

On the trail of THE OLDEST SØNDERBORG – Middle Ages and Renaissance



A City Walk



20 Havbogade

A new section of the city emerged along the waterfront on Søndergade (South Street) and Havbogade – formerly Nørregade (North Street) during the 14-1500s. In the 1700s, this was one of the nation's largest seafaring environments. By 1770, there were 100 houses in the city owned by skippers and 44 by ship's mates, nearly all located along the sound. At the end of the 1800s, these streets became a workers' enclave and, after bridges were built over the street in 1930, slums began to appear.

In 1947, it was decided to remove all dwellings in order to expand the harbour and, in spite of preservation attempts in the 1960s, much of the neighbourhood was razed. Today, little remains of the former hotchpotch of small gable and "garret" houses from the 16-1700s. One is the little 1700s double house at Havbogade 47-49. Two of the houses were dismantled and now stand in the open-air museum "The Old Town" in Århus.



21 Nørrebro

The harbour quay Sdr. Havnegade (South Harbour Street) emerged after 1864 and Nr. Havnegade (North Harbour Street) after 1920. Previously, there were only two public piers, Nørrebro and Sønderbro (North Bridge and South Bridge), as well as a long row of private quays and moorings. Nørrebro is

much changed in recent time with the addition of the bridge ramp in 1930 and modern residential buildings after the demolition of the Solo margarine factory in 2002.

22 Søndergade

Søndergade (South Street) still has a number of old houses. The double house Søndergade 16 combines a gable house from the 1600s with a later "garret" house, both with brick facades from the great age of sailing ships about 1750-70. On the "water side" are two former warehouses from 16-1700s at Søndergade 15 and 21. In former times, the merchants' houses on Perlegade often had harbour warehouses, built with the west wall jutting out into the water.



23 Sønderbro

The square now dominated by the little tilting-at-the-ring statue was the city's oldest harbour, formerly a small bay north of the castle. A shipyard already existed here in the 1500s, and a naval vessel was built here for King Hans in 1510. This shipyard disappeared around 1700, but in the 17-1800s, there were three other yards constructing wooden ships on Søndergade-Havbogade. These did not survive the advent of iron and steam, and closed in the 1880s.

Front page: Perlegade 61, backyard.

Text: Peter Dragsbo.

Editors: Museum Sønderjylland – Sønderborg Castle, Sønderborg Tourist Office and Sønderborg Township.

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15 Æblegade-Mariegade

The old street-name Æblegade (Apple Street) and the former name of Mariegade, "In The Orchard", remind us of the ducal garden, that in old times lay behind the still preserved garden-wall along Mariegade (with the little gazebo). In the 17th century, the Dukes of Sønderborg had a great town residence on these premises (now Perlegade 7-11), but the main buildings were destroyed by the shelling 1864. The quaint little houses at the end of the street are all built after 1864, but the small house Æblegade 10 still contains parts of a 16th century "booth".

16 Kirkegade 8 (Church Street)

Kirkegade 8 is Sønderborg's best preserved Renaissance gable house, built in 1643 by master tailor Søren Jensen. This protected house was restored 1985-87, and the original front parlour, called "Diele", and a formal lounge, called "pisel", were reconstructed.



17 St. Marie Church

Sønderborg was not large enough to have a convent or priory but, at the beginning of the 1200s, a lepers' hospital, St. Jørgen's, was built on a hill outside the city. After the Reformation, the hospital functioned as a charitable foundation. A chapel was added about 1300 and expanded in the 1400s to include an altar to the Virgin Mary. When the city's old parish church, St. Nikolaj, was torn down about 1530, St. Jørgen's Chapel became the new main church, later changing its name to St. Marie in 1649. From 1595-1600, Duke Hans the Younger undertook a

total renovation and extension of the church. A small part of the west brick wall is all that survives from the Middle Ages.



