

Olesko Castle



One of the oldest in Ukraine Olesko castle is located on the top a high hill, which formed the basis for the fortification system. Below, along the slope was the rampart with stockade, further - one more line of the defensive wall with a moat filled with water. The impassable bogs surrounded the castle in the valley of the river Libertsia.

For the first time the castle is mentioned in 1327, when the owner was the Galicia-Volyn duke Yuriy II – the son of Masovian duke Troyden and the Ruthenian princess Mariya. This proves one of the Yuriy II sons – Andriy or Lev - to be the founder of the castle.

The stone oval basement were put into the scheme of the castle. During the XIV century, locating on the boundary of the Galician and Volyn regions and subsequently between Poland and Lithuania, the castle was permanently changing its owners. At first, it belonged to the duke Lubart, then - to Alexander Koryatovych. In 1390 the Hungarian governor of Galicia duke Wladyslaw Opole passed the castle to the Galician Catholic bishops. In 1432 p. the Olesko castle was owned by Wladyslaw Jagiello but he also passed it to Ian from Siena, whose descendants became known as Olesky. They owned the castle until the beginning of the XVI century.

In 1511 the ownership was divided between two daughters of Peter Oleskyi - Halyna and Jadwiga. Gradually the fortress was transformed into the royal residence. Afterwards, the current owners added a tower, chapel, several premises, and dug the wells with a depth of 42 m. The Olesko castle overpassed a significant reconstruction at the beginning of the XVII century when in 1605 Lviv castellan and Ruthenian governor Ivan Danylovych of the Gerbut family married to Sophia Zolkiewski and became the owner of the castle. Particular attention in the reconstruction of the residence was given to architectural and plastic decoration of the courtyard and living quarters. The castle courtyard was arranged with the open arcades. The entrances to the living quarters were decorated with the white stone portals of the Renaissance style. In such a refined atmosphere was brought up daughter of Ivan Danylovych Sophia. She married to the Krakow castellan Jakob Sobieski. Two years later she gave birth to a son - the future king of Poland Jan III Sobieski. In 1682, when he was already the king of Poland, Jan Sobieski became the owner of the castle Olesko, payed all the debts of the Koniecpolski family who owned the castle from 1647.

He renovated the castle, so that the tower and roof acquired the traits of Baroque. Hereafter, among the numerous heirs and owners of the castle, only Rzewuski family thoroughly continued the renewal of the castle. They turned it into a luxurious residence and set the picturesque park around.

On January 23rd, 1838 during an earthquake, the castle was damaged and began to ruin. Not less damaged it the owners themselves at that time. Incidentally the walled-in treasure was found in one of the rooms. Since then everybody began the feverish search of other jewels: broke the walls with frescoes, destroyed the fireplaces, took off the floor. At the end of the XIX century the Olesko castle turned to be in ruins.



For the collected funds in 1882 the castle was bought and passed into the hands of the state. There were different opinions concerning its use. It was offered to open a boarding school for the students of the teachers' seminary. The Regional Sejm considered a better option to give the building at the disposal of the monastery. There was also another option: in one part of the premises to equip a public school in the one part of the premises and in the second part - the museum by Jan Sobieski. Until 1939 the castle is used for a female agricultural school. It experienced many trials at that time. In addition, during the Second World War, it has placed the military depots. Nowadays, the castle was renovated and took a new life of the museum-reserve and the department of the Lviv Art Gallery.

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Pidhirtsi Castle



The castle in Pidhirtsi is an outstanding historical and architectural monument of Ukraine from the XVII century. It was built according to the order of Grand Crown Hetman Stanislaw Koniecpolski by the architect Andrea dell'Aqua in the years of 1635-1640. Later the owners were Jan III Sobieski, Radziwill and Rzewuski families. The castle complex includes a palace, surrounded by the bastion fortifications, ramparts and moats, a Baroque church (1752 - 1766), entrance gates and wonderful "Italian" park of the XVIII century with old linden trees.



The construction of the Pidhirtsi castle is associated with the names of the French military engineer Guillaume de Beauplan and the Italian architect Andrea dell'Aqua. It is originally conceived as a castle Renaissance and Baroque stylized fortified residence. The service premises formed a square courtyard with a terrace adapted to defensive functions. From the three sides, the palace was surrounded by a deep moat. On the north side it faced the picturesque valley. The castle had a good terrace, balustrade and sculptures. The entry gate with two columns placed on the axis of the palace under the terrace of the southern curtain wall. The late Renaissance portal of the entrance gates, plastic figures of the guard towers and dungeons at the corners of the terraces' balustrade grab our attention by their magnificence.



Opened to the park side castle with the terrace and stairs in front of it was initially two-stored with three-tier square risalits. The interiors of the castle-palace with the anfilade planning were noted with the refinement of the plastic figures. In XVII century, during the liberation war and the raids of the Tatar and Turkish troops, the castle was subjected to the

devastation, but still remained one of the most luxurious magnate residences in Europe. In 1646 the castle was visited by the king Wladislaw IV, for whom the grandiose fireworks were organized. During the battles of the liberation war headed by the Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, the castle was seriously damaged. Nevertheless in 1656 it began its recovery.



The grandson of the Hetman granted the castle to Jan III Sobieski, together with the villages of Pidhirtsi and Zahirtsy, with the one condition: the owner has also look for the Brody fortress till the adulthood of Jakub Sobieski.

