

The Rhine Falls

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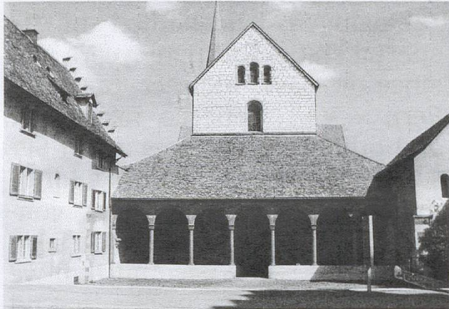
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Allerheiligen

Schaffhausen's lofty Münster zu Allerheiligen (Cathedral of All Saints) is the focus of the Old City. The first church on the site dated from 1049, very soon after the founding of the town itself, and was replaced in 1103 by the building which still stands today.



Münster zu Allerheiligen

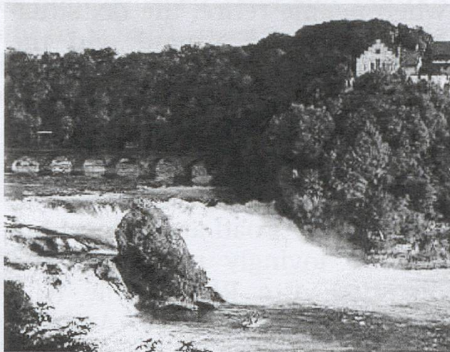
The beautifully restored Romanesque church tower gives a hint as to the interior in which twelve huge columns of Rorschach sandstone line the austere, mostly unadorned, Romanesque nave. Beside the cathedral, the Romanesque-Gothic cloister is the largest in Switzerland, a lovely broad walkway circling the Junkernfriedhof, or noblemen's cemetery, many of whose "inhabitants" are commemorated on plaques set into the wall. In the cathedral courtyard sits the gigantic Schiller Bell, cast in 1486: its Latin inscription of *vivos-voco/mortuos-plango/fulgura-frango* ("I call on the living, lament the dead, halt the lightning") is supposed to have inspired German poet Friedrich Schiller to compose his *Song of the Clock* ... despite the fact that Schiller never set foot in Schaffhausen. Just beyond is the atmospheric little herb garden, precisely recreated according to medieval records.

The Rhine Falls

The Rhine Falls are the widest plain waterfalls in Europe.

They are 150 m wide and 23 m high. In the winter months, the

average water flow is 250 m³/s, while in the summer, the average water flow is 700 m³/s.



The Rhine Falls

The falls cannot be climbed by fish, except by eels that are able to worm their way up over the rocks.

The Rhine Falls were formed in the last Ice Age, approximately 14,000 to 17,000 years ago, by erosion-resistant rocks narrowing the riverbed.

During the Würm glaciation, the Rhine was pushed far to the south to its present course, over a hard limestone bed. As the river flowed over both the hard limestone and the easily-eroded gravel from previous glaciations, the current waterfall formed. The Rheinfallfelsen, a large rock, is the remnant of the original limestone cliff flanking the former channel.

Economics...

The north side of the falls has long been a mill site. In the 17th century a blast furnace for smelting iron ore was built. It was in operation until the first half of the 19th century.

In 1887 the ironworks applied for permission to divert between one fifth to one half of the river's flow for electricity generation. The Swiss Alpine Club, the Schweizerische Naturforschende Gesellschaft and several scientific societies opposed the plan.

In 1913 an international competition was held for the best plan for a shipping route between Basel and Lake Constance.

Can you believe it?

I found the following in Wikipedia; I hope this is one of the instances where Wikipedia cannot be trusted...

In 1919, a company wanting to build power stations in northern Switzerland was told that any such station at the Rhine Falls "must serve the economic interest of the public". In 1944, the Swiss Council of States granted permission to build the proposed power station. The permission was to become effective on 1 February 1948, with construction to begin in 1952. But in 1951, the Neue Helvetische Gesellschaft (New Swiss Society) got 150,000 Swiss citizens to sign a petition protesting the project. The petition not only scuttled the power station project, but effectively prevented all future hydropower and navigation engineering projects on the upper Rhine to the present day. *Wikipedia*

Schaffhausen was bombed in World War II

During World War II, Schaffhausen was the only Swiss city to be bombed by Allied aircraft. About a hundred civilians were killed during a raid by American bombers on April 1, 1944. The US claimed that pilots had mistakenly identified Schaffhausen as a German target. They apologized profusely and paid out compensation ... only to make the same mistake again on February 22, 1945, this time killing sixteen in Schaffhausen and nine in Stein am Rhein (also on the "wrong" side of the river). Records that could possibly throw light onto the allegation that the bombings were in fact an Allied response to Schaffhausen's munitions industries supplying arms to the Nazis in breach of Swiss neutrality are, as yet, still classified. *internet*