



Discover the traces of a man who changed the world. Down through the centuries, he has left his tracks. Eisleben built this monument to Martin Luther more than one hundred years ago.



The great reformer was born in this house.

CHAPTER ONE

The Roots

The Region of Mansfeld—Luther's Childhood

Not much is known about Luther's childhood. He was born on November 10, 1483, in Eisleben as the second¹ son of a miner named Hans Luder (originally from Möhra in Thuringia) and his wife, Margarete.

Only one day after his birth, Luther was baptized in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul (*St.-Petri-Pauli-Kirche*) in Eisleben. The infant was named after the saint of that particular day: Martin.

Sights in Möhra

Luther Monument *(Lutherdenkmal)*

The Luther Monument in Möhra was commissioned in 1846 to be erected by sculptor Ferdinand Müller. It was dedicated in 1861.

Leaving many relatives behind, in 1484 Luther's father, Hans, moved his small family to Mansfeld. Even today, "Luther" is one of the most common last names in this region.

Hans Luder was able to climb the social ladder in Mansfeld. Starting out as a miner, he later owned a copper mine and eventually even became a city councilor (*Ratsherr*). Martin's upbringing was somber and marked by thriftiness and strictness.

At the age of only four and a half, Martin was enrolled at the local "trivium school" (*Trivialschule*), similar to our modern elementary schools. Martin's memories of this city school,



The massive castle of the counts of Mansfeld towers over a steep valley.

however, were not especially pleasant, since beatings with a rod and other punishments were standard fare. Martin attended this school until 1497.

Commenting on his family background and ancestors, Martin Luther wrote:

I am the son of a peasant. My great-grandfather, grandfather, and father were truly peasants. But my father insisted I should become a director, a mayor [*Schultheiss*], or whatever else they have in the village—a chief servant, rising above the others. Later, my father moved to Mansfeld and became a miner there. That is where I am from.²





- 1** Home of Luther's parents (Luthers Elternhaus)
- 2** Luther's home church, Church of St George (St. Georg)

- 3** Luther Monument (Luther Fountain) (Lutherbrunnen)
- 4** Luther's school (Luthers Schule)

- 5** Mansfeld Castle (Schloss Mansfeld)
- i** Tourist Information

Sights in Mansfeld

(For Eisleben, see chapter 11)

Home of Luther's Parents (*Luthers Elternhaus*)

In 1483/84, Luther's father moved from Eisleben to Mansfeld, where they rented a house. The original address was Am Stufenberg 2. Today, the address of that building is Spangenbergstrasse 2.

Luther's Home Church, the Church of St. George (*St. Georg*)

This church was built in the Late Gothic style between 1497 and 1518. We can assume that young Luther served as an acolyte in the earlier sanctuary, which had been constructed in the Romanesque period and of which some sections are still preserved. In addition to a painting of the resurrection by Lucas Cranach the Elder, this church also boasts the only full-length portrait of Luther painted in Cranach's workshop.³

Luther Monument (*Lutherdenkmal*)

The Luther Fountain in Luther Square was constructed in 1913 by Paul Juckoff. It depicts Luther as a thirteen-year old boy with a staff.

Luther's Elementary School (*Luthers Schule*)

In 1488, Luther attended the City School of Mansfeld (*Mansfelder Stadtschule*) for the first time. It is here that he learned to read, write, and do arithmetic. This is also where he acquired basic Latin skills.

Mansfeld Castle (*Schloss Mansfeld*)

Documented for the first time in 1229, this castle was the ancestral seat of the counts of Mansfeld. Today, it is home to the local YMCA (CVJM).



Magdeburg and Eisenach—School Years

At the age of fourteen, Luther transferred to the school of the Brothers of the Common Life in Magdeburg. At fifteen, he switched to the Latin School of St. George in Eisenach, preparing for university. While it is unknown why Luther switched schools, it was not unusual in that era, especially when pupils came from a village that did not offer further educational opportunities, as was the case in Mansfeld.

Luther was accompanied to Magdeburg by his friend Hans Reinecke, and he lived in the home of Dr. Paul Mosshauer, a representative of the archbishop at clerical proceedings. Mosshauer, too, was from Mansfeld and had relatives there who had become masters in the trade of mining. Most likely, it was



The Old Town section of Magdeburg.

Mosshauer's recommendation that prompted Luther to attend school in Magdeburg. The reason Luther then transferred to Eisenach was probably because he had relatives there.

