

Zeitschrift: Schaffhauser Beiträge zur Geschichte
Herausgeber: Historischer Verein des Kantons Schaffhausen
Band: 86 (2012)
Heft: [2]: Schaffhausen seven walks through history : old town & Rhine falls

Artikel: Salvation and piety
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-841555>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 23.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

In the Middle Ages Schaffhausen had not only the parish church of St Johann, but also three monasteries. Two of them, Allerheiligen and St Agnes, belonged to the Benedictine Order, and taken together formed a double monastery, one for men and one for women. In the late 11th and 12th centuries they played an important role in the political, spiritual, economic and cultural life of the city. In the middle of the 13th century a third monastery was established, the Barfüsserkloster. These monks, who lived under the completely different monastic rule of a discalced order, soon came to be highly respected. The Reformation put an end to the monasteries. In 1524 the city council turned the Allerheiligen monastery into a non-monastic church, even though it did not officially introduce the Reformation until 1529. All monasteries were dissolved and were subsequently administered by the city; the buildings were turned over to the public authorities and assigned new uses. Some of their well situated extensive land holdings were sold as building land to wealthy Schaffhausen burghers.

Ruins of the former Barfüsserkloster

1



From the middle of the *Fronwagplatz* we walk slightly downhill along the *Stadthausgasse* to the "Stadthaus", now the seat of the city government. This was where the discalced monks established the third monastery in Schaffhausen, in around 1250, taking over what had previously been a residential area in the middle of town. They belonged to the Order of Fri-



The still partially preserved cloister of the Barfüsser monks, looking towards the church (Johann Jacob Beck, ca 1835)

ars Minor, founded by Francis of Assisi in 1209. The monks pledged themselves to an ideal of poverty, which is why they were known as "minor". They soon won great respect, at the cost of the Benedictines, and attracted many endowments. Their three-aisled church occupied the central part of the Stadthausgasse and, at a length of 67 metres, was nine metres longer than the parish church of St Johann. It was demolished stage by stage in the centuries following the Reformation. In 1729 the construction of what would later become the Stadthaus (Walk 4) led to the demolition of a large part of the huge nave: white stones in the paving in front of the Stadthaus indicate where it once stood. Significant parts of the monastery buildings and the cloister dating from the 13th to 15th centuries survive in the buildings to the north of the former church (cannot be visited).

Where nuns once sang: the former Benedictine convent of St Agnes

2

We continue along the *Stadthausgasse*, formerly known as the *Brudergasse* (Brother Lane), cross the *Kirchhofplatz*, and turning left, come to the garden of what is now Schaffhausen old people's home. This is where Ita von Nellenburg, the wife of the city's founder, Eberhard, established the convent that was the female counterpart to the Allerheiligen monastery. At first glance it would be hard to guess that the main building of the home, painted reddish-brown, was once a place of worship. Nevertheless, it is indeed the fully preserved church of the former convent of St Agnes, which was built in several stages between 1090 and 1300. Parts of the Romanesque church can still be seen inside, in the cafeteria.



The convent of St Agnes from the south (Hans Wilhelm Harder, 1835)

After the Reformation the convent buildings were used as the paupers' hospital. Its transfer from the area now known as the Posthof/Schwertstrasse started in 1542. It was dedicated to the Holy Ghost, whose symbol, a white dove in a golden

aureole, is depicted above a black cross in the triangle below the gable of the classical southern façade. The current façade dates from the major rebuilding project implemented between 1822 and 1825. The hospital's Reformed church was turned into a residential building by inserting two floors and adding rooms. This also meant the demolition of the nuns' cloister, which, with sides 35 metres long, was in no way inferior to that of the Allerheiligen and today corresponds more or less to the garden of the old people's home.

Reformed parish church of St Johann

We return to the Kirchhofplatz and come to the parish church, which was originally surrounded by the city cemetery.



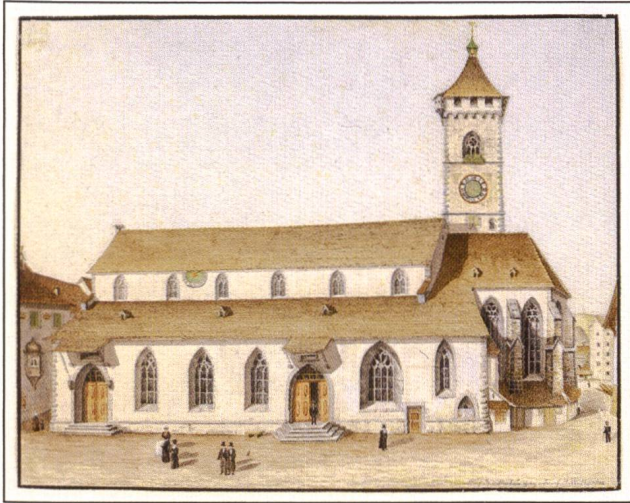
Church ruins beneath the parish church of St Johann

Excavations in 1986/87 revealed the remains of a Romanesque church up to 3.5 metres below the floor of the current church. Stones in the paving outside the modern chancel indicate the position of the walls of the old chancel, and other parts of the old church are accessible below the sacristy and in the western crypt as part of a guided tour. This church was built around the turn of the first millennium.

