

# ELEMENTE DE DATARE A HANURILOR PATRIA ȘI NECULESCULUI\*

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**Abstract:** Paradoxically, when speaking about the urban architecture of Wallachia, we refer to buildings that transpose into the urban space the characteristics of vernacular architecture. However, the modelling influences of this type of formal expression are multiple and owe much to the transit of Bulgarian and Macedonian master masons through the Ottoman Empire. Representing the typical built stock of Bucharest up to the first half of the nineteenth century, this architecture is going to be almost totally replaced by neoclassical, neo-Gothic and eclectic buildings.

The late recognition of the value of town architecture is mostly due to causes linked to “the image” of Bucharest. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the city wanted to erase its rural aspect and emphasize the importance of its recently built representative great eclectic palaces. Nevertheless a parallel reality constituted by its rural character impregnates the city up to the present day. “*Europe did never have, since the end of World War II, a capital more submissive to the rural than Bucharest.*” Until the 70’s urban architecture was still perceived as minor and somewhat insignificant.

Then a major change in trend appeared, while Romania underwent a period dominated by *protocronism* - a theory aiming at emphasising Romanian priorities in the most diverse domains. This period overlaps the restoration campaign in the Historic Centre of Bucharest, conducted by architect *Constantin Joja*. Its goal was to convey the “true image” of the town, by eliminating some of the eclectic façades and reconstituting building fronts in the style called urban architecture. This controversial restoration approach resulted in very successful examples (as in the case of *Manuc Inn*, based on consistent iconographic data) but also in the creation of a series of new façades designed by the architects.

Under these circumstances the conservation of the few examples of authentic urban architecture becomes even more significant. Two of the buildings erected in the style, belong to a program that was still representative for Bucharest in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the commercial inn – a late and small scale version of the Great Inns described by *Frederic Damé* as characteristic buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bucharest. Both are to be found in *Calea Moșilor (Podul Târgului de Afară)*, in different stages of use and conservation.

Because it belongs to traditional typologies, dating urban architecture is particularly difficult. Based mainly on the characteristics of the buildings, with little or irrelevant documentary support, the supposed construction dates of the two inns are in fact, significantly prior to the real date of their completion. Establishing the exact building date does not diminish their value, demonstrating the late persistence of local models.

**Patria Inn** – mentioned by *Ulysse de Marsillac* in 1877 as *Patria Hotel*, with 53 rooms, coffee shop and billiard – is located in *Patria street*, in the district of *Sfântul Ion cel Nou*. Being known almost since its completion as a hotel, it does not figure in *George Potra*’s exhaustive *History of Bucharest’s Inns*. According to *Ionnescu Gion*, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the princely jail was situated on the site occupied later by *Patria street* – the former *Rahtivan alley*. Obviously, this information leads to the conclusion that the building dates back only to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However *Constantin Joja* identifies it as “*The Old Barracks*” represented in a watercolour from 1855, and asserts that it is one of the most beautiful and representative buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The watercolour certainly represents the courtyard of the inn, but probably both the name of the place and date are mistaken. The most recent dating of the inn belongs to architect *Dan Ionescu*. According to him the building was erected between 1835-1840 and completed around 1870.

The most relevant documents, concerning Bucharest at the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century are the *Borroczyń plans*. The characteristic shape of the building does not appear in the 1846, nor in the 1852 plan. The 1846 and 1847-1852 *Borroczyń plans*, confirm *Ionnescu Gion*’s information about *Rahtivan alley (Ulița Rahtivanului)*. On the site presently occupied by the inn, one can see several buildings on a piece of land marked with the name of the owner, with slight differences in spelling: *Ractivanu* (1846) / *Rahtivan* (1847-1852). It is therefore certain that the inn was built after 1852.

Documentary evidence found in the Archives of Bucharest Municipality confirms this dating. On 28 August 1867, the owner requests a building permit, for the completion of the roof of his inn situated in *Patria Street*. In the *Pappasoglu Plan* (1875) the inn is represented as a U shaped building, leading to the conclusion that part of the southern wing and the eastern wing were added after that date.

The outer façades of the inn have an elaborate design, marking the corner, the central axis of the building and the entrance by wide openings with semicircular arches supported by pilasters and balconies with delicate ironwork. The interior courtyard presents the characteristic elements of *urban architecture*: open galleries at ground floor enclosed by glass panes with dense window framing at first level, the entrance corner adorned by the apparent staircase. The late completion date does not diminish the value of the building, representative for Romanian urban architecture.

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