Magiczny Kraków

City walls and the Barbican: the fortifications that defended Kraków

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The city walls defended Kraków from the late 13th century; two hundred years later, they were reinforced with a round bastille called the Barbican or the “saucepan”. The fortifications proved effective for a few centuries. They defended the city against the Tatars, the Bohemian army, pretenders to the throne of the Commonwealth, and the Swedes during the Deluge (1655–1660); the last time they resisted invaders was during the Bar Confederation in 1768. A shot from a blunderbuss fired by Marcin Oracewicz, a craftsman from Kraków’s Fowler Brotherhood which mortally wounded the tsar’s officer commanding the assault, became the stuff of legend.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the heavily damaged fortifications were demolished. Only three towers, the Floriańska Gate, and the Barbican were left – the latter, however, lost its connection with the walls. The area of former towers and gates is now occupied only by recently erected small obelisks or plaques indicating their location and by Planty Park, placed in the ground to mark where high walls used to stand fronted by a moat and a wide foreground.

The remaining fragments of the walls are located at Floriańska, Basztowa and Pijarska streets.

Accessibility: Floriańska Street/Basztowa Street/Pijarska Street. The Barbican and the Defensive Walls are branches of the Kraków Museum. Information about availability for visitors can be found at: www.muzeumkrakowa.pl