Sights in Magdeburg

Church of St. John, with Luther Monument (*Johanneskirche mit Lutherdenkmal*)

The foundation of this church was laid between 936 and 941. It was first documented in 941, when it was mentioned as a parish church, which had been given to the Monastery of St. Maurice (Moritz) by King Otto I.

Luther preached here in 1524 on the topic of true and false justice. The reformer's sermon made such a huge

impression on his listeners that the city became Lutheran soon thereafter.

In fact, Emil Hundrieser designed a Luther statue in 1886 in memory of this sermon. The statue's original pedestal had been replaced by a concrete foundation in 1966. On May 29, 1995, the original pedestal was put in place once again, along with the inscription: "God's Word with us eternally."



The Walloons' Church (*Wallonerkirche*)

This church was founded in 1285 by monks of the Augustinian Monastery. Jubilee indulgences were celebrated in 1396, and because Magdeburg was appointed as the only place to offer such pardons within a sixty-kilometer (approximately forty-mile) radius, it drew many pilgrims.

Luther visited this church and its Augustinian monks in 1516, spending the night in one of the monastery's dormitory rooms. In 1524, he came for another visit and preached there. That same year, the abbot dissolved the monastery and handed over all its facilities to the city of Magdeburg. From then on, the church was used only for secular purposes. After the Thirty Years' War, it was no longer repaired, and it was no longer used after 1639.

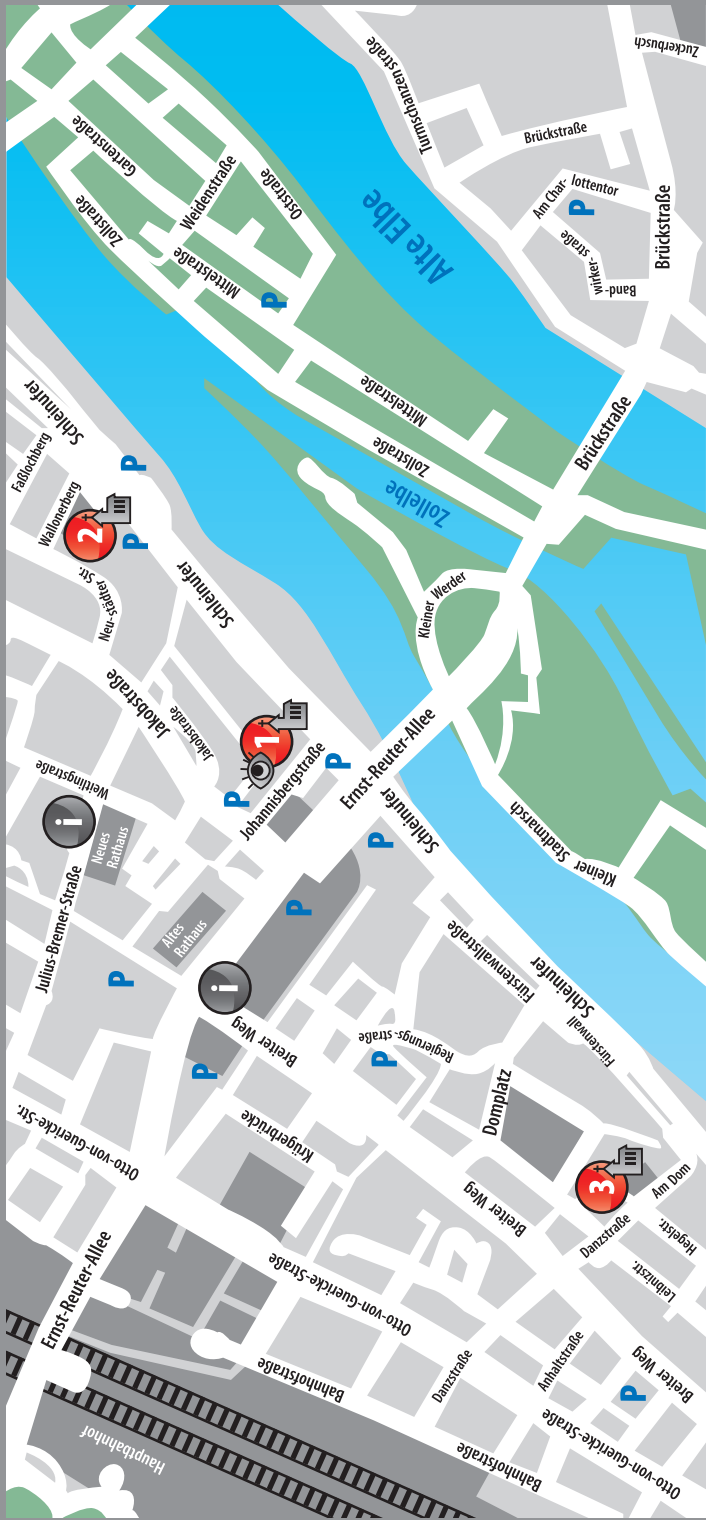
In 1690, by order of Elector Frederick William, the church was handed over to Lutheran Walloon refugees, and since that time, it has been known as the Walloons' Church.

