

# HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

**Hidden**  
*Treasures*  
**of the**  
**University of Debrecen**



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN  
Debrecen, 2022





## Preface



All children love listening to their elders sharing their stories of the past. We marvel at the fascinating events of old times, the strange traditions that used to be part of everyday life, and we immediately have a different attitude towards a cup, a book, a tablecloth, a chair or even a window frame once we learn more about its history and significance for those who are familiar with their hidden secrets. We look at old black and white photos with the same enthusiasm as they have preserved a moment of the past and we try to guess what the subjects might have thought and felt at the time the picture was taken. All of a sudden, the whole world around us turns into the source of a myriad of secrets. Wherever we look, everything has its history and carries its own little secrets even today. The University of Debrecen, one of Hungary's most popular higher education institutions, is characterized by continuous renewal and innovative development, a modern infrastructure and an ever-expanding social and business network that enables it to provide students graduating from the institution

with expertise that is suitable for meeting 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges, while also providing jobs for close to 10,000 people in and around Debrecen. At the same time, as an institution with a history spanning half a millennium, the walls of the university, the monuments on its premises, the cherished photos, documents, furniture, and paintings of the past preserve a great many memories and stories.

Secrets are always mysterious, the knower of secrets is a chosen one, a secret represents knowledge. On the pages of this book we pass on some of these hidden treasures and secrets. We tell stories and present objects that have been a defining part of our university identity and daily life to this day. They are special because only a few had the privilege of knowing about them, yet the goal is not to hide these treasures but to share them with others and pass their knowledge on as every secret also needs a curious ear, an interested audience, a sharp eye, and an open heart.

Let us all be good guardians of the university secrets presented on the following pages!





## From Reformed College to the University of Debrecen



The University of Debrecen is Hungary's oldest, continuously-operated higher education institution and one of Hungary's research universities of excellence, providing the broadest set of programs at 14 faculties and in 24 doctoral schools. At the start of the 2020–2021 academic year, the student body exceeded 29,000, with an outstanding number of 6,500 international students arriving from 117 countries. Overall, there are close to 40,000 members of the university community, including students, faculty members, and staff.

Higher education in the city has its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Reformed College of Debrecen was founded in 1538 and it has played a significant role in Hungarian education and culture for centuries. This date is also featured on the coat of arms of the University of Debrecen, recognizing and pointing towards the predecessors and traditions.

In 1912, with Count János Zichy acting as Minister of Religion and Public Education, the Hungarian Parliament ratified Act XXXVI which established two universities, one in Pozsony (Bratislava), and one in Debrecen. The Hungarian Royal University of Debrecen was founded in the Cívis City (the nickname of Debrecen) with five faculties (the

Faculty of Reformed Theology, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Humanities, Linguistics, and History, as well as the Faculty of Quantitative and Natural Sciences). It started its operation, however, only in 1914 and with three faculties. At first, students attended classes within the Reformed College but it soon proved to be too small for such a purpose. The city of Debrecen granted a huge piece of land in the Great Forest (an area of 112 cadastral jugera, or approximately 64 hectares) for the university, and also contributed first 5, and later on an additional 3 million Golden Koronas to the construction so that in 1918 Charles IV could inaugurate the central building of the newly established Faculty of Medicine. Mathematics and science were first taught during the 1923/24 academic year, within the Faculty of Humanities. The independent Faculty of Sciences was established only in 1949.

In 1921, the institution was named after Count István Tisza, statesman, former prime minister and once a student of the Reformed College who was martyred on October 31, 1918. From this point on the official name of the institution was the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen.

The construction of the Main Building of the university started in the 1920s and it was inaugurated in 1932. After the Parliament and the

◀ *Courtyard of the Debrecen Reformed College*



Buda Palace, it was the third largest construction project of the country. Construction lasted four years but even so only about a third of the plans could be implemented.

After World War II and due to political reasons, in 1949 the university, which by then had five faculties, was disintegrated. During the same year, the operation of the Faculty of Law was temporarily suspended, in 1950 the Faculty of Theology was separated from the university and was moved to the College, controlled and operated by the Church, while in 1951 the Debrecen Medical University was established, making medical training independent. The institution carried the name of István Tisza until 1945, after which it was

called the (Science) University of Debrecen, and after 1952 Lajos Kossuth University.

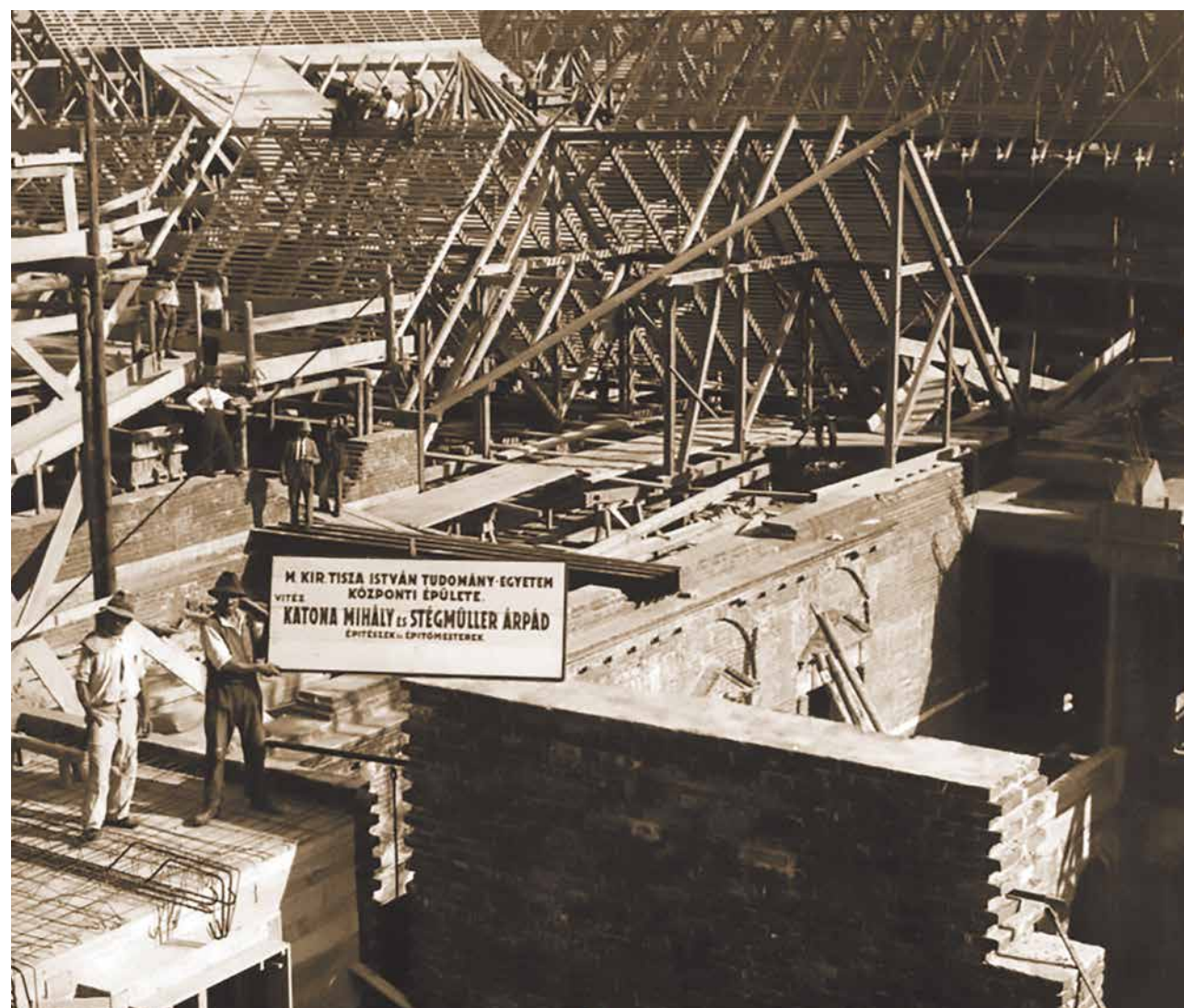
Discussions of reuniting the disintegrated higher education system in Debrecen started already in the 1980s. Such attempts, however, gained momentum only after 1996 when an amendment to the law stated that after December 31, 1998 universities could continue their operation only if they provided high-quality education in several disciplines.

Finally, on January 1, 2000, with the integration of the former Debrecen Agricultural University, the Medical University of Debrecen, the Lajos Kossuth University, and the István Wargha Teacher-Training College in Hajdúböszörmény,

the University of Debrecen, one of the major higher education institutions of Hungary was established with five university and three college faculties within the framework of three centers, the Center of Agricultural and Economic Sciences, the Medical and Health Science Center, and the Faculties of Science.

Section 26 of Act CCIII of 2013 on the Amendment of Certain Laws Serving as the Foundation of the 2014 Central Budget of Hungary also affected the organizational structure of the university, resulting in the termination of the existing centers as of January 1, 2014. The units of the institution continued their operation as the Center of Agricultural Sciences and the Clinical Center.

Today, the University of Debrecen is a leading and key institution in Hungarian higher education. It is a prominent university in the field of education both in Hungary and abroad, as well as in terms of research, innovation, and development, and contacts with the business sphere. The ever-changing social and economic environment demands flexibility from the university, as well as the ability for continuous renewal and adaptation to new expectations. The mission of the University of Debrecen is to contribute to the education of future generations in cooperation with Hungarian and international partners, with interdisciplinary research and educational programs built on multi-faceted and practical experience.



*Construction of the Main Building*



*The Completed Main Building*





*The Former István Tisza (today University) Square from the Window of the Assembly Hall*



*The Central Building of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen*

## The Park in Front of the University



The city's largest and most imposing square is located in front of the University of Debrecen, boasting a hornbeam hedge, lines of English yew, bronze statues, a two-tier pool and fountain in a more than 33,000 square meter French-style park linked inextricably with the Main Building.

Construction work did not end with the 1932 inauguration of the central building of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen, a sports field was created in the neighboring areas, professors' villas were erected based on the plans of Dénes Györgyi, and landscaping was completed for the park in front of the Main Building. Debrecen's largest square (with the overall dimensions of 230x144 meters with a 65x20 meter water pool in the middle) was created in the process, in line with the plans of under-secretary Róbert Kertész K. based on the ideas and commission of Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Public Education. The design was part of the Great Forest Landscaping Plan of 1923 commissioned by the city of Debrecen and created by József Borsos chief engineer and Ferenc Pohl chief gardener of the city. *"It is desirable that the creation of the park at the building should be started as early as possible this year... the statues of Péter Méliusz, Gál Huszár, Albert Szenczi Molnár, and György Komáromi Csipkés shall be erected in the park in front of the building."* –said Benjámin Csáki

outgoing rector in his report recorded in the the university's 1929/30 yearbook. *"Significant progress has been made during the year in the landscaping of the surroundings of the building. The willingness of Debrecen city to make sacrifices was witnessed again and together with the amounts granted by the government for this purpose this enabled us to start the beautification of the István Tisza [today University] Square."* – said Béla Kun, outgoing rector, before the general assembly that opened the 1931/32 academic year. According to the report from the construction supervisory committee, in the first half of 1931 the excavation for the pool in the square started, together with asphaltting and the laying of stone pavement tiles, along with gardening work.

Minister Kunó announced a call for the creation of statues to be placed in the square, and as a result the statue of Péter Méliusz Juhász could be made by Richárd Füredi, that of Gál Huszár by Béla Ohman, Albert Szenczi Molnár by János Pásztor, and the statue of György Komáromi Csipkés by Zsigmond Kisfaludi Stróbl (who was also the artist responsible for the István Tisza statue now standing in front of the Main Building). The cost of the park's construction work was financed by the city and in exchange the Ministry of Culture offered the statues to Debrecen as a gift.

The first statue to be unveiled in Debrecen on the István Tisza (today University) Square in front





Building of the Pool in 1931

of the university was that of Péter Méliusz Juhász (1536–1571) on May 17, 1934. The figure shows the founder of the Hungarian Reformed Church, the religious debater preaching passionately with a book in his hand. The inauguration ceremony was opened by the College Choir, followed by a speech by Rector Zsigmond Varga: *“An avenue opened up from this beautiful square to the heart of the city. This road connects the Great Church and the College with the István Tisza University, the past with the present... Thus with the certain faith that the grand soul of Méliusz joins the present from the past unhindered, his statue shall serve as an eternal symbol.”*

*“The first of the four sculptures is now completed... now on behalf of the Minister of Religion and Public Education... I hereby present it to the people of the free royal city of Debrecen. Let me ask Mr. Mayor to take over the statue on behalf of the city and preserve and protect it.”* – said under-secretary Kálmán Szily.

*“Let me thank the Hungarian state on behalf of the city... and pay tribute to the memory of Kunó Klebelsberg who came up with the idea of creating the statues of Hungarian reformers and initiated the implementation of this plan.”* – stated István Vásáry, mayor of Debrecen.

The inauguration ceremony of the three other works of art was held on April 27, 1939, together with a series of events celebrating the 400-year

anniversary of the Debrecen Reformed College. It was on this day that the statues of Gál Huszár (1512–1575), founder of the printing press in Debrecen, Albert Szenczi Molnár (1574–1634), translator and psalmist, György Komáromi Csipkés (1628–1678), Bible translator, were unveiled and the foundation stone of the University Church was laid.

The park, however, reached its final form only later on: after World War II a fountain was added to the pool and the city had another six statues made to decorate it. The bronze statues installed in 1965 represent large male and female nudes sunbathing and playing with water. They include Walter Madarassy's *Woman holding a branch*, Sándor Várady's *Boy reaching into water*, Imre Varga's *Resting woman*, Lajos Ungváry's *Sunbathing man*, Károly Radó's *Nude girl*, and László Marton's *Jumping man*. Meanwhile, the line of thuja on two sides of the pool became too old and thus the University of Debrecen (based on the initiative of the Student Union and with the support of the local government responsible for the area) had 20 3-meter-tall, conical English yews planted for Christmas of 2014. The square has been a part of daily life at the university to this day: in nice weather students study, relax, meet and converse here, while sometimes after a successful exam and as a result of a bet they may even get into the ice cold water of the fountain.



The Central Building of the University





*Péter Méliusz juhász*



*Gál Huszár*





*György Komáromi Csipkés*



*Albert Szecei Molnár*





Portrait of István Tisza in the Rector's Council Room (Ede Palatin, 2014)

## The Memory of István Tisza



The new and by now final statue of Count István Tisza was inaugurated on October 31, 2016 upon the request of the Student Union in front of the Main Building of the University of Debrecen that formerly bore his name, a truly worthy place. Zoltán Szilvássy, Rector of the University, commemorated Tisza as the founder of the University of Debrecen. Emphasizing his contribution as Prime Minister, the rector mentioned that *“it was the shared Calvinist Hungarian and the Catholic Habsburg will that made the foundation of a university in Debrecen possible.”* *“On Reformation Day and on the anniversary of the death of the martyred Prime Minister, the statue of István Tisza is now placed at its worthy and final location in Debrecen.”* – declared Gusztáv Bölcskei, Rector of the Debrecen Reformed Theological University. Péter Körösparti, former president of the university's Student Union and one of the initiators of the plan to relocate the statue, noted that the statue of István Tisza was brought down by university students and now it was erected again in front of the university's Main Building based on the initiative of their successors, today's university students.

### ***István Tisza and Debrecen***

István Tisza (1861–1918) was a student of excellent educational achievements who completed his

studies already at the age of twenty. In the first four years of his high school studies he was a private student, while he completed the next four as a regular pupil of the Debrecen Reformed College, passing his school-leaving exams at the age of 14.

### ***The Supporter of the Birth of the University***

The establishment of the University of Debrecen was preceded by long negotiations that Tisza joined in 1911: *“I would consider it one of the biggest achievements of my life if a university was established in Debrecen where I completed my studies as a young man.”* – said Tisza at a meeting in which he participated as the chair of the House of Representatives. He was really hoping for success, as reflected in one of his letters addressed to his son's teacher: *“... it is with great happiness that I can express my sincere hope that the University of Debrecen will be established as a first-rank state institution without losing its Calvinist nature and the historical traditions connected to the college...”*

At the time of the opening of the very first academic year in 1914 he was already Prime Minister when he received a telegram from Rector Ferenc Kiss thanking Tisza and asking for his support for the construction of the clinical site in the Council of Ministers.





*The Statue of István Tisza in Front of the University Clinics*

### ***The Memory of István Tisza***

Honoring the former Prime Minister, a commemoration was held annually after 1920 and based on the initiative of the Faculty of Law and the unanimous resolution of the four faculties, on January 28, 1921 the University Council stated that the *“university was to be named after Count István Tisza, the great statesman who died a martyr’s death for the Hungarian national ideal.”* The ceremonial general assembly was held on June 5 of the same year and the name of the university (as discussed previously) was changed to Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen. After 1924, on April 22, the birthday of István Tisza,

commemorative events were held primarily of a scholarly nature where besides the welcome address of the incumbent rector lectures by prestigious scholars were also delivered. The collection with numerous original letters and photographs also served such commemorative purposes and was a cherished treasure of the university. In 1945, however, the collection was destroyed.

### ***History of the Statue – 1.***

The full-length statue cast in bronze by Sculptor Zsigmond Kisfaludi Stróbl had an adventurous fate: the two meter and thirty-four centimeter tall

bronze statue weighing three and a half hundred kilos was first erected 100 years ago. It was the first depiction of István Tisza in a public space, located in front of the clinical site, it was brought down by the students of the institution. Some good souls saved and hid it so that the sculpture could be erected again a few decades later, even though not at the same place.

The construction of the clinical site was the first of the university campuses to be started and at the end of the project, during the ceremony of laying the final stone of the construction on October 17, 1926 with the participation of senior state officials, the statue of István Tisza was unveiled in front of the building complex. *“There were but a few Hungarian statesmen who would have taken the idea of responsibility more seriously... He saw it clearly that we need schools and hospitals, railroads and waterworks, factories and financial*

*institutions...”* – said Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Public Education, when unveiling the statue covered with the national tricolor. Antal Berzeviczy, delivered a speech as the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the National István Tisza Memorial Committee: *“...and now István Tisza has a statue as well in Hungary, and what is more, a remarkable and worthy statue made by an excellent artist in a city which is connected to his name in numerous ways, and the university of which proudly took his name...”* On behalf of the university, it was Rector Géza Illyefalvy Vitéz who welcomed the statue: *“... You brought a piece of the country of perfect knowledge, that of heaven, to the plain when you built a temple of science here to bring the Hungarian soul closer to God. You will always be a strong cornerstone of this temple where the young Hungarian souls will come to quench their thirst for science and the laboring love of their country...”*



*Count Kunó Klebelsberg Delivering His Speech at the Tisza Statue in 1926*



*Unveiling the Tisza Statue in 1926*



On April 23, 1945 university students toppled the monument from its pedestal but it was rescued and moved to the basement of the Déri Museum, together with the “Statue of Hungarian pain” by Emile Guillaume located on the György Magoss (today Bem) Square, where the damaged statues covered in tar were kept hidden for decades.

