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Ernest Brog: 
Bringing Swiss Cheese to Star Valley, Wyoming 

by Alexandra Carlile, 
Adam Callister, and Quinn Galbraith 

I. Introduction 

Star Valley is a small community on the western side of Wyoming, today consisting of the towns Alpine, Afton, Thayne, and others. The area, sometimes known as “Little Switzerland,” is a thriving community with a newfound focus on tourism and other businesses and services.1 Star Valley was originally settled by pioneers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the 1870s.2 At the time the area was considered the frontier of settlement in the American West, in which, according to one current Star Valley resident, “people were just trying to eke out a living.”3 With harsh winters and snow so deep that it completely covered fences and signposts, survival was difficult. Star Valley was sometimes known in those early times as “Starve Valley,” and residents would often have to snowshoe for miles to bring their families flour from the railhead. Residents tended to be farmers with large families who relied on their own farming and cattle for food and sustenance. This resulted in a large number of farmers becoming involved in dairy farming, which would become even more significant in later years.4  

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2 “Star Valley History.” 
3 Fred Brog (Brog’s son) in discussion with Quinn Galbraith, September 2019. 
4 Fred Brog.
In 1896, long before world wars or the invention of the Model T Ford, Ernest Brog was born in Switzerland, where his family had been making cheese for over 300 years. Young Ernest spoke French, German, and Italian, and spent his youth traveling through Europe. He graduated from a cheesemaking school and was considered a master cheesemaker. When he was about 21 years old, Ernest felt limited in the small area of Switzerland and immigrated to the United States to seek greater opportunities. He initially moved to Madison, Wisconsin, an area with a large population of Swiss immigrants. After a year or two, Ernest began to feel that the land of opportunity was the West, where fewer cheesemakers worked. The other Swiss immigrants in Wyoming challenged Ernest. They argued that making Swiss cheese so far west would be impossible; Ernest set out to prove them wrong.

Ernest headed west and ended up in the Driggs and Alta area of Idaho where he met the Kaufman family. The Kaufmans had emigrated from Switzerland as well, largely due to religious persecution arising from becoming members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They had settled in the Idaho area because the mountains reminded them of their high-altitude home. Rudolph Kaufman hired Ernest to make Swiss cheese for him. This was initially a successful arrangement, but was cut short when Ernest eloped with Rudolph’s daughter Martha. She was 16 at the time, and he was 26. The couple were married and traveled to Rexburg, Idaho, and then Montana before ending up in Star Valley, Wyoming. Over the next few decades, Ernest would change the course of life in the valley.

II. Cheese

The biggest contribution of Ernest Brog to Star Valley was his innovative approach to Swiss cheese. Brog’s efforts as manager of the Star Valley Swiss Cheese Company would bring national fame to Star
Ernest Brog

Valley, Wyoming.8 Ernest, who was invited to Star Valley by a group of dairy farmers from Freedom, Wyoming, organized a farmers’ cooperative upon his arrival.9 Ernest himself was in charge of purchasing, installing, and overseeing, the cheese-making operation without ready access to water, electricity, or sanitation systems; he would also be-

come responsible for cutting, hauling, and contracting the wood supply for the boiler. Ernest promised the farmers that he could pay them double for their milk by selling it as Swiss cheese. Under Ernest’s supervision, the first Swiss cheese was made in Wyoming on August 26, 1926.

That first load of cheese was driven miles over fields that were three to four feet deep in snow using seven teams of horses. The group had to travel around 50 miles to get from Freedom, Wyoming, to the nearest railhead in Soda Springs, a trip that would have taken about a week. Due to the cold temperatures, the bill of lading was marked “frozen cheese,” so when the cheese arrived to the wholesaler in Los Angeles, he was only willing to pay grinder’s price for it. Upon receiving a telegram with this news, Ernest himself hopped on a train, headed to Los Angeles, and sold the cheese in person, receiving the full price merited by the quality of the cheese and necessitated by the promises he had made to the farmers. Ernest’s quick thinking and ingenuity resulted in a high profit for both himself and the farmers, and Ernest was, therefore, able to successfully begin his Swiss cheese business.

