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THE PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVES AT THE MUSEUM  
OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY  
IN LITHUANIA AS AN OBJECT OF EXPLORATION  
OF PHARMACEUTICAL DEVELOPMENT

There is a rich collection of photographs at the Museum of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy in Lithuania. This visual material is divided into several inventories at the museum, according to the view these photographs reflect. These photographs portray the development of pharmaceutical science, the activity of pharmacists' circles, the moments of various pharmaceutical performances, as well as personalities, the equipment, instruments, the interiors and exteriors of pharmacies. The aim of this article is to examine the interior and exterior of pharmacies, the photographic material, saved as the inventory of the museum, and to discuss what useful information these sources present. While preparing this work the material was divided according to the historical periods, where as the Soviet period is divided into two parts paying attention not to the intervals of general history but to the peculiarities of pharmaceutical development. Thus, the photographs will be discussed according to the following system:

1. Photographs of Lithuanian pharmacies during the annexation by czarist Russia (Lithuania belonged to czarist Russia from 1795 till the First World War). The museums archives possess the photographs by pharmacies of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only.
2. Photographs of Lithuanian pharmacies during the years of Lithuania's independence (1918–1940).
3. Photographs of pharmacies of Soviet Lithuania during the post-war period.
4. The biggest part of pharmacies portrays the exteriors and interiors of pharmacies in the 1970s–1990s. This period may be called the years of the decoration of pharmacies by art works. There are more than 1200 of such photographs in the museum archives (the period of the decoration of pharmacies).

Photographs are an informative source which substitutes the material of archives. They portray political accents (one can see state symbols), partly the economical situation of pharmacies (the pharmacies of cities are established in refined brick houses, where as country pharmacies are placed in small wooden ones), the layout of medicines, number of advertisements, elements of decoration and so forth.



Fig. 1. Panevėžys pharmacy built in the main town square.  
Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century



Fig. 2. Kajetonas Stropus' pharmacy (Laukuva village). About 1910

Unfortunately our archives contain a very small amount of photographs of pharmacies of Vilnius City and its region. The majority of photographs of the first periods portray pharmacies in the country.

At that time pharmacies used to be found by the church, the market or in the town square (Fig. 1).

Museum archives contain a very small number of the photographs of the earliest period of czarist Russia. Casting a glance at the photograph it is necessary to say that the inscriptions on the signboards of pharmacies are only in Russian or Latin until 1904 when the Lithuanian press was established.

It was common practice to mark the signboards of Lithuanian pharmacies by a double-headed eagle which was the emblem of the empire of czarist Russia. At the beginning of the XX century the surname of the owner of the pharmacy (and sometimes the district too) was mentioned in the signboards (Fig. 2).

Another period embraces the years of independence and the photographs of pharmacies from 1918 to 1940. After the proclamation of Lithuania's independence in 1918 the symbolics of the signboards of pharmacies changed. A common sign is Vytis – a National State emblem of Lithuania. Some photographs of prescription rooms portray not only state but also Catholic symbolics.

The majority of pharmacies in the towns had their own names which were indicated on the signboards. For example, *"The Green One"*, *"Theatre's"*, etc. The surname of the owner of a pharmacy appeared on the signboard very often. During the first years of independence one can see the word *"aptieka"* which is of Latin origin. Later due to the requirements of governmental institutions the name was changed into a Lithuanian one *"vaistinė"* ("pharmacy"), but the first one remained very popular as well. Thus quite often two names appear on the signboards of pharmacies quite often that is *"aptieka"*, which is preferred by the people, and the required *"vaistinė"*. Inscriptions on a pharmacy used to be Lithuanian only during this period (Fig. 3).

The photograph of the interior of Marijampolė pharmacy shows a spacious prescription room, the furniture, a table of a pharmacist, a cash desk with a Lithuanian note "shows the money paid". Medicines are kept in two locked cupboards with such notes as *"specialia"* and *"drastica"*. There used to be a watch fitted in the furniture of the prescription room in the pharmacy. There are no visual advertisements of medicines either (Fig. 4).

