

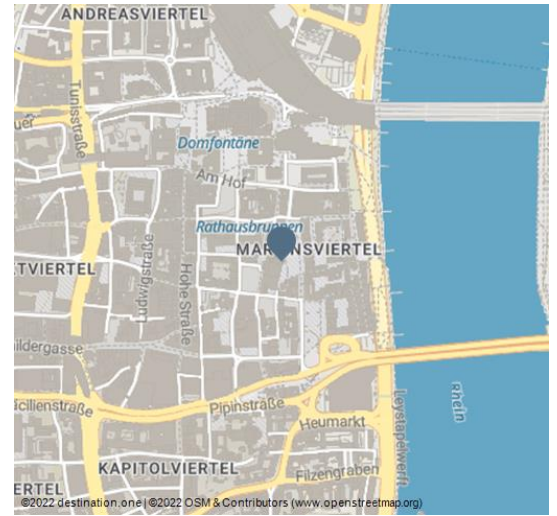


# Platzjabbeck

Historic site



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The ensemble of figures on the Cologne Town Hall Tower portrays various personalities from Cologne's history who have been important to the city through their various activities and functions. The head of the Platzjabbeck is an obvious exception in this context. Not only is it painted, but the bearded man's head with cap and stalked eyes has a mechanical device that causes it to open its mouth and stick out its red tongue on the hour.

The fact is that the movable mouth and red tongue were installed much later, in the course of a restoration in 1913. Before that, it was the rigid, jappende (kölsch for "yawn" / "open mouth") face on the town hall square that looked down on the people of the market square.

What motivated the Cologne Council to attach the head to the town hall tower in 1445 has not been handed down and therefore cannot be answered unequivocally. In all probability, the Platzjabbeck is an expression of power emanating from the town hall tower. Consequently, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the Platzjabbeck was attached by the gaffs to taunt the patrician families of the city of Cologne. In a series of uprisings in the 14th century, the Cologne guilds (Gaffeln) had taken power in the city and created a new constitution tailored to them with the Verbundbrief in 1396.

Another explanation is that the Platzjabbeck commemorates a legend that was meant to address all Cologne citizens. According to the legend, Charlemagne at the time asked his three sons to open their mouths. Emperor Charlemagne wanted to put a piece of apple in each son's mouth to symbolically show the division of the empire to the three sons. The youngest son, however, was sceptical about the request, which is why he kept his mouth closed. The end of his inheritance was familiar to the people of the Middle Ages: it was divided among the brothers.

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According to this explanation, the Platzjabbeck would have to be understood as an invitation to the people of Cologne to open their mouths in order to receive what they wanted and were entitled to.



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