Once Ernest became manager of the Star Valley Swiss Cheese Company, he incorporated aspects of his cheese-based education and modern technology to create an efficient yet quality system for making the Swiss cheese. By 1962, Ernest had a precise system of operation. Each morning, eight milk trucks which carried almost 80,000 pounds of milk per day, would bring the milk from the dairy farms to the factory. The milk was sampled, weighed, and heat separated, after which it was treated with heat and standardized. Electronic equipment would then stir and cut the resultant curd which was piped into smaller vats to be pressed into 85 pound blocks (or, as happened earlier in Ernest’s management, 185 pound wheels). The blocks of cheese would be placed in brine solution for 36 hours and then wrapped, boxed, and placed in the

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10 “Ernest & Martha Brog History,” 22.
11 Fred Brog.
13 Fred Brog.
curing room. A 72° F temperature allowed for bacterial growth, which created the eyes in the cheese. After six weeks, the cheese was moved to coolers for aging; it would be sold after 60-70 days, or two to six months if it was sold through the storeroom. Ernest initially made

cheese in blocks rather than round wheels. His son-in-law believed that this was a practice that Ernest himself developed, and he would later be sued by Kraft for the rights to it. According to the Brog family, Ernest won that legal disagreement.15

Ernest brought a spirit of innovation to his work in the cheese industry. Initially, frogs and snakes were occasionally found in the milk due to the cooling process in which open pails of milk were placed in the creek. These accidental additions to the milk had to be screened out at the cheese factory.16 As a result, Ernest began to provide filter discs to the milk producers, which created a cleaner milk supply and, therefore, a higher quality cheese product.17 Later on, after the invention of penicillin, antibiotics in the milk began changing the cheese’s quality and flavor; Ernest had to use his chemistry skills, developed years previously during his education in cheesemaking in Switzerland, to develop a new starter to return the cheese to its original taste and quality.18

Ernest’s innovation also came in handy when a friend who made cheese in New Zealand came to him for help. Ernest’s friend’s cheese starter had a contaminant, the source of which they were struggling to determine. Ernest was able to determine that the starter was receiving contaminants from a nearby sheep population and helped his friend solve the problem. Relating to the incident, Ernest’s son-in-law said, “It was a continual challenge to keep the starter pure enough to make the right kind of cheese. It was always a problem, and that is where he excelled. He understood that.”

Ernest, it would seem, had a particular talent for making and selling Swiss cheese, which was often difficult to manufacture well.19 In fact, 40 other cheese-makers accompanied Ernest from Wisconsin to make cheese in the West. Of these 41 who left Wisconsin, 39 returned to Wisconsin, declaring that “good Swiss cheese was not capable of being produced in the West.”20 Ernest, however, stuck it out, putting

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15 Clyde Stock (Brog’s son-in-law), in discussion with Adam Callister, August 2018.
16 Fred Brog.
17 “Ernest & Martha Brog History,” 22.
18 Clyde Stock.
19 Clyde Stock.
his Swiss-developed skills to good use and making Swiss culture more accessible to rural America.

III. Community

Beyond his economic impact on Star Valley, Ernest Brog was an active participant in the Star Valley community, developing programs and ideas that would help the people of the area for years throughout his life and after his death.

One of the most significant impacts of Ernest Brog on the Star Valley community was his work in introducing electricity to their rural areas. Of his father, Fred Brog said, “Probably the biggest focus other than Swiss cheese in his life was what he did to electrify the Star Valley and Jackson Hole area.” Prior to other electrical access, Ernest had created his own electrical generator by burning coke (a fuel derived from coal) and quaking aspens to produce steam, which would turn a turbine and power his plant.21 Ernest had installed individual power plants for each of his cheese factories, but there was a clear economic benefit to be had in providing better access to electricity throughout the community an “urgent need” to provide it for dairy manufacturing and other industries.22 Congress had passed the Rural Electrification Act (REA) in 1937; this act allowed cooperatives to borrow from the government in order to provide rural areas with electricity.23 Ernest himself traveled to Washington, D.C., and personally negotiated with Senator Joseph O’Mahoney to obtain REA funding for the Star Valley community.24 Without the REA, Star Valley would not have been able to afford to electrify its countryside, due to the high cost of wiring distribution lines across the farms.25 Ernest would later name his youngest daughter Rea, in honor of this national act that would provide so many opportunities for the Star Valley residents.26

