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Unesco World Heritage Sites

Abbey of St. Gall

The Abbey of St. Gall was a typical and outstanding example of a large Benedictine monastery. With its rich library and famed scriptorium (place for copying and writing manuscripts), it was deemed to be a centre of art and knowledge in the Middle Ages.

In 747, the abbot Othmar established a community of Benedictine monks in the place made famous by St. Gallus and at the same time founded a school. During the 9th and 10th centuries, the abbey of St. Gall was one of the most renowned centres of Western culture and science. Its culmination coincided with the abbacy of Gotzbert (816-37). Gotzbert was the recipient of the famous Plan of St. Gall which constitutes the ideal plan of a Benedictine abbey. It is the only surviving major architectural drawing from the roughly 700-year period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the 13th century. The plan was probably sent by the Bishop of Basel, Heito, who was also Abbot of Reichenau.

During the Carolingian Church reform, Ludwig the Pious awarded the Abbey with an imperial privilege of immunity in 818, placing it under the direct protection of the Crown. In 854, the abbey was released from paying tithes to the Bishop of Constance and had at last attained full autonomy.

From 1206, the abbots were deemed Princes of the Empire. They ruled over the town of St. Gallen, the Fürstenland and after 1468, over the County of Toggenburg. However, during subsequent Reformation, the City of St. Gallen and the Toggenburg became independent. For a time, the abbey itself was threatened by dissolution. Abbey rule finally ended when French troops entered St. Gallen in 1798. In 1805, the abbey was dissolved and turned into a Bishopric. In 1836, the baroque abbey church (Stiftskirche) became a cathedral: Today, only the foundations and some elements of architecture remain of the original monastery.

The Abbey Library of St. Gall is recognised as one of the richest medieval libraries in the world. It is home to one of the most comprehensive collections of early medieval books. In 2005, the library held over 160,000 books, of which 2100 are handwritten. Nearly half of these are from the Middle Ages and 400 are over 1000 years old. Recently, the library has started a project to convert its many books to electronic format, available on the Codices Electronici Sangallenses webpage. The library hall was designed in Rococo style by the architect Peter Thumb and is considered one of the most beautiful of this style in Switzerland and around the world. In 1983 the library, together with the Abbey of St. Gall, was made a World Heritage Site, as a "a perfect example of a great Carolingian monastery". In 2012, St. Gallen celebrated the 1400th anniversary of the arrival of the City's Patron Saint.

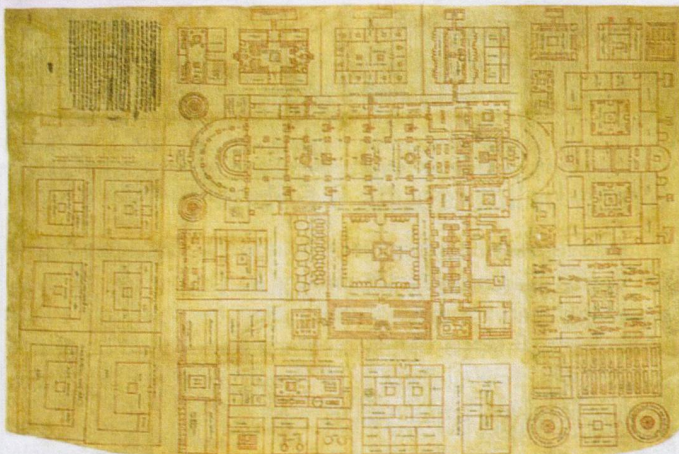
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_library_of_Saint_Gall,
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/268>



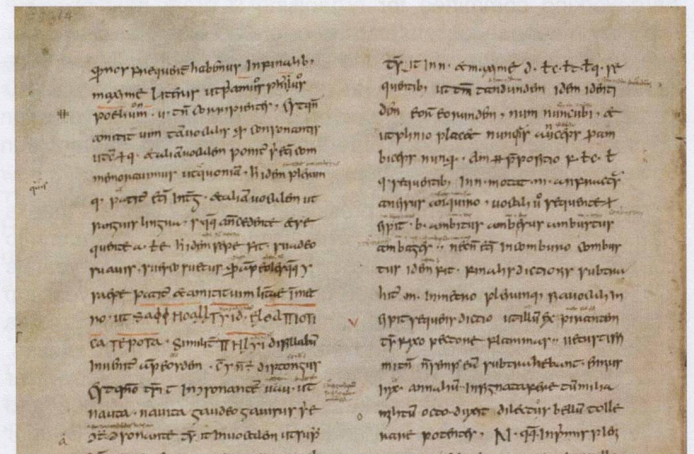
The Abbey of St Gall of today
<http://www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch/de/>



The famous Library (Stiftsbibliothek) of the Abbey of St Gall
<http://www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch/de/>



Schematic architectural drawing of the Abbey of St Gall from the 9th century, which was never accurately realised
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_of_Saint_Gall



The Irish Priscian manuscript "Institutiones Grammaticae" by the grammarian Priscian of Caesarea (6th century) with over 9000 glosses, among them 3478 in the Old Irish language <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch>