

TELČ



ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

RENAISSANCE AND OTHERS



ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN TELČ

A walk through Telč gives an excellent overview of the development of architectural styles in Bohemia and Moravia. Disregarding antiquity that probably did not reach this region, we can study architecture in this town and castle as if we were reading an art history textbook.



ROMANESQUE STYLE

The oldest monument in town is the tower of Holy Spirit Church. The original Romanesque church was not preserved and it is not clear who had the church built. It is certain, however, that the tower served a defence purpose. From the top of the tower it was possible to observe the town surroundings and register, in time, a potential enemy. The tower was probably adjacent to the courtyard. Shortly after the beginning of the second half of the 14th century a new settlement was founded as a part of the court and it was called Nová Telč (New Telč). Its ground plan was in the shape of a triangle defined by a marketplace, and soon after it was founded a fortification wall was built around it. Until then only the area around the Holy Spirit Church was fortified. The defence system ingeniously utilized the ponds that surrounded the town. The only preserved Romanesque stronghold can be found near the original Upper Gate.



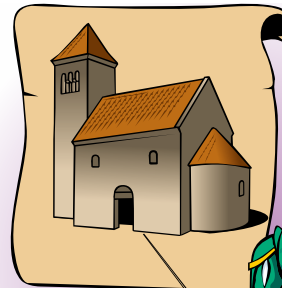
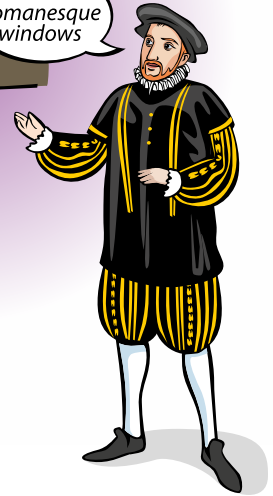
Holy Spirit Church Tower



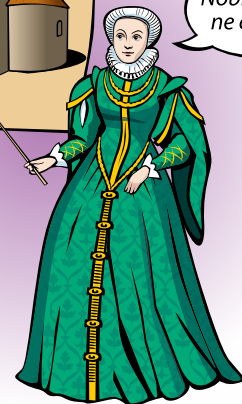
*Joined
Romanesque
windows*



*Detail of the Romanesque joined
windows in the tower*



*Noble tribu-
ne church*



GOTHIC STYLE

Gothic style in the castle

The precursor of the current castle was a Gothic water castle built before 1356. A Gothic reconstruction of the castle took place during the second half of the 15th century, which is when a southern wing (today's armoury) was added and two prismatic towers were built. Relics of the original construction are still visible in the area of the old castle near the so-called Small Yard and in the Chapel of St. Jiří (St. George).



Castle and the Tower of St. James

Gothic style in Church Objects

One of the dominant features of Telč is the more than 50 metre high tower of the Gothic Church of St. James. The first records of the church are from the year 1372, but it is likely that it was built before then. It actually burnt down in 1386 and it was not until 1443 that a Gothic double-nave was built in the preserved walls and the presbytery was re-vaulted. Original Gothic frescos have been partly preserved in the interior of the church.

Prior to 1486, a late Gothic single-nave church with a polygonal presbytery, decorated with paintings with the symbols of Evangelists, was built in the place of the Holy Spirit Church. Only the western church wall was preserved from the Romanesque building.

Houses on the Square

From the Gothic period, primarily cellars built from quarry stone and stone portals have been preserved in Telč. At the time of the origin of the so-called New Telč, the houses were often made from wood; therefore they were destroyed in the case of town fires, especially during the large fire in 1386. The newly built houses were made from brick, however. After the Renaissance reconstructions, the only things preserved from these Gothic houses were architectural details, primarily entry portals (houses No. 8, 19, 24, 39, 40, 41).

A typical house where we can observe Gothic elements is house No. 31, which is referred to as the House of Telč. Probably the oldest preserved Gothic portal in Telč can be found in



Gothic Portal inside House No. 31

the rear room of this house. Inside of the house we can see an example of extensive cellar space that can be found under most of the houses in Telč, or at least under the ones on the square.

