



**The Königshütte
(King's Iron and Steel Works)
in Bad Lauterberg im Harz, Deutschland**



**Förderkreis
Königshütte
Bad Lauterberg e.V.**

Historical monument of national importance

Development

The Königshütte in Bad Lauterberg was erected as the third state Iron works after the Rothehütte and the Sollinger Hütte in the years 1733 to 1737. Located near the small town Lauterberg, the River Oder and the pond Wiesenbeker Teich provided the wheels mostly with enough impact water for the wheels for the bellow's drive, the ore crushing machine, for the light and heavy hammers. Another reason for the site was the richness of wood of the Lauterberger Forest as the melting works needed masses of hard charcoal (made from beech) and soft charcoal (spruce-wood).

Founding these three iron and steel works the electorate Hannover strengthened its finance politics in the era of mercantilism. The state was able to increase its income by selling the iron and steel products via the factoring business, at the same time it was necessary to provide the territory regularly with iron and steel products of different kinds. The principal for these three iron and steel works was the main mining office in Clausthal. Constructing the iron and steel works introduced the end of the then still existing private iron works.

During the 18th century still some buildings were added. After nearly 100 years a second era of constructing started at the King's iron and steel works and as well at the Rothehütte near Elbingerode (then in Hannover's territory, now in Sachsen-Anhalt) for their state of dilapidation and extension. This constructive period took place at the time between about 1820 and 1832. With a new big blast furnace - the iron works used to own two blast furnaces - the amount of pig iron's output could be increased another time. The English method to form hot iron bars between iron roils was introduced for producing evenly formed products like diverse section steels, wires and sheets. Until this point in time heavy hammers, driven by water wheels, did this kind of work. Both of these new roll housings, built in 1834 and 1840, were equally driven by a water wheel each. Later a Puddel-furnace was built to decarburize the pig iron by coke to forgeable or weldable iron.

After the battle of Langensalza/Thuringia in 1866 and the following conquest of the Kingdom Hannover by Prussia, this factory was sold to the millwrighting-industrialist A.C. Peters and the publisher Ludwig Holle in Wolfenbüttel in 1871. The new owners changed the manufacture basically: the blast furnace was torn down and replaced by foundry shaft furnaces. After this change no pig iron was produced any more at the King's iron and steel works, but only cast iron. At the same time the hammer works vanished. In its place was built a massive industrial mill for grinding grain. This last important building of the Königshütte is an industrial mill, erected by A.C. Peters as one of the new owners. The company earned more money by selling flour, semolina and other cereal products before World War 2 than by the sale of iron products. During this period the main focus was on producing mill- and gypsum-machines. The new developed mill machines could be tested and demonstrated to clients in this industrial mill. The mill was closed in 1960.

The whole ensemble of the King's iron and steel works still belongs till this day (2019) to the heirs of the bookseller and publisher Holle. In the end of 2001 the foundry was closed and more than 50 employees and workers had to be dismissed. In 2002/2003 all production facilities of the foundry except the two foundry shaft furnaces are sold. Since that time, the ensemble is well maintained as the industrial monument by the Cooperation of the Förderkreis with the owners.

Components

The visitor of the King's iron and steel works is certainly surprised about the big iron and steel works' ensemble whose effect is increased by the casted and built well of the middle of the 19th century. Following the still existing drawings of 1736 the Förderkreis Königshütte commissioned a working model of the blast furnace iron and steel works in its "Südharzer Eisenhüttenmuseum". We can see clearly the way Goethe saw this factory twice (1777, 1784), and King Jérôme in 1811. This building does not exist any more. The administration house (Faktoreihaus) and a civil servants' company house of the first constructive period still exist. These buildings are, like others after them, built in the typically High Harz mountain (Oberharzer) constructive way, unusual for the buildings in Lauterberg: half timbered with wooden planking. This is necessary in the high Harz mountains caused by the weather, but hardly here in the Southern Harz mountains.

The second constructive period made a real "royal" work. There are still two neoclassical buildings: the iron storeroom with Doric pillars (Eisenmagazin), and the former modelling house of 1822 (Formhaus). Both of the buildings could be restored, partially with financial help of the office for protection of historical buildings. Since 2007 several members of the Förderkreis renovate and repaired the old machines of the historical machine factory (Bohr- und Drehwerk, Maschinenfabrik). In this building with the old machines the time stood still since 1930. The machine factory is also an historical monument / heritage of national importance.

The highly impressive blast furnace and moulding works, finished in 1832, is nearly gone. Only the building plans, early paintings and photographs give us an idea to the sight to this Neo-gothic building which has been the biggest building of the King's iron and steel works. Today there are only in the foundry hall some relicts of walls with cast iron elements, a historical window and architecture, among them cast iron Gothic elements. The creator of these buildings of the 1820s were the machine director Ludwig Christoph Barthold Mühlenpfordt of the Mining office Clausthal and his member of staff Karl Heinrich Mummenthey, the later master of cast iron arts (Kunstmeister). Mummenthey drew the still existing building plans. Having finished the project planning, he was ordered to supervise the construction at the King's iron and steel works themselves.

The "Förderkreis Königshütte" and the Prospects

In 1983 the support association (Förderkreis) Königshütte Bad Lauterberg e.V. was founded. The association succeeded to classify the whole entity as an historical monument / heritage of national importance in 1986. The association had restored some buildings and had emerged a specialized museum in a formerly dilapidated building after ten year's time of construction, opened at 1997. This "Südharzer Eisenhüttenmuseum" (Southern Harz mountains iron works museum) shows the basics of iron and steel smelting and the products of the iron and steel works, especially the arts cast iron (Kunstguss).

One of the purposes of the Förderkreis, according to the statutes, is the support of measures to the preservation and use of the King's iron and steel works in its entire historic building entity and of the Förderkreis works to increase the public interest in this unique mercantilistic iron and steel work ensemble in Northern Germany now, with the company existing as a name and the danger of dilapidating buildings. The idea of the Förderkreis is the implementation of iron storeroom, machine factory and iron and steel works pub in the historic buildings as a "Historic industrial park King's iron and steel works". Some elements could be an arts smith's shop and the demonstration of casting and old belt drive machines. The pub should contain apart from other exposition space a lecture room with cafeteria for scientific and other conferences. Actual extensive projects in 2019 are the restoration of the machine factory and a weir-bridge.

The support association/Förderkreis cannot finance these aims by its own financial resources, but needs the consensus of the owners, the public authorities and private sponsors that it is necessary to give the iron and steel works' buildings a new life.