

# HISTORY OF CASTLE PERSENBEUG

## GENERAL HISTORY:

It is difficult today to determine whether the castle or their first residents have borne this name or at least parts of it. The town Persenbeug and the castle of the same name were mentioned in the course of its history with more than thirty name types, but with resembling spellings such as: Petramich, Persinbiugun, ad biugun, Besenboig, Böse Beuge. Others tell of a sedentary knight named Perso who may have served as name giver.

The convenient location on the Danube river and the high-lying rocks offered in any case an optimal condition, first for a certain strategic fortification, which had been expected to already appreciated by the Romans along the limes, as watchtower against invasions from the north.

Soon after the conquest of the territories east of the Enns by Charles the Great 791 AD., a fortification was built on this castle rock, to protect the country and its formative Danube passage. The Magyar invasions towards the end of 9<sup>th</sup> century brought a first devastation of the building with it. Even the Bavarian Count Sieghart of Sempt and Ebersberg fell victim to these. He was the child of the last Carolingian King Ludwig and was commissioned to create military courts in the "Ostmark" of the German empire against the attacking enemies.

After the destruction of the Hungarian army in 955 by emperor Otto I at the Lechfelde and with the newly incipient domestic takeover of the eastern mark of the empire, those descendants of the Bavarian count Sieghart of Sempt and Ebersberg appeared here again. Count Sieghart was explicitly mentioned 970 for the first time as "Count of Persenbeug" in an Ebersberg certificate (an old monastery located east of Munich and still existing). It was probably Sieghart II. who built up the castle again.

The present castle has a very eventful past history and played a significant role as original fiefdom. The dynasty of the Counts to Sempt and Ebersberg defuncted, with Adalbert III. In the year 1045, who wanted to turn the castle towards a pious foundation for the monks of Ebersberg, with the provision that his widow Richlinde Persenbeug should keep the castle as lifetime widow residence. Within the same year, the Salian emperor Henry III. appeared in Persenbeug, on his way against the Hungarians. He was a guest of Countess Richlinde and he enfeoffed her nephew Welf III. Count of Altdorf with the county of Persenbeug. During the act of enfeoffment in May 1045, and in the presence of many prominent guests, the floor of a castle hall collapsed due to overloading. Some of those present guests rushed to the bathroom of the basement, and came to death. However, emperor Henry was able to hold on to a round pillar of the room and was unharmed, while bishop Bruno from Würzburg (he was later even canonized), Abbot Altmann from the monastery Ebersberg and countess Richlinde died as a consequence of serious injuries. The historian J. Aventinus has handed down this incident very clearly in Latin source.

With year 1136, the Babenberg dukes acquired the castle and the associated county of Persenbeug. With year 1226, both, estate and county of Persenbeug, were owned by king Ottokar II of Bohemia, whose wife was in turn a sister of the last Babenberg duke Frederick II. Consequently Persenbeug fell back again to the empire and until year 1368 it is referred to as an imperial fief. 1301 – 1364 Persenbeug was owned by queen Agnes, widow of the Arpads king Andreas III. from Hungary. She was a native daughter of the Habsburg king Albert I. and thus also a direct granddaughter of the famous dynasty founder Rudolf I of Habsburg.

From the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the castle was pledged over and over again to various aristocrats of the time, ultimately emperor Maximilian I, the last knight, held Persenbeug in possession for 24 years until his death. In his personal hunting books, the hunting grounds and close forests around the nearby Rottenhof as well as a wellspring are also explicitly stated.

Emperor Ferdinand I, moved from Madrid to the Austrian hereditary lands. He was the younger brother of Charles V, and he induced an accurate description of the castle and entire estate in 1523. He mortgaged everything to several aristocrats. 1593 emperor Rudolph II sold the castle including possession as a free property to Ferdinand Albrecht from Hoyos, a strict catholic family, which served faithfully and on the long-term for the purposes of the counter-reformation, the imperial house in the hereditary lands. Persenbeug remained thereafter for 207 years in possession of this from Burgos in Spain origin family. During the peasants´ revolt in 1597, Persenbeug was forcibly occupied by them. A few years later, protestant “Landstände” (political representatives of the estates of the realm), of upper and lower Austria, occupied again the castle. They were in rebellion to emperor Ferdinand II. In rebellion against the strict catholic new castle lord, they plundered this well equipped property again. Ultimately, after several troubled years from the second castle storming in 1612, with the help of imperial troops, they managed to drive out the insurgents and all possessions could be returned to the family of Hoyos secured.

It was Adam Eusebius from Hoyos who let renew and expand the castle in its present form between years 1617 to 1621. A devoted final capstone, which was used at that time, as well as a still preserved door coat of arms of the Hoyos dynasty, reminds us still of the noble family rooted with lower Austria.

The castle Persenbeug itself forms architecturally a pentagon with a spacious inner courtyard and a simple central fountain. The south-western wing with a large onion tower and lantern, counts to the oldest part of the castle. The to the holy cross consecrated chapel is located in the west wing and the “Michaeler Tower” in the northwest corner had an onion dome conclusion, which was demolished by repeated squalls twice in the course of its existence. The great hall and later called Imperial Hall is located on the upper floor of the east wing and is characterized by an opulent ornamented stucco-flat ceiling, which was probably created in the years 1670/80 from the Viennese stucco plasterer circle around Rueber, Castelli and Piazzoli.

