The old Main bridge

The Marktheidenfeld Main bridge was the first stone bridge between Würzburg and Aschaffenburg that led over the river Main when it was opened for traffic on January 29, 1845. The imperial road No 8 – today the federal highway A8 – a road which led across Germany, from Emmerich at the Lower Rhine to Passau in Lower Bavaria, crossed the river Main over this bridge. King Louis I. of Bavaria personally corrected and approved the plans. Because of its harmonic construction and the way it is integrated into the Main landscape the Main bridge in Marktheidenfeld has always attracted a great deal of interest and admiration since it was built. It also served as a construction model for other stone bridges.

On April 2, 1945, two of the bridge’s arches were blown up in order to stop the approaching Americans. After the war, the bridge was repaired immediately and its former state was restored soon. Only the red sandstone balusters, which unfortunately are damaged, are displayed in the sacristy. These were uncovered in 1982/83 which show William and Elisabeth of Krichingen (passed away in 1610/1612). The two grave covers, which unfortunately are damaged, are displayed in the back part of the church. During the renovation of Saint Lawrence church in 1982/83, late medieval frescos were found under the interior plaster of the sacristy. These were uncovered in 2003. Images of Christ as the judge of the world as well as symbols of the four evangelists appeared. It is assumed that these frescos date back to the early 16th century.

Another historical finding was made in 2003. When renovating the sacristy, two historic grave covers were discovered which show William and Elisabeth of Kirchingen (passed away in 1620/1622). William and Elisabeth of Kirchingen were descendants of the old counts of Würtemberg. The two grave covers, which unfortunately are damaged, are displayed in the back part of the church.

The fair in Marktheidenfeld is called Saint Lawrence Fair. Every year, around Assumption Day (August 15) Marktheidenfeld celebrates the Laurenzi Fair with visitors from near and far for 9 days. A second Catholic church, today’s parish church St. Josef, was built from 1965 to 1970 in the style of the old town hall and the adjacent old forge from 1883, the bridge with a stair above it. If we take a closer look, we can also see the date 1846 (the year the bridge was opened), a crown and the letters L (a reference to Louis I., the builder of the bridge). Today the old town hall and the adjacent old forge from 1707, accommodate the community college of Marktheidenfeld.

The old town hall and the old forge

The old town hall is next to Saint Lawrence church. In 1665, it replaced a smaller and dilapidated building as school and town hall. Above the entrance there is the coat of arms that Marktheidenfeld has borne since 1383. The bridge with a stair above it. If we take a closer look, we can also see the date 1846 (the year the bridge was opened), a crown and the letters L (a reference to Louis I., the builder of the bridge). Today the old town hall and the adjacent old forge from 1707, accommodate the community college of Marktheidenfeld.

The old forge and the former prison, which was built in 1890/90 on Ludwigstraße and is a modern history exhibition. On Würzburger Straße, we do not only find the old prison (9), but also the Friesenkirche (8) which was built in 1832/32 as the first official building in Marktheidenfeld as well as the former diocese court building (10) which was built in 1886/87. We are back at where we started from. Our walking tour through the old city of Marktheidenfeld ends at the fishermens fountain on the market square.

If you have a little more time, we would like to recommend a detour via Stiergasse and Würzburger Straße. On Stiergasse 20, a former barn, the Historischer Verein Marktheidenfeld and Umgebung e.V. (Historic Association Marktheidenfeld and Surroundings) established an old forge workshop (6) with the inventory from the old forge as a permanent exhibition. On Würzburger Straße, we do not only find the Friesenkirche (9) mentioned earlier, but also the old prison (10), which was built in 1832/32 as the first official building in Marktheidenfeld as well as the former diocese court building (11), built in 1886/87, which now is the police station.

Saint Lawrence church (St. Laurentius-Kirche)

Through the Hermgasse, one of the nine Main alleys, our walking tour leads us up to the catholic Saint Lawrence church with its magnificent facade from the mid 18th century. The church had been reconstructed again and again for over 700 years. This is why we can distinguish between different building periods featuring the Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque and New Baroque building style. The building styles of the respective time period have always been integrated harmoniously into the former built harmonic concept. It is just to call Saint Lawrence church the history book of the city.

