

## Memorial stone for Carl Kellner

In 1757 the park Rosengärtchen (Rose Garden) was the first cemetery outside of the city walls, and during WWI it was transformed into a park. In this process the gravestone of the Kellner family was lost.

In 1926 this memorial stone was erected with an incorrect birth date. Correct is that Carl Kellner was born on 21 March, 1826 in Hirzenhain/Oberhessen as the son of the local Buderus steel mill manager. His first name according to the baptismal registry was spelled with C. Around the age of 8 Carl Kellner moved with his parents to Oberndorf (today Solms) where his father was the manager of a steel mill in the service of the prince of Solms Braunfels.

After an apprenticeship in precision engineering, Kellner went on travels where he met Moritz Hensoldt in Hamburg. Several attempts were undertaken to open a joint business, but they failed. Kellner opened his workshop in Wetzlar in 1849 because he received financial support from his brother in law, the wealthy business man Johannes Hinckel. The workshops of Carl Kellner were located at the “reformierten Treppchen” (little reformed steps) Jäcksburg 29.

Although he started producing telescopes, Carl Kellner began to manufacture microscopes in 1851 and only two years later he was producing more microscopes than telescopes. By the time of his death, in 1855 there had been about 130 microscopes in three different variations produced, 5 large astronomical telescopes and approximately 100 hand held telescopes. The excellent reputation of his optical instruments was based on the high quality of the optical systems he used. The former state of knowledge in science as well as the nature of glass and the technical ability made them at least to the most perfect ones.

## Origin of the optical industry in Wetzlar: The first Workshop of Carl Kellner in the „Jäcksburg“

The roots of the optical industry in Wetzlar

Until a housing area was built in 1976, there stood a building at Jäcksburg 29, which was originally a rectory for the reformed community and later a section of the glove factory. Here Carl Kellner announced in 1849 the opening of his workshop with the booklet “The orthoscopical oculars” and advertised his products with a pricelist.

All the pioneers of the optical industry in Wetzlar before 1900 came from outside. The families Kellner, Hensoldt, Engelbert, and Seibert were related. The mother of Carl Kellner, the mother of Louis Engelbert, the mother of Mrs. Hensoldt and the grandmother of Wilhelm and Heinrich Siebert, were sisters, the 4 daughters of the shoemaker Rudesdorf from Haiger.

The fact that he worked together with his relatives is certainly not a coincident. Instead he had made the successful breakthrough to a better life and therefore looked for his employees from within the family circle. Carl Kellner had promised the mother of the brothers Wilhelm and Heinrich Seibert an apprenticeship for her sons, which was accepted after the death of Carl Kellner by Friedrich Belthle. With Moritz Hensoldt it was different, his marriage with a cousin of Kellner and Engelbert, was probably due to the friendship with Carl Kellner.

The recognition of the great mathematician, Carl Friedrich Gauß from Göttingen was especially important for Carl Kellner. The improvements by Kellner came from the combination of an achromatic eye lens with a biconvex lens by their focal length from, the former distanced field lens. This eyepiece was originally intended for telescopes, therefore resulted, based upon very large visual field, in a perfect non-curved exceptionally correct, sharp picture to the edge.

After the death of Carl Kellner in 1855, the workshop was run by his relative Luis Engelbert, from 1856 on by Friedrich Belthle from Bebenhausen near Tübingen, assistant to Kellner and later husband of his widow. Ernst Leitz I, who came from the south of Baden Sulzburg, heard about Belthle and the Kellner workshop while on his travels.

Ernst Leitz I came to Wetzlar in 1864. In 1869 he overtook the workshop after the death of Belthle and established the firm ERNST LEITZ in Wetzlar, since 1875/76 at the Karlsmunttor.



Friedrich Belthle: he married the widow of Kellner in 1856 and continued the workshop.

Literature and pictures:

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