### ***History of the Statue – 2.***

The statue depicting the former prime minister was restored and erected again on the anniversary of his death, on October 31, 2000, although a bit further away from its original place. This happened because the work of sculptor Imre Varga called Professors (originally Master and disciple)



*Restoration of the Tisza Statue*

occupied that place and the artist did not consent to the relocation of his group of sculptures. The piece by Kisfaludy regained its original glory thanks to the restorative work of sculptor Lajos Györfi.

### ***History of the Statue – 3.***

Years later the university's Student Union thought that the area in front of the Main Building would be a worthier place for the statue and as they wrote in their letter dated March 10, 2016, “*the current location of the statue is not worthy of the achievements of István Tisza.*” The Senate of the university approved the request of the students at its meeting on March 17 and supported the idea of erecting the statue again in a way and at a place worthy of the former namesake, on the square in front of the central building. Lajos Györfi was commissioned for a second time to restore the statue. As he testified: “*This statue is one of the most beautiful figural representations of Hungary, it carries in itself the character, personality of István Tisza, the plastic solutions and patterns are brilliant.*” The total cost of renovation and relocation was covered by the Adjátok vissza a hegyeimet [Give me back my mountains] Foundation. “*This is yet another mission for us. We are devoted to rescuing values, as the István Tisza statue also well exemplifies, as we contributed to its renovation already in 2000*”, emphasized Tibor Becsky, President of the Board of Trustees.

The date of the installation (similarly to the event that took place one and a half decades earlier) was October 31, the anniversary of the assassination of the prime minister. The bronze statue of István Tisza is now at its new, worthy, and hopefully final place in front of the Main Building of the University of Debrecen where it can welcome visitors.



*Unveiling the Restored Tisza Statue on October 31, 2000*



*Unveiling the Statue of István Tisza in Front of the Main Building in 2016*



## Memory and Tribute – Kunó Klebelsberg



In 2017 the administration of the University of Debrecen decided that besides the monument of the former namesake, István Tisza, the statue of Kunó Klebelsberg should also be erected in front of the university, thus commemorating the minister who worked so hard for Hungarian education and who considered the establishment and development of a university in Debrecen an important goal. The university community voted and picked the final design from four models submitted for the invitational sculpture competition. The tender was won by sculptor Richárd Juha. *“The posture of the statue depicts the minister of culture in a relaxed and dignified position, holding a hat in his left hand while resting his right hand on the books on a pillar, thus signaling his life’s creed, that of a person who thought that the guarantee for the survival of the Hungarian nation depended on the development of education, training, and well-educated people.”* – noted the artist himself in his description. The bronze statue is 250 centimeters tall, which is almost exactly the same height as that of the Tisza statue, with its classic representation matching the realistic formation.

The artist also shared that he came up with his concept after consulting a huge quantity of archival materials based on which such a final design could be created and that would provide a worthy counterpart for Zsigmond Kisfaludi

Stróbl’s Tisza statue in front of the Main Building. At the original inauguration of the Tisza statue on October 17, 1926 Klebelsberg said: *“There were but a few Hungarian statesmen who would have taken the idea of responsibility more seriously than Tisza. He deeply believed that those responsible for the fate of the nation will need to stand in front of the eternal judge. Such a watchful sense of responsibility derived from a deep religiosity and patriotism...”*

Kunó Klebelsberg and his work undeniably contributed to the development of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen. It was due to his efforts that after World War I the unfinished construction of the clinical site could be continued and he was also present at the ceremony of laying the final stone of the construction. At the first graduation ceremony of the Faculty of Medicine on September 23, 1923 he claimed that *“a truly modern university town was built...”*.

It was also based on his initiative that a new act was enacted in 1924 based on which besides the Faculty of Humanities, the István Tisza University of Debrecen could also organize the National Hungarian Royal Secondary School Teacher-Training Institute in Debrecen in 1925.

*The Statue of Count Kunó Klebelsberg  
in Front of the University Main Building ►*







Count Kunó Klebelsberg and Students of the Summer School in 1929

The minister was also present when the foundation stone of the Main Building was laid on June 3, 1927 and he took one of the first, symbolic strokes of a hammer while uttering the following words: *“with unbroken faith in the name of religion, morality, and culture.”* His thoughts are also preserved by the text encapsulated in the foundation stone.

On May 15, 1932, Pentecost Sunday, the Ceremonial Hall served as the venue of the ceremonial inauguration of the building. Count Kunó Klebelsberg, retired minister of culture, was also present at the event as a guest.

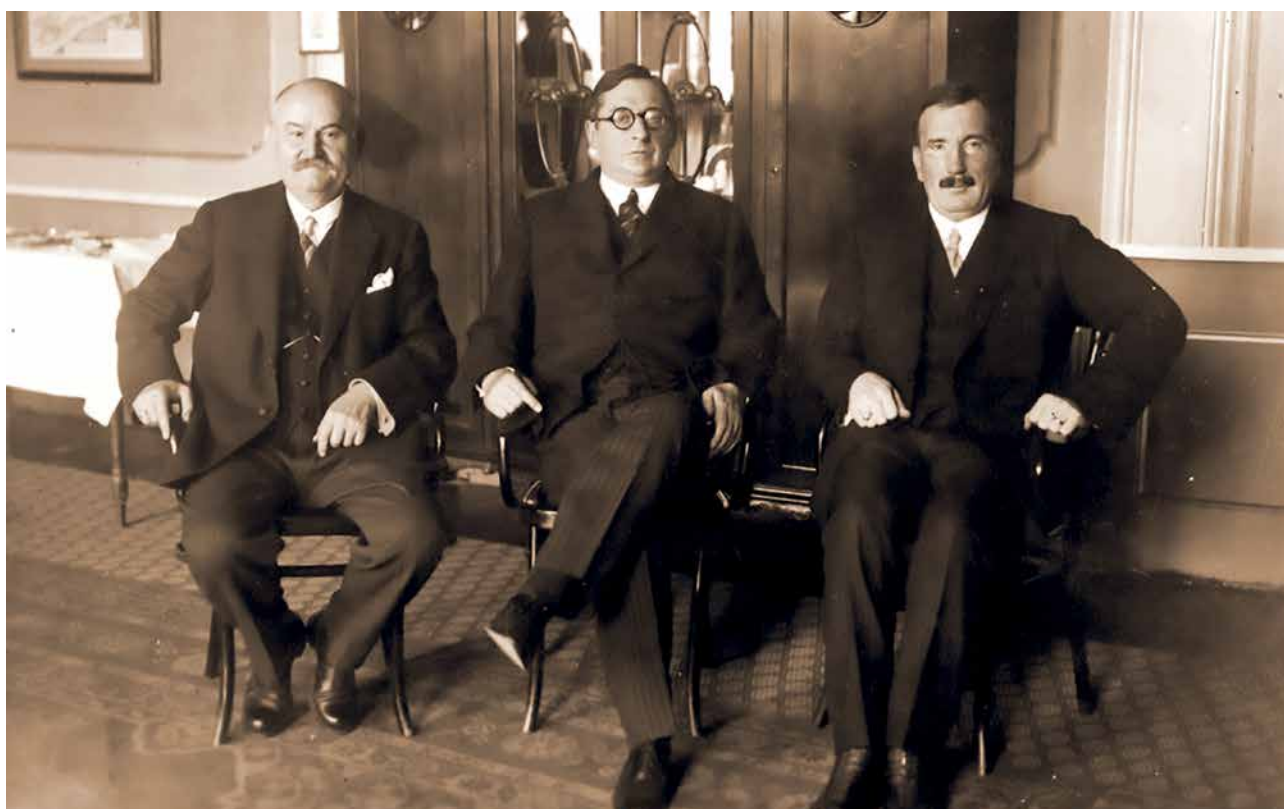
The gratitude of the institution for his work in support of the university was also expressed by granting him an honorary doctorate in 1927. *“These are the three talismans that I would wish to grant to all our universities outside the capital to ensure their existence: do research, teach, and love the youth.”* –said Klebelsberg in his address after receiving the degree.

Klebelsberg’s term as minister also witnessed the construction of the universities of Pécs and Szeged, 21 clinics, he also established the College of Physical Education, 5,000 elementary schools, while the building of the National Sports Swimming Pool on Margaret Island and the establishment of the Hungarian Olympic Committee are also associated with his name.

The official unveiling ceremony of his statue in front of the Main Building took place on May 15, 2018, organized by the University of Debrecen together with a commemorative exhibition showcasing the career of the minister of culture and his links to Debrecen, as well as a symposium celebrating his achievements.

#### **Remembrance Cast in Bronze**

Students of the University of Debrecen arrived at the venue of the ceremony to the sound of fanfares, carrying the flags of Hungary, Debrecen, and the university, as well as the gerundium rod, the



Meeting of Dr. Benjámín Csánki, Count Kunó Klebelsberg, and Dr. Jenő Darkó in 1929



Dr. Frigyes Verzár, Count Kunó Klebelsberg, and Dr. Jenő Darkó



symbol of the institution. These symbols on the podium in front of the statue of Kunó Klebelsberg covered by the Hungarian tricolor all indicated that the former minister of religion and public education earned a worthy commemoration with his work for the country, the city, as well as the university.

*“According to Kunó Klebelsberg, one of the key features of works of a truly national spirit is that they become interwoven with the life of the nation, sharing in its fate and adversities. Now as we stand in front of the University of Debrecen, one of the main achievements of the minister of culture, we can see that the great statesman was correct. The building complexes of the University of Debrecen have become symbolic buildings of the city and the country. The research results of the scholarly community working here are internationally recognized for a reason, the scientific research projects conducted here have global impact.”* – proclaimed István Ádám Bognár, Chair of the University of Debrecen Student Union, who was the first speaker at the event as it was based on the initiative of the students that the Senate decided to erect a statue for the minister of education.

Rector Zoltán Szilvássy also reminded the audience of the personal relationship between Tisza and Klebelsberg and how much they both sacrificed for the country, education, and progress. *“The University of Debrecen started in 1914 with 300 students and now we have 30,000. I believe the image of these two statesmen cast in bronze are not simply remnants of the past but that they represent examples, identification for all of us with those Hungarian values embodied in them, fusing the values of Christianity and science, and as it all started from students, the youth, this provides a guarantee for the future that we will continue to walk the path they set.”*

The mayor of the city of Debrecen, László Papp observed that *“Kunó Klebelsberg saw the opportunity in Debrecen to serve as a spiritual link in post-Trianon*

*Hungary, at the eastern border of the country, for Hungarians now living outside the country... As the Minister of Culture, he serves as a model for all of us as he emphasized the need for a strong union between the city and the university. In 1927 he said that besides the metropolis on the Danube, there are opportunities for extensive development here, in the metropolis of the Tisza and the Trans-Tisza region, in Szeged and Debrecen. Klebelsberg's idea that defines our city as the intellectual center of the cross-border region serves as one of the most important principles for the operation and development of Debrecen today.”*

*“Both of them believed that Hungary should be a great and strong country in terms of its soul, knowledge and culture. They both had unbroken faith*



*Details of the Klebelsberg Statue in the Making*

*that Hungarians have an important and special role, mission in their own country and the wider region of the Carpathian Basin. And if the two of them now stand here, guarding one of the most important buildings in Debrecen, we have no other task but to try and follow in their footsteps. We must thus also think of Hungarians as great and strong, well versed in sciences, and as a community that can join and lead the peoples of the Carpathian Basin. Debrecen must also play its role in this process.”* – added Lajos Kósa, Minister without Portfolio.

Zoltán Balog, Minister of Human Capacities emphasized that *“the life and work of Count Kunó Klebelsberg represent an undisputed beacon. The saying never applied to anyone more than to him:*

*Sometimes if we look great it is only because we are standing on the shoulders of giants. His heritage represents a standard, an example, and encouragement for anyone choosing service to the nation as a career. If we make comparisons, we should not compare the road already taken as we are not at the end yet. Do not compare the performance that is still changing but the direction. For Klebelsberg the stake of culture was the life, survival and growth of the nation. This is his direction we need to follow.”*

The statue of the minister of religion and public education was unveiled by the five speakers together and the ceremony concluded on the square in front of the university with the laying of wreaths.



*Unveiling the Statue of Count Kunó Klebelsberg*





# The History of the University's Main Building



The administration of the Hungarian Royal University of Debrecen established in 1912 always urged the building of a central building, since in order to provide high-quality education and scholarly work lecture halls and seminar rooms were needed, along with specialized libraries. The municipality of Debrecen donated a huge area of 80 acres to the university in the Great Forest, while also contributing five million Koronas to the construction and an additional three million for the establishment of university teaching hospitals, together with land totaling 25 acres.

### Laying the Foundation Stone of the Main Building

The foundation stone laying ceremony of the university's main building was held on June 3, 1927. The document encapsulated in a copper case and placed in the foundation stone includes the following: *"Let this stone provide such a solid basis for the main building rising above it as those noble traditions have provided for this young university that were inherited from its predecessor, the three-hundred-year-old Reformed College... Let this blessed productivity remain alive within its walls and let it*

*raise many famous champions for science and the country now as a university..."*

The dignitaries then gave the first symbolic hammer strokes, accompanied by a different sentence uttered by each participant: Count Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Public Education: *"With unbroken faith in the name of religion, morality, and culture."* Dezső Baltazár, Reformed Bishop: *"Any nation without science is lost."* György Magossy, Mayor: *"This institution whose foundation stone is now laid shall work for the benefit of our country, proclaim the glory of our nation from east to west, from north to south, from earth to heaven, and from the face of the earth to the center of it."* Géza Illyefalvi Vitéz, Rector: *"Let the eternal spring flourish in you with the flowers of patriotism blossoming on the tree of knowledge."*

### Construction of the Main Building

After the ceremony, on September 27, 1927 construction began with the excavation. Outgoing Rector Frigyes Verzár noted the following in his report on the 1927/28 academic year: *"...on the site where just a year ago we laid the foundation stone now tall walls are rising and we have hopes that before the arrival of winter the roof will also be put in place on this proud building."*

The new building (according to the plans) would after its inauguration house the three

◀ Construction of the Central Building



faculties of the university, a library with holdings of 500,000 volumes, and the university offices. Construction was supervised by the designer Flóris Korb himself, while Debrecen-based master builder Árpád Stégmüller was responsible for implementation. He won the job by promising that the costs of construction would not increase despite the economic difficulties and the rising price of building materials.

The façade of the main building is 108 meters high, its depth is 88 meters, and its area spans 6,200 square meters. The basement of the 5-storey building resembles a labyrinth, while the floors above featuring artistically-designed staircases and corridors connect the seminar rooms and lecture halls with professors' offices. At the center of the building the 29-meter high Ceremonial Hall covered with a glass roof of 700 square meters, proved a perfect venue for grand celebrations and events. Around the Ceremonial Hall marble tablets engraved with the names of the most famous former professors and students of the Reformed College and the university remind people of the long tradition of higher education in Debrecen.

One year later (in the report on the 1928/29 academic year) Rector Jenő Darkó continued to report on the difficulties of construction: *“Our central building... with its monumental wall system, is rising towards the sky in an imposing way and the roofing tasks are also well underway... The forced interruption in the construction work was partly caused by the long winter and spring frost and partly by certain technical difficulties that we have successfully overcome...”* Building was taking place simultaneously with works involving reinforced concrete, carpentry, tinsmithing and tiling, along with industrial work carried out in factories and workshops for ironwork, elevators, stonemasonry, artificial stones, carpentry, locksmithing, sculpting, floor covering, and furnishing. After

a short hiatus, in the spring of 1931 work was restarted and carried on continuously. *“On August 31... there are more than 500 people working on the largest construction project of the country at this time... It will be the task of the next academic year to complete some of the work on the interior, along with furnishing and providing the means to cover these costs. Let me emphasize that the state cannot have the luxury of leaving this building to stand empty once completed...”* – wrote Rector Benjámín Csánki in his report on the 1929/30 academic year. Meanwhile, the supervisory committee of university construction also wrote its annual report: *“...the glass roof of the Ceremonial Hall has been completed, together with the humidity ceiling and the glass roofs providing side illumination. At present the external decorative plastering, plumbing, sewerage, electrical and other industrial works are in progress... The main objective is to finish the internal and external decorative plastering work during the summer months.”* – wrote chief engineer and construction supervisor Vitez Zsigmond Herczegh in his report dated July 9, 1930.

Rector Béla Szentpéteri Kun was hoping to start the upcoming academic year in the new building, but *“although my request for the building to be at least partially opened for its intended use at the beginning of the 1931–32 academic year was welcomed everywhere... due to the harsh financial situation no steps could be taken with regard to furnishing the building.”* Later, on April 23, 1932 it was possible to allow those who were curious and journalists into the almost completed building. Prominent figures of the city, the leaders of Debrecen, and representatives of the press could inspect the then still empty rooms and corridors. According to a journalist of *Debreceni Újság*, the impact it had on them was stunning: *“I have been wandering in the building from one floor to the other and I just cannot have enough of the beauty of different parts of the building.”*



*The Dome Structure of the Ceremonial Hall*



*The Ceremonial Hall Today*



When construction was completed, the administration of the university moved into the new building from the College and the other temporary locations (with the exception of the financial offices of the clinics). The Financial Directorate, the Questura (Office for Educational Affairs), and the Teacher-Training Institutes were housed on the ground floor, while rooms of the Faculty of Theology could be found on the first floor. The Rector's Office and the Faculty of Law occupied the second floor. Humanities were moved to the third floor, which also featured a large auditorium seating 340 people, while the science departments moved into the fourth floor. Moving was complete by July 15, 1932.

