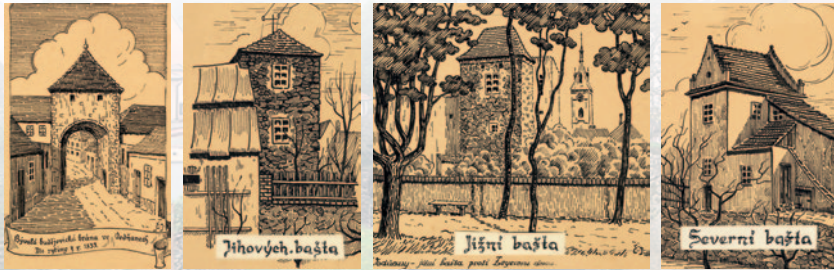


All around the walls of Vodňany

For a medieval town fortifications meant a certain existential and more advantageous economic survival assumption. In a social hierarchy there was a fortified town situated higher than a town without any fortifications. Even though the town gates of Vodňany were pulled down in the 19th century so that the town could open itself to increasing traffic, the great part of the fortification defensive system has been preserved until now. The development of the town walls building can be partly followed on the basis of available historical both written and material sources – in the written reports supported by structurally-historical research and by the results of located archaeological research. But the fact which complicates exactly the setting of the oldest building phase of fortifications is beyond all understanding – it isn't known the exact date of the town foundation. The same it is with the date of the promotion to the town, promotion to the royal town and with the consent of the king to build the walls. Owing to the rectangle layout the beginnings of the town are matched with the half of the 13th century, probably with the period of the reign of Přemysl Otakar II. (1253 – 1278). From the almost square (circa 100 x 100 m) to the former town gates there lead 3 main streets forming together with other side streets regular blocks of flats. The residential space in the size of 300 – 400 m x 400 – 500 m is surrounded by the walls. Their very beginnings are assumed not to be very far away from the date of the town foundation. There had been probably temporary fortifications like rampart and palisade before the stone walls were build. Building the walls surely took a very long time and it's very complicated to give an evidence of the date of particular parts development. There have been preserved the prismatic fortification towers which structurally belong to the 14th century. It's the time of the first written records of the town of Vodňany. According to the written mentions Vodňany belonged to the property of the king of Bohemia. And also this town was pledged. The oldest written mention comes from 1318 when there was stated a valet from Vodňany as one of the judges in the case of setting the foundation date of Vodňany. The 2nd surviving record from 1327 reminds Vodňany as a place where there was levied duty. The most important medieval document is the privilege of the king John of Luxembourg from the turn of the years 1335/36, original of which is kept in the town archives. But none of these documents prove the existence of the walls. During the 14th century there was a big progress of the town – from the small town to the royal



town. Even so it ranked among the smallest and the least wealthy royal towns. Together with České Budějovice and Písek Vodňany formed, in the south of Bohemia, the strategic points of the royal power against the noble dynasty of Rožmberk with whom they put up many a fight especially in the 15th century. Several occupations of the town point to a not very good function of the fortifications at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries – in 1395 by Jindřich of Rožmberk and in 1406 by Heralt of Kunštát. In the second above mentioned case the enemy came with a very small army as it is said in the Hájek's chronicle. Occupied inhabitants laughed at him to send him flying only by the inflated bladder. But their carelessness caused the downfall of the town. In 1419 Vodňany was occupied by Oldřich of Rožmberk who had the walls pulled down and the ditch filled up. On the basis of the forced commitment of obedience he permitted to build the walls and the ditch again in the following year. The then extent of the intentional damage of the fortifications is questionable. The building maintenance was neglected and the foundations of the walls were shallow and put into not a very solid bed and so it could be very easy to destroy those all ones. The direct threat of the town during the home war events in the 15th century led to the extension of the wall system. But probably not later the town had enough money and possibilities to look after the main wall which was under the pressure of the expanding town housing. So in the 15th century the town may have been able to defend itself only thanks to the newly-established moat. Its rampart, originally with a regular row of prismatic bastions, formed the town ditch lining towards the town centre at the same time. In the 16th century the fortifications

