

**Chemical Landmark 2012 – Designation of Rosental –  
The Cradle of the Basel Chemical Industry and of the  
Novartis Company Archive**

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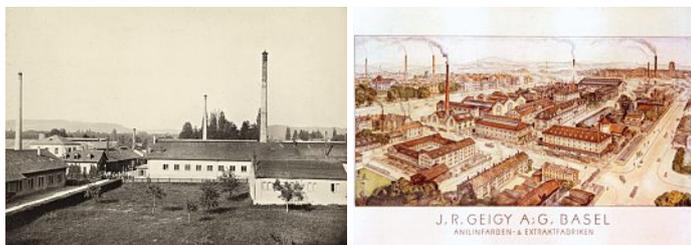
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The fourth «Chemical Landmark» award in Switzerland was a double tribute to Basel: the Rosental site was recognised as the real ‘cradle of the Basel chemical industry’ and the importance of the Novartis company archive was honoured.

**The Rosental Site**

The Rosental site is the oldest chemical facility that still exists in Basel. In 1862, J. J. Müller & Cie., a spin-off company of J. R. Geigy AG, built a modern factory for the production of synthetic dyes on the ‘Rosental-Matten’.



The Rosental site in 1870 (left) and in 1926 (right). (Copyright: Novartis Firmenarchiv)

In 1888, Traugott Sandmeyer joined the company and significantly contributed to the success of the company by implementing his methods. The site was expanded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the construction of new production facilities. In the 1930s, the research and production of insecticides started and led to the discovery of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) by Paul Hermann Müller (Nobel Prize 1948). This was followed by fungicides, seed treatments, as well as pharmaceutical products.



The old laboratory (left) and production facility (right). (Copyright: Novartis Firmenarchiv)

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the site was further expanded with the construction of laboratories and office buildings. However, production at the Rosental site was discontinued and moved to Schweizerhalle in the 1960s. As a result, the production buildings were demolished and replaced by research laboratories. In the 1950s and 1960s, the pharmaceutical research had great success, mainly in the development of anti-inflammatory anti-rheumatic agents such as Butazolidin<sup>®</sup>, Tanderil<sup>®</sup>, and Voltaren<sup>®</sup>.

From around 1980, the Rosental site evolved gradually and became the headquarters of Ciba-Geigy, Novartis, and finally Syngenta. In 2007, Syngenta relocated the last research laboratories to Stein (AG). Besides the Syngenta headquarters, there are currently over 30 companies and academic institutions specialised in life sciences at the Rosental site. Among them, one of the oldest buildings attests for the rich history of the chemical industry in Basel.

**The Novartis Company Archive**

Novartis AG holds the oldest company archive in Switzerland, which includes the records of all its predecessor companies going back to the 1860s. Namely, these companies are the following: J. R. Geigy AG (founded 1758), Durand & Huguenin AG (founded 1872), Ciba Ltd. (founded 1884), Sandoz AG (founded 1886), Wander AG (from 1967), Ciba-Geigy AG (merger 1970), and Novartis AG (fusion 1996).



Company archive of Novartis AG. (Copyright: Novartis Firmenarchiv)

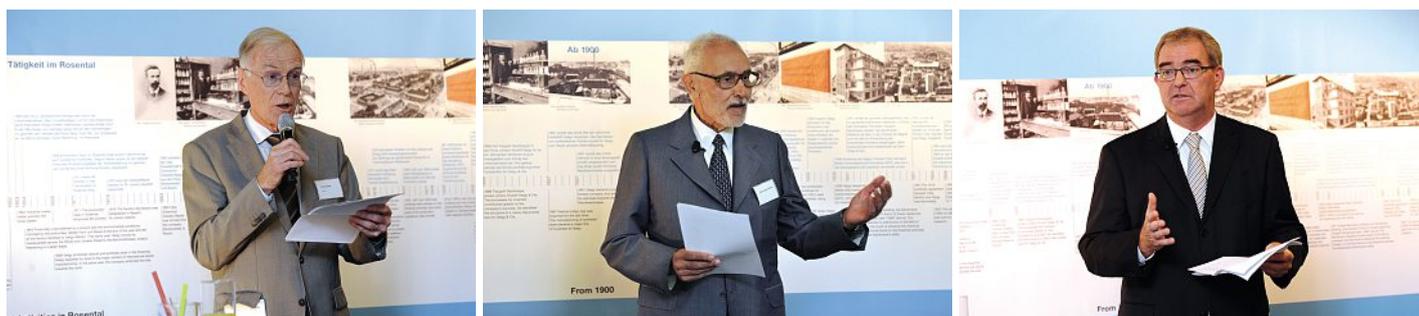
A large piece of history of the Basel chemical and pharmaceutical industry is collected, indexed, and safely stored here. The company archives are accessible to researchers, historians, and other interested parties. One of the major concerns is to prevent documents from degradation, destruction, and theft in order to ensure access to future generations. The archives comprise a broad range of written and non-written records, including certificates of incorporation, contracts, annual reports, board meeting minutes, audit reports, investments plans, statistics, staff lists, organizational regulations, site and building plans, product packagings, as well as classical and digital pictures, and sound files. Furthermore, the Nobel Prize medal

