

TELČ



**VISITING HISTORIC
SIGHTS OF THE
TOWN OF TELČ**

**WITH ZACHARIAS
OF HRADEC
AND CATHERINE
OF VALDSTEJN**



A WALK THROUGH TELČ WITH ZACHARIAS OF HRADEC AND CATHERINE OF VALDŠTEJN

1. Let us take a walk through a historic town that, thanks to Zacharias of Hradec, became one of the most significant Renaissance town complexes in Bohemia.

Thanks to the fact that even the succeeding generations had a sense for beauty, the town centre has maintained its original appearance, with only minor reconstructions that did not fundamentally change the overall look.

In addition to Telč becoming a town historic preserve, it was also included in 1992 in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, that includes the most beautiful and remarkable cultural and natural sites from all over the world.



2. TOWN HALL

The Town Hall is the largest house on the square. It actually comprises two houses. The Renaissance façade unified the originally Gothic houses into one majestic building of the Town Hall.

There are sgraffiti on the façade of the gable. The purpose of the gable was to cover the roof and make the building look higher. The front wall, overreaching the roof, created the illusion that the house has an additional floor. The gables and gable parapets belonged to the most common motifs of the Bohemian Renaissance.

Until the time that roofs were made from wood, gable parapets had a practical significance - they served as prevention to the spreading of fire. The edge of the gable parapets with merles and crenels is called a battlement. When looking into the interior of the entry corridor of the Town Hall, we can find still visible Gothic elements from the original buildings - for example, the column with a spiral shaft.

Remains of the town jail are situated in the courtyard of the Town Hall.



3. HOUSE NO. 65

Similar to other houses on the square, house No. 65 has an arcade, which was not only a very elegant construction element but was also practical, because it enabled artisans to offer their goods outside of their houses. Some of the pillars supporting the arcades have the artisans' symbols inscribed on them.

The symbol of this house is a beer spatula signifying that the burgher and house owner was entitled to brew and serve beer. The symbol on the neighbouring house No. 64, as well as on house No. 8 on the opposite side beside the Town Hall, is of a butcher's guild.

Butchers had an important status in the town. That is why Jindřich of Hradec granted special rights to the butcher's guild already in the year 1490.

The stunning great entrance hall called a "mázhaus" has been preserved in this house. Mázhaus is a large corridor that used to be located in the front ground part behind the entrance of the house. It was most often used as a store, a workshop or a place to sell beer. In Gothic and Renaissance houses, this space used to be vaulted using a central pillar. When the owner was entitled to brew, he used to make and sell draft beer here. In such a case the mázhaus actually became a public tavern that served also wine and spirits and sometimes even food. When artisans worked in their house, they used the mázhaus as storage for the goods made. This was the case primarily with cloth weavers, tailors, hat-makers, boot-makers as well as watchmakers and locksmiths. Goldsmiths preferred to have



their workshops on the first floor in order to prevent theft of the precious metals. A narrow corridor led from the mázhaus to the courtyard and to the staircase going up to the first floor. To the courtyard was usually attached a garden where the burghers grew garlic and onion, cabbage, legumes and carrot. Growing of fruit trees was also very common here.

The barns served to keep horses, steers and cows, sheep and goats. Poultry used to run freely in the courtyard and dogs and cats could often be found in the mázhaus.

The staircase went up to the first floor which is where the dwelling rooms were situated. The scullery was usually located in the upper hall. The furnishing used to be quite modest - table, benches and cupboards. However, the wealthy burghers in Telč used to have the upper hall furnished luxuriously. The wooden joist ceiling was often decorated with paintings and the walls with tapestries that made the room warmer. In other cases the walls were decorated with leather wall coverings. The benches at the table served also as storage space for clothing or other objects. To make the benches more comfortable, animal hides were placed on them or they were covered with fabric. In case of need, it was possible to sleep on these benches. Trunks also used to be popular and they were often used for travelling instead of today's suitcases.

The floors used to be decorated with ornamental tiles. In the evening, candles were used for lighting and during the day, light pierced in through the windows that were made from small glass discs embedded in round lead frames.