The rise in the level of the cemetery resulting from constant burials meant that the Romanesque church "sank" about two

metres over the course of centuries. This circumstance and the damage it suffered during the city fire of 1372 were the reason why a new Gothic church was built at the current level. Still surviving from the period around 1400 are the tower and the chancel with the sacristy, as well as the ossuary beneath it. The new church was dedicated to St John (Johann in German), like its predecessor. Both saints of this name are depicted on some of the bosses of the cross-vaults: John the Baptist with the Lamb of God in the choir, and John the Evangelist with the eagle in the choir, sacristy and Täufer chapel.

Tower and exterior: The city accounts show that a monk from the nearby monastery on Rheinau island installed a "Zitgloggen" – a striking clock with a dial – as long ago as 1409. But it was not until 1425, after a period of construction lasting about 30 years, that the church tower was completed. At that time the top was open to the sky and was used as a look-out post and for observing the weather. A small hut provided the watchman with a little shelter, and the Madonna and Child in the nearby niche, which can barely be seen from below, offered protection. It was only in about 1470 that a roof was added. On the southern side, where the market is held nowadays (Tuesday and Saturday mornings), there is a fine sundial by the clerestory, although it is somewhat hidden by the trees. At the eastern end of the façade is a crucifixion group with the Virgin and John the Evangelist and a view of the city.



The parish church of St Johann from the south (Hans Wilhelm Harder, 1835)

Naves: The main body of the church built between 1466 and 1472 consists of the central nave and two lateral naves; a clerestory admits natural light to the central section. The previous building had been lit only from the sides, and was therefore rather gloomy. The south-west portal has also been preserved; it dates from 1467 and was moved to its present location in 1515 when the church was widened. Records show that the city council ordered new stalls in 1472 and a swallow's nest organ in 1473. In 1494 the Im Thurn family endowed a new pulpit, and the baptismal font is mentioned in 1495. The baroque ceilings of the central nave and of the inner lateral naves date from 1733 and include stucco decoration: John the Evangelist on Patmos is depicted in the central span of the nave, while above the chancel arch, two angels display the two coats of arms used by the city, with the city motto: "Deus spes nostra est" (God is our hope). The church acquired its current shape when the two outer lateral naves were added in the period 1515 to 1517, barely

a decade before the establishment of the Reformation. This made St Johann one of the biggest parish churches in Switzerland.

Visit and chancel: A few of the niches, paintings and sculptures still give an idea of the rich pre-Reformation furnishings of the church with its twelve altars, which were destroyed or whitewashed by the 16th century iconoclasts, and some of which were exposed again in the 19th and 20th centuries. Let us now walk around the interior, starting at the north-west portal and going clockwise. The chapel located in the bay at the top of the lateral nave on the north side was endowed by the city's long established Täuber family. Over the years, the family supplied many of the members of the city council; the Täubers belonged to the Butchers' Guild. In the two-part niche is a scene with the Mount of Olives and the soldiers led by Judas marching into the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. A pointed arch leads into the St Michael chapel on the ground floor of the tower, where a series of images on the north wall relates nine episodes from the life of the Virgin.

To the left of the neo-Gothic pulpit from 1882, there used to stand an altar dedicated to Saints Anthony, Barbara and Dorothea. It included the niche where Anthony the Anchorite, the patron saint of the sick and the poor and of domestic animals, is portrayed with a beggar's bell, a pig and an abbot's staff, along with St Wolfgang who wears the insignia of a bishop and carries a model of the church.



Until 1835 the chancel was separated off by a rood screen.

View of the rood screen with pulpit in front of the chancel. (Johann Jakob Beck, ca 1835)

The latest restoration of the chancel, a space once reserved for the parish priest and his chaplains alone, conveys some sort of impression of the way it would have looked before the Reformation. There used to be statues on the foliated capitals of the pilasters; these are now represented by modern dummies, and the stained glass dates from 1881. The doorway leading to the tower is decorated with a picture of Mary Magdalene, while the recess in the south wall is ornamented with a picture dedicated to the Virgin. The underlying sketch shows the death of the Virgin, but this was later overpainted with a scene showing the beheading of John the Baptist, fragments of which still survive.

