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CASTLES

Neuschwanstein
AND
Hohenschwangau



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King Ludwig II of Bavaria, the builder of the castles Neuschwanstein (1869—1886), Linderhof (1874—1878), and Herrenchiemsee (1878—1886) — on the reverse picture in the vestment of the Georgi-Knights (Order of St. George's Knights) — wrote to Richard Wagner on 13th May, 1868: «I have the intention to re-build the ancient castle ruins of Hohenschwangau near the Poellat gorge in the true style of the ancient German knight's castles . . . The place is one of the nicest ever found . . .»

THE VESTIBULE

Having passed the red aisle and the magnificent main staircase of unpolished Untersberg marble, the visitor enters the vestibule in the 3rd storey. It separates the King's apartments from the representation room, the throne-hall which is accessible through the marble portal on the right. The wall-paintings (by Professor W. Hauschild) illustrate scenes from the first part of the Nordic Sigurd saga (ancient version of the Siegfried saga, the Nibelungen-song). Scenes from the second part can be seen in the vestibule of the 4th storey.

The vestibule is covered by a romanesque transverse vault, richly decorated by colourful paintings; its downward arches end in capitals with representations of knights and animals. The chandeliers, the work of the Munich Moradelli factory, are of painted wrought iron. Along the walls, there are heavy, carved benches of oak, covered by bolsters of impressed hogskin.

The trapezoidal shape of the hall was conditioned by a bend in the ledge of the rock serving as natural foundation of the castle.



THE THRONE-HALL

The throne-hall is a representation room in Byzantine style (designed by E. Ille and J. Hofmann). Stairs of Carrara marble lead up to the apse where a throne of gold and ivory should have found its place. But this project was never realized because after the King's death all work planned but not yet begun was cancelled. The paintings (by W. Hauschild) represent, among others, the twelve apostles, six canonized kings and details from their life. In the apse we see Christ in his glory with Mary and his favourite disciple St. John. In the rear of the hall, there is the painting «St. George fighting the dragon». This picture shows, on the left side of the rock, the King's planned fourth castle, Falkenstein. Work scheduled to start on that building in 1886 was never carried out after the King's death.

The gallery is supported by columns of imitated porphyry. The columns of the gallery itself are made of stucco-lapislazuli. The big chandelier in the shape of a Byzantine crown is made of gilded brass and holds 96 candles. For cleaning and changing the candles, the chandelier (weight: 13 cwt.) can be let down by means of a winch.

An especially wonderful work (by Detoma, Vienna) is the tessellated pavement of the hall which is about 50 feet high and 66 feet long. More than two million stones symbolize the life of animals and plants from all over the world.



THE BALCONY

The balcony of the throne-hall grants a splendid view over the Bavarian Alps. In the background, the mighty chain of the Thannheim mountains is towering. In front of them, the two lakes — on the left the «Alpsee» (Alp lake), on the right the somewhat smaller «Schwansee» (Swan lake) — can be seen embedded amidst thick forests. The former castle «Schwanstein», today called «Hohenschwangau» is situated between these two lakes. Early records mention that castle already in 955 and thus prove its eventful history.

For the visitor of the Neuschwanstein castle, Hohenschwangau, too, might be of special interest, where Ludwig II spent 17 years of his childhood and youth. The impressions he gained there probably had a decisive influence and eventually inspired him to build and furnish the Neuschwanstein castle in its present form.

Already in the middle of the 19th century, Maximilian II, father of King Ludwig II, had the intention to re-build the old castle of «Vorderhohenschwangau» (where the Neuschwanstein castle is situated today).

1867, in a period of extended unemployment, Ludwig II ordered his gardener Karl Effner to elaborate various projects with a view to creating work for his subjects. In that connection, he probably encountered the unrealized project of his father. Preliminary work on the construction of the «New Castle of Hohenschwangau» started in 1868, and on September 5th, 1869, the foundation-stone of today's Neuschwanstein castle was laid.



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THE DINING ROOM

The pictures in the dining room show details of the life at the Wartburg castle at the time of the legendary singers' contest (about 1207). Richard Wagner has chosen this theme together with the Thannhaeuser saga as subject of one of his most beautiful operas. The pictures of that room were painted by Ferdinand Piloty of Munich, the most well-known artist who worked at Neuschwanstein. Above the door, framed with red silk curtains, there is the picture of Wolfram v. Eschenbach, the poet of «Parzifal» and «Lohengrin» (1170—1220). The picture above the door leading to a servant-room shows Gottfried von Straßburg («Tristan and Isolde», about 1210).

