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Transforming wealth into beauty – the sociology of bankers' mansions in Hamburg, Frankfurt and Berlin

We can rightly ask ourselves why we should be interested in how bankers lived in their mansions in bygone days. These bankers are too little known today to personally interest us in terms of providing a keyhole view of the wealthy in times past. Yet there are three arguments that could justify our interest. They relate to the fact that in our cities today we are still faced with the legacy of these bankers' mansions.

Villa Rotonda by Andrea Palladio
(© Wikimedia Creative Commons)



Mansions stand alone, surrounded by large gardens or parks. Some of these parks created by bankers around their mansions still exist today and are preserved and maintained as valuable public green spaces within the city, as in Frankfurt, or as extensive suburban parks in Hamburg and Berlin. Mansions arguably had a major, albeit still largely unexplored today, significance as models for middle-class living habits. The bourgeoisie considered building if not a grand mansion, then a detached family home with a garden as a goal of a successful career.



Stourhead House
(© Wikimedia Creative Commons,
Photo Jon Wornham)

A freestanding house also embodied the promise of freedom and ownership, a promise that is still evident today. The desire for freedom and ownership shapes and plagues urban development to this day. When bankers' mansions are preserved, they are used for public or prestigious purposes. Such rooms and suites of rooms are currently being built neither for residential nor for work purposes, yet they are evidently highly valued once more for their prestigious ambience, their atmosphere.

The origin of the banker's mansion

The banker's mansion cannot be easily classified in terms of architectural history like similar grand houses such as the artist's villa, which has a studio, or the industrialist's mansion, located within sight of the factory so that it could be easily supervised. Even the presence of a safe does not necessarily indicate a banker's mansion. The banker's mansion is a grand house commissioned by a banker, whom we always assume to be very rich however. It remains to be seen whether invisible career-related rules had to be adhered to. There are two periods of construction of bankers' mansions that are interesting from a sociological point of view, namely the period around 1800, when the mansion culture was introduced to Germany, and the period between 1880 and 1914, when it flourished once again, but then came into conflict with the needs of modern living and saw a fresh start after World War I.

At that time the mansion had already been evolving for some 2,000 years. During the Roman Empire it was a country estate with a manor house, a refuge to which one would withdraw in the summer to escape the unhealthy climate in the city. The culture of luxury villas belonging to wealthy Romans was rediscovered in the Renaissance. Members of the Florentine and Venetian nobility now had mansions built on their estates, which became a meeting place for all sorts of summer amusements. It was the mansions built by architect Palladio that had the largest resonance in the history of architecture; he constructed some 50 country mansions in the area around Venice in the 16th century.

Palladio's buildings were reduced to geometric, i.e. from a contemporary viewpoint cosmic and thus natural dimensions stemming from ancient times and appeared to many in the 18th century to provide deliverance from contrived Baroque forms. In England, with the invention of the English

The Pantheon in Stourhead Garden
(© Wikimedia Creative Commons,
Photo Luke Gordon)



landscape park in the 18th century, a new ideal combination emerged of an advancement of the Palladian mansion and the landscape park. Thus the banker Henry Hoare, for example, purchased the Stourhead country estate and had a Palladian mansion built there by architect Colen Campbell, while his son Henry Hoare Jr. (1705-1785) created the extensive landscape garden at Stourhead as of 1743. He used paintings by Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin to provide inspiration for the ideal landscape.

This new idea of a mansion, i.e. a country manor promising beauty and harmony and built in line with "natural" dimensions on an estate not used for agricultural purposes, but one artfully designed, came to Germany via various channels.

The profession of banker arose in Germany around 1750. Unlike in other professions, bankers were unable to show the fruits of their labor. Their commercial success manifested itself in a good reputation and in an accumulation of wealth. Not all bankers were keen to show their wealth. Indeed, some kept a low profile, others were frugal. Yet when they put their money into material form, it was first and foremost in a grand home and bank building, as it was customary to combine the two under one roof not only for bankers until the mid-19th century.

