

St. Gallen



Places

Vadian Monument

The city of St. Gallen paid homage to Joachim von Watt, known as Vadian, with this monument in 1903. St. Gallen was not, however, the only place with such a monument. They were indeed quite popular and numerous at the time, maintaining the memory of people of prominence. The work was that of Solothurn-based sculptor Richard Kissling, who had already created the Alfred Escher Statue in Zurich. The dedication ceremony was scheduled to coincide with the Swiss national shooters' festival (*Schützenfest*), a major event in the country. Many people were invited to attend – although only Reformed Christians.

Zum Goldapfel and Zum Tiefen Keller

Vadian was born in the house under the sign of the golden apple, *Zum Goldapfel*, in 1484, and would live there again after returning from Vienna. In 1522, he moved with his wife Martha and their daughter to the house next door, *Zum Tiefen Keller*. While the latter is still mostly intact, Vadian's birthplace was taken down in the 18th century. The Hinterlauben neighborhood was an upscale area back in the time, and the affluent Von Watt family was able to afford to build a good number of houses there.

A number of squabbles among neighbors were recorded from Vadian's time there. In 1544, for example, Vadian went to court to accuse his neighbor of breaking off pieces of the wall between their houses so that he could now listen in to everything that was said. The neighbor protested that he only broke off a piece of broken wall and wanted to replace it with a paneled wall. Vadian was not happy with this explanation and the court concurred. In the end, his neighbor had to build a new wall made of large bricks and ensure that nobody could hear through to the other side.

"Town House"

On one of the walls of St. Gallen's *Stadthaus* or "Town House", a reflection of St. Gallen's flourishing textile industry, is a relief of a friend of Vadian, Johannes Kessler, who was a central figure in St. Gallen's Reformation. He had a good understanding of the people and was able to interpret biblical texts for the wider public.

Until the Reformation, there had been two parts of an abbey at that location, a nuns' hermitage and the Johanneskapelle Chapel. In 1589, the merchant Hans Schlumpf had them replaced by the Town House, constructed in a Renaissance style, and called "the big house" or the "tall house" due to its size. Its third name, "the half house", refers to its unusual layout. Today it serves as the seat of the municipality, which contains and preserves the old town archives and the Vadian Collection with a library and manuscript collection.

St. Lawrence Church (*St. Laurenzen Kirche*)

This church was the most important site of the Reformation in St. Gallen. It was there that Holy Communion was conducted for the first time by the congregation at Easter 1527. Johannes Kessler, Vadian's friend and kindred spirit, began to hold his well-received talks there beginning in 1525. He read and discussed the Bible together with those in attendance as a theologically educated layperson – and not as a consecrated priest. In his clear manner of speaking, he was able to win the town's people over to the Reformation.

The church was also, however, the town's gathering place where elections for the mayor were held. Vadian was elected mayor for the first time there in late 1525. And the town council introduced Reformation measures there as well, resolving in 1524 that the Bible was the highest authority. In 1525, the council had altars and imagery destroyed and an organ dismantled, which had been built only a few years before. Liturgical vestments and other items of the church were sold off for the benefit of the poor. St. Laurenzen is thus a symbol of the close connection between politics and religion in St. Gallen.

Abbey Church and District

Until the Reformation, the Abbey Church was the religious center for the town's people in addition to St. Laurenzen, and was where they went to worship. They supported its expansion and renovation with foundations and sought aid and comfort from a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary in the church. There was a major iconoclasm incident in the church and other chapels of the Abbey District in 1529, however, in which altars were destroyed, sculptures hacked down, pictures cut in half, and the walls painted over in white.

After the First War of Kappel in 1529, Zurich and Glarus, as its protectors, sold the District to the town itself. St. Gallen was then the owner of the abbey archives and library. Following the Reformed defeat in the Second War of Kappel in 1531, the Catholic towns declared the sale for null and void, and the abbot would already return on March 1, 1532. Today's Collegiate Church (*Stiftskirche*) of St. Gall and Otmar was built between 1755 and 1805, is considered a masterpiece of the late baroque period, and

is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The abbey library is also world famous.

The Dividing Wall (*Schiedmauer*)

The history of St. Gallen is often viewed as a history of contrasts: between town and abbey, large and small, Catholic and Reformed. This is symbolized by the *Schiedmauer*, a wall built in 1566 to separate the town from the abbey. The two had however existed side by side for a long time before the wall was built, and the town emerged and grew as a settlement next to the abbey. The abbot granted St. Gallen its town privileges in 1291, and the two were mostly independent of each other by the mid-15th century.

Certain obligations did continue to apply, however, and only after decades, in 1566, was there an agreement on complete independence. The existing mutual obligations – e.g. providing the abbey with candles and communion hosts – were replaced by payments. It was then that the dividing wall was built along Gallusstrasse to Gallusplatz, which separated the two areas of authority. Only remnants of the massive original wall can still be seen today. Its original location is now marked by a knee-high little wall.

Charles' Gate (*Karlstor*)

This is the only remaining historical town gate. The gate was built for the abbot, allowing him to reach his Catholic area of authority, which stretched from Lake Constance to Wil and into the Toggenburg region, without him having to venture into the Reformed town. The name *Karlstor* derives from the account that Cardinal Karl Borromäus (1538-1584), a significant representative of the Counterreformation, was the first to walk through the gate.