Sacristy rooms: After going through the original iron door, we come upon plastered walls tinged brown by incense and lamp soot. A depression in the wall by the east window was a basin for pouring away the water used during the liturgy. The south room, three steps higher, has fine star vaulting with tendril decoration. An angel on the boss holds a mitre and crozier, and below are the coat of arms of the monastery of Allerheiligen (a ram leaping from a gate tower) and that of its last abbot Michael Eggenstorfer (a masonry drill), who was also rector of the parish church of St Johann. Leaving the chancel in the direction of the south lateral nave, we pass a niche bearing the date 1513 with fragments of the words sung by angels on the Assumption of the Virgin. The east bay of the south lateral nave was also a family chapel, that of the old Schaffhausen Löw family. It was paid for from the compensation which Wolf von Landenberg had to pay Hans Löw for having killed Hans' brother Beat outside the nearby "Kaufleutestube". Hans Löw was guild-master of the weavers, a council member and in charge of the alms given to the poor. The bosses in the elaborate net vaulting feature the patron saint of the murdered man, St Beatus, with staff and dragon, as well as the golden lion from the coat of arms of the family who endowed it. In the next bays in the outer lateral nave, our eyes are drawn to magnificent pairs of stone brackets. These are the first examples of the Italian Renaissance in the city of Schaffhausen: dancing cherubs, cupids making music, little boys with fish tails, half-length male portraits and much else.

Finally, it is worth taking a look at the picture of Christ carrying the cross on the west wall, with a plethora of figures and plenty of things going on in front of the oldest view of Schaffhausen as seen from the west. On the left of the picture are the followers of Jesus including the Virgin and Veronica with her cloth, and on the right, a dim figure of the Saviour, with the thugs and ruffians. The organ dates from 1879. Today, famous conductors and musicians appreciate the acoustics of the church's vast interior.

The site of the former Allerheiligen monastery

On leaving the parish church we take the *Schneidergang*, passing under the old town hall of 1343, to get to the Allerheiligen monastery. Even if today the only visible traces of the monastery are its stones, a lot still remains of its lively history, the story of its construction, and its artistic and economic culture. The enclosed monastery complex is not just a peaceful oasis in the heart of Schaffhausen, but also a place where the attentive visitor can learn about building styles and discover history as it was really lived, while the herb garden offers a lesson in nature study, and examples of craftwork and of art can be seen in the Museum zu Allerheiligen.



Layout and tour of the minster: The buildings that form the forecourt of the minster used to be part of the monastery. On the left is the house of the beguine community, which carried out charitable tasks for the monastery. (Today it is the debt enforcement office!) On the right is the abbot's main residence, where he lived at the interface with the outside world, and which is today part of the museum. We go through the neo-Romanesque porch to the west portal of the minster, whose double bronze doors were erected in 1959. They are decorated with high relief portraits of the Four Evangelists with their symbols; between them are the Twelve Apostles and scenes in low relief showing events from the life of Christ. The visitor is struck by the width of the interior, its fine proportions and sober beauty, very much in the so-called Hirsau style. The Hirsau reform sought a return to simplicity in architecture, such as had already been applied in Cluny. The ground plan takes the square as its basic element, the number of apses has been reduced, and the ceilings are flat. Arches of alternating grey and red sandstone, resting on monolithic pillars crowned with Romanesque cubic capitals, form seven bays. On either side of the crossing which divides the chancel from the nave are the two almost square transepts, each with a niche on the east side; beyond it is the more complex chancel. A groove carved into the flagstones around the pillar in the north-east of the crossing indicates the location of the yard walls and the quatrefoil chapel in the original cloister. The ceiling, floor and organ

date from the 1950s, the most recent renovation, which returned the church to its original Hirsau-influenced style.