Cathedral (*Dom*)

As early as 955—that is, even before being crowned emperor—Otto I began building a cathedral in Magdeburg in the Ottonian-Romanesque style. It was the predecessor of the modern-day cathedral and beautifully adorned. In 1207, fire destroyed the cathedral and most of the city of Magdeburg.

Years later, a new cathedral was constructed next to the old one by using the original rocks and pillars. The Reformation had an impact on the cathedral: after being shuttered for twenty years, it was reopened in 1567 and became Lutheran—celebrating its first Lutheran church service on the First Sunday in Advent of that year.





1 Church of St. John, with Luther Monument (Johanniskirche)

2 Walloons' Church (Wallonerkirche)

3 Cathedral of Saints Maurice and Catherine (Dom St. Mauritius und St. Katharina)

i Tourist Information

Luther's Rose—The Seal of Luther



On July 8, 1530, Luther wrote the following words to Lazarus Spengler regarding the “Luther Rose”:

Because you inquired as to whether my seal has “hit the mark” or not, I would like to share my original thoughts with you. . . . I have summarized them in a seal that illustrates my theology. First, we have a black cross lying on a heart that should be its natural color. This reminds me personally that it is only faith in the Crucified One that saves us. For if you believe from your heart, you will be justified. Although that cross is black—that is, even though it kills and is supposed to hurt—the heart retains its natural color. This means that the cross does not destroy the heart’s nature. In other words, the cross

does not kill, but keeps alive. *Iustus enim fide vivet, sed fide crucifixi* [“For the righteous shall live by faith, yet faith in the Crucified One”]. This heart is at the center of a white rose. This shows that faith gives joy, consolation, and peace and quickly forms a joyful white rose, [but] not the way the world gives peace and joy. For this reason, the rose should be white and not red, because white is the color of the spirits and all angels. This rose is in a sky blue field because joy in spirit and faith is the beginning of the future, even though our heavenly joy is not yet complete. This joy is captured by hope, yet that joy is not yet manifest. And [place] a gold ring in that field [as a sign] that this blessedness is eternal in heaven and that it is more precious than all joy and possessions, just as gold is the highest, most precious metal.²⁵

CHAPTER FIVE

Wittenberg—City of the Reformation

With its formerly remote location, Wittenberg at first appeared to have torn Luther away from mainstream events. Yet it was precisely Wittenberg's new spiritual and social environment that triggered the opposite with him. Supported by his colleagues at the newly founded University of Wittenberg, Luther was now in a position to unleash monumental forces, as today's historians recognize.

Wittenberg in the Late Middle Ages

Wittenberg was first documented in 1180 as *burchwardum wittenburg*, and from 1200 on, it belonged to the ruling Ascanians. In 1260, Albrecht II established his residence there, and in 1293 he gave Wittenberg the rights of a city. In 1356, Wittenberg became the residence of the elector and had a high court beginning in 1441. Located in an agricultural setting, Wittenberg at that time was known only as a regional trade center for shoemakers, cloth makers, butchers, and bakers.

Of the 356 home owners paying property tax, 172 had the right to brew beer. The remaining 184 residents were so-called *Buddelinge*, owning tiny homes. Wittenberg was fortified with eleven towers, which have been preserved to this day. They remain situated around its three gated towers: the Elbe Gate to the south, the Coswig Gate (also known as the Castle Gate) to the west,

and the Elster Gate to the east. Today, the Collegienstrasse and Coswiger Strasse are the city's main streets. The highest points in the Old Town are both the Market Square (*Marktplatz*) and the Church Square (*Kirchplatz*).

Wittenberg's main structures are its city hall (*Rathaus*) and the Parish Church of St. Mary, which was expanded in the fifteenth century and was the church that Luther served as preaching pastor.



