

**From the Bonngasse to the
Schwarzspanierhaus
“Beethoven Houses”
in Bonn and Vienna
in Old Pictures**

**Special Exhibition of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn
September 21, 2001 - January 7, 2002**

Beethoven was a restless man, at least as regards his often-changing addresses. With the help of old paintings, drawings, prints and photos, this special exhibition offers a glimpse of the external circumstances of Beethoven's life. Beethoven actually moved about 70 times. This was connected mostly to the habits of the Viennese, who liked to spend the hot summer months in the country. With Beethoven's love of nature, it was no wonder that he readily adopted this custom. Only a few of the “Beethoven Houses” in Bonn and Vienna which can be traced directly and precisely to Beethoven have been preserved - among the Viennese houses we include those in the inner city, in the outlying areas of the city, in the nearer suburbs as well as in the preferred summer resorts of the Viennese, Mödling and Baden. In Bonn, only one of the houses in which the Beethoven family lived still exists: his birth house, where he spent the first few years of his life. In Vienna, the house in the suburb Windmühle (now the VI. district, Laimgrubengasse 22) where Beethoven lived from the fall of 1822 to the summer of 1823 has survived. In other houses, Beethoven's lodgings are not precisely identifiable or were actually located at another place than where they are now commemorated. This is the case, for instance, with the “Pasqualati House” on the Mülkerbastei.

The first half of the 19th century put up monuments to its artists while the second half turned to their places of abode, especially the houses of their births and deaths. The monument builders believed - not without reason - that they could somehow come nearer to the revered artists, could capture something of their aura in these authentic places. This attitude has not changed even today.

Ground floor, Room 12: Beethoven Houses in Bonn

Case 1 and 2: Only since the middle of the 19th century has it been firmly established that Beethoven was born in the rear part of the building in the **Bonngasse 20**. The living space of the family included a kitchen (that is the room in which you are now standing), a utility room on the ground floor with a cellar underneath, two small rooms and one somewhat larger one located one floor higher as well as several very small rooms under the roof.

Case 1 shows a selection of the oldest known depictions of the birth house. The etching by Rordorf stems from the time during which the question of whether the house in the Bonngasse or the one in the Rheingasse was the actual birth house was still being debated. Reiner Beißel's drawings have preserved for us the state of the house before the beginning of the renovations in 1889. The picture of the room in which Beethoven was born shows that this room was always revered, although the house in the Bonngasse was otherwise in a state of great

neglect. The damage to the floor can be discerned: Visitors often took splinters of the floorboards as souvenirs.

Case 2: After the museum in the Bonngasse 20 was set up by the Beethoven-Haus Society, this commemorative place drew visitors from all over the world. Many visual artists also came to Bonn, were fascinated by the atmosphere of the birth house and inspired to depict it - especially the view from the garden - with many different techniques and in many different styles. The Bonn painter Carl Nonn, for instance, painted the house three times all together. The late impressionist version from the 1920s shown here is captivating through its luminous colors and its lively surface.

Case 3: Until the middle of the 20th century there was a second “Beethoven-Haus” in Bonn which was for a time considerably more famous than the house in the Bonngasse. The Beethoven family lived (with interruptions) in this building in the Rheingasse (formerly Rheinstraße), which belonged to the backer family, Fischer, between young Ludwig's 5th and 15th years of life, approximately. In the 19th century it was even mistakenly considered to be the actual birth house:

The move to the Rheingasse took place only in February, 1777. Gottfried Fischer's (1780-1864) notes record the memories of neighbors and acquaintances about Beethoven's youth.

Case 4: The Beethovens lived in a small, half-timbered house in Bonn in 1785 and again from about 1787 until November, 1792. It stood in the courtyard behind the building Wenzelgasse 25 until 1928. It was the last Bonn abode of the composer before he moved to Vienna. To this house Beethoven returned after his first journey to Vienna and here his mother, Maria Magdalena, died on July 17, 1787.

Room 7 in the first floor - Vienna and Environs

Case 1: The so-called “Testament House” in the **Probusgasse 6** in Heiligenstadt was considered until very recently to have been the place in which in October of 1802 Beethoven wrote that letter to his brothers - never sent - which is now called the “Heiligenstadt Testament”. Recent research by Walther Brauneis has shown that the rooms on the street side which now house the commemorative space were built only after a fire in 1807, in other words, that it is not authentic.

Case 2: In the summer of 1808 Beethoven lived in the **Grinzingstraße in Heiligenstadt** under one roof with the then 17-year-old author Franz Grillparzer. He later reminisced about his encounter with the composer, returning repeatedly to Beethoven and his art in lyrics and prose.