It is interesting to note that the photographs portraying the interior of pharmacies rarely exhibit the advertisement of medicines. The situation was conditioned by a negative point of view of the majority of medical specialists towards the advertisements of medicines. Physician Dr. V. Bagdonas wrote in the journal *"Medicine"* that *"Advertising in the sphere of health is an inadmissible, harmful matter which should be eliminated and considered an offence against a physician's ethics. There is such a situation in America too. There the advertising of medicine and pharmacy has reached the highest and impertinently shameless degree..."* It is true but the only photograph of this period displays a bold medicine advertisement (Fig. 5).



Fig. 3. Antanas Kaikaris' pharmacy (Laiuvos village), 1934.  
From left: Alfonsas Kaikaris, Antanas Kaikaris (1878–1950),  
Isabelė Kaikarienė (1890–1954), Petras Kaikaris (born 1929),  
Vytautas Kaikaris (1912–1982)



Fig. 4. Marijampolė's pharmacy. 1924



Fig. 5. Jonas Vėlavičius' pharmacy (Platelių village)



Fig. 6. Klaipėda's pharmacy No. 145. 1956

After the Second World War, when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania, one can notice bilingual notices: both Russian and Lithuanian. Moreover instead of the surname of an owner a number of a pharmacies is indicated. Some photographs of the interior show the portraits of such politicians as Stalin and Lenin. An exceptional motive of the photographs of that period are the queues of people waiting in a prescription room (Fig. 6).

A period of the decoration of pharmacies should be marked as a separate interval. At that time Lithuanian pharmacies possessed specific features which discerned them from pharmacies in other republics of the Soviet Union. We guess that such tendencies of the decoration of pharmacies will not be detected in other countries either. Pharmacies used to be transferred into new premises gradually, according to special orders of institutions of pharmaceutical administration. Their interiors were created by the most famous architects. Pharmacies used to be ornamented and decorated by works of art. It was common practice to use a lot of elements of decoration which was modern at that time, that is ceramics, paintings, stained glass, chandeliers and even fountains in a prescription room (Fig. 7 and 8). It was a time of big contrasts because there were cases when a person could not even buy the most common medicine such as Bayer's Aspirin in a beautifully decorated pharmacy. The administration of pharmacy paid great attention to the interiors of pharmacies then. In 1972 members of the union of architects met in Kaunas Theatre pharmacy and discussed about the interiors of pharmacies. Vytautas Sedelskis may be considered an initiator of such a transformation. Having become senior administrator of pharmacy in Kaunas region, he started decorating pharmacies of his district. Vytautas Sedelskis paid great attention to the creation of new ideas and aesthetics. When he was still working in Druskininkai (Lithuania's health-resort town), he took care of the building of a new pharmacy. He equipped a fountain in the prescription room, a birch used to grow there as well. People were delighted. The interior of the pharmacy surpassed even the interiors of cafes. Having become the administrator of the region, Vytautas Sedelskis organized special workshops for producing the furniture of pharmacies. Kaunas pharmacies became something of places of sightseeing. Plans of town excursions included visits to several pharmacies of Kaunas. The heads competed with each other whose pharmacy would be arranged in a more bizarre and innovative style. Thus, a number of pictures were painted on a pharmaceutical theme, stained glass, frescos, paintings on the walls, etc. were created. Later this attempt at decoration spread all over Lithuania and even administrators of other Soviet republics used to order furniture here due to the fascination of such pharmacies. In such a way one set of pharmaceutical furniture was exported to Tashkent, another to Lvov.

It is a great pity that part of the interiors have been laid to waste and neglected; paintings are lost, furniture changed. After the privatisation of pharmacies, owners did not assign much money for the preservation of works of art, restoration of the furniture and, finally, the majority of them were destroyed.



Fig. 7. and Fig. 8. Interiors of modern pharmacies

The latter period is distinguished by the richness of visual material because the opening of a new pharmacy used to be photographed. To say more, the most beautiful and orderly pharmacy was selected and awarded.

In conclusion it is worth stating that a great number of pharmaceutical photographs were destroyed in the confusion of wars and exiles. Moreover, it was common practice not to keep photographs with the symbolics of independent Lithuania, that is Vytis, during the Soviet period of time. Also, a big part of photographs belong to private persons. Nevertheless, that part of the exhibits which is preserved in our depositories illustrates the development of pharmacy and gives us worthwhile information.

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