

*Helen Bome*

**THE JOURNEY  
OF A RENAISSANCE FIREPLACE  
FROM REVAL TO ST PETERSBURG**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Gothic merchants' dwellings in the Old Town of Tallinn were equipped with various elements carved out of local limestone. These were archivolted portals and their doorside stones (*Beischlagsteine*), internal portals with ornamented lintels, elaborate window jambs and mullions. Many of these have been preserved in their original locations; sometimes they were covered up during later reconstruction, or immured in secondary locations in the same building. But there are also carved items that were taken long distances away in connection with reconstruction. When medieval and early modern architectural details no longer had a place in a modern residence, owners appreciative of history and inclined to Romanticism reused them to decorate the buildings and parks of their summer manors (*Höfchen*). This paper discusses the even longer journey that a Renaissance fireplace undertook in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Reval (now Tallinn) to St Petersburg.

I will start by examining a description of the fireplace in its original location, searching for additional information from field studies of the building and other elements of the interior that have survived to this day. Then move on to study another relevant text produced by Baltic German heritage enthusiasts active in Estonia, Latvia and Russia. I will investigate the circumstances of the sale of the fireplace and its new princely owners in St Petersburg. And finally, I will look at the artefact's further move to Tsarskoye Selo (now Pushkin) near St Petersburg. The fireplace acquired a new context in different buildings, different interiors; in time, its origins were forgotten and a new provenance and meaning created for it. Following the journey of the fireplace sheds light not only on one of the unsolved mysteries of Tallinn's artistic heritage, but also on wider questions about the sale of antiquities and knowledge transfer in the northwest corner of the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### THE FIREPLACE IN TALLINN

The building, located in Tallinn Old Town on the corner of Pikk and Tolli streets (71 Pikk St/2 Tolli St), catches the eye with its presentable façade (Fig. 1). The arrangement of decorative niches of various shapes is similar to the façade of Pirita convent near Tallinn, built between 1417 and 1436, and is therefore dated to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The Late Renaissance or Early Baroque carved door (Fig. 2), fitted into a Gothic portal, marks the second important building phase in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the owner of the house was an affluent merchant and elder of the Great Guild Jacob Höppener<sup>2</sup> with his spouse Brigitta Rode, whose coats of arms decorate the door<sup>3</sup>. But the corner house was not a typical merchants' dwelling with a hall (*diele*) and a chamber (*dornse*) on the ground floor and merchandise stored on the upper floors. The entire house was used

1 Boris Dubovik, "Elamud Pikk t. 71", *Eesti arhitektuur 1* (Tallinn: Valgus, 1993), 163.

2 The name is spelled differently in the sources: Jacob, Jakob; Höpner, Höppener, Hoppener, Hoepener. *Tallinna kodanikkuderaamat: 1624–1690 ühes jätkuga kuni 1710-ni = Das Revaler Bürgerbuch: 1624–1690 nebst Fortsetzung bis 1710*, ed. by Georg Adelheim (Reval: Revaler Estn. Verlagsgenossenschaft, 1933), 24; Leo Tiik, *Väljavõtted Tallinna vanimatest kinnisturaamatutest VIII* (Tallinn, 1967). Archive of the National Heritage Board of Estonia [Muinsuskaitseameti arhiiv, MKA], ERA.T-76.1.731, 11.

3 Sten Karling, *Holzschneiderei und Tischlerkunst der Renaissance und des Barocks in Estland* (Dorpat: Õpetatud Eesti Selts, 1943), 186.

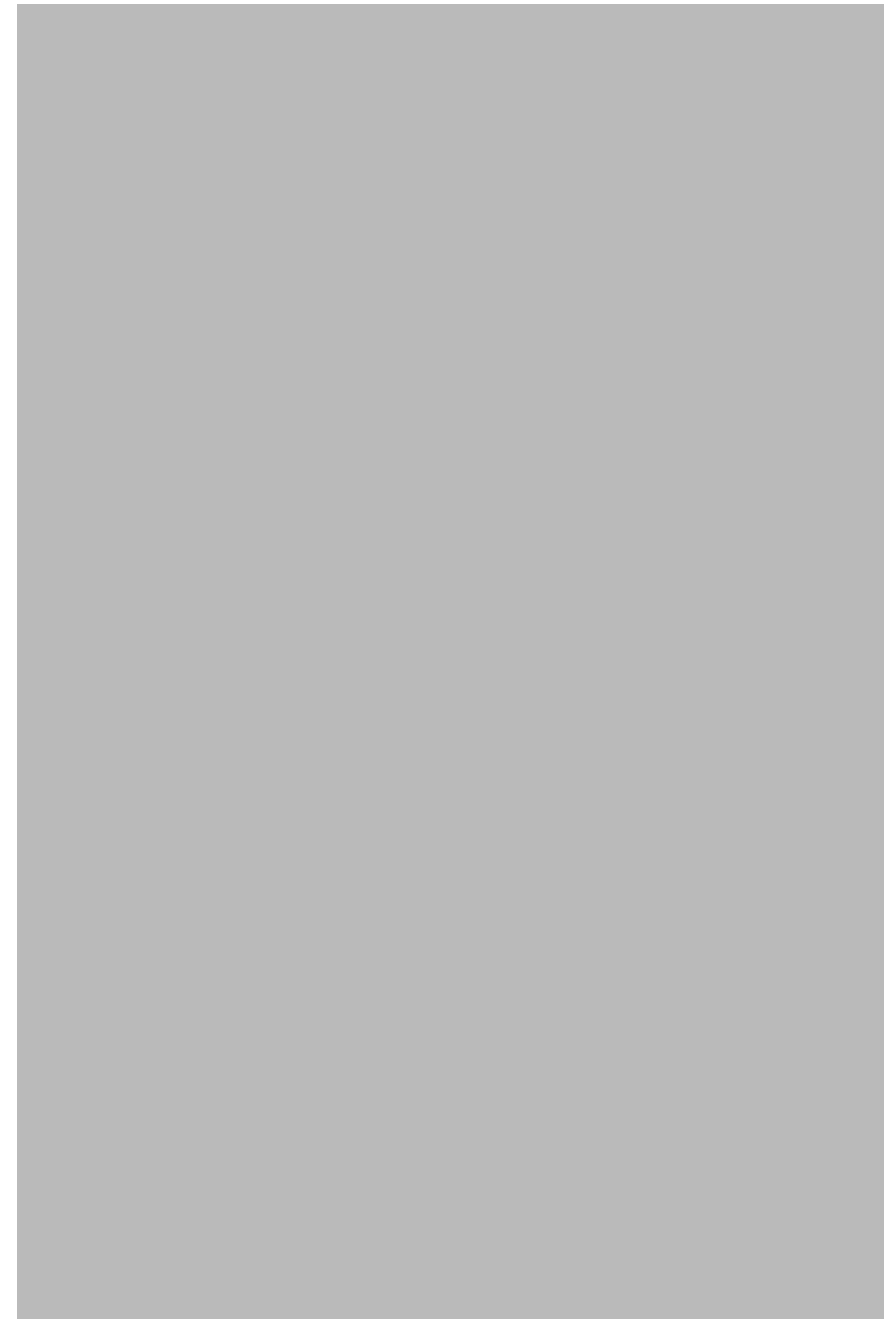


FIG. 1. ERNST HERMANN SCHLICHTING, *VIEW TO THE CORNER OF PIKK AND TOLLI STREETS*. OIL ON CANVAS. 1850s. TALLINN CITY MUSEUM.



FIG. 2. PORTAL WITH THE COATS OF ARMS OF HÖPPENER AND RODE IN 71 PIKK ST, TALLINN. PHOTO: HELEN BOME, 2017.

as an office and a warehouse, while living quarters were located in another building behind it, in the eastern part of 4 Tolli St<sup>4</sup>

A description, authored by archivist of the Estonian Knighthood and renowned historian Carl Russwurm, has survived of this property prior to its extensive reconstruction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Russwurm collected data when compiling the Ungern-Sternberg family history. The description must have been written down before the publication of the second volume of the work in 1877, where Russwurm writes that the third volume, about the family's real estate, is ready for print and will hopefully be published the same year.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately this didn't happen, and after Russwurm's death in 1883, his son handed the manuscript of the third volume over to the archives of the Knighthood.<sup>6</sup> Russwurm's description is riddled with corrections and additions. The information came from a district school inspector August Hippius, whose family owned 71 Pikk St between 1800 and 1856. Below are the original and a translation.

#### Reval Häuser.

Da diese Häuser zu den ältesten der Stadt gehören, jetzt aber vielfach verändert sind, so mögen einige Nachrichten [Anmerkung: Mitth. des August Hippius, Inspector.] über die frühere Beschaffenheit derselben bis 1856 hier Raum finden. Bei der Zusammengehörigkeit beider Häuser wurde das Exhaus nur als Waarenniederlage, das andere als Wohnhaus benutzt. Letzteres war früher nur durch die große Thür des Ecxhauses zugänglich und hatte eine kleine, später erweiterte Hinterthür, durch die man auf verschiedene Treppen in die Zimmer von ungleicher Höhe und in den Saal gelangte, deßen ~~später] nachher vermauerte Fenster auf den Hof gingen. Die~~ Wände mit Holz verkleidet waren, auf dem biblische Bilder, Thiere und Landschaften, in Oelfarben gemalt sich zeigten. Hinter der Verkleidung waren Schräncke angebraht. Die großen Fenster mit steinernen Fensterbänken enthielten lauter

4 Dubovik, "Elamud Pikk t. 71", 163; Dubovik, "Elamu Tolli t. 4", *Eesti arhitektuur* 1 (Tallinn: Valgus, 1993), 239.

5 Rudolf von Ungern-Sternberg, Carl Russwurm, *Nachrichten über das Geschlecht Ungern-Sternberg. Zweiter Theil, Stammtafeln und Urkunden* (Reval: [s.n.], 1877), IV.