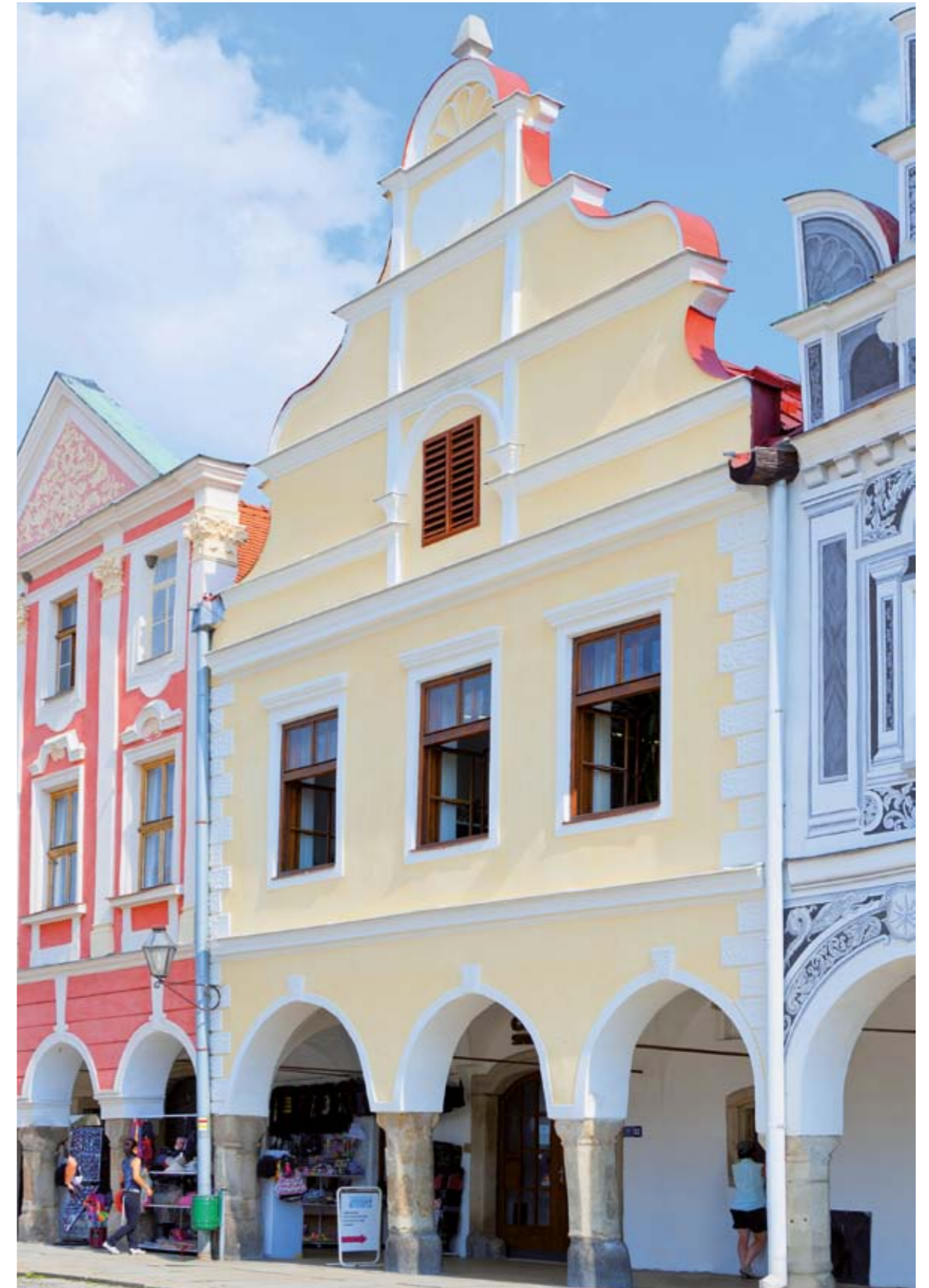


4. HOUSE NO. 62

This house belonged to a blacksmith for many long years. Blacksmiths were not usually very rich. Their houses were furnished in a modest way - wooden benches, ordinary undecorated trunks, and even the dishes were sometimes only wooden.

The family's clothing was made from rough canvas or cloth, as were the few pieces of bed linen.

The remaining money was used for the trade tools and equipment and for farming. Later in history the smithy was moved to the outskirts of town and there has been a bank in this building for over one hundred years.



5. HOUSE NO. 61

This house belonged to Michal, the baker. As soon as he bought it in the year 1553, he had it rebuilt and decorated. We can find the year of the completed alterations - 1555, in the gable. Michal the baker wanted to have the most beautiful house in town; he actually had the intention to run for mayor.

