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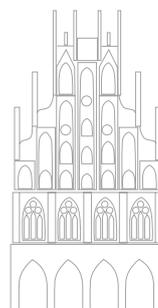
Münster Marketing

Town Hall of the Peace of Westphalia





Town Hall (Rathaus) and Citizens' Hall (Bürgerhalle)



Münster Town Hall – with its *Friedenssaal (Hall of Peace)*, known worldwide as the location of the *Peace of Westphalia*, and its magnificent gables, also considered to be one of the most architecturally important buildings and one of the finest secular buildings from the Gothic period.

Council Chamber (Ratskammer)

The first assembly room on this site dates from the 12th century and was situated directly opposite the former Michaelis Gate leading to the Episcopal area of immunity on Cathedral Hill. The original structure consisted of a half-timbered building erected at some distance from the market street, and this was replaced – possibly before 1200 – with a stone building. This stone building, probably with two storeys, is already documented in 1250 as a meeting place for the lay judges; its lower story is today's *Friedenssaal*.

Citizens' Hall

In the early 14th century the need arose for a covered room for meetings of the citizenry. To the west, in front of the stone building, a large gabled house was constructed which reached as far as the building line of market street. The exact dating of the Citizens' Hall is disputed, but it could have originated around 1320.

After completion of the Citizens' Hall a division of the building's interior into two parts is first recorded in a chronicle dated 1337. The councillors met in the rear part of the Town Hall in the Council Chamber, while the citizenry came together in the front part of the building in the Citizens' Hall. Today some of the armaments and weapons owned since ancient times by the city can be viewed here, as can a replica of the special sword ("*Sendschwert*") which was displayed in olden times whenever fairs were held.



The model ship

In 1927 the Hanseatic Geschäftsverein, a merchants' association founded in 1835, visited Münster and presented to the city council a model of an old Hanseatic ship, commemorating Münster's 400-year membership of the Hanse.

The model shows a caravel, made at the Lübeck Maritime Association building and copied from an original there. At the end of the Middle Ages it became the best known type of ship used in northern Europe and, with its non-overlapping planks, it superseded the Hanseatic cog, which had lapstrake planking. Caravels, which were already in use in ancient Egypt, made it possible to have larger hulks for cargoes of up to 400 tonnes. As a result of their smooth surface and their sail areas numbering between six and eight, caravels had a greater manoeuvrability and higher speeds.

The peace flag

On the occasion of the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648, the city council commissioned this flag which was displayed outside the Town Hall at the proclamation of the peace treaties.

The existence of the flag, which used to be kept in the Hall of Peace in the Town Hall, had almost been forgotten. Probably the last time it was carried across Prinzipalmarkt was on 30 October 1948, the 300th anniversary of the Peace of Westphalia.

The original of the delicate silk flag belongs to the Westphalian Association of Historical and Classical Studies and is today on permanent loan to the LWL State Museum of Art and Cultural History. The flag is in such a fragile condition that it can no longer be exhibited.

On the initiative of the Münster Local Heritage Society a reconstruction of the flag was made on cloth, reproducing the original colours. A green laurel wreath is shown on a blue background, and the wreath encloses four symbols – a white dove with a green branch in its beak, the golden imperial crown of the Habsburgs, two hands in white gloves exchanging palms as a symbol of peace, and the coat of arms of the City of Münster in gold, red and silver. The flag of peace is considered to be an icon of the city's history.

