

## Welcome to Rheinland-Pfalz! Our Neighbors from the USA

The Sickingen town of Landstuhl is pleased to invite our long-standing American friends and neighbors to this special event as part of the state program "Welcome to Rheinland-Pfalz! Our Neighbors from the USA". For decades, American citizens have lived and worked in our region, especially near military bases like the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) and the Ramstein Air Base. This coexistence has influenced and shaped our community in many lasting ways.

The close friendship between the citizens of Landstuhl and the Americans stationed in this region is a unique feature of our town. Over the years, various social, cultural, and economic connections have developed. Joint events, partnerships, and active exchanges have deepened these relationships and created a strong sense of community.

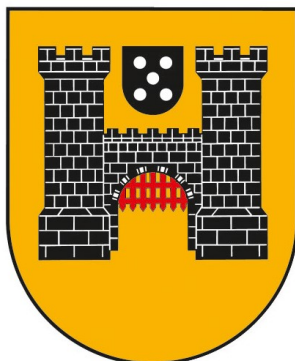
To further strengthen this friendship, the Heimatfreunde Landstuhl will present a play about the last hours of the life of the Knight Reichsritter Franz von Sickingen. This performance not only provides an insight into regional history but also offers an opportunity to share the culture and traditions of our town with our American neighbors.

The state program "Welcome to Rheinland-Pfalz! (WiR!) Our Neighbors from the USA" was launched in 2014 and promotes initiatives that strengthen the cooperation between the local population and Americans. The WiR! initiative supports this event financially to create positive effects for both sides through local actors.

We are happy to invite you to be part of this special event and celebrate the diversity and richness of our shared history with us.

For more information about the program and its goals, you can visit:

[www.welcome-to-rlp.org/](http://www.welcome-to-rlp.org/)



WILLKOMMEN  
WELCOME  
*Rheinland-Pfalz*

## **Dramatic Representation by Heimatfreunde Landstuhl for the Commemoration of the Death of the Knight Reichsritter Franz von Sickingen on May 7th at Burg Nanstein**

A Historical Play about Honor, Betrayal, and the End of an Era

The Sickingen town of Landstuhl annually commemorates the last great Reichsritter, Franz von Sickingen, whose fate was sealed on May 7th, 1523, at Burg Nanstein. The Heimatfreunde Landstuhl e.V. will bring to life the dramatic last hours of this significant knight from the early modern period through an impressive staged portrayal. The performance will be accompanied by the booming cannon fire from the Schützengemeinschaft 1848 Landstuhl e.V., recreating the siege of Burg Nanstein. The play will also be musically supported by the fanfares of Werkfolk Fanfarenzug Bann e.V.

The town of Landstuhl thanks the associations for their commitment and willingness to preserve tradition and honor the memory of the namesake of our Sickingen town. Special thanks go to the Heimatfreunde, led by their chairman Frank Zimmer, for organizing the event.

### **Background of the Play:**

We are in the year 1523. The decline of the knights is sealed and the power of the territorial princes is growing. Franz von Sickingen, a passionate advocate for free knighthood and supporter of the Reformation, clashed with a coalition of princes from Trier, the Palatinate and Hesse. His attempt to use force against the Archbishop of Trier, Richard von Greiffenclau zu Vollraths, has failed. Now, the united forces of his enemies have turned against him and laid siege to his castle, Burg Nanstein.

Despite significant reinforcements to the cannon castle, the massive number of the besiegers quickly reduces Nanstein to its grounds. The massive walls and the cannon tower, built to defend against the new firepower, cannot withstand the assault. Sickingen, who was severely wounded in the fight, has retreated with his chaplain Nicolaus Merxheimer and a few loyal followers to the innermost chambers of the castle. Escape is impossible.

### **The Decisive Moment:**

While inspecting the damage to the castle, fate strikes: a cannonball from a so-called Feldschlange - one of the feared cannon types of the time - hits a pile of wood. The splinters flying from the impact gravely injured Franz von Sickingen. Bleeding, he is taken to safety, where he makes his last confession and arranges his affairs with his remaining followers.

### **The Arrival of the Princes – The Final Resistance:**

The besiegers have achieved their goal. The three powerful princes—the Archbishop of Trier, Richard von Greiffenclau, the Elector of the Palatinate, Ludwig V., and Landgrave Philip of Hesse—enter the castle. Sickingen faces his defeat. Yet, even in the face of certain death, the proud knight does not surrender.

His final words reflect his unyielding pride: "Nothing without cause!" and "I have to speak with a Higher One!"

Shortly after, he passes away due to his severe injuries. His companions and his chaplain Merxheimer ask the victorious princes for a Christian burial. Despite the enmity between Sickingen and his conquerors, he is buried in the former Marian Chapel, now the St. Andreas Church in Landstuhl. This is likely due to the influence of his loyal followers, who wanted to preserve his reputation and faith.

### **The End of the Knight's Revolt and the Aftermath:**

Sickingen's death seals the fate of the rebellious Reichsritter. The victors proceed to conquer his other castles and his followers submit completely. Burg Nanstein is left severely damaged. In the following years, it is partially rebuilt but is again destroyed in later conflicts.

Sickingen's defeat clearly shows the growing dominance of the territorial princes and the changing nature of warfare with the increasing importance of artillery. The era of free imperial knights is over. Yet, his legacy endures.

The actors conclude the performance with his motto:

"To God alone the honor; love for the common good; protect justice."

**Historical Basis:** This Play is based on the "Warlichen Bericht," the eyewitness account of the Reichsherald Kaspar Sturm, and was adapted for this performance by Frank Zimmer, Chairman of Heimatfreunde Landstuhl 2025. Today, the ruins of Burg Nanstein, the St. Andreas Church in Landstuhl and the annual commemorative events keep alive the memory of Franz von Sickingen, the last great Reichsritter and the namesake of the town of Landstuhl.