Meanwhile, the "beautification" of the István Tisza Square was also showing good progress: bush had been cleared, accumulated building material removed, and the ground leveled. The university almanac reported about the progress: *"This university that is of unparalleled beauty in more than one way and which forms a single unit with the forested park of 120 acres, with its central building rising high and the largest urban square of Hungary in front of it with the statues of leading figures of the Reformation that has defined the historical character of Debrecen, and which is linked to the heart of the city by an avenue, will at all times proclaim the greatness and glory of those who did not deem any overwhelming sacrifice to be too much for national culture."*

### **The Inauguration of the Main Building**

Finally, on May 15, 1932, Pentecost Sunday, the Ceremonial Hall served as the venue for the ceremonial inauguration of the building. *"Today marks the ceremonial inauguration of the central building of the University of Debrecen and thus the grand work is complete for the benefit of both the country and the city of Debrecen."* – wrote *Debreceni Újság* in its Sunday edition of May 15, 1932, calling

the ceremony in its report published on May 18 "inspirational." *"The event was a wonderful celebration of science, from which the cultural eminence of the Hungarian nation reverberated."*

*Debreceni Újság* had already written about the arrival of guests on the previous day and provided a detailed program of the inauguration ceremony. The governor of Hungary was represented at the event by Pál Petry, while the Hungarian Government by State Secretary Kálmán Szily. Kunó Klebelsberg, retired minister of culture who played a key role in the construction of the main building, was also present at the event as a guest. The ceremony started with a worship service in the Great Reformed Church after which guests moved to the main building decorated for the occasion. After the national anthem, the general assembly of the university was opened by Rector Ede Neuber. *"With the opening of the Central Building, the István Tisza University is formally complete... It is only the building that is new, the institution is old: it is one of the oldest institutions of the country, noble and reputable with roots reaching back centuries both intellectually and formally... The nurturing and development of sciences always meant the development of people... Any nation without science is deemed to perish."* State Secretary Kálmán Szily expressed his gratitude to the two great benefactors: the Reformed Church in Debrecen and the free royal town of Debrecen. *"According to the eternal and unchangeable law of nature, the future belongs to the youth and the future will be such as the youth... Magnifice Rector! I hereby hand over this building for its intended purpose. I charge you and your successors with the sacred duty to stand guard so that this building shall be an impregnable castle of science for Hungarians forever."* The sacrifice of the citizens of Debrecen, without which the central building of the university could not have been built, was praised by Mayor István Vásáry: *"...this is the fusion of centuries, the shared*

*history of centuries which created complete spiritual unity and an inseparable sense of community between the ancient college and the population of the city."* Master carpenter Gyula Bessenyei spoke on behalf of the craftsmen participating in the construction. The new hall of science was consecrated by Bishop Dezső Baltazár. The building was taken over symbolically on behalf of the university community by Rector Ede Neuber.

The celebration continued in the Arany Bika (Golden Bull) Hotel with a gala lunch for 600 people, followed by the ceremony awarding doctoral degrees to law student Ernő Kerekes and humanities student László Varga. The next

event on the agenda was the general assembly of the Higher Education Association held in the Déri Museum but guests participating in the inauguration ceremony even visited the academy in Pallag on Sunday afternoon and were also invited for a tea by the mayor of the city in the glass hall of the Arany Bika Hotel. The Hotel also served as a venue for a gala evening with dance and a concert. The series of programs concluded with a trip to the Hortobágy. *Debreceni Újság* reported: *"The celebrations on Pentecost Sunday and on Monday will certainly remain unforgettable events in the history of the István Tisza University."*



*Doctoral Awards Ceremony in the Ceremonial Hall in 1935*





## Architectural Curiosities and Solutions



The Main Building of the university features technical solutions that are not visible to regular visitors. Some of these remain hidden from everyone, while others have been seen by only a select few.

### *The Foundation and Walls of the Main Building*

For the foundation of the Main Building and for the construction of all the walls, large-sized clay bricks (29x14.5x7 cm) of excellent quality were used, which were produced at the brick factory of Árpád Stégmüller in Debrecen. Wall thickness varies depending on the load that it needs to transfer to the foundation. Thus at some places the internal walls and the facade walls have a significant thickness of 105 cm or 90 cm, while there are also wall thicknesses of 75 cm, 60 cm or even 30 cm in the case of “thin” partitions. To match the various wall thicknesses, strip foundations of varying sizes and depths were made so as to ensure the proper transfer of the building’s tremendous load to the sandy, slightly loess soil. One of these footings under the facade wall is 346 cm wide at its lower plane and is located at a depth of 341 cm under the current pavement level. Under the internal, thicker walls the 310 cm wide footing is located at a depth of 464 cm. Such

large size foundations were usually reduced to the size of the walls built on them by creating three stages. The smallest base width is 100 cm, with its lower plane at a depth of 265 cm. It is especially important that the plinth of the building was made of hard limestone with a 20–22 cm width and a significant size seated on brick rows with gradual protrusions as a result of the masonry work. Such a console protrusion was made for seven rows of bricks and its upper surface can be located 10 cm below the sidewalk. Reinforced concrete structures were made at several places within the building so it is hard to understand why they did not use this technology for the foundation as well. The designers and builders did an excellent job, however, as there are no cracks in the building due to sinking that would indicate an inadequate foundation. The basement level of the building was used during World War II as a shelter that provided protection for hundreds of people.

### *Slabs of the Main Building*

Above the floors of the building, reinforced concrete slabs were made with two designs. Above the basement level, a reinforced concrete slab ribbed from below, while above the other floors slabs have the ribs on top. Depending on the expected loads on the slab, the inside of the monolith with reinforced concrete ribs features a hot rolled steel

◀ *The Colorful Glass Roof of the Ceremonial Hall*

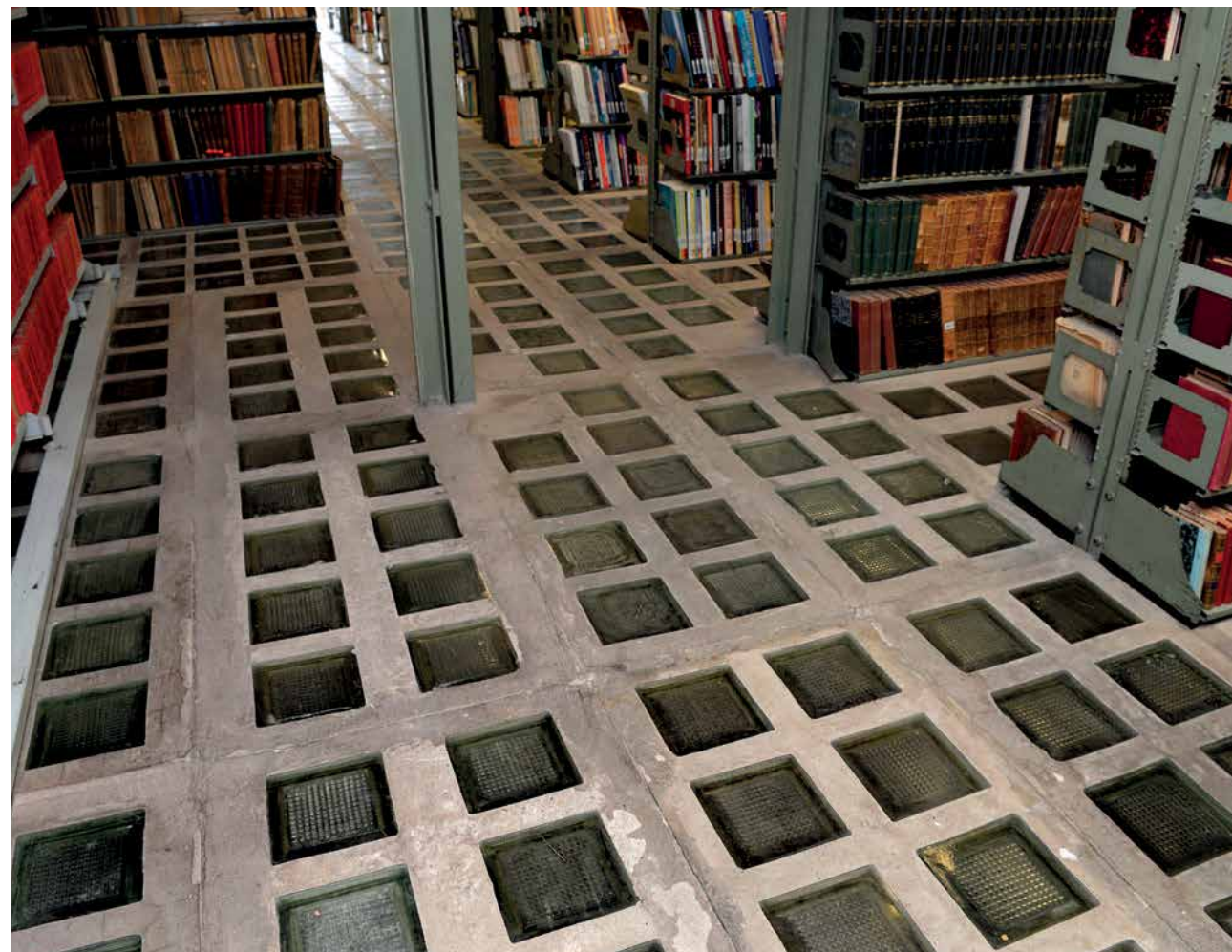


I-beam matching the load. The largest I-beam is 28 cm high. The distance between the ribs also varies because they were adjusted to their loads. The areas between the ribs are filled with a reinforced concrete plate, and the reinforcement was attached to the I-beam holders. The thickness of the reinforced concrete plates also varies, with a plate thickness of 10–12 cm in between the denser ribs, while at the sections with a smaller load the reinforced concrete plates vary between 8 and 6 cm. For the inside of the slabs with the ribs on top a boiler slag filling was used under the coating layer. The space above the Assembly Hall features a 10-cm-thick reinforced concrete barrel ceiling and above it there is a ribbed structure. Besides the ribs, the slab was also suspended on the reinforced concrete frame created in the attic

where reinforced concrete frames provide the necessary support for long-span wooden trusses.

#### ***Roof Construction for the Ceremonial Hall***

The most imposing space within the Main Building is the Ceremonial Hall that impresses visitors with its total floor space of 700 square meters, its internal height of 29 meters and its colorful, barrel-vault glass ceiling. The huge, long-span space was covered with a double glass roof designed and prepared by engineers at the GANZ factory. Above the beautiful, barrel-vault glass roof the pitch structure hidden under the glass was designed using almost filigree steel holding elements, now visible only in old photographs. The lattice support units with rivets were assembled into a spatial load-bearing structure on site.



*The Floor Structure of the Library*

The wire mesh paneled glass panes were placed on the lattice holders in a way that spacers were added with 8 mm diameter lead pipes lined with impregnated hemp rope to avoid breakage. The original external glass covering proved defective several times over the decades which resulted in leaks. In 2014 this external glass was replaced and the glass panes glued together from two layers of tempered glass that were installed with double silicone rubber sealing. To avoid condensation, the air space between the outer glass coverage and the colorful inner ceiling is heated.

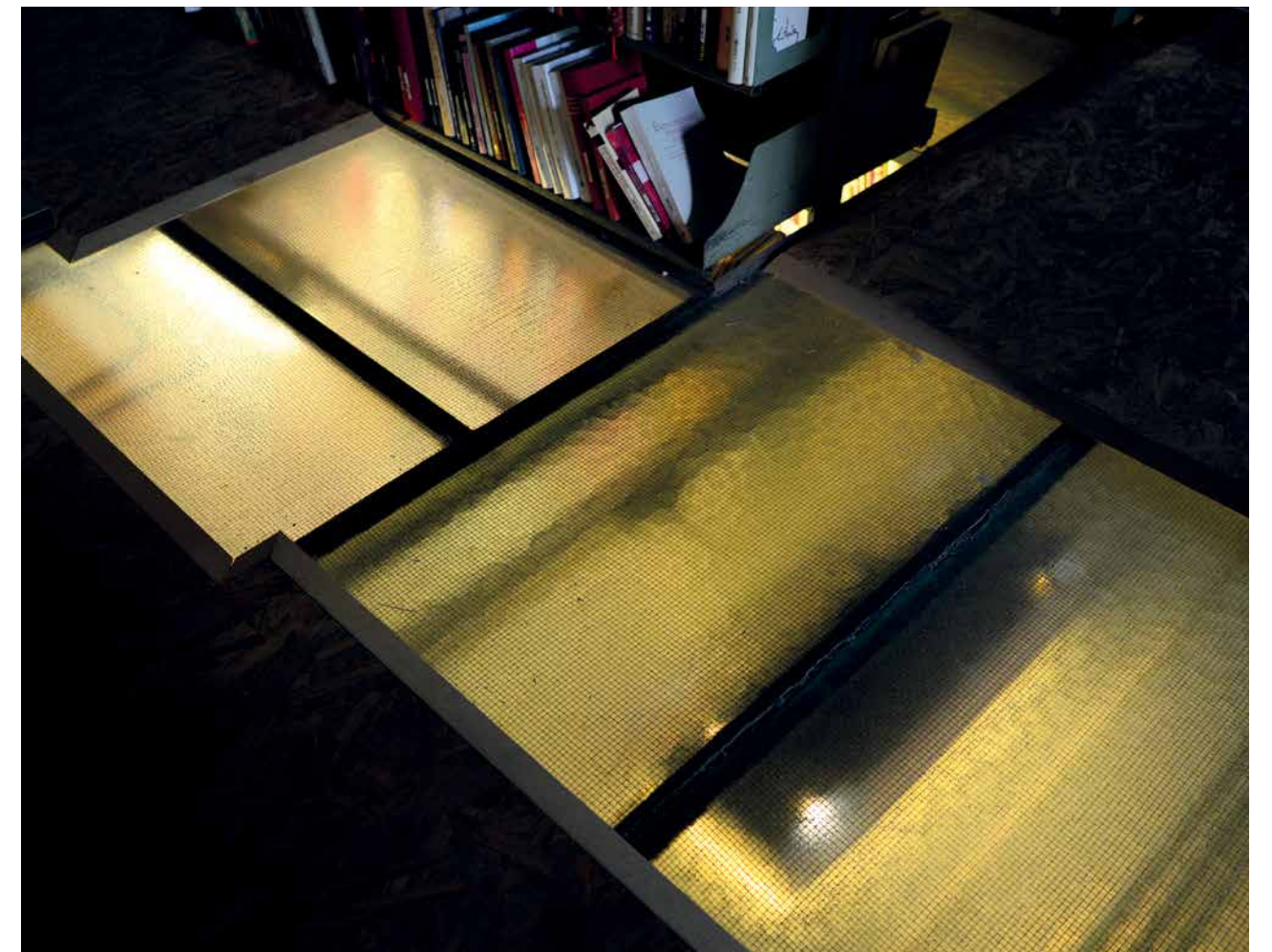
#### ***Designing the Libraries***

The libraries located in the two symmetrical building blocks in the northern part of the building make use of the significant internal

height of the building overall. These libraries were created with a modern design well ahead of their time. At the floors joining the building blocks the ceilings of the library storage areas are connected as ribbed slabs but here the lighting areas have glass bricks built into the reinforced concrete. The internal height made possible the dividing of each level into two parts with a built-in glass slab. The 3-cm-thick glass panes are held by a frame system fitted on a profiled steel structure. The frame system itself starts at the basement level. This structure also holds the bookshelves that may be reached both from the level of the glass floor and the level of the slabs.

#### ***Rainwater Drains in the Main Building***

Due to the numerous floors and varying spans,



*Glass Panel in the Reinforced Concrete Slabs of the Library*



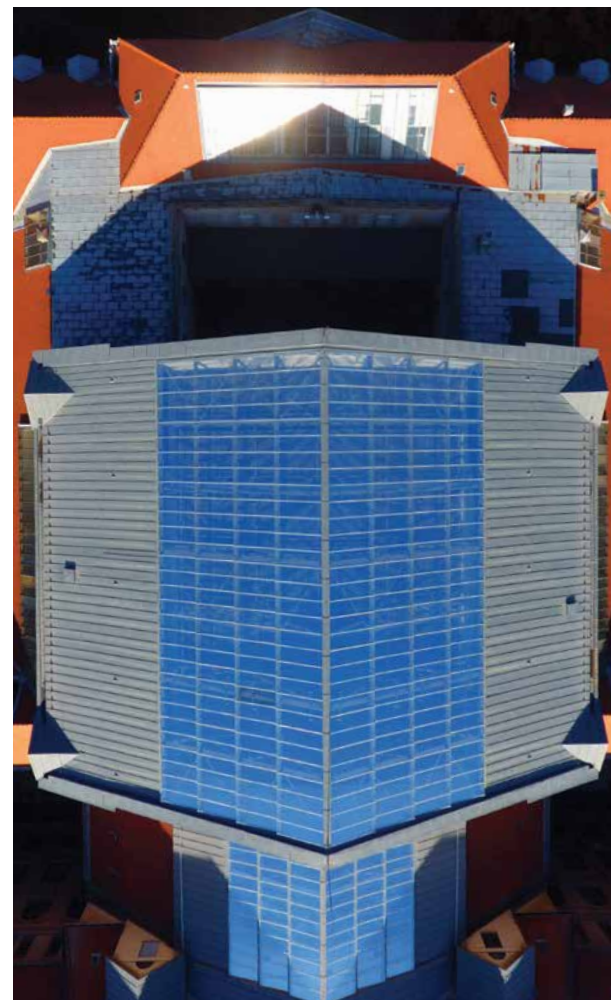
the roof covering of the building is a very complex carpentry structure. We find pitched roofs, lean-to roofs, and also a mansard-style roof. The roof surfaces were covered by beaver tail tiles from which rainwater is drained along the eaves into gutters suspended at some places so that there would be no vertical drainpipes on the facades of the Main Building, therefore, under the gutters, at the top of the facade walls valley gutters were designed with galvanized sheet metal lining. Some of the rainwater is channeled into the valley gutters through drain pipes from the hanging gutters, while at other places, differently from the traditional solution, the water is led into the attic space and 12 wooden containers lined with tin, from where the water flows on in drain pipes with a cast iron casing leaving the building in the canals under the basement floor.

#### ***Building Engineering, Heating, Ventilation***

To this day the building has relied on the building engineering systems built 80 years ago, the maintenance and operation of which requires great effort. At the time of construction the most up-to-date technology and excellent quality materials were used.

This applies also to heating that still operates with the original steam-heating system. Steam generated by a boiler located further away from the building is then led at six bars through heat insulated pipes in the utility tunnel into the heating center located in the basement. Here, it is converted into low-pressure steam with a pressure reducer and channeled into the heating equipment through pipes hidden in the wall. Heating occurs intermittently depending on the weather. The heating and ventilation of the Assembly Hall was designed separately and includes both radiator heating and forced hot air heating. The air-handling units are located in the

basement under the lobby and in the attic. Needed fresh air is provided through the ventilation shaft next to reception and it is tempered after filtering as needed. The heated air is led into rooms through air channels hidden in the walls. Used air is extracted through the decorative grids built into the ceiling of the Assembly Hall and it is transferred towards the roof. The Grand Reading Hall of the Library also has a similar heating and ventilation system. The waste steam and condensate that has passed through the heating system are led back to the boiler through the utility tunnel. These selected examples from the numerous hidden architectural curiosities and technical solutions of the university's Main Building may help readers to get to know this imposing building better.