The former Romanesque building was constructed by the monks from Holzkirchen. Under the leadership of the counts of Wertheim, Martin Luther’s teachings had already been proclaimed in the 1530s in Heidenfeld. In 1612, after Heidenfeld again had become part of the archdiocese Würzburg, prince bishop Julius Eucher of Meiningen carried out the catholic reform and had a new church built in 1613/14 as a visible sign. The longhouse of the old romanesque church was torn down. Only the choir, the tower of the town, is still intact and has been serving as sacristy ever since.

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It is inviting, this little town located at the river Main and in the Spessart Forest. And it is worth visiting with its charming half-timbered houses, the romantic alleys and the picturesque Main promenade. The settlement, which was originally named Heidenfeld, is more than over a thousand years old. Monks from the monastery Holzkirchen, located halfway between Marktheidenfeld and Würzburg, influ-enced the town from the beginning. Holzkirchen in turn was supposed to remind of Marktheidenfeld’s past as a settle-ment of fishermen and skippers. The town’s coat of arms with the bridge, the lucky star (which is said to have risen over Marktheidenfeld during the building of the old Main bridge) and the coats of arms of the 6 boroughs as well as the coat of arms of the Breton partner city Montfort-sur-Meu are carved into the base of the fountain.

The fishermen’s fountain on the market square

The stonemason Heinrich Eschenbacher from Marktheidenfeld sculpted the octagonal fishermen’s fountain on the market square. It portrays a fisherman of the river Main and is supposed to remind of Marktheidenfeld’s past as a settle-ment of fishers and skippers. The town’s coat of arms with the bridge, the lucky star (which is said to have risen over Marktheidenfeld during the building of the Old Main bridge) and the coats of arms of the 6 boroughs as well as the coat of arms of the Breton partner city Montfort-sur-Meu are carved into the base of the fountain.

The Franck House

Our walking tour leads from the market square into Unter- torstraße to the Franck House which already attracts atten-tion from a far distance with its magnificent blue facade. In 1745, the vintner and merchant Franz Valentin Franck had this house built in the style of the late Baroque. After chan-ning ownership quite a few times – special mention should be made of the vintner Johann Georg Andreas Schulz (1735 - 1809) who is supposed to be the first person in Germany to have discovered how to produce sparkling wine in this house – in 1894 the Franck House eventually became the property of the town which from 1994 - 1998 renovated and restored the Franck House in the course of the urban renewal. The Franck House is still preserved. Visitors can get a good impression by stepping left into the small alley at the end of Untertorstraße and walking towards the old city’s greenery. Our actual wal-king tour, however, leads left towards the river Main, along the former „Fleckenmauer“ to the Main quay.

The Main quay – a cultural heritage

Originally, Marktheidenfeld was separated from the Main by a wall. In 1844/45 a door in a new wall was built in front of the wall. This is why today Markthei- denfeld is facing the river. The walnut trees along the Main promenade used to belong to the houses behind them. Their residents took care of the trees and in turn harvested the walnuts. Individual houses as well as the Main quay are today listed as a heritage ensemble. This part of Markthei-denfeld looks especially beautiful from the other bank of the river Main and in the afternoon sun.

Marktheidenfeld acquired the privileges of a town in the 13th century, the city literally experienced a population explosion. Before World War II, only about 2,600 people lived in today’s centre; whereas right after the war was over, there were already 4,300 inhabitants. Many refugees and expellees found a new home here and contri-buted to the progress of Marktheidenfeld.

Starting point for a walk tour through the historic center of Marktheidenfeld is the market square.

The former city gates and the „Fleckenmauer“

The tour continues to the end of Untertorstraße where the buildings end and the lower gate (Untertor), facing Lang-furt, used to be. This gate is one of three city gates. In 1863, it was torn down because it wasn’t modern anymore and an obstacle for the increasing traffic. The upper gate (Obertor) had already been torn down in 1844/46 and the middle gate (Mitteltor) in 1860. The three characteristics of a medieval town were jurisdiction, market rights and an encircling wall. At that time, Marktheidenfeld had two of these three characteristics: market rights and an encircling wall. Today, only parts of the former wall, the „Fleckenmauer“, are still preserved. Visitors can get a good impression by stepping left into the small alley at the end of Untertorstraße and walking towards the old city’s greenery. Our actual wal-king tour, however, leads left towards the river Main, along the former „Fleckenmauer“ to the Main quay.

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