

History of the House by the Park

On the site where the House by the Park stands today, a popular country restaurant owned by Johann Englisch, an Olomouc burgher and restaurateur, had existed since 1879. Later, in 1887–1888, J. Englisch built a three-storey palace-style residential house with a restaurant on the ground floor, based on a design by Emil Schnizer von Lindenstamm. At that time, it was one of the first residential buildings on the newly established street (then called Avenue of Trees). According to the 1890 census, 30 people lived here in seven rented flats, mostly members of the moderately affluent educated class. For example, the family of Emil Seyss, director of the German gymnasium, lived here; his infamous son Artur Seyss-Inquart later became a leading figure of the Austrian Nazis and, during the Second World War, served as Reich Commissioner in the Netherlands. In 1946, he was sentenced to death for war crimes at Nuremberg.

In 1896, based on a design by the renowned architect Jacob Gartner, an extension was added to the original building: a rear wing containing a representative social and theatre hall. The ground floor of this tract was from then on used for various businesses. Between 1912 and 1922 the premises housed the company of Salomon Grätzer, which produced Christmas ornaments. From 1924, Bohumil (Bohuš) Valihrač operated his printing shop here; like many others, it ceased to exist in 1948.

After Amalie Englisch, widow of Johann Englisch, fell into financial difficulties, the house was sold at auction in 1912 to the Jewish Grätzer family, or more precisely to the aforementioned company Salomon Grätzer. The family worked mainly in the paper industry. They established paper mills in Litovel and in Vlčice near Loštice, and later also produced Christmas decorations. The economic crisis that erupted after the First World War negatively affected their business. The branch of the family that owned our House by the Park had to sell the property in 1921 to the metalworkers' union in order to satisfy creditors. The building then remained for nearly 90 years in the hands of Czech metalworkers' unions, which brought together employees mainly from the engineering plants in Řepčín and Hodolany.

Czech workers had already been using the local restaurant extensively for their political and social activities. From 1908, newspapers and official reports often referred to this house as the “Workers’ House.” It is therefore no surprise that one of the strongest trade union organizations in Olomouc eventually acquired the building, which was from then on officially called the House of Trade Unions. After all trade union associations were merged during the Second World War into a single organization (later known as ROH), various regional and district trade union institutions were based here. Because of its great historical importance for the labour movement, the building was declared a protected monument in 1958.

As the house gradually became an administrative building, the restaurant closed (in 1949). Hospitality services were revived only in the early 1990s, but no longer at the front of the building; instead, a courtyard premises were used. In 2010, the property was purchased from the unions by the company Dům u parku, s. r. o., which carried out a major reconstruction in the following years.

History of the Restaurant of the House by the Park

A restaurant existed here long before the House by the Park itself was built. Since 1879, the site had been home to a country inn with a skittle alley and a glass pavilion, owned by the Olomouc burgher and restaurateur Johann Englisch. In 1888, a three-storey residential building with a restaurant on the ground floor was built in its place. The name of the establishment changed many times depending on the tenant, but the most common names were “At the Englisch’s,” later also “Karviná Tavern” or “Těšetice Tavern.” From an advertisement published before 1914, we learn what guests could look forward to: “In addition to the best local and foreign wines, an excellent Märzen beer from the brewhouse of the privileged burghers of Olomouc will be served; I also warmly recommend the renowned good Viennese cuisine.”

Long after the construction boom had transformed the previously rural landscape of Nová Ulice into a modern suburban district, the establishment continued to be a popular destination for the predominantly German-speaking middle class of Olomouc. Many German associations held their meetings here: for example, the Fortschritt (Progress) association, the Fidelio society, the First Olomouc Cyclists’ Club, the Barbers’ Club, and others. The German character of Englisch’s restaurant was further reinforced in 1906–1908, when it was leased by the Karviná Brewery, owned by the influential industrial family of Counts Larisch-Mönnich, one of the prominent German economic and political elites in Moravia and Silesia.

