

The move of the Dark Count and the Dark Countess into the Castle Eishausen 200 years ago

In the morning **29th September 1810** three gentlemen met in the house of a privy councillor of Hildburghausen. These were Karl von Baumbach, the representative of the ducal finance deputation Lotz as well as the senator Johann Carl Andreä. They discussed a rent affair which concerned the ducal domain Eishausen.

Senator Andreä intended to rent the main building of the domain, the so-called **Castle Eishausen**. The court of Hildburghausen acquired the former feudal estate in 1802 and might have been gladly to be able to rent the main building of the complex lucratively. The fact that the affair was accompanied by the head of the provincial government personally, makes clear which value it had. The permission for the deal was given by the highest place.

The three gentlemen went from Hildburghausen to Eishausen on the same day to hand over the object to the senator. The concluded contract enclosed, in the end, the first and second upper floor of the castle, a part of the ground floor with kitchen and pantry, a cellar as well as various stables for horses and a travel carriage in the outbuildings.



Castle Eishausen, illustration by Andre „Max“ Müller, Hildburghausen

Not all **objects** were in a good condition. Window frames were decayed, hinges damaged and shutters defective, which should be repaired at the expenses of the ducal management. Other works, as for example the improvement of the rooms in the first upper floor or the repair of the stoves, should take place by the tenant.

Senator Andreä did not want to move into the Castle himself. He acted by order of gentleman "**Vavel de Versay**" from Hildburghausen who had lived seclusive there the last two and a half year in different accommodations with his always deeply veiled companion. This pair, today called the Dark Count and the Dark Countess, wanted to enter the remote castle to withdraw even farther from the

public life. Whether "de Versay" enquired the Castle Eishausen by Andreä or whether the court offered the building to the stranger, cannot be probably determined any more.

The move into the Castle Eishausen already taken place during the day after signing the lease contract. On this **30th September 1810**, a Sunday, several carriages drove from the "Radefeldschen Haus" – the previous dwelling of the pair – to Eishausen, because not only the personal having and property of the both had to transport into the new domicile, but also numerous leased furniture with which the castle should be equipped.

Meanwhile, the pair seemed to live in Eishausen only temporarily. The duration of the contract was limited at first to six months. Later, when a longer stay became foreseeable, the contracts had a term of one year.

In the end "Vavel de Versay" and his companion lives a seclusive life for nearly 30 years there up to their death in 1837 and in 1845. Their existence, about which was reported after their death over and over again, was so strange that the reasons for this behaviour is discussed till today. What one can assume as securely, is that gentleman Vavel de Versay lived under a wrong name and has been in truth a former Dutch diplomat called **Leonardus Cornelius van der Valck**. However, the identity of the lady is not cleared finally till our days.

After the death of the strange inhabitants the Castle Eishausen stood widely empty. Different ideas of utilisation like the use for a poorhouse or a use for the bibliographical institute of Joseph Meyer failed. After nearly 30 years the building was so ramshackle that it **was sold** for material production and **pulled down in 1874**. Today only some stones reminds on the location of the castle. For the village Eishausen and for the whole research which deals with the events at that time this is a big loss, because the most important dwelling of the pair and a place of memory got lost.

However, the Castle Eishausen never got in oblivion completely. To preserve the memory also to the **architecture of the building**, the "Heimatverein Eishausen e.V." made two models during the last years which illustrates the outside of the domain. Besides, in February of this year the inside of the castle could be visualised for the first time by a project of the "Madame Royale" Historical Society and the Coburg University of Applied Sciences. There was made a three-dimensional computer reconstruction, which is available on DVD. In the end, artists work with the building too. Andre "Max" Müller from Hildburghausen who deals beside his woodworking also with graphic reconstruction, has made several illustrations of the Castle Eishausen (see the picture www.woodgrafic.de).

Further information on the internet under www.Madame-Royale.de or www.Dunkelgraefin.de.