

The history of Lichtenberg

has been effected by its location at the north end of the Odenwald between mountains and lowland and also by the changing requirements of the individual epochs.

In the prehistoric times, Lichtenberg for the first time became a central point when the "Kelts" during the last Pre-Christian Century built the rampart on the old Barn "Altscheuer" or "Kernbach" and the "Heuneburg" as means of an escape fortress, military center, road control, and worship place.

Prior to that, however, during the early Stone Age (2500 - 1600 before Christ) there were farms in the vicinity, inhabited by people from all over Europe, who had wandered to the fertile grounds of this landscape. This prehistorical bulwark has been replaced by the fortress owned by the Count of Katzenelnbogen which probably was built in the 12th century already. For this reason, Lichtenberg became a historical point for the second time, which has been of special importance for the territorial history.

The fortress also was the center of culture as is evidenced by the eulogy of the minnesingers praising one of its owners who even called himself "Count of Lichtenberg".

In the year 1312 economical responsibilities were added to this middle-aged castle when King Heinrich VII awarded Lichtenberg and Groß-Biebrau the municipal rights.

In modern times the fortress was replaced by the Castle of Lichtenberg, especially after the Counts of Hesse in 1479 took over the heritage left by the died out Counts of Katzenelnbogen. The bulward, built in 1503, is the first building starting with the change of defence against firearms.

This was concluded by the Castle which was built from 1570 to 1581 by Jakob Kesselhut. It became the model for all renaissance buildings in South-Hesse. During the years of distress during the Thirty Years War the castle was the place of refuge for the Counts and their families, but also for the people living in the vicinity. Here they sought protection against the rage of Soldateska and pestilence. At this time Lichtenberg once more became of special importance but this time in a different manner.

In the following years the Counts of Hesse-Darmstadt resided in the Castle or used it as starting point for their hunts.

At the end of the last century Lichtenberg developed into a "health resort" and at the same time became a well liked destination point for many excursionists.

In previous years the rooms in the Castle were used by the Hotel Schellhaas as bed rooms for its guests or as summer residence. Now part of the Castle is rented to tenants.

Since the end of World War II the Castle is owned by the State of Hesse.

Hans H. Weber