

# ĻAUDONA AGRICULTURE SCHOOL BUILDING DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT INDRIĶIS BLANKENBURGS

INDULIS ZVIRGZDIŅŠ\*

Madona Museum of Local History and Art

**Summary.** The construction plan of the *Ļaudona* Two-Year Agriculture School (1923) supposedly is the first project of an educational institution of the graduate of the Riga Polytechnic Institute (1913), architect *Indriķis Blankenburgs* (1877–1944). It was not a new building, but a reconstruction of the building after a fire, however, we can find some elements that had been used in the new buildings. The building was used for education for more than half-century. The article is devoted to the history of the building, also mentioning other buildings designed by *I. Blankenburgs*' projects in *Madona* city.

**Keywords:** *Indriķis Blankenburgs*, the project of *Ļaudona* Agriculture School.

## Introduction

Architect *Indriķis Blankenburgs* (1877–1944) is well-known and remembered as designer of many school buildings in the Republic of Latvia. From August 1924, his official position was Head of the Construction Bureau of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Latvia [1]. Before that, he had worked for two years at the Central Association of Latvian Agriculture, where he worked on the design of the *Ļaudona* Agriculture School.

The increasing demand for agricultural knowledge in the first years of the Republic of Latvia was facilitated by the agrarian reform – part of the former landless people and servants became independent landowners and landlords, who themselves had to make decisions on organizing rural activities. New agriculture secondary schools and also two-year agriculture schools were founded. The latter were intended to perfect the professional skills and knowledge of elementary school students.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail: [i.zvirgzdins@madona.lv](mailto:i.zvirgzdins@madona.lv)

Some of them had a narrower specialization – beekeeping, horticulture, animal husbandry, and housekeeping. The new educational institutions needed new premises, most of which were placed in former manor centres.

Conditions were different in *Ļaudona* parish [2]. It was the centre of the Lutheran and Orthodox congregations, thus, at the end of the 19th century, there were schools of both denominations and also the parish schools. At that time the Lutheran congregation covered four parishes – *Ļaudona*, *Ļaudona Odziena* (since 1925 – *Mētriēna*), *Sāviēna*, and *Saikava*. The church school offered two years of training and admitted graduates from parish schools. At the beginning of the 20th century, the tuition fee was 10 rubles per year. In 1856, the school was based in a wooden one-storey building with a designed attic space, and was named after the local noblewoman *Emīlija*. Later, a small brick house was built for a teacher, who at the same time was also an organist of the congregation. In the spring of 1901, the Lutheran congregation school burnt down. The Congregation Council decided not to renew the house, but to build an annex to the teacher's residential house. There were two classrooms, three small bedrooms, and also a housekeeping room, which included a kitchen, because the school had a communal kitchen. The four rooms in the building were used by the teacher and his assistant for living. Studies began in autumn; the graduate of the Pskov Teachers Seminar *Augusts Nesaule* (1874–1971), who had worked in *Dzērbene* for five years, was accepted as a teacher. After 1918, the school became the *Ļaudona* Parish Elementary School. The building remained in the property of the church, and in everyday life was still called the congregation school. On 27 April 1921, a dinner for 72 students was being cooked in the school kitchen.

It was a windy day, sparks from the flue got into the scobs of the roof and a fire broke out. This time the building was burnt partly, because the walls of the exterior and the enclosing partitions were of bricks. After a few days, elementary school students continued their studies in another building. The Church Council had to decide what to do with the burned building. In the discussions with the Agriculture Society, it was decided that the Church and the Society could collaborate and establish an agriculture school [3]. The *Ļaudona* Agriculture Society founded in 1898, already and in 1905 initiated the opening of permanent agriculture winter courses in *Ļaudona* parish, and a permission was received from the Russian Minister of Agriculture, on the condition that the training should be done in Russian. The Association was not satisfied, therefore the idea was not implemented [4]. In 1921, lawyer *Reinholds Lamsters* (1883–1941?) was the chairman of the congregation, *Arvīds Bremeris* (1871–1941) chaired the Agriculture Society, and *Augusts Nesaule* was at that time the secretary of the congregation and of the Agriculture