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21 Fred Brog.
22 Papworth, et al., p. 65.
23 “Ernest & Martha Brog History,” 23.
24 Fred Brog.
25 Fred Brog.
26 Clyde Stock.
Ernest was, therefore, a founding member of Lower Valley Power & Light, Inc., the efforts of which resulted in many rural parts of Star Valley receiving electricity late in 1938. Ernest, himself, was given the opportunity to flip the switch of the first electrical light in the Mormon Cultural Hall. The Lower Valley cooperative established a program to obtain bids for wiring individual houses for electricity, and opened a store that sold electrical appliances and fixtures. By late 1951, access to electricity was almost universal across rural Star Valley, and Lower Valley Power & Light has grown ever since. The company still exists today as Lower Valley Energy, and leadership of the group remains in the Brog family, with Ernest’s youngest son Fred as chairman. As stated by the Lower Valley Energy cooperative itself, Ernest and others’ early work in electricity “was a major factor in the progress and growth of the valley and its communities, bringing practically an entire new way of life. . . . Residents have felt a keen appreciation for the efforts of Lower Valley Energy.”

Following the electrification of Star Valley, life was much easier for the community’s residents. For one thing, access to electricity allowed Star Valley residents to pump water from aquifers, giving farmers the critical access to water that they needed. Electricity allowed farmers to milk the cows in light or by using electrical pumps; this resulted in a purer product that made better cheese. Electricity also allowed farmers to store their milk at cooler temperatures. All of these factors allowed Ernest’s Swiss cheese business to thrive under the influence of electricity.

28 “Ernest & Martha Brog History,” 23.
30 “History.”
32 “History.”
33 Fred Brog.
34 Fred Brog.
35 Fred Brog.
Ernest Brog himself ensured that the turbines, bought by REA funding, continued to regularly produce electricity. The turbines were turned by the Salt River. However, due to extremely low temperatures in Star Valley in winter months, the river would frequently freeze over. In those parts of the year, Ernest and his daughter Rea would row a rowboat up and down the Salt River to keep the ice broken up so that the farmers could have electricity the next morning.36 This story illustrates not only Ernest’s ingenuity, but also his dedication to the community and its needs.

Beyond the grand effect of providing electricity, Ernest had an effect on various other aspects of Star Valley life. One of his strongest desires for the community was the completion of a paved road between the cities of Freedom and Wayan. The last section of oiled road was completed within Ernest’s lifetime. It has since become a main thoroughfare for tourists and others traveling to and from the valley.37 Ernest Brog also introduced the hot lunch program in Freedom schools using his strong political contacts.38 His daughter Rea said, “He thought if kids were given at least one good meal a day, they’d be able to learn better,” and his son-in-law Clyde believed that Ernest had popularized the program in Washington, D.C.39 Ernest was an active participant in the community, and he often acted as a spokesperson for its needs. His close ties with Kraft and Challenge dairy companies allowed him to increase business within the community, and these connections helped him network with Congress and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This influence is part of the reason Ernest was able to push for initiatives like electricity and the hot lunch program.40

Brog also participated in the community in a variety of smaller, yet still significant, ways. For example, in 1937, Ernest purchased the right to brand all Star Valley high school teams; he named them the Cheesemakers, a name that would stick until 1948.41 Brog made sig-

36 Fred Brog.
38 “Ernest & Martha Brog History,” 23.
39 Clyde and Rea Stock (Brog’s son-in-law and daughter) in discussion with Adam Galbraith, May 2018.
40 Clyde and Rea Stock.
41 History of Star Valley, 393.
nificant financial contributions to the construction of the local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) church building, despite not joining the church himself until much later in his life, when he was 88 years old.42 He personally built the fence around the church and ordered the copper steeple, making the church a significant and visibly noticeable aspect of the cityscape.43 Brog also supported the movie theater in Thayne, attending movies at least three times per week on a regular basis.44 Additionally, he purportedly often acted as a “water diviner” for free in the community, using a willow rod to determine underground sources of water.45 Ernest also frequently transported people to the hospital in his car; this included many women in labor and recent accident victims.46 He was a frequent interviewee for the local newspaper, Star Valley Independent, which consequently was able to publish several articles on his life and opinions. A quick search of the newspaper’s archives states that “Ernest Brog” has been referenced in 904 of the newspaper’s records. In many ways, the newspaper and the community considered him to be a bit of a local celebrity, featuring him as the “Mystery Personality of the Week” in the local competition.47

