The City of a Hundred Spires Becomes Digital: Bridging the Digital Divide Through The Use of New Media

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This creative project focuses on providing accurate historical information, in an accessible format, for people to visit and learn about the city of Prague, Czech Republic. Prague is a city that has seen significant historical and cultural developments across the past nearly thousand years, and has a number of monuments that reflect these developments.

Five separate monuments were chosen for this study: Prague Castle, the Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslas, and Adalbert, the Church of Saint Nicholas, Charles Bridge, and Wallenstein Palace. The history of each location was researched and documented, to provide the content for the second half of the project, the interactive website.

The digital divide, which traditionally refers to the lack of a physical connection to the Internet, is not limited to simply wires. Instead, it involves the presence of credible information. While there are several online resources to provide those seeking a deeper knowledge of Prague with where to shop, where to eat, and what tours to take. However, there are few sources on the open Internet that offer visitors academic information about the city. This project is designed to fill this gap.

The website, which is hosted at www.praguespires.com, was created using newly developed technology, which were constructed to streamline the process of creating desktop and mobile viewing experiences. Traditionally, creating mobile-friendly websites required the maintenance of two separate and distinct code bases, which can lead to the absence of consistent content. Recently, there has been a push towards ‘responsive’ sites, or sites that change as the viewport changes in size. Thanks to technology such as Twitter’s Bootstrap, a framework for rapidly building responsive websites, sites like this have become increasingly more possible.

I approached this project by creating a base template for the entire site, which could be scaled easily and cleanly, without undue reorganization. The overall design is kept to utmost minimalism:
there is only one color used for navigation elements, and all other elements are kept to a minimum.
The navigation menu, which runs across the bottom of each page, is designed to cross between both mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, and desktops. For mobile users, the navigation menu condenses to compensate for the smaller screens.
THE CITY OF A HUNDRED SPIRES BECOMES DIGITAL: BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE THROUGH THE USE OF NEW MEDIA

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Part 1. Bridging the Digital Divide

1. Introduction

The Internet has become an interactive tool which allows anyone with a computer and a network connection to publish pages that can be displayed across the globe with minimal cost. Publishing has gone from designing and creating pages to be printed by a professional publishing house, to managing a blog or website from a living room computer. This transformation in the way publishing can be conducted has brought about monumental growth of information on the Internet; some of it factual, some of it pure fiction. The audience for this information is global: the breadth of the audience is only limited by lack of a physical connection to the Internet.

Digital publishing has increased the amount of information that is produced, and how it is produced. Information can be published and disseminated to a wide audience, in a format that can easily be mistaken for a credible source. For tourists, this can present a problem. A simple Google search for the term “Prague” returns, on the first page, Prague Welcome, the official Prague tourism site, a Wikipedia article, a WikiTravel article, and several sites selling art and souvenirs from Prague, however no articles on the history or development of the city.¹

For those searching for more in-depth information about, for example, the history of the Czech Republic, or looking to gain a broader understanding of the culture or artistic styles that have developed in Prague, a more specialized search is required. The results of these searches are varied, and the pages that are queried are often not sourced. (Google, after all, is not an academic search tool, and does not rank pages based on the number of citations contained therein).

This project is a proof of concept, a potential bridge across the digital divide. I have completed this project to allow more people the ability to access academic information about the city of Prague, in a format that is easy to use, and can be manipulated and viewed on a wide variety of devices. The digital divide is the representation of the technological “haves” and “have-nots,”² which, despite the extensive efforts of the U.S. government, are increasing. According to the National Telecommunications & Information Administration, a division of the United States Department of

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¹ This is based off of a Google search conducted multiple times, most recently on March 1, 2013.
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Commerce, those who are often considered in the “have-not” category reside in rural areas, with limited income and other monetary resources. Location is not the only factor that affects connectivity levels among Americans. Race is another factor that places people firmly in the “have-not” category in the U.S. The digital divide, however, is not limited to simply hardware limitations. Recently, there have been limitations on the spread of academic information. Copyrights, and the debate surrounding Open Access have limited those who are socioeconomically challenged from accessing materials that are considered “common (or shared) culture.” Projects like this, with no profit motivation, are purely educational projects, based on the output and dissemination of scholarly material, have the potential to finally bring together those who would not traditionally have access to information, and those who do, ultimately bridging the digital divide.

The goal, as stated above, of this project is to present academically correct information about historically significant monuments located in the city of Prague, in the Czech Republic. There are several other sites that provide information about the city, and about various historical sites. Wikipedia.org, for example, has several brief discussions (in English; there are more in-depth discussions in Czech) about several of the monuments included in the scope of this project.

Tourism sites, such as LonelyPlanet.com and PragueWelcome.cz (and others) host information about the sights of Prague: where to go, what to see, where to shop and what to eat. That is not the goal of this project. Instead, the goal of this project is to foster a greater understanding of the historical and cultural background and importance of these monuments, in an accessible format for users who are limited by device restrictions. Each page is accessible through traditional means, i.e. a desktop connected to a high-speed Internet connection, while at the same time accessible through non-traditional ways, on smartphones and tablets connected to 3G and 4G (LTE) (wireless) networks.

LonelyPlanet.com has an extensive portion on the city of Prague. They list a total of 176 pages about the sights of Prague alone, not including the shopping, entertainment, and dining venues throughout the city. In each of the pages, there is an emphasis on which tours you can take to further appreciate the architectural and historic impact of each site. For example, in their writeup about Charles Bridge, the author mentions the earlier bridge which spanned the Vltava in a brief statement: “You can see the only surviving arch of the Judith [Judita] Bridge by taking a boat trip with Prague Venice.” The entirety of its nearly seven hundred years of history have been compressed to two paragraphs, surrounded by paragraphs warning against pickpockets, and alerting visitors to the best time to visit the bridge, without crowds.

Wallenstein Palace appears on the list of ‘Sights’ on LonelyPlant.com. The palace, which was originally built in the early seventeenth century, and has since undergone a series of changes, reconstructions, and repurposing, has a short paragraph to describe it:

Lonely Planet review for Wallenstein Palace: Valdštejnské náměstí, a small square northeast of Malostranské náměstí, is dominated by the monumental 1630 palace of Albrecht of Wallenstein, general of the Habsburg armies, who financed its construction with properties confiscated from Protestant nobles he defeated at the Battle of Bílá Hora in 1620. It now houses the Senate of the Czech Republic, but you can visit some rooms on weekends. The ceiling fresco in the Baroque Hall shows Wallenstein as a warrior at the reins of a chariot, while the unusual oval Audience Hall has a fresco of Vulcan at work in his forge.8

Neither page truly represents the vast history that each monument has undergone, or the corresponding historical shifts that occurred at the same time. The author of the Charles Bridge page, for example, chose to leave out the fact that the bridge was the place of illicit executions soon after its completion, or that the statuary that flanks the walkway was designed to combat the executions and assassinations that took place along the famous bridge.

PragueWelcome.cz, the official tourism site for the city of Prague, owned and maintained by Prague Information Service, a division of the City of Prague (Pražská informační služba, příspěvková organizace hlavního města Prahy) has a slight advantage over Lonely Planet. First, it is both owned and operated by a Czech entity, as opposed to an international conglomerate (LonelyPlanet.com is

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owned by BBC Worldwide). The site itself has clearly labeled areas and sub-areas, designed to guide the reader throughout the entire site quickly and easily. The simplicity of the site is misleading, as much of the information is only accessible through searches and continual browsing. On the homepage, a row of “Top Monuments” greets the visitor, with quick facts below each image. Prague Castle, which is one of the “Top Monuments,” has a sparse historical page. The history of Prague Castle has been compressed to just two paragraphs, with a map and several images. However, unlike LonelyPlanet.com, there is contact information and information about fees associated with visiting the castle.

