

Aspects of Erlangen

Erlangen Street Names

I suppose every self-respecting German town and city has a “Sedanstraße” or a “Schillerstraße” or a “Goethestraße”, and I suspect we all know why. If they are not named after common trees or birds, roads often remind us of famous musicians and writers, or great events from the past. During the Franco-Prussian War, on 2 September 1870, French emperor Napoleon III was taken prisoner with 100,000 of his soldiers at the First Battle of Sedan. Due to this victory, which made the unification of Germany possible, 2 September was declared Sedan Day (Sedantag) and a national German holiday in 1871. It remained a holiday until 1919. Hardly surprising then that this street name can be found throughout Germany.

There are, however, street names that are more common in the eastern half of German rather than in the western half. The GDR, naturally enough, celebrated communism and socialism: Karl-Marx-Straße, Ernst-Thälmann-Straße, etc. Next time you visit the Germanisches Nationalmuseum take a close look at the 1993/94 installation in the entrance hall by Raffael Rheinsberg. The artist created his work using discarded East Berlin street signs, so heroes of East German socialism abound from Lenin to Helene Weigel, the famous actress who married Bertolt Brecht.



straße	LISZTStraße	Deutschermeisterstr.	Glaschkestraße	Ursula-Goetze-Straße
l-Straße	Klüsserather Weg	FRITZSTR.	John-Sieg-Str.	Dankwartstraße
r Straße	Siegfried-Widera-Str.	Karlshorster Str.	Eibenallee	Elli-Voigt-Straße
raße	Paul-Junius-Str.	Grimnitzstraße	Herzbergstraße	Blockdammweg
aße	Leninallee	Hagenstraße	Hausburgstraße	Kubornstraße
raße	Albert-Höbner-Straße	Hegemeisterweg	Judith-Auer-Straße	Otto-Marquardt-Str.
reg	Margaretenstraße	Jaques-Duclos-Str.	Helene-Weigel-Platz	W...
ße	Stadthausstraße	Storkower Straße	Sophienstraße	Oberfeldstraße
ße	...	Heinrich-Roller-Str.	Werner-Lamberg-Str.	Rüdinerstraße

But let's stay in Erlangen. Immediately after the war many refugees from former German territories settled in the Huguenot city, which explains why there is a Sudetenstraße, an Egerländerstraße, an Ostpreußenstraße, and even a Komotauerstraße. The Egerland is the name for the far north-western part of what is now the Czech Republic. Chomutov, or Komotau in German, was also part of Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. The story of the many ethnic Germans from (Austrian) Silesia, Bohemia and Moravia, who were forced to flee their homeland after 1945, is complex and perhaps deserves its own dedicated article.

In Erlangen, street names associated with National Socialism are understandably rare. There is a Rommelstraße, named after the famous general of the North African campaign, the Desert Fox as he was dubbed. His role in the resistance to Hitler and his “forced” suicide continues to be a matter of debate. Erlangen Bruck has a Geschwister-Scholl-Straße, as do large numbers of other German towns. The sister and brother, Sophie und Hans Scholl, were part of the Resistance group known as the “Weiße Rose” and were executed in 1943. Another name that came to prominence especially after the First World War is that of Langemarck, a small Belgian town close to Ypres. The high number of German casualties – many of them young, inexperienced soldiers - associated with this campaign in late 1914 led to it being turned into the so-called “Langemarck Myth”,

the story of how German youth fought so valiantly against overwhelming odds, a perfect tale for the propagandists of Hitler's Germany. This explains the Langemarckplatz in Erlangen, the location of the university's main mensa near the town centre.

In the post-war years the arrival of Siemens in Erlangen had a major impact on Erlangen street names. Apart from the obvious "Werner-von-Siemens-Straße" we have the "Gebbertstraße" (Max Gebbert, who died in 1907, was an engineer and co-founder of Reiniger, Gebbert & Schall, makers of electrical equipment often for the medical field, eventually becoming part of the Siemens group in the mid-1920's.). Paul Gossen, after whom a major road is named, also deserves mention. He, too, was an engineer (especially in the field of x-ray technology) and also worked for Reiniger, Gebbert & Schall. Finally, there is the Günter-Scharowsky-Straße, named after the mechanical and electrical engineer of that name who was head of the Siemens-Schuckert works in Berlin and largely responsible for Siemens locating its headquarters in Erlangen after 1945.

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