

The Dunajec Castle in Niedzica

Erected in the first half of 14th century by Kokos of Brezovica, the castle was a fortress protecting the Northern border of Hungary. Between 1327–1328 the watchtower was appropriated by Wilhelm Drugeth and, prior to the year 1330 it was converted into a masonry castle (gothic upper castle). From that moment on, with a short interlude, the castle remained under control of Hungarian families until 1945. Following the First World War, it was incorporated into the Polish state.

The castle underwent numerous modifications. In the second half of the 15th century Emeric Zapolya initiated expansion of the castle (the oldest part of the lower castle and the medium castle), whereas Jerzy Horvath finished reconstruction and expansion in 1601. The latter modifications include the new Renaissance-style wing with entrance gate (lower castle) and they considerably influenced the ultimate look of the castle.

The period of Giovanelli family rule was marked by a time of anti-Habsburg insurgencies. This period of unrest, combined with the lack of care for the residence, led the upper castle to fall into ruin until the end of the 18th century. When in the year 1817 the castle was reappropriated by the Horvath- Palocsay family, its condition was so dilapidated that throughout reconstruction and modernization were required. Having invested considerable funds and effort into these processes, the interior of the castle regained its representative character. This was also the time when a new chapel and a ballroom were constructed.

Last owners of the castle were the Salamon family. Ilona Salamon Countess of Bethlen, widow of the late Géza Alapi Salamon conducted necessary refurbishment works of the residence and the surrounding area in the 1920s . She also arranged the Salamon family cemetery in the vicinity. The history of Hungarian noble families owning the Castle for 700 years ends with the last owner of the Hungarian *castrum Dunaiecz*.

After 1945, following the entrance of the Red Army, the castle was totally devastated and plundered. In such state it was nationalized and in 1950 entrusted by the Ministry of Culture and Art to the Association of Art Historians for perpetual usufruct. Over 50 years' period of the Association's care over this magnificent object was marked by construction conservation and adaptation works, implemented in several stages by the Management for the Restoration of Wawel Royal Castle under the supervision of Prof. Alfred Majewski.

The interior of the upper and medium castles were adapted for museum purposes, preserving their historic arrangement and character. The museum was opened to the public in 1963. The exhibits displayed here were gathered with a view to furnish among others the following rooms: prison with torture-devices,

the Spisz župan chambers (an office, bedroom) guard room or residential chambers of the Salamon family-the last owners of the castle. The historical halls house objects excavated during archeological works conducted on the area of the castle and some old photographs. Additional attraction are viewing terraces which give you the opportunity to admire the beauty of the surroundings.