

# MUNICH FOOTNOTES

by Ginger Henry-Künzel &  
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Helen Keller, blind and deaf from birth, once said, "Cities have different aromas. Paris smells like perfume, London like smoke, and Tokyo like incense. Munich's atmosphere is really unusual, like music and ancient history."

Most of us are fortunate enough to be able to experience the sights and sounds of Munich in addition to its smells. How many of us, however, have walked through the city without really opening our eyes to some of the less noticeable objects or just not knowing the history buried within the buildings. Unearthed here are some of Munich's darker moments, both in history and legend, as well as fun information to help flesh out the city. Hopefully, everyone who follows this walking tour will see the city with new eyes.

## Marching Through Munich

Our tour starts at Marienplatz where an American, Ernest Langendorf, arrived in late April 1945 at the head of the U.S. invasion of the city. Munich residents joked that "the Americans needed exactly one hour and one minute to crash through the rickety street barricades and conquer Munich. They spent one hour laughing at the barricades and one minute pushing them aside." Munich is still being "invaded" by armies of Americans (and other nationalities) as anyone visiting Marienplatz at 11am can testify, but the tourists crowding into town these days often need longer than just one hour to find their way around the city.

Marienplatz was known until about 1850 as *Schranneplatz* (marketplace). Here the various merchants and farmers came to sell their wares. Fruits, vegetables, herbs, and eggs could be bought daily. On Mondays the wine market was held, while Tuesdays and Wednesdays grains were sold. On the days before religious celebrations, the Isar fishermen brought their catches to market. Dogs and fowl could be purchased on Sundays and holidays.

Salt caravans, which had to pass through Munich on their way to other parts of Germany, were forced to store their goods in the city for three days before continuing on their journey, giving residents an opportunity to purchase this staple as well as providing an important tax for the government.

## He Lost his Head

Marienplatz was the site for official celebrations and festivals, but also for public stocks and executions. The pirate knight Diez, sentenced to death by beheading, begged the judge to spare his accomplices. His proposal: stand the men in a row beside him. Those whom he could walk by after his beheading should be spared. The judge agreed to his request, thinking that such a feat was impossible. As the legend goes, Diez was indeed able to pass before the entire line before collapsing.

The *Mariensäule* near the center of the square, crowned by the dazzling statue of Mary, was erected in appreciation of the fact that Munich was spared from destruction during the Thirty Years' War. Munich was indeed lucky, as 900 Bavarian villages were levelled and over one-half of the residents of Bavaria lost their lives in the war.

The *Fischbrunnen* (fish fountain) at the northeast corner of Marienplatz was once the site of the fish market. In former times, boys who had completed their apprenticeship as butchers would be brought to the fountain, decorated with calves' tails. To celebrate their promotion, the boys jumped in the fountain. This tradition is still repeated every three years. The fountain is also said to contain magic powers. On Ash Wednesday, Munich's mayor and other residents wash their wallets in the water, ensuring that they will remain filled with money throughout the year.

The cornerstone for the new city hall was laid on the 21st birthday of Ludwig II, Bavaria's favorite king. The *Glockenspiel* is a recreation of the wedding of Duke Wilhelm V to Renata

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von Lothringen in 1568, an event which was the talk of Europe for years thereafter. One of the highlights of the celebration, which lasted three weeks, was the jousting tournament, depicted in the *Glockenspiel*. The dancing men, one level below, represent the *Schäfflertänzer* (dancing barrelmakers). The *Schäffler* were the first who courageously ventured out into the streets in 1517 after one of the dreaded plagues. This dancing tradition is still carried out every seven years by costumed men. The next dances will be in 1991.

On the southwest corner (*Wurmeck*) of the *Rathaus* (town hall) is a green dragon who, according to legend, brought the plague into Munich. Between 1349 and 1680, Munich hosted the plague 25 times and was known as *Pestloch Europas*, (plague hole of Europe). Behind the dragon are three panels with reliefs depicting, from left to right, citizens shooting the dragon with a canon, people repelled by the dragon's plague-laden breath, and the *Schäfflertänzer* described above.

## Crooked A-Spirations

Now walk up Rindermarkt (cattle market) to *Peterskirche* on the left. The tower's eight clocks, according to Munich comedian Karl Valentin, are so that eight people can tell the time at once. In former times, every tower had a watchman whose duty was to be on the lookout for fires and for enemies trying to sneak into the city. The St. Peter's watchman, legend tells us, heard the devil and his underlings trying to destroy the steeple. Grabbing a wooden cross, he went out onto the gallery near the top of the steeple and fought the evil spirits off. It was a bitter battle and Heinz, the guard, was in danger of losing. Suddenly, the clock struck 1am

and the devil and his accomplices were forced to retreat. When Heinz told the townspeople the story the next day, nobody believed him until someone noticed that the tip of the steeple was indeed crooked, the work of the devil. Inside the church you can see the statue of St. Peter on the high altar. When a Pope dies, the priest removes the crown from this statue. When a new Pope is chosen, St. Peter's crown is replaced.