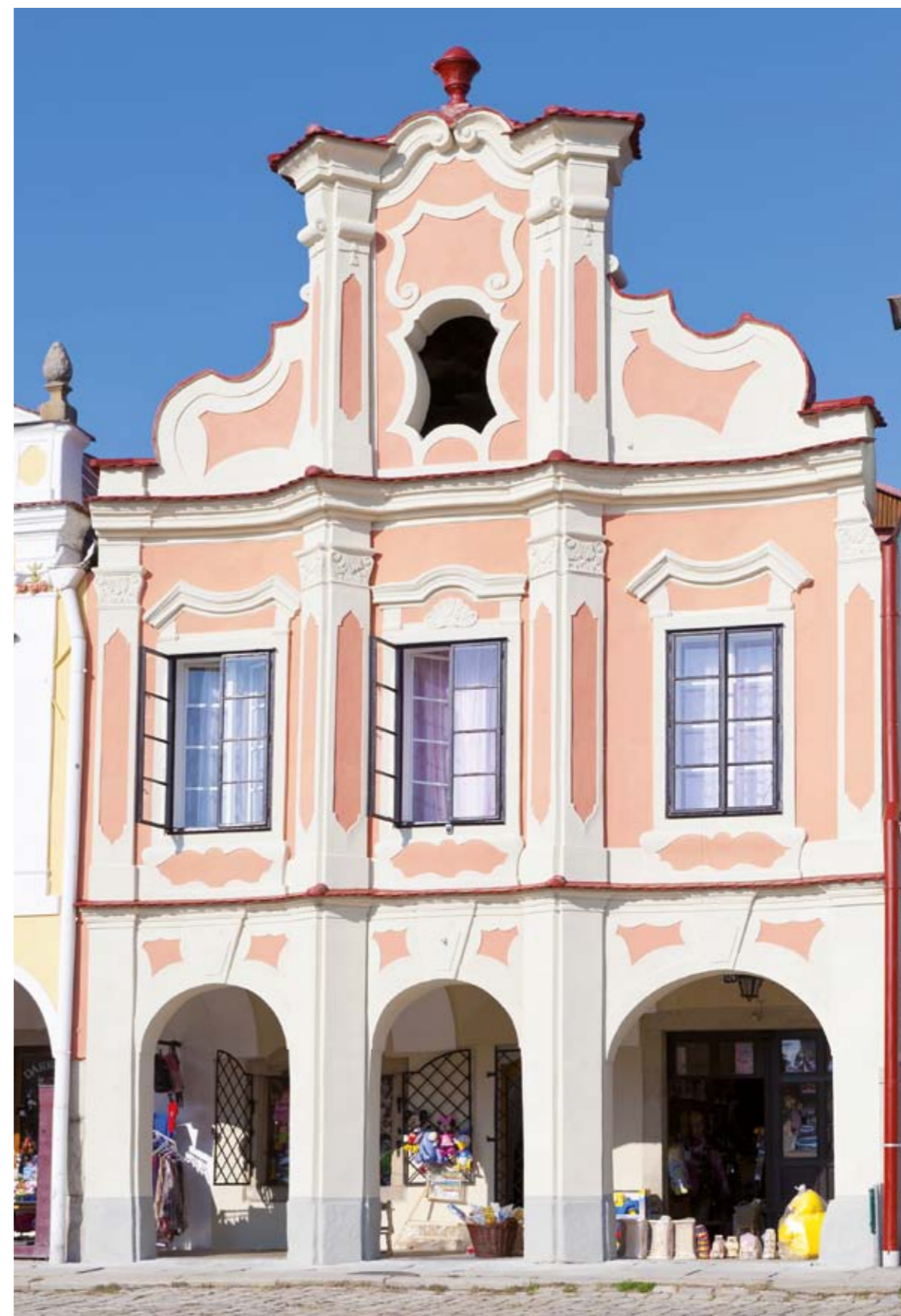
He therefore had a beautiful Renaissance gable added to the house. This is an arch gable inspired by Venetian Renaissance, decorated with sgraffiti. The decorations show Old Testament figures - David, Goliath, Saul, Holofernes and others.



6. HOUSE NO. 59

This building has a distinct, dynamically waved Baroque façade. The Baroque style started to appear in Bohemia in the 17th century. Initially, simple two-tower churches used to be built but later also central buildings full of dynamism were constructed.

This started to appeal to the townsmen and they began to rebuild their houses. Many townsmen had the façades of their houses altered in the new decorative Baroque style. Most of the time, the reconstruction was done only on the exterior part of the house. Inside, the houses maintained the old mázhauses.



