



Town Chronic 1893: The town of Ybbs ranks among the most beautiful towns along the Danube river. Due to its great age and historical importance it is one of the most remarkably old towns in Austria dating back many centuries.

## A Stroll through its Past



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Bicyclemuseum Ybbs – Citymuseum Ybbs  
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Further worth mentioning are the houses number seven and eight. The former is the so-called Klosterhaus. It is to be found to the north of the square, and was owned by the Order of St. Francis for a while. The latter, the Passauerhof, is located to the east of the square. Together with the Passauerkasten it was in the possession of the diocese of Passau for about 600 years, serving as a cellar and a cashier's office.

**THE TOWN HALL (15)**  
The barrel vault inside the building hints at its date of erection: i.e. the 16th century. On the corner, facing the main square, there is a rectangular building with a neo-Gothic tower top. The town hall received its classicistic facade after the great blaze of 1868.  
By walking through the town a variety of buildings can be spotted giving evidence to a long and eventful past.

**FROM THE SANDTÖRL INTO THE HERRENGASSE – THE SANDTÖRL (7)**  
An old entrance to the town is located between the Salzamt and the Weinmaut. On it there is a date reminding of a renovation only. However, the passage itself is much older than this date indicates.  
The old council protocols of the 18th century record, that the pollution of the Danube's bank had reached an unbearable extent. To keep the access to the town, which is located close to the ship station, clean, the wrong-doers being re-

sponsible for the litter were pilloried on that spot.  
Through an arch the stairs of a narrow alleyway lead to the Herrengasse.

**THE MOZARTSAAL (16)**  
In the past the house Herrengasse number 23 was the tavern called „Zur Goldenen Sonne“. Its stuccoed ceiling calls to mind the Emperor Karl VI, a special patron, who generously supported the town after the blaze of 1716, making its reconstruction with splendid baroque facades possible.

The name Mozartsaal dates back to an entirely different incident. In the year of 1762, 6-year-old Mozart stopped his journey from Passau to Vienna in Ybbs. He played the organ at a mass, which was held at the Franciscan's monastery beyond the town gates. There is every reason to believe that Mozart was not accommodated in the unheated monastery, but in the grand tavern "Zur Goldenen Sonne".  
Today the building houses the historic archive and the town's museum.

**THE ALTE PFARRHOF (17)**  
The presbytery is located opposite the Mozartsaal. Up to the 18th century this magnificent renaissance building was a tavern called "Zum Bären". Its history as a presbytery started after the disastrous conflagration of 1716. In its course the old presbytery close to the church burnt down. In the year of 1784 the purchase of a new dwelling was granted to the

parish priest. The tavern was adjusted to the needs of a presbytery and used as such until 1951.  
Today the building houses the bicycle museum and a further exhibition area.

**THE BRAUHAUS (18)**  
The brewery borders on the old presbytery. Spacious double-storeyed cellars, wide staircases, an old well and a document testify that this was once a place where beer was brewed. In 1644 the council protocols mention the first beer brewing.

**FIRES**  
One of the most disastrous blazes occurred in 1716. The protocols record the loss of 54 houses, large parts of the church, a day labourer, and a middleclass man and a woman.  
In 1868 the oppressive midday heat kindled a fire which caused the destruction of 87 buildings. Even the fire brigade of the town of Melk came to assist the population of Ybbs. However, according to a newspaper only a reeking dump of smoke remained of the town.

**THE TRAM-LINE OF YBBS (19)**  
From the year 1907 to 1953 a tram-line ran through the Wienerstraße. With its range of 3km it was at that time the smallest in the world, connecting the main square with the railroad station.  
Up to the 19th century the federal highway B 25 was only

a bumpy road. After the opening of the railway, leading from Vienna to the Swiss border, the old road was extended to a continuous one. However, in order to build a permanent connection to the railroad station the tramline of Ybbs was finally established. It consisted of two motorized vehicles.  
In 1953 the old tram outgrew the reinforced demand and was thus replaced by a bus line.

**FLOODS**  
In the past the town on the Danube was nearly annually plagued by floods. To mention an example, in the year of 1501 the lower town sank up to the roofs in the waters.  
The construction of the hydroelectric power station gave great hope to the population of Ybbs. And indeed, minor floods stayed away. However, the centenary disaster of August 2002 flooded vast areas of the town's centre up to a height of 2.7 meters.

**THE HYDROELECTRIC POWER STATION**  
Work on the oldest Austrian hydroelectric power station began in 1940. However, after the outbreak of war the plan was cancelled in 1943. In 1954 the construction of the station with its 6 turbines was tackled again, being finally finished in 1959.  
The station Ybbs-Persenbeug consists of a lock and two independently working power plants, which are arranged on the northern and southern Danube bank.



## CHRONICLE

Carved stones and a rampart indicate that already at the time of the Celts a settlement had been established on the site of the Marienhöhe in close range to the town of Ybbs. Its name might be derived from that period. The Celtic river name Ivesis could have been taken over later by Romans settling along the Danube. In the course of the time the name of Ips developed from sound shift.

