



MONHEIM AM RHEIN

A brief history

Volume 1

of Monheim am Rhein

From the Romans to Napoleon

www.monheim.de

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Published by

The City of Monheim am Rhein

First edition 2024

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Text: Dafna Graf | based on: Karl-Heinz Hennen
Geschichte der Stadt Monheim am Rhein, Volume I

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Layout: Anna Garecht/Strich!Punkt GmbH

Print: Lenz Druck, Leverkusen

www.monheim.de

A brief history of Monheim am Rhein

Volume I | From the Romans to Napoleon

Abridged and revised edition of
Karl-Heinz Hennen's book on the history of
Monheim am Rhein, Volume I





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PREFACE

A warm welcome to Monheim am Rhein! In 2014, the City of Monheim am Rhein commissioned Dr. Karl-Heinz Hennen, a resident historian and philologist, to conduct a modern academic review of the town's history, which dates back around 2000 years. The first volume of his work, "from the Romans to Napoleon", was published in German in 2016.

Dr. Karl-Heinz Hennen combined old and new research, reviewed and evaluated it from the 21st century perspective. Rightly so – as the writer and early democrat Georg Herwegh noted one-and-a-half centuries ago "Every period not only has its own history, but also its own view of previous history. The past is given new meaning in each century".

This booklet is an abridged and revised version of Hennen's extensive work, provided in an English translation. It was written with those guests of Monheim in mind who have an interest in the long history of our town, irrespective of whether they come to our city via their professional work, as tourists, in the context of our many twin-town programs or a school exchange visit.

My grateful thanks go to the author for his historical research and his permission for the review that made this shorter version possible. My thanks also go to Dafna Graf for her editorial and substantive work on the text and the addition of photos and illustrations.

Immerse yourself in the early origins of Monheim am Rhein's fascinating history! After reading, you will see the city and the many surviving traces of the past with new eyes.

Daniel Zimmermann

Daniel Zimmermann
Mayor of Monheim am Rhein



The city of Monheim am Rhein incorporates the four communities of Blee, Monheim, Baumberg and Bürgel. Whilst the history of Bürgel reaches all the way back to the late Roman era in the fourth century, the other three parts of modern-day Monheim share much of their history as medieval settlements dating back to the ninth century or even before. All four parts have been joined in history ever since the river Rhine changed its course in the 14th century. This is when Bürgel, which had originally been situated on the left bank of the river, suddenly found itself on the right bank instead.

Situated on the right river bank in this densely forested and sparsely populated area, Blee, Monheim, Baumberg and a number of other small settlements (including Hitdorf, today a part of Leverkusen) were small villages in the Middle Ages. They preserved their rural character for a very long time, even as they grew and developed.

The village of Monheim proper went on to play a special role in the history of the area. Over the course of the 12th century, it had gained importance in the county of Berg and was eventually granted town-like privileges, including fortifications, towards the end of the 14th century. Many of the settlements in its surroundings – some smaller, some larger – including those that make up today's districts of Monheim belonged to the same administrative district, called "Amt Monheim". This is why they all shared a common worldly, religious and judicial history. Another feature they shared is their location close to the banks of the river Rhine, a feature that has shaped the development of landscapes, the fates of people and the unfolding of political events in the region through the ages. A separate chapter is dedicated to the location on the Rhine.

Further chapters are dedicated to the history of each of the different villages. The chronology of events over the long period of time covered by this booklet (ca. 400–1800 AD) is told against the backdrop of changing power relations and political constellations. It begins in Roman times with the history of the Bürgel fort, continues with the dominating power of monasteries and collegiate churches through the Early and High Middle Ages, covers the 600 years of rule of the counts and dukes of Berg, and ends with the dissolution of the duchy of Berg prior to Napoleonic occupation. The historic accounts of the villages and eras are interspersed with local legends and portrayals of important personalities.



Today, Monheim am Rhein consists of the two main districts of Monheim and Baumberg and extends about ten kilometers along the Rhine's right bank between Leverkusen and Düsseldorf. To the east, Monheim am Rhein borders on Langenfeld. Düsseldorf lies to the north, and Leverkusen to the south. The border to the town of Dormagen, on the west bank of the Rhine, runs through the river, as does the border to the city of Cologne in the south. Monheim am Rhein is situated in the center of the Cologne Lowland (Kölner Bucht), which lies between the cities of Bonn to the southeast and Neuss and Düsseldorf to the north.



Course of the river Rhine around Monheim, river kilometers indicated

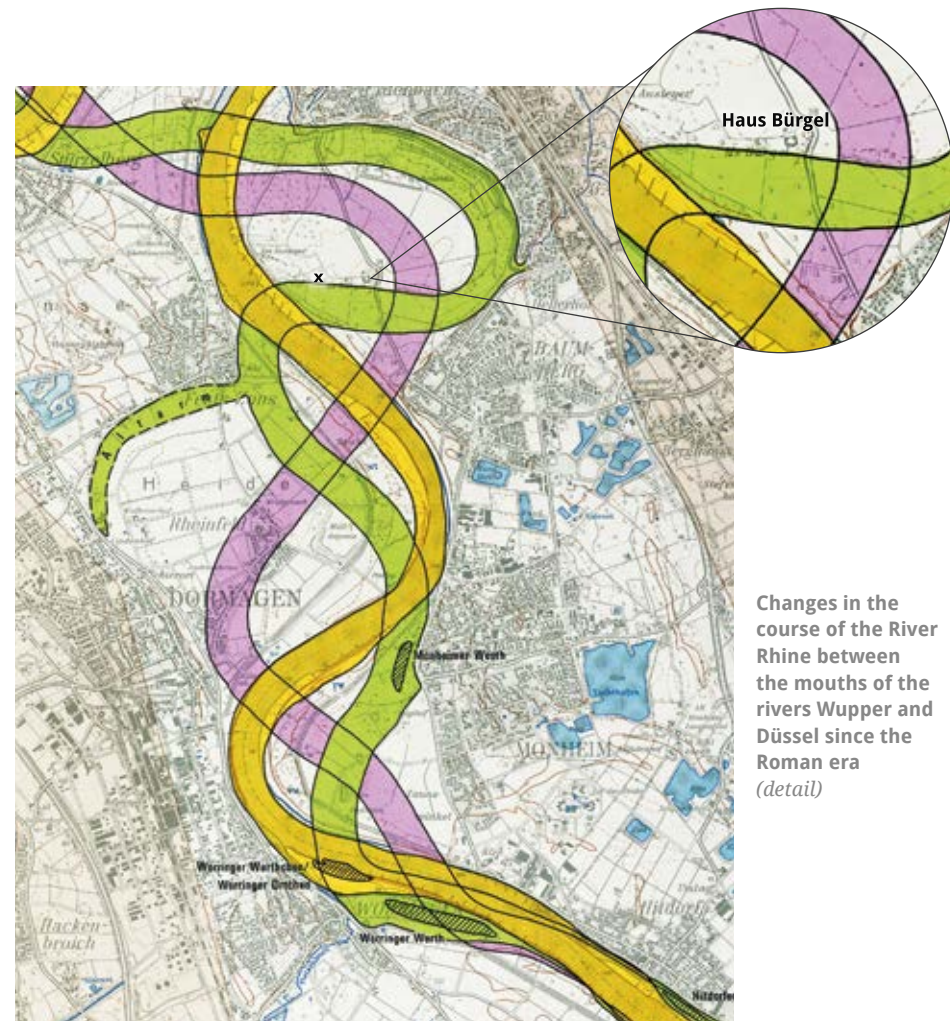
In 1994, the name of the river became part of the town's name. Ever since, it has been called "Monheim am Rhein" rather than simply "Monheim", setting it apart from the other German town of Monheim in Swabia. Adding the name of the river also highlights how important the Rhine, which forms the western city limits between river kilometers 707 and 717, has been for the town throughout its history.

THE RIVER'S CHANGING COURSE

Over the course of time, the Rhine has changed its course more than once. Apart from some minor and major shifts in the riverbed, river break-throughs have cut off meandering arms of the Rhine between Dormagen and Urdenbach twice since Antiquity. While being so close to the Rhine always harbored the risk of devastating floods, its proximity also contributed to making the landscape so fertile. Whenever the Rhine changed its course, this could just as well mean the loss of valuable farmland or the gain of new fertile land. The changing landscapes had a significant impact on Monheim's history, as the settlements that make up Monheim am Rhein today were originally founded and located on the banks of the river and were deeply affected by its changes. From south to north, these are Blee, Monheim, Baumberg and Bürgel.

The map on the opposite page provides an impressive overview of the three major shifts of the Rhine: the first one in Roman times (first and second century), the next during the Middle Ages (13th century) and finally, in the early modern age (beginning of the 19th century).

Around 300 AD, the Rhine flowed around the *Castrum Durnomagus* (the Roman fort of Dormagen) in a wide arc before turning eastwards just before the point where Feste Zons (the Zons fortress) eventually stood. The illustration clearly shows (in purple) how both the Roman forts – *Castrum Durnomagus* and the fort Bürgel – were located on the left bank of the Rhine. Both of these forts were part of the Lower Germanic Limes (more on this in the chapter "Haus Bürgel").



Changes in the course of the River Rhine between the mouths of the rivers Wupper and Düsseldorf since the Roman era (detail)

- Course of the Rhine in the Roman era (turn of the first/second century AD)
- Course of the Rhine in the Middle Ages (13th century)
- Course of the Rhine in the modern age (early 19th century)
- Course of the Rhine today

Meanders are a series of winding bends in the river course. Over time, they grow larger and move closer together, eventually forming a loop. At some point, the meander may get cut off: the river will seek a more direct flow, cutting across the loop. The remaining arm of the loop forms what is called an oxbow lake.

Werth is the Middle High German word for a river island.

In the Frankish era, most likely in the sixth or seventh century, the river shifted its course from west to east when the **Dormagen meander was cut off**. The Rhine now ran in an elongated S-shape past Blee and Monheim in a north-north-westerly direction (shown in green). Looking at its course after the break-through, you can see how Blee, Monheim and Baumberg – all of which were presumably founded in the ninth century – were located close to the right bank of the Rhine. Monheim was located on the river's main arm; a tributary was located further to the west. Almost the complete area now referred to as the Monheimer Rheinbogen (Rhine bend) – the land to the west of today's Bleeer Strasse – used to be to the left of the river.

Thus, the Rhine must have flowed in two arms past a **Werth** even at the time that Monheim was founded.

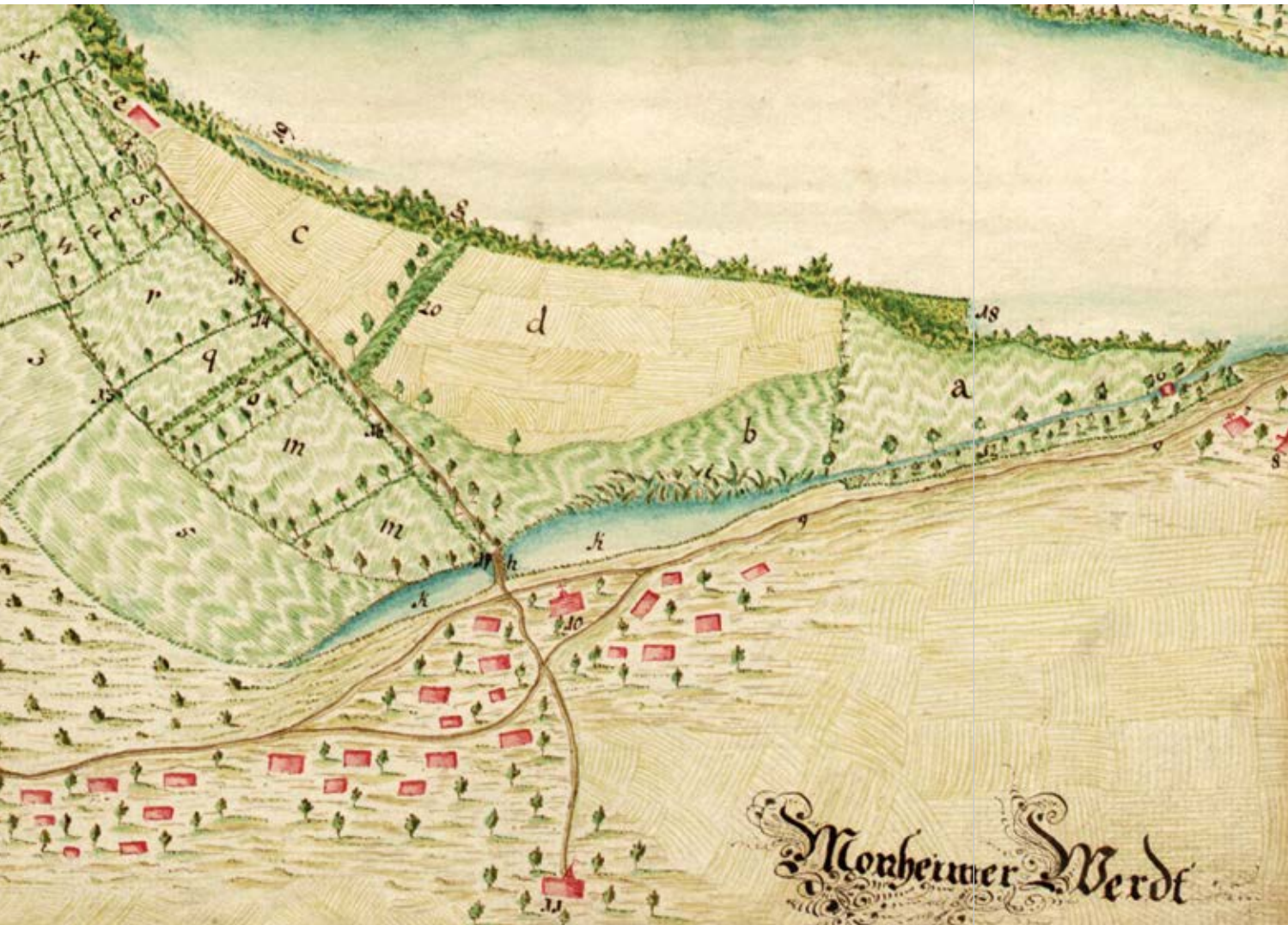
The street name "Am Werth" is a reminder of that island. The main arm of the river flowed past St. Gereon's Church and the entry to the market square, almost exactly following the present-day route of Kapellenstrasse. The toll house later stood just to the north of the church, where Zollstrasse (toll street) runs today.

Catastrophic flooding, most likely between Christmas of 1373 and May 1374, led to the **cut-off of the Bürgel meander**. As a consequence, Haus Bürgel, surrounded by extensive floodplains, ended up on the right bank of the Rhine (shown in yellow on the map). The Baumberger Aue and Urdenbacher Kämpe floodplains are nature reserves today. At the time, they formed an almost circular depression with alluvial forests, meadows and fields. As the former riverbed of the Rhine only silted up very gradually, Haus Bürgel effectively stood on an island for a long time.



In 1591, another disastrous flood changed the surroundings of the fortified town of Monheim once again. Following the flood, the river's main arm and secondary arm swapped places. The tributary western arm, further away from the settlement, became the main arm, while the eastern arm, on the banks of which Monheim was located, was now the secondary arm, referred to as Binnenwasser (inland water), or simply as "Loch" (the hole). It roughly followed the course of today's Kapellenstrasse. A channel flowing northwards connected the arm with the Rhine.

The "Monheimer Werth", the river island, still lay between the western main arm and secondary arm. The toll house, no longer located on the main arm of the river, could not serve its purpose anymore so, in its stead, a "Werthus" (river island house) was constructed 200 meters further to the west. It served as the toll station for the next 200 years.



Monheimer Werth in 1771

This map from 1771 shows the Monheimer Werth and remnants of the northern part of the secondary arm. A path leads from the water to the "Werthhus" in a southwesterly direction (shown at the top left of the map). St. Gereon's Church and the former toll house beside it are identifiable, as well as St. Mary's Chapel and the post mill on the right-hand edge of the map.

Over time, the area around the Werth gradually became more and more marshy until it was finally drained in the course of the 19th century. **Kradepohl**, the small square at the northern end of Grabenstrasse, is located in the former marshlands. When the Rhine's water levels rise, you can still observe that the ground water rises faster and higher on the foreshore of the old town as elsewhere in Monheim because the direction of flow changes during high water. You can even still see the outlines of the former river island when water levels rise high enough.

The area around **Kradepohl** must have still been a wetland or pond in 1853 when Monheim's council decided to build a "water pit and fire pond" there. This is reflected in the name of the square: it means Toad Pond in English. Krade is dialect for "Kröte", or toad; Pohl is dialect for "Pfuhl", a murky pool. A well was built in honor of the eponymous toads in 1973 (and restored in 2018).

RHINE SHIPPING AND TRADE

As the Roman Empire began faltering in the mid-fifth century, shipping on the Rhine gradually lost its significance. It was not until the eighth century that the Rhine began to regain its importance as a transport route. There was no fleet that could be used to defend ships against enemy raids, such as those that took place in the war-ridden Carolingian period in the ninth and tenth centuries. Nevertheless, merchant shipping experienced a revival.

Over time, trade became ever more important, with trade routes on land and on water being used. Commerce flourished, especially in towns and cities from the 11th century on. By the 13th century, the Rhine had once again become the most important trade route to the major trading hub, the city of Cologne. Monheim benefited from the lively trade thanks to its location on the Rhine, acting as a transshipment spot for

commercial goods being imported from the left bank of the Rhine, largely from Cologne, to the **Bergisches Land** region. Vice versa, skippers from Monheim delivered goods to Cologne, mainly agricultural products, but also wood intended, for instance, for the duke's house there.

The first ship from Monheim to be mentioned in the records appears in 1217, albeit not in connection with trade. It was in June of that year that a large number of ships gathered on the British coast in preparation for the Fifth Crusade. The ship from Monheim never made it past that first meeting point, though. It ran onto cliffs and sank. Going by this source, Monheim could have already had a **landing pier** at this time.

"Berg" means hill or mountain in German. But the **Bergisches Land** region does not owe its name to rolling hills, but rather to a noble family that called itself **von Berg** (from Latin *de monte*, "of the hills") after its residence "Burg Berge" (Hills Castle) near Altenberg. The lords of Berg – who later became the counts and dukes of Berg – ruled over an area between the Ruhr, Rhine and Sieg rivers for a period of around 600 years from the high Middle Ages to the early modern age. Today, the region's traditions and identity are promoted by the "Bergisches Land Cultural Region", a culture initiative by the State of North-Rhine Westphalia which includes the modern-day district of Mettmann (of which Monheim am Rhein is part). The chapter on "Monheim in the county of Berg" tells you more about this noble family.



View of Cologne in 1531, woodcut by Anton von Worms (detail)

As trade and the transport of goods on land or on the Rhine increased, it paid off to establish toll stations along the borders of the prince-archbishopric of Cologne and the county (later duchy) of Berg. Monheim was made one of the county of Berg's first road toll stations even before 1257, and for a short period during the 15th century, it even levied the tolls for passing along the Rhine (see "Monheim in the duchy of Berg", page 55).

Levying fees proved to be a profitable business for the duchy of Berg, and from the 16th century on, further toll stations were added in Baumberg, Urdenbach and Himmelgeist (the last two are parts of Düsseldorf today). The goods exported via Monheim included agricultural products, building materials, and ironmongery from Solingen and Elberfeld. Goods that passed Monheim in the other direction included wine and agricultural goods, such as grains and wool, and later, from the 18th century on, black coal from the Ruhr area.

As the siltation of the eastern arm of the Rhine that flowed past Monheim progressed over the course of the 16th century, the shipping trade gradually began losing its significance for the town. Instead, Hitdorf's port gained importance, eventually edging out that of Rheindorf, too. Around 1800, Hitdorf held the exclusive shipping privileges for the important trade between the duchy of Berg and Cologne.



Towing a ship up the Rhine near Worms

Detail from: Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographie. Hencicpetrina*, Basel, 1572

The upstream journey against the strong currents of the Rhine was cumbersome for the freight ships. The towing of ships – **Treideln** in German – became a standard means of support. Treideln means the towing of ships by horses in harness, dragging the ships by long ropes. This made it possible to overcome strong currents, unfavorable winds or lulls. Paths were made along the banks of the river specifically for pulling, called Treidelpfade (towing paths) or **Leinpfade** (linen paths) in German. The word "Leinpfad" is derived from the Old and Middle High German word *lin* for linen or flax, from which the towing ropes were made.

