



STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

It was an idea of students of the Hranice Grammar School to open the tower of the Old Town Hall to the public as a lookout spot. They put it forward in 2006 as a part of their activity called Project Citizen whose purpose was to acquaint students with the concept that *“apart from representative democracy there is also participative democracy”*. As part of the project students needed to collect historical information, make an overview of similar towers in the Czech Republic which were open to the public, make a survey, work out a report from an excursion to the tower as well as a draft of the project budget. After that the students informed the Town Council about their project TOWN HALL STAIRWAY (ALMOST) TO HEAVEN, and the Council authorized financial means for the elaboration of a detailed project. The Town Hall Tower was open to public in 2009 as part of the project SIGHTSEEING IN THE URBAN CONSERVATION AREA OF HRANICE which was largely financed from EU funds.

HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

For centuries the Old Town Hall used to be the seat of Hranice self-administration (Mährisch Weisskirchen in German). There are several years written on the building which show its gradual formation – the Gothic Hall with a remarkable rib vaulting was finished in 1528, the Renaissance portal comes from 1544, and the tower was built in 1571. The overall look of the building was changed only later due to large construction works in 1869 and to the execution of historic-style conversion works on the facade in the beginning of the 20th century. Until the end of the 20th century burgomasters, mayors as well as National Committee’s chairmen were changing places in the Town Hall. In 1998 the Municipal Office moved into the Hranice Chateau and the reconstructed Town Hall building started to be used as the seat of the Town Museum and Gallery, Municipal Library, piano department of a Primary Art School and an Information Centre.

PORTAL AND OTHER MONUMENTS

The Renaissance portal from 1544 is the most valuable historic part of the Old Town Hall. On the portal there is, among others, a portrait of the then burgomaster Skřítek depicted with a Tailors Guild coat of arms and the wording *VERBUM DOMINI MANET IN ÆTERNUM (God’s word shall remain forever)*. * From Radniční street we can see a walled-in cannon ball on the facade of the building which was placed here as a reminder of the battles of the Thirty Years’ War. * The original tower clock from 1571 was made in the town of Opava, and the two clock bells were cast in Olomouc. While the bells still work today, the clock was replaced with a new machine in 1890. * The metal banner on the tower has the years 1571 and 1869 inscribed on it, however, it is only a reproduction from 1979. * During its repeated reconstructions historical documents were placed in the cupola of the Town Hall, in 1738 there were even the *“Holy relics of Mr. Pastor placed in this cupola so that God could protect this place from all evil”*.



The Hranice Old Town Hall Lookout Tower



HRANICE MUNICIPAL MUSEUM AND GALLERY

Hranice Municipal Museum was founded in 1905. Its expanding collections have been moved several times and between 1912 and 1921 they were housed also on the ground floor of the Old Town Hall. In 1963 the Museum became a part of Přerov Museum of Local History and Art. In 1994 a newly established organization called Hranice Municipal Museum and Gallery was established and it took over the original collections. The most interesting ones comprise a collection of old prints (the so-called Gallaš's Library) and a collection of Hranice faience from the turn of the 18th and 19th century. In 2001 the Museum moved into the premises of the Old Town Hall. Its Gothic Hall is used for historic exhibitions, and the showroom in the nearby synagogue serves for exhibitions of modern visual arts.

VIEW FROM THE TOWER

An art academy painter, Jan Pinkava (1846–1923), a native of Brno who graduated from the Vienna Art Academy, worked as a professor of drawing and calligraphy at the state German Grammar School in Hranice from 1873 till 1901. Apart from portraits and church paintings he created numerous watercolours in which he depicted Hranice beauty spots, interesting buildings as well as current events with almost documentary precision. For views from a height he often took advantage of the Lookout Tower, so it came naturally that his art works and collections, which were provided by the Municipal Museum and Gallery, were chosen for an exposition for the ascent to the tower. Thus we can compare how the town seen from the Town Hall tower changed over the last century.