

From “Torrinpuirron” to “Dornbirn”

The History of Our City

First mention in 895

If we want to embark on a journey through the City’s history, it is best to start with the establishment of the Alemannic settlement. It was established between 550 and 650 after the end of Roman rule. In 895, the name of “Dornbirn” was mentioned for the first time in a deed from St Gallen. This deed refers to “Torrinpuirron” (settlement of the Torro). Under the rule of Duke Leopold II of Austria, Dornbirn becomes a Habsburg city in 1380.

Independence from the counts of Ems

From the end of the 14th century, the Counts of Ems started to acquire land in Dornbirn. In the end, Archduke Ferdinand Karl even sold the Court of Dornbirn to the Counts of Ems. This transaction was the last straw which broke the camel’s back: The people of Dornbirn finally refused to pay homage to the new sovereigns and forced Archduke Ferdinand Karl to reverse that transaction. Over the years, however, the Counts of Ems had piled up such an amount of debt that the people of Dornbirn were able to repurchase the entire land in 1771. This date went down in Dornbirn’s history as the “Redemption of Ems”.

Economic boom

Only a few years later, in 1793, Dornbirn was granted the higher status of a market town. Based on the peace treaty of Pressburg, Dornbirn briefly became a part of Bavaria in 1805, but was returned to the Austria Empire in 1814.

At the end of the 18th century, an economic boom set in: on the one hand due to the construction of a railway line, on the other hand due to the textile industry. By the mid-19th century, this business sector had become the most important driver of economic development in the region.

When Emperor Franz Joseph I visited Dornbirn on 10 August 1881, the people present become witnesses of what could be referred to as a sensation: He used a telephone located at a spinning company in Gütle, a part of Dornbirn, to call the headquarters of F.M. Hämmerle, a textile factory located in the upper part of the village. This was, in fact, the first telephone system of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy which could be used for calls to other places.

The village turning into a city

Dornbirn constantly grew over the years to become the most populous settlement in the region of Vorarlberg. In 1901, Dornbirn, the largest village in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was finally granted the higher status of a city. At that time, 13,000 inhabitants were living in Dornbirn.

City with many faces

Since then, the identity of the City has been showing itself in many different ways: museums; architecture; cultural institutions; businesses and restaurants. Dornbirn has long since turned into an important business location. Since the economic situation of the textile industry deteriorated at the end of the 20th century, trading, commerce, tourism and a few industrial companies having great success on international level have taken centre stage.

With the establishment of the Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences in the 1990s, Dornbirn has also become an attractive university location. Today, Dornbirn is the tenth largest city in Austria with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Andrea Kaufmann, the first female mayor of Dornbirn, has been in office since 2013.