

City history

The original name of Châlons comes from the Gallic people of the Catalaunes, who had settled on the oppidum of Cheppe named Attila 's Camp, 16 kilometres in the northeast of Châlons. By 20 BC, Agrippa was asked by Emperor Auguste to establish a road network in ancient France (Gaule). One of the main roads connecting Milan to Boulogne-sur-Mer, (via Agrippa) crosses Châlons (Rue de la Marne). Little by little, in contact of the Roman world, Catalaunes left the oppidum of Cheppe to settle down on the current site of the city between the canal and river Nau.



The arrival of Saint-Memmie, first bishop of Châlons, is situated after the edict of pacification of 1st Emperor Constantin (313 AD) The presence of the bishop will allow Châlons not to be a simple village again during Merovingian period (5th-7th centuries) then to become prosperous from the 9th century.

Châlons then became a prosperous market allowing the trade of faraway farm produces. A square was created outside the too narrow gallo-Roman surrounding wall. From the Middle Ages to the 19th century, it was named Place du Marché au blé (Wheat Marketplace), today Place de la République. In 864, due to the important trade activity of the city , the bishop was allowed by King Charles le Chauve to create a monetary workshop. It worked till the beginning of the 17th century.

As early as the 12th and throughout the 13th century, the prosperity of the city was based the manufacture of high quality woolen sheets, sold in all Europe through four Fairs of champagne.

The 13th century was the time of the maximal extension of the city: the plan of the ramparts built at the beginning of the century corresponds to today 's boulevards which surround the city. The artistic life was great. In those days., seventeen religious buildings were built or reconstructed

The economic decline of the city started in the 14th century. The Hundred Years' War and the change of the commercial routes (importance of Paris) stopped the urban developing until the mid-19th century.

In the 16th century, because of war, Châlons remained a strategic place being so close to the empire of Charles V.

The bishop became less powerful than the Bourgeois of the city council. In the 17th century, he was replaced the Intendant of Champagne, representing the King.

The last Intendant , Rouillé d' Orfeuil (1764-1790), developed a policy aiming at making Châlons a provincial capital. He began a series of works to embellish the city : Hôtel des Intendants ,the Cours d' Ormesson, the city hall and Place Foch, the Comedie theater (destroyed) reorganization of the Marne river.

During the French Revolution, Châlons changes its historic name of Châlons-en-Champagne into Châlons-sur-Marne. The name of "Champagne" reminded the revolutionaries of the former feudal structure of the County of Champagne which was necessary to get rid of. In the 19th century, the city knew an economic slump, but was "saved" thanks to the presence of soldiers. In 1801, a first regiment of cavalry settled in the old abbey of Saint-Pierre-aux-Monts (now Cité Administrative Tirlet). In 1856, Napoleon III created the military camp of Mourmelon; then from 1870 several infantry, artillery, and cavalry districts were built.



Just before the World War I, Châlons was one of the main French garrison towns and the seat of the

General staff of the 6th army corps. The two World Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) caused many transformations in the city. Châlons was close to the World War I Front, but it was not damaged.

During the World War II, several districts were completely destroyed (rue Grande Etape, Place Monseigneur Tissier).