

## History of Karpniki Castle

The origins of Karpniki Castle are shrouded in mystery and legend. One of them claims that the Castle was erected by the Knights Templar in 1160. The fact that the Knights Templar used to build castles or fortified manor houses on a square plan, surrounded by the walls with small towers, bears testimony to that. Moreover, those buildings were surrounded by moats and artificial reservoirs. The mystery to it all is added by the information that in the 19th century the Countess von Reden, from nearby Bukowiec, received from Karpniki owners a well for her park. It was called The Knights Templar Well, which once had stood in the Castle's courtyard.



What is certain is that the Castle many times changed its owners through the ages and it belonged to many distinguished Silesian families, e.g. Schaffgotsch and Zedlitz. It was administered even by Cistercian monks living in the nearby Krzeszów Abbey. Under the present 19th century Neo-Gothic decorative cover, a Renaissance residence, constructed on the initiative of the von Kanitz family at the turn of the 17th century, is still clearly visible. At that time the Castle took a shape of a square with a tower and the inner courtyard. A wooden drawbridge was replaced by the stone bridge whose form is still recognizable. At both sides of the entrance, rooms with pointed arches decorated with stucco were erected. In the room on the right side of the entrance gate one can admire Renaissance decorations: rosettes, stars, masks with human features, which in their classical outline reveal their Italian origin.

The Renaissance alterations to the Castle were finished in 1603, as indicated by the inscription on the preserved portal, built into the outer wall of the moat. The inscription says that the construction of Karpniki Castle was started by paternal uncle Friedrich von Kanitz, and finished by father Elias. Christoph Friedrich took care of the decorations, the moat, the walls, the renovation of the tower and expansion of the Castle. In 1993 an act of vandalism took place and the thieves removed the Renaissance portal, took it to pieces and prepared to take it away. Luckily, the intervention came just in time, the portal was rescued and moved into a safe place. After a careful renovation it returned to its rightful place.

In 1822 Karpniki property was purchased by the brother of the King of Prussia, Prince Wilhelm and his wife the Duchess Marianne. Under the rule of the royal Hohenzollern family Karpniki Castle experienced true prosperity, and Jelenia Góra Valley became famous throughout Europe. Straight after the purchase of the property, the first renovation works took place. Their aim was to adapt the Castle for the Prince's family needs. On one side of the courtyard, at the first floor level, a gallery in Neo-Gothic style was erected, thus enabling separate use of enfiladed rooms. Subsequent alterations were made in the forties of the 19th century and gave the building a Neo-Gothic look. The conversion project is attributed to the architect of the royal family K. F. Schinkel. It was his idea to unify the appearance of the castle, to set equal heights of the buildings and to add crenellations looking like the top of a medieval castle. The Castle is a three-storey building with a quadrilateral plan around an interior courtyard. On the front facade, over a Neo-Gothic pointed arch, there is a bay window finished with battlements. The building works were supervised by Stüler, a prominent apprentice to Schinkel, who carried out conversion works of the royal palace in nearby Mysłakowice. Prince Wilhelm, who turned out to be a sketch artist himself, directly influenced the architectural projects.



The prince couple used to stay with pleasure in Karpniki, where they could enjoy idyllic life free from court etiquette. The dreams about closeness to nature in a rural scenery could come true at last. Prince Wilhelm with Princess Marianne and their four children used to spend summer here and their stay often lasted even until December. The children grew up on the Castle's premises. In 1842 in the church in Karpniki, in the royal couple's and the heir to the throne prince Maximilian of Bavaria's presence, the younger sister Maria's confirmation ceremony took place. That same year Maria married the prince, and in 1848 she became the Queen of Bavaria.

It was in Karpniki property where the royal Hohenzollern family's foray into the Jelenia Góra Valley started. The King Friedrich Wilhelm III was a frequent guest to his brother's property in Karpniki. Remaining under the spell of the surrounding area, the king bought a palace in 1832 in nearby Mysłakowice. Later he connected it to Karpniki Castle by the Royal Route, romantically running through the close-by picturesque meadows and hills covered with forest. Another residence which has become Hohenzollerns' property is the Wojanów palace which the king bought in 1839 and gave as a present to his daughter Luise.

