



Olympia

Olympia

Olympia was named after the highest mountain in mainland Greece, Mount Olympus.

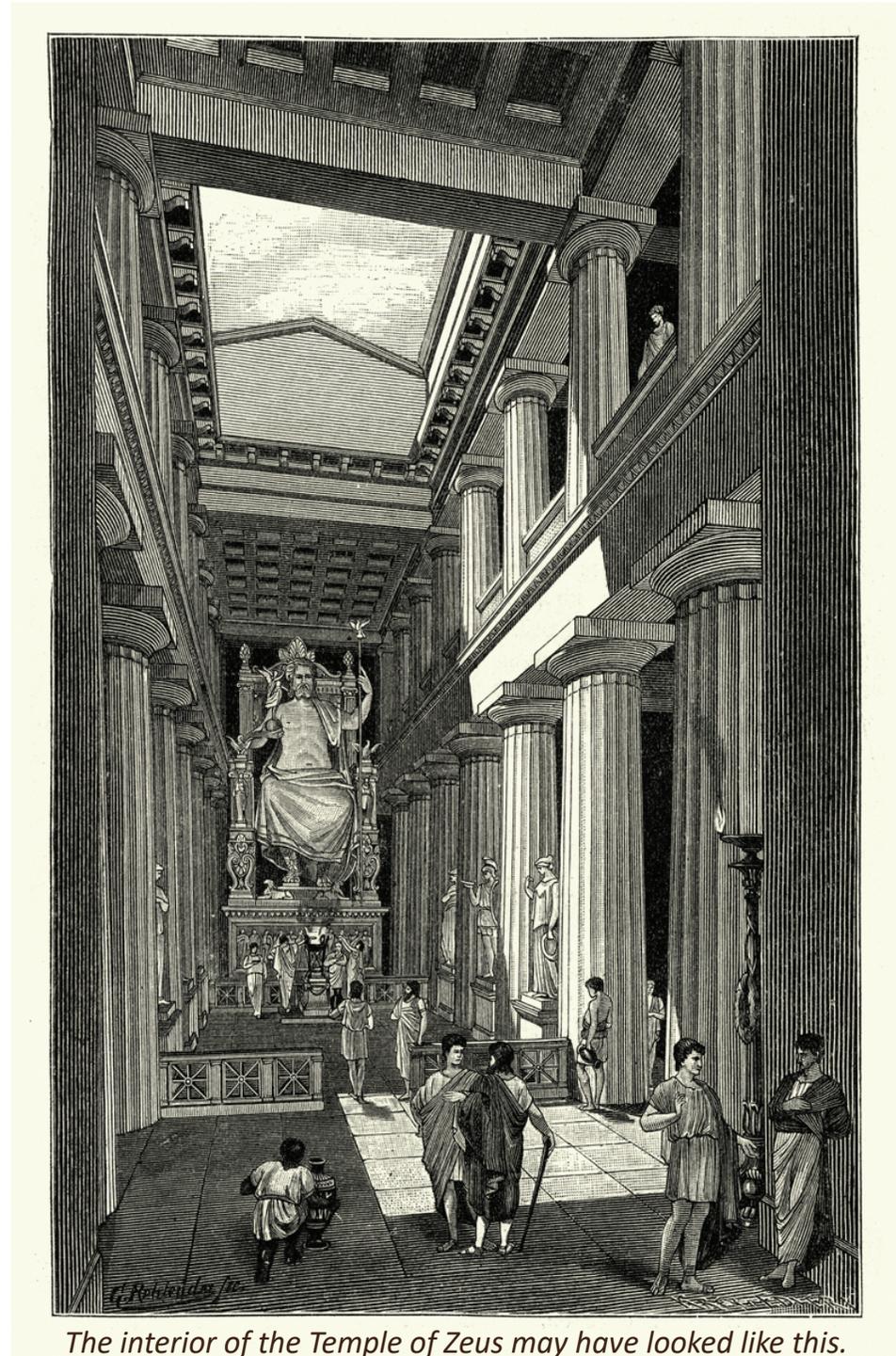
In Greek mythology, Mt Olympus is the home of the greatest of the Greek gods, Zeus.

