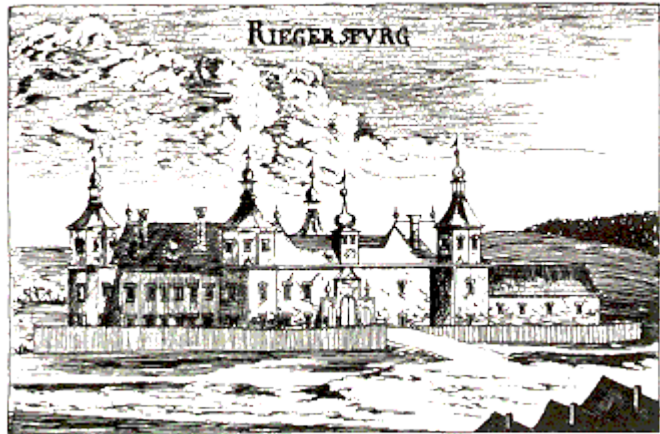


History

Short History of the Baroque Palace of Riegersburg in Lower-Austria. (N.Ö.)

Acquisition of the Castle of Riegersburg by the imperial Count Sigismund Friedrich Khevenhüller in 1730.

by *Ernst Dieter Petritsch*



Gravure de Georg Mattaeus Vischer 1672

Like many other castles, the fortress of Riegersburg, already mentioned in documents in 1427, had during the course of the centuries, an adventurous life. The Imperial Count Sigmund von Hardegg (1539-1599) bought the fortress in 1568 from the Lords of Eitzingen who owned it since already 1441. On the foundations of the fortress he let built a castle with pillars on moulds and he settled there not only his residence but also the administration center of the County of Hardegg. But Sigmund's son, Johann Wilhelm von Hardegg incurred in so many debts in buying some properties which had themselves further debts, so that when he died on 1635 bankruptcy was declared on his succession.

In order to finalize the negotiations with the creditors, the heir, Count Julius von Hardegg (1594-1684) after long discussions, signed with them an agreement and paid all the debts. To be able to do it, he sold the County of Hardegg and Riegersburg. The new owners were the Counts of Saint Julien Wallsee, who were in those days still under age. Their father Henri Guyard, Comte de Saint Julien (1590-1642) was married with the sister of the above mentioned Count Julius von Hardegg, Sidonia Elisabeth (1619-1651). For religious reasons he emigrated in previous days from France and entered into the imperial army service first as a treasurer and eventually as „Hofkriegsrath“ (Imperial Counsellor of the Army). After he had bought the the Estate of Niederwalisee, he and his descendents were created Imperial Counts of Wallsee. Henri, grandson of Johann Julius de Saint Julien Wallsee (1702-1783) inherited at the death of his father (1728) of the County of Hardegg, first together with his brother Johann Leopold, and became full owner only beginning of 1730.

But already the 1st august of the same year he sold the County with all ist estates to Count Sigismund von Khevenhüller.



Sigismund Friedrich von Khevenhüller (17.9. 1666 -8.12. 1742) made a brilliant career as a civil servant: in 1694 he became Counsellor of State in the Regional Austrian Government in Graz, from 1698 to 1711 Governor of the Carinthian Province, in 1701 Imperial Counsellor and from 1711 onwards, Governor of the Province of Lower Austria and President of the Austrian Council. In 1721 he was made Knight of the Golden Fleece and short after Minister of the State Council. But the highest reward was for sure the title of Imperial Count which was granted to him and his descendants in 1725.

The 1st of August 1730, Count von Khevenhüller signed in Vienna a purchasing act for the County of Hardegg with the estates of Riegersburg, Prutzendorf, Untermixnitz and Obermixnitz.

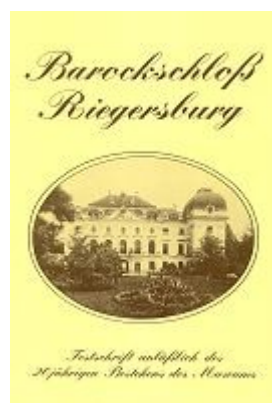
Together with his son, Count Johann Joseph von Khevenhüller (who had also signed the purchasing act) he left already on 5th of August from Vienna „to go to get acquainted with the „possessions“ bought from H.E. the Count Julius von Saint Julien and to take possession of the County of Hardegg on the Thaya river with its estates of Riegersburg and Prutzendorf at seven stage-coach stations from Horn....and for the fidelity swearing ceremony of the subjects“

In those days the castle of Riegersburg was mainly in bad conditions and could not be lived in. Therefore big restoration works had to be done rapidly. They lasted for many years and were done after the plans of the landscape architect Franz Anton Pilgram (1699-1761), a scholar of Lukas von Hildebrandt, originally from Lower-Austria.

And so the ancient castle of Riegersburg got his splendid shape still existing now-a-days, of an impressive Baroque Palace.



References:



*Festschrift in occasion of the
20.th anniversary of the museum*

Price: € 20,00