Society. The Ministry of Agriculture allowed the congregation to cut more trees in the surroundings to provide building materials needed for the restoration of the building under the condition that the payment should be made later. On 18 September in *Ļaudona* parish, the first charity event took place to raise funds for the restoration of the burnt building, which provided a balance of 180 000 rubles [5]. In the beginning of 1922, an agreement between the congregation and the Agriculture Society was signed. Its main points were as follows: the first store of the remaining brick building should have a second floor; the apartment had to be preserved in the building (three rooms and a kitchen) for the organist (*A. Nesaule*). The timber had to be provided by the congregation, the rest of the materials – by the association, both parties should provide funding. The building plan had to be prepared through the Latvian Agriculture Central-Union. The construction works should be completed by 1 August 1924, the association would open an agricultural school that should run for 25 years (until the end of the 1949/1950 academic year), in 1950, the congregation and the association would agree on the future use of the school building.

### **Renovation of *Ļaudona* Agriculture School building**

The *Ļaudona* Agriculture Society was taking care of the building renewal project. At the time, there was a Technical Office of Construction at the Central Association of Latvian Agriculture, which in a way was a joint organization of local societies. It was chaired by *Jānis Orleāns* (1891–1986) [6]. He began his studies in the Department of Architecture of RPI in 1909. His studies were repeatedly interrupted; he continued studies in the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Latvia, which he graduated in 1935. From July 1922 to August 1924, architect *Indriķis Blankenburgs* was the office architect. Both architects joined the student corporation «*Talavija*». *Arvīds Bremers*, the deputy of the first Russian Dome, the owner of the «*Glāznieki*» in *Ļaudona* parish, had already been acting in the Central Association of Agriculture. Then he approached the Technical Office of Construction. On 1 August 1923, the Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture wrote to the Construction Board of the Ministry of the Interior: «The Department of Agriculture declares that it does not raise objections to the construction of the *Ļaudona* Agriculture School building to the project prepared by the Technical Office of Construction of Latvian Agriculture Society [7].» The letter was sent along with the drawings prepared by *I. Blankenburgs*, they had been signed, but the date is missing [8]. Supposedly, at the time

when the letter was mailed, the construction of the building under the leadership of *Eduards Lauge* was already on its way.

Ļaudona Two-Year Agriculture School Building  
Designed by  
Architect Indriķis  
Blankenburgs



Figure 1. Project of Ļaudona Agriculture School building [8].

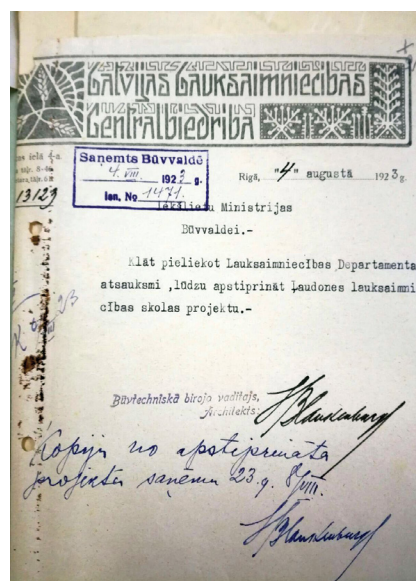


Figure 2. Document signed by *I. Blankenburgs*, Head of the Technical Office of Construction of the Central Association of Latvian Agriculture, to the Construction Board of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Latvia requesting to approve the project of the Ļaudona Agriculture School building, 4 August 1923 [9].