PragueWelcome.cz compresses most of the historical write-ups to two paragraphs or less, preventing an in-depth discussion of the monument or the history surrounding the construction and subsequent historical importance. In order to find more information on each of the buildings, further searches have to be done. The site is designed in such a way that finding references to further information is difficult, and many of the facts presented are unsubstantiated.

Wikipedia.org has a more broad coverage of Prague history, however it is lacking in information regarding the monuments of Prague on the English website. On both the Czech and German sites, the information is present to a greater extent. In English, the information is limited to a cursory glance at the history and development of the city, and the monuments. It should be mentioned that Wikipedia.org is lacking articles on the Church of Saint Nicholas (Chrám svatého Mikuláše), and has only brief information on sites such as Wallenstein Palace. There are a few photos, and, in the case of Charles Bridge, the discussion of why it was built and decorated with statues is brief.9

Wikipedia.org itself is at a disadvantage from the beginning, as the information is poorly supported by external sources. Entire articles are, in some cases, missing all citations. For example, the Wikipedia.org article on Charles Bridge lacks any citations, and while it was flagged in 2010 by community standards moderators, no further citations have been added.10

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The tourism site TimeOut.com\(^{11}\) claims to be “Your critical guide to hotels, restaurants and going out in Prague.” The site, while being poorly designed and difficult to navigate, lacks considerable information about several of the monuments in Prague. Instead, like many other pages, TimeOut focuses on what to buy, where to stay, and which tours to take, to fully experience Prague. This puts the visitor who wishes to learn more about the history of a place, without a costly tour at a significant disadvantage.

Part 2. The Project

2. Research

Beginning in May of 2012, information on the city of Prague was gathered and evaluated, to form the basis of this project, before the actual design of the final site was considered. A variety of resources were used, ranging from the libraries at Washington State University to the digital collections of the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf. Much of the historic information was gathered from sources in the Czech Republic; in fact large portions of research were conducted through resources obtained at Charles University, Prague. One of largest roadblocks to the progress of research the Czech Republic was the language barrier. Information on the years post-1920 in the Czech Republic were more readily available, however for the centuries between 1150 and 1900, there were considerably fewer resources.

As the research progressed, a number of sources were reviewed. Primary sources, pertaining to the historical and cultural developments in Prague from the twelfth century onwards, in English, are remarkably difficult to find. It was discovered, however, that the Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections (MASC) at WSU had a copy of a typescript, written by a soldier who celebrated the second anniversary of the liberation of Prague in 1947. This text described visiting the unique crypt below Prague Castle, which contain the bodies of Czech and Bohemian rulers. Digital scans of a number of books were found, held in museums and libraries throughout Germany, documenting parts of Bohemia from the seventeenth century. Due to the nature of copyright law in the United

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States, each of the texts, dating more than one hundred years, have been released into the public domain, meaning that the texts could be used in this project without restriction.

3. Design Process

The site itself was constructed using HTML5 (Hypertext Markup Language), CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), and jQuery, in the form of the Bootstrap toolkit. HTML5 is a markup language, which is modified by CSS. Each of these technologies form the basis of what the Internet is becoming today: an interactive platform for disseminating information across a wide variety of devices, without needing to build highly specialized sites for each distinct platform.

Most of this website was created using Twitter’s Bootstrap environment, which is a responsive HTML5 and jQuery framework designed to allow rapid website creation, without the need to create extremely large amounts of code. Much of the web has already been created, in the form of plugins and pre-built environments, which are designed to be used to create extensive websites. Bootstrap provided the flexible platform for automatically re-sizing each element on the screen as the viewport (device screen size or viewing window) changed, reducing the overall time spent constructing the project. Because each of these frameworks are available, there is no logical reason to recreate them on a per-site basis. Instead, the plugin system allows developers to create sites without a broader understanding of the underlying technologies.

Even with the jQuery plugins and Bootstrap, creating a consistent mobile experience is a serious undertaking. Adding a mobile component to any site requires the addition of extraneous files, and ensuring that each element will scale correctly, creating a uniform experience for the user. The change from desktop to mobile site should not be abrupt, but instead a seamless shift that is unnoticed by the user. Before JavaScript and HTML5 allowed dynamic pages that could scale as the viewport changed (known as responsive websites), web developers were required to use separate designs and code bases. Maintaining two (or more) separate experiences is costly, and often differences begin to appear between the designs. The creation of responsive techniques has simplified this, but it has not reduced the overall amount of effort required.
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Best practices on the web, which are continually evolving as users expect a richer, more dynamic experience, have begun to suggest that using two separate sites can cause discouragement among users, because while mobile sites typically are simpler, they often lack functionality that desktop sites have (and vice versa). Responsive sites, however, allow mobile users to use the same functions of desktop sites, while at the same time experiencing user interfaces that are specifically designed for (typically) touch-friendly devices, such as iPhones and Android devices. Responsive sites also allow desktop users to experience the simplicity of mobile sites.

The content of the final site was chosen, and unified for both desktop and mobile users to encourage users to access the site from mobile locations, as opposed to only accessing it from stationary desktop locations. (All content included in the site can be found in Part 3). Smashing Magazine, an online German magazine about web development and web standards, offers the following justification for unifying content across platforms:

Up until now, limiting content made some sense. Especially in the early days of the modern mobile Web browser. Today, however, it is widely accepted that we don’t know anything about our users’ goals based on which device they are using. Users need and expect full functionality on their mobile device, because they could be using it anywhere, for any reason. 28% of American adult smartphone owners now access the Internet mostly on their mobile device. That means that many of your users literally require all of the same functionality on mobile that they would otherwise get on a desktop.12

The content of the site is not the only rhetorical information present, however. The aesthetic and design of a site can influence the perception of both the site and the content.13 The user experience of this particular website was designed to be minimalistic, with only one dominant color, to prevent the design from overpowering the user and causing the user to become distracted. Bootstrap is designed to be modified to match user specification, rather than forcing developers and designers to use the stock implementation. Each element of the Bootstrap toolkit can be quickly redesigned, recolored, or otherwise modified.

Once the site was designed, the content was slowly added. Photos were taken in Prague, on three separate trips to the city (in December 2012, May to August of 2012, and December of 2012). The text of the site, which can be found below, as well as on the site, was then added to the various pages, with each citation noted and linked, using JavaScript to match the citation style (Chicago), in a non-paged format.

Part 3. Prague: Research and Historical Discussion

4. Historical overview and background

Bohemia lands were, geographically, between Austria in the south, Bavaria in the west, Hungary to the southwest, and Poland to the north. Until the late twentieth century, Slovakia was included in this; however, after the fall of the Soviet Empire and following the subsequent Velvet Revolution, Slovakia became its own country, and the Czech Republic was formed.