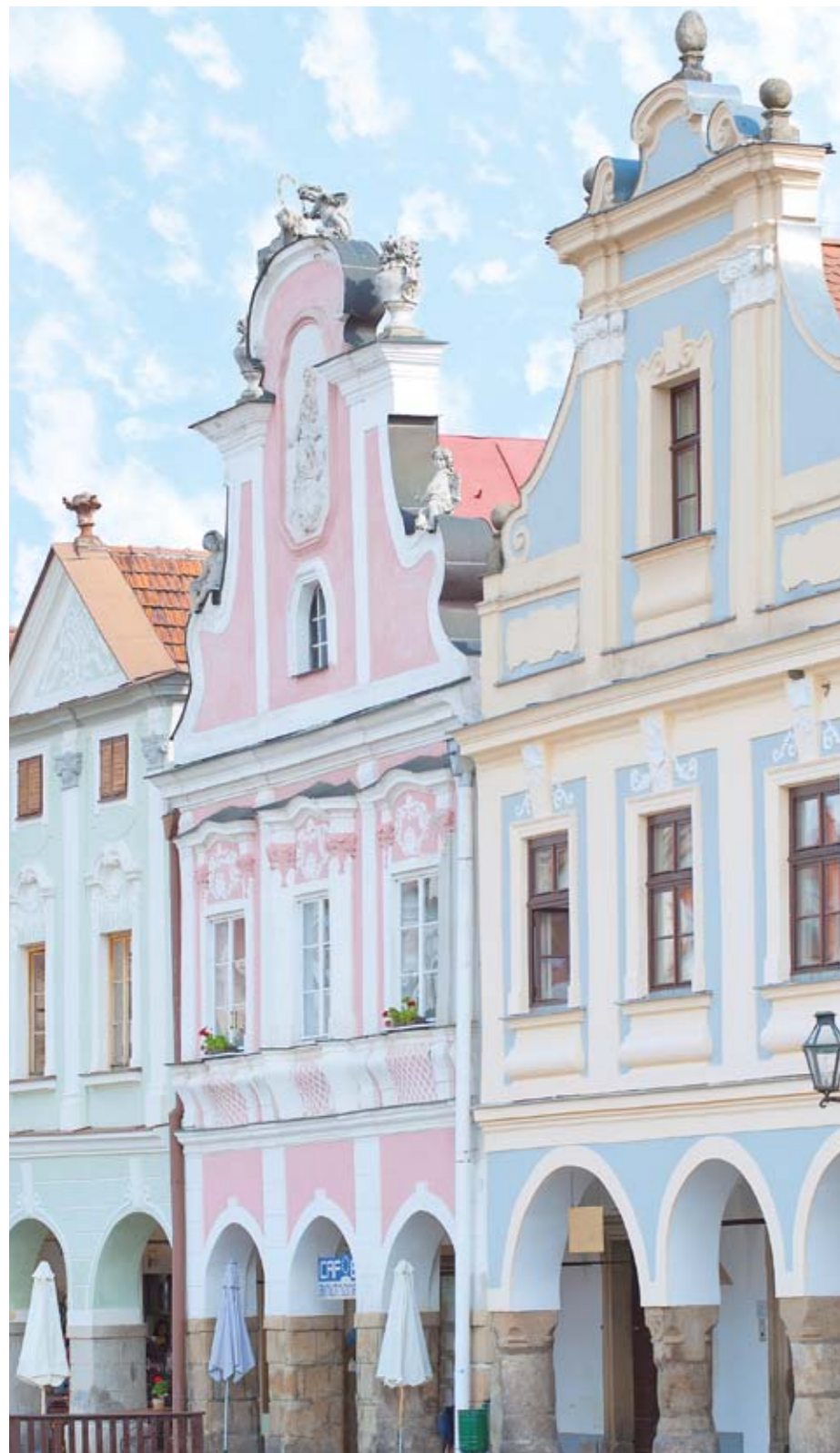
7. HOUSE NO.57

This is another house with a Baroque face. This house also has sculptural decoration - two pairs of angels and two vases. In the centre of the gable is Virgin Mary Immaculata (without stain). She is standing on the globe encircled by a snake.

During the second half of the 18th century and in the 19th century, the over-decorated Baroque style used to be sometimes insulted because it appeared to be too flamboyant.

In a way, the Baroque style extended and developed Renaissance art methods. On the other hand, however, it contradicted the ideas of the Renaissance because it returned to a medieval Christian way of thinking.

For the town of Telč, it was important that the Renaissance houses did not get demolished and that only the front faces of the houses were rebuilt to fit the new fashionable look.