After the more than 200 years of interregnum of the Hoyos dynasty, emperor Franz I from Austria bought the castle and territory of Persenbeug. Thus Persenbeug again came to the possession of the sovereign and his descendants, this time, however, as a free-belonging acquired private property. The emperor chose castle Persenbeug to his favorite summer residence and visited it many times. Beside his adolescent youthful children and numerous brothers, also the state chancellor prince Metternich as well as the young duke from Reichstadt, the only son of Napoleon and grandson of the emperor, visited the castle quiet often.

After the death of emperor Franz in year 1835, Persenbeug remained a widow residence of the very socially engaged empress Carolina Augusta, a native Bavarian princess. After her death in 1873 the castle and environment went to Archduke Karl Ludwig, a younger brother of emperor Franz-Joseph. He handed over Persenbeug to his younger son Archduke Otto as a wedding gift. Archduke Otto was the father of the last Austrian emperor Charles, who was born on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1887 at castle Persenbeug. Pope John Paul II beatified him, in year 2004, because of his christian family life and his peace efforts to end the war earlier.

Indebted by constantly rising rebuilding and extension costs, Archduke Otto was forced to sell the entire estate to his uncle emperor Franz-Joseph I with year 1896. After the emperor's death, his daughter Archduchess Marie-Valerie inherited the estate. She died early and the castle came into the possession of her numerous children and ultimately later to their descendants as a family joint operation.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO THE PREMISES:

### **IMPERIAL HALL:**

This marvelous hall, located on the upper floor of the east wing, is characterized by an opulent ornamented stucco-flat ceiling, which was probably created in the years 1670/80 from the Viennese stucco plasterer circle around Rueber, Castelli and Piazoll. A large centered mirror, the opulent wood paneling as well as all elements of the preserved historical architecture, lends this hall a singular air of grandeur.

Remarkable is a unique old master painting of Joseph Rebell, revealing the imperial family in front of Leiben castle in Weintal, Lower Austria, in summer 1830. The picture can be found in the center of the hall, on the courtyard side, and shows the engagement of crown prince Archduke Ferdinand, who earned as later emperor the name „Ferdinand the kind-hearted“, with his bride Maria-Anna, Princess of Savoy.

The impressive, with paintings richly decorated and wood-paneled imperial hall was used particularly for private events of the imperial family. In August 1887, Charles I of Austria (last emperor of Austria) was born in the castle of Persenbeug and the baptismal festivities took place at the imperial hall.

### **PORTRAIT HISTORY AT THE MARIE-VALERIE HALL:**

Of historic interest is a painting of A. F. Seligmann, revealing the unmarried members of the imperial family, who assembled on the occasion of the 60th throne jubilee of emperor Franz Joseph I, in year 1908, Schönbrunn, in order to perform a self-written and choreographed theatrical performance. In the middle standing: the then 21 year old archduke Karl Franz Joseph I (Karl I, Emperor of Austria, as of year 1916) and on the right in the back row, the last but one male person is archduke Dr. Huber Salvator, son of Archduchess Marie Valerie and co-heir of Persenbeug castle.

### **CASTLE CHAPEL PERSENBEUG:**

It is historically documented that the castle chapel construction works started already in year 1609. In year 1621 the ceremonious keystone lapping and inauguration occurred under Adam Eusebius von Hoyos. This early baroque, two-storey chapel is located within the west wing of the castle and the church arches are richly decorated with stucco elements. Three apses clearly highlight this venerable chapel from the exterior building. Pietro da Nobile established the marbled, wooden altar in 1819 above a classicism tabernacle. The sacred relics of Vinzentius the martyrs can be found in a glass shrine underneath the altar. These relics were a present of pope Pius VII to emperor Franz I from Austria. Furthermore remarkable is the stand alone wooden renaissance pulpit with impressive, filigree ornaments as well as the professionally restored Bach-organ with it's incredible precise and cheerful sound volume.

### **CASTLE PARK AND PARK BRIDGES:**

The castle park was laid out in year 1779 and over centuries this area has been transformed into a landscape garden of peace and tranquility. The grounds are directly connected to the same level, eastern side, of the castle via two historic stone bridges. Artistic enhancements and functional extensions were made over decades, like a stable building from 1891, and characterize this haven of peace today. A remarkable collection of rare species of trees and shady park avenues with ancient trees brings out the generosity, colour and drama of the season.

### **THE SMALL PARK FOUNTAIN: “ The bathing mother” at the castle park:**

The most incredible historic story reveals the small park well in the back area of the castle park, concerning an almost tragic incident around later emperor Karl I. He spent many summers in Persenbeug and one day he fell in this park well at an unattended moment and could be saved only at the last minute. Still today the bronze statue „The bathing mother“ (from an artist associated with sculptor Georg Raphael Donner 1693-1741), presumably put up by his father archduke Otto, reminds of this occurrence.

## HOYOS STAIRCASE:

This unique staircase is leading directly to the extensive castle park and is characterized by a simple elegant architecture. The cast iron park gate is richly decorated with ornaments and derives its name from Johann Leopold of Hoyos (1728 - 1796), the last representative of the so-called „Persenbeug Hoyos line“, on the occasion of his 40th birthday. The House of Hoyos is a Spanish noble family, which was closely associated with the imperial family at that time. Castle Persenbeug was in family ownership from 1593 to 1800. Emperor Franz I from Austria acquired the castle with all its belonging manorial estates from the daughters of Johann Leopold of Hoyos, which thus passes into an independent, private ownership and was often used as summer residence. The two-winged paled gate forms the connection between the east wing of the castle and the park. Still the annual number „1768“, as well as the winding initials „J.L.v.H“ can be found on the intertwined ornaments of the gate.