

# Brzezice Manor House as an example of changing the function of a structure from production to a manor house

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**Abstract:** This article presents the history of the manor house in Brzezice in the municipality of Piaski as an unusual example of changing the function of a manor house/production facility into a residence/ manor house. Even nowadays, the transformation from a productive to a residential function is not a frequent occurrence and this change took place at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building originally had a single-space interior with a vaulted ceiling hidden in a mansard roof measuring 7.5×23 m and 7 m high. The walls and vaults were entirely made of brick, and not of the commonly occurring limestone, which is quite unique on a local scale. The adaptation probably took place due to the insufficient area of the original manor house, but with the owners' considerable income, the reason why they adapted the existing production building and did not erect a new palace as it used to be at the time is not certain.

**Key words:** manor house in Brzezice, architectural research, farmhouse, distillery

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## Introduction

The first mention of the existence of two manor farms in Brzezice dates back to 1529 and says that the vicarage in Biskupice was paid 1.5 grzywnas from one manor farm in Brzezice and 4 grzywnas from the other one to the vicarage in Piaski<sup>1</sup>.

The oldest description in which the manor house was mentioned comes from the year 1688<sup>2</sup>, which shows that it consisted of a chamber with three windows, heated by a white furnace, a chamber and a hallway, in which there was a bakery with a black furnace. Outside the manor house, there was a brewery, a vestibule, a pigsty, a granary, a stable and a building in ruins opposite the manor house.

In 1729, Aleksander Suchodolski and the Jews from Piaski filed a lawsuit against Aleksander Brzózka, an heir to a part of the village of Brzezice, for failing to pay a fee for cattle and for keeping the wife of one of the Jews in a private punishment cell<sup>3</sup>.

A description of a manor house with a hallway, a room with three windows with a fireplace and a brick cooker, a linden table, three benches and a wing comes from 1790. From this room there was a door to an alcove with two windows and a fireplace, a couch, charagi, a barrel and a table. On the other side of the hallway there was a dining room with an oven for baking and heating, a wardrobe and a bench. From this room the doors led to a chamber without a window with a stamped wooden ceiling and a door leading outside. In addition to the manor house, fence, gardens, orchard, the document in question also mentions:

1 L. Świetlicki, *Dwory nad Giełczą*, p. 95.

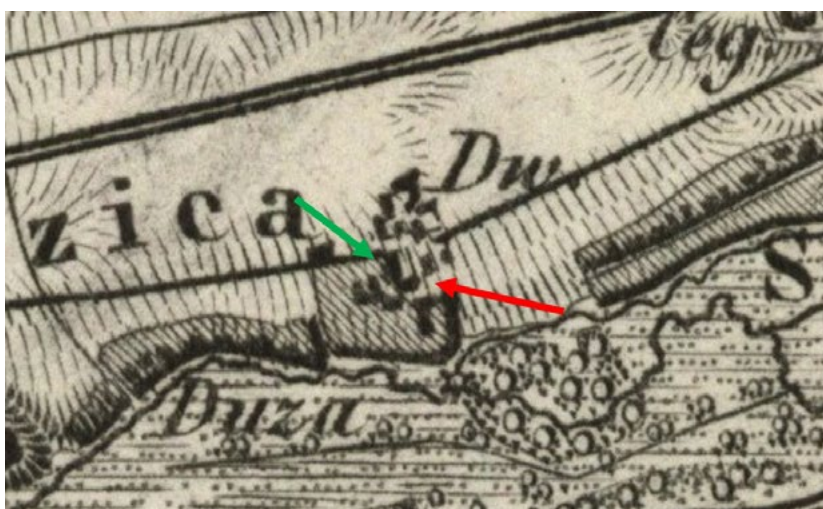
2 State Archive in Lublin (APL) *Księgi Grodzkie Lubelskie(KGL)*, no. 114, item 934.

3 H. Gmiterek, *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów Żydów w księgach grodzkich lubelskich za panowania Augusta II Sasa 1697–1717*.

