

About the "Big Amtshaus" in Hallstatt

# CONTENTS

<b>1. STARTING POINT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. BUILDING DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1. The Facades</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.2. The Structures of the Plans</b>	<b>3</b>
The Linear Measures	3
The Plans	3
<b>2.3. The Construction</b>	<b>4</b>
The Walls	4
The Ceilings	4
The Floors	4
The Chimneys	4
The Roof Truss	4
The Roofing	4
<b>2.4. The Historical Materials and Craftsmanship</b>	<b>4</b>
The Stone	4
The Wood	5
The Wood Roofing	5
<b>3. THE BUILDING HISTORY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.1. The Development of the "Amtshaus"</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.2. A Comparison with the "Amtshaus" of Ebensee</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.3. The Phase of Construction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.2. The Transformations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.3. Nowadays Condition</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. THE USE OF THE BUILDING</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.1. The Original Use of the Building</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.2. The Transformations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.3. Nowadays Use</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.4. Optional Uses</b>	<b>10</b>
The Economical Framework	10
Full Utilization Over the Whole Year	10
The Dwelling Use	10
The Official Cultural Use	10
The Accessibility for the Traffic	10
The "Big Amtshaus" as a Place of Research	10
The Demographic Changes	11
The Structural Suitability of the "Big Amtshaus"	11

The International Architectural Competition as an Exchange of Ideas	11
<b>5. ANMERKUNGEN</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. QUELLENVERZEICHNIS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>7. LITERATURVERZEICHNIS</b>	<b>13</b>

# 1. STARTING POINT

The "Big Amtshaus" in Hallstatt is not being used and more or less empty at the moment. With the decline of the salt production at the end of the 20. Century the building lost its original importance. The aim of this workshop is to develop new ideas, how a representative building of the Mid-18. Century might be incorporated again in the functional structure of the village.

## 2. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

### 2.1. The Facades

The "Big Amtshaus" is situated on a little hill at the southern border of Lahn. The monumental appearance of the building is emphasised by the borders that taper off in perspective. In order to structure the facade different levels of plaster and colourings are used. The plastered architectural elements are coloured in white and the zero level is coloured in so called Schönbrunn-yellow. Above the striped basement the upper stories are visually held together by wide colossal pilasters. The upper horizontal border is formed by a richly profiled ledge. A curved gable emphasises the axis of symmetry of the main facade. The edged windows are situated on fields of plaster that are slightly raised over the zero level. An impressive two-stories high Mansard roof emphasises the official character of the "Big Amtshaus".

### 2.2. The Structures of the Plans

#### The Linear Measures

The measures of the investigated original plans are Viennese foot and Viennese "Klafter". One Viennese foot corresponds to 0,98 foot and one Viennese "Klafter" to 1,93 yards.

#### The Plans

The object is constructed on a rectangle with a ratio of 1 : 1,3. The three stories are organised with the same principles. Each of the three stories is developed along a 12 feet or 3,57 meters wide corridor in the longitudinal axis of the building that is accessible at the ground floor level by two portals on each side. The former office rooms and apartment rooms with a ratio of 1 : 2, are connected with their shorter side to the central corridor. At the East side two of these narrow rooms have been united to a room in form of a square whose sides are 30 feet (8,9 metres) long.

The vertical connection by the staircase is situated directly behind the West facade. The official rooms and the lavatories are situated next to this vertical connection, whereas the apartments are at the East side of the building. The situation of the staircase makes the West portal the main entrance.

This solution will be understood in analysing the ensemble. The design creates an axis of orientation in direction to the Calvary, that is devised by the stairs coming up from the "Pfannhaus" or boiling house and meeting it perpendicularly. Thus the three main objects of the ensemble are connected by a circulation and orientation system in T-form.

## 2.3. The Construction

### **The Walls**

The walls in the ground floor are about 3 feet (0,9 metres) wide and made of snecked rubble walling combined with lime mortar and covered with lime plaster. The width of the walls decreases about 2 feet (0,6 metres) per storey.

### **The Ceilings**

North of the middle corridor and at the higher stories are built as floors of dwelled wooden beams or open floors. The rooms at the mountain side are formed as tunnel vaults.

### **The Floors**

Worth mentioning is the covering of the corridor in the ground floor, it is made of oversize carved lime stones. In general all the other floors have a wooden strip floor finish of wide soft-wood posts.

