

EXHIBITIONS AT THE TOWN HALL

Astronomical Clock exhibition

This exhibition focuses on the six-hundred-year-long history of this unique time machine. The Clock is introduced to visitors as an interesting piece of iconography and artistic craftsmanship as well as a historically significant astronomical work. The Clock is presented at various stages of development and supplemented by original parts of the older clock. In this way they symbolically return to the premises they were originally intended for. The exhibition is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Town Hall.

History of the Town Hall

The second exhibition charts the history of the Olomouc Town Hall from its construction to the present. Today, the Town Hall is the most important monument of secular architecture in Olomouc and still serves its original purpose. To this day, it accommodates the headquarters of the elected city government and its office. The exhibition can be seen on the first floor of the Town Hall.

Olomouc through the Ages

The latest exhibition entitled „Olomouc through the Ages“ is devoted to the history of the city. Its core consists of authentic copies of historical documents displayed in showcases in a Gothic corridor on the first floor. The documents are complemented by info panels that further explain Olomouc's development.



An example of a historical document.

According to an old legend, the city was founded by the Roman Emperor, as stated already in a document issued by George of Poděbrady, King of Bohemia, in 1459. „Although many large and important cities like precious gems greatly adorn and illuminate our Margraviate of Moravia, yet the glorious, ancient and famous city of Julius Hill or Olomouc surpasses all of them by extraordinary grace and shines as rose in Moravia. This city certainly was once founded by Julius Caesar and called in his name and our predecessors, famous margraves, gifted privileges and freedoms to this first among towns, popes honoured it with bishop's mitre.“

ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK

The Astronomical Clock is a monumental horological and astronomical work of the Middle Ages and has been a permanent part of the Town Hall since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In the past, the Clock represented an intellectually coherent and continual work of generations of craftsmen, artists and scholars. By its very existence, the Clock elevated Olomouc to a major European centre. The Clock depicted the medieval vision of the world adequate to Christian cosmology and linking ancient and Christian traditions. The philosophical context intensified the importance of this work which was one of the largest, most operationally complex and most artistically valuable astronomical clocks in Europe.

**The Clock is ranked among Strasbourg-type clocks,** together with the astronomical clock in Prague. Both clocks, the one in Olomouc and Europe's oldest astronomical clock in Strasbourg, have a three-story layout, an Epiphany motive and a chime. The unusual appearance of the Clock today in the concept of socialist realism resembles neither its an-

Astronomical Clock after 1747.



cient history, artistic and scientific value nor the abundance of animated figures which in the past attracted attention with their colourfulness accompanied by music. Still, at least archive sources and museum collections today testify about the old Clock that amazed people already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The rooster is the work of Jan Linek, and we always hear his greeting after the chimes and procession of figures.

The Clock only chimes at 12:00. The musical repertoire was prepared by Antonín Schindler and Josef Harna, both Olomouc natives. The Clock plays regional Haná folk songs:

„On the Hill beyond Náměšť“

„The Long and Wide Road to Olomouc“

„The Willows Are Turning Green“

The history of the Astronomical Clock

1420–1570

The Olomouc Clock, just as the Prague astronomical clock, dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to the legend of the blinded clockmaker, it was constructed around 1420 by clockmaker Antonín Pohl.

1573–1575

In the Renaissance period, the Clock was to be „renewed and improved“ and got a new astronomical dial.

Clockmaker Hans Pohl and astronomer Paul Fabricius – creator of the famous planisphere – were responsible for these modifications. A new centennial calendar for 1570– 1671 was calculated.

1661–1662

After the Thirty Years War, the Clock was repaired by clockmaker František Jahn, master locksmith Kelbl and astronomer and mathematician Antonín Gerhard.

A new centennial calendar for 1661–1762 was created.

1747–1748

The Clock was repaired and its paintings were enhanced. The repairs had been designed by city syndic Ferdinand Laucký; the paintings were restored and enriched by Jan Kryštof Handke.

1895–1898

The Clock was out of service for a few decades in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Clock was general reconstructed at the end of the century. The Clock was fashioned in Neo-Gothic style and got a completely new mechanism. The centennial calendar was changed to an eternal one.

1926

The frescos and paintings were restored by Jano Koehler.

1945

At the end of World War II, artillery shells damaged the Town Hall tower together with the Clock.

1947–1955

Ultimately, it was the intervention of Karel Svolinský which finally destroyed the remaining historic value of the Clock. According to his design, the glass manufacture in Nový Bor created glass mosaics depicting The Ride of the Kings, The Procession of Little Queens, the Worker, the Chemist and the Allegory of the Twelve Months.

His wife Marie made the Clock's animated figures.

1990 – Present

After the removal of the monuments to Joseph Stalin and Klement Gottwald, the question arose as to whether it would be possible to restore the Clock's dignified appearance. Today, the opinion prevails that the Clock bears witness to a time which it would be advisable not to forget.

Clock figures by Marie Svolinská.



Olomouc

...Town Hall and Astronomical Clock



Exposition of the Astronomical Clock at the Town Hall.



Olomouc Town Hall and Astronomical Clock

For more than six centuries, the Town Hall dominating the Horní Square has been a symbol of the economic and political importance of the former royal capital of Moravia.

The construction of the Town Hall was enabled by a privilege from the Moravian Margrave Jost of Luxembourg in 1378. Originally a wooden structure, which had been built in the years 1410–1411, it burned down soon after, around 1417.

A new construction was initiated in the 1420s. The Town Hall underwent a fundamental change into a noble residence during the reign of King Matthias Corvinus. The Publication Hall was built on the first floor, and a recess for an astronomical clock appeared next to the Town Hall's tower.