of Paul Hermann Müller, as well as the earliest pharmacological agents, and an extensive collection of advertising and product designs are stored in the archives. Currently, there are 2.6 km of classified documents and 700 m of unclassified documents in storage. The Novartis company archive provides access to the most comprehensive collection and testimony of the outstanding achievements and contributions of the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry.

The «Chemical Landmark» designation ceremony was held on September 20, 2012. Nearly 120 people took up the invitation, including many former and current employees of Novartis AG and

of Syngenta AG, thanked the SCNAT for the designation and emphasized again the historical importance of the Rosental site for the development of both the chemical industry and the city of Basel as a leading centre for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry. At the end of the first part of the program, the audience had the opportunity to visit the exhibition about the Rosental site, which was especially made for this event.

The second part of the program began shortly afterwards at the Novartis Campus. Prof. Dr. **Karl Gademann**, President of the «Platform Chemistry» of the SCNAT, welcomed the audience and introduced the «Chemical Landmarks» program.



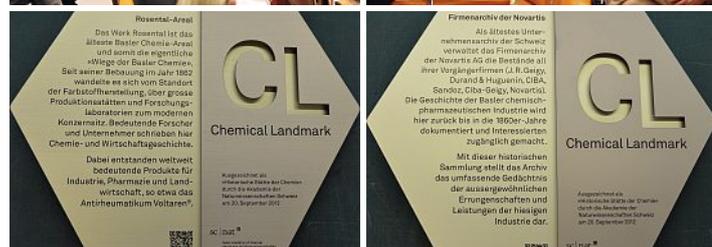
Prof. Dr. Felix Escher, Prof. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Hansen, Christoph Mäder. (Copyright: Peter Schnetz)



Prof. Dr. Karl Gademann, Walter Dettwiler, Prof. Dr. Dieter Seebach, Pascal Brenneisen (Copyright: Peter Schnetz)

Syngenta AG, as well as political and economical personalities from the Basel area. The celebration started at the Rosental site, where Prof. Dr. **Felix Escher**, Vice President of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT), warmly welcomed the guests. In his laudatio, Prof. Dr. **Hans-Jürgen Hansen**, Emeritus Professor of Organic Chemistry at the University of Zurich, acknowledged the importance of the Rosental site in the history of the chemical industry in Basel. After the unveiling of the commemorative plaque, **Christoph Mäder**, Member of the Executive Board

**Walter Dettwiler**, Director of the Novartis Company Archive, gave a detailed presentation on the history of the chemical and pharmaceutical industry in Basel using numerous pictures from the archive, which demonstrated the importance of this institution. The laudatio of Prof. Dr. **Dieter Seebach**, Emeritus Professor of Organic Chemistry at ETH Zurich, emphasized the historical importance of the company archive and its usefulness for future generations. After the unveiling of the second commemorative plaque, **Pascal Brenneisen**, President of Novartis Switzerland AG, thanked the SCNAT for the designation and emphasized again the importance and relevance of the chemical and pharmaceutical industry for the metropolitan area of Basel, as well as for the Swiss economy.



Impressions of the ceremony (Copyright: Peter Schnetz) – The Commemorative plaques (left: Rosental; right: Novartis Company Archive). (Photo: B. Winter).

Additional documents on the «Chemical Landmark 2012» and further information about the Chemical Landmarks program are available using the link: [www.chemicallandmarks.ch/2012](http://www.chemicallandmarks.ch/2012) or the QR-code below.

