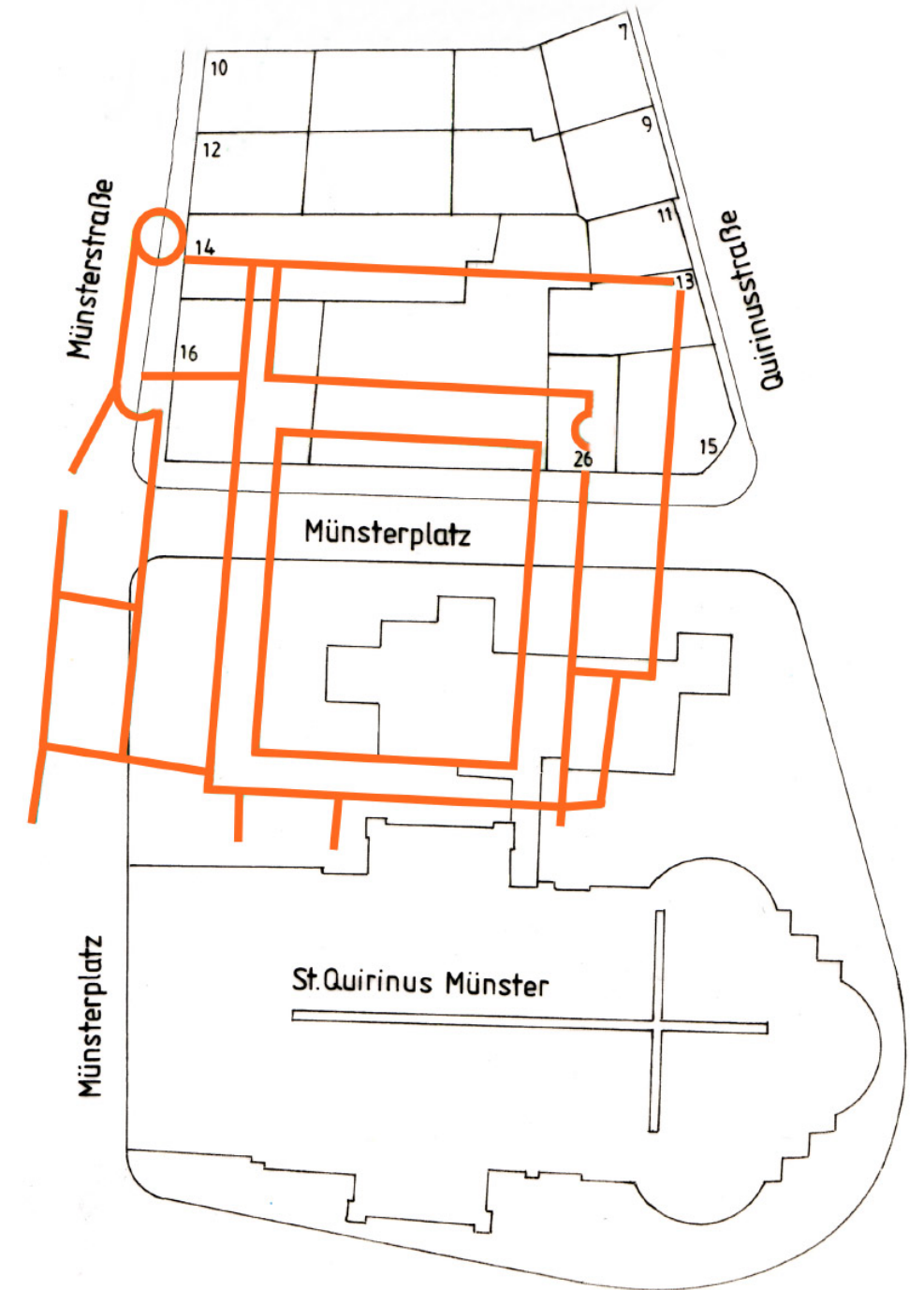




# ST. QUIRIN'S CONVENT

## Former Benedictine convent

The name of this square, created in 2018, commemorates the **Benedictine Convent of St. Quirin**, founded around 950 and located north of the cathedral. At the turn of the 13th century, the convent was converted into a **spiritual community for women** with a much more open way of life. The **canonesses** living in this type of institution for the spiritual well-being of unmarried women mostly came from the Lower Rhine landed gentry. From then on, they were no longer nuns. As such, they were allowed to wear secular clothing, have their own possessions and their own homes, and leave the convent – typically through marriage. The canonesses had the task of performing religious duties and looking after pilgrims. The community consisted of an average of 15 women – led by an elected **abbess** – who also represented them externally. Usually coming from the high (Rhenish) nobility, she was often a sister of the Archbishop of Cologne. Initially, pastoral care for the women was the responsibility of the abbot of the Benedictine monastery in Gladbach – though it was later taken over by secular clergy. These were canons, who also lived on the convent grounds. Such a situation led to both internal strife and ecclesiastical censure regarding the lifestyle in the spiritual community.



Floor plan of St. Quirin's Convent from the south-east, transferred to today's city map. (City of Neuss, Office for Urban Planning, Department of Archaeological Heritage Preservation)



Abbess with canonesses behind the canons and the shrine during the Quirin procession, around 1610 (Clemens Sels Museum Neuss, on loan from St. Quirin Parish Church)



Saint Quirin with the parish and endowment church, around 1670 (Neuss municipal archives)

Since its foundation, the history of the religious community had been marked by a conflict-ridden **relationship with the city** – in terms of politics, economic foundations and social organisation. The canonesses acted as independent, self-confident figures who helped shape the fortunes of Neuss. Besides the social status of the abbess in particular, this was also due to the fact that the St. Quirin Spiritual Community was an important **economic factor** in the city. It **owned extensive land** and several mills – all generating considerable income. Moreover, relocating the remains of Saint Quirin – which according to legend was done in 1050 by Abbess Gepa – had led to the convent developing into an important **pilgrimage centre**, where it gained importance beyond the confines of the region.



Canoness of the Quirin Spiritual Community, copperplate engraving, around 1760 (Neuss municipal archives)



The Quirin Spiritual Community with cloister and service buildings north of the cathedral, digital reconstruction (Martin Stitz, 2025). Apart from a floor plan from 1802, no illustrations of the women's spiritual community have survived.

The **new construction of the convent church** – today's Quirin Cathedral, which was initiated by Abbess Sophia in **1209** – should also be seen in this context. After actively shaping the history of the city and the church for around 800 years, the religious community was dissolved in 1802 during the course of secularisation. The canonesses fled across the Rhine, the **spiritual community's buildings were demolished** and the stones sold. Only a few **cellars** remained, which were uncovered during archaeological excavations in 1979 and converted.

(Sources and texts: Neuss municipal archives)



Relics of the former convent cellar beneath the houses between Quirinusstraße and Münsterstraße during excavation in 1979 (City of Neuss, Office for Urban Planning, Department of Archaeological Heritage) and after conversion into the "Stiftskeller" wine bar, around 2000 (photo: Thomas Mayer, Neuss)