*The Roof of the Main Building from a Bird's Eye View*



*Rainwater Drainage in the Main Building*



*The Gutter System Used for the Rainwater Drainage of the Main Building*





## DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

THE FRONT AREA OF THE LONGITUDINAL AXIS ON THE LEFT FEATURES THE MAIN BUILDING OF THE UNIVERSITY THAT HOUSES THE RECTOR'S OFFICE, THE OFFICES OF THE DEANS, ROOMS OF THE FACULTIES OF LAW AND HUMANITIES, THE ASSEMBLY HALL, AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

IN THE TWO SIDE WINGS THAT BORDER THE FRONT AREA OF THE MAIN BUILDING, BOARDING SCHOOLS WERE PLANNED WITH MENSA ACADEMICA, DORMITORIES, AND ROOMS FOR THE STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS. THE FRONT OF THE DECORATIVE SQUARE IS OCCUPIED BY THE MEMORIAL STATUE OF OUR KING FRANZ JOSEPH.

ON THE TWO SIDES OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED LONGITUDINAL AXIS, ONE CAN FIND THE FACULTIES OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE, I.E., CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, ZOOLOGY, BOTANY, MINEROLOGY, AND GEOLOGY. THE INSTITUTES OF PHYSIOLOGY, PUBLIC HEALTH, PATHOLOGY, AND PHARMACY ARE OPPOSITE THE LONGITUDINAL AXIS. THE GREENHOUSES OF THE BOTANICAL GARDEN AND BEHIND IT THE WATER FACILITY OF THE UNIVERSITY WITH THE WATER TOWER, TO THE SIDE IN THE DIAGONAL AXIS THE ANATOMICAL INSTITUTES WILL BE BUILT. IN THE AREAS ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE SITE, THE GROUP OF CLINICS AND THE RECEPTION AND FINANCIAL BUILDINGS ARE LOCATED. ON THE REMAINING PARTS, OUTSIDE THE BOTANICAL GARDEN, THERE ARE LARGE RESERVE AREAS AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

BUDAPEST, APRIL 19, 1917

front of the university in a U-shape. In the back wing of the central building that was never built, he would have provided a separate section for natural sciences. No document has been found, however, in this regard. Due to harsh economic circumstances the building itself was completed only five years later, in 1932. Unfortunately, neither the designer and architect Flóris Korb, nor the main contractor and constructor Árpád Stégmüller would live to see its completion. After their death, construction work was supervised by Márton Patzó. The upper floors' staircases and corridors connect the seminar rooms and lecture halls with the offices of professors, while the basement of the five-story building later served as a shelter in case of bombing during World War II.

Although teaching occurred in the building in 1932, several shortcomings were revealed. Due to financial difficulties, the uniform lighting equipment could not be purchased for years and the Assembly Hall was left incomplete. Finally, the hall as we know it today was completed for the 400<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of founding the Reformed College of Debrecen. According to the original plans, the ceiling and walls of the Assembly Hall should have been decorated by frescoes commemorating the history of the college; in December 1943, however, the university council decided that the wall behind the professors' chairs should depict the meeting of the House of Representatives that decided on the establishment of the university, while the opposite wall should feature a wall painting of the laying of the foundation stone. For the center of the ceiling of the Assembly Hall, a starry sky was planned. The council also noted that the submitted plans should consider the past of the 400-year-old College and "modern or hypermodern works should be ignored."

Development and expansion projects have been continuously present at the University of Debrecen ever since despite the fact that the originally planned elements of the Main Building have never been implemented.



*The Main Building in 2020*





## Stories of the Ceremonial Hall



During its history, the Ceremonial Hall of the University of Debrecen's Main Building has served as the venue for opening and closing ceremonies of the academic year, degree-awarding and doctoral ceremonies, balls, sports events and even funeral services. Past photos prove that those who could receive their diplomas and certificates here experienced touching moments, young people enjoyed balls, the administration of the university welcomed prestigious guests at the Ceremonial Hall, and there were even some who were accompanied on

their last journey starting out from here. There were, however, happier events as well hosted at the grand hall: for years, this was the home of the finals of the Jenő Kamuti University Fencing Championship in the 2000s, and it was not the first time when athletes entered the Ceremonial Hall as the top gymnasts competed here as early as 1935. Besides the women's, the men's gymnastics team of the university club DEAC also demonstrated their skills.

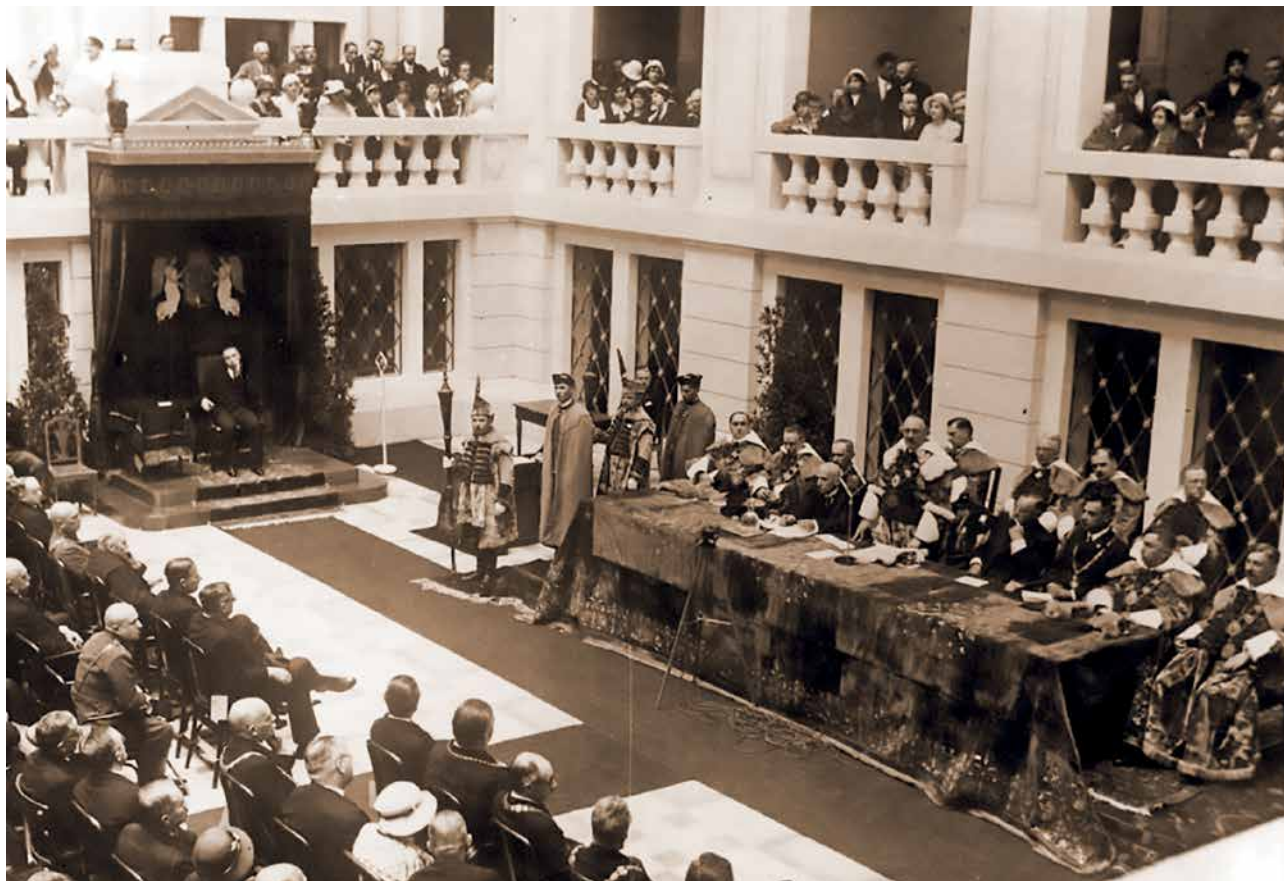
At the center of the building, this Ceremonial Hall with a floor space of 700 square meters and a



◀ *The Ceremonial Hall Today*

▲ *Construction of the Ceremonial Hall in the Main Building*





*The Opening Ceremony of the Central Building, Closing Remarks by the Rector, 1932*

height of 29 meters has proven suitable for hosting 2,000 people and with a stretch of our imagination may also see that a 10-storey building will also fit into it.

The 700-square-meter glass roof (similarly to the windows of the Assembly Hall destroyed during World War II) was the work of Miksa Róth. The size of the window panes is 83×270

centimeters. The original roof lasted for more than 80 years without any need to replace it, the first major renovation happened only in 2014. Students hurrying to the library or reading their notes while sitting on the benches in the corridors are in prestigious company every day for the marble tablets on the walls of the Ceremonial Hall are engraved with the names of twenty three of



*Sports Celebration in the Ceremonial Hall in 1935*



*Gymnastics in 1938*



*Participants of the Opening Ceremony of the Central Building, 1932*



*Dancing in the Ceremonial Hall*





*Furnishing for a Ball in the Ceremonial Hall*



*Celebratory Dinner at the Ball*



*Reception in the Ceremonial Hall Nowadays*



the most famous former professors and students of the Reformed College and the university, reminding people of the long traditions of higher education in Debrecen.

Who would not like to be included among Mihály Fazekas, the author of the Hungarian epic poem *Lúdas Matyi*, the poet Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (with both a memorial and a street named after him in Debrecen), Ferenc Kölcsey, writer of the Hungarian National Anthem or poet Endre Ady, who was a journalist of *Debreceni Hírlap*? Or be mentioned on the same page with János Arany, who even recalled the gerundium competition he saw during his College years in his most famous work, the epic poem *Toldi*, even though his protagonist does not use the university symbol specifically

to show directions, or Zsigmond Móricz, whose protagonist Misi Nyilas did not want to be a student in Debrecen? An inscription commemorated Sámuel Diószegi, founder of Hungarian botany, whose statue with Mihály Fazekas stands in the university's Botanical Garden. The name of Dezső Baltazár also appears, who was present at the inauguration of the building and consecrated it as the bishop of the time, along with that of Ferenc Medgyessy, whose sculptures can be found in front of the Déri Museum. The opportunity is there for everyone as two tablets have been left empty for decades and according to legend this is because any student of the university may hope to one day have his or her name inscribed there as a former student of the University of Debrecen.



*First-year Students' Ball*

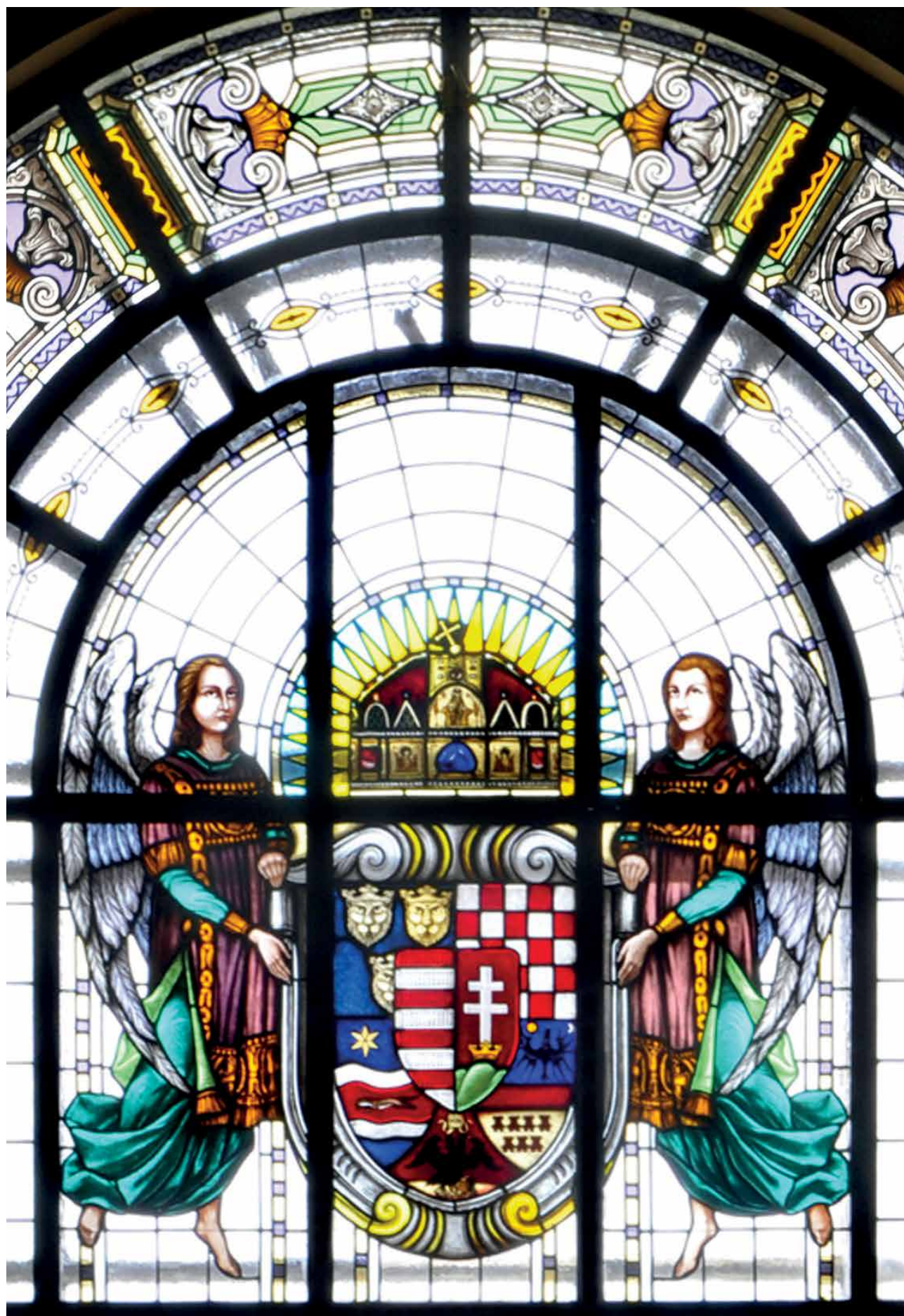


*Details of the Ceremonial Hall*



*Graduation Ceremony in the Ceremonial Hall*





*Detail from the Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Debrecen*

and shots. Although the damage caused to the glass was reported to be insignificant, in reality it meant a painful loss. The stained glass of the Assembly Hall windows was destroyed by the blast from a mine that fell on the area between the building and the pool in the middle of the square in September 1944. Probably it was at this time that the colorful windows of the Assembly Hall were broken and similarly to other art treasures during World War II, the windows themselves were also destroyed. Their reconstruction was inconceivable as many classrooms did not even have simple windows; later on, besides the lack of financial resources, the political atmosphere did not favor the cherishing of the memory of a university named after István Tisza. For a long time there was transparent glass in the windows and in the course of time their original appearance sank into oblivion. But not forever, mostly thanks to László Vince, retired Secretary to the Rector, who spent his life at the university and who considered this institution to be his home even after retirement and believed it

was his task to protect this home, to preserve and restore its values. His initiative that the University should restore the stained glass windows for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary was not received favorably as there were not enough resources to implement an undertaking of such large proportions. Twenty years later, however, approaching the centenary, the University decided to embrace his initiative. Based on research and very thorough and professional preparatory work, the windows gradually took shape; in 2009 the first, central window was restored, followed in 2010 by the two windows next to it and in 2011 the two outermost windows. The stained glass windows do not simply serve as the decoration of the Hall; the refractive structure of the colorful elements and their placement are part of a deliberate construction that captivates the observer by shedding a mysterious light. For the centenary of the foundation of the Hungarian Royal University of Debrecen, the Assembly Hall of the emblematic building of the institution regained its original splendor and atmosphere.



*Detail from the Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Contemporary Depiction of the College of Debrecen*



### JURIS PRUDENTIA – TIGVRVM

The first window from the left carries the Latin name of jurisprudence and in the lower third of the window, on the band above the townscape, the old Latin name of Zurich, Tigurum, appears. At the foot of Münster Kirche, the lake glistens in blue, the representation of buildings proves remarkably detailed, the scene is complete with the green hills beyond the town walls. Shades of warm colors (yellow, orange, light brown) dominate the image. In the lower part of the window, in the upper right corner of the townscape Zurich's coat of arms is visible. It is a peculiar feature of the window that the names of those participating in the reconstruction were listed in two tiny glass plates.

### PHILOSOPHIA – TRAJECTINVM

Next to the window of law is the window of Philosophia, Humanities. Under the name of the discipline, one can see the old Latin name of the Dutch city of Utrecht, Trejectinum. The image of Utrecht features the often cloudy Dutch sky in deep blue and white tones, forming a nice contrast with the reddish-yellowish colors of the building. The symbol of the University in the upper left corner of the scene can also be found above the entrance of the institution: the city's coat of arms in the center of the sun. Utrecht's coat of arms appears in the upper right corner of the townscape decorating the window.

### DEBRECEN

The central piece of the five stained glass windows represents Debrecen. In the top center, light glimmers through the middle coat of arms of the Kingdom of Hungary approved on February 9, 1874, regulated in 1896, and held by angels on the two sides. The middle coat of arms is made up of the Hungarian Holy Crown and the coat of arms of its member countries – Hungary, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, and Transylvania – in the form of a shield. Under the coat of arms, the year 1912, the

foundation year of the university, can be seen. In the lower section of the window, the seventeenth-century image of the ancient College of Debrecen is depicted. In the upper left corner, the seventeenth-century noble family coat of arms of István Tisza, former eponym of the institution, is visible.

### MEDICINA – WITTENBERG

To the right of the central window appears the window representing the Faculty of Medicine and bearing the inscription Medicina, that is medical science. In the lower third of the stained glass window, a view of the University of Wittenberg adorns the window under the inscription "Wittenberg." In the upper right corner of the image, the old coat of arms of the city (today the chief town of the district) of Wittenberg (today Lutherstadt Wittenberg) is depicted. This coat of arms was preserved by the seal of the town surviving from the fourteenth century. In the upper left corner of the view, the commemorative medal coined for the foundation of the university appears as the coat of arms of the university picturing Frederick III (Frederick the Wise, 1486–1525), founder of the institution.