### **The Chimneys**

The chimneys that deserve most of the rooms are moved over the height and grouped together. Under the roof those two groups of chimneys form a monumental portal like gateway.

### **The Roof Truss**

The costly constructed roof truss over two stories has the form of a Mansard roof. The wooden beams are hewed by hand as it is visible on the traces.

### **The Roofing**

The roofing is made of split shingles of larch wood. This kind of roof corresponds to the original state of the building.

## 2.4. The Historical Materials and Craftsmanship

### **The Stone**

The excavations with the most recent findings in Hallstatt are Roman walls. They are traces of rising masonry, made of quarry stones of the Dachstein limestone, held together with lime mortar and plastered.

From the beginning of the Modern Times on, there was used besides the snecked rubble walling also ashlar stone walling. Especially in the official buildings this technique was used for the construction of stone facing. Until the middle of our century this kind of masonry was the cheapest way of construction and therefore widely used. The industrialisation of the production of bricks and the use of concrete in combination with a rising wage level superseded the technique of stone masonry.

The running of the so called "Sudpfanne" or boiling pan produced as a side product huge quantities of slacked lime. In the burning zone under the pan stood about 250 stone pillars that held the pan. The fire transformed the pillars to slacked lime, they lost their stability and had to be replaced frequently. The introduction of more resistant brick pillars took place at the beginning of the 18. Century.<sup>1</sup> Once those cylindrical bricks had become useless they were recycled as building material. They are an important indicator to date buildings. Masonry that contains this kind of cylindrical bricks can be classified for sure before 1721.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Wood**

Until the introduction of the coal firing, the productivity of the forestry was the main parameter for the output of salt. The forest did not only supply fire wood but also material for the building of utensils, boats and buildings for official and private use.<sup>3</sup>

The use of the forest was extraordinary so that they were rather sparsely-wooded at the end of the 16. Century because the reforestation has been ignored.<sup>4</sup> The restriction of the private use of wood offered a solution to the crisis. In order to supply enough wood for the salt production, the building of wooden houses was generally prohibited. This prohibition ceased to be in force in the Mid-18. Century.

### **The Wood Roofing**

Until today two different kinds of wood roofing are in use: shingle roofing and board roofing. The distinction can be made with the aid of their different manufacturing methods.

One of the most original ways of wood working is the splitting of the trunk in the longitudinal direction. "The work of the shingles maker remained unchanged until today. He looks for trees with good, fissile wood in a sheltered place and cuts them. The saw as a tool for cutting and splitting of the trunks has been used in the "Kammergut" since 1795/96,<sup>5</sup> before only the narrow bladed so called "chisel axe" was available.

The useable lower part of the trunk is decorticated, cut and divided into quarters. With the shingle knife the shingles are chopped radially or tangentially, the better side is cleaned and the shingles for the lower part of the roof near the eaves are treated separately.<sup>6</sup>

With the continuous productivity of the salt works and the rising need of wood in connection with the lack of reforestation, the wood began to run short and this provoked a change of the whole management of the salt work plant.

The first symptom was the lack of first class bough-less and therefore good fissile so called Kleutz-wood.<sup>7</sup> This quality of wood was not only needed for the production of shingles but also for the packaging to transport the salt, the so-called "Küferln"<sup>8</sup>. Already at the beginning of the 16. Century, a lack of this wood was to be remarked.<sup>9</sup>

As the main economical interest was the production of salt the obvious thing was to reserve the bough free Kleutz-wood for the salt packing. For the roofing the shingles had to be replaced by sawed boards. For these boards also low quality wood trunks could be used as raw material, because the technique of production allowed to cut wood with boughs without any loss.

Not only the subjects were ordered to use boards as roof material<sup>10</sup>, also official buildings were covered more and more often with boards.<sup>11</sup>

The development of the second half of the 19. Century showed how deeply the traditional shingle roofing was embedded in the anonymous architecture. As the demand for wood declined in the salt works, the shingle roofing again replaced the board roofing.<sup>12</sup>

## 3. THE BUILDING HISTORY

### 3.1. The Development of the "Amtshaus"

The big importance of the salt production for the nation as well as for the people becomes evident in the representative appearance of the "Amtshäuser", the administration buildings. The first "Amtshaus" was built during the construction of the saltworks. Only in a few cases, existing buildings owned by the landlord were converted and reused as administration buildings.

