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**HISTORICAL PARKS AS AN ELEMENT  
OF SHAPING A GREENERY SYSTEM IN BIAŁYSTOK  
(Part 1: Emergence and development history)**

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**Abstract.** At the outbreak of World War II, green areas, organized in Białystok, created a system, spatially and functionally linked with the surrounding city forests and meadows. In the first half of the twentieth century they were rebuilt and greatly enlarged. They lent a contemporary look to the public spaces of the city.

**Key words:** Białystok, historical parks, greenery system

## **1. Introduction**

The system of green areas of the contemporary Białystok is based on the affiliations of natural parks situated in the city centre with the surrounding forests and open areas. This layout has existed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Białystok accounted for an extensive compositions of landscape related to the residence of J. K. Branicki.

## **2. Aim, scope and research method**

The aim of the research conducted by a team of architects is the analysis of the contemporary natural system of the city of Białystok based on its historical conditions. The authors look for relationships between green areas in the spatial and historical-cultural dimension. The analysis covered the area of the former residence of J. K. Branicki along with the closest adjoining area with a particular emphasis on the area of the modern downtown city. Due to historical factors associated with the development of the city, the time frame spanning since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the dynamic development of the industrial city) to modern times was taken into account for the analysis.

In the carried out research, the available sources of literature [1, 2, 3, 4, 5], including the history of development of the city of Białystok [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11], and the preserved cartographic elaborations, including maps and plans of the city were used [12, 13]. The research benefited from the iconographic sources with a particular emphasis on old photographs and postcards of Białystok.

## **3. Green areas in city layout of J. K. Branicki**

The 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque laid in the eternal layout composition at the residence of Jan Klemens Branicki was based on the natural conditions resulting from its location. It was created by the topography of the place, the river valley, and the natural forests. In this arrangement, a number of architectural and functional elements were introduced, which, then, connected the system of a road network and the system of scenic link. The road network was based on the combination of communication to the palace with the summer residence located in

Choroszcz (15 km west from Białystok). The road was laid in an attractive landscape, enabling the viewing of other elements of the composition during the travel time. The individual parts of the layout had been formalized in varying degrees (from a representational avenue, to field roads). This layout included the palace along with its adjacent gardens, a zoo, the city itself, as well as the surrounding villages (Białostoczek, Sloboda, Starosielce) and the new settlement tavern. On the possible observation area, a natural elevation was located, whose spatial significance emphasized the architectural objects. In the immediate vicinity of the palace there was a formal Baroque garden. Its composition includes, among other things, an embroidered entry to parterres and a bosquet. In the area of the garden, an orangery intended for a seasonal storage of citrus trees fitted with the equipment was erected. A substantial part of the area of the palace and the park was surrounded by ponds fed with the waters of the Biała River. The largest of these, with an area of over 8 hectares, was located on to the north-east side of the palace and was one of its visit cards [14, 15, 16, 17].

After the death of Hetman Branicki, the residence passed into the hands of his wife, and then, to the next heirs. In 1802, it was sold to the king of Prussia and in 1807, after the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit, this area was incorporated into the Russian empire [6, 7, 18, 19, 20].

#### **4. Green areas in the industrial Białystok during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

The spatial and economic development of Białystok during the nineteenth century, to a large extent, was conditioned by the geopolitical situation. The impetus to this were the changing boundaries of countries and the industrial revolution [16, 17]. The beginning of the century was associated with the organization of residency in the former tsarist palace of Branicki. Half of a century was dedicated to the dynamic development of the textile industry associated with a restrictive economic policy of Russia towards the industrialized areas of the former central Poland. The end of the century was a period of development of the city, assimilation and urbanization of the surrounding areas and making efforts towards organizing and beautifying the space. During this time, the arising of the city reflects the characteristics of other centres developing on the outskirts of the Russian Empire. Characteristic of them are a regular grid of streets and communication links of military character [6, 7, 18, 19]. The greenery in these cities was regarded as “embellished and decorative” – resolved in the form of city parks. They accounted for separated enclaves not linked to other objects of landscape architecture. During the time of J. K. Branicki, the spatial arrangement of green areas was rebuilt and divided. In addition, the former palace park, the area surrounding it and the zoo began to function separately.

