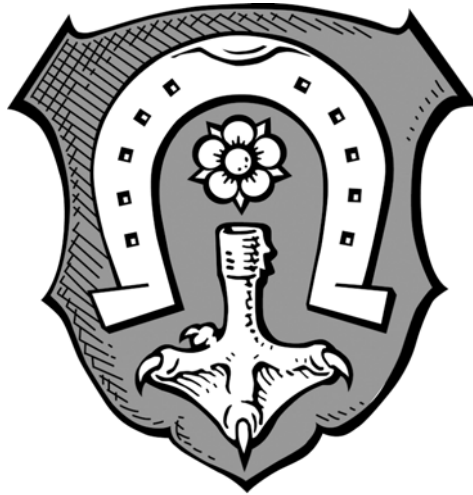


A tour of “old Griesheim”
with explanatory notes by Karl Knapp



A tour of old Griesheim:

1) Meeting place at the “Kreuz [Cross(roads)]”: Here, the ancient trade route between Worms and Frankfurt branched off to the northeast and continued via Frankfurter Straße [Frankfurt Road] and Frankfurter Weg [Frankfurt Way]. To the south, it followed the present-day first part of Groß-Gerauer-Straße [Groß-Gerau Road], Pfungstädter Straße [Pfungstadt Road] and Pfungstädter Weg [Pfungstadt Way]. In old documents and maps, the supra-regional flood-proof traffic route was the only one to be referred to as “Straße [road]”, whereas in the municipality situated to the west of it, there were only “Gassen [streets]”. Moreover, the trade route was designated as a “Geleitstraße [escort road]” on which merchants’ caravans with their valuable freight were given armed escorts against payment of a sum of money to the sovereign. – From the “Kreuz” Cross(roads), a way led to the northwest towards Mainz, via Groß-Gerau. At this fork, there must have been a wayside cross or shrine in Catholic times until 1530, from which the modern name of “Kreuz [cross]” was derived, still used to this day. Apart from that, the Kreuzgasse [Cross Street] had long been part of an old procession route leading from the Mainz areas through Griesheim towards Walldürn in the rearmost part of the Odenwald mountain range, via the “Kreuzweg [Way of the Cross]” in the recreational forest, the Gehaborner Hof [Gehaborn Manor] and Arheilgen. – The house situated in the fork used to belong to the Jewish merchant Joseph Joseph.



2) The properties at Groß-Gerauer-Straße [Groß-Gerau Road] 18 and 20 are now owned by the town of Griesheim, and a museum complex is being built there at a high cost. The stately building No. 18 was erected by the Jewish merchant family Löb shortly before 1900. In the rear part of the property, there is a restored “museum barn” which was moved here from the estate of the Schupp family at Groß-Gerauer-Straße [Groß-Gerau Road] 38. The Schupp family was often called “Stoikeneschts [Stork Nests]” after a stork nest that was constantly occupied on the barn in the past. – Property No. 20 could be restored and be preserved as an ensemble. This residence dates from the early 18th century. Inside, one would come across a well with a finely worked sandstone cross which probably dates back to the late Middle Ages and is now built over by a south wall. The well has been preserved and can be viewed inside the building.



3) The half-timbered house with stone foundations at Groß-Gerauer-Straße [Groß-Gerau Road] 22 is the oldest existing building in Griesheim. It was built in 1620 but unlike, unfortunately, the majority of historic properties in the old town, it did survive the devastations of the Thirty Years' War and of the Second World War.



4) In the small square at Kreuzgasse [Cross Street] 16, enlivened by a well and lined by trees, there was the building of the Groß-Gerau dairy plant which had been erected as a milk collection point in 1885. There used to be a livestock scale in the small house to the right of it.



5) The stately property at Groß-Gerauer Straße [Groß-Gerau Road] 24 had been built by seed shop Nungesser at the end of the 19th century and, following a transfer of ownership later on, served as the company building of Müller Brothers' building and furniture joinery. Its eventful history further included: Manufacture of aircraft parts for the aviation pioneer August Euler who worked in the Griesheim Sand area from 1909; one of the first cinemas in Griesheim from 1914; construction of high-

performance gliders in cooperation with the Technical University of Darmstadt and of own powered aircraft – GMG - in the 1920s and 30s; trials with the world's first liquid-driven rocket motor by Fritz von Opel in 1929. Taking into consideration the interests of the protection of historic monuments, this large building has been modernised by the town of Griesheim as the current owner into a "Community Centre at the Kreuz [Cross(roads)]" and the domicile of a kindergarten.

6) Where Backesgasse, that is, the bakehouse street, reaches Löffelgasse [Spoon Street], there had been the communal bakehouse in the north-west corner until 1911, documented as early as 1454, with a tapered baking oven made of stone. On the south side, where today one gets to Hintergasse [Back Street] via a narrow connection, there had been the communal forge since 1606.



7) Instead of using an earlier building, the parish house was erected as a half-timbered house with stone foundations in 1630. In the past, it also included a parish barn and stables but which at one time had to give way to a kindergarten and finally the modern community centre.