Around 1800: Hamburg and Frankfurt

The question arises as to whether or not several of these bankers soon became so wealthy as to be the first members of the middle class who had this new type of luxury residence built as summer retreats. This is indeed the case for the Free Imperial and trading cities of Hamburg and Frankfurt, but not for the royal seat of Berlin, where court officials had the first mansions built in the Tiergarten district around 1800.

The first two mansions were commissioned in 1789 and 1791 by Jean César and Pierre Godeffroy, two brothers from Hamburg who had both business contacts and family relations in England. They were Huguenots, orphaned at an early age, self-made men each with their own company. The elder was a trader, the younger a merchant banker, who engaged in overseas trade alongside his banking business. The architect of the mansions was Danish, one Christian Frederik Hansen. He had been appointed to Altona as Danish Regional Architect in 1784 after studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Art in Copenhagen and in Italy. Hansen had never before built a grand mansion when César Godeffroy commissioned him in 1789 to erect this building,

Front and rear of César Godeffroy's mansion on the River Elbe near Blankenese (© M. Rodenstein)



today known as the “House in the Deer Park”, on the elevated geest landscape, which at the time was covered only in heath, on the River Elbe near to Blankenese. Here, as in Hansen’s other mansions along the Elbchaussee thoroughfare, Palladio’s influence (columns and temple-like entrances) is abundantly clear. Overall, five bankers and four merchants commissioned Hansen to build mansions for them on the banks of the Elbe between 1789 and 1806. And at the time there were some 24 banking houses in Hamburg and Altona. So what set the bankers Godeffroy, Thornton, Lawaetz, Gebauer and J. F. Baur apart as the first to build mansions? This is most evident in the example of Pierre Godeffroy, who according to my research had the first banker’s mansion in Germany built. Pierre Godeffroy was married to an Englishwoman, the sister of his friend and business partner John Thornton, also a banker. He had a great interest in the arts, which he also indulged on his business trips to Paris (as a member of the Hamburg legation at Napoleon’s court), Switzerland and Italy. He took some of his ten children with him each time and visited museums with them. He had a collection of paintings and hosted musical soirees and plays at his (bank) house on Jungfernstieg on the banks of the Binnenalster lake. The townhouse provided a prestigious setting where he could conduct business and entertain friends in winter. The construction of the mansion began in 1791 after Pierre had managed to secure a plot of land directly next to his brother’s. The buildings were approx. 700 meters apart (beeline).

The mansion was only home to the family in the winter; from March to October they moved to the country with all the furniture, servants and tutors. The father came when business allowed. The servants lived in the basement of these mansions, which also housed the kitchen. This new luxury type of residential building, the “mansion”, differed crucially from other summer retreats and country manors that had long since been found outside the city walls of major towns by means of their particular aesthetics, which referenced not only the coordinated interior and exterior Classicist design of the building, but also the artful way in which the mansion was set within the landscaped grounds. It would be no exaggeration to view the mansions of this time within their extensive gardens as a *gesamtkunstwerk*, whose subject is the beautiful design of the building based on nature (the cosmos) in connection with the artistically designed nature of the surrounding park. The interior matched the Classicist exterior of the edifice. It was likewise designed by Hansen.

Pierre Godeffroy’s White House had a relatively small entrance, wooden columns and was originally probably painted a sand or ocher color (© M. Rodenstein)





Jenisch House on the River Elbe
(© M. Rodenstein)



Mural with a Roman landscape in
Jenisch House
(© M. Rodenstein)



Mansion built by Martin Haller for
Moritz Warburg and his wife in 1889
(© M. Rodenstein)