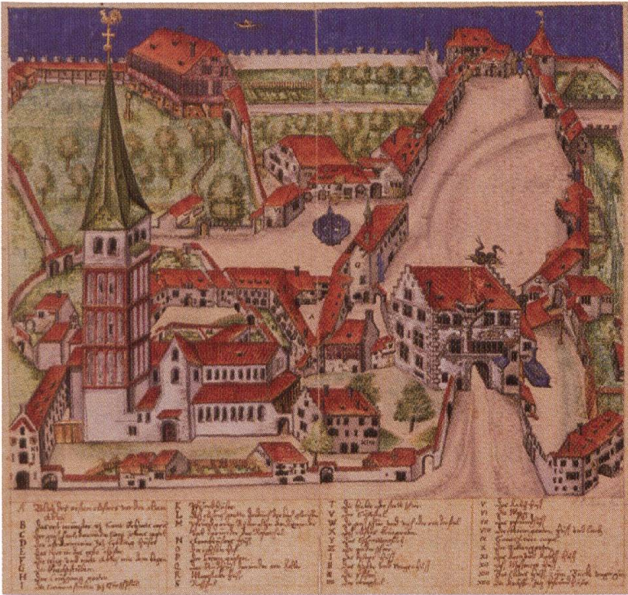
In the Middle Ages the interior was certainly almost entirely painted. The stone blocks of the large wall areas would have been coloured all over. In some places there would have been decorative elements, like the ornamental bands and friezes complementing the architecture, traces of which still remain, as well as figurative images. In the south side chancel we find a rare depiction of a profession of faith (creed cycle), painted in about 1450. This cycle shows, in twelve mandorlas from left to right: God the Father, as creator of the world; the Only Begotten Son; the Annunciation; the Passion; Christ in Limbo; Christ emerging from the tomb; the Ascension; Christ as judge of the world. And after four faded pictures comes Christ anointing the Mother of God. The apse of the south transept is decorated with three rows of pictures. At the bottom is a crucifixion scene with attendant figures, above it a pieta, and at the top probably the Saviour crowning the Nellenburgers. On the south-west pillar of the crossing, a fragment of an enthroned Virgin and Child can be seen. Since 2006 the partially reconstructed tomb of the Nellenburgs, the founders of the monastery and the city, has been located between these two images. It was first built in about 1120 and was originally placed in the nave at the level of the last two round pillars. The figures are Eberhard (whose bones had been moved when the crypt of

the old minster was abandoned), his wife Ita and their son Burkhard. The original is on display in the St Erhard chapel in the museum, where the rare memorial tablet in memory of the two benefactors and their six male descendants can also be seen.

The post-Reformation sandstone pulpit of 1594, which still features the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire above the coats of arms of the city and the monastery, now stands to the west of the crossing.

History of the Allerheiligen monastery

By establishing the Allerheiligen Benedictine monastery, the city founders, Eberhard von Nellenburg and his wife Ita, strengthened their rule in Schaffhausen. It was a proprietary monastery, meaning the founding family retained certain rights over it. Pope Leo IX, who was related to them, consecrated the site between the parish church and the Rhine on his way from Basel to Reichenau on Lake Constance on 22 November 1049. The monastery was completed in 1064, and dedicated to the Saviour, the Holy Cross, Mary the Mother of God, and to all the saints (Allerheiligen). The elements of this monastery that still survive are the oldest buildings in Schaffhausen: the St John chapel (in the Museum zu Allerheiligen) and part of what is now the south wall of the cloister, which was originally the wall bounding the enclosed part of the monastery on the Rhine side.



The Allerheiligen monastery ca 1605 (from the Rüeger-Chronik)

The small monastery was later expanded to become a prestigious dynastic monastery, with its unusual cloister adjacent to the minster. The church and chapels of the Nellenburg complex form the corners of a cross, connected to each other by walls. After Eberhard's death in 1080, his son Count Burkhard renounced all his rights. He was a partisan of the pope at the time of the Investiture Controversy that brought the emperor and the pope into conflict. The monastery was placed under the direct authority of the pope; it took over the family's considerable land holdings, the right to choose its own abbot, as well as the market and coinage rights of the city of Schaffhausen. This meant that the abbot was now the ruler of the city. As early as 1090 the Nellenburgs' buildings were torn down in order to create space for a new church. The initial plan was for a vaulted basilica with five aisles, which would have been unique in the German-speaking world at that time.

But after various conflicts the plan was altered, and today's minster, a basilica with a flat wooden ceiling and three aisles, was built on part of the foundations and consecrated in about 1104. It is an example of the sobriety that characterised the Hirsau reform movement, and was the first church to be built in this style after that of Saints Peter and Paul in Hirsau itself, near Calw in the northern Black Forest, consecrated in 1091. The cloister, four times the size of the one in the first monastery, dates from the same time.

That was the last wholesale alteration to the monastery. The most noteworthy subsequent addition is the minster tower, built in about 1150. By around 1300 Allerheiligen was deep in debt, and its dazzling building activities came to a full stop.

