

MUSEUM BUILDINGS, THE HOUSING OF THE COLLECTIONS – THEIR CHANGES IN THE COURSE OF TIME

Municipal museums and museal buildings in Hungary

The foundation of municipal museums in Hungary picked up in the last third of the 19th century. Most of these institutions were established by civic organizations, and following contemporary customs, they strove to present all of their collections while conducting educational and popularizing activities at the same time. At first, schools, ecclesiastic buildings and private personnel provided their housing. In 1897, the National Superintendence of Museums and Libraries was founded, which supported museums that avowed national supervision. During the early 20th century the circle of supporters and their collaboration with the Superintendence varied often.

The Museum Association of Vác joined the ranks of institutions accepting the Superintendence and claiming state financing, early on.

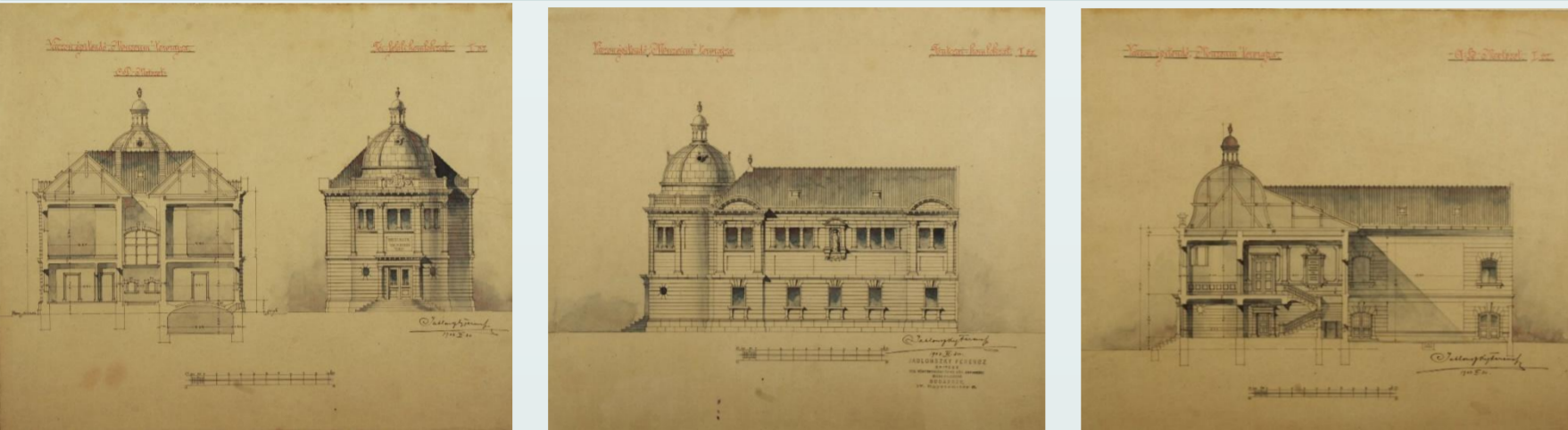


The museum of the Museum Association of Vác was founded in 1895. For decades it stored and presented its material in ever-changing locations. Exhibits were opened in private homes, schools and ecclesiastic buildings.

Museum palaces and palaces of public education

In 1896, the municipality of Szeged funded a Palace of Culture in the city. The building was designed with museal goals in mind and was acclaimed highly. It housed collections of antiquities and natural sciences, alongside an art gallery and a library. The construction of museum buildings in Kassa/Košice and Nagyvárad/Oradea were also supported by the Superintendence. Both this professional organization and the Ministry of Religion and Public Education helped a lot in building museums and palaces of public education throughout Hungary. They allocated funds to promote the establishment of cultural centres in the countryside. In cases where locals could finance at least half the costs, they provided the funding for the construction and furnishing of museums. Financing practices were problematic, yet their results are unanimous. Several dozen municipalities were thus provided with new, nice edifices for public education, at other places, existing buildings were refurbished as museums. The planning and construction works were supervised by architectural inspectors of the Superintendence.

The Museum Association of Vác created several plans for a museum, yet unfortunately none was granted funding.



