

Riots and fires broke out once more, and the Cult of Sigmar attempted to take control of the city. A cynical policy of “Bread for Believers” required folk to swear an oath of loyalty to the cult in return for food and protection. Altdorfers defrauded this system so extensively that the cult’s coffers were almost emptied and for little gain, as the population returned to its cheerful irreligious nature once the handouts ceased. It took over 300 years for the cult and the city to recover from this financial disaster.

Around this time, the beginnings of an organised guild structure began to appear. These guilds later dominate the political life of the capitol, but at this time, they focused on protecting their members against the harshness of the times. In the wake of plague and turmoil, many country peasants flocked to the city to fill the empty houses and join the new guilds. This move from the farmlands, combined with many poor harvests, beggared the Reikland Elector. The ruined noble approached Altdorf for aid and eventually made a deal. The Count formally adopted the Prince of Altdorf; the Count then abdicated all Electoral privileges to the Grand Prince. Vast sums of money flowed into the Reikland estates, restoring the fortunes, if not the title, of the former Count.

The dual title of Grand Prince of Altdorf and Elector Count of Reikland then passed from prince to prince, though it seemed to bring little luck with it. The crippling upkeep of the Reikland and collapse of Altdorf trade meant that before the 1200s ended, the rulers of The Reek were known as “the poor princes”. From this time forward, money became increasingly important as a source of power and leverage. Bribery and corruption seeped into all aspects of city life.

## THE TIME OF THE BURGOMEISTERS

The 1500s opened with a bold move from the Burgomeisters. Following the trend of the times, the Guilds openly bribed the nobility to return to the city. Gifts of lands and walled estates lured some, whilst other responded to generous loans and “honour tithes”. The Elector count of Wissenland reportedly received a gift of 50 white peacocks with gilded beaks and purple-stained feet. He promptly invited the guild masters of Altdorf to a feast and served up the birds on silver salvers as a lesson about loyalty.

Despite this rebuke, by 1547 IC and the time of the Three Emperors, Altdorf managed to repair its fortunes. As the territories fought, The Great Reek learned to profit from the civil war. The guilds effectively ran most city life, and riches became the ultimate dream of every citizen. The city continued to grow and evolve throughout this time of strife. By the first siege of Altdorf in 1701 IC, the famous ‘dorfer attitude was recognisably present. A proud and cunning people, the siege did not break their spirits; rather, it became a point of principle to ignore the hunger, death, and horror of the Orc warlord Gorbad Ironclaw’s incursion. All the temples of the city experienced a marked rise in offerings at this time, and a religious renaissance swept the city. In the aftermath of the

siege, the city was rocked by the uncovering of several Chaos cults and a scandal involving a lector of Sigmar anointing a wolfhound to the office of priesthood. Outside the city bounds, Crackle Hill was established as the execution grounds for heretics and traitors, whilst Morr’s Oak remained the hanging place for ordinary criminals.

As the centuries wore on, the increasingly empty purses of the counts allowed the rich to buy themselves titles and coats of arms from the nobility. Heraldry became deeply fashionable, and Altdorf introduced Mercier laws to govern which colours, cloths, and cuts could be worn by each class. Later repealed as unenforceable, these laws did manage to set custom (and fashion) for some time to come. By the turn of the millennium, the Burgomeisters marshalled the guilds and seized the opportunity to become self-governing. Huge gifts of money surreptitiously flowed into the coffers of the Princes of Altdorf, enabling the once-mocking title to again become a reality. The city became a self-governing state, and the newly empowered Burgomeisters engineered huge tax breaks for themselves.

## SIEGE AND RECONSTRUCTION

This prosperity was smashed by civil war and sieges. The vampire lords of the Von Carstein family laid siege in 2051 IC and 2132 IC. Both attempts came at a great cost to the city. The walls were breached in several places, and the loss of life was tremendous. The city brazened the sieges out, mockingly adopting the “shade of death” as the banner of Altdorf. This gallows humour did not disguise the tolls the sieges exacted. The Von Carstein habit of catapulting rotten zombies into the city brought many winters of plague, while crippling taxes created an era of poverty and desperation. By the Battle of Hel Fen in 2145 IC Altdorfers no longer cared that the Von Carstein line had been crushed. Every able-bodied man was expected to aid in the rebuilding of the defensive walls or lose their citizenship. Many protested, but they lacked the spirit to riot.