It was only in the late Gothic period that the last abbots of Allerheiligen were able to match the glorious early days of the monastery. It is true that they had little success in reclaiming the old rights which they had lost to the more and more powerful body of burghers, but they left behind some impressive buildings, including the new residence and administrative headquarters of Abbot Konrad VI Dettikof, built in 1484 over the monastery gate. In 1496 Abbot Heinrich Wittenhan renovated the south wing of the enclosed area in Gothic style, adding a winter refectory on the upper floor. And finally, in 1521/22, the last abbot, Michael Eggenstorfer, converted the old Lady chapel into the St Anne chapel. New monastic apartments

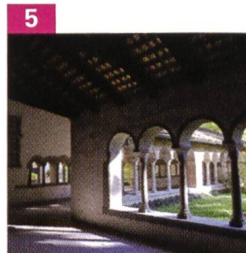
with single cells (which now house the museum administration) were added on the south side, and a hospital building was probably erected north of the minster chapel, of which only a funerary chapel, the so-called St Oswald chapel, survives.

Tour of the cloister and cloister garden:

The buildings within the enclosed area of the former monastery are clustered round the cloister: chapter house, dormitorium (where the monks slept), refectory (dining room), kitchen and cellar. During the monastic period the square cloister led to the different parts of the monastery and linked them together. It was used by the monks for prayer, processions and recreation, but also for domestic tasks like cutting hair, washing dishes and cleaning shoes.

The collection of epitaphs on the walls and the loose arrangement of the various tombstones in the garden date from the period 1577 to 1874, when the cloister garden was used as a cemetery for those families eligible for posts in the city government.

If we walk east, we get to the walls of the old chapter house, the monks' meeting room, which today has lost its upper floor and its roof. The Gothic miniscule letters running round the upper edge of the bell displayed here read "+ vivos . voco . mortuos . plango . fvlgvra . frango". (I summon the living. I mourn for the dead. I break the lightning.) These Latin words made the



5

bell famous, because the German poet Schiller used them for his "Lied von der Glocke" (Song of the Bell), although he never actually saw the bell himself.

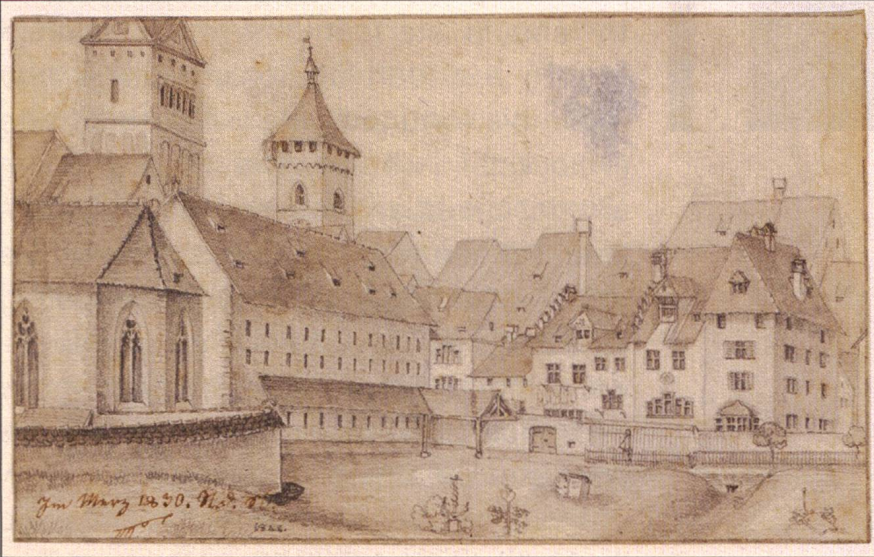
6

If we go out of the old chapter house into the east cloister, we come to the enchanting herb garden laid out here in 1938, in a throwback to monastic tradition. To the south it is bordered by the house of the novices, the prospective monks, to the east by the infirmary, the monastery hospital, while to the north is the chapel of St Anne, originally dedicated to the Virgin, whose polygonal chancel dates from 1522, and which was the last thing to be built in the monastery.

St Oswald chapel: A final jewel can be seen in the city library. This building was erected in 1554 for storing grain and pickled cabbage. Its south-east corner incorporated a small sacred space, part of the chapel of St Anne built in 1522. The chapel stood in the monks' cemetery, which surrounded the tip of the minster chancel. It was used as a funerary chapel or morgue, as shown by the late mediaeval fresco "The Art of Dying" (ars moriendi) on the interior of the south wall, depicting a man on his death bed. The chapel may also have been the place where the relics of St Oswald were kept;

a few particles of them were given to the church of St Oswald in Zug in 1502. The St Oswald chapel is accessible when the city library is open.

7



On the left, the St Anne Chapel of 1522, behind it the storehouse for grain and pickled cabbage of 1554 (today: city library) with the Oswald Chapel and in front the cemetery 1541–1864 (Hans Wilhelm Harder, ca 1840)