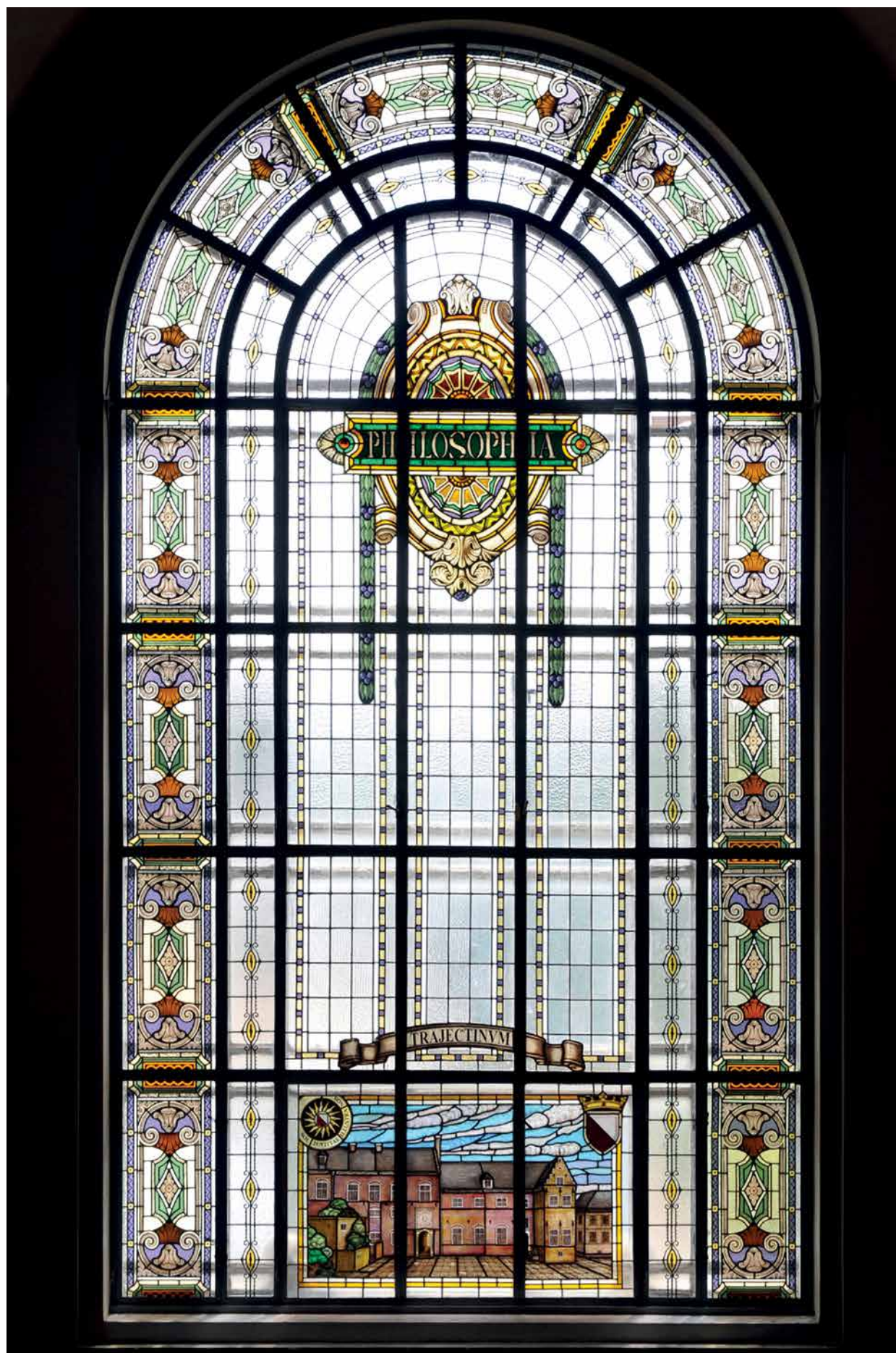
### THEOLOGIA – GENEVA

The inscription Theologia appears in the decorated frame in the center of the upper third of the window on the right side of the Assembly Hall. The view of St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva unfolds on the window representing the field of Theology with the old, Latin name of Geneva above the image. The waving ribbon of the view features the name of Geneva. In the upper right corner of the town view, the coat of arms of the city, a divided shield, may be found. In the upper left corner of the image is Róth's version of the emblem of the University of Geneva depicting a blazing sun with the inscription LUX SCHOLAE GENEVENSIS (the light of the Geneva school, that is the university) encircling it.

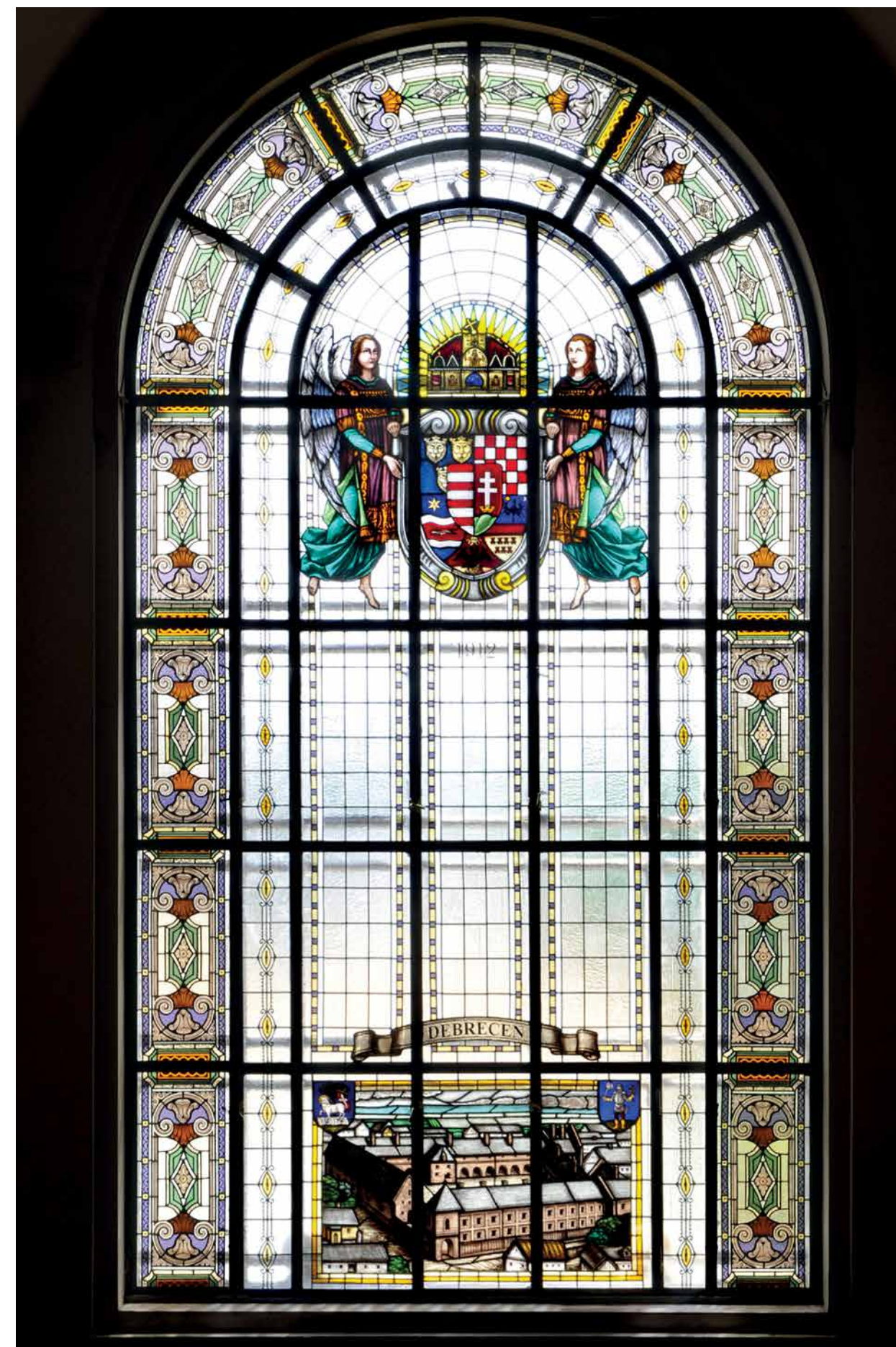


*The Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Zurich*



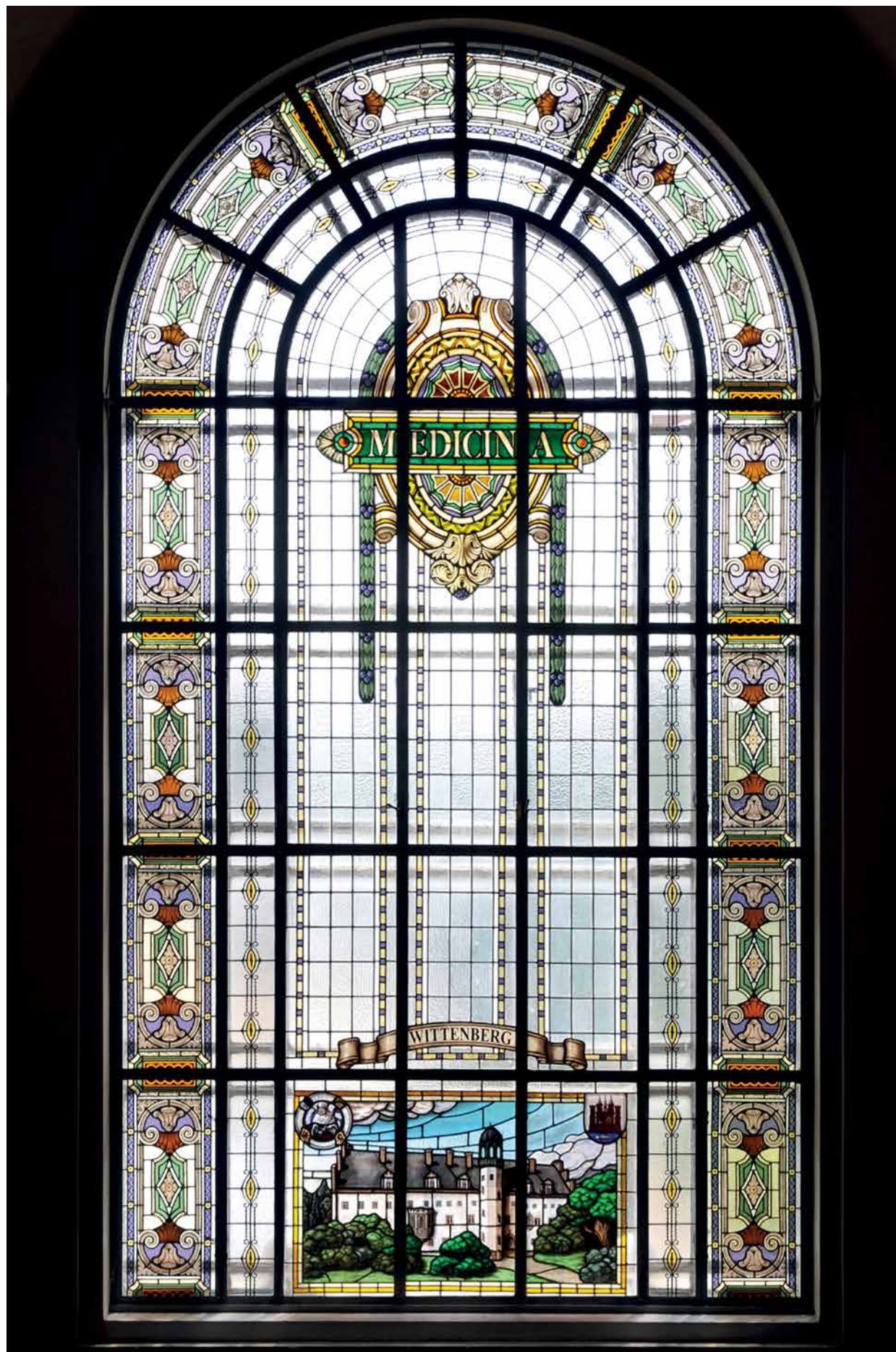


*The Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Utrecht*

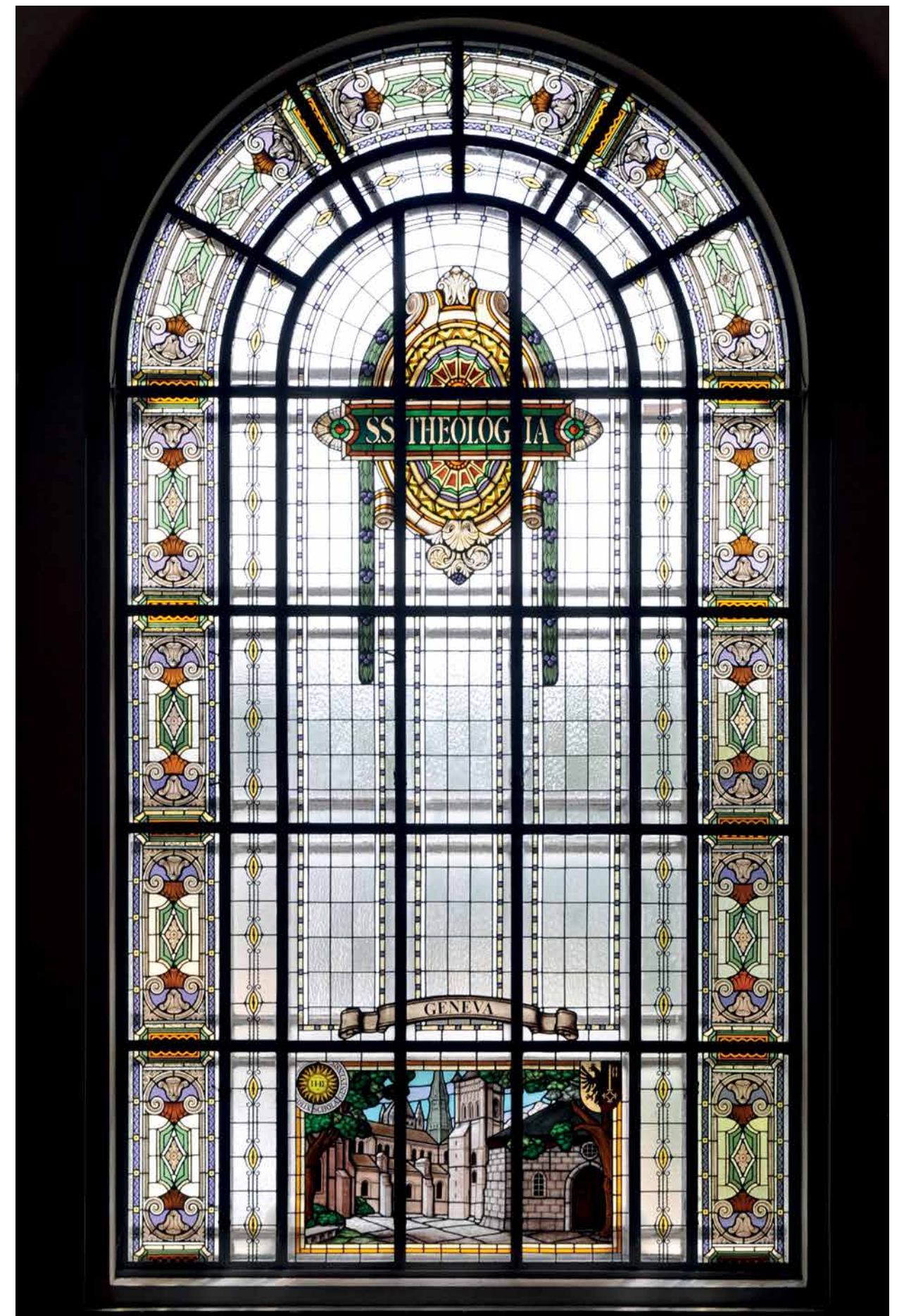


*The Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Debrecen*





*The Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Wittenberg*



*The Stained Glass Window of the Assembly Hall – Geneva*





*Coat of Arms on the Tisza Tablecloth*

## The Tisza Tablecloth



The tablecloth that was once made upon the order of Count Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Public Education, in the homecraft workshop established by Royal Princess Isabella with the aim of preserving traditions, was a silent witness of numerous events, celebrations, degree and doctoral degree awarding ceremonies for centuries. The applied arts masterpiece named the “Tisza tablecloth” was received by the incoming rector of the institution,

Benjámín Csánki from the minister himself at the opening ceremony of the academic year of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen on October 14, 1929. The cloth has faded and been worn out over the long years and by now it is only a frail reminder of years past.

But what is the relationship between Kunó Klebelsberg, a Hungarian royal princess, and the work of a homecraft workshop? What makes it a “Tisza” tablecloth? The opening ceremony of



*Doctor Honoris Causa Award Ceremony of Finnish Linguist Dr. Juhana Artturi Kannisto*



the academic year on October 14, 1929 started with a worship service at the Reformed Great Church, followed by a ceremonial university assembly meeting in the ceremonial hall of the Reformed College, which was also attended by Minister Klebelsberg who presented the Tisza tablecloth. The outgoing rector Jenő Darkó said in his official speech: *“Today’s celebration is made especially significant by the fact that it marks the day when we can first use the decorative tablecloth that is presented to the university as a result of the joint effort of the noble-hearted and artistic taste of Her Excellency Isabel Royal Princess and the sacrifice of His Excellency, the Minister of Culture. This cloth was made at the Izabella-Homecraft workshop that wishes to propagate our Hungarian national art by applying motifs of Hungarian art on handicraft ornaments and through the preservation of the masterpieces of national art contribute to the enrichment of the aesthetic and moral capital of the nation, and improve our national identity and self-confidence.”*



*The Altarcloth of the Reformed Church in Nagyvarsány (Motifs of the Tisza Tablecloth)*

Rector Darkó also answered the question of why the minister considered it so important to have such an object made and then presented as a gift to the university, which at that time did not even have a completed central building! *“His Excellency, the Minister of Culture has made sure that our central building will be not only useful but will also within the range of our financial constraints satisfy artistic needs. Thus he already told us during his visit to the university last October about his decision to donate a decorative cloth to cover the university council table in the Assembly Hall of the central building. Such a welcome promise was soon followed by action.”* As Minister Klebelsberg himself noted: *“This cloth that I hereby present to the István Tisza University on behalf of the Hungarian State was made based on old Hungarian patterns and with Hungarian motifs. This teaches us that we should respect Hungarian traditions, the Hungarian land where our university is erected and that we should always apply this love and protection to Hungarian*



*Tisza Tablecloth*



culture and education as well. The three coats of arms of this tablecloth, that of the Hungarian state, the city, and the university, shall symbolize that these three shall come together harmoniously on this piece of land and work for Hungarian education in the true meaning of this word,” as reported in the yearbook.

The 300-year-old altarcloth on the altar of the Reformed Church in Nagyvarsány served as the model, which was embroidered by Countess Mária Thoroczkay in 1656. Later it came in the possession of Count Ferenc Gyulai of Marosnémet and his wife, Count Mária Bánffy, who gave it as

a gift to the Reformed Church in Nagyvarsány in 1726 together with a complete service for the altar, a marble communion table, plates, chalice, and flagon.

The Tisza tablecloth itself took over ten months of work by the Izabella Homecraft workshop. Rector Darkó described it in detail: “On a red Italian velvet base with antique patina and embroidered with gold and silver, it includes the Mária Thorockay pattern beautifully adapted to the new material, while it also features the full Hungarian coat of arms, to the right the coat of arms of Count István Tisza and to the left



Inscription of the Tisza Tablecloth



The Pattern of the Original Tisza Tablecloth

that of the city of Debrecen, with the minutest heraldic details. His Excellency, the Minister of Culture aptly named this masterpiece of industrial art the ‘Tisza tablecloth’, wishing to indicate that this most recent piece of the refurbishment of our university shall be seen as an expression of a sense of sacrifice and homage to the memory of the great statesman who we may thank for the foundation of this university and whose name it also bears.”