Ernest’s wife, Martha Kaufman Brog, was a significant member of the community as well. Martha had been born in Midway, Utah, only a few weeks after her parents moved from Switzerland. She too came from a cheese-making family, although her family made Swiss cheese for their own consumption and not for commercial sales.48 In Star Valley, Martha ran the local restaurant while her son Frank managed the cheese production. While selling basic food items like hamburgers, Martha was also able to increase the sales of her famous pie and Ernest’s Swiss cheese by providing little samples with the food she served.49 Her innovations, therefore, assisted Ernest’s business while

42 Fred Brog.
43 Rea Stock.
44 Clyde and Rea Stock.
45 Clyde and Rea Stock.
46 “Ernest & Martha Brog History,” 23.
48 Clyde and Rea Stock.
49 Clyde and Rea Stock.
providing a warm, friendly environment for customers and the community.

Ernest’s descendants argue that everything he did was for the good of the community. His son-in-law, Clyde, contends that Ernest could have been a millionaire “many times over” if he had kept electricity and other business ventures in his own name. By choosing to build the community using co-ops instead of for-profit companies, Ernest was able to spread the benefits of his innovation. As Clyde said, “He was community-minded . . . and financially it was a tremendous mistake. He was a very generous person, he wasn’t a greedy individual—a very generous person, very community-minded.”

Regardless of Ernest’s motives, the fact remains that this innovative Swiss immigrant was able to make remarkable and extensive improvements to the Star Valley community because he was such a strong participant. As the Star Valley Independent says, he “undoubtedly brought more fame to Star Valley than any other man.”

IV. Ernest’s Legacy/Conclusion

Ernest’s long-reaching legacy within the Star Valley community suggests that inviting the innovative Swiss to help their dairy economy was a significant positive decision for the area. Ernest’s cheese business boosted the economy, allowing the dairy farmers to make more money off their milk while encouraging them

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50 Clyde and Rea Stock.
51 “Ernest Brog, MP of the Week.”
to improve their milk quality. Ernest was also an active member of a wide variety of aspects of the Star Valley community, from movies to church to electricity. Star Valley, Wyoming, is what it is today because of Ernest Brog. He brought his Swiss spirit of hard work and innovation to the valley in order to shape it from a small rural area to a thriving economy and community.

Sources


“Swiss Cheese Helps Eyesight.” Star Valley Independent (Star Valley, WY), March 13, 1941.

Clyde and Rea Stock. Interview with Adam Callister. August 2018.

Fred Brog (Brog’s son) in discussion with Quinn Galbraith. September 2019.


The History of a Cemetery:
An Italian Swiss Cultural Essay

by Plinio Martini
and
translated by Richard Hacken

Years ago, there was no cemetery in my village. This absence, which weighed heavily upon the people as a cruel stroke of fate, was a result of our village having earlier been part of a neighboring community, whose more favorable location—sunny and protected from the north winds—had allowed it to prosper while our community dwindled. After long discussions and arguments, the mountain pastures, valley meadows and forests—formerly communal property—were divided up into separate realms with precise boundaries: everything was written down on parchment and sworn to in the name of God. The Catholic Parish remained intact, however, as did the church. Somewhat later, with money that emigrants had donated from Padua and Rome, we were able to build a large and beautiful church our-

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1 This essay is about a small village at the confluence of the Maggia and Bavona Rivers in Vallemaggia, a Ticinese region stretching north-northwest of Locarno along the Maggia River. This valley supplied the majority of Italian-Swiss emigrants to California in the nineteenth century. See also Tony Quinn, “The Ticinese Swiss Immigration to California,” Swiss American Historical Society Review, 47, no. 1 (February 2011) 23-26, as well as his article in the current issue, “Canton Ticino and the Italian Swiss Immigration to California” (93-112), in which he also mentions Plinio Martini as a novelist.

