

**URBAN ARCHITECTURE.
ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
OF FAIR TOWNS. REPRESENTATIVE MONUMENTS
(CASA POROINEANU FROM CRAIOVA)**

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Abstract: The present study analyzes the architecture of market towns, whose signs can still be present today. Examples of architectural details present in cities from Oltenia, Muntenia and Moldova are highlighted in the text of the study. Old mansions can be found in many places. They are more or less deformed – in Preajba (Dolj, in Otetelis (Vâlcea), and in Bengești (Gorj), in Bengești (Vâlcea), etc.). An old house, now destroyed, was located in Brănești (Dâmbovița).

Sufficient reasons for admiration, contemplation, reverie for the urban architecture of the time, venerable for its old age, sobriety and good taste of the olden times.

Keywords: old architecture, old houses, cities, Poroineanu house, past.

Leaving the cavern – cave – his first shelter and first home, primitive man, just like in our country as in other lands, found himself at the beginning of this new existence in front of the powers of nature: good and welcoming in summer, but hostile and full of shortcomings, winter.

And in our country, today as then, nature is the same, almost unchanged. Only long ago, the Getic winter had scared Ovidiu!

The need for shelter was his first thought. So he made it, as much as he knew how at the time and with the means at his disposal; the material that the forest gave him: leaves, wood.

In the evolution that followed, in the past millennia, starting from the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, over time this shelter became a real construction and imposed, together with the basic comfort acquired, the need to beautify this dwelling – inside and out¹.

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¹ *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România*, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2008, pp. 23–39.

This evolution was long. Gradually man began to give new meanings to his life and work, beautifying it more and more. This is how the first major art came into being – ARCHITECTURE.

The group of families with dwellings – neighboring houses – closer or more scattered, which made up the village at the beginning, progressed and, as a result, developed into larger villages. Some were formed in the mountains, others on the hills, and others in plain – in cities.

According to the position and configuration of the land on which they came into existence, with communications between them, more difficult or easier, according to the nature of the roads in their vicinity or which passed through them, according to the richness of the land around these villages, they grew and developed and the respective villages. Some of them becoming bigger, with more inhabitants, some of them left the occupation of their parents and grandparents – raising cattle, sheep or working the land – agriculture – and turned to other means of capitalizing money. Thus, some with manual skills became craftsmen, and others, more gifted with a mercantile spirit, became merchants. The classes of intellectuals – those with books – and the boyars, were also formed. How? This is the object of “sociology”. And if the settlement – their market was near or on certain more important roads, at the intersections of major roads, the fair became a city, developing and growing in relation to this road².

There are extensive and large works on the houses of the villages – on their architecture, as well as on the architecture of the defense houses, the noble castles, which have been dealt by various authors.

It's the turn of the fairs – of the cities, some of them, in our country, due to the geographical position, the means of living, etc., have distinguished themselves by the variety and beauty of their dwellings. Târgu-Jiului, Râmnicu-Vâlci, Curtea de Argeș – there are only a few. I mentioned them in the order in which they are placed on the slopes of the mountains, starting from Oltenia to Muntenia. Next are some fairs from Moldova and why not those from big cities like Bucharest or Ploiesti. Professor architect N. Ghica-Budești was speaking about “The noble houses and mansions that can still be found in the cities and on some estates are somewhat smaller in size, somewhat imitating the princely palaces”³. They seem to be of two main types: The ones that have a square or rectangular plan, with a pedestal forming a low ground floor and a higher floor, with a protrusion on some of the facades, forming either a gazebo with a staircase or a porch, or a porch with beveled corners. The staircase is, when exterior (Coțofeni), when closed between the walls (house

² Ioan Godea, *Arhitectura românească în epoca modernă*, Oradea, Primus Publishing House, 2012, pp. 124-157.