18 Kirkeallé 4 (Church Avenue)

When King Christian X's Bridge was built in 1930, most of the old buildings around the church were torn down, including the remains of the Middle Ages hospital west of the church. All that remained was the small half-timbered house at Kirkeallé 4 from 1641.

19 Hønekildetrappen (The Hen Spring Steps)

From Jomfrustien (The Virgin Steps) a small set of steps goes down to Havbogade (Sea Street). These are named after the former Hønekilde Spring, now encased in a drainpipe. There was a saying in Sønderborg that babies were "found" at Hønekilde – and just 100 years ago, there were a great many children living on Havbogade ...

11 Perlegade 61

Behind the more modern facade hides one of the city's oldest and most beautiful half-timbered houses (entrance from Løkken by the driveway between no. 28 and 32). From the rear, one can see that both no. 59 and 61 are gable houses with side wings toward the street. The gable house at no. 61 dates from the end of the 1500s. On the corner of the gateway, look for a carved, twisted column, typical of Late Renaissance style about 1650.



12 Perlegade 58

This lovely building, with its gable "garret", pilaster columns and brick bands of square "stones" is typical of the Baroque style fashionable in Copenhagen and Hamburg about 1730-40. This is also one of the first houses in Sønderborg to be built parallel to the street. A strange detail is the 1704 date on the facade, which is completely wrong – look closely at the "7" which covers an original "6", likely the date of an earlier building. The present house is actually from 1740-50!

13 Perlegade 91-95

At the top of Perlegade lies an interesting, well-restored row of houses. Perlegade 93 is from the 16-1700s and illustrates the earlier typical combination of a one-storey gable house and a two-storey "cross-house" to the street. Perlegade 95 is a fine "long house" with "garret" from about 1800, while no. 97 was constructed in 1850 as the main building for Peter Petersen's iron foundry, which produced the fine iron balcony.



14 Bjerggade 11-15 (Mountain Street)

In the 15-1600s, most of the more affluent citizens of Sønderborg lived in large or small "yards" with gable houses toward the street. Poorer folk lived in small row houses, called "booths", each having a door and 2 windows to the street. Most dwellings of this type were on Bjerggade and Mariegade, and the now-protected houses Bjerggade 15-17 with Renaissance half-timbering from about 1650 are typical of the style. Bjerggade was one of the city's poorest streets. Until 1905, it was called "Behind the Dung". The large merchants' homes in the neighbourhood were connected to farms with dunghills to the rear of the houses.

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Sønderborg – city and buildings 1200-1800

Sønderborg, like many other Danish cities, was founded about the year 1200. The name is mentioned for the first time in a royal letter dated 1256. The city was established as a market town for Als and Sundeved as a supplement to Brovold near Augustenborg, a seasonal trading town from the start of the 1100s. A fortress was built at Allsund near the village, one of many royal and private fortifications constructed in the 1200s. Named Sønderborg Castle, it became one of the kingdom's strongest fortresses during the Middle Ages.

The oldest part of the city was planned around a pier, now called Sønderbro (South Bridge). The eldest church, St. Nikolaj, was likely on Rosengade (Rose Street), and Humletorvet (The Hops Square) was probably the first town square. During the 13-1400s, the city expanded to the north, where Rådhusstorvet (The Town Hall Square) and Perlegade (Pearl Street) were established, bordered by merchants' and craftsmens' houses. Sønderborg was, for many years, overshadowed by Flensborg, which administrated Als and Sundeved 1491-1589. Sønderborg Castle was the seat of the Dukes of Sønderborg 1571-1668, bringing prosperity to the city, although the nobility had the right to trade in other places. Sønderborg quickly became an important seafaring town and, in the 1700s, there were more than 100 captains' and seafarers' families living here. Small, family-owned ships sailed to the Baltic and northern German cities, as well as to Copenhagen, an important market for bricks produced by tileworks along Flensborg Fjord.

