



Relief showing the founding of the Academy of Sciences and Humanities

## PUBLICATION DATA

### PUBLISHED AND EDITED BY

The Governing Mayor of Berlin  
 Senate Chancellery  
 Press and Information Office of the Federal State of Berlin  
 Jüdenstraße 1  
 10178 Berlin  
 Phone +49 30 9026-2411  
 presse-information@senatskanzlei.berlin.de  
 www.berlin.de/senatskanzlei  
 2023

### OPENING HOURS

Monday to Friday  
 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, when no private functions are being held  
 Information is available in advance by phoning: +49 30 9026-2032

### ADDRESS FOR VISITORS

Rotes Rathaus  
 Main entrance at Rathausstraße 15  
 10178 Berlin

Wheelchair access at Jüdenstraße 1

This brochure is part of the public relations work of the federal state of Berlin. It may not be sold or be used to promote political parties.  
 Title image © Landesarchiv/Platow

### ROTES RATHAUS ONLINE

www.berlin.de/rotes-rathaus

@RegBerlin  
 #insideRotesRathaus

## BERLIN'S 'CHRONICLE IN STONE'

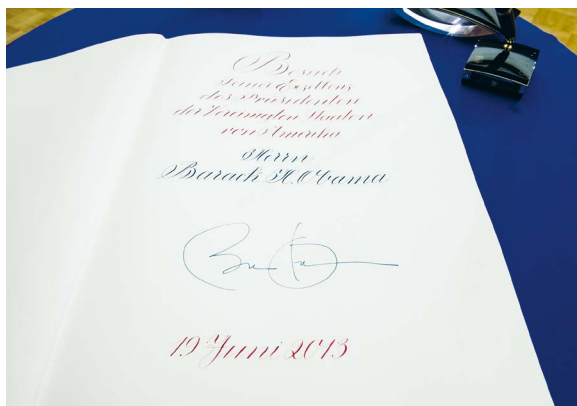
The Red Town Hall's striking, bright red brick façade stands in vivid contrast to other buildings in the heart of the city. Its detailed design is embellished by the terracotta plaques of the 'CHRONICLE IN STONE': a series of reliefs that tell the story of the city's dynamic growth up until the German Empire was founded in 1871. The 36 reliefs were created by the sculptors Ludwig Brod-wolf, Alexander Calandrelli, Otto Geyer, and Rudolf Schweinitz from 1877 to 1879.

The 'CHRONICLE IN STONE' starts at the rear of the building at the corner of Gustav-Böß-Straße and Spandauer Straße, and runs anticlockwise around the Town Hall. The first panels illustrate the early years: the Slavic people converting to Christianity; the ground being cultivated; the city being founded. Around half of the reliefs are devoted to everyday urban life in the Middle Ages, and show scenes from the mediaeval justice system in the panels above the Jüdenstraße entrance: the pillory, the old courthouse, and a robbery and murder.

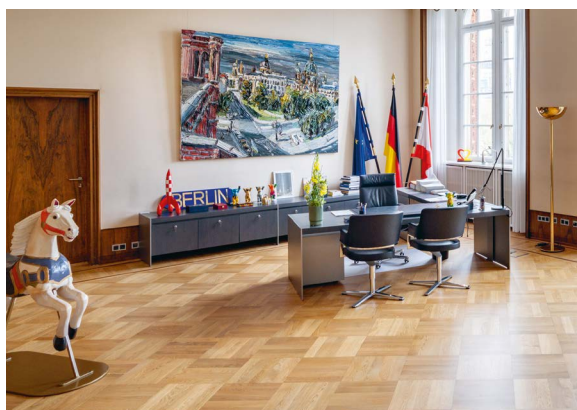
The panels on the front of the building on Rathausstraße show the bourgeoisie submitting to the elector Frederick II ('Iron Tooth') by giving him the keys to the city. The scene is followed by the construction of the Hohenzollerns' palace. Other reliefs honour the achievements of the Prussian monarchy and the city's industrial boom in the 19th century. The chronicle ends with German unification: in the last relief, Berliners celebrate the news from Versailles about the founding of the German empire.