³ N. Ghica-Budești, *Evoluția arhitecturii în Muntenia și Oltenia, IV. Noul stil din veacul al XVIII-lea*, in “Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice” (BCMI) , XXIX (1936), issues 87–90.

from Gorj Department), when interior (Budeasa), as a safety measure. At Coțofeni (Dolj Department) there are two gazebos with arches: one on the facade from the north and the other from the south, with external staircase: beautiful vaults with lunettes and the rooms on the first floor have also been preserved here. The cellars with their vaults “en berceau”, that is, in a semi-cylindrical shape; which would show an older age than the 18th century.

In Gorunești (Gorj) a pavilion of the same type, but smaller, opens in the main facade, and under it is the arch from the entrance to the cellar.

In Budeasa (Argeș) the gazebo is smaller and restored. The staircase is internal, made of massive oak beams. The entrance to the cellar is to the left of the door; it is cylindrically vaulted “in a cradle”. Beautiful stuccoes ceilings are preserved inside the house, forming finely decorated borders, with rounded branches at the corners, according to the characteristic forms of the 18th century ornamentation. In the center of the ceilings there are beautiful rosettes of the same kind.

The second type of old house, which can also be found in fairs and in the country, presents a longitudinal plan, on one of its facades, usually the one facing the south, there is a long porch, with arches on carved wooden columns. At one end of the shed is the staircase, closed by a door. Similar houses can be found in Câmpulung (Muscel), in Târgoviște, in Vălenii de Munte, where Prof. N. Iorga's house is one of the most beautiful and well restored; in Cândești, where the classical pilasters in the Ionic genre are also preserved, having volute capitals (Casa Parnia).

An old house is located in the courtyard of the Negru-Vodă monastery in Câmpulung-Muscel; it has a gazebo on one of the corners of the building, with an external stone staircase; traces of frescoes on the vaults and border arches with stucco on the windows were still visible before the fire of 1934, which destroyed it. This house is still in existence today, restored, in 1934 only the roof had burned, see Câmpulungul today.

In Bucharest, the few old houses left were demolished one by one.

The Melic house in Spătarului street no. 22, built in 1780, repaired in 1812 and restored in 1920. A different type of house with the attic on the first floor closed on all sides with windows; modified but lost its original character through restoration.

The Ioniță Crețulescu house – then I. Moruzi – on Calea Victoriei (the house with chains), restored by the City Hall for the Municipal Museum (but finally demolished in 1942). A park was built in its place. It only exited a little from alignment. The Phone Block sticks out a lot more.

In Ploiesti:

– The Hagi Prodan House, restored by the architect Toma T. Socolescu (today the Prahova Museum);

– Dobrescu House (today Caragiale museum).

In Târgoviște, an old house, revealed by the architect N. Stănescu.

In Râmnicul-Vâlci, on the road to Zavoi: two old houses.

In Ogretin (Prahova), an old, picturesque house – studied by Virgil Drăghicescu.

In Cartiu (Gorj) – the house of the Cartiens, which, due to its constructive character, make it an intermediate genre between the country house and the cottage.

Then follows the Culele, after giving a definition of their character, he lists them: Culele from Măldărești (two): Duke and Greceanu.

Cula from Curtișoara – of the logofat Cornea, in Gorj;

Cula lui Cocoș-Crăsnaru from Groșera (Gorj);

Cula from Brabova (Dolj);

Cula from Cernătești (Dolj);

Cula from Pojogeni (Gorj) and from Bujoreni (Vâlcea);

Cula from Almaj (Dolj) etc⁴.

The houses we dealt with before; the noble houses, mansions, merchant houses – in fairs and cities –, are the object of our research that will follow, in the order of the cities of which they are a part. Only a few of these houses are still in existence today. Most have perished without a trace.

