

# THEODOR SCHWANN MEMORIAL



The city of Neuss honours one of its most important sons with the Schwann memorial by sculptor **Joseph Hammerschmidt**. It was inaugurated on the promenade on 8 June 1909 in the presence of internationally renowned scientists.

**Theodor Schwann** was born in Neuss in 1810 as the son of goldsmith and print shop owner Leonard Schwann and his wife Elisabeth, née Rottels. After studying medicine in Bonn, Würzburg and Berlin, he worked at the Berlin Institute of Anatomy and Physiology, where he discovered the digestive enzyme pepsin. He researched the muscular system and the structure of cells in plants and animals.



Model of the memorial in the workshop of sculptor Hammerschmidt, 1926 (Neuss municipal archives)



Schwann received the prestigious Copley Medal from the Royal Society in 1845 (Neuss municipal archives)

Since, as a Catholic, he was denied a professorship in Prussia, Schwann applied for a **professorship in anatomy** at the Catholic **University of Leuven**, which appointed him in 1838. From 1848 to 1880, he taught at the University of Liège, where he also developed a breathing apparatus for miners named after him. Theodor Schwann died in Cologne in 1892. He is buried in the **Melaten Cemetery**.



Schwann memorial with a view of Kanalstraße, postcard, around 1910 (Neuss municipal archives)



Theodor Schwann, 1810-1892 (Neuss municipal archives)

As early as 1899, efforts to honour Schwann in his hometown resulted in a **memorial plaque** at his **birthplace** at Büchel 18, followed by the naming of a **street** in his honour in 1908. The initiative to erect a memorial came from municipal councillor and medical officer Franz Rheins. It was funded by donations from Neuss residents as well as from physicians, natural scientists and universities outside the city. The city contributed 500 marks. A prominent spot on the promenade, laid out on the former city fortifications at the beginning of the 19th century by court gardener Maximilian Weyhe, was chosen for the site. It depicts the researcher seated in a 'Belgian professor's coat' and has been a listed monument since 2005.



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(Sources and texts: Neuss municipal archives)