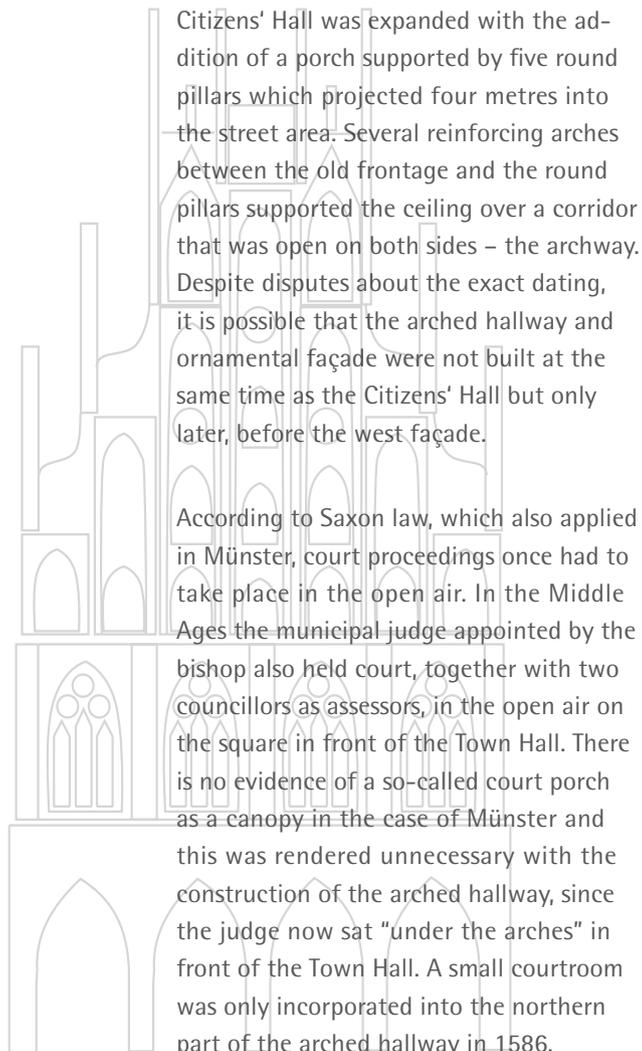


Reconstructed: The Münster peace flag from 1648

Arched hallway and ornamental façade

Towards the end of the 14th century the Citizens' Hall was expanded with the addition of a porch supported by five round pillars which projected four metres into the street area. Several reinforcing arches between the old frontage and the round pillars supported the ceiling over a corridor that was open on both sides – the archway. Despite disputes about the exact dating, it is possible that the arched hallway and ornamental façade were not built at the same time as the Citizens' Hall but only later, before the west façade.

According to Saxon law, which also applied in Münster, court proceedings once had to take place in the open air. In the Middle Ages the municipal judge appointed by the bishop also held court, together with two councillors as assessors, in the open air on the square in front of the Town Hall. There is no evidence of a so-called court porch as a canopy in the case of Münster and this was rendered unnecessary with the construction of the arched hallway, since the judge now sat "under the arches" in front of the Town Hall. A small courtroom was only incorporated into the northern part of the arched hallway in 1586.



The lavish architecture of the gable can only have been planned and started at a time when the economy was flourishing. The demonstrable continuity from 1370 in the council and the office of mayor was probably helpful in this respect. However, completion of the display façade was delayed, presumably as a result of the economic consequences of the plague and fires in 1382/1383. As a result of the numerous repairs, re-paintings and destruction, few remains of the original design were preserved.

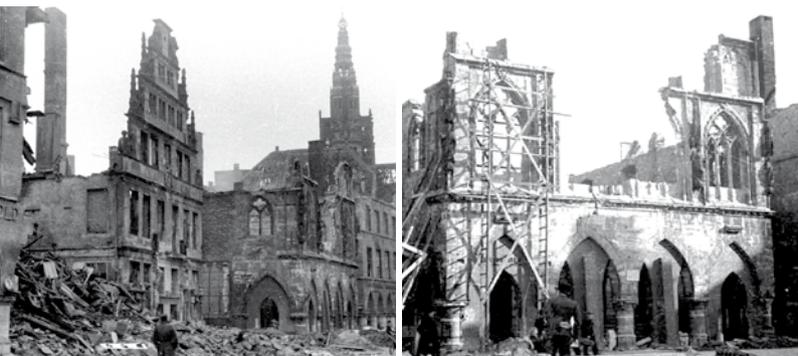


A more precise dating of the series of paintings, in particular the crowning of the Virgin Mary in the top gable shrine, is not possible. Sculptures or reliefs representing the crowning of the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven are widespread on European cathedrals and churches from the end of the 12th to the 16th century. However, the appearance of such a sculpture on a secular building such as this town gable from the end of the 14th century is unique.

In 1576 substantial alterations were made to the town hall. From then on, an overall span roof connected the front-facing part of the building with the arched hallway and Citizens' Hall and the rear Council Chamber.

Destruction during the war and reconstruction

On 28 October 1944, during an Allied air raid, several incendiary bombs hit the town hall. Shortly afterwards the splendid display façade lost its support and crashed down on to Prinzipalmarkt. Only the bottom arches and two tracery windows in the first storey remained intact.



Views of the Town Hall destroyed in the war, Münster city museum, Jack collection

All of the interior architecture of the *Friedenssaal* (*Hall of Peace*) with the wooden panelling, chandeliers and paintings had already been removed at the start of the war, thus allowing it to be saved. On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Peace of Westphalia on 24 October 1948 it was therefore possible at least to visit the faithfully reconstructed *Friedenssaal* again.

After the end of the Second World War in 1945 there were initially no plans for the erection of a new Town Hall. The city lacked the financial resources for this purpose, as they were more urgently needed for house-building. Finally in 1950 the merchants' association succeeded in launching an initiative under which the old Town Hall of Münster would be resurrected without any financial support from the city. The city authorities agreed and only looked after the administrative side of the process.

Ultimately a committee was formed for the reconstruction of the Town Hall, scheduled to take place over several years. In addition to architects, art historians and representatives of the city and of various professions, the committee also included numerous personalities from public life.

The plans for the reconstruction of this symbolic building also met with broad agreement outside the city. The laying of the foundation stone on 9 July 1950 was an occasion for joyous celebration by all citizens of Münster after the war. Subsequently, numerous donations were made to the project, including some from other regions of Westphalia in recognition of the enormous importance of Münster Town Hall of as an architectural monument – also for the Münsterland as a whole.

In 1952, two years after the foundation stone had been laid, it was already possible to hold the topping-out ceremony. A further two years later the splendid gable – reconstructed largely in line with the model of the destroyed original – once again radiated its beauty. Finally, on 30 October 1958, the building, with its rich tradition, was ceremonially returned to the city authorities. The interior furnishings were in accordance with contemporary requirements for a meeting and conference facility for a city parliament.

Peace of Westphalia

In 1648 the *Peace of Westphalia* was concluded, thus marking the end of the Thirty Years War. This war, which was initially a German war, had spread so rapidly over central Europe that it ultimately involved virtually all European powers, at least for a certain time. Religious and political disputes, which had been occurring increasingly since the middle of the 16th century, threw the European continent into one of its most serious crises. In the course of the war the religious motives receded almost completely into the background. Increasingly, it was the interests of power politics that determined the course of events.

Triggered by the *Defenestration of Prague*, in which Bohemian nobles threw the Catholic King Ferdinand II's governor out of a window of Prague Castle, and followed by the election of the Calvinist Elector Friedrich V of the Palatinate as the new Bohemian king, the regional conflict grew into an empire-wide war.



The Defenestration of Prague, Münster city museum

Initially the Catholic side under Ferdinand II, who had now been elected emperor, was able to win a number of important victories. An example was the battle of Stadtlohn in western Münsterland in 1623. However, the further course of the war was marked by the intervention of major European powers. On the Protestant side first Sweden, under Gustav Adolf, and subsequently also Catholic France entered into the war. A balance of military power arose, and an end to the bloody battles appeared possible only by means of negotiations.

As one of the most important conditions for any promising peace negotiations, the first task was to select two cities as locations for negotiations which on the one hand were each in the area of influence of one of the two parties to the conflict, but on the other hand close enough to each other so that a quick exchange of information could be ensured. Both negotiation venues also needed to have intact urban infrastructures, as numerous delegations were to be expected not only from all parts of the empire but also from the neighbouring European countries.

Münster and Osnabrück fulfilled these conditions and so the negotiations started in the two cities in 1643/1644. Münster in particular commended itself as a venue for this first European peace congress since, because of its strong fortification, it showed hardly any war damage. In Osnabrück the Emperor's envoys negotiated with those of the Diet and of Protestant Sweden. In Münster the imperial delegates met those of the French king. In addition, the Dutch negotiated here with the Spanish on the recognition of their state sovereignty and the equally significant end to the Eighty Years War.

After five years of negotiations the peace agreements were signed in 1648. On 15 May the Spanish–Dutch Treaty was agreed in the *Friedenssaal* in the Town Hall of Münster, so named after that event. The painter Gerard Ter Borch recorded this scene in a painting (original in the National Gallery in London; copy in Münster city museum). An etching based on this famous painting can be seen in the *Friedenssaal* itself next to the fireplace.

On 24 October the Peace of Westphalia was concluded. Sweden and France imposed a curtailment of the imperial central power in the empire and a strengthening of the principle of a federal constitution. Equality in the legal treatment of religions was also decided for the first time. Switzerland and the Netherlands were granted recognition of their state sovereignty.



This represented the first time that a war in Europe had been ended not by military means but by diplomatic negotiations. Admittedly this peace agreement did not resolve all of Europe's problems, and further wars subsequently occurred, but the constitution established in the agreement proved to be of such fundamental significance for the empire that it would endure until secularisation in 1803.

Representation of the Spanish-Dutch Treaty in the Town Hall of Münster, Münster city museum

Town Hall and Friedenssaal (Hall of Peace)

This oldest part of the current city hall was built in the second half of the 12th century. As a council chamber it was initially the meeting hall for the city council. Since the council was also responsible for the lower jurisdiction, the so-called lay assessors court, the room also served as a courtroom. Both uses are still recognisable from the current furnishings.

How did a council chamber become the *Friedenssaal*?

In this room on 27 May 1643 the imperial document was read out, according to which the city of Münster was declared neutral for the duration of the peace negotiations which would ultimately end the Thirty Years War, and it was therefore relieved of all duties to emperor and empire. Subsequently the more than 150 envoys who had travelled here for the peace negotiations were greeted by the council.



Although the actual *Peace of Westphalia* of 24 October 1648 was not concluded in this room, it did play a major role during the years of peace negotiations as the central venue for social events. For many years Münster, with this scene of negotiations, was a hub of European diplomacy.

Pax optima rerum



"Pax Optima Rerum", hearthstone, Münster city museum

As a memento of the conclusion of peace in 1648, in the fireplace on the south wall there is a one metre high cast-iron stove plate, which shows in the centre a cushion with a crown and sceptre. Above this there are three doves with olive branches in their beaks. The inscription reads: "Anno 1648. Pax optima rerum, 24 Oct." (freely translated: "Peace is the greatest good", 24 October 1648)





Sovereigns and envoys

The 37 portraits on the west wall and a part of the south wall of the *Friedenssaal* are reminders of the peace negotiations which ended the 30 Years War in 1648 with the signing of the *Peace of Westphalia*. Soon after the conclusion of peace the city council had these portraits of the sovereigns and of the most important envoys hung in memory of the years of peace negotiations.

Viewed from the direction of the mayor's table and going from top right to left, the portraits start with Emperor Ferdinand III and the two peace mediators Fabio Chigi and Alvisse Contarini. These are followed by the imperial envoys, then the legations from France, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands. On the fireplace side are the six German electoral envoys. The short side shows the envoys from Basle as well as Johann von Reumont, the Münster town commandant.



Johann von Reumont, town commandant of Münster

During the last expensive restoration of the portraits (in preparation for the 350th anniversary of the *Peace of Westphalia*) numbers were discovered on the frames, which appear to indicate the original hanging sequence. The current hanging corresponds with that sequence.

Sweden



Johan Adler Salvius

Spain



Johan Oxenstierna



Gaspar de Bracamonte y Guzman Count Penaranda



Philipp IV.

France



Henri II. de Bourbon Orléans



Ludwig XIV.

Imperial envoy, Bohemia



Johann Maximilian Count Lamberg



Johann Ludwig Count Nassau



Maximilian Count Trautmannsdorff

Emperor, peace mediator



Ferdinand III.