For centuries, before the introduction of motorized ships, towing was the only way for ships to transport goods upstream on the Rhine. When steam boats were invented in the 19th century, they gradually replaced the grueling labor of towing. The English vessel "Defiance" was the first steam ship to sail all the way from Rotterdam to Cologne on the Rhine, passing Monheim on June 12, 1816.

Old towpaths are still clearly recognizable in many places. Many of them have been converted into riverside promenades, cycling paths or hiking trails. The footpath leading from Klappertorstrasse to the Baumberg camping site is a good example. Leading along the Monheim Rhine bend, another such path runs from the end of Bleer Strasse to just west of Gut Oedstein, where a second arm of the Rhine used to flow just to the northeast of the path.

Hitdorf is a part of the town of Leverkusen today. It lies just south of Monheim on the river banks. Hitdorf was closely connected to Monheim in the past. The first mention of Hitdorf in an official document dates back to 1155, and its river port (first mentioned in 1356) played a particularly important role in its development.



Haus Bürgel is situated in the very north of Monheim, in the Urdenbacher Kämpe nature reserve, which borders on the town boundary of Düsseldorf. The remains of a Roman fort dating back to the fourth century AD are part of the Haus Bürgel complex. Looking back at 1,700 years of history, Haus Bürgel is the oldest documented settlement in the municipal area of Monheim.

In Roman times, the fort formed part of the Roman fortified border known as the *limes* (more on this in the next section) and stood on the left bank of the Rhine until the Middle Ages. During the devastating flood of 1374, however, the meander of the river was cut off, shifting the riverbed westwards. Ever since then, Haus Bürgel has stood on the right bank of the Rhine. In the Middle Ages, a Frankish farmstead was built on the ruins of the fort. The building style is known as a Vierkanthof (literally: four-corner farm); it consists of a building arranged around a square inner courtyard. Later, the building was expanded and re-fortified as a medieval castle. In the early modern period, the castle lost its significance as a fortification and was converted into a manor. In 2021, Haus Bürgel was granted World Heritage status by UNESCO as part of the Lower German Limes.

In July 1983, the City of Monheim am Rhein listed Haus Bürgel as an architectural monument to protect and preserve it. In October 1987, the protection was extended to include the inner courtyard, and a 60-meter strip

Aerial view of the Haus Bürgel complex



of land around the outer walls was designated as a protected historic ground. Haus Bürgel has been owned by the North Rhine-Westphalia Foundation for Nature Conservation, Heritage and Cultural Preservation since 1989. This enabled the listed building and archaeological monument to be restored and expanded so they could be developed for new uses:

- The **Haus Bürgel Biological Station** is in charge of preserving the Urdenbacher Kämpe and other nature reserves.
- The **Haus Bürgel Roman Museum** displays archaeological finds, while an archaeological walk outside the buildings and the historic kitchen garden broaden visitors' experience of the past.
- The **Reuter Heavy Horse Stud Farm** breeds Rhenish-German heavy horses, runs a boarding stable and offers drives in a covered wagon or carriage.

THE LOWER GERMANIC LIMES

The Roman Empire was at the height of its expansion under Emperor Trajan in the first century AD. The river Rhine formed a natural boundary to the northwest of the Empire between the Roman province of Lower Germania (*Germania Inferior*) to the left of the Rhine and the territories of the Germanic tribes to its right (*Germania Magna*). The section of the boundary that stretches from Katwijk aan Zee (Netherlands) on the North Sea coast to the Vinxbach river near Bad Hönningen-Rheinbrohl in Germany is a good 400 kilometers long and is known as the **Lower Germanic Limes**.



The Lower Germanic Limes. *Niederlande* = Netherlands; *Deutschland* = Germany; *Belgien* = Belgium;
 ● Provincial Capital; ■ Legion camp; ■ Auxiliary troop fort; ● Other military installations;
 - - - Borders in Antiquity; — Modern era borders

As early as the first century, this section of the Rhine developed into a guarded border. When incursions across the river by the Franks (Germanic tribes) from the east of the Rhine became ever more frequent in the fourth century, the Romans established additional military camps, forts and watchtowers along the left bank. The Bürgel fort was one of them.

Besides paved military roads, the Rhine was the most important transport route for troops, supplies and trade goods to the capital of the province, Cologne (*Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*), as well as to the legion camps in Cologne, Bonn, Neuss, Xanten, Nijmegen and the other fortifications with auxiliary troops. Accordingly, every camp or fort had its own port or landing site. The North Sea, the Rhine estuary and the Lower Rhine were surveyed and controlled by the Germanic fleet (*Classis Germanica*), which had its military headquarters in Cologne.



Burial objects from the Roman cemetery on the eastern side of Haus Bürgel, on display at the Roman Museum at Haus Bürgel

EARLY ROMAN PERIOD

Archaeological excavations show that there had been a Roman settlement as early as the first century in the Bürgel loop of the Rhine. It was probably a small military post between the garrisons in Cologne and Neuss, helping to improve the supply of agricultural and crafted products to the large posts.

What might have been the small settlement's name? The *Itinerarium Antonini* (i.e., the register of major imperial roads) mentions a place called *Buruncum* or *Burungum*, situated between Dormagen and Neuss along the road from Cologne to Xanten. *Buruncum*, a word that originates from the West Germanic language, means a place with one or more huts. However, there is no definitive evidence whether it refers to Worringen (a present-day district of Cologne) or to Bürgel, an issue that has been extensively discussed in the literature for many years.

The earliest phase of settlement was discovered in 1993, when archaeologists excavated a field with seventy graves dating back to the first to third century. Burial objects such as pitchers and drinking mugs were found in the Roman cemetery.

In addition to such grave goods, five so-called **matron stones** have been found on the Bürgel site, bearing witness to the religious practices of their time. Those votive stones were inscribed with a dedication to the "matrons" (*matronae*). These female figures were mother deities worshiped by Romans, Celts and Germanic tribes.

The stones were dedicated to these deities as a plea for protection and assistance to the family, as a prayer for fertility or professional success, or as a sign of gratitude for being saved from danger or sickness. Three seated female figures in flowing garments are often portrayed above the inscription.

The votive stones – or shrines – are thought to have been part of a cult of matron worship between the late first and the mid-third century that was widespread among Roman soldiers, especially the Germanic recruits. Over 800 matron stones have been found to date in the territory of the Roman province of Lower Germany, particularly in the southern Rhineland. Learn more about the matron stone found in Bürgel in 2014 in the section "Maternus Chapel" below.

LATE ROMAN PERIOD

Probably under Emperor Constantine (306–337), a fort was eventually erected in about the same area in the fourth century. Archaeological excavations between 1993 and 1996 explored the layout of the square fort. It measured 64 by 64 meters on the inside, with four circular corner towers and eight intermediate towers, a west gate towards Dormagen, and an east gate to the Rhine. There were no buildings in the inner courtyard in Roman times in order to allow for the erection of additional tents for soldiers. The fort was surrounded by an inner and an outer moat.

Reconstruction of the Roman fort, on display at the Haus Bürgel Roman Museum



Grain and food stores, barracks, workshops and administrative spaces were built along the inside of the defensive walls, as was a hot and cold bath house with underfloor heating. The fort, like the early settlement, stood in a landscape of riverine meadows, mixed forests and swamp areas along the Rhine, blending into open, fertile agricultural land and extensive lowland meadows.



Explore the southern and eastern walls of the Roman fort as you follow the archaeological path at the Haus Bürgel Roman Museum. The position of some of the towers, a gate, and the fort's bath house are marked in the paving.

The garrison initially consisted of Roman soldiers and their families. Over time, a growing number of Germanic mercenaries was recruited into the service of the Roman Empire, as suggested by archaeological finds. The items on display at the Haus Bürgel Roman Museum paint a vivid picture of everyday life in a late-antiquity fort. They include Germanic jewelry, combs, pottery, tools, weapons and many other items. Pieces of gear, for instance, show that, over time, the distinctions between Roman legionary troops and Germanic auxiliary troops gradually disappeared. Some amphorae and other ceramic vessels from faraway places such as Spain, Italy and Palestine are

Trove of coins from the former fort bath house.

The last of the coins was minted in 408.



evidence that the small fort was integrated into the Empire-wide transport network and the Mediterranean trade.

Hidden treasures are testimony of the fort's later years, which were marred by crises in the west of the Roman Empire and along the Rhine frontier. A trove of coins was discovered in the outflow channel of the former bath house in the course of archaeological excavations in 1995. Two glass jars containing 139 bronze coins from the early fifth century had been hidden there.

This was the period when the fort was battered by Frankish conquests and raids which eventually led to the establishment of a Frankish kingdom in the Lower Rhine in the mid-fifth century, with Cologne as its center. Over the course of this century, the fort was besieged and battered and finally fell into dilapidation.

MIDDLE AGES

After the Merovingian dynasty had risen to become rulers of the Frankish realm, Bürgel probably became a royal estate. The king usually awarded buildings and land in his property to one of his vassals as fief. During the eighth or ninth century, the fort was newly occupied, as evidenced by archaeological finds. The remains of the Roman fortifications were torn down, the intact foundations re-used for a **Frankish Vierkanthof** – a farmstead arranged around a square inner courtyard. Even today, there are places where it is easy to see where parts of the walls were recycled for residential buildings, stables, barns and storage facilities. A small, aisleless wooden church was erected inside the courtyard, the Maternus Chapel. The area around the chapel was used as a cemetery (more about the Maternus Chapel in the next section).



Fig. 42. Bürgel. Ansicht des Hauses von Nordosten.

Artist Ludwig Arntz drew Haus Bürgel from a northeastern perspective in 1892 for the publication "Art Monuments of the Rhine Province".

Ministeriales were servants of unfree origin in charge of administrative duties on royal estates and in abbeys, and later on behalf of nobility. Some even served in the military as armored cavalry. From the 12th century on, some of these *ministeriales* were allowed to call themselves *militēs* (knights), a title previously reserved for the aristocracy. Over the course of the 13th century, parts of this formally lieged but privileged class developed into the German gentry.

In 1002, the former fort and all other parts of the royal estate were transferred to Archbishop Heribert of Cologne. Around this time by the latest, the late Roman fort was re-fortified and became a **medieval castle**. The church remained standing, but no more burials took place inside the castle courtyard. The broken-down walls were restored and some of the towers renovated. The former circular Roman tower in the northeastern corner was replaced by a square one that is still clearly visible today. The castle's manor house was built in the northwestern corner, most probably using Roman materials.

The first mention of Haus Bürgel in an official document is found in a deed dated May 3, 1019: Archbishop Heribert donated land and rights to property to Deutz Abbey, including the Bürgel castle (*Castrum in Burgela*). On June 17, 1147, Pope Eugene III confirmed the archbishop's donation, which included "*Castrum Burgele cum curte et ecclesia*" – Bürgel castle with estate and church. The name Bürgel is clearly a diminutive form of the German word for castle "Burg". The stewards of the

Bürgel estate – ministeriales or knights – referred to themselves as *de Burgele* or *de Burghile*, that is, "of Bürgel".

The medieval system of ownership and possession was complicated. In some documents, the prince-archbishopric is mentioned as the holder of all rights, in others, it may be an abbey, an ecclesiastic estate, or various noble individuals. Over time, parts of the Bürgel complex, comprising the estate and church, were sold or given away, but then also taken back as fiefs. In the 14th century, the castle and/or the whole estate including the church must have somehow come into the possession of Brauweiler Abbey, as the abbey sold it to the knight **Gerhard von Kniprode** in 1375.

By the 15th century, Haus Bürgel was no longer owned by the prince-archbishopric of Cologne or the abbeys of Deutz or Brauweiler, but had become the property of various noble families that were related to one another. By this time, the castle at Haus Bürgel had largely lost its fortifying function and was only used as an agricultural estate. In 1698, Haus Bürgel changed ownership again and was sold to Freiherr (baron) Franz zu Nesselrode. For almost three hundred years, the estate and properties were managed by the counts of Nesselrode, who built a new manor house in 1837/38. Finally, the estate was sold to the North-Rhine Westphalia Foundation, which is its present owner.

MATERNUS CHAPEL

It was probably in the early ninth century, not long after the establishment of the Frankish estate, that a small wooden church was built in the inner courtyard of the former fort. The Bürgel chapel was dedicated to Maternus, the first bishop of Cologne in the early fourth century. For hundreds of years, it was a parish church, and residents of the neighboring Zons came to worship in the Maternus Chapel.

Gerhard von Kniprode was a nephew of Winrich von Kniprode, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. Learn more about the von Kniprode family of knights on page 106.

In Merovingian times, **Zons** was probably just a small settlement about two kilometers west of Bürgel, on the left bank of the Rhine. It only gained importance later: in 1373, it was granted town privileges and became a fortified toll station.

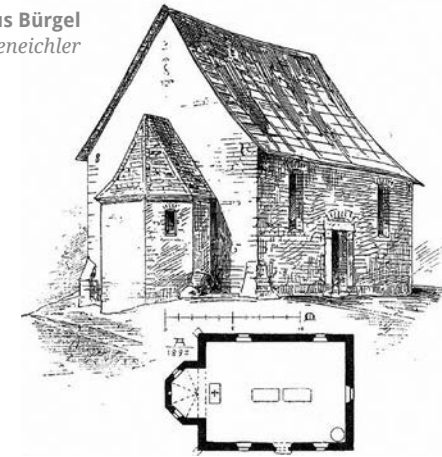
In 1374, heavy flooding led to massive changes in the Rhine's course. In the aftermath of the flood, Zons remained on the left side of the river, but Bürgel was suddenly located on the right bank. The two villages of the parish were now separated by the river Rhine. In the web-based "Monheim Lexikon", Michael Hohmeier describes how clergymen from Zons would have to take the ferry to get to Bürgel for mass, an endeavor that regularly proved difficult or even impossible when the Rhine's water was high or frozen.



Flooding at Haus Bürgel in 1993

In 1408, Zons got its own small church, dedicated to St. Martin. However, it remained a subsidiary church of the Bürgel parish until 1593, when it was awarded the qualification of a parish church. Nonetheless, Bürgel retained its honorary precedence as "mother church". Each year until the early 19th century, a Holy Saturday procession to Bürgel was held, during which the baptismal water for St. Martin's church was blessed.

Maternus Chapel, Haus Bürgel
Drawing by Clemens Siebeneichler



The parishes of Zons and Bürgel were finally separated in 1806 as part of the restructuring of the Diocese of Aachen, which had been newly founded by Napoleon. In 1843, the parish of Bürgel was dissolved. The old church remained standing in Bürgel until 1775, when it was razed to its foundations to make room for a new building, consecrated on July 15, 1776. Contemporary reports say that the new chapel was already ramshackle by 1880. By 1910, it was a roofless ruin, and it was completely demolished in 1916.



Maternus chapel, probably around 1910. The small church was already a ruin by this time. The well-preserved manor house as it is today can be seen on the right.

The website of the Roman Museum Haus Bürgel tells the story of how the chapel's foundations slumbered below ground for almost 100 years, until building work on a visitor's path in the inner courtyard of Haus Bürgel in 2014 occasioned archaeological excavations. The archaeologists discovered not only the almost completely preserved ground layout of the chapel, but also the foundations of an altar, a baptismal font and a Roman votive stone.

This matron stone was re-used as building material for the medieval chapel and must have originally been part of a Roman altar.

The matron stone found in 2014 after restoration. The stone is dedicated to the maternal deity Alagabia.



MATRON[IS]
ALAGABIABU[S]

Dedicated to the Alagabic Matrons

C(AIUS) SATURNINI | [U]
S MATERNUS

Caius Saturninius Maternus

S MATERNUS
PROSE ET SUIS

(donated this stone) for himself and his family

V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito)

in full keeping with his vow



Maternus Chapel
baptismal font

A few parts of the chapel have defied the ravages of time until today: its pride and joy must have been the blue-black marble baptismal font (12th–13th century). Its circular bowl is about one meter in diameter. Four carved heads at the corners divide the outer surface into fields, alternately decorated with bas-relief dragon carvings and a frieze of full-center arches. The font is in possession of the counts of Nesselrode and stands in St. Nikolai's church in Brandenburg an der Havel today.

The Maternus Chapel bell bearing the date 1400 initially found a new home in St. Joseph's Church in Langenfeld-Immigrath, but was relocated to St. Paul's in Langenfeld-Berghausen in 1926.



W

do not know exactly when the Monheim settlement was established. As with many settlements in the area, it is suspected to have been founded in the early Middle Ages between the sixth and ninth century. As we have no documents or written records from that period, what knowledge we have has been gained from archaeological finds and the research into names. The same applies to Monheim.

From the early sixth century, a large strip of the territory on the right bank of the Rhine south of the river Ruhr belonged to the **Frankish Kingdom**. The land between today's Düsseldorf and the northern part of Cologne-Deutz was covered in dense forests and probably almost uninhabited for several centuries. It was only after massive deforestation that settlement was even possible. Place names ending in *rath* or *rode* are still evidence of such **forest clearances** ("roden" means to clear a forest in German). Onomatologists – researchers into names – assume that these villages were established in the sixth or seventh century. Examples in the vicinity are Richrath, Reusrath and Immigrath, which are districts of Langenfeld today.



The Frankish Kingdom from Clovis to the death of Charlemagne

■ Main Salian Frankish territories before 482

Expansion

■ until 511
 ■ until 536
 ■ between 734 and 814

Mailand = Milan

Venedig = Venice

Genf = Geneva

Forest clearance and swamp drainage, however, necessitated enormous effort. As it is assumed that the population sharply declined soon after the disintegration of the Roman Empire, the settlement of the area east of the Rhine most likely took several centuries.

ORIGINS OF THE NAME MONHEIM

The oldest sources mentioning the name *Munheim* (or *Munheym*) date back to 1150. They indicate that Monheim had an earlier history and suggest that the development of the village had a long tradition even before the mid-12th century.

The name **Monheim** (*Munheym*) itself hints at the time when the village was founded. The ending *-heim* is typical for permanent settlements in the period of Frankish land seizures in the seventh to ninth century. There is no agreement, though, on the meaning of *mon* (or its older forms, *mun* and *muon*, in Old High German). Several interpretations have been given in the literature.

Monheim could, for example, mean "home of Muno" or Monno. Muno is an abbreviated form of the Old High German forename *Munibert*, in which *muni* means something along the lines of thought, meaning, mind, or even joy. So, who was Muno? No one knows.

Alternatively, *mon* could be derived from *munt*. The Old and Middle High German word *munt* describes the topographical place where a body of water opens like a "mouth" to take in another one. In this sense, *munt* means an estuary or confluence of a body of water. One example of this is the place name Angermund (a present-day district of Düsseldorf), meaning the place where the Anger flows into the Rhine. In Monheim, the topographical explanation is not quite so obvious; however, there was, at one time, a confluence of two arms of the Rhine north of the Werth (river island) (see the chapter "Location on the Rhine"). In this interpretation, Monheim would be a topographical place description.

Munt has the further meaning of guardianship. The *Munt* or *Muntherre* was the guardian; a prince or a Vogt (bailiff) could exercise the *munt*. In this case, the name Monheim would have meant the place that is under the *munt* of the Fronhof (manorial estate, see section below).

If this assumption were to be correct, this would mean that the small village must have been established in the middle of the ninth century, around the time the Fronhof estate was founded.

THE FRONHOF AND ST. GEREON'S CHURCH

The existence of the **Fronhof** is the first reliable indication for early settlement. The Fronhof in Monheim was founded by the **Gereonstift** and first mentioned in a document from 1157 (the word Fronhof is based on the Old High German word *vrô* for lord or sovereign). After 1180, **St. Gereon's Church** in Monheim is also documented as a dependent church of the St. Gereon's collegiate church in Cologne. There had very likely been a smaller, wooden church with no tower earlier, as was usually the case in smaller villages.

Gereonstift is the Collegiate Church of St. Gereon's in Cologne. A collegiate church was endowed with land and the right to the revenues from the land.

St. Gereon's Church



There are some indications that the Fronhof and church were built earlier than 1157, during a period when estates formed the nucleus and starting point of settlements and Christianity was not yet considered stable. If this were to apply to Monheim, the settlement and cultivation of the area would have begun with the Fronhof and St. Gereon's Church. A small village then developed close by. The Fronhof, church and surrounding buildings presumably stood very close to each other on a flood-proof raised area on the bank of the Rhine, which constituted the western boundary of Monheim at that time.

Serfs were unfree peasants who were bound to the manor they served. They owed the manorial lord, the "Grundherr", certain dues and services. In return, it was the lord's duty to protect and care for them.