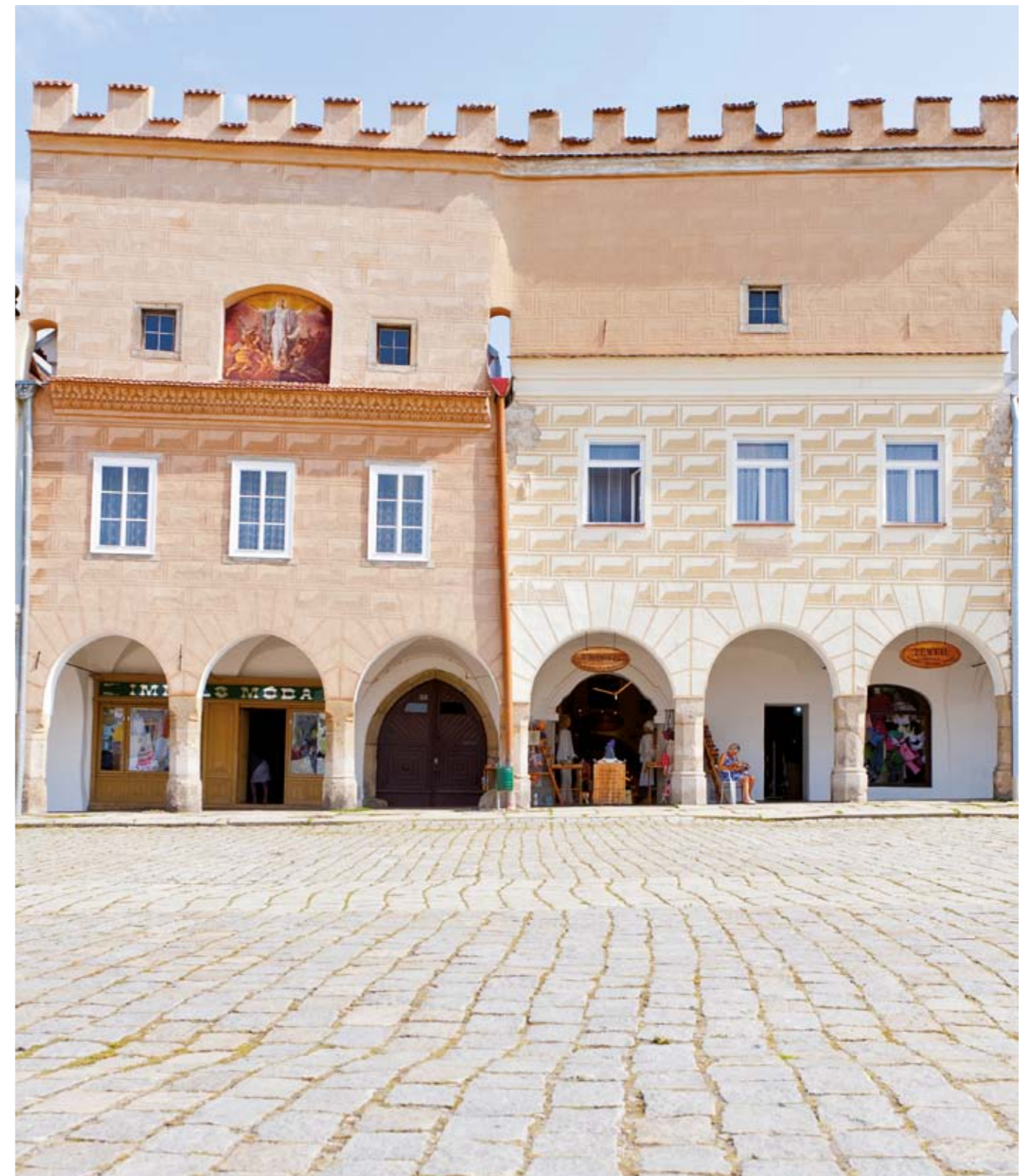


8. HOUSES NO. 54 AND 55

These are two typical Renaissance houses. They both have a façade with envelope-pattern sgraffito. The front faces are topped with gable portal and battlements. Let us take note of the openings on the edges of the gable portal. These also served a purpose. Although the builders brought Renaissance style from Italy, they were aware of the tough local winters. These openings were used for removing snow from the roofs. These houses were not only beautiful but also practical. As a matter of fact, that is the way the whole town of Telč was during the Renaissance period.

At the end of the 18th century, house No. 54 belonged to Jan Pavel Bílek, a doctor, a pharmacist and a veterinarian. He was interested in history and he preserved many documents that later became the foundation of the town's museum collections. He also instigated the celebration of the 700th anniversary of the alleged foundation of the town of Telč in 1799.

Since 1849, house No. 55 belonged to the local national revival Filip Šašecí. This trained confectioner and gingerbread baker established and led the nationalist society in Telč.



9. HOUSE NO. 47

House No. 47 also has a beautiful gable parapet that even has two illusive, or false, windows. The gable parapet made this house look higher; therefore it became the highest house on the square. The core of the house is Gothic, however. The original Gothic front wall with a window divided by a medieval sculptured cross has been preserved in the arcade. This house used to be the town brewery.

Later on the brewery was shut down and the house turned into a school for girls. Jan Evangelista Kypka was the headmaster of the school during the years 1848-68. He was also the director of the organ loft and he put together and led the church choir and the orchestra. He was also a composer and his Pastoral mass is still played today. Being a nationalist, he devoted his time to history and he taught the Czech language.



10. HOUSE NO. 46

This house has a very nice Baroque gable. It used to belong to the Kerndl family that had a beautiful daughter Julie. However, one day all of the sudden Julie started to get weak and pale until she became sick. The family invested lots of money in doctors but the girl eventually died regardless of the care. The parents put in their beloved daughter's coffin precious golden jewellery. But the gravedigger did not want to bury these treasures with the poor girl and decided to keep these.

The bracelet and necklace came off easily but the ring did not want to come off at all. He thought that since the girl is already dead anyway he would just cut her finger off. When he started cutting her finger, the girl screamed, jumped up and ran home. Thus Julie was saved thanks to human greed. The parents had good hearts and did not even have the grave digger punished. Nevertheless no one can avoid their fate and Julie ended up dying before she got married anyway.





15

12

14

13

11

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

16

17

18

19

20

1

11. FOUNTAINS AND THE MARIAN COLUMN

The Marian Column from the year 1720 is the work of the sculptor David Lipart of Brtnice by the town of Jihlava. He was paid from the bequest of the burgess Zuzana Hodo-vá, who provided 1000 florins for its construction. On top of the column is a statue of Mary and on the bottom there are eight angels in a circle. The saints are usually Baroque - St. James with the sign of a seashell, St. Sebastian tortured to death by arrows and St. Roch between them. On the other side are St. Francis Xavier, St. John of Nepomuk and between them the guardian angel. St. Rosalie is in the cave and on the opposite side is St.

