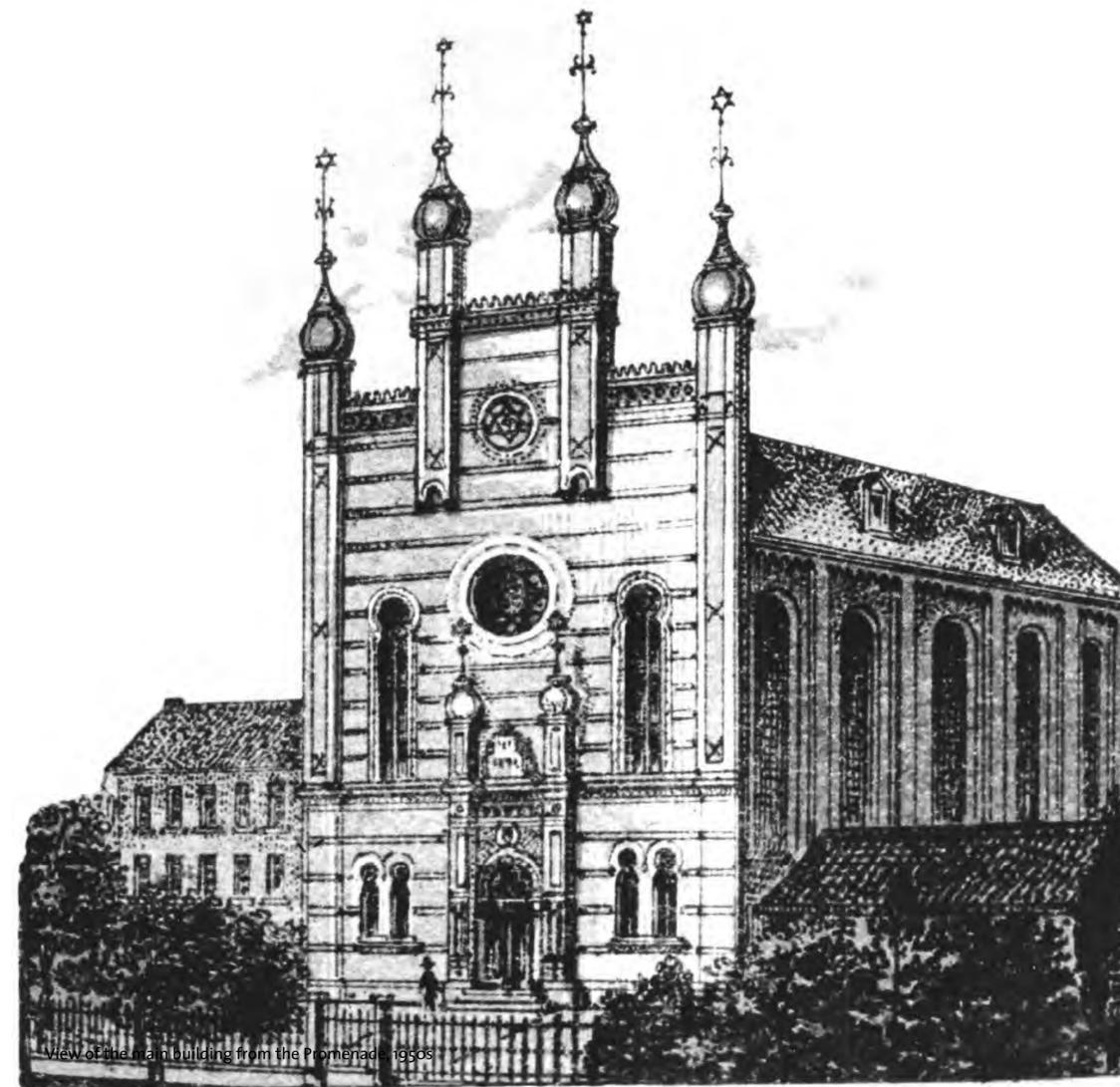# SYNAGOGUE

On the opposite side of the Promenade *(today: Sparkasse Neuss)*, until its destruction, stood the **synagogue** of the Jewish community in Neuss. On the night of 9th-10th November 1938, it was ransacked and set on fire by SA men from Neuss and Düsseldorf.

