

Tudor Mansion on the Crimean Shore: M.S.Vorontsov's Palace in Aloupka

Seen in the Context of the British Victorian Country House Architecture*

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Abstract—The following article concerns Edward Blore's M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Aloupka (Crimea). Documents concerning the building were found by us in Victoria and Albert's Museum and Cambridge University Library (UK). The author of the project, E.Blore, was known in England first of all as an architect capable to build country houses in so called Tudor style. His Crimean mansion has many features in common with the estates he has built in Britain. But it is important also to stress its unique character based on the local traditions and local relief's peculiarities.

Keywords—*Aloupka Palace; M.S.Vorontsov; E.Blore; Tudor style; Victorian architecture*

I. INTRODUCTION

M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Aloupka has more than one drawn attention of our art scholars who discussed the influence on it by the British Victorian architecture. They wrote not only about the Tudor style popular then in England, but also the exoticism inspired by the interest in the national architecture of the colonies, particularly India, as O.V.Linnikova [1] noted in her article. Some documents found in the British archives also add to the story of creating the palace and park in Aloupka. The architect Edward Blore left the documents in two copies — one for the client, the other kept by himself. Now only a few of those sent to M.S.Vorontsov in Russia are safe, but we have found the architect's copy given by his widow to the Victorian and Albert museum where it has been kept in safety to this day (110 sheets)¹. The close contacts between M.S.Vorontzov and Edward Blore (1787-1879) throughout the construction works are confirmed by correspondence found by us in the

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¹ Victoria and Albert Museum. 8735 A I-70. See also: British Museum, Add. MSS.42027, ff.72-76; RIBA. A.182 q.

archive of the Cambridge University library².

II. ALOUPKA PALACE AND ITS STYLISTIC PECULIARITIES

The architect's project clearly shows its affinity to the British architectural theory and practice of those years. Quite actual now is finding the basic stylistic sources of the ensemble. One of them was the episodic penetration of Indian style into the British architecture of the XVIII-XIX centuries, a rather original touch of oriental taste [2], [3], [4], [5], [6]³. That trend with a colonial taste continued the unclassical pre-romantic excursions, such as Turquerie or Chinoiserie. That came from the deeper interest of the English society in India's culture. But there were two different stages in that trend. The first was linked to the exotic fantasy of the landscape park⁴. The other, actual for E.Blore's conception, was based on a certain synthesis, that was presented in the King's ensemble in Brighton built by J.Nash in 1815-1822 [7], [8], [9], [10].

Another form-shaping source came from British architects who established Tudor fashion in Victorian country house architecture. In that, part form Edward Blore, we mean W.Burn and A.Salvin, devoted to the so-called Tudor (or Elizabethan) style often used in country complexes over 1830-1840s [11], [12], [13], [14], when it gained popularity in Victorian England.

However, talking of the genesis of Tudor style in English architecture, particularly in the country, we should note that contrary to the wide-spread opinion, a kind of discovery of the Tudor epoch was made not in Victoria's reign, but a bit

² Cambridge University Library. Add.MS 8170. N.91.

³ See as examples: Delhi, Humayun's tomb, 1565; Fatehpur Sikri mosque, 1572; Haydarabad Charminar gate, 1591; Agra, Taj Mahal, 1630-1652.

⁴ In the interior decoration of the Daylesford manor house in Gloucestershire, 1788-1796 built by C. Cockrell both Persian and Indian decoration is used. See also the Indian Temple in Melchet Park, Hampshire, 1800, by Th.Daniel; garden pavilions in Indian taste in Staumore Hall, Middlesex, 1800; Werrington Park, Devonshire.

earlier — in the Georgian period. In the 1820-1830s T.F.Hunt published some books in which he used for the first time the phrase “Old English” which became wide-spread [15]. And in the very beginning of the Victorian epoch J.Nash published the series of prints “The Mansions of England of the olden time” [16]. In the Victorian time the Tudor style competed with the Neogothic and ousted it. The Gothic style remained actual all through Victoria’s reign, particularly for church buildings. By mid-century it was used mainly by religious families or by old Catholic ones. But landlords wishing to make their homes more social and less somber character preferred the traditions of the Elizabethan, or, wider, Tudor architecture. The Victorians preferred that epoch as the golden age of Britain, the birth of the great Empire, when culture reached a kind of zenith. Architecture in that style suited the idea of national identity in that empire epoch. Such mentality was better than Gothic style of A.W.N.Pugin’s associated with Catholic religion always dangerous to this country.

