

Johann Nepomuk Hauntinger, *Journey through Swabia and Bavaria in 1784*

Abstract

From 1780 to 1823, the monk Johann Nepomuk Hauntinger (1756–1823) was the librarian at the Benedictine Abbey of St. Gallen. In July and August 1784, Hauntinger traveled through Swabia and Bavaria with Abbot Pankraz Vorster and Father Beda Pracher. This excerpt from his travel journal describes the natural history cabinet at the Benedictine Abbey of Petershausen, the church architecture and library collection at the Cistercian Abbey at Salem, and the library at the Premonstratensian Abbey in Schussenried. The journal conveys an overall sense of the intellectual atmosphere at South German cloisters in the late eighteenth century. Additionally, it provides information on the types of collections they housed and describes the intellectual networks of monk-scholars such as Hauntinger.

Source

St. Gallen to Munich

From the 12th to the 20th of July 1784

We traveled on the 12th of July, Father Pankratius and myself, in the company of Father Beda of Neresheim above Rorschach, where Mr. Beda paid his farewell visit to the governor. He was undecided whether to do the same with the pastor, changed his mind on this point a few times, and finally decided against it. So we continued our journey over Romishorn [Romanshorn], where the Lord Obervogt entertained us with a midday meal, and continued on past Münsterlingen, by Konstanz, to the neighboring Benedictine imperial monastery at Petershausen.

[...]

Petershausen

For lunch we had the honor of dining in Petershausen with the regular clergy. The table readings were from the following: 1) the Holy Scriptures, 2) Fleury's Church History, 3) an excellent new pastoral letter from the Elector of Trier. In the afternoon we visited the abbey, whose antechamber contains a small collection of paintings and the famous clock. The clock stands on a pedestal and shows all the daily cycles and changes of the planets according to the Copernican system. In addition to this, it has a minute, quarter hour and hour, day, month, year, and century hand; moreover, the impulse spring to the century hand may only be wound up every hundred years. With this clock it is also possible, through a rather rapid movement, to see the general history of the world from the beginning of creation up to our times, including the most important events of the Church as well as of the state, and to know for each of these events in what year it happened. We also saw a model of a flying garden there.

I will not write here about the monastic and church buildings because they are well known to almost all of us. In the afternoon, after making a brief visit to Kreuzlingen, we visited the famous Petershausen natural history cabinet, perhaps the most beautiful one I will see in my lifetime. It is divided into four unequal rooms, each of which is decorated with casts of ancient Greek and Roman heads and busts of famous men from antiquity, and a large number of stuffed foreign birds, about 150. There are cabinets all around, each one closed with glass doors, and in the middle of each of these rooms is something like a large, double desk, each one about ten feet in length and five in width, all with drawers down to the floor and closed with glass lids at the top. In these rooms, which

must certainly contain well over half a million individual pieces, there are in most cases complete collections of the following natural rarities: 1) all natural phenomena, stalactites, incrustations, and fossils, which are found in Karlsbad [Karlovy Vary] and the surrounding regions. This collection is the most complete and therefore the rarest. Through the efforts of its keeper, it has actually appeared in print in a folio volume of naturally illuminated copper plates; 2) a collection of all types of marble from widely differing regions; 3) a collection of different agate stones; 4) incrustations; 5) wood fossils of all kinds, and several of unusual size; 6) the whole domain of stones arranged according to their types; 7) a collection of different species of wood; 8) healing clay earth and other types of earth; 9) foreign rarities; 10) a magnificent tiered cabinet filled with samples of gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, iron, even naturally occurring pure gold, etc., from the most famous mines; 11) another collection of all types of fossils; 12) several thousand stones of various kinds found in the Danube, all ground on one side; 13) a collection of gemstones: granite, porphyry, garnets, etc.; 14) a cabinet of sea-shells with rare pieces and mostly pairs; 15) ammonites (marine mollusks) of all kinds and also of unusual size; 16) stone clams and mussels; 17) Oeningen fossils; 18) plaster casts of many thousands of coins and medals; 19) a collection of stuffed birds; 21) a not inconsiderable number of iron idols and exalted figures from antiquity; 22) other natural and artistic products that I can no longer count. It is a collection that has few equals in Germany, especially when it comes to some subjects. We remained there for so long that we completely forgot about the library. We would certainly have found beautiful works on natural history in that library. The gentleman who presides over this unusual collection has, in my limited understanding, a complete grasp of the subjects represented here, and thus lends an eager inclination to this beautiful study. This collection owes its existence and growth mostly to the now rather unfortunate ex-Benedictine Fr. Franz Übelacker, former subprior to Petershausen. In the chapel of the prelate we saw two silver images of St. Gallus and Gebhard, which our prince Bernhard donated to the Konstanz Cathedral on the occasion of the concordance with the bishop there. They were sold to Petershausen some time ago.

