

HYDROTHERAPEUTIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN HEALTH RESORT ABBAZIA / OPATIJA OWNED BY THE SOUTH RAILWAYS COMPANY

HIDROTERAPIJSKI ZAVODI U AUSTRO-UGARSKOM LJEČILIŠTU OPATIJA U VLASNIŠTVU DRUŠTVA JUŽNIH ŽELJEZNIKA

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SUMMARY

The South Railways Company built two hydrotherapeutic institutions Warm baths (Warmbade-Pavillion) and Hydrotherapeutic Institution (Hydropatische Anstalt) in the Angiolina Park in Opatija in 1884. The both institutions were in operation till 1904. Due to the deterioration of the both hydrotherapeutic institutions and increasing number of guests (in 1899 - 4009 guests, in 1902 - 19.001 guests) the South Railways Company built in 1902-1904 new modern hydrotherapeutic treatment institution the Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor (Erherzog Ludwig Viktor Bad). The leading physician (dirigierender Arzt) of these institutions was Professor Dr. Julius Glax, who added the thalassotherapy to the balneology. In 1907 the post of the leading physician of the Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor (Erherzog Ludwig Viktor Bad) took over Dr. Albert Nussbaum. The Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor institution was operating till 1919, when it was transformed into a hotel.

Key words: Hydrotherapeutic institution; Warm bath pavilion; The Covered Bath of Archduke Ludwig Viktor hydrotherapy; Abbazia / Opatija

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The implementation of water as the source of well being and the use of water for several therapeutic treatments was well known in the ancient times. In the middle ages however the therapeutical implementation of water was forgotten. Only in the 19th century Vinzenz Prisnietz (1799-1851), based on his own experiences, introduced healing with cold water in the Habsburg monarchy [1].

In Austria Vinzenz Prisnietz is regarded the initiator of the cold water healing. All his life he was living in his birthplace *Gräfenberg* (today *Lazne Jesenik* in Czech Republic). In 1822 he built his first hydrotherapeutic institution. After 1826 numerous patients started to come to him for treatment.

In 1830 the Austrian government allowed him to build and to direct the hydrotherapeutic institution for cold water treatment. For the treatment he used cold compresses, icy splatters, as well as drinking therapy and air baths. Besides that he recommended healthy nutrition and physical exercise, and emphasised the significance of fresh air. With his activities he made the hydrotherapy popular. Many (120) of his contemporary physicians became his students [1].

His successful hydrotherapeutic treatments attracted numerous patients into *Lazne Jesenik* that are one of the most known health resorts in Czech Republic even today. There his hydrotherapeutic treatments are still available to the guests.

The empirical findings of Vincenc Prisnietz were scientifically substantiated by Professor Dr Wilhelm Winternitz (1834-1917). In 1864 he was appointed the associate professor for hydrotherapy at the Vienna medical school (*Wiener Medizinische schule*), today Medical University Vienna. Already the next year he founded his Hydrotherapeutic institution (*Wasserheilanstalt*) in *Kaltenleutgeben* near Vienna. The institution was operating from 1865 till 1938. In 1872 he successfully added a little hydrotherapeutic department (*hydrotherapetische Station*) to the newly established polyclinic (*Allgemeine Poliklinik*) in Viena [2].

The greatest economic company in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century was the South Railways Company (*K.u.K. priv. Südbahngesellschaft* 1858-1923). Its managing director Friedrich Julius Schüller (1832-1894) was the first to recognise the high market value of the leisure time and he introduced the tourist marketing into the South Railways Company [3]. South Railways Company was building railways, provided railway coaches that enabled comfortable journey, it built the necessary infrastructure at



Figure 1 - Opatija. Middle of the picture Hotel Quarneo, lower building to the right warm bath pavilion. Postcard mailed 1901.
(Family archive Glax – Fischinger)

Slika 1. Opatija. U sredini slike Hotel Quarneo, desno uz njega nizka zgrada Kupališni paviljon s toplim kupkama (Warmbade-Pavillion). Razglednica slana 1901. (Obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

the railway stations also in the places with potential possibility of tourist development. In 1883 the managing director of the South Railways Company Friedrich Julius Schüller invited three distinguished physicians of the time to Opatija for consultation. Those were Professor Dr Max Oertel (1835-1897) from Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, Professor Dr Theodor Billroth (1829-1894) from Vienna Medical School, and Professor Dr Julius Glax (1846-1922) from Karl – Franzens University in Graz. At their meeting it was decided that South Railways Company should build all the necessary infrastructure in Opatija, so that Opatija could be designated the climatic health resort and the public sea bath [4].

