

FAMILY HOUSE AND SCHOOL OF DANIEL GABRIEL FAHRENHEIT*

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Family House. Let's now have a look, as far as it is possible, at the house in which Daniel Gabriel was born and brought up. According to the property registers preserved till our times, the address was the following: Hundegasse descendendo fol. 32A, that is Ogarna Street, going down, chart 32A. To explain we should add that the plots of land were registered one by one from the beginning to the end of the street, first "going up" on the right, and then "going down" from the end to the beginning on the left. In the case of Ogarna Street the beginning was by the Municipal Yard, and the end by the Cow Gate. While introducing in 1803 a so-called service numbering, and later, in 1854 today's numbering, the same order was kept. The numbers of allotments circle the street, and regardless of the direction, in which we are going, the numbers grow on the right and drop on the left. Unfortunately after the war in many places the logic and clear numbering was changed into a "modern" system, in which one side has odd numbers, and the other one – even numbers. Ogarna has, however, kept the old system of numbering. Comparing it with the entries in the property registers we can assume that the Fahrenheit family possession was the fourth one from the corner of Mieszcząńska Street (Matzkausche Gasse in the old days), that is since 1854 number 94. On a wide allotment there were two houses. Let us call one of them 94a – it was biaxial (that means it had two rows of windows), and the other one 94b – triaxial with a beautiful portal and threshold. The neighbouring building number 93 belonged in 1702 to Albrecht Stiper. The courtyards of both houses were divided by a wall, which was a frequent cause of arguments. The two storey-building number 94a was probably used as a warehouse. It was entered directly from the street. In the three

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storeys building number 94b the Fahrenheits lived. Before it was destroyed by the war, there was a memory plate on the façade, and after the house was rebuilt a new plate was put.

The present front – different from the one before the war, dating back to 1879, is a rococo one from around 1760. In the Fahrenheits' times it must have been a different one – renaissance (mannerism) or baroque. In front of the house there was a porch, from which fortunately the richly sculpted plates of the balustrade were preserved. They were sold before the World War I to the Nuremberg Museum. The two larger ones show Neptune carried by sea horses, surrounded by puttos blowing horns. The smaller ones show the winged female torsos and a conch full of flowers and fruit. The masterpieces of sculpture can be dated back to about 1660. If the façade was their contemporary, it must have had an equally magnificent portal.

In the files of the construction police we can find the sketches and plans from 1841, owing to which, in spite of all the changes, it is possible to try to reconstruct the original layout of the rooms. As most of the houses in the Right City, the Fahrenheits' house was a narrow (8.1m, and together with the warehouse 14.6m) and deep one (the front building 18m, and together with the wings and outbuildings 27.2m). From the threshold one entered a typical Gdansk hall, brightly illuminated by big windows, which was of a representative character. There were richly sculpted tables and benches there, the walls were decorated with paintings, an elegant chandelier hung from the painted ceiling, and by one of the walls stood a splendid Gdansk wardrobe.

According to the Dutch custom the floor was coated with flagstone, and the lower part of the walls – up to the molding – with Delft tiles. In the background beautiful winding stairs led to the upper floors. The middle tract, dark, lighted only by a so-called skylight, which meant the windows in the superstructure in the roof, housed the staircase. The back tract, which led to the courtyard, housed two rooms, much lower than the tall hall. In the bottom one there was the kitchen, later transferred to the annex, in the upper one – a study in which all the business matters were dealt with. In the Fahrenheits' times on the upper floors there were bedrooms for parents, children, servants and guests, and all the different storerooms for equipment, although in some houses people started to organize a living room (at the front) and a dining room (at the back), and a mezzanine was added in the hall.

On the ground floor, next to the study, there was a narrow passage leading to the courtyard. A different door led to the side wing and to the annex, in which there were various additional storerooms and bedrooms. It was not yet a custom to transfer the kitchen here (at the ground floor), nor to organize ensuite rooms on the first floor, serving as recreational space – for pipe smoking, tea or coffee drinking, reading or enjoying music.

It would mean wasting time to look for the Fahrenheits' name on the parchment pages of the property registry of the Right City from the years 1633–1814. Every change of the owner meant getting rid of the previous name with a sharp knife and overwriting it with a new name. When a hole appeared after several such operations, a new book was started. All this means that only a small part of the entries can be deciphered today. Thanks to them we know that in 1604 (data from the previous book) the whole number 94 allotment belonged to Jakub Schieling. In 1632 half of it

belonged to an underjudge Georg Curicke, and the other half to Andreas Kemmering. A share in the front house had also Miss Barbara Pauli, a niece of Dr Georg Pauli, who was the father-in-law and at the same time a brother-in-law of Curicke (after the death of the first wife he married the sister of his own son-in-law). To make the story complete it is worth adding that Curicke's son – Reinhold, later a secretary of the City Council, was the author of the famous Historical Description of the City of Gdansk (*Der Stadt Dantzig Historische Beschreibung*), edited after his death in 1687, by the efforts of his son Georg Reinhold, in Gdansk and Amsterdam. The richly illustrated volume got great fame and it is almost sure that the young Daniel Gabriel had some contact with it in his parents' house.