6 Johannes Russwurm, "Aus dem leben meines Vaters", *Herdflammen: Baltisches Haus- und Jugendblatt*, Nr. 1 (1925), 6.

kleine Scheiben in Blei gefaßt, und zwischen den Fenstern standen steinerne mit Bildwerk verzierte Säulen. Der große ~~Kachel~~Ofen hatte auf der weißglasierten holländischen Kacheln blaue biblische Bilder. Daneben stand ein Kamin mit steinernen Verzierungen, nämlich ganz oben mit einem Pelikan, der seine Jungen mit seinem Blute tränkt. Eine Inschrift darunter lautet: ~~die Aehnlichkeit dieses Vogels mit Christo an, der sein Blut zur Versöhnung der Menschen mit Gott dahingab.~~ Mit seinem blut der pelican den jungen bringt das leben; so hat auch Christi blut gethan, das er vor uns gegeben. [Anmerkung: Dieses Schnitzwerk verkaufte der, Graf Buxhöwden dem ~~Grafen~~ Fürsten Kotschubej, der das in seinem. Hause an der Moika in St Petersburg aufstellen ließ. Dieselben Wappen finden sich an der Hausthür das Ecxhauses.] Daneben stand mit der Inschrift 1653 und den Buchstaben: J. H. und B. R. (Jakob Hoepener und Brigitta Rode) die Wappen der Fam. Hoepener und ~~von der Beke~~ Rode (ein Bär mit goldene Spieße. [Anmerkung: Jakob Hoepener. Jakob's S. war 1611 zu Lübeck geboren und † 1668 als Aeltesten der grossen Gilde; Brigitta Rode. geb. 1622 zu Reval, † 1696 6/1 auf ihrem Gute Machters.]) /---/.

### Reval houses.

Because these houses are among the oldest in town, but have by now gone through many changes, you will find here some information [reference: Information from August Hippius, inspector.] about their former state until the year 1856. When the two houses were together, the corner house was used only as a warehouse, the other as a dwelling. The latter was earlier accessible only through the big door of the corner house and it had a small back door that was later enlarged, through which staircases led to rooms on different levels and the chamber, ~~the later walled up windows~~ of which faced the yard. The walls were wood covered with Bible scenes, animals and landscapes painted on them with oil colours. Behind the panels were cupboards. Large windows with stone benches only had small panes of glass in lead frames and between the windows were stone pillars decorated with carvings. The big ~~cocke~~stove had Bible scenes painted in blue on white glazed Dutch tiles. Next to it stood a fireplace with stone decorations, on top of it was a pelican giving her young her blood to drink. Below it is an inscription: ~~This bird is a likeness~~

~~of Christ, who gave his blood to reconcile people with God.~~ With her blood the pelican brings life to the young; so did also the blood of Christ, that he gave for us. [reference: Count Buxhöwden sold this carving to ~~count~~ prince Kochubey, who had it set up in his house in St Petersburg by the Moyka. The same coats of arms can be found on the front door of the corner house.<sup>7</sup>] Next to it stand with the inscription 1653 and the letters J. H. and B. R. (Jakob Hoepener and Brigitta Rode) the coats of arms of the families Hoepener and ~~von der Beke~~ Rode (a bear with a golden lance) [reference: Jakob Hoepener. Jakob's son was born in 1611 in Lübeck and † in 1668 as elder of the Great Guild; Brigitta Rode was born in 1622 in Reval, † in 1696 6/1 in her Mahtra manor.] /---/<sup>8</sup>

Hippius-Russwurm's description was introduced to researchers in 1955 by Helmi Üprus, who published it shortened and paraphrased in Estonian. This text was in turn retold in 1973 by Marta Männisalu. (Later authors have published their own retellings of the latter text and mistakenly dated the original to the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century.) At first it was thought that 71 Pikk St and the eastern part of 4 Tolli St did not belong together in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the description of 71 Pikk St was not associated with rooms in the eastern part of 4 Tolli St Üprus and Männisalu hoped that further field studies in the corner house as well as finding the fireplace and learning its measurements would help to localise the room described.<sup>9</sup> Üprus visited St Petersburg several times and lists searching for the fireplace as one of her tasks in her travel notes, although the results are unknown.<sup>10</sup> Boris Dubovik conducted field studies in the buildings of 71 Pikk St and 4 Tolli St in 1983, and found evidence of their connection. Dubovik proposed the ground floor chamber at 4 Tolli St as the room in the description.<sup>11</sup>

7 The second sentence of the reference is about the next sentence of the text.

8 *Familien-Archiv Ungern-Sternberg. Gütergeschichte R–Z*. Estonian History Museum [Eesti Ajaloomuseum], AM.104.1.53, text fol. 24r, first reference fol. 23r. Accessible via the Saaga web environment of the National Archives of Estonia [Eesti Rahvusarhiiv, RA], <https://www.ra.ee/dgs/explorer.php> [accessed 16/06/2024], digitised manuscript, 26–27.

9 Helmi Üprus, "Kolm õde". *Majad Tallinnas, Pikk tn. 71*. Ajalooline õiend (Tallinn, 1955). MKA, ERA.5025.2.7941, 4 and reference 2; Marta Männisalu, *Pikk 71 "Kolm õde"*. Lühiülevaade ehitusajaloost (Tallinn, 1973), MKA, ERA.T-76.1.1540, 4–5.

10 MKA, Helmi Üprus' personal archive, 149, s.p.

11 Boris Dubovik, *Tallinn, Tolli tn. 4*. Väliuurimiste aruanne (Tallinn, 1983), MKA, ERA.T-76.1.11346, 29.

Rasmus Kangropool concurred, writing in 2001 that in 1651 Jacob Höppener acquired the corner house with living quarters behind it in Tolli street, retelling the already familiar description.<sup>12</sup>

Dubovik's field study in 1983 confirmed or specified several details mentioned in the description. In the 4 Tolli St ground floor chamber, traces of two heaters were found.<sup>13</sup> The *Fensterbänken* in the description can mean a windowsill or benches beneath the window. The fact that it is mentioned seems to indicate benches, but due to later reconstruction of the windows no trace of the benches survives<sup>14</sup> and it is impossible to say whether they were placed transversely on the sides of the window or in the form of a step parallel to the window<sup>15</sup>. On the exterior wall of the building the limestone frame of the original three-part window remains visible.<sup>16</sup> New data was added in the second half of the 1980s when fragments of window mullions were found in the building. Among them are two capitals that may have belonged to the pillars dividing the trifora mentioned in the description. One capital has a bearded male head in the front and on the sides are the coats of arms of Höppener and Rode with the initials JH and BR (Figs. 3–4); the other capital has a grotesque mask in front and on the sides male and female winged merpeople on a background of sea waves. At present, the capitals are on view in a wall niche in the chamber on the first floor.<sup>17</sup> According to Krista Kodres, the capitals were made by different masters at different times.<sup>18</sup> Kodres has written several times about another window

12 Rasmus Kangropool, *Pikk tn 71/Tolli tn 2 hooneteansambel "Kolm õde" eritingimused rekonstrueerimiseks* (Tallinn, 2001), Archives of the Urban Planning Department's Heritage Conservation Department [Tallinna Linnaplaneerimise Ameti Muinsuskaitse osakonna arhiiv], 9.645, 13–14.

13 Dubovik, *Tallinn, Tolli tn. 4*, 15–16.

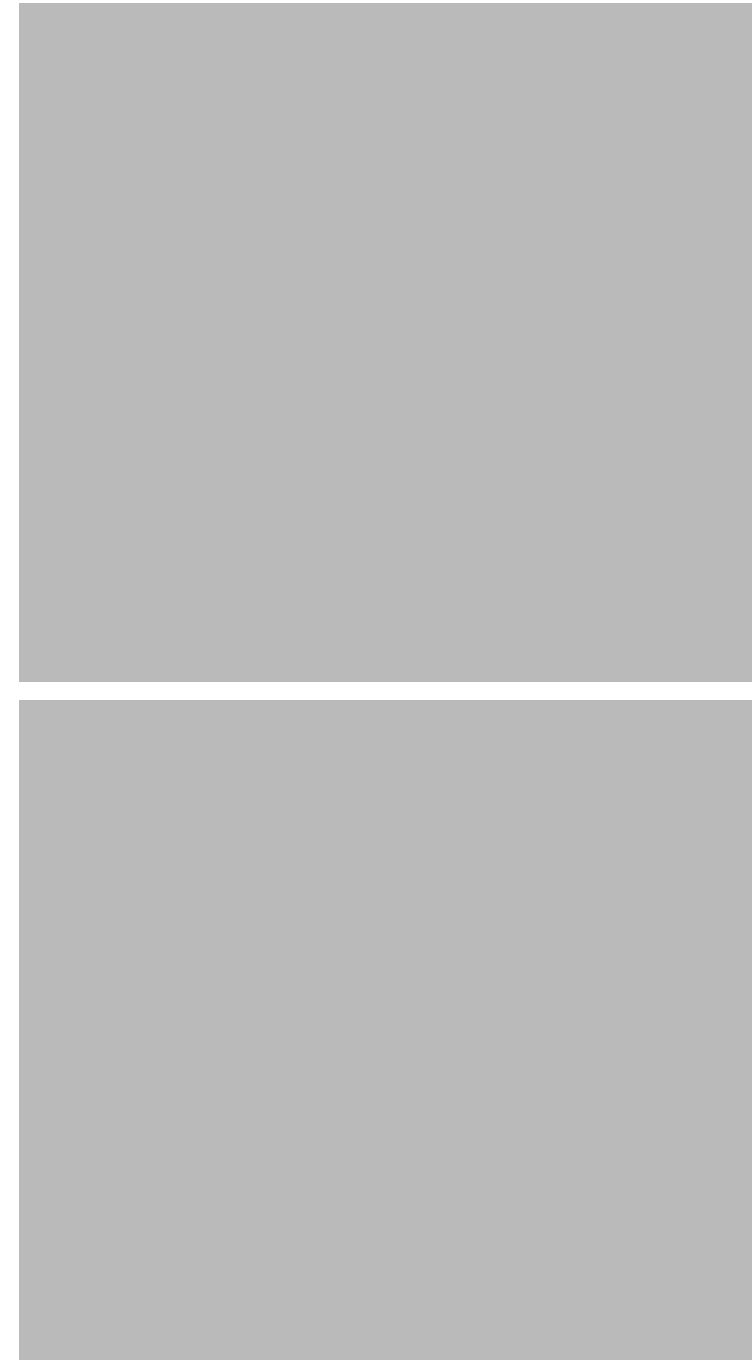
14 Ibid., 17, 28.

