

HISTORY OF THE AREA

Today's Peterstraße/Neanderstraße/Hütten does not reflect the historical reality of the area. The so-called "Neustadt" ("New Town") came into being during the Thirty Years' War, when between 1615 and 1625 Dutch engineer Johan van Valckenburgh added an additional layer to the city-walls in order to make Hamburg safe. Thus, areas which were previously unprotected now became part of the town; houses could be built in this "New Town" and there was plenty of room for immigrants and refugees. In contrast to the Old Town with its traditional citizens' and merchants' houses, members of the lower middle class and the working class lived here, often in poor and cramped conditions. This is still reflected today in the tradesmen's widows' housing ("Krameramtsstuben") close to St. Michael's church and in the "alleyway quarter" ("Gängeviertel").

In the north-west part of the New Town, Valckenburgh built a grid-system network of roads. This was meant to be a symbol of civic equality and republican common welfare. This road network is barely recognizable today, although original street names dating back to that time remain.

HISTORY OF THE RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX

Initially: very few original houses existed in Hamburg

The sparsity of original houses in Hamburg today is due to events in the town's history, mainly

- the demolition of famous old houses in around 1800,
- damage caused by the Great Fire in 1842 and by the Second World War.

1965: the charity home for elder people (Beyling-Stift) is to be torn down

It was against this backdrop that Hamburg's First Mayor, Professor Herbert Weichmann, turned to Alfred Toepfer and asked him to rescue the charity home for elder people (Beyling-Stift) built in 1751, as, being short of funds, the Senate of Hamburg had decided to demolish the building.

1966 to 1982: renovation of the Beyling-Stift and erection of the residential complex Peterstraße/Neanderstraße/Hütten

Alfred Toepfer ensured the renovation of the Beyling-Stift as well as the half-timbered houses surrounding it (Peterstraße 35–39) kept with the original style. In addition, he bought property in Peterstraße/Neanderstraße/Hütten. Here he wanted to give the impression of the past architectural style and the way people had lived. By reconstructing representative bourgeois residential houses he was, in effect, erecting a monument to Old Hamburg and to its citizens and craftsmen of former times.

Between 1966 and 1982 an architectural ensemble of citizens' and merchants' houses, once located in different places around the Old Town, was built in Peterstraße/Neanderstraße/Hütten. The reconstructed house fronts were originally built in the 17th and 18th centuries.



With the reconstruction of old citizens' and merchants' houses in Peterstraße Alfred Toepfer wanted to show how beautiful Hamburg was in the past.

FURTHER INSTITUTIONS

It is not only the architectural ensemble which represents Alfred Toepfer's ideas. It was also him who built an auditorium ("**Lichtwarksaal**"), a restaurant ("**Zum Alten Senator**") and the **Johannes-Brahms-Museum**.

In the mid-1990s, after Alfred Toepfer's death, the **Low German Library** ("**Niederdeutsche Bibliothek**") and an archive with information on Alfred Toepfer ("**Alfred Toepfer Archiv**") were set up in the house on the corner of Peterstraße 36/Hütten.

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If you are interested and have the time, you are cordially invited to take a closer look at the residential complex.