We start with Târgu-Jiu: “In today's times (1899) we no longer see those noble houses, with large porches, almost all around, large halls, large guest rooms, winter and summer living rooms, attics and cellars with arches, cellars below, a shingle covering higher than the house, with wide, low eaves, protruding almost two cubits. Even the streets have not kept their old names of Putna, Băroi, Ulița Domnească, Ulița Mare, Transilvaniei Barrier, Severinului Barrier, Barrier Vâlci, the Great Post Road, the Craiova Road. Of the old houses from the beginning of the century, only a few are left like dreams thrown during the day, but also those redone according to modern taste, but here and there you can see the Byzantine forms”⁵. “It is not possible to specify with certainty the place where in 1406, the houses of Jupân Bratul, the judge of Jiu..., of Tudor Negrul during the time of Basarabă Vodă cel Batrân, 1442, of Dumitru Pârcălabul – 1591... Alexe Șteful were –1622, Hamza Postelnicul –1624 –..., of Șteful County – 1672– ,... Mihai Ștefulescu –1723, Mihalcea and Iordache Șteful –1724, Radu Șarlău ,–1724,... Mihai Șteful –1743, Pătrașcu Ștefulescu, founder of the church of Sf. Apostoli – 1747,... Pârvu Cămărășescu și Dobre –1763...”⁶.

After these records of the architect N. Ghica-Budești, another luminary of the Romanian School of Architecture, namely the engineer N. Stănescu, in the Bulletin of the Historical Monuments Commission (abbreviated BCMI), published in Bucharest, resumes the sketches and description of the famous architect Toma T. Socolescu from the *Revue Architecture*, no. 2–1916.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Alexandru Ștefulescu, *Istoria Târgu-Jiului și a județului Gorj*, Craiova, 1899, 1904.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

Both describe the Poroineanu family house, on Drumul Garii, in Craiova. A house similar to those described above, with a slightly raised ground floor raised five steps from the ground level. The modest porch on the corner of the house, with 3 wooden pillars, dominates, including the corner one, work simply. Each of the beams placed horizontally above the walls of the house along the roof, to support the rafters are slightly cut above them, the roof is low, with smooth slopes. The oak wooden staircase, between the walls, leads to the verandah. The entrance to the cellar is under the rest of the stairs, with the door on the side facade.

The house, quite large, includes a building on the upper floor, of which there is a guest room in the middle, the exit of the house – a room with two windows, one in the front, the other in the attic, with slight arches above, then the staircase, the pillars of the porch and the massiveness of the cellar doors. The thick masonry is the characteristic feature of the entire ensemble of the Poroineanu house.

Historical foundations, such as that of Craiova, have suffered the last “old houses of theirs” to fall in the face of the haste of renewal. Almost 150–200 years old, it is undoubtedly the most spacious of merchant houses of old Craiova, but it is arranged, outside and inside, according to the image of its neighbors from the old slums of Craiova. “Four rooms, about the same size, on the right and left of a room, a smaller room, in the back – the kitchen, the room that separates them ends at the end with a five-sided place – a small room on the top floor of the facade of noble and noble houses, protruding outside and closed with a window or shutters”⁷.

This was the arrangement of the Poroineanu house. The proportion of the walls, the amplitude of the gazebo and the awning, the simple shape of the roof gave this house a distinguished appearance. The decorations enhance its beauty even more, making it a rare thing, “a tender model of Romanian architecture”, says Ioan Godea in his reference work, “Romanian Architecture in the Modern Era” (1700–1900).

Numerous works can be consulted about Craiova's architecture and past, including the following: Dinică Ciobotea, *O descriere a centrului comercial permanent din Craiova de la sfârșitul secolului XIX și din prima jumătate a secolului XX*, in Cezar Avram, Dinică Ciobotea, Vladimir Osiac (coord.), *Destin de istoric. In onoare dinu C. Giurescu*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing, 2012; Deaconu Luchian, *Craiova de la 1898 la 1916. Saltul la urbanismul modern*, Craiova, Editura Sitech, 2001; G. Mil. Demetrescu, *Din istoria Craiovei*, in “Arhivele Olteniei”, no. 18–19/1925; Anastase Georgescu, *Craiova. Cercetări istorice. Târgul Craiovei*, in “Ramuri”, 1936; Anastase Gerogescu, *Mahalalele Craiovei*, in “Arhivele Olteniei”, no. 104–106/1939; Constantin Joja, Paul Petrescu, *Arhitectura urbană românească din secolul al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea la Craiova*, in “Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei (S.C.I.A)”, seria arte plastice, no. 1/1964;

⁷ N. Ghica-Budești, *Evoluția arhitecturii în Muntenia și Oltenia, IV. Noul stil din veacul al XVIII-lea*, in “Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice” (BCMI), XXIX (1936), issues 87–90.