The Hohenzollerns willingly spent their time in their summer residences at the foot of the Karkonosze mountains, and Karpniki Castle became the centre of social life in the Jelenia Góra Valley. The balls, meetings and parties were organised for participating monarchs and aristocrats from all over Europe, as well as for people of art and culture. Among the prominent guests were the Tsar Nicolas I and his wife Alexandra Feodorovna, the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III, the Emperor Wilhelm I, the Radziwiłłs and, among others, an outstanding scientist Alexander von Humboldt. At the invitation of King Friedrich Wilhelm III, a great artist and an opera diva Henriette Sontag came to Karpniki in June 1830. During her performances her sparkling voice charmed everyone present. It was in Karpniki that Henriette Sontag met Prince Antoni Radziwiłł, thanks to whom she met the composer Fryderyk Chopin, during her concerts in Warsaw. Her performances in Karpniki appealed so much to the Tsarina of Russia that the singer later performed at the court in St. Petersburg. The soprano started teaching singing to Adini, the Tsar couple's youngest daughter.

Karpniki Castle also witnessed the romance of the young Prince Wilhelm, the son of Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III, who later became Emperor Wilhelm I, and Princess Eliza Radziwiłł from the nearby palace in Ciszycza. Their romance was widely commented by the entire European aristocracy. Eliza and Wilhelm had known each other since their childhood, but their love blossomed later and in the Karpniki Castle they could enjoy each other's presence in a romantic scenery. Initially their love was welcomed by both families, but the king had other plans for his son.

In 1829 Wilhelm was persuaded to marry Princess Augusta von Sachsen-Weimar, who was his equal. Plunged into despair, Eliza died five years later but Wilhelm never forgot the love of his youth and kept a miniature portrait of Eliza on his desk until the end of his days.

In 1938, a movie „Preußenliebe” was made, based on this love story. Taking motion pictures took many weeks and some of the film shootings took place in Karpniki. Lida Baarowa played the role of Princess Eliza, and Willy Fritsch played Prince Wilhelm. The film was very popular, however, it was prohibited from public screening by the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, who was in a close relationship with the lead actor. The romance was widely commented and nearly threatened Goebbels's career. Baarowa's name was henceforth not allowed to appear in public. After the war, the movie could be watched, under the new title „Liebeslegende”, in every major cinema in Germany.

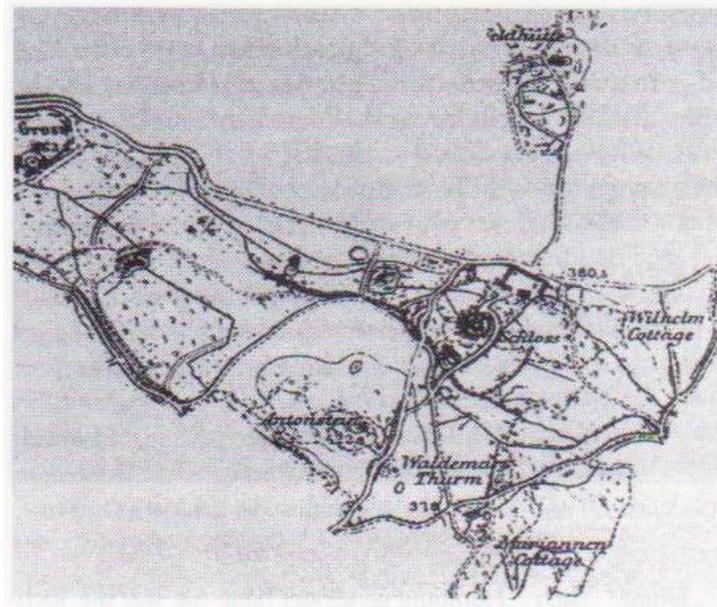
A landscape park surrounding Karpniki property was founded by the Hohenzollern family in the 19th century. Well-groomed ornamental areas, created by the most distinguished gardeners, have been integrated into a naturally formed landscape.

The royal landscape architect Lenné combined in one the park in Karpniki with nearby estates, creating a coherent parkland called the Silesian Elysium.