Unlike the castles Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee, Neuschwanstein has no so-called «magic table». It would have been impossible technically to install such a device since the kitchen is situated three stories below the dining room. Meals came up from the kitchen by a food-lift.

The centre-piece of the table is a present by Munich artists to King Ludwig II (design: Widmann; execution: Wollenweber, Munich). The sculpture of gilded bronze shows Siegfried fighting the dragon. The base of the table decoration is polished marble of Carrara (total weight: about 275 pounds).



THE BEDROOM

The lonely King had a predilection for sumptuous bedrooms. The room built in neogothic style shows the richest oakwood-carvings, especially on the canopy of the bed, on the washstand, on the reading chair and on the centre-pillar. Fourteen sculptors worked 4½ years to complete this room. The wood-carvings at the foot-end of the bed, representing the resurrection of Christ, symbolize the near relation between sleep and death. The picture at the head of the bed is a copy of an icon (by J. Frank), painted on gilded copper. The wall-paintings show details from the saga «Tristan and Isolde», the subject of an opera by Richard Wagner. Curtains and coverings show the light Bavarian blue, the favourite colour of the King; they are embroidered with the Bavarian coat-of-arms, the swan and the Wittelsbach lion. The washstand was furnished with running water, supplied by a source emerging about 660 ft. above the castle so that its natural pressure was sufficient to supply the whole castle — even its uppermost rooms — with water.

The balcony window of the bedroom grants a splendid view of the Poellat gorge with a waterfall about 149 ft. high. In the background, there towers the huge mountain Säuling (about 6749 feet above sea-level).



THE CHAPEL

The dominating piece in the small praying room of Ludwig II, furnished in neogothic style (according to designs by J. Hofmann, Munich) is the richly carved altar. A very precious crucifix (by A. Dießl) stands at this altar.

Pictures and glass-paintings on the windows show scenes from the life of Ludwig IX of France, the Saint (pictures by W. Hauschild; glass-paintings by F. Mayer, Munich).

King Ludwig II was born in the castle Nymphenburg in Munich on August 25th, 1845. At the age of 19, after the death of his father King Maximilian II, Ludwig became King of Bavaria on March 10th, 1864. On January 22nd, 1867 he was engaged to Princess Sophie of Bavaria, a sister of the Austrian empress Elizabeth. However this engagement was broken on October 10th, 1867. After that Ludwig II remained alone until his death.

Neuschwanstein was the first castle built by order of the romantic King, Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee followed later. Neuschwanstein also was the castle where Ludwig's tragic fate should reach its climax. On June 11th, 1886 a commission sent from Munich declared him unfit to rule and took him to the castle Berg on the border of the Starnberg lake, where he got drowned in the lake on June 13th, 1886 under mysterious circumstances. Although for our prosaic contemporaries his life may seem very uncommon, Ludwig II was and is still the favourite king of the Bavarian people.



THE DRESSING ROOM

The dressing room is the only room of the King's apartments without a wooden ceiling. The paintings on the ceiling — in form of an unsheltered arbour — and the pictures on the wall are works by Eduard Ille, a pupil of Moritz von Schwind. The wall-paintings represent scenes from the life of the minne-singer Walther von der Vogelweide (1170—1230). Above the entrance: Walther von der Vogelweide surrounded by birds. On the left: Illustrations from the minne-song «Under the lime-tree». Above the washstand: Walther singing at the court of the Duke Welf VI. (This Duke is buried at the church of Steingaden.) The paintings above the stove and in the corner again show scenes of a Wagner theme: The Mastersingers of Nuremberg.

The toilet-set on the richly carved washstand is Mettlach majolica ware (by Villeroy and Boch). The front side of the King's jewel-box standing on the small table in the corner shows a precious painting (by Spieß): «The right of first night» — *jus primae noctis* — (copied from a picture by Garnier). Curtains and cushion-covers are of violet silk, embroidered with peacock motifs.

