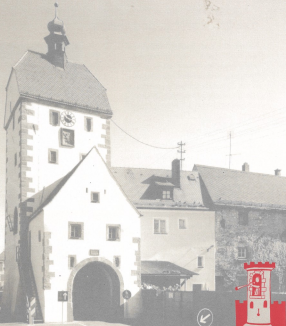


Erstes Deutsches Türmermuseum Vilseck

English Version



Plan of medieval Völsbach
(town quarters, wall, pond)



View on former tower wall
and St Egid



View from former Türmer's tower
(castle tower) on the Vogelsturm



PROSPECT OF A MEDIEVAL TOWN: The engravings by Matthius Merian exemplary show the most important parts of a town (in this case Kemnat, 1644). 1 Lower Town Gate (Amberger Tor, Krautturm); 2 Upper Town Gate / church bell tower (until last, the Türmer lived in the annex); next to the bell tower on the right is the Upper Suburb beside the Krautturm the Lower Suburb; 3 Town Mill; 4 Town Pond; 5 Meadows (Koppawiesen).

Photo reference: Vogelsturm
Petra Kallner, View from castle
tower Josef Götz, Historic views
Fotoarchiv Ringer, Zwölfbrüder-
stiftung Stadtbibliothek Nürn-
berg (the museum logo is
derived from a miniature in this
manuscript), contract Stadtbli-
och Cham, view from Veilburg
bell tower and into the watchman's
room in Cham Barbara Poloczek.

TÜRMER – A SPECIAL OCCUPATION

Türmer (the best English equivalent is probably 'wait') were common in many larger towns and cities, e.g. in Hamburg, Krakow and Nördlingen. In the Upper Palatine this profession was unusually widespread, even villages often had a Türmer of their own.

What Did They Do?

- They kept **lookout** for fire, foreigners, or nobility who had to have a special welcome.
- They therefore worked high up, most often on a **church belfry**.
- They even lived up there, with their whole family.
- Journeyman and apprentices were part of the family as it was customary in the **craft** which was organized in guilds.
- They played **music** in their spare time – it was to become their major occupation in the course of time.
- They performed music in church, at weddings, christenings, funerals, in pubs, and at fairs.
- Therefore they mastered many musical instruments: horn, trombone, trumpet, oboe, flute, violin, or zink.
- They played every kind of music, from **serious** to **entertaining**.
- Often they taught music to the children in their community.
- They conducted the community's band, too.

Hausbuch der Memmischer Zwölfbrüdergattung,
Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Arm. 317.2*, fol. 6'



HOW DID THEY LIVE?

Very poorly, according to their own descriptions. There was **little space** in a belfry, the flat had only one room in most cases – without any privacy, lavatory, or bathroom. If they were lucky they had a kitchen ('Rauchkuchl'), otherwise one had to heat and cook on a simple oven. The **whole family** lived here, including journeymen and apprentices. These conditions are hard to imagine nowadays. Many Türmer left their belfries during the 19th century when the watch was dropped and exclusively replaced by music.

Often **complaints** are preserved, when a Türmer's income was diminished, e.g. by unauthorized musicians. We find petitions as well asking for state benefits to save the families from starvation because of 'hard times' or similar aggravating circumstances.

In many places the post was handed down from father to son

Chiem, St. Jakob, stairs from the watchman's room to the bedroom



because the children grew up in these very **musical surroundings** and learned almost automatically to play the most important instruments. Often nicknames attached to families point towards ancestors who were Türmer, many people with the surname 'Thumer' are descendants from these musicians.

A HISTORIC CONTRACT

One of the earliest preserved contracts, a so-called '**Bestallungs-urkunde**', is from Cham. It was written in **1599/1600** as a model, names and dates were to be filled in later. The Türmer made a promise to keep an honest way of life and to obey the town council. His rights and duties are accurately listed, e.g.:

'Item so dreissig oder mehr Reitter zu der Stat khommen, soll er in das hörnlein stossen, darvff ein Veldtgeschrey blasen, vnnnd gegen

dem thor, da sie herrin ziehen, denn fannen ausstecken, Vnnnd so offt er drey oder mehr Reiter vnangeblasen übersicht, Soll ime jedesmals für einen Reuter ein kreuzer an seinem Wochen soldt abgezogen werden. Item bei Tage vnnnd Nacht soll er vff das Feuer vleissig vfsehen gebrauch. vnnnd do in der Stat [...] sichtiger Prunst oder Schadenfeuer Anzeigen, soll er so Balden die Sturen Glockhen Anschlagen, Vnnnd also bei dem tag den feuer fannen, vnnnd bei der nacht ein Lich in einer Lattem gegen dem ortt, da das feuer sein würdte, hinaus steckhen [...]

Item er noch die Seinen, sollen auch nichts vnsaubers an kott, Misst, oder andern in die Rinen, zwischen des Thurns vnnnd der Kirchen herabschütten oder werffen, bei hoher straff.'

For these duties he received 107 florins a year as well as grain and firewood to keep his family and the necessary three jourmeymen.



ARE THERE STILL ANY TÜRMER?

Up to the 20th century Türmer were called **'Thurner'**, a tower ('Turm') was a 'Thurm'. An orthographic reform changed the 'th' into a simple 't'.

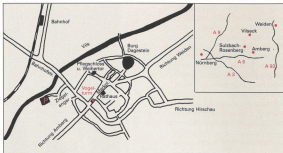
There are still plenty **descendants** of Türmer families who are not necessarily all called Thurner. Quite often they are very musical having inherited the family gift. Some helped developing the museum, all are valuable witnesses of a lost culture. Their memories must be preserved.

The **Erste Deutsche Türmer-museum** would like to make its contribution to keep alive a piece of history in the Upper Palatine.

Waldburg, view from the watchman's room



VILSECK Vilseck lies on the Pendolino train connection Nuremberg-Weiden or is within easy reach of motorways no. 6, 9, and 93.



Fr-Sun and Holidays 2-5 p.m. and on request

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