were strengthened and repaired. Needed work wasn't always made thoroughly. In 1617 a bricklayer Petr Gros from České Budějovice repaired the town gate behind the Bavorov gate to order of the town council. There exists the complaints form which declares the work badly carried out as far as it could fall down. During the occupation of the town by the duke Maximilian of Bavaria in September 1620 there was hit the Týn gate with the neighbour bastion. After breaking the fire out the occupants of the estates capitulated. After the book called The Czech History by Pavel Skála of Zhoř the duke set their commander free after a short talking. The peace brought another purpose for the wall system – the moat started to turn into the gardens. After the defeat of the Czech estates' uprising the town of Vodňany was held in pledge for long decades. In 1623 – 1710 it was held by the noblemen of Marradas and Schwarzenberg. For all that long time the town tried to buy itself out of the pledge and it gathered finances at the expense of other needs and investments. *“The condition of the town fortifications, found out those days, was poor. The gates and bastions fell into ruin, the ditches and walls fall down. There was no thought of repairs.”* In 1678 during the control visit, the head commissioner of Třeboň ordered to put it right from the financial return of the legal beer batch. The same year the Bavorov gate had to be pulled down and the following year it was rebuilt. The domain of Hluboká provided 50 tree trunks for the floors, 50 rafters and 40 laths. It isn't known if it ever and what extent to other parts of the fortifications were repaired. But in the programme at the town council there were always the town fortifications endangering the property of other citizens. At the beginning of the 18th century it was thought about the demolition of the bastion on the north-west edge of the town behind the present houses No 36 and 37 which was destroyed by fire as early as 1610. Owing to an improvement of the road network and an access to the town there was allowed to build a new gate in 1678. The solution of the way through the fortifications matched up the period thought at that time. The gate was put up in 6 weeks – in June and July of the same year. And the access road was temporary called after this gate – the Newgate road (now ČSLA Street). On the 21st August 1710 after a long time effort the town of Vodňany finally repaid its pledge to the Schwarzenberg dynasty with an adjusted sum of money which was originally 70 thousand florins but it was at the expense of a huge debt. The survey of the expense and loss also describes the condition of the fortifications. *“Vodňany was*

equipped by the firm triple walls, deep ditches and towers and a church from the old Czech royal times. Now the town walls go to rack and ruins and the ditches are filled up and it would cost 10 thousand florins to restore them to the original state.” The disastrous fire of the town in 1722 touched also on the town fortifications, especially gates. In 1729 the Bavorov, Písek and Týn gates are said to be occupied by the gate keepers. The New gate didn't provide an accommodation for the gate keepers. During the wars of the Austrian heritage and the following Seven Years' War the importance of medieval walls took a back seat. During the “Joseph's military mapping” (1764 – 1767) the military land surveyors recorded the unbroken and full belt of the fortifications. Vodňany is described there as a town surrounded *“by the double wall and ditches”*. In the course of the 18th century the importance of the town fortifications finished step by step. The building new houses into the intact fortifications says about that much. In 1790 with the consent of the vice-chamberlain office there were sold the particular parts of the town moat along all the town to the emphyteutic property. The boundary of the parts was formed by the town gates, bastions and during the following division also by the small bridges and passageways from the town. The part of the south-west moat from the Bavorov gate became the property of the draper's guild. In 1797 the town council considered an option to remove the walls for their poor condition. The presented quotation of the cost for partly demolition of the moat wall, which formed the support of the back parts of the houses and gardens, and for the reconstruction of the rest of the wall was unacceptable amounting 4866 florins.



Čestmír John (1886–1970) – an author of the drawings, the fund of the Museum and Gallery Vodňany



The people of Vodňany promise their obedience to Oldřich of Rožmberk if they break their promise and oath that they took because he allowed them to build a wall around the town again: In Vodňany, 3rd March 1420 (The quoting is modified a little bit because the original letter was written in the old Czech language):

“We mayor, aldermen and all the community of Vodňany town, we all together and unanimously ask everybody reading or hearing this letter to promise and swear to the gentleman Oldřich of Rožmberk and also to his successors to allow us to surround Vodňany by the wall and the ditch as it used to be. And if we make him angry or we do more harm than good we promise him the right obedience as we gave a letter to his father and other masters who had been in the war with him and the letter confirms that. In addition, as a gesture of our good will, we enclose our town seal with this letter which was posted in Vodňany 1420, on the 2nd Sunday of fasting.”

Rynešová, Blažena (ed.):
Listář a listinář
Oldřicha z Rožmberka.
Sv. I. 1418 – 1437.
Praha 1929,
č. 23, s. 3 – 14.

