

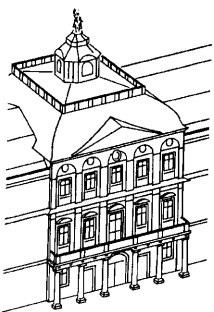
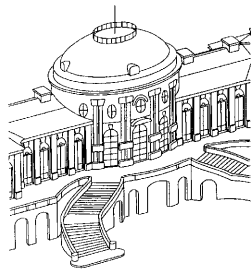
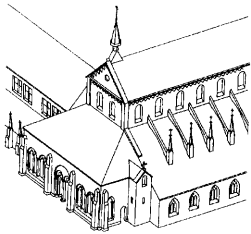
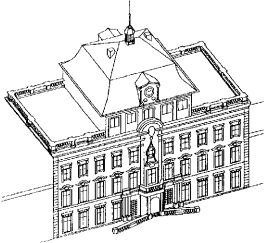
Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg

Medienservice

Heidelberg Castle

Texts to the Permanent Exhibition

Middle Ages – Heidelberg Castle And The Palatinate At The Rhine
Until The Times Of Reformation



I. From the Office of Count Palatine to Imperial Principality
Palatinate history originates with the office of the count palatine (Pfalzgraf). In the High Middle Ages the holder of this eminent position was in charge of law and order in the imperial court and represented the king in judicial proceedings. These responsibilities were exercised primarily at the most important Kaiserpfalz or imperial castle (of the peripatetic ruler and his court) in Aachen. As appanage, the count palatine was ceded lands immediately surrounding the city as well as along the Rhine and granted regalian rights. He was first designated "rheinischer Pfalzgraf" or count Palatine of the Rhine in 1131. During the twelfth century, the concentration of land-holdings shifted from the Lower Rhine and the Mosel to the Middle and Upper Rhine, especially after Emperor Frederick I bestowed the Pfalzgrafenwürde or dignity of the count Palatine upon his half-brother Conrad of Hohenstaufen. The office became hereditary and in 1214 Bavarian Duke Louis of Wittelsbach succeeded to the post. He was prince of the Reich or Holy Roman Empire and his son, Otto II., was betrothed to Conrad's granddaughter, Agnes.

Henceforth until 1803, the Pfalzgrafschaft bei Rhein or Palatinate lands of the count on the Rhine remained in the hands of the Wittelsbach dynasty. What had once simply designated the duties to be discharged within the royal court now designated a Reichsfürstentum or principality. Initially the focus of its activity was found in Bacharach and Alzey. In the twelfth century, Heidelberg was conjoined with the territory and became a subsequent hub. Beneath the older castle on the Molkenkur (today a station on the Königsstuhl for Heidelberg's cable car) of which no trace remains today was built a newer and more spacious castle complex on the Jette Hill (Jettenbühl), that on which you stand today. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, a methodically laid out city came into being in the valley below.

Medienservice der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg
Internet: www.schloesser-und-gaerten.de



The land's owner, the Bishop of Worms, enfeoffed the Count Palatine, that is to say, invested the count with a feudal estate. Because of the relatively late attempt by the counts Palatine to establish a centre of authority on the lower Neckar, they encountered opposition from rival powers and were unable to create a contiguous territory; taken as a whole, the size of their territory was only moderate.

Nevertheless the overall standing of the counts palatine was comparable to that of a duke, thanks to the dignity of the Count Palatine, which consistently outranked that of the Bavarian dignity of duke in the formal hierarchy of titles or *Titulatur*. The lands of the Count Palatine were subsequently subsumed into those of the Bavarian duke's for three generations and later specifically into those belonging to the lineage residing in Munich after the duchy was partitioned in 1255. Although the counts Palatine spent the majority of their time in Bavaria, they were nonetheless able to successfully fortify and enlarge their Rhenish principality. This was also thanks to their political allegiance to the kingship. Numerous intermarriages attest to this: Since the middle of the thirteenth century the count Palatines were constantly related by marriage to the king over five generations, at times also with foreign dynasties.