R.S. Modin, *Din istoria Craiovei. Vechi drumuri, mahalale și suburbii*, in “Arhivele Olteniei”, no. 18–19/1925; August Pessiakov, *Schițe din istoria Craiovei*, Institutul Samitca, 1914; A. Vicenz, *Câteva locuințe vechi din Craiova*, in „Ramuri”, 1929 etc.

Many old houses still populate the streets of Craiova today. As mentioned by a well-known art historian of our scientific community, Paul Rezeanu – former director of the Craiova Art Museum, in his work “Craiova – City of a thousand millionaires (History of Craiova between 1800–2000)”: “After the end of the War of Independence and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Romania, i.e. in the last two decades of the 19th century, Craiova experienced an unprecedented urban development. Then, thanks to some especially foreign architects and builders, the penetration of French and Italian fashion took place, the buildings began to compete in beauty, in elegance. In those years, several edifices of public or private utility were built, streets, small parks and gardens were laid out, attempts were made to erect some public monuments...”⁸.

Numerous houses were built, such as “Casa Diamantopol, grain merchant on Calea Unirii, no. 37, Casa Costin, merchant with many shops, on Calea Unirii no. 40, another House Eskenhazy, banker, on Calea Unirii no. 42, Casa Grigorescu, merchant, on Calea Unirii no. 61, Casa Cornetti, politician, first director of the National Bank, Craiova branch, great philanthropist, house which was for more than half a century the headquarters of the Cornetti Conservatory and which was demolished after the earthquake of 1977, instead of being restored, on Kogălniceanu street..., the first building, the one in the middle, of the National Bank, built in 1887–1888 (then, in 1931, the front part was built, and the last part of the building, from the back, plus the first floor on this, it was built in 1956–1957)”⁹.

At the same time, “as private residences, in the last decade of the 19th century, the following were also built: M. Talievici House – count, of Russian origin, whose only daughter was married, for the first time, to Constantin Argetoianu – located on Buzești street no. 25, Constantin Vălimerescu House, built between 1892–1893, according to the plans of the French architect Albert Galleron, on Calea Unirii no. 4 (...), Gabroveanu House, completed in 1898, on Iancu Jianu street no. 16, which upon nationalization escaped being occupied by the Soviet army and no one was then allowed to approach it. The house has interiors painted by Francisc Tribalsky (...). Casa cu lei (Casa Săvin) was one of the former Bibescu houses. Rebuilt several times, throughout the 19th century, it was the property of Major Băicoianu, Tănăsescu Negrea, Lache Dumitrescu and finally lawyer Emanoil Săvoiu. The current form dates from 1893–1895 and is due to the architect Albert Galleron (...). The splendid Davidescu House (actually a sumptuous palace), was located on Simion Bărnutiu street no. 5. It was built in the Baroque style, in

⁸ Paul Rezeanu, *Craiova – Orașul celor o mie de milionari (Istoria Craiovei între 1800–2000)*, Craiova, Info Publishing House, 2017, p. 78.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

the last decade of the 19th century. Once, when he came to Craiova, in 1903, for the royal maneuvers, Prince Ferdinand, after nationalization, in the eighth decade, hosted the Army House. Severely damaged by the 1977 earthquake, it was decided to demolish it instead of restoring it...”¹⁰.