The Přemyslid dynasty, the founding Bohemian dynasty, began in the ninth century C.E., in the area surrounding what is today Prague. They quickly annexed and conquered much of the surrounding lands, creating the basis of the Kingdom of Bohemia. In 1198, Otakar I (sometimes spelled “Ottokar I”) was elected as King of Bohemia; he quickly sought the legitimization of his rule over the Bohemian lands, and was formally acknowledged by Philip of Swabia, the then-elected Holy Roman Emperor, as a favor to Otakar in return for his support of Philip against his rival as king, Otto IV. King Otakar’s reign lasted until 1230.

As Holy Roman Emperor Frederich II (reigned 1211 - 1250) ascended the throne, the Bohemian King had a choice: to either become an independent nation, separate from other powers, or to remain in alliance with the Holy Roman Empire. Otakar chose to solidify their allegiance with Emperor Frederich and the Holy Roman Empire. This relationship was further cemented in 1212, when Frederich II granted the Golden Bull of Sicily, elevating the Duchy of Bohemia to

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15. Ibid., 86-7.
16. Ibid., 106.
17. Ibid., 109.
the Kingdom of Bohemia. The king, from then onwards, ruled “by the grace of God.”\textsuperscript{19} This did a
number of things for the kingdom. First, it re-established the heredity of the title of king. Second, it
established the right of appointing the clergy upon the king.

Otakar was succeeded by his son, Vaclav I (Wenceslas I) (reigned 1230-1253), who en-
couraged vast growth in the empire.\textsuperscript{20} The dynasty continued growing until 1306, when Vaclav
III (reigned 1305 - 1306), who relinquished his hereditary rights to the Hungarian throne,\textsuperscript{21} was
murdered while on a trip to Olomouc, likely by agents of Henry VII, the king of Luxembourg.\textsuperscript{22} In
1310, Henry VII, who was also the King of the Romans and the Holy Roman Emperor, married his
son Jan to Eliška Přemyslovna.\textsuperscript{23} Jan then ascended the Bohemian throne in 1311. Rather than pro-
moting the interests of the Bohemian lands, to which he was never welcomed, he sought to expand
the interests of the Luxembourg family in Central Europe. His policy of expansion, however, was
highly beneficial to the Bohemian lands, as he succeeded in extending the reach of the Bohemian
kings.\textsuperscript{24}

After Vaclav I’s death, the kingdom was divided. Bohemia, Görlitz, Bautzen, and Silesia to
the East were all to go to his son Charles IV, while Moravia and the Duchy of Luxembourg would go
to his younger brothers. Charles IV was previously named Vaclav, or Wenceslas, however upon his
confirmation in 1323 he changed his name to Charlemagne, as an homage to his French heritage.
He was named the successor, and through a series of political victories, he was crowned king in
1347.\textsuperscript{25} His legitimacy to the throne was hardly questioned; he was a descendant of the Přemyslid
dynasty, and spoke Czech fluently. In 1355, he became the Holy Roman Emperor, and Prague
became the center of the empire. He married four times, and continued to grow his kingdom with
each marriage. Prague, during his reign, was divided into several different districts, one of which
Charles developed (Nové Město, New Town in English, which was founded in 1348 as the center

\textsuperscript{20} Pánek and Tůma, A History of the Czech Lands, 107.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{22} Agnew, The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown: Studies of Nationalities, 23.
\textsuperscript{23} Due to the Czech language, the names Přemyslid and Přemyslovna belong to the same family.
\textsuperscript{24} Pánek and Tůma, A History of the Czech Lands, 124.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 127.
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of the arts in Prague). He also sponsored the construction of both the Cathedral of St. Vaclav (Wenceslas), and Charles Bridge, which can be seen today.

As with many other European nations, religion and religious freedom began to rise to the forefront in the early fifteenth century. During this time, the Czech lands were governed by a single Bohemian king, who had supreme control, and smaller Estates, as the nobles were known, which had their own political structure, and answered to the king. The combination of the king and the Estates, or the land-owning nobility of Bohemia and Moravia, and the varying political systems therein, helped to accelerate the revolts that would lead to the war.

The Hussites, who were originally led by Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake on July 16, 1415, were a faction that sought to overthrow the Catholic head of state, and reduce reliance on the Holy Roman Empire. Hus emphasized a reduction in the Catholic teachings of the university of Prague, which was a Catholic institution, and the establishment of a non-Catholic state. Following the death of Vaclav IV in 1419, Prague fell into disarray. His widow, Queen Sophie of Bavaria, managed the state, while his heir, Sigismund continued his campaign to defend the borders shared with Hungary against the Turkish marauders, who threatened to include Bohemia in their repertoire of conquered lands. Because of this, the concerns of the religious nobles in Prague, who were Catholic, in regards to the Hussites, were left ignored. While the Hussites were gaining ground, a second group, set on the destruction of the Bohemian crown, began to form, known as the Táborites. The Táborites were a faction that began in the city of Tábor, in southern Bohemia, similar to the Hussites, in Prague. Originally led by Jan Žižka, the Táborites were a theocratic movement, who were led by priests but had militaristic factions. Many of their teachings were similar to those of John Wycliffe, the English theologian.

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26. Ibid., 132-3.
29. Ibid., 153.
30. Ibid., 144-5.
31. Ibid., 154.
32. Ibid., 144.
In 1420, the Hussite Wars became an armed conflict. Sigismund, Vaclav IV’s heir, was less than successful at maintaining order, and in 1421, he was stripped of the title of Bohemian King after fleeing Prague the previous summer. The leader of the Hussites, Jan Žižka, was more successful, winning battles throughout the Czech lands. Žižka, who had been blinded in an earlier battle, remained an inspirational leader. In 1422, the Lithuanian prince Sigismund Korybut was chosen as the favorite to take the Bohemian crown, and while Žižka recognized him, he refrained from trusting the new prince. Žižka was killed on October 11, 1424.

In 1427, Korybut was imprisoned, and later exiled, due to his inability to defend the Czech lands. He later aligned himself with the Táborite garrisons in Silesia, never to return to Prague. Prague remained heavily divided, with Old Town (Staré Město) and New Town (Nové Město) both vying for control of the country. Kutná Hora, a city approximately ninety kilometers to the East of Prague, replaced Prague as the central point of governance until the end of the war, when control was restored to Prague. On May 10, 1434, Prokop Holý, the leader of the Táborite bloc, was killed, signaling the defeat of the field armies, but by no means the end of the war.

The years that followed saw a number of shifts, including an end to the Luxembourg era in Prague. Sigismund Korybut was executed in September of 1437, and a new king, Sigismund of Luxembourg, ascended the throne. His ascension was deemed legitimate because he met many of the demands of the Estates, who effectively controlled the political structures of Prague. Soon after taking the throne, however, he ignored his promises, and amid a culture of disobedience to the crown, fled to Hungary in 1437. He died later that year, ending the Luxembourg dynasty in Bohemia. His son-in-law, Albrecht II of Habsburg, was elected Bohemian king by the Diet of December 1437, by the Catholic party with the assistance of the conservative nobility. He died in 1439, which again plunged the nation into conflict. The Bohemian and Moravian Estates continued to split, leading to a highly divided nation. In 1448, George of Poděbrady (Jiří z Poděbrad)

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35. Ibid., 159.
36. Ibid., 163.
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captured the city of Prague, in an attempt to unify the country once again. George of Poděbrady
was not elected king until March 2, 1458.39

This unification was not as successful as it was originally hoped to be, as the Papal See
refused to grant legitimacy,40 sparking a drawn-out period of hostilities, accentuated by the inner
turmoil already occurring in Vienna, threatening to bring down Holy Roman Emperor Fredrick IV’s
rule.41 In 1468 King Mátyás Corvinus of Hungary declared war on the Hussites.42 He negotiated
peace with George of Poděbrady, by promising to lend his support in George’s claim to the Imperial
throne. However, in 1469, Mátyás broke his promise, and was subsequently offered the Bohemian
crown by the leaders of an anti-Poděbrady faction centered in Zelená Hora, a city nearly three
hundred kilometers to the South East of Prague. Corvinus accepted, and was elected in May, 1469
in Olomouc.43 The country was once again divided in two, until the death of Poděbrady in 1471.
On May 27, 1471, the diet in Kutná Hora elected Vladislav, the son of the Polish king Kazimierz,
to the Bohemian throne.