A **Fronhof** (Latin: *villa* or *curtis dominica*) was the domicile of a manorial lord or his administrator (German: *Meier*, Latin: *maior* or *villicus*) and was the center of a manorial estate in the Frankish period. A Fronhof could be a simple farm or a large operation with a manor house, ancillary buildings, serfs and more. It often formed a unit with a church.

The land owned by a Fronhof could include farmland and pastures, but also meadows, woodlands, vineyards and orchards, fish ponds and more. Parts of the land were cultivated by the serfs for their own subsistence; parts of it could be leased to dependent peasants against taxes and labor.

Thus, a Fronhof was the lordly and economic center of a group of estates, which could include superior and subordinated estates. Everyone belonging to such an association of estates was subject to the jurisdiction of the **manorial court**.

The establishment of the Fronhof in Monheim served to extend the sphere of influence of the Gereonstift and improve its economic situation. This is evidenced by the Fronhof's development to an Oberhof (superior manorial estate) with

subordinate estates in Baumberg, Katzberg, Schleiden, Berghausen and other places. Depending on the census, the Fronhof was Oberhof and thus central authority for a total of 14 to 16 other estates, including some in the Solingen administrative district, and even for partial estates in Dormagen and Worringen on the other side of the Rhine. As land clearance and technical advances progressed, the amount of arable land and its yields multiplied several times over the course of time.

Last but not least, it was the Fronhof from which the manorial lord, the Gereonstift, exercised manorial authority and hence jurisdiction until the late Middle Ages.

Aerial view of the Fronhof, probably dating from the second half of the 1950s



For centuries, the Fronhof dominated a vast area and remained under the authority of the Gereonstift in Cologne until 1803, when land owned by monasteries and ecclesiastic estates was nationalized (see p. 73). Undoubtedly, the Fronhof with its substantial set of farmsteads was a major economic factor in little Monheim.

The domination structures in Monheim and its surroundings changed in the course of the 11th and 12th centuries with the establishment of the county of Berg. More on this in the next chapter.

Contrary to the usual spelling, the words Fronhof and related words, such as the street name Fronstrasse, are spelled differently in Monheim: as Frohnhof and Frohnstrasse.

Salland (Latin: *terra salica*) was the part of landed estate reserved for direct exploitation by the manorial lord using the labor services of his subordinate tenants.

WILHELM VON MUNHEIM

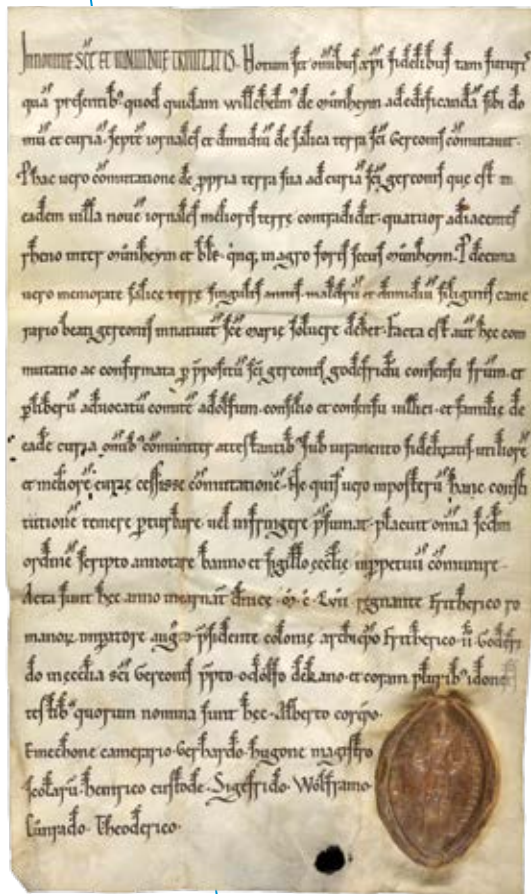
The first mention in writing of the name Monheim appeared in 1150 in a document called Werdener Urbar, a list of goods and levies of Werden Abbey on the Ruhr (in present-day Essen). This source shows that Count Adolf II of Berg received the proceeds of one hoof of land in *Munheim* for his service as the Vogt of Werden Abbey.

Another source, dated between 1151 and 1153, reports a ruling in a legal dispute between the abbey of St. Pantaleon in Cologne and its Untervogt (deputy bailiff) in *Huttorp* (Hitdorf), Gumpert von Eller. At the end of the

document, witnesses and those in attendance are listed, with Count Adolf and his son Everhard at the top of the list. A certain *Willehelmus de Munheim* is also mentioned along with other witnesses.

More is heard of said Wilhelm of Monheim a few years later. A document dated 1157 mentions *willehelm de münheym* (second line of the illustration). The document records an exchange of land with the Gereonstift of Cologne. Wilhelm receives Salland from the collegiate church in return for some land of his own, including some between Monheim and Blee. This tells us that he owned several acres of allodial land (his own land), but sadly, little more is known about Wilhelm of Monheim.

Document dating from 1157 about an exchange of land between the Gereonstift of Cologne and Wilhelm von Monheim



The development of Monheim is closely intertwined with the rise to power of the counts of Berg. After centuries during which monasteries and ecclesiastic estates had been the major manorial lords in and around Monheim, the counts of Berg gradually established themselves as powerful secular territorial lords and strengthened their dominion over the 12th century. It was probably in the second half of the 12th century that Monheim became part of the county of Berg. It gained importance over the course of the 13th century and became a seat of administration.

THE COUNTS OF BERG

The era of the county of Berg begins in 1101 with the first mention of **Adolf I** as the count of Berg. He was already the Vogt (bailiff, see p. 40) of the important abbey of Deutz when he successfully advanced to the title of count of Berg. During the second half of the 11th century, the lords of Berg – later counts of Berg – asserted themselves successfully by skillfully growing their property and official functions. Monheim became part of the county of Berg around 1150 as the county gradually expanded in the area between the rivers Ruhr, Rhine and Sieg.

As the 12th century went on, the counts of Berg extended their power. The actions of the **"elder counts of Berg"**, Count Adolf II (1115–1160).



Reconstructed Neuenberg castle, known today as Burg Castle (Schloss Burg an der Wupper), Solingen

Count Engelbert I (1161–1189) and Count Adolf III (1189–1218) were politically astute and benefited the family economically. They were well connected with powerful families in the Lower Rhine area and the archbishops of Cologne. As their lands increased, so did their power – and vice versa.

As the territory expanded to Westphalia during this period, the location of the family's original ancestral seat Burg Berge (Berge castle) on the river Dhünn near Altenberg became geographically inconvenient. Sometime before 1160, Adolf II built the new ancestral seat – **Neuenberg Castle** on the Wupper.

In 1160, Count Adolf II divided the country between his sons. While the elder son, Everhard, received the land in Westphalia, Engelbert inherited the possessions in the Rhine area. **Engelbert I** thus inherited the lands, rights and protectorates between the Rhine, Ruhr and Sieg rivers as the count of Berg. The county grew considerably under his rule. In 1189, Engelbert I obtained extensive possessions around Düsseldorf, Monheim and Himmelgeist. He and his successor, **Count Adolf III**, were successful in developing an important economic and political role in the area south of the river Ruhr.

Count Adolf III died in Egypt while on the Fifth Crusade, in 1218, without male heirs. A long and fierce dispute about his succession ensued, which ended in 1225 with the county of Berg going to the house of Limburg by way of inheritance.

Territories of the county of Berg, from 1380 duchy of Berg

Design: J. Hantsche,
based on J. Niessen
Cartography: H. Krähe

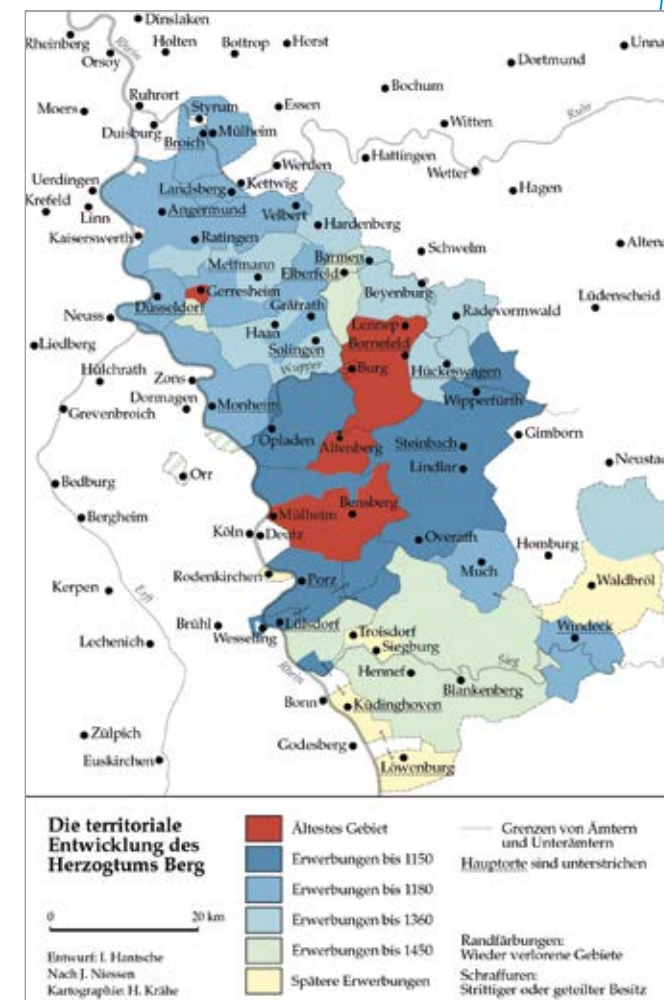
Oldest territories ■
Acquisitions by 1150 ■
Acquisitions by 1180 ■
Acquisitions by 1360 ■
Acquisitions by 1450 ■
Later Acquisitions ■

..... Boundaries between
administrative districts
and sub-districts

Major settlements

Colored outline:
territories eventually lost

Hatched areas:
sovereignty disputed
or shared



The **Lion of Berg** has been the coat of arms of the counts of Berg since 1225 and goes back to the Limburg Lion. It is found in many city coats of arms in the region, including the city coat of arms of Monheim (see p. 65).

From around 1250, a process began that would change the structures in the lands of Berg. Over the centuries to come, a decentralized administration system was installed. Monheim became a seat of official administration in the process. These early structures are evidenced in a document issued by Count Adolf and his wife Margareta in 1257: one of the first documented 13th-century officials is the *officialis* Gottschalk. The document refers to "Gottschalk, our Vogt in Monheim". The **Vogt** is considered as the precursor of the later **Amtmann** as the local official in charge (see p. 40). Thus, Monheim was already the seat of an officer of administration and jurisdiction in Berg at this early time.

Between the Middle Ages and 19th century, the term **Amt** (office, Latin: *officium*) referred to an administrative district with an administrative seat. The **Amtmann** in Berg was in charge of the administration of the rights and possessions of the territorial lords, i.e., the counts of Berg, and of regional jurisdiction over their subjects.

The **Amt Miselohe** district owed its name to a large forest between the Dhünn and Wupper rivers. The district covered the area of the present-day towns of Burscheid, Leichlingen, Leverkusen and Odenthal, with Opladen as its main settlement.

THE AMT MONHEIM

A charter defining the districts of the dominion ruled by Count Wilhelm II is known as the **Bergish Administrative Constitution** (Bergische Ämterverfassung). This constitution dates to 1363, but it is thought that the division into administrative districts occurred much earlier. From north to south, the eight oldest districts were Angermund, Mettmann, Solingen, Bornefeld, Monheim, Miselohe, Steinbach and Bensberg. The original extent of these territories was very substantial and was most likely based on older jurisdictions or possibly parish boundaries. Monheim county court, for instance, went back to the Fronhof manor court.

Amt Monheim remained an administrative district for about 600 years. During this long period, its administrative scope and territorial extent underwent major changes. Originally, from about 1250, the territory covered a large but thinly populated area along the Rhine.

The illustration shows that the territory of the Amt Monheim was considerably larger than the present-day municipal area of Monheim: it included villages such as Hamm, Bilk and Volmerswerth (now parts of Düsseldorf), Richrath and Reusrath (now parts of Langenfeld) as well as Hitdorf and Rheindorf (now parts of Leverkusen).

Development of the Amt Monheim from 1250 to 1813

Legend:

Zones 1 to 5: Amt Monheim from about 1250

Zone 1: Part of Düsseldorf from the late 14th century

Zone 2: Oberamt (superior district) from about 1400

Zones 3 to 5: Unteramt (subordinate district) from about 1400

Zone 3: Richrath dominion from 1666

Zone 4: 1807 to 1813 Municipality of Monheim

Zones 3 and 5: 1807 to 1813 Municipality of Richrath

■ Places of regional importance: Monheim, seat of Amt Monheim and Richrath, seat of the Richrath dominion

● Other villages



As time went on, there was a good deal of change, especially for the small settlement of Düsseldorf. After the Battle of Worringen in 1288, Düsseldorf was awarded its town charter (more about this further on in this chapter); a hundred years or so later, the municipal area of Düsseldorf was expanded southwards. Other boundary changes took place over the course of the centuries.

Officials were placed in the county administration on behalf of the counts of Berg. The **Vogt** (Latin: *advocatus*) was the highest-ranking steward and head of court. From about the middle of the 14th century, the title for this function changed to **Amtmann**. The Amtmann was the head of the district and in charge of administration and jurisdiction. It was also part of his responsibility to organize the defense of the district in the event of war. The title of Vogt now designated the representative of the count of Berg. He was the second-most important official after the Amtmann. For a long time, he was also responsible for the management of the dues owed to the territorial lords, i. e. taxes, in addition to his extensive judicial activities. For the centuries that the Amt Monheim existed, the names of many members of noble families who served as an Amtmann or Vogt in Monheim are known from deeds and other records. Some of the noble families provided several men for the office of Amtmann, such as the houses of Etbach, Quad von Alsbach and von Nesselrode (you will be reading more about some of them in the next chapters).

THE RISE OF MONHEIM

There were several reasons for Monheim's ascent to an official seat of administration. Especially important was its **strategic location on the Rhine** opposite Cologne. This made Monheim a border town to the prince-archbishopric of Cologne, with which the county of Berg had frequent, vehement disputes. Additionally, the **parish of St. Gereon's Church**, which included the villages of Baumberg and Blee and many scattered farmsteads, was extensive.

Moreover, opportunities to generate significant additional income arose in Monheim in the second half of the 13th century, adding to the town's value. The development of new agricultural land increased taxes that the counts could collect, and so did the compensation for certain **rights and privileges**, such as fishing, hunting and forestry rights or market, toll collection and beer brewing privileges.

Market tolls were an important source of income. The **market of Monheim** – *foro de Munhem* – is first mentioned in a document dated 1307, although Monheim was awarded market rights much earlier. Market rights were the prerequisite for the development of commerce and trade in every small village. They were awarded by the ruling territorial lord and regulated the distribution of goods. Market tolls were imposed on goods traded beyond the local area by the counts of Berg as the lords of the market, whereas everyday goods were toll-free. The market place stretched from the eastern arm of the Rhine as far as present-day Turmstrasse; the modern-day name "Alter Markt" (old market square) is reminiscent of that.

Many activities required obtaining **use rights** or **privileges**. These rights were awarded by the king, territorial lord or manorial lord and could be bequeathed, sold or pledged. Examples include market, hunting or fishing rights.



The old market square in a postcard from 1907

Land and river tolls were another important source of income. Monheim was one of the oldest road toll stations in the Berg County, as can be inferred from the previously mentioned document from 1257, in which Count Adolf III of Berg and his wife Margareta confirm to Gräfrath Abbey that Monheim has tolling rights (to which Gottschalk von Monheim appears as witness, see p. 38). The Monheim toll station was part of a system of stations that levied fees for transports along the Rhine (river toll) or across the Rhine to the other bank (land toll). Düsseldorf, Mülheim and the three modern-day Leverkusen districts of Hitdorf, Rheindorf and Wiesdorf received the same rights at approximately the same time. They were all transshipment places for trade, especially with Cologne.

The Zollhaus (**toll house**) stood between St. Gereon's Church square and Turmstrasse. In those days, the eastern arm of the Rhine ran directly below St. Gereon's Church (see chapter "The Location on the Rhine"), and the boatmen had to moor for customs checks. Land tolls and, during two separate periods, Rhine tolls were levied here (see p. 55). The name of the very short Zollstrasse (toll road) is a reminder of this era.

Prior to 1250, the village was built around a small center with solid stone buildings and at least one street leading from Monheim to Blee in the south (the southern part of what is now Franz-Boehm-Strasse).

THE FIRST FORTIFICATION AND DEFENSE TOWER AT ST. GEREON'S CHURCH

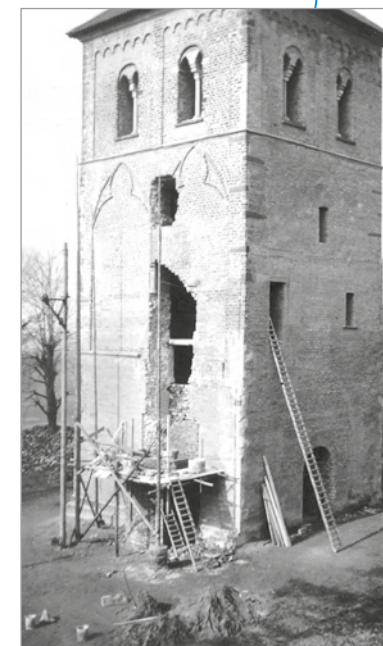
Between 1225 and 1243, there were tensions with the archbishops of Cologne. After a brief pause in hostilities, tensions re-rose and came to a head in 1275 when **Siegfried von Westerburg** was consecrated as archbishop at the intervention of the king and the pope. This happened against the wishes of the cathedral chapter in Cologne, whose majority had spoken in favor of Konrad von Berg, a provost of Cologne cathedral and the brother of **Count Adolf V** of Berg. The Bergs also felt that they had been deceived. Konrad's non-election led to a flare-up of conflicts and eventually to a war between Berg and the

prince-archbishopric of Cologne. Archbishop Siegfried had strong fortifications on the left bank of the Rhine thanks to the castles of Zons and Worringen. Count Adolf V countered by building fortifications to protect the border town of Monheim. There is no evidence as to the exact specification of the defenses or their precise extent. However, it is likely that they consisted of a defensive palisade structure similar to the kind there is evidence of in many other places.

In the mid-13th century, there were likely a number of solid stone buildings in the village center. The wall below the church square, adjacent to the toll house, served as a landing stage for boats and was probably built around 1250. Between the toll station and church square there stood a tower, which still stands today – "disguised" as St. Gereon's Church tower. Originally, it was built as a **fortified defense tower** sometime after 1180, possibly with a wooden predecessor. The tower stood some three meters away from the church and was owned not by the church, but by the count. Readily visible from the Rhine, it stood as a sign of Bergish rule.

The Fronhof, church, tower and toll house, including the early settlement extending along the Rhine formed an ensemble on a small elevation above the eastern arm of the Rhine. This compact unit could easily be protected with palisades to close the gaps in the row of stone buildings.

The **tower of St. Gereon's Church** was not structurally connected to the church until the mid-17th century. From then on, it served as bell tower, although it was not owned by the church. The church was completely destroyed during bomb raids in 1945 and the roof of the tower burned down. In 1948, the civil community of Monheim conveyed the tower to the Catholic parish.



View of the tower from the southeast before reconstruction of the church, photograph taken after 1949 (possibly 1951)

However, the first fortifications did not last long. Archbishop Siegfried von Westerburg did not approve of the fortification of Monheim. In his opinion, he alone – and not the count – held the ducal rights of fortification, i. e., the authorization to build such structures. He asserted his prerogative in the military conflicts against Count Adolf V around 1280 and forced the count to dismantle the fortifications and undertake never to build anything like them again. And thus it was – the fortification was taken down around 1284.

THE BATTLE OF WORRINGEN

St. Gereon's Church and the adjacent fortified tower did play a small part in the history of the Battle of Worringen, a decisive battle with far-reaching consequences. Worringen, now a district of Cologne, lies left of the Rhine, approximately opposite the southern tip of Monheim.