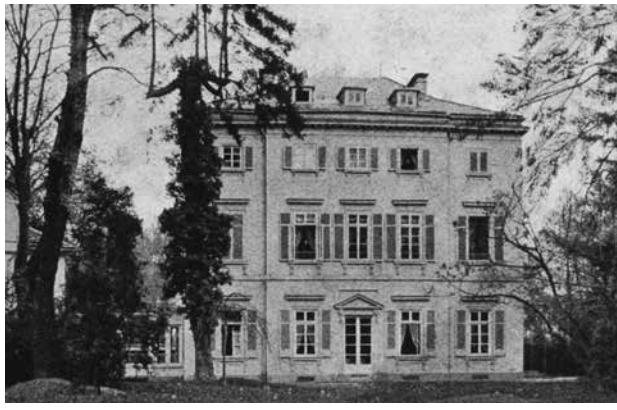
Villa Gogel (today Sommerhoff
Park), gouache ca. 1810
(© Hist. Museum Frankfurt, photo
Ursula Seitz-Gray)

With replicas of newly excavated ancient statues from Rome as permanent decorative pieces it looked like a museum of ancient history; but landscapes from Antiquity also featured in artistic form on the walls in wall coverings and plaster friezes. The garden hall was the central room in these mansions owing to its view of the park. Floor-length doors opened out onto a loggia, but there was not yet direct access from the house to the park. The further architectural development of this type of residence was later marked by an increasing opening of the house towards the park – initially by way of steps from the garden hall leading outside.

All the bankers who owned mansions on the banks of the Elbe were highly educated, art lovers, modern and passionate garden designers, who with the help of gardeners shaped nature into the images of English gardens we are familiar with. Yet as Huguenots, Englishmen or citizens of Altona, they were from the viewpoint of Hamburg citizens also social outsiders, meaning, they didn't belong to the Lutheran class that set the tone. Yet in building mansions on the Elbe, they were pioneers. Indeed, the first of the established Lutheran Hamburgers to construct a mansion on the river was senator and banker Martin Johann Jenisch. From 1828 (until 1834) he had a mansion in the late Classicist style realized, designed by Hamburg architect Forsmann but also based on designs by Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

It is not hard to see how these mansions on the Elbe are linked to the business dealings of these merchant bankers. In 1802 the banker Georg Friedrich Baur from Altona had a hill formed in his park above the Elbe on which he installed a cannon to be used to salute his ships as they arrived and departed. Other mansion owners raised flags. They wanted to show solidarity with the daring captains and crews of the ships on which the economic existence of these families depended. The high banks of the River Elbe gradually became a magnet for affluent families looking to have a mansion built. The director of Norddeutsche Bank Max Schinckel (1887), the Hamburg banking family Warburg with five sons (1897) and the two Münchmeyer brothers, both bankers (1906), all of whom had amassed great wealth between 1880 and 1914, also purchased huge plots on the banks of the Elbe, now between Blankenese and Rissen, in order to transform them into large parks with mansions.

The situation was entirely different in Frankfurt. Although there were at least twice as many banks in the city as in Hamburg and Altona around 1800, only two mansions set within English-style landscape gardens were built, both by bankers. And that despite the fact that Frankfurt also had an architect familiar with the construction of such grand houses, namely Nikolaus Alexandre Salins de Montfort (1753-1838), who had fled France before the Revolution. The first mansion was commissioned by calvinist banker Johann Noe Gogel (1758-1825), son of the well-known Frankfurt art and book collector who shared the same name. It was realized around 1806 probably by Salins de Montfort, who represented the Classicism of the Paris School of Architecture in Frankfurt. The second mansion belonged to marchand banquier Georg Brentano in Rödelheim close to Frankfurt, whose architect is unknown. Brentano loved park design and over the course of 40 years bought the entire present-day park area in Rödelheim. These two mansion owners are likewise known to have kept a clear distance to Frankfurt society.ⁱ



Villa Brentano in Rödelheim
ca. 1860 (© Institut für
Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt/Main)

