

Szidónia Manor House: The Castle for Hungarian Aristocracy

Szidónia Castle in West Hungary dates back to the 16th century when it was built as a single storey Nagyerdő or hunting lodge for the Felsőbüki Nagy. The castle was the centre piece of the Felsőbüki Nagy's 3000 hectare woodland estate, which included 25 houses and 5 farms.



The castle was rebuilt in about 1750 in the Romantic or Neo-Classical style by the reformer Pál Felsőbüki Nagy. The new building was U-shaped and encircled by 8 hectares of leisure grounds and parkland. After the death of Pál Felsőbüki Nagy his son Josef inherited the castle. Josef was succeeded by his only child, a daughter named Juliana and when she died without children, the castle passed to her husband, Miksa Ürményi.

The Ürményi were an ancient and respected Hungarian family. The Szechenyi family had lands nearby and Count István Széchenyi was a regular visitor to the castle. Known to the posterity as the "Greatest Hungarian", Count Széchenyi was a gifted nationalist great politician who emerged as a major reformer during the 1848–49 war of independence and major figure of the reform age.



Miksa Ürményi's children sold the castle in the late 19th century to Antal Bauer, a famous and prosperous Austrian farmer. Bauer then moved from Waydhofen (Austria) to Shopron where he owned a large brewery in Shopron.

His family only used the castle in summer and weekends. Antal Bauer died in 1893 and the castle passed to his son Mihály, who was named Baron Röjtöki by the emperor Franz Josef. In 1910 it was purchased by the German Baron Gusztáv Berg, a friend of the German industrial tycoon Thyssen, who thoroughly renovated and enlarged the castle with the assistance of the architect Mayer. In 1913, Baron

Berg's close friend, the German industrial magnate Thyssen, presented the picturesque stone bridge that can be admired there to this day.

By 1926 it belonged to the Vatican's special envoy Verseggy Nagy who carried out large-scale refurbishing of the property. He added the outdoor bath designed by Hajós Alfréd, the "Dutch Garden", the famous Japanese House" and the house chapel which held a number of pieces of fine art, including two wooden statues now housed in the Museum of Schopron. The castle ballroom still contains furniture once owned by King Ludwig.



After Verseggy's death, his daughter Elisabeth Janssen inherited the castle and entertained many influential people such as the Eszterhazy, Batthyány, Széchenyi and Pálffy families. Elisabeth Janssen died in 1934 and was buried in the park.

Verseggy married a Countess Zichy (from another well-known Hungarian family of Hungary) but, when the Communists invaded, they had to flee the estate with their two children. They settled in a discreet and modest farmhouse until 1956 when, following the Revolution, they relocated to Germany.

Szidónia Castle Hotel opened its doors in its current form in December 1999. In 2005, two of the elderly Zichy ladies returned to the castle for a long weekend to experience the Szidónia Castle Hotel wellness experience. It was a delightful gathering – a "fusion" of past, present and future – presided over by the new owner, Ms Martha Derry, whose love for the castle has made this terrific hotel possible.



<http://www.szidonia.hu>

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