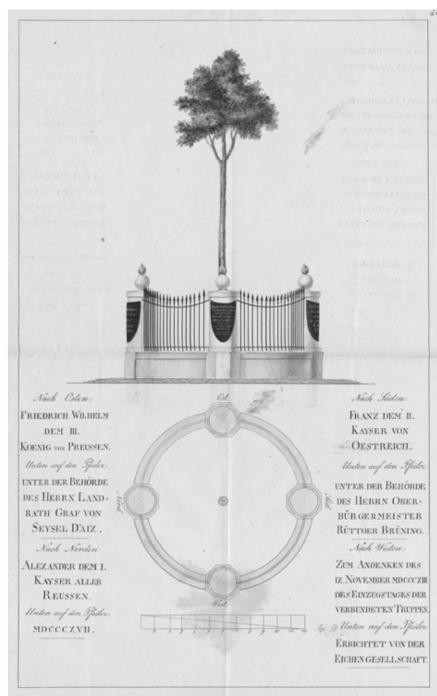


# THREE-EMPEROR-MONUMENT WITH FREEDOM OAK



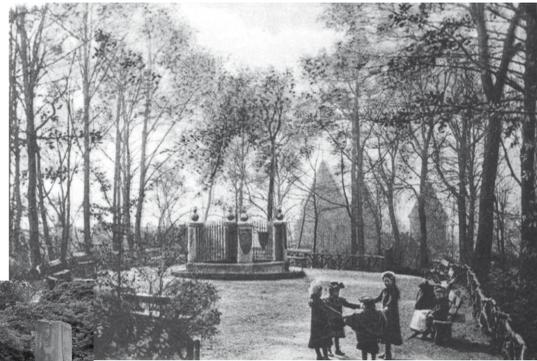
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2



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## UNDER NAPOLEON'S RULE

The Grand Duchy of Berg, founded by Napoleon I in 1806, was part of the French Emperor's satellite states. Napoleon's wars and the Continental System caused the forced recruitment of soldiers and high taxes in Berg, which again caused economic decline and social unrest.

More than 15 000 soldiers from Berg didn't return and of the more than 5 000 soldiers who participated in the Russia campaign only a few survived.

## FOR FREEDOM AND FATHERLAND

The *Völkerschlacht* (battle) near Leipzig in October 1813 was the turning point in the wars of liberation. Napoleon suffered a decisive defeat by the allied forces of Russia, Austria, Prussia and Sweden. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1813 Russian Cossacks, arriving as advance units of the allied forces, were cheered as liberators in Barmen and Elberfeld. Justus Gruner, appointed state commissioner of the conquered Generalgouvernement of Berg, expressed the intention of the victors in the following words, "We are all fighting for one goal, for mankind's holiest and dearest possessions, for freedom and fatherland".

## THE ELBERFELD FREEDOM OAK

For the first anniversary of their liberation the citizens of Elberfeld founded the *Oak Society*. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1814 they planted a Freedom Oak on Neumarkt, presented a sketch for a monument, and started collecting donations for its construction. The Congress of Vienna changed the boundaries of states in Europe. In June 1815 Prussia received the western part of Germany. The former Grand Duchy of Berg now belonged to the Prussian 'Rheinprovinz'.

## THE MONUMENT OF 1817

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1817 the *Oak Society* unveiled the completed Freedom Monument. Four columns with inscriptions are crowned with the freedom flame and connected by iron railings. Three columns bear the names of monarchs. They stand for the nations that contributed to the victory over Napoleon I. The fourth column informs about

the cause for the construction of the monument. After the founding of the German Empire in 1871, which endowed the Prussian king with the imperial crown, the name Three-Emperor-Monument became established.

## REMOVAL AND TEMPORARY END

In 1894 the monument was moved to the Hardt because of a remodelling of the Neumarkt. After WW II, in the 1950s, it was demolished to make room for a playground enlargement.

## THE MONUMENT RETURNS

A donation from the Foundation Mittelsten Scheid made a partial restoration possible with some rediscovered stone fragments. It was completed on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000 with the restoration of the column that was dedicated to the Prussian king. For the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the planting of the Freedom Oak the faithful restoration of the whole monument was completed thanks to a donation from the Russian Federation. The German-Russian Cultural Centre Applaus e.V. and a Wuppertal action group coordinated the restoration and presented the restored Freedom Monument to the public on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

1  
The Freedom Oak on Neumarkt in Elberfeld, planted by the Oak Society in 1814 and completed with a stone border in 1817. Photo: Historisches Zentrum Wuppertal

2  
The sketch for the monument presented by the Oak Society which the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III approved with applause in 1817. Source: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin

3  
During remodelling works of Elberfeld's Neumarkt in 1894, the Freedom

Monument – meanwhile called Three-Emperor-Monument – was moved to the Hardt until it had to give way to a playground in the 1950s and was finally demolished. Photo: Historisches Zentrum Wuppertal

4  
In 2000 a donation from a Wuppertal family made a partial restoration of refund fragments of the monument around a young oak possible. In 2014 the Russians financed the faithful restoration of the whole monument. Photo: Uwe Schinkel