

# BISCHOFSSHEIM – THE ORTSDAMM THROUGH THE AGES

<<Map>>

## DARMSTÄDTER STRASSE

A lockable gate, built in 1589, formed the entrance to the town here. Directly next to it on the ground floor was the Betzenkammer, the local prison.

Both were demolished in 1821. 63 years later, the community built



*The bakehouse shortly before its demolition.*

a fire station with prison cells and a guardroom in the same place. Today, the Volksbank is located there. The local bakehouse, left, was built in 1746 and leased to various bakers. Privately owned since 1915, only the bistro and its special shape are left as reminders. An S-shaped curve is clearly visible in this place on the town plan of 1850.



*To the right of the embankment ran a daw, a drainage ditch.*

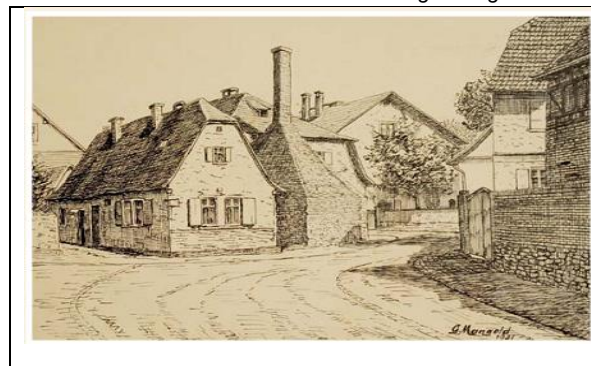
Traffic on the roads increased continuously at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the bendy roads were straightened in the 1930s.

This changed the townscape enormously. Darmstädter Straße is



*Even houses had to move for the road straightening.*

one of two areas where development crossed the embankment as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the first was Haus Astheimer, Darmstädter Straße 10, the two-storey half-timbered building to the right of the embankment. The house was first built in 1730 at the Mönchbruch hunting lodge and later relocated here in a slightly modified form.



*How Georg Mangold saw the S-shaped curve and the bakehouse.*

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## WEISENAUER GASSE AND KLINKER

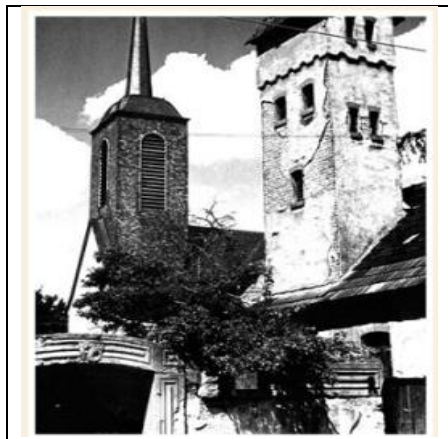


Entrance to the St. Viktorstift monastery.

Weisenaue Gasse is among the oldest parts of Bischofsheim. Together with the Evangelische Kirche, it is located on a flood-proof ground sill. Shards of earthenware found at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate that people lived there as early as the Neolithic period (5500 - 4800 BC).

In 1740, the St. Viktorstift monastery from Mainz built the first stone building here, the St. Viktorhof farmhouse.

As taxes, formerly known as Zehnt (tithes), were stored there, it was known as the Zehnthof.

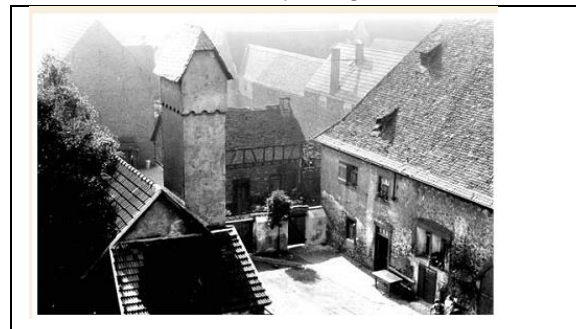


The St. Viktorstift monastery, with the Evangelische Kirche in the background.



View through the Weisenaue Gasse.

About 200 years later, ownership of the farmhouse passed to the Landgraves of Hessen, who sold it. The community kept breeding animals, the cattle, in the stable. A school class with more than 70 children was occasionally taught in the residence.



The inner courtyard of the St. Viktorstift monastery.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it also served as an alms house. The monastery and farmhouse no longer exist today. Only the replica stone archway at the passageway to Weisenaue Gasse are left as reminders of the old building.

