

Mutterstadt – Community of tradition and future

In the large community of Mutterstadt, situated in the Rhine Valley, only few architectural remains of the past can be found. The following short chronicle shall give a survey of the community. It is by studying and describing the history of Mutterstadt that we show respect for the achievements of the past. The future is manifested by the attempt to create best living conditions for our citizens. Both aspects can be seen in our community.

The area of Mutterstadt has been inhabited since the Middle Stone Age. The village is situated in a landscape of dunes just west of the old Roman Road connecting the cities of Straßburg (Roman “Argentoratum”) and Mainz (Roman “Moguntia”). Within the village limits a settlement of the “Hallstadt period” and a Roman military base or camp were discovered.

The first documentary mentioning of the village is an entry in the “Lorscher Codex” about a donation of estate in the “Mutherstather Marca” from 767 AD.

The fertile agricultural area was an important provider for the “Reichsfeste” (fortress of the Empire) Trifels. The existence of a “Herrenhof” (master’s manor) of the monastery of Weissenburg, of a royal hide manor and of 17 manors of clerical owners show a vast Franconian royal estate. The clerical (monasterial) society of the “Stuhlbruderhof” at the cathedral of Speyer had its most prosperous civil estate in Mutterstadt.

The village was destroyed in the Thirty-Years-War and depopulated, but just a century later, the architect F.W.Rabilliati could again add the big hall-type church to the remaining churchtower of the 16th century.

In 1797 Mutterstadt became French. The town was a part of the department of Mont Tonnere (Donnersberg) within the district of Speyer and became the capital town for 17 further towns with a notary and customs facilities. Among those places were the villages round the location “Rheinschanze”, from which today’s city of Ludwigshafen has developed. In the following years, the town itself was not able to make further use of this extraordinary position as an important administrative place. So the only architectural evidence of this era is the ancient Kanton’s jailhouse in the former “Arrestgässel” (arrest lane). In the post Napoleonic era, Mutterstadt was allocated to the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1816.

After 1830, along with the construction of the railway “Ludwigsbahn”, Mutterstadt again had the opportunity of a further development. But unfortunately the town lacked the insight and vision which economic future could have loomed for the town with this railway. The original plans of the railway had suggested the railway tracks at the southern outskirts of the town. But Mutterstadt contented with a small railway at the furthest southern part of its local subdistrict at the “Limburger Hof”. So the town had a station that was regarded to be a main station by the railway providers because of its handling of passengers and goods, but it was never really accepted as Mutterstadt’s railway station by the population. The narrow-gauge-railway that led through the town from 1890 has never been a real substitute for the big railway. Surely because of the increase in individual motorization it was shut down in 1955.

Jewish life in Mutterstadt was first documented in 1719, in the then Electoral Palatinate village. A stone evidence is the Jewish Cemetery, first documented in 1890. The Jewish community, that comprehended up to 171 persons, was integrated into everyday village life, so that the political authorities in the town even supported the construction of a synagogue in 1871. This synagogue was burned down in the night of November 9, 1938 (Reichskristallnacht). Later the remains were torn down and the site was sold. With the deportation of the remaining 52 Jews on October 22, 1940 to the concentration camp of Gurs in Southern France and the subsequential murder of the majority of these people in other concentration camps, Jewish history came to an end in the town of Mutterstadt.

In the last years many individual, public and church efforts were undertaken to bring back the memories of Jewish life in and to Mutterstadt and former Jewish inhabitants and survivors of the Holocaust paid visits to their former hometown and shared their lives' memories with the young and today's citizens. Tender human relations to these people could be established due to the untiring efforts of individuals. Another ongoing and demanding project is the virtual reconstruction of the Mutterstadt synagogue (see also www.JudeninMutterstadt.org). In honour of the deported, a plate holding the names of the 42 victims of the 1940 deportation was placed in the yard of honour at Mutterstadt's new cemetery, in 2000.