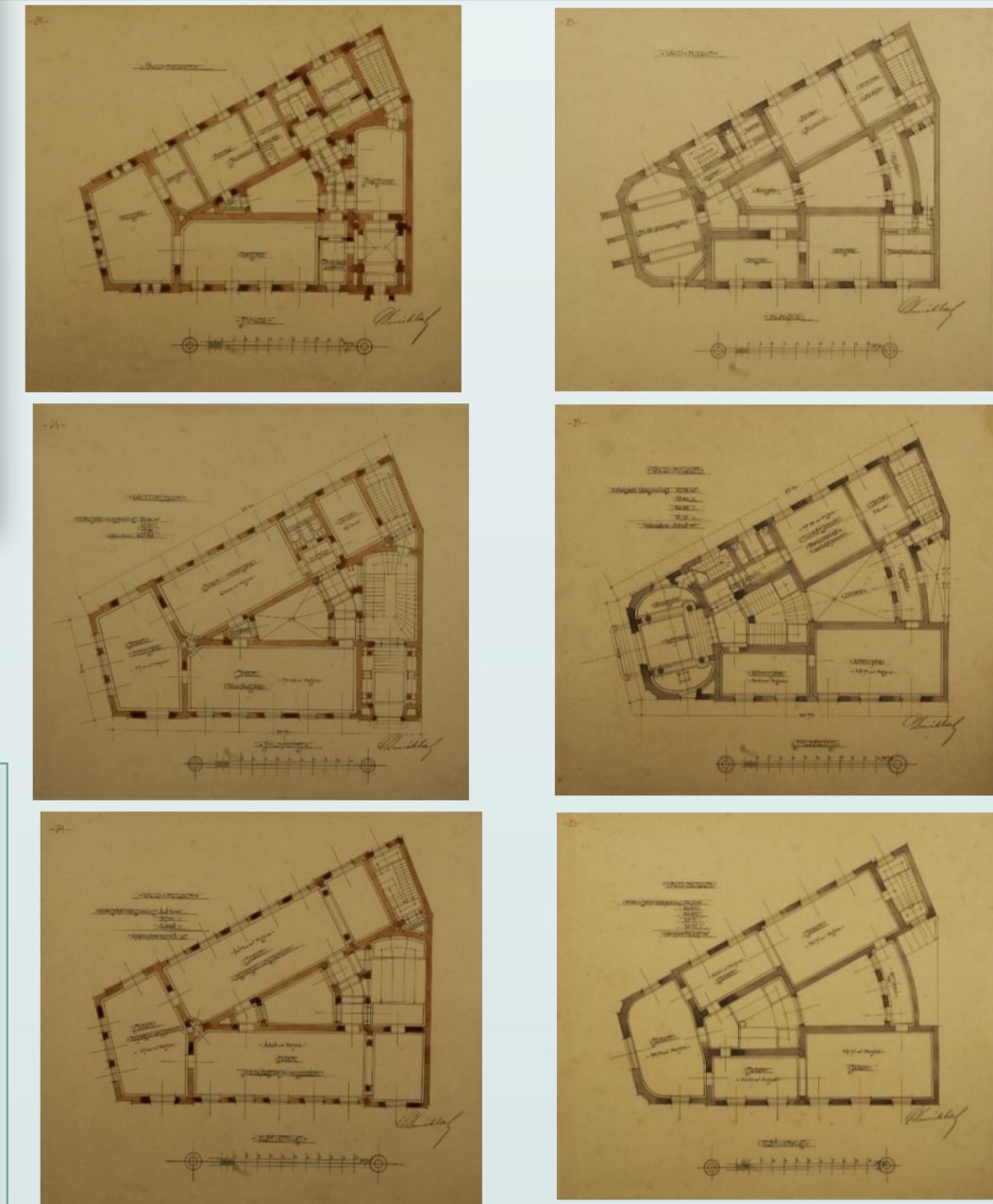
Downtown corner parcel and the museum building planned there



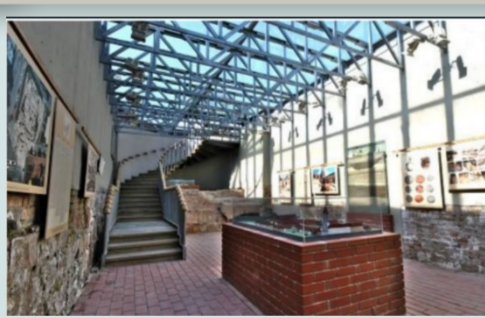
A changing world

Over time, museum collections increased, tasks and working conditions changed, and the edifices that met the needs of the early 20th century, were no longer keeping up to new challenges. The institutions have outgrown even the palaces and it became a general practice to move some of their collections from the main building to an outer premises. Less fortunate municipal institutes, that were not even granted such main buildings and have been operating on multiple locations became even more disjointed. In past decades, the system of tenders focused on the renovation of communal spaces and did not assist in creating complex museal buildings nor collection spaces. The spread of visible storages is partially a result of this practice, combining exhibitions with storage spaces proved a temporary solution to the issue. Museal institutions of the central region of Hungary were not eligible for joint European Union tenders due to application criteria, which further afflicted these institutes. The level of activity, efficiency and collegiality of county museal directorates that operated between 1962 and 2012 was quite heterogeneous, thus in 2013 when local governments were charged with the upkeep of museums, the state of museal estates they inherited differed greatly.

