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Town history

In 1002, Herzogenaurach is mentioned in an official document for the first time. In 1021, Emperor Henry II gave the Carolingian royal court Aurach (Vraha) to his newly founded Bishopric of Bamberg as a present. The settlement evolving from the royal court, located at the southernmost edge of the Bishopric, was granted the town privileges in the first quarter of the last millennium.

A rent-roll of the Bamberg Bishop Friedrich von Hohenlohe gives the first detailed description of Herzogenaurach in 1348. The town with its 500 or 600 inhabitants was the center of an extensive administrative district. The cloth manufacture was first mentioned in the form of a "wollenslaher" in 1348 and has since become one of the main economic factors for Herzogenaurach. The name affix "Herzogen-" has been mentioned in documents since the early 14th century. Yet, it remains unclear who initially assigned this name to the town.

The development of the town

The development of the settlement is still detectable in the modern maps of the town. The castle, the town center as well as the parish church with its church yard once were three separately walled areas. The church of St. Maria Magdalena replaced the former royal court located on a supported valley terrace. The

building made of sandstone blocks was completed in 1341 and has been preserved until today. Archaeological discoveries seem to provide evidence for a preliminary building from about 1200. The castle was newly built west of the old royal court during the first third of the 13th century for the episcopal bailiff. Prince-Bishop Lothar Franz von Schönborn had the residence renovated in Baroque style during the early 18th century.

During the time the first castle building was erected, the street market area alongside the river was built as well. The main street was expanded by the rectangular marketplace going up the hill to the north. A third town gate was built at the northern edge of the market place. Even today the street market between the two late medieval gate towers is still a cohesive line of impressive farming citizens' houses. The Old Town Hall as center of the civic and urban life is a detached building in the center of the marketplace. During the 15th century, another town wall was built embracing the new suburbs grown in the meantime. When the town connected its street network to the road to Ansbach, which had so far branched west of the town, Herzogenaurach became a town with four town gates.

Severe destructions during the Thirty Years' War resulted in certain changes of the townscape. Most of the half-timbered houses alongside the main street and the marketplace were built during the 17th and 18th century.

Cloth and shoe manufacture

As a consequence of the Treaty of Amiens from 1802, Herzogenaurach, as part of the Bishopric of Bamberg, was assigned to Bavaria which came under Prussian rule in 1803 and then under French rule in 1806. In 1810, the town and its inhabitants finally found their political home under the Crown of Bavaria. At that time, almost half of the 1400 inhabitants of Herzogenaurach were directly or indirectly related to the cloth manufacture industry, yet by the end of the 19th century, the

shoe manufacture gradually superseded this business.

The economic crisis during the Weimar period had particularly severe consequences for the people in Herzogenaurach. Due to the monostructure of the local business, the number of unemployed persons increased outstandingly. Yet, there was one lucky circumstance considerably influencing the contemporary history of Herzogenaurach, namely the fact that the town survived World War II without suffering any damage.

Consequently, the town experienced a huge inflow of refugees and evacuated people looking for a new place to live. Between 1939 and 1954, the 4940 citizens in Herzogenaurach were increased by another 2377 new inhabitants. It was a huge challenge to provide a home, work and income to all the new citizens. The town has since grown further and the new inhabitants also brought new industries with them, e.g. the needle-bearing manufacture of the Schaeffler (INA) company, today providing more than 8,000 jobs in Herzogenaurach.

In 1972, Herzogenaurach and the newly established administrative district of Erlangen-Höchstadt were assigned to the region of Middle Franconia. By 1978, most of the surrounding villages had been incorporated in the framework of the municipal territory reorganization. In 1980, Herzogenaurach with its 13 incorporated villages had approx. 17,000 inhabitants. After the invasion of the American troops in 1945, the air base built in 1934 was used as a military base called "Herzo Base". After the US garrison had been dissolved in 1992, adidas started building its "World of Sports" in this area. Besides the global headquarters of the sports goods manufacturer, the youngest incorporated village of Herzogenaurach has been growing here. In three building areas with a total of 30 ha, a new housing area for another 2000 people is being created.

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