In the 18th century, the key event for the Town Hall was the Baroque treatment of its facades. During the 19th century, any construction work done at the Town Hall was usually limited to the interior. A rather extensive „pseudo-Gothic“ reconstruction took place at the beginning of the 20th century.



Detail of the Renaissance portal. Coats of arms on the staircase represent the emblems of the Austrian.

#### CHAPEL OF ST. JEROME



The Chapel of St. Jerome, completed in 1488 and consecrated three years later, is located in the east wing of the Town Hall. It was decorated with frescoes at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. There is a vaulting system of high artistic quality in the chapel's nave and even more valuable is the Danubian Gothic rib vault in the bay, the oldest of its kind in the country. Looking from outside, you can see the alleged portrait of the master himself at the lower part of the bay.

The stained glass bay windows depict Ottokar I of Bohemia, Rudolf of Habsburg and John the Blind.

Frescoes show John the Baptist, the Ecce Homo scene and the Crucifixion on the east side, and Saint John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos, a kneeling churchman and Madonna on the west. Above the door, there is a scene from the Last Judgement. The frescoes are not dated from the same period. The chapel has been deconsecrated.



The Late Gothic hall, formerly called Publication Hall. It was originally a place of public assembly and was used for receiving homage from serf villages; it serves as a ceremonial hall today.

#### RENAISSANCE LOGGIA

The beautiful Renaissance loggia was created by the Olomouc stonemason Hans Jost in 1588–1591. The imposing portal leading from the stairs directly into the city council chamber is the work of an unknown Italian master and dates back to as early as 1529 or 1530. The year 1564 notated there marks its reconstruction, not its completion. The coats of arms were installed in the stairway in the 19th century.

#### PUBLICATION HALL – CEREMONIAL HALL

The Publication Hall used to serve as a place of public assembly, for announcing the city council's decisions, receiving homage from representatives of serf villages and other official purposes. It currently serves as a ceremonial hall. Originally it had nine vault fields, which were reduced to six during reconstruction in 1902–1904.

At that time, the hall was also decorated with romantic historicist paintings by Viennese painter Karel Wilda. Suggestions for the themes from Olomouc's history were chosen by the city physicist, archivist and historian Hans Kux.

#### Did you know that...

- the 4 turrets on the Town Hall tower indicate that Olomouc had the town privilege of capital punishment and therefore its own executioner?
- one has to climb 144 steps to reach the 75-metre-high viewing platform at the top of the Town Hall tower?
- in 1415, Olomouc burghers borrowed a sum of 40 grivnas to proceed with the construction of the Town Hall, yet the Hussite riots and constant military threat to the city stopped its further development as it was necessary to pay for the city's defence?
- in 1417, the Town Hall burned down and the archaeological survey of the fire layer did not uncover any evidence of mortar or materials that would indicate an earlier stone building?

#### Other interesting facts...

- **St. Jerome is the patron saint of ascetics**, theologians, scholars, students and pupils, universities and learned societies
- Starting in the mid-16th century, the city had its own **tower watchman** whose job it was:

- to blow a trumpet every hour, or every quarter of an hour, day and night, for which purpose he had two helpers,
- to monitor the surroundings and ring the bell in case of fire or other danger,
- from the 18th century, the watchman gradually became a municipal bandmaster as well,
- the watchman was on regular payroll for his service and music production,
- he welcomed important visitors with fanfares,
- he trumpeted fanfares in honour of births and other anniversaries of the imperial family members.

#### Our tip

##### Town Hall tower climb

The Town Hall tower was built together with the stone Town Hall building in the 1420s. The construction was finished by the year 1443 when it was roofed over. The tower, whose first floor housed the city archive, was about one-third lower at that time. The tower's current height of 75 m was reached during the subsequent reconstruction in 1601–1607. At that time a new roof fitted with the characteristic high dome with four side towers was placed on the newly built part which includes a stone gallery and a tower watchman's room. Tours are provided by the Olomouc Information Centre.

#### A brief laudation of Olomouc

*„Nothing, however, is as great among the city buildings as the town hall, which rises in the midst of the square. Above the gold-decorated building, a tall tower soars and its crenels break through the clouds.“*

*Simon Ennius Klatovský (1549)*



You can climb the Town Hall tower year-round at 11:00 and 15:00, when weather permits. From 15. 6. to 30. 9., tours are held daily at 10:00, 11:00, 13:00, 14:30, 16:00 and 17:30.



**Up-to-date tip**  
You can borrow an audio guide at the Information Centre. Self-guided tours are possible, free of charge, during municipality office hours.



**Olomouc region Card**  
With the discount tourist card valid throughout the region, public transport, museums and castles are free. Discounts at restaurants, hotels, the zoo, water parks, etc. are also included.  
**[www.olomoucregioncard.cz](http://www.olomoucregioncard.cz)**



#### OLOMOUC INFORMATION CENTRE

Horní náměstí – the Town Hall's archway  
Tel: 585 513 385, 585 513 392  
Open daily 9:00–19:00  
E-mail: [infocentrum@olomouc.eu](mailto:infocentrum@olomouc.eu)  
[www.facebook.com/informacni.centrum.olomouc](http://www.facebook.com/informacni.centrum.olomouc)  
**[tourism.olomouc.eu](http://tourism.olomouc.eu)**



The Renaissance portal.



A detail of the bay window in the Chapel of St. Jerome.



The staircase from the foyer of the mayor's office.



Last Judgement, Chapel of St. Jerome.



An example of a Gothic vault, Chapel of St. Jerome.



A detail of a gargoyle under the Town Hall's roof.

