

## Hanseatic City of Lübeck

Lübeck is the second largest city in Schleswig-Holstein, in northern Germany, and one of the major ports of Germany. It was for several centuries the "capital" of the Hanseatic League ("Queen of the Hanse") and because of its Brick Gothic architectural heritage is on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

The Hanseatic League was an alliance of trading guilds that established and maintained a trade monopoly over the Baltic Sea, to a certain extent the North Sea, and most of Northern Europe for a time in the Late Middle Ages and the early modern period, between the 13th and 17th centuries. The area around Lübeck was settled after the last Ice Age. Several Neolithic dolmens can be found in the area.

In the 10th century it became the most important settlement of the Obotrite confederacy and a castle was built. The settlement was burned down in 1128 by pagan Rani from Rügen.

The modern town was founded by Adolf II, Count of Schauenburg and Holstein, in 1143 as a German settlement on the river island Bucu. He established a new castle which was first mentioned by Helmold in 1147. Adolf had to cede the castle to Henry the Lion in 1158. After Henry's fall in 1181, the town became an Imperial city for eight years. Emperor Barbarossa gave the city a ruling council with twenty members that survived into the 19th century. This council was dominated by merchants and caused Lübeck's politics to be dominated by trade interests for centuries to come. The town and castle changed ownership for a period afterwards and was part of the Duchy of Saxony until 1192, of the County of Holstein until 1217 and part of Denmark until the Battle of Bornhöved in 1227.

Around 1200 the port became the main point of departure for colonists leaving for the Baltic territories conquered by the Teutonic Order. In 1226 Emperor Frederick II elevated the town to an Imperial Free City, becoming the Free City of Lübeck. In the 14th century Lübeck became the "Queen of the Hanseatic League", being by far the largest and most powerful member of this mediaeval trade organization. In 1375, Emperor Charles IV. named Lübeck one of the five "Glories of the Empire", a title shared with Venice, Rome, Pisa and Florence. Several conflicts about trade privileges were fought by Lübeck and the Hanseatic League against Denmark and Norway with varying outcomes. While Lübeck and the Hanseatic League prevailed in conflicts in 1435 and 1512, Lübeck lost when it became involved in the Count's Feud, a civil war that raged in Denmark from 1534 to 1536. Lübeck also joined the Schmalkaldic League.

Lübeck, which had access to the Baltic and North Sea fishing grounds, formed an alliance in 1241 with Hamburg, another trading city, which controlled access to salt-trade routes from Lüneburg. The allied cities gained control over most of the salt-fish trade, especially the Scania Market; and Cologne joined them in the Diet of 1260. In 1266 Henry III of England granted the Lübeck and Hamburg Hansa a charter for operations in England, and the Cologne Hansa joined them in 1282 to form the most powerful Hanseatic colony in London. Much of the drive for this co-operation came from the fragmented nature of existing territorial government, which failed to provide security for trade. Over the next 50 years the Hansa itself emerged with formal agreements for confederation and co-operation covering the west and east trade routes. The chief city and linchpin remained Lübeck; with the first general Diet of the Hansa held there in 1356, the Hanseatic League acquired an official structure and could date its official founding.

Source: -- Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]