Wittenberg City Hall.

Wittenberg University

In 1502, Elector Frederick III, also known as Frederick the Wise, founded the Leucorea University of Electoral Saxony (*leukos* means “white” and refers to “Wittenberg,” that is, “white mountain”). Permission to found the university had been granted by Emperor Maximilian, and the university celebrated its opening on October 18, 1502.

In the early thirteenth century, universities had been founded elsewhere under the authority and supervision of the pope. These universities taught the Aristotelian academic methods customary in the Middle Ages, as well as the cultivation of Roman law in the area of jurisprudence. But over time, secular powers (kings, princes, and cities) began to found universities, blending the concepts of the Late Middle Ages with recently emerging humanistic ideas. Nontheological subjects were beginning to grow in their independence and significance. This was also the case at the Leucorea, which Frederick had founded mainly in the hope of improving the administration of his principedom.

In those years, there was still a decidedly medieval aura to the Leucorea, however, because St. Augustine was chosen as its patron saint. Furthermore, each department was appointed its own patron saint. To determine the correct seating order at staff meetings, the various faculties were ranked. As was customary in the Late Middle Ages, the theological department sat at the head of the table, followed by the law and medical faculties in less prominent positions. At the bottom of the ranking was the arts faculty, which taught the seven liberal arts as prerequisite studies.

One new regulation, however, indicated the spirit of rising humanism in that era: crowned poets (*poetae laureati*) were now ranked with the masters of the arts faculty. These poets represented German humanism. As such, they dealt with the ancient languages—Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, plus their respective literature—in new ways and also especially devoted themselves to rhetoric. New faculty positions for the humanities were also being created at the university.



The northern courtyard of the Leucorea building in “Luther City,” Wittenberg.

The university required a large amount of teaching materials for its students, especially in the humanities. Thus printers moved into town, and Wittenberg’s first printed texts were made available the same year the university was founded. In this way, the university contributed significantly to the economic boom of Wittenberg.

Frederick the Wise assigned two Augustinian hermits as professors. One position was in the theological faculty. The second position was in the arts faculty, giving lectures on moral philosophy. The prior of the Augustinian Monastery, Johann von Staupitz, who cofounded the Leucorea, required these Augustinian hermits to take general studies themselves. This guaranteed that they would attend every academic event.

Frederick the Wise also increased the number of canon regulars at the university to twelve and made attendance at the lectures mandatory for them as well. This at least partially ensured the salary of the professors.²⁶ In light of these transitions, the

City Hall (*Rathaus*)

During the Reformation, Wittenberg prospered and its population grew. Soon the town outgrew the old city hall, and beginning in 1523 (and thus even in Luther's day), it was expanded and renovated until it took on its current dimensions.

Legal decisions were rendered outside the main door, and executions were carried out in front of the portal. A closer look at the cobblestoned market square in front of the city hall reveals traces of where the gallows once stood. After proclamation of the sentence, the "poor sinner's bell" was rung. It sounded for the last time on May 9, 1834, when a butcher's apprentice named Ernst

Wollkopf was convicted of murder and broken on the wheel.

While Cranach discharged his duties as mayor for many years, Wittenberg's city hall also served other purposes as well. For instance, the cellar once contained a tavern (*Ratskeller*) as well as a jail, and cloth makers and shoemakers at one point sold their products in the public marketplace (*Bürgersaal*).⁴¹

Luther Monument (*Lutherdenkmal*)

Designed by Johann Gottfried Schadow, Wittenberg's Luther Monument is one of the largest bronze statues. It was presented to the citizens in 1821, a very early date for a Luther monument. In comparison, it was not until 1883 that





flyer. It was based on the following incident: In 1523, two of Luther's brother monks were burned to death at the marketplace in Brussels because of their confession of faith. Even in the first lines, Luther conveys his mood: "We lift up a new song to praise the workings of God our Lord, which God has done for His praise and honor . . ."