- two thatched pine tree pigsties;
- a barn with a stable;
- a stable;
- a threshing floor;
- a pine barn with thatched roof;
- a bunker granary covered with thatched roof;
- a brewery with a hallway and a chamber (with a flight);
- a bovine barn with thatched roof and planks;
- Radziminsky brewery with kettles, ladles, room, chamber with cellar – building covered with shingles;
- a pigsty.



**Fig. 1.** Fragment of the Hendesfeld map from 1802 (the red arrow marks the building of the original manor house (kitchen), the green arrow marks the discussed building), <https://mapire.eu/> accessed 19.10.2020



**Fig. 2.** Fragment of the „Kwatermistrzowska” map, Topographic Charter of the Kingdom of Polesie – 1843 (the red arrow marks the building of the original manor (kitchen), the green arrow marks the building in question)

The description shows that the village was divided between at least two owners. This fact, in a way, explains the often contradictory information about the owners of the village of Brzezice, of whom there were several at the same time<sup>4</sup>.

In 1842 the village was purchased by Józef Popławski and transferred to Ludwik Zembrzejski for 180,000 zlotys (1490 morgens). From the period of purchase in 1842 to 1871 the whole mortgage book was recorded,

<sup>4</sup> APL, KGL, no. 511, item 442–444.

i.e. 440 pages of encumbrances, loans, contracts, etc., which to a large extent reflects the nature of the property, with constantly increasing encumbrances to amounts exceeding its value.

In 1891 Brzezice passed into the hands of Wladyslaw Morchonowicz, whose daughter and son-in-law Edmund Scipio del Campo inherited it. No information about the appearance of the buildings from that period has been preserved, but according to local reports, it was this owner who rebuilt the manor house and led to the flourishing of the farm.

In 1929, the Brzezice estate consisted of about 408 hectares<sup>5</sup> of arable land, forests, meadows, park, buildings, etc.<sup>6</sup> For this year, a fire estimate originates, which lists the manor house and kitchens and 32 other buildings. This is the first document that explicitly mentions the existence of a kitchen and manor house.

In 1947, under the law of the agricultural reform, the manor house with kitchen and park was handed over to the educational authorities<sup>7</sup>. From that moment on, the kitchen building served as a social housing and the manor house as a school. The equipment of the manor house at the time of the takeover was very rich, matching the palace interiors. Only the sideboard has survived to this day.



**Fig. 3.** Undated photograph of the court, L. Świetlicki, Miasto Piaski, Kronikarski zapis dziejów, p. 99



**Fig. 4.** Photograph of the manor house from before 1960, W. Myk, Karta z dziejów powiatu lubelskiego, p. 43

5 51 ha of forests, 305 ha of arable land, 27 ha of meadows, 1 ha of pastures, 3 ha of water, 10 ha of fruit orchards, 0.65 ha of land for development, 1.4 ha of park, 9 ha of ditches, borders.

6 APL, UWI, Department of Agriculture no. 1061, p. 3.

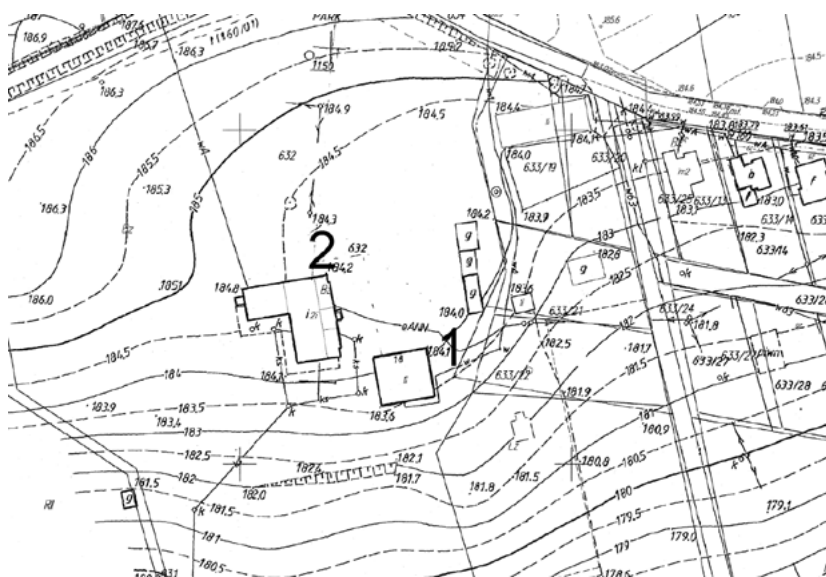
7 Świetlicki, p. 100.

