



PASSAU  
Leben an drei Flüssen

# THE TOWN HALL BUILDINGS OF PASSAU

Paintings and Stained Glass Windows



PASSAU

THE CITY ON THREE RIVERS

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## The Council Chambers of the Town Hall

The Town Hall of Passau consists of one large Council Chamber (*Großer Rathausaal*) and one smaller Council Chamber (*Kleiner Rathausaal*). They are located in the Old Town Hall, and are accessible via a Gothic staircase dating from 1446.

## The Large Council Chamber

Following the the devastating Great Fires of 1662 and 1680, this hall was reconstructed with two naves and three flat casebays by the Italian master builders Carlo Lurago and Giovanni Battista Carlone. Their major influence on Passau's Italianate Baroque architecture is honoured by the fact that two picturesque streets near the Cathedral were named after them: the Luragasse and the Carlonegasse.

The Passau artist Ferdinand Wagner worked on the decoration of the hall between 1887 and 1890; his paintings show the town of Passau and various historical scenes. The two large oil paintings, "The Wedding of Emperor Leopold" (*Hochzeit Kaiser Leopolds*) and "The Entry of Kriemhild" (*Einzug der Kriemhild*) were completed in May 1892 and July 1893, respectively.



### The Wedding of Emperor Leopold

The painting on the east wall depicts the Emperor's Wedding.

Emperor Leopold was born in 1640, in Vienna. His father was Emperor Ferdinand III. Leopold was Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as King of Hungary, Bohemia, Croatia and Slovenia. The original plan was that he would enter the priesthood, but when his elder brother died, Leopold took his place as heir to the throne. He was married three times. Following the deaths of his first two wives, Leopold married Eleonora Magdalena von Pfalz-Neuburg in 1676. She bore him ten children and went on to survive him by 15 years.



### The Entry of Kriemhild

The painting on the west wall depicts an episode from the famous "Nibelungenlied" saga, which is believed to have originated in Passau. It is also known as the "State Painting." We see the Entry of Kriemhild to Passau, accompanied by her uncle, Bishop Pilgrim. Historical evidence suggests that the original author of the "Nibelungenlied" was, in fact, a member of the Court of the Passau bishop Wolfger von Erlau.



## Stained Glass Windows

Five of the windows were donations by individual citizens of Passau, while the sixth was a donation by the Town Council. The first five windows were designed in 1891, in collaboration with the donors, and according to the "Painting Plan for Five Stained Glass Windows."

Window 1: "Odoaker visits St Severin on route to Italy."

Window 2: "The people of Passau welcome the 9th Infantry Battalion upon their return to the Nikola barracks following the military campaign of 1870/1871."

Window 3: This window was sponsored by the Passau Hiking Association and depicts "Charity for Poor Schoolchildren" as well as "The Social Pleasures of Hiking."

Window 4: "Celebration of War" (1800-1809) in the setting of the "Innstadt" (on the banks of the River Inn) and the Mariahilf monastery.

Window 5: "Holy Saint Gisela enters the convent of Niedernburg."

Window 6: Not included in the original "Five Windows" plan: "Bavarian Prince Regent Luitpold visits Passau in 1887."

## Ceiling Design and Motifs

Six large ovals depict the virtues and qualities to be aspired to or practised in this hall, as follows:

**Faith** here we see a winged figure, hands raised heavenwards. A small angel gives him the Bible ("The Word of God") for study and edification purposes.

**Strength** armed with a mace and cast-off chains, she is flanked by a lion, symbolizing physical as well as spiritual strength.

**Victory** the laurel leaves and palm fronds symbolize victory; the eagle soars towards the sun and represents the lofty aspirations of the human spirit; the torches stand for spiritual enthusiasm.

**Loyalty** the dog and the ring as symbols of loyalty.

**Temperance** represented here by a lamb; the protective mantle held by the angels symbolizes Christian charity.

**Diligence** here represented by a beehive, a distaff and bowls of fruit.

## Dates in Roman Numerals in the Large Hall

MDCCLX (1860)	Inauguration of the railroad connecting Passau and Straubing.
MCCCLXVIII (1368)	Battle at the River Erlau: Prince Bishop Albrecht III von Winkel attempts to restore the old order.
MCCXCVIII (1298)	First recorded mention of the Town Council in the town archives; The Passau Revolt.
MDCCCIII (1803)	According to Hillerer, this was when secularisation took place. According to E. Egger, this was the year Passau became part of Bavaria.

## The Smaller Council Chamber

This smaller hall is used for multiple purposes. Among other things, it is where the plenary sessions of the Passau Council take place. It is also used for civil wedding ceremonies at the Register Office.

Occupying about 100 square metres, and connected to the larger hall on the south-facing side, its structure is somewhat simpler, forming an almost perfect square with a four-window axis. An arbor-like structure supported by four Tuscan pillars connects it to the main Chamber. Following the Great Fire of 1662, Carlo Lurago und Giovanni Battista Carlone rebuilt this hall in the Baroque style. It was in all likelihood painted completely in white at the time. The decorative elements we see today were painted by Ferdinard Wagner in the 19th century.



## Ceiling Paintings

Measuring 5.80 x 4.23 metres, the large ceiling decoration was first seen by the general public in 1888. The blonde woman in a golden robe is an allegorical representation of the town of Passau. The river Danube at her feet is portrayed as a rather plump woman; the River Inn as a muscleman with an uprooted tree, and the River Ilz as a dark-haired angel. To the left, we see Prince Bishop Wolfgang von Erlau, under whose regency the “Nibelungenlied“ saga was written. The other angels represent minor riverlets and streams flowing from the main rivers. St Stephen’s Cathedral can be seen in the background.

The panoramic-style large paintings on the sides are a homage to Maximilian Joseph following the re-affiliation of Passau to Bavaria. This painting dates from the Baroque era, while the gold-leaf work was first carried out in the 19th century, creating the impression of a golden carved wood ceiling. A very similar ceiling can be admired in all its splendour in the Doges Palace in Venice, which Ferdinard Wagner visited as part of his preparation for his work in Passau.

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