

# ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA

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## ***March – Nuremberg Patricians***

The term Patrician, or Pleb(eian) for that matter, recalls social structures in Ancient Rome. In certain medieval German, Swiss, and Italian free cities, however, patrician came, over time, to denote once again a member of a hereditary ruling class. This was the case in the Free Imperial City of Nuremberg.

The man who founded the Franconian Society in 1984, Paul von Tucher, is a descendant of one such Patrician family, the Tuchers of Simmelsdorf, as they became known in 1598. While not one of the oldest – they are first documented in 1309 – their rise to wealth, fame and power in the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was both rapid and remarkable. Their prosperity can be ascribed largely to the Tucher trading company, founded in 1440, which was soon to have outposts across Europe from Venice to Antwerp, Geneva to Lyon. Marital ties with other Patrician families – for example, the Grolands, the Hallers or the Tetzels – reinforced their social standing. Indeed, members of the family served on the Inner Council from 1340 until 1806, the end of the Holy Roman Empire, and several occupied the highest offices in the city. Some were also generous benefactors and patrons. Veit Stoss's famous *Englischer Gruß* of 1517-18 was, for example, commissioned by Anton II Tucher.

Substantial wealth allowed the family to acquire property and land in Nuremberg and beyond, such as the village of Lohe just north of Nuremberg airport or Simmelsdorf, from which the family took its name in 1598. One of their most significant houses in Nuremberg is the striking Tucherschloss (built between 1533 and 1544) in the Hirschelgasse, now a wonderful museum which the Franconian Society has visited several times.

Whereas other Patrician family names have slipped into obscurity, the Tucher of Simmelsdorf have remained well known. Their coat of arms is very conspicuous with its reference to St. Maurice, who, legend has it, was a moor from Egypt who served as a Christian in the Roman army. And a Dürer portrait of one member of the family, Elisabeth (Elisabeth) von Tucher, was depicted for many years on Germany's 20 D-Mark note:



For many, of course, the name Tucher is associated with beer, though it is worth recalling that the family's acquisition of the *Königliches Bräuhaus* only dates back to 1855. The brewery did become, however, one of the biggest beer exporters far and wide. Today, however, despite the continuing use of the name, the company has no direct ties with the family.

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