Mary Magdalena. Water was brought into the fountain from the Nadýmák pond. The fountain was originally wooden just like the piping that the water ran through. Later, the fountain was rebuilt from stone and the statue of St. Margaret was added. A second fountain is located on the edge of the square and it was built in 1817. The statue on this fountain is of Silenus with Dionysos in his arms. Silenus was a jolly old man who was companion and tutor to the wine god Dionysos. Silenus was often associated with river banks and springs. That is probably why he was placed on the fountain.



12. HOUSE NO. 39

This is a massive Renaissance house that was built on the originally Gothic core of the building. The gable and façade of the house were rebuilt during the Baroque period. After the cancellation of the Jesuit order, the Jesuit pharmacy was brought into this house. Ignác Lyra, who used to be a brother in the Jesuit order, became the pharmacist here. Now he could even get married. He took diligent care of the pharmacy.

It remained in the house even after his death - a total of nearly 100 years.

There is a plaque on the side wall of the house commemorating the poet Otokar Březina who used to live there as a secondary school student and who studied in Telč during 1883-1887. Březina's poetry belongs to the most demanding works of European symbolism.



13. HOUSE NO. 32

This house projects into the square off the aligned front line with arcades. The bottom part of the façade evokes Renaissance but the upper part is already Baroque. It was built around the year 1800, thus in late Baroque.

The authorities bought this house and established a kitchen there for their clerks. The noble clerks were mostly young single men and they were served food in this house. On Maundy Thursday prior to Easter Sunday, sweet porridge was cooked here for the poor.

The tradition to serve the poor sweet porridge was established by Perchta - our White Lady. Mrs. Perchta married Jan of Lichenštejn and followed him to Telč. He did not love her, however, and was often cruel to her. Perchta complained to her brother and father. Back then it was not possible for a woman to leave her husband although he mistreated her. It was not until the death of her husband that she was free and could return to her original family. Since that time Perchta used to stay at Rožmberk castles and provide help where it was needed, especially to the poor and suffering. It was she that first introduced giving to the poor in the fall, to celebrate the completion of the building of the castle in Jindřichův Hradec, and later on Maundy Thursday. They were given other goodies as well. Everyone got a fish, peas, bread and beer. In memory of the Last Supper, the rich used to serve the poor

on that evening. The emperor Joseph II abolished the giving of porridge to the poor in the year 1783. Instead of that the poorest received money that was later distributed by the city council.

Many people used to say that Perchta appeared as the White Lady. She would appear either smiling to foretell some good news or gloomy wearing black gloves, which usually meant death or another tragedy. The White Lady also used to help nannies to watch over the little children of the Rožmberks.

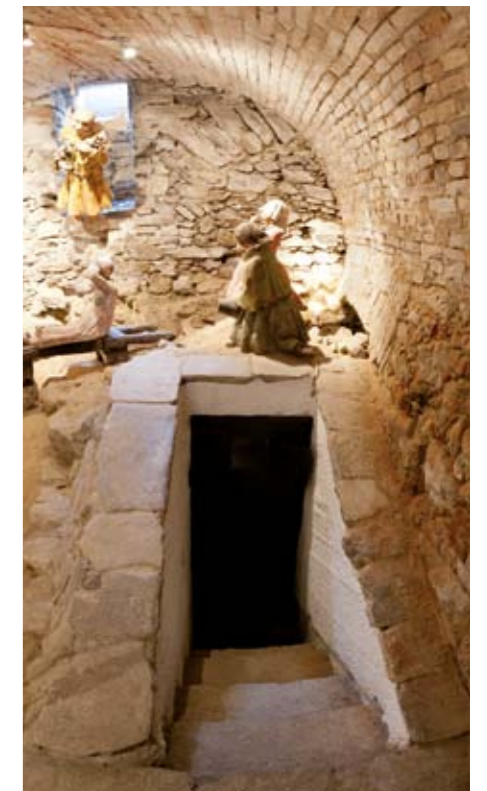
Many a time, Perchta came to a child to cradle it when the nannies were falling asleep from being over tired. The nannies knew Perchta and silently let her cuddle the child. Once, however, there was a new nanny who did not know how things were in the castle. She shouted at the White Lady for daring to take the child out of the crib. Perchta told her who she was and instructed her to tell Petr Vok how and from where she was appearing. Then she entered the wall and never came back. The nanny followed Perchta's instructions and told the adult Vok about what had happened when he was a toddler. Vok thought for a while, and then he had the wall knocked down in the place where the White Lady was last seen leaving. And behold, he found a huge golden treasure there!