A look inside the Louise Schroeder Conference Room, formerly called the Green Hall due to its colour scheme



The signature of Barack Obama is the first in what is now the ninth volume of the Golden Book



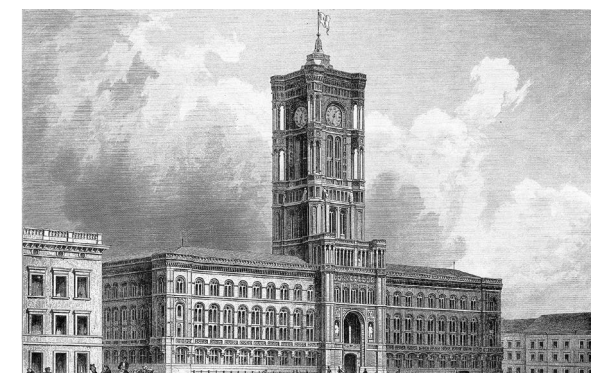
Office of the Governing Mayor

## HISTORY

- History of the Town Hall
- History of Berlin

- 1237 First documented reference to the city of Berlin
- 1861 Foundation stone laid
- 1865 First meeting of the municipal assembly following completion of the first phase of construction; official seat of the mayor
- 1867 Topping-out ceremony
- 1869 Opening of the Ratskeller  
 Completion of the Town Hall
- 1870 First session of the city council
- 1871 Founding of the German Empire, with Berlin as its capital
- 1879 Completion of the 'Chronicle in Stone'
- 1914- First World War
- 1918
- 1920 City council meeting room enlarged  
 Creation of the new municipality of Greater Berlin
- 1933 Interiors and grand staircase redesigned  
 Municipal assembly stripped of its powers by the National Socialists; enforced political conformity of the administration
- 1939- Second World War
- 1945
- 1945 Severe damage during the Second World War; new municipal assembly appointed by the Soviet occupying power  
 Berlin occupied by the Allies
- 1948/ Non-communist city council members leave
- 1949 and take up office in Schöneberg Town Hall  
 Berlin Blockade; division of the city
- 1951 Reconstruction (until 1955); major interior remodelling; rooms repurposed  
 Reconstruction of the two halves of the city begins separately

- 1955 SED-led city government and city council move into the reconstructed Red Town Hall
- 1961 Construction of the Berlin Wall
- 1987 Renovation of the exterior  
 Berlin's 750th anniversary celebrated in both halves of the city
- 1989 First 'Round Table' in Berlin (4 December)  
 Fall of the Berlin Wall (9 November)
- 1990 Reunification of Berlin; joint administration of the two halves of the city
- 1991 Extensive renovation and modernisation; seat of the Governing Mayor from 1 October on  
 German Bundestag votes to move the country's seat of government from Bonn to Berlin
- 1999 Government and parliament take up their work in Berlin
- 2011 Archaeological excavations; remains of the old town hall uncovered
- 2012 Berlin celebrates its 775th anniversary
- 2019 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall
- 2020 The Town Hall celebrates its 150th anniversary  
 100 years of Greater Berlin  
 Opening of the U5 station "Rotes Rathaus" (Red Town Hall)



The Town Hall shortly after its completion

# THE RED TOWN HALL

Seat of Government and  
 Landmark in the Heart of Berlin





Dear Visitors,

Welcome to the Red Town Hall, the seat of the Governing Mayor of Berlin and his administrative staff, the Berlin Senate Chancellery. The Red Town Hall gets its name from its red-brick façade, and much more takes place here than just politics. Above all, its doors are open to Berlin's urban community and guests. In addition to policy-making, it hosts conferences, exhibitions and tours. Deserving citizens are honoured in ceremonies within its walls, and heads of state from all over the world sign the Golden Book of Berlin here.

Time and again, ever since the foundation stone was laid, the Red Town Hall has been the scene of significant events in Berlin's turbulent history. As the seat of the mayor, the municipal government, and the city council, the history of democracy in Berlin was also written here – until that democracy came to an abrupt end with the rise of the Nazis in 1933. The building was severely damaged in the Second World War and was rebuilt in the 1950s. From then on, it was the seat of the mayor of East Berlin, while West Berlin's government held its meetings at the Schöneberg Town Hall. Since 1991, the Red Town Hall has been the seat of the heads of Berlin's state government, and a home to democracy and dialogue in the historic heart of the reunified city.

I hope you enjoy your visit!



Kai Wegner  
Governing Mayor of Berlin



Kai Wegner,  
Governing Mayor of Berlin

© Hans-Christian Plambeck

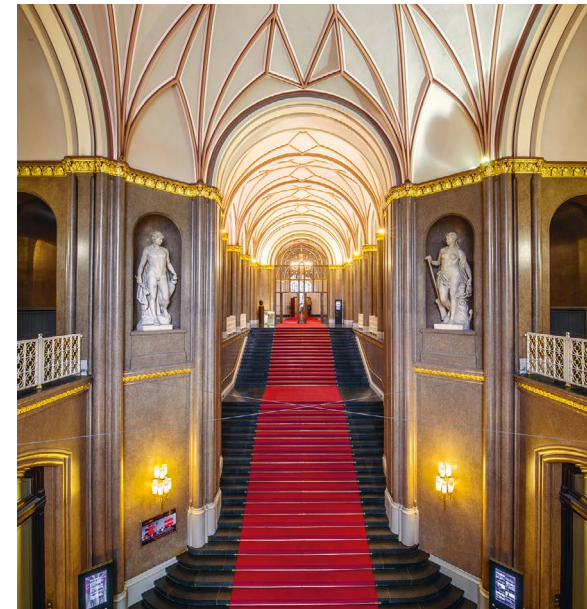
## A VENUE FOR ENCOUNTERS

One of Berlin's most iconic landmarks, the Red Town Hall was built from 1860 to 1869 to plans by Hermann Friedrich Waesemann in a neo-Renaissance style. At 94 metres (including the flagpole), its tower is visible from afar.