Matthias Mylonius Biörenklou



Schering Roesenhane



Antoine Brun



Joseph de Bergaigne



Abel Servien



Claude des Mesmes Comte d' Avaux



Ferdinand Ernst Count Walstein



Isaac Volmar



Johann Krane



Alvis Contarini



Fabio Chigi

Envoy from the city of Basle



Johann Rudolf Wettstein

Electoral envoy



Count Johann von Sayn-Wittgenstein



Georg Christoph Freiherr von Haslang



Hugo Everhard Cratz Count Scharfenstein



Barthold van Gent



Godart van Reede

Netherlands

Porch



Johann van Mathenesse



Adrian Pauw

Fireplace



Johann von Reumont



Franz Wilhelm von Wartenberg



Johann Ernst von Pistorius



Hugo Friedrich Baron Eltz



Adriaen Clant van Stedum



Willem Ripperda



Frans van Donia



Johan de Knuyt

Masterpieces of carving

The panelling on the long sides of the room was created in 1577 on the basis of a uniform concept. The date can be found on the panel of the entrance door, which is decorated with the figure of the Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ. The designs are by Hermann tom Ring, the most important Westphalian painter of the 16th century. Münster's natural desire to be represented as the leading Hanseatic town in Westphalia certainly contributed to the impetus for this lavish furnishing. With their severe form these examples of panelling are true Renaissance masterpieces.



West wall



On the west wall adjoining the entrance door is a bench, the rear panelling of which bears the figures of Christ, his twelve apostles and the patron saint of the cathedral, St. Paul, so important for Münster. The spaces showing figures are separated by narrow columns on moulded plinths; at the top they are bordered by a decorated triangular gable with an angel's head in the middle.

Eastern window wall

On the centre surfaces of the window pillars the eastern window wall shows the four Evangelists. The representations were carved in the manner of the engravings of Heinrich Aldegrever, dated 1549. The most northern niche is decorated by a figure of Moses the law-maker, the other window niches show the seven liberal arts: grammar – dialectic – arithmetic – rhetoric – music – geometry – astrology. These figures too (like the spaces with figures on the opposite side) are crowned with decorated triangular gables and the heads of angels. Worthy of special note are the medal heads in the centre of the plant arabesques below the triangular gables – a typical genre for the period.

North wall

The front side (north wall) of the room is dominated by the wall of cupboards, the judge's table and the mayor's bench. At the back of this bench small there are wall cupboard drawers incorporated in two rows, one above the other, twelve on the left and ten on the right. Their 22 doors are, with their reliefs, objects of special value, being among the few works still preserved of 16th century Münster craftsmanship.

No particular main theme can be recognised in this wide variety of biblical scenes, figures of saints and illustrations of human vices. The doors appear to have been carved around 1536, some possibly earlier. Presumably they were taken over from an earlier furnishing of the room and adapted for use in the new panelling of 1577.

To preserve the impressive furnishing of this room, all wood surfaces, including the judge's table and the judge's cabinet, were extensively restored in 2002 by the 'restaurum' workshop. A specially compiled restoration report documents the work that was performed.



Fireplace

To replace the fireplace from 1577 on the south wall, which was destroyed in the war and which showed the judgement of Solomon (1 Kings 3, 16-28) with symbols of justice and wisdom – the merchants' fireplace from the Krameramtshaus of 1621 was moved to this location in 1948. The relief on the front wall shows the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16, 19-31). The gable figure of Justice with sword and scales – the personification of justice – fits in well in this room, which was also once a courtroom. Appropriately for a Hanseatic merchant city, at the sides of the fireplace there are also emblems of trade and shipping. A cast-iron stove plate (see also *Pax optima rerum*) serves as a further reminder of the conclusion of the Peace of Westphalia on 24 October 1648.

Display cabinet

The golden cockerel



The *golden cockerel* is an artistically formed, gilded silver vessel, presumably created around 1600 in Nuremberg. It holds a little more than a bottle of wine and is offered to important guests of the city as an honorary goblet. Legend has it that a Münster councillor once donated the *golden cockerel* after his own cockerel, flying up into the air, made it clear to those laying siege to the city under Prince Bishop Christoph Bernhard von Galen that it was pointless to wait for the onset of any famine.

Severed hand

A detailed examination carried out by a physician some years ago demonstrated that this severed hand belonged, more precisely, to the body of someone who had been murdered. At a time when there were no photographs available of the crime scene or of the dead body, a piece of the body (a hand, a foot or an ear) lay, instead of the whole body, on the judge's bench during the trial. The mummified hands, preserved down to the present day, are probably remains from cases which were never solved – and never buried as long as the culprit was not found and punished. Today such objects help forensic archaeologists to learn more about medieval judicial practice and its regional peculiarities.