Thus in summary we can say that the first mansions were in Hamburg mostly and in Frankfurt exclusively built by bankers, who were not only wealthy, highly educated, art loving and cosmopolitan, but also lived slightly apart in social terms from the leading Lutheran society of their city, dominated by an entrepreneurial spirit. This explains why they were able to break down established residential norms of the middle class with the construction of their mansions and made use of columns, architraves, etc., which until that point had been reserved for the nobility. On a more modest scale, typical of Frankfurt gardens at that time, in 1799 Salins de Montfort built a mansion for calvinist banker Jakob Friedrich Gontard-Wichelhausen in Frankfurt's Westend district, at Bockenheimer Landstrasse 42. He also constructed Villa Leonhardi in 1806 for banker and Freemason Baron Leonhardi, which fell to ruin in 1905. Today a replica is located on a different site. If we consider that at this time there were roughly twice as many banks in Frankfurt compared to Hamburg and Altona, the small number of mansions certainly requires explanation.

The fact that the Bethmann bankers, until 1820 the most important banking house in Frankfurt, did not initially have a mansion built could be down to their banking business, whereby unlike the merchant bankers in Hamburg they earned money with bonds for royal courts, particularly in Austria. Simon Moritz Bethmann sought ennoblement at the Viennese court in 1808, enabling him even better access to the customers at court. As a member of the nobility, he now seemingly considered himself more a manorial lord, commissioning Salins de Montfort to extend Riedhof (Sachsenhausen district) in 1816 as a manor house with a large banqueting hall. The summer house (purchased in 1783 and then converted) belonging to the Bethmann family just outside Friedberger Tor, one of the old city gates, was gradually extended and converted into a mansion over the course of more than 50 years. Neither were the Rothschilds among the families to own mansions early on. They lived in the ghetto until its destruction in 1798, had overtaken the Bethmanns in the bond business by 1820, were ennobled in 1817 (becoming barons in 1822) and purchased two modest summer houses at Bockenheimer Landstrasse 10 and Neue Mainzer Strasse 33 in 1818. Conversion work did not begin immediately however. For after anti-Jewish two-day riots in Frankfurt in 1819, during which the windows of the Rothschilds' home-cum-commercial premises were smashed, it was by no means certain whether they wanted to remain in Frankfurt at all, where Jews were still denied citizenship. It was not until 1831 that Amschel Mayer von Rothschild and Frankfurt architect Friedrich Rumpf began enlarging the house and gardens at Bockenheimer Landstrasse 10 into a mansion.



Left: Palais Rothschild at Bockenheimer Landstrasse 10 (© Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt/Main)



Right: Villa Günthersburg ca. 1855 (© Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt/Main)

In 1837 Carl Mayer von Rothschild bought the Günthersburg grounds and hired Rumpf, the same architect used by Amschel Mayer von Rothschild, to erect a mansion (1845) in the Frankfurt Classicist style, but with arched windows, which were novel at the time. That same year the Rothschilds also purchased the Grüneburg grounds, where work was begun on a large summer mansion for nephew Wilhelm Carl, who came from Naples, on an artificially raised site. The Rothschilds commissioned French architect Bellanger to design the residence and had Frankfurt architect von Essen build it in the style of the French Renaissance (Louis XII). It was the first historicist banker's mansion in Frankfurt. Although all these mansions belonging to the Rothschild, Bethmann, Brentano and Gogel families were demolished a long time ago, the memory of them extends across the large inner-city parks into our day and age.



The Neue Palais at the "green castle", constructed in 1844/45, was destroyed at the end of World War II (© Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt/Main)

1880-1914: Frankfurt and Berlin

The massive population growth in the cities led to the areas that were formerly home to summer mansions becoming more densely built. In Frankfurt's West-end district for instance there were now 17 families permanently living on the area that was home to one family with its summer mansion. It was a similar situation in Berlin's Tiergarten quarter. In Berlin private individuals took the initiative and founded colonies of mansions outside the city, whereas in Frankfurt wealthy bankers and industrialists moved out to the Taunus hills for the summer. Not only the new squeeze in the cities, but also the increasing anti-Semitism, now resting on racial ideology, had led to the emergence of processes of segregation.