2 Plinio Martini (1923-1979), son of the village baker in Cavergno, was a teacher and a writer.

3 Though left unnamed, Cavergno is the village in this essay, as it fits Martini’s narrative descriptions autobiographically, geographically and culturally with its neighboring community, Bignasco. Martini is able to affix his own personal experiences and impressions unto the historical legend and lore of his home village.
selves, one that the neighboring community and the entire valley envied. From the Bishop of Como, we were given a chaplain who read the Mass. I cannot tell you how much this privilege made us happy and our neighbors jealous. We still were unable to bury our dead in our own lands, though; we had to carry them over to the old cemetery in the neighboring community.

The procession went forward in the following manner: our houses were among the simplest on earth at that time, and most of the kitchen doors led directly onto the street. Thus, after the all-night wake, when it was time for the burial, the dead were carried straight out of the house and laid out on the communal bier. Poor as we were, we wrapped and sewed them into a sheet. Four candle holders were placed to the left and right of the bier. The slightest breeze put the candles out. That made us sad for the deceased; but it was also a way to save candles. Then came the relatives, women in tears, the men stiff and sullen, as was proper. The men and women of the village, meanwhile, had gathered in the street and made way for the brotherhood that would soon arrive. In order to lose no time, the Rosary Prayer was recited.
If the large bell was ringing, then the deceased was a man; if the medium-sized bell rang, the soul ascending to heaven was a woman. Then the brotherhood appeared, along with the priest. The priest came to a stop, gave a blessing, set the Miserere in motion, and then those in the procession made their way to the church, mumbling their prayers, first the brotherhood—the men from the village, dressed in white—then the priest in his black vestments, followed by the bier, the relatives and the women. All the while, slowly and heavily, the bell was ringing and echoing over their heads, above the rooftops and between the mountains. The people listened to the Requiem in the church and then walked through the fields along the path down to the other community, which lay a quarter of an hour distant.

By the beginning of this path all the prayers for the dead had already been spoken. To shorten the time and do a good deed as well, it had become the habit to talk about the poor soul being borne off to the grave. The good acts he had performed were praised, and as many good things as possible about him were spoken aloud. It may be that this custom had arisen on its own, but it’s also possible that the priest had suggested it. I don’t know; I only know that this was always the way it was done in the village.

In every village, though, there are the good and the less good; the honest, the sly and the bellicose; those who would sell the soul of their father for thirty Gulden; others who would betray our Lord for a single Gulden. Once under the hot July sun, there was a man being carried to his grave who had been a true good-for-nothing all the days of his life: he had cheated on his wife and beaten his children; he had gotten himself drunk in the pubs, swindled his relatives, argued with everybody and spread slanderous lies everywhere. Thus, it was difficult to find a few general virtues to discuss in his case. Scarcely had we gotten past the last houses of the village, and the talk was already at an end. Silently, we passed over the mown meadows. It was hot and the crickets were chirping.

Then an old woman stopped, one of those who feel compelled to always tell the truth at any cost. She took a breath while saying loudly enough that a number of people could hear her: “Not even to
the campo rotondo [“round field”] yet, and already we’re finished with him!” Since that time, it is said of an evil person: “He doesn’t have enough going for him to even make it to the campo rotondo.”

Nowadays, the dead are buried as quickly as possible. Back then, burials lasted a long time and were only finished around noon. Once the coffin had been lowered into the ground, everyone stayed to the last shovel of dirt and then the relatives of the deceased met in the community hall for a snack, where the womenfolk had set up tables. Someone started cutting into a virgin cheese round, and there were bread and wine to go along with it. That’s the way it’s been done since the advent of human memory—perhaps through distant ages when we weren’t even Christians yet—up until 30 years ago; and the custom demanded that the snacking should occur in a happy and positive atmosphere. The people were allowed, nay forced, to chatter
about things that were amusing, enjoyable, or that at least took everybody else’s mind off the serious business they had just been engaged in. Death for the dead and life for the living! The wine warmed the general merriment.