Initially, it was planned to use the first and second floors of the rebuilt building, and in the 1930s, the attic space was turned into the third floor. It was expected that most of the students would live in the dormitory. On the first floor, it was planned to have two bedrooms for 28 boys, and on the second floor – two rooms for 32 girls, with appropriate amenities on both floors. On the second floor, there were two similar classrooms, each about 42 square meters. The apartment

mentioned in the agreement was on the northern end of the first floor. In the other end of the first floor, there was another apartment with a similar number of rooms for the school principal. On the second floor, there was a school kitchen and a dining room, and a few smaller rooms. In the kitchen, meals were prepared for students, and it was also used as a classroom, where the girls mastered a course in housekeeping, which included cooking. The first floor had brick walls, additional door frames were constructed, as well as verandas in front of them serving as windbreakers. In the southern corner there was an entrance to the basement below the building. The outside walls of the second floor were made of wood, and then mortared. The building had five entrances to the first floor and two staircases to the second floor, as well as to the third floor. Besides it being convenient, it was also safer in the event of a fire. The northern part of the building along the courtyard staircase up to the roof was made of bricks and served as an internal firewall. At the beginning, the building had a roof from scobs, it was replaced with tin covering in the 1930s.

At the north end, the entrance to the apartment and also the second-floor stairs were designed as a portal with a couple of steps and triangular pediments on the top. The doors of the two-bay piles along the sides were decorated with pilasters raised from the wall. The entrance to the stairs from the courtyard had a small triangular roof held by two columns, which later was transformed into a glazed windbreaker. Staircases were lighted by windows with a rounded top. The architect had planned to have pronounced decorative projections around the windows and also between them at the second floor level of exterior walls. However it was not realised in life, presumably due to limited construction finances. As already mentioned, the funds for the construction were raised in charity events, auction markets, concerts, etc.

On 27 August 1924, the Minister of Agriculture signed the order on the opening of the *Łaudona* Agriculture School [10], classes began in October. The pupils studied for two years, mainly mastering special subjects. The annual tuition fee for a student was 20 lats per year, 6 lats for living in the dormitory, and also for the food for communal services. The poor were exempted from tuition fees. Usually there were three teachers, two of them had agronomist's education, and the third, almost always a woman, taught housekeeping. The Ministry of Agriculture provided salaries for teachers and also covered most of the school maintenance costs. By the end of the Second World War, 227 young people graduated from the school in 14 graduations.

At the end of summer 1944, before the retrieval of the German army, the centre of *Łaudona* parish was largely destroyed, burnt down. The *Łaudona* Agriculture School building survived, but the former parish



Figure 3. Ļaudona Agriculture School 1930s [11].

elementary school was destroyed. In autumn, a seven-year elementary school started functioning in the premises of the former agriculture school. Soon it was transformed into a secondary school with 11 classes. At the time the number of students was over 200 instead of previous 60. The school had 11 classrooms, a combined physics and chemistry cabinet, a gym where exercises were run from time to time, a pioneer room, a teachers' room, and a flat in the attic space. In this building, the school continued its work until 1977, when a new secondary school building was built next to it. Since then, the building designed by *Blankenburgs* has not been unused [12].

## Conclusion

The buildings designed by architect *I. Blankenburgs* can be seen in *Madona* city. In 1924, at 21 *Skolas* Street in *Madona*, the director of *Madona* Secondary School *Jānis Dobulis* (1876–1965) started building a private house to the project of the construction manager *Eduards Smurģis*. In autumn 1925, he began working as a member of the Directorate



Figure 4. Building to *I. Blankenburgs*' project, 15 *Saules* Street, *Madona* city. March 2017 [13].

of Secondary Schools at the Ministry of Education in Riga, but kept the property in *Madona* city. The annex of the of *Jānis Dobulis*' private house was designed by architect *Indriķis Blankenburgs* (1933) [14]. It seems that *J. Dobulis* used the assistance of his colleague. The house at 21 *Skolas* Street was demolished during the war in 1944.

Another project of I. Blankenburgs, was implemented in 1939, in *Madona* city at 15 *Vienības* (former *Saules*) Street [15]. The building on the corner of the street was built for a tree trader *Augusts Rocis*. The first floor was designed to accommodate four stores, the second – two apartments (for the owner and a doctor), there are also doctor's reception rooms. Basement rooms include laundry, and vegetable and wood storage facilities. The first floor is from bricks, the second is a mortared wooden construction.