The next 300 years are known as The Great Reconstruction. Gradually, pride, money, and comfort returned to Altdorf. Even the indignity of the Great Boil Plague of 2302 did little to deflate the growing sense of recovery. The citizenry laws were revised, and Altdorf gathered thousands of new taxpayers to her bosom. The early seeds of the Imperial menagerie began when the fashion of gifting rare beasts became popular amongst the nobility. The Great War Against Chaos brought further monies to Altdorf merchants as weaponry and supplies became scarce. The fall of distant Praag in 2303 caused minor alarm, but The Reek believed itself immune to serious change.

It came as a shock when Magnus the Pious announced that Altdorf would become home to the Orders of Magic. Riots erupted throughout the summer of 2304 IC, and few were prepared for the martial law that followed. Many abandoned the city when the time came for the High Elves to warp the fabric of Altdorf to accommodate the College buildings. They eventually returned to find the city much the same, yet utterly different. Becoming thoroughly unmappable, pandemonium



ensued as 'dorfers learned to navigate by landmarks rather than sense of direction. Street guides became common, and martial law remained as anti-wizard sentiments remained high.

## WIZARDRY AND STATESMANSHIP

The Orders of Magic quickly set out to court the guilds and their leaders. The Grand Prince grew alarmed at this, for the wizards seemed to quickly enmesh themselves in the complex web of negotiation and extortion that passed for Altdorf politics. Magister, a separate state of citizenry, was created to curb the power of the Orders. Complex laws on trading, land ownership, and voting rights served to keep the wizards in line, at least for a while.

A vital distraction occurred in 2324 IC when the water system collapsed. Wells filled with foulness from the midden heaps, sewers clogged, and the river ran black with filth from thousands of privies, tanneries, and graveyards. The "Summer of Cess" united the guilds for the first time as they banded together to sink new wells, line sewers, and create aqueducts. The Clean Water Company was created with monies from all craftsmen; however, it was riven with infighting, rivalry, and virtual ineffectiveness for many years. A political tool of the guilds, the company was pushed from pillar to post for over 100 years, gradually accomplishing its goals at a great cost to the people.

By 2429 Altdorf was rich, settled, and powerful. Despite its own past, the city was scandalized by Marienburg's announcement of independence. After an emergency session

of the aldermen and guild masters, a series of trade sanctions were applied to the new city state. Fearing that their status as a tax haven would be challenged, many of the upper echelons of Altdorf loudly protested the move. Many privately lent their influence to aid in deposing Emperor Dieter IV, which was accomplished shortly thereafter.

A month of celebrations ensued as the Prince of Altdorf was elected to the throne. The guilds publicly swore allegiance to Willhem III, offering huge gifts and revenues to the once-impooverished office of Princedom. Merchants and institutions scrambled for Imperial patronage, and under the advice of the Grey Order, Willhem auctioned off his favours and appointments for huge sums. This money allowed the new Emperor to engage in unprecedented amounts of statecraft, ensuring loyalty amongst much of the nobility for some time. The Grand Prince officially recognised the Altdorf Press as a newspaper, hoping to gain a measure of control over the scandal sheet. Typical, this move failed as the paper remained true to the irreverent spirit of Altdorfers everywhere.

The Great Fire of 2431 allowed Willhelm to entirely rebuild Altdorf's east side and curb the Order of Bright Wizards. The reconstructed area became a prestigious neighbourhood, having well laid out streets and stone buildings. The loss of goods and revenue hit the merchants hard, and while they were on the back foot, the Grand Prince seized many political gains. This trend continued with the accession of Karl Franz in 2502. His personal interventions eventually resulted in the Stench Act of 2506. This legislation effectively handcuffed the overweening egos of the guilds and the Orders of Magic, causing uproar and outrage.