

## 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 Libertsya.

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.

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## Zolochiv castle



The Zolochiv Castle is a masterpiece of defensive architecture. The town of Zolochiv is situated 60 km east from Lviv. The Zolochiv Castle was built in the first third of the 17th century as a defensive fortress. Over the centuries the castle served as a fortress, royal residence, prison and educational institution.

The history of the Zolochiv Castle is very interesting and rich in historical and romantic adventures. Nowadays the Zolochiv Castle is a museum and the department of the Lviv Art Gallery. The new castle at the place of old wooden castle was built in Zolochiv in



17th century. It was designed by Italian architect. Its original purpose was a defensive fortress.

In the castle's courtyard there are two palaces. The biggest of them is called the Grand Palace. The Chinese Palace is situated opposite the tower. The Chinese Palace of the Zolochiv Castle is a unique monument of architecture. There are only three Chinese Palaces in Europe and one of them tourists may admire in Zolochiv. The Chinese palace was renewed in 2004 and opened for tourists.



The Zolochiv Castle is also a part of the "Golden Horseshoe", a ring of three castles in Olesko, Zolochiv and Pidhirtsi. It is a very popular tourist route. This trip includes visits to three medieval castles, each of which is similar to the previous one.

Every year thousands of tourists from different countries travel this route. The Zolochiv Castle attracts tourists by the beauty of its medieval architecture and by its art treasures. Certainly, the Zolochiv Castle is an architectural jewel and the pride of the Western Ukraine.



It was 350 years ago: France during the time of the musketeers and Cardinal Richelieu. Young Marie Casimire Louise de la Grange d'Arquien, daughter of the captain of the royal guard and of the King's governess, journeyed east to a remote country. She had no idea that Zolochiv castle (located in the current-day Lviv region) would be her refuge for many years, a castle proudly boasting modern Ukraine's only Chinese Palace.

The girl was a lady-in-waiting for the French princess Ludwika Maria Gonzaga de Nevers, the bride of Polish King Wladislaw IV Vasa. Marie - or "*Marysenka*" (as she was known in Polish) did not expect that in time Poland's throne would be hers along with a bevy of legends and stories surrounding the most romantic love-story in central Europe.



It happened in 1656. It was love at first sight between this French beauty and Jan III Sobieski (King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1674 to 1696). At the time Jan was 27 and Maria was 15. This flame of love continued into their old age. Jan III Sobieski and Marie Casimire married in 1665. The future would bring 30 years together, 13 children out of which only 4 survived, wars against Turkey, Jan's coronation and his triumph in 1683 near Vienna, when his troops stopped the advance of the Ottoman Empire in Europe.



Malicious tongues would whisper, "Maria rules Jan, and Jan rules Poland". They did not like the queen. She was a foreigner, not noble enough, and she drained the royal treasury. Even the fact that Louis the XIVth was her son Jacob's godfather did not improve her situation. The proud queen needed some sense of safety. For her retreat she chose one of their summer residences – a castle in Zolochiv which was the patrimony of Jan's father – Jacob Sobieski.



The castle had its secrets. The owner and his wife had separate rooms. Windows of the apartments faced the outer side of the fortress where there was a guard. One side had a back door that led to the treasury. There was also said to be an underground tunnel connecting the castle to the surrounding world.

The special pride of Zolochiv Castle were... its washrooms. Yes, common toilets, which were a great rarity at the time. And those of Zolochiv were made so skillfully that they have been studied even by modern specialists!



In the 1690s, Marie often vacationed in Zolochiv. This was when a Chinese palace appeared in the castle, something quite unusual for this region. Though researchers can not find actual features of Chinese architecture in this building, the imagination of the local craftsmen who had never visited China in their lives created a true architectural masterpiece.

This was yet another version of the fairy tale of Cinderella-Marie.

And the castle itself has become considerably more beautiful within recent years due to the efforts of the Lviv Art Gallery Director Mr. Boris Voznytskyi. In 2004, an exhibition of eastern art was opened here and now tea ceremonies and knights' tournaments are also held.

Near the castle gates there are several 10 tonnes giant stones brought from another castle in the Lviv region that was destroyed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Several lines in an unknown language are carved into the grey background, and above those lines there are two separate woven wreaths – thorn and poppy. Between the wreaths there is a small hole. They say that if you have a secret wish, you should put your finger into the hole and twist it quickly. If the wish is material, twist towards the thorn wreath. If you want a romantic adventure, twist towards the blooming wreath. If the wish does not come true, then sorry! it was not the right finger. All you can do is return to Zolochiv Castle one more time and try again...

They say that the ghost of Marie Casimire Sobieska roams the vaults of Zolochiv Castle. And recently a new guest from the afterworld has been reported: a Black Knight disturbs the castle's peace searching for something or someone in the Chinese Palace. Is it King Jan looking for his beloved Marie?

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