The important supplement to the property registers are the so-called Libri Memorandum, in which the transactions concerning real estate were registered. It was them that have made it possible to identify the family house of the future scientist and many other properties. Fahrenheits also owned the house in Ogarna Street "ascendendo fol. 18A", which means the later number 39. They also had a majority share in the mortgage of the house in Szeroka Street, half of the Cock (Hahn) granary at Long Pier fol. 5A – today Chmielna 21, and a summerhouse with a garden in Winniki, that is in today's Zakopiańska Street. The granary changed its name quite often, depending on the colour of the stone or metal coat of arms. In 1553 it was a Cock, in 1688 – the Red Cock, in 1813 – the Black Cock. In 1710 part of the granary was called the Polish King. In 1784 the granary belonged to Karl Gottlieb Steffens, the later owner of the Golden House at Long Market – recently deprived of the golden ornaments.

We do not have any special information about the childhood of Daniel Gabriel. We only know that the initial learning was done at home, with a private tutor. The parents were probably very busy. The father had his business, which constantly developed. The mother had a new baby every year and the lying-in was the only time she was not pregnant. The private teaching meant reading, writing, initial religious training, and the knowledge of arithmetic, so important for the possible future merchant career. After such preparation the school time approached. According to the parish affiliation from 1698, the parents sent the 12-year-old son to St. Mary's School, being the best one in Gdansk at that time – of course apart from the Academic Gymnasium of a semi-academic character.

School. The parish school at St. Mary's Church was first mentioned in 1350. Initially the bell-ringer was the first teacher. The learning was aimed at accustoming the children with church singing and active participation in church services. Reading and writing, Latin and probably arithmetic were also taught. Since 1383 the rector was the head of the school. In 1427 apart from him there were several teachers, a chanter and the first choir singer. In 1436 there were 6 elementary schools in Gdansk, whose aim was solely elementary education in German. The parish schools, called Latin ones, were allowed to raise the level of education, which was however introduced only after the reformation. In 1525 the children of the poor were obliged to go to school as well. In 1539 the rector of St. Mary's School Andreas Aurifaber (Goldschmied) prepared an ambitious curriculum. There were still 6 parish schools in the city, which also took over the duties of elementary schools. The minimum curriculum included reading,

writing, catechism and the basics of Latin, and was realized in the lower grades. In 1558 a secondary school was opened (a "particular"), which was transformed in 1580 into Academic Gymnasium, whose highest grades realized university program. Since 1574 the Council tried to unify the form and content of education in different schools. The curricular basics were freshly prepared by the new rector of St. Mary's School – Valentin Schreck, and in 1653 developed by the rector of the Academic Gymnasium Jan Maukisch.

Since the beginnings of its existence St. Mary's School was situated at the end of Podkramarska Street, opposite the Presbytery (number 4). The original gothic building in 1581 gave place to the new, renaissance one. The next redecoration in 1651/52 cost 46781 florins, and gave it the early baroque form. In 1836 it was torn down, save the front wall with the tall gable, which can be seen in the pre-war photographs. The famous school, destroyed in 1945, has not yet been rebuilt (the so-called St. Mary's School in Chlebnicka Street has nothing to do with the old one).

In the Fahrenheits' times the school theoretically consisted of 6 classes, with an additional elementary grade for the poor ones. In reality there were only 5 classes, since grades VI and V were joined. After the temporary crisis in 1672, when the number of pupils dropped to 45, now there were over 100 of them. The "Educating Body" consisted of the rector, conrector (deputy), cantor and three preceptors for the lower grades, and a separate preceptor for the poor pupils. Each of them had one class assigned, with which he had all the lessons, except for the first grade – the highest one, assigned to the conrector, in which some classes were taught by the rector and cantor, and for the second grade, assigned to the cantor, with some lessons taught by the rector and conrector.

It is not difficult to imagine some autumn day in 1698, early in the morning, when the parents, or maybe just one of them, lead the 12-year-old Daniel Gabriel from Ogarna Street, through Mieszczkańska, Kuśnierska, and Grząska, they turn into Mariacka Street, go past the old Presbytery and stop by the corner house – the school building, from which teachers' and pupils' voices can be heard, reciting one by one or together some Latin words, grammatical rules or poetry.

