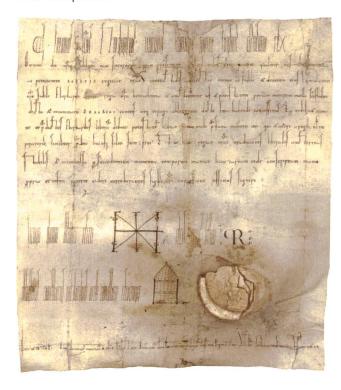# A brief history
of the city of Schaffhausen

Origins and location

Schaffhausen owes its existence to its favourable location. As long as goods were shipped down the Rhine, cargo – mainly salt from the eastern Alps and cereal from southern Germany – had to be unloaded just before the Rhine Falls, and carried overland to be reloaded onto ships below the obstacle. Thus the city developed around the spot where the roads from the ferry across the Rhine, the Klettgau and the Hegau all met, i.e. what is now the Fronwagplatz. Transport and trade laid the foundation for the emergence of a diverse economy.

From market town to free city

Schaffhausen entered history on 10 July 1045, when King Henry III – soon to become Holy Roman Emperor – granted Count Eberhard von Nellenburg the right to mint coins in the „villa Scafhusun". By this time the city probably already had its defensive walls and enjoyed the right to hold a market. The founding of the Allerheiligen (All Saints) monastery in 1049 by Eberhard von Nellenburg also had a decisive impact on the development of the city. Along with Hirsau and St Blasien, Allerheiligen was one of the leading monasteries promoting the Cluniac reform movement in the German empire. In 1218 the emperor assumed the prerogatives of

imperial bailiff himself, which made Schaffhausen a free city within the empire – in other words, directly subordinate to the emperor.

10 July 1045: King Henry III grants Count Eberhard von Nellenburg the right to mint coins in the "villa Scafhusun"

Under Austrian rule

The relationship between Schaffhausen and the Habsburgs is of particular importance: the Habsburgs were acquiring more and more influence, strengthened still further because the ruling family in the Hegau, to the east, was linked to them. Finally in 1330 King Louis the Bavarian mortgaged Schaffhausen to the House of Habsburg-Austria. Under their rule so many military and financial demands were made on the citizens that for many years the town laboured under great social and economic difficulties. By the end of the 14th century Schaffhausen was deep in debt, many of the leading families had

moved away and others had died out as a result of the devastating wars against the Swiss Confederates. It was not until the 15th century that the citizens managed to win back some of their rights. The year 1411 was a milestone in the development of the city: a constitution was introduced placing power in the hands of the guilds, which was to leave its mark on the political structure of Schaffhausen for centuries.

Schaffhausen joins the Swiss Confederation

In 1415 Schaffhausen unexpectedly regained its status of free city within the empire, in the wake of a dispute between the then King Sigismund and his rival Duke Frederick of Austria. Constantly dogged by Austria's attempts to reconquer it, the city concluded a number of treaties, allying for the first time with the Swiss confederates in 1454. Having proved itself a reliable partner in the Burgundian and Swabian wars, Schaffhausen was accepted into the "Eternal Alliance" of the Swiss confederation in 1501 as the 12th member.
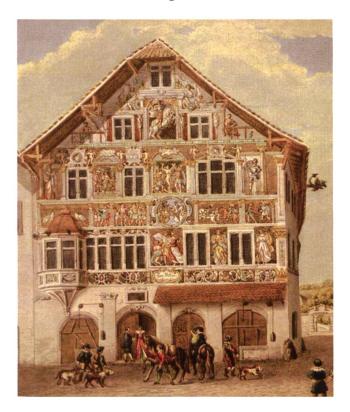
Reformation and territorial expansion

What is today the canton of Schaffhausen has its origin from the city. Bit by bit the rural areas around the town of Schaffhausen were conquered and added to the city-state. The secularisation of the Allerheiligen monastery in 1524 brought Merishausen, Neuhausen and Hemmental into the possession of the city. In 1529 the up-and-coming city-state joined the Reformation. By the middle of the 16th century, the borders that were to last until the end of the Ancien Régime were more or less complete. Schaffhausen further upgraded its fortifications, including the Munot. The rural areas were divided into ten administrative districts under the rule of the city council. Finally, the city gained control over the Reiat district in 1723 and added it to its territory.