14. HOUSE NO. 31

This house is called the house of Telč. It is a beautiful Renaissance house that likely belonged to the court by the Tower of the Holy Spirit. On the ground floor in the entry room, there is a nicely painted beam ceiling. Inside the house there is access to the Telč cellars, which were an important part of the all houses, not only for the storage of food and kegs of beer and wine, but usually everyone also had their own well in the cellar.

When the townsmen walked down to the lowest floor, they entered the underground where all houses were interconnected. This feature played an important role in the case of the town being threatened by an enemy.



15. CHURCH AND TOWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is the oldest tower in town, and it was built in the late Romanesque period. The older the time of origin is, the less we know about who actually had the object built - it could have been the Templars, Přemysl Otakar II or the Johannites. Perhaps it was a part of the castle. One thing is for certain, and that is that the tower served a defensive function.

Prior to the year 1486, a late Gothic single-aisle church with a polygonal presbytery, decorated with paintings with Evangelist symbols, was built in the place of the Holy Spirit Church. The western wall of the church was preserved from this Romanesque construction.

Later, this church was often subjected to changes made by current users or owners. Even the use of this church had alternating functions. Following a fire, it became a storage place and in the 19th century it served as the town theatre.

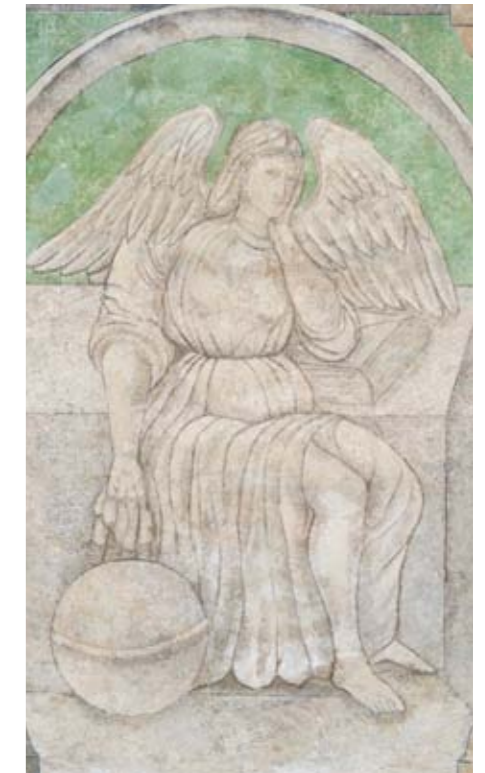
In 1922, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren bought this church and since then it has been used for divine services. Inside, the original windows with tracery, a Gothic vault, relics of mural paintings and a five-leaf rosette (the symbol of the Lords of Hradec) have been preserved.



16. HOUSE NO. 15

This house with an alcove is the most noticeable building on the whole square. In mediaeval times, the alcove had an important defence function because it provided a view into the side along the façade - in this case into the neighbouring street. Sometimes toilets were placed in alcoves that were located on the side of the courtyard. They used to be called "garderobes". However, this alcove was a decorative element of the house. The house also has sgraffiti. In the front part we can see the Crucifixion and an angel. And what is the meaning of the painting of the house with scaffolding all the way on the left? The owner wanted to capture the original image of his house prior to reconstruction. Taking a look into the passage, we can see the remaining sgraffiti.

Once again there is a story from the Old Testament about Saul and David. The lady with the blindfold symbolizes Justice. The ground floor of the house is decorated with envelope-pattern sgraffiti that used to be very popular in Bohemia in the Renaissance period. Those who could not afford fancy decorations had at least this envelope-pattern made, which was done on a routine basis. A string was used to keep the horizontal line and the envelope pattern was engraved along it into the plaster. The beautiful decoration of this house was hidden for a long time under the plaster. The sgraffiti were discovered only in the year 1952; they were uncovered and restored.



17. JESUIT CHURCH OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS, JESUIT COLLAGE AND HIGH SCHOOL

This church was built in 1667 and it was founded by Countess Františka Slavatová. During that time Renaissance went out of fashion. The new style was called Baroque, the aim of which was to turn people away from worldly pleasures back to God. This was the main aim especially of the Jesuits who administered this shrine. According to a legend, Countess Slavatová even dedicated her son Karel to God. Karel Slavata was about to get married. One day he decided to go hunting. Somehow he lost the rest of the group and his horse fell into a wolf pit. Neither he, nor his horse was able to get out. In desperation, Slavata promised that he will devote his life to God if he survived. He was crying out for help and eventually a local farmer heard his calling and rescued him. A promise is a promise; Slavata ignored the tears of his fiancée and entered the monastery. However, when his brothers died and he remained as the only successor of his dynasty, he got permission from the Pope to return to secular life and look after his manor. Perhaps he was not destined to die as a monk.



In the Baroque period, churches were built with very rich decorations. This church is rather modest compared to the pompous and ornamental Baroque style that later flourished in Bohemia. This type of church is called "Il Gesù". It was built untraditionally, with its side facing the square. The exterior decorations still bear traces of the then dying Renaissance style. The interior design of the church is already Baroque.

