

MUSEUMS OF HRVATSKO ZAGORJE
VELIKI TABOR CASTLE

Veliki Tabor Castle



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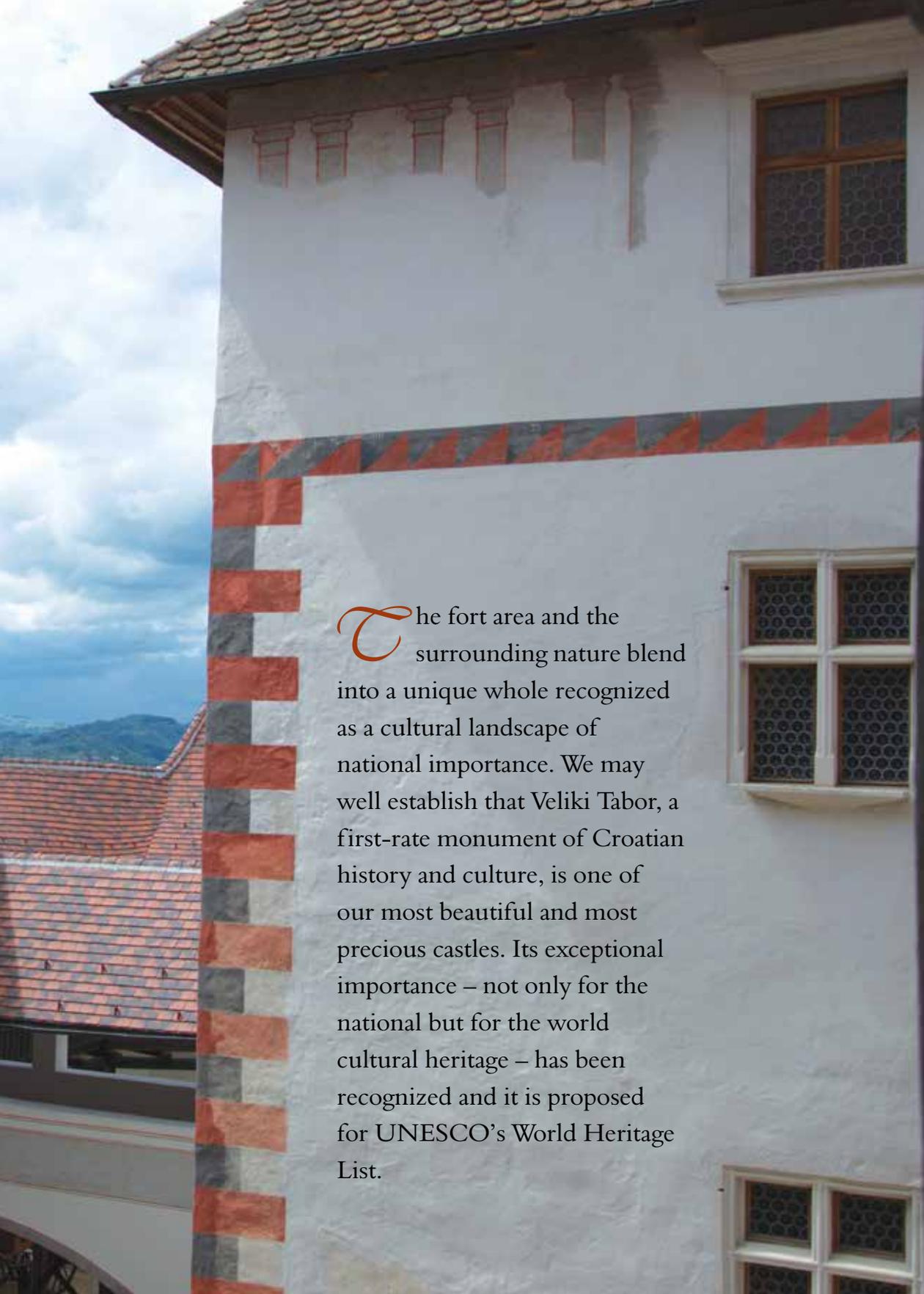
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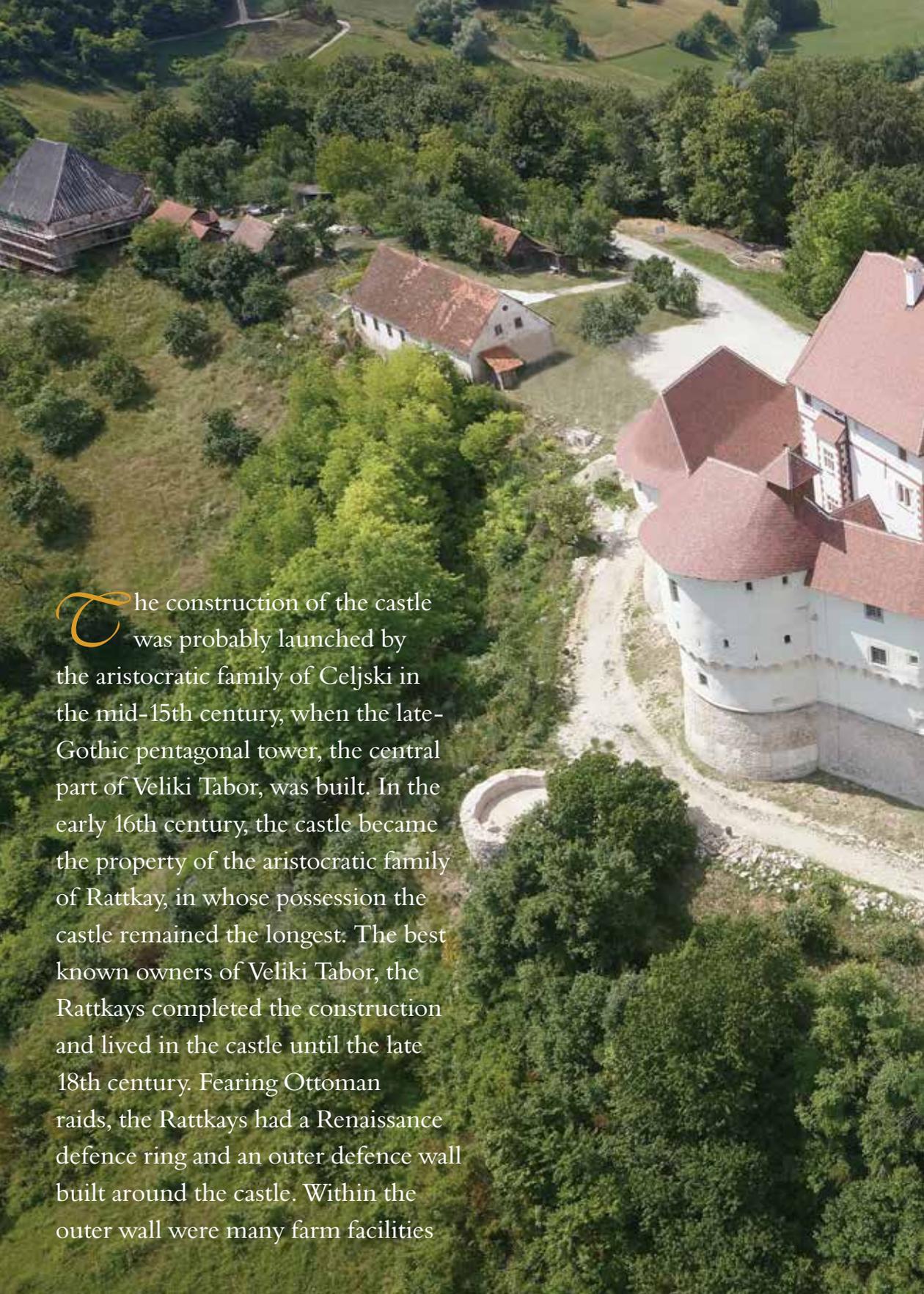
The late-mediaeval castle of Veliki Tabor is located on top of a hill, 333 metres above sea level, in the village of Košnički Hum, three kilometres from Desinić. Recognizable for its fairytale-like appearance and the lush, monumental architecture, it has been declared a monument of the highest category. It is one of the best preserved late-mediaeval castles in continental Croatia, preserved almost in its original form. For over half a millennium it has dominated the hill from which beautiful views of a large part of Hrvatsko Zagorje and the neighbouring Slovenia can be enjoyed. The view of Veliki Tabor from the surrounding area is also impressive, especially from the Horvatska rivulet valley, with the fort standing as a landmark that can be seen from afar.