II. The Rhenish Counts Palatine as Prince Electors

Drafted over the course of two imperial diets or Reichstage, the so-called Golden Bull of 1356, [an edict with a golden seal which constituted the legal framework of the empire] accorded the count Palatine de jure important rights to act on behalf of the king, some of which he had long since been exercising. It would have been possible, had the need ever arisen, for him to sit in judgment over the king in court. Likewise, he could be called upon to act as judge in the case of the king's prosecution of a prince.

These royal prerogatives attest to the early activities Rhenish counts palatine as deputy imperial judges as well as to their distinctive judicial roles in Franconia and Lotharingia. Even in the thirteenth century, the count Palatine was given full proxy powers should the throne be vacant or the king be sojourning in Italy. This Reichsvikariat or imperial vicariate was also accorded the count Palatinate in the Golden Bull. However, it was regionally restricted to the lands on the Rhine, in Swabia and to the entire area covered by Franconian law. In the northern and eastern parts of the empire, the duke of Saxony was bestowed with full powers of proxy.

Indubitably, the count Palatine was given a prominent role in the imperial election.

Even prior to 1200, he and the three Rhenish archbishops were among those viewed as possessing influential electoral votes. In the election of Rudolf of Habsburg in 1273, the count Palatine was one of the seven electoral Princes, a council of seven electors of the emperor which came to constitute the electoral college and whose number remained limited. A justification for this development is proffered by the Rechtsbuch des Sachsenspiegel of 1230, a codification of Saxon law: Of the lay prince-electors, the count Palatine of the Rhine was the pre-eminent elector due to his designation as Truchseß or arch seneschal, the most important of the four high-ranking officials at the court.

The decision to restrict the number of electoral princes to seven may derive from the functional assignments when choosing and coronating the king. The count Palatine, for example, served the meals during the coronation. As of 1339 the rank of arch seneschal was included in the formal appellation of the counts Palatine. The pronounced rivalry between the Munich and Heidelberg lines since the election of Louis of Bavaria in 1314 is ascribed to the dynastic agreement of Pavia from 1329, which Louis had concluded with his nephews; the electoral vote was to be exercised alternately between both lines of the Wittelsbach house. The Golden Bull, however, explicitly reserved this right for the Heidelberg line, whose principality had in the meantime grown by virtue of numerous imperial mortgages and was designated the or Electoral Palatinate [Kurfalz] in 1400.

III. The Reign of Rupert of the Palatinate

The Elector Rupert I., who finally established Heidelberg as his residence and in 1386 founded the university, is regarded as having established a power base in the Palatinate. This was due in part to the good relationship he had with Emperor Charles IV. In 1376 this emperor was able to procure the necessary electoral votes to assure that his son Wenceslas would be crowned King of the Romans. Wenceslas, however, remained so thoroughly passive with respect to imperial politics that in 1396 both counts Palatine Rupert II. and Rupert III. participated in measures to depose him. Finally, during the summer of 1400, four Rhenish electors met on the Königsstuhl at Rhens on the Rhine and elected Ruprecht III. in accordance with provisions of the Golden Bull, this after having found Wenceslas unfit to rule and having drawn up a declaration of deposition. In spite of appearances, these actions could not be described as a coup d'état. Given that Wenceslas retained the imperial insignia, a crown had to be expressly created for Rupert's coronation on the 6th of January 1401 in the Cologne Cathedral.