Unfortunately, both the Papacy and King Mátyás Corvinus of Hungary refused to grant legit-
imacy to Vladislav’s reign; it was not until 1487 that the Pope chose to recognize his authority. On
April 6, 1490, Mátyás Corvinus died suddenly, leaving the throne of Hungary vacant.44 The Jagiel-
lon Dynasty of Hungary, which unified Bohemia after the election of Vladislav II to the Hungarian
throne in 1490, continued until 1526.

Ferdinand I, a member of the founding generation of the Habsburg dynasty, was elected to
the Bohemian throne in 1526, after the death of King Ludvík on August 29, 1526.45 The king-
dom, at the time, contained five separate countries (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Upper and Lower
Lusitania), four of which (Moravia, Silesia, and Upper and Lower Lusitinia) were given no voice.
Bohemia, the center of the kingdom, was granted complete power to elect their new ruler. Upon

39. Ibid.
40. Heymann, George of Bohemia, King of Heretics, 277.
41. Ibid., 326.
42. Ibid., 483.
44. Ibid., 174.
45. Ibid., 192.
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being elected, Ferdinand brought together the lands previously under his control. This new kingdom was the largest in Central Europe, comprising of Hungary, Bohemia, and Austria. This land was less than might be expected, because Turkish conquests had reduced the Hungarian lands to merely the areas known as Royal Hungary, which included much of Slovakia, Croatia, Burgenland, and the western portion of Hungary. Ferdinand’s claim to the throne was severely challenged by the Ottoman-backed candidate for the Hungarian throne, Jámos Szapolya.  

The Jesuit order, came to power in Prague in 1526, when the Habsburgs, being Catholics, wished to establish a more permanent footprint in the city. Ferdinand I founded Prague’s second university, the Ferdinandea (the other was the Carolina, today Charles University), and placed it under the control of the Jesuits. During the Thirty Years’ War, the Jesuits were banned from the city. Following the defeat at White Mountain, and the restoration of the Habsburg control of the city, the Jesuit order was once again welcomed. 

In the years leading up to the Thirty Years’ War, the Bohemian Estates sought to gain more control, and in 1618, with the onset of this war, Habsburg rule was at risk. The Estates began a campaign to establish their own independent control of the country, while the Habsburgs struggled to maintain their hold on the Bohemian crown. A victory by rebels fighting the Habsburg control in 1619 succeeded in unifying the nation, and the Bohemian and Moravian Estates fought as one. It was a short-lived victory, smashed by a crushing defeat at White Mountain (Bílá Hora) in November of 1620. This was followed by a series of executions, effectively ending the rebellion and returning the country to Habsburg control, for over one hundred years.

An important milestone in the development of Baroque Prague was the conquest by Swedish forces in 1630, and again in 1648. Emperor Ferdinand II relied heavily on Bohemian general Albrecht von Wallenstein, who had been relieved of his command of the Imperial Army, to defend the city. Swedish military forces managed to capture much of Prague, and during the 1648 sack of Prague...
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Prague, managed to capture Wallenstein’s palace, looting the palace of the statuary and taking it back to Stockholm with them.\(^{50}\)

The Habsburgs exiled and executed those who were involved with the rebellions of previous years, and many Bohemian intellectuals and scholars fled.\(^{51}\) The culture of Czech oppression at the hands of the Austrian empire caused lasting damage to their relations.\(^ {52}\)

Cultural and artistic changes occurred as a result of Habsburg domination. One of the more significant changes that occurred was the policy of bilingualism, which established Czech as an official language, and required all employees to be bilingual in both German, which was the language of the government, and Czech, the language of the people. However, due to the growing connection between Bohemia and Catholic Europe, there was a period of artistic growth between 1620 and 1740. Many artists began flocking to Prague from Vienna, which was little more than a fortified city, to begin building the Baroque core.\(^ {53}\)

In 1740, Empress Maria Theresa ascended the throne, and added crucially to the fabric of Prague, namely through her developments of the castle, and the cultural developments that were encouraged during her reign. When Maria Theresa took the throne, the Estates’ decline from power was almost certain. The Habsburg seat of power was quickly shifting to Vienna, making Prague a regional seat, rather than the center of power.\(^ {54}\) Her rule was not without contest. The Wars of Austrian Succession (1740 - 1748) left the Austro-Hungarian Empire in need of financial stability.\(^ {55}\) Many of the cultural improvements can be traced to the consolidation of government that occurred under Maria Theresa’s reign. Leading up to this time, the nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were referred to by their official titles: the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Archduchy of Austria. As a part of the consolidation of government, there were policies of meritocracy that were strictly imposed upon government workers.\(^ {56}\)


\(^{55}\) Ibid., 266.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 268.
In 1848, there was discord between the nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who sought to be free from Habsburg control. A rebellion in Vienna was indicative of substantial struggle between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and their subjected countries. Bohemia, for a time, prided itself for staying away from the violence, going so far as to offer the king refuge in Prague. He declined, instead choosing to flee from Vienna to Innsbruck. In June of 1848, however, a student-led revolt against the poor working and living conditions, as well as the high unemployment rates, brought violence to Prague. The uprising was predominantly Czech: While there was German support, the Germans chose to not involve themselves, leading to rumors of anti-German sentiment in Prague. In the end, however, the Austrian general Windischgrätz declared, on June 18, 1848, the city of Prague under siege. He also formed a commission, to determine the cause of the uprising and punish those directly involved. Following his direct control of the city, the citizens of Prague began leaving the city in droves. Nearly twenty thousand residents fled the city. In the years following the uprising, parliamentary meetings in Vienna included seats for Bohemian representatives. Unfortunately the Bohemians lost their credibility, and because internal strife among representatives prevented them from coming to consensus.

After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czech people began a period of self governance. The Constitution of 1920 established a parliamentary system, and a representative democracy, headed by a president, Tomáš Masaryk. This plan, while not originally endorsed by President Woodrow Wilson, was eventually wholly supported by the U.S.A. In the years following the war, it was determined that the majority of laws and decrees established under the Austro-Hungarian Empire would remain in effect, and much of the governmental structure would remain the same. In an attempt to fight the overinflation and economic hardship that occurred as a result of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovak banknotes were produced, determined to reduce the inflation

58. Ibid., 148-9.
59. Ibid., 150.
60. Ibid., 159.
61. Ibid., 167.
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by replacing the Austrian crown. The newly formed nation was not without its challenges, both at home and abroad. While Czechoslovakia inherited nearly 70% of Austro-Hungarian production capacity, which was centered in Bohemia and Moravia, Czechoslovakia faced competition from nearby nations, especially Germany. At the same time, production in Slovakia was severely diminished, and there was a growing culture of separation in Slovakia. Many Slovaks felt there was inherent anti-Slovak discrimination at the hands of the Czech government, and strove to create a Slovakian identity.