In 1884 The South Railways Company built its first hotel in Opatija Hotel Quarnero, today Hotel Kvarner, the warm bath pavillion nearby (Warmbade-Pavillion) (Fig 1) and hydrotherapeutic institution (Hydropatische Anstalt) (Fig 2). They were designed by the architect engineer Franz Wilhelm (?-?), the director and inspector at the Bureau for the High Constructions at the South Railways Company [3].



Figure 2 - Opatija. Hydrotherapeutic institution (Hydropatische Anstalt). Postcard mailed 1895. (Family archive Glax – Fischinger)

Slika 2. Opatija. Hidroterapeutski zavod (Hydropatische Anstalt). Razglednica slana 1895. (Obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

The warm bath pavillion was linked with the hotel Kvarner with the covered passage (Wandelbahn) [5]. There were 12 bath tubs and the most contemporary equipment [6]. In the pavilion the guests could enjoy warmed sea and fresh water baths, and electric (galvanic and faradic) baths. For inhalations there were portable respiratory devices using diluted or compressed air, designed by Professor Dr Johann Schnitzler (1835-1893), and the clinical scale [7].

The hydrotherapeutic Institution was located in Angiolina Park. Showers, water baths, treatment with cold water and steam baths were available to the health resort guests. There were two types of showers available: high pressure and Scottish showers. They were mobile and fixed. The baths were total or partial. The total baths were possible in a smaller pool [8].

In the French half-sitting tub there was possible to perform Roman-Irish showers, healing and local showers (vaginal, haemorrhoidal, rectal, lumbar...) [7].

In the both institutions professionally trained personnel took care of the consumers of the baths and of the performance of the hydrotherapeutic treatments [7].

Accurate plan (ground plan and elevation) of the indoor alignment of all therapeutic utensils in the hydrotherapeutic Institution (Fig 3) and the picture of the French half-sitting tub with all above mentioned showers were published by the professor of balneology Dr Julius Glax in his book *Balneologie* (*Balneologie*, 1897) [8] (Fig 4). Professor Dr J. Glax was director of the both hydrotherapeutic institutions. He practiced in the Hydropatic Institution every day from 3 p.m. till 4 p.m. [7]. The both institutions were owned by the South Railways Company till 1898. In this year the owner of the both institutions became the International Company of the Sleeping Railways Wagons (*Internationale Schlafwagen-Gesellschaft*) [3].

Due to the increasing number of guests (the season 1887/1888 – 2.143 guests, season 1901/1902 – 19.001 guests) and deterioration of the both hydrotherapeutic institutions the Health Resort Board (*Kurkommission*) decided to build new covered baths in 1902 as was suggested by the Opatija Physician Society (*Verein der Ärzte in Abbazia*) [4].

The preparation of plans and the construction of the covered bath was taken over by the Bureau for the High Structures at the South Railways Company in Vienna under the guidance of the engineer architect Robert von Morpurgo (1872–1941). The one floor building was planned for the covered baths. It was planned that in it the both so far separated institutions would operate. The project included also the luxurious building with a swimming pool the size of which was 10 x 15 m. The covered bath was built

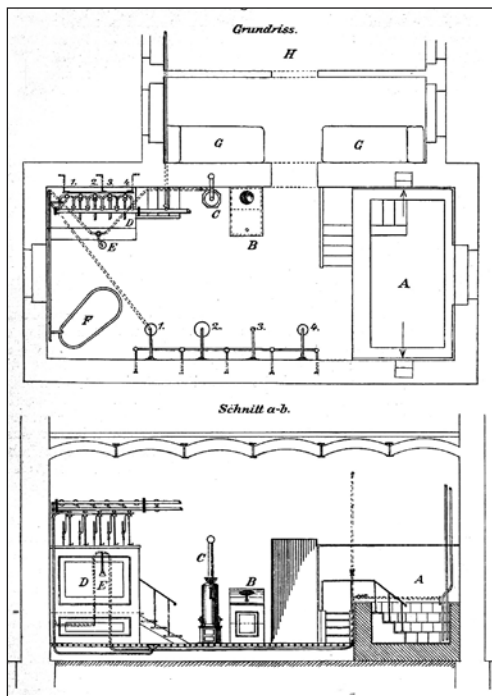


Figure 3. Positions of hydrotherapeutical devices on ground plan of the Hydrotherapeutic institution and longitudinal section of institution. (Source: Julius Glax *Balneologie*, 1897)