Growing self-confidence

By the time Schaffhausen joined the Swiss Confederation, what is now the old city already had the shape it has today. Wealthy citizens took in hand the task of beautifying it. Houses were decorated with oriels and frescoes, and painted panes were put in the windows. Statues were placed on the fountains. But the Reformation led to huge changes: countless Romanesque and Gothic works of art were destroyed by iconoclasts. The Church no longer gave commissions to artists. Only glass painting flourished in Schaffhausen, reaching its peak with Daniel Lindtmayer (1552–1607) and Tobias

Stimmer (1539–1584). Stimmer, the most important painter of his time, was responsible for the frescoes on the "Zum Ritter" house in the Vordergasse.

Numerous town houses belonging to wealthy burghers were redesigned between the 16th and 18th centuries, initially in Renaissance style, later in Baroque. The many oriels were embellished with the family coats of arms of their owners. The interiors of most of these houses were decorated with ornate stucco ceilings.

House names

The many house names, inscribed on oriels and lintels, are a typical feature of Schaffhausen's old city. The visitor finds an abundance of very diverse appellations: some are purely descriptive, while others are based on family names, job designations or features of the building in question. There is a range of variations to do with animals, plants and the cosmos. The list is completed with references to the Bible, abstract moral concepts and, quite often, simply flights of fancy. For a long time these names were the only way of identifying a building. They only started to lose their importance in 1809 when all buildings had to be registered for the sake of fire insurance, and became redundant in 1887 with the introduction of house numbers by street.

End of the Ancien Régime

In 1798, the old system of rule by the city establishment collapsed. Schaffhausen had to endure foreign armies sometimes clashing on its territory. The so-called Regeneration constitution of 1831 put an end to the privileges of the leading city families. The city was separated from the rest of the former city-state, becoming the commune of Schaffhausen with its own administrative apparatus. The communes in the rural areas became autonomous under a new cantonal government. This transformation found a symbolic physical expression too: the boundaries

of the city were destroyed, with the walls and many of the towers and gates razed to the ground. For the new municipality the first half of the 19th century was overshadowed by economic distress and depression. The collapse of the salt trade, the abolition of shipping privileges on the Rhine and Baden's entry into the German customs union – which cemented economic ties between German states – hastened the decline, and this, along with the rise in population that occurred at the same time, led to mass emigration to North and South America.

Pioneers of industry create an economic boom

Energetic pioneers like Heinrich Moser and Friedrich Peyer Im Hof, who respectively harnessed the power of the Rhine and connected Schaffhausen to the rail network, opened up new prospects and created a thriving industry on the ruins of the old guild system. In less than five decades Schaffhausen became one of Switzerland's leading industrial centres. The Schweizerische Industriegesellschaft (SIG), manufacturing railway wagons, weapons and packing machines, the former Johann Conrad Fischer iron and steel works, subsequently Georg Fischer +GF+, Alusuisse, the IWC watch company, and the medical supplies company, Internationale Verbandstofffabrik IVF, all achieved an international reputation. From the point of view of town planning, it must be regarded as a stroke of luck that this development only really started after major industrial firms stopped depending

Tip
A permanent exhibition in the Museum zu Allerheiligen shows the diversity and importance of industry for Schaffhausen, and how its inhabitants lived in the 19th and 20th centuries.

directly on the flow of the river for their energy and could be relocated to the outskirts. The rapid increase in population meant that towards the end of the 19th century the outer suburbs, originally planned as housing for workers, started to grow.

Schaffhausen in the Second World War

As a border canton, Schaffhausen experienced the war in a very particular way: on the one hand, it was threatened by Hitler's Germany, while on the other, it was torn internally between rival parties.

On 1 April 1944 the city was accidentally bombed by American planes, which killed 40 people. Many houses, as well as works of art in the Museum zu Allerheiligen, were destroyed.

A brief history
of the city of Schaffhausen

The post-war boom

It was the post-war period with its econom-
ic upturn, rising incomes and partnership
agreements between management and
employees that ironed out social inequa-
lities and brought general prosperity. The
incorporation of Buchthalen (1947), Herb-
lingen (1964) and Hemmental (2009), as
well as the rapid rise in population, greatly
increased the number of people living in
the city. The population was now about
35,000. The upsurge in individual trans-
port and the start of the building boom in
the 1970s permanently changed the
appearance of the city. Fortunately, the old
city was largely spared, thanks to intelli-
gent conservation measures.