Unfortunately, the borderlands, which was a previously undisputed region, became a source of contention for the new republic. Sudeten Germans living in the region began calling for nationalism, and began aligning themselves with the ethnically German, as opposed to the Czechs. During the days leading up to the Treaty of Munich in 1938, the Nazi party made claims of human rights abuse of the Sudeten Germans living in the Czech/Germany borderlands. The transition from the Czech lands to Sudetenland was subtle, at first. The Nazi party first annexed the borderlands, and began evicting the Jewish populace living in those areas, replacing them with Sudeten Germans. Many Czechs and Slovaks fled to the more interior portions of the region, which had not been annexed. Those who remained in the border regions were deemed hostile, and also fled the area, fearing persecution if they remained. Many people left their entire lives behind, and took only what they could carry. In 1935, former foreign minister Dr. Eduard Beneš replaced Masaryk as the president of the republic. Beneš was aware of the shift occurring in the Weimar Republic, and warned that the state of events would soon lead to trouble.

70. Ibid., 82-3.
71. Ibid., 84-5.
Following the initial period of annexation, there was an increasing level of Germanization in the Sudetenland. Czecho-Slovak tradition was placed under suppression. Elementary schools were closed or completely restructured, with only Nazi approved instructors leading the classes. Books were also destroyed, often to the accompaniment of singing and dancing. An estimated twenty thousand books were burned or defaced during this time.\(^\text{72}\)

As the Nazi party continued to exert control over the Czech Lands, they officially changed the name of the country to Czecho-Slovakia. The central government, still located in Prague at the time, was undergoing a series of changes, in response to the Munich Agreement. The Second Republic, as the government at the time was known, struggled to maintain control over Prague.\(^\text{73}\)

As the government in Prague was attempting to maintain the state as a single unit, in the Slovak regions, negotiations were taking place with Berlin to establish Nazi control of those regions. While the Slovak State officially declared independence from Czecho-Slovakia, the Nazi party refused to guarantee the survival and protection of the Slovak state if Czecho-Slovakia was unable to remain a single entity.\(^\text{74}\)

The Soviet Union was the sole country that came to the aide of the Czechs,\(^\text{75}\) and on March 16, 1939, by order of Adolf Hitler, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was created, bringing the First Republic to an end.\(^\text{76}\)

The creation of the Protectorate did not create a sense of equality between the Czech state and the Nazi party. Germans who were living in the Protectorate were given Reich citizenship. All Czechs were given Protectorate citizenship, which became the mark of a lower class. On November 17, 1939, all Czech universities were ordered to be closed, and shortly thereafter, all clubs and associations were ordered to disband, including the Boy Scouts.\(^\text{77}\)

After the Nazi defeat in 1945, the fate of Czecho-Slovakia remained uncertain. The Slovaks, led by Jozef Tiso, sought an independent Slovak state. President Beneš, newly returned from exile, sought a unified Czechoslovakia. For a time, Czechoslovakia was poised to become a bridge between Western democratic freedom and Eastern Communist suppression. Unfortunately, much of President Beneš’ foreign policy plans revolved around continued support from the Soviet Union.

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\(^{73}\) Luža, *The transfer of the Sudeten Germans: a study of Czech-German relations, 1933-1962*, 175.


\(^{75}\) Luža, *The transfer of the Sudeten Germans: a study of Czech-German relations, 1933-1962*, 183.


\(^{77}\) Ibid., 496-501.
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This was evident in the months leading up to the end of World War II, during which Germans living in Czecho-Slovakia were forcibly removed from their homes and transferred back to Germany.⁷⁸ Between the Nazi defeat and 1948, the Third Republic, as it was known, began to once again establish a Czechoslovak nation.⁷⁹

On February 13, 1948, the Communist party succeeded in taking control of the Ministry of the Interior, which controlled the police forces, among other important areas of the government. The Ministry quickly suppressed any and all anti-Communist publications through police force.⁸⁰ President Beneš remained firm in his refusal to accept Czechoslovakian Prime Minister Klement Gottwald’s attempt at regaining control of the situation, and, in February 1948, allowed his cabinet to resign and replaced them with Communist counterparts, destroying the democracy and establishing a consistent Communist rule in the country.⁸¹ The bridge between the East and the West was destroyed.

In the 1968 Prague Spring, citizens of Czechoslovakia became more politically active, and there was a brief culture of liberalization in the otherwise oppressive regime.⁸² This was crushed in the summer of 1968, when the nations of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia to force the ceasing of liberalization, and to establish Soviet control of the country.

The Czech Republic, as it stands today, is a relatively new construction. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the citizens of Czechoslovakia began peacefully protesting the poor living conditions, and the remarkably low standards of living that permeated the country. Their protests were harshly met by police forces in the country. Following the protests on November 17, 1989, thousands of protestors met in squares across the city.⁸³ Led by Vaclav Havel, they were successful in breaking away from the period of Soviet oppression, and creating their own nation once again. On December 20, 1989, Alexander Dubček was elected Speaker of the Federal Assembly, the highest level of the legislative body, and Vaclav Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia.

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⁸⁰ Ibid., 493.
⁸¹ Ibid., 496-501.
⁸² Ibid., 539-63.
⁸³ Ibid., 589.
on December 21. 84 Slovakia continued their policy of pursuing a separate state, and at the end of the Velvet Revolution, on January 1, 1993, the two nations peacefully split, creating the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

The Czech Republic today exists, geographically, in much of the same areas that traditional Bohemia existed, without Slovakia. A member of the European Union since 2004, their economy has undergone a series of growths, with an estimated GDP per capita of $27,200. 85 The region has long been an industrial center, and that continues today. Their principle industries are motor vehicles (Škoda, which is today owned by German manufacturer Volkswagen, with production in the Czech Republic), iron and steel production, and metalworking. Historically, they have maintained their glass and crystal manufacturing status, as well as their beer production, which is centered around the city of Plzeň.

The Czech Republic, like many European countries, has undergone a series of historical shifts, that have caused the development of the modern country. From the dynastic period onwards, the city of Prague has remained the center of the country, and most prominent city, except for in times of war, when the capital was moved to Kutná Hora. Periods of growth, such as that of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries have established the City of A Hundred Spires.