After long discussions back and forth, one day our village was given permission to bury our dead next to the new church. We received the permission from the court in Canton Zürich, since our pathetic little argument was being adjudicated in that distant Protestant canton.4 In the Year of Our Lord 1786, on Wednesday September 13, the decision was sent down: “that the corpses of the community members of both communities can be transported freely and without hindrance through the territory of the one Parish or the other to the sanctified cemetery of whichever church they belonged to during their lifetime.”5

The dead were now buried between the new church and the community hall. When the children came out after school or after religion classes, it often transpired that they played hide-and-seek between the gravestones. The Government of the Three Capitals6 found this to be neither hygienic nor appropriate, and they requested that a new cemetery be developed outside the village proper. But we preferred our dead near the church. Our community council consisted at the time of five men, farmers who were no less devoted to the matters of the community than they were to their own. The government in power then—with an eye to coming elections—had no particular desire to anger the citizens of an entire community either. So, the question was deliberated back and forth, year after year, in letters, journeys and inspections.7

4 Until 1803, Ticino (Tessin) was a territory subordinate to the thirteen cantons of the Confederation.
5 It follows that each village had its own Parish by this time, or else the court in Zürich had the wrong impression about the unified ecclesiastical organization in Cavergero and Bignasco.
6 During the first period of Ticino’s independence, the seat of government switched between Lugano, Bellinzona, and Locarno.
7 This period of bureaucratic inaction appears to have lasted roughly 150 years, from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.
Plinio Martini as a young man with the church tower of Cavergno in the background. Credit: Azione. Settimanale della cooperativa Migros Ticino, April 4, 2019.
We were not forced to give in until the highway was built through the village. The pavement was designed to pass directly between the graves, so the cemetery needed to be cleared and moved. Great, deep holes were dug in order to find everyone and everything down to the last little knuckle bone. The new cemetery was laid out fifty meters downhill from the church, and a stone cross was erected at the site of the old cemetery. The whole thing was done according to all the rules of art, a thoughtful labor that was also supported with governmental funds. Admittedly, the old folks shook their heads and there were women who wept: nobody wanted to be the first one to be buried in that large and empty field. It was a stroke of luck that twins died right then. They had left no will and testament, and they had only dwelt on this earth for a few hours, just long enough to be baptized and then take their last breath. After this burial, nobody was left that could refuse to provide the dead twins with some company.

The cemetery is very simple; it distinguishes itself from others only in having fewer gravestones and ostentatious monuments. There is one private family chapel, to be accurate, just one that’s so modest it doesn’t come across as pushy. I learned to smoke there. That was during the summer, when almost everybody was staying up in the mountains or the high pastures, and scarcely fifty people and a few strangers were still around in the village. As a result, the cemetery lay open and deserted with high grass, crickets and wind. We boys went there—without arousing any suspicion—to play and to smoke Arturo’s cigarettes. I remember that we hid them in the private chapel, behind a Statue to Faith.

Our carefree youth thus came in contact with death, a contact that was later renewed in the long, gloomy, all-night wakes that were the norm in the village whenever somebody died. Our parents would drag us there by force, and during the Rosary Prayer we stared, eyes wide open, at the stiffened corpse beneath the sheet. At the end we were given a glass of wine, and this bonus compensated for everything.

For me, as the son of a baker, there was another type of work to be done when somebody died. After the all-night wake and after the
third Mass, acceding to the wish of the heirs, we passed out the “death bread.” My father filled two or three baskets with loaves of bread and stood next to the church door, he on the one side and me on the other. We gave a nice crusty one-pound bread to everyone who was leaving. Even today this custom is followed, but instead of the bread itself a printed card good for a gratis loaf of bread at the bakery is distributed. This new system is certainly more practical and attuned to our world of television and rockets. However, the aroma of fresh-baked bread has been lost, the smell of that “death bread” that was taken home as a remembrance of a person who had emigrated to the other world. Many of our customs have come to a similar end, printed on cards. That is probably the reason we sometimes look around us like people who have lost their way.
Raiders of the Lost Ark

by Dwight Page

Although a French national, John Calvin spent a large part of his career as a pastor and a theologian in Switzerland. Specifically, he resided in Geneva between 1541 and 1564 and transformed the city into his beloved Protestant City of God, a safe haven for Protestant refugees from all over Europe. Indeed, so thorough was the Reformation in Geneva that the city became known as the Protestant Rome and the center of the new Protestant faith. In the sixteenth century, at the time of the Reformation, Geneva was truly the Mecca to which many Protestants gravitated and to which many Protestants looked for hope and inspiration.