The upper court-yard and the gateway building which from 1873 to 1884 was temporarily used as lodging by Ludwig II can be viewed from the window.

The door between the living room and the dressing room is decorated with iron-work, probably the finest of the whole castle.



THE LIVING ROOM

Having passed through an artificial grotto (by A. Dirrigl, Munich) and the winter-garden, the visitor enters the King's living room. It comprises the big parlor and, divided by columns, a smaller sitting corner, the so-called swan corner. The motifs of the wall-paintings (by Heckel and Hauschild) represent the Lohengrin saga which inspired Richard Wagner to compose his opera «Lohengrin». Above the stove: Lohengrin's arrival at Antwerp. Opposite: The miracle of the Holy Grail — Parzifal assigns his son Lohengrin to fight for Elsa of Brabant. Further scenes from the Lohengrin saga are represented in the swan corner.

The doors of the big romanesque-style bookcase are decorated with paintings (by F. Piloty) showing scenes from the tales of «Tristan and Isolde», «Parzifal», and «Siegfried». A big flower vase of Nymphenburg majolica in the shape of a swan, the favourite animal of Ludwig II, stands on the stove. The candlestick, made of gilded brass, carries 48 candles. The ornaments on the chandeliers and columns are made of coloured Bohemian glass; coverings and curtains are of light-blue silk, embroidered with swan motifs. The wrought-iron works on the doors (by Moradelli, Munich) are, as to form and variety, outstanding examples of the excellent workmanship during that time.



THE STUDY

The King's study was built in romanesque style corresponding to the Wartburg castle which served as a model for Neuschwanstein. All woodwork is knot-free oak (made by Poessenbacher and Ehrengut, Munich). All lighting fixtures in that room as well as in the other apartments of the King are gilded brass (by Wollenweber, Munich).

The major part of the paintings in the castle represent motifs which also served as themes for Richard Wagner's operas. For instance, the wall-paintings of the study show scenes from the Thannhaeuser saga and the singers' contest at the Wartburg castle (painted by J. Aigner). Above the stove: Thannhaeuser at the singers' contest. On the right: Thannhaeuser playing outdoors for a dance. Above the bookcase in romanesque style: Thannhaeuser in the Venusberg. On the left: Thannhaeuser as penitent before Pope Urban IV.

Green silk, hand-embroidered curtains and coverings show the Bavarian rhombic coat-of-arms in gold and silver.

The anteroom of the study, much simpler in its decor, was intended for the King's aide. The curtains and coverings are made of blue woollen fabrics and spun gold. The aide's room was already equipped with an electric calling device during the King's life.



THE SINGER'S HALL

The Wartburg castle in Thuringia was the model especially for the singer's hall. The paintings in the hall itself and around the listeners' gallery show details of the Parzifal saga, the subject of Richard Wagner's most important opera. Most of the paintings in that festive hall are works by Professor Spieß and Ferd. Piloty, both of Munich. The stage-scenery «Klingsor's magic forest» was painted by the Munich artist Christian Jank (painter at the Royal Theatre) who also made the major part of the designs for the building and interior equipment of the Neuschwanstein castle.

Above both doors beside the stage, there is the coat-of-arms of the Wittelsbach dynasty with the inscription: «Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, Count Palatine». This inscription is the only reference to the builder in the whole castle.

During the life of Ludwig II, the hall was never used. Only in 1933 festive concerts were arranged on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Richard Wagner's death, and musical events of this kind took place until 1939. During these concerts, the hall was illuminated by the light of more than 600 candles. The angular and panelled pine-wood ceiling gives the hall very good acoustic qualities.

After repeated attempts in 1952, concerts have again taken place since 1969, always in September in the singer's hall. (For further details, please contact the Verkehrsamt — tourist office — of Schwangau, telephone No. 08362/8208.)



THE KITCHEN

In contrast to the kitchens of Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee, the kitchen of Neuschwanstein is still entirely unchanged. The mighty vault is supported by columns of polished stucco-granite. Absolutely modern for that time, there were, besides hot and cold running water, a grill and fully automatic turning spits for game and poultry. Rising hot air in the chimney turned a turbine in a broad tube above the spit, and this movement operated the spit over a gear (an invention by Leonardo da Vinci).