[...]

Salem

It is located in a valley above—and at a distance from—Heiligenberg Castle. The entire monastery complex consists of three quadrilaterals, one of which comprises the court building and the abbey; the other two constitute the convent building. The circumference of the monastery stretches over a very long distance, and the administrative buildings, the dwellings of the ministers (servants), the tree, herb, and flower gardens, which are as extensive as they are beautiful, and the little pools or fish ponds, are all enclosed by one wall—from afar they give the monastery the appearance of a small town. In the courtyard garden are some raised terraces decorated with large, knitted flower baskets in the latest English style. After we had paid our respects to the gracious Lord Imperial Prelate Robert, we went to the church, an old, majestic, Gothic cathedral, and took in all its inner ornamentation, which deserves to be admired by every viewer. It has three rows of aisles side by side, as is the case with almost all the Gothic churches, and at the intermediate columns as well as at the main walls are dainty altars, 27 in number. All these altars are made of alabaster. The [alabaster] stones from the area of the canton of Schaffhausen near Schleithelm were purchased for one guilder and 30 kreuzer per unprocessed hundredweight [Zentner]. They are white, with gray veins running through them. The design of the altars is in the most beautiful antique taste. They have different shapes; one, for example, represents a kind of urn, another a monument, a pillar, vases, half and whole columns, and so on. And so they always alternate gracefully. The so-called pipes of the pillars, the candlesticks, the convivia, the rings, and the handles of the vases, are all made of copper and were gold-gilded under heat, and, in addition to being durable, have quite a splendid appearance. The choir lattice is only about three feet high, also antique, and placed on it are once again magnificent alabaster vases, which contain excellent bas-reliefs. The two faldstools are the most beautiful that one can see of this type of work. One presents a

pyramidal monument with a letter of praise to the founders of this place; the letters of the document are gilded under heat, and the whole monument is decorated with beautiful statues, all relating to the monument. The other one, on the opposite side, is the funerary monument for all abbots, and it rests just above their crypt. An angel holds up a large tablet on which all their names and years of death are marked in golden letters. Further out from these two monuments are two other pyramids, which have a different appearance. Each of these four pieces was made from only about three large chunks of alabaster, arranged on top of each other, and finished in the church itself. The altarpieces are not paintings but rather alabaster bas-reliefs, which portray a biblical story or something else that relates to church services. Sometimes an altarpiece is a bas-relief, cast in lead and completely gilded, for a change.

The choral altar stands at the beginning of the chancel and is built in a Roman manner so that mass can be held on both sides at the same time. All of the altar decorations are limited to a cross and a candlestick. All of the altars are the same throughout the year; only on festival days are the metal candlesticks on the main altar swapped for silver ones. At the end of the chancel, instead of the choral tabernacle, there is a silver-gilded ark of the covenant with cherubim, and then a large niche in the wall, in which Jesus is represented by Brucker (Brugger), dying on the cross between two murderers. The chancel itself is decorated with old and new bas-reliefs of woodwork depicting stories. The choral alter piece that stands at the end of the chancel above the aforementioned niche is being removed, and they are already working on another, which, in another alabaster bas-relief, will depict the same content that the painting features. The piece is at least 18 feet long and represents the Assumption of Mary—a fine work of art. There are about eight side altars, attached to both main walls; in each rests the holy body of a Roman martyr under the altar stones. These sacred bodies lie in place of a so-called antependium [hanging pulpit] in a coffin, and in front of these coffins copper-gilded lattices are attached, such that one sees only the coffins and not the holy bones. The altarpiece always presents in alabaster bas-reliefs the probable story of the sufferings of the saint resting therein. On top of each altar stands the statue of the saint with the triumphant palm branch in his right hand. These are works of Georg Dürer, a sculptor who was able to compete with the greatest masters and who, through his works in our chancel, but especially those in Salem, erected for himself an eternal, but unfortunately all too early, monument. The church also contains two magnificent organs. It has no paintings, except for only two small sub-ceilings, which Brucker (Brugger) executed in fresco. Except for the building itself, there is nothing left of the old Gothic style in this church but the so-called sacramental receptacle [*hierotheca*], which now also serves as a tabernacle. It faces the left side of the chancel and presents a very artistic open-work Gothic tower, which reaches almost to the church vault, a laborious and, in terms of Gothic beauty, splendid work. In the morning we saw the hall at court, which at the time of its creation may have been the most beautiful, but it is now too overlaid with heavy stucco and gigantic gilded statues; we then saw the sacristy, where there is a red velvet church ornament embroidered with gold, very much in the style of an ancient drawing and another, made from a gala dress of the daughter of Emperor Joseph II. The panel room is covered in marble, also very much in antique taste, and because, like the splendid prelature, it has true windows only on one side and mirrored windows on the other, which have a good effect.