What makes a royal princess support homecraft? Princess Isabella von Croÿ who married Archduke Friedrich in 1878 supported the development and teaching of high-quality folk craft in Hungary (embroidery, crochet) and founded manor schools for Hungarian women in the area of the Habsburg Monarchy in Hungary. Based on her initiative, a women’s association was established to support the embroidery home craft of Pozsony (Bratislava) and its surroundings, which was named the “Izabella embroidery home craft association” for which she served not only as organizer but also as a patron.

Of course, the contemporary daily press also reported the opening ceremony and specifically the arrival of the cloth in detail. *Debreceni Ujság* published a lengthy article about the ceremony the following day under the title “The Minister of Culture at the Opening Ceremony of the University of Debrecen” and the subtitle “István Tisza Tablecloth Presented to the University of Debrecen.” The article reveals that there was huge interest and the presentation of the Tisza tablecloth was considered truly extraordinary as the paper provided a long list of all the city’s notables who were present at the event: “The prominent audience has already filled the ceremonial hall entirely by this time, including the leading figures of Debrecen’s genteel society as well as the heads of various offices. Thus Dezső Baltazár reformed bishop was present, along with dr. János Lindenberger apostolic governor, ...dr.

István Vásáry mayor as head of the city council..., dr. György Magoss retired mayor..., Lajos Ady director general of the school district, Lajos Kesserü President of the Court, Mihály Perjéssy Chairman of the Board, vitéz dr. Lajos Bessenyei director of the Reformed high school, dr. József Lukáts director of the Piarist high school, as well as many other prominent figures of the genteel society.” – noted the *Debreceni Ujság* for October 1929.

“...As soon as the university council was seated on the podium, the college choir sang the anthem, and under the tense anticipation of the audience outgoing rector dr. Jenő Darkó arose to speak and he reported in detail on the activities of the University of Debrecen during the previous year in a beautiful speech. At the beginning of his speech he also praised the other significant event of the day, the donation of the decorative tablecloth made for the University of Debrecen designed and supervised by Royal Princess Isabel... The Minister of Culture named it the Tisza tablecloth. The new tablecloth is an excellent work of art that beautifully revives the forgotten motives of old Hungarian handicraft.” – wrote the daily.

“Let this tablecloth carry the glory of its noble-hearted, generous creators for centuries, let it represent our never-ending tribute to the great university founder and the unparalleled model of all Hungarian patriots, and let it preach our deep love and affection of our dear Hungarian historical traditions by constantly reminding us of old Hungarian art.” – wrote the yearbook and almanac when commemorating the events of the 1929/30 academic year.

At present the Tisza tablecloth is carefully wrapped in a storeroom waiting for a new opportunity to fulfil its mandate even if not in its original function but as a much appreciated part of the university’s historical collection that keeps reminding us of the institution’s history even after almost a century.





*Awarding of a Doctor Honoris Causa Degree in the Rector's Council Room in 1938*

## The Iványi-Grünwald Painting in the Rector's Council Room



For decades the Rector's Council Room in the Main Building of the university has been decorated by the large-scale painting of Béla Iványi-Grünwald titled *The Conviction of Mihály Dull*. However, there have only been legends so far about how, when, and under what circumstances the painting made its way to Debrecen.

Painter Béla Iványi-Grünwald received a commission by the state from Minister Kunó Klebelsberg to prepare the monumental piece in 1923. He asked him to paint two pictures on a historical topic for the Assembly Hall in the Main Building of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen at that time under construction. Only one of his works was completed, however, and even that was not put on display in the Assembly Hall, as Katalin Telepy, biographer of the artist noted.

Béla Iványi-Grünwald was born on May 6, 1867 on Darázs-pusztá near Som in Somogy County. He was one of the artists defining a key period in Hungarian painting and working on the establishment of the artists' colony in Nagybánya. His artistic career may be divided into several periods. He arrived in Nagybánya already with great skills in drawing and painting, where he became acquainted with a naturalistic way of painting that brought great success for him later on. Later, due to the impact of

modern approaches coming from Paris, he created decorative, monumental paintings along the lines of European Art Nouveau. Later on he undertook the task of supporting young artists as the leader of the artists' colony in Kecskemét. From the 1920s on, he spent the summers at Lake Balaton, which also had its impact on his oeuvre. It was during this period that he was commissioned to prepare the large-scale composition *The Conviction of Mihály Dull* for the Assembly Hall of the University of Debrecen.

The painting chronicles the story told by Mór Jókai that took place in Debrecen during Turkish times (titled "How Mihály Dull became János Rácz"): Mihály Dull was summoned in front of the pasha in Várad for killing a chiaus (Turkish soldier) but due to a clever move by András Bayk, the chief justice of Debrecen, Dull was exchanged for János Rácz who was already sentenced to death and awaiting execution.

Mór Jókai visited Debrecen several times and spent four months here during the War of Independence between January and April, 1849. Thus it is natural that stories related to the town and personal memories may be identified in several of his accounts. *"The poet Jókai loved using political events, ideologies, problems, well-known figures as resources for his work and he had a special talent that enabled him to turn even the crudest political*



motif into the obedient tool of aesthetic effect; for example, to overcome the contemporary public events and present them from an artistic distance” — wrote Ferenc Zsigmond in his work on Jókai and Debrecen during his inaugural speech as corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Science. *“Even if unintentionally, the task becomes a topic of the tale, a poetic theme in which the essence has to be true, while names, numbers and other external data are used more for a sense of an illusion and the point is not whether they are authentic or not but that they should be typical. Jókai needed a well-known, famous, typical Debrecen street name to tell the story of his stay in Debrecen in an illustrative way and thus he picked Péterfia street where he prefers to place the imaginary characters of his poetry as well; the two neighbors annoying one another live there: Márton Gubádi and Orbán Csukási (“Két menyegző”), there is the butcher János Kondor and the future daughter-in-law’s mother: Daczosné (“Mégsem lett belőle tekintetes asszony”), even colonel Simonyi lived there when he went to the Piarist school probably so that Jókai could make him walk a long way everyday, thus providing believable occasions for fighting Calvinist students (“A legvitézebb huszár”); the shanty of the impious János Rácz was also located in the small*

*Péterfia street (“Hogyan lett Dull Mihály uramból Rácz János?”) — highlights Ferenc Zsigmond in his account of the events.*

It remains an eternal mystery, however, why Béla Iványi-Grünwald picked this specific Jókai story as the subject of his painting. We may only guess but probably he wanted to use a Debrecen-related topic for a painting made for the University of Debrecen or he was inspired by the great storyteller Jókai. The creation of the grand painting was preceded by several sketches. One of these has been preserved by the Déri Museum. *“Today we know of two sketches of the large painting at the University of Debrecen. The location of one of them is unknown, while the other one is in the Déri Museum.” — said Éva Fodor museologist. She continued; “The name of Iványi-Grünwald has become one with his treatment of light, the development of the expressiveness of colors, and this is visible not only on the large painting but already on the sketch. The artist paid special attention to the depiction of the clothes of the protagonist with a light tone and intensive colors, this is exactly why the spots built on the opposition of the yellow and blue dress of Pasha Mehmed direct attention to him immediately. He is the other protagonist of the painting with the scene unfolding in front of him. The painter depicts*

*exactly this moment, the scene of judgment with this form of composition.”*

The work was completed by 1928 and was even presented at the group exhibition organized in the Ernst Museum in Pest, as reported by *Új idők* on April 22, 1928 that also mentioned that the painting would be part of the Hungarian group of the exhibition in Italy. It is interesting that the paper used the title *“Judgment. A Scene from the Turkish World”* as the caption. After this, the painting traveled to Milan, Italy in 1929 where Béla Iványi-Grünwald was introduced to the audience in the company of István Csók, Gyula Radnay, and János Vaszary. The painting titled the Conviction of Mihály Dull won the gold medal and finally arrived in Debrecen. But where would the painting be placed? The Main Building of the university was still being built and was finally inaugurated officially in 1932. Thus there was no Assembly Hall yet where according to some sources the painting was to be placed. In another publication, Katalin Telekdy mentioned the university library as the final venue of the painting. The 1929/30 university yearbook records succinctly: *“The painting by Béla Iványi-Grünwald titled ‘How Mihály Dull became János Rácz’ has arrived and the painting was*

*temporarily put on display in the rector’s reception hall.”*

But where could the rector’s reception room be? In 1918 Charles IV inaugurated the central building of the newly established Faculty of Medicine. It was at this time that the Rector’s Office was moved from the Reformed College to the building in the Great Forest where the office could begin its work and it was also here that the study and reception room of the rector was established. Thus most probably this yearbook refers to the central building of the clinical site. There is no mention in the yearbook or almanac of the university, however, of when and how after the opening of the Main Building the painting was moved to its current location and why it was not placed in the Assembly Hall as originally planned. *“Also due to the care of our Council, the rightly admired Iványi-Grünwald painting in the Council Room received an ornate frame...” — reported the 1935/36 university yearbook.*

The painting in the Rector’s Council Room has witnessed meetings, decisions, the arrival of high-ranking guests, cheerful discussions, and it could also get to know the former leaders of the university. It is part of times past and hopefully of the future as well.



*The Administration of the University in the Council Room with the Painting The Conviction of Mihály Dull in the Background*



*Béla Iványi-Grünwald's Painting, The Conviction of Mihály Dull in the Rector's Council Room*



## The Tisza Furniture



The University of Debrecen cherishes the memory of the former namesake-founder, Count István Tisza, Prime Minister to this day. On June 5, 1921, the institution was named for this statesman martyred on October 31, 1918. From 1921 the official name of the institution was the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen until 1945. The University Council, at its special meeting on June 6, 1921, decided to establish a Tisza memorial collection consisting of objects and documents related to the martyred prime minister. April 22, the birthday of István Tisza was declared a day of celebration for the university. The contemporary yearbooks reported in detail about the events, most of which consisted

of scholarly presentations. For decades, the university collected memorabilia related to István Tisza and his family. The idea of establishing the collection was raised by rector Frigyes Verzár at the October 28, 1927 meeting of the university council: *"...our university possesses several memorial objects that were once owned by Count István Tisza or that remind us of him, thus it would seem justified to collect such items regularly. Therefore, we exhibit the objects collected so far in an ornamental cabinet in the Rector's Room and at the same time initiate action aimed at collecting privately-owned objects in a larger number."*

The collection of objects has had multiple names (the Tisza collection, the Tisza memorial collection,



◀ The Tisza Cabinet

▲ The Tisza Settee Set



István Tisza memorabilia, István Tisza memorabilia museum, Tisza memorabilia collection) and was exhibited in one of the meeting rooms of the Rector's Office in the Main Building (then called the Central Building) that was completed in 1932. We find reports of this event in issues MMXV and MMXVI of the *Gerundium* journal on higher education history, recalling the memories of László Vince, formerly the rector's secretary under the title *"University legends — memories and fragments from the history of the University of Debrecen."* *"The university opened a Tisza memorial room with the aim of preserving and presenting the documents related to the namesake..."* On May 19, 1942 Hungarian Radio broadcast about the collection. The wax disc on which the recording was made, however, was also destroyed. The collection (mostly consisting of letters and photos) itself was destroyed at the end of World War II, in 1944-45. *"...the current holdings of the university deteriorated to a great extent in 1944, many and in most parts irreplaceable items.... were damaged or lost..."* — said Rector János Bodnár. This was especially unfortunate as according to the 1927/28 yearbook the collection must have been of considerable size, containing a total of 235 objects.

The majority of the furniture received from the family and offered to the university in 1944, however, has survived: according to the unpublished yearbook of the 1944/45 academic year of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University. That yearbook itself has survived in manuscript form, *"Count Lajos Kálmán Tisza donated the family castle in Geszt and the yard also including the castle garden, as well as the remaining furnishing of the castle and the holdings of the library to the University of Debrecen for the establishment of an institution serving the purposes of the university."*

As the *Gerundium* journal notes based on the recollections of László Vince: *"Today only the rustic cabinet and seats on the corridor of the Rector's Office*

*may remind us of the namesake, along with the portrait of Ilona Tisza in the Rector's Room..."* — which itself also had an adventurous journey to the university. Professor András Csilléry, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, had a significant collection of works of art, including paintings and chinaware. In 1944 he asked for the permission of the rector (who granted it) to place his collection in the basement of the university (to protect it from possible bombings). In exchange for such permission, he offered the bridal portrait of Ilona Tisza as a donation. The professor was later charged with war crimes and his collection (including Ilona Tisza's portrait) was seized. As a result of intervention by a professor of the Faculty of Law (arguing that the painting was verifiably the property of the university) the painting returned to its original place, the reception room of the rector.



*Portrait of Ilona Tisza*



*The Tisza Settee Set*





# The Heritage of Centuries – The University Library



The history of the University Library is almost as long as that of the institution itself, the decision regarding its establishment was made during the premiership of István Tisza and in the same year Antal Csige Varga was commissioned by the minister of religion and public education to organize the library, which similarly to the classrooms started its operation at a temporary venue in 1918 in Simonffy street. This “temporary” state lasted for almost 15 years, until the completion of the Main Building.

*“A university library in general, and in Debrecen in particular, has to strive to realize two key objectives: supporting university education successfully and disseminating scholarly information as broadly as possible.”* – claimed György Szabó, head of the institution in 1924. The library that had

a bit more than 10,000 volumes at the beginning was expanded by the end of the 1928/29 academic year into a catalogued collection with more than 40,000 holdings organized in line with the needs of the different faculties. It brought about real progress in the life of the university when in 1929 István Nyíreő became the director of the library. Development did not stop: the library received a prominent place in the central building construction based on the plans of Flóris Korb even if the architect originally had plans to house the library in a separate building connected with the Main Building by a bridge (the decision of the ministry, however, dismissed such plans referring to financial considerations).

The collection was moved to its current, final place in 1932. *“Although due to the unfavorable*



Students in the Reading Room in 1965



Library, 1965

◀ Reading Hall of the University of Debrecen University and National Library



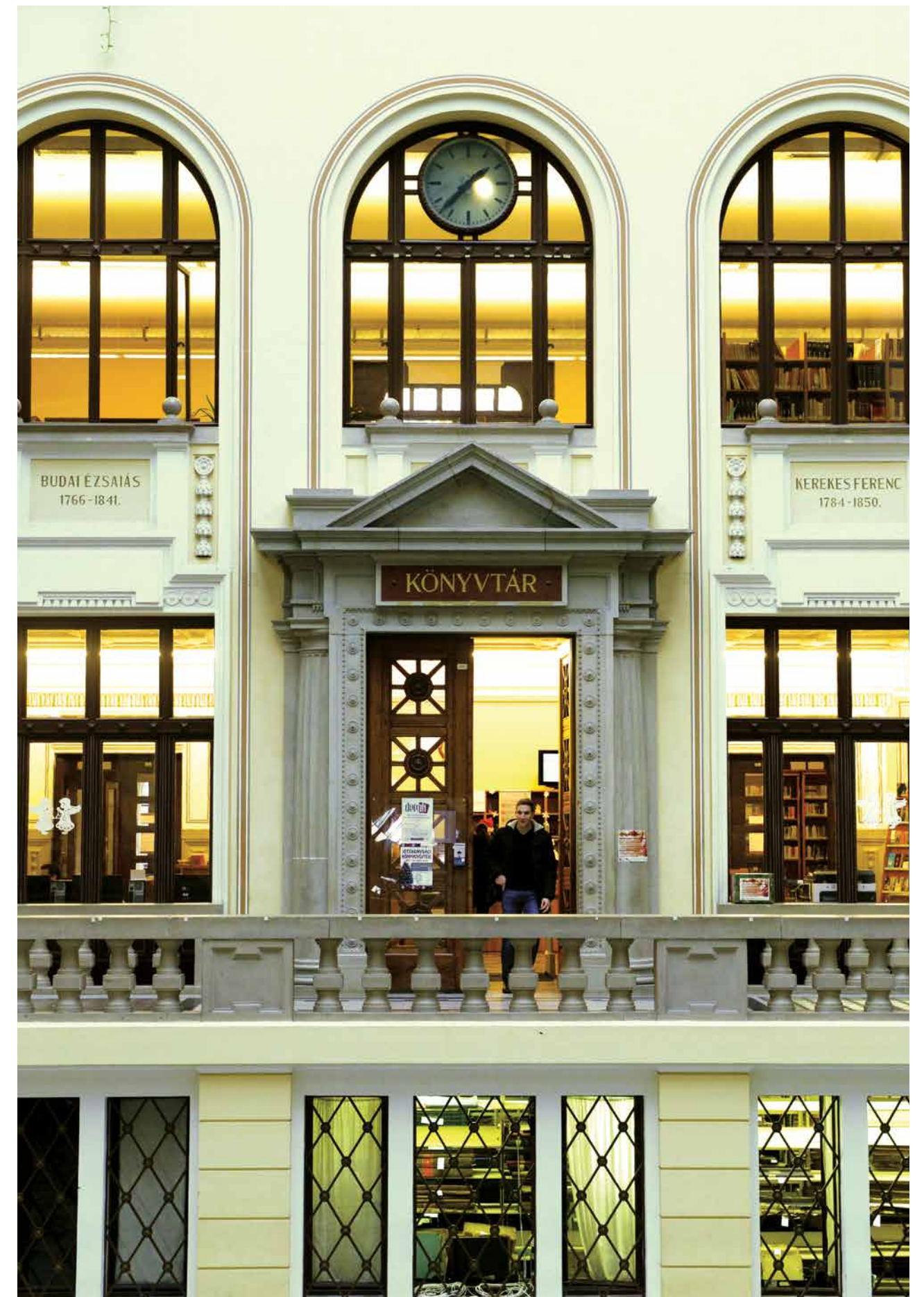
*financial circumstances the internal completion of the building and especially its adequate refurbishing represents a major task for the upcoming years, we are happy to say that the new institution in the center of the university site can provide the most important opportunity for future development with its extensive repository... The materials that filled forty storage carts... could be carried directly to their final position due to proper preparations.” – wrote István Nyíreő in his report on the operation of the library in 1933.*

*“The moving of our library represents a notable moment in the intellectual life of our university... In this*

*process the library could move from the small leased rooms to the modern spaces of the central building, which is a definite advantage for both the professors and students wishing to learn. Unfortunately, the completion of the grand reading hall (that our diligent students would fill) remains a distant hope... I need to express my acknowledgements to the library staff for their excellent performance in moving a library with more than 100,000 volumes and organizing it rapidly.” – said rector István Rugonfalvi Kiss in his report on the 1932–33 operation of the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen.*