Likeness of well-known Elizabethan monuments is found in many Victorian households. Particularly popular for imitation was Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire(1580-1588), which inspired Ch.Barry in Highclere Castle, Hampshire (1842-1844), J.Paxton and J.Stokes in Mentmore, Bedfordshire (1850-1855) and the famous Elizabethan Burghley House, Lincolnshire (1558-1587) gave the idea to Harlaxton Manor, Lincolnshire (1834-1835) by A.Salvin and W.Burn. The popularity of the Tudor style is due to its universal character. The number of its typical elements is limited, but the Victorian architecture shows to us, that the specter of images produced by it is very wide.

E.Blore was one of the most productive architects in that style. His leadership was based on a great number of realized projects⁵ and also on his encyclopedic knowledge seen in his graphic heritage⁶. The impressive series of project sheets for M.S.Vorontzov’s large estate in Aloupka⁷ was created by the architect in 1832, when he was also busy with numerous projects of country houses in Britain. E.Blore wasn’t the first architect employed by M.S.Vorontzov. At first it was T.Harrison who offered a project in the classical taste. But it

was unacceptable for its lack of link with the region’s relief or its architectural context. E.Blore created a plan based on the complicated local relief. He followed the principle of asymmetric volumes of different size in contact with each other, which helped to solve the problems of images and compositions (“Fig. 1”). The main part of the dominating the space was placed by the southern line of the slope, which strengthened its visual effect. The long line of the southern façade was oriented towards the large panoramic territory leading to the sea (“Fig. 2”, “Fig. 3”, and “Fig. 4”). But the northern façade formed two smaller architectural zones: one of them was a space before the main entrance to the main building; the other (later called Shouvalov pass) was a narrow passage between walls with narrow embrasures (“Fig. 5”). Another zone was a large service area with working and living quarters. Thus, E.Blore’s solution provided multi-variant and multi-aspect architectural zones. The space structure of the complex followed the same principles of contrast unity of different elements united by the passages, corridors, galleries and stairs. That tendency is seen in all of E.Blore’s projects, be it the central, dining or library blocks — each of them considered a separate important composition (“Fig. 6”).

On the stylistic solution of the façade we may note that the Indian theme is notably played only on the south façade of the main building which is most important in the entire context. Here we should particularly note the architect’s stylistic synthesis of two branches of medieval architecture — the English and Indian ones.

The oriental pathos of the southern façade is stressed by including in its composition a huge niche to show the rich space capacity of non-classical architecture, its perfect adaptation to the environment. Actually the idea of including some elements of islamic architecture came from the client — M.S.Vorontzov who associated it with the muslim past of the land. E.Blore linked it with the interior plan of the complex and marked that place as drawing room possible with a fountain. Such element of oriental taste invited others in that style. But a more consistent style and composition in the northern architectural zone was linked by E.Blore with English architectural style of the XVI-XVII centuries.

⁵ Combemere Abbey, Cheshire, 1830-1832; Penge Place, Surrey, 1836-1837; Pull Court, Worcestershire, 1836-1846; Lodsworth, Sussex, 1837-1839; Ramsey Abbey, Huntingdonshire, 1837-1843; Worsley Hall, Lancashire, 1837-1843; Merevale Hakk, Warwickshire, 1838-1844; Haverland Hall, Norfolk, 1839-1842; Shadwell House, Norfolk, 1839-1844 (see about: Girouard M. Shadwell Park, Norfolk // *Country Life*. 1964, July, 2, 9); Moreton Hall Cheshire, 1840-1846; Colhurst, Sussex, 1841-1844; Kingston Hall, Nottighamshire, 1842-1846; Thicket Priory, Yorkshire, 1843-1846. See more: Meller H. Blore’s Country House (1975) – Courtauld Institute of Art, unpublished dissertation.

⁶ 48 albums of the architectural graphics of E.Blore are now in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 42000-47), it is the result of his 70 years’ labor. His graphic sheets are also in: Victoria and Albert Museum. London (8714 A-B); The Society of Antiquaries Library; University Library, Cambridge (Add. MSS. 3953, 3954-3956); Royal Institute of British Architects, Drawing Collection.

⁷ Architectural graphics of E.Blore concerning the Aloupka complex is now in: RGIA. F. 919. Opis. 1. Delo. 1024, 1190; Victoria and Albert Museum. 8735 A 1-70 (110 sheets); Wilton House, Wiltshire; British Museum, Add. MSS. 42027, ff. 72-76; Royal Institute of British Architects, A. 182 q.

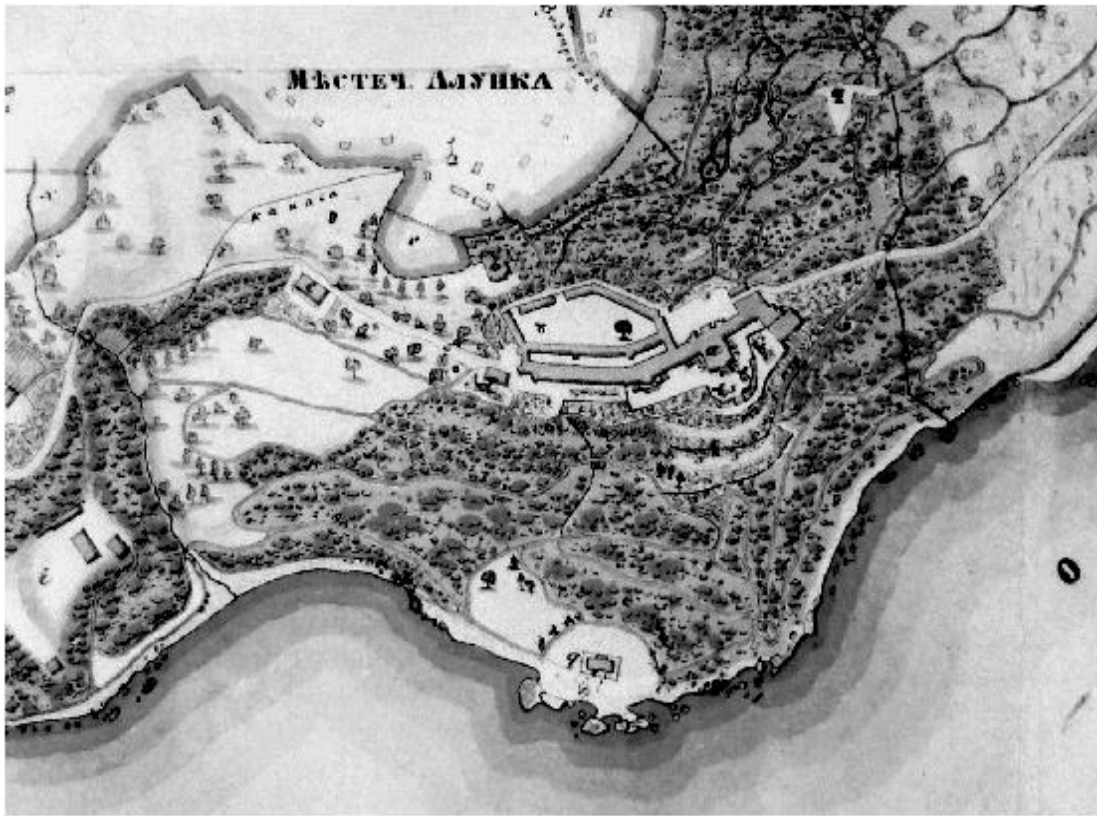


Fig. 1. General planning of M.S.Vorontsov's estate in Aloupka. 1859.