The Jesuit Dormitory is adjacent to the other side of the church. The Jesuits focused on the spreading of faith primarily through education. In the nearly 120 years that this order was in Telč, many Jesuit novices received their education here. After the order was abolished, the building was used for about 100 years as military quarters, and later once again as a school. Today it is the residence of the Brno Masaryk University.



18. CONVICTORIUM OF THE HOLY ANGELS

The Jesuits also utilized the old malt house for their purposes. They rebuilt it into a convictorium (common residence halls) and the school of church choir singing. This too was founded by Countess Slavatová.

This building was recently reconstructed. Today it is the residence of the Educational and Conference Centre of the Ministry of Education.



19. ST. JAMES CHURCH

The St. James Church was founded together with the town. In the mid-15th century it was rebuilt and decorated with beautiful Gothic frescos. The top of the tower offers a view of the whole town. It was built in a very coherent way. It is surrounded by ponds, serving the purpose of defence against enemies.

The whole town was enclosed by walls, and water ditches were constructed in front of them. In the case of a threat, the water ditches were filled with water from the ponds and the town became an unconquerable water fortress. The only entry to the town was through the well-guarded town gates. Two of these have been preserved to this day. The Upper (or large) Gate from the mid-16th century is decorated with sgraffiti; it has a beautiful shingle roof, and above the passage is a five-leaf rosette. There used to be another gate in front of this one in the place where the street starts to narrow. It was demolished in the year 1833 because the town had no longer any use for it. The other gate that has been preserved is the Bottom (or small) Gate. It used to be a part of the castle and originated during its reconstruction. There used to be a drawbridge in front of it across the water ditch.



20. THE CASTLE

The castle is a true Renaissance gem. It has been preserved in the way that it was built in the Renaissance period. No one has dared to touch this piece of beauty.

The golden ballroom was topped with a beautiful ceiling with 38 gold-plated cassettes with engraved reliefs. Each one is different, but they all reflect mythological themes. Renaissance beauty has also been preserved in the adjacent Blue Hall. Magnificent balls and opulent feasts used to be held in this castle. The tables buckled under the weight of the platters of delicacies. And the dining room furniture consisted of a silver table and 12 gold-plated chairs! Twelve Antwerp tapestries hung on the walls.

Zacharias' successor, his nephew Adam, was not a very good landlord and the dynasty of the Lords of Hradec dies out following the death of his son, Jáchym Oldřich, in 1604, after a sword fight. Telč became the property of the Slavatas of Chlum and Košumberk. This was a powerful dynasty. They played an important, although controversial, role in Czech history, especially with respect to Vilem Slavata of Chlum and Košumberk. Slavata held important offices and he was also governor of Prague during the time when Czech nobility was in dispute with the Emperor about the Letter of Majesty of Emperor Rudolf II.

On May 23rd 1618, unhappy Protestants entered the Prague governor office under the leadership of Jindřich Matyáš of Thurn and following a short, improvised trial they accused both Catholic governors Vilem Slavata of Chlum and Košumberk

and Jaroslav Bořita of Martinice of a violation of religious freedom.

In the end they forcefully threw both of them out of the window, together with their secretary Filip Fabricio. All three of them survived the fall from the 16 meter high window down the southern slope of the Prague Castle and the subsequent gunfire - probably thanks to their double Spanish garments. Vilém Slavata, however, hit his head on the window frame on the first floor and he was badly hurt, in addition to that he was being suffocated by his own ruff. He was rescued by Bořita and carried on a stretcher to the Lobkowitz Palace where the famous Catholic Countess, Polyxena of Lobkowitz, offered him a refuge.

Once Slavata's injuries healed, he emigrated to Passau, to which he had transferred a significant part of the Telč Castle furnishings.

After the defeat of the Bohemian uprising in 1622, Slavata returned to his manor and cooperated on the replacement of the old constitution with a new one, issued in 1627. During his service, he was honoured to Count and he achieved the highest Emperor decoration. He secured the renewal of all town privileges for the town of Telč and the granting of a new coat of arms and seal in 1650. At the castle there is a painting depicting the Prague defenestration. Considering the fact that all the defenestrated are being rescued from death by angels, we can presume that Slavata himself had the painting made.



Published by the Town of Telč in 2011.

20-20 Vision Graphics agency implementation team

Photographs: Adam Hruška

Illustrations: Antonín Urbánek

Graphics: Eva Tomášková

Text: Ing. Miroslava Kholová

TELČ



Information Center

nám. Zachariáše z Hradce 10
588 56 Telč

Tel.: +420 567 112 407
E-mail: info@telc-etc.cz

www.telc-etc.cz
www.telc.eu
www.telcsko.cz

www.unesco-czech.cz
www.unesco.org

Not for sale



European Union
European Regional Development Fund
Investing in Your Future

Co-financed by the European Union from
the European Regional Development Fund
and the Vysočina Region.