5. Prague Castle and the Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslas, and Adalbert (Pražský hrad and Katedrála svatého Vita, Václava a Vojtěcha)

The foundations of Prague Castle date back to the formation of Bohemia, when a collection of tribes lived in the region. The Přemyslid dynasty, which founded Prague, built their palace on Hradčany, a hill overlooking the city, where the castle stands today. The castle itself is not a single building, but a compound, built up of smaller buildings, including the Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslas, and Aldalbert, Rosenberg Palace, and St. George’s Cathedral. The castle has been the seat of Bohemian and Czech power for the past ten centuries. Today, the castle acts as the seat of

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power and the office of the president, as it has since Vaclav Havel was elected following the Velvet Revolution.\(^{86}\)

Situated at the center of the complex stands an impressive neo-Gothic cathedral. The Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslas, and Adalbert is the third religious building that has stood on that ground since Prince Wenceslas I, the Duke of Bohemia, built the original building, a rotunda dedicated to St. Vitus, sometime before 935. The decision to dedicate the rotunda to St. Vitus came after Wenceslas returned to Bohemia carrying the arm of St. Vitus, from Emperor Henry I of the Holy Roman Empire. Very little of this original building remains, however a portion of the ashlar masonry that made up the pylons still exists today.\(^{87}\)

The second iteration that stood on the grounds was the Basilica of Saints Vitus, Wenceslas, and Adalbert, which was completed in 1096. Prince Spytinev, who saw the increasing need for a larger congregational space, commissioned the basilica. The church has never been completely reconstructed, but most sources agree that the building had three main aisles, with two large choirs. The building was re-consecrated in 1096, following a fire that necessitated renovations. Part of the rotunda dedicated to St. Vitus was included in the construction of the basilica.\(^{88}\)

The Gothic cathedral that stands in the complex today is the third version of the cathedral. The building was designed primarily by Peter Parler, who took over from Matthias of Arras in the mid-fourteenth century, who had been summoned to the Papal Court at Avignon to build the cathedral. The original design of the building included a number of elements of French Gothic, complete with flying buttressing that supported the central, triple-aisle nave. The cathedral was patronized by Charles IV, the King of Bohemia and the soon-to-be Holy Roman Emperor. Parler began where Matthias left off after his death in 1352, treating the building as a sculpture, rather than a mathematically proportioned architectural structure.\(^{89}\) Parler also designed Charles Bridge

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\(^{88}\) Ibid., 60.

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across the Vltava around the same time that he began work on the cathedral. His sons completed much of his work on St. Vitus cathedral in Prague.

Work progressed slowly on the cathedral for the next three hundred years. As the cathedral was reaching completion in the late nineteenth century, Josef Mocker, who oversaw the construction from 1835 to 1899, sought to remove all influences of Parler from the building. Mocker’s successor, Kamil Hilbert, rejected this, and attempted to create a unified building, that had a semi-consistent style throughout.90 In 1929, to commemorate the martyrdom of Wenceslas, work began to complete the cathedral, and to finish the stained glass windows that had been planned for centuries.91 As work progressed on the windows, the importance of Wenceslas, whose death has been commemorated since the tenth century in the Czech Republic, became increasingly apparent. One of the first windows to be installed in the twentieth century depicted St. Wenceslas; however this window was replaced in 1965, as it was considered “not remarkable.”92

The chapels within the cathedral were named by the donors who provided the funds for the windows that graced the walls of the chapels. In some cases, these gifts were a source of rivalry and contention among factions, as companies and banks sought to ensure their place in the national monument of Bohemian Catholicism.93

Below the cathedral are the crypts, which hold the remains of the Czech and Bohemian kings and queens. The crypts, as described by Mark Brislawn in his 1947 account, written during a visit to the city to commemorate the second anniversary of its liberation, are located below the sanctuary, and are richly decorated in gold and silver. He mentions the chill of the cathedral, and of the crypts; this chill exists today as well.94 The heating systems do little to ward off the cold emanating from the massive stone building.

Architecturally, due to the lengthy duration of the construction of the castle and the buildings therein, there are several architectural time periods represented. The castle itself was originally

91. Ibid., 163.
92. Ibid., 166.
93. Ibid., 165-6.
built in the Gothic style. Renovations to the castle in 1485 under King Ladislaus II, a member of the Jagellion dynasty, expanded the castle and added new defense towers to the north of the castle. It was redone in the Baroque period after both the conquest by the Swedes and a large fire in the seventeenth century caused the destruction of large portions of the castle.

The castle was built in the early tenth century, on earlier foundations. The castle was continually added to, slowly, for the next nine centuries before the castle was declared completed. The oldest section of the castle standing currently was consecrated in 1185, and is now the Old Palace. The Romanesque architectural styles, with clean, simple archways and simplistic designs stand as the starting point for the rest of the castle. Charles IV, in the fourteenth century, chose Hradčany and Prague Castle to be his home and the seat of royal power in Bohemia and the Holy Roman Empire, and built much of the Gothic portion of the castle.

Rosenberg Palace, one of the larger buildings in the complex, which was originally built in 1545 to 1560, was one of the only Renaissance buildings in the castle complex, which was built following the fire in 1541 that destroyed much of the parts of Prague called Malá Strana and Hradčany. The fire destroyed many of the smaller buildings that stood in the way of building larger, more impressive structures. Rosenberg Palace remained largely unchanged until 1820, when renovations to the exterior brought it into the nineteenth century.

Later renovations, overseen by Empress Maria Theresa, who reigned from 1740 to 1780, expanded and repaired the castle and brought it to its modern condition today. During her reign, much of the Baroque changes to the castle ground were made, such as the addition of the polychromatic façade of the otherwise Romanesque basilica of St. George, whose two spires rise above the castle walls. She also oversaw the conversion of the Rosenberg Palace into the Institute of Women, a place of learning for unmarried noblewomen.

The castle now houses the Prague Castle Gallery, which includes several influential paintings completed by the masters. The gallery opened its doors in 1965. During Rudolf II’s reign, from 1552 to 1612, a considerable collection of works had been amassed, however the Sack of Prague

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by Swedish military forces in 1648 saw the removal of the majority of the collection. In the seventeenth century, Leopold I began again collecting works from throughout Europe. He purchased a large collection from the Duke of Buckingham in Antwerp in 1648. He may have acquired 1,397 paintings, many of which were destined for the galleries at the castle. Unfortunately, the need for money urged the removal of much of the collection, and by 1737 the castle gallery inventory listed only 573 paintings. Maria Theresa, to fund her many wars and recoup loses that the Austro-Hungarian Empire had sustained, continued to sell off portions of the gallery to increase cash flow into the failing royal economy. Due to the political discord of the early twentieth century, the castle and gallery remained closed until 1960, when it was reopened for renovations and cleaning. The collection that was recovered includes works by Titian, Paolo Veronese, Pordenone, and Jacopo Bassano, among many others including works by various German artists.

6. Church of Saint Nicholas (Chrám svatého Mikuláše)

The Lesser Quarter Square (Malostranské Náměstí) is located at the center of the Lesser Quarter (Malá Strana) in Prague. Near the castle hill (Hradčany) and Prague Castle, the Lesser Quarter Square is the home of the entrance to Charles Bridge and the Old Town (Staré Město), the traditional center of Prague. The square has undergone a series of changes, especially during the Baroque transformation of the city in the early seventeenth century. It was changed again when the reigning nationalistic sentiments following World War I encouraged the removal of Austro-Hungarian artifacts from the city. One such artifact that was removed was the Marian column in Staré Město, which was originally erected in the early seventeenth century. There were several buildings, however, that remained unchanged, and at the center of Malá Strana stands the Church of Saint Nicholas (Chrám sv. Mikuláše).

Built by the Jesuits, with donations from Albrecht von Wallenstein, the general and Bohemian war hero, and Wenzel Franz von Kolowrat, a member of the Society of Jesus, the church was

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99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., 602-3.
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designed by Giovanni Domenico Orsi, Christof and Killian Ignaz Dientzenhofer, a father and son architectural team, and completed in 1772.\textsuperscript{102}

The seventeenth century, specifically after 1620, was a time of artistic expansion in Prague, and a time of development of new styles. The Turkish marauders had been held back in Vienna, the capital of the empire and the home of the power that controlled Prague.\textsuperscript{103} During this time, Prague became a center of culture and learning, on a scale to rival Vienna.\textsuperscript{104} This expansionism brought about a number of influential artists and architects, who contributed greatly to the growth of the radical and high Baroque styles.

