



## HISTORY

---

### THE HOFBURG SITE

A distinctive feature of the Hofburg site is its unusual continuity. The original Hofburg, or Castle of the Court, was founded by an emperor of the Staufer dynasty.

The plans of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen to govern Austria as a territory directly under the Emperor's authority made it necessary to erect a city castle within Vienna in 1237. A quadrangular castle with flanking corner towers based on the southern Italian model was subsequently put under construction until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. But the castle itself was not completed either during the reign of Frederick II or during the last few years of the reign of Frederick the Quarrelsome. The quadrangular castle was most probably completed by the Bohemian king Přemysl Ottokar II during the last years of his reign.

Over the centuries the building complex was steadily expanded by the Habsburg rulers of Austria. Under Duke Albrecht II the Hofburg became the main residence of the Habsburg Dukes of Austria. In 1327 King Frederick the Fair founded Vienna's Augustinian Church. The nave of the Augustinian Church is thought to have been completed in 1370. The Church itself was one of the most important locations for dynastic ceremonies celebrated by the imperial family. Emperor Frederick III succeeded in acquiring the palace of the Count of Cilli, which adjoined the Hofburg, thereby expanding the area of the Hofburg westwards.

During the First Siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1529 the city's mediaeval fortifications proved inadequate, and it was the bad weather rather than the city's battlements that saved the city from the Ottoman army. In the wake of the Ottoman siege the city was fortified in line with modern criteria. One of the first modern bastions was the Castle Bastion (Burgbastei) erected directly in front of the castle. The mediaeval Hofburg complex damaged during the first Turkish siege was renovated in the Renaissance style from the 1540s onwards. A ball house (Ballhaus) on the edge of the pleasure garden was built between 1540 and 1542. Over the next two years the north-



eastern wing was rebuilt to accommodate the Chamber of Lower Austria and the queen's retinue. A stately staircase was built between 1549 and 1554, and in 1554 a new wing with the ornamental Swiss Gate (Schweizertor) as the main entrance to the Hofburg came to replace the mediaeval wall. Between 1553 and 1556, living quarters running along six axes were appointed next to the West Tower to accommodate the growing residential needs of the imperial court. The first building to house a chamber of art (Kunstammer) north of the Alps was erected between 1558 and 1563.

The Stallburg, a building comprised of four wings and inspired by Italian architecture, was built under Emperor Maximilian. Situated to the north of the Hofburg, it housed both the stables and the guest apartments and the chamber of armour. In the place of the old Cilli castle a stately residential wing was built for Archduke Ernest, the governor of the lands of Lower Austria. For the imperial art collections Emperor Rudolf II also commissioned the building of a three-storey gallery building alongside Ferdinand I's chamber of art. In 1622 a new and larger bastion (Bastei) was added. The three administrative buildings bordering the large Burgplatz to the north were linked by means of a continuous façade, creating a long chancellery wing.

In 1660 Leopold I commissioned the construction of the so-called Leopoldine Wing in the early Baroque style, connecting the Swiss Court (Schweizerhof) with the Amalienburg along the old city wall. In 1666 a theatre (Komödienhaus) was built on the fortification in front of the Augustinian Church, on the site of the present-day Castle Garden (Burggarten), in preparation for the wedding of Emperor Leopold with the Spanish Infanta Margaret Theresa. The architect of this tiered-box theatre was Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini. Between 1681 and 1683 a three-storey building was erected on Rosstummelplatz, with the ground floor serving as a riding school. The upper storey was to accommodate the imperial library.

To the south-east of the Swiss Court, on what is now Josefsplatz, Charles VI ordered the construction of a new library around 1723 to house in a single location the imperial book collection, which had expanded vastly as a result of countless acquisitions. The architects Johann Bernhard and Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach created one of the most magnificent libraries in the world. Construction work on the Imperial Chancellery Wing first began in 1723 to plans by Johann



Lucas von Hildebrandt, but the building was finally completed with a richly structured façade with three portals on the northern side of the Castle Court (Burghof) to plans by Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach. It is named after the Aulic Council (Reichshofrat), the imperial authority responsible for the administration of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. There were also plans to erect a large domed structure, St. Michael's Wing (Michaelertrakt), adjoining the Imperial Chancellery Wing; however, only half of it was completed during the time of Charles VI. The cupola itself was completed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ferdinand Kirschner based on historical architectural plans.

The Amalienburg was remodelled to its present appearance in 1764 for Emperor Joseph II. Parts of the city fortifications were remodelled to lay out gardens. To give the Hofburg complex in front of the court library a uniform appearance, the architects Nikolaus Pacassi and Franz Anton Hillebrandt added a continuous and uniform façade to today's Josefsplatz in 1770, and in this area the Hofburg was opened up to the city centre.

