



**Address:**  
 Alter St.-Matthäus-Kirchhof  
 Grossgörschenstrasse 12-14  
 10829 Berlin-Schöneberg

**Nearest Station:**  
 S-Bahn station Yorckstrasse

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# Old St. Matthew's Cemetery



## Old St. Matthew's Cemetery

In 1846, the Protestant parish of St. Matthew was founded in southern Tiergarten district, a residential area favoured by senior civil servants, influential businessmen, artists, and well-known scientists. With its town houses and villas from the late nineteenth century it was known as the "Privy Councillors' Quarter". When St. Matthew's Church was built 1844 – 1846 in Matthäikirchplatz the parishioners got their own place of worship. Based on a design by Friedrich August Stüler, the church is a brick building in Romanesque style. The first pastor of the new church was Dr. Carl Albert Ludwig Büchsel from Uckermark; he held this office for 38 years, even when he was appointed General Superintendent of Neumark and Niederlausitz.

In 1854 the parish purchased a piece of land on a hillside near the village of Schöneberg for their own cemetery. The first burial took place on 25 March 1856. The cemetery soon enjoyed great popularity, also among non-parishioners: in 1863 it had to be enlarged eastwards and again in 1866 and 1884 to the west. In 1877 the prices of graves for non-parishioners were raised dramatically, but this did not succeed in dampening demand. Thus in 1890 the decision was taken that henceforth only parishioners would be buried in Old St. Matthew's Cemetery. In the same year the parish founded a second graveyard – New St. Matthew's Cemetery near the city and suburban railway station of Papestrasse.

In keeping with the cemetery's increased social status, in 1906–1909 a more impressive funeral chapel in the style of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque replaced the original wooden chapel of 1876. The majority of people buried in Old St. Matthew's Cemetery came from affluent, upper middle class families, and many imposing graves can still be viewed today that bear witness to this. The designs for grave architecture, sculptures, and surrounds are often of considerable artistic merit. There are works by many well-known architects, sculptors, and artisans of the Prussian Empire, and many of them are buried here, for example,

August Kiss, Friedrich Drake, August Wredow, Gustav Eberlein, Heino Schmieden, and Alfred Messel.

In 1938/1939 part of the northern section of the cemetery next to the Grossgörschenstrasse was demolished, approximately one third of the total area. Thousands of graves, including many imposing family monuments, had to make way for Albert Speer's large-scale, north-south axis re-development of Germany's capital. The graves were either levelled or taken down and re-erected in the Südwestkirchhof Cemetery in Stahnsdorf. A memorial stone on the site where the mausoleum of the publisher Gustav Langenscheidt originally stood commemorates this act of demolition. It was planned that in 1941 the rest of Old St. Matthew's Cemetery would follow suit, but war intervened and this did not take place. Many graves, however, were destroyed in the course of World War II.

In the post-war period graves were also demolished. It was only in the mid-1970s that a new awareness evolved that Old St. Matthew's Cemetery, with its wealth of historical graves and memorials, represents a unique ensemble worthy of preservation. In recent decades there has been extensive conservation and restoration work on many gravesites of special artistic, cultural and historical value. When the parish of St. Matthew was dissolved, in 2001 the Protestant parish of the Twelve Apostles took over the cemetery. A measure adopted by the current administration, which has made an important contribution to the longterm preservation of historical graves, is sponsorship. In this way many graves have found new owners. The cemetery continues to be a favoured final resting place because of its picturesque hillside location and its rich historical monuments.

From the perspective of art history and the history of the city Old St. Matthew's Cemetery is one of Berlin's most significant graveyards. Around 60 graves of important personages have been designated heritage sites by the City of Berlin. These include the graves of Minna Cauer, women's rights activist, the linguists and writers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the educationalist Adolf Diesterweg, and the doc-

tor and politician Rudolf Virchow. In addition to the graves of famous people and the works of well-known sculptors, the cemetery's attraction resides in its splendid collection of architectural monuments which define its character and render it a work of art. The restoration and preservation of this valuable heritage for future generations is a priority.

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### Picture:

Grave of Alexander Katsch, ca. 1877, private archive of Prof. S. Einholz

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### Concept, Editing and Layout:

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### Contact:

Evangelische Zwölf-Apostel-Kirchengemeinde  
Kirchhofsverwaltung  
Kolonnenstr. 24-25, 10829 Berlin  
Tel.: (030) 781 18 50, Fax: (030) 788 34 35  
E-mail: [kirchhoeefe@zwoelf-apostel-berlin.de](mailto:kirchhoeefe@zwoelf-apostel-berlin.de)  
[www.zwoelf-apostel-berlin.de](http://www.zwoelf-apostel-berlin.de)