Rupert's kingship was not sufficiently consolidated to forcefully attend to political matters: a prematurely initiated incursion into Italy undertaken to further legitimize his rule ended in 1402 in total defeat. Henceforth, Rupert was able to discharge his imperial duties only in the southwestern portion of the German Empire. It would be impossible for him to bring about a resolution of the Great Schism. Fortunately, the dowry that his daughter-in-law Blanche, daughter of the English king, had presented to his son could be mortgaged. This relationship by marriage with the English House of Lancaster mirrored Rupert's position within the European power constellation; therein the English-Burgundian coalition supported the Roman pope and opposed the Avignonese pontiff advocated by the French monarchy. These alliances affected affairs within Germany, without, however, allowing an opposing coalition formed by Baden and Bohemia to ever become a serious threat. That notwithstanding, a territorial rivalry was rekindled against the archdiocese of Mainz. Rupert limited his ability to manoeuvre politically because of his rigid adherence to the Roman Papacy and his dismissal of the conciliar cause until his death on May 5, 1410. Forthwith, his four sons divided the Palatine territory amongst themselves. The original Electoral Palatinate went to the eldest, Louis III, who renounced his candidacy for king, but retained traditionally significant roles as count Palatine, e. g. as protector of the Council of Constance.

IV. The Rise to Power, Glory and Fall

The losses resulting from the partitioned principalities of Palatine-Neumarkt, Palatine-Simmern, and Palatine-Mosbach are only at first glance impolitic. Palatine-Neumarkt was rejoined with Palatine-Mosbach when its dynastic line died out in 1448. Moreover, this principality in turn was reverted back to the Electoral Palatinate in 1499. Only the dynastic line of Palatine-Simmern which in the subsequent generations split into a Palatine-Zweibrücken branch, endured. Louis III. was able to restore the Electoral Palatinate during his twenty-six year long reign. After the early death of his son Louis IV., a critical situation arose when his brother Frederick became the electoral regent for one-year old Prince Philip, the heir to the electoral dignity. Frederick, however, wanted his regency to become a lifetime reign. To this end, he adopted his nephew through a Roman legal provision, the *arrogatio*, as he had been advised to do by jurists in the recently founded university. While Frederick was able to win support for his scheme from his sister-in-law and the most influential personages in the Electoral Palatinate as well from the pope, he still encountered resistance from both neighbouring powers and the emperor. Using his talent as a strategist and tactician, Frederick pursued a shrewd policy vis-à-vis his allies and was able to exploit the material wealth and military force of his holdings. Little by little he was able to neutralize belligerent opponents. In a triumphant victory in the battle of Seckenheim in 1462, Frederick took as prisoner the margrave of Baden, the bishop of Metz, as well as the duke of Württemberg. During his reign, Frederick "the Victorious" of the Electoral Palatinate irrefutably embodied the hegemonic might of the southwest German Empire. His authority, which could not be assailed by the distant and relatively powerless Emperor, approached that of a sovereign. Upon his death in 1476, he was succeeded by his nephew Philip the Sincere whose resplendent court life would become the centre of early humanistic culture in the German kingdom. In 1499 Philip misjudged the instruments of dynastic politics and tried to enjoin the prospective hereditary succession of Bavaria-Landshut by betrothing his son Rupert to the daughter and potentially inheritable heir of this partitioned duchy, which de jure should have fallen to the Wittelsbach line in Munich. When the question of succession actually arose in 1503, opposing and vociferous factions had already formed with almost all of the former opponents of Philip's predecessor, Frederick the Victorious, on the side of Bavaria. After bitter confrontations the Electoral Palatinate was subjected to an arbitral award, whereby large portions of its territory, especially in the Upper Palatinate, the Alsace and Ortenau, were given away. Just as it had reached the threshold of the modern age, so too had it experienced its greatest losses as a territorial power.

V. Consolidation and Contingency in the Reformation Age

Philip the Sincere's successors assumed rule over a ravaged and highly indebted land. They were forced to oblige both the neighbouring powers and the imperial house of Habsburg. In 1518 Louis V. agreed to join three additional electoral princes in their support of Charles V's candidacy for emperor. In exchange, Louis was formally invested with imperial fiefs and granted extraterritorial privileges. Upon Emperor Maximilian's death he was unchallenged in his exercise of a 'vicariate of the empire' until a new emperor could be elected. Louis V.'s reticent and wait-and-see manner were qualities that enabled him to act as mediator. Neither a sojourn in the French court, nor a good humanistic education helped mitigate his reservedness. Nevertheless, he developed a collection of literature concerning the healing arts. Prudence underscored his attitude regarding the Reformation so that here, as well, without being personally very religious, he concentrated on maintaining an equilibrium; his epithet, "the Peaceable" is hence befitting. That notwithstanding, Louis was compelled to defend himself in a feud with the knight Franz of Sickingen in 1523 and again in 1525 during the Peasants' War. To be sure, the peasant uprising strengthened the impression that the Reformation movement was a remote phenomenon, the consequence being that Louis V never decisively acted, thus implicitly favouring the spread of evangelical tendencies which Luther's visit to Heidelberg in 1518 had spawned. Louis' brother Frederick II., who succeeded him in 1544, hesitantly introduced the Reformation, though he had to partially backtrack on this decision at the insistence of the emperor.

