

History of the Building

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The building at 11a K. Valdemāra iela was constructed in 1873. The author of its design was Heinrich Scheel (1829 -1909), the academic of German origin and one of the famous architects of Riga. Initially it was his private house - one of the fanciest buildings in the ensemble of Riga boulevards. The house was created with a small front yard facing A. Pumpura iela, and the ensemble was complemented with a stylistically matching fence and abundantly decorated household building – stable.

Insignificant reconstruction works were performed at the beginning of the 20th century due to frequent changes of ownership. In 1905 it was transformed by the architect Augusts Reinbergs and in 1936 – by the architect Aleksandrs Birzenieks. The building over the time, however, has not lost its initial image and architectural quality. The architecture of the building reflects the renaissance forms being incorporated in the facade composition characteristic to eclecticism style. The facade of the building is decorated with rustications and groups of window opening accentuated with expressive fronton type pediments. In some places the cornice is complimented with balustrade.

Several halls with rich decorative finish restored during the recent years have been preserved at the representative level of the building above the elevated basement floor.

A decorative wall painting by one of the Latvian professional decorative art founders and ornament master of the 20th century Jūlijs Madernieks was uncovered in the hall with a fireplace during the restoration process.

From 1922 to 1940, the building was used as a residence of the foreign ministers of the Republic of Latvia. Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, Vilhelms Munters and other foreign ministers used to reside there. A valuable collection of furniture and artefacts was located in the building during this time (materials regarding it may be found in the Monument Documentation Centre of SIHP (State Inspection for Heritage Protection)).

During the Soviet Era, the building hosted the Friendship Association with the fellow-countrymen abroad, operating under the supervision of the State Security Committee. When the country regained its independence, since 1992 the building is the home of the Ministry of Culture.

Data from the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SIHP. Research materials of the AIG project and data from the archive of the Ministry of Culture.

<https://www.km.gov.lv/en/history-building>