There are two entrances to the building – the front one from Podkramarska Street, and a side one, next to the well with a tap guarded by a grille, from the side of the church. The future student, who had learnt some Latin during his lessons at home, is trying to decipher the inscription over the main entrance "Cui Pietas cordi, moresque, artesque, politae / Huc ades, aetatis flore virente Puer!". The parents are trying to help: "If in your heart piety, learning and politeness, enter here boy, blossoming with the flower of youth!". They do not enter, however, yet proceed to the second door with the inscription "Hic olim egregius felix Respublica Cives Coelica municipes hinc petet aula suos", which means "Here once eminent citizens' happy republic, here then the heavenly castle calls its fellow-citizens". Here one can reach the rector's room entering the steep winding staircase. The rector works on the second floor, on the left. From the windows facing north one can see the roofs of the houses in the Św. Ducha Street, over which, on the right we can see the dome of the Royal Chapel finished 20 years before.

The visit at the rector's office is necessary, as it is his decision that places the boy in the proper class. After a short exam the decision is made: the third grade! The

parents give a sigh of relief – the home teaching was not in vain. Daniel Gabriel is not a disgrace for his family. The new pupil has yet to take a solemn oath, saying that he is to obey the school's rules and regulations, come to classes punctually, listen to his teachers, learn diligently, take part in prayers and masses. He was also admonished to “act tactfully and calmly in the street and other places, pray before and after meals, say his Latin lessons to his parents and show due respect for the older, respectable people”. Then there was still 1 florin (30 groszy) to be paid as registration fee, and the regular fee of 1 florin every three months.

That was not a substantial sum for the well-off Fahrenheit family. Later the sum will be enlarged by the additional holiday and vacation fees, money for heating, and so on, yet they, too, will be rather of a symbolic character. The most important thing is that Daniel Gabriel is a full rights pupil of the third grade, called a *terce* here, and can learn with highly qualified teachers.

The lessons started at 7 a.m. in summer, and in winter (since St. Michael's till the carnival) at 7.30 “because of dark days”, and lasted till 10.00 a.m., and in the afternoon from 1 p.m. till 4 p.m. On Wednesday and Saturday there were no afternoon lessons. The full curriculum was 30 hours a week. The classes were started and finished with a prayer. The preceptor was responsible for the third grade, and he taught most of the lessons. In Fahrenheit's times it was Andreas Schlüter, born in 1662, probably the son of the famous sculptor living in Berlin at that time. Some classes were taught by the 4th grade (quart) preceptor Samuel Hindenburg. Latin was taught first of all (8 hours a week), then religion (6 hours). Great stress was laid on classes (exercises) in both subjects (12 hours), and there were tests every week (4 hours).

Once a year, “between St. Michael's (29 September) and St. Mark's (22 October)” there was an exam. The date of the exam was appointed by the protoscholarch, that was the mayor who was the head of education. Two weeks were assigned for material revision, then the scholarchs, that is the members of the school council, were invited. In those days the council consisted of 4 councilors, 2 aldermen, 4 representatives of the 3rd Rank (a representative body of the people). From within the school itself, the corrector and 3 teachers entered the exam committee. The exam started with a prayer, and all the classes, from the lowest to the highest one, took part in it. After the exam the students were free. The next day during lessons the results were given and discussed. The best ones were sent by the rector to the next class. If someone failed, there was always a chance to get better results during the Easter session.

We have no precise data, yet the chances are that Daniel Gabriel did not have any problems with learning, and every year he moved to the higher grade. All grades had the same total number of hours. In the II grade (seconds) there were 9 hours of Latin, 9 of religion, 4 singing lessons, and only 2 of arithmetic; 2 hours were devoted to exercises, 4 – to tests. The lessons were taught by the cantor (25 hours) and the corrector (4 hours). On Saturday the first hour was taught by the rector himself.

In the highest I grade the number of Latin lessons was increased to 14 hours a week, religion was diminished to 3 hours, calculus to 1 hour, there were still 4 hours of singing. New subjects were introduced – 3 hours of rhetoric, 1 of logic, and

4 1-hour-long tests in stylistics. The lessons were taught by the cantor (5 hours), conrector (15 hours) and the rector (10 hours).

Since 1678 the rector was Jan (Johannes) Krieg. Born in 1640 in Pырzyce in the west of Pomerania, he was a graduate of the Academic Gymnasium in Gdansk. We do not know whether or where he studied. Since 1668 he was a teacher at St. Mary's School. 6 years later he married the daughter of the parson of St. Spirit hospital church. His son Jan was later a deacon at St. Trinity's Church. Latin was the specialty of rector Krieg; he also taught logic. In his free time he wrote poetry. He died in 1707.

