

Abstract

In the year 1896 Hungary celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the Magyar settlement in the Carpathian Basin. The preparations started in the early 80's of 19th century. Originally they planned to celebrate in 1895, since it was decided that the conquest had happened in 895. But there was not enough time to prepare, so they postponed the festivities. Even though there was widespread development in industry and culture at the end of 19th century, the situation in Hungary was very complicated. The main problem was the relationship of Hungarians within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, changes in that society, and the situation of national minorities and the working-class. During the celebrations of the millennial anniversary, these discussed topics were overlooked while everybody was occupied with the festivities. Hungarians tried to present their glorious past, their country's successful economy, industry, and culture to prove that Hungary was the foremost nation in the Carpathian Basin. The Hungarian parliament passed a law to celebrate the millennium that ordered, for example, the building of monuments around Hungary and the founding of The Museum of Fine Arts and 400 elementary schools. Throughout the country there were opening ceremonies, festivities, meetings, processions, parades, and unveilings of memorials. The most significant events took place in the capital city of Budapest. The biggest project was the Millennium Exhibition, which had more than 5 millions visitors. The castle of Vajdahunyad in the City Park (Városliget) is a remnant of the Exhibition. At the location of its former entrance was built the Millennium Memorial. Through the years the city has enjoyed the construction of the first underground in continental Europe, the Bridge of Liberty, the House of Parliament; the founding of several museums; the renovation of the Great Boulevard (Nagykörút); and the renovation of Mathias Church. All of these sights are part of the World Heritage Site, and they are mostly built in the eclecticism style, which combines different historical styles. The more recent Art Nouveau has been applied as well. The Hungarians love to celebrate: they celebrated the millennium in 1896, as well as in 2000 (the 1000th anniversary of the Kingdom of Hungary); in 1996 they celebrated their millecentenarium (1100 years since the arrival to the Carpathian Basin). There are those who say that the obsession with celebrations, the pathos, and the stick of national history is typical of Hungarian culture. Perhaps it is true, though maybe not. The fact is that although the celebrations of the millennium in 1896 were at least partially a sentimental illusion, they demonstrated the progress of the country and thanks to them Budapest has become a beautiful, important city among European capitals.