Karpniki Park was embellished in various ways. In accordance with the spirit of the era, it was decorated with artificial ruins, sculptures, overlooks, as well as romantic buildings and pavilions with alleyways running between them.

Near the main entrance, there once stood a marble bench with portraits of the ducal couple and their sons Adalbert and Waldemar.

Near the bridge today you can still admire Napoleon's stone. Legend has it that the stone is a fragment of a block of rock, from St Helena Island, on which Napoleon liked to sit.



Marianne`s Cottage, called the tea room, and Wilhelm`s Cottage were some of the most interesting attractions of the parkland setting. Here the ducal couple could find a moment of relaxation and immerse themselves in reading with pleasure. The garden structures were also used to entertain guests in a casual and less formal atmosphere. One could get into Marianne`s Cottage through the Romanesque portal, built into a ruin designed for the parkland. This portal, originally part of a medieval church, was brought from Rhineland to Karpniki by Prince Wilhelm, who was the incumbent of the post of the General Governor of Rhineland.

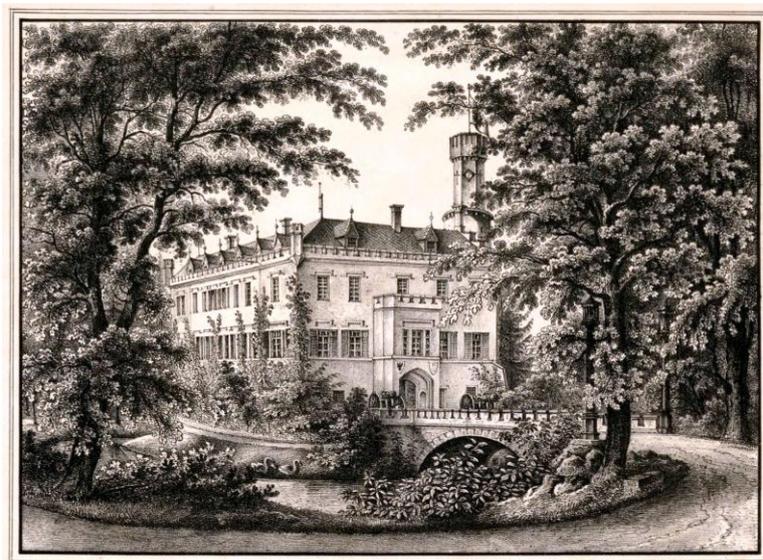


A tourist shelter Szwajcarka (Schweizerhaus) once stood within the vast parkland area. This wooden building was erected as a hunting lodge in the Sokole Hills by Prince Wilhelm in 1823. At the present time, it is outside the castle park, but it remains one of the most attractive spots in the area. It is interesting that through Maria, the ducal couple`s daughter, Szwajcarka in Karpniki has its Bavarian copy. Maria`s intense longing for Karpniki played an important role here. It was for her – later Queen of Bavaria – to commemorate the happy moments of childhood and youth, spent in Karpniki, that around 1850 her husband Maximilian II the King of Bavaria ordered to build Szwajcarka`s copy in Schwangau (now Berggasthaus Bleckenau). At a later time the Alpine Szwajcarka served as the hunting lodge belonging to Queen Maria`s son Ludwig II, who became famous as the builder of Neuschwanstein Castle and went down in history as “Mad King Ludwig”.

At the end of the forties of the 19th century, on both sides of the entrance to the castle, there stood two cannons, which Prince Waldemar, the son of Marianne and Wilhelm, had brought from India. He received them as a gift from Queen Victoria, who appreciated his contribution while fighting for the British Army.

His travel diary was published in print, and Alexander von Humboldt, mentioned earlier, wrote the introduction. From his expedition to India, Prince Waldemar brought souvenirs, arms and works of art which enriched Karpniki Castle décor. There was a related attraction with the Prince's name – the Waldemar Tower, decorated with battlements. From the tower one could admire a stunning view over the Karkonosze Mountains.