In the 1st part of the 19th century perhaps all clerks of almost all the institutions (from the municipal council, the Prácheň region office, the Prague vice-chamberlain office to the Prague regional office) were busy solving the troubles over the walls and the adjoining buildings. Between 1808 – 1810 there were sold 5 bastions probably under the pressure of the owners of the adjacent gardens. The bastions were sold to the freeholders who had to sign up to keep them in a good condition at their own expense and to respect the pre-emptive right of the town of Vodňany. Later the sale was queried and it became a millstone for the town. There was also an argument when selling the Bavorov gate in 1817 which wasn't finally realized after a year-long arguing. Then there still existed a barbican. The same year the townsfolk of the church quarter asked to build a new gate with a bridge leading from the small market place behind the church through the north wall between the houses No 75 and 76 (now No 34 and 36 in the Písecká street) and over the dean's moat to the mill-race. After a year it was permitted, it was paid by the applicants and the municipal council kept an eye on its maintenance. At the end of the 18th century there started to be built the first buildings in the moat. The check of the Vodňany walls by a technician of the Prácheň region office in 1830 reported the following state: *“The town walls, as a consequence of their bad structure and acting the time, partly lie in ruins and on many parts they need repairing. Then the walls of the moat towers standing at the Písek and Bavorov gates should be pulled down in their upper parts and after avoiding the dampness they must be covered in a brick layer in plaster.”* The next year the maintenance was thought to be handed over the owners of the adjoining properties but only a few of them were willing to accept it. In 1833 the regional office decided on leaving adjoining parts of the both inner walls to the applicants to free using including the possibility to build up over the level up to 2 fathoms. *“The outer wall (ie. the outer brickwork of the ditch) remained in the care of the town.”* The town guaranteed the owners of the adjoining properties for the possible damage caused by the collapse of their wall. In 1839 the Prague vice-chamberlain office allowed the municipal council to demolish the Bavorov and Budějovice gates with a view to making the town more beautiful and to widening the entrance and exit of the town. The town had to deal with the requests of the owners of the flats over the both gates. These gates are still recorded in the land registry plan from 1837. After pulling down the both gates the function

of the town walls in Vodňany finally disappeared in the 1st half of the 19th century. Except for that the other passageways from the town were broken through. On the south-west edge the moat from Hrnčířská street was spanned by the solid bridge instead of the footbridge. The similar access was made also from the present Mokrého street. In 1858 the local brewing citizens got the suitable space for creating the purposeful beer cellars near the then Bavorov gate and under its bridge because they bought the south part of the moat which belonged to the deanery. On the basis of the required expert opinions and available solutions of the building intentions especially with the former bastions several times there was invited the chief commissioner of The Office for the preservation of historical monuments Mr. Šebek to Vodňany in the 30s of the 20th century. In the surviving records he pointed out the extensive damage and seediness of the walls and he warned about the threat of the wall collapse. According to his recommendation an architect of Vodňany Augustin Křížek worked out the construction plans but their realization dropped off because of the finances. In 1939 – 1940 during the building of a public building No 81 near the defunct Bavorov gate there was uncovered a former barbican which was later filled again. The adjacent land within the town fortifications was put to an archaeological exploration in 1999. The present garden reminds the possibilities of usage of the former moat and the ditch in the peaceful times of our history. A historian of the town Dr. Václav Mostecký thought the place had been used both for agriculture and as firing range or place for some handicrafts. But the existing archaeological research hasn't confirmed that yet. *“Today the former town ditch has a straight flat bottom which raises only along the inner brickwork. In danger it may be possible to fill it with water from the nearby river Blanice and its small tributaries.”* But about real filling with water there are no reports. Still it isn't possible to answer the question where water could have been brought to the ditch from. In its southern part there was a drain. The town of Vodňany had the outer moat wall plastered inappropriately in the 70s of the 20th century. After 2000 there arose the project to get the outer walls among the property of the town and to repair them supported by the grants. First there was repaired the wall in the Palackého street. In 2006 – 2007 there were bought out other parts of the outer walls in the Zeyer's park and in the Square of 5. května which were repaired in 2009 supported by the European fund for regional rise.



Plan der STADT WODNIAN

Maasstab der Zoll =
40. Wiener Filaftern.