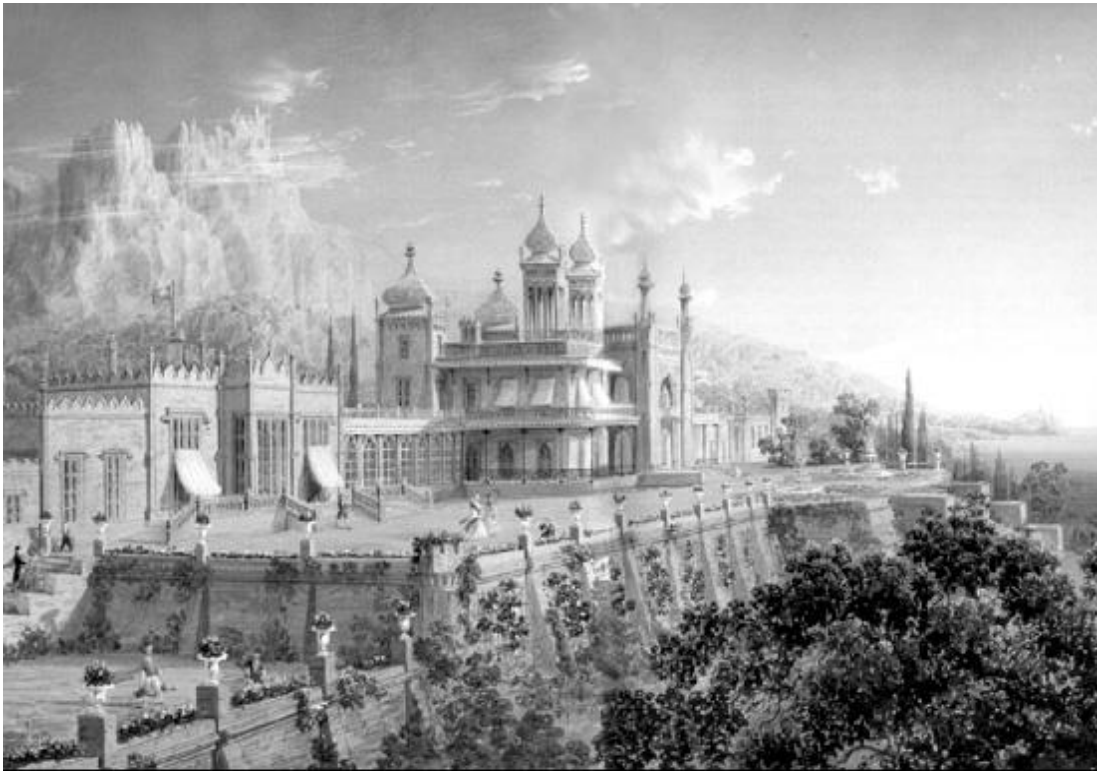


Fig. 2. South facade of M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Aloupka.

³ Crimean sites, designed and engraved by C.Bossoli in 1842. Odessa, 1842.

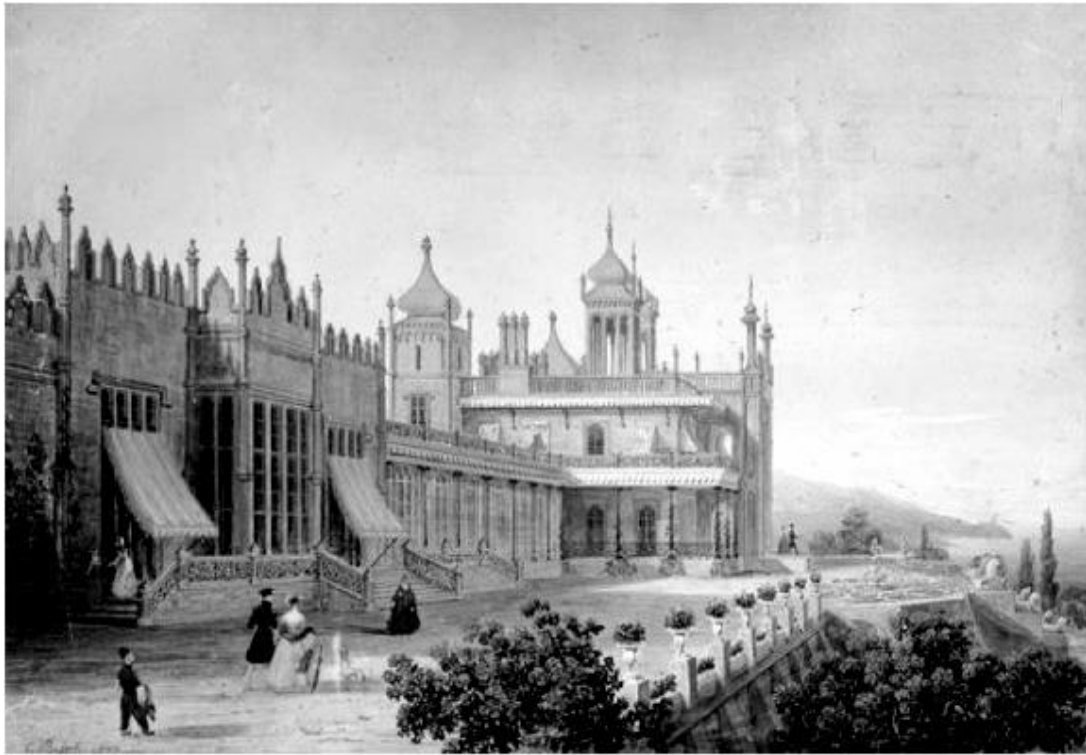


Fig. 3. Fragment of the South facade of M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Alouпка.