The street that runs along the right front of the embankment to Mainzer Straße is called Im Klinker. Fruit and vines were still cultivated there at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The Ortschaftsdamm from the air. Im Klinker with numerous fruit gardens.

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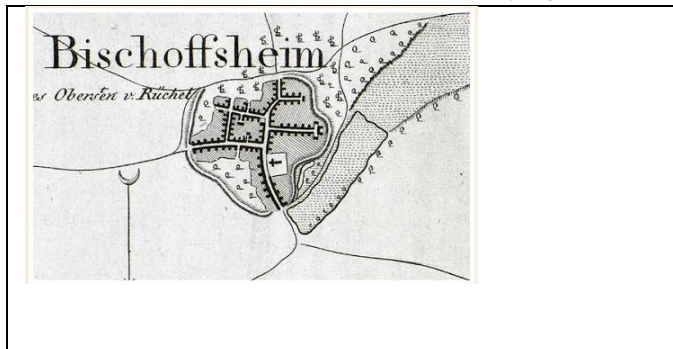
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## HEXENDAMM

An archaeological dig with lots of volunteers from Bischofsheim took place here in 2003. The main finds were shards of pottery and brick remains. Some of them are now on display in the museum. Dating



This map from 1793 is the earliest known depiction of the Ortssdamm.  
(Source: LHB Darmstadt No. 5699)



This map from 1801 shows the modern course of the Ortssdamm.  
(Source: HStAD Best. P2, No. 1a/7)

the finds allows two conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, the course of the embankment was changed at this point shortly before 1800, and secondly the building's predecessor was built in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. in the period between 1600 and 1630.

After the relocation, it was possible for the inner areas to also be used. The plots served as kitchen gardens where fruit and vegetables were grown for the purpose of being self-sufficient.



The dig made the stratification in the side of the embankment visible.



The approx. 2.7-metre-deep test pit at the embankment.

The embankment used to be approx. 50 cm higher. It was gradually ablated to create a footpath on the crest. Prior to this, children used the higher and steeper elevation as a sledging hill. This section was also known as the “Hexendamm” – or “witch’s embankment” – because a woman whom children were afraid of is supposed to have once lived there.

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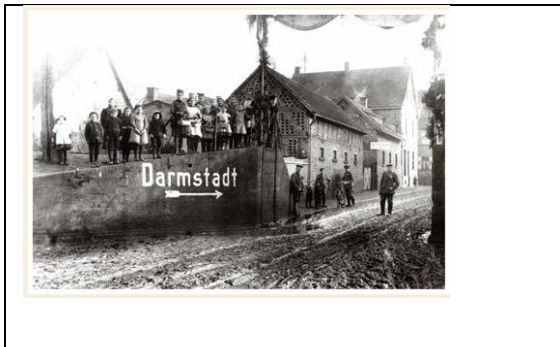
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## DAMMTOR

Right in front of you was the Dammtor, a passage through which Mainzer Straße passes. Where the two stairways are today, there



The Dammtor in a photo from 1918.



View of Mainzer Straße towards Gustavsburg ca. 1910.

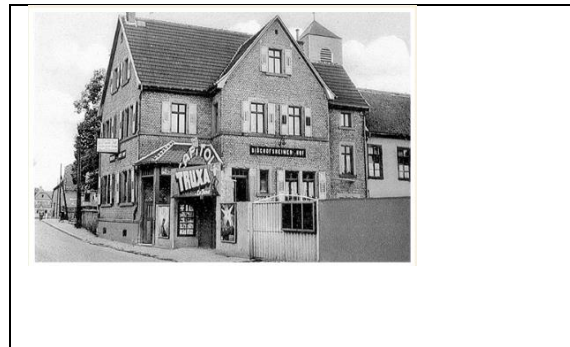
used to be a massive building made of sandstone. However, it wasn't really a gate. On either side were vertical ducts into which planks were inserted in the event of imminent flooding, and earth was spread in the spaces in between. This prevented water from getting into the village.

Here there were shops and two pubs with large dance halls. One of them occasionally served as a cinema.