Besides the salt production the management of the saltworks also had to meet important official administration duties. During a long period, the "Amtshaus" was not only responsible for the administration of the saltworks, but was also the centre for the political and juridical administration for the population. For this reason the "Amtshaus" was usually situated in the centre of the village. There it remained even when the production plant was transferred outside the village. This physical separation is striking in Hall in Tyrol and in Aussee.

Despite some similarities between the several "Amtshäuser", no independent and clearly definable building type developed. The formal principles were mainly influenced by the formal expression of the time of construction and the condition of the respective site.

In general the offices were situated at the ground floor level, whereas the apartments for the higher officials were on the upper levels. An important part of the "Amtshaus" was the house chapel, that was either incorporated into the building or built as an independent construction nearby.

From the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century on, a movement towards the construction of representative buildings of an imposing appearance is visible. The "Big Amtshaus" of Hallstatt built in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century is situated on a small hill and decorated with a representative facade. The "Amtshaus" of Ischl that was constructed 90 years later, predominates the East side of a big park and has a regular facade.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2. A Comparison with the "Amtshaus" of Ebensee

The production plant of Ebensee built in 1608, was the most modern of its kind in the land of the Habsburgs, when the saltworks of Hallstatt were rebuilt in Lahn. It may be supposed that the plant of Ebensee served as a model for the design of the construction in Lahn.

The comparison of the "Big Amtshaus" in Hallstatt with the one in Ebensee that was constructed 150 years before, shows the transfer of a successful building concept. Like the object in Hallstatt the "Amtshaus" of Ebensee has a rectangular plan and three stories.

The implementation in the urban fabric is nearly the same. Situated on a mountain slope the building predominated the former production plant. An axis of orientation and circulation points at one side in the church's direction. The plan is not as clearly structured as the one in Hallstatt, but the development along the central axis is already visible in the second floor. An important horizontal ledge separates the ground floor from the two upper stories at the main facade. Quarry

stones embrace the corners of the building and a jutting out ledge in form of a fillet marks the transition to the hipped roof.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3. The Phase of Construction

During the conflagration of 1750 not only the salt production plant at the market was a victim of the fire. Apart from numerous other objects also the official administration building was completely destroyed.<sup>15</sup>

The regional administration in person of the Baron Sternbach, demanded generally the abandonment of the saltworks in Hallstatt and their transfer to Ebensee. But the so called "Hof-Banco-Deputation" that was the authority of the state financial administration decided the rebuilding of the saltworks in Hallstatt in 1751. Decisive for this decision was not only a consideration of national economy but also the minimisation of the loss of wood during the transport.

Because of the unfavourable topographic conditions in the market a new factory location in Lahn was chosen.

The transfer of the production plant revealed also the need of a new administration building. For management reasons it had to be near the new salt production building. Another parameter was to centralise the administration and their offices. This trend is also readable in the patterns of the plan of each storey.

The special importance of the religious practice required a church for the workforce. Therefore the choice of the site for the "Big Amtshaus" was influenced a lot by the Calvary buildings constructed in 1700 and 1710.<sup>16</sup>

The "Big Amtshaus" had no restroom in the original building plans. One was obliged to use an entire room per storey for this use, which "smelled rather badly in summer".<sup>17</sup> The oldest plan we know is the one that shows the extension of the lavatory in 1770. From that date on we find in a lot of plans for official buildings sanitary facilities, so-called "Privets". It is conceivable that this fault in the planning introduced the development of the "Privets"<sup>18</sup> in the area. The extension of the lavatory at the west side of the building was finally constructed in 1807. Since then the building was used in the same way so that no major constructive changes were necessary.

The Austrian saltworks brought in good returns during the 19. Century and in the first third of the 20. Century. That's why there was the financial basis to keep the company's buildings in good condition having them repaired by the workers of the company.

After the shut-down of the salt production in Hallstatt in 1943 and the concentration of the administrative body in Bad Ischl, there was no internal company use for the "Big Amtshaus". In 1944 the former offices were transformed to company's apartments but the fabric structure was not altered essentially.

## 3.2. The Transformations

The "Big Amtshaus" is preserved on a large scale in its original fabric structure. Most of the structural changes are works of preservation, in the course of which the original construction was not always restored. For example the monolithical lime stone stairs survived only between the second storey and the attic. Also the implementation of the lattice windows does not correspond to the original state that can be seen on the plan of the architect Panzenberger.<sup>19</sup> Originally there were in each storey two large square rooms at the East side of the building. They were vaulted at the ground floor level and this vault posed on a pillar in the centre of the room.