8) Luther Church: At the place of the Luther Church, there had been a church in Romanesque style, first documented in 1165, and a Gothic church from 1507. The construction year is engraved on the round arch keystone on the right side of the main entrance. The Luther Church was first built in 1681 while retaining the old Gothic choir on the east side and received its present outer form only after demolition of the latter in 1749. – The old cemetery next to the Luther Church, maintained for about one thousand years, was abandoned in 1902.

9) Family crypt of Landgrave Friedrich August and his commoner wife Karoline Seitz who met and fell in love in Darmstadt, married in the Luther Church in 1788 and also lived for a few years at Darmstädter Straße [Darmstadt Road] No. 4 in the house of Karoline Seitz's grandmother. More recently, the coffins were transferred to the burial place of the Darmstadt landgraves in the Rosenhöhe park.



10) In the public parking area the west of restaurant “Zur Goldenen Insel [Golden Island]”, formerly restaurant “Riedhof [Reed Farm]”, there used to be a boys' school, erected in 1713, in which, after the “Old School” was built, the first pharmacy in Griesheim could be established in 1865.



11) Similar to other buildings in Griesheim, the timbered house of the Feldmann/Sahr family at Oberndorfstraße [Oberndorf Road] 1 is listed. It was built in the late 17th century and is colloquially known as “Nikelose-Haus [Nicholas House]” after an ancestor of the owners, Nikolaus.

12) Bordered by the northern part of Oberndorferstraße [Oberndorf Road], Gäßchen [Alley] and Hintergasse [Back Street], there once stood an impressive Frankonian estate which was documented as a stately manor since the High Middle Ages and whose owners have been called to this day “Hofbauern [manor farmers]” in relation to other farming families. Along with the church, the parish house and the town hall, this estate was probably part of the nucleus of old Griesheim.



13) At the location of the old town hall at Oberndorferstraße [Oberndorf Road], a dedication board with the building inscription, recessed in a remnant of the wall of the former north façade, is the only reminder of the historic building that was destroyed in 1944. The original old town hall had been burnt down in 1622 during the Thirty Years' War and was replaced by a new building in 1625 which in turn stood the test of time until 1944. – The road areas around the old town hall and the Frankonian estate and around restaurants “Zum Grünen Laub [Green Foliage]”, “Zum Grünen Baum [Green Tree]” and “Wirtschaft zur Krone [Crown Restaurant]” in the immediate vicinity of the old town hall were previously used as “fairgrounds” to hold markets, fairs, etc. – The name of Gellgasse [Gollum? Street], previously called Göllgasse [Gollum? Street], which branches off to the West at the level of the old town hall, could be related to “Gollenstein [gollum? stone – related to English gollum as in gollumshark?]”, a regional German expression for menhirs.

Corresponding observations were made during the new construction of a residential building at Gellgasse [Gollum? Street] decades ago. – Restaurant “Zum Grünen Laub [Green Foliage]”, documented since almost 300 years, is today owned by the town of Griesheim and, following major modernisation, is run as a community centre.



14) At Pfungstädter Straße [Pfungstadt Road] No. 13, there was, until 1944, a high building with a Renaissance gable, built before 1618 by Captain Hans Diehl Dreßler who was in charge of peat extraction in Griesheim. As the later restaurant “Zum weißen Schwan [White Swan]”, it came into the possession of the mayor family Keller who held office for a long time, and experienced an eventful history.



15) Towards the end of the 19th century, the owner of the big seed shop Nungesser built the beautiful brick house at Pfungstädter Straße [Pfungstadt Road] No. 10, which was later purchased by the teacher Friedrich Boller, well-known and respected in Griesheim.



16) At the estate of printing company Bassenauer at Pfungstädter Straße [Pfungstadt Road] No. 2, built in 1888, the local newspaper “Griesheimer Anzeiger [Griesheim Gazette]” had been produced for more than a hundred years before it was relocated to industrial estate North.



17) In the big house at Pfungstädter Straße [Pfungstadt Road] No. 1, built in 1843, the beer brewer and cooper Valentin Hottes from Egelsbach operated a brewery with a restaurant attached. In 1848, the first postal agency in Griesheim was opened here, and even after the destructions of the Second World War, the Post had again found accommodation here for many years. By the way, there used to be in this house a well-frequented cafe and a restaurant later on.



18) At the place of today's turning loop and stop of tram line 9, there was, until 1973, the first schoolhouse of the so-called Old School, built in neo-classical style in 1830, and which was also used as the town hall between 1903 and 1953. To the east of it, the Old School included three more schoolhouses, of which only the cooking schoolhouse, built in 1902, still exists. The Horst Schmidt Hall, built after the demolition of the schoolhouse situated on the east side of the overall premises, belonged to the Old School also. – In the 18th century courtyard house bordering to the north with the former school building and town hall, company Nungesser had been running since 1800 a seed production and sales establishment that was known far beyond Griesheim.





19) Site of the former Jewish synagogue, demolished in 1938 and destroyed by bombs in 1944. In the present-day parking area, a commemorative plaque reminds of this site.

This historic tour was created by Karl Knapp in conjunction with the town of Griesheim. Boards with explanations are mounted on the historic buildings. The photographs are taken from the books "Griesheim – 100 Jahre in Bildern" 1999 and "Griesheim, von der steinzeitlichen Siedlung bis zur modernen Stadt" 1991 from publisher Bassenauer.