Jesus on the cross with Mary and John is depicted in a relief above the gate. To the right one can see the coat of arms of the Holy Roman Empire with the double eagle, which reflects that St. Gallen was an imperial abbey. The arms of Pope Pius IV Medici can be seen to the left. In the middle, below, is the coat of arms of Abbey Otmar II Kunz (1564-1577). To left is St. Gallus with the bear that helped him build his cell, according to legend. To the right is St. Otmar with a wine barrel, an allusion to the miracle of wine connected with the transportation of the saint's relics across Lake Constance.

The Little Castle (*Schlössli*)

Affluent St. Gallen textile merchants often owned a castle-like residence in the countryside in addition to their town houses, thus imitating the aristocratic lifestyle. The rich Zollikofer textile family, however, built such a residence right in the middle of town, known as the *Schlössli*, or "little castle". The building was constructed between 1586 and 1590 and is the grandest private home in the town. Vadian's family was connected to the family through the marriage of his daughter and Laurenz Zollikofer, and the *Schlössli* was built by Vadian's grandson.

Saint Catherine's Convent (*Kloster St. Katharinen*)

Founded in 1228, Saint Catherine's Convent was a Dominican convent until the Reformation, with numerous women from the town's upper class, including Vadian's sister Katharina. In the course of the Reformation, iconoclasts destroyed much of the convent, the nuns were harassed and forced to attend Reformed sermons. The convent would then slowly begin to come apart. The town finally purchased the convent in 1594 and used it for schools. Beginning in 1685, the church was used for French worship services for Huguenot refugees.

St. Mangel Church

The earliest St. Mangel Church was built at its location in 898 and is considered to be the town's oldest church. The cemetery around the church replaced the earlier cemetery near the Gallus Abbey. The gravestones of clergymen of the past can be seen along the side. The services of the French church still held in the church today are reminiscent of the Huguenot religious refugees from France.

Tradition has it that the Alemannic aristocrat Wiborada had herself walled into a hermitage cell in 916. She was then only able to interact with the outside world through a small window, and was martyred in 926 during a Hungarian invasion. Wiborada would then become the first woman ever to be canonized. When the images and relics of St. Mangel Church were destroyed during the Reformation in 1528, Wiborada's remains were moved to an unknown location.

History

According to legend, St. Gallen was founded as a hermitage in the 7th century by Gallus, a monk and follower of St. Columban. This hermitage grew into one of Europe's most influential monasteries in the High Middle Ages. By the early 16th century, some 4000 to 5000 people lived in the town, which would then emancipate itself from the abbey in the course of a long process. Political power now lay in the hands of the burghers, and Martin Luther's ideas were able to find their way to eastern Switzerland.

Joachim von Watt, known as Vadian, was the main figure in the St. Gallen Reformation. He expounded on biblical texts both locally and in his correspondence with other clergy friends of his. Johannes Kessler (1502/3–1574) also played an important role in the spread of the Reformation. Kessler studied theology in Basel and Wittenberg and came to know Luther there. Kessler earned a living as a saddler, but gained renown for his Bible interpretations, discussing the Bible with the townspeople first in private rooms and later in the church as well.

It was, however, the town authorities that would eventually establish the Reformation in St. Gallen. The town council issued a decree in 1524 that made the Bible the highest authority; everyone was expected to be able to interpret the Bible themselves and were not forced to maintain the church's interpretation. A Reformation commission, which included Vadian, examined whether sermons remained true to the Bible. The council also demanded that all preachers swear an oath of citizenship. Holy Communion was conducted for the first time in accordance with the Reformed tradition at the St. Lawrence Church during Easter 1527.

Soon only Reformed citizens lived in the town. In line with the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* ("Whose realm, his religion"), all subjects had to be of the same confession as their sovereign. French refugees of faith (Huguenots) also arrived in St. Gallen, who participated in the development of the cotton industry in St. Gallen and throughout eastern Switzerland.

Joachim von Watt, known as Vadian

Joachim von Watt was born to a wealthy family of politicians and fabric merchants in 1484. He was in Vienna as a student and completed his degree of Master of Arts in 1508. He became a medical doctor in 1517 and returned to St. Gallen in 1518. It was there that he embraced the Reformation, under the influence of his friend Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich. Vadian was a council member and mayor of St. Gallen for over 25 years in three-year terms, making every effort to support the Reformation through his office.

Vadian's efforts sent the ruling abbot and monks into exile. Following the defeat of Reformed from Zurich in the

Second War of Kappel of 1531, the balance of power would however change and the abbey was restored as a seat of sovereignty. As a humanist, Vadian maintained an intensive correspondence with other scholars from throughout the German-speaking world, connected in part to the Reformation. While Vadian enjoyed great prestige as a reformer, as a diplomat he also intervened in a variety of political and religious conflicts. Vadian died in St. Gallen in 1551.

Johannes Kessler

With a humble upbringing in St. Gallen, Johannes Kessler spent his student years in Basel, where he heard Luther's teachings, and later in Wittenberg as well. Once back in St. Gallen, Kessler learned the saddling trade, and would then hold biblical talks to his fellow saddlers. He also wrote his history of the Reformation, known as the *Sabbata*. Unlike other reformers, Kessler was generous and willing to allow others to hold other positions. After Vadian's death, he took on part of his tasks and served the church in St. Gallen for another 20 years.

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