The battle took place on the Fühlinger Feld (field of Fühlingen) near Worringen on **June 5, 1288** and marked the peak of the war of succession for the duchy of Limburg, after the male line of the dukes of Limburg had died out. Several side lineages claimed the duchy, one of them being Count Adolf V of Berg. A power struggle for influence and territory between Siegfried von Westerburg, the archbishop of Cologne, and Duke John of Brabant ensued, resulting in the confrontation of two huge forces of knights. Archbishop **Siegfried von Westerburg** and Count Rainald of Guelders stood on one side, facing the army of **Duke John of Brabant** and Count Adolf of Berg on the other, with numerous allies on either side.

The counts of Luxembourg and Nassau fought on the side of the archbishop; fighting on the Berg side were not only the counts of Mark and Jülich, but also the citizens of Cologne, who had been struggling for years against their archbishop for more autonomy. They were also supported by Bergish foot soldiers, who entered into the fray with their battle-cry *Hya, Berge romerike!* (Onward, glorious Berg!). Counting thousands of armored cavalry



The Battle of Worringen, illustration from around 1440/50, taken from the *Brabantsche Yeesten* manuscript by Jan van Boendale

and foot soldiers on both sides, the troops were almost equal in force. The battle lasted many hours and ended in a clear defeat for the archbishop of Cologne. Estimates suggest that around one thousand men lost their lives on the battlefield, and another 700 of the almost 10,000 fighters succumbed to their wounds shortly after.

Siegfried von Westerburg was captured by Duke John of Brabant and handed over to the count of Berg. After crossing the Rhine in the evening, the archbishop was held in the fortified tower beside the church in Monheim for one night. The next morning, he was taken to Neuenberg Castle (family seat of the counts of Berg) and kept prisoner there for a year before finally being released against an enormous ransom of 12,000 marks (nearly three tons of silver). The archbishop's castles in Worringen, Zons and Neuenberg were demolished and the left bank of the Rhine de-fortified. The Limburg inheritance went to John "the Victorious" of Brabant.

The night in the tower of Monheim was described by Jan van Heelu, a medieval author who wrote *Yeeste von den slag van Woeronc* (History of the Battle of Worringen) between 1288 and 1294:

*Count of Berg was content to return to his lands
with such a valuable pawn.*

*Hence, when he was brought before him,
he took the bishop as his prisoner at once,
and had him ferried across the Rhine
to Monheim, where he owned the land,
and had him [the bishop] imprisoned in the church.*

(From the German translation by Karl-Heinz Hennen)

Freiheit (freedom) was a term used in the Middle Ages and early modern period for smaller towns that had town-like privileges, though the rights of a Freiheit were more limited. Nonetheless, individuals could become citizens and obtain civic rights, and hence be released from feudal bondage. The status of a Freiheit also meant exemption from or at least reduction of taxes, levies and other services owed to the territorial lord. In return, administrative and military duties had to be fulfilled for the lord. A Freiheit could elect a mayor and council, who took on some self-governing duties.

The archbishop's position was weaker than ever before following the defeat at Worringen in 1288. Count Adolf V could have seized this opportunity to raise the status of Monheim to that of a **Freiheit** and re-fortify it. This did not happen; instead, he awarded the small settlement of Düsseldorf the privileges of a town in the same year, to the detriment of Monheim's significance. As Düsseldorf is at a greater distance from Cologne, he might have acted out of consideration for the citizens of Cologne, who had been allies of the count at Worringen. Furthermore, the small village of Düsseldorf was located on a peninsula that was immune to flooding and secured from three directions. Over the centuries, the little town of Düsseldorf developed into the city of residence of the dukes of Berg, while Monheim remained an administrative seat and was only awarded its status as a Freiheit in the following century.



Towards the end of the 14th century, the territory of the Amt Monheim expanded in the aftermath of heavy floods that caused the Rhine to break through a meander near Bürgel. Bürgel, which stood in a hollow, was now placed on the right-hand side of the river and within the territory of Amt Monheim (see p. 10). It was around this time that the border town and seat of local administration Monheim was promoted to Freiheit, about 100 years after the Battle of Worringen with its extensive power-political consequences. Monheim maintained this status until the French occupation in the early 19th century.

MONHEIM IN REGIONAL POLITICS

The house of Limburg-Berg became extinct with the death of Count Adolf VI in the mid-14th century, after which the county of Berg and that of Ravensberg in eastern Westphalia went to a side branch of the counts of Jülich. The second half of the 14th century saw significant changes under Count Wilhelm II (1360–1380). He was made duke by King Wenzel in 1380, and the county of Berg became the **duchy of Berg**. The division of the core territory of Berg into administrative districts was already completed by this time (see p. 38). Count Wilhelm II – now Duke Wilhelm I (1380–1406) – took charge of internal matters in the duchy of Berg.



Duke Wilhelm I of Jülich-Berg kneels at the feet of the Virgin Mary. The coat of arms in the lower left corner is also shown on the duke's breastplate. Image of the west window of Altenberg Cathedral.

Towards the end of his rule, a **feud** developed between Duke Wilhelm and the counts of Mark and Cleves arising from a conflict over income from the Rhine toll at Kaiserswerth. The duke suffered a devastating defeat in the **Battle of Kleverhamm** in 1397 and was taken prisoner together with 90 knights and 2,000 soldiers. They were released against a huge ransom. Not only the duke and his fellow nobles had to compensate for the defeat and ransom, so did the Bergish administrative districts and, hence, their residents. The Amt Monheim had to raise the immense sum of "ten thousand good old gold shields" (i.e., gold coins). Several knights of Berg, as well as Young Duke Adolf, Wilhelm's son, confirmed the agreement by oath, including Gerhard von Kniprode from Monheim, who found himself heavily in debt as a result (see "Knipprather Hof" on page 106). Wilhelm's sons saw this defeat as a threat to their inheritance and stripped their father of his power. Thereafter, the son **Adolf I** ruled as the **Jungherzog**, or Young Duke.

A **feud** was a legal institution of free citizens, particularly nobles, for settling breaches of law among themselves without involving the courts – by force of arms, if need be. At the time, there was no state monopoly on force. It was not until 1495 that the right to wage feuds was finally abolished by the Reichstag (Imperial Diet).

However, this did not settle the matter. In a long and drawn-out feud with Johan von Heinsberg, father Wilhelm and son Adolf agreed to assemble a defense force in November 1403. Duke Wilhelm set off from Benrath Palace to Monheim, where he intended to board a boat to Cologne to negotiate with von



Duchy of Berg in the 15th century with the counties of Cleves in the northwest and Mark to the east

Heinsberg. Young Duke Adolf arrived in Monheim with 400 cavalymen at the same time as his father. But the feud was never to be fought out. Instead, Adolf captured his father, and took him first to Düsseldorf and then to Neuenberg Castle. Young Duke Adolf proclaimed in a document dated 1404:

We, Adolph, Young Duke of Berg and Count of Ravensberg, hereby make this announcement, that because matters have come to pass this way between our dear lord and father and ourselves, we have taken action in the best interest of the associated land and have seized the castles, estates and people of the Bergish Land to save them, and that we have left the Amt Monheim in the ownership of our dear lady and mother [...]

Adolf had seized power for himself in a **coup d'état** and safeguarded his mother's livelihood through the Amt Monheim. But that was still not the end of the story. The Chronicles of Cologne tell how the Old Duke Wilhelm was eventually freed from his imprisonment in Neuenberg Castle: an ally opened the prison door with a copied key, and another one led him to safety in Zons via Monheim.

It nearly came to an altercation between father and son after Wilhelm was freed. Wilhelm's wife Anna, however, stood by her husband. She used her influence with her brother, King Ruprecht of Palatinate, against her son Adolf.

The king took a stance in favor of his brother-in-law Wilhelm. His intervention successfully prevented a great internal feud in Berg which would have severely damaged the lands and the noble house. The duchy was divided between father and son in a settlement in 1405. When Old Duke Wilhelm died in 1408, he left behind a divided land on the brink of financial ruin with a population that had suffered greatly from the numerous feuds.

ELEVATION TO FREIHEIT

It was during this turbulent period that the village of Monheim received its charter of rights as a **Bergish Freiheit**, giving it town-like privileges. Although there is no surviving document, references from other sources point to a time window somewhere between 1390 and 1408.

The status of a Freiheit generally meant that residents enjoyed certain privileges, such as the exemption from or reduction of taxes and other

land duties, and freedom from feudal bondage for citizens. However, there was a price to pay: the town had to be fortified in case it needed defenses, and the fortifications had to be maintained and manned with guards. As no charter for Monheim has survived, the exact privileges and obligations are not known.

The Freiheit of Monheim formed its own administrative unit within the Amt Monheim and enjoyed special rights. Under certain circumstances, a person descended from Monheim **citizens** had full civic rights when he came of age; outsiders could be awarded citizenship following an admission procedure. All citizens had obligations of obedience to the mayor and to the welfare of the Freiheit of Monheim. They also had to pay taxes to the territorial lord and the community, and had to make themselves available for election as mayor or as a council member. In return, they were under the jurisdiction of the

A voluntary town guard was founded in Monheim to protect the town from external threats, called in German a **Schützenbruderschaft** (brotherhood of marksmen). Their patron saint was St. Sebastian. These guards were also deployed in religious disputes, and later ensured order at festivals and processions. Many German towns still have a **Schützenbruderschaft** (or **Schützenverein**) today, but their role is a completely different one: nowadays, they are organized purely as sport shooting and local heritage clubs.



The Monheim alderman's seal showing a portrait of St. Gereon, attached to an Altenberg document dated 1448.

Freiheit's court and were entitled to use the common land (Allmende). Becoming a citizen was a privilege reserved to men only.

As Monheim's civic status rose, its jurisdiction changed: as a Freiheit, it now enjoyed municipal rights, which included a town court. The Vogt (see p. 40) presided, and seven citizens of Monheim were appointed as aldermen.

Honnschaft was a medieval and early modern word for a farming community, used mainly in the Lower Rhine and Bergish Land regions. A Honnschaft was the smallest rural administrative unit, and usually consisted of several individual farms, sometimes several villages. The Honne was the leader of the Honnschaft, who probably presided over the peasant court and the manorial court, but also had administrative duties such as the timely delivery of payments in kind due to the territorial lord.

The **court of the Freiheit of Monheim** was both the town court and county court for the farming communities (Honnschaften) of Baumberg and Blee and was held outdoors in the market place. It was officially in session for three days each year, but extraordinary sessions could be held in urgent cases. The days of court session, on which there was plenty of food and drink, almost took on the character of a public festival.

There was no court building until the 17th century. One of the streets within the village was called **Steinweg** (stone way) or *via lapidae* (renamed to "Freiheit" in 1933), as mentioned in a document dated 1335. The reference to stone in the street's name could either refer to the paving or, as was probably the case in Monheim, the local court. The site of a court, place of execution or, later, of the **court building** was marked with significant stones, often a large boulder, according to a tradition going back to Germanic times. The court building (house number 6) was not built until 1615.



Former Steinweg, now named Freiheit, with a view to the old market square

There was as yet also no **town hall**. The mayor and council of the Freiheit of Monheim carried out their official business from inns or the mayor's living room (see "Markthof" on page 101).

Progress in the construction of residential and commercial buildings was made in the 14th and 15th centuries. Stone buildings were erected in the environs of the church and its neighboring defense tower and around the old market, for instance in Turmstrasse, Grabenstrasse and Poetengasse. One of these buildings, prior to 1510, was the Pfannenhof (see "Pfannenhof" on page 102). Around 1500, the duke owned a house in the Freiheit of Monheim, but its exact location currently remains unknown. Nonetheless, the houses in the Freiheit of Monheim were still usually single-story wooden huts or simple timbered structures for homes and workshops.

Apart from agricultural work, with which most people made their living, there were tradespeople such as blacksmiths, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, roofers, wheelwrights (manufacturers of wheels, wagons and agricultural implements made of wood), saddlers, shoemakers, tailors, bakers and butchers.

The house at Grabenstrasse 20 has been lovingly restored and fitted with a modern roof and dormer window. In the old days, it had a workshop on the right and living quarters on the left.



THE SECOND FORTIFICATION

Duke Adolf I (1408–1437) continued to wage war. When his brother Wilhelm was not elected as archbishop of Cologne, he went to war in the summer of 1416 against Archbishop Dietrich of Moers, who had been elected instead. Before doing so, he had Mülheim (now a district of Cologne) and, at the end of 1415, Monheim heavily fortified. He then began charging Rhine tolls in Düsseldorf and Mülheim to hamper trade with Cologne. The archbishop, for his part, found allies in the citizens of Cologne and erected fortifications in Wesseling and the present-day districts of Cologne Deutz and Riehl. Duke Adolf was defeated in the **Battle of Wahner Heide** (now part of Cologne), but the dispute was finally settled by King Sigismund of Luxembourg. In his ruling, the King judged that the unlawfully charged tolls must be lifted and all newly constructed fortifications in the prince-archbishopric and in the duchy of Berg had to be taken down. This was a costly affair, but there was no choice but to implement the ruling in due time. Thus, the second fortification remained in existence for less than two years.

This is how the Cologne chronicle of June 1417 tells the tale:

[...] The letter [from the King] upheld fully the demand for the dismantling of the bastions in Mülheim, Monheim, Riehl and Deutz. And the King sent a knight by the name of Sir Jörg von Zedlitz, who was not to leave before the bastions were demolished [...]

The structure of these "bastions" presumably consisted of solid stone only in very few places, for reasons of cost among others. It is more likely that the fortification consisted of a **rampart-and-ditch** system; wooden defenses or palisades were erected on top of the rampart, a common practice at the time. Stone elements, if present, completed the complex.



Quay wall below St. Gereon's Church.
The long surface ran directly along the Rhine in the Middle Ages and served as a landing point for boats and barges. On the right of the picture, the angle of the wall leading eastwards is visible. The present form of the wall is mainly a result of the reconstruction of the church after the Second World War.

To the east, the fortification probably ran along present-day Grabenstrasse and had a ditch in front of it, hence the name of the street: "Graben" is German for ditch. Wherever possible, the spaces between houses would simply be filled in with wooden sheds. To the west, the fortification ran towards the Rhine, just in front of present-day Kapellenstrasse. The old quay wall beneath St. Gereon's Church was most probably part of the fortification; old remains from the wall were found in its foundations. The course of the fortification to the south is disputed. Possibly, the quay wall extended southwards down to Frohnstrasse, turning from there to the east (see map on inside back cover).

There were three potential access points to the fortified town of Monheim: from the south via the Fronhof, from the open fields in the east at the site where the Schelmenturm (Rogue's Tower) came to stand later, or from the West, from the Rhine in the direction of the market. From the north, Monheim was inaccessible, probably because the land was swampy. Between the Rhine and the ditch fortification, the settlement was shaped like a shallow triangle, a shape that changed little until the end of the 19th century.

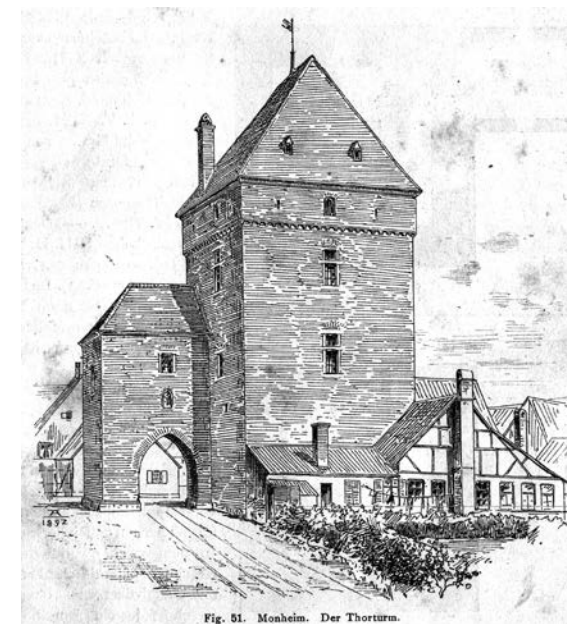
THE THIRD FORTIFICATION AND THE ROGUE'S TOWER

When Duke Rainald of Jülich-Guelders died in 1423 without direct heirs, the duchy of Jülich went to Adolf, who now became duke of Berg and Jülich (**Duke Adolf of Jülich-Berg**). Adolf's claim to the duchy of Guelders was disputed by his rival Arnold von Egmont, and so conflict flared up anew.

Once again, Monheim was dragged in. Not long after the second fortification had been demolished, the third and last fortification of Monheim was put in place between 1426 and 1431. This time, it was a matter of additional defenses against attack during the **Second War of Succession in Guelders**, although the issue of tolls may also have played a role: solid buildings were required for the collection and safekeeping of toll payments. Count Adolf raised the **Rhine toll** in Monheim in the period from 1426 to 1431, after which it was relocated again to Düsseldorf.

The final outcome of the Guelders War was still undecided when Adolf I died in 1437. But Monheim was now fortified, and the right to be so was no longer disputed. One important part of the defenses still exists today: **Schelmenturm**, or Rogue's Tower, and the eastern gate.

Rogue's Tower – which had simply been called Gate Tower up to the 19th century – controlled access to the Freiheit of Monheim from the east, and possibly land duties were collected there. Erected between 1417 and 1431, it served as an outlook and as a refuge in case of danger, suitable even for a longer stay. The gateway was built later. As the ground floor had no windows and probably no door, the main access lay via a mobile staircase to the upper



Schelmenturm,
*view from the east. Drawing by
 Ludwig Arntz in 1892 for the
 book on art monuments of the
 Rhine province (Kunstdenkmäler
 der Rheinprovinz)*

Fig. 51. Monheim. Der Thorturm.

floor. Small doors in the upper levels of the tower's north wall leading to the adjacent building (Grabenstrasse 32) provided escape exits. In addition to these functions, the tower was also a status symbol for the power of the ruling dukes of Berg.

The tower was given the name "Schelmenturm" or Rogue's Tower in the 19th century due to its function as a prison. The Middle High German word *schelm* means "miscreant, scoundrel, crook" – if you had been convicted of a crime, you'd be sent to Rogue's Tower.

THE DUCHY OF JÜLICH-BERG

After Adolf's death, the duchy went to his nephew, Gerhard (1437–1475). In the latter years of Gerhard's rule, it became apparent how serious the obligations of a Freiheit could become. Neuss was besieged for three months in the war between Emperor Friedrich III and Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy (1474/1475). Young Duke Wilhelm, who was already carrying out the business of ruling, commanded the Amtmann (see p. 40) Johann von Etzbach to ensure that the imperial troops could cross the Rhine. He was then to set up a naval blockade on the right bank of the Rhine to prevent the duke of Burgundy from invading the Bergisches Land. The plan worked, the siege of Neuss was smashed and Charles the Bold was forced to retreat.

Wilhelm III (1475–1511) was the last of the dukes from the house of Jülich. When it became obvious that the house of Jülich was about to die out, Duke Wilhelm married his daughter Maria to Johann, the son and heir of the duke of Cleves-Mark, in 1510. Johann "the Peaceful" initially became the duke of Jülich-Berg and count of Ravensberg in 1511, then also of Cleves and Mark from 1521. This led to the establishment of a ruling complex in Rhineland and Westphalia which was referred to as the "United Duchies of Jülich-Cleves-Berg".



The transition from the late Middle Ages to the early modern period marked a process of transformative change. What had been old certainties began to shift. The Protestant Reformation was a renewal movement within the church that began in 1517 and led to a division of the Church into several denominations, resulting in terrible wars. Education, civic rights and the common good gradually gained importance. These and many other developments brought about substantial changes even in rural regions and, albeit to a lesser extent, in the Amt Monheim.

The reign of **Duke Johann "the Peaceful"** over the United Duchies of Jülich-Cleves-Berg (1511–1539) was, indeed, a fairly peaceful time compared to the bellicose years to come. His successor, **Wilhelm V "the Rich"** (1539–1592) ruled over the United Duchies from Düsseldorf, which he made his main residence and administrative seat. During these turbulent years, the duchies of Jülich and Berg served as military deployment zones. Initially so during the war between the northern provinces of the Netherlands and Spain (around 1579), later and to a more devastating degree during the Cologne War, between 1583 and 1588. Many villages, monasteries and convents, churches and noble estates were ransacked and left in ruins in these wars.

The United Duchies of jülich-Cleves-Berg around 1540



The Cologne War (1583–1588) was an armed conflict between the reformed and expelled archbishop of Cologne, Gebhard Truchsess von Walburg, and a mighty Catholic alliance. Gebhard's ally, Count Palatine of the Rhine John Casimir, and his army attacked the Wupper region and the Amt Monheim. Eventually, the Catholic alliance, with the help of Spanish forces, prevailed.

