



Historical Notes on the Kolleg's Buildings

The Griesbach Garden House – Prinzessinnenschlösschen

Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745–1812), professor of theology in Jena, had the house built in 1784–85 to serve as his summer house. Just beyond the perimeters of the old city walls, the building is situated right next to the botanical gardens. The view across the meadows to the river Saale was well known and extremely popular. Here, the great writers of Germany's Classical period met: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, as well as Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel. During the Napoleonic Wars, Griesbach and his wife opened their summer house taking in a number of refugees.

After Griesbach's death, Goethe arranged for the house to be sold to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach in 1818. Two years later, in 1820, Princess Augusta (later Queen of Prussia and German Empress, wife of Wilhelm I) and her sister Marie, the daughters of Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (1786–1859), started spending their summers here. The house then became known as the Prinzessinnenschlösschen, the princesses' palace. It was not all leisure-time for the princesses, however – through the good offices of Goethe, several professors of the university taught the two young girls in various subjects.

After the end of the monarchy in 1918, the house was sold by the last Grand Duke Wilhelm-Ernst to the Carl Zeiss Foundation. The house was used for various purposes before and after the Second World War – among them, as museum of contemporary art, and as office spaces; it has belonged to the Friedrich Schiller University Jena since 1989. In 2010–11, the house was restored in keeping with conservation regulations and has been the home of the Kolleg since December 2011. A marble bust of Maria Pavlovna, the granddaughter of Catherine the Great, now occupies a central place in the downstairs hall and serves as a reminder of the long-standing links with Eastern Europe. Equally enduring is the historic connection between Jena University and the former ruling dynasty, symbolized by the generous support of Prince Michael and Princess Dagmar of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach in furnishing the balcony room on the first floor.

The JenTower

Since early 2011, the Imre Kertész Kolleg has been housed on the fourteenth floor of the JenTower which is the best-known building in the city. Planning for the 28-floor cylindrical tower began in the late 1960s. In 1967, the GDR Council of Ministers decided to give East Germany's most important cities a makeover, aiming towards a new, socialist appearance. For Jena, this meant that the close interplay of science and technology was to be made more visible in the urban landscape. The purpose was to provide research space for the state-owned Carl Zeiss Jena optical works.

In order to create the necessary space, the existing historic houses that had survived the war were demolished in April 1969, and in January 1971, the tower was completed. However, it was the university that moved in and not the Carl Zeiss company. Zeiss had experienced an economic slump and the party leadership had changed its policy, making the prestigious project superfluous. What remained were the tower and a large, empty square – useful for demonstrations – for which major parts of the Old Town had been sacrificed.

After the university moved out in 1996 there was heated debate throughout Jena as to whether the building should be torn down or repurposed. An investor acquired the property in the late 1990s for a token sum and proceeded to carry out major renovations, including the construction of a new façade. Since then the tower has become an established site in the cityscape. Today it is considered a landmark of the city and its difficult history.