

Erlangen and its railway history

The first railway line in Germany, as everyone probably knows, was the one built between Nuremberg and Fürth in 1835. Along its tracks ran the famous “Adler”, built at the Robert Stephenson locomotive works in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1835, and transported to Nuremberg via Rotterdam, Cologne and Offenbach.



The journey that took more than two months was a feat in itself. And the train driver, who had originally intended to return to Britain after training local engine drivers, fell in love with a German Fräulein and remained in Nuremberg. His name is William Wilson, and he lies buried in Nuremberg's St. John's cemetery.

As I mentioned in the “Aspects Article” on the Fränkische Schweiz, the railway was to play a significant role in the industrial development of our region as well as making it more accessible to tourists from near and far. The railway line linking Nuremberg, Fürth and Bamberg was opened on August 25th, 1844. This included, of course, the completion of the over 300-meter long Burgberg tunnel, the oldest railway tunnel in Bavaria. You can imagine the pleasure Erlangen walkers would have had waiting for a steam train to emerge at the mouth of the tunnel on its way to Erlangen railway station.



And in the steel engraving below by Alexander Marx which dates back to 1845, we can see the southern entrance of the Burgberg Tunnel as well as the Ludwig-Donau-Main-Kanal and the bridge over the Schwabach.



As you know the Frankenschnellweg (A73) was built over much of the old canal, and I fondly remember cycling out that way to observe and listen to the bluethroat as it sang among the reeds and rushes. One of my happy memories of Erlangen in the 1970s.

Erlangen railway station was officially opened on August 25th, 1844, the birthday of King Ludwig 1st.



Today the façade looks a little different, but not overwhelmingly so. The open Neo-Renaissance arches of yore have been replaced by sturdy doors leading to the waiting area, the ticket office and shops. It's simple and tidy, as befits our Huguenot city.

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