^a. Crimean sites, designed and engraved by C.Bossoli in 1842. Odessa, 1842.

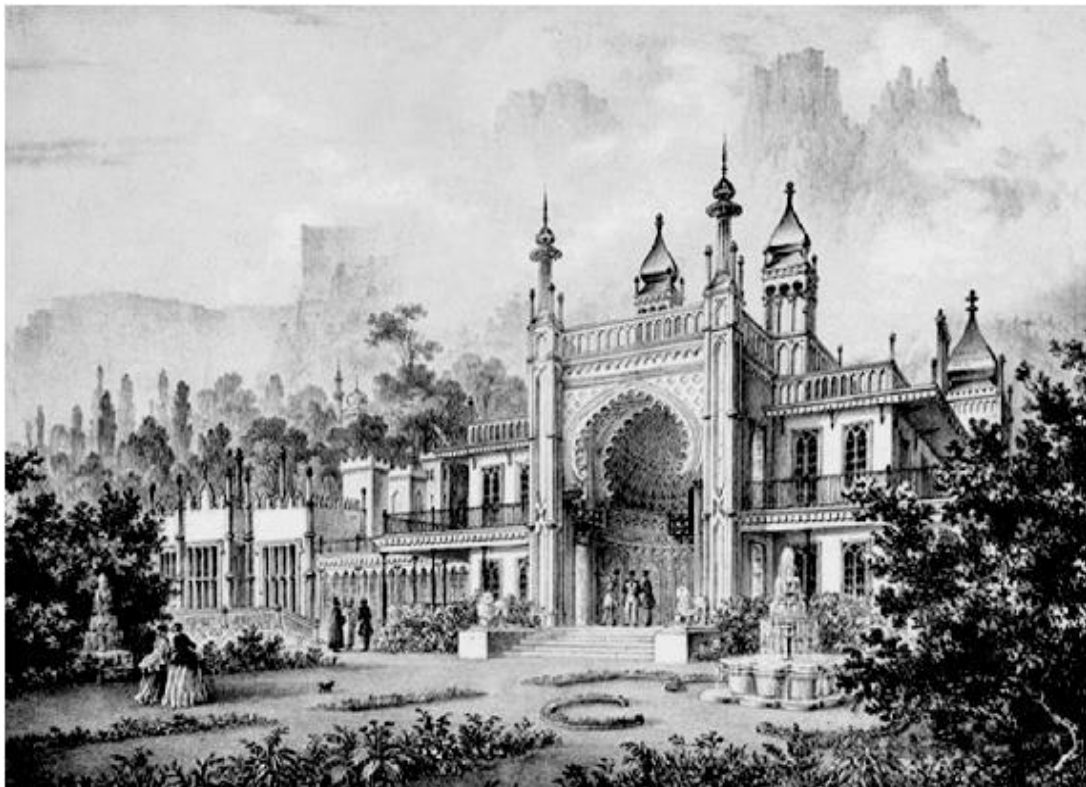


Fig. 4. Fragment of the South facade of M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Alouпка.

^a. Crimean sites, designed and engraved by C.Bossoli in 1842. Odessa, 1842.