The building, designed by official Prussian **architect Friedrich Weise** (1801-1874), was one of the first representative buildings to shape the image of the newly created Promenade. The synagogue, to the construction of which the city had also contributed 2,000 thaler, was festively inaugurated on 29th March 1867. Numerous city dignitaries took part in the three-day **inaugural celebrations**. To the Jewish community, the inauguration apparently represented an affirmation of their new, almost equal status in relation to the Christian communities, which they had achieved since their foundation in 1816.

The new synagogue kept to an **oriental style**. Its façade consisted of light and reddish stone and was crowned by four small onion towers with gilded stars of David. A large round window dominated the middle axis, over which a star of David was positioned. The orientalised style was continued through into the richly decorated inner space. There was no women's gallery; men and women were simply separated from one another by the central aisle. Until the synagogue's inauguration, the services and gatherings of the Jewish community had taken place in a private house.

A small Jewish community already existed in Neuss by the 12th century, whose lives were played out between the so-called **Jews' Bridge**, in the area of the later Hessian Gate, and Glockhammer. There was also already a synagogue here. In 1463, the city's Jews were expelled and issued with a ban on settlement.

Only with the introduction of **religious freedom** during the Napoleonic occupation, at the beginning of the 19th century, could a Jewish community slowly form again, but was not very big. They reached their largest number in 1890, with 300 members.
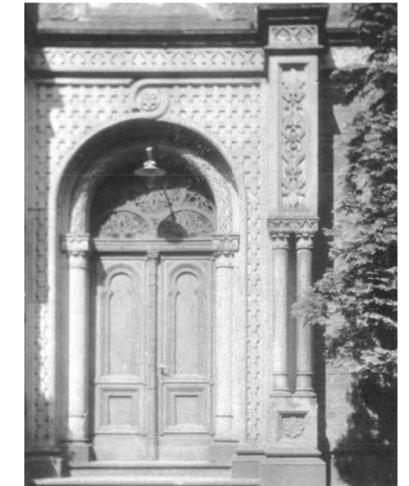

View of the main building from the Promenade, 1950s

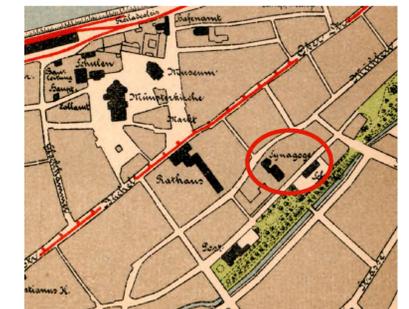View of the synagogue on the Promenade, lithograph around 1870

In 1933, no more than 227 citizens of Jewish faith lived in Neuss, who were increasingly **persecuted** over the following years. At least 204 of the then or earlier members of the synagogue's congregation in Neuss were deported and murdered by the National Socialist regime; only a few managed to escape into exile. Today, the victims are remembered by a memorial stone opposite the erstwhile synagogue, designed by Ulrich Rückriem, and numerous **stumbling blocks** around the city.

With the immigration of numerous Jewish families from the former Soviet Union, a Jewish community has again formed in Neuss since the beginning of the 1990s, which moved into the **Alexander Bederov Centre** on Leostrasse in 2008 as a **'branch congregation'** of the Jewish Congregation of Düsseldorf.

(Sources and texts: Neuss municipal archives)

The synagogue's portal, around 1930

Synagogue on the Promenade, plan, 1910 (excerpt)

The former Scheibenhäuschen on the Promenade, in which the Jewish school was sometimes held, left, the set-back façade of the synagogue, around 1935

12th century
Existence of a Jewish community in Neuss

1463
Expulsion of the Jews from Neuss, ban on settlement

1858
Foundation of the synagogue congregation in Neuss

1938
Destruction of the synagogue during the night of the pogrom

1995
Inauguration of the memorial on the Promenade

14/15th centuries
First synagogue at Glockhammer

1794
Beginning of the French period in Neuss, with religious freedom, immigration of Jewish citizens

1867
Festive inauguration of the synagogue on the Promenade

1988
Visit of former Jewish citizens and their families to Neuss

2008
Opening of the Jewish community centre on Leostrasse