People came to Olympia to take part in a religious festival dedicated to Zeus and watch athletes compete for glory. The festival was held every four years.

The Ancient Town of Olympia

Over the years, the ancient Greeks worked hard to expand Olympia. They built a beautiful new temple that contained a colossal statue of Zeus. The famous sculptor Phidias sculpted it, and it became known as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

They added training areas (the gymnasium and palaestra) and new buildings to house the athletes and visitors (Leonidaion).



The interior of the Temple of Zeus may have looked like this.

Gymnasion



Philippeion



Temple of Hera

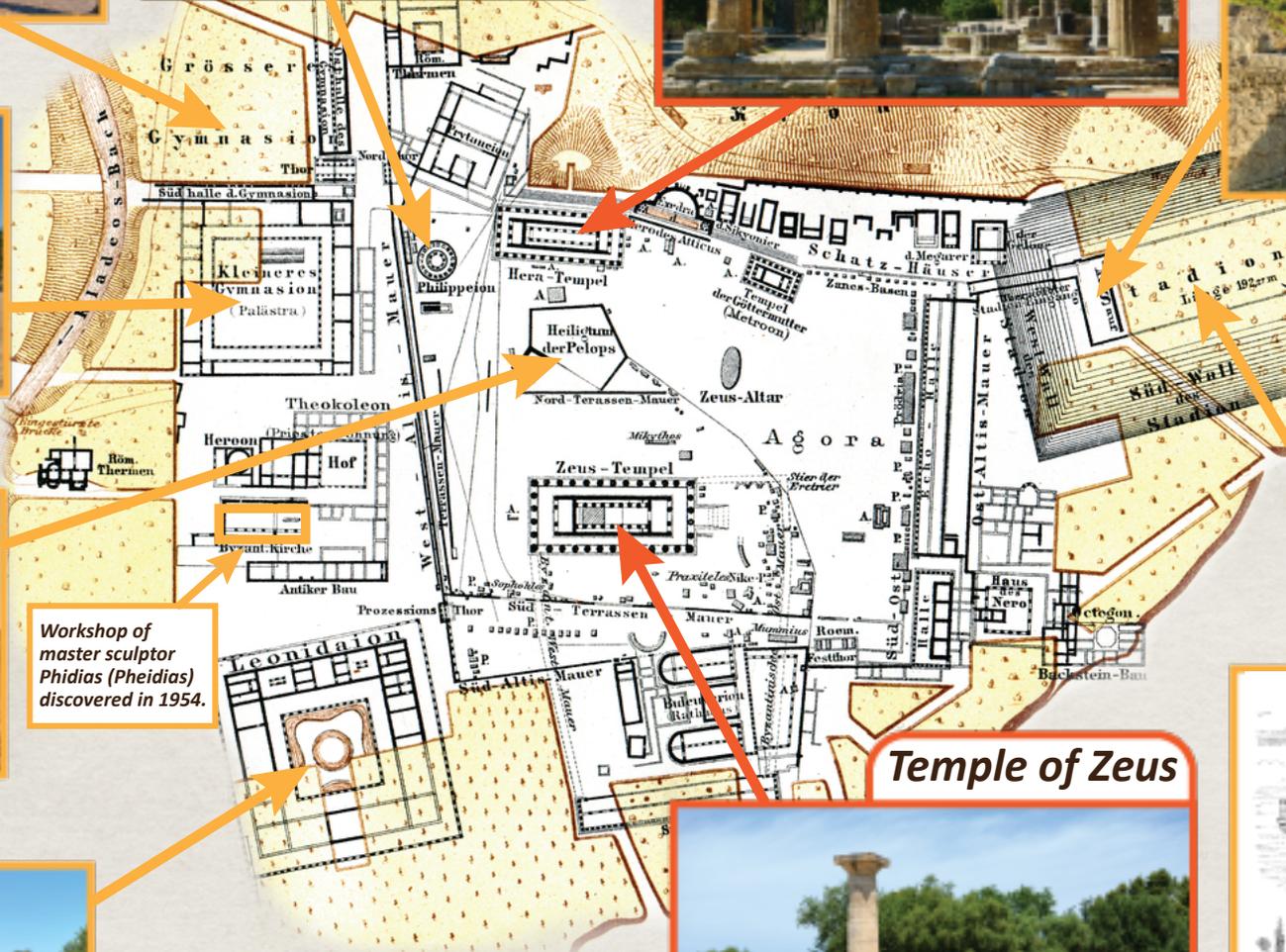


The Temple of Hera is much older than the Temple of Zeus.