The smoke of the big stove in the middle of the room was led off underfloor. The heat escaping from the stove to the chimney at the same time warmed the dishes in the plate-warmer which is installed in the wall beside the baking oven. The water-tap of the granite fish-tank beside the exit shows the head of a swan. The kitchen was in full operation for two years.

As early as 1884, the Neuschwanstein castle was centrally heated by warm air from the cellar and the ground floor. Hot air flowed through air-shafts to the rooms of the upper stories. The big stoves for heating are placed in special rooms beside the kitchen. The immense volume of firewood was transported to the stoves by means of a lift.





THE «MARIENBRÜCKE»
(Queen Mary's Bridge)

Directly on the southern side of the Neuschwanstein castle the rock steeply slopes towards the Poellat gorge. The name of that wild-romantic, deep gorge derives from the Poellat, a brook coming from the mountains and feeding the 149-foot high Poellat falls below the bridge. At a height of about 304 feet, the Marienbrücke bridges the gorge in a bold curve. This suspended bridge, older than the castle of Neuschwanstein, is a technological masterpiece of the time. As early as 1866, the firm of M.A.N. was entrusted by the royal family with the construction of the bridge, which was later named after Queen Mary, mother of Ludwig II (a Princess of Prussia), «Marienbrücke».

The way over this bridge leads along a winding road to the hunting lodge on the «Tegelberg» (today a restaurant). Walking to the top takes approximately 3 hours, however, it may be reached in a more convenient way by means of a modern ropeway, the funicular being at the foot of the Neuschwanstein castle. The «Tegelberg» is one of the nicest points in the Bavarian part of the Alps, granting an excellent view to Munich and the «Zugspitze» in fair weather.

When walking from the Neuschwanstein castle towards the bridge, visitors will pass the viewpoint «Die Jugend» (the youth). Benches invite for a rest, allowing the observer to enjoy the wonderful panorama.



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THE ROYAL CASTLE OF HOHENSCHWANGAU

The Hohenschwangau castle, a jewel of German romanticism, had its most important epoch shortly after its construction in the 12th century when it became a centre of the minne-song. The builders and lords of the castle were the Knights of Schwangau. The «Heidelberger Liederbuch» (Heidelberg Songbook, also known as «Manessische Handschrift») for ever brings to mind Hiltbold of Schwangau, one of the first known knights, as minne-singer. At first, the Schwangau Knights were vassals of the Welfen dynasty, later of the Staufen who frequently visited the castle.

For instance, Prince Konradin, the last of the Staufen, who at the age of 16 was beheaded in Naples in 1268 had been living there.

The Schwangau Knights died out in the 16th century. The castle was exposed to ruin. During the Napoleonic wars the castle was heavily damaged in 1800 and 1809. Because of its excellent location, the ruin was purchased by Crown Prince Maximilian, later King Maximilian II and father of King Ludwig II; it was restored in 1832—36. Renowned artists of the romantic epoch, e. g. Moritz von Schwind, Dominik Quaglio and many others, helped to rebuild it. Thanks to their work, 14 rooms were furnished, and may be visited today.

King Ludwig II spent most of his time at this castle where he also received Richard Wagner who never set foot to the castles of Neuschwanstein and Herrenchiemsee.

It is assumed that the character of King Ludwig II was decisively influenced by the romantic structures of Hohenschwangau.



THE CHAPEL

The former arms and drinking hall, the place of the minne-song, was re-built to a chapel in neogothic style during the life of King Maximilian II. Holy Mass is still being celebrated there on Sundays and holidays.

Armours date from the 16th century. The two glass-paintings show on the left Emperor Ludwig, the Bavarian, on the right Prince Elector Maximilian of Wittelsbach, army-leader of the Catholic League during the 30-year war.

The most precious piece of the chapel is probably the small winged altar, the work of the Allgäu school, dating from about 1460.

THE BILLIARD ROOM

(no picture included)

This room formerly served mainly as waiting room during audiences.

The English pocket billiard dates from the time of King Maximilian II.

Moreover, the very valuable collection of badges includes decorations conferred on the members of the Bavarian royal family. The hand-carved writing desk with a visitor's book holder of King Ludwig I as well as the arms-case of ivory and gilded silver, a present of the Bavarian communities to Prince Regent Luitpold on his 90th birthday, are also worth mentioning.