During the first half of the sixteenth-century the defensive and representational needs of the prince electors found visible expression in building plans for the Heidelberg castle. Under Louis V., additional masonry stories were built onto Rupert's Palace (Ruprechtsbau) and erected around the castle courtyard were the so-called Library Building (Bibliotheksbau), Ladies' Palace (Frauenzimmerbau) and new banqueting hall (Hofstube), Louis' Palace (Ludwigsbau), as well as the Soldiers' Building (Soldatenbau) with its Well House (Brunnenhalle). The Hall-of-Mirrors Building (Gläserne Saalbau), begun in 1549, soon replaced architecture of the thirteenth century on the northern side of the castle courtyard. Its arcade attempts to evoke the architecture of antiquity by means of the indigenous Romanesque, thereby marking the advent of the Renaissance north of the Alps. In addition, beginning as of about 1520 and with great expenditure, the castle was defensively reinforced with moats, masonry ramparts and artillery posts, bringing it up to the modern standards of fortification. In the direction of the hill a new gate-tower was built. The spacious medieval fortress was now a residential palace with defensive fortifications.

VI. The Renaissance Prince: Ottheinrich

As the Prince Elector succeeded his two childless uncles in 1556, he was already fifty-four years old and suffering physically. The principality of Palatine-Neuburg was formed after the end of the Landshut War of Succession in 1508 for both him and his brother. Widely travelled with a refined appreciation of music, literature, the fine arts and architecture, he was able to create a remarkable residence. As connoisseur and patron of the arts he amassed large collections of medallions, copper engravings, tapestries, manuscripts and prints. He however, had to turn over the governing authority of his province in 1544 due to his extraordinary indebtedness. Interested in both political and religious matters and therein fundamental, he converted to Lutheranism in 1544.

After his accession, Ottheinrich announced new articles of faith for the church; in 1557 a mandate followed ordering the removal of paintings and altars. The cloisters in Lorsch and Schönau were secularized, and he confiscated the valuable library at Lorsch. This library, together with his own collection of books, became part of the famous Bibliotheca Palatina for which Ottheinrich is known as founder. Following the advice of Melanchthon, he reformed the university and transformed the study of the seven liberal arts into a philosophical faculty. Ottheinrich's three-year reign was hardly time enough to have the Heidelberg castle enduringly reflect his artistic sense. The edifice built in his name does brandish the first Renaissance façade on German territory. It attests not only to his interest in the architecture of antiquity, and to his knowledge of numismatics and astrology, but also to his delectation that finally, he, as prince elector, was able to launch into activity after his predecessors had reigned so irresolutely. The façade and its distinctive architectural statement were realized in close cooperation with the Flemish sculptor Alexander Colin. Admittedly, the structure behind the façade retained a traditional disposition of rooms, because the very corpulent Ottheinrich intended to reside on its main floor, his death, however, preceding its readiness. In addition, his court orchestra and musical patronage were illustrious. With the death of Ottheinrich in 1559, his dynastic line ended and was succeeded by that of the Palatine-Simmern. Ottheinrich regarded the extinction of his lineage to be a curse inflicted by God for the actions of his ancestor Louis III, who in 1415 had had Johannes Hus burned at the stake during the Council of Constance. Comparing himself to Louis III., Ottheinrich found consolation in his conviction that he had restored purity to the renewed Gospel.