With the separation of living and commercial space for bankers after 1850, building a prestigious banking house became a priority. At the same time however, building a grand mansion in the city had become standard, for even as a private individual a banker represented his business, which did not apply to the same extent for the directors of the new incorporated banks in Berlin. In the architecture of these grand houses historicism as a form of rediscovery of European art and architectural history and its reinterpretation had ousted Classicism as a rediscovery of ancient architectural styles. Now, beauty was no longer predominantly linked to ancient architecture, but seen in the structures of various architectural eras, indeed, in historicism all art-historical epochs were considered of equal importance and were able to be mixed.

Builders were able to choose which architectural style they wanted for their mansion, with which they sought to outwardly present and culturally anchor themselves. In this period most architects could realize buildings in all styles: Neogothic, Neorenaissance, Neobaroque or Neoclassicism, which could also be mixed for city mansions, whereas for summer country manors exposed timber-framework and brick as historical building methods/materials were now primarily rediscovered as decorative elements. Owing to this freedom of choice and their public image the mansion as an art form posed a considerable challenge for bankers seeking to transform their wealth into beauty. With which style should they identify? There were also certain boundaries that needed to be respected in the self-presentation of bankers' mansions, indeed, it was by no means indifferent how someone to whom one entrusted one's money lived. The danger for bankers and their business reputation was, being so wealthy, in the temptation to build too big, too pompous a mansion. This would show that they were unable to correctly judge what is appropriate and could lose their clients' confidence, the banker's most important capital. Not all bankers managed to adhere to this unwritten rule.

In 1891 Villa Andrae was built. It was commissioned by banker Albert Andrae, who took his wife's name de Neufville, based on plans by Frankfurt architect Franz von Hoven. Andrae wished to see numerous building elements typical of Frankfurt in his mansion. We can make out the Renaissance gables found on Frankfurt's Römerberg and the Rententurm. Moreover, the timber-framework is shaped into a Rosicrucian symbol and thus remembers an ancestor who wrote influential manuscripts for this movement in the 17th century.

The mansion had 29 rooms and 1,520 square meters of living and usable space and soon became known as the Protzenburg ('splurge castle'). By building the tower, the banker presumably sought to deliberately compete with Königstein Castle, which was indeed subsequently deemed inappropriate. It could also be suggested that he wished to outdo other mansions in Königstein, such as that built by Marie von Bethmann in 1881, who also hired Franz v. Hoven, and that belonging to the Rothschilds (built by Bauqué and Pio) of 1888. Naturally I have no proof of a direct connection, but Andrae largely inherited the fortune he put into building the mansion. The banking house Goll, where Andrae worked, ceased doing business in 1915.

All these mansions were at the time described as picturesque, meaning they represented a contrast to the symmetrical structure of Classicist mansions. Architects sought to provide comfort and to open up the house towards the park with oriels, balconies, verandas and terraces.



Villa Andrae in Königstein
(© Wikimedia public domain)



Villa Andrae and Burgruine
Königstein around 1900
(© Wikimedia public domain)

The mansions built by bankers in Frankfurt look very different. Their location also reveals something about the relationship between Jewish and Christian banking families, which had more of an impact in the private than the commercial sphere with the anti-Semitism that openly erupted in the 1880s. The bankers' social circles as well as the locations of their mansions saw a much clearer split than in the first half of the 19th century. Particularly on Schaumainkai the banking families Metzler, Andreae, Grunelius, Hauck, Neufville, which were also related, grouped together, whereas Jewish bankers built their mansions close to their relatives in the Westend district and when Palmengarten was built also preferred to live close by the gardens. Charles Hallgarten, a banker whose father had found his fortune in America, came to Frankfurt to live out his days. In 1881-2 he had a Neo-Renaissance mansion built on Siesmayerstrasse by architect Franz von Hoven.



