

THE HOTELIER FAMILY WIRTH

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Their story began with GOTTLIEB DAVID WIRTH (1800 - 1839), who was originally a salt trader and who married the daughter of the owner of the inn "Zum Hirschen" in Maulach, Württemberg. He was succeeded by his son, FRIEDRICH WIRTH (1830 - 1885) who was an inn owner and beer brewer and at the same time was running the custom facilities, collecting custom duties at the border to Ansbach, in a, at that time, divided Germany.

He sent his 11 (!) children out into the world to get an education and make their way.

The most successful of them was G. HEINRICH WIRTH (1858-1937), who enjoyed an auspicious career as hotelier.

His path took him through the best-known hotels in Switzerland to England, back to Germany, from there to Italy and in 1879 for the first time to Rome.

The first professional centre in his life was Lucerne (Switzerland) and the Bürgenstock Hotels, where he married Christine Bucher in 1887, the daughter of the Hotel-pioneer Franz Josef Bucher. Later he became managing director and shareholder in the Bucher-Durrer company, which built, purchased and leased several hotels in Europe.

The SEMIRAMIS in Cairo became the southernmost hotel in the company, the northernmost being those in Basel, Lucerne and Lugano. The hotel group was managed by G. HEINRICH WIRTH via the centres Lucerne and Rome. In Rome Heinrich Wirth supervised the hotel MINERVA and later the QUIRINALE.

After difficulties with the Bucher-Durrer-Group heirs and co-shareholders, G. H. Wirth left the company and helped his five children to manage or acquire their own hotels.

THE WIRTH HOTELS IN ROME

This led to Wirth renting and later, with the family Nistelweck, buying the HOTEL EDEN in Rome. After this, he acquired the HOTEL VICTORIA, built in 1899, with the Thieles.

The hotel EDEN was then run by his son OSCAR WIRTH. In place of the previously insignificant guest-house "Roma e New York" above the Spanish Stairs, he built a luxurious hotel in the years between 1938 and 1944. This hotel named "Hassler / Villa Medici" was finished just in time to house American officers who had just seized Rome. Today, the Hotel Hassler is owned and run in turn by his son ROBERTO WIRTH.

The HOTEL VICTORIA was run by Heinrich Wirth's son HENRY ALBERTO WIRTH and his wife ELLY BURKHARDT and later taken over completely by them.

THE HOTEL VICTORIA DURING THE WAR AND WHAT FOLLOWED

The protestant Wirths of Switzerland were all open-minded, democratic and liberal. So too were Henry Alberto and Elly Wirth at the Hotel Victoria, who during World War II hid anti-fascists and Jews in their hotel which had been occupied by the Germans. During the withdrawal of German troops from Rome they also hid two young German lieutenants, who they were able to save from being hung by the mob.

After the war, due to the same attitude the Victoria became a home to Russian musicians who were looking for freedom from communism abroad.

Henry Alberto Wirth, who had learnt his trade in the most famous hotels in Europe, continued a tradition in the Hotel Victoria - which had already begun with his mother ALBERTA WAELLY, the second wife of H.G. Wirth, an hotelier's daughter from the GRAND HOTEL MAGGLINGEN, located above Bienne, Switzerland) - of cultivating culture and music and in particular relationships with travelling musicians.

Hence he was not only for many years the president and promoter of the CORO POLIFONICO ROMANO and of the ORATORIO DEL GONFALONE, but he and his wife accommodated, supported and promoted musicians all their lives wherever they could.

Listing the musical friends and customers of the Wirth family is like reading a handbook of musical life and ranges from V. ASKENAZY, S. CELIBIDACHE, S. CHERKASSY, E. & E. GHILELS, W. GIESEKING, P. HINDEMITH, L. KOGAN, the OISTRAKHS, S. RICHTER, R. SERKIN, S. STEINBERG to the maestro MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVICH, to mention only a few. Today, musicians still use the grand piano, which stands in the family's private flat in the hotel, to practise during their stay in Rome.

EXCUSE ME, WHERE CAN I FIND THE HOTEL VICTORIA?

The hotel, built in 1899, was refurbished in the last five years by ROLF H. WIRTH, a former banker. Remodeled and owned by the latter and his sisters VERA, HEIDI and ERICA, the hotel is quietly situated behind the Via Veneto, opposite the park of the Villa Borghese in Rome's historic centre and within walking distance of the most famous shopping streets. This means that guests can also reach the most important places of interest on foot. Because of Rome's agreeable climate, joggers can use the park of the Villa Borghese all year round. Thanks to its quiet location and the fresh smell of the park opposite, guests can comfortably sleep with open windows even in the middle of Rome.

