

## Aspects of Franconia

### The Double-Headed Eagle



The **double-headed eagle** has featured in many cultures around the world, including Ancient Persia, the Byzantine Empire, the Venetian Republic, Russia, Scandinavia, and the **Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation**. Since Nuremberg was a “**Free Imperial City**” within the latter empire, it is understandable that we have several examples of the double-headed eagle on display around the city. In the example above, sculpted by Adam Kraft for the eastern doorway of the Mauthalle, you can see the double-head eagle accompanied by the two city coats of arms, the “Greater” (on the left, but, in heraldic terms, on the right, and the “Lesser” coats of arms.

The history of the double-headed eagle as an imperial coat of arms goes back to 1402, but it was Emperor Sigismund I who adopted it officially in 1434 to symbolize his huge empire, a union of territories in Central Europe with Germany at its heart, but with lands extending at one time from the Netherlands to Italy, from the edge of France, across Switzerland and Austria into the present-day Czech Republic.

Nuremberg was one of several “Free Imperial Cities”, that is those towns and cities ruled over directly by the emperor unlike other towns held, for example, by a prince. In 1806, with the ending of the Holy Roman Empire, the double-headed eagle lost its function for German territories. It was retained, however, by the Austrian Empire (later the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918), whereas “Germany” chose the single-headed variety! In 1950, this eagle was to become **The Federal Eagle of Germany**.