During these years in Geneva, one of Calvin’s most salient contributions to the development of Christian theology was his analysis and elucidation of the concept of the divine Covenant between God and Man, first made between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden, next between God and Abraham in Ur of the Chaldeans, then 400 years later in Egypt between God and Moses, and finally more than 1,000 years after that, consummated in the new Covenant between God and Man splendidly expressed by the perfect life and resurrection of God’s own son Jesus Christ. Calvin elevated the study of this theological concept to an unprecedented level of scholarship and intellectual reflection and discussion.

Not only did Calvin himself devote much attention to this subject, notably in Part Two of his seminal work *Institutes of the Christian Faith*. He also influenced his successors over the next two centuries to further explore and explain the meaning and importance of this concept of the perennial covenant between God and Man. Paul Helm, for example, see Protestant theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries as a coherent and cohesive body of teaching handed down from Calvin to Beza, to Knox, to Ames and Perkins and achieving classic formulation in the Westminster Confession of 1648.¹

Departing from its initial roots in the writings of John Calvin in sixteenth century Geneva, the Westminster Confession formulated a more precise two covenant form of Christian theology. One might say, in other words, that this latter document is the distillation, synthesis and consummation of two centuries of Calvinist reflection upon this important and central topic of the Christian faith.

According to the seventeenth century Westminster Confession, the first covenant made by God with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and through him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience to God’s commandments. The second covenant is commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein the Lord freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him. The first and original covenant described in the Old Testament was based solely on obedience and was cancelled by sin. God’s response to the failure of this original covenant of works was its replacement by a new covenant of grace, based on faith. According to this new covenant, made in the New Testament, one is saved by both perfect works and by the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Thus, according to this New Covenant, both good works and divine grace are prerequisites for salvation.²

Based on this concept of the Double Covenant, of which he himself was the original author, Calvin had taught long before the advent of the Westminster Confession that a person has the assurance of salvation, provided that he accept accountability for his own behavior. True salvation is thus the consequence of the covenant between God and Man, faith or belief in the validity of that covenant, and manifold good works demonstrating that faith. According to Calvin, the entire

¹For a fuller analysis of this subject, see Paul Helm, Faith with Reason (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).
The edifice of the Christian faith rests on veneration and respect for this historically perpetuated and renewed covenant—first between Adam and God, then between Abraham and God, then between Moses and God—which finds its ultimate expression in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ.  

We have thus established that the concept of the covenant between God and Man is one of the central pillars of Calvin’s theology: he spends a great deal of time in the *Institutes of the Christian Faith* analyzing and elucidating this theme. Indeed, among the Protestant theologians, John Calvin is the principal exponent of Covenant theology.

It is not surprising that Calvin would attribute such extraordinary importance to the theme of the covenant between God and Man, given that the entire Old Testament is devoted to the frequent reiteration of the renewal of this covenant between God and the human race. Indeed, the entire history of the Jews is the story of their unique relationship with God, a relationship which is distinguished from other religions by the Jews’ historic commitment to the articulation of their

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3 Calvin devotes an entire chapter of the Institutes (II.10) to explaining both the Old and the New Covenant. For a more extensive discussion, see Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 138.
very special covenant with Yahweh, most dramatically expressed in the Ten Commandments which Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai during the Exodus from Egypt.

One of the strongest features of Israel’s faith, presented in the Old Testament, was its deep antipathy to any graphic representation of the Deity in image form. Naturally, because Yahweh Himself, in the third of the Ten Commandments, had expressly forbidden the creation or worship of idols. There is no valid evidence anywhere to prove that Israel ever did permit or value images of Yahweh Himself, and so no plausible reason exists for doubting that the prohibition of images of Yahweh goes back to the Mosaic origins of Yahwism.