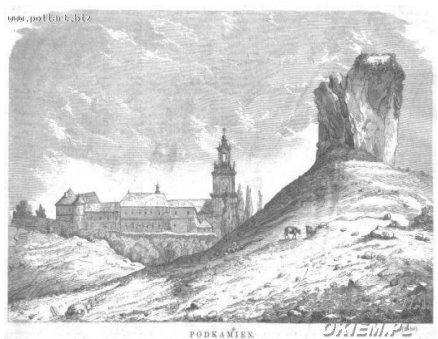
The renovation of the castle lasted until 1680. In 1688 it suffered again after the attacks of Tatars. In 1720 the owner of the Pidhirtsi castle became Waclaw Rzewuski. While he was owning the residence, it was renovated, added the third floor and refitted interiors. The lifting-bridge with the other pavilion was dismantled. The owner also built for the guests of the residence built the so-called Hetman mansion with the sundial. Waclaw Rzewuski amassed the collection of paintings, books, weapon, furniture. Exactly this period of renovation and formation of the interior has brought the plastic baroque motifs into the primeval late Renaissance architecture. In the years of 1752-1766, according to the project of the architect K.Romanus the Baroque church of St. Joseph were built near the castle. This church is a rotunda with a diameter of 12 m. The main front is decorated with a porch of the 14 Corinthian columns. In addition, the 8 sculptures of saints was installed on the attic.

Later, the castle began to ruin because of the financial inability of Rzewuski family. The significant damage suffered the Pidhirtsi castle during the years of World War II and the fire in 1956. Afterwards, it was again restored and adapted into a hospital that led to the demise of site. The current renewal of the palace gives us a hope for its big return into the center of the cultural processes in Ukraine. The palace is a unique monument of the XVII century, which clearly reflects the final stage of the evolution of the defensive system, constructing on the basis of its' luxurious mansions and palaces.

The picturesque park provides the site with a great view. In ancient times the park was more impressive to a traveler than the castle itself. It surrounds the castle from all sides. The park is distinguished by intirety of an artistic vision and deep relations of topography, architecture, sculpture, and greenery. Therefore, it belongs to the monument of landscaping art of national importance. Built on the level of the best examples of the so-called "Italian" parks, it is the most beautiful and unique park of this type in Ukraine.

From the Internet-resources: www.pidhirtci.org , www.thisisukraine.org , www.castles.com.ua

Pidkamin



Lots of legends are connected with the village of Pidkamin. One of th legends tells us about a hero, who brought a rock from the mountains to put it on the place where the castle would be based. There is also another legend about the devil who got angry with the monks in Pidkamin and decided to throw this big stone on to the monastery. He tore it from the Carpathian Mountains, and threw a rock. He was not strong enough, so that the stone fell not to the monastery, but near it.

A rocky giant, located on a hill, north-eastern outskirts of the Pidkamin village, called by the local people "Stone". The fragments of the crockery of the Vysotska Culture from the early iron Age (XI-VII c. BC) and the period of Galicia-Volyn principality (XI-XIII c.) were found at the foot of the Stone.



These prove its' use in the following cases: an idol, amulets for the local people and land from all evil; as a rock temple-fortress. Exactly to this time relates a niche made in a heart shape from the western side of the Stone. It could be used for pagan rituals of the ancient inhabitants of this territory.

The numerous grooves and hollows, which were holding the whole wooden construction, remind the building system of the Carpathian Tustan and Bubnyshche fortresses. During the Galicia-Volyn principality a church with the defensive role was built right on the Stone. The stone crosses at the western edge of the site are preserved till nowadays from the cemetery of the second half of the seventeenth century. To the east from the Stone, deeply to the Rozhanytsia mountain, there are two caves with the traces of human activity. The explorers have proved that both caves are of natural origin and could be used as a cave-church or chapel. However in the early XVIII century they were used to extract stone for the construction of the monastery fortifications.

An old monastery is located on the hill opposite to the Stone. The first mention of its origin comes from the first half of the XIII century. It is exactly that time, when the Dominicans entered to the territory of current Pidkamin. They stopped on a picturesque hill, where they built a wooden church. As an inscription on the ancient monastery's icon pointed out, the Dominican court was destroyed by the Tatars. They killed the abbot Urban and 12 monks. From the southern side of the monastery, there is a small chapel, where the victims of the Tatar attack should be buried according to the legends. The new owner of the town Balthazar Tsetner renovated the monastery. The new four three-meters high sculptures were located on the high tower over the temple. In 1640, with the help of the Balthazar' son, an additional fortification strengthened the monastery complex. It was surrounded by the new defensive walls, ramparts and towers, which have saved not only the monastery, but also the surrounding territory from the Tatar raids numerous times. In addition, a hospital and a shelter for the poor were built near the defensive walls.

The proclamation of the icon of God Mother as the miraculous one contributed to the reputation of the Pidkamin monastery. According to the request of the Polish king, the Senate and the highest circles of the Dominican Order, Pope Benedict XIII on May 14, 1725, sent a permission to celebrate the coronation of the same icon of the God Mother. As the testimony of monastic chronicles, about 200.000 people attended this ceremony. It indicates that the Pidkamin monastery reached its "golden age" in its development at that time and could be a competitor of the most famous sanctuaries of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita). The monastery outlasted the great devastation during the First World War. The roof was partially collapsed after the artillery bombardment in 1915. In 1916 a lot of paintings, portraits and icons burnt in a fire. It destroyed about 500 valuable manuscripts and books.

A unique monument in the monastery, installed in 1719, is a high tower with a gilded statue of the Virgin Mary holding a baby. Over the years it has blackened. Since the restoration of the monastery in 1997, the sculpture showed that phenomenon that can be hardly explained: it began to self-clean, taking its original bright yellow color.