

Springs of Santa Barbara

The city of Drama is characterised by the abundance of water, from which, according to one tradition, derives its name (which at first was “Hydrama”). The springs of Santa Barbara cover an area of approximately 60 acres at the centre of Drama, at the area around the old church of Santa Barbara, the patron of the city. The exact number of the springs is not known but they cover a large area, and they are surrounded by rich vegetation. According to the tradition, during the Ottoman domination, the conquerors intended to demolish the Byzantine church of Santa Barbara and replace it with a mosque. The church, however, was covered with water and therefore the Turks could not reach it. The incident was seen as a miracle by the locals, who then declared Santa Barbara as patron of the city. To commemorate the event and in honour of the Santa, at the eve of Santa’s feast (3rd of December), the citizens gather at the area of the old church and the children leave boats with candles in the lake. This custom has been preserved until today. The old church is now visible at the bottom of the lake, while in 1920 a new church was built nearby, where the picture of the Santa is located. Circa 1870, at the same area was created the district of Santa Barbara. During this period, the population of the city increased, due to the cultivation of tobacco, a change that led to the construction of the first tobacco warehouses in this region, which used the water for processing and storage of tobacco. The stream that begins from the springs of Santa Barbara, merges with two other streams (the “Tsai” torrent and the stream Kallifytou) to the south of the city and they all together end into the Aggitis river.



In the past, the springs of Santa Barbara, were used by the water mills built in the region and by the tobacco warehouses, which used the water for the processing and storage of their products. The area has always been an important biotope for many animal species, fish and birds that find shelter in nearby trees. Today the water sources are used for watering the surrounding crops and the area is an important recreational place for the citizens.

The Municipality of Drama constructed an artificial reservoir to collect the water of the springs, at the bottom of which it can be seen the old church of Santa Barbara. A platform was also built, which is used for the cross throwing and the blessing of the water celebrated on the Epiphany day (6th of December).

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Tobacco Warehouse of Ioannis Anastasiadis

The tobacco warehouse of Ioannis Anastasiadis, was the first to be built in the district of Santa Barbara and the first major tobacco shop in the city of Drama. It is a two – storey building, which covers a total area of 250m². It is covered by a pitched tiled roof and its walls consist of white stone.

Next to the tobacco warehouse there is the so called “stone house”, which has similar perimetric walls to the tobacco warehouse and it was used as the owner’s residence. The construction of the warehouse in this area was not accidental, since the springs of Santa Barbara ensured the humidity which was necessary for the storage and processing of tobacco.

The tobacco warehouse of Ioannis Anastasiadis changed many uses since its construction. In 1943 it was occupied and looted by the Bulgarian army and after the liberation of the city in 1944 and until 1953 it worked as a dance learning centre. For the next six years (until 1958) it was used as a dry cleaner and after that, the owners used it as a warehouse. The tobacco warehouse of I. Anastasiadis is preserved in a good condition. Its owners conserved the roof, before they use it as a warehouse. The building in general, maintains the original form of its façade, since few interventions were made from its construction until today.



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Tobacco Warehouse of Hermann Spierer also known as “Austrian-Greek”

The tobacco warehouse of Hermann Spierer is located in the district of Santa Barbara. It was built by the architect Konrad von Villas, for the Swiss- Jewish tobacco merchant Hermann Spierer and his company “Hermann Spierer and Co”. The warehouse is built on two lots in the district of Santa Barbara. The location choice is associated with the water that emanated from the springs, which was necessary for the storing and the processing of tobacco.

It is a very large rectangular building (7.500 m²) with five floors (basement and four floors) and 1:3 aspect ratios. The excessive size of the warehouse is indicated by the name “skyscraper Spierer” with which it was called and by the adverse reactions, caused by its construction. These reactions were related to the size of the warehouse and to its use in relation to the surrounding area.

The ground floor is divided into two equal parts by a transverse wall, which have different entrances from Santa Barbara Street. Each of these parts is uniform, has wooden columns and was used for the concentration of tobacco. The vertical communication between the floors and the transfer of the packages of tobacco to the upper floors was obtained by two wooden staircases, one on each wing and also with a lift.

The architecture of the building reflects the general trends in the architecture of the time. The exterior walls are made of rubble, the roof is double, made of tiles and it has a framing on the east side. Morphologically, the building is characterised by simple lines, symmetry and by the arrangement of its parts in horizontal bands. Another characteristic is the large number of openings, which are surrounded by frames and have different heights, depending on the use of each room. Adjacent to the east side of the warehouse is a smaller building, which housed the administration offices of the company. It is a two storey building with independent entrance from Santa Barbara street, which communicated at the interior with the tobacco warehouse.

Konrad Jacob Josef von Villas (1860-1929) was an Austrian engineer who lived and worked in Drama and the surrounding area, in the late 19th and early 20th century. He built private houses, public buildings and several warehouses in Drama and other cities. He was the architect who transferred and pursued the new European trends, which prevailed at the time, in the architecture of Drama. Hermann Spierer (1885-1927), was Swiss-Jew, born in Smyrna, where he founded the tobacco company “Hermann Spierer and Co”. His company operated in several areas, including Kavala, Drama and Volos. In these cities he built warehouses, the construction of which he assigned to the engineer Konrad von Villas. Hermann Spierer was also known for his philanthropy, since he provided shelter, food and work to many immigrants after the catastrophe of Asia Minor. On January 20th, 1932 it was bought by the “Austrian-Greek Tobacco Company SA” and retained the same functions, even during the Bulgarian occupation. After the cessation of processing of tobacco in 1974 by the Greek state, it functioned as a warehouse. It has been declared as preserved building by the Greek Ministry of Culture.



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