As Otto Schlisske remarked: "Luther is filled with jubilant joy that what he understood to be true had now manifested itself in others as well—and so powerfully that they were even able to bravely face death for it."⁷²

As early as 1523, Luther's first hymns were published individually. One of them was "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice"—one of his most impressive musical compositions. A choral hymnal of four books—one for each voice—contained Luther's first collected musical expression for singing in worship services. It was published in Wittenberg in 1524.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Luther's Opponents

In the last years of his life, Luther was increasingly concerned about the future of his country and of the Lutheran Church—particularly in light of such grievances as miserliness, usury, immorality, sectarianism, the hostility of Rome against Lutheranism, and, last but not least, even conversions to Judaism.⁸⁴

Because many of these things are “nonissues” these days, Luther’s displeasure over them is often no longer understood today. Rather, in contrast to Melancthon’s kind assessment offered above, many people today feel that Luther’s railing against these issues must have been triggered by a general feeling of malaise or grumpiness caused by his declining health. If that is true, however, it is unclear why his final letters to Katharina are rather humorous and cheerful and scarcely reveal a trace of grumpiness.

Luther and the Jews

Luther’s attitude toward the Jews changed over the years. In 1523, he published the writing “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew,” trying to evangelize them. At this point in his ministry, he was against anyone who would discriminate against Jews.

Yet by the end of his life, Luther was disappointed that his attempts at attracting Jews for the Gospel were unsuccessful, and thus he wrote books against them.⁸⁵ Case in point, he sarcastically describes the sculpture on the City Church (*Stadtkirche*) at Wittenberg:

Here in Wittenberg there is a pig carved in stone on our parish church. Under it are young piglets and Jews who are suckling. Behind the pig stands a rabbi, who is lifting up the pig’s right leg and pulling its rear⁸⁶ over himself with his left hand. Stooping over, he is diligently looking at the pig from under its rear, peering into the Talmud, as though



Details and Contact Information

[Note: Telephone numbers are listed as they would be dialed within Germany. To telephone Germany from the United States, remove the leading 0 from the phone number and dial 011 + 49 before the number. The Internet addresses are to German sites. Many search engines provide links to translate Web pages. One can also look for a British flag or even the word “English” on some sites. Clicking it will connect to an English-language page.]

Chapter 1: The Roots

For Eisleben, see chapter 11.

1.1 Möhra

General Information

Local and Tourist Association of Möhra
(*Heimat- und Wanderverein Möhra e.V.*)
G. Erbe
Tel.: 0 36 95/8 43 80

1.2 Mansfeld

General Information

Mansfeld City Information (*Stadtinformation Mansfeld*)
Junghuhnstrasse 2
06343 Mansfeld
Tel.: 03 47 82/9 03 42
Fax: 03 47 82/9 03 42 44
E-mail: stadtinfo@mansfeld.eu
See also www.eisleben-tourist.de (Luther’s Traces in Mansfeld)
Business Hours:
Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–12 p.m. and 1:30–3:30 p.m.

Links to Luther and His Works (texts in English)

<http://www.cph.org/luthersworks>

(new volumes of Luther in English)

<http://www.bookofconcord.org/>

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-luther.html>

Other Books by Martin Luther available from Concordia Publishing House (1-800-325-3040 • www.cph.org)

- Luther's Works: American Edition, vols. 1-54
- Luther's Works on CD-ROM
- *What Luther Says*, edited by Ewald Plass



Timeline

- 1463 Birth of Frederick the Wise, Saxon prince from 1486 to 1525
- 1472 Birth of Lucas Cranach
- 1483 November 10: Birth of Martin Luther in Eisleben; November 11: Luther's Baptism
- 1484 Luther family moves to Mansfeld
- 1488 Luther attends the Latin school
- 1497 Luther attends school with the Brethren of the Common Life in Magdeburg
- 1498 Luther moves to Eisenach; attends the parish school of St. George
- 1501 May: Luther enrolls at the University of Erfurt
- 1505 January: Luther is awarded a Master of Arts degree; May: begins law school; July 2: Thunderstorm experience at Stotternheim; July 17: Luther enters the Augustinian Monastery in Erfurt
- 1507 April 3: Luther's ordination; begins theological studies
- 1508 Lucas Cranach receives his hereditary emblem, a winged snake, from Electoral Prince Frederick the Wise
- 1510 November: Luther travels to Rome
- 1511 Luther returns from Rome; transfers to Wittenberg
- 1512 October 19: Luther is awarded his Doctor of Theology degree
- 1513 Luther's "Tower Experience" (*Turmerlebnis*)
- 1517 October 31: Luther posts his Ninety-five Theses against indulgences
- 1518 "Sermon on Indulgence and Grace"; August 7: Luther is summoned to Rome, to no avail; October 12–14: Hearing with Cardinal Cajetan, at which Luther refuses to recant