##### **4.1. Palatial park and adjoining area**

In 1837, after the resignation to create the tsarist residence in Białystok, on the basis of the imperial decree, the tsarist palace and the associated gardens along with it were dedicated to the needs of a newly created Institute for Noble Maidens [7, 18]. During the years 1837–1841, on the area of the palace, a number of construction and renovation works were done, besides the aimed adaptation of the facilities to new functions, it was also meant to obliterate the traces of its former glory [10, 11]. During 1884 a new school building was built in the immediate vicinity of the palace. This property still exists today, and now houses the Collegium Novum Medical University. The Institute for Noble Maidens existed until 1915, when during the war, it was evacuated to Str. Petersburg.

The park and green areas related to the Institute, directly adjacent to the palace, were divided on the part of the garden – which was made in the area for planting new trees and vegetable gardens and an orchard, which were functionally connected with the school. This area was surrounded by the meadows in the west and the south, which were encircled with a wooden fence. Since 1895, this area began to be utilised by using mowed grass in its territory for the needs of the depot formed for the horse tram. After 1919, this area functioned as barren and was taken over by the State Treasury.

##### **4.2. Old Park**

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time of dynamic development of the city. The most emphatic evidence of this was the population growth, which in 1857 amounted to 13 789 people and in the course of 1895 – to 62 993 [6, 7, 18, 19]. The demographic changes are associated with the development of the industrial

city [17, 18]. This known period is dated back to the 1880's regulatory plan of the city. This plan assumed hitherto the arrangement of chaotic building (introduced a regular grid of streets into places of spontaneous development of suburbs, in which new streets duplicated the old divisions of agriculture areas) and the construction of a large urban park. The area, which was allocated under this investment was located between the streets: Bulwarna (now Branicki) and Puszkina (now Mickiewicza). It had more than seven hectares of area. To the eastern border of the park there was a former palatial mill pond, also known as the millpond, which in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century began to transform into a quagmire due to the negligence. The park, being situated on the main avenue (the axis of the north - south) was designed with three perpendicular alleys and an avenues system, cutting the surface of the park into the layout of adjacent triangles. The figure of the next plan (the project) of the city from 1887 reflected continued efforts regarding the adjustment of the streets while increasing the area of the city. The surface of the planned park reduced the area of the city by more than half by limiting it to Bulwarna and Pushkin streets and the newly demarcated Mieszczkańska (now Elektryczna) street. The plan also redesigned the spatial layout of the planned park. An oval plaza was designed in the central part of the park, within which three avenues intersected, dividing the area into six triangular foundation quarters. The fundamental change in relation to the earlier concept was to resign from the main compositional axis.

In 1895, the work related to the foundation of the park commenced. Basic operations consisted of regulating the course of the Biala river and completely filling up the remains of the old pond. Under the new park was allocated an area of over 3.5 hectares (similar in size to the plan of 1895). The park was designed by a well-known Warsaw architect Walerian Kronenberg and Teodor Chrzepiński worked with him in the design and its implementation. An oval plaza was established in the central part of the park from which a crossover distributed the main avenues. The remaining composition was composed of several interior design related to the complex system of roads, which were carried out in a simple, curved and circular manner. The park was fenced with a wooden fence, which in 1897 was replaced by a massive brick wall, translucent spans of which were filled with wrought iron bars. During the years 1908–1910, the fence was rebuilt again – this time it was given Neo-Baroque features and a large part of the decorative elements made of stone blocks, the author of this work was the engineer Kołuba. All of the other fences were equipped with three gates, of which the main was located in the vicinity of the gate of the palace and the other in Bulwarna and Puszkina streets. In 1892, the central square of the park was located around the fountain. Its most important equipment in the period was wooden, circular Paradise pavilion. It was located on the axis between the fountain pool and the Biala river. The building held exhibitions and concerts. Within the park, there was also a public passage. In 1919, the municipal park was given the name of Prince Józef Poniatowski [11, 18].