The cellars, built already in the oldest houses, were used, and still are for the storage of food, beer and wine. Often there also used to be a well in the cellar, as we can see in house No. 31. A private source of drinking water was priceless, especially in those houses whose owners had the right to brew beer.

The lowest cellar floors were often interconnected and that is how the so-called underground came about. It was a labyrinth of original cellars that later turned into entire corridors. The underground was not used only to store food, it was also a hiding place and an emergency exit in case the town was threatened by an enemy.



Detail of the house cellar area



Entrance to the underground of the town

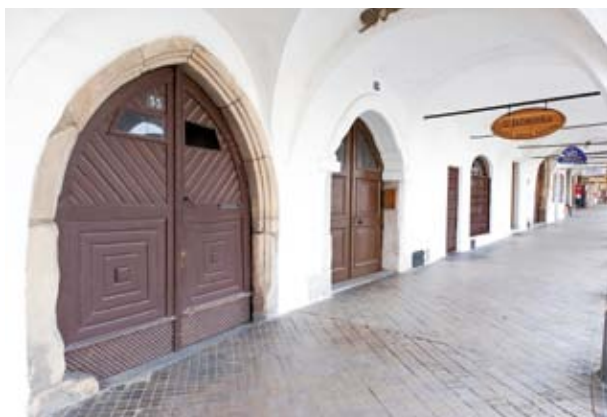


Gothic wreathed column





Gothic portal of house No. 8



Gothic portal of house No. 55



Gothic portal of house No. 24

We can find a Gothic remnant also in the Town Hall. The Town Hall originated by connecting two Gothic houses. A nice detail that has been preserved is a wreathed column in the entry hall of the Town Hall. This column is a typical Gothic element, which often supported the vault of a "mázhaus".

Let us also take note of the several entry portals of houses that we can see during our tour of the square.

Bourgeois houses used to be built on narrow plots. In the front part there used to be a gateway or later a "mázhaus". Mážhaus is a large hall located in the front ground part behind the entry of the house. Most of the time it was 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 mážhaus actually became a public tavern that served wine, spirits and sometimes even food. When artisans worked in their house, they used the mážhaus 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 mážhaus to the courtyard and to the staircase going up to the first floor. A garden was usually attached to the courtyard, where the burghers grew garlic and onion, cabbage, legumes and carrots. 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 mážhaus.

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.



Mázhaus in House No. 56



Black kitchen



Lead glass window



Gothic furniture



Painted wooden beam ceiling - Renaissance, in House No. 31



Gothic furniture - Museum of Vysočina, Jihlava

RENAISSANCE IN THE CASTLE

During the Renaissance period, Telč experienced its greatest boom. This can be accredited mainly to Zacharias of Hradec, the youngest son of Adam I. and Anna Hradecká of Rožmitál, born in 1527. Although he was not entitled to court education, being the younger son, his natural intelligence helped him to understand management, as well as art.

In 1549, he was pronounced adult and in 1550 he obtained the Telč Castle. Immediately after that, in 1551-1552, he participated in a trip with Bohemian and Moravian nobles to Italy. He was introduced there to Italian Renaissance, which made a great impression on him and provided inspiration for the reconstruction of the Telč Castle. As a follower of the Habsburgs, he soon acquired important offices in the country. In 1558, he became the highest Moravian chamberlain and in 1567, the Hetman of Moravia. Thanks to his social status, as well as his clever management of the inherited property, he became one of the wealthiest nobles in Bohemia and Moravia. When he died, in 1589, he left behind a prospering homestead, a stunning castle and the booming town of Telč.

The Telč Castle, for the most part preserved in its original state from the Renaissance period, is evidence of Zacharias' understanding of Renaissance art and humanism that accompanied this artistic style. The castle interiors are richly decorated in the spirit of Italian Renaissance - coffered ceilings, sgraffiti and rich parterring depicting antique motives.