15 Window seats of stone have preserved in *diele*'s of Old Town: original 29 Lai St and reconstruction 10 Rütli St

16 Anu Seidla, *Boris Dubovik: "Vanalinn, minu lemmik!": Vana Tallinn muinsuskaitse pilgu läbi* (Tallinn: Eesti ICOMOS: Ajakool, 2017), 125–126, photo p. 127.

17 Silja Vohli, *Tallinna raidkivide passid II* (Tallinn, 1989), MKA, ERA.T-76.1.12870, Pass nr. 83–84.

18 She considers the author of the capital with coats of arms the workshop of the "Master of the Clodt chapel portal" c. 1673, and the author of the capital with merpeople the workshop of Arent Passer c. 1640, see Krista Kodres, "Klassikalise ideaali probleemist Eesti 16. ja 17. sajandi kunsti näidetel", *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi*, 11 (2002), 143–144, 146. I would like to point out that Jacob Höppener bought the house in 1651 and died in 1668. The capital bearing his coat of arms and initials had to be commissioned in this period, probably during the reconstruction that took place immediately after the acquisition of the building, which, according to the year on the fireplace, took place in 1653.



FIGS. 3–4. CAPITAL OF A WINDOW MULLION WITH THE COATS OF ARMS OF HÖPPENER AND RODE IN 4 TOLLI ST, TALLINN. PHOTO: NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD OF ESTONIA, 1989.

mullion found in the same building, also from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, now placed between the windows of the first floor chamber.<sup>19</sup> Fragments of a companion mullion – a basis and the figure of a lion in two parts – are on view in the wall niche, the capital that was found has gone missing.<sup>20</sup> Kodres' point of departure is the earlier research tradition, and she considers 71 Pikk St and the eastern part of 4 Tolli St as belonging to different owners. Therefore, she doesn't connect 4 Tolli St interiors and the fragments found there to the owners of 71 Pikk St. She has elsewhere cited a paraphrase of the Hippus-Russwurm text as describing a room in 71 Pikk St, but doesn't connect it to the eastern part of 4 Tolli St.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, a description of a room with a carved fireplace has been known to Estonian conservators and art historians since 1955, but confusion regarding the property boundaries of 71 Pikk St and 4 Tolli St has hindered localising it. The necessity of finding the fireplace in St Petersburg has been stated repeatedly, but without success. During field studies and conservation of the buildings in the second half of the 1980s, the capitals of window mullions mentioned in the description were however found, giving a more accurate idea of this interior in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## SECOND LIFE IN ST PETERSBURG

The next time we receive news of the fireplace is in 1913, not from Tallinn or St Petersburg, but from Riga. A note was published in the *Rigasche Zeitung* newspaper saying that at a meeting of the Society for History and Archaeology of the Baltic Provinces of Russia (*Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Rußlands*) on 9<sup>th</sup> October, Johannes Gahlnbäck<sup>22</sup>, active in St Petersburg, donated his drawings of Baltic artefacts in the German Renaissance style to the Society's library. Among these was "a fireplace in St Petersburg (on

19 Most recently Krista Kodres, *Esitledes iseend: tallinlane ja tema elamu varauusajal* (Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2014), 215–216.

20 Vohli, *Tallinna raidkivide passid II*, Pass nr. 87–89.

21 Kodres, *Esitledes iseend*, 167, 184–185.

22 Johannes Leopold Gahlnbäck (1855–1934) was born and raised in Saaremaa and had great merit in studying and collecting Estonian medieval and folk art. About him see Olga V. Kalinina, "Sobirateli: Gal'nbek Ivan Andreevič", Rossijskij Étnografičeskij muzej, <https://ethnomuseum.ru/collections/collectors/galnbek-ivan-andreevich/> [accessed 16/06/2024]; Piret Öunapuu, "ERMi parim tehing saja aasta jooksul", *Sirp*, 13/12/2013, 40.

the corner of Moyka and Gorokhovaya streets in a private residence) in possession of princess Kochubey (1887), acquired in 1855 in Reval; with the coats of arms of Jacob Hoeppener and (his wife) Brigitta Rode, 1547."<sup>23</sup> This note aroused the interest of schoolteacher and historian Friedrich Keußler, active mainly in Latvia but also in Estonia and Russia. Keußler asked Gahlnbäck for additional information, and based on this published a thorough article in *Revaler Zeitung* a month and a half later. Below are the original and a translation.

### Ein Alt-Revaler Kamin in St Petersburg.

Im Jahre 1887 befand sich in Petersburg im damaligen Fürst Kotschubeischen Hause von der Ecke der Gorochowaja und der Moika außer einer Anzahl altertümlicher Möbel aus Reval ein schöner, statslicher Alt-Revaler Kamin im Stile der Spätrenaissance. Er war zusammen mit den Möbeln und einer vor dem Kamin auf dem Fußboden angebrachten Platte im Jahre 1855 nach Aussage der Familie Kotschubei von einem ihrer Angehörigen, der in Reval einen höheren Regierungsposten innegehabt hat, erworben und nach St Petersburg übergeführt worden, und im ersterwähnten Jahre hat der St Petersburg Architekt und Bibliothekar an der Baron Stieglitzschen Zeichenschule Johannes Gahlnbäck einer größere getuschte Federzeichnung des Kamins und der Platte nebst Angabe der Maße hergestellt, die er der "Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Rußlands" zu Riga erst kürzlich auf der Sitzung vom 8. Oktober dargebracht hat. Hiervon erhielt der Verfasser der vorliegenden Zeilen durch eine kurze Notiz der "Rig. Ztg." Kunde, was ihn dazu bewogen hat, Herrn Architekten Gahlnbäck persönlich um nähere Auskünfte über den Kamin zuersuchen, die er dank der Liebenswürdigkeit des genannten Herrn nunmehr bekannt zu geben in der Lage ist

Vor allem muß konstatiert werden, daß der Kamin, jene Platte und die erwähnten Möbel sich nicht mehr in dem bezeichneten Hause befinden, seitdem letzteres vor etwa sechs Jahren durch Kauf in den Besitz des Kriegsministeriums übergegangen ist und gegenwärtig vom Kriegsminister bewohnt wird (die Adresse lautet heute Moika No. 69, und der Eingang in die Wohnung führt

23 *Rigasche Zeitung*, 26/10/1913, 4. The same information was published in *Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Alterthumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands aus dem Jahre 1913* (Riga: W. F. Häcker, 1914), 203.

aus dem Hof). Höchst wahrscheinlich sind alle diese genannten Gegenstände noch bis auf den heutigen Tag Eigentum der Familie Fürst Kotschubei, die sie beim Verkauf des Hauses behalten und mitgenommen hat. Aber der Kamin wurde durch eine aus Stein, Mörtel und Gips hergestellte Kopie ersetzt, welche mit Oelfarbe in den Farben des Originals angestrichen ist, und diese Nachbildung steht an dessen früherer Stelle, d. s. in einer Ecke des Speisesaales der Wohnung des Kriegsministers. Nachgebildet war auch die Platte vor dem Kamin, die freilich, was besonders betont werden mag, nicht eigentlich zu letzterem gehörte, sondern als Rarität vor ihm angebracht worden war; sie war mit Ornamenten versehen und trug die Jahreszahl 1547. Indessen ist die Nachbildung der Platte bei einer Remonte der Wohnung zerbrochen und dann entfernt worden.

Der Kamin hat eine Höhe von etwa  $4\frac{1}{4}$  und eine Breite von etwa  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Arschinen. Das Original war aus sogenanntem inländischen Marmor von dunkelbläulicher Färbung hergestellt, d. h. aus jenem Kalkstein, der sich namentlich im Kirchspiel Kegel und auf den Inseln Moon und Oesel findet; die bunte Bemalung war auf dem dunklen Grunde mehr angedeutet, als ganz ausgeführt. Die Feuerung in einer Höhe von fast 2 Arschinen wird von 2 Pfeilern mit Hermen (männlichen Gestalten, die nach unten in Pfeiler auslaufen) flankiert. Ueber den Pfeilern ruht ein besonders hohes, stark ausladendes und schön gezeichnetes Gesims, auf das sogleich näher eingegangen werden soll und über diesem eine gleichfalls verhältnismäßig hohe, üppige Barockcartouche (Einfassung), welche rechts und links in Rollwerk und Voluten ausläuft, in der ovalen Mitte aber einen Jungen mit seinem Fleisch ätzenden Pelikan in Reliefdarstellung zeigt. Unter diesem Bildwerk erblickt man im Fries des Gesimses ein Schild mit folgender Inschrift: "Mit seinem Blut der / Pelikan die iungen bringt / zum leben das hat auch / Christi blut gethan / das er vor uns gegeben."