## LIST OF SOURCES AND LITERATURE

- [1] Korporācija Talavija 1900–1925–1965–2000, atbildīgais redaktors Raimonds G. Slaidiņš. Rīga: Elpa, 2000, 572. lpp.
- [2] Draudzes skolas skolotāja Augusta Nesaules rokraksts «Ļaudonas draudzes skolas – LPSR vidusskolas vēstures meti» (1962). Madonas Novadpētniecības un mākslas muzejs (MNM8022).
- [3] *Latvijas Sargs*, 1921. gada 30. jūlijs, No. 69, 2. lpp.
- [4] *Lauksaimniecības biedrības un viņu darbinieki*, Rīga, 1931., 57. lpp.
- [5] *Latvijas Sargs*, 1921. gada 25. oktobris, No. 243, 2. lpp.
- [6] Korporācija Talavija 1900–1925–1965–2000, atbildīgais redaktors Raimonds G. Slaidiņš. Rīga: Elpa, 2000, 583. lpp.
- [7] LVVA 6343. f, 8. apr., 192. l.. 3.–5. lp.
- [8] LVVA 6343. f, 8. apr., 4. l., 4. lp.
- [9] LVVA 6343. f, 8. apr., 192. l., 2. lp.
- [10] Zemkopības ministra rīkojums No. 214. *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1924, No. 197, 2. lpp.
- [11] Ļaudonas lauksaimniecības skola. Madonas Novadpētniecības un mākslas muzeja krājums.
- [12] Zvirgzdiņš, I. Skolā – par tās projektētāju. *Latvietis*, 2017, No. 456,
- [13] I. Blankenburga projektētā ēka Madonā, Saules ielā 15, 2017. gada martā. I. Zvirgzdiņa foto.
- [14] MNM37663:8.
- [15] MNM37666:11.



**INDULIS ZVIRGZDIŅŠ**, *Mg. hist.* (1996, University of Latvia), is a senior researcher at the Madona Museum of Local History and Art. His main academic interests include the history of Madona and Madona district. He is the author of many publications.

Address: 12 *Skolas* Street, Madona, LV4801, Latvia  
E-mail: *i.zvirgzdins@madona.lv*

Ļaudona Two-Year Agriculture School Building  
Designed by Architect Indriķis Blankenburgs

*Indulis Zvirgzdiņš*

### **Arhitekta Indriķa Blankenburga projektētā Ļaudonas lauksaimniecības skolas ēka**

Ļaudonas divgadīgās lauksaimniecības skolas būvplāns (1923), jādomā, ir pirmais Rīgas Politehniskā institūta 1913. gada absolventa arhitekta Indriķa Blankenburga (1877–1944) darbs mācību iestāžu projektēšanā. Tā gan nebija jaunceltne, bet nama rekonstrukcija, pārbūve pēc ugunsgrēka, tomēr te varam atrast atsevišķus elementus, kas izmantoti arī vēlākās jaunbūvēs. Izglītībai ēka kalpoja vairāk nekā pusgadsimtu. Raksts veltīts celtnes vēsturei, pieminēti arī daži citi I. Blankenburga būvplāni Madonā.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** Indriķis Blankenburgs, Ļaudonas lauksaimniecības skolas projekts.

*Индулис Звиргздыньш*

### **Здание Ляудонской сельскохозяйственной школы, проектированное архитектором Индрикисом Бланкенбургом**

Предполагается, что план строительства двухлетней Ляудонской сельскохозяйственной школы (1923) является первой работой выпускника Архитектурного отделения Рижского политехнического института (1913) Индрикиса Бланкенбурга (1877–1944). Это не была новостройка, здание нуждалось в реконструкции после пожара, однако, мы можем в проекте найти некоторые элементы, которые архитектор использовал в новостройках позже. Здание служило для образования более полувека. Статья посвящена истории здания, в ней также упоминаются некоторые другие проекты архитектора И. Бланкенбурга в Мадоне.

**Ключевые слова:** Индрикис Бланкенбург, проект Ляудонской сельскохозяйственной школы.