Portraits of Zacharias and his first wife, Catherine of Valdštejn are hiding in the figures of allegorical Virtues. Zacharias and Catherine are also depicted in the Chapel of All Saints on the mausoleum, which resembles the Habsburg tomb in the St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague.

The artists that worked on the construction and decoration of the castle were later hired by the wealthy townsmen to rebuild and decorate their houses on the square in Telč. The main builder was Baldassare Maggi of Arogn.



Current historical festivities



Castle garden



Main courtyard of the castle

RENAISSANCE IN THE TOWN

There was great development in construction also in the town during the time of Zacharias of Hradec. Townsmen started to do reconstructions on their houses in the spirit of Renaissance, following the example of the castle. In 1574, the Town Hall was founded by connecting and uniting two Gothic houses. The Renaissance façade united the two houses into a majestic building with sgraffiti on the façade. The front face is topped off with a gable parapet with battlement. The purpose of the gable parapet was to visually hide the roof. The front wall that reached above the roof created an illusion that the house is higher and that it has an additional floor. Gables and parapets belonged to the most often used motives of the Czech Renaissance. The gable parapet also served as a barrier against the spreading of fire, especially when the roofs were made of wood.

House No. 61

This house's gable displays the year 1555. The arched gable was inspired by Venetian Renaissance and it is decorated with sgraffiti with the portraits of characters from the Old Testament - Goliath, Saul, Holofernes and others.

Houses No. 54 and 55

These are two typical Renaissance houses with envelope-pattern sgraffito on the façade. The front faces are topped with gable portals and battlements. Both houses have foundations in older Gothic houses. House no. 55 has preserved its Gothic entrance portal and Gothic cellar.

House No. 15

This house with an alcove is one of the most interesting buildings 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. The house is decorated with sgraffiti. In the front part we can see the Crucifixion and an angel. In a painting, 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 and a motive symbolizing 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. The masons pulled a string taut in order 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.



Chapel of All Saints at the castle

BAROQUE STYLE

For the most part, the Baroque period did not significantly change the house interiors in Telč; only the reconstruction of the houses' front faces and gables took place. We can see the most interesting Baroque front face on houses no. 59, 57, 56, 70-65, 46. On the one hand, Baroque style broadened and refined Renaissance artistic techniques; on the other hand, however, it contradicted Renaissance ideals because it returned to the mediaeval Christian way of thinking.