Shortly before the First World War, however, Czech associations and organisations also began to gather here more frequently, helped by the fact that in 1908 the establishment was leased to a Czech company, the Těšetice Joint-Stock Brewery. At the height of national rivalry between Germans and Czechs, this event was seen as an important political issue. The “battle over pubs” did not bypass Nová Ulice either. The Czech newspaper *Našinec* published a succinct but telling note: “The Karviná Tavern has been leased to the Těšetice brewery from 1 January 1908. Thus Olomouc has gained a new Czech hospitality establishment.”

The restaurant At the Englisch’s retained its Czech character. Mainly workers’ associations and trade unionists met here. Various mass meetings and gatherings advocating better living conditions for workers were organised in the courtyard, as well as public exercise events of workers’ physical-education organisations. For this reason, from 1908 onwards, the unofficial name “Workers’ House” appeared in newspapers and official reports.

The restaurant continued to operate even after metalworkers’ unions bought the property in 1921. The last innkeeper to whom the establishment was leased was Antonín Němec in 1949. The restaurant closed when the unions decided to convert most rooms into offices. Furthermore, after February 1948, small businesses were being liquidated on a massive scale.

After a long hiatus, a hospitality business was reopened here only in 1992, but no longer in the front street wing; instead, a covered courtyard garden was created. The pub was first called *Pod padákem* and between 2000 and 2010 *Wild West Ranch Restaurant*. In 2010, after a change of owners and a major reconstruction, this establishment ceased to exist. In 2015, this traditional Olomouc restaurant was renewed.

History of the Representative Hall of the House by the Park

Following the design of architect Jacob Gartner, Amalie Englisch, widow of restaurateur Johann Englisch, the first owner of our house, decided in 1896 to add a rear wing with a representative social and theatre hall to the residential building in order to increase the attractiveness of the local restaurant. The sub-hall structure was designed as a modern reinforced-concrete construction intended for commercial use. The designer Jacob Gartner, born in Prostějov, was of Jewish origin and belonged to the most significant Austrian architects before the First World War. In Olomouc, he designed several interesting buildings, most notably the Olomouc synagogue built between 1895 and 1897 in a historicist, so-called Moorish-Oriental style (today the site is occupied by a car park on Palach Square). The synagogue was burned down by the Nazis in March 1939. Between 1894 and 1899 he also designed the building of Count Pöttingen's Institute for Girls' Education in Olomouc.

At the turn of the 1910s, Czech theatre groups also took an interest in the hall. This was because the Czech inn *U města Prahy* in Nová Ulice, where travelling Czech theatre groups traditionally performed, was purchased in 1911 by the German self-government of Nová Ulice and renamed *Stadthof*. The new owner refused to rent the premises to Czech associations and theatre troupes. Therefore, the idea arose to use the hall in our House by the Park as a new stage for Czech performances. In 1910, the house was bought by the firm Salomon Grätzer. Fortunately, unlike in the case of the inn *U města Prahy*, the change of ownership did not lead to the exclusion of Czech theatre. The Grätzers allowed the ambitious theatre director Bedřich Jeřábek to transfer the tradition of performances of travelling theatre troupes to the new venue.

This travelling ensemble entered the history of Czech theatre in Olomouc with its guest performance held in the autumn of 1911 in the representative hall. Before the theatre operations could begin, Bedřich Jeřábek had to carry out several adaptations: extending the stage, installing electric lighting, and adjusting the auditorium, which after the renovation had a capacity of 300 seats, 400 standing places on the ground floor, and 300 standing places in the gallery. Tram transport was arranged to take visitors from Hodolany, Holice, and the surrounding areas home after each performance. At the beginning of the season, comedies by contemporary Czech and foreign authors were staged. The comedic repertoire was complemented by more serious dramas by authors such as Leo Tolstoy, Hermann Sudermann, and Henrik Ibsen.

The hall was also used for various social events: balls, Saturday dance evenings, "afternoon social teas," and New Year's Eve festivities organised by both German and Czech associations. During the First Republic, the premises were rented by various dance masters for teaching ballroom dancing, such as the "Dance School" of ballet master Luis Moran Lehký or the "maître de danse" Beppo Rašín, who published the book *Tango: Theory of the Most Popular Modern Dance in International Style* in 1926. In the second half of the 20th century, the hall mainly hosted trade union conferences and training sessions.