17 The west moat wall



16 The west moat wall



15 Husova Street –
there used to be the Bavorov gate



14 The southwest moat wall



13 The southwest moat



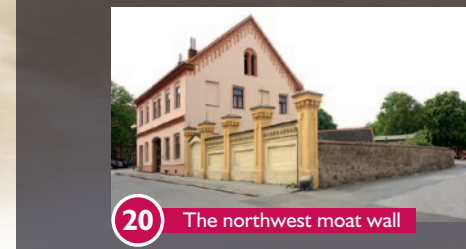
11 The passageway – Heritesova Street



10 The bridge – Heritesova Street



21 The bridge – Pisecká Street



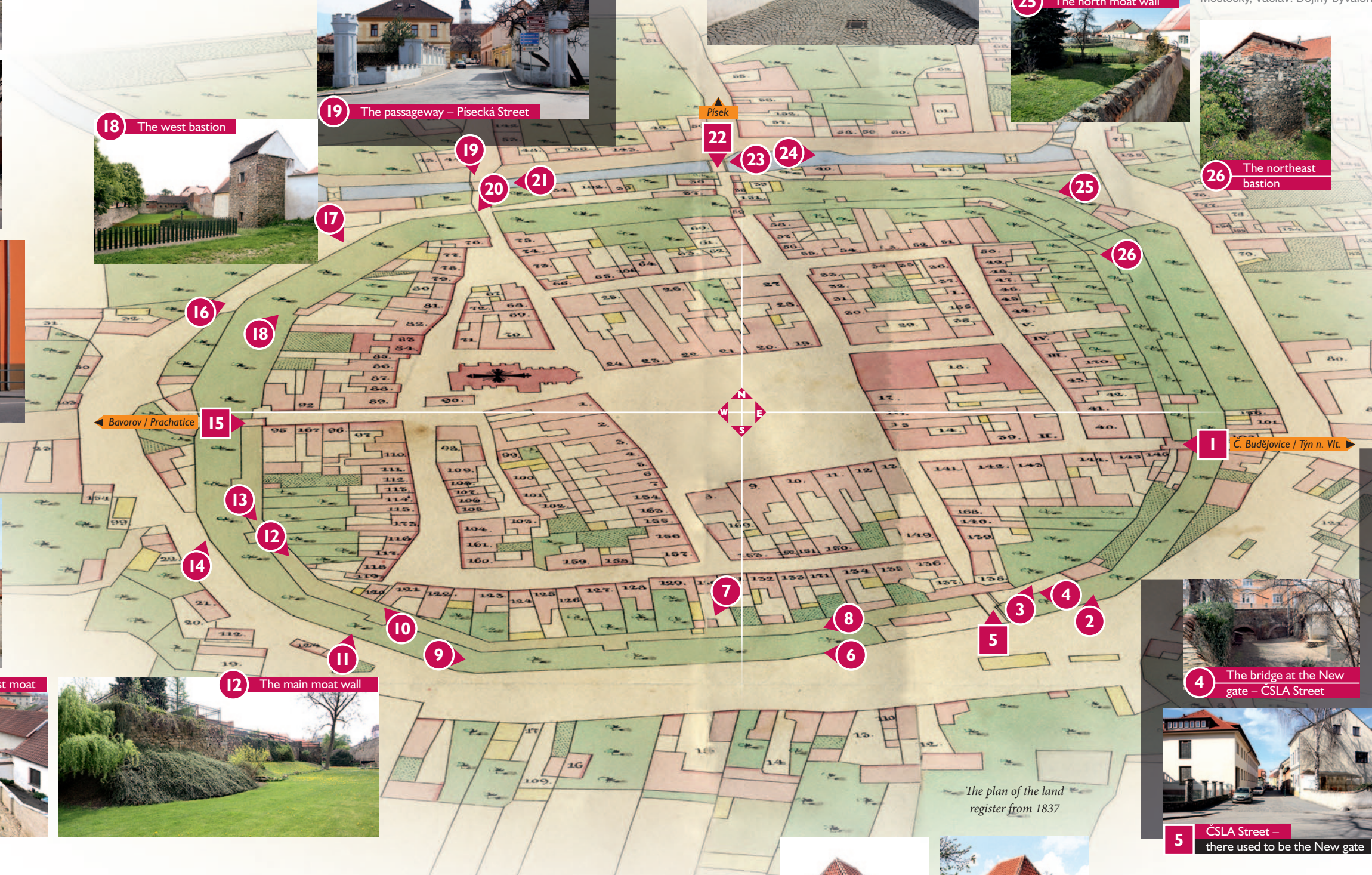
20 The northwest moat wall



19 The passageway – Pisecká Street



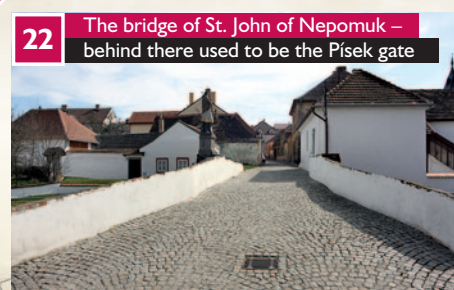
18 The west bastion



The plan of the land
register from 1837



23 The bridge of St. John of Nepomuk



22 The bridge of St. John of Nepomuk –
behind there used to be the Pisek gate



24 The mill-race



25 The north moat wall



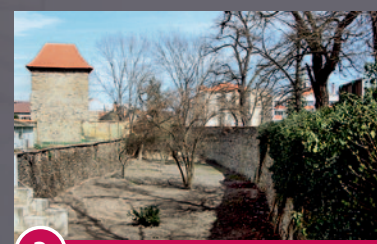
26 The northeast
bastion



I A. Křížka Street –
originally there was the Tyn (Budějovice) gate situated



2 The SE bastion



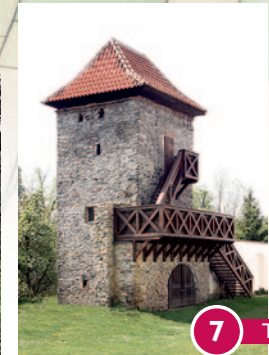
3 The SE moat (Herites's garden)



4 The bridge at the New
gate – ČSLA Street



5 ČSLA Street –
there used to be the New gate



7 The south bastion



6 The south bastion



9 The gardens in the south moat



8

The former town Týn gate also called the Budějovice gate was decorated to welcome the emperor Francis I. and the empress Karolina in 1833. The historian of the town Dr. Václav Mostecký recorded this festive event in this way:
“The memorable visit happened on the 31st July. On the borders of the Prácheň region and the Libějovice estate in Sedlec there were the imperial couple with their 30-membered retinue awaited and welcome by many country people, in the village of Újezd there was built the triumphal arch, there were honoured guests welcome by the Schwarzenberg officials, by school children and the clergy with a dean Jedlička. From Vodňany there went the townspeople on horses in the lead with a postmaster Jireš and they accompanied the parade to the town where the horses were changed. In front of the decorated Budějovice gate there could be everywhere heard: Glory be! Long live the emperor! On the outer columns