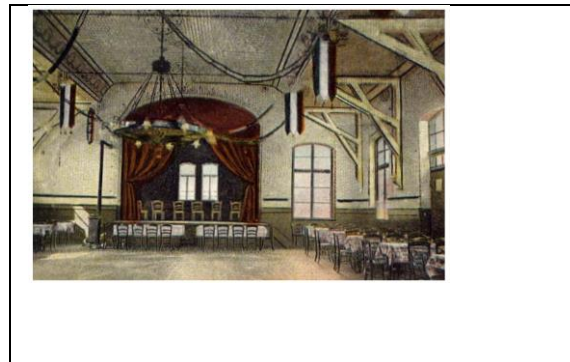
When the quarter outside of the embankment was built in, a number of beautiful villa-like art nouveau houses rose up in 1909. Their architect was Jacob Ritzert, who lived and worked in the house at Mainzer Straße 21.

## ORTSDAMM

To this day, the embankment surrounds the old centre of Bischofsheim. It was only levelled there when Schulstraße was extended. It



The Bischofsheim farmhouse in the '50s.



There were big parties in the Bischofsheim farmhouse.

was floodproof, but its age has yet to be conclusively clarified. An archaeological investigation (see "Hexendamm") yielded finds from shortly after 1600. This period also coincides with historical writings in which it is mentioned. However, it is likely older because there have always been floods. Besides, the embankment also formed a border between the settlement and the area. Up until about 1850, people built and lived solely within its basic oval shape. The first building outside the Ortsdamm was a forge in which a cartwright pursued his trade.

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<<Map>>

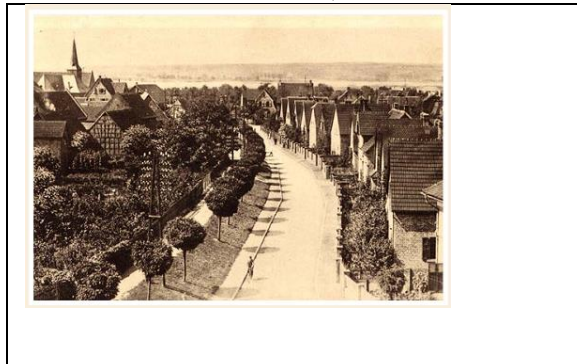
## BISCHOFSSHEIM AM MAIN?

Today, the Evangelische Kirche is more than a kilometre away from the Main. That hasn't always been the case. A little west of here, the



This map from 1801 clearly shows the curve of the former course of the Main next to the built-up Bischofsheim.

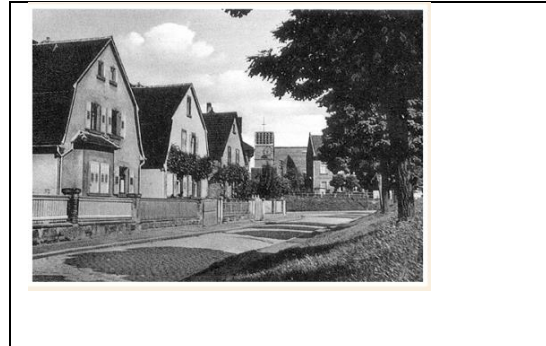
(Source: HStAD Best. P2, No. 1a/7)



View of Dammstraße from the ramp.

slightly curved course of the street Am Flurgraben traces an old loop of the Main. After it was silted up the Nachtweide lay there. A little further along in the direction of Gustavsburg, animals grazed on the Tagweide. A ditch ran directly along the inside of the embankment. Although it was owned by the municipality, some residents assigned it to their own private yards. They watered their gardens using water from it.

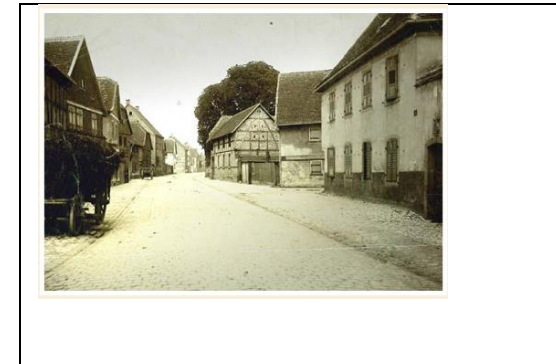
Later, the gardens were expanded and also used for washing clothes. Even further into the centre, at Frankfurter Straße 17, the



Dammstraße with a view of the Catholic Church.

buildings of the Mainz cathedral chapter, built around 1750, have survived. The cathedral chapter, along with the St. Viktorstift monastery, has been well off in Bischofsheim since the Middle Ages.