*Back Entrance of the Central Building, the Library from Outside*



*Entrance of the University of Debrecen University and National Library*

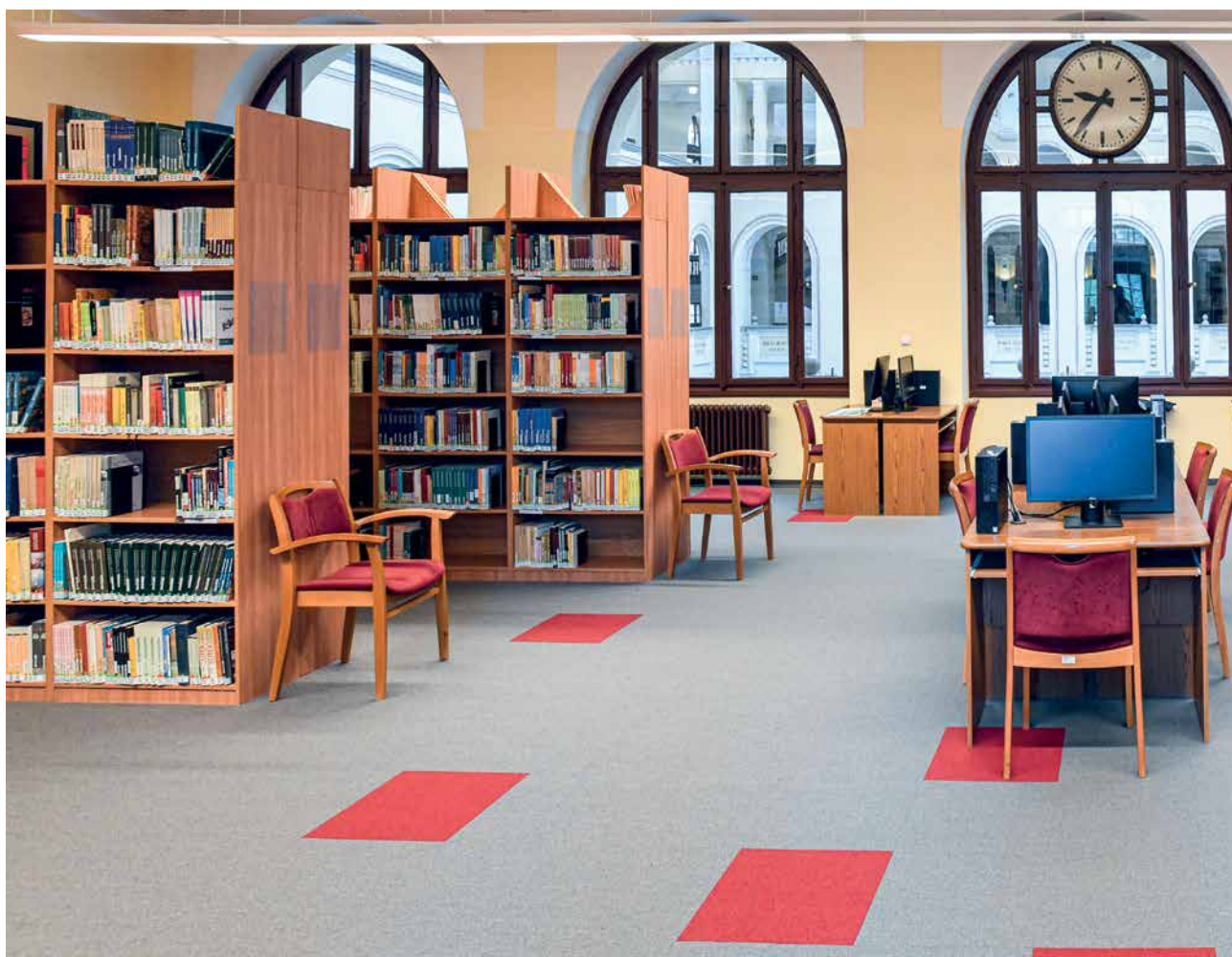




*Students in the Library's Reading Room in 1965*

Although the originally-stated task expressed by György Szabó in 1924 has remained unchanged, it went through significant transformations: besides the traditional services related to reading and borrowing in the library, the library now offers numerous modern services for readers from all over the world. Besides the traditional responsibilities, the scholarly publications, student papers, and educational materials of the university are also collected electronically, while the library also operates the iDEa Academic Profiles site presenting the academic work of researchers of the institution. Of course, with holdings of more than 6 million volumes, there are numerous old documents that can still be found only in the traditional card catalog. Due to extensive digitalization, however, not only finding

but also viewing them is becoming easier. The Digital Collections are expanding continuously on the library's website with newer and newer items added from one week to the next to the online galleries of old books, posters, and maps alike. The University of Debrecen's University and National Library (DEENK) today operates on ten sites on a total floor space of over 14,000 square meters and with 120 staff members providing services for close to 40,000 members of the university community. 1,000 reading spaces can be used at one time, with 200 of these also having a computer, addressing a growing need related to technological developments. The number of visitors and users clearly shows that the University and National Library continues to be an integral part of education, research, and culture.



*Reading Room in 2020*



*Corner of the Library "Island"*



## The Library of Secrets – Rare Books and Special Collections



Those wishing to walk next to all the shelves of the University of Debrecen's University and National Library (DEENK) would have to complete a distance equal to that of a marathon as the length of the storage exceeds 47 kilometers. Thus it is not by chance that only a few can explore a small but significant collection of 30,000 volumes within the total of six million library holdings that comprise the Rare Books and Special Collections section containing the most valuable holdings of the Library, among them several ornamental books made in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The collection was established in 1976 when the library began to separate volumes published before 1850 and of museum quality and value separately. The Rare Books and Special Collections today bring together cultural values of Debrecen, Hungary, and Europe from the age of incunabula (1450-1500) to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867).

The collection primarily focuses on researching Hungarian history, books published in Hungarian abroad, and all antiquarian or old books that may be of value today. The bulk of the protected books



*A Rarity in the Library, a Miniature Book*



*Rarities in the Library, Collection of Miniature Books*





Rarities in the University Library

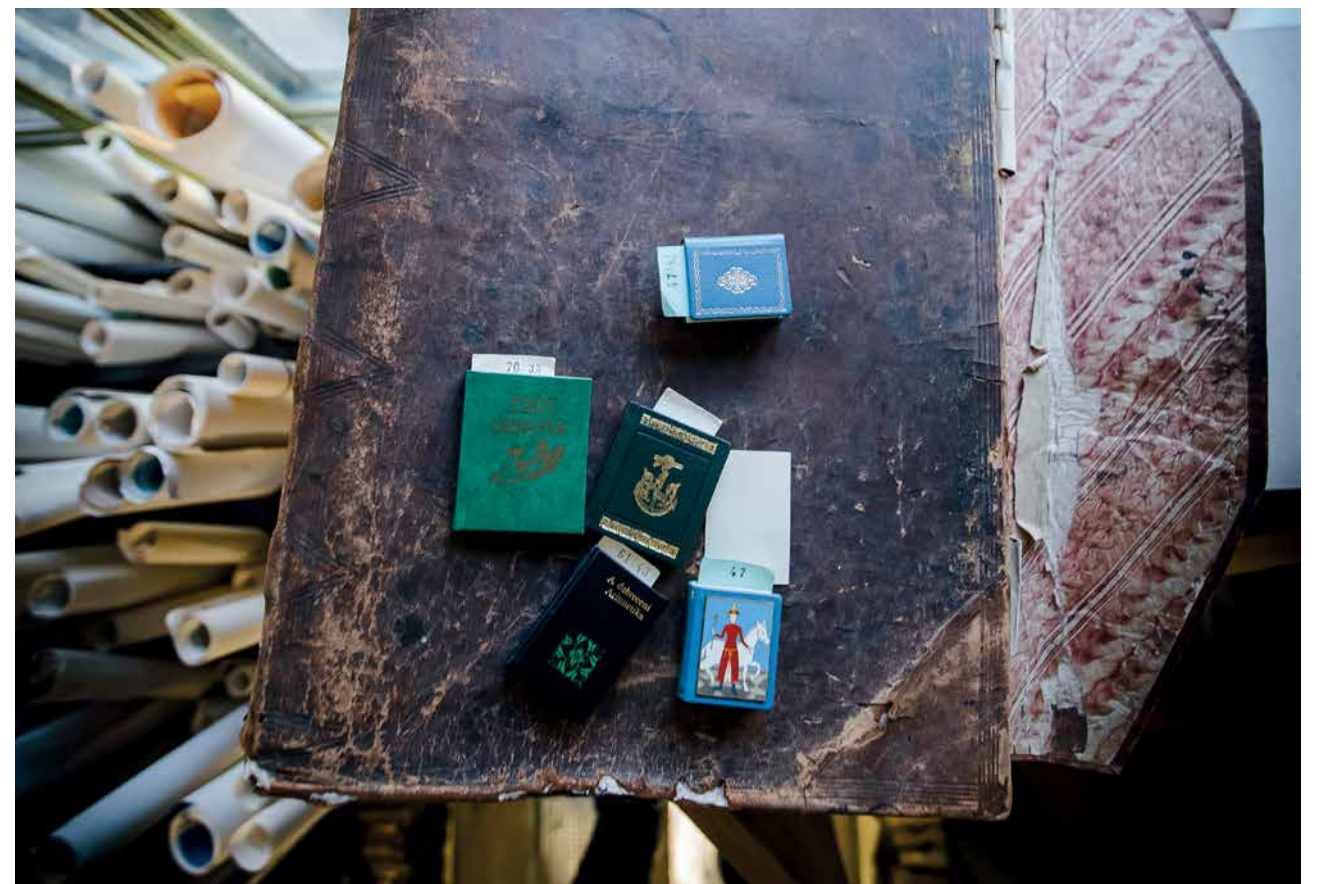
is made up by “Hungaricana” but it also includes decorative books, rarities, miniature books, as well as valuable and rare books due to their printing or binding technique.

A significant proportion of the early part of the collection is made up by old, Hungarian Church documents, with many of them having relevance for Debrecen. The oldest piece is the Latin Bible printed in Nürnberg in 1480, but the collection also features a volume of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas from 1486 in its original Italian renaissance leather binding. Incunabula of Hungarian relevance are represented by the

chronicle of János Túróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum* published in Brünn in 1488, a mass book from 1512 published in Venice decorated with beautifully-colored miniatures, and a copy of the Vizsoly Bible (even though it is an incomplete, restored copy) made in 1590 and from which today there are only 52 left in the world. It is a special, interesting feature of the Várad Bible printed in Transylvania in 1661 that although the Old Testament section was made in Várad, the semi-finished volume was taken to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) to protect it from the Turkish peril and where printing could be completed with the New Testament.

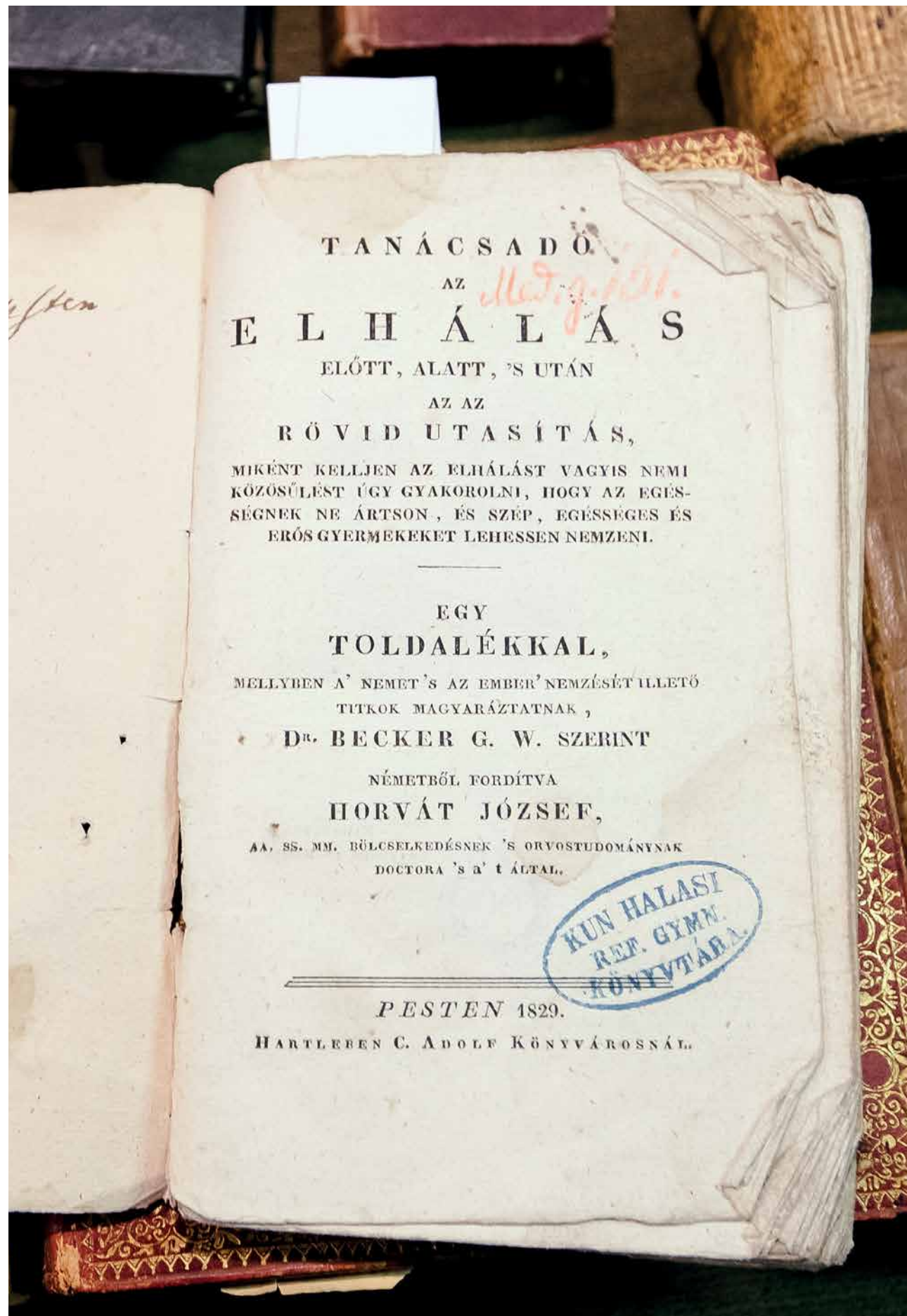


Encyclopedia



Rarities in the Library, Collection of Miniature Books





Rarity in the University Collection

First printings represent a separate category that includes the famous narrative poem *Toldi* written by János Arany and Mihály Fazekas' *Lúdas Matyi* "published in Vienna in 1815" with only four copies of the latter surviving to this day, and the first issue of the *Nyugat* literary journal.

The miniature collection with close to 1,000 volumes is a real curiosity representing the wonders of contemporary printing technology, along with the largest size volume, a memorial album of the coronation ceremony of Alexander II of Russia and Maria Alexandrovna from 1856.

The collection also includes a richly-illustrated "Book teaching midwifery" published in 1766

in "*Debretzen*" and a booklet from the library of the Kunhalas Reformed Girls School that was visibly consulted many times and which provided information in 1829 for young ladies prior to marriage titled "Advice before, during and after consummation and a brief instruction on how to do it..."

The collection is expanding to the extent possible and the library staff also pay special attention to restoring existing volumes. Although the use of the books is governed by strict regulations, they (similarly to the library collection as a whole) also serve the purposes of scholarly research and education at the university.



The Incomplete, Restored Copy of the Vizsoly Bible in the Library



# The University Church



The adventurous or rather troubled story of the University Church started in 1938 with a call for tenders, and continued in 1939 with the laying of the foundation stone and the consecration of the building in 1942. The church was hit by a bomb during the war but the biggest loss was caused later when it was made impossible for it to function as the house of God. It became state property and was operated as an IT center and library storage, while its stairs served as the venue of summer theater performances. It was returned to the university congregation in 2001 but they could take actual possession of it only in 2006. The Tiszántúl Reformed Church District worked hard to make its renovation possible and for the church to be able to function again in line with its original purpose.

The University Church came into existence as part of the plans to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformed College, the Jubilee Executive Committee announced a national tender for designing a university church in 1938, with several architects participating in the call. Finally, eleven designs were submitted, four of which are still available in the manuscripts division of the college library. Two of them could not be identified as the modern and folk-style drawings submitted under the names of “*cyklamen*” and “*kántus*” were never associated

with real names by the jury probably because they did not make it to the next round.

The name of Béla Gyöngyöshalászi Takách, however, has survived. The designer submitted a classicizing neo-baroque plan and one with eclectic, neo-Romanesque and neo-baroque elements as well, however, in the end the jury chose the drawings of the then already retired József Borsos as the winner. He also prepared several versions ranging from the modern style to the neoclassical, with the latter finally chosen. The work, however, could be implemented “only” after several modifications as a major debate unfolded about the location of the church. The members of the committee thought that it should be attached to the lateral *avant-corps* of the university building, while József Borsos imagined the sanctuary to be built on the corner lot of the University Square and the avenue. Finally (despite his protest) the church was built only 16 meters away from the university, which resulted in a less favorable scaling in view of the large university building. At the same time, he also had to adapt the building to the university, thus among others, the committee required that he use a main cornice with Doric columns

*The University Church* ►







Ceremonial Hammer Blow by State Secretary Dr. Károly Jalsoviczky in 1939



Construction of the University Church



Consecration of the University Church in 1942

thus pushing Borsos' unique formal style into the background. Nor did his characteristic use of clinker brick and sandstone facade cladding material combinations prevail.

Despite the limitations, however, the University Church has become a modern building of Debrecen with an excellent mass formation and spatial effect. The main facade is made even more solemn by the grand, free-standing stairway that leads to an open colonnade, this way hinting at the relationship between modern sciences and ancient Greek culture. The 48-meter-high tower with its artistic proportions can still manage to balance the presence and mass formation of the university. The large church interior designed to seat close to 1,000 people could be an interior of the Cívis town with one of the most beautiful effects of its time. The floorplan starts out from a 15x15 meter central square which ends in a "window wreath" at a height of 13 meters above the side wings and closes with a rising coffered ceiling. Two triangular side wings and the nave itself join this central square.

Local contractor Lajos Sebestény was commissioned with the construction. The beauty of the interior was made even more attractive by the folk-style carvings of the pulpit, decorations of the 25-cassette ceiling with Hungarian motifs, and the 35 stained glass windows with a Biblical theme created by Jenő Haranghy.