### Loafing on the Job

Walk around behind the church, coming out on Rosental where you will see Munich's new (since 1807) market place, the *Viktualienmarkt*. Here, up until about 175 ago, bakers who sold poorly-made bread were placed in a basket and dunked three times in a huge vat of water.

Go left on Rosental where you soon come to the back side of the old town hall (*altes Rathaus*). Notice the fresco on the tower depicting the city coat of arms and its development down through the years. The grim-faced monk slowly develops into a child (the *Münchner Kindl*). From 1808-1818, during the secularization, the monk was totally banned from the crest. What one doesn't see is the coat of arms during the Third Reich picturing an eagle with a swastika in its claws. Hitler called Munich *Hauptstadt der Bewegung* or Capital of the Nazi Movement.

**W**alk up Sparkassenstraße, crossing under an archway over the street. It formerly connected the old town hall, which housed the prison and torture chamber, with the court building. As many an unfortunate prisoner crossed this way going to trial, it earned the nickname "Bridge of Sighs."

On the corner of Ledererstraße is the *Zerwirkgewölbe*, built in 1264 and formerly a falconry. In the Middle Ages it became the court brewery (*Hofbräu*) before that was moved a couple of blocks over to Platzl in 1590. Later the building was used to prepare game for sale, a function it still serves today. Currently closed for renovations, the speciality shop will offer a wide variety of fresh game when it reopens.

Turn right on Ledererstraße and continue to Hochbrückenstraße. Cross over to house Nr. 8, the 18th century Moradelli House. To the right of the house, through an open garage, you can enter the courtyard where you will see one of the few remaining examples of a romantic courtyard with wooden balco-

nies running along three sides.

### Eins, Zwei, G'suffa

Coming out of the courtyard, turn right on Hochbrückenstraße and continue to Bräuhausstraße on the left. Walk up this street, turning right at Platzl, home of the *Hofbräuhaus*. Take a peek inside the *Schwemme* on the ground floor with its vaulted ceiling covered with frescoes. The items depict where different groups of people had their regular tables. Thus, the vegetable salespeople sat under the cucumbers, the fishermen under the fish, the musicians under the instruments, and the gamblers under the cards and dice. If your German is passable, Walter and Willi, two Bavarian-clad regulars at the King Ludwig Table just beside the band, will be glad to tell you more tales of the *Hofbräuhaus*. Just tell them Ginger sent you!

Turn right on Platzl and then left on Pfisterstraße. A short way up this street you will come to the *Alter Hof* (old palace courtyard) on the left. A large statue on a horse depicts Ludwig the Bavarian. His father, Ludwig der Streng (strict), earned his name when he ordered his wife beheaded after hearing that she had been unfaithful. He later discovered that the story was not true.

### Monkey Business

Inside the courtyard is an oriel -- a projecting bay window -- with a pointed tower at the top and bottom. This is called the *Affenturm* (monkey tower) in memory of the tame monkey who lived in the castle during Ludwig the Bavarian's childhood. This monkey, imitating the nurse, took the baby Ludwig out of his bed and carried him around the room. The nurse, upon entering the room, shrieked in horror, frightening the monkey, who then climbed out onto the roof. In the courtyard below, the family and members of the royal court spread blankets and pillows on the ground. As the excitement died down, the monkey also relaxed and returned through the window with the baby. (The fact that this oriel was added in the 15th century and Ludwig was born in the 13th century does not diminish the popularity of this legend).

**E**xit the *Alter Hof* from the opposite side of where you came in, bringing you to Altenhofstraße. The lion cages of the Bavarian Dukes were formerly at this corner. Duke Albrecht used to take walks through the city with

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a tame lion in the 16th century.

Turn right on Altenhofstraße and continue onto Dienerstraße (Servant Street). Crossing over this street, you arrive at Marienhof behind the city hall. This area was densely populated from the mid-13th century until its destruction in 1945. The first settlers were Jews who built homes, a synagogue, and a school. As the Christian religion prohibited the lending of money for profit, the Jews were granted the sole license for this profession by the rulers, who of course charged a stiff licensing fee. As more and more people went into debt, they started blaming the Jews for all the unfortunate events including fires, the plague, and other diseases. In 1285, violence erupted and many Jews took refuge in the synagogue. The crowds set the building afire, killing all those within. After WW II, the heavily bombed area was turned into a park. In the mid 1980's the city decided that something "useful" should be done with this valuable piece of property. During the excavations, old wells and cellars as well as much WW II rubble was discovered. From Schrammerstraße at the north side of Marienhof, one can view the dig-

gings. Once the city decides whether they should build a parking garage or a glass enclosed shopping arcade on this site, the ruins will probably be destroyed.

**R**eturn to Dienerstraße which becomes Residenzstraße at this point. On the right side of the street is the main post office, located here since 1838. It was built after a newspaper wrote that mailing a letter in Munich was a life-endangering situation as the post window was located in a gateway through which the post coaches also came rolling, narrowly missing postal customers.

In the next block, one passes the National Opera built by King Max Joseph I and requiring the destruction of a Franciscan monastery which had, until that time, been located there. Only five years after its opening, the building burned to the ground, despite valiant efforts by firemen and citizens to squelch the flames. Due to a shortage of water, beer from the nearby *Hofbräuhaus* was used, also to no avail. Many Munich residents contended that the fire was God's punishment for tearing down the cloister.