Zu beiden Seiten der Inschrift sind zwei Wappen in nicht sehr hohem Relief ausgeführt. Das linke Wappen zeigt einen Mann mit einer Hopfenstange in der Rechten, und oben finden sich die Buchstaben "J. H."; das rechte hingegen zeigt einen schwarzen Bären, welcher mit der rechten Tatze an ein langstieliges Schlachtbeil greift, dessen Stiel nach außen ausgebogen ist, und oben finden sich die Buchstaben "B. R." Unter beiden Wappen ist die Jahreszahl 1653 angebracht, und zwar berart, daß 16 unter

dem linken und 53 unter dem rechten Wappen zu lesen ist. Nach Aussage der Fürstin Kotschubei deuten die Buchstaben "J. H." den Namen des Jakob Hoepfener und "B. R." diejenigen seiner Ehefrau Brigitta Rodeau.

Einem Revaler Lokalhistoriker, beziehungsweise einem Kenner der Familiengeschichte der Revaler Geschlechter, mag es vorbehalten bleiben, darüber zu entscheiden, ob die beschriebenen Wappen in der Tat den genannten Familien angehören, und namentlich auch festzustellen, wer Jakob Hoepfener und Brigitta Rode gewesen sind. Nach Dr. J. G. v. Bunge's "Revaler Ratslinie" (Reval 1874) hat es zwei Mitglieder des Rates mit den Namen "Rode" im Mittelalter gegeben, dagegen vier mit dem Namen "Rodde" in der zweiten Hälfte des 17., ferner im 18. und im 19. Jahrhundert; Ferner haben sechs "Hoepfener" dem Rate im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert angehört, aber in der Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts (also um das erwähnte Jahr 1653) weder ein Rode oder Rodde, noch ein Hoepfener. Seit wann trotzdem die Familien Hoepfener und Rode oder Rodde in Reval anständig gewesen sind, ist dem Verfasser dieser Zeiten leider unbekannt.

Nachschrift. Wie Herr Architekt J. Gahnbäck nachträglich von unterrichteter Seite aus Reval erfahren hat, ist Jakob Hoepfener, des gleichnamigen Vaters Sohn, am 6. August 1611 geboren und am 6. Februar 1668 gestorben. Ferner befand sich der Kamin seinerzeit in dessen Hause an der Langstraße (Ecke der Zollstraße) und die beiden Wappen nicht nur am Kamin, sondern auch an der Haustür daselbst.

### **An Old Reval fireplace in St Petersburg.**

In the year 1887 there was in St Petersburg, in what was then prince Kochubey's house on the corner of Gorokhovaya and Moyka, in addition to a number of antique pieces of furniture from Reval, a beautiful and stately Old Reval fireplace in the Late Renaissance style. According to the Kochubey family, it was acquired along with the furniture and a slab attached to the floor in front of the fireplace in the year 1855 by one of their members, who held a high government position in Reval and brought them to St Petersburg. In the year first mentioned, a St Petersburg architect

and librarian of the baron Stieglitz's drawing school<sup>24</sup> Johannes Gahlnbäck made a large ink drawing of the fireplace and slab with measurements, donating it only recently, at the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> October,<sup>25</sup> to the Society for History and Archaeology of the Baltic Provinces of Russia in Riga. The author of these lines became aware of it through a short note in the *Rigasche Zeitung*, which led him to ask mister architect Gahlnbäck for additional information about the fireplace, which thanks to the kindness of the named gentleman he can now offer.

First of all it must be stated, that the fireplace, this slab and mentioned furniture are no longer in the house described, because the latter became the property of the Ministry of War through sale about six years ago and now the Minister of War lives there (address is now Moyka No. 69 and entrance to the apartment is from the courtyard). With high probability, all items mentioned are today the possession of prince Kochubey's family, who kept them and took them in the sale of the house. But the fireplace was replaced by a copy made of stone, mortar and plaster, which is painted with oil colours in the colours of the original, and this reproduction stands in its former place, that is in the corner of the dining room of the apartment of the Minister of War. The slab in front of the fireplace was also reproduced, which of course – it must be particularly emphasised – did not actually belong with the latter, but was placed in front of it as a rarity; it was decorated with ornament and bore the date 1547. However, the reproduction slab was broken during the renovation of the apartment and was then removed.

The height of the fireplace was about 4¼<sup>26</sup> arshins and it was about 1½ arshins wide. The original was made of so-called domestic marble of dark bluish colour, that is of the limestone that can be found especially in Keila parish and on islands of Muhu and Saaremaa; colourful painting was rather implied than fully applied on a dark background. Flanking the firebox almost 2 arshins high were 2 pillars with herms (male figures narrowing downwards to pillars). Resting on the pillars is an especially high,

24 Central'noe učiliše tehničeskogo risovanija (The Central School of Technical Drawing).

25 Typographical error, should be 9<sup>th</sup> October.

26 Typographical error, should be 4½ arshins.

strongly protruding cornice with beautiful lines, which will be discussed in more detail shortly, and above it a likewise relatively high, lavish Baroque cartouche (frame) that ends on the right and left with scrollwork and volutes, while in the oval middle part it depicts in relief a pelican feeding her young with her flesh. Below this image you see on the frieze of the cornice a shield with the following inscription: "With her blood the / pelican brings the young / to life this has also / done the blood of Christ / that he gave for us."

On both sides of the inscription two coats of arms have been executed in not very high relief. On the left coat of arms there is a man with a hop pole in his right hand and in the upper part the letters "J. H.", while on the right one a black bear who with the right paw grasps a long-shafted battle-axe with shaft bent outwards and in the upper part the letters "B. R." Below the coats of arms is the date 1653, more precisely, below the left coat of arms can be read 16 and right coat of arms 53. According to princess Kochubey, the letters "J. H." stand for the name Jakob Hoeppener, and "B. R." for his wife's name Brigitta Rodeau.

It remains to Reval's local historians, or rather a specialist in Reval's family genealogies, to decide whether the coats of arms described actually belong to the families mentioned, and above all to ascertain who Jakob Hoeppener and Brigitta Rode were. According to Dr. J. G. von Bunge's *Revaler Ratslinie* (Reval 1874) in the Middle Ages there were two members of the town council with the name Rode, while in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were four with the name Rodde, and in addition in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries too. In addition six Hoeppeners were on the town council in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (therefore around the mentioned year 1653) there was neither a Rode, a Rodde nor a Hoeppener. Unfortunately the contemporary author doesn't know when the families of Hoeppener and Rode or Rodde were established in Reval.

Postscript. As mister architect J. Gahlnbäck afterwards found out from an informed source in Reval, Jakob Hoeppener, the son of a father of the same name, was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1611 and died on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1668. Also, the fireplace was then located in his house on Pikk street (at the corner of Tolli street)



and both coats of arms were not only on the fireplace, but also on the front door.<sup>27</sup>

Collections of the Riga Society for History were passed on to the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation, but unfortunately Gahlnbäck's drawing of the fireplace is not there.<sup>28</sup>

Reading the article, one notices the extraordinarily professional description of the fireplace, which can be expected from Gahlnbäck, who was also an art historian and art collector. He deals with the measurements, material, polychromy, architectural elements, iconography and inscriptions of the fireplace, whereas the terminology is explained to the common reader. The only aspect causing difficulty is the genealogy of the first owners of the fireplace, where the literature at hand is not sufficient; this problem is solved by turning to an expert in Tallinn.

How did the fireplace end up in St Petersburg? In 1877 *Russwurm* wrote that "count Buxhöwden sold this carving to prince Kochubey, who had it set up in his house in St Petersburg by the Moyka". In 1887 Gahlnbäck found out – presumably from princess Kochubey who is named as the current owner – that "according to the Kochubey family, it was acquired along with the furniture and a slab attached to the floor in front of the fireplace in the year 1855 by one of their members, who held a high government position in Reval and brought them to St Petersburg".

71 Pikk St and the eastern part of 4 Tolli St were sold on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1856. The corner house was bought by baron Alexey von Ungern-Sternberg and the dwelling behind it (with the fireplace) by count Nikolai von Buxhoeveden.<sup>29</sup> Alexey was a cornet of the Imperial Guard and the lord of Kernu (*Kirna*) manor, Nikolai was the owner of Koluvere castle (*Schloß Lode*) and popularly known as the "mad count". The two men were cousins. The sale of the fireplace could not have happened before that time. But who was the buyer? An attempt to identify in the archival sources of Tallinn a prince Kochubey

27 *Revalsche Zeitung*, 28/11/1913, 3. Abbreviated version was published in *Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga aus dem Jahre 1914 (Januar-Mai)* (Riga: W. F. Häcker, 1914–1921), 85.

28 I am grateful to Inga Karlstrēma (Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation) for a thorough search.

29 Tiik, *Väljavõtted Tallinna vanimatest kinnisturaamatutest VIII*, 12, 15.

holding a "high government position" was not successful. Of the six Kochubeys mentioned in the address books of officials of the Russian Empire from the years 1855 and 1856, none served in the Governorate of Estonia. Five were positioned in other regions. The only possible candidate is prince Pyotr Arkadyevich Kochubey, who as an aide-de-camp of the emperor could be sent on special assignments.<sup>30</sup> According to different sources, whether in the summer of 1855 or winter of 1856 he was sent to Narva castle to investigate a large-scale theft of gunpowder and cartridges; it seems possible, that during this trip he also visited Reval.<sup>31</sup> But as established before, the fireplace couldn't have been bought before the autumn of 1856.