## The current manor house

What is now considered to be a manor house originally had an industrial or manufacturing function. The original manor house was a “kitchen” building, which has been confirmed by research<sup>8</sup>.



**Fig. 5.** View of the facade from the south-eastern side, photo: K. Janus, 2018



**Fig. 6.** Situation map (1 – kitchen building – former manor house, 2 – current manor house building)

The first information about the building dates back to 1929 and is referred to as the manor house. It is not clear when exactly it was built, but it was certainly not a residential building, but a manor house located right next to the original manor house. The most puzzling thing is that it was made entirely of brick (7×18×34 cm)<sup>9</sup>. Brick was not a typical material in this area, it was used very rarely, for example in the treatment of holes or corners (in more important buildings), the dominant material in the area has always been sheet metal.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile,

<sup>8</sup> K. Janus, T. Stankiewicz, *Badania architektoniczne dworu w Brzezicach T. 1*, 2016 r., p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Since 1804, the size of the brick was standardized and controlled by the Russian authorities and was about 7×14×29 cm

<sup>10</sup> In this part of the Lublin region, stone deposits are common, sometimes it is enough to expose about 50 cm of soil (in the case of a manor house, the deposit is located at about 120 cm) to get to the stone deposit, it is worse with clay, which is scarce and of poor quality.

the whole building was made of brick, which certainly significantly increased the cost of its construction. During the research, an additional chimney was uncovered in the structure of the eastern wall (90x40 cm), on which there are no traces of trenches but only streaks and a wooden canal/box with an undefined function, which was made simultaneously with the wall and destroyed during the execution of the current windows (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). The building had walls 110 cm thick, situated about 110 cm below the ground level (it had no cellars), its interior was single-space with a width of about 7.5 m and length of at least 23 m (the northern wall is a secondary element). It was not possible to determine whether the building could have been only a few metres or a dozen or so longer. The interior of the building was a single-space, vaulted hall about 7 m high (Fig. 8, Fig. 10). The building had no windows in the central part and was covered with a mansard roof. It was not possible to determine precisely what function it could have had at that time, but it can be assumed that it had to have a large hearth and most probably boilers in the central and northern part based on brick arches. During this stage there were numerous changes in the interior in a relatively short period of time, which is characteristic of the production process.



**Fig. 7.** Location of a canal/ wooden box cut with secondary windows, photo K. Janus, 2016.



**Fig. 8.** Wooden box/channel cut in the external wall of a building, photo: K. Janus, 2016.

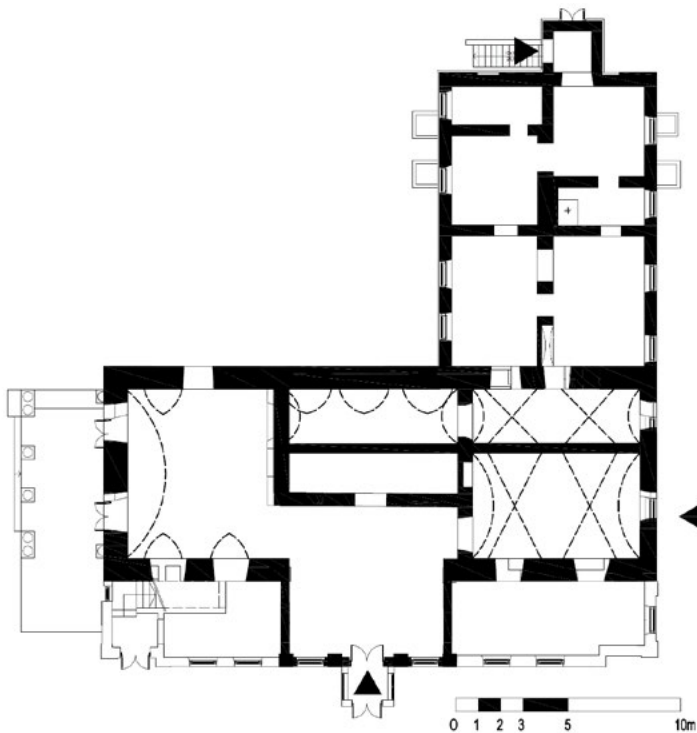
For some time the building functioned in its original form, but it was extended in two independent stages. It is impossible to determine the order of these stages. One of them was to make a pseudo-pier in the central part from the east. It was made mainly of local stone and increased the area of the building by about 30 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 9).