From 1779, the farmhouse was leased to Bischofsheim residents and, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an oil mill was established in an adjoining building, the pan mill of which is at the end of Dreihäusergasse today.



Frankfurter Straße with cobblestones. On the right, the facades of the cathedral chapter's buildings.

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## FLOODS

Bischofsheim has always been threatened by floods. It was only in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that construction began on embankments along the two large rivers.



In 1858, the inn "Zur alten Schmiede" became the first house to be built outside the Ortsdamm.



The ramp, the train station and the colonial trader Wilhelm Astheimer.

Despite everything, the water stood almost one metre in the parsonage during the flooding of 1882/83. The cattle was brought to safety on the elevated area in front of the church. Houses could only be reached by boat; 80 were damaged in total.

Frankfurter Straße used to be known as Obergasse and is among the oldest streets in Bischofsheim. It originally ended at the embankment. Around 1800, the house there was demolished and the road was continued.



Frankfurter Straße and the course of the embankment can be easily identified in this aerial picture.



By 1973, the "Alte Schmiede" stood in the middle of the street. It was then torn down.

The village ditch was bridged using a "Stiegel", a small footbridge. The first houses outside the old village quickly sprung up here. As a result, Schulstraße and Hochstraße – which today is covered by the ramp to the train station built around 1900 – also emerged.

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## ROSE GARDEN

This section of the embankment is also known as the “Apothekerdamm” because an apothecary has been on the left-hand side there since 1934. Across the road, a two-storey brick building with a bell tower houses the Rathaus. It was built as a school in 1874.



The rose garden, former schoolyard, with the Rathaus, embankment, apothecary and Schulstraße.



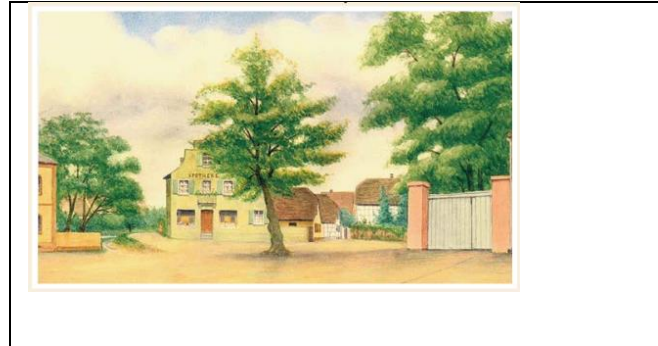
The Ortdamm used to run along the broad footpath of Schulstraße.

After the railway reached Bischofsheim, the number of residents and students grew rapidly.

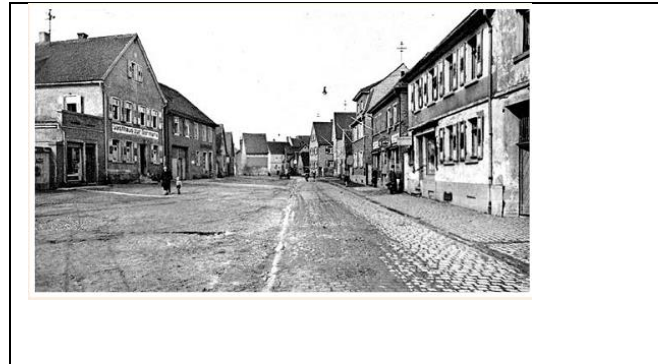
By 1895, the number of residents exceeded 400, meaning that even this school was no longer adequate. Just a year later, the new schoolhouse was inaugurated on Spelzengasse, front right. Parts of the municipal administration are housed there today.

If you look straight ahead, at the end of Bahnhofstraße, you'll see the 19-metre-high water tower, built in 1911/12.

Steam trains used to be filled with water there.



In his pictures, Georg Mangold resurrected the “Friedenseiche” (“peace oak”) planted in 1872. It was felled in 1919.



View of Schulstraße. On the left is the inn “Zur Germania”, on the right is the bakery Engel, later Kolmar.

It is under monument protection and recalls the time when Bischofsheim was one of the largest shunting stations in what was then the German Empire. Most residents in the houses outside of the embankment worked there.

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