Slika 3. Pozicija hidrotérapeutskog uredjenja na tlocrtu Hidropatskog zavoda i uzdužni presjek zavoda. (Vir: Julius Glax, *Balneologie*, 1897)

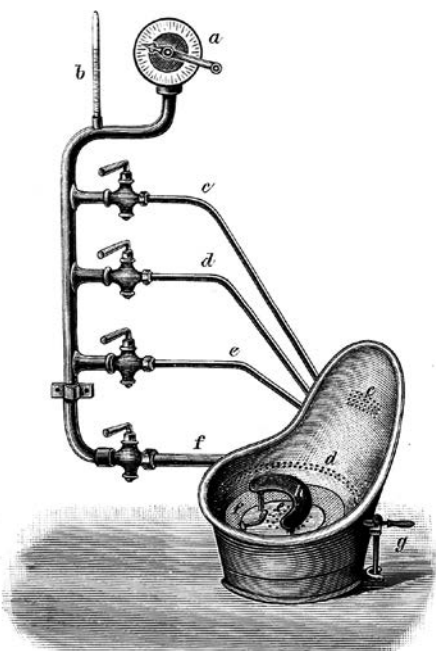


Figure 4. The picture of the French half-sitting tub for local showers of the body.
(Source: Julius Glax, *Balneologie*, 1897)

Slika 4. Slika francuske sjedeće kupke za lokalna tuširanja tijela u Hidroterapeutskom zavodu. (Vir: Julius Glax, Balneologie, 1897)

Morpurgo, and Professor Dr J. Glax as the health resort principle and the leading balneologist in Opatija [9]. The newly constructed covered bath was named The Covered Bath of Archduke Ludwig Viktor (*Erzherzog Ludwig Viktor Bad*) honouring the most frequent guest in Opatija from the sovereign Habsburg family Ludwig Viktor (1842-1919) (Fig 5).

The Covered Bath of Archduke Ludwig Viktor was offering baths in tubs (28) with warm fresh or sea water in the ground floor. In the first floor there were facilities for hydrotherapeutic treatments and various types of healing baths and medical consultant room with the waiting room.

In the basement and in the attic there were auxiliary facilities for its undisturbed operation. In the basement there were engine room, pantries, laundry room, drying room, store room for coal and a room for the production of carbonic acid, and the janitor's apartment.

along the main street (today Ulica Maršala Tita 136/4) in the Opatija centre at the immediate vicinity of the Hotel *Kronprinzessin Stephanie*, today Hotel Imperial. The construction of the building with the swimming pool was never accomplished [9].

They began to build the covered baths in November 1902 and they finished in December 1903. In the State Archive in Rijeka (DAR) the protocol on delivery of the covered baths into use is kept (February 18, 1904). At this event there were present representatives of the South Railways Company, of the International Company of the Sleeping Railways Wagons, the leader of the project the engineer architect Robert von



Figure 5. Opatija. The Covered Bath of Archduke Ludwig Viktor (Erzherzog Ludwig Viktor Bad). Postcard mailed 1909. (Family archive Glax – Fischinger)

Slika 5. Opatija. Zatvoreno kupalište nadvojvode Ludviga Viktora (Erzherzog Ludwig Viktor Bad). Razlednica slana 1909. godine. (Obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

In the attic there were rooms for the personnel, working space, ironing room, depository for linen and containers for warm sea water [9].

The hydrotherapy was prescribed by a physician. While waiting for a therapy a reading room was available for the patients. The rooms for hydrotherapy were separated for men and for women. Total baths were performed in two smaller pools (2,50m x 2,50m), other baths in tubs (13), French half sitting tubs (2) and walking pools (2). The consumers could use also steam (3), spray (4), electric or galvanic (2), electro light (2), herbal (2) and baths with added carbon (3). For the hydrotherapeutic treatments 7 beds (*Einpackbett*) were available and a bench for towelling (*Frotirtbank*). In the first floor there also was luxurious princess bath (*Fürstenbad*) available [9].