Giovanni Domenico Orsi designed a number of buildings, including sacred and secular buildings, throughout Prague. Not much is known about Orsi as a person, however it is speculated that he lived between 1633 and 1679. He was born in Vienna, but did most of his work in Prague. He designed several churches, including the Jesuit church in Tuchoměřice, completed in 1668, and his Greek-cross church in Světce, which was destroyed in the late eighteenth century. He also proposed a plan for Saint Vitus cathedral, located within the castle grounds, which was never implemented. His works became one of the cornerstones for the high Baroque style, which tended to be more towards the dramatic.\textsuperscript{105} The church was also designed by Christof and Killian Ignaz Dientzenhofer who were both prominent Baroque architects. They worked in Bohemia on several buildings, including the Church of St. Nicholas in Malá Strana. Killian Dientzenhofer, son of Christof Dientzenhofer, designed the second St. Nicholas Church, located in Old Town, which is a similar church, with two bell towers and no dome.

The church was built in radical Baroque style, with undulating walls and an articulated drum dome. The style was common throughout Bohemia However many of the similar buildings built the central dome coupled with the bell tower. The bell tower stands to one corner, with a large clock in each of the four faces. The dome, which is slightly shorter than the bell tower, is situated

\textsuperscript{103} Mojmír Horyna, \textit{The Architecture of the Baroque in Bohemia} (Prague: Prague National Gallery, 2001), 93.
\textsuperscript{105} Horyna, \textit{The Architecture of the Baroque in Bohemia}, 90.
over one corner of the building. The overall style of the building is similar to that of the Basilica Vierzehnheiligen, in Bavaria, Germany, although the basilica has two bell towers, rather than one.

The original church was longitudinal, with the large dome sitting on one side. The church was renovated into a square, with a large courtyard in the center. The light stone façade, with its red tile roof, blends in very well with the rest of the buildings surrounding it. The dome, coupled with the bell tower, however, are quite different. The copper roofs have long since turned green, and set the building apart from the neo-Gothic and Baroque buildings surrounding it. At the top of the front façade is the crest of the Jesuits, a stylized form of the initials “I.H.S.,” the monogram of Christ.

The interior of the church was designed in the Rococo style, with high vaulted ceilings decorated with gilded decorations and motifs. The church houses a large organ, with over 4,000 pipes, which was used by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart during his visit to the city of Prague. The ceilings are decorated with large frescoes, done in pale colors primarily shades of green and blue. The columns that surround the inner chapel appear to be Corinthian-style columns, with ornate gilded capitals and fluted columns.

The church was designed to be the main chapel of the Jesuits in Prague, however their dissolution in 1773 meant that the church was no longer under the Society’s purview. Rather, the church became municipal property. During the era of Soviet Occupation, the bell tower was used as a surveillance station, to monitor both the US Embassy and the Yugoslavian Embassy, and the road to the Embassy of West Germany (which today houses the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany [Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland]). After changing hands multiple times, it was named a cultural heritage site in 1997. Today, the church and the tower are open to the public, with the tower serving as a museum of Soviet surveillance.

Charles Bridge (Karlův Most) spans the Vltava river and serves as a connecting point between the Old City (Staré Město), and the Lesser Quarter (Malá Straná) in downtown Prague. Like much of Prague’s historic center, Charles Bridge has been rebuilt several times due to damage caused by flooding of the Vltava River.\textsuperscript{110} The bridge was originally built out of sandstone and arkoses, which were both sourced from quarries in the Czech Republic. Recently, the reconstruction of the bridge has caused much consternation, as many feel that the preservation of the historic center should be placed above the longevity of the bridge. Therefore, the preservation and reconstruction, which was largely put on hold throughout Prague during Communist occupation, has been done in a way so as to preserve the original building materials and methods as much as possible. However, the reconstructions between 1966 and 1975 added layers of pavement and concrete above the traditional cobblestones, and incorporated a high-pressure grout, designed to prevent the bridge from collapsing under its own weight. None of these materials were found in the original construction.\textsuperscript{111}

Charles Bridge was originally built sometime before 1357. Although the date of the construction is unknown, it must have been before 1357, when it was used for the coronation of Charles IV.\textsuperscript{112} The coronation procedures required that the king walk from the Municipal House to the Castle, along the King’s Way.\textsuperscript{113} The bridge was built to replace an earlier bridge, the Judita bridge, which was destroyed when the Vltava flooded in 1342. The Prague Stone Bridge, as it was called until the nineteenth century, provides a main thoroughfare across the river.

The bridge was designed by Master Oto and Peter Parler, who oversaw the construction and the carving of the statuary. The decoration of the bridge, and the completion of the towers were not finished until the late fourteenth century. Much of the façade on the Old Town tower and the bridge was destroyed during the siege of Prague by the Swedish army in 1620, during the Thirty


\textsuperscript{112} Benešovská et al., \textit{10 Centuries of Architecture: Architecture of the Gothic}, 80-1.

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Years’ War.\textsuperscript{114} Legends of the siege by the Swedes in 1648 say that the Jesuits manned the defenses, calling students to form militias to fight the onslaught of the Swedes. However, during the lulls in the battle, they were encouraging people to repent, to pray on the bridge that they were working so diligently to defend.\textsuperscript{115} The siege by the Swedes brought the classes together, linking the knights to the peasants in a struggle to defend the city.

The bridge, prior to having the current decorations put in place, had a dubious reputation, as it served as an execution venue for those wishing to do away with potential rivals and enemies. Several prominent people were killed here, including several high ranking members of the Catholic Church in Prague. A cross, placed to mark the place where a priest from the cathedral, Martin Cink, met his demise on the bridge in 1361, was one of the earliest monuments on the bridge, and yet it was destroyed in 1419, again sometime in the late fifteenth century, and finally in 1648. The severed heads of Czech rebels, executed in 1621, were prominently displayed along the bridge.\textsuperscript{116}

To combat this particular reputation and use of the bridge, a proposal was put forth, to replicate the Ponte degli Angeli, in Rome. Rather than statues of angels, however, the city of Prague proposed adding statues of saints to the bridge. The bridge is decorated with a series of thirty-one statues, ranging in style from Gothic to Baroque. Each of the statues is made from sandstone, to match the overall aesthetic of the bridge, and the aesthetic of much of the city. During the flood of 1890 sections of the bridge were destroyed, causing several statues to fall into the Vltava, to be forever lost. They were replaced, but by statues depicting different people, rather than replaced by replicas of the lost statues. The replacements were made of the same materials.\textsuperscript{117} Between 1683, when the first statue was built, and 1714, when the last statue was erected, twenty-eight statues were built. In a country where the Jesuits were quickly gaining ground, the first Jesuit statue was built on the bridge in 1709. Thirteen were patronized by individuals, nine by religious orders, and the remaining six were patronized by other institutions, including the Chancellory of Bohemia.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{114} Bene\v{s}ovská et al., \textit{10 Centuries of Architecture: Architecture of the Gothic}, 80-1.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 64-5.
The statues are arranged on either side of the bridge, towering over people walking between Old Town and Lesser Quarter.

