

The three water towers at „Rotes Tor“

In order to drink a glass of water we directly head towards our water-tap at home. A naturalness from today's point of view. The fact that drinking water simply flows into our households wasn't always the case and not at all natural.

We are now standing in a wonderfully situated courtyard called „Brunnenmeisterhof“ which is located in the south of Augsburg. The city's central Water supply was steered from this place. Here about 500 main pipes were in action.

The Water towers were constructed to solve one big problem: The highly populated city on the hill hardly had access to drinking water. Because of a natural land lowering at the „Lechfeld“ south of the city, it was possible to steer water through rivers and canals. Now it was necessary to get over 12 meters of difference in altitude. This is why the towers were build. The power of water was used to pump itself up on the hill. This is how a new age of drinking water supply started for Augsburg in the 15th century.

On the left we can see the tower couple, consisting of the big and the small water tower. The bigger one is the eldest. Originally it was built out of wood. A big catastrophe was foreseeable. In winter 1464 it burnt down, as the water needed to be heated with fire to thaw the water wheels. After this disaster the wooden tower was replaced by one made out of stone. The water- reservoir was located in the upper storey, which culminates in a balustrade.

The small water tower was created in 1470. Later it was raised higher and provided with a cupola. The pipes of the small tower were attached to 1009 public taps. The two water towers thus supplied the city with water.

The red rendered tower called “Kastenturm” or “Spitalturm” had a special task: it was meant to cover the water supply for the city's fountains – especially the Augustusbrunnen, Merkurbrunnen and Herkulesbrunnen. Those public fountains were covering their water-needs by the city's water-pipe-system.

If registered at the trade museum one can visit the interior of the red tower. If so one would recognize two special features: a crossed spiral staircase artistically made by the fountain-master Caspar Walter as well as the old water pond.

The towers were designed in a very lavish kind of way as they also represented the city's richness and technical knowledge. As is generally known, progress is costly. The city even introduced a water tax to counterbalance the produced costs. During the 18th century Augsburg was in possession of seven pumping stations and a pipe system of more than 22 miles in length.

The pipes consisted of hollowed-out tree-trunks, which were easily available but not very durable. Thus the pipes needed to be renewed about every thirty years. It was only at the beginning of the 19th century that the tree-trunks were replaced by iron pipes, as a serial production of those pipes had not been possible until then.

Putting the big waterworks at „Hochablass“ into service on October the first 1879, the history of the waterworks at „Rotes Tor“ ended.