



The Halle Orphanage. The Francke Foundations: History and Sights.

Thomas Müller-Bahlke (ed.), Halle 2015.

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The Francke Foundations in Halle offer a chance to explore a unique historical ensemble of social and educational architecture from the early modern period. Founded by pastor, theologian and educationalist August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), the extraordinary project of his remarkable school town began in 1698 when work started on his Orphanage, the heart of the entire ensemble – later called the Francke Foundations in his honour.

From the outset, the Historic Orphanage, which remains the hub of the Foundations today, was designed for multipurpose use. Now, it is home to the *Krokoseum*, the children's creative centre, two cabinet exhibitions with the evocative titles *Changing the World by Changing People*, *The History of the Francke Foundations* and *The Power of the Word. Pietism's Influence on Cultural History*, as well as a conference floor and other exhibition spaces. Before visitors climb to the roof platform for a stunning view across the entire Foundations site, they can also marvel at the Cabinet of Artefacts and Natural History on the attic floor. This is the only complete surviving *Wunderkammer* (Cabinet of Wonders) from the Baroque period founded by a religious and civil society initiative and still on show at the original location in the original Baroque display cupboards. Moreover, since this collection regularly attracted visitors even in the period up to 1750, it now ranks as one of the oldest museums in Germany open to the public.

Apart from the Historic Orphanage, the Foundations also have many other sights to offer including the Historic Library in Germany's oldest free-standing library building. Since the library design with Baroque bookcases on either side of a central aisle recalls the perspective of sliding scenery or backdrops in a Baroque theatre, this was known as a *Kulissenbibliothek* (literally, a 'scenery library'). Visitors can also enjoy a tour of Francke's Home as well as tours of the schools and other functional buildings in the historic school town, now painstakingly restored and once again housing a series of scholarly, educational and cultural organisations and institutions.

This catalogue, with its wealth of illustrations, will appeal to all those interested in the Francke Foundations, and is especially suitable for providing a deeper insight into this historic school town either before or after a visit. The eight chapters offer a fascinating introduction to the history of the Francke Foundations, their architecture, sights, and diverse and varied work today:

The Founder August Hermann Francke | The Great Undertaking. An Architectural History of the Orphanage and the Francke Foundations in the Eighteenth Century | The Architecture of the Francke Foundations in its Historical Context around 1700 | The Francke Foundations Today | The Historic Orphanage and its Exhibitions | Francke's Home | The Library | The Chapels | The Historic Brewery and Bakery

The publication also includes an extensive appendix with an Index of Persons, plan of the Francke Foundations and a short biography of the founder, August Hermann Francke.

