

GESELLSCHAFTSHAUS DER BÜRGERGESELLSCHAFT ZU NEUSS E.V.

Home of the Bürgergesellschaft zu Neuss

Founded in 1861 as the Catholic “**Gesellschaft Constantia**”, the Bürgergesellschaft (since 1908) is still one of the largest traditional associations in Neuss. Since 1974, the “Bürger” has had its community centre and restaurant on Mühlenstraße. Committed to a **Christian world view**, this non-profit association is involved in city society and offers a wide range of events.

In 1861, 60 Catholic citizens of Neuss came together to found a society at the instigation of the religious teacher Dr Ludger Kleinheidt. It was the time of the incipient “Kulturkampf” – a historical cultural struggle – between the Prussian state on the one hand and the Catholic Church and party on the other. The aim of the “Constantia” was “to spread knowledge of Catholic principles, promote civic and ecclesiastical interests and provide social entertainment”. The association served as a **social rallying point for the Centre Party**. That meant it was closely associated with its journalistic organ, the Gesellschaft für Buchdruckerei, which had published the Neuß-Grevenbroicher Zeitung (NGZ) since 1874. Rheinland Feuerversicherung, founded in 1880, provided support for the local economy. Under the presidency of Peter Wilhelm Kallen, Franz Werhahn and Cornelius Thywissen, the “Bürger” gained influence over the political and economic development of the city through personal civic involvement.



Society building on Niederstraße, built in 1909



Banquet to mark inauguration of the new house, January 1910



“Bürger” community centre with office building and hall, 1974

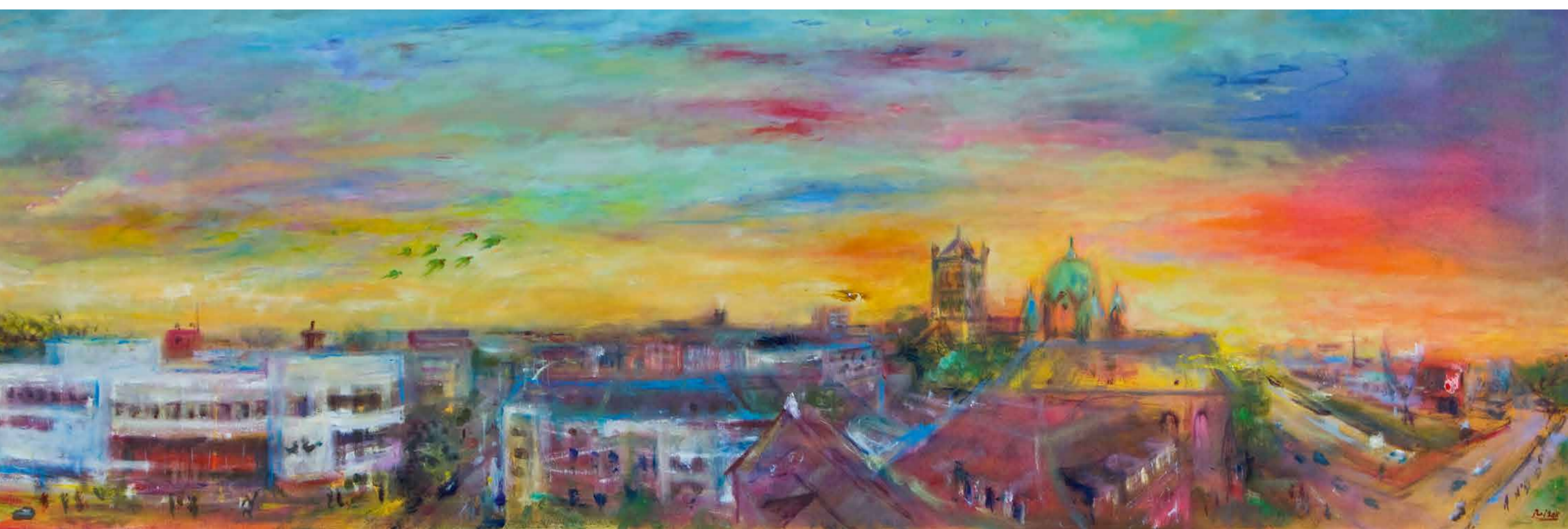


Inauguration of the community centre, 1974

In 1909, the civic society moved from its original headquarters on the market square to its first own **building at Niederstraße 46**. After its destruction in the Second World War, its domicile was rebuilt together with the NGZ publishing and printing house and then served as a venue for many Neuss clubs, including the Schützen. Following “extensive redevelopment” of the Neumarkt district and relocation of the NGZ to the outskirts of the city, the civil society **moved to Mühlenstraße in 1974**. Under the leadership of Hermann Wilhelm Thywissen, President from 1950 to 2000, the **new building with its large hall** once again became a centre of social life in Neuss.

The modern orientation of the civil society, which has also accepted Protestant Christians and women since 2000, was initiated under President Dr Hermann-Josef Kallen. He also arranged for the hall to be given up and for the **Gesellschaftshaus to be renovated** (2005). Under the presidency of Johann Andreas Werhahn (since 2009), the civil society celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2011 with a grand ceremony.

(Sources and texts: Neuss municipal archives)



Neuss from the roof of the Romaneum, oil painting by Christoph Rehlinghaus on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Bürgergesellschaft zu Neuss, 2011