THE HALL OF THE SWAN-KNIGHT

The former dining room is famous for its impressive wall-paintings: Scenes from the saga of the swan-knight Lohengrin. They do, however, not represent illustrations of the Wagner opera which was composed only later. The style clearly proves the influence of the romantic school, although the pictures were not drafted by Schwind, but by Christian Ruben, and in 1835 completed by Michael Neher and Lorenz Quaglio.

Notice should also be paid to the tripartite centre-piece of silver, a present by the Bavarian Swabians to Crown Prince Maximilian on his wedding to Princess Mary of Hohenzollern.

The big gorgeous plate of gilded silver is a present by the upper Bavarian community to Prince Regent Luitpold on his 70th birthday. St. George fighting the dragon (silver, partly gilded) was a present to Crown Prince Rupprecht (1939) by the officers of his body-guard. The big bowl of Nymphenburg china (about 1850) and the square piano of Queen Mary with its exquisite intarsia are also worth mentioning. The chairs in that hall are covered by pressed leather, partly gilded.



THE «SCHYREN» - ROOM

(no picture included)

Dressing room of Queen Mary.

«Schyren» is the ancient name of the Wittelsbach dynasty. The wall-paintings show scenes from the history of the very old reigning family and are the work by Wilhelm Lindenschmit.

Attention should also be paid to the coloured lithograph showing the portrait of King Maximilian II, the bronze bust of his consort Mary (by Halbig, 1850), and, in the corner, to the two big photographs of the young King Ludwig II and his younger brother Otto.

THE QUEEN'S BEDROOM

In 1833, Crown Prince Maximilian visited Turkey. This explains the Turkish style of that room which is moreover furnished in conformity with the taste prevailing in the romantic epoch.

The settees are presents by the Turkish Sultan Muhammed II to the Bavarian Crown Prince.

The wall-paintings illustrate stages of his visit to the Orient. They were painted in 1836 by the Swiss master Wilhelm Scheuchzer according to original drawings by the painter Widmer.



LOCAL HISTORY ROOM

(no picture included)

Living room of Queen Mary.

In contrast to the «Schyren»-room, the wall-paintings do not illustrate the history of the Wittelsbach dynasty but show scenes from the long and varying fate of the old castle. For instance, they represent pictures of Hilt-pold of Schwangau, the minne-singer, Prince Konradin, the last of the Staufen dynasty, the reformer Martin Luther, people who lived here and whose fate was closely connected with the old castle's history.

BERCHTA-ROOM

Writing room of Queen Mary.

According to a Bavarian saga, Charlemagne, the first great European, was born at the «Reissmühle» of Gaunting near the Starnberg lake. The wall-paintings are devoted to him and his mother Berchta. They are the first joint work of various painters, and, therefore, unsigned. Fr. X. Glink supervised the work, horses were painted by A. Adam, hunted animals by L. Quaglio.

The gorgeous cup in the middle of the room (gilded brass) was a present of the Georgi-Knights to Prince Regent Luitpold on his 50th anniversary of membership.



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Geschichte der Makratin Auen
von Wallenburg Gemahlin Ottos des Ersten
von Baiern, von 1159 bis 1180.

ROOM OF THE LADY OF THE CASTLE

Living and presence room of the Queen.

The wall-paintings in the castle of Hohenschwangau are mainly fresco-paintings on gypsum ground. This room was restored in 1849. The pictures by Fr. Giessmann are oil-paint on canvas according to the original models. The paintings illustrate the typical life of a lady of the castle in the Middle Ages — here, scenes from the life of Agnes of Wasserburg, consort of the first Wittelsbach duke, Otto I.

The main attraction is the big chandelier of silver, decorated with swans, the heraldic picture of the castle. The heavy centre-piece of silver, a present to Prince Regent Luitpold (1901), is a copy of the Ludwig-well at Ludwigshafen.

On the mantelpiece, there is a coloured lithograph showing Queen Mary, and two busts of her sons Ludwig and Otto (by Halbig, 1850).

The marble bust represents King Otto I. He was the first King of Greece, brother of King Maximilian II and uncle of King Ludwig II.

The small bronze statue shows Prince Regent Luitpold as huntsman.

The lower storey accommodates the apartments of the Queen, the upper storey the apartments of the King.