The slab in front of the fireplace (Fig. 5) looks like a typical interior door lintel relief of a merchant's dwelling in Tallinn Old Town. The vegetative ornament seems to be created using Heinrich Aldegrever's print as a model. On the top in the middle is the date 1547, under it two coats of arms: on the left a shield with a heraldic 'stork wings expanded' flanked by the initials TW, on the right a shield with a house mark and above initials TW. In most cases, the shields on the lintel bear the house marks of the master and mistress of the dwelling, but here is represented only the master, Tönnies Wibbeking<sup>32</sup>: on the left is his seal<sup>33</sup>, on the right his house mark. Tönnies Wibbeking acquired a house at 11 Lai St in 1540<sup>34</sup>, and as was the custom, marked certain architectural elements with signs of ownership and the final year of reconstruction. In 2020, in the wall of the *dornse* of the house

30 *Adres-kalendar'. Obšaja rospis' vseh činovnyh osob v gosudarstve, 1855*. Č. 1–2 (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskoj Akademii nauk, 1854); *Adres-kalendar'. Obšaja rospis' vseh činovnyh osob v gosudarstve, 1856*. Č. 1–2 (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskoj Akademii nauk, 1855). I am grateful to Tõnu Tannberg (University of Tartu) for his help in investigating this.

31 Further information could be obtained from his biography (where 1855 is mentioned) or his memoirs about the assignment to Narva in 1856, unfortunately these were unavailable: Vjačeslav Sreznevskij, *Očerki žizni i dejatel'nosti Petra Arkad'eviča Kočubeja, 1825–1892 z.: Reč', proiznes. v toržestv. sobr. Imp. rus. tehn. o-va 22 dek. 1893 g. v godovšinu smerti P. A. Kočubeja, V. I. Sreznevskim* (Sankt-Peterburg: "Vladim." parovaja tipo-lit., 1893); Petr Kočubej, *Vospominanija Petra Arkad'eviča Kočubeja o dannoj emu imperatorom Aleksandrom II komandirovke v zimu 1856-go goda*. Č. 1. (Sankt-Peterburg: tip. br. Panteleevykh, 1890). According to his obituary, he was sent to inspect the northern fortifications at the end of the Crimean War: "Kočubej P. A. Nekrolog", *Gornyj žurnal*, 12 (1892), 564.

32 The name is spelled differently in the sources: Tonnies, Tönnis, Tönnies; Wibbekingk, Wibbekinck, Wibbekinge, Wibbeking.

33 Eugen von Nottbeck, *Siegel aus dem Revaler Rathesarchiv nebst Sammlung von Wappen der Revaler Rathesfamilien* (Lübeck: H. G. Rahtgens, 1880), 29.

34 Leo Tiik, *Väljavõtted Tallinna vanimatest kinnisturaamatutest III* (Tallinn, 1970), MKA, ERA.T-76.1.688, 99.

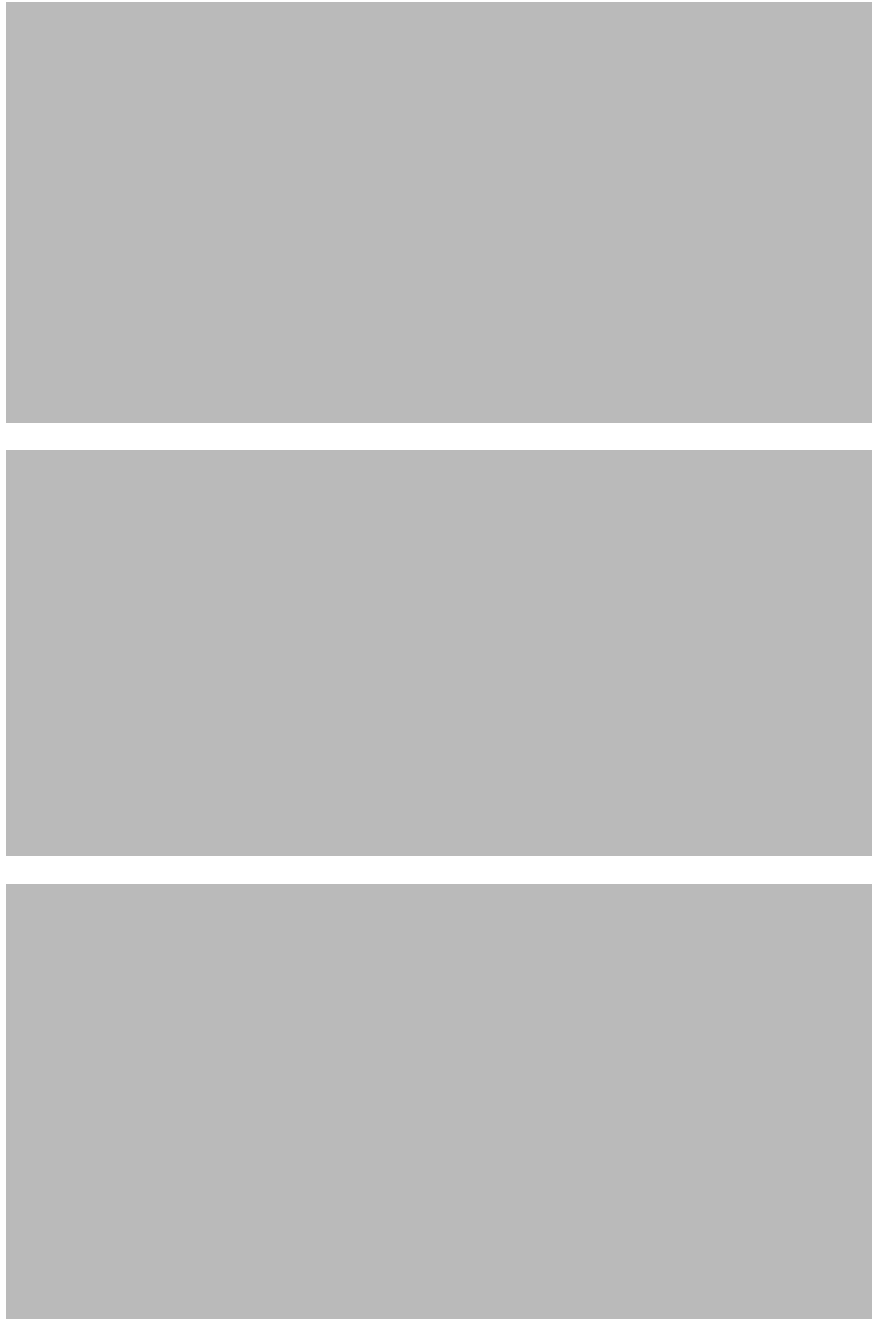


FIG. 5. DOOR LINTEL IN KOCHUBEY MANSION, TSARSKOYE SELO. PHOTO: KOCHUBEY CENTRE, 2020.

FIG. 6. DOOR LINTEL IN 11 LAI ST, TALLINN. PHOTO: MARTIN SIPLANE, 2021.

FIG. 7. DOOR LINTEL IN ROCCA AL MARE MANOR PARK, TALLINN (DESTROYED). PHOTO: OTTO KLETZL, 1940. BILDARCHIV FOTO MARBURG.

a lintel was uncovered, which is almost identical to the slab in prince Kochubey's possession, except the shape of its rectangle is slightly lower and the letters TW flank the house mark (Fig. 6).<sup>35</sup> But this is not all – a third almost identical stone is also known, except that the coat of arms on the left has the master's house mark flanked by the initials TW, and the one on the right has the mistress's house mark flanked by the initials BE. The latter lintel belonged to the carved stone collection of Reval commandant baron Woldemar von Salza, who donated it to the Estonian Provincial Museum. It was on display in Rocca al Mare manor park near Tallinn. The lintel was destroyed in 1944, but photos of it have survived (Fig. 7).<sup>36</sup>

How did one of the three lintels of the inner portals of 11 Lai St end up in prince Kochubey's possession in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? In 1819, the building was acquired by burgomaster Peter Heinrich von Witt, who died in 1855. In 1857 it became the property of assessor Herman von Rosenthal.<sup>37</sup> Salza has noted in the catalogue of his collection that his lintel was found in 1859 from Rosenthal's house on Lai St<sup>38</sup> Apparently the new owner started reconstructing the house and the lintel came into view. But is it possible that prince Kochubey received his lintel in 1856? A hypothesis that the prince visited the house after Witt's death and before Rosenthal acquired it, and the stone that was in view was hewn out of the wall at his request and sold or gifted to him, seems unlikely. It is possible, that the prince acquired the lintel after 1859 through Salza.

Pyotr Arkadyevich Kochubey (1825–1892) came from a Ukrainian noble family of Crimean Tatar origin. He was a military engineer and a chemist, but his passion was mineralogy. Kochubey was one of the founders of the Museum of Applied Knowledge in St Petersburg, a chairman of the Russian Technical Society and a member of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences. In 1851 he married countess

35 Risto Paju, "Põnevaaid raidkivileide Tallinna vanalinnas", *Muinsuskaitse aastaraamat 2020* (Tallinn: Muinsuskaitseamet, 2021), 111; Sirje Sorok, "Tõnnies Wibbeking ja voorused. Maalingud Tallinnas Lai 11 dornses", *Muinsuskaitse aastaraamat 2021* (Tallinn: Muinsuskaitseamet, 2022), 32, the bird depicted is here erroneously called a swan.

36 Helen Bome, "Vandaalid Via Appial. Baltisakslased, eestlased ja kohalik raidkivipärand", *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi*, 31 (3–4) (2022), 11.

