

From the collegiate church to the parish church

In 1143, the canons of St. Aposteln zu Köln founded a branch monastery in Wipperfürth and began building the Nikolauskirche. Its location on the outermost edge of the then populated area is typical of the situation of a collegiate church in a small town. We do not know whether the Apostles' Monastery in Wipperfürth wanted to take on the task of pastorization or only showed its presence because many farmers in the surrounding area were liable to pay taxes, but we do know that the monastery owned a "Stadelhof" in the village where the taxes were to be paid. In 1198, the dispute over the throne broke out between the candidates from the House of Hohenstaufen and the House of Guelph. Around 1205, it led to raids by the Archbishop of Cologne Adolf von Altena, who had been deposed by the Pope, his cousin Engelbert von Berg and his brother Adolf on the possessions of the Cologne monasteries, which were on the opposite side. The canons therefore left Wipperfürth and retreated behind the safe walls of Cologne. In the following decades, the collegiate church became a parish church. However, in 1254 Archbishop Konrad von Hochstaden linked it closely with the Apostles' Monastery, which received part of the income and provided the parish priest until its dissolution in 1802. As the right to baptize belonged to a parish church, it is hardly a coincidence that the Wipperfürth baptismal font dates back to the first decades of the 13th century according to the latest findings. The parish also had burial rights. A few preserved grave lids still bear witness to this, that the noble families once had their burial places inside the church. The overcrowding of the small churchyard resulted in serious hygiene problems, which led to the construction of a new cemetery on what is now known as Lüdenscheider Straße in 1813.

Nikolauskirche: Romanesque pillar basilica, 2nd half of the 12th century, central nave vault 1st half of the 13th century; side choir from the Gothic period, its windows "Romanized" around 1875

Severe damage caused by the town fire of 1795, loss of the roofs and the choir flank towers, west tower shortened; Restoration ca. 1870-90, Tower half demolished and heavily rebuilt, side aisles extended

In the extended side aisles:

- a) Epitaph of the mayor Johann Hagedorn, died 1623
- b) High altarpiece from 1623, erected on the occasion of the installation of Johann Hagedorn junior (canon of St. Aposteln) as pastor of Wipperfürth

Late Romanesque baptismal font in the northern side choir; the "Tower Madonna" (Cologne work from around 1400) used to stand here;

Its acquisition may have been made possible by testamentary donations from Hanseatic merchants from Wipperfürth. In the 14th century there were Hanseatic merchants from Wf. in numerous trading centers in the North and Baltic Sea region. The case of the de Walde brothers from Wipperfürth, who were active in the wool trade between England and Flanders around the middle of the 14th century, is well researched.

In London, they belonged to a consortium, a so-called **Hanseatic League**, of merchants from Dortmund and Attendorn, who were also active in the credit business. Their main debtor was the English King Edward III, for whom they redeemed his royal crown in 1343, which he had pledged to a German bishop. Until the king had settled his debts to them, Wipperfürth Hanse merchants were therefore co-owners of the English royal crown.