The hydrotherapy was performed on the principle of the leading Austro-Hungarian balneologist at the time Professor Dr W. Winternitz [10]. Professor Dr J. Glax, the physician at the covered bath, was a personal friend of W. Winternitz. The substitute for Professor Dr J. Glax in the covered bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor was Dr Franz Tripold (1865-1956) [9]. In 1907

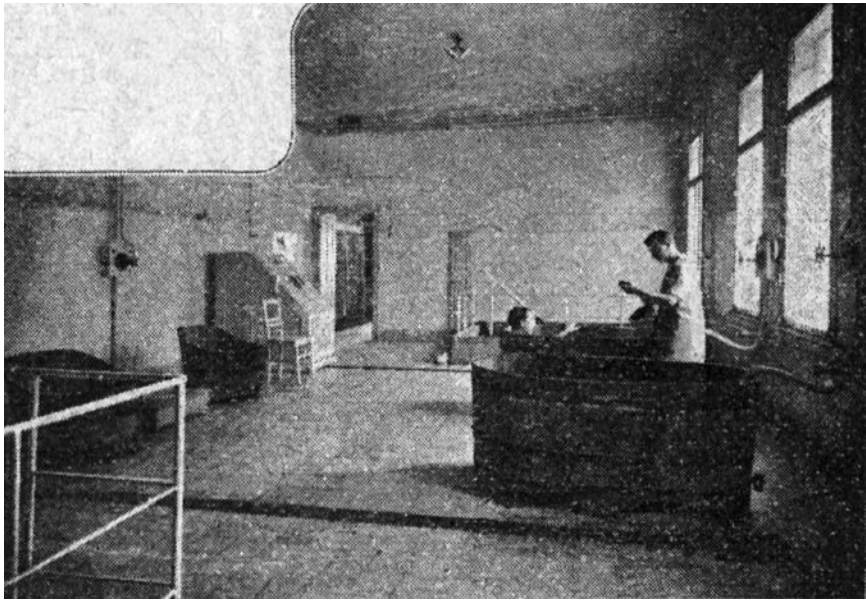


Figure 6. The room for various types of hydrotherapy in The Covered Bath of Archduke Ludvig Viktor. (Source: *Abbazia als Kurort*, 1906)

Slika 6. Erzherzog Ludvig Viktor Bad . Dvorana za sve vrste hidroterapije u Zatvorenom kupalištu nadvojvode Ludviga Viktora. (Vir: Abbazia als Kurort, 1906).

Dr Albert Nussbaum (1862-1932), former ward doctor of the Vienna general hospital (*Wiener allgemeinen Krankenhauses*), was appointed physician at this bath. He practiced every day from 10 till 12 a.m. and from 2 till 4 p.m. [11].

The Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludvig Viktor and its offer were closely presented in the book *Opatija as the health resort (Abbazia als Kurort, Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag des Prof. Dr. J. Glax, 1906)* in the chapter *Opatija as the sea bath (III. Kapitel. Abbazia als Seebad)*. The chapter was written by a physician Dr Hugo Schwerdtner (1875-1936). Six photographs presenting the inside of the bath were included there. From the historian point of view the most interesting is the photography of the room for various types of hydrotherapy (Fig 6). In the article the author emphasised Glax's expansion of the Winternitz's hydrotherapy with fresh water by introducing the application of the sea water [4].

In the books *Guides in Opatija (Abbazia. Ein Führer für Kurgäste)*, that were edited in December each year, in the *Direction of the health resort institutions (Die Direction der Curanstalten der Internationalen Schlafwagensgesellschaft in Abbazia)* in the chapter *The baths and other therapeutic treatment offers (Bäder*

und sonstige Curbehelfe) was advertising the covered bath. The excellent and the most modern equipment of the hydrotherapeutic division were particularly underlined. Hydrotherapeutic treatments with sea water and sea baths with added carbon (CO₂) were mentioned as specialty in their offer. In *the Guides in Opatija* they stated that these baths and treatment due to high levels of salt (*Salzgehalt*) in the sea water have the same effects as the baths in Nauheim (authors' remark: Bad Nauheim was the leading and the most famous bath in Germany at the time). In the books *Guides in Opatija* the offer of all types of healing baths and hydrotherapeutic treatments including the prices and the bath order (*Badeordnung*) were published. The bath order of the Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor included 21 paragraphs. Among others it precisely determined the duties of the customers and of the bath personnel. Especially interesting is the 16th paragraph that already at that time prohibited smoking in the bath institutions. The offer in the Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor constantly followed the novelties in hydrotherapy. Thus in 1909 the ozone baths (*Ozetzähler*) were introduced [11].