37 Tiik, *Väljavõtted Tallinna vanimatest kinnisturaamatutest III*, 100.

38 *Verzeichniss der in Reval gefundenen Alterthümer, gehörig dem Commandanten von Reval Baron Woldemar Salza und befindlich in der Reperbahn-Vorstadt im eigenen Hause No 10. Anno 1859* (Reval: Lindfors Erben, 1863), nr. 13.

Varvara Alexandrovna Kusheleva-Bezborodko (1829–1894), with whom Gahlnbäck later discussed the fireplace. The prince was a well-known collector of art and minerals.<sup>39</sup>

Kochubey owned two houses on the bank of the Moyka River, Nos. 67 and 69. We are interested in No. 67, which was accessed through No. 69. It was rebuilt in 1857–1858 by Ivan Chernik, and the interior decorated in 1858–1859 by Ludwig Bohnstedt. The Ministry of War owned the building from the year 1898 and the Minister of War moved there in 1900<sup>40</sup>, thus twice the “six years earlier” claimed in the article of 1913. The appearance of the room where the fireplace and the lintel were located for four decades can only be imagined. Unfortunately, only scarce remnants have survived of the interiors, and the copy of the fireplace is no longer in the corner of the dining room.<sup>41</sup> The reproduction of the slab in front of the fireplace had been broken and removed during a renovation already by the time the article of 1913 was written. But manufacturing copies suggests that these items were integral parts of a complete interior, and taking the originals with suggests how much the Kochubey family valued them as artefacts.

### THIRD LIFE IN TSARSKOYE SELO

The prince died in 1892 and the princess in 1894; the house on the Moyka was sold in 1898. The fireplace disappeared after the 1913 article from the view of Baltic German heritage enthusiasts, but it was exactly then that the third life of the fireplace began, in a third location, about which we find information only from Russian sources.

Pyotr Arkadyevich's son Vasily Petrovich Kochubey (1860–1940) was a master of ceremonies of the court and an active state councillor. He inherited his father's collection and continued collecting furniture and

39 M. L. Moiseeva, “Petr Arkad'evič Kočubej i ego kollekcija mineralov v sobranii Mineralogičeskogo muzeja im. A. E. Fersmana”, *Novye dannye o mineralah*, vyp. 38 (2003), 89–98; Elena Knjazeva, “Kočubei i Sankt-Peterburg”, *Commentarii de Historia / Istoričeskie zapiski*, 5 (2006), (24)–(25).

40 *Ves' Peterburg na 1898 god: adresnaja i spravočnaja kniga g. S.-Peterburga* (Sankt-Peterburg: izdanie A. S. Suvorina, 1898), IV otdel, col. 232; *Ves' Peterburg na 1900 god: adresnaja i spravočnaja kniga g. S.-Peterburga* (Sankt-Peterburg: izdanie A. S. Suvorina, 1900), III otdel, p. 319.

41 “Dom Kočubeja P.A. (Voennogo vedomstva)”, *Kartočka ob"ekta iz EGROKN* (Edinyj gosudarstvennyj reestr ob"ektov kul'turnogo nasledija, Ministerstvo kul'tury Rossijskoj Federacii), archived 19/04/2024, [https://ru-monuments.toolforge.org/get\\_info.php?id=781610563800005](https://ru-monuments.toolforge.org/get_info.php?id=781610563800005) [accessed 16/06/2024].

artefacts; but he sold the minerals, his special interest being manuscripts and books.<sup>42</sup> The prince had a mansion built in Veliovskaya St (now Radishchev St) in Tsarskoye Selo (now Pushkin) near St Petersburg. He commissioned it from Armenian architect Alexander Tamanian, and the neoclassical building rose in 1911–1912. The prince had a disagreement with Tamanian and in 1913–1914 the building was brought to completion by several other architects. According to the wishes of Kochubey, the mansion's reception rooms were designed in different historical styles and furnished with items from those eras.<sup>43</sup>

We are interested in the prince's study which became the site of the fireplace. For the study, Tamanian had chosen a style he described as “Renaissance, rather early”, intended to remind people of the ancientness of the Kochubey family. It was designed by Nikolay Lanceray, also known as a historian of architecture and a preservationist. The study is symmetrical to the grand guestroom on the other side of the vestibule. The main elements of the design were a coffered ceiling, a frieze and a mural above the windows, a bas-relief with reclining figures above the central window and a low wooden panel. The texture and colour of the coffers and frieze made of stucco imitated wood. The opposite wall was decorated with a giant tapestry. The general colour palette of the interior was based on dark, dim tones of brown and green with flashes of gold on the wall covering and frieze, which were designed using grotesque. The high doorways had oak carved frames decorated with oval inlays of green stone.<sup>44</sup> In the study, there were a green fabric-covered oak desk, leather-upholstered office furniture, as well as green velvet-upholstered chairs, armchairs and a sofa.<sup>45</sup>

Photographs of the study interior have survived, one by the prince himself (Fig. 8) and another with a wider angle in the collections of the Russian Museum<sup>46</sup>, both from the year 1914. In the corner of the room stands the fireplace with the slab on the floor in front

42 Galina Semenova, *Carskoe Selo. Znakomoe i neznakomoe* (Moskva: Centrpoligraf, 2018), 120.

43 Jurij Jaralov, *Tamanjan* (Moskva: GIAG, 1950), 11.

44 Galina Ol', Natalija Lansere, *N. E. Lansere* (Leningrad: Strojizdat, 1986), 74, Lanceray's drawing p. 74; Ljudmila Usačeva (Bantikova), *Osobnjak Kočubeev. "Dvorjanskoe gnezdo" v Carskom Sele* (Sankt-Peterburg: Russkaja kollekcija SPb, 2016), Lanceray's drawing p. 31; Semenova, *Carskoe Selo*, 120.

45 Usačeva (Bantikova), *Osobnjak Kočubeev*, 31, 35; “Osobnjak V.P. Kočubeja”, *Učebnyj centr podgotovki rukovoditelej (Kočubej-centr)*, <https://mtcenter.hse.ru/kochubey> [accessed 16/06/2024].

46 Fotograf L. S. Gorodeckij. Carskoe Selo. Osobnjak V. P. Kočubeja. 1914. Bromoserebrjanyj otpečatok. LiSt: 33,9×41,5 sm; Izobraženie.: 23,4×29,2 sm. Sobranie Gosudarstvennogo Russkogo muzeja.



FIG. 8. FIREPLACE IN KOCHUBEY MANSION, TSARSKOYE SELO. PHOTO: VASILY KOCHUBEY, 1914. KOCHUBEY CENTRE.

of it. Standing by the walls next to the fireplace are cupboards in Renaissance style, on them candlesticks and other decorative items, and between them chairs. In the middle of the room stands a long table with chairs, and a sumptuous chandelier hangs from the ceiling. On walls covered with ornamental wall covering hang paintings in gilded frames in several rows. Part of the interior decoration has been preserved.<sup>47</sup>

47 See detailed description of preserved interior elements “Osobnjak Kočubeja V.P.”, *Kartočka ob"ekta iz EGROKN*, archived 19/04/2024, [https://ru-monuments.toolforge.org/get\\_info.php?id=781610563800005](https://ru-monuments.toolforge.org/get_info.php?id=781610563800005) [accessed 16/06/2024].

The mansion opened in 1914 with a ball, but then came the World War I and the October Revolution. In 1918 the Kochubey family emigrated to Belgium, the mansion was nationalised and the collection taken to museum storage, where it disappeared in the middle of the 1920s. An orphanage and then a home for veterans inhabited the building. During World War II the building was damaged in an air raid and looted. In 1947–1948 the mansion was restored and a school for kolkhozniks was situated there, then from the beginning of the 1950s it became a vacation home for party members.<sup>48</sup> Since 1986 it has been an advanced training centre, a conference centre, a hotel, and is currently the Kochubey Centre of the Higher School of Economics. The building that was once closed or semi-closed has gradually opened to the public, the owners have started to highlight its history and now excursions are organised there.<sup>49</sup>

The building's card in the Russian cultural heritage register also contains information about the fireplace and the slab in front of it. The height of the fireplace is 320 cm, the width 134 cm and the depth 46 cm. Surprisingly, the material of the fireplace is described as stucco and that of the slab, grey marble, and both are dated to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>50</sup> There are further opinions about the materials: art historian Galina Semenova writes in her monograph about Tsarskoye Selo that the fireplace is covered with ceramic tiles,<sup>51</sup> historian of the Kochubey Centre Lyudmila Usacheva claims that the slab in front of the fireplace is made of granite.<sup>52</sup> At the time of writing this article it was not possible to travel to Russia due to the political situation, to examine the fireplace and the slab. Photos of them have been published in the exhibition catalogue of the Centre and in a popularising magazine article.<sup>53</sup> I also used about 30 photos found on the web. Some of them in the web channels of the Kochubey Centre, most of them snapshots by the Centre's visitors (Fig. 9). Identifying

48 Semenova, *Carskoe Selo*, 119–120.

49 *Kočubej – Učebnyj centr podgotovki rukovoditelej NIU VŠĚ*, <https://kc.hse.ru/> [accessed 16/06/2024].

50 “Osobnjak Kočubeja V.P.”, *Kartočka ob"ekta iz EGROKN*, archived 19/04/2024, [https://ru-monuments.toolforge.org/get\\_info.php?id=781620574820006](https://ru-monuments.toolforge.org/get_info.php?id=781620574820006) [accessed 16/06/2024].

51 Semenova, *Carskoe Selo*, 120.

52 Usačeva (Bantikova), *Osobnjak Kočubeev*, 35.

53 *Ibid.*, 2, 33; “Čem slaven Kočubej”, Al'manah social'nogo partnerstva “Russkij mecenat”, 29 (aprel' 2019), 14, 16.

the material used is made even more difficult by the fact that the fireplace is entirely covered with a thick coat of oil paint.

