

Guide to the Collection of the Germanic National Museum (1860)

Abstract

This collection guide was published eight years after Hans Freiherr von und zu Aufseß (1801–1872) founded the Germanic Museum. In its introduction to the museum's history, the guide presents the founding of the museum—since renamed the Germanic National Museum—as a collaborative (or at least mutually supportive) effort between the various German states in the years immediately following the failed unification of 1848. “Germanness” in the form of the importance of German history, literature, and art and the preservation of this cultural heritage dominates the text.

Source

Founding and Organization of the Museum

The founding of the Germanic National Museum took place, after many proposals and attempts, at the assembly of German historians and antiquarians held at Dresden, with then Prince—now King—Johann von Sachsen presiding, on 17 August 1852, at the request of Freiherr von und zu Aufseß of Franken. There, it retained the statutes which had remained unaltered as well as, through vote of the assembly, its director and administrative board. Nuremberg was determined as the home location. The institution was approved by the royal Bavarian government on 18 February 1853 as a foundation endowed with all the rights of a legal body for the purpose of instruction, and thereupon was recognized by the German Federal Assembly at Frankfurt as an institute of the German nation and was recommended for support by all German states. The ceremonial opening occurred on 15 June of the same year. Through acquisition by purchase of the former Carthusian monastery in 1857, the museum achieved its own property and adequate space after having found insufficient accommodation in a leased private building.

The goal of the museum is, notwithstanding all existing collections of art and science, to allow a point of entry for all endeavors directed at the research of German history. Specifically, through the production of comprehensive repertoires, an overview is to be generated of the entire source material not only in Germany itself, but also abroad, dispersed in libraries, archives, cabinets of art, and other collections, initially for the period from 1650 to the present. The donation, purchase, and deposit of the museum's collections serve as purposive documentation for the individual branches of the repertory, as well as examples towards understanding the historical material. The library, supported by complimentary copies from German booksellers, aspires for as complete as possible a collection of the historical literature of the Fatherland; while the archive is to be an asylum for dispersed historical documents, testaments, and letters, and is to offer an opportunity for the safe preservation and scientific use of small-scale town and family archives. The collection of art and antiquities consists—in originals and copies—of objects that are suitable for knowledge acquisition, also with respect to the daily life of our forefathers. Images will be sought of those antiquities that cannot be collection objects, or of those that are located in other collections. Administration of the whole museum, according to the principles of the organizational plan published in 1856, is conferred to two presiding co-directors. They are assisted by a committee of 24 members. This committee of scholars, who are selected to represent in good number all the fields of study within the discipline of history, supports the museum in questions of scholarship. A number of full-time administrators and assistants carry out the daily business and work especially on the production of repertoires. Lively interchange with public institutions

and associations for historical research, as well as mutual exchange of writings, takes place continuously.

Funding for upkeep of the museum is ensured through voluntary contributions of the German nation, its monarchs and governing bodies. The contributions consist of money, objects for the collections, and invaluable work to further the museum's objectives. Numerous agencies and auxiliary associations represent the interests of the institution beyond the town of its location. As the property of the nation, the museum grants the use of the collection not only to its learned colleagues and friends, but also to each German citizen, naturally under the conditions that are necessary for the museum's maintenance and order. In order to manage its publications and distribution, the museum has founded its own Literary-Artistic Institute, whose press publishes its publications and art prints, and which maintains contact with all German booksellers. The *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* [Journal for the Study of German history] is the scientific organ of the museum and simultaneously serves in maintaining contact with all friends of the operation. Every agent in the various locations is charged with distributing the publication, which they receive on a regular basis, to participating friends of the institution free of charge. Moreover, annual reports provide exact information about the museum's situation and development. From time to time memoranda are published; thus far the organizational outline and the catalogue of the collections based on the inventory of 1856 have been published in this series.

The Museum's Halls and Collections

The Carthusian House, current home of the museum, was founded in 1380 by Marquard Mendel, a native of Nuremberg, under the name Mariazell (*cella beatae Mariae*). The following year, King Wenceslas laid the foundation stone in the presence of Cardinal Pileus, the Elector of Mainz, the bishops of Würzburg and Bamberg, Duke Wenceslas of Saxony, the burgrave of Nuremberg, and other princes spiritual and worldly. The Carthusian House remained a monastery until 1525; at that time the prior and convent converted to the Reformation and its substantial holdings passed to the town. The spacious buildings were used as official residences and in recent times were barely maintained. In the past several decades the lovely church served the royal Bavarian military administration as a hay silo. Before the buildings could be furnished by the museum for its purposes, significant restorations were necessary—for which the funds had to be raised through contributions from the nation—which have not yet been completed. Nevertheless, in these venerable, historic buildings we may hope to see one of Nuremberg's most interesting monuments rescued forever.

[...]

Source: *Das germanische Nationalmuseum und seine Sammlungen. Wegweiser für die Besuchenden. Mit Abbildungen und Plänen*. Nuremberg, Press of the Literary-Artistic Institute of the Germanic Museum, 1860, pp. 3–6. Available online at: <http://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/title/BV013478862/ft/bsb11346401?page=1>

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