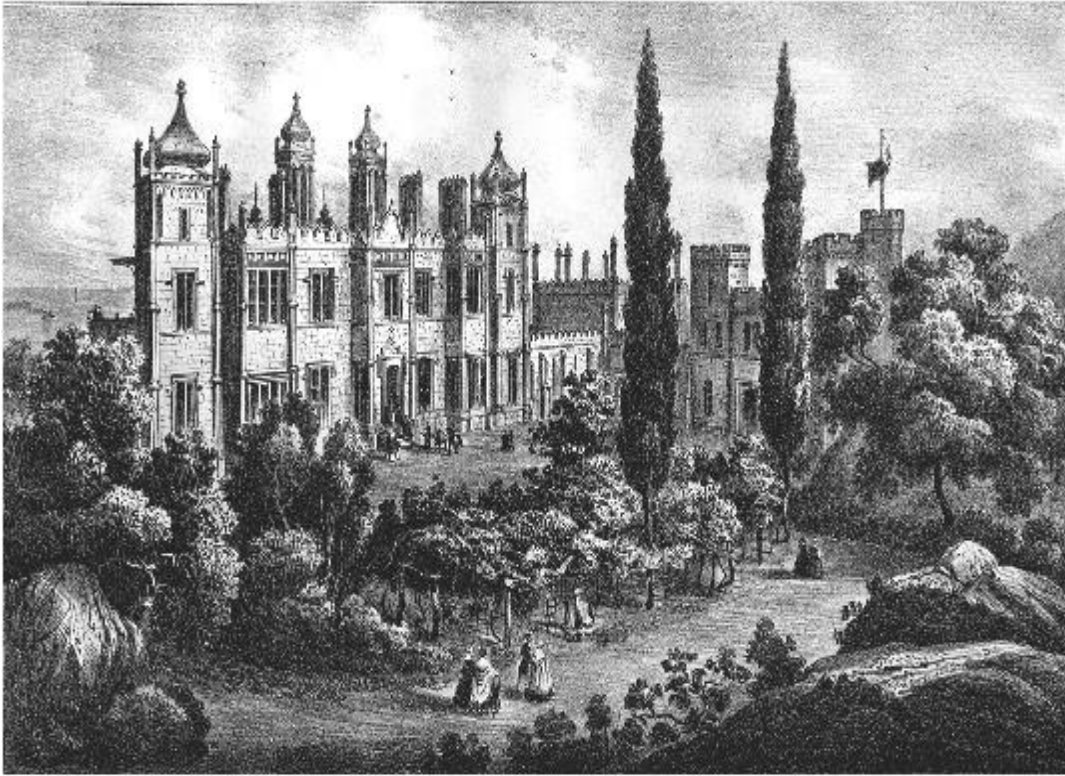


Fig. 5. North facade of M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Alouпка.

^a Crimean sites, designed and engraved by C.Bossoli in 1842. Odessa, 1842.