Even though the duke had declared his territory neutral, clashes continued, with dire consequences for the local population. Spanish soldiers raided the district of Miselohe and that of Monheim with "800 to 1,000 men, stealing a large number of cattle, sheep, and pigs and killing inhabitants who tried to flee with their livestock. The villages of Neukirchen, Lützenkirchen, Opladen, Leichlingen, Witzhelden and Richrath, Ganspohl, Reusrath, Rheindorf and Hitdorf were pillaged, houses broken into, money and valuables stolen, and everything else destroyed. What could not be carried or made to walk along was shot or stabbed to death, other inhabitants were taken hostage and tortured. Not even the churches were spared, but they, too, were broken into and plundered." (Prömpeler 1929; quotation translated).

Armies of Protestant and Catholic lords were pitched against each other in these wars, which were as much about religious as about political differences. They were, in effect, the harbinger to the Thirty Years' War (see p. 64).

The Catholic Duke Wilhelm V took a rather friendly stance towards the Protestant Reformation, which advanced the movement in the Bergisches Land region.

Not only were these decades full of hardship, the population of Amt Monheim was also plagued by several natural disasters: the 16th century saw several successive floods which brought destruction and led to failed crops and famine. In 1552, a large part of the village of Blee, including the church, was swept away by the floods. The church was never rebuilt (see also the chapter "Blee"). In 1591, a devastating flood led to another shift in the course of the Rhine. The arm of the Rhine that flowed immediately past Monheim became an oxbow lake, and was no longer navigable. The outflow of that arm at the northern end of today's Grabenstrasse was possibly used as part of the moat around the fortification. In any event, the Freiheit of Monheim no longer stood on the banks of the river.

This picture may well have been taken in January 1926, the last time that the old part of Monheim was flooded by the Rhine.

Taken from the west, it shows Speck's restaurant ("Im alten Zollhaus") and, to the right, St. Gereon's Church.



Changes in early modernity also concerned a completely different aspect of life. The notion that education was important was gradually beginning to reach the even remote rural areas. First attempts at providing school education for children were made; usually, this was part of the local vicar's responsibility.

However, we know of one school master from the time around 1575 who was probably a farmer or court clerk, and who had sufficient knowledge about religion, reading, writing and basic math to teach. As no school building existed, classes took place at his house, which was referred to as the **school. Johan in den Scholen**, sometimes nicknamed "Scholjan", was so highly regarded in Monheim that he was elected mayor in 1575. School was not compulsory at the time; in fact, parents had to pay for the schooling of their children. It is thus not very surprising that literacy in rural areas left much to be desired until as late as the 19th century.

Reports from the year 1659 mention that some members of the Monheim council were unable to sign their own name on a document.

When the family line of the dukes eventually died out in 1609, six mighty noblemen raised claims to the United Duchies, and a drawn-out dispute over the line of succession ensued. It lasted for years until two strong opponents came to an agreement in 1614 after military clashes, some of which took place in the district of Monheim. As a result, the duchies of Jülich and Berg were given to **Wolfgang Wilhelm of Palatinate-Neuburg**; Cleves, Mark and Ravensberg were given to Johann Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg.

Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm (1614–1653) resided almost exclusively in Düsseldorf, and never succeeded in forming a strong bond with the knights of Berg and even less so with the people. His religious policy is a clear reflection of that: he cut the rights of Protestants wherever he could, despite Berg being a Protestant stronghold (almost 50 percent

of its population were members of the Lutheran or Reformed faith). He immediately began removing Protestant officials from their posts in 1614, including the Amtmann (see p. 40) **Johann von Etbach**, who was replaced by Heinrich von Lohausen. When awarding offices, he would almost unfailingly give preference to a Catholic.

RELIGIOUS DISPUTES

Towards the mid-16th century, the Reformation movement finally reached the mainly Catholic Amt Monheim. Influential landowners (those of Grosser Hof and Haus Bürgel) had joined the Reformation, and leading officials – Amtmann Dietrich von Hall (1562–1596) and Amtmann Johann von Etbach (1609–1623) – supported the movement.

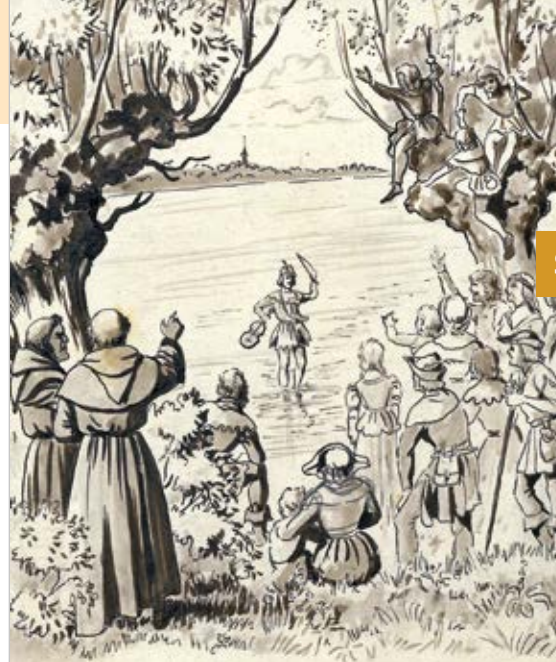
Around 1611, the first reformed community was established. Local legend says that this happened almost overnight, when the Baumberg church and Monheim parish church were forcefully occupied by "squatters" while the Catholics put up a fight. A turbulent and unstable time followed. Amtmann Johann von Etbach convened the citizens of Monheim in 1612 to clarify their religious affiliations. Eighty-eight Catholics and 39 members of the reformed church appeared. Konrad Senger, the Catholic priest, refused to follow orders to leave his church to the Protestants from time to time. They, in turn, decided to force their way in, under the general leadership of preacher Absalom von Kessel. Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm, who was a converted Catholic, intervened a week later, prohibiting such disruption of the service under threat of penalty.

After the rivaling nobles of Brandenburg and Palatinate-Neuburg came to an agreement in 1614, Jülich-Berg once again became part of the Catholic camp, including Monheim. Any form of use of St. Dionysius' Church in Baumberg or St. Gereon's Church in Monheim by Protestants was strictly banned. However, they were allowed to use Marienkapelle (St. Mary's Chapel), where the synod of the Reformed Protestants in the Bergisches Land eventually took place in 1619 (to find out more, see the chapter "St. Mary's Chapel").

After Absalom von Kessel had left Monheim in 1613, the Reformed community of Monheim, struggling with its finances, gradually disintegrated between 1620 and 1624. The last remaining faithful joined the Urdenbach parish. For over 200 years, the reformed Protestants from Monheim and Baumberg were members of the Urdenbach parish. The Lutheran Monheimers had their parish church in Reusrath. It was not until 1858 that a Protestant church in Monheim was completed.



The Protestant Church (called "Altstadtkirche" since 2008) in 1965, surrounded by kitchen gardens. The former school building – the sacristan's house today – is visible to the right in front of the church.



Spielmann – The jolly minstrel

"The jolly minstrel of Monheim. A true story from the year 1615" is a story from a collection of myths and legends from the Bergisches Land region, collected by Vinzenz von Zuccalmaglio (1806–1876) and published under his pseudonym Montanus. This is an abridged version.

The jolly minstrel

Illustration by Heinz Koenig, ca. 1952

The tale tells the story of a young minstrel who would come to Monheim every year for the Monheim fair from the other side of the Rhine to entertain the folk with his violin. In the summer of 1615, the water of the Rhine was so low that a large crowd gathered on its banks after High Mass one day. Seeing so many people, the minstrel decided to cross the Rhine on foot, playing his violin as he crossed the river, much to the delight of his audience.

The witch-hunters among the onlookers, however, seeing the minstrel cross the river on foot without harm, were convinced that this must be the devil's work. They demanded that he be charged with witchcraft before a clerical court. The minstrel's prospects were dire; his life hung by a thread. But Heinrich von Lohausen, the Amtmann of Monheim, knew a way out: the minstrel was only charged with "outrageous recklessness" for having crossed the Rhine while playing the violin, despite the dangers of such an undertaking. He ended up having to pay ten shillings and spend six days in prison, but he got away with his life.

And thus ends the story: "Since that day, the Rhine has shrunk down many a time. But no minstrel has ever dared cross the river near Monheim while playing his instrument again."

This period was followed by the **Thirty Years' War** (1618–1648), one of the bloodiest conflicts ever seen in Europe. Religious disagreements between Catholics and Protestants eventually led to a war involving all the major European powers. Duke Wilhelm, in a similar manner to Wilhelm "the Rich" before him, managed to maintain the neutrality of the Jülich and Berg duchies, averting the disastrous consequences of war from them for a long time. But as the duke himself wanted his lands to be Catholic, neutrality didn't last forever. In the end, the duchy became one of the conflicting parties. Repeatedly, marauding armies came through the area, occupying and plundering Amt Monheim, Amt Miselohe and other Bergish districts. Haus Bürgel was occupied by Hessian armed forces in 1642 and war levies were enforced there and in Baumberg. Government debt rose enormously in the years of the war and became a burden to several generations. The people suffered unthinkable hardship until the Peace of Westphalia finally ended the war in 1648.

It was at this time, the beginning of the period of Enlightenment, that elector (Kurfürst) Johann Wilhelm II, called Jan Wellem by locals, ruled over the duchy Jülich-Berg. Düsseldorf, in particular, experienced its glory days under his reign. **Jan Wellem** (1679–1716) turned his Düsseldorf court into a magnificent residence. He was also a clever diplomat and a patron of the arts, music and science. The city's economy flourished. The people in the wider Berg region, however, hardly benefited from all that. More wars followed: the Nine Years' War between France and the Grand Alliance (1688–1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) once again saw troops marching through the area and laying heavy burdens on the population.

The Vogt and the Goose Girl

The seal of Vogt Johann Peter Aschenbroich showed the first depiction of a maid and a goose.



The Vogt of the Amt Monheim, **Johann Peter Aschenbroich** (1696–1743), used a personal seal that depicted a maid with a goose in addition to the official court seal showing St. Gereon. The maid is shown placing her left index finger over the lips, telling her goose to keep quiet. The gesture is explained in Latin: *Nocet esse locutum* ("Talk is painful" – essentially meaning "unguarded talk does harm") – a warning to be discreet when it comes to official matters. The Latin quote is taken from the Distichs of Cato, a collection of moral teachings from late antiquity. The abbreviation I.P.A.I.M. goes horizontally across the seal: *Iohann Peter Aschenbroich Iudex Monheimensis* (judge in Monheim).

Johann Peter Aschenbroich was the owner of the Vogtshof estate and built St. Joseph's Chapel there, which was consecrated in 1707 (see "Vogtshof" on page 105). His son and grandson succeeded him as the local Vogts until the duchy of Berg was surrendered to Napoleon in 1806.

The maid shown in the Vogt's seal was the model for the municipal coat of arms, designed in 1939, and for the city logo, introduced in 2016. Today, she is known and loved under the name of **Gänseliesel** (Goose Girl).



Municipal coat of arms of Monheim am Rhein

In 1955, the Heimatbund (local heritage association) brought the **Goose Girl** and the **Jolly Minstrel** together. They have become an essential couple in the local carnival tradition: since 1977, the Minstrel is ferried over the Rhine from the Piwipp ferry landing near Dormagen to the Monheim side of the river, where his "bride" Gänseliesel is already waiting for him.

Jan Wellem was the last sovereign to reside permanently in Düsseldorf. His successors lived mainly in Mannheim and Munich and appointed a governor for the administration of the Jülich-Berg region. For the electors, the duchy was more of a side quest to which they only attributed minor importance.

Kurfürst (elector) **Karl Theodor** (1742–1799), a benefactor of the arts and sciences, left his mark on Düsseldorf with many important buildings; the other parts of the duchy, however, hardly felt any effect from the rule of the mostly absent sovereign. The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) dealt the Bergisches Land a hard blow. Kurfürst Karl Theodor was an ally of the imperial troops and France in their war against Brandenburg-Prussia and Hanover. Regardless of which party was arming up, marching through, or taking up residence, the tax money that had to pay for it was squeezed out of the people. In October 1758, ten thousand soldiers serving the French – a huge number of people at the time – had to be billeted in the districts of Monheim and Miselohe. Almost every single citizen had to take in a soldier.

The **Düsseldorf palace** – a former medieval castle – that had been the home of the counts and dukes of Berg for about 600 years burnt to the ground in 1872. The only remnant of it today is the Schlossturm (tower) on Burgplatz square by the Rhine. The Benrath Palace in the South of Düsseldorf, which was built later, has been preserved.

View of Maisburg from Kapellenstrasse, with the Protestant church to the right in the background. In August 1943, the original building was destroyed by a bomb and replaced with a new one. Clemens Siebeneichler modeled his drawing on an old postcard.



Johann Georg Lottner – from master carpenter to mayor

Johann Georg Lottner was a journeyman carpenter who came from Württemberg to Monheim – and stayed. His skilled craftsmanship and great knowledge in the building trade earned him lots of work on the large estates in and around Monheim. He was a master carpenter on the construction site of Schloss Benrath (Benrath Palace) from 1752 to 1760, surely the highlight of his career. On the last day of 1742, Lottner was sworn in as a citizen of the Freiheit of Monheim. In 1754, he built his spacious timbered house on the former premises of a maize farm, which is why townsfolk referred to it as "Maisburg" (maize castle).

As an Evangelical Lutheran, Johann Georg Lottner was part of a small minority. Only a few non-Catholics were elected to public offices in Monheim. In other words, he must have been held in exceptionally high esteem when he was elected mayor in 1769. His sons Johann Peter and Johann Caspar were among the founders of the Protestant school in 1784.

Johann Georg Lottner died in 1776, but his descendants kept his name alive. In 1881, Ferdinand Lottner built "Lottner House" (Kapellenstrasse 44), which could be described as the first-ever savings bank branch. The "Lottensträsschen" (Little Lotten Street), first mentioned in 1922, later grew to become "Lottenstrasse" (Lotten Street). And then there is the curious story of the Catholic school: it was built in "Lottensträsschen" in 1933 and named after a well-known Nazi figure under National Socialist rule. However, Monheimers simply called it Lottenschule (Lotten school), until this became its official name in 1983. This is how a Catholic school ended up being named after a Protestant personality.



The house on the corner of Turmstrasse and Freiheit 2 was built as an inn – and used as town hall from 1867 to 1938. As with many other buildings, the previous building in its spot dated back to the High Middle Ages. The photograph originates from a 1914 administrative report by the district of Solingen.

Despite the wars and war taxes imposed in the area, the population increased markedly during the 18th century. Between 1733 and 1806, the Freiheit of Monheim boasted 146 new citizens, of which 122 had moved there from out of town. This led to a lively phase of construction. Both private homes and commercial buildings now tended to be larger, and the layouts more generous than before.

Buildings – in addition to the traditional timbered houses, brick buildings gained popularity. The inn on today's Freiheit 2, built in 1787, is a good example. The two-story building with a fully converted attic is testimony to an affluent bourgeois middle class. In 1867, the former guest house became Monheim's first **town hall**.

A map drawn by master builder Nasset from 1819 clearly shows that there were still large unused plots of land despite the intense building activities (see map on the inside back cover). This is because new buildings were not necessarily erected on previously un-used sites; in fact, they often used the foundations and cellars of previous buildings dating back to the High or Late Middle Ages. Almost every house also had a garden, which was intensively cultivated.

Schools – In 1726, the **Catholic school of Monheim** was housed in a single, cramped classroom in the vicarage on today's Poetengasse 14. For forty years, Vicar **Johannes Eberhard Schaaef** was the school master at Poetengasse. The wayside cross on the corner of Poetengasse and Grabenstrasse he had erected in 1752 is a reminder of this time.

It was not until 1819/1820 that the Catholic elementary school moved into a building of its own – on Alte Schulstrasse (Old School Street), which is how the street got its name. The Honnschaft (farming community) of **Baumberg** also had some sort of elementary school since the end of the 17th century, at the latest since 1709. The vicar there taught children mainly in religious education.

As progress in education was made, expectations rose: towards the end of the 18th century, an increasing number of citizens was dissatisfied with the standards of the Catholic school. When the **Protestant school** opened in 1786, three Catholic families sent their children there, willing to pay the higher tuition fees for more qualified teaching. When the first Jewish family since the late Middle Ages settled in Monheim around 1790, it became a tradition until 1933 to send their children to the school that offered the better education.



The Protestant school on Grabenstrasse, completed in 1786, open until 1933. Today, the building is used as the sacristan's house. Along with the Protestant church, it is located on the former premises of Blumerthof farm, which the Reformed community had purchased in 1774. Drawing by Clemens Siebeneichler.

The origins of the street name **Poetengasse** (Poet Lane) are not actually poetic. It is popularly thought that the word Puten gave the street its name: a derogatory or jocular term for children in the local dialect. Poetengasse is thus a reminder of the many years in which the vicarage housed the local school there.



Wayside cross on the corner of Poetengasse and Grabenstrasse, erected by Vicar Johannes Eberhard Schaaef in 1752.



Old Pharmacy, Zollstrasse 1,
photograph from the 1920s

Healthcare – The first **doctor** to be known by name moved to Monheim in 1737. Christian Simons, born in Cologne, was sworn in as a citizen of Monheim at the end of that year. Two other doctors settled in Monheim after 1778. It took a while for a **pharmacy** to be established, though. It was not until 1805 that the first pharmacy opened; it served the whole district of Monheim and even some of the towns on the left bank of the Rhine, such as Zons and Dormagen. Initially located in a building by the Rüphan inn on Turmstrasse, it was moved to Zollstrasse 1 in 1824. The Proempler family of apothecaries managed the pharmacy for about 140 years.

THE END OF BERGISH RULE

For roughly one generation, the Rhine and Berg regions were spared from the effects of war. The **French Revolution** of 1789 with its new ideals inspired sympathy in the region Berg at first. However, the appeal was lost for the majority of the population, at the latest when the French army first crossed the Rhine in 1795.

A series of wars known as the **Coalition Wars** had begun in 1792. During the War of the First Coalition (1792–1797), the French Revolutionary Army occupied the area on the left bank of the Rhine at the end of 1794. The duchies of Jülich and Berg became deployment areas and suffered badly. Imperial troops were stationed in fortified camps at Baumberg and Monheim and on the surrounding estates. In addition to billeting, Monheim also had to set up a field hospital towards the middle of 1794. The citizens of Monheim had to take on debt to pay for the burdens of war.

The bells of St. Gereon's Church



In 1779, the Freiheit of Monheim decided to have three new bells cast for St. Gereon's Church. Renowned bell founders Martin and Pierre Legros from Malmedy were commissioned with the work.

One of the three bells cast by Martin Legros of Malmedy in the tower of St. Gereon's Church, photographed in February 1954

The Schelmenturm – Rogue's Tower – had to be used as the foundry, as it was the only building in Monheim large enough. However, the tower did not have a ground-level entrance, or the entrance was too small (see p. 55). This is why a hole had to be broken into the western wall of the tower; this opening towards Grabenstrasse is still used as an entrance today. The ground also had to be dug out eight feet deep so that the liquid metal could be cast into the sand molds. The efforts paid off: the church had three new bells that sounded beautiful. The people of Monheim were thrilled and celebrated the event with a big public festival on October 30, 1779, after the bells had been consecrated and High Mass held.

But the artfully cast new bells were almost lost during the Second World War: the big and the middle bells were taken to a warehouse in Hamburg to be molten for ordnance in 1942. It was by pure chance that the bells escaped this fate and were left in the warehouse. Luck remained on their side until the end of the war. On February 21, 1945, St. Gereon's Church was hit in a bombing raid and destroyed. The roof of the tower burned down. Had the bells been in the tower that night, they would not have survived, as was the fate of the remaining small bell. As things were, the big bells were returned to Monheim in the fall of 1947 and a new small bell was cast. After the church was rebuilt, the bells were re-consecrated on June 21, 1953.

From 1792 to 1815, France engaged in a series of wars, entering into varying coalitions with major European forces. These lasting conflicts, referred to as the **Coalition Wars**, were occasioned by the French Revolution which had introduced the ideals of human rights, freedom and nationhood in France. The French monarchy had been abolished in a bloody revolt. Threatened by these events, Europe's monarchies formed alliances against the French revolutionary army that conquered large parts of Europe under General Napoleon Bonaparte in the course of these wars.

At the beginning of September 1795, French troops crossed the river Rhine and took the recently abandoned positions. Eyewitness reports say that the French soldiers wreaked havoc in Baumberg and Monheim and the surrounding villages. They subjected the whole Bergisches Land to merciless confiscations and imposed levies by force, leaving the population impoverished and hungry. The war ended with the annexation of the territories to the left of the Rhine in 1797.