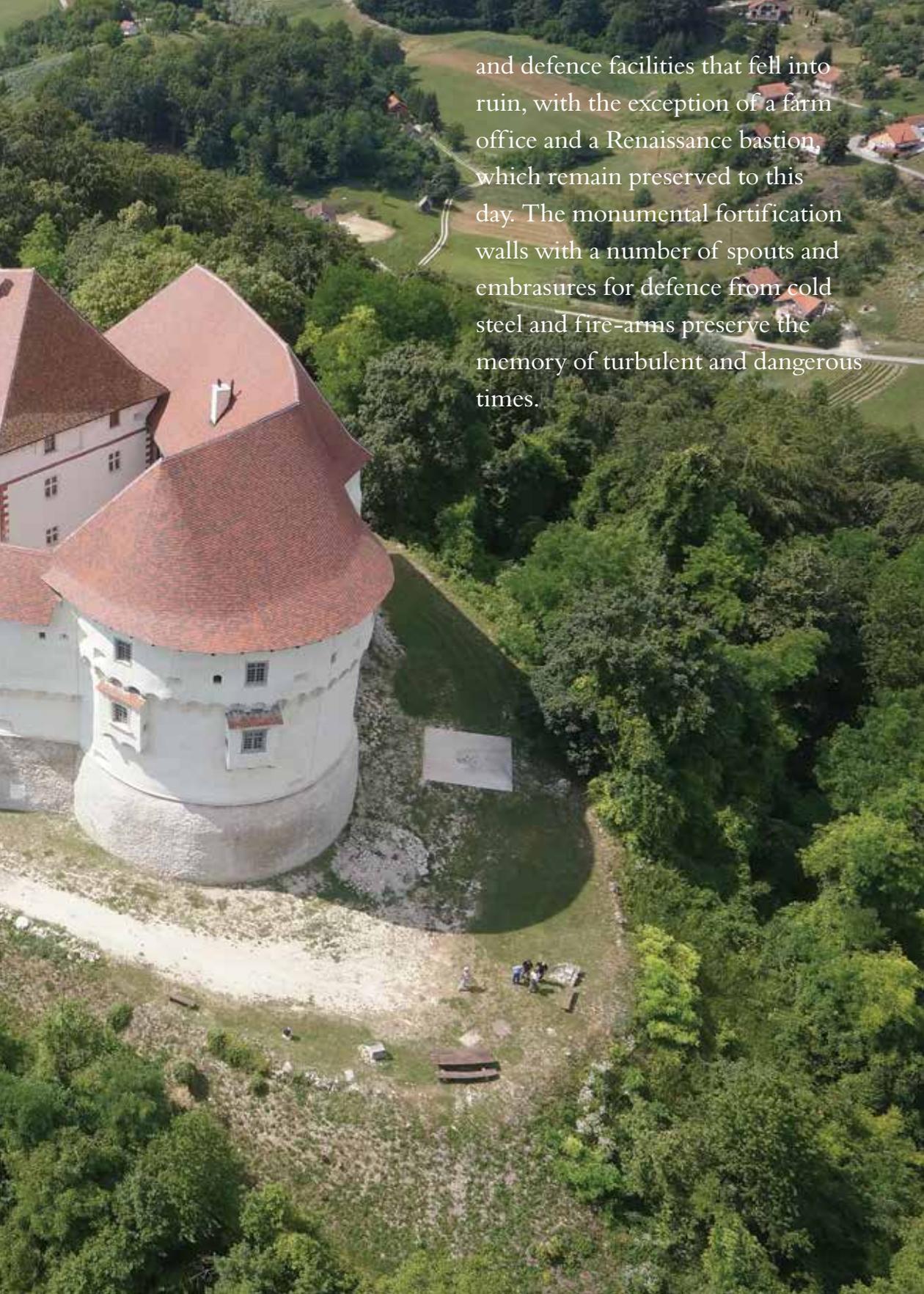




The fort area and the surrounding nature blend into a unique whole recognized as a cultural landscape of national importance. We may well establish that Veliki Tabor, a first-rate monument of Croatian history and culture, is one of our most beautiful and most precious castles. Its exceptional importance – not only for the national but for the world cultural heritage – has been recognized and it is proposed for UNESCO's World Heritage List.

An aerial photograph of the Veliki Tabor castle complex. The main castle is a large, white stone structure with a prominent pentagonal tower on the right side, all topped with red-tiled roofs. It is surrounded by a stone wall and a dirt path. To the left and slightly behind the main castle, there are several smaller farm buildings with red-tiled roofs, including a large barn-like structure. The entire complex is situated in a lush, green landscape with many trees and rolling hills in the background.

The construction of the castle was probably launched by the aristocratic family of Celjski in the mid-15th century, when the late-Gothic pentagonal tower, the central part of Veliki Tabor, was built. In the early 16th century, the castle became the property of the aristocratic family of Rattkay, in whose possession the castle remained the longest. The best known owners of Veliki Tabor, the Rattkays completed the construction and lived in the castle until the late 18th century. Fearing Ottoman raids, the Rattkays had a Renaissance defence ring and an outer defence wall built around the castle. Within the outer wall were many farm facilities



and defence facilities that fell into ruin, with the exception of a farm office and a Renaissance bastion, which remain preserved to this day. The monumental fortification walls with a number of spouts and embrasures for defence from cold steel and fire-arms preserve the memory of turbulent and dangerous times.