## 3.3. Nowadays Condition

Lacking maintenance and little use of the building over the last years are already visible at the outer skin and first building damages become apparent. An immediate repair of the roofing would be necessary.

The fact that there are only three apartments in use and therefore the larger part of the building is not heated, damages on the long term the fabric structure of the "Big Amtshaus". The high humidity during the winter time in Hallstatt, the situation on a slope and the unfavourable exposure of the site to the sun results in a soaked masonry.

A protection of the "Big Amtshaus" on the long term will only be possible, if a lasting use for the object will be found.

# 4. THE USE OF THE BUILDING

## 4.1. The Original Use of the Building

In the original concept the building was planned for a mixed use. In the year 1860 27% (518 m<sup>2</sup>) of the net total surface of 1922 m<sup>2</sup><sup>20</sup> were used for the circulation. 20% (288 m<sup>2</sup>) of the remaining 1404m<sup>2</sup> were used as offices, annexes included, and 80% (1116 m<sup>2</sup>) as apartments for the higher officials.

## 4.2. The Transformations

After the transformation of 1944 the "Big Amtshaus" served exclusively as a multiple dwelling. The former offices were only partially suitable for this kind of use. Because of their big heights, the rooms can only be heated insufficiently with the available heaters. The plans and the illumination of the units are not favourable. In the decades to follow more and more apartments were abandoned.

## 4.3. Nowadays Use

At the moment three apartments are still occupied and the rest of the building is empty.

## 4.4. Optional Uses

### **The Economical Framework**

Hallstatt is a pure summer tourist resort, half of the over-night stays are registered in the months of July and August. Because of the topographical situation tourism in winter time is not possible. The low temperature of the water in combination with regular bad weather conditions also cause problems in summer.

Most of the businesses have a lot of problems of capacity out of the two months of peak season. Even the planned investments from the Austrian Saltworks Company (ÖSAG/DAG) can not resolve the structural problems.

### **Full Utilization Over the Whole Year**

To support this trend at least partially, an investment into the "Big Amtshaus" should principally aim at a use during the entire year and the creation of permanent employment.

### **The Dwelling Use**

Apart from the north-western corner that is rather well illuminated, the building does not meet the modern demand for habitations.

### **The Official Cultural Use**

The character of the "Big Amtshaus" suggests an official cultural use of the object. The classification of Hallstatt as a World Heritage could initiate a lasting use and therefore a lasting preservation of the "Big Amtshaus".

### **The Accessibility for the Traffic**

The object is situated immediately above the national road of Hallstatt and there is about 15 m of difference in height to the ground level of the building. The object is accessible by car. Directly beneath the building there is a parking place for 60 cars.

### **The "Big Amtshaus" as a Place of Research**

A national important research centre should be situated in a village whose name designated a European cultural era and which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

The continuity of the mining activity and the settlement that has been existing since the Bronze Ages predestines Hallstatt to be the location of research institutions. Possible objects of research could be classical archaeology, archaeology of the Middle Ages and industrial archaeology.

Numerous archaeologically not explored areas in the villages offer a lot of possibilities for field exercises and educational excavations on the long term. The findings should be conserved in situ, investigated scientifically and made accessible to the public.

### **The Demographic Changes**

The setting up of this research centre, and the shifting from the mass tourism to a tourism of science and congresses will without any doubt alter the existing economical structure and the structure of the population. Restaurants with a higher quality could count on an increased demand off season.

The non-seasonal jobs at the research centre would demand for the most part higher qualifications that are missing at the local job market. Immigration and a higher total population could be expected.

### **The Structural Suitability of the "Big Amtshaus"**

The structure of the floor plan of the "Big Amtshaus" which is the one of a typical administrative building is best suitable for an institute's building. The several offices are easily accessible by the large floor in the central axis. This floors could also be used as semi-public zones for internal communication spaces. As the floors are directly superposed in all three stories, they could easily be connected by a lift next to the existing staircase.

The poorly illuminated areas at the hill side of the ground floor level and the first floor level could be used as depositories. It could be possible to dry the masonry with the newly developed method of socle heating and to make the rooms the right temperature for the stocking of records. In the big two storey high attic a lecture room as well as seminar rooms and reading rooms could be installed.