Slipper

The *slipper* dates from the period 1620–1640 and its exact origins remain unresolved, as does the reason why it was kept. Originally the shoe was attributed to Elisabeth Wandscherer, who was beheaded in 1535 by her husband himself – Jan van Leiden, the King of the Anabaptists. Another version sees in the shoe the one-time possession of Anne of Bourbon, Duchess of Longueville (1616–1679). She had accompanied her husband Henri II d'Orleans, Duke of Longueville, to Münster for the peace negotiations (1643–1648).



The following objects can be classified as pertaining to the room's function as a place of justice:

Courtroom bar

The wooden courtroom bar, originally standing in the middle of the room for trials, separates the judge and his assessors from the litigants and spectators.

Table

A table below the centre of the ceiling – at the position where, on court days, the bar stood – refers to the interrogations, with the expression urging impartiality on the part of the judge: "Audiatur et altera pars – Let both parties be heard".



Chandelier

The chandelier, the work of a Flemish wrought-iron craftsman, cannot be exactly dated. Its base ring rests on the strong antler beam of a stag with eight antlers and is decorated with enchanting hunting scenes and depictions of animals. On its front, above the city's coat-of-arms, there is a small, late Gothic Madonna figure with a halo from Mechelen, in Belgium. Entwined leaves surround the candleholder. The bars of the support are held together by a golden crown; two golden spheres also decorate the ceiling pole. The ceiling support emerges from a carved rose, a symbol of secrecy and discretion. The circular transcription in golden letters (from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 1.1) is seen as a direction to the judges and its translation reads: "Love justice, those of you who judge the world".

The Friedenssaal today

As the city's most important room for representational purposes, the *Friedenssaal* still fulfils its function to this day. Today the city's official guests are still greeted here by the Lord Mayor and his representatives. Here they enter their names in the city's guest book and receive the honorary drink from the *golden cockerel*.

24 October 1998 marked a special highlight: on the occasion of the opening of the *European Council Exhibition "1648 – War and Peace in Europe"* the representatives of all the former warring parties came together, including the royal heads of state of Sweden and the Netherlands. Together with numerous high-ranking guests from Germany and abroad, they also commemorated in the *Friedenssaal* the 350th anniversary of the *Peace of Westphalia*.



Also in the anniversary year of 1998 the Westphalian Peace Prize (*Preis des Westfälischen Friedens*) was awarded for the first time. The award, with a value of 100,000 euros, is now awarded every two years in Münster and is intended to commemorate the historic peace settlement, achieved only after years of negotiations, which ended the Thirty Years War in Europe.

Peace quilt

In August 1998, to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Peace of Westphalia, this peace quilt was presented by the Association of Münster Women's Institutes to the then Mayor of Münster, Marion Tüns, who accepted it on behalf of the city.



Women across four continents in cities which are either twinned with Münster and Osnabrück or have close contacts with them produced symbols of peace typical of their countries. These go together to form the quilt, which is itself a peace treaty expressed in the diversity of languages and in the cultural tradition displayed in each country's language and work techniques.

As the basis for the women's work, blue fabric squares of equal size were sent out to them, with a number of requests: to use a needlework technique of their choice, to select as a motif a peace symbol used in their local culture, and to incorporate both the word for peace in their own language and the name of their town or city. In the end, all 28 individual squares were assembled in a random pattern and combined to produce a harmonious peace quilt.

Information in the Historic Town Hall

Prinzipalmarkt 10
Tues - Fri 10 am - 5 pm
Sat, Sun and public holidays
10 am - 4 pm
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www.tourismus.muenster.de
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Tourist information on the Hall of Peace and the City of Münster can be obtained in the Historic Town Hall.



Münster city museum

Interesting historical facts about the *Town Hall of the Peace of Westphalia* can be found in the city museum.

Stadtmuseum Münster
Salzstraße 28, 48143 Münster
Phone +49 (0)251 - 492 4503
www.stadt-muenster.de/museum
Tuesday - Friday 10 am - 6 pm
Saturday + Sunday 11 am - 6 pm



Further literature

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