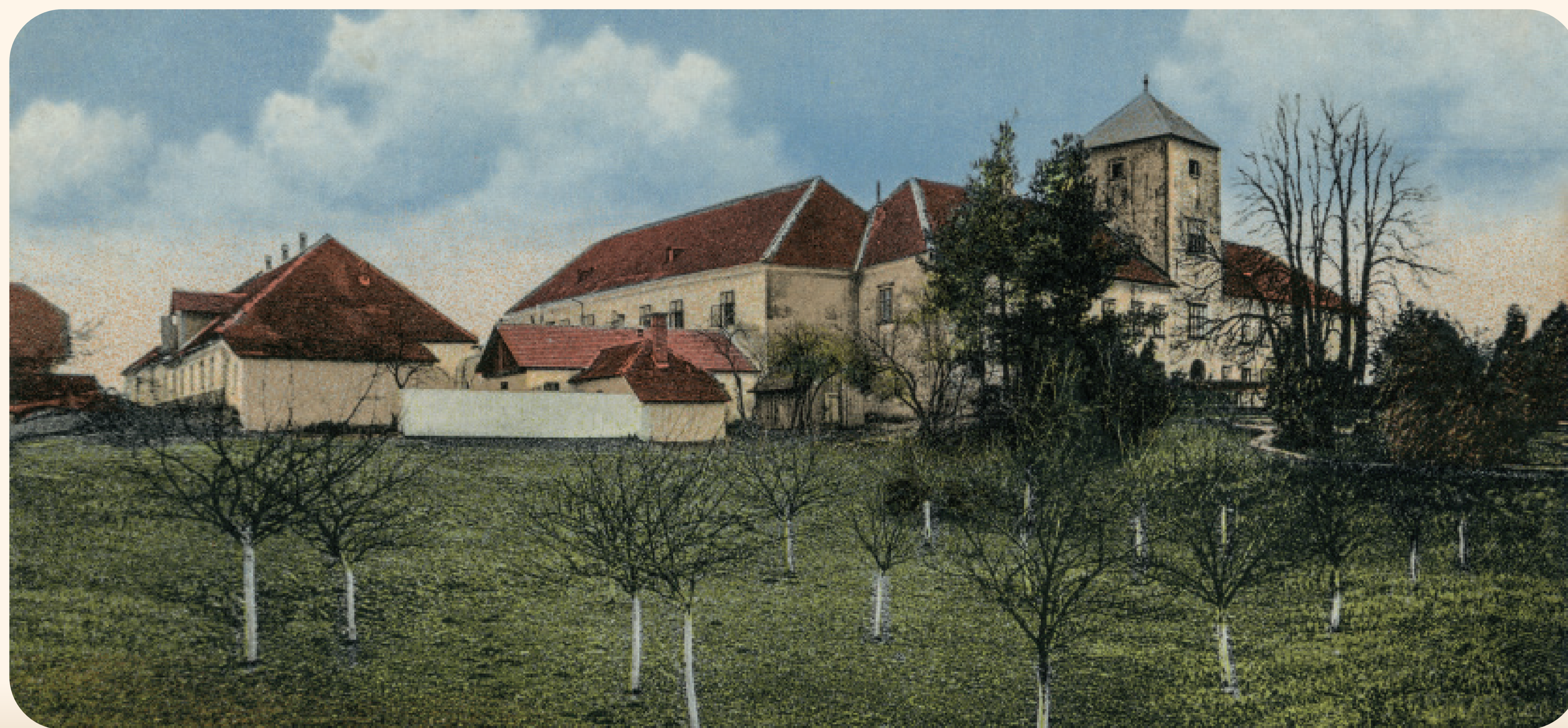


Grm Castle

by Judita Podgornik Zaletelj



Grm Castle on a colorized postcard from the beginning of the 20th Century (1)