On the southern side along the main street the covered bath had commercial premises. Those were shops where they were selling the children's toys, clothing, carpets [12].

Later baths were linked with winter garden and with the *Hotel Kronprinzessin Stephanie* by the covered passage. Thus the use of baths and hydrotherapies was facilitated for the numerous guests [4, 7].

The health resort and sea bath Opatija attracted more and more guests by offering sea baths and mostly by the contemporary designed Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor. In 1904 there were 23.223 guests, and already in 1910 the number of guests almost doubled (42.740 guests). It is interesting that the Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor needed general renovation in 1912 after only 8 years of operation [9].

The Imperial King's Field Hospital (*K.u.K. Feldspital 7 10*) was established in Opatija during the great war in 1916. The recovering patients were placed in the hotels and its allocations (*Hotel Quarnero, Kronprinzessin Stephanie, Palace, Bellevue*). The hospital was allowed to use also the Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor for its patients [13]. During Italian occupation the bath was changed into *Select Hotel Plaza* owned by S. A. *Liburnica* [14].

The golden era for the health resort in Opatija finished after the Great War. Italians did not continue the tradition of therapeutic treatments

tourism and focused rather on the attraction of healthy guests by the organisation of numerous events [15].

In 1938 Opatija lost its status of the excellent health resort and became *luogo di cura di III categoria* [16].

Today the building of the former Covered Bath of the Archduke Ludwig Viktor is only partially used. In the ground floor along the Marshal Tito street there are the *Tourist Board Opatija* and *Privredna banka Zagreb*. The former commercial premises were changed and organised in only one shop. There is a self-service supermarket *Konzum*. The first floor and the northern part of the ground floor are empty and are deteriorating. The working rooms in the attic of the covered bath are transformed into apartments.

After the Second World War the therapeutic tourist offer was revitalised and was redirected more into therapeutic treatments than only in enjoying holidays. In 1957 The *Health Centre Thalassotherapy* was founded. The centre resumed the directions of the therapeutic tourism development in Opatija and became the referential centre for medically programmed holidays of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia.

Thalasso Wellness Centre and therapeutic hotel *Villa Dubrava* are affiliated with the *Health centre Talassotherapy*. The *Water Park* is a special offer of the therapeutic hotel [17]. The *Water Park* project is provided with the most contemporary pool using the warm sea water. Through the covered passage the pool is linked to The *Health Centre Thalassotherapy* and to the therapeutic hotel *Villa Dubrava*. In the pool there are numerous utensils for the performing of hydrotherapy. Thus in Opatija there is continuation of the hydrotherapy tradition based on the methods of Priesnitz, Winternitz and Glax certainly with the modernised approaches. *Thalassoterapija* in Opatija is placed at the very top of the European therapeutic treatment destinations with its programs of modern wellness and water park.

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SAŽETAK

Društvo Južnih željeznica u Opatiji sagradilo je 1884. godine u Opatiji Kupališni paviljon s toplim morskim kupkama (Warmbade-Pavillion) uz Hotel Quarnero i Hidroterapeutski zavod (Hydropatische Anstalt) u parku Angiolina. Kupališni paviljon i Hidroterapeutski zavod djelovali su do početka 1904. godine. Uslijed dotrajalosti tih ustanova i velikog povećanja broja lječilišnih gostiju (1899. godine - 4009 gostiju, 1902. godine - 19.001 gostiju). Društvo Južnih željeznica sagradilo je od 1902.-1904. godine novu, najmoderniju hidroterapeutsku ustanovu pod imenom Kupalište nadvojvode Ljudevita - Viktora (Erzherzog Ludwig Viktor Bad). Glavni liječnik Hidroterapeuskog zavoda i Kupališta nadvojvode Ljudevita - Viktora bio je prof. dr. Julius Glax, koji je balneološku terapiju dopunio sa talasoterapijom. 1907. godine postaje glavni liječnik kupališta dr. Albert Nussbaum. Zatvoreno Kupalište nadvojvode Ljudevita - Viktora ukinuto je 1919. godine, kada je prenamijenjeno u hotel.

Ključne riječi: Hidroterapeutski zavod; Kupališni paviljon s toplim kupkama; Zatvoreno kupalište nadvojvode Ludviga Viktora; Opatija