After 1945, Mutterstadt again reached an administrative importance, comparable to the Kanton's main town in the 18th century when the "Landratsamt" Ludwigshafen (Rural District Office) took its official residence in Mutterstadt for four years.

During the last 40 years, the formerly agricultural and rural community has taken a new function. Though close to big cities, Mutterstadt has retained its own economic, cultural and agricultural substance and has become a remarkable place of living and recreational value. The far visible landmark is Mutterstadt's water tower, 53 meters high.

In 1965, the town became renowned for an exemplary structural improvement (enclosure of land) within a reorganisation, redistribution, exchange and concentration of agricultural areas combined with the re- and outsettlement of agricultural sites from the inner town in groups into the areas around the actual designated housing areas. The especially good climatic conditions offer great opportunities to the local farmers by growing specialized crops in the surroundings thus making an intensified use of soil. The irrigation union "Beregnungsverband" (association with the aim to deliver water to the farming areas by a pipe system - instead of individual wells – so that the crops become independent of rainfalls) does a lot to further intensified agriculture. At the "Pfalzmarkt" in Mutterstadt, the largest cooperative marketplace for vegetables and crops en gros in Germany, the farmers and gardeners of the region can sell their products.

In Mutterstadt culturally active clubs and associations are part and parcel of public life. Music and choral societies take a great part in this with their activities, concerts and shows. Local learning opportunities and leisure time facilities are numerous: daycare facilities for children, the "House of Children", elementary schools, an integrated highschool, meeting place for Youngsters, a public library, adult evening classes, institutions of the churches and a home for the elderly with an assisted living division are available and help people to enjoy their lives..

Even in the realm of sports, Mutterstadt has a good name. Everyone talks about the ongoing success of the weightlifters. Other sports performed on the level of the first national leagues are ballroom and other dancing, German bowling and athletic power sport. Mutterstadt does provide four large indoor sports facilities, an outdoor sports park for football, athletic sports and spare time sports, the bowling center and the weightlifter center; they all do enhance sports in Mutterstadt. Lately the public in- and outdoor swimming and bathing facility was remodelled and modernized into the fun and recreation facility named "Aquabella", that provides besides connected indoor and outdoor activity pools a wonderful large spa area with different sauna experiences and related services.

In the town forest recreational area, a "vacation without suitcase" is offered to school children and senior citizens, forest feasts have become a regional trademark and the community owned Forest provides many beautiful walking and hiking trails and resting places.

More than 60 clubs and associations offer numerous opportunities for hobbies and social activities and everybody in town comes along to take part. The Mutterstadt "Kerwe" (annual fair) is the ultimate proof of the sense of community in town.

In the powerful and attractive retail-stores in town and the commercial area "An der Fohlenweide" shopping is easy; the public transport and the Autobahn-connections to A61 and A65 provide an easy access to and from Mutterstadt.

In the historic townhall, the museum for local history, the history of Mutterstadt is displayed with photos, illustrations, charts and explanatory comments. It is shown in the divisions building history, craftsmanship and agriculture, club history, genealogy, religious communities, traditions and pre-and-early-history. The time-line-display, a sixty centimetre wide backlighted display shows over a length of 25 meters the events of world-, regional and town-history in three horizontal bands synchronized with texts and pictures. Furthermore there is a Roman Room, and a show-and-events-room.

With the Palatinum, a community-center for events, culture and catering completed in 1998, the town has best opportunities for congresses and other events. Its modern and friendly architecture with variably usable spaces and partitions for up to 800 persons has created a bright and friendly ambience that furthers active participation at conferences and events as much as the enjoyment of comforting delights of art during concerts and theatre performances.

The increase in population over the last years has modified the structure of population and architecture. Agriculture and rural activities that used to be the town's main features have mostly disappeared. The former agricultural buildings have been replaced by residential buildings and shops. Especially the centre of the town has profitted from the outsetting of the agricultural holdings, and because of this new sites for the buildings of a new townhall and for the reconstruction of the town center itself became available. This is a development that has a positive effect on the life of the community.

(Übersetzung von Udo Geier und Helga Bubach)