

# Houses with gables decorated with sunray motives in Szeged

Category: man-made values – sector ranging

Houses with gables decorated by sunray motives are typical in the architecture of Szeged. On the gable, the eyelet hole looks like an eye (Eye of God). This architecture tradition, which also appears in the decoration of temples was spread in Szeged and its surroundings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to the folk belief, this decoration helped avoiding troubles. Nowadays, just a few decorated houses remained but those are protected historic buildings and have importance in Szeged.

Religious background

“... it derives from the arts of temples which considered archaic Sun symbol as one of their saint symbols. The Catholic and Reformed Church symbolized the Holy Trinity with a triangle, in the middle with a bright eye which symbolizes God who sees everything and everybody.”

Sándor Bálint

## Did you know?

1. Houses with gables decorated with sunray motives can also be found in the surroundings of Szeged, in Bácska and Bánát, where the emigrated inhabitants of Szeged took this decoration type.
2. The plague epidemics were believed as the punishment of God in the 18<sup>th</sup> century so for pledge and propitiation, Holy Trinities were raised all over the country.
3. In Szeged, Holy Trinity ornament can be seen on the high altar in the church of Alsóváros and church of Felsőváros and on their frontings.
4. There is a Holy Trinity sculpture in Dóm Square.
5. Cheap planks were needed for this sunray decoration.
6. During the re-building, after the great flood in Szeged in 1879, builders who wanted to build this type of house could choose from standard designs.
7. In the first half of the 1880s, on the basis of the re-building standard designs, more hundreds of farmer families in Alsóváros and Felsőváros had sunray gables built on their houses. Outside the main boulevard, streets were built up full of with sunray gables.
8. The planks of the gables were painted with different colours: yellow and brown were dominated; on yellow basis, brown rays; on light blue basis, dark blue rays were painted. At the beginning of the century, almost every house had one colour: brown, green (stripes could be the lighter version of the ground colour) or two colours (red-blue, red-grey, red-green, grey-green) or rarely, three colours with bizarre but impressive combination. The frontings were white.
9. After World War I, the usage of wood gables was stopped because of their price was increased and the building fashion changed.
10. In 1940, a new act (ONCSA) was published about supporting large families. They could get interest-free loans for a long term for building family houses. According to the suggestion of Sándor Bálint, they made sunray gables. In Csongrád county, totally 836 “ONCSA” houses were built in 4 towns and 16 villages.
11. The numbers of this type of houses have been decreasing, in 2003, only 74 houses remained.

### What is sunray decoration on the gables?

This connected to the Baroque symbolism of Holy Trinity. It had protective roles, helped avoiding troubles. According to some assumptions, it appeared as the ancient symbol of the Sun. According to the folk belief, it protected the residents of the house from illnesses and natural disasters.

The plague epidemics was believed as the punishment of God in the 18<sup>th</sup> century so for pledge and propitiation, Holy Trinities were raised all over the country. That was the time when the triangle with God's eye in the middle became an amulet. The name of the motive of Szeged, "Istenszöm" derives from there. It was also appeared in the frontings of temples and in the gables of altars and pulpits.

### Story of their building

Houses with gables decorated with sunray motives are typical in the architecture of Szeged. On the gable, the eyelet hole looks like an eye ("istenszöm" - Eye of God in the tradition of Szeged) and from which staves take shape like sunrays.

This tradition in the architecture was spread in Szeged in the end of the 18th century after the great flood in Szeged. The coloured sunray motives differs from house to and they are important sights of Szeged. In 1883, the division of kitchens, porches and the decorations of gables and also sunray motives from the old traditions of architecture appeared in the re-building drafts, as well. Beside these, whitewashing of walls, building attic staircase, eaves and cellar and the proper sizes of rooms were also recommended.



Pásztor u. 39.



Nyíl u. 45.

### List of houses with gables decorated with sunray motives:

There are some example in Kisfaludy, Tisza Lajos, Szabadsajtó, Nyíl and Sándor Street.

Csaba St. 34.

Nyíl St. 43. sz. in Alsóváros

Nyíl St. 41.

Pásztor St. 66.

Pásztor St. 39.

Paprika St. 11.

Katona József St. 24.?

Pásztor St 63.

Liszt St. 4.

Liszt St. 2. - Restaurant,

Nyíl St. 45. – Guest hotel,

Tisza Lajos St .39. – Restaurant, guest hotel

Szabadság Square 9.

Bálvány St. 6.

Bem St. 25.

Kisfaludy St. 3.

Hattyas St. 1.

Kisfaludy St. 17.

Középkapu St. 19.

Középkapu St. 22.

Pálfy St. 26.

*Houses with gables decorated with false sunray motives:*

*Boszorkánysziget 52.; Hattyas st. 23.; Hattyas st. 27. , Szeged-Szőreg Szerb st. 60.; Szeged Dorozsmai st. 59., Csonka st. 1.; Harmat st. 24. Nemestakács st. 47-49.; Makai st. 21.; Udvarhelyi st. 36.; Szekeres st. 16., Sárkány st. 11.*

*Öreg Kőrössy Halászsárda*



Csaba u. 34..



## Then and now

Sándor Bálint mentioned the following settlements: *farms in Szeged, Algyő, Deszk, Feketető, Földeák, Jázova, Kistelek, Kiszombor, Kübekháza, Röske, Sándorfalva, Száján, Szentmihálytelek, Szőreg, Tápé, Tiszasziget, Törökkanizsa, Újszentiván, Ada, Horgos, Királyhalom, Kiskundorozsma, Kiskunmajsa, Martonos, Óbecse, Szegvár, Apátfalva, Csanádpalota, Makó, Orosháza.*

## References:

Bálint Sándor: Napsugaras házvégék pusztulása. In: Szegedi Friss Újság, 1936. dec. 25.

Bálint Sándor: Szeged városa. Bp., 1959.

Bálint Sándor: A szegedi nemzet. In: Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve 1974/75. 2. Szeged, 1976.

Cs. Sebestyén Károly: Szegedi napsugárdíszes házvégék. In: Néprajzi Értesítő 1904.

Juhász Antal: A napsugaras oromdíszítés és megóvásának lehetőségei. In: Műemlékvédelem 1980 (XXIV. évf.) 165-171.

Osváthné Csegezi Mónika – Osváth Gábor Dániel: A régi Szeged múltékony jellegzetességei: a napsugárdíszes házoromzatok. In: Ház és Ember : A Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum Évkönyve. Szentendre, no. 18. 2005. 81-166.

Vass Erika – Valkony Károly: Napsugaras házak múltja és jelene. In: Ház és Ember : A Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum Évkönyve. Szentendre, no. 18. 2005. 53-80.

[http://www.delmagyar.hu/szegedi\\_setak/napsugaras\\_hazak/41526/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szegedi_setak/napsugaras_hazak/41526/)

<http://www.szegedvaros.hu/ertektar/7682-szegedi-napsugaras-orumzatu-hazak.html>