St. Florian’s Gate

St. Florian’s Gate served as the main entrance to the former Kraków. It allowed entry to the city and was a military building. Currently, it is one of the most famous monuments in Kraków. It was built as a defensive tower. Its 34-meter silhouette rises picturesquely between the Barbican and the beginning of Floriańska Street. The first mention of it comes from 1307. It was expanded and increased in height until the 16th century. Until the 19th century, the role and layout of the inner area and some external parts were changed. The building was erected on a rectangular plan with dimensions of eight and a half meters and just over nine meters. Its walls are made of irregular, light-colored stones. Only the upper section is made of brick. A narrow strip of bricks also appears in the central part of the wall facing Floriańska Street. The building is covered with a brick hip tile roof. It is crowned with a steeple covered with a now green, copper sheet metal helmet and a gold-plated flag.

The gate opening is about three and a half meters high, almost four meters wide, and is topped with a sharp arc. In the wall on the west side, there is a small chapel. When entering from the side of the Barbican, you can see it on your right. Above the altar, there is a copy of the icon of Our Lady of Piasek.

Above the gate opening on the wall facing Floriańska Street, there is a porch. It is surrounded by a decorative stone balustrade made of gray sandstone. From the porch, you can enter the Chapel of the Virgin Mary. In the recess situated a few meters higher, there is a bas-relief of Saint Florian. He is depicted as a Roman soldier in gilded armor. He is holding a red banner in his left hand and a bucket in the right one. As the patron of firefighters, the saint is pouring water from the bucket onto a building which is much smaller than him.

The northern wall facing the Barbican is decorated with a bas-relief depicting an eagle. It is situated at a height of almost twelve meters. The crowned eagle with outstretched wings is depicted on the background of a shield.

The highest, brick part of the tower walls is surrounded by a protruding porch. It is supported by light-colored stone brackets. The porch is fully enclosed. Its walls have some small arrowslits. This is the so-called machicolation.

St. Florian’s Gate was to be demolished for the third time at the beginning of the 20th century when a tram line was being built at the site. The problem was that the height of the passage under the gate did not fit the pantograph, i.e. an apparatus mounted on the roof of a tram to collect power. Fortunately, a decision was made to widen and deepen the passage. As a result, the monument survived. However, for the next dozen years or so, drivers operating the narrow-gauge trams had to fold the pantograph every time they would go under St. Florian’s Gate.