The statues and the building of the statues along the bridge represented a new era for Prague. Up until this point, the city had been recovering from the devastation of the Defeat at White Mountain, and the opposition and oppression of the Habsburg Dynasty. The addition of the statuary was ad-hoc, unplanned and not centralized. The decoration of the bridge represented a community building action, a way for the people of Prague to come together and build a symbol of their city, rather than it being built for them. The presence of the statues of saints on the bridge made the bridge a center and a symbol of piety for both citizens and visitors.119

Today, the bridge is a tourist hotspot, and is often overcrowded. There are vendors that line the sides of the bridge, selling various wares from photos to handmade jewelry. Dotted along the way are the occasionally beggars, who prostrate themselves on the ground at the edge of the bridge. The bridge and its restoration, which has been an ongoing pursuit since the Soviet era, has proven to be a source of contention in the city of Prague, one which will likely continue for several years.

8. Wallenstein Palace (Valdštejnský palác)

The traditional Baroque period in Prague began in the late seventeenth century, and continued until approximately the mid-nineteenth century. During this time, a number of buildings throughout the city were designed and constructed. Prague is a predominantly Baroque city. While the city’s architectural style was originally Gothic, it was heavily influenced by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and during the mid- to late-seventeenth century, the Baroque core of the city sprang up. One of the first examples of this new style of building was Valdštejnský palác, the home of Albrecht von Wallenstein, an influential military leader during the Thirty Years’ War.

The early seventeenth century was a time of turmoil for Bohemia, especially during the time following their defeat in 1620 at Bílá Hora (White Mountain), during the Thirty Years’ War. Prague was viewed as a viable cultural competitor to Vienna, especially with the influx of Baroque influences on the city, as it represented a shift in viewpoints, changing the city to a cosmopolitan hub. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Vienna remained a place of few monumental homes, 119. Ibid., 66.
whereas Prague had a number of homes and palaces belonging to wealthy statesmen. Up until the late seventeenth century, Vienna was the fortified capitol, the sovereign seat of the Habsburg monarchy and a defensive point in the ongoing battles against the Turks. One of the most influential military leaders of the time, Albrecht von Wallenstein, who was originally born a Czech, but who did not adhere to the Bohemian image, was a conqueror and a leader. He was born into noble family with an important history, but without title. His family belonged to the Bohemian Brethren, a sect that was quite popular prior to the resurgence in Catholic theories and ideals, however in 1606 he converted to Catholicism, feeling that the Jesuits were a closer representation of true Roman statesmen. His life was relatively short-lived: he was born in 1583 and was killed in 1634 at the age of 50.  

In 1606, at the age of 23, he travelled to Italy, on a Kavaliereise, or “grand-tour,” where he found himself connecting with the Italian culture more than he had his Bohemian roots. It was there that he converted to Catholicism, and began studying the Roman scientists that had come before. He spoke Italian as well as Czech and German, however he never used his knowledge of Czech. 

As he progressed through his life, he built himself a title, and position of power, through both marriages (he married twice, both to women who had titles and land), and the purchasing of estates from alleged Bohemian rebels. In 1624, he purchased the Dukedom of Friedland, after which he was granted the title of Prince of the Empire. A year later, he was a leader of the Imperial Army throughout Germany. 

Following his conquest of much of Europe for the Habsburg Monarchy, Wallenstein expressed a desire to become the King of Bohemia, a role traditionally held by the ruling Habsburg monarch of the time (Emperor Ferdinand II was on the throne). He was promptly relieved of his command of the Imperial Army in 1630, and returned to Prague. Wallenstein waited, and plotted for his revenge. In 1632, Wallenstein was reinstated as a general in the imperial army, to meet the coming onslaught brought about by the Swede, Gustavus Adolphus.
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In the months leading up to his death in 1634, Wallenstein was involved in a number of “peace talks,” aimed at ending the armed conflict and restoring the empire.125 During this time, there were two vastly different methods for obtaining “peace,” which were presented to Wallenstein: either restore the empire to pre-war conditions, or ally with the Swedes and the French to destroy the Habsburgs.126 He chose both, and failed. In 1634, a secret order signed by Ferdinand II on January 24, called for his execution. He was assassinated in his home later that year.127

The main entrance to Wallenstein Palace stands near a small square, Valdštejnské náměstí, in the center of the Lesser Quarter, Prague. The plastered façade is cream in color, with decorative elements done in a light pink. Walking in through one of the smaller entrances, (currently used as a vehicle entrance) places you directly in an inner courtyard, with an entrance to a second courtyard to the right. Across the small courtyard is a second exit, which leads to the gardens. The exterior façade has a clear mix of styles, from the Italian influence, which can be clearly seen on the lower portion of the walls in the colors of the plaster, as well as the rounded arches over each of the windows and doors, to the Netherlandish dormers, which stand on top of the terra cotta roof.

Wallenstein Palace was built on the foundations of the house that had stood there previously, known as Trčkovský dům, and was enlarged and transformed by Wallenstein.128 Construction ended on the palace in 1630. Albrecht von Wallenstein lived in his palace for less than twelve months before he was assassinated by agents of Ferdinand II.

The style of the building, architecturally, represents a blending of different styles. The combination of the Italian and Netherlandish styles illustrates Wallenstein’s adherence to notions of Italian nobility, and emphasize his desire for power. Many scholars believe that Wallenstein devoted much of his life to the study of Italian ideals, especially in regards to power and military leadership.129 A number of frescoes decorate the interior of the palace which were completed by the Italian artist Baccio del Bianco.130 Several illustrate the ideas of Johannes Kepler, the German

126. Ibid., 415.
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mathematician and astronomer and close friend of Wallenstein.131 The frescoes reflect the importance of science and mathematics to Wallenstein. Both Baccio del Bianco and Johannes Kepler had scientific backgrounds; Baccio del Bianco did a number of works for the Medici family in Florence, Italy, that were all heavily centered on scientific exploration.132

A pavilion in the gardens has a frescoed ceiling and is now used for Senate meetings and open-air exhibitions. Within the walls of the garden stands an impressive collection of statuary, each depicting a different scene. At the end of the garden sits a man-made lake, with a small island in the center, accessed by groundskeepers by a small boat. A large bronze statue of St. Wenceslas fighting a dragon, representing Wallenstein’s connection to his traditional Bohemian values and traditions, dominates the island. Smaller bronze statues depicting various scenes in keeping with the themes found throughout the garden surround the periphery of the island.

In 1648, a portion of the Swedish army, led by General Königsmarck, attempted to capture the city of Prague. During their attack, they managed to both maintain a foothold in both the Old City (Staré Město) and the New City (Nové Město), and also loot much of the Lesser Quarter (Malá Strana), including much of the statuary from the Wallenstein gardens. To this day, the statues remain in Drottningholm, Sweden, and replicas stand in the garden in their stead.133

As the city has grown, modern developments have begun to encroach on the traditional, historical buildings. Wallenstein Palace became the property of the Czechoslovak state in the years following World War II, before being converted into the present-day meeting site for the Czech Senate.134 At the far end of the garden stands the Malostranské train station, with an entrance directly to the gardens.

Wallenstein Palace, when it was originally built, was a monumental display of power and control in the city, similar to the Palazzo Medici in Renaissance Florence.135 Wallenstein’s home

134. Ibid.
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was built to compete with the few grand houses in the city, the main example of which, at the time, was Prague Castle. The building remains a strong example of Baroque architecture in the city, surrounded by both Gothic and later Baroque buildings, and it retains the title of first Baroque building built in Prague.

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References


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