The aesthetic valorization of the urban architecture specific to the city of Craiova is a theme widely addressed by several generations of painters, starting from the 19th century to the present day. The way in which the painters relate to the image of the city of Craiova includes a series of attitudes that vary from the representation of the urban center and edges, images of a tacit orientalism, to representations of the old urban architecture, the air à la française of the houses, historical monuments contemporary with the painters from today. We also present, in this article, some images with works by some visual artists of the past. Mircea Olarian is one of the visual artists who fell in love with Craiova and learned to reproduce its image through the filter of the art of his school. He captured picturesque corners, squares, slums or even the center of the city, people and streets, loneliness or agglomerations, urban themes that made him famous, “appreciated for his draftsman's qualities, for his ability to capture the accidents of nature, but also for the natural fluidity of its forms, for the special execution of the engravings and the use of faded demitentes, for the subtle chromatic accords of the watercolors, for his sober painting, the artist Mircea Olarian remains an example of probity and artistic dedication” (Florin Rogneanu – Art critic, former director of the Craiova Art Museum)¹¹.



Fig. 1. Mircea Olarian, Casă din Craiova/ Old House from Craiova¹².

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 79–82.

¹¹ For more details, see <https://vatra-mcp.ro/artisti-si-patrimoniu/pictori-romani/dolj/mircea-olarian-pictor-desenator-grafician/>, accessed at August 23, 2024.

¹² *Ibidem*.



Fig. 2. Mircea Olarian, *Craiova – Răscruciul mic Street* (watercolor)¹³.

Barbu Iscovescu represents another style, another painter who tried to immortalize the image of Craiova. His drawings still impress today, through the rigor of the architectural details, the atmosphere of a wealthy fair-town, with undulating streets, with beautiful churches of the past.



Fig. 3. Barbu Iscovescu, *Biserică din Craiova*¹⁴.

¹³ Image from the Collection of the Craiova Art Museum.

¹⁴ See https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbu_Iscovescu#/media/Fi%C8%99ier:Barbu_Iscovescu_-_Biserica_din_Craiova.jpg, accessed at August 23, 2024.

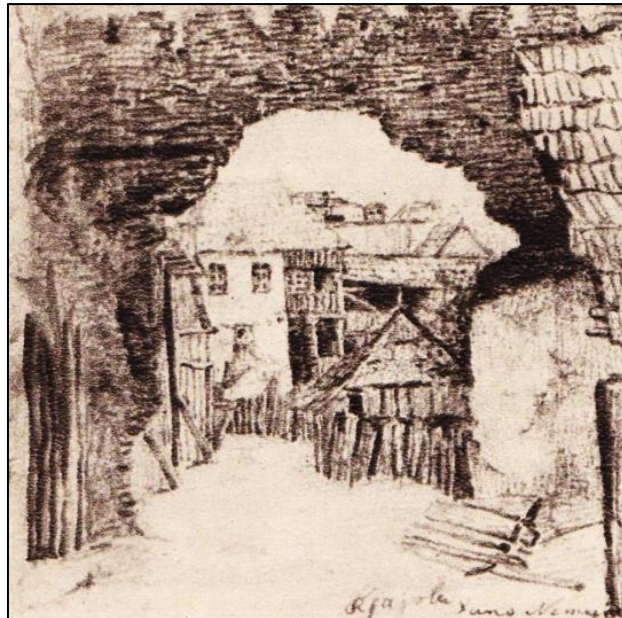


Fig. 4. Barbu Iscovescu, Hanul nemțesc din Craiova¹⁵.



Fig. 5. Barbu Iscovescu, Uliță veche din Craiova¹⁶.

¹⁵ See https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbu_Iscovescu#/media/Fi%C8%99ier:Barbu_Iscovescu_Hanul_nemtesc_din_Craiova.jpg, accessed at August 23, 2024.

¹⁶ See https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/ba/Barbu_Iscovescu_Ulita_veche_din_Craiova.jpg, accessed at August 23, 2024.

Sufficient reasons for admiration, contemplation for the urban architecture of the time, venerable for its old age, sobriety and good taste of the olden times. The architecture of the old cities still impresses today with its admirable details, inviting the local and national community to safeguard this heritage. The aesthetic revaluations of this architecture, as well as the contemporary ones, contribute to the preservation of this atmosphere for future generations.

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