The town's parish church and adjacent buildings form the area of the old castle. Already before the year of 900 a Carolingian imperial castle, by the name of Eparesburg, was erected. The area belonging to this castle got the name of "Ipspurch" or "Isepurich", from the 13th century onwards only "Ips" or "Ybbs". The Bavarian noble family of the counts of Sempt-Ebersberg preserved Eparesburg and the adjoining settlement by way of heritage, and established a toll gate during the years of 903 and 905. After the death of the last holder of the name Sempt-Ebersberg, the Eparesburg fell into possession of the Salian Franks. Being crowned German emperor under the guardianship of his mother Agnes, 8-year-old Henry IV took quarter in Ybbs in 1058. This Salian emperor should later become famous for his travel to Cannossa.

In the course of time Ybbs finally came into the possession of the Babenberg dynasty, henceforward being country-royal property. The first town of lower Austria opened its gates to the Habsburg sovereign Rudolf I in 1276. As time went on it became equipped with a set of privileges. In the year of 1317 Frederick the Fair sealed the municipal law by the bestowal upon a blood

spell condemning the right to death by the sword or the gallows, which was otherwise reserved for the national sovereignty.

### THE UPPER AND LOWER DONAULÄNDE THE PULVERTURM (1)

This tower is located at the southeast end of the medieval fortification. The order to finish it, because of it supporting the whole town and wall, was issued in 1523. Up to the fire in 1868 it carried a coned roof.

Today the fortification is still visible to a large extent. Its moat winds in a semicircular way around the town. In medieval times water from the Danube was piped into the moat at the so-called Schwalleck (7), a pentagonal tower providing continuous current. At the Pulverturm it ran back into the river.

Turning towards the Danube the town was also protected by a wall, which is still visible at the rear of the church. However, advanced war technology made the moat ineffective, and it eventually served as pastureland after draining. Today gardens are to be found there.

### THE TOWN GATES

Four no more available gates led from the town into its suburbs: the Viennese gate into the suburb of Angern, the gate of Linz into the suburb of Trewald, and the monastery gate into the suburb of Piesenegg, to the Franciscan's monastery, its hospital, and farther upstream to the sunk castle Donaudorf, to which a special exhibition area is dedicated in this museum. Mural paintings at the former locations of the gates show their original appearance. Near the Viennese gate there was

once a free house. In the course of the 19th century the Barbenbergerhof was erected on this site.

The fourth gate, the so-called Wasser- or Sandtor, was a big exit in the otherwise closed Danube front leading through the Schiffmeisterhaus. Today this gate is only visible as a vault. It lost its impressive size due to levelling of the ground. The 1880 demolition of the urban warehouse, which was located next to the Schiffmeisterhaus, made the creation of an open square with view to the Danube possible.

For passer-byes there was a passage close to the ship landing station. In the last decade of the twentieth century another exit was created close to the church.

### THE SCHIFFMEISTERHAUS (2)

It recalls a branch of industry once being of great importance to the town: the navigation on the Danube. The ship master was a manufacturer, operator and regulator of the Danube fleet. Mathias Feldmüller was the most famous and influential one along the entire Danube.

The Schiffmeisterhaus ranks among the most magnificent buildings. An interesting renaissance architecture is to be found under its 19th century facade. This includes a vault and stuccoed ceilings. Facing the Danube an old tower is integrated in the building.

### THE PASSAUERKASTEN (3)

It is one of the oldest buildings of the town covering an area of 10 x 24 meters. Its basement vault is Gothic with six narrow, round-arched, Romanesque windows. The upper floor

is divided into two incomparably big rooms: an 8 x 16 meters large hall with a height of almost 5 meters and with early gothic double arcade windows, and a subsequent space, which is in the form of a rectangle of approximately 5 x 8 meters.

The building's appearance dates back to the architectural period of the Babenberg dynasty in its heyday.

The early gothic tracery of the windows gives evidence to the building's splendid past. It is to be supposed that it was the first castle of the town, the so-called Pallas, consisting of a manor house with a representative hall. The Barbarakapelle, which was known in former times as the Michaelskapelle, is opposite that building.

Nowadays it is hardly conceivable that this narrow dwelling-house, which is located directly near the church and above the town wall, was once a double-storeyed chapel.

### THE TOWN'S PARISH CHURCH ST. LAURENZ (4)

The Gothic longhouse with its three naves was erected under the Viennese cathedral master builder Laurenz Speyning in the years of 1466 to 1485. However, it was not before 1500 when the chancel could be finished at last. The partition arch depicts the year 1521 as the date of completion. The longhouse is divided by a simple cross-rib vault, whereas a star-rib vault is already to be found in the chancel.