THE HALL OF HEROES

The paintings of this festive hall illustrate the Wilkina saga, part of the legends about Dietrich of Berne, which were lost in Germany but preserved by a Norwegian copy of the 13th century.

The pictures are based on drawings by Moritz von Schwind; they were completed by Glink, Giessmann, Neher, and Adam.

An especially nice scene is illustrated on the picture «King Ermenrich's fête in Rome». When painting it, the artists, just for fun, immortalized the three most famous masters of their time: Moritz von Schwind, Peter Cornelius, and Wilhelm Kaulbach who can be seen on that picture on the right of the main scene near a wine-cask. During their lifetime, it is true, these painters were not averse to having a drink.

The magnificent centre-piece of hot-gilded bronze was made in 1840 for King Ludwig I, according to design by L. v. Schwanthaler. The bowls are of Zwiesel crystal. The dominating feature on the centre-piece (originally intended for the Munich court but later brought to Hohenschwangau) is the Nibelungen saga.

The wood-carvings on the mantelpiece are Berchtesgaden work and represent Prince Regent Luitpold.

The bust of Carrara marble showing King Ludwig II was made by the American sculptor Elisabeth Ney in 1869. The King himself was posing for that artist.

King's Command on the Bay of ...

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THE ROOM OF THE HOHENSTAUFEN

Dressing and music room of the King.

The wall-paintings in that room are devoted to the Hohenstaufen dynasty. In the foregoing part, reference was already made to the relationship between that princely family and the Hohenschwangau castle. Close connections had also existed between the Wittelsbach and Hohenstaufen dynasties. For instance, it is reported that in the 12th century Count Otto of Wittelsbach spared the life of the renowned Staufen Emperor Barbarossa (Frederick I) and was appointed by him first Wittelsbach duke of Bavaria in 1180.

Notice should be paid in this room especially to the very nice square piano, the so-called Wagner piano, made of maple-tree wood.

Richard Wagner played here from his own works to King Ludwig II who was a good pianist himself.

The chapel in the corner was furnished by Ludwig II. The two very precious Russian icons were presented to King Ludwig II by Czar Alexander II.

The crucifix is made of lapislazuli. The outstanding image of Christ is the work of the famous Danish sculptor B. Thorvaldsen.



THE TASSO-ROOM

The royal bedroom was painted according to motifs of the Italian poet Torquato Tasso. The pictures illustrate the tale of Rinaldo and Armida of Tasso's «La Gerusalemme Liberata».

The colourful carpet of King Maximilian II is a beautiful piece in that room.

In 1871 King Ludwig II suffering from a feverish toothache was resting here when Count Holnstein, Bismarck's envoy, arrived and handed him the famous «Letter of the Emperor». After long negotiations which lasted for hours the suffering King agreed to sign and thus approved of Wilhelm I being elected German Emperor.

THE WELFEN-ROOM

(no picture included)

That room was formerly a small library.

The wall-paintings show scenes from the history of the Welfen dynasty whose members as dukes of Bavaria were the predecessors of the Wittelsbach dynasty on the Bavarian throne.

The last Bavarian duke of the Welfen dynasty, Henry the Lion, was the founder of Munich.



THE AUTHARI-ROOM

Named after the ancient Bavarian saga of Authari, the King of the Langobards, when he was wooing for Princess Theodelinde, daughter of Duke Garibald I. The pictures were drafted by Moritz von Schwind and later completed by Fr. X. Glink, and A. Adam, the painter of horses.

Richard Wagner stayed in that room, when he visited the Hohenschwangau castle.

THE WRITING ROOM

(no picture included)

The furniture is made of Lebanon cedar. The gorgeous box in the middle of the room was a present by the Bavarian cities to Prince Regent Luitpold on his 80th birthday. The wall-paintings, drafted by Moritz von Schwind, show the typical life of a medieval knight. The silver shield was presented by 154 Bavarian nobles to Crown Prince Maximilian and his bride Mary on their wedding in 1843.

King Ludwig used to sit on the leather-covered settee during his audiences.

Picture on the Reverse

The ancient castle of Hohenschwangau is situated amidst a marvellous landscape. At the foot of the castle, there is the «Alpsee» (Alp lake) with unique excursion ways leading around it.

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