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone was held on April 27, 1939 on the István Tisza Square in front of the central building, simultaneously with the unveiling of the statues in the park. "Of the four excellent individuals of Hungarian Reformation, the statue of Bishop Péter Méliusz has already been erected, thus we are here today to unveil the statues of György Komáromi Csipkés, Calvinist pastor and teacher of theology in Debrecen, Gál Huszár, founder of the printing press in Debrecen and reformed pastor, and Albert Szenci

*Molnár, Calvinist writer and psalm translator from Debrecen, and to hand them over to the free royal town of Debrecen. The university church that is currently being built is also such a facility and its foundation stone should be laid after this unveiling ceremony."* – said Rector Jenő Bacsó. After the unveiling of the statues, the ceremony continued in front of the church, with Sándor Makkai, dean of the Faculty of Reformed Theology, reading from the Bible. The traditional document encapsulated in the foundation stone, titled "Glory belongs to God alone" read: "...to proclaim the words of God, however, a shelter is also needed... This holy need led to the building of a reformed church for the Hungarian Royal István Tisza University of Debrecen as it has for four centuries provided for the education of pastors, servants of the word of God... Let the sacred shelter raised upon the foundation stone serve at all times for the benefit of the Hungarian national spirit and the rise of the Holy Trinity and the glory of God in this world as fully as possible."

The mottos recited by the dignitaries as they delivered their ceremonial hammer blows were as follows: "As the psalmist says: Blessed are those who believe in the Lord." – said Károly Jalsoviczky, Hungarian Royal State Secretary for Religion and Public Education. "This foundation stone and this church shall stand here – and until this time it shall stand! – as long as Christ, only Christ and the whole Christ is preached here!" – said Imre Révész, Bishop of the Tinszántúl Reformed Church District. The third hammer blow was made by Rector Jenő Bacsó, who said the following: "Let there be silence within your stone walls and good peace... so that within your walls the torch of faith and within the walls of the neighboring university that of science should provide light for eternity to the glory of God and the benefit of our Hungarian country!"

The university yearbook reporting on the ceremony also considered it important to mention



that *“The Hungarian Radio also broadcast our inspirational ceremony.”*

After the construction was completed, the consecration of the church took place on May 17, 1942, starting with the prayer of Rector Kálmán Kállay, followed by his sermon. Calvinist Bishop Imre Révész then gave the consecration speech: *“If we people enter our churches, great churches or even this one, we are fascinated by the huge dimensions and we feel so small. We look up at the great gates, arches, vaults, and marvel at them. How large are they compared to us! But if the Lord comes, how small everything suddenly becomes. How small the gates are and the brave vaults are but miniscule! Give way to the Lord as he is the King of glory!” “...please preserve this church and the towering crystal palace of national science, education, and culture next to it from ever having to become two competing castles...”*

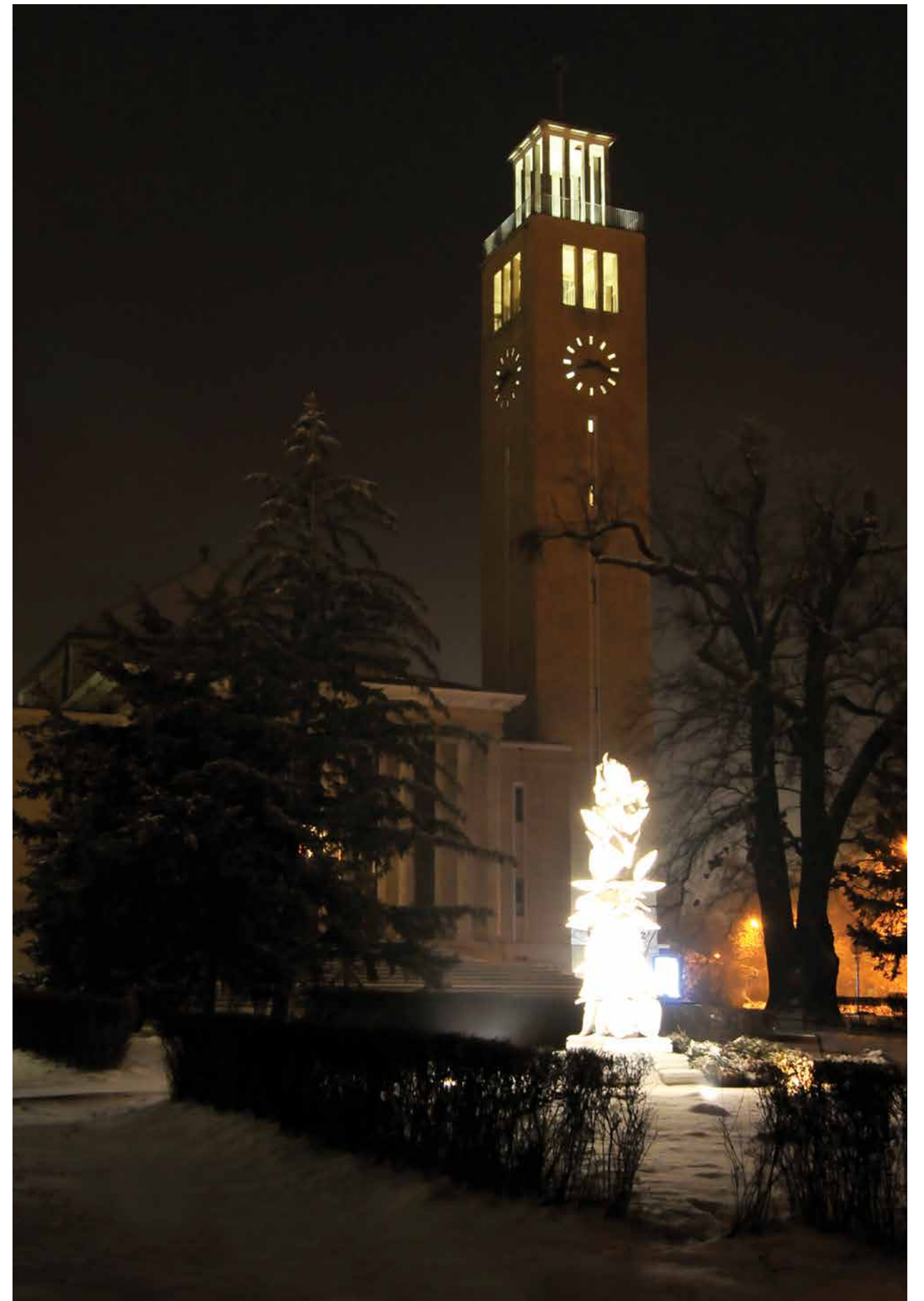
The joy provided by the new church, however, did not last long. During World War II the building was badly damaged, most of its glass windows were destroyed, and only three pieces were found during the renovation of 2007. Political events made the life of the congregation harder and harder and as the state administration considered the church to be too close to the university, it

became state property in 1970. For a few years the building was used as storage and in the 1970s summer theater performances were held on its stairs. In the 1980s the IT center of the university was moved into it and then the building housed the library’s journal and music collections. It was at this time that the 400-ton steel structure was built within the church which was used for storing the library holdings on four levels. After the change of regime, the building was returned to the Great Forest Congregation as a result of a special government decision and then renovation started so that the church could be made fit to serve its original purpose again. The church was renovated by the Tiszántúl Reformed Church District between December 2020 and April 2021 using a grant of more than HUF 500 million. The purpose of the renovation project was to preserve the architectural values, modernize the building, and reinforce the structure of the tower.

The university Main Building in the Great Forest, the park, the professors’ villas, and the University Church designed by József Borsos provide a representation of architecture of the 1930s and 1940s that is hardly found together anywhere else in the country.



*The Decorative Glass Windows of the University Church*



*The University Church at Night*



## The Gerundium Rod – An Ancient Symbol



When not used, the gerundium rods symbolizing the institution and its faculties with their custom decoration rest in the Rector's Council Room at the University of Debrecen. What was the original use of the gerundium rod? And why was it chosen as the symbol of the university? Many people ask these questions when they see the decoratively carved rods carried by students wearing caps for the first time at the opening ceremony of the academic year.

Originally, the gerundium was used by students of the Debrecen Reformed College for putting out fires. If the fireguard for a night (called the *vigil*) noticed a fire hazard, he raised the alarm and the students used their rods to prevent the fire from spreading by removing fences and both thatched and shingled roofs. Younger students used smaller rods, while senior students participated in firefighting with the larger versions. The large rod was 170 cm long and weighed 8 kg. According to college legend, the name of the rod used to fight fires supposedly comes from the idea that it is just as difficult to properly use the rod as it is to use the gerund (gerundium) in Latin grammar correctly.

Some of the gerundium rods were also present at the first opening ceremony of the academic year held in the Great Church of Debrecen in October 1914, when the Hungarian Royal University of



*The University  
Gerundium Rod*



*Doctoral Ceremony in 1938*





*A Procession in 1929*



*Procession at the Centennial Opening Ceremony of the Academic Year in 2014*

Debrecen began its operation with three faculties (theology, law, and humanities). The students coming from the area of the Monarchy could also be perceived as the predecessors of the more than 6,000 international students studying at the university today.

The student population included 354 students in the first year, while in a hundred years this has increased almost a hundred times as at present the University of Debrecen has close to 30,000 students. The rectors of the university, the newly inaugurated doctors swore their oath on the gerundium and even today no opening or graduation ceremony may take place without these symbols. Their number has increased however, with the expansion and development of the university, and today all 14 faculties have their

own gerundium symbols with custom decoration.

The gerundium, however, is part not only of ceremonies but also daily life as it features on various publications and invitations as the symbol of the university. The journal specialized in the history of the university is also named *Gerundium*, while the electric car developed by the students of the Faculty of Engineering also bears this name, similarly to the vlog managed by students majoring in communication titled “Featherweight Gerundium.” It appears on ceremonial dresses and those worthy of such a recognition receive a golden gerundium for their work improving the reputation of the university.

The gerundium is a symbol that pays tribute to the centuries-long history of higher education in Debrecen.



*University Bedelli in 1927*



## The History of the University Regalia



It is an unforgettable sight at ceremonies of the University of Debrecen, such as at the opening ceremonies of the academic year or the various graduation ceremonies, when behind the students wearing gowns and carrying the gerundium rods the rector and the deans of the university also enter wearing their chains of office. Only a few realize, however, that the symbols representing the different faculties on the top of the rods and the older chains of the rector and the deans were made more than a hundred years ago from the bronze of cannons obtained from the enemy during World War I, reminding people that several students and teachers of the university fought to protect their country.

On behalf of the university council, in September 1915 Rector Nándor Bernolák submitted a request to the Minister of Religion and Public Education: “... we would be honored... if you could make a proposal that the most gracious donation of the usual regalia of the university should be made from the war material taken during the victorious battles of the triumphant war.” – recorded the 1915/16 yearbook of the Hungarian Royal University of Debrecen. It took long months to receive a favorable answer: the university received permission for its rector and

deans to wear the usual regalia and the “*Minister of War was ordered to make the necessary material available...*”

Minister Béla Jankovich did even more as he took care not only of the necessary materials but (as he argued an artistic solution was necessary) he also thought about the design of the rods, chains and ceremonial robes: “*I would like to inform the honorable Council that I have commissioned Richárd Zutt, Hungarian royal professor of applied arts to design and produce the regalia (the chains of the rector and deans, as well as the rod)...*”

Richard Zutt (1887–1938) an outstanding goldsmith and medalist of his time studied in Munich and worked in Florence. He was invited to teach in Budapest in 1912 and then in 1917 he founded the Hungarian Art Workshop and continued working in the capital until 1925. He died in 1938 in Suez.

As the university founded with five faculties in 1912 (the Faculty of Reformed Theology, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Humanities, Linguistics and History, the Faculty of Quantitative and Natural Sciences, and the Faculty of Medicine) began its operation in 1914 with three faculties, first the symbols of the Faculty of Humanities, Theology, and Law were made. Based on the guidance of Rector Nándor Bernolák, the artist started his work: “*The size and shape of the chains may resemble*

◀ The Rector's Chain





*University Ceremony in 1932*



*The Leadership of the University at the Funeral of Count Kunó Klebelsberg in 1932*

*those worn at the universities in Budapest and Kolozsvár... The shape of the particular chain links should possibly be based on a Hungarian motif, maybe the modern implementation of a Debrecen artefact or work of art.*" He also described his ideas in detail about the gerundium decoration, emphasizing that the institution was established and is supported by the Hungarian state in cooperation with the city, by taking over such noble traditions as those of the ancient reformed college. The gerundium representing the university was created based on the ideas of the rector with a lamb holding a flag reminiscent of the coat of arms of Debrecen. Later, in addition to the symbols created for the 1916/17 academic year, ornamental gowns were also designed by Richárd Zutt. As noted by rector Nándor Láng: *"The commissioned artist created such masterpieces in the form of these regalia which shall be the pride not only of the university but Hungarian applied arts as well."*

The faculty rod of the humanities features an owl that has represented the scholar immersed in books to this day. The gerundium of the Faculty of Law has had an adventurous fate, however, as Lady Justice remained in the desktop drawer of László

Vincze, former secretary to the rector, for more than 40 years (after the closing of the law faculty in 1949) to finally occupy its rightful place among the university symbols. The fate of the dean's chain and gerundium of the Faculty of Theology was similarly adventurous. The theology faculty was suspended at the university in 1950 but continued to work from August 25 of the same year as the Debrecen Academy of Reformed Theology until the foundation of the Reformed Theological University of Debrecen in 1997, at the ceremonies of which the original gerundium with the rooster and dean's chain were again used.

The number of university chains has increased to a great extent as today the university has 14 faculties, each with their own gerundium rod. The newly made chains of the deans all resemble the original with the colors of the faculty added, which are also the colors worn both by the deans and the students on their gown. As in the past, the student carrying the gerundium with the lamb on it knocks on the floor three times and utters the sentence now used for more than a century: "Please stand as the leadership of the university enters."



*The University Council in the 1927/1928 Academic Year*



# The Ceremonial Fanfare



Those who have attended a ceremony organized by the University of Debrecen (an opening ceremony of the academic year or a graduation ceremony) have already heard the constant element of such events, the fanfare music. But what is this music exactly? And how long has it been a part of ceremonies of the university?

Its history goes back to the integration of the former Debrecen Agricultural University, the Medical University of Debrecen, the Lajos Kossuth University, and the István Wargha Teacher-Training College in Hajdúböszörmény, and the creation of the University of Debrecen on January 1, 2000. The university administration of the time decided to use the musical piece by the French composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier titled “Te Deum” as the institution’s signature tune. By today, all university faculties (with the exception of the Faculty of Music which traditionally waves goodbye to its graduating students at the musical ceremony organized in the Liszt Hall) have their graduation ceremonies in the Ceremonial Hall of the Main Building. The venue for the doctoral ceremonies is the Assembly Hall where the students about to receive their doctoral degrees, the students wearing the gowns with the colors of their faculty and carrying the gerundium rods representing their faculties enter, followed by the leadership of the university, the rector, vice

rectors, deans, and professors where after the music ends, the National Anthem is sung.

Most often, the fanfare is played from a recording of the performance of the brass band conducted by András Kammerer, therefore it is a special occasion for brass students of the Faculty of Music when they can participate in person and play Charpentier’s music at the doctoral graduation ceremony.

Marc-Antoine Charpentier (Paris, 1643 – Paris, February 24, 1704) was a French Baroque composer and one of the leading figures of his time in the field of religious music. A part of his grand motet titled “Te Deum” (thanksgiving worship) has by now become a symbolic and constant part of the ceremonies at the University of Debrecen.



Brass Students of the Faculty of Music Playing the Fanfare

## Te Deum

Prelude

M. A. Charpentier







Student Robes of Different Faculties in 2021

## A Brief History of Academic Dress in Debrecen



The gown represents a remarkable and inevitable part of university ceremonies, worn by the heads of the institutions, faculties, and professors at all official events, together with graduating students at graduation ceremonies concluding their university years. Similarly to numerous other traditions of the University of Debrecen, the history of the gown also goes back to the formation of the Reformed College.

The academic dress itself is not unique to Debrecen as it has been seen all over Europe centuries ago according to old school regulations. Debrecen differed from others, however, as the detailed specifications effective here regarding the dress were completely unique.

The mandatory dress of students of the Reformed College, the toga was ordered by the synod of Várad (Oradea) in 1624 based on the initiative of future prince György Rákóczi. This described a black dolman robe with a belt which was worn together with a green upper szűr mantle decorated with a yellow passementarie and hem. The green and yellow colors were not chosen by accident as those were the colors of Transylvanian princes. On their head, they wore a Cuman cap which was later replaced by the triangular German cap. The dress itself, however, has changed several times over the centuries.

At the foundation of the Hungarian Royal University of Debrecen in 1912 it was natural that respecting the traditions of the college, the leaders of the university should wear an ornamental dress at ceremonial events as did the students about to receive their doctoral degrees, based on the pictures in the photo archive of the library even at the beginning of the 1940s. The dismembering of the university and social changes were reflected also in the abandonment of academic dress. In 2000, however, when the integrated University of Debrecen was founded, a uniform dress was also used as a form of expression of what the unity of higher education represents in Debrecen. *“It was the clear intention of the university administration to start forming a shared image of the integrated university, built on historical traditions.”* – notes the yearbook of the university in 2000. The almanac lists in detail that it was at this time that the university logo was approved which (with the consent of the Reformed Church and as a symbol of historical continuity) also included the year 1538, the foundation of the Reformed College. The plans for the gowns and robes were made in 2000, together with the chains for the leaders, as well as the custom gerundium rods of the faculties. The latter was a key motif in the new image and identity of the university, emphasizing the



presence of a newly integrated university and establishing new traditions. The colors of the institution (also in line with the traditions of the college) became green and old gold. In the same year, the logos of the faculties were also designed, which appeared on the gerundium rods made based on the old versions as well as the gowns of heads of faculties, using the same colors in its decoration.

The green and gold coat of arms of the University of Debrecen made in line with the rules of heraldics was approved by the Senate on April 27, 2017. The blazon features an open book that often appears in the symbols of higher education institutions, with the foundation year of the Reformed College included in it. The phoenix emerging from the fire in the three-leaf golden crown refers both to continuous revival and renewal, as well as the close relationship with Debrecen.

The rules for wearing the gown and robe are stipulated in detail in the dress code of the university, discussing which gown may be worn at which particular occasion. Professors and the honorary doctors of the institute may also wear the ceremonial dress besides the rector, the vice rectors, and deans. The code also specifies the colors of the different faculties that also appear on the dress of the deans (on the stole) and the students (on the collar) indicating a sense of belonging to various units of the university. The student cap that is used uniformly today became a part of student's graduation dress only in later years.

At the closing of the graduation ceremonies (as a symbol of freedom from study requirements) hundreds of student caps are thrown up in the air and then taken home by graduating students to remind them of the years spent at the University of Debrecen even decades later.



*Students in Front of the Main Building in the Robes of Their Faculties*



*Student Cap and University Logo*



*Procession of Students Carrying the Gerundium Rods during the Opening Ceremony of the Academic Year in Főnix Hall*





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