

Immigrant master builders:

Architecture transfer between Germany and Chile 1852 – 1875, buildings and models¹

Renato D'Alençon Castrillón, Architect, MArch,

During the period of immigration of the German settlers in southern Chile organized by the Government between 1852 and 1875, a total of 6952 people settled in unique locations at the shore of Lake Llanquihue and in the cities of Osorno and Valdivia. This led to the construction of a vast architectural heritage, which is recognized in the country as "German" architecture. However, it has not been clearly established to what extent the houses built by the settlers –stemming from regions not limited to Prussia- in southern Chile is influenced by the import of European models.

In this work, we attempt to identify the specific influences developed by these immigrants in southern Chile. Because of the simple design of these houses, the traces of such influences are found in basic elements and building systems, which we document in a number of cases of study - both in Chile in the mentioned areas and in the areas of origin where the emigrants concentrated: Bohemia, Hessen, Silesia, Westfalia and Würtemberg.

A variety of building systems and architectural elements, such as the Transverse Gable ("Zwerchhaus"), the use of Massive Timber Construction ("Massivholzbau"), the Joining Marks ("Abundzeichen"), show striking coincidences with similar procedures and building systems in the areas of origin which we document and discuss.

Salduv Statek, Jilemnice, Czech Republic. Massive timber walls photographed during the process of relocation of the house. Photo: Jan Sucharda.



House Garcés, Puerto Fonck, Lake Llanquihue, Chile. Detail of the caulking in the corner of two perpendicular massive timber walls. Photo: Ma Fernanda Vargas



Presenting Author

Renato D'Alençon Castrillón
Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter
A 53, Habitat Unit, Raum A 623
Technische Universität Berlin
Strasse des 17. Juni 152
10623 Berlin
+49.30.314.21904
dalenconcastrillon@tu-berlin.de

Renato D'Alençon Castrillón, is an Architect, graduated from the School of Architecture of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and Master of Architecture in Cornell University. He is currently a Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in the Technische Universität Berlin working with a focus on energy and buildings design and building technology. He was awarded a Fulbright Grant from 2002 to 2004 to pursue his Master Degree and a Deutsche Akademischer Austausch Dienst Grant to pursue a PhD Degree in Technische Universität Berlin, starting 2008. He practiced Architecture since 1998 in the firm D'Alençon - Plaza - Rosso Architects. He has been a Professor at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and guest Faculty at the University of Chile and the Technical University of Berlin. His publications in the area of this presentation include:

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Research Authors

Francisco Prado García, Building Engineer, Master in Heritage Conservation, Professor at the School of Building Engineering, P. Universidad Católica de Chile.

Renato D'Alençon Castrillón, Architect, Master in Architecture, Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter at the Faculty VI, Technische Universität Berlin.

Felipe Kramm Toledo, Architect PUC, Master in Heritage Protection TUB

José Miguel De la Barra Cifuentes, Building Engineer PUC

Daniel Korwan, Architecture Student Faculty VI TUB

Johanna Moser, Architecture Student Faculty VI TUB

María Fernanda Vargas Fuenzalida, Building Engineer PUC

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