### **4.3. Zwierzyniecki Forest**

In the 80's of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on the initiative of the Tsarist authorities, "strategic Baranowicka highway" was built, which separated the latitudinal area of Zwierzyniecki forest on the northern and southern part [13]. This state initiated a number of ways for using both parts of the old zoo.

In the southern part, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the place of the former forestry a complex of buildings called "Rozkosz" was built [7, 8, 18]. This place was used as a summer resort and served entertainment purposes. Since 1895 citizens of Białystok could get there, with a horse streetcar, of which a track led along one of the baroque ducts (currently 11 Listopada street). During World War I in the north-west part of the former zoo a German military cemetery was created [13, 18].

The northern part of the zoo was kept in form of a forest. During World War I, this area was decimated.

## **5. Transformation of green areas in Białystok during the interwar period**

In 1919 the so-called "Big Białystok" work was started to clean up the urban space [18, 19, 20]. In the renovated building of the former Branicki Palace, the head office of the province was created. The palace courtyards were renovated all around and a part of the garden was cleaned up. It was left with numerous changes made throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among them, planting trees made baroque composition unreadable. In the neighbourhood of the palace a new clerical district was built. In Mickiewicza street buildings of the Court and the Tax Chamber and in Świętojańska street residential buildings for officers and their families were built.

In 1925, the gardening organization started to function in the city, which in its work undertook problems connected with beautifying the urban space.

### 5.1. Park of Constitution of May 3

The first activities related to organizing green public spaces are associated with Zwierzyniecki forest. This work started in 1921. The northern part of the Zwierzyniecki forest was given the name of Park of Constitution of May 3, and on its premises a monument memorializing this event was located. The monument took form of the landscape object consisting of three oak trees circumscribed with eleven lime trees [10, 11, 18].

In 1924, a comprehensive modernization project of Zwierzyniecki forest was developed. It was designed by Stanisław Życieński-Zadora. The composition of the new park was upheld in the spirit of modernist idea and based on a wide avenue planted with double rows of trees. The development covered woodland; the existing summer resort Rozkosz and the newly designed sports grounds. The assumption of design marginalized the importance of the tsarist Baranowicki route. The system inscribed in the radial distribution of the avenue Big Zwierzyniec of Branicki day which was highlighted with a newly designed flora planting [18]. The composition of duct and avenue was complemented by a formal, oval place (roundabout), which was supposed to be equipped with monuments. This system was complemented by peripherally conducted avenues and paths. Their composition referred to the graphic line calligraphic parks.

Implementation work at the area of the zoo began in 1930. The work was led by the Chief Engineer of the city, J. B. Rybołowicz. He was also the author of a detailed concept from 1924 [10, 11]. Primary assumptions of design were implemented piecemeal. The rebuilding of the road transport on Baranowica Street was not made, which sanctioned division of the zoo on the northern and southern parts. Both parts, due to their functional purpose and planned facilities, as well as the distance from the city, were implemented separately. A portion of the communication system was completed in the northern part, including the main avenue and the square where the monument “ko czci poległych oficerów i żołnierzy 42. Pułku piechoty” made by Jakub Juszczyk was placed in 1930 [10, 11]. In 1934, in this part of the zoo, a military cemetery was established according to the project of Stanisław Grala [10, 11, 21]. In the 30's, to the west from 11 Listopada street, according to the original intentions, sports grounds were organized, including a soccer field with bleachers, tennis courts and shooting range. The implemented work and the introduced equipment gave a natural outlook to this part of the zoo. Apart from the formal equipment, its walking layout was supplemented with avenues which were going along interesting groups of trees and shrubs, a viewing platform on a small hill on its eastern part along with views of the ponds and a watercourse in the area of north-east [10, 11, 18, 21].

The scope of the work carried out in the southern part was much smaller. Only a fragment of the compositional and communication work was realized. This area remained as a forest. In this area, in the place of the former summer resort Rozkosz, the gastronomy and recreation facilities were still functioning. In the direct vicinity one of the planned roundabouts was implemented, which from the south side was closely extended to 11 Listopada Avenue [18].