there was written the inscription Vivat, on the gate itself, covered in flower blossoms, there could be read: Francisco Patri – Carolinae Matri – Wodnianiensis. In the square there were built columns decorated with needles, with the Austrian eagle and the Czech lion. There took part the official welcoming, where there came many important personalities like the county commissar a knight of Kunratic, the dean with the clergy from all around, teachers with their pupils, the mayor with the town council, guilds with 12 banners and the Jewish community with Torah. The townspeople wanted to show their loyalty to the ruler so they intended to pull the imperial coach through the town but the emperor didn't allow it. After changing the horses they went on to Skočice, Drahonice, Strakonice, Plzeň, Zatec, Louny and through Karlín to Prague.”
Mostecký, Václav: Dějiny bývalého královského města Vodňan. III. část. Praha 1940, s. 164.

In February 1843 a pharmacist Antonín Herites along with his mother Antonia bought a house No 1 in the Vodňany square and the south-east part of the town moat from the New gate to the Budějovice gate where there was a garden. His son, František Herites, a writer and a Vodňany mayor for some time, kept it in his memories like that:
“I remember going to the garden only with my mother. She never went across the square, always along the side streets, with a woollen scarf over her shoulders, with a white cap on her head, she thanked for the greetings to all people she met. And when the fruit was picked and the servants carried the full baskets in front of her she generously shared the harvest from the trees with the folks. The old garden in the moat plays a major role in my childhood memories and I think I would be able to show very exactly where there stood each tree and which fruit it had and where there were each flower and herbs which my father planted with a great interest and real knowledge.”
Herites, František: Vzpomínková črta. In: Almanach: král. město Vodňany a okolí. Vodňany 1914, s. 95.