After France had also been victorious in the Second War of Coalition (1799–1802), the area they had conquered and annexed was officially recognized as French national territory (1801 and 1802). The duchy of Jülich, to the left of the Rhine, was now a part of France and separated from the duchy of Berg for good.

By the time the Third War of Coalition was over (1805), Napoleon dominated continental Europe. **Maximilian Joseph of Palatinate-Zweibrücken** was the last duke of Berg (1799–1806). He had already lost the duchy of Jülich and the left-bank Palatine territories from 1801. In 1805, he ended his alliance with Austria and Russia; Bavaria became a French ally instead. With the Peace Treaty of Pressburg in 1805, Maximilian Joseph was given the Austrian counties of Tyrol and Vorarlberg in return for his military support of Napoleon, and was made the first King of Bavaria. On March 15, 1806, Maximilian surrendered the duchy of Berg to France in exchange for the Principality of Ansbach. The Bergish territories were now de facto under French rule.



In 1806, the long reign of the dukes of Jülich Berg from the House of Wittelsbach over the Bergisches Land came to an end. Elector Maximilian Joseph ceded the duchy to Napoleon and the period of French occupation began (1806–1813). It was short but drastic.

However, shortly before this, in the final stages of the Holy Roman Empire, a final important law had been passed that had far-reaching consequences: the Imperial Recess of 1803. It initiated the process of mediatization, putting an end to particularism which had resulted in many small states. The second important part of the law dissolved the ecclesiastical princedoms and the ecclesiastical manorial system as a whole. This marked the first **separation of church and state**.

These major political decisions – known as **secularization** – also had an impact on the Amt and Freiheit of Monheim (see p. 50) and the surrounding area. The Richrath dominion, which had existed largely independently of the Amt Monheim since 1666, was dissolved. Most of the land owned by monasteries and ecclesiastic estates was nationalized and then sold to private individuals in the years that followed. With the exception of the counts of Nesselrode, most landowners from the lower nobility lost their fiefs.

Until 1803, a **dominion** was the name given to a regional administrative district headed by a nobleman.

The famous German author Heinrich Heine recounts the demise of the duchy of Berg and the arrival of Joachim Murat in Düsseldorf with a poetic-ironic twist in "The Le Grand Book", Chapter 6.

Napoleon elevated the duchy of Berg to a **grand duchy** (French: *Grand-Duché de Berg et de Clèves*) as early as 1806. The elevation to a grand duchy was coupled with territorial expansions. The new entity was, in effect, a satellite state of the French Empire, with a ruler unknown to the Bergish population. **Joachim Murat**, Napoleon's brother-in-law, became the duke and later the grand duke of Berg.

In accordance with the French model, the grand duchy of Berg, with its capital in Düsseldorf, was divided into four départements – Rhine, Sieg, Ruhr and Ems – which roughly correspond to the administrative districts of today. Administration was modernized and the previous cities, free towns and rural communities were combined into municipalities from 1807 onward. Monheim became a **municipality**, including Blee and the small settlements near the Knipprath, Katzberg, Schleiden and Laach estates, the community of Baumberg with Bürgel, as well as Hitdorf and Rheindorf.

The changes in the administrative structure were pioneering modernizations. They have left traces in the structure of local government that are still evident today, namely, the structuring of communities into municipalities, districts, independent cities and administrative regions.

The Rhine Department 1813;

- State border
- - - Département border
- · · · · Arrondissement borders within the Rhine Department
- · · · · Canton borders

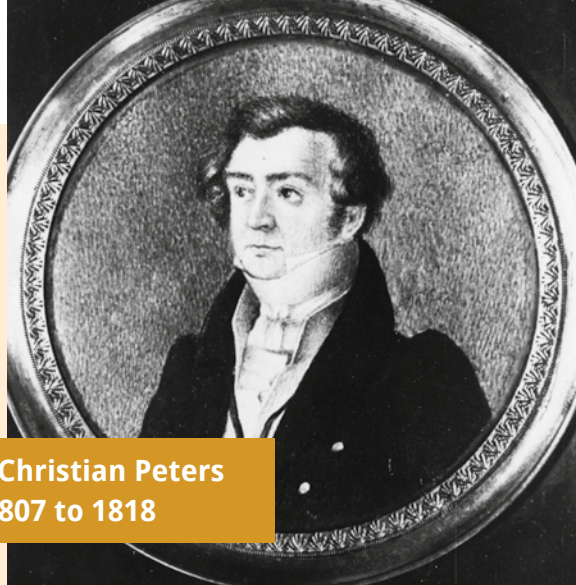
Düsseldorf
Capital of the Département

Essen
Capital of the Arrondissement within the Rhine Département

The other towns in the Rhine Département are the main towns of each Canton

Design: I. Hantsche after H.-K. Junk
Cartography: H. Krähe





(Johann Peter) Christian Peters
– mayor from 1807 to 1818

Christian Peters (1766–1848) was the mayor of the municipality of Monheim from 1807 to 1814 and mayor of the joint municipality of Richrath-Monheim from 1814 to 1818.

Christian Peters was appointed director under French rule in 1807 and maire (mayor) of the municipality of Monheim in 1808. Peters remained in office under the provisional government that followed the withdrawal of the French and the dissolution of the grand duchy of Berg (1813–1815). He even gained influence as the mayor of the newly formed joint municipality of Richrath-Monheim, whose seat was in Monheim. In 1818, he resigned for reasons unknown. From 1830 to 1833, he was a deputy member of the state parliament of the Prussian Rhine Province.

Peters had thus successfully retained his post as mayor and was able to hold his own even during a change of regime. His rise from tenant farmer to one of the most influential landowners in Monheim was also noteworthy. Following in his father's footsteps, he was the tenant of the Fronhof from 1786 to 1820. In 1808, he acquired the prestigious farmhouse of Staubsburg. In 1817, he bought the large Vogtshof estate from the heirs of the Aschenbroichs (see "Vogtshof" on page 105). Finally, in 1820, he was able to buy the Fronhof estate, which had passed into Prussian state ownership in the meantime.

A municipality was headed by its **director**. The position of director was honorary. It combined the former duties of the Amtmann, Vogt and mayor as well as the duties of police commissioner. In August 1808, a director, two deputies and fifteen municipal councilors were sworn in for the municipality of Monheim. All of them were prominent members of the ruling elite who fulfilled clear selection criteria: wealth and social standing. Religious denomination played no role. The individual communities were represented in the council roughly in proportion to their size.

The first director of the Municipality of Monheim was the tenant of the Fronhof estate, (Johann Peter) **Christian Peters**. Its deputy director was Heinrich von Berg. Paul Aschenbroich, descendant of three former Vogts of Monheim, was appointed tax collector. And since there was still no town hall, official business was carried out in the director's house or in Franz Roth's restaurant, now the "Spielmann" pub (see "Markthof" on page 101).

Further changes followed in 1808, when Napoleon made his brother-in-law, Joachim Murat, King of Naples and ruled the grand duchy of Berg himself. The territorial constitution of November 14, 1808 abolished all remnants of the Bergish Administrative Constitution (see p. 38). The title of director now became **maire** or mayor.

Municipalities were merged into cantons. Together with Richrath, Hilden and Benrath, Monheim belonged to the **Canton of Richrath**, which was subordinate to the arrondissement of Düsseldorf. Until 1816, the arrondissements of Düsseldorf, Elberfeld, Mülheim am Rhein and Essen formed the **Rhine Departement**, with the prefect's seat of government in Düsseldorf.

The local population benefited from the far-reaching modernization of the justice system from 1810 onward. The French (Napoleonic) **Code civil**, or Civil Code, came into force and other codes based on the French model soon followed. This meant that the court system of the Bergish region, which was based on medieval land law, was abolished. The manorial courts of Fronhof in Monheim, Altenberger Hof in Blee, Hoher Hof and Verresberger Hof in Baumberg and the peasant court of Grosser Hof were abandoned.

The principle of equality of all before the courts was welcomed by the local population. The *Code Civil*, a modern and important piece of legislation in the modern era, remained the basis for civil law in the Prussian Rhine Province until the beginning of the 20th century.

The reform of the **tax law** was also welcomed. Traditional tax exemptions for members of the nobility were abolished from 1806 onward; the local population regarded this as an end to centuries of injustice. A new land title register was introduced. However, the joy was diminished when a higher land tax was levied in addition to other new taxes. One tenth of this tax revenue remained with the *mairie* (i.e., municipality). Along with other income, such as that from leases, these funds were normally sufficient to cover the expenses of the municipality of Monheim. But when catastrophic flooding caused severe destruction from Baumberg to Rheindorf in February 1809, they proved insufficient and Mayor Christian Peters had to ask the prefect in Düsseldorf for support.

NAPOLEON EN MONNEM?



The "funny king" in Monheim

Announcement of the operetta "Napoleon in Monnem?", performed in November 2008

To mark the 30th anniversary of the "Panikorchester Monnem am Rhing" in 2008, an operetta entitled "Napoleon en Monnem?" was performed in Monheim. The idea and text of this satire about the period of French rule in Monheim came from Emil Drösser.

The fictional plot revolves around Napoleon's brother, Jérôme Bonaparte, who had been made King of Westphalia by his brother. The citizens of Kassel, where he had his residence, called him "König Lustig" – the funny king. Legend has it that he owes his moniker to the fact that he only knew one German sentence: "Lustik, lustik, morgen wieder lustik!" (Funny, funny, and tomorrow, funny again!)

The story goes that King Jérôme and his Queen, Catharina, spent the night in Monheim on December 4, 1807, on their way from Paris to Kassel. After crossing the Rhine at Piwipp, they received a warm welcome in the municipality of Monheim. Jérôme was so taken with the cheerful Rhineland attitude that he reported "I would have loved to have spent more evenings in Monheim, but a few days later I was expected in the capital of my new kingdom. It was with a heavy heart that I had to travel east across the barren fields the following morning. Oh, why did my imperial brother not make me king of the Rhineland?"

The performances of the operetta in the Monheim dialect with a number of local celebrities were much of a laugh for actors and audience alike.

The **economy and trade** stagnated during this time. The Continental Blockade imposed by the French against trading with England had a severe impact on industry in the Bergisches Land region, especially in Solingen and Elberfeld. Trade with the duchy of Jülich had been brisk before, but it declined sharply, as the Rhine had become the state border to the French Empire.

The **Continental Blockade** was a trade blockage against Great Britain. In 1806, Napoleon banned all the European countries under his rule from trade with the British Isles. As time went on, almost the entire European continent was involved in this blockade.

Customs duties were now levied on goods passing to the left bank of the Rhine – where the duchy of Jülich was situated. But the locals were resourceful. Some became well-organized smugglers; barges regularly crossed the Rhine from the Piwipp, for example with grain.

In March 1809, Napoleon I transferred the grand duchy of Berg to his four-year-old nephew Napoleon Ludwig. To celebrate the change of rule, "a festival of thanks for this grace and boon" was ordered. It appears, though, that the people of Monheim were not overjoyed. The sources report that the parades, speeches and mass in St. Gereon were rather stiff and formal. Only when the official part and luncheon were over and the dancing began – which went on till late in the evening – did the party get into a festive mood.

The local population suffered a great deal under the general **conscription** that was introduced due to the ongoing wars: men from the Bergisches Land region had to do military service in the French army. Quotas of conscripts were created, which were filled by drawing lots. If you were wealthy, however, you could pay for a *remplaçant* (a substitute) to take the place of your conscripted son. Berg had to provide 5,000 soldiers for the Russian campaign of 1812 which ended in a military disaster after initial French successes. It is estimated that less than half of them survived the devastating outcome, after thousands of Bergish young men had already lost their lives in Napoleon's campaigns of conquest in Spain and Italy.

Resentment and hatred began to grow among the local population. But feelings about the French occupation were ambivalent, not only in the municipality of Monheim, but throughout the Bergisches Land. In particular, the introduction of the principle of equality in the judicial system was seen as a liberation from the chains of a status-based judiciary. By contrast, the strong cult surrounding Napoleon himself, the generous provision of lucrative offices to his relatives and the ties to the old regional ruling elites did not fit in with these ideals at all. The policy of reform, which could have had a modern and pioneering effect, was only partially effective owing to the briefness of the reign.



Wayside cross on the Alter Markt on Turmstrasse. Erected in the 18th century, it has been restored several times since then.

One special feature of popular piety are the **processional or wayside crosses**, 13 of which are still preserved in the townscape. The French occupants wanted them removed, as neutrality in matters of faith was obligatory in public life. It seems that their orders to remove them were often not followed in Monheim. Such wayside crosses very often date back to the end of the 17th or the 18th century, the period after the devastating wars and epidemics. Some families had the crosses erected out of gratitude for having survived these terrible times, others commemorated the victims with these crosses. Until not so long ago, some crosses also served as stations during processions, as they still do today at Corpus Christi.

French rule came to an end in November 1813 when the Russians and Prussians invaded. The French government officials, who resided in Düsseldorf, had long since fled the country by then. For the municipality of Monheim, however, the invasion meant seven weeks of having to accommodate Cossacks, who were meant to guard the eastern bank of the Rhine, from November 1813 to January 1814. The local population had to take care of the soldiers and their horses, which – as with all billeting – entailed extraordinary burdens and oppression.

After the withdrawal of the French government, the **Generalgouvernement Berg** was formed as an interim solution. It stayed in place up to the conclusion of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The municipality of Monheim became part of the **joint municipality of**

Richrath-Monheim in June 1814. Its official seat was in Monheim, and it comprised Baumberg, Berghausen, Richrath, Immigrath, Wiescheid, Reusrath, Monheim, Hitdorf and Rheindorf.

On April 5, 1815, the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III took possession of the land. The Bergisches Land region became part of the Prussian Province of Jülich-Cleves-Berg, which was eventually merged into the Rhine Province in 1822.

After Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813, the victorious powers of Russia, the United Kingdom, Austria and Prussia convened the **Congress of Vienna**. Over 200 European statesmen met from September 1814 to June 1815 to discuss the future of Europe. The goal was to establish lasting peace and order in Europe. Territorial reorganization was meant to restore the balance of power. The Congress of Vienna established numerous new borders, reinstated old ruling families and the Great Powers declared mutual solidarity in the event of any revolutionary movements.



Baumberg, the northern district of Monheim am Rhein, is situated on the Rhine between Haus Bürgel in the north and Monheim in the south. The small settlement was first mentioned in a document in 1296, where it was referred to as "Boimberg". The name Boimberg (or "tree hill") comes from the tree-covered church hill, which assumedly lay not far from the core of the settlement.

Situated close to the banks of the Rhine on fertile soil, the settlement developed so well that it rose to the status of a Honnschaft, the smallest administrative unit, in the first half of the 13th century at the latest. Farming and fishing characterized the rural character of the settlement that was home to several large farmsteads until the 20th century.

Kirberger Hof (whose name comes from Kirchberg = church hill) seems to be the oldest of the farmsteads. The farm and the grounds of **St. Dionysius' Church** originally belonged together. The church tower of St. Dionysius was probably built as early as the 12th century, so it is older than the first mention of the settlement's name. Potentially, the farmstead and church, in the form of wooden buildings, may even date back as far as the turn of the millennium. The farm was a fief of the Collegiate Church of St. Gereon and formed part of the Fronhof estate in Monheim (see "Fronhof" on page 31).



Catholic Church of St. Dionysius. The tower dates back to the 12th century, while the current appearance of the church dates back to the 1950s. On the left is the roughly 260-year-old lime tree, Baumberg's landmark.

From the early 14th century onward, perhaps even earlier, the **Kirberg** family of knights managed the estate. They probably named themselves after the estate, which had already been in existence for a long time. In later years, members of the family became aldermen and mayors of the Freiheit of Monheim (see p. 46). From the 18th century onward, the estate was owned by the Muhr family of Baumberg for centuries.

Kirberger Hof adjoins the church grounds, which at first had been part of the estate.

The wayside and processional cross dating from 1887 is shown on the left-hand side of the picture.



Verresberger Hof – In the 13th century, Kornelimünster Abbey near Aachen was the manorial lord to which the Verresberger Hof and Sanderhof estates belonged. Verresberger Hof was the Oberhof (the superior manorial estate) for a number of smaller, subordinate estates in today's Langenfeld districts of Richrath, Immigrath, Wiescheid and Solingen-Wald. Every year, on St. Martin's Day, the peasant court met at Verresberger Hof and decided "solely on interest and *Kurmud*".

From 1332 onward, Verresberger Hof changed hands and belonged to various noble owners, including the knights of Kniprode and Varnesberg. When new housing estates were built outside the old town center in the 1960s, the Verresberger Hof estate disappeared and is now only commemorated by a street name.

Sanderhof – Sanderhof is a farmstead located to the north of Verresberger Hof and is at least as old as the latter. The Sanderhof estate was also originally owned by Kornelimünster Abbey, but did not remain in its possession beyond the 14th century. **Johann von Hoingen** pledged the farm to Altenberg Abbey in the 1320s when he was the Amtmann of Monheim.

The Sanderhof estate was farmed by knightly families, including a certain Konrad vom Sande in the 1340s. In the 15th century, it became the property of knights, but after the male line died out, it returned to ecclesiastical ownership by way of a gift. The farm was abandoned in the 1960s and its buildings demolished. Here, too, only a street name remains.

Hoher Hof – The Hoher Hof estate in the north of Baumberg on the Uferweg played a special role.

Kurmud or Besthaupt was a payment in kind comparable to a combined change of ownership fee and inheritance tax. When tenant farmers died or ownership changed, a compensation was owed to the lord of the manor. For a long time, the best piece of cattle (Besthaupt) was the customary payment.

Johann von Hoingen – nicknamed Smende or "vamme sande" (of the Sande family) – was the Vogt of Monheim from 1305 to 1307 and Amtmann from 1322 to 1326. The von Hoingen family founded the Clarenhof estate, formerly known as Hoingen Hof, in 1261.

Its origins are unknown, but it was probably founded in the 14th century at the latest. In 1381, the heirs of the estate, Wolf von Groenscheid and Cäcilie von Kirberg, sold the farm to **Gerhard von Kniprode**, who had already acquired Haus Bürgel in 1375 (see "Knipprather Hof" on page 106). From then on, Hoher Hof and Haus Bürgel were closely connected. The manorial court for the Bürgel circle of estates, consisting of fourteen farmsteads and other properties, almost always met here, at Hoher Hof. Hoher Hof and Haus Bürgel adhered to the medieval traditions of formal enfeoffment and the claiming of the "Kurmud" for a very long time.

Unlike in the Freiheit of Monheim and in the Honnschaft of Blee, where monasteries and abbeys – in particular the Collegiate Church of St. Gereon and Altenberg Abbey – remained influential until secularization in 1803, most of the farmsteads in Baumberg and Bürgel were in the possession of worldly owners.

TRADES AND CRAFTS

Besides agriculture and farming trades, the character of the settlement was shaped by **fishing families** who had settled near the shallow banks



Fishing was still being carried out on the banks of the Rhine in Monheim and Baumberg until the 1960s.

The photo, taken in 1951, shows Hubert Kloth's eel barge below Monheimer Strasse.

of the Rhine in the north of Baumberg – not far from the Hoher Hof estate. Hoher Hof and Bürgel owned fishing rights. The tradition of fishing continued for centuries with the fishing settlements in Baumberg, around St. Mary's Chapel, and in Blee, and it was always linked to the fishing rights of the big estates. Fishing came to an abrupt end in the 1960s when the pollution of the Rhine by industrial waste water destroyed all fish stocks.

Basket weaving was another ancient craft presumably dating back to the late Middle Ages. The location near the river, where willows thrive, was ideal for this craft.

Willows have been planted in the soggy Rhine lowlands since the 13th century at the latest. The trees provided the material for the ancient craft of basket weaving. The basket weavers had to pay the manorial lords a rent for the right to cut the willows, but were then free to trade the results of their work for their own account. Besides baskets of all shapes and sizes, they also made fishing gear, including salmon and eel traps.

You can find out more about fishing in the Rhine up close in the historic "Aalschokker" (eel fishing barge) Fiat Voluntas; it houses the interactive **Eel Fishing Museum** at Klappertorstrasse 38.

For centuries, they also had a very important communal task: they made fascines – wickerwork that was used to protect the banks of the Rhine from erosion.

The long tradition of this typical local craft lasted well into the 20th century. Its last representatives were Christian and Eberhard Holzberg from Baumberg, who worked as basket makers until they reached a ripe old age.