For the most part I spent the afternoon in the library with my friend and correspondent P. Kaspar Oexle, superintendent of the library and secretary to the gracious lord. This room contains seven windows on each side and, like our own, has a gallery and rows of columns. It may be about 100 years old, which makes it easy to determine the taste of the rest of the design. Busts of ancient Greeks and Romans are attached to the top of the gallery for decoration. The ceiling is painted and the panel boxes are all sealed with glass doors. Under the library there is another room of the same size, complete with books and mostly with duplicates and old memorial prints, which are very numerous and very substantial. Among the latter are also works printed on parchment. From the

gallery you enter into three other rooms, one of which is quite spacious. All are again filled with books, and among them are some of the most magnificent, especially those that deal with the history of literature, antiquity, profane and ecclesiastical history, and descriptive natural history. Under the previous government, this collection was the Prelature Library, but now these books and the rest are all open to the public. The whole collection is constantly growing, and I know a bookseller who is allowed to send newer books unsolicited, if they are of any importance, for the purpose of expanding the collection. Here, as in almost all of the libraries below, I have noted some of the most beautiful books, and will list them all in systematic order at the end of the report, but this of course is only for those books that are not already in our library. I estimate all these books, divided into the various rooms, to be at least 30,000 volumes together with the duplicates.

Some of the manuscripts (and others that can be looked up in travelogues) are worth mentioning: Silbereisen's, Abbot of Wettingen, Chronicles, the acts of the Council of Constance from 1492 with illuminated coats of arms; the older and autographic copies have been lost to fire. The best manuscripts contain works of the Fathers of the Church, the life of St. Gallus by Walafrid Strabo, Berno's Handmusik, a volume of stories from the twelfth century with pictures; some of the native authors of Salem, who referred to an interpretation of the Song of Songs written by Abbot Berthold of Salem. This interpretation is no longer found in Salem, but in our library it still exists in a paper codex from the 15th century under no. 939.

Afterwards we went to the philosophical cabinet [*Armarium*]. It consists of one larger and two smaller rooms; in the first one are mostly mathematical, geometrical, and static instruments. In the second one, optical, dioptric, and catoptric instruments; especially interesting is a very fine new concave mirror of great strength. In the third are air pumps, electrical machines and mechanical pieces: of special interest is the model of the Salem church tower.

On the 15th of July we saw the church tower in the morning. It is fair to say that whole forests have been wasted on it. It is entirely made of wood, and without any danger you can remove individual defective beams and replace them with new ones. The tower was not built from scratch but rather was planted over the four main pillars of the church vault. Its design is neither antique nor modern, and it is neither a dome tower nor a whole helmet tower, but its appearance is nonetheless very delicate and tasteful; it contains 14-15 bells, which are quite harmonious and make a perfect chord. The largest of them is 160 hundredweights. The tower itself is lined with copper and lead, and water tanks are located on each floor for emergency use. Afterwards we looked at the natural history cabinet, which, on a smaller scale, is furnished almost as well as the one in Petershausen. In addition to what is known as the natural history and shell cabinet, it also contains a collection of birds' eggs, various types of marble, a rather precious collection of many types of agate stones, and a pitiful collection of bread of all sorts and prices from neighboring towns from 1771 to 1772. The whole cabinet was collected by the famous Capuchin Fr. Andreas von Marchtal, former court confessor of margravian Baden-Baden. He gave it to Salem for a good number of books that they had held in duplicate. This good Capuchin is now Vicar in Markdorf. He also has a splendid collection of copperplates, consisting of about 30-50 folio volumes, which will perhaps at some point also be given to this monastery. I consider it my honor to be acquainted with this learned man and to have received several letters from him. The Salem cabinet is always receiving important additions of all types of rarities, too; they place orders even as far away as distant Spain to obtain from there some natural and local items. Of the petrifications, the rarest might be the petrified bird's nest, which includes a brooding mother and two chicks, also petrified. Also on display here is a beautiful coin cabinet, overseen by Fr. Malachias, in certain of which whole orders of ducal and princely houses are distinguished. This cabinet of natural objects, shells, and medals occupies a very spacious room.

We took a brief look at the beautiful stables, including the splendid carriage sheds; the most beautiful vehicles in

them are all decorated after ancient models, incomparably comfortable and are even made in Salem by a monastic brother. We finally ended our tour with a visit to the place where the beautiful alabaster bas-relief works are made.

