

The Copper city Stolberg and its "Kupferhöfe"

unique, varied, attractive

Although the former brass smelters, the so-called copper yards "Kupferhöfe", are very characteristic for Stolberg, these courtyard buildings from the period of the Early New-Age are not at all an assembly of stereotype buildings. Anyway, there is no single "Stolberg copper yard" that could be identified as typical in its appearance. Depending on the dating of their construction year and the wealth of their respective builders, the structural shapes of the individual courtyard buildings vary quite considerably.

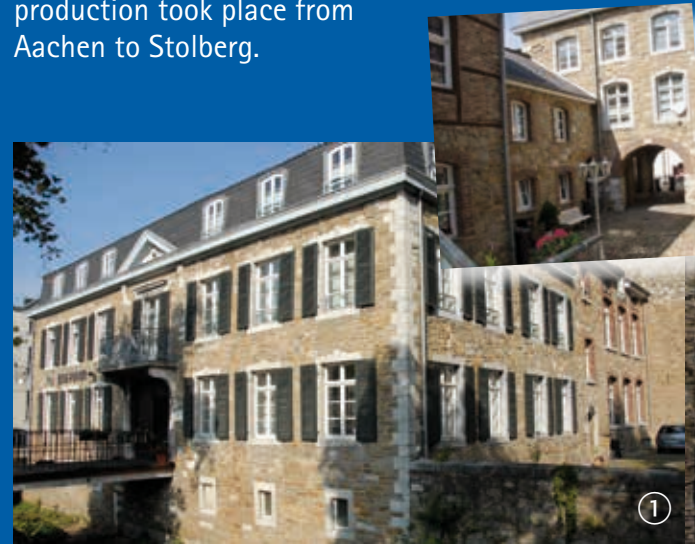
The terms copper master, "Kupferhöfe" (literally translated copper yards) and copper city understandably give our guests the impression that Stolberg had gained its economic importance with the production of copper. In fact the situation was slightly different: in Stolberg copper was not produced, but refined. This is how the process of brass production was understood at that time.

Early days of New-Age brass industry

In the early 1570s the Aachen habitant Leonard Schleicher, as the first copper master, recognized the location advantages important for the brass industry in the Stolberg valley (among others water power as well as nearby ore and hard coal deposits) and consequently moved his company from Aachen to Stolberg.



At today's Burgstraße he built the first brass smelter facility in Stolberg. Until the middle of the 17th century an almost complete relocation of the brass production took place from Aachen to Stolberg.

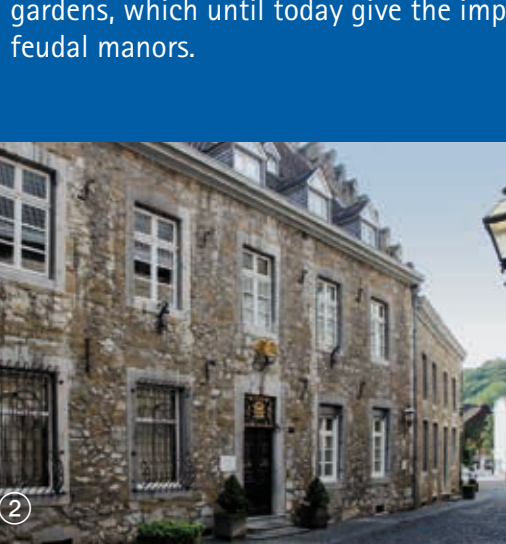


Building shapes of the former brass smelters commonly called copper yards

After resettlement into the unfortified and sparsely populated area of Stolberg, everybody was self-responsible for the defence of his belongings and his life to a great extent. Therefore the copper yards in Stolberg were at first built as closed, well-fortified and defensible courtyard building assemblies, which usually formed a courtyard completely enclosed by residential and factory buildings as well as stables. This complex was accessible by only one well-fortified gate. With the windows all facing the courtyard, the external appearance of a courtyard building resembled a fortress and therefore its exterior view was not very appealing and inviting.