The second stage was the extension of the one-storey western part, which was made entirely of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and increased the area by about 105 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 9).

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building changed its function from production to a manor house residence (Fig. 11). The adaptation limited the interference to the minimum, only necessary modifications were made. This conversion was probably due to the insufficient area of the manor building (kitchen), however, it was unusual to transform an industrial building into a representative building<sup>11</sup>. The reasons for such a situation are not fully established, but this is probably the only example of such a change in the province. It is known that the manor house was booming during this period and the owner could afford an expensive reconstruction or even construction of the palace, of which there are many examples in the province. The reconstruction consisted in making a ceiling and dividing the space into two parts, inserting a cast-iron staircase (curved), making new windows and dividing the rooms. From the garden side, a balcony was made on a column, the interior was given a palace character (wooden upholstery of windows and doors, mosaic parquets, sideboard, furnishings, etc.). Modern building materials were used for the renovation. The lintel above the portico was made of reinforced concrete (reinforced with forged steel rods), the balustrade, terrace and columns were probably delivered from Lublin as prefabricated reinforced concrete elements.

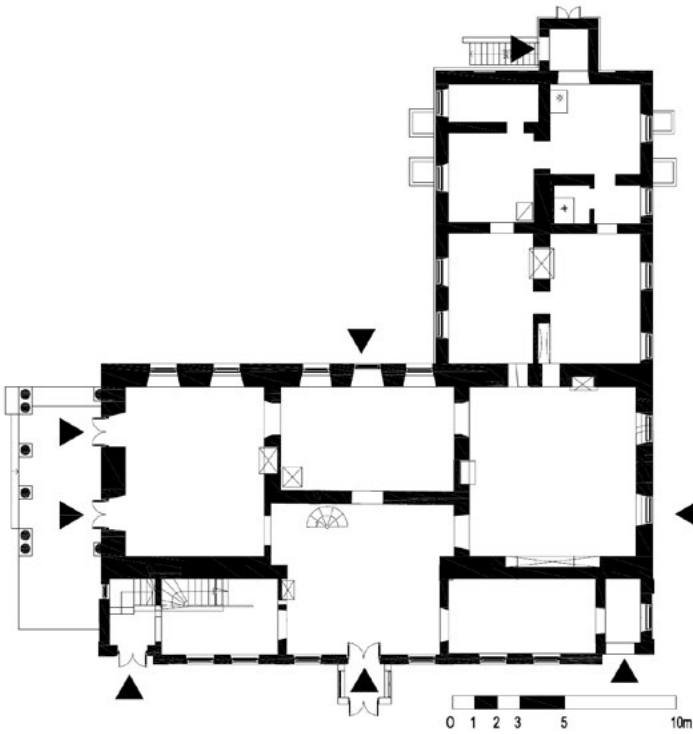
Another change of function took place after the end of World War II, when the owners were expropriated and a school was introduced into the building. It was then that the process of „impoverishment“ of the building from its residential character gradually began. The mansard roof was „straightened out“ and covered with eternit, all interior equipment, both movable and immovable, was removed. The curved staircase was removed, the only thing that has survived to this day is the sideboard, which was permanently connected to the recess.