Old Sønderborg was a city of half-timbered houses from the 15-1600s, with many gable houses in North German style. Brick residences and a new style of "long houses" with fronts parallel



to the street were introduced in the 1700s. Much of the city burned under the Prussian bombardment of 1864, especially the area around Rådhusstorvet, and many of the surviving buildings were torn down later. Exploring the middle of Sønderborg is, however, still worthwhile!



1 Sønderborg Castle

The first construction by Als Sound was a fortress tower, built about 1200 on an island or promontory on the coast. During the Middle Ages, the original tower was expanded to a ring-walled citadel with corner towers and several separate buildings. The "Halberdier Room" on the ground floor of the castle, together with a part of the Middle Ages wall on the building's north side, is all that remains of the Late Middle Ages castle where King Christian II was held prisoner 1532-1549. From 1549-1571, King Christian III and Queen Dorothea undertook the massive task of revamping the castle into a modern royal residence with staircase towers, a ballroom and apartments, as well as a chapel adorned with the writings of Martin Luther. In 1571, the castle became the seat of the Dukes of Sønderborg, who were declared bankrupt in 1667. The decaying building was renovated in Baroque style 1718-26. It became a barracks, first Danish, later German and, in 1921, Southern Jutland's historical museum (restored 1964-73) was established.

2 King Frederik I's Fortifications

With the advent of cannons, the old castle's thick walls no longer provided adequate protection. In the 1530s, King Frederik I added a fortification with two cannon bastions as well as an embankment, moat and bridge. From the castle courtyard, it is possible to walk past the north bastion along the old cobblestoned approach road. The present wooden bridge replaces the earlier drawbridge.

3 Slotsgade (Castle Street)

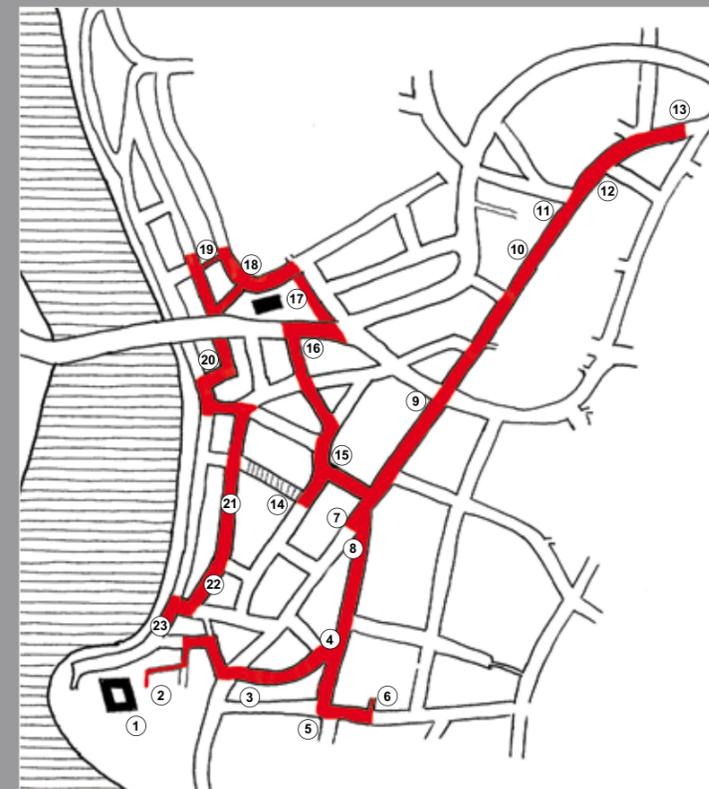
The small streets Slotsgade and Christian II's Gade – called Hattemagerstræde (Hatter's Lane) before 1864 – are some of the oldest in the city. Between the many small houses from the 17-1800s, one can see some gabled residences from about 1600, such as Slotsgade 10, restored in 2006. In the 17-1800s, this part of town had a strong craftsmens' influence. At no. 4, note master smithy Paul Rochler's beautiful wrought iron gate in Art Nouveau style from 1901.