**Basket maker
Eberhard Holzberg
weaving in his workshop
at Im Strässchen,
photographed in 1966.**

*The Holzbergs were
a basket making
dynasty with several
businesses in Baumberg
and Monheim.*



ST. MARY'S CHAPEL

Outside the fortified Freiheit of Monheim (see p. 46), a settlement developed, stretching north from Kradepohl along the Rhine. At its northern tip stood a post mill and St. Mary's Chapel.

St. Mary's Chapel (Marienkapelle) was originally a church called "Kapelle zur Schmerzhafte Mutter" (Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows). It still stands today, on the street An d'r Kapell, north of the old town and close to the Rhine. Built in 1418 as a simple wooden chapel, its history probably goes back even further. At the point north of the Werth (river island), where the two branches of the Rhine that flowed past the old town reunited in the Middle Ages, there was the landing stage of a **ferry across the Rhine**. This ferry at Monheim was first documented in 1374. The riverbanks by the Werth were shallow, making it easy to cross the Rhine here on a ferry or flat-bottomed boat.



St. Mary's Chapel

Fishermen settled there early on. The fishing families ensured that they and the residents of Monheim were supplied with fish by catching salmon, eels and many other types of fish with nets, baskets, fish traps, landing nets and fishing rods.

The location here, as elsewhere in Monheim, was threatened by flooding. In the hope of gaining protection and shelter, ferrymen and boatmen built a little shrine with an image of the Virgin Mary directly behind the bank reinforcement, probably during the 12th century. Stories of miracles soon started to emerge. This was perhaps due to the strange behavior of the current at this point, where the two arms of the Rhine reunited behind the Werth; if one threw a piece of

The Piwipper Böttchen,
with St. Mary's Chapel in the background



"Ferryman, ferry me across!" The old connection between St. Mary's Chapel and Haus Piwipp near Dormagen on the other side of the Rhine was brought back to life in 2012. The Piwipper Böttchen Rhine ferry runs every weekend between April and October.

The baroque altar
of St. Mary's Chapel,
the late Gothic Pietà
in the center



wood into the water there, the wood did not float down the Rhine, but returned to the bank in a gentle curve.

A simple wooden chapel was built in 1418, which was replaced by a late Gothic stone building in 1514. In the choir, a late Gothic Pietà from the early 16th century stands in the center of a baroque altar that was built later. It depicts Mary as the *Mater Dolorosa*, Our Lady of Sorrows (see picture at the beginning of this chapter).

When pilgrimages became popular and word of the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary was spread, the chapel became a destination for pilgrims. Thanks to its location at the Rhine ferry jetty, it was easy to reach for pilgrims coming from the left bank of the Rhine and Cologne. Pilgrimages became ever more frequent, especially after the great plague pandemic of 1348 to 1350. In 1553, Hermann von Weinsberg from Cologne reported that many citizens of Cologne had visited the Chapel during the plague pandemic to pray that they may be spared from the deadly disease.

Pietà is a work of art depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary cradling the mortal body of Jesus Christ after his Descent from the Cross.

A Monheim legend of the Virgin Mary.

During the time of religious dispute between the Catholic and Reformed churches, a preacher ordered the image of the Virgin Mary to be thrown into the Rhine. Miraculously, the image drifted back to the chapel and two fishermen, although members of the Reformed church, brought it back.

The statue of the Virgin Mary, only 46 centimeters high, has disappeared and reappeared three times. This gave rise to a legend about the miraculous image and increased the popularity of the small church as a pilgrimage site. The legend dates back to the time of religious conflict between the Catholics and the Reformed Protestant church. Between 1614 and 1620, St. Mary's Chapel was in the hands of the Reformed, who did not tolerate images of the Virgin Mary in their churches. They would have removed the statue and eventually returned it when the chapel was returned to the Catholics in 1620 (see "Religious disputes" on page 61).

In its more than 500-year history, St. Mary's Chapel has withstood many a flood and even survived the Second World War almost unscathed. Not so the chapel bells – they had to be sacrificed during the First World War when many church bells in Germany were melted down to make ordnance.

During the National Socialist era, the home of the local Hitler Youth and later two barrack camps were built on a free area in front of the chapel – formerly Schützenplatz – where Italian prisoners of war were interned and forced to work in the nearby refinery.

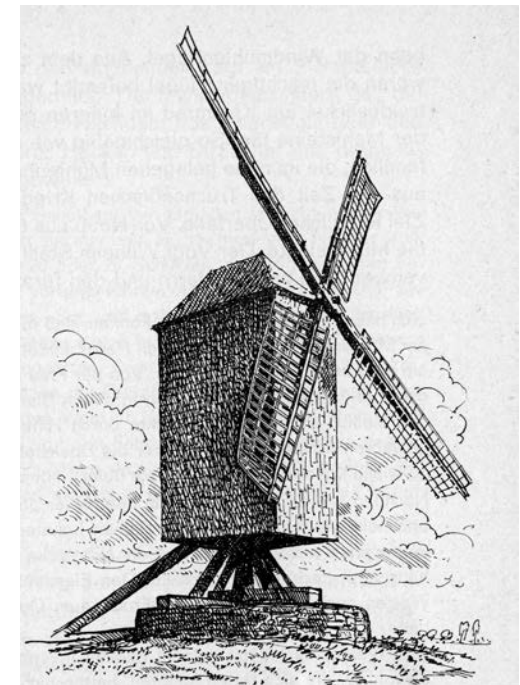
In 2006, the building was renovated and a financial support organization was founded. Since then, St. Mary's Chapel has been used for regular church services, concerts and other events again. Even the old tradition of the chapel as a place of pilgrimage has been revived.

POST MILL AND MILL HOUSE

Near the chapel, on a specially constructed hill, stood a wind mill. The first mill to be built there was presumably a water mill. In 1518, the **knight Adolf Quad zu Vorst**, Amtmann of Monheim, had a post mill built at the spot. This type of mill allows the body of the mill to be turned so that the blades face the wind.

The operation of grain mills or oil mills was a sovereign right in the late Middle Ages and early modern period. Residents were, therefore, only allowed to use the (manorial) mill that they were assigned to. The catchment area of the flour mill near St. Mary's Chapel consisted of the entire parish of Monheim, probably including Richrath. The Monheim post mill was in operation until 1888; it was demolished in 1894. The chapel and windmill can be clearly seen on the map drawn by the master builder Nasset in 1819 (see map on the back cover).

Post mill.
Drawing by Clemens
Siebeneichler



The Mühlenhof (mill house) was the residential building connected to the mill. In the 18th century, the old building was replaced by a more formidable mill lord's house, which later belonged to the Rhine Construction Administration of the Prussian state. The stylish building was completely destroyed during the Second World War.

The current Mühlenhof estate was built behind the mill hill to the east about 150 years ago.



St. Mary's Chapel and mill manor house.
Photograph from the 1920s



The small village of Blee – sometimes spelt *Blahe* or *Bleche* in ancient documents – lies to the south of the town center of present-day Monheim. In the Middle Ages, Blee covered an extensive area: bordered by the Rhine in the west, it stretched as far as today's Lichtenberger Strasse in the north, to Laacher Hof in the south-east and to Hitdorf in the south. However, the course of the Rhine was very different in the Middle Ages. The bend of the Rhine in front of Blee did not swing so far to the west, as can still be seen today on the "In den Kämpen" path (see the chapter "The location on the Rhine"). The landscape in this area was not so much characterized by farmland, but rather by extensive woodlands, pastures and orchards. Similar to the site of St. Gereon's Church in Monheim, there was also an elevated area in Blee that extended from Oedstein to the south. Even so, that area on the banks of the Rhine was extremely vulnerable to flooding.

The beginnings of Blee may date even further back than those of Monheim. In a document dating from 922, the archbishop of Cologne transferred property in "*villa blahe*" to the Collegiate Church of St. Ursula in Cologne. Like many documents from the Middle Ages, the date on this document is suspected to have been falsified. But if it is correct, it would mean that there was already a small farming settlement in Blee by that time.

Fishermen also settled here, and a small chapel, first mentioned in 1246, was built. By the middle of the 13th century at the latest, the settlement had grown so much that Blee formed its own Honnschaft (administrative unit) in the Amt Monheim (see p. 38). There was also a **ferry service** there from 1399 onwards, which existed until the mid-19th century.

The major manorial lords in Blee were Altenberg Abbey and Werden Abbey. The Benedictine abbey of Werden had owned a farmstead in Blee since the 11th century at the latest, which eventually became a superior manorial estate (Oberhof). By the 15th century, that Blee Oberhof estate had grown to cover a large area, spread over Katzberg, Rheindorf with Hitdorf and Richrath with Berghausen. After several changes of tenancy and/or ownership, the **Blee Oberhof** passed to the von Winkelhausen family of knights in 1529. For centuries, this family was closely associated with the Amt Monheim; it provided at least one Amtmann (see p. 40) – Hermann von Winkelhausen around 1356 – and managed the farm. This is where the name **Winkelhauser Gut** comes from. They were followed by several other owners before the estate, last known as Thelen-Hof, was sold in the early 20th century. A large industrial area was built on the site.

The **Cistercian abbey of Altenberg**, closely linked to the counts of Berg, steadily expanded its influence in and around Monheim between the 12th and 15th century. In Blee, the abbey acquired farms and farmland, timber and fishing rights, annuities, and tithing and patronage rights, thereby significantly expanding its holdings. Thanks to exchanges, purchases and donations, the abbey acquired the Widdauen estate (in present-day Langenfeld) as early as 1147 and the Laacher Hof estate in 1259.

The abbey received generous donations from the knight **Sibodo von Blee** (*Sibodo miles dictus de Bleche*), for example. In a document dating from 1262, Sibodo transferred his property, the Berger Hof in Rheindorf, to Altenberg



Altenberg manor house in Blee in the 1920s

Abbey in the presence of his wife Petronella and his five sons. The brothers Adolf and Gottschalk von Winkelhausen did the same with the Katzberger Hof estate in 1306.

In 1322, Count Adolf VI of Berg pledged the Blee Gutshof estate (called **Gut Blee**) to the Altenberg Abbey for a relatively small debt. Apparently, the pledge was never redeemed, so that the Abbey, which had already been administering the estate, became the largest landowner in the south of Monheim. Together with duty exemptions and granted rights, such as the fishing rights in Blee, this put Altenberg Abbey in an economically privileged position.

The farm has had many tenants over the centuries, including Johann Pick von Sleberg (Amtmann from ca. 1441 to 1461). From 1820, the farm passed from Prussian state ownership to private ownership.

THE DISASTROUS FLOOD

Like the old town center of Monheim, Blee was also located immediately next to the Rhine. Wherever the current put the most pressure on the banks, strong wooden piles were put in place to prevent any undercutting. There were at least three devastating floods in the 14th and 15th centuries, with heights of over ten meters according to the water gauge in Cologne. In January 1374, the flooding even reached a record level of 12.3 meters. The Honnschaft Blee and its chapel survived all of this. However, around the mid-16th century, disaster struck. The reinforcements of the riverbank were swept away by high water flowing at great speed, and a large part of the settlement along with the small church were washed away.

According to reports from 1600, huge efforts were made to secure the banks of the Rhine. The owners of the Winkelhausen estate and Altenberg Abbey had provided hundreds of piles and built embankments; breakwaters had been installed to reduce the flow velocity of the water.

The two large estates in Blee thus survived the flooding disaster relatively unscathed. And though some houses were gradually rebuilt at a greater distance from the river, no new church was ever built again. For a long time, there was hardly any development in the small village which lived from farming. It was not until the early 20th century that the village became an important part of the town of Monheim again in the course of industrialization.

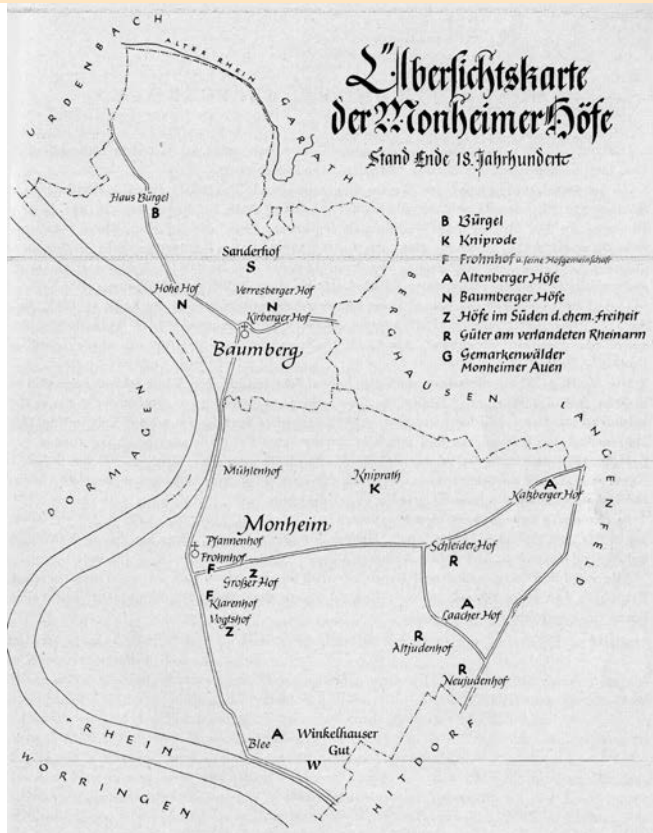
Flooding in January 1926.
Taken at Kolblech (now Bleeer Strasse).
The tower of Marienburg can be seen on the left-hand edge of the picture.



The large estates were of crucial significance for the foundation and development of settlements in the area of present-day Monheim. The Fronhof manorial estate in Monheim (see "Fronhof" on page 31), Kirberger Hof in Baumberg (see "Kirberger Hof" on page 83) and the Bleeer Oberhof estate in Blee (see "Bleeer Oberhof" on page 96) are examples of big farmsteads that formed the nuclei of new settlements and were the driving economic force behind their development.

The settlements in the Amt Monheim were villages that were very much characterized by farming. Until well into the 19th century, over 90 percent of the population was employed in agriculture itself or in the trades and crafts that depended on it.

In 1807, the population of the municipality of Monheim was 3,146 – of which 676 lived in Baumberg and 923 in Monheim. In 1832, there were 212 farms in Monheim and 130 in Baumberg.

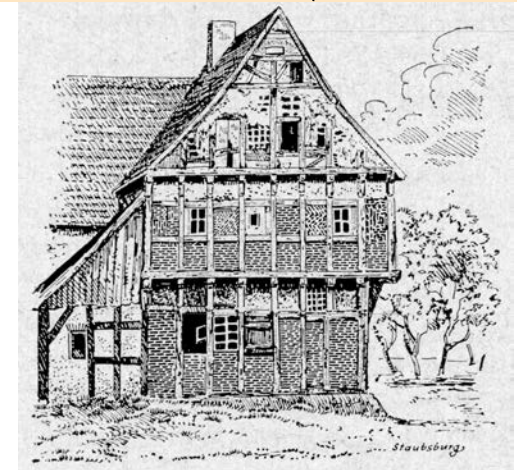


General map of the Monheim farmsteads, drawn by Clemens Siebeneichler. The map also shows the Sanderhof estate in Baumberg and the main estate in Blee (Winkelhauser Gut) as complemented by Karl-Heinz Hennen.

Fronhof and Pfannenhof were the two large estates that were located within the limits of the Freiheit of Monheim (see p. 46), along with a few smaller farms. You can read in detail about the Fronhof and its central role in the chapter "The beginnings of Monheim".

The **Staubsburg**, a farm building located to the east of St. Gereon's Church, was probably an impressive complex with large areas of farmland at one time. Around 1808, Christian Peters, the enterprising *maire* (mayor) of the municipality of Monheim (see

The farmhouse building to the east of St. Gereon's Church, now on the corner of Franz-Boehm-Strasse and Kirchgässchen, was ironically called "Staubsburg". The model for Clemens Siebeneichler's drawing was a photo from the early 1880s.



the chapter "Under French Rule"), became the owner of the property. By the end of the 19th century, the building had fallen into complete disrepair, so that no traces of the Staubsburg remain today.

The **Markthof** estate on the Alter Markt (old market square) was certainly an imposing building in its day. Its origins date back to at least the 12th century, as investigations of the foundations in the cellar and courtyard have shown. Mention of the Markthof was made in 1807 when Franz Roth, besides farming, ran an inn there. As Monheim did not have a town hall at the time, the local council met in a room in the inn until 1867. Later, Roth's restaurant was given the name "Zum alten Rathaus" (old town hall). Today, the pub is called the "Spielmann" (jolly minstrel). Farming only ceased in 1894.



Markthof, shown on the right, was owned by Franz Roth, who also ran an inn there ("Zum alten Rathaus"). Today, it is the "Spielmann" pub, Turmstrasse 21.

About a hundred meters outside the fortified Freiheit of Monheim lay a maize farm. The original building from the 15th or 16th century was replaced with a spacious new building by master carpenter Johann Georg Lottner in 1754, that locals referred to as **Maisburg** (maize castle). The building was destroyed in a bombing raid in August 1943. Today's successor building is situated on the corner of Drehwanstrasse and Meisburgstrasse; the old staircase to Kapellenstrasse is still preserved.

Pfannenhof was one of the largest farms among the subordinate farms of the Fronhof manorial estate. The farm building, now a restaurant, still stands today at Turmstrasse 2-6. Although the farm is first mentioned in documents in 1510, it was probably founded in the 12th or 13th century. The importance of the farm is evidenced by its stewards and tenants, some of whom are known to us today because they became a Vogt (see p. 40), Schultheiss (sheriff) or mayor. The name Pfannenhof refers to the brewing pans that were used to make beer ("Pfanne" is German for pan); Pfannenhof may well be the oldest preserved brewery in Monheim.

The northern part of the Werth (river island in the Rhine) in Monheim belonged to the Pfannenhof estate until it fell to the municipality during secularization in 1803 (see p. 73). The town turned the area into a sports ground and donated part of the land to the Schützenbruderschaft (local sport shooting and cultural heritage association, see also p. 50).

Brewhouses

were small home breweries, usually run by innkeepers who sold the beer they had produced themselves.



The Pfannenhof is one of the oldest farmsteads in Monheim. Beer was brewed here at least since the early 16th century. Today, modern dormer windows have been fitted and the old shutters are missing; however, some half-timbering is still visible on the gable.

Hops

About beer and brewing in the Middle Ages



Beer was drunk in large quantities in the Middle Ages. On a hot summer's day, field workers could easily drink two or three liters of beer. That is why the common measure for beer was not the glass or bottle, but the jug or barrel. The widespread belief that there was no usable drinking water in the Middle Ages has since been disproved. The beer (or, if you were wealthy, the wine) was watered down and was a healthy and nutritious drink.

In the early Middle Ages, a weak beer was brewed on large farms or mead was made from honey boiled in water. **Grut** (gruit) was used for brewing until the 15th century. This mixture of herbs, whose main ingredient in the Lower Rhine region was bog-myrtle (*myrica gale*), served as a fermenting agent for the "Grutbier" and gave it its typical taste. It was not until the late 15th and early 16th centuries that "gruit" was substituted with hops in the Bergish and Rhineland regions.



The right to brew – called "Grüte" – was the sovereign's privilege, in this case, that of the counts of Berg. All those who brewed grut beer in the county had to pay a levy to the sovereign. This levy from the "Grut of Monheim" is documented as early as 1262. It was around this time that beer production was increasingly professionalized and concentrated in a few locations, one of which may well have been the Pfannenhof farm.

Sign of Pfannenhof brewery, the oldest preserved brewery in Monheim: "Hopfen und Malz, Gott erhalt's" ("Hops and malt, may God preserve them")



Inner courtyard
of Grosser Hof
with archway

Grosser Hof, Clarenhof and Vogtshof were three estates located just south of the Freiheit of Monheim. The Mühlenhof estate (see the chapter "St. Mary's Chapel") was located to the north.