Currently, renovation works are being carried out to restore the object to functionality and permanent use.

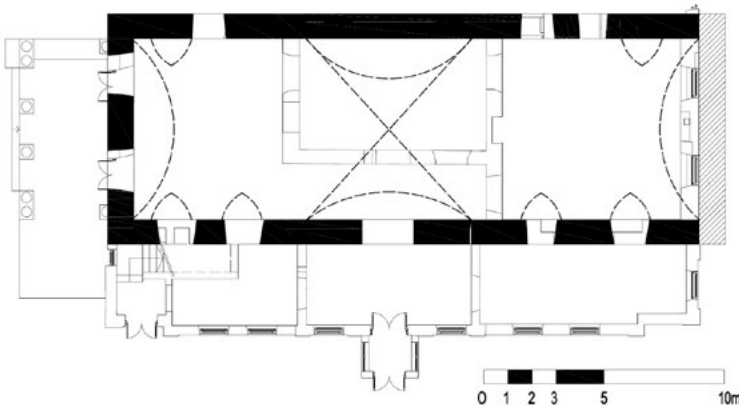


**Fig. 9.** Ground floor plan – reconstruction of the building at the peak of its production period, Fig. K. Janus

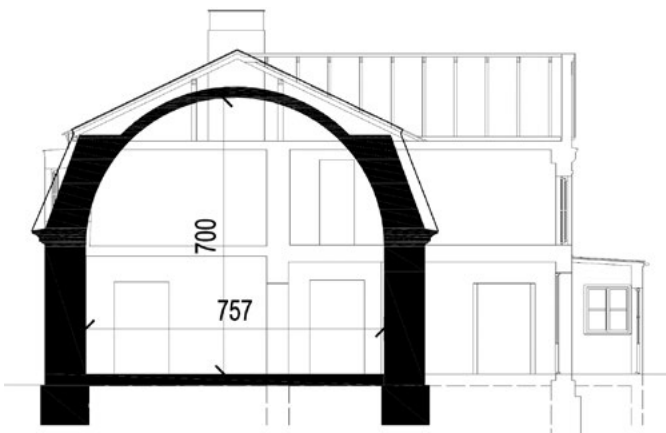
<sup>11</sup> Usually, if there was a change of function, the manor was changed to an industrial facility, and if the manor was not big enough, or if it turned out to be not big enough, it was rebuilt or a new facility was created.



**Fig. 10.** Ground floor plan – reconstruction of the building undergoing transformation into a court, Fig. K. Janus



**Fig. 11.** Ground floor plan – reconstruction of the object in the first phase of its operation, Fig. K. Janus



**Fig. 12.** Section – reconstruction of the object in the first phase of its operation, Fig. K. Janus

## Conclusions

The present building, called the manor house in Brzezice, originally served an unspecified production function related to the operation of the manor house<sup>12</sup>. It is possible that there was a distillery here. It is certain that there was a single-space hall 750 wide and 700 cm high. Later, the building was at least doubled in size. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century it was converted into a manor house – a residence with a very high standard of finish. At that time, it was divided by a ceiling, interior divisions were added, a balcony on a colonnade and cast-iron curved stairs. In this form, the building functioned until World War II, after which it was converted into a school.

The building is one of the few examples of transforming a farm/production building into a residential function in the Lublin region.

## References

- [1] Gmiterek H., *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów Żydów w księgach grodzkich lubelskich za panowania Augusta II Sasa 1697–1717*, UMCS, 2014 r.
- [2] Janus K., Stankiewicz T., *Badania architektoniczne dworu w Brzezicach*, T. 1, 2016 r.
- [3] Świetlicki L., *Dwory nad Giełczwią*, Norbertinum, 1999 r.
- [4] Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Księgi Grodzkie Lubelskie, sygn. 114.
- [5] Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Księgi Grodzkie Lubelskie, sygn. 511.
- [6] Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, Wydział Rolnictwa, sygn. 1061.

12 Almost every manor farm in Lubelskie voivodeship at that time had a brewery or distillery.