First of all – could the fireplace in Kochubey Centre be a copy of the original? As said before, the prince had reproductions made of the fireplace and the slab to leave to the house by the Moyka when moving out, taking the originals with him. The fake fireplace is no longer there. A hypothesis that after a while, the Ministers of War grew tired of the reproduction and the prince was asked to take it away seems unlikely. Even more unlikely is that the prince had yet another copy made of the fireplace for the mansion. Apart from that, where would he have put the original? The entire art collection was taken from St Petersburg to Tsarskoye Selo. The prince, an art collector, proudly exhibited the Renaissance furniture and artworks he owned in his study, why not the original fireplace then?

Why did the material of the fireplace seem to be stucco to the people taking the inventory? Maybe there were spots where paint had fallen off, revealing the white coloured ground. Or a broken fireplace detail had been repaired with stucco. In the article of 1913 Gahlnbäck claimed that the fireplace is made of bluish tinted “domestic marble”. This is what Estonian Baltic Germans called the Orgita dolomite (a settlement in Märjamaa parish, Rapla county). But the material could also be grey, patterned Lasnamäe limestone (district of Tallinn). In photographs taken with light from the side, one can even discern underneath the thick coat of paint an uneven surface with chips broken off characteristic of Lasnamäe limestone. If it were a plaster copy, one would expect a perfectly smooth surface. Also raising doubt is the detail of the fireplace, for example the four bolts at the junction of the lintel and the overmantel, one of which is broken or gone missing. If this were a copy, the bolts wouldn’t have been reproduced, or if so, then perfectly. I’m inclined to believe that the original limestone fireplace is in Tsarskoye Selo.

What about the original polychromy of the fireplace? In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, carved fireplaces could be finished with lime paint, oil paint on chalk base, or tempera. It is possible, that the original coat of paint was painted over in the centuries that followed. When brought from Reval to St Petersburg, and then to Tsarskoye Selo, the fireplace was disassembled and reassembled, so perhaps paint was reapplied also on those occasions. Examining the photos from 1914 it seems that the details (for example the gilded volutes) are only

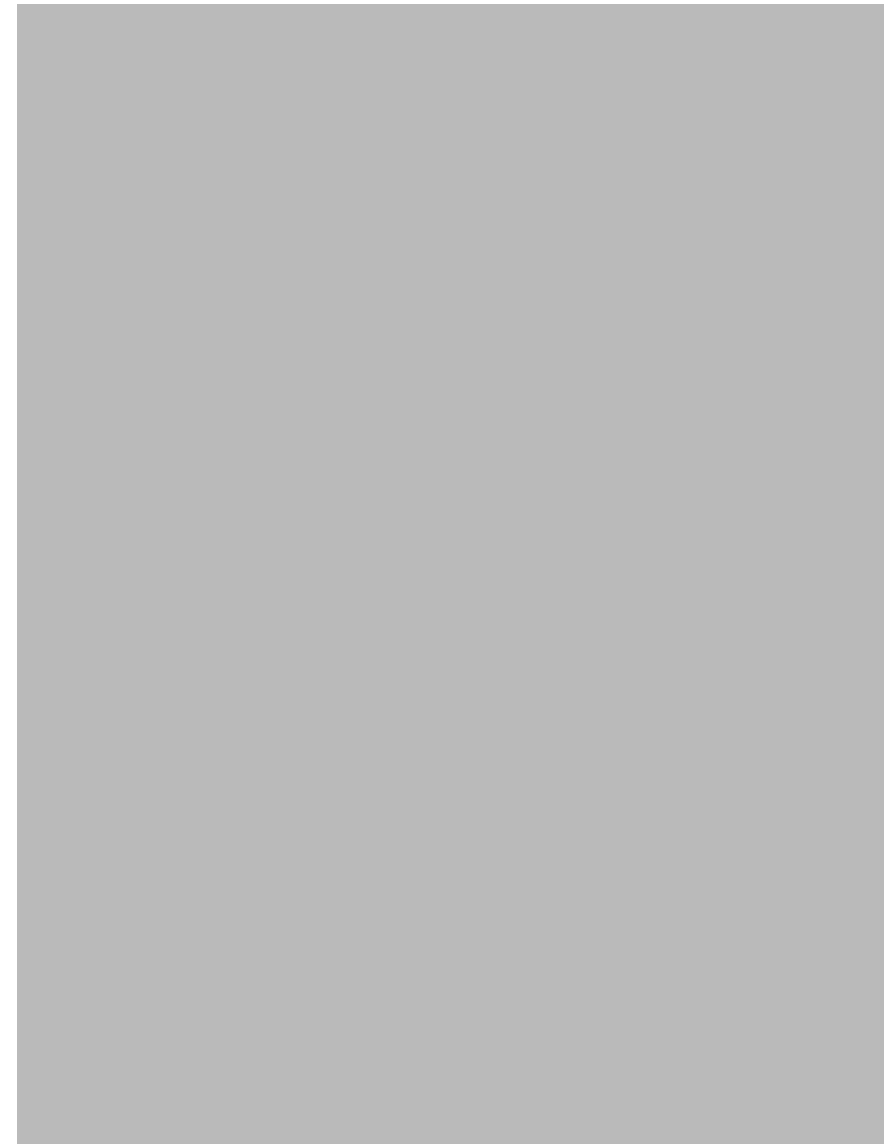


FIG. 9. FIREPLACE IN KOCHUBEY MANSION, TSARSKOYE SELO. PHOTO: MARIYA KLESHCHYOVA, 2022. DZEN.

partially covered, which speaks against (recent) overpaintings. The inscription on the cartouche in the centre of the lintel (“Mit seinem blut der pelican den jungen bringt das leben; so hat auch Christi blut gethan, das er vor uns gegeben.” or “Mit seinem Blut der Pelikan die

iungen bringt zum leben das hat auch Christi blut gethan das er vor uns gegeben.“) can be clearly distinguished. In present-day photos the text is covered with paint, although in photos with sidelight the antiqua letters protruding in relief can be discerned. Probably the cartouche was painted over by Soviet restorers, because a religious text in German was not appropriate for the building's new function as a vacation home for party members.

In the case of the slab, the question of material is easier to solve. The copy was broken. Making yet another copy for the mansion, out of marble, seems unlikely. The lintel reliefs of interior doors in Tallinn are typically made of Lasnamäe limestone, and the patterned stone surface on the photographs is consistent with this material. Since the lintel was recessed into the floor in both the house by the Moyka and the mansion, it was worn until it acquired the shine of marble.<sup>54</sup>

About the iconography of the fireplace, Semenova writes only that Adam and Eve are depicted on it. The bird on the coat of arms on the slab she considers a pelican.<sup>55</sup> But there is no reason to interpret antique-inspired male and female terms as Christian, and the bird is a stork. The printed and web materials<sup>56</sup> and the guided tours<sup>57</sup> of the Kochubey Centre offer a fascinating reinterpretation of the fireplace and the slab.

The inspiration for this interpretation seems to be Kochubey's abovementioned wish to emphasise the ancientness of his family by the Renaissance-style design of his study, plus a certain legend. Vasily Petrovich is supposed to have brought the slab from a family burial ground, and afterwards covered up the fireplace and never used it again, “as though he had sealed the heart of the family in it”. (In my opinion it sounds like an origin myth as to why the fireplace

54 I am grateful to geologist Helle Perens as well as conservators Isabel Aaso-Zahradnikova and Marge Laast for their comments on the possible material of the fireplace and lintel.

55 Semenova, *Carskoe Selo*, 120.

56 Usačeva (Bantikova), *Osobnjak Kočubeev*, 2, 35; “Čem slaven Kočubej”, 15–16; “Osobnjak V.P. Kočubeja”, *Učebnyj centr podgotovki rukovoditelej (Kočubej-centr)*, <https://mtcenter.hse.ru/kochubey> [accessed 16/06/2024]; “Istorija”, *Kongress kompleks i gostinica v Puškine* (2009), <https://congresscomplex.ru/> [accessed 16/06/2024].

57 References to guided tours: natali1663 [?], “Otzyv o Osobnjak ‘Kočubej-centr’ (Rossija, Puškin)”, *Otzovik*, 26/11/2017, [https://otzovik.com/review\\_5681430.html](https://otzovik.com/review_5681430.html) [accessed 16/06/2024]; Serž P'etro I [?], “Dvorcy Peterburga. 60. Dačnyj dvorec”, *Stihi.ru*, 27/09/2020, <https://stihi.ru/2020/09/27/7756> [accessed 16/06/2024]; Marija Kleševa, “‘Vozvyšajus’, kogda pogibaju’... deviz roda Kočubeev.”, *Dzen*, 16/02/2022, <https://dzen.ru/a/YZ1K3q2JCQ-IpBUN> [accessed 16/06/2024]; Inna Plakhina, “Dvorjanskije istorii carskogo sela”, *Dzen*, 30/03/2022, <https://dzen.ru/a/YkN6BOub-yjFGHyZ> [accessed 16/06/2024].

is not used – actually, the prince may have wanted to spare the antique carvings from damage that might occur with firing.) It is now a “family fireplace”, a material expression of veneration of the ancestors. The door lintel is a grave slab of the founder of the family, Kuchuk-bey, and 1547 is the year of his death; in the decorations of the fireplace the entire history of the family is coded. Sixteen-fifty-three is the birth year of his son's son Vasily Leontiyevich (actually, 1640) and the pelican feeding her chicks her own blood is an allegory of the latter's death and its impact. Vasily Leontiyevich was executed unjustly in 1708<sup>58</sup> and as a compensation Peter I gave his descendants lands and high positions; the two branches of the Kochubey family stemmed from the two sons of the son of Vasily Leontiyevich.