The Red Town Hall is the seat of the Governing Mayor and her administrative staff, the Senate Chancellery. Every year, it attracts around 80,000 visitors – to exhibitions, tours, and formal events. When no functions are being held, visitors are welcome to tour the ceremonial rooms.

## A TOUR OF THE TOWN HALL

The tour starts in the foyer, where four allegorical figures watch over the grand staircase from their lofty perch. They represent shipping, agriculture, fishing, and trade. Personalities such as Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Sophia Loren, King Willem-Alexander and Queen



The foyer with the grand staircase

© Landesarchiv/Wunstorf

Maxima of the Netherlands – along with many other prominent visitors – have graced the red carpet that leads up the 39 steps of the grand staircase.

The Golden Book, which is one of the city's visitors' books, is exhibited in a display case in the gallery, and documents visits made to Berlin by many distinguished guests. The members of the city council and the municipal assembly who were murdered under the National Socialist and Stalinist regimes are commemorated by a memorial plaque.



A view of the Hall of Pillars

© Landesarchiv/Wunstorf

With its ribbed vaults in an orange-reddish hue, the Hall of Pillars is considered the Town Hall's most attractive room. The hall, with its soaring, nine-metre ceiling – painted to resemble Siena's Palazzo Pubblico – once housed the library used by the municipal assembly. Three rows of columns featuring 26 pillars support the imposing vaulted ceiling. The structural elements of the hall are reminiscent of a Gothic cathedral. Following its destruction in the Second World War, the hall was rebuilt in a less ornate style. This is where the GDR awarded its Medals of Merit and the 'Banner of Labour' order. Nowadays, the Hall of Pillars is used for ceremonial activities, exhibitions, and weddings.

The Hall of Arms, which measures around 280 square metres in size, was once the venue for city council meetings; today, it is primarily used for receptions for guests of state, and for official ceremonies. The floor and the door frames are made from red Thuringian marble, while the walls are adorned with painted scagliola. The hall takes its name from the coats of



A view of the coats of arms at one end of the Hall of Arms

© Senatskanzlei Berlin

arms of Berlin and all its boroughs shown in their historical versions, which were designed by Heinrich List. This composition is a reference to the formation of the municipality of Greater Berlin in 1920. All coats of arms of Berlin's 23 former boroughs, along with Berlin's coat of arms as a 24th element, are shown.

The Main Hall is, at 30 metres in length and 18 metres in width and featuring arched windows extending to 6.90 metres in height, the Town Hall's largest room. It was planned as a venue for festivities from the very beginning. This is also where East Berlin's city council convened until 1990. The monumental painting, 'The Berlin Congress of 1878', which the court artist Anton von Werner produced for the city of Berlin, once again adorns the wall at one end of the room, as it did from 1881 to 1945.

Not all of the rooms in the Town Hall are accessible to the public: Berlin's state government holds its weekly session in the Senate Meeting Room every Tuesday. The Governing Mayor works in her office, where she meets with guests and discusses policy. The Louise Schroeder Conference Room is the scene of negotiations for coalition agreements and conferences, among other events.



The Senate Meeting Room

© Landesarchiv/Platow

## ARCHITECTURE AND STYLES

The Red Town Hall and its imposing belfry, which was built to tower higher than Berlin Palace, symbolise the self-confidence of the city's middle class. The building was designed in a style based on the Italian Early Renaissance. Hermann Friedrich Waesemann designed the Town Hall with four wings and a floor plan that is almost square in shape. Middle wings spanning this square divide the building into three inner courtyards. Berlin's Town Hall sustained severe damage in the Second World War, and was reconstructed from 1951 to 1955 under the guidance of the architect Fritz Meinhardt, who made fundamental changes to its interior design. Many of the rooms were repurposed, and rooms that were ornately decorated in the past were rebuilt in a much less elaborate style. The building was listed as a historical monument in 1979. When the Governing Mayor left Schöneberg Town Hall to take up office in the Town Hall in October 1991, the architect Helge Pitz gave the building another makeover, also modernising its technical infrastructure. This is evidenced by the lift towers that were added to the outside walls of the courtyards of the Town Hall.

© Landesarchiv/Wunstorf