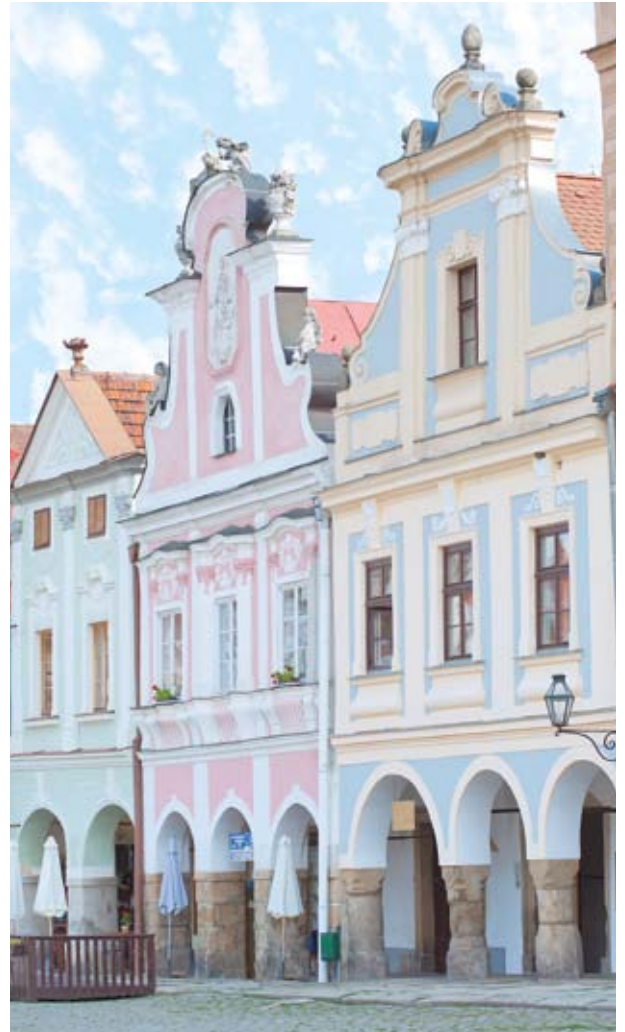
House No. 15 - sgraffiti



House No. 10 - Town Hall



Houses No. 61 & 62



Houses No. 56 & 57

In 1655, Františka Slavatová of Meggau invited Jesuits to the town of Telč. Their arrival marked the construction of a new church, college, high school and convictorium (common residence). Construction of the former Jesuit College began thanks to the significant contribution of Countess Slavatová. This very religious and at the same time modest lady donated 50 thousand florins.

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.

Jesuit Church of the Holy Name of Jesus

Domenico Orsi designed the church building. The church was built between 1663 - 1667 and was referred to as "Il Gesù" type of building. It is turned with its side to the square, which is very unconventional. The exterior decorations still bear traces of the dying Renaissance style. The interior design of the church is already Baroque.

Convictorium of the Holy Angels

It is also a part of the Jesuit grounds. The former malt house was rebuilt to a convictorium (common residence halls) and the school of church choir singing. This too was founded by Countess Slavatová. A monastery garden, which belongs to this building, can also be visited.

Fountains and the Marian Column

The interior of the square was completed during the Baroque period with a Baroque Marian Column and fountains. The Marian column originated in 1720 and it was created by the sculptor David Lipart of Brtnice near Jihlava. He was paid from the bequest of the burgess Zuzana Hodová, who provided 1000 florins for its construction.



Jesuit College

On top of the column is a statue of Mary and on the bottom there are eight angels in a circle.

The Baroque saints include 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 (Jan Nepomucký) and between them the guardian angel. St. Rosalie is in the cave and on the opposite side is St. Mary Magdalena. The originally wooden fountain was rebuilt in stone and the statue of St. Margaret was added. The second fountain was not built until 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.



View of the Jesuit Church of Holy Name of Jesus



Convictorium of Holy Angels



Detail of the Virgin Mary



Marian Column



Detail of an angel



St. Mary Magdalena



St. John of Nepomuk (Jan Nepomucký)



Fountain with St. Margaret



St. Rosalie



Fountain with Silenus

LATER DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN TELČ

Prior to 1835, the Castle park was transformed into a natural landscaping park with precious tree species. In the second quarter of the 19th century, Leopold Podstatský-Lichtenstein and his wife had a classicist greenhouse and villa constructed here which served as a widow's manor. In the Castle's interior, the rooms of the Podstatskys were newly furnished.

Later developments in construction left the town centre with only minor architectural changes. The square went through a few alterations. The tower of the Church of the Holy Spirit was renewed after a fire with a pseudo Gothic "roof helmet".

The Art Nouveau style registered in the town's image primarily with the adjustments made to the northern and western frontage of the Jesuit College. Also the building of the hotel "U Černého orla" (Black Eagle) was rebuilt in a non-Baroque style. The last house to be built on the square in Telč in 1870 was the firehouse. This pseudo Gothic building has been restored to resemble its original image and it serves as the town gallery.

In 1904, a synagogue was built in Telč in Neo Romanesque style according to a project by Karel Wagner, an architect from Jihlava. During World War II the furnishing of the synagogue was taken away. At the end of the war the ownership of the building fell to the town. At that time, the relief decoration was removed and the interior layout of the building was changed. Nowadays, there are only a few details in the interior that indicate the original purpose of the building. However, the building itself continues to remind us that the Jewish community was an important part of pre-war Telč.



Firehouse



View across the Ulický Pond

Literature used:

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