### **The International Architectural Competition as an Exchange of Ideas**

After the exact definition of the project requirements, international architects should be invited for an architectural competition in order to collect new ideas and give a new impetus to the project. In this way the building could express a synthesis of an architectural form and the demands of an international research centre.

## 5. ANMERKUNGEN

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- <sup>3</sup>KOLLER, Engelbert, Die Holztrift im Salzkammergut, Linz 1954, S. 6.
- <sup>4</sup>SCHRAML, Carl, Das oberösterreichische Salinenwesen vom Beginne des 16. bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts, Wien 1932, S. 372.
- <sup>5</sup>KOLLER, Engelbert, Die Holztrift im Salzkammergut, Linz 1954, S. 7.
- <sup>6</sup>STADLER, Franz, Steirische Almsiedlungen im Dachsteingebiet, Sonderdruck aus der Schriftenreihe des Landschaftsmuseums Schloß Trautenfels am Steiermärkischen Landesmuseum Joanneum, Band 2, Bauen-Wohnen-Gestalten, Trautenfels 1984, S. 79f.
- <sup>7</sup>KOLLER, Engelbert, Die Holztrift im Salzkammergut, Linz 1954, S. 4.
- <sup>8</sup>TREFFER, Günter, Weißes Gold. 3000 Jahre Salz in Österreich, Wien - München - Zürich - New York 1981, S. 144.
- <sup>9</sup>Hofkammerarchiv Wien, Obderensisches Salzkammer Gut, Fonds 6, Salinen zu Hallstatt, rote Nummer 47, Handschriften aus den Jahren 1494 - 1710, Ausseeischß salltzhalben: Vnndericht auch betrefen aufrichtung ainer newen Salltz Pfannen zu Hallstat, fol. 28<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>10</sup>KOLLER, Engelbert, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bauwesens im Salzkammergut, in: Schriftenreihe des Institutes für Landeskunde von Oberösterreich, Nr. 20 (1968), S. 27.
- <sup>11</sup>Hofkammerarchiv Wien, Obderensisches Salzkammer Gut, Fonds 6, Salinen zu Hallstatt, rote Nummer 47, Handschriften aus den Jahren 1494 - 1710, Inventar des Hallamts und Siedens zu Hallstatt, 1526, fol. 82<sup>r</sup> u. fol. 79<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>12</sup>KOLLER, Engelbert, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bauwesens im Salzkammergut, in: Schriftenreihe des Institutes für Landeskunde von Oberösterreich, Nr. 20 (1968), S. 27f.
- <sup>13</sup>ERICH, Rudolf, Die Baudenkmäler des Salinenwesens in Österreich, Dissertation TH, Wien 1972, S. 25ff.
- <sup>14</sup>ERICH, Rudolf, Die Baudenkmäler des Salinenwesens in Österreich, Dissertation TH, Wien 1972, S. 99.
- <sup>15</sup>Hofkammerarchiv Wien, Altes Bancale, rote Nummer 286, 23. Jan. 1751: Commissions Relation dieses hohen Mittels Hoff Raths Hr. v. Quiex die zu Haalstatt abgebrunnenen Sallz Pfannen betr., fol. 56<sup>r</sup>.
- <sup>16</sup>Hofkammerarchiv Wien, Altes Bancale, rote Nummer 286, 23. Jan. 1751: Commissions Relation dieses hohen Mittels Hoff Raths Hr. v. Quiex die zu Haalstatt abgebrunnenen Sallz Pfannen betr., fol. 65<sup>v</sup> u. 66<sup>r</sup>.
- <sup>17</sup>SCHRAML, Carl, Das oberösterreichische Salinenwesen von 1750 bis zur Zeit nach den Franzosenkriegen, Wien 1934, S. 101f.
- <sup>18</sup>Hofkammerarchiv Wien, Gmundner Bancale, rot 988, fol. 453, Plan: Ra 603/ 2.
- <sup>19</sup>Hofkammerarchiv Wien, Grund Ris und Faciata, Des Hofschreiber Amt Haalstätterischen Amtshaus, Welhes an Einigen Zimmern und Stiegen in Hinkunft solle abgeändert werden, Plan Ra 598, Panzenberger, Joh. Georg 1770.
- <sup>20</sup>Sammlung Unterberger Hallstatt, K. K. Salinen-Verwaltungs-Gebaeude, Plan im Maßsatb 1:288 der k.k. Salinenverwaltung Hallstatt, 16. 2. 1860.

## 6. QUELLENVERZEICHNIS

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