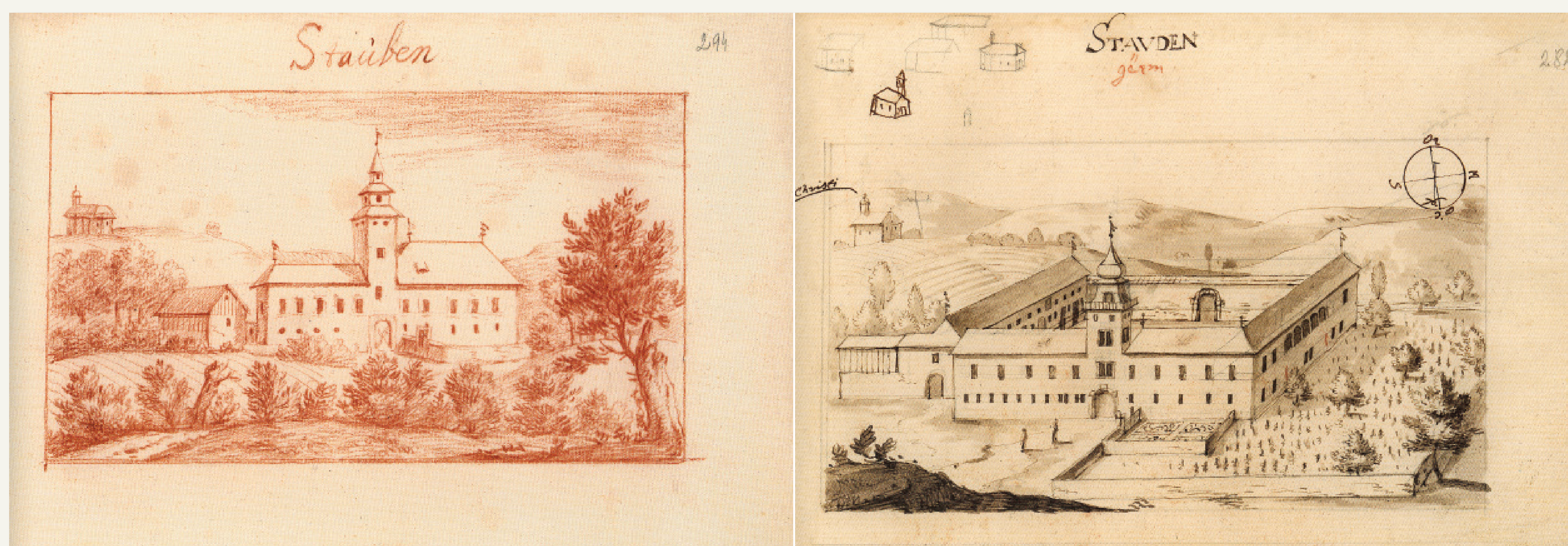
Grm Castle (*Stauden* in German) is located by the former main road that historically connected the region of Bela krajina with Novo mesto. The building of the castle began around 1586 under Christoph Mordax, who acquired the land formerly belonging to the nearby Graben Castle after part of its estate was divided between him and his two brothers.

Three generations of the Mordax family expanded and beautified the castle from the end of the 16th to the beginning of the 18th century. Christoph Mordax most likely furnished his own modest living quarters to the left of what is now the main entrance (marked in the plan as Phase 1), while his son, Hans Andreas, built the tower and the right half of the castle's main block after his father's death in 1614. The building work was finished around the year 1636, which is attested to by a keystone with the Mordax coat-of-arms today found in the courtyard (Phase 2).



A keystone with the Mordax coat-of-arms (3)

Today, the castle's finest decoration remains the coved ceiling with lavish stuccowork in the tower hall. The stucco is complemented by four large painted battle scenes recounting biblical stories and sixteen smaller medallions and cartouches containing painted scenes from military life and representations of soldiers of different ranks. The medallions and cartouches are held by pairs of putti, while the space around them is filled by shells, fruit baskets, roses, auricular ornaments and acanthus leaves. The centre of the ceiling is occupied by the arms of alliance combining the coats-of-arms of the Mordax (shield charged with two crossed axes) and Gallenberg families (shield divided *chapé ployé*) both topped with crowns of nobility. The coats-of-arms are surrounded by an inscription naming Wolf Ferdinand's estates.