Beethoven lived (with interruptions) from 1804-1808 and again from 1810 to 1813 in the house on the **Mülkerbastei** belonging to Baron Johann Baptist Pasqualati (1777-1830), a wholesale dealer privileged to the royal and imperial court. As shown by numerous letters and dedications, Beethoven appreciated this landlord (and occasional legal advisor), who supposedly always kept lodgings free for Beethoven in order to enable him to return at any time. According to the reminiscences of Gerhard von Breuning, Beethoven was so fascinated with the view from his apartment that he wanted to have a hole torn in the wall to have a window put in facing the east, toward the Prater - but without asking his landlord! The view from the Bastei over the “Glacis”, a green belt several hundred meters wide, was that beautiful. This auda

cious plan was foiled, however. Beethoven's apartment was probably on the other side of where the memorial is now located. The letter to the music publishing house of Breitkopf and Härtel of February 28, 1812 bears the autograph return address: "Ludwig van Beethoven living in the pascolati house on the Mülker Bastei 1239."

Case 3: A number of important compositions were written in the **Pasqualati-Haus**, among them the first two versions of the opera *Fidelio* as well as the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. Beethoven's original manuscript of the latter is displayed here.

Beethoven also lived for a time in the years 1803-1805 (some of the time together with his brother, Kaspar Karl) in the complex of buildings belonging the **Theater an der Wien**. This rent-free official residence served only as a second address for part of that time. During this period a number of Beethoven premieres took place in the Theater an der Wien, for instance in November 1805 the premiere of the first version of *Fidelio*. The elaborate preparations for the first performance of the opera must have made it rather convenient for Beethoven to have lodgings very close to the theater and also to be able to receive visitors there.

Case 4: From May to June 1817, Beethoven stayed for a short time in Heiligenstadt to take the waters. Local lore has it that he lodged in the house on the **Pfarrplatz 2**, in a corner room on the first floor with a view onto the Danube and onto the street now named the *Eroica-Gasse*. This building was one of the favorite Viennese Beethoven houses for painters and photographers in the 19th and 20th centuries. The watercolors by the Nuremberg painter Gottfried Bürklein (1867/68) were done quite early; later examples are by Lila Bruner (1910), Rudolf Schall and Emma Bormann (ca. 1920).

Beethoven went from Heiligenstadt briefly back to his lodgings in the city in order to take care of business. Then he returned to the country, now to **Nußdorf**, to the so-called "Greiner House" in the **Kahlenbergerstr. 26**. He remained there until October, 1817 and was visited there by the famous pianist Marie Leopoldine Pachler-Koschak, of Graz.

Case 5: In the summer months of the year 1818, Beethoven resided in the so-called "**Hafner-Haus**" in **Mödling**, together with his nephew Karl. Here he began taking the waters. He also worked on the *Adagio* and perhaps also on the final fugue of the Piano Sonata, Op. 106. In Mödling he was visited by the painter August Kloeber, at that time 25 years old, who received the composer's permission to portray him. The lively pencil drawing which was made during a first sitting as well as a drawing of Beethoven's arms and hands, done somewhat later, have been preserved.

Case 6: Beethoven's sycophant helper Schindler - not always a reliable witness - reported the anecdote that Beethoven, who had already lodged in the **Rathausgasse 10** in **Baden** in 1821, was only accepted as a lodger a second time after he promised - twice - to be a more considerate neighbor than he had been the first time around. He additionally had to promise to replace the shutters on the windows to the street. The idea behind this request was that Beethoven had scribbled all kinds of notes on the shutters; They thus had become such curious relicts of the famous composer that the landlord was able to do a lucrative business with them.

Case 7: Beethoven's brother Johann bought a country house named the "Wasserhof" in **Gneixendorf** in 1819. In the fall of 1826 Beethoven accepted the invitation of his brother and travelled there in his own carriage in the company of his nephew Karl. He is supposed to have stayed in the room with three windows on the southwest corner of the first floor. Here he copied out the parts of his String Quartet in F major, Op. 135. He departed from Gneixendorf on December 1. Travel conditions were so spartan that he was very ill upon his arrival in Vienna.

From mid-October 1825 until his death, Beethoven lived in the former prelate's tract of the Cloister of the Black-Robed Spaniard (**Schwarzspanierkloster**), not far from the Schottentor. We are precisely informed about the appearance of this apartment and how it was furnished: Gerhard von Breuning, the son of Beethoven's friend Stephan von Breuning who was fondly nicknamed "Pants button" by the composer, gave a detailed report of it in 1874 in his book "From the Schwarzspanierhaus." This commodious apart

ment consisted of an antechamber, kitchen and servant's room looking out onto the courtyard. Overlooking the street, with a lovely view over the Glacis, were the dining room, an auxiliary room next to it, the central room for living, making music and sleeping, and finally, the study.

Beethoven died here on March 26, 1827. Already in the first half of the 19th century, some of the rooms, which in the meantime had been rented out for other purposes, were serving as commemorative spaces. In 1903 the house fell victim to real estate speculators and was torn down. Numerous objects from the inventory of the house now grace the permanent collection of the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn, others are to be seen in the Beethoven commemorative space in the Mülkerbastei in Vienna.

In the Schwarzspanierhaus important works such as the String Quartets in B-flat major, Op. 130 and in C-sharp minor, Op. 131 were composed as well as further smaller works such as "Beethoven's Last Musical Thought", the beginning of a string quintet which was published as a posthumous work by Anton Diabelli.

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