

BUST OF EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH I.

Monument in honour of Emperor Franz Joseph I. (1911/1985)

Location: Kaiser Franz Joseph-Platzl (Hauptstraße 17, 3003 Gablitz)

The bust of Emperor Franz Joseph I. was commissioned by Heinrich Lefnär and the local beautification committee in 1910 in honour of the Emperor's 80th birthday. It was designed by Johannes Benk, a well-known sculptor at the time, and unveiled in the presence of Archduke Karl Albrecht in 1911. The inaugural ceremony was a splendid affair, as can be guessed from a newspaper report on the event:

“They had set up a stately tent in red and gold colours in honour of this event: following the official speech by mayor Fritz, a charming little girl, local pupil Fanni Macher, came forward and recited a celebratory poem. The Archduke presented the child with a precious golden necklet as a souvenir of the event, after which he proceeded into the imperial tent. There Mr Lefnär, chairman of the memorial committee, addressed the Archduke in an official speech [...]” - Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt, 15th August 1911, p. 3

Initially, the bust was erected near Hauptstraße 8, a few metres from its present location. Following the destruction of the monument in 1918, a new bust was moulded in 1985 on the basis of a plaster bust which - in contrast to the one from 1911 - was not made by Benk. Whether the plaster bust of the original survived in the “old schoolhouse”, reportedly peeking out of the attic window for years, or whether it was destroyed is currently unknown. In any case, the emperor bust which was erected at the Kaiser Franz Joseph-Platzl in 1985 appears to be Austria's newest monument of the Emperor - and was judged by media accordingly.

Today the bust is open to the public near Hauptstraße 17 at the Kaiser Franz Joseph-Platzl mentioned above. As part of reconstruction efforts, a modest stone plinth was made to replace the old one in 2010. The inscription, meanwhile, was carved on a voluntary basis by local stonemason Josef Lang, who also made the stone crest of Gablitz in front of the primary school.

- *Grimmlinger, Renate u. Haunschmidt, Angelika (2020): Gablitz - eine Geschichte. Baumgarten: Fa. Mails & More.*
- *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt, 15. August 1911, p. 3*

Bilderbezeichnung + Unterschrift (Vorschlag!):

“Kaiserbüste”: Bust of Emperor Franz Joseph I.