The leading FIRST-CLASS HOUSE **** was rebuilt in accordance with the era in which it was created, while preserving its historic substance and the artwork collection it contains was expanded. Thus the Hotel Victoria possesses over 400 pictures from the eighteenth century, all of which represent buildings, ruins or views of ancient Rome. Today the HOTEL VICTORIA is famous for the RESTAURANT BELISARIO, with its classic Italian cuisine, Roman specialities and various associated Italian wines, as well as the elegant VIC'S-BAR as meeting place.

The romantic roof terrace with its view of the Villa Borghese, which in summer serves as bar and restaurant, is also popular.

Small, functional conference rooms and an efficient day and night garage service are a matter of course.

The continuing Swiss hotelier tradition of the Wirth family guarantees a friendly, competent and multilingual service.

A BANKER WITHOUT BANKS

In 2000, the HOTEL VICTORIA ROMA suddenly found itself without its patron ALBERTO H. WIRTH, without one of his children ever having taken up the profession of hotelier.

In a meeting with his sisters Vera, Heidi and Erica and enthusiastically supported by his brother-in-law Dr. Rainer von Falkenstein, the oldest member of the family, ROLF H. WIRTH, who has just ended his career in banking, decided, whether through a sense of duty, tradition, honour or pure entrepreneurial spirit, to bring the declining hotel into shape. In doing this, the fifth generation of hotel tradition within the Wirth family began. The transition from a Member of the Board of an international bank (General Manager of the Deutsche Bank Switzerland AG) to a hotelier seemed natural: Grown up in the hotel, having been trained in hotel management in the Hotel Management School Lucerne, with practical experience in various hotels, having the necessary professionalism and the will to succeed, a love of hosting and of good food and drink, he had the perfect qualities needed for this challenge.

However, the former banker found himself suddenly in a position of extreme financial difficulty having to fight the banks to gain refinancing for the hotel.

THE RENOVATION WITH FANTASY INSTEAD OF MONEY

With the help of a small troop of loyal employees, the interior of the HOTEL VICTORIA was totally gutted and renovated. Channels for the new ventilation and air conditioning were installed in the more than hundred year old walls. The bathrooms were recreated in the original style using appropriate materials. Alcoves and awkward corners were used for built-in wardrobes and ladies' make-up tables. The old corridors were intentionally not straightened but simply covered with sunny yellow Tuscany wall plaster, and as tradition demands, then waxed. Every day the fight against the Roman laid-back attitude goes on. Additionally, decentralised water pumps had to be installed to help against Rome's low water pressure, an ancient Artesian well was reactivated and part of old the walled-up wine cellar was opened up.

The renovations are continually carrying on with painstaking attention to detail.

AS ONE MAKES HIS BED, SO HE MUST LIE

Our guests shall feel completely comfortable and therefore we have chosen the best mattresses for the new beds.

The heading-panel is adjustable to give the opportunity to read and even have breakfast comfortably in bed.

The personal safes, Internet connections and heat-rejecting flat screen TVs are conducive to the guests' convenience.

LUCULLUS IS BACK AT BELISARIO'S

The roof garden, which was previously primarily for private use has been opened to the customers. Surrounded by gardenias, pomegranate trees, camellias, orange trees and palm trees, customers are spoilt from spring until autumn with delicious food and drinks.

The newly renovated RISTORANTE BELISARIO serves Italian and Roman specialities, which are prepared to traditional recipes whilst our wine cellar offers an astonishingly affordable selection of Italian wines, representing many best buys. The 50s style VIC'S BAR not only has a superbly relaxing atmosphere but you can also enjoy typical cocktails of that era there, such as the Americano or Negroni.

HERE I AM IN ROME

As no other hotel in the city, the VICTORIA points out to his Roman location: The artwork from the eighteenth century forms a unique collection - especially with its vedutas.

The collection of over 400 antique pictures is located in the rooms, the staircases and the saloons. All of which represent Rome in the past with views of bridges, gardens, landscapes, churches, palaces, places and ruins of ancient Rome.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A GOOD TEAM

In the light of a complaint by his grandfather, G.H. Wirth, that there are no good governesses, that is employees, in Rome, the new patron, aided by his right-hand, Mrs. A-M. SALA, trains his young employees in kitchen and restaurant skills himself. Mother Wirth's over seventy-year-old governess was reactivated to drill the two young governesses in the ways of Prussian order and cleanliness!

The retired former manager of the Club Baur au Lac in Zurich, Franco NAREDI, is responsible for food and beverages. More active than ever, the director and delegated Member of the Board of the Fimotel, Henry HUNOLD, who after a successful international career as manager of the Dolder Grand in Zurich and later the Kronenhof in Pontresina, is preparing the Hotel Victoria for its future steps. With typical "Wirthian" impatience, the patron himself spurs his employees on to higher levels of professionalism and efficiency, always saying: "I admit there is always something going on but there is even more to do; so let's get started"! And if you ask him if it's urgent, he'll say "no, you've got until this evening"!

We welcome you to the old, new HOTEL VICTORIA ROMA!

If you'd like to know everything that happened off the record, then write to:

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