As they retreated in 1809, Napoleon's troops demolished the outer Castle Gate and part of the old bastion in front of it. As it now served no further purpose, the Castle Bastion was razed to the ground in 1812. In its place Emperor Francis I commissioned a new Castle Gate in 1821 to commemorate the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig. With the fortifications in front of the Hofburg now removed, two new gardens were laid out: north of the Castle Gate, the People's Garden (Volksgarten), which was open to the public, and, to the south, the present-day Castle Garden (Burggarten), which was designed as a court garden and reserved for the imperial household.

The final phase of large-scale construction work on the Hofburg complex was carried out during the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I. Besides the two court museums situated on the other side of the Ringstrasse, Gottfried Semper's and Carl Hasenauer's design for an Imperial Forum (Kaiserforum) also comprised the New Castle (Neue Burg); construction work got underway in 1881. The southern wing was completed only in 1913; the northern wing, the linking section between the two wings in front of the Leopoldine Wing and the two triumphal arches over the Ringstrasse were never realised.



The Republic of Austria established one hundred years ago also retained the Hofburg as its centre of stately representation and administration. Over the course of 750 years the Hofburg has undergone a complete transformation from a pure centre of power to the greatest concentration of cultural institutions of its kind in Europe, all open to visitors.

In the middle of the room at the Info Center is a model of the Hofburg with various media replicating the evolution of the various planning and implementation phases from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Three timelines along the wall depict the history of the Hofburg as it unfolds in parallel with the history of Austria and the world at large. This allows visitors to situate the structural development of the Hofburg and the history of the Hofburg site within global history and the history of Austria itself. A selection of choice exhibits correlating with the timelines are used to refer to the museums and institutions of the Hofburg site where the originals of these very exhibits are on show. A research project by the Austrian Academy of Sciences completed only a few years ago provided the starting point for showcasing the Hofburg's structural development. The graphical implementation of the evolution of the site's buildings draws on IT-based building imaging created by the Vienna University of Technology on behalf of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

(Matthias Pfaffenbichler, Curator of the Hofburg Info Center)

Further reading:

Mario Schwarz (ed.), *Die Wiener Hofburg im Mittelalter. Von der Kastellburg bis zu den Anfängen der Kaiserresidenz*, Vienna 2015

Herbert Karner (ed.), *Die Wiener Hofburg 1521–1705. Baugeschichte, Funktion und Etablierung als Kaiserresidenz*, Vienna 2014

Hellmut Lorenz – Anna Mader-Kratky (eds.), *Die Wiener Hofburg 1705–1835. Die kaiserliche Residenz vom Barock bis zum Klassizismus*, Vienna 2016

Werner Telesko (ed.), *Die Wiener Hofburg 1835–1918. Der Ausbau der Residenz vom Vormärz bis zum Ende des ‚Kaiserforums‘*, Vienna 2012

Werner Telesko – Richard Kurdiovsky – Andreas Nierhaus (eds.), *Die Wiener Hofburg und der Residenzbau in Mitteleuropa im 19. Jahrhundert. Monarchische Repräsentation zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, Vienna 2009

Thomas Trenkler, *Die Hofburg Wien. Geschichte, Gebäude, Sehenswürdigkeiten*, Vienna 2004

## PRESS PHOTOS

---



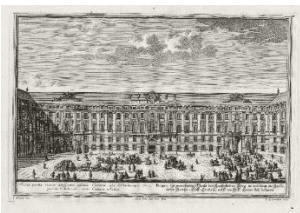
**The imperial castle c 1300**

in: Moritz Bermann, *Alt- und Neu-Wien: Geschichte der Kaiserstadt und ihrer Umgebungen*, Vienna 1880



**A bird's eye view of the city of Vienna before 1683**

Joseph Mulder after Folbert van Alten-Allen, 1686



**Field-side façade of the Leopoldine Wing (Imperial Chancellery Wing)**

Johann August Corvinus after Salomon Kleiner, before 1725



**Imperial Forum**

Gottfried Semper, Carl von Hasenauer, 1869



**The Hofburg site as it stands today**

Aerial photograph, 2017

© Stefanie Grüssl / BHÖ



## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

---

Imperial Shop Vienna & Hofburg Info Center  
Hofburg, Heldenplatz  
A-1010 Vienna, Austria

## **OPENING HOURS**

---

Daily from 9 am to 6pm

**Guided tours of the Hofburg site available on request**

T +43 1 525 24 -2500

## **CONTACT**

---

Ruth Strondl, MAS  
Communication & Marketing Department  
KHM-Museumsverband  
Burgring 5, A-1010 Vienna, Austria  
T +43 1 525 24 -4024  
[ruth.strondl@khm.at](mailto:ruth.strondl@khm.at)  
[www.khm.at](http://www.khm.at)