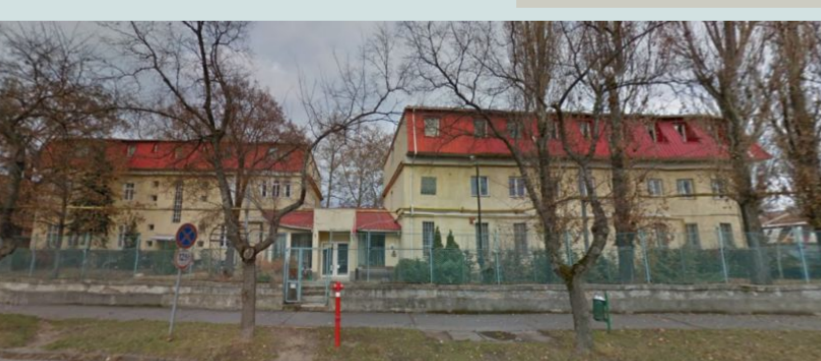
Until 2003, the Museum of Vác was accommodated in a detached house donated in 1918. In the last decade, alongside the main building, the museum operated in eleven outside locations. One artifact storage, which was insufficiently protected, suffered multiple break-ins. In 2003 an office block was granted as a main building to the museum, alongside three downtown exhibition spaces and outer storages.



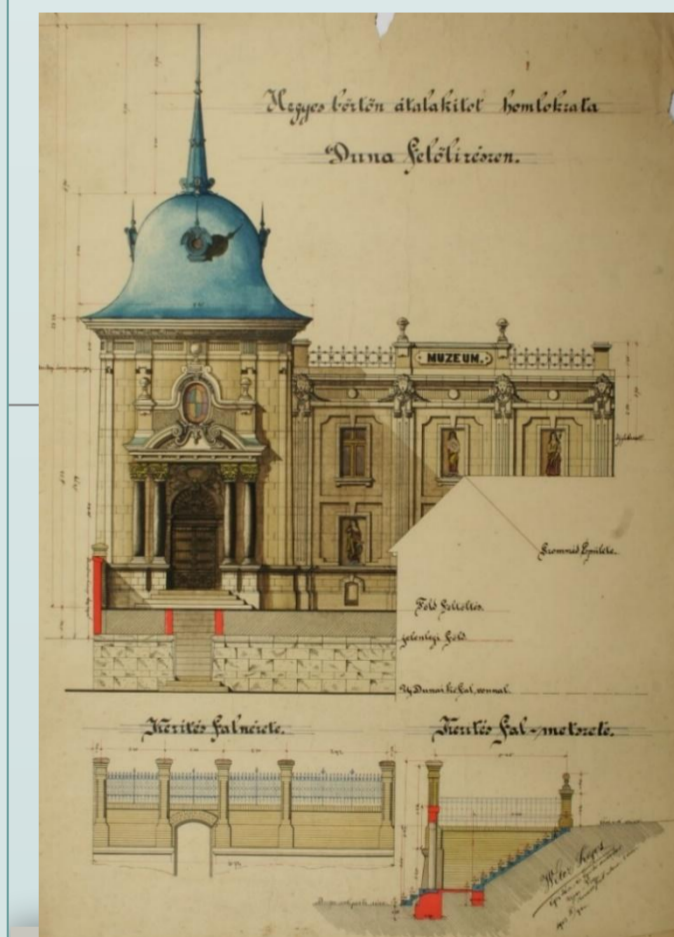
A private house donated to the museum by a citizen of Vác accommodated the institution until 2003.



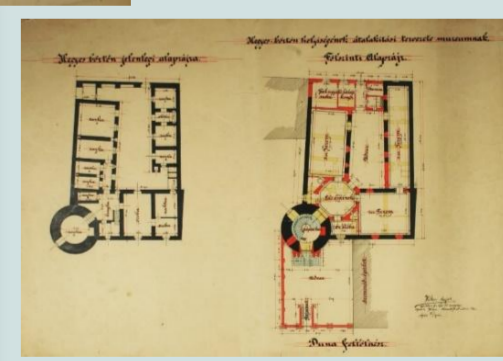
In 2003 the museum was transferred to a former office building. Its exhibitions are accommodated in downtown protected monuments.



The museum plans made in the 1990s were revised multiple times, yet construction works were halted soon after they began.



Reconstruction plans for the Medieval city tower called „Hegyes” (literally „Pointy”).



Present days

2012 brought about a new chapter in the history of Hungarian museums. Their estates and artifact collections became state property, yet most of their funding was transferred to local governments the next year by a new act. Nowadays, there are ongoing priority projects for the renovation of institutes supported by the state, yet there are no central funds available for developing the majority of museal institutions upheld by municipalities.

Despite numerous building plans and two incipient development projects, the 125 years old Museum of Vác still works as a disjointed institution and does not possess a building suitable to its needs. The possibilities for presenting the collections is limited, frequent relocations have seriously deteriorated the state of the artifacts. At the moment, based on a government decree made in 2017, we await the transfer of approximately one billion HUF for a new building for the Museum of Vác.