In 1716 a fire destroyed the interior and the steeple of the church. A renewal in baroque style took place in 1721. However, the steeple was again damaged by a fire in the year of 1868. After taking a vote the citizens decided to fashion its

spire in the neo-Gothic style. By doing so the steeple resumed its earlier appearance. Another well worth seeing feature is a group of figures dealing with the Agony of Christ. This is situated at the main entrance and dates back to 1450.

### THE CHURCH SQUARE

Up to the year of 1868 a churchyard was located in front of the church. On the walls of its interior, gravestones are still to be found referring to the town's past. The most interesting one is a witness of Gothic art, namely the gravestone of Knight Hans von Ybbs, who died in the year of 1368.

### THE SALZAMT (6)

The remarkable big building with its bays on all four corners, is situated between the Kirchengasse and the river Danube. In former times it was an imperial toll house. From 1639 onwards it was used for storing salt. To this very day traces of decomposing salt are to be found in its cellars. The name Salzamt is derived from its past.

The highest floods within the last 500 years are recorded on the building's Danube frontage.

### THE WEINMAUT (8)

This building is one of the oldest in town. Due to a renovation round about 1990 it lost its Gothic roof and medieval appearance. However, its foundation still consists of Gothic walls. In past ages it was used as an imperial tollbooth, being looked after by the tollkeeper and his assistants. Passing ships had to berth in Ybbs declaring their goods. Thus the town ac-

quired wealth and a high reputation. To mention an example, 2.000 guilders of toll-charge were contributed to the University of Vienna in 1551 for the salaries of its professors.

Today this building is being used as a college for police aspirants.

### THE MUNICIPAL HALL (10)

The hall was erected next to the town's moat between 1962 and 1965 by the graduated engineer Leo Kammel. It was festively opened on January the 8th 1965.

The building complex is a typical architectural representative of the sixties and thus of historic importance. However, it is highly controversial, as it disturbs the ensemble of the historic Danube front.

### THE MONASTERY AND THE CAVALRY BARRACKS (11)

The spacious yellow building complex, which is situated between the hydroelectric power station and the historic town centre, is in the possession of the city of Vienna since 1860. Today it is a nursing home for old and mentally ill patients. In the past the area was covered by a monastery with an adjacent hospital, and farther to the west by a cavalry barracks. The latter was built by the Emperor Karl VI in 1723. Along with its primary purpose the barrack was also used as a sick bay and a ration storeroom for the army.

A Cistercian nunnery was founded by the rich citizen Adelheide Gottschalk in the suburb of Piesenegg in 1291. In the days of the Reformation it was abandoned for fear of the war-

like Turks, standing empty from 1572 onwards. During the Counter-Reformation in 1631 the town of Ybbs succeeded in placing the building in the hands of the Order of St. Francis. After the demolition of the old complex, works for its re-erection started in 1632. From that time onwards it flourished until its dissolution by Joseph II.

In the course of time the town developed to a significant reloading point with regard to the iron trade. In the 19th century a branch of the mining labour union was installed in the former monastery building controlling the quarrying, processing, and trading of the iron.

Around 1860 the monastery was pulled down being replaced by a bigger building complex. The cavalry barracks was invariably included into the final concept.

### THE ROYAL CASTLE (13)

The spacious predecessor of the present castle was erected at the time of the town's expansion in the 14th century. This was at the site where today the Herrengasse leads into the Burgplatz. However, in 1490 it was reported that the royal castle was destroyed by a flood. The building was re-erected soon after, and in 1494 the Emperor Maximilian I already resided in its walls.

The most important incident with regard to the castle's history took place in the year of 1521. Having nothing but worries on his journey from Worms to Vienna, the freshly crowned Emperor Ferdinand I paid homage to the leaders of a potential revolt. He was only capable of the Spanish language, but was supported by his German speaking secretary

Gabriel of Salamanca. This event became historically known as the first "Landtag of Ybbs".

In the years to follow the royal castle lost much of its importance. In 1533 Ferdinand already refers to it as the desolate castle of Ybbs.

The last famous guest was the Emperor Joseph II. He took quarter in the castle in the year of 1779.

Over the years the building experienced various changes. Its present appearance was completed in the renaissance. However, it lost its four corner towers due to transformations in the 19th century.

Within the renovation activities of the town's centre, the royal castle was completely refurbished. Nowadays it serves as a college for nursing aspirants.

### THE MAIN SQUARE (14)

The main square represents the centre of Ybbs. It is leading to the Wienerstrasse and connecting the upper and the lower town. A fountain dating back to the year of 1613 is located in its middle. A figure representing a knight armed with a shield and a sword is standing on a raised pedestal. In the vernacular people endearingly call this figure the „Kilian“. It is likely to be Hans von Ybbs, whose gravestone can be seen in the church.

In the year of 1716 a blaze devastated large areas of the town. Its reconstruction was done in baroque style. However, a further fire occurred in 1868 leaving nothing more than the baroque facade of the house number three on the west side of the square.