Left: Villa Riesser in Frankfurt ...
 Right: ... and the neighboring Villa
 Bonn (© M. Rodenstein)

Diagonally opposite, the Frankfurt-born lawyer and banker Dr. Jakob Riesser built a Neo-Renaissance mansion in 1893; designed by Berlin architect Ernst Eberhard Ihne it looked almost austere in comparison to Hallgarten's residence. Riesser had been director of the Bank für Handel und Industrie (Darmstädter Bank) in Berlin since 1888 and in 1901 founded the banking association Centralverband des Deutschen Bank- und Bankiergewerbes in Berlin. Ihne, whom the Kaiser in Berlin commissioned to realize many buildings, was a recognized authority. Two years later (1895-97) Wilhelm Bonn hired the same Berlin architect to construct his mansion on the neighboring plot. Bonn, born in Frankfurt (1843-1921), returned from New York in 1885, where he had enjoyed success financing railway businesses. He became a partner of Lazard Speyer-Ellissen, alongside Rothschild and Stern the only Frankfurt banking house of the so-called Prussian Consortium, meaning this banking house was considered in the issuing of government bonds by Prussia and the German Empire. Bonn attached great value to both a grand show of his standing and familial closeness. The religious Jewish family's closeness was one of the ways in which they buffered themselves against the dangerous anti-Semitism. The family owned five additional mansions in the immediate vicinity.

The family gathered every Friday in the main hall in Villa Bonn to celebrate the Sabbath. The family's mansions, located close to Palmengarten, radiated an unbroken self-confidence. In hiring the Berlin architect, the family showed that it shared the tastes of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his mother. It also documented the commercial connection to Prussia and the German Empire. At this time in Frankfurt, as we can see, wealth was still displayed and not hidden, as is the case today. All the bankers named here were generous with donations and endowments, but none more so than Charles Hallgarten, whose funeral in 1908 is said to have been attended by 20,000 grateful people.ⁱⁱ

Casting a glance at the directors of the early incorporated banks in Berlin, who were not required to represent their banks to the same extent as bankers, we can see whether they differ from bankers in the way they lived. Unlike Frankfurt banks, Berlin banks played a significant role in the private expansion of the urban space, including by building colonies of mansions outside the city proper. Deutsche Bank of 1870 and Berliner Handels-Gesellschaft of 1856 jointly developed the marshy Grunewald area into such a colony. The banks and shareholders of the housing company earned very well on the development of Grunewald.

Carl Fürstenberg of Berliner Handels-Gesellschaft, who had agreed with Georg Siemens of Deutsche Bank on how to conduct business at the beginning of the project in 1889, secured several plots for himself and his politically and economically influential Jewish friends and colleagues. It is notable that none of the Deutsche Bank directors, who like Fürstenberg were all self-made men, had mansions built here, i.e. neither Georg Siemens (ennobled 1899, died 1901) or Arthur Gwinner (ennobled 1910) nor their Jewish colleagues Hermann Wallich or Max Steinthal, who at the time all lived in extensive apartments and sometimes in their own houses or mansions in the Tiergarten district.

Georg Siemens arguably had the most unusual living arrangements. He had an apartment block and rented out the apartments to friends. On the Deutsche Bank Supervisory Board opinion was split on the prospects of success of the Grunewald development project. Wallich was the only one to buy a plot there, on which he had a log house built where the family could enjoy picnics on weekends. It seems as though this area was left to Fürstenberg and his friends, and perhaps the others avoided their society.ⁱⁱⁱ This in turn may have been down to the lively, salon-like conviviality the Jewish Fürstenbergs displayed first in their mansion in Tiergarten, then in Grunewald, similarly to the private bankers and brothers Robert and Franz von Mendelssohn who also lived here, and lastly in their apartment in the Berliner Handels-Gesellschaft bank building. The Hamburg ship owner Albert Ballin wrote about it in 1911 in a letter to his friend, journalist Maximilian Harden. Both were among the Fürstenbergs' guests and friends: "Ministers, diplomats and dignitaries were pulled across the room by their hair, as it were; people sought to push themselves into the center of social life and yet achieved nothing more than to breed anti-Semitism."^{iv}

Many Jews who sought to quietly assimilate in Berlin society, such as close friends Hermann Wallich (1833-1928) and Max Steinthal (1850-1940), criticized as dangerous this strategy of acting as though anti-Semitism didn't affect them. They had their children baptized and established their own small social circles.

