



## Ledigenheim – Small is Beautiful

In bygone days, as the burgeoning industry sucked huge masses into cities as labourers, altruistic thinkers set up special boarding homes providing singles, mostly young males, immigrating from the countryside into urban regions, with a home

at rental costs fitting, but not consuming smaller incomes. The “Ledigenheim Rehoffstrasse”, the bachelor boarding house in Hamburg’s city centre, is such a survivor of a socially empathetic past.

The „Ledigenheim Rehoffstrasse“ opened its doors in 1913, in the shadow of Hamburg’s landmark church St Michaelis, close to the busy port and shipyards. Since then, it has continuously served as a home to seamen and dockers. About 120 males live in small, inexpensive single rooms in the five-floored building – and some of them have been tenants for over 40 years.

When it opened, the building was unusually well appointed, its initiators wished to share increasing living standards with the less fortunate. It had the facilities to feed its boarders in the oak-pannelled dining and common room, in which “cultural events”

once took place. Its staircases feature terracotta floors, heavy wrought iron spindles, massive mahogany handrails and Art Nouveau wallpaping. Every floor level had its own matron; she was the community’s mother, kept a sharp eye on her flock, and would wash and iron a shirt – and listen to a heartfelt story.

In the course of its 104 year history, the building changed hands many times, and was recently purchased by a Danish property investment group with plans to turn the 120 rooms into modern flats. But two young Hamburger citizens, Antje Block and Jade Jacobs, managed to convince the in-

vestors to sell the building which they will keep and renovate. They intend to return its public spaces back to their past splendour and keep the boarding house concept alive. “Cultural events” have already returned – gigs, lectures, art exhibitions and educational programmes are regular events in the yet-to-be restored dining / common room.

The Offen Group is proud to contribute to the funding required to restore the „Ledigenheim Rehoffstrasse“ in Hamburg.

Visit [www.rehoffstrasse.de](http://www.rehoffstrasse.de) and discover more on an unusual example of private initiative for a good deed.



Historical pix: G.Koppmann & Co Hamburg aus dem Hamburgischen Architekturarchiv. Contemporary pix: YPS Peter Neumann.

The “Ledigenheim Rehoffstrasse” then and now. Top row: The dining / common room. Centre: The staircase at the main entrance. Bottom row: The boarding house building viewed from the Rehoffstrasse.