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The „Residence“ in the Royal garden of Prague castle. Work by three eminent architects – K. I. Dientzenhofer, A. Haffenecker and P. Janák

ANNOTATION

The Czech presidential residence in the Royal garden of the Prague castle has been inaccessible for a survey of the development and modifications of this part of the castle area since it had been built. Only the opening of the property and declassification of the archive documentation in the 1990s enabled the recognition, analysis and evaluation of the successive participation of eminent architects of the period on the building construction. Building activity by the south terrace wall of the Renaissance Royal Garden on the site of present „Residence“ started in 1731 by building an expensive and sizable greenhouse. Its completion was assisted by K.I.Dientzenhofer. After the greenhouse was damaged by Prussian bombing, architect A.Haffenecker preserved and modified the central entrance pavilion and a small tower like summer-house. In 1947–1950 architect P. Janak used the remnants of the building for one of his fundamental works – the presidential residence. Problems, individual needs of presidents and fractional functional modifications are noted mainly in Janak's diary and subsequently in the declassified archive documents.

SUMMARY

The documentary evidence places the initiation of building activities on the site of current „Residence“ in the Royal Garden of the Prague castle to between 1731 – 1732, when a sizable Baroque greenhouse was built to the terrace wall. This building was composed symmetrically with a pavilion in the centre, which still exists, and the actual greenhouse wings joined on both sides. Initially master Jakub Antonin Canevalle was paid for the building work, then Kilian Ignac Dientzenhofer, who was the court building master during the whole construction. The building project is usually assigned to Dientzenhofer, but there is also a possibility, that Canevalle was the author of the original plans, whose project was later modified by Dientzenhofer. In 1757 at the beginning of the seven years war the greenhouse was hit by a cannonade during the Prussian siege of Prague and was burnt down. In 1776–1777 the building was rebuilt by a master builder Antonin Haffenecker. However, he renovated only the central pavilion, refurnished by fresco paintings probably shortly afterwards, while the side wings were never rebuilt.

The pavilion then remained almost unchanged until after the Second World War. In 1947 – 1950 the presidential „residence“ after the project of Pavel Janak was built on the site of the greenhouse, named in contemporary documents as a „garden house“. The Baroque pavilion remained in its centre, to which the eastern and western wings were built. Janak was evidently inspired by the lodge in Ratboř by Kolin, built in 1911 – 1913 by the architect Jan Kotěra, with whom Janak worked in 1907–1909. The kitchen wing and the preparation annex below the adjacent part of the raised garden were added to the „garden house“.

The building served as the presidential „residence“ with occasional interruptions up to the end of the communist regime. Building activity was intensified around 1960 when the mezzanine floors in the eastern wing were dismantled in a project by Jaroslav Lacha, and the northern tract was became a cinema. Later in the time of president Husak, a sauna was built in 1975–1976 and a new balcony on the south face of the „residence“. The author of the project (perhaps architect Osvald Dobert) was probably also influenced by the balcony at the lodge in Ratboř by Kolin. In 1981–1982 a swimming pool was built to the north of the „residence“ below the level of the upper part of the Royal garden.

After the revolution in 1989 president Vaclav Havel lived for a short period in the residence, but then the building, modified in 1992 by architect Miroslav Masak in cooperation with Danish designers, was used by president advisory officers and as a registered place for several foundations. Currently the building awaits another phase of general reconstruction.

- Fig. 1.** Prague castle, Royal garden. Site of the presidential residence at the voluptuary area of Prague castle. (Map underlay from Google Earth.)
- Fig. 2.** Prague castle, Royal garden. General view of the presidential residence, St. Veits cathedral in the background (P. Nagel 1992, after ROMER 1992).
- Fig. 3.** Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Current state of the northern facade (original data are archived in the Office of the president of the Republic).
- Fig. 4.** Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Building history survey of the main building ground floor (northern modifications are below the upper garden level). **Blue** – presumed remains of Renaissance terrace wall, **brown** – Baroque construction from 1731–32, **orange** – recent constructions from 1947–1950 (period of the architect P. Janak), **yellow** – later constructions after 1950. (Original data are archived in the Office of the president of the Republic).
- Fig. 5.** Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Current state of the south facade (original data are archived in the Office of the president of the Republic).
- Fig. 6.** View from St. Veits cathedral tower towards the north. **A:** Johann Joseph Dietzler 1742 – a cut-out from coloured ink drawing of the greenhouse from 1731–1732 (archived in National gallery in Prague). **B:** Current state.
- Fig. 7.** The greenhouse – detail of the drawing by J. J. Dietzler 1742.
- Fig. 8.** Prague castle, Royal garden. Transverse section of the central pavilion and the greenhouse wing with a heating channel. Ground floor of the lower entrance pavilion has flat ceiling. Entrances in greenhouse wings have flat lintels – earlier project? Not dated, author not stated. Archived in Prague castle archive (further APH), Old plan collection.
- Fig. 9.** Groundplan and a section through the pavilion with a roof line of the greenhouse wing and entrances to its loft. Not dated, author not stated. Archived in APH, Old plan collection.
- Fig. 10.** Groundplan and outline of the greenhouse in Royal garden. Possibly work of K. I. Dientzenhofer office. Not dated, author not stated. Archived in APH, Old plan collection.
- Fig. 11.** Facade of the central pavilion; part of documentation, which can be assigned to K. I. Dientzenhofer office. Pencil drawing on the reverse of the plan quoted at Fig. 9. Archived in APH, Old plan collection.
- Fig. 12.** Plan of the Prague castle from 1759 – a cut-out. Archived in APH, Old plan collection.
- Fig. 13.** Prague castle, Royal garden. View of the "summer house" and the pavilion from the west, ante 1947. Archived in APH, Photograph collection of Prague castle building office.
- Fig. 14.** Prague castle, Royal garden. Baroque pavilion modified by A. Haffenecker, view from southeast, ante 1947. Archived in APH, Photograph collection of Prague castle building office.
- Fig. 15.** Prague castle, Royal garden. Baroque pavilion modified by A. Haffenecker, east, demolished facade of the pavilion surveyed in 1947. Archived in APH, New plan collection.
- Fig. 16.** Prague castle, Royal garden. South face facade of the former pavilion with a classicism plastic basket with flowers above the doorway.
- Fig. 17.** Prague castle, Royal garden, Baroque pavilion. **A:** ground floor groundplan, **B:** groundplan of the first floor. Surveyed 1947, originals with measurements. Archived in APH, New plan collection.
- Fig. 18.** **A:** Ratboř by Kolin – lodge, Jan Kotěra, 1911; **B:** Prague castle, Royal garden – residence, Pavel Janak 1947–1950.
- Fig. 19.** Prague castle, Royal garden. Partially built western wing of the "residence" with beginnings of the west pavilion side demolition. Archived in APH, Photograph collection of Prague castle building office.
- Fig. 20.** Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Vestibule on a site of an earlier entrance loggia into the Baroque pavilion.
- Fig. 21.** Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Fresco (Flora divinity) on the ceiling of the former entrance loggia of the Baroque pavilion, last . of the 18th century. After modifications in the 1990s.

Fig. 22. Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Lift and staircase.

Fig. 23. Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Modifications of a room in the Janak wing adjacent to the former pavilion during the last decade. Hall before the banqueting room and private cinema. **A:** state 1992 (photo P. Nagel 1992, based on ROMER 1992); **B:** state in 2010.

Fig. 24. Prague castle, Royal garden, residence. Conference lounge.

English by Linda and Patrick Foster