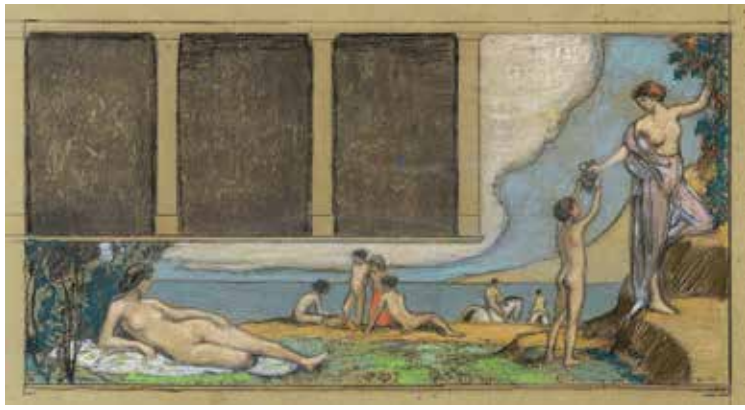


Georg Siemens' residence in Berlin on the corner of Tiergartenstr. 37 / Hitzigstr. (© Staatsarchiv Darmstadt)

It is not surprising that they moved away from the Tiergarten quarter, considered a show of Jewish ostentation, and built their mansions on Uhlandstrasse (Charlottenburg district) close to one another. Another neighbor was the highly influential museum director Wilhelm Bode, who advised them on artistic matters and acquisitions, and in return received an insider tip for a share purchase from Max Steinthal.^v Their mansions now showed evidence of the growing contradictions between the historicist mansion culture, with which those Jewish bankers seeking to assimilate anchored their identity in German history, and the changed, new needs of daily life. Villa Wallich, built in 1906 by Breslauer & Salinger in the style of the German Renaissance, can be seen as Hermann Wallich's commitment to the era of Dürer; the paintings he collected and donated, on the advice of Wilhelm Bode, also came from this age of Humanism. The mural by Ludwig von Hofmann^{vi} that embellished the staircase was contemporary art, but Art Nouveau already in opposition to Historicism. The result was a break in style between the inside and outside. The mural references a new relationship between man and nature.

As in almost all historicist mansions, the typical main room – as in Villa Steinthal (built in 1895 by Cremer & Wolffenstein) – was the hall, which was something of a dark cave owing to the paneled ceilings alone, and which the artwork, stained-glass windows painted with late-Gothic motifs, darkened still further. The historicist mansion had lost all the brightness and light of the early Classicist mansions. The unfavorable light conditions in the building were now improved by joining the music room and conservatory by means of a mirrored pane that could be lowered using hydraulic power, a mechanism that reappears in the 1920s in various mansions of the modern era (but now as a drop window to end the division of inside and outside). The new requirements in terms of light and airiness, as well as freed bodies, which stemmed from the Lebensreform movement, had consequences for the directors of Deutsche Bank and their wives.