Continue up Residenzstraße, passing the *Residenz* (palace) on the right side, guarded by watchful lions. Just before Odeonsplatz is Viscardigasse, a street often used by Munich citizens in the era of Hitler to avoid having to pass the *Feldherrnhalle* (memorial to two Bavarian Field Marshalls). Hitler's attempt to seize power on 9 November, 1923 (known as the Beer Hall Putsch) was bloodily crushed at Odeonsplatz. Hitler chillingly commented of 9 November, coincidentally the same date the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989, "We are determined to make this a holy day for the German nation in the future and for all time." To commemorate the *Putsch* (coup), Hitler later erected a monument on the east side of *Feldherrnhalle*. People were required to give a Nazi salute when passing by the memorial, a rule persuasively enforced by armed guards. Viscardigasse during this time was nicknamed "Shirker's Alley".

### Come and Give it

The *Theatinerkirche*, to the right of *Feldherrnhalle*, was built by Elector Ferdinand Maria after his prayers to St. Cajetan for the birth of an heir were answered. At the same time, a cloister was built and the Theatiner monks were

brought to Munich to inhabit it. These monks were pledged to poverty and were not allowed to beg. A "starvation bell" was built into the cloister which they could ring if they had been without food for three days. For many years all went well as the good people of Munich always delivered enough food. After a time, however, people started getting forgetful and the monks had to ring their bell. The people responded very generously and also mended their forgetful ways. The bell had to be rung only once after that, 15 years later.

**W**alk south on Theatinerstraße and turn right on Salvatorstraße, crossing over Kardinal-Faulhaber-Straße and turning left. Here, shortly before Promenadeplatz in front of the Carin Goppel store, a plaque is set into the sidewalk marking the area where Kurt Eisner was assassinated 21 February, 1919. Eisner, a Marxist, organized the November 1918 revolution in Munich which overthrew the Bavarian monarchy (the Wittelsbachs), then became the first prime minister of the newly formed Bavarian Republic. He was shot in the back while on his way to a parliamentary session where he planned to resign his post after election losses.

### The Devil Made Him do it

Go straight across Promenadeplatz and follow passageway next to Herder bookshop winding by Waldheimer Restaurant and emerging onto Löwengrube Street. You can't miss the huge *Frauenkirche*, its two towers being the symbol of Munich. Unfortunately, the church is closed for renovations for the next two years and can only be viewed from the outside.

There is an interesting story, however, about its construction. The builder Jörg Ganghöfer made a pact with the devil in order to enlist his aid. The deal was that he would not include any windows in the church. If he failed to keep the bargain, the devil would get his soul. Certain that nobody would enter a house of worship which had no windows, the devil thought he had struck a fine bargain. Upon completion, Ganghöfer invited the devil to come inside and see for himself that there were no windows. He had been clever enough to place the windows so that they could not be seen from the entrance of the church and he knew that the devil would never venture beyond

that point. The devil, seeing that he had lost the deal, stamped his foot in anger, leaving a footprint which can still be seen.

During WW II, a watchman was stationed in the north tower of the church. In 1945, awaking from a short nap, the watchman discovered that someone had hung a huge white flag, as big as three bed sheets, on the south tower. After radioing his commander, he was ordered to climb the south tower and remove the flag with all due haste.

### A Sad Turmination

Continue to the pedestrian zone and turn right on Kaufingerstraße. Walk one block west to the corner of Kaufingerstraße and Augustinerstraße where on the corner of the Hirmer building you can see a statue of a man carrying a tower on his back. The tower is the *Schöne Turm* (Beautiful Tower) formerly located here as part of the city wall, and the man is an unfortunate goldsmith. One day a wealthy man brought him a valuable piece of jewelry and asked the goldsmith to make a copy. The goldsmith agreed and started to work, sitting before his open window. Upon returning from lunch, he noticed that the jewelry was gone. He quickly told the owner who then accused him of being a thief. Although the goldsmith pleaded his innocence, nobody believed him and he was executed. Shortly thereafter, some workmen repairing the roof of the Beautiful Tower noticed something shimmering in a bird's nest. This was, of course, the jewelry. The culprit was a naughty bird and not the poor goldsmith. Retrace your steps on the pedestrian zone. Notice the outline of the foundation of the tower on the pavement in front of Hirmer. A bronze plaque showing the beautiful tower is on the facade between two display windows. Continue on the pedestrian zone, arriving back at Marienplatz where our tour began. ❖

Books consulted by the authors include *Hitler and Munich*, by Brian Deming and Ted Illiff (Verlag Anton Plenk KG, Berchtesgaden), *Münchner Spaziergänge* by Elke Barten/Peter Zimmer (W. Ludwig Verlag, Pfaffenhofen, 1987), and *Munich Tales and Legends* by Heinrich Trautmann (translated by Anelia Curtiss-Stahl, Langewiesche-Brandt KG, Ebenhausen, 1958).

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