

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

Str. Păcii nr. 11, Tulcea, Romania

Text Rev. **Fr. Felix Lucian Neculai**¹

Translated by prof. Petru Șolcă

St. George's Church is located at the crossroads of streets Păcii and Dobrogeanu Gherea, near St. George's Square (photo 1), close to Km 0 of the city of Tulcea. This place of worship for the Orthodox believers from Tulcea is also known as „the Bulgarian Church” or „the church with a clock”, due to the clock fixed in the bell tower more than 100 years ago (photo 2). The current clock was acquired from Germany and dates from 1928 (photo 3).



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

¹ Episcopia Tulcii

The history of the Church started sometime after 1830, when on the place of today's grand church there was a modest wooden house of worship, built in the "Bulgarian neighborhood" of those times. In 1848-1849, people started collecting funds for the implementation of the project of a new church.

The Turkish imperial document (photo 4) for approving the building of the church was issued by Sultan Abdul Medjid, at Constantinople, during the last day of the month of *zilde* year 1272 (1854) (photo 5).

Photo 4

Photo 5

The Church is built between 1854-1857 by the Christian people of Tulcea, although the original inscription of the Church perhaps recalls only its consecration day: *this church, dedicated to the Great Martyr Saint George, is built in 1857, May 20th, with the help of the Bulgarian community* (photo 6).

Photo 6



The dyptich enumerates the top church founders: Macedonian-Romanians Hagi Velicu Ștefanov with his wife Anastasia (photo 7), Bulgarians Hagi Stoicu Uzun, Bey Dumitrache Teodorov and his wife Sultana, Constantin Marcof with his wife Anghela, along with many others being also mentioned the Romanians Gheorghe Butuc, Hagi Gheorghe, Hagi Vrânceanu.

Photo 7

It seems that in 1873, according to the inscription written on the gates of the Church (photo 8), the construction of the Gothic style, 27-meter-high Bell Tower was started. Because of its height, it is assumed that the completion of the construction was done after the liberation of Dobrogea from the Turks, in 1878, as the Ottoman authorities would have never allowed such a defiance of the Muslim minaret from Tulcea.



Photo 8

Due to the fact that the church was raised on a land flooded by the Danube waters until the end of the 19th century, St. George's needed frequent repairs and improvements. The first was held in 1873, then others followed in 1893, 1906 and in 1927, when the interior painting of the church was completed (photo 9). In 1942, Prof. Nicholas Udrescu, from the Boys High School in Tulcea, using funds of over 40,000 lei, reconstructs the Church porch, affected by the shrapnel of a fragmentation bomb dropped 4 meters away from it during World War II.

Photo 10

Description: the church is built in the basilical style, with three naves. The central nave is covered by a semi-cylindrical cove supported by columns. Lower lateral naves are covered with cross coves, supported by the arches between the columns and the exterior walls (photo 11).

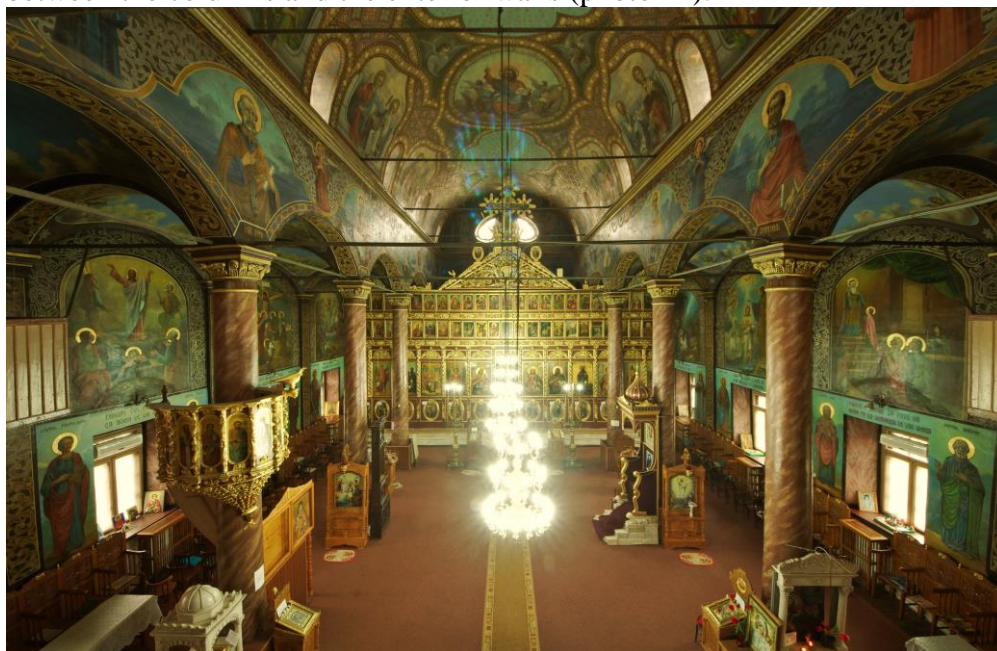


Photo 11

The Church has the following dimensions: 18 m high, 33 m long and 17 m wide. It has no spires because of the Islamic interdiction decreeing that no other building should exceed the height of the minaret of mosque Azizzie in Tulcea. The construction presents architectural similarities with the Church of St. George from Fanar, the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and St. George from Dobrich (Bulgaria).

The inner painting presents a particular brightness and pertains to the academic style. It was conducted between 1923-1927 by the self-taught painter Mihail Paraschiv, from Tulcea (photo 12), also known as “the painter” who was also professor to the famous painter Alexandru Ciucurencu in his apprenticeship years.



Photo 12

A feature and pride for the church is the exceptional altarpiece (photo 13), with an unusual size of 15x17m, unique in Romania, worked between 1872-1874 by Bulgarian master Anton Stanishev.



Photo 13



Photo 14

Altarpieces worked during the same period can be found in Bulgaria in the Holy Trinity church of Șviștov (photo 14) and St. Nicholas church in Vratsa. The altarpiece is particularly luxuriant, combining floral and zoomorphic patterns with no less than 90 icons, most of them from the 19th century. Many of the paintings on the altarpiece are done by the great Bulgarian artist Stanislav Dospevschi, as well as by Enache Cardaș, a Romanian painter who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, best known in Dobrogea at that time.

The oldest icon of the altarpiece is of Greek origins, painted by monk Sofronie of Palomenu (Mount Athos) and is dated April 5th, 1862.

Over time, St. George had an essential contribution to the promotion of culture, education and the public life of Tulcea. Starting with 1859 and up until 1940, the buildings enclosed in the churchyard functioned as: a primary school, the girl's high school Princess Ileana (photo 15) (1927-1940), as well as the "Red Cross" Hospital (photo 16), the Town Hall and the Courthouse of Tulcea (photo 17) between 1916-1920.

Today St. George's church (photo 18) stands as an architectural monument representative for Tulcea and one of the numerous tourist attractions for anyone visiting the city at the gates of the Danube Delta.



Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17



Photo 18