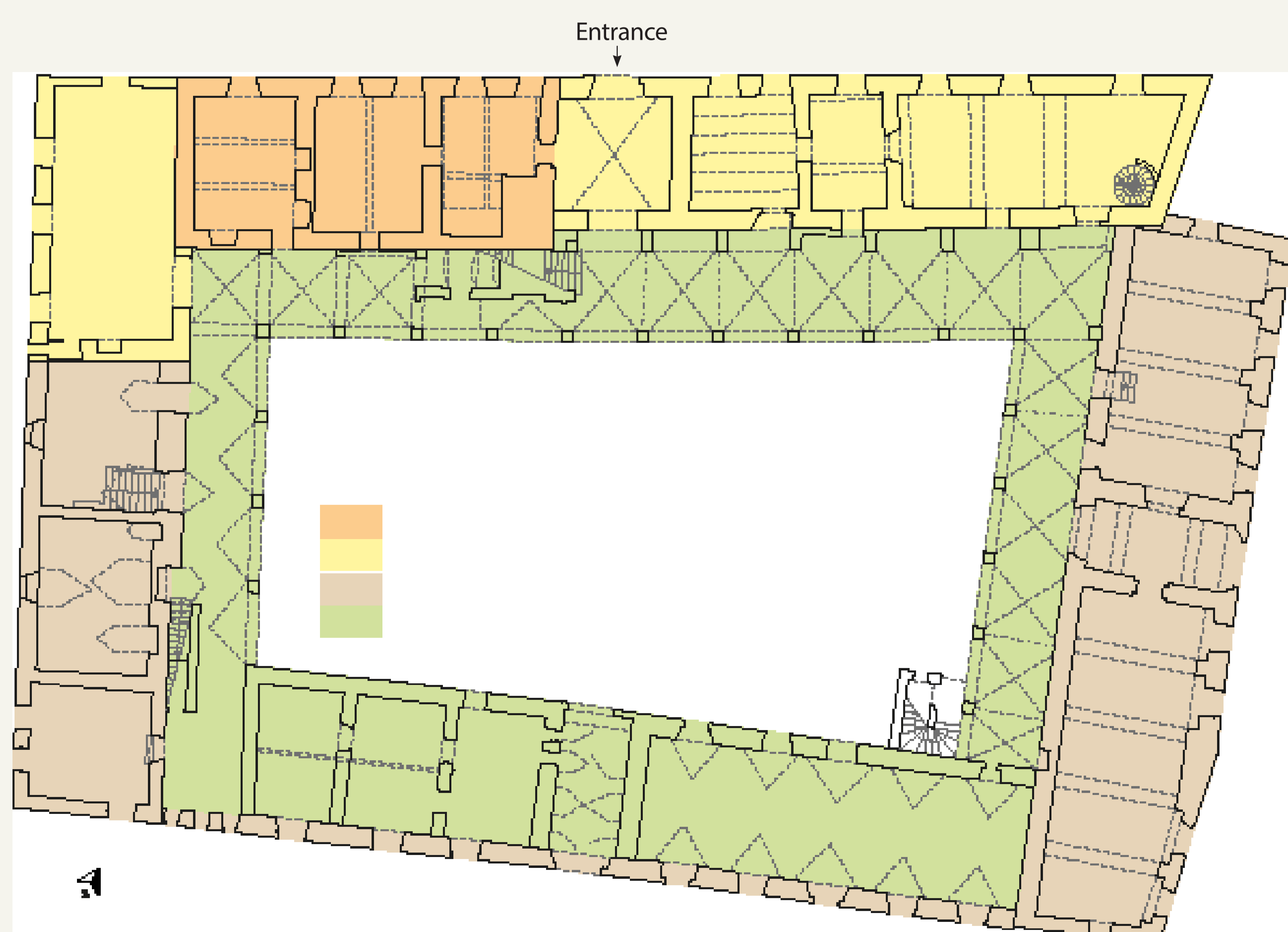
Two depictions of Grm Castle by Janez Vajkard Valvasor from the sketchbook for the *Topographia Ducatus Carnioliae moderna*, 1678–1679, (2)

Extensive work took place on the building in the second half of the 17th century, when the castle belonged to Christoph's grandson, Wolf Ferdinand Mordax. Alongside its expansion, Wolf Ferdinand had the castle interior decorated with elaborate stuccowork and wall paintings, which survive only in the tower hall. Together with his wife, Ana Rosina von Gallenberg, originally from Soteska Castle, he introduced into

the castle the imagery and way of life typical for Carniolan nobility of the second half of the 17th century. This is the image of Grm Castle as it has been handed down to us by Valvasor. The same period also saw the original design of the castle gardens and, in 1675, the erection of the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre east of the castle, which came to serve as the family mausoleum (Phase 3).



The tower hall ceiling decoration with stuccowork and medallions (3)



The ground floor plan of the castle showing different construction phases (3)

The castle's later owner, Siegfried Balthasar von Gallenberg, who had it in his possession between 1709 and 1753, never lived at Grm. In 1753, the Gallenbergs sold the castle and its estate to Michelangelo Zois, who gifted it to his son, Franz Xaver Augustin Zois, in 1756. The latter is most likely to have added the south wing and built the castle to its final extent and form of a single-storey quadrangular building with a central courtyard. The building work was completed in 1805, which is denoted by an inscription of the year on the northern façade (Phase 4).

In 1810, Grm Castle was bought by Karel Smola, a wealthy Czech immigrant and the castle steward at the time. It stayed in his family until 1886, when Anton Vincenc Smola sold it to the crown land of Carniola and the

castle was repurposed for the state agricultural school. The castle building was modified according to the needs of the school (turning it into classrooms, offices, and apartments for teachers, other employees and boarding students), but its main characteristics were retained.

The agricultural school stayed at Grm Castle until 1983, when the castle came under the management of the car manufacturing company IMV from Novo mesto. For a time, the castle was privately owned, and since 2009, it is owned by the Republic of Slovenia. Since 1994, the castle has been home to the Novo mesto Regional Office of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia and the Novo mesto Unit for Dolenjska and Bela Krajina of the Historical Archives Ljubljana (ZAL).