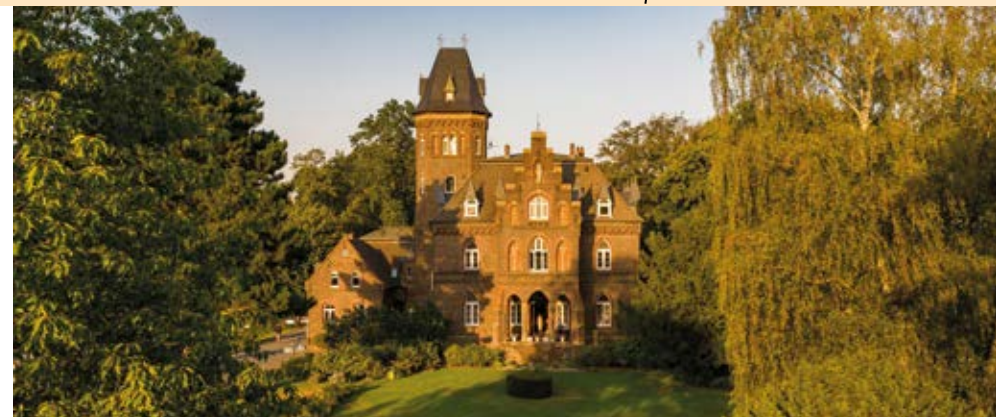
Grosser Hof (Hofstrasse 12) was located nearby the Fronhof manorial estate. Its origins are unclear, but date back to at least the 14th century. Parts of the outer walls of the stables are very old.

Until the French occupation (1806), the Grosser Hof had its own peasant court which went into session on up to eight Sunday afternoons a year to hand out punishments for offenses. Grosser Hof was also where the animal pound for the three farmsteads in the south of Monheim was located; cattle grazing without permission were driven there. It is said that the fines collected were then immediately invested in alcoholic beverages, which were enjoyed in convivial gatherings.

Various knightly dynasties had rights over the estate; the **knights of Quad**, three of whom held the office of Amtmann in Monheim between 1499 and 1605, had a particular influence on the history of the estate. This is why it was also known as the "Quaden estate". The estate remained in the hands of this family until 1736.

Around 1840, the large farmstead came to the von Kessler family through marriage. They owned the estate, which had grown to cover a large area between 1808 and 1840, for almost 150 years. Eugen von Kessler (1832–1885), a district court judge in Cologne and member of the Prussian House of Representatives and the Reichstag, had a manor house built next to the Grosser Hof in 1879/1880 and surrounded it with a large park. The **Marienburg** manor house is an architectural homage to the Marienburg Castle in the town of Malbork in Poland. Malbork has been twinned with Monheim since 2005.

Marienburg, its immediate surroundings and the Grosser Hof are in private ownership today. **Marienburg Park** has belonged to the city since 2002 and is open to the public.



Marienburg, view from the west

The **Vogtshof** estate (Bleer Strasse 43) originally appeared as Bodenhof, named after the Boden family who farmed it from the 16th century onward. From the 1680s onward, the farm belonged to the Aschenbroich family, three of whom held the post of Vogt in Monheim between 1695 and 1803 (see p. 65). Since then, the name Vogtshof has become well established. **Johann Peter Aschenbroich**, Vogt to the duke of Berg, had the small St. Joseph's Chapel built on the farm; it was consecrated in 1707. In 1807, the Vogts' family sold the farm to Christian Peters, tenant of the Fronhof estate and later director and mayor of the municipality of Monheim (see p. 76). The estate continued to be run as a farm by other owners until the 1980s. These days, a residential complex stands on the site of the farm.

The **Clarenhof** estate (Bleer Strasse 41) was founded in 1261 by the steward of the Fronhof, knight Eberhard von Hoingen, and was initially called Hoingen-Hof. In 1343, the estate was given to the Collegiate Church of St. Clara in Neuss as fief. Associated with the farm was a lucrative fishing right to the Rhine lowlands next to the estate. The estate was run as a farm until the 1980s.

Saving St. Joseph's Chapel

When the Vogtshof was converted into a residential complex in 1992, building work damaged the small chapel. The developer's promises to restore the chapel came to nothing. For years, the chapel, whose roof was damaged, was left to the mercy of the elements. It took the united efforts of the town's administration, residents, and the eventually founded aid organization before the chapel could be restored. Finally, in 2002, the rescue of the chapel was celebrated with a high mass and a procession.



The residential building of the Clarenhof estate at Bler Strasse 41, photographed in 1958, now replaced by a modern building.

Far outside the Freiheit, towards the east, lay the Knipprather Hof estate, surrounded by extensive woodland, and Schleider Hof. Schleid or Schleiden was long considered a village in its own right. Even farther to the east were the four farmsteads on Katzberg hill (now a district of Langenfeld), which, together

with some small settlements, formed a separate Honnschaft – a community of farms that made up the smallest administrative unit in a greater district.

The **Knipprather Hof** estate was located in a clearing (the word "Rath" means a clearing) in the western part of the Knipprath Woods on a "Knip" or hill; the estate is thought to date back to the 13th century. The farmstead was managed by the Kniprode family of knights, who apparently named themselves after the place where the farm was located. In 1388, the farm changed owners in court: "The seller, the knight Gerhard von Kniprode and his wife Kunigunde von Kerpenich, appeared before the seven Monheim aldermen, who – led by the then Amtmann Heinrich von Zweifel and the court messenger Adolf – had gathered in Monheim in the open street in front of the gate to the cemetery and, in line with local custom, renounced it 'with mouth, hand and stalk'. A number of Monheim residents had also gathered" (Brendler 2020, translation).

Close ties and family relationships with the counts of Nesselrode have existed since the 14th century. There were also economic links: the counts of Nesselrode helped knight Gerhard von Kniprode to settle a considerable debt after a failed feud (see p. 25). To this day, the Nesselrode family owns large properties around Haus Bürgel and in the Knipprath Woods.

Several knights of Kniprode attained high ecclesiastical and secular offices, while others administered the family estate. One of the most influential was **Winrich von Kniprode**, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order based in Marienburg in former Prussia from 1352 to 1382.

The Knipprather Hof estate fell into disrepair in the early modern period. A forester's house was built in its place; it was destroyed in the Second World War and replaced with a new building in 1957.



Winrich von Kniprode

Winrich von Kniprode – sculpture in the courtyard of Marienburg Castle in Malbork, Poland

Winrich von Kniprode (circa 1310–1382) was an important historical figure and is often referred to as Monheim's greatest son. However, he did not live and work in Monheim, as he had joined the Teutonic Order at a young age. His path led him to the eastern lands, which is where the political weight in Europe shifted to in the 14th century. The Teutonic Order conquered territories from Prussia to the Baltic states and declared them the Teutonic Order State. Winrich was elected Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in 1352, a post he held until his death in 1382.

Winrich von Kniprode is known for his influence in Monheim's twin town of Malbork (formerly Marienburg) in Poland. That is where the imposing Marienburg castle complex stands. It was the seat of the Teutonic Order from 1309 to 1454, the place where Winrich von Kniprode exerted influence for many years and where he is buried.

In Monheim am Rhein, Winrich von Kniprode is commemorated by two memorial stones and a Catholic elementary school in Baumberg that bears his name.



Schleider Hof. Drawing by Clemens Siebeneichler

Schleider Hof probably owes its name to the Old High German word *sleida*, a term denoting a small mountain or slope. The small hamlet around the farm was regarded as a separate village which, together with Katzberg, formed a Honnschaft. In the High Middle Ages, the farm, along with other estates, belonged to the **von Holstein** family of knights, who had their seat on the Lanquit (Langfort) estate in the Honnschaft of Berghausen (now Langenfeld). In 1281, Knight Dietrich Flecke von Holstein transferred his estates in Lanquit, Berghausen and Schleiden to Heinrich von Windeck, the brother of Count Adolf VI of Berg, but received them back as a fief. After several changes of ownership, the estate passed to the Collegiate Church of St. Gereon of Cologne by 1510 at the latest. In 1682, it was bought by the counts of Nesselrode, who owned it until it was demolished in 1970.

Further to the east were the **Katzberger farms**. The large Katzberg estate and several smaller farmsteads formed the Honnschaft of Katzberg. Some farms belonged to the Fronhof estate, some to Altenberg Abbey. Today's Langenfeld district of Katzberg, not far from the present-day S-Bahn (local

train) station, is a reminder of these farms, which no longer exist. The name Katzberg probably goes back to the words "Katsch" and "Kacks", which refer to the old execution site of the Amt Monheim. The **execution site** was located on a piece of uncultivated land near the Katzberg farms, which was called "Galgendriesch" ("Galgen" is the German word for gallows). The street name "Am Galgendriesch" near Langenfeld's local train station is an indication of where the execution site was located in those days.

Further estates – Laacher Hof and Altjudenhof, which was later divided into Altjudenhof and Neujudenhof – lay to the south of those small villages. Along with the two superior manorial estates all the way to the south in Blee – Gut Blee and Gut Winkelhausen (see the chapter "Blee") – they had stronger ties to the Honnschaft of Blee than to the Freiheit of Monheim.

The **Laacher Hof** estate was located on an old path that led from Knipprath via Schleiden and Laach to the Altenhof estate in Hitdorf and on to Rheindorf. The estate and its neighboring farms stood along a very old arm of the Rhine dating back to prehistoric times, so they were mainly surrounded by fertile flood loam soils.

The farm was probably built in the mid-13th century; at that time, a knight called Gottfried von Lagheim or Laichem lived there, hence the name of the estate. In 1296, the estate came into the possession of Altenberg Abbey. It remained the property of the abbey until 1803 and then passed to the Prussian state in 1813 or 1814. Ownership changed hands several times until the Bayer corporation bought the large estate in 1962 to use it as an experimental farm. Laach Castle, which was only built in 1910 or 1911, has nothing to do with the old history of the farm.

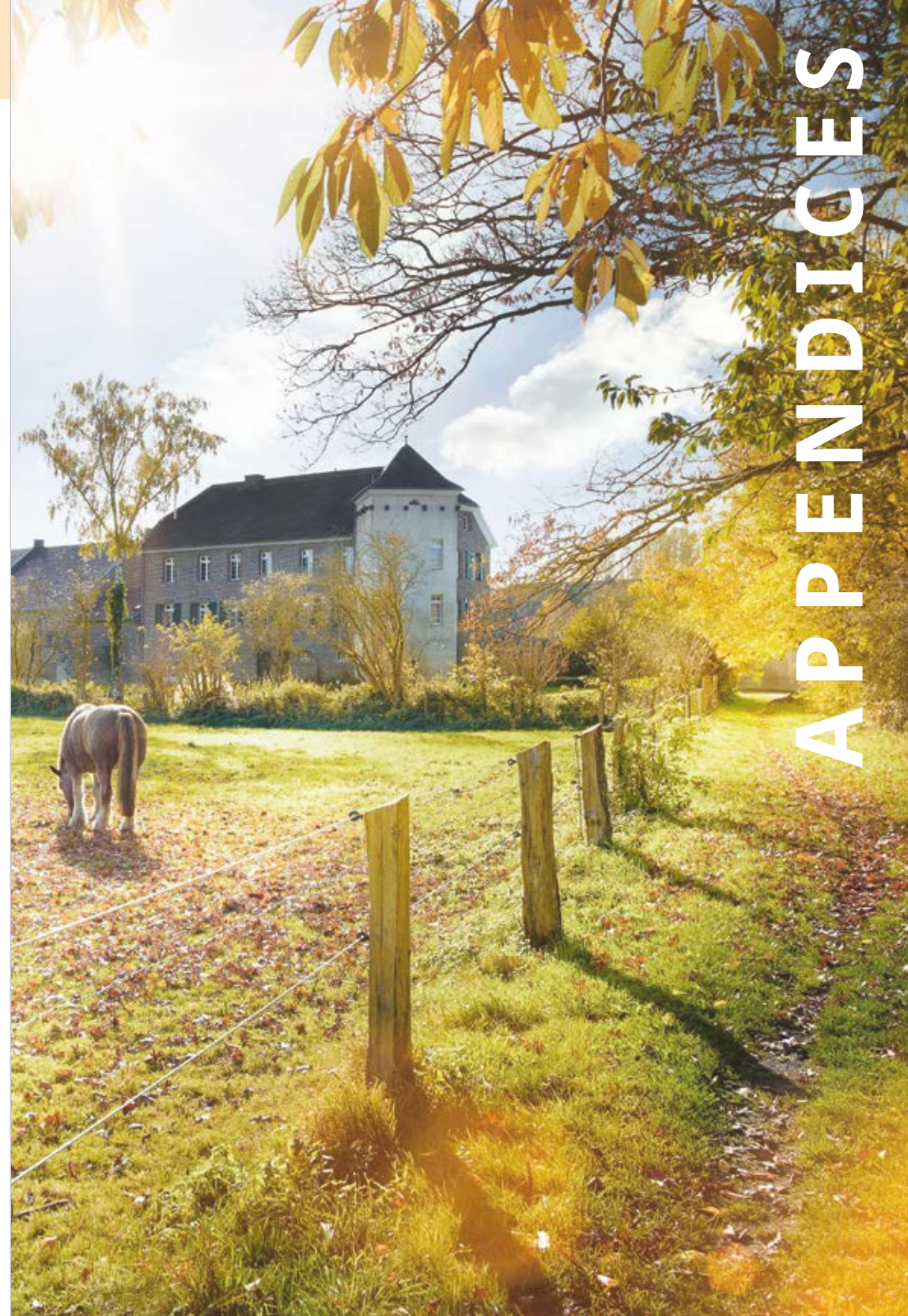
The **Altjudenhof** estate is located to the southwest of Laacher Hof. Its history dates back to at least the 15th century. The farm was originally part of the house of Rheindorf. Its oldest known owner was Knight **Johann Pick von Sleberg**, tenant of the Gut Blee estate and Amtmann of Monheim from

around 1441 to 1461. After a long period of ownership by the family and other relatives of the house of Rheindorf, the estate passed to a patrician family from Cologne called Judden in 1614. This is where the older (and correct) name Juddenhof comes from. Due to inheritance disputes, the property was divided into two farmsteads towards the end of the 16th century: Altjudenhof and Neujudenhof (the latter now lies in Leverkusen). Despite the newer spelling, Jews (in German "Juden") played no role in the farm's history.

Over the centuries, a considerable number of small and medium-sized farms have disappeared. Some estates are only known by name from historical sources; some became too small when they were divided up and distributed among heirs; others near the Rhine were victims of flooding disasters.



The Laacher Hof estate is a listed architectural monument and is now used as an experimental farm by Bayer Crop Science AG.



CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF MONHEIM

- 306-337 ● Construction of Bürgel fort
- 922 ● First mention of the settlement Blee
- 1101 ● First mention of Adolf I as count of Berg
- 1147 ● Mention of Maternus Chapel at Bürgel
- 1149-1152 ● First documented mention of Monheim
- 1151, 1157 ● Documented mentions of Wilhelm of Monheim
- 1157 ● First mention of the Fronhof manorial estate
- 1180 ● First mention of an Oberhof (superior manorial estate) in Blee (Werden Abbey)
- 1180 ● First mention of St. Gereon's Church
- after 1180 ● Construction of the defense tower near St. Gereon's Church
- 1225 ● Counts of Berg of the house of Limburg
- 1246 ● First mention of a church in Blee
- around 1275 ● First fortification of Monheim, demolished around 1284
- 1288 ● Temporary imprisonment of the archbishop of Cologne, Siegfried von Westerburg, in the defense tower at St. Gereon
- 1296 ● First documented mention of Baumberg
- 1324 ● First documented mention of a church in Baumberg
- 1335 ● First documented mention of Steinweg (stone way, called "Freiheit" today)
- 1348 ● Counts of Berg of the house of Jülich
- 1363 ● Mention of the "Bergish Administrative Constitution"
- 1374 ● Rhine meander break-through at Bürgel
- 1374 ● First documented mention of a Monheim ferry
- 1380 ● County of Berg elevated to duchy of Berg
- 1399 ● Ferry service in Blee begins operating
- between 1390 and 1408 ● Monheim elevated to Freiheit (town-like privileges)
- 1403 ● Duke Wilhelm I is taken captive by his son, Young Duke Adolf, in Monheim
- 1415 ● Second fortification of Monheim during a feud with the archbishop of Cologne; demolished 1417
- 1418 ● St. Mary's Chapel constructed of wood

- between 1426 and 1431 ● Third fortification of Monheim with Schelmenturm (Rogue's tower)
- March 1475 ● Ship blockade between Monheim and Urdenbach during the Neuss-feud
- 1512 ● Construction of a post mill near St. Mary's Chapel
- 1514 ● St. Mary's Chapel constructed of stone
- 1521 ● Creation of the United Duchies of Jülich-Cleves-Berg
- around 1550 ● Flood destroys parts of Blee including the church
- 1555 ● Mention of Monheim court as town court as well as district court for nearby villages
- 1591 ● Siltation of the Rhine arm that flowed immediately past the Freiheit of Monheim after major floods
- 1604 ● First written evidence of a forge in Monheim
- 1609-1614 ● War of the Jülich Succession
- 1614-1620 ● St. Mary's Chapel taken over by Reformed community
- around 1615 ● Construction of the court building on Steinweg (stone way)
- 1620 ● Reformed community is dissolved
- 1666 ● Richrath Dominion is separated from the Amt Monheim
- 1707 ● Consecration of St. Joseph's Chapel at Vogtshof
- 1726 ● New vicarage, serving also as school building, erected in Poetengasse
- 1737 ● First mention of a medical doctor in Monheim
- 1776 ● Consecration of the new Maternus Chapel in Bürgel
- 1779 ● New bells cast for St. Gereon's Church at Schelmenturm (Rogue's Tower)
- 1784 ● Construction of Protestant school building on Grabenstrasse
- around 1790 ● First Jewish family of the modern era settles in Monheim
- 1803 ● Secularization: ecclesiastic assets secularized
- 1806 ● Duchy of Berg surrenders to Napoleon I by Kurfürst (Elector) Maximilian Joseph
- 1806 ● Grand duchy of Berg established by Napoleon
- 1806 ● Municipality of Monheim established
- 1813-1815 ● "Generalgouvernement" of Berg established as temporary administrative body
- 1814 ● Municipality of Monheim becomes part of the Samtgemeinde (joint municipality) of Richrath-Monheim
- 1815 ● Berg becomes part of the kingdom of Prussia

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Monheim in 1819

Map by master builder Matthias Nasset

Settlements to the north of the former Freiheit:

- 1: Post mill
- 2: St. Mary's Chapel
- 3: Mill manor house
- 4: Present-day Lottenstrasse
- 5: Present-day Düsselweg
- 6: Present-day Meisburgstrasse
- 7: Maisburg (maize castle)
- 8: Kradepohl (toad pond)
- 9: Present-day Kirchstrasse (Church street)
- 10: Present-day Kapellenstrasse (Chapel street)

Former Freiheit:

- 11: Grabenstrasse (Moat street)
- 12: Poetengasse
- 13: Schelmenturm (Rogue's Tower)
- 14: Pfannenhof estate
- 15: Turmstrasse (Tower street)
- 16: Marktplatz (market square)
- 17: Old toll house
- 18: Werthhus (new toll house)
- 19: Catholic parish church of St. Gereon
- 20: Present-day Kirchgässchen (Church alley)
- 21: Fronhof estate
- 22: Monheimer Werth (Rhine island of Monheim)

Settlement to the south of the former Freiheit:

- 23: Present-day Frohnstrasse
- 24: Present-day Heerweg
- 25: Grosser Hof estate
- 26: Clarenhof estate
- 27: Vogtshof estate
- 28: Present-day Bleer Strasse
- 29: Present-day In den Kämpen

- ▭ Inside the green line: the likely origin of the settlement between Fronhof and St. Gereon's Church
- ▭ Inside the red line: the likely fortification of the Freiheit around 1426
- ▭ Inside the blue line: the former eastern arm of the Rhine


Hand-written entries:

(top to bottom, left to right; Old German in italics)

privath Eygenthümlich Ackerland (vertical): Privately owned farmland
Domeinen-Grund zum Fronhof: Farmland belonging to the Fronhof estate
privat Gärten (twice): Private gardens
Privath Eygentümliche Wiesen: Privately owned meadows
Ein Wasser das Loch genannt: Inland water, so-called "hole"
Kommunal Wiesen und Ackerland: Communal meadows and farmland
Fluß - der Rhein (writing flipped): River Rhine

The map is a reproduction of a drawing made for the "1965 Golden Book of the City of Monheim" by the Munich-based commercial artist de Crignis. The reproduction is owned by the Heimatbund local customs association. The whereabouts of the original map are unknown.





This abridged edition of the first volume of Karl-Heinz Hennen's books on the history of Monheim am Rhein takes us through the eventful history of Monheim and its neighboring communities from the time of the first Roman settlement in Bürgel to the Middle Ages, when Monheim was part of the county and duchy of Berg, and through the Napoleonic Rule in the area.