The zeal with which they dedicate themselves to their studies here is as great as the care for monasticism, for which this monastery was always famous. Fr. Firmus Blaibinhaus, Professor of Church History, Fr. Secretary, Professor and Library Overseer Kaspar Oexle, Fr. Malachias, Professor of Theology and Supervisor of Natural and Coin Collections, and Fr. Bernhard, Librarian, each excels in his field. The Orientalia collection was donated by the famous linguist, the ex-Jesuit Fr. Weitenauer, and Fr. Chrysostomus, a native Egyptian from Alcairo (Cairo), continues to care for it. Arabic and Turkish are his mother tongues; Greek and many other living languages are the fruits of his travels. He was already 38 years old and had been a priest for 18 years when he took up his profession.

Court Doctor Michael Hornstein, our former schoolmate, is well respected and loved by all.

[...]

Schussenried

The same evening, we had no further opportunity to view anything else. Together with some other gentlemen, we were given into the care and guidance of Fr. Kastner Siard, a brother of our Fr. Ulrich.

On the 17th of July, we saw the church and the chancel in the morning; both are old and of no particular beauty. On the choir stalls small statues of all religious founders are attached. If this monastery is executed according to the beautiful plan which we are shown, it must be one of the most splendid in Germany. In the sacristy, where much silverware can be seen, a part of St. Mangenstab is on display; a magnificent and richly encased relic of St. John of Nepomuk, which Emperor Charles VI venerated in this church. The library hall is the most beautiful we have seen on our trip. It is larger than ours, but contains only a single ceiling, painted in fresco by Hermann the Elder. One can hardly figure out what this painting is supposed to represent, however, because too many objects have been gradually inserted into it during its completion. There are 66 cases located down below and on the gallery, six of which are just for symmetry and which at the same time serve as the library doors. The cases are made of spruce wood, painted only with pearl-colored paint and decorated with gold; the doors of the cases are covered with canvas, on which white bound books with red titles are painted. On both sides of the hall there are rows of gypsum plaster columns with statues that at once correspond with and contradict one another, so to speak, e.g., on one side are those representing free-thinking, false politics, heresy with its attributes, foreign currency, also books, on which the names Voltaire, Rousseau, Machiavelli, etc., stand, in addition to Luther and Calvin with their tenets, etc., and then on the opposite side are the statues of a prophet, an apostle, and an evangelist which refute the aforementioned with written texts. This is an idea which, in my opinion, would be better suited to any other place than a library, since a book room must be open to all kinds of people, and by virtue of its very existence, it is not the place where religious disputes are presented to an outsider passing through. Since the inscriptions of these statues are not yet fully elaborated, some advice could still be brought to bear. The library is otherwise comfortably furnished. Each cubicle, when it is opened, holds a small desk and a seat which can be lowered down, and behind each cubicle is a space in which there is a small ladder for each occupant. But because the librarian was not present, I could not find out where the specific catalog for each subject belonged. The whole design, the bright pearl color, and the sparkling gold ornamentation give the library an exceptionally bright appearance, and even if it is not decorated with such precious wood and veneer work as our library, it certainly pleases the eye, if I am not mistaken, just as much, if not more. Next to the library is a very large room, which is prepared for the overseer of the same. I was not actually able to meet him in Schussenried; he is working on a library catalog that he intends to have printed. Concerning their holdings of major works and somewhat older

books, the library may have been slightly neglected, but now everything can be replaced through usury. One would be hard pressed to name a noteworthy new book that one had not already acquired. On the cover of an old book I found a passage from Walafrid's *Miraculis S. Galli*, from about the 10th century.

Afterwards we looked at the beautiful and rather large garden, the summer and winter priory, and the apartments of the fathers, each of whom had a living room with an iron stove, an alcove and a so-called study or small study cabinet, all clean and beautiful, without splendor. We were also taken to the guestrooms, in which two Turkish tables are remarkable. They are inlaid with mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell, and other stones, and each is valued at six thousand guilders. They were a gift from a member of the Schussenried monastery, who so distinguished himself that he obtained one of the first positions at the Imperial Court. With a cursory eye we then passed through the administrative buildings, the beautiful granaries, the cellars, the theater hall, the museum, or rather the place of spiritual retreat, which is also the recreation hall. The paneling is so well built that it can be used to set up 15 small prayer desks at the same time on each side. After the prayer or spiritual reading, they are folded up again without effort or noise, and then one once again sees nothing more than a paneled hall. In the courtyard garden, many pineapples are cultivated in their own prepared beds. In the afternoon we went through the refectory, and the school buildings, which contain several rooms and in which the Monastic Institute is conducted for the lower classes.

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Source: Johann Nepomuk Hauntinger. *Reise durch Schwaben und Bayern im Jahre 1784*. edited by Gebhard Spahr. Weissenhorn: Anton H. Konrad Verlag, 1964, pp. 25, 27–28, 29–35, 39–41.

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