The conrector Johann Nicolaus Weber was a Gdansk citizen. He was born in 1649. After finishing the Academic Gymnasium he probably studied at some university. Since 1675 he was the conrector at St. Catherine's School in the Old City. In 1677, a year after marrying the daughter of the vicar at St Mary's Church, he became the conrector of that school. He had classes in Latin, rhetoric, and stylistics. He died in 1700.

The cantor at St. Mary's Church since 1697 was Johann Friedrich Steinroeck. Before that he had the same function for 11 years at St. Mary's Church in Elbląg. He was born in Groß Lindenau near Święta Siekierka (Heiligenbeil), also called Holyplace (on the way to Królewiec), where his father was a parson. Apart from singing he also gave arithmetic lessons. He was not a very conscientious teacher, and was dismissed in 1717. He moved back to Elbląg, where he died 5 years later.

Let us name one more teacher, who only had classes with the poorest ones, yet Daniel Gabriel must have had contact with him during church singing. That person was Achatius Filiborn, the first singer in the City Council's band. Information about his life is scarce. He was born in 1640 in Poznan. In Gdansk he was first connected with the hospital church of St. Jacob, where he was a cantor. In 1687 he became the preceptor of the paupers at St. Mary's School and the first cantor of the famous, founded in 1560, band of the City Council, whose tradition is continued to this day by Cappella Gedanensis. Among his duties was intoning the choir songs during prayers. He also wrote theme poetry. He died in 1712. In 1698, the year when Daniel Gabriel became the pupil of St. Mary's School, Filiborn's poem was published. It was entitled "The Holy Tree of Christ" (Der Heilige Christbaum), and praised the Christmas tree – probably the first work of that kind in literature!

What knowledge and abilities did the future scientist obtain in the first three years of his education? We have to remember that in spite of its high level, it was a school that was deeply rooted in the classic tradition and in the spirit of reformation. The main task of the school was to "educate the young people carefully in the arts and languages, and first of all in the knowledge of the Scriptures of the Prophets and of the Apostles, of the old, not falsified Augsburg Confession, Luther's catechism and his books". Learning Latin served to understand the Bible and the religious treatises. And it was taught really meticulously. Already in the youngest grades the pupils were introduced to the grammar rules, Donat's book (an old Roman book of grammar) was exercised and revised, Latin catechism was read together with Salomo's Proverbs, Cicero's letters and poets' sayings. The boys had to "talk in Latin and present fluently Latin dissertations, which could be meticulously corrected by the teachers in their presence".

The III grade was taught the rules of “natural construction” of sentences, that is of syntax, and the following books were studied: Rhenius’ “Introduction to Grammar”, Comenius’ “Orbis sensualium pictus”, Conderius’ “Colloquia”. During the prayers chapters were read in Latin from the Bible, Luther’s or Gdansk Catechism, and Salomo’s Proverbs. The II grade, apart from the Catechism and grammar, also did the “Talks” by Erasmus of Rotterdam, “Prosody” and “Versus transponendi”, and still the works of Komenius. The chosen ones were allowed to study Greek. The I grade read and commented on the Bible by Ossiander, Voss’ “Rhetoric” was introduced, together with the work of Kornelius Nepos (a Roman author of the descriptions of lives of famous people). The rector chose and explained the treaties of apologist Justin (II century), Ovid’s and Virgil’s poetry, and the rules of logic. The pupils were trained in explaining the Bible by themselves and in imitations, that is in speeches and treaties modeled on the works of ancient authors.

An important part and a diversion from the routine of classes were the annual performances. For this purpose the wooden partition between the rooms of the III and II grades was torn down, and the old so-called “Grand Aula” was restored. Terentius’ plays were among the most often staged ones. Pupils from the I and sometimes II grade took part in the performances. Among the invited ones were “the patrons and other good friends”. Great stress was put on church singing and taking part in the Sunday masses (in the morning and afternoon) and in the burial ceremonies. Singing during burials was an additional source of income for the school.

As we can see, finishing school in 1701 Daniel Gabriel was fully educated in the field of so-called trivium, that is grammar, dialectic and rhetoric. From quadrivium, which was the higher course including arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, he only knew a narrow range of arithmetic and music. He could speak Latin fluently, could cite the Bible and ancient authors, yet he lacked profound knowledge of mathematics, not to mention physics or chemistry, whose modern rules were just being born. Let us remind that the epoch-making work of Newton “Mathematical Background of Natural Philosophy”, which meant physics, appeared for the first time in 1687. Because of his abilities and diligence, and probably under the pressure from rector Krieg, the parents decided the 15-year-old Daniel Gabriel would continue his studies in autumn in one of the classes of the Academic Gymnasium that had its seat in the former Franciscan monastery in Rzeźnicka Street (the present National Museum). The fate, however, decided otherwise.

Translation: Anna Kucharska-Raczunas