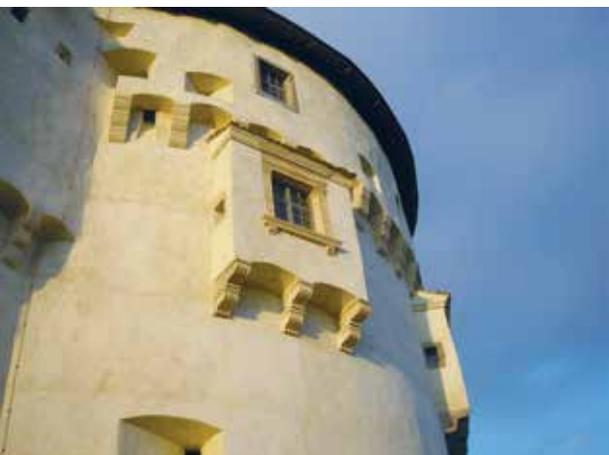
After the Rattkay family died out, the castle changed hands several times in the course of the 19th and the 20th centuries. It was frequently used for inappropriate purposes – in the 20th century it was used as a prison, a housewifery school, an orphanage, a meat smokery, and a warehouse for Desinić Agricultural Cooperative, becoming increasingly dilapidated. In the period between the two world wars (1919–1938) it was owned by famous Croatian painter Oton Iveković, who found boundless inspiration in the picturesque castle and the surrounding landscape. In 1993 it was made part of the Museums of Hrvatsko Zagorje, which soon launched comprehensive archaeological research and oversaw the restoration of Veliki Tabor under the guidance of the Croatian Conservation Institute in Zagreb.

In addition to its specific architecture and appearance, Veliki Tabor is known for a number of legends and stories. The best known is the orally transmitted story about Veronika of Desinić (Veronika Desinićka), which has been recognized as cultural heritage and entered in the Cultural





Heritage Register of the Republic of Croatia. The story of a noblewoman who paid with her life for her great but forbidden love for aristocrat Fridrik of Celje (Fridrik Celjski) was passed on from generation to generation and preserved to this day. The sad but intriguing story has captivated the imagination of the many visitors of Veliki Tabor, who come in hope of resolving the mystery of the wall into which – as the story tells us – Veronika’s body was built.





According to legend, many centuries ago Hrvatsko Zagorje was ruled by powerful Count Herman II of Celje. His young son Fridrik, who often went horse riding across his father's estate, set his eyes on

Veronika, a beautiful, golden-haired girl, with whom he instantly fell in love. Veronika reciprocated Fridrik's feelings and they soon became lovers. Herman fiercely opposed their love, objecting to Veronika's



humbler origins. This drove Veronika and Fridrik to flee to the town of Fridrihštajn in Slovenia, where they were married in secret. Old Count Herman soon learned of the marriage. Furious and vengeful,

he dispatched an army to fetch the young couple. Veronika managed to run, but Fridrik was caught and taken to Celje, where, on his father's orders, he was imprisoned in a tower for four years. Herman's soldiers



soon found Veronika and imprisoned her in Veliki Tabor. The vindictive Count accused unfortunate Veronika of being a witch who had cast a spell on his son. She was put on trial, but, to Herman's big surprise, the

judges cleared Veronika of all charges. Furious, Herman issued an order for her execution. A large vat filled with water was brought into the courtyard of Veliki Tabor, and Veronika was drowned in it. To remove every



trace of her, they built her body into the wall connecting the pentagonal tower to the fort entrance. Nevertheless, in long winter nights Veronika's wails can still be heard in the hallways of Veliki Tabor...





The tragic love story of Veronika of Desinić, based on true historical events that took place in the first half of the 15th century, has been an inspiration to numerous artists. In the past two centuries, artists have created a number of works – in visual arts, literature, drama, and other arts – inspired by this tragic love story. It continues to stir up interest of creative associations and individuals as well as the many visitors of Veliki Tabor, and remains intriguing to this day. Visitors can meet the characters from the legend at the Mediaeval Festival, which is traditionally held in Veliki Tabor every September. Throughout the year, a travelling puppet theatre *Ioculatori* performs medieval-themed puppet shows entitled *Véronika of Desinić* and *Véronika the Sorceress*, greatly enjoyed by our youngest visitors.



With the goal to include children in our efforts to foster and spread awareness of cultural heritage, a project entitled *The Rose of Zagorje* was carried out this year. Pupils from the Đuro Prejac Primary School in Desinić and from the Vinagora Branch School participated. As part of the project, a 30-minute radio programme on Veronika of Desinić and her multiple identities was produced.

That the interest in the legend has not waned is clearly illustrated by a large number of children's artworks and literary compositions that we receive each year as entries for the competition entitled *The Legend of Veronika of Desinić*, which we carry out in cooperation with primary schools from throughout Croatia.