In the heyday of the brass industry and in the course of the increasing wealth of the copper masters, who became more and more self-confident, significantly more representative complexes were built in the

18th century. As regards size and furnishings, the residential units developed into spaciouly laid out manor houses surrounded by well-tended, park-like gardens, which until today give the impression of feudal manors.

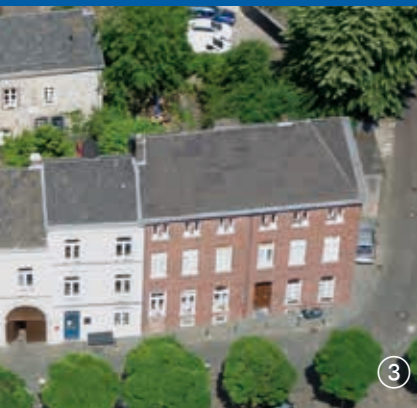


Former brass smelters in the Stolberg valley – modern life and old architecture

Besides the special atmosphere of the old town and the charm of the Wilhelminian Era, an extended leisurely walk through Stolberg gives an overview of the various building styles of the building assemblies commonly called copper yards, which are found throughout the whole city area where they appear as picturesque architectural elements of the townscape. Still today conception and construction of the courtyard buildings distinctly show the development of the town as well as the economic success of the brass industry in the Stolberg valley.

The "Kupferhof Schart" ① located in the south of the old town, was built in 1600 directly at the Vichtbach in the form of a two-complex courtyard building. Today's appearance of the "Schart" is characterized by the conversion of the building in 1808, at which the originally simple exterior facades were significantly changed.

In 1719 the „Schart“ as the first former brass smelter in Stolberg experienced a change in its use, when Matthias von Asten acquired it to establish a cloth factory.



In 1575 the first Stolberg brass smelter was built at today's Burgstraße, which later became the Adler pharmacy ②. Due to the needs of the time, also this courtyard complex was at first designed as a well-fortified building assembly, by dispensing to a great extent with a representative exterior view of the building. Today's appearance resulted from conversion work subsequently carried out.

In 1790 one of later in total seven countryside pharmacies in the district of Aachen, which existed until 1971, was established in the former brass smelter facilities; thus it worked without interruption for almost 200 years. Today it is used as a residential building.

After about 100 meters the „Kupferhof Alter Markt“ (copper yard old market square) ③ can be seen, which was formerly also called „Rose“. The stucco facade dating from the 19th century does not clearly reveal the age and the original function of this building, which was constructed around 1600.

Only the impressive inner courtyard of the building assembly, which today is used as a venue for the exhibition of art, gives an idea of the charm exuded by the former building.



Along the mighty castle the way goes through the narrow, winding alleys of the romantic old town to the "Kupferhof Sonntal" ④. This complex was built as extension of a brass smelter facility no longer in existence today and was constructed in 1730 as an independent building assembly.

In 1835 a glass factory was established in the Sonntal, which, however, stopped its production after only 15 years. After conversion or more precisely said extension of the building complex an iron foundry was founded in 1850, which operated for more than 100 years in this place. In the course of restoration work carried out in the old town the former "Kupferhof Sonntal" was redesigned in the 1980s and an attractive residential complex was created.

Compared to the brass smelters built in earlier periods, e.g. Schart or Rose, the impression of a feudal manor cannot be avoided in case of the "Kupferhof Grüenthal" ⑤.



The building assembly constructed in about 1700 with the centrally arranged manor and the two side wings built towards the front forms a generously dimensioned courtyard open to the north. In the course of its eventful history the courtyard building Grüenthal experienced several changes of use.

In 1889 the core piece of the spacious facility was bought by the family Wirtz, who moved its soap production to this place. After the Second World War the family Wirtz founded a pharmaceutical company of the same name in this location, which today is operating worldwide.

One of the most beautiful copper yards in Stolberg is the "Hof Rosenthal" ⑥, which was built in 1724 on behalf of Johannes Schleicher by the well-known master builder Tillmann Roland as a representative courtyard building assembly with an imposing bridge gate.