After Prince Wilhelm's death in 1851 (Princess Marianne died in 1846) the property passed into the hands of their older daughter Elisabeth, who was Prince Karl von Hessen's wife from 1836. The estate remained the House of Hesse's private property until 1945. Its last owner was Prince Ludwig von Hessen und bei Rhein, the grandson of Princess Elisabeth and the great-grandson of Princess Marianne and Prince Wilhelm. At those times the property was not frequently visited. The visitors used to come during the summer, in the autumn hunting events were organized, and in the remaining part of the year it served as a museum. For a small fee, visitors could see elegant first floor and see the memorabilia of the royal Hohenzollern family, furniture, paintings and works of art.



During World War II, the castle was one of the places in which Günther Grundmann, a district of Lower Silesia heritage protection officer, founded a museum. It was also here that, in fear of bombardment, the last owner of Karpniki Castle, Prince Ludwig von Hessen und bei Rhein, moved the collections of art from Darmstadt.

Among other works of art there was also a 16th century painting „Darmstadt Madonna” by Hans Holbein the Younger.

From January 1945 the works of art were moved deep into Germany and hidden from the approaching Soviet Army. Transport of the collection was co-ordinated by Grundmann and Count Solms-Laubach, who in 1943 dismantled the Amber Room in Tsarskoye Selo.

After WWII from February 1946 till 1949 the People`s University had its seat in the Castle. Then the building remained empty for a few years. In 1956 a Care Home for Children opened here. The first post-war repair works took place only in 1962, among other things, the roof was renovated. The Castle was supposed to serve as a holiday camp, but in 1973 its condition was so bad that the inhabitants had to leave. In the following years a few attempts to find a purpose for the building were made, but they all failed. The Castle repeatedly changed its owners and, in spite of many repair and protection works, it gradually fell into ruin.

Karpniki Castle is the only residence in The Valley of Palaces and Gardens, which is surrounded by a moat.

In 2009 the Castle with the park and the surrounding land were bought by a development company, whose aim was to renovate the Castle and to restore it to its former glory. The idea for the project and the purchase of Karpniki Castle was born from the passion of the present owner, who is a lover of architecture. Antique furniture, which he collected over the years, have found their place in the castle. Spectacular renovation, carried out in the years 2010-2014, restored the castle`s former splendour and prepared the building for the new role of a hotel and restaurant. Thanks to the owner`s great respect to the castle`s historical substance, it has retained the unique atmosphere of the historic site. Karpniki Castle has everything that modern hotel facilities do not have at their disposal and what cannot be created today: authenticity, an aura of mystery and unique character.

Historic rooms were renovated with particular attention to detail. Many Renaissance elements were preserved, including window bands on the ground floor, some door bands, stucco in the room next to the front gate and fragments of polychromy.

In many rooms, available to hotel guests, there are 19th century features, such as a bookcase from 1825, which decorate the library, wood panelling, antique parquet floors and two fireplaces made of marble from nearby Wojcieszów. It should be emphasized that Wojcieszów marble was used in many Prussian palaces, among others, at Sanssouci Palace. During the revitalization process, the patina of the past was combined with technological achievements of the 21st century and ecological solutions.

Karpniki Castle is heated with thermal water from a 2 km deep borehole. Ecologically, healthy, with respect for the environment. Thermal water sourced in the area adjacent to the castle is of excellent quality. At the moment, each hotel bathroom is supplied with water from the deep ground, and there are plans to build luxurious baths next to the castle. In the near future the guests will be able to enjoy a swim in the hot springs and a wide range of wellness treatments.

Karpniki Castle is a perfect place for family meetings, events and celebrations.

Extensive green areas and hilly land create many opportunities for active leisure. Comfortably and stylishly designed rooms and suites provide the guests with a unique experience during their stay.

In the plans for the land development there is the only heliport in the local area, which will provide a communication alternative for our guests and clients.

The castle`s location at the crossroads of three countries (Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic) provides an ideal base to explore the region, famous for its numerous monuments of the multicultural history.



ZAMEK KARPNIKI

**Zamek Karpniki**  
**ul. Łąkowa 1**  
**58-533 Karpniki**

**www.zamekkarpniki.pl**  
**tel. 757122140**  
**info@zamekkarpniki.pl**