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City history

City history: The Biemenhorst housing estate "Sonnenschein"

City Archive presents the Historical Photo of the Month for April // Photo from Biemenhorst

The photo of the month for April is related to an event that hardly made the headlines 75 years ago, but brought about a fundamental improvement in the lives of various people: we are talking about the laying of the foundation stone and thus the realisation of the "Sonnenschein" housing estate in the municipality of Biemenhorst on 4 April 1949.

Four years after the end of the Second World War, this was not simply about housing or reconstruction. At the centre of the project was the provision of housing for the poorest of the poor, for single war widows, for refugees from the eastern territories, for people who had fallen on hard times through no fault of their own and who were also unable to help themselves through their own efforts.

This idea, based on Christian charity, was the brainchild of Bocholt factory owner Werner Borgers, who in October 1948 gathered together like-minded business owners from various sectors and representatives of the municipal administration and set up a non-profit building association with them.

The companies included the Lung construction company, the Harks joinery, the Klein-Wiele haulage company, the Unland electrical installation business and the Albert Ketteler architects' office. They all provided building materials, labour and services free of charge or at cost price for the first houses.

To realise the building project, Nikolaus Fürst zu Salm-Salm donated a four-acre plot of land in Biemenhorst between Büngerner Straße and Dannenkamp to the association by deed of gift. In the spring of 1949, construction of the houses began on the 700 square metre plots.

The buildings each had two separate 4-room flats of 46 and 40 square metres on the ground and top floors with cellar rooms and an adjoining shed. The first tenants moved in as early as the autumn of the same year. The entire estate of a dozen houses was completed in 1958. At the end of the 1960s, the first residents were able to purchase their homes.

The deed of foundation of the building project reads, among other things: *"These flats may bring light and joy back into the gloomy existence of those bombed out and refugees from the East. The housing estate was therefore named 'Sonnenschein'."* The streets on which the houses shown in the photo were built were given the names "Wilhelm-Buß-Stiege" and "Sonnenscheinstraße" by the Biemenhorst municipal council on 2 February 1950.





The historical photo of the month April
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