The date 1547 has several interpretations: Kuchuk-bey's birth or death, his baptism to Orthodox faith, or the crowning of Ivan IV – when the first Kochubey entered the tsar's service. In reality, Kuchuk-bey resettled from the Crimean Khanate to Ukraine and was baptised half a century later. Discussions about the date on the supposed grave slab have reached even research articles on genealogy<sup>59</sup>. In comments by visitors of the Centre,<sup>60</sup> questions about this interpretation are raised: why are Kochubey's coat of arms and motto not depicted, why are Latin letters and dates from the birth of Christ (not from creation of the world) used. In comments, there is even a close guess, that the fireplace and the slab are created to imitate artefacts from the Baltics or Germany, not at all related to each other nor to the Kochubeys. All those writing about the fireplace and the slab – in print and online – call them mysterious and state the need for further study.

Finally, I will examine the significance of the rediscovery of the Höppener-Kochubey fireplace for research on stone carvings in

58 Alexander Pushkin's poem “Poltava” (1829) and Pyotr Tchaikovsky's opera “Mazeppa” (1883) are based on this story.

59 Marina Geras'ko, “Rid Kočubeiv u genealogičnih doslidžennjah”, *Siverjans'kij litopis*, 2 (2019), 151; Marina Geras'ko, “Rodina general'nogo suddi V. L. Kočubeja”, *Siveršina v istorii Ukraïni*, vip. 12 (2019), 130.

60 Comments on blog posts: Kolotun-Babaj (v\_murza) [?], “Osobnjak Vasilija Petroviča Kočubeja v Carskom Sele”, *Poëzija, kraevedenie i nemnogo vol'nodumstva – LiveJournal*, 13/02/2011, <https://v-murza.livejournal.com/92575.html> [accessed 16/06/2024]; Kolotun-Babaj (v\_murza) [?], “Osobnjak V.P.Kočubeja. Ohotničij zal, Zolotaja gostinaja, Paradnyj kabinet”, *Poëzija, kraevedenie i nemnogo vol'nodumstva – LiveJournal*, 17/02/2011, <https://v-murza.livejournal.com/92807.html> [accessed 16/06/2024]; discussion about the coats of arms on the fireplace and the lintel: “Gerb roda Kočubeev”, *Geraldika.ru*, 08.05.2017–09.05.2017, <https://geraldika.ru/s/1450> [accessed 16/06/2024].



FIG. 10. RELIEF WITH THE GREATER COAT OF ARMS OF TALLINN IN TALLINN TOWN HALL. PHOTO: PEETER SÄRE, 2004.

Estonia. In the territory of contemporary Estonia only two richly decorated fireplaces from the 17<sup>th</sup> century have survived. The first is a fireplace reconstructed in Tallinn Town Hall, of which the fragments of one side console and a lintel relief are preserved; on the lintel there are the City's greater and lesser coats of arms and between them the

date 164... (the last number is missing).<sup>61</sup> The other is a fireplace in Ohtu manor in Harju county, probably taken there from Tallinn at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has preserved in its entirety – overmantel, lintel relief and side consoles. The surface of the overmantel is covered with winding volutes, on the lintel there are two figures of angels, two coats of arms and the date 1654 surrounded by abundant ornament. Traces of original polychromy and gilding can still be found on this fireplace made of Lasnamäe limestone.<sup>62</sup> There are many fragments of carvings however immured to the walls of buildings and in the city museum in Tallinn that may have belonged to fireplaces. In addition, many of the fragments that by now have perished are preserved in photographs. The Höppener-Kochubey fireplace provides valuable reference material in investigating these fragments.

Has the stone carver who made the fireplace left more traces in Tallinn? When comparing the fireplace to fragments of window mullions found in 4 Tõlli St, they are not made by the same hand. The treatment is different, and the Höppener and Rode coats of arms on the capitals differ from those on the fireplace in the shapes of the shields as well as depictions on them (cf. the shape of the bear's battle axe). But at least one artefact has preserved that has definitely been carved by the same master. In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a new main entrance was built in the centre of the façade of the Tallinn Town Hall, and on the left wall of the porch a relief slab was placed to mark the reconstruction. Its measurements are 120 × 94 cm and it bears the town's greater coat of arms and the inscription *INSIGNIA CIVITATIS REVALIENSIS: ANNO 1652* (Fig. 10). In 1960 the porch was demolished. The slab was initially placed on the wall of the open arcade, and then above the staircase leading to the citizens' hall.<sup>63</sup> Comparing the style of the figures and ornament of the slab with those of the fireplace, they are very similar. The shape of the shields of the coats of arms, and the shape of the letters and numbers (cf. the distinctive number six) are identical. The slab in the Town Hall

61 Teddy Böckler, *Tallinna raekoda: uurimine ja restaureerimine 1952–2004* (Tallinn: T. Böckler, 2004), 117, fig. 123–124, 84, fig. 173, 117.

62 Ants Hein, *Ohtu mõisaansambli ehitusajalooline ülevaade* (Tallinn, 1986), MKA, ERA.T-76.1.11757, 23–24, fig. 31–32; Helle Perens, *Paekivi Eesti ehitistes. II, Harju, Rapla ja Järva maakond* (Tallinn: Eesti Geoloogiakeskus, 2004), 55, fig. 142; Jana Rand, "Elurõõmust loodud Ohtu mõis", *Maakodu* (august 2004), 21.

63 Böckler, *Tallinna raekoda*, 90, 153, 254, see also 247.

was repainted in 1926 and conserved in the 1960s or 1970s,<sup>64</sup> making it impossible to determine the original polychromy. Unfortunately, no archival records have survived that cover the commissioning of the relief, and the mason who created such large-scale and stately artefacts remains anonymous.

## CONCLUSION

The rediscovery of the Höppener fireplace is not only a solution to the mystery that has fascinated Estonian art historians for years. The article examines the journey of the fireplace from Reval to St Petersburg as a case study, opening up interesting perspectives on several other problems as well. The fireplace was previously discussed by Baltic German, Estonian and Russian scholars, but they did so based on different sources and were unaware of each other's research. Bringing these three lines together creates a complete picture.

The interior design of the building at 71 Pikk St/2 Tolli St in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century becomes clearer, enabling us to date more accurately, and view in context, the other interior elements there. The addition of a whole fireplace to the Estonian carved stone heritage is also welcome, being helpful in identifying the fireplace fragments found in local buildings and museum collections as well as in the reconstruction of complete artefacts. It is possible to associate the fireplace with another relief in Tallinn created by the same mason.

Even more interesting are the new perspectives on such little-studied phenomena as the sale of heritage items in Reval in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including outside the city and even outside the Governorate of Estonia, and their use to enrich Historicist residential interiors. In addition, the network of Baltic German heritage enthusiasts in Estonia, Latvia and Russia and its efforts to capture these artefacts on the move – access to which had become difficult or impossible – in words and pictures in order to make them available to the public.

Finally, the fate of the fireplace in Russia, the recreation and reinterpretation of the provenance and iconography of the artefact

64 “Raekoja wanade tahwlite ja wappide ‘noorendamine’”, *Kaja*, 07/11/1925, 7; “Raekoja wappisid ‘noorendatud’”, *Kaja*, 23/07/1926, 6; “1405 Reljeef Tallinna suure vapiga, 1652 (paas)”, National registry of cultural monuments, National Heritage Board of Estonia [Kultuurimälestiste register, Muinsuskaitseamet], entered 25/04/2013, <https://register.muinas.ee/public.php?menuID=monument&action=view&id=1405> [accessed 16/06/2024].

are exceptionally interesting. The Höppener fireplace transforms into the Kochubey fireplace. It becomes a site of ancestor veneration, its imagery alluding to the glorious history of the noble family. The story of the work of art does not end with its completion by the master and the impressions of his contemporaries, it continues through the centuries.

**HELEN BOME: THE JOURNEY OF A RENAISSANCE FIREPLACE FROM REVAL TO ST PETERSBURG**

**KEYWORDS:** TALLINN (ESTONIA); ST PETERSBURG (RUSSIA); BALTIC GERMANS; ART COLLECTIONS; STONEMASONRY; ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS; RENAISSANCE; NINETEENTH CENTURY

## SUMMARY

The article follows the travels of a richly carved limestone fireplace that was originally located in 71 Pikk St, Tallinn. It was commissioned by local merchant Jacob Höppener in 1653; in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was sold and taken to Russia. Several Baltic German heritage enthusiasts produced descriptions of the artefact, but after the historical upheavals of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lost sight of it. From the middle of the century, Estonian art historians studying stone carvings and restoring the building made efforts to find the fireplace, but in vain.

The paper examines the archival, printed and web sources about the artefact and traces it to its new locations, first in St Petersburg and then in Tsarskoye Selo. The fireplace's new owners, the princes Kochubey, used it to enhance the Historicist interiors of their residences. During the Soviet period the artefact's provenance was forgotten and it was inaccessible to the public. In recent years, the fireplace has been reintroduced to a wider audience; a new origin story and a new interpretation of its iconography have been proposed and popularised by the Kochubey Centre.

The article brings together the sources and results from researchers in different countries who have studied this mobile artefact over one-



and-a-half centuries. The rediscovery of the Höppener-Kochubey fireplace is a solution to a longstanding mystery, and the artefact has welcome similarities to Renaissance era stone carvings in Estonia. This case study also uncovers information about the sale of antiquities, the use of those antiquities in interior design, the interests and goals of collectors, and knowledge transfer through learned societies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Estonia, Latvia and Russia.

## CV

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