### 5.2. Planty Park and Kościalkowski Boulevards

In the period of a great economic crisis, the governor of Białostocki province Marian Zyndram Kościalkowski made donations to the city in the year of 1932. The park located in the downtown, was nationalized in the year of 1919, remaining as waste land of the state land which was once associated with Branicki residence. On this area in the years 1934 to 1936 was implemented a new, modernistic city park. For the clean-up and construction works the area was granted with investment on which 200 unemployed people were hired. The project of a new park was developed by Stanisław Grail in collaboration with Józef Blicharski. The basis of the assumptions was the main avenue, laid out parallel to the old avenue of ash-maple (from the composition of city of J. K. Branicki), which was connecting already the existing Old Park and the Park of Constitution of May 3 (northern zoo). In the central part of the park a rectangular pool was organized, on the axis of which flowery carpets were laid. The surrounding of the main avenue was designed in a geometric way, connecting at the same time circular paths which overlapped. The area of the park was enriched with a pond and a concert shell. The statistical data confirms the size of investments. On the area of the park 600 trees encompassing 34 species were planted. The main avenue of the park was planted with thuja [21].

In the north – eastern part of the park, in the area adjacent to the administration district, a rose garden was established. The facility was composed on four levels (gradually declining toward the centre). At the lowest of them a rectangular pool was realized. The entrance to the rose garden was overgrown all through with plants gate (climbing roses). The interior was composed as regular rentals – a boxwood of hedges interspersed with roses. Sidewalks were laid under pergolas and tunnels.

Along with the construction of the Planty Park, work was carried out in the area to the west of the palace. The area between the Wersalska street (now Akademicka) and the former palace gardens was being utilized at that time. With the decision of the City Council, the created boulevard was given the name Kościałkowski Boulevard.

### 5.3. Old Park

In 1933 on the area of the Old Park work on building the modernist Community Centre in name of Marshal Józef Piłsudski was started. The author of design development of this building together with the theatre hall was John Giryn [8, 18]. Facilities were inscribed in modern characters to form an administrative district of the city at this place. One of the activities related to the construction of the theatre building was reconstruction of its surroundings – the City Park. In 1937, the pavilion Raj and the park fence was dismantled. A new spatial arrangement was implemented based on the development of the project by Stanisław Życiński – Zadory. In the years 1936–1938, the main axis of the assumptions was reconstructed. The existing alley was converted into a wide prospectus with a rectangular swimming pool fountains and flowery carpets. Around it a lower greening of the place was organized and in further distance an existing forest stand was kept. Around the area of the park a large part of the naturalistic system by Valerian Kronenberg was left. The only part of the building which is a remnant from the old park is the arched bridge spanning over the Biała river. Definitely, a new element was an avenue connecting the central part of the park with the Planty park which was adjacent to Mickiewicz street. The entire assumption was completed with the building of the Municipal Theatre named after Marshal Józef Piłsudski in 1938.

## 6. Conclusions

Summing up, it can be ascertained that a day before World War II (1939), a system of parks located in the centre of Białystok was organized, and a complementary system included: the Old Park, the Planty park with Kościałkowski Boulevards, the park of the Constitution of May 3 and the Zwierzyniecki forest. This system alluded to the historical assumptions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It constituted an example of a wedging system, in which the suburban green areas functionally, in a continuous manner, entered the city centre through convenient city parks.

### Gratitude

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**ІСТОРИЧНІ ПАРКИ ЯК ЕЛЕМЕНТ ФОРМУВАННЯ СИСТЕМИ  
ОЗЕЛЕНЕННЯ У БІЛОСТОЦІ  
(Частина 1. Виникнення та історія розвитку)**

**Анотація.** *Коли почалася Друга світова війна, озеленені території в Білостоці об'єднувались в одну просторову і функціональну систему, пов'язану із лісами та луками навколо міста. У першій половині ХХ століття їх перебудовано та збільшено, в результаті чого було сформовано сучасний характер громадським просторам міста.*

**Ключові слова:** *Білосток, історичні парки, система озеленення.*