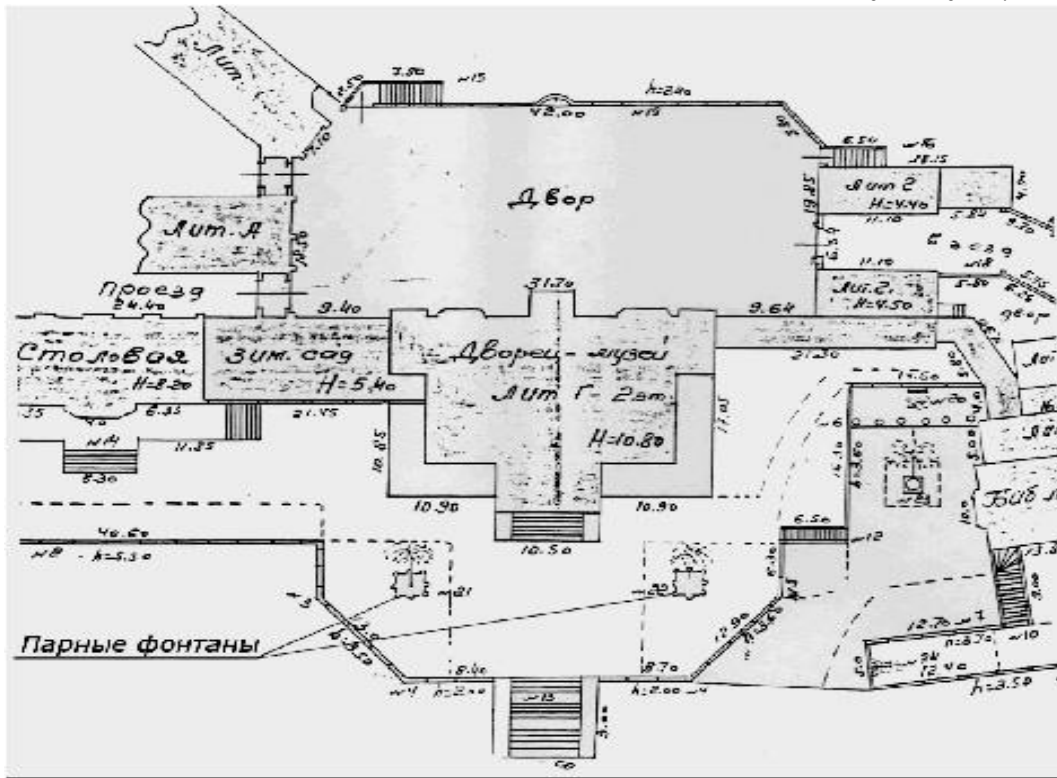


Fig. 6. General planning of the central part of M.S.Vorontsov's palace in Alouпка.

^a Technical inventarisation Bureau.

To realize his grand ideas E.Blore sent to Crimea from England first Hatton⁸, then young architect William Hunt who took over the entire front building works in 1833. It was William Hunt who took over further detail work finishing the initial project without changing E.Blore's conceptual basis. Correction was made in the south-west of the complex with three buildings instead of one including the so-called Shuvalov wing⁹. Essential changes were made in the architectural composition of the service zone of a square shape similar to the British terrace house¹⁰. It was a long two-storey building with separate blocks, each with its door. That type of city house was popular in Britain in the second quarter of the XIXth century [17], [18], [19]. William Hunt also made a number of small architectural compositions in Aloupka's park, such as the well in oriental taste, many fountains, such as Tear Fountain, imitated from Bakhchisaray palace.

Describing briefly the stylistic features of interior decoration in Aloupka's complex we should stress the stylistic features of its interiors. We should mention three elements in the variety of their decoration. They were genetically linked to various styles of European architecture: the first group is linked to the Elizabethan style. That influence is felt in the decoration of the library, the gallery, the hall, the study, the billiard room and the dining room. The second group includes the Chinese cabinet, the Blue guest-room keeping the features of the Rococo style. Finally the third group has reminiscences of the classical style, seen in the composition of the caisson niche. Next to the established English system of ceilings Aloupka has quite different space solutions accepted in Europe's architecture in the second half of the XIXth century. The structure of the winter garden provided a source of light without additional supports. Constructive innovations were in the wall galleries fixed to the southern façade of the main building by metal brackets and also in the light cast-iron bridge built over the Shouvalov passage. New methods of lighting were used in a number of rooms with a system of lamps masqueraded by the wall prongs. That solved the problem of lighting in the suite of rooms of the guest block linked to the Shouvalov passage.

The architectural expressiveness of the Aloupka Castle resulted not only from romantic form creativeness, but from new constructive ideas. The artistic search of its composition was approved by E.Blore who imitated it in the years after his work in Aloupka, for instance at Merevale Hall Warwickshire (1838-1844) or in his project of Australia governor's residence¹¹ [20]. But with that analogy in Tudor details the Aloupka palace has a cardinal difference in its "eastern" part. It is also different in its planning solution. Thus, Merevale Hall is of compact cube shape with modest

projections. E.Blore executed such projects in England's different counties. The Aloupka's planning is more complicated adapted to the local relief peculiarities.

III. CONCLUSION

The unique solutions by E.Blore showed that his former reputation as a "cheap architect" [21] capable of only typical Tudor style had been unfair. With his excellent education and erudition E.Blore knew a variety of trends in British architecture of his time as well as of past epochs. Besides he had a fine taste and knowledge of architectural context which helped him to proceed from the nature of the locality and use the traditions most suitable to the place and building traditions.

In the Crimea he understood that building would take place in an Islamic region, so he chose for sample the architecture of Northern India with its tradition of Muslim architecture. He had also to adapt to the unusual for him relief situation. He turned to the Georgian epoch with its love for picturesque asymmetrical planning. And the creative result was, on the one hand, rooted in the Victorian English tradition, on the other hand, quite unique with no British analogue.

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⁸ British architect Hatton died briefly after his arrival to Crimea in summer of 1833, his name is not found in the architectural dictionaries.

⁹ RGADA, f.1261, opis.2, delo 926, p. 5, 1847. Plan of count Shouvalov's house in Aloupka. W.Hunt.

¹⁰ Aloupka Museum. Architectural graphics collectionj, N2 89. General planning of E.Blore corrected by W.Hunt, 1851.

¹¹ Govenor's House, 1837-1845. Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.