4 Humletorvet

This small square has been an open space since the Middle Ages, and is possibly the city's original square. During excavation, a well with tiles

from the 1200s was discovered under the square. The most impressive building is the Schättiger-Ewers merchant's house, Humletorvet 4. Its original bowed windows are typical of building style after the 1864 bombardment.



1. Sønderborg Slot, 2. Forværker, 3. Slotsgade, 4. Humletorvet, 5. Rosengade, 6. Skt. Nicolaj Sti, 7. Rådhusstorvet, 8. Rådhuset, 9. Perlegade 21, 10. Perlegade 49-51, 11. Perlegade 61, 12. Perlegade 58, 13. Perlegade 93-97, 14. Bjerggade, 15. Æblegade-Mariegade, 16. Kirkegade 8, 17. Skt. Marie Kirke, 18. Kirkeallé 4, 19. Hønekildetrappen, 20. Havbogade, 21. Nørrebro, 22. Søndergade, 23. Sønderbro

5 Rosengade

Rosengade, formerly Pottemageregade (Potter's Street) marked the city's southern boundary. Sønderborg Castle's formal and kitchen gardens once occupied the hill on which Hotel Comwell now stands. The street's dominant building is the Dean's House, Rosengade 18, built 1767 with a grand Rococo gateway. The building was not constructed as a vicarage, although it is probable that a Middle Ages communal priests' dwelling originally stood here.



6 Skt. Nikolaj Stien (The St. Nikolaj Path)

The path's name is the final indication of Sønderborg's original parish church, likely built in the 1200s, but torn down about 1530 during the Reformation in Southern Jutland. It was replaced by a lepers' church, St. Jørgen's. St. Nikolaj Church has, unfortunately, disappeared without trace. Skeletons were found in the ground south of Rosengade but,

in spite of archaeological quests, nothing more has been discovered. A Romanesque christening font now standing at Sønderborg Castle is thought to have originated from St. Nikolaj Church.

7 Rådhusstorvet

The large square, actually triangular in shape, is typical of High Middle Ages town planning. It was surrounded by large merchants' houses rebuilt after the 1864 bombardment, and some of these were used up to the 1900s. One of the best preserved is Rådhusstorvet 4, where one can see the old building style with a gable house toward the street, an outbuilding and a warehouse at the rear of the courtyard.



8 The Town Hall

Sønderborg's town hall has always stood strategically at the fork between Store and Lille Rådhusgade (Large and Small Town Hall Streets). The original town hall was constructed of "monkstone" in the 1500s, one of the city's few brick buildings. This Middle Ages structure survived in refurbished fashion until the 1864 city bombardment. Its replacement in New Gothic style was demolished in 1932 to make way for the present structure, designed by architect Holger Mundt in fine Danish New Classic style.



9 Perlegade 21

One of the city's oldest properties is hidden on the southwest corner of Perlegade (Pearl Street) and Jernbanegade (Railroad Street). Behind the building facing the street lies a two-storey, half-timbered gable house dating from the end of the 1500s (entrance from Jernbanegade between two shops). To view the

house, go through the passageway between two shops around the corner on Jernbanegade. The property was owned by a merchant family named Karberg in the 1700s but, in 1801, a house was built in front of it by sugar refiner Hans Andersen. This building stands parallel to the street and, with its bowed top and flat columned pilasters on the facade, it is typical Early Classic style. At the rear of the property, the old warehouse from about 1800 can be seen. In 1930, the property was partly spoiled when Jernbanegade was built and the main building was reduced in size.

10 Perlegade 49 og 51

In the passage between the two properties, one gets the best impression of how buildings looked in old Sønderborg. No. 51 is a former merchant's house, comprised of a half-timbered gable house from about 1640 with a protruding bracketed top storey on both sides. The gable was stone-built about 1800, but the old front brackets are still visible at the entrance inside the little vestibule. No. 49 is a single-storey half-timbered gable house from the 1600s which has been extended toward the street with a side wing (originally with a gateway). Old warehouses (also visible from Løkken) stand at the back of both properties.