Crypt (arched way to the stadium)



Palaestra



Stadion (stadium)



Pelopion



Workshop of master sculptor Phidias (Pheidias) discovered in 1954.

Temple of Zeus



Temple of Zeus at Olympia



The Temple of Zeus may have looked like this.

Leonidaion



Olympia

The End of an Era

The Romans took control of Greece in 146 BCE. At the time, Olympic competition was highly regarded, so the games were allowed to continue for another 500 years.



Eventually, people began to lose interest in Olympia, and the Roman Empire decided to abolish the pagan festival. The last recorded Olympic Games took place in 393 CE.

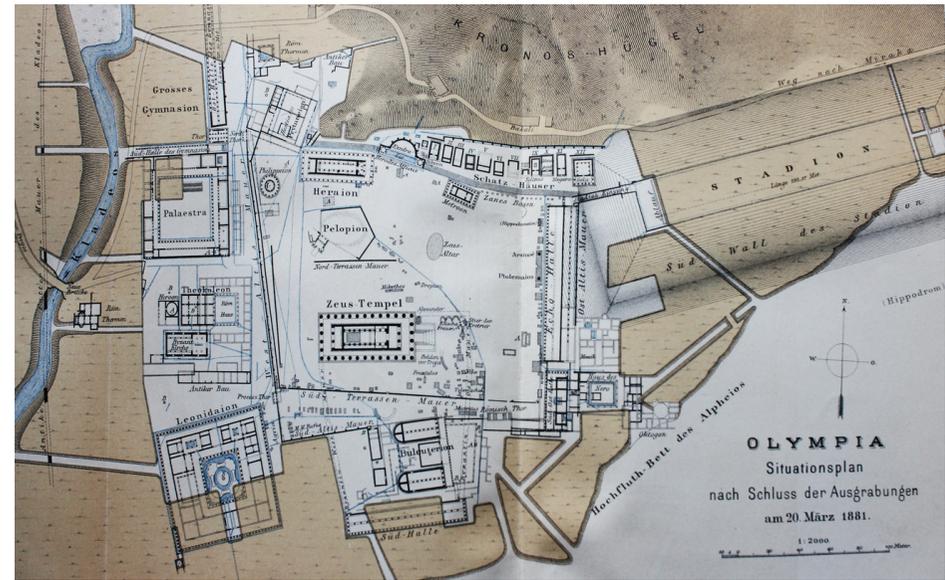
After over a thousand years of tradition, Olympia's sporting contests finally ceased, and its temples were closed down. The buildings, affected by earthquake activity in the region, fell into ruin and lay buried for hundreds of years.

All that remained of Olympia were ancient stories of its glorious past. The city lay forgotten, buried underground until the 1700s.

The site was rediscovered by the English archeologist Richard Chandler in 1766.

A French expedition began excavations of the Temple of Zeus in 1829, then major expeditions by German teams excavated much of the site between 1875 and 1881.

Excavations have continued at the site to this day.



An aerial photograph of a coastal resort area. The image shows a sandy beach curving along a coastline. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. Waves are breaking gently onto the shore. On the right side of the image, there is a large resort complex with several buildings, swimming pools, and a tennis court. The surrounding land is lush with green trees and vegetation. In the background, there are rolling hills and a small town or village perched on a hillside under a clear blue sky.

What caused Olympia's destruction?

According to research by Professor Dr Andreas Vött in 2011, Olympia was destroyed by a tsunami event in 551 CE, which buried the site in debris up to 8 m deep.