

Photo of the month - October 2022

Note: The photograph was kindly made available to us by the image archive of the monument conservation department of the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL).

The 1928 meeting of the Ramblers' Associations in Bocholt



The title of the popular city archive series "Photo of the Month" can be taken literally when looking at the picture. For in this issue, the object reproduced is only marginally discussed. This time, the focus of the discussion is on the image carrier itself: the photographic image.

Much has been written about Bocholt's Historic Town Hall in recent years and decades, yet the last word has not yet been spoken - not even in the context of the town's 800th anniversary. In the past, the opinion has been consolidated that this oldest photograph of the building, which was erected in 1618, was taken around 1871. The reason given for this is that the picture served as a model for the woodcut of the town hall in the same perspective from the Leipzig "Supplement to the Illustrated Newspaper" of 6 May 1871. According to the files, however, there are justifiable doubts about this view.

Background: In 1887, 135 years ago, the restoration of the town hall façade was under discussion. According to an estimate, the costs would add up to around 25,000 marks, an amount that the city administration alone could not afford. A grant from provincial and state funds was therefore applied for from the government president in Münster.

To clarify this matter, the letter of request was accompanied by an explanation, a ground plan of the property and building, and a photograph of the town hall. There was, therefore, a proven reason to elaborately produce a first-class photographic image of the building. In

order to confirm that the photograph is from that period, a close examination of the sitter is required in relation to the background mentioned.

No simple snapshot

Such an excellent photograph could only be produced by a proverbial "professional", by a photographic artist of the first rank. For: **what do we see here, and what do we not see here?**

Looking at the photograph, one notices that the spatial surroundings of the town hall are as good as deserted. The market square, which is quite busy during the week, appears to be deserted. The photographer will have chosen a day or a time when the weather-related interplay of light and shadow was excluded. It was important for him to let the town hall speak for itself in all its rigid appearance, in sharpness and clarity, without distracting circulating influences.

This photograph is not a "snapshot" or a souvenir. The master knew exactly that this picture would be taken by the district president himself. He combined the requirements of the client with his own ideas and skills for a perfect shot. And for the production of the ordered photo, the Wesel court photographer Meyer Frankfurter chose an ideal day: the quiet early autumn Sunday morning of 9 October 1887, when the houses of worship were full but the streets of the city were empty.

About the photo of **the month**

The Photo of **the Month** is presented once a month by the Bocholt Municipal Archives. The texts accompanying the picture are written by Wolfgang Tembrink.

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