

Public Relations

Hirschelgasse 9-11
D-90403 Nuremberg
www.museen.nuernberg.de

Documentation Centre

Nazi Party Rally Grounds

Telefon: +49-911-231-5666
Telefax: +49-911-231-8410
E-mail: dokumentationszentrum@stadt.nuernberg.de

02 The Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds

The site before 1933 – In a Democratic Tradition

The site surrounding the two “Dutzendteich” lakes and comprising Luitpold Grove park, the municipal stadium and the zoo in the south east of Nuremberg, about 2.5 kilometres from the city centre, had always been a traditional recreation and leisure area close to the city. In the late 19th century, public swimming baths, a lake-side café and promenade were established near Dutzendteich. In 1906, the Bavarian Jubilee Exhibition was held on the site, commemorating the incorporation of Nuremberg, formerly a Free City of the Empire, into the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1806. After this event, the site developed into a recreational area. In 1912, the zoo was opened here.

Luitpold Grove was a popular venue for political events, too. Here, on August 12, 1923, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and 50,000 democratically minded citizens pledged allegiance to the Weimar Constitution. A war memorial honouring the dead of World War I was erected on the north eastern side of Luitpold Grove in 1928/1929. The park in conjunction with the integrated municipal stadium also dates back to the 1920s. The site was then considered to be one of the most modern recreational areas and was awarded a gold medal in the Arts Competition on the occasion of the IX. Olympic Games in Amsterdam in 1928.

Designation as “Party Rally Grounds”

Nuremberg was designated “City of the Party Rallies” by the National Socialists for mainly pragmatic reasons. Long considered a city with a worthy historic tradition, the town was conveniently situated in the centre of Germany and boasted excellent traffic connections. Nuremberg had been a workers’ and industrial city as well as a stronghold of the Social Democratic Party up until 1933. Nevertheless, the local police were known to have sympathies with the Nazi Party. Also the Nazi Party could establish itself here at an early stage and with fairly good election results, mainly due to the propaganda spread by the “Franconian Führer” Julius Streicher, publisher of the virulently anti-Semitic propaganda paper “Der Stürmer”.

These were important factors in Hitler's decision to declare Nuremberg to be the “City of Nazi Party Rallies” in 1933. Later, the propaganda was to make good use of Nuremberg’s role as a medieval centre of trade, art and culture and as the venue of imperial diets – and in presumed historic continuity as venue of the Nazi Party Rallies.

The first Nazi Party Rallies were held 1923 in Munich and 1926 in Weimar, followed by those in 1927 and 1929 in Nuremberg’s Luitpold Grove, in the park, immediately in front of the memorial for the dead of World War.

museen der stadt nürnberg

Between 1933 and 1938, the Nazi Party Rallies were held in Nuremberg during one week in September of each year.

In 1934, Hitler decreed that the site was to be redeveloped and fashioned into the "Party Rally Grounds". All obstacles to this plan were to be removed. Thus the zoo had to be relocated. Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, was entrusted with the overall construction management. He created a visual link between the Party Rally Grounds and the medieval silhouette of the Old Town with the Imperial Castle. The "Nuremberg Party Rallies Association" (Zweckverband Reichsparteitage Nürnberg ZRN) was founded in 1935 for the organisation and financing of the party rallies as well as the building programme, members being the Nazi Party, the German Reich, the State of Bavaria and the City of Nuremberg.

With the beginning of World War II on September 1, 1939, the rapid progress of building came to a standstill, but the necessary provision of natural stone as well as all planning and project work continued. After the end of the campaign in France in 1940, building resumed, using the forced labour of prisoners of war for the construction of the Congress Hall and on the foundations for the German Stadium. Huge amounts of granite from over eighty quarries were delivered to Nuremberg. Under the heading "extermination through labour", thousands of concentration camp inmates were worked to death in quarrying the stone for the NS building programme. As the war continued, construction again came to a standstill in late 1942. The administration of the enterprise "NS Party Rallies", however, continued until March 1945, under the overall management of the Reich's Ministry of Finance.

The former SA and Hitler Youth camp south of the March Field, between 1939 and 1945 was a POW and forced labour camp. It was freed by American troops on 17./18. April 1945 and then used as an internment camp for leading members of the Nazi party and the SS.

Triumph of the US Army in 1945

On April 20, 1945, Hitler's birthday, following fierce fighting, the US army took Nuremberg. Three days later, they held a victory parade at the Zeppelin Grandstand. Afterwards they blew up the swastika which was installed on its central block. After the war, the US Army used the former SS barracks as well as areas surrounding the March Field for its own purposes. Between 1951 and the mid 1960s the Great Road served as an airfield for the US Air Force. Up until its withdrawal in 1992, the US Army used the former SS barracks and parts of the site for military and other purposes (such as sports events).

Refugee Camp

Beyond the former SA camp, the international refugee organisation "United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration", UNRRA, established a camp for displaced persons and refugees, predominantly from Eastern Europe. This camp existed until 1960.

The Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds after 1945

As far as the overall site was concerned, the City of Nuremberg was intent on restoring the original function of recreational area around the two Dutzendteich lakes. In the 1950s, the city administration had the ground between today's "Silbersee" (the excavation for the German Stadium which filled up with ground water) and Luitpold Grove re-developed into the Volkspark Dutzendteich. The grandstands in Luitpold Arena were demolished in the 1950s in the course of the landscaping of the park. Today, the area is a park again and much appreciated by Nuremberg citizens as a recreational area close to the city centre.

The former **March Field** and the camp area to its south were used as building ground for the new satellite town of Langwasser which was to solve the urgent housing problem (foundation stone laid on March 29, 1957). The eleven completed towers on March Field were consequently blown up in 1966/67. Langwasser today houses about 35,000 people.

After 1945, the NS buildings of the **Zeppelin Grandstand** and the Congress Hall became property of the City of Nuremberg. The Zeppelin Grandstand has been used as a venue for all sorts of open-air events, such as motorcycle and car races, political events, religious services and since the 1970s rock concerts. In 1967, the pillars on the grandstand were demolished, as they were structurally unsound, and in the early 1970s the side towers were reduced to half their original height for the same reason.

Under the auspices of the "Committee for the Rebuilding of the City of Nuremberg", the **Congress Hall** and the space on the Great Road were used for the first German Building Exhibition in September 1949. Nine months later, from July 14-30, 1950, the City of Nuremberg celebrated its 900th anniversary in this area. In 1969, Nuremberg City Council, following the concept of "trivialising" the structures, decided to use the unfinished structure of the Congress Hall for storage purposes and to rent out rooms to various companies.

In the post-war years, the NS buildings were utilised in a pragmatic fashion. Several plans for their use were never implemented, such as the re-development of the Congress Hall into a football stadium or a shopping centre. The Congress Hall currently serves as a storage centre for several companies and a store for Nuremberg's museums. The **buildings were classified** as historic monuments, examples of "the monumental buildings style of the Third Reich", **in 1973**. Since that time, the City of Nuremberg has been responsible for their maintenance and has spent a considerable amount of money on this task.

The first exhibition in the Zeppelin Grandstand

In 1985, the City of Nuremberg opened the exhibition "Fascination and Terror – Nuremberg and National Socialism" in the Zeppelin Grandstand on the former Party Rally Grounds. Until shortly before the opening of the documentation centre, this exhibition provided information on the topic. Because of structural problems, it could, however, only held open during