Instead of summer mansions Gwinner, Wallich (both in 1911) and Steinthal (not until 1924) maintained estates they could use in the summer. They were valued as investments and as a way for the owner to live a less restricted life away from the hustle and bustle of Berlin. Only Georg Siemens, who had inherited an estate, bought a mansion in sunnier climes abroad, in Stresa on Lago Maggiore, as early as 1895, which proved to be a forerunner of bankers' mansions abroad today. Here again we see a clear difference in the behavior of directors of incorporated banks. Whereas Fürstenberg conducted himself more like a private banker (very similar to private bankers and brothers Franz and Robert Mendelssohn) the apartments and sociability of the early



Design for the mural by Ludwig von Hofmann for Villa Wallich on Berlin's Uhlandstrasse (with the kind permission of Ketterer Kunst)

Deutsche Bank directors did not represent Deutsche Bank, but rather the individual comforts and various interests, and presumably also the need to own a country estate like the nobility.

If we consider how we wish to live today we can see how strongly the mansion culture imported to Germany around 1800, with its opening up of the house to the outside space, has shaped our modern ideas on living. At the same time we must wonder why the aspect of the architectural ostentation of Classicism and Historicism outlined here means so much once again today, with several surviving bankers' mansions in Hamburg, Frankfurt and Berlin often being used for festive and representational purposes. Are we, like those in the 19th century, looking for our firm place in history with the help of architecture or is it a case of throwing over the old splendor like an evening gown, with the change of scenery, the opposite of ours today, providing the attraction? With this question I wish to direct attention to the fact that the topic of 19th-century bankers' mansions still influences our society and can be seen as a mirror for determining one's own position today.

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ⁱ Georg Brentano belonged to the Romantic circle of his siblings Clemens and Bettina, and Hölderlin writes in a letter to Hegel, whom he recommended to take the position as private tutor for the Gogels, that the latter "largely keep to themselves, because they, and particularly the lady, do not wish to deal with Frankfurt society and its stiffness and poverty of the heart and mind, lest they become tainted and have to conceal their domestic gaiety." Letter dated 1796, cited in Roswitha Mattausch: "Herrensitz, Kinderparadies und verstecktes Refugium - Die Wandlungen des Sommerhoff-parks", in: Evelyn Brockhoff, Heidrun Merk (eds.) *Frankfurter Parkgeschichten*, (Frankfurt/Main: Societätsverlag, 2014), p. 82

ⁱⁱ Hans-Otto Schembs, Charles L. Hallgarten, in: Arno Lustiger, Hans Otto-Schembs (eds.), Charles Hallgarten. *Leben und Wirken eines Frankfurter Sozialreformers und Philantropen*, (Frankfurt/Main: Societätsverlag, 2003), pp. 13-88, here p. 8

ⁱⁱⁱ Werner Weisbach, son of Jewish banker Valentin Weisbach, describes in his biography that as a child he was forbidden from socializing with the Fürstenberg daughters. However, in the story of Carl Fürstenberg's life written by his son Hans, Max Steinthal is described as a friend of the Fürstenbergs and the friendship between the wives of Steinthal and Fürstenberg is documented. Nevertheless, the Steinthals were not among the permanent guests (*habitués*) of the Fürstenbergs' salon.

^{iv} Cited in Jan Andreas May, "Die Villa als Wohnkultur und Lebensform. Der Grunewald vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg", in: Heinz Reif (ed.) *Berliner Villenleben*. (Berlin: Mann, 2008), pp. 285-308, here p. 295

^v Max Steinthal wrote to Bode on May 29, 1905: "Perhaps you might buy some shares in Elektrische Licht- und Kraft, trading today at 130%, and about to realize older holdings at great benefit. The last piece of information is intended solely for you personally, and I ask for your utmost discretion. Many thanks for your constant efforts in the artistic furnishing of our home." SMPK/ZA, Bode estate, cited in Ernst Siebel, *Der großbürgerliche Salon: 1850-1918, Geselligkeit und Wohnkultur*, (Berlin: Reimer, 1999), p. 239

^{vi} Annette Wagner-Willke, *Ludwig von Hofmann und das Wandbild*, dissertation in the Philosophy Faculty at the University of Freiburg. <https://www.freidok.uni-freiburg.de/fedora/objects/freidok:8636/datastream/FILE1/content>