The divine presence in Israel was in no way linked to any kind of image, or symbolic representation of the Deity, Yahweh. Nonetheless, given the importance which Jewish society traditionally attributed to the reaffirmation of their faith in Yahweh—the Covenant between God and Man, and the religious ceremonies at which this covenant was formally and publicly renewed—were associated with certain Holy Objects which were thought to belong to Yahweh and to his cult.

One year after the Exodus from Egypt, in the wilderness of Sinai, Yahweh had in fact given specific instructions to Moses concerning the construction of these Holy Objects and Places (Exodus 25):\(^4\) These were the Tent of the Tabernacle; the special sanctuary within the Tabernacle known as the Holy of Holies; and the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Ten Commandments, which would occupy a revered place at the heart of the Holy of Holies. The Jews seriously believed that God sat on the Mercy Seat above the Ark, and that in this most holy place, he would hold counsel with those rare prophets and priests whom he deemed worthy to commune privately with Him. Wherever the Jews went during their peregrinations, the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant were to accompany them and were always to be placed at the geographic center of their encampments. These three sacred items formed the foremost sanctu-

\(^4\) In this article, the following version of the Holy Bible is used: The Holy Bible: Commonly Known as the Authorized King James Version (Nashville: The Gideons International, 1978).
ary of Yahweh, in which Israel believed that His divine presence appeared to their chosen representatives, in order to reveal His will and purpose and in order to guide their conduct and shape their destiny.⁵

As Judaism over the centuries evolved into Christianity, the person of the semihuman/semidivine Christ Himself came to replace the original Ark and the Tent of the Tabernacle as the ultimate symbol of the perpetually renewed covenant between God and Man. During his 33-year sojourn upon Earth, the Christ became the manifestation and the personification of this new Covenant between mankind and the Deity.

Christ was well aware that after his death and resurrection, his followers would require visible and tangible proof of his eternal existence and his eternal power over their lives and human events, especially given that the original proof of God’s power among men—the Ark of the Covenant—had been lost centuries before. Thus, long before his crucifixion, Christ ordained the institution of the papacy, declaring to Simon Peter, the First Pope, that he was destined to be “the rock upon which he would build his Church.”

The long succession of Popes from the time of the Resurrection until the Reformation in the sixteenth century thus constituted the strongest conceivable physical bond between God and Man, and during all those years the Holy Pontiffs in Rome served as a constant physical reminder of the eternal Covenant between God and the human race. And, as if the fact that the Christ Himself had personally appointed the Popes to represent him on earth were not enough, between 1508 and 1512, God sent another of his representatives—Michelangelo—into the heart of the Vatican in order to paint the famous frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which magnificently retell the book of Genesis and God’s original covenant with Adam, and which would further enhance the prestige of the Papacy and the Church.

After the fall of Rome in the fifth century A.D., the Kings of the various Germanic nation states of northern Europe, likewise came to be regarded as vital links between God and his people, and as visible human manifestations of the reality of the eternal covenant between the Deity and mankind. These Kings for centuries were seriously considered to be the infallible vicars of Christ in their respective kingdoms. Moreover, these rulers’ authority was upheld and justified by many works of philosophy and political theory corroborating the widespread belief in the divine right of Kings to rule—unreproached—their kingdoms.

Thus, throughout the entire Middle Ages, people constantly looked to two sources for spiritual comfort and inspiration: the Holy See and the Vatican in Rome, and the King of their particular Kingdom. In this regard, the Pope in Rome and the King of the Nation constituted proof that God had not forgotten his people but rather that He was constantly watching over and protecting them and was continually renewing his covenant with them.

Unfortunately during the Reformation, a serious problem arose when Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin broke with Rome and established independent Churches. In these new Protestant urban republics of Europe and Switzerland, there was neither a traditional Pope nor a traditional King.

Hence, in order to fill the subsequent vacuum of authority and restore hope and faith to their congregations, Protestant reformers like
Calvin in Geneva were compelled to find new ways to vividly represent and symbolize the age old covenant between God and man, upon which their Protestant congregations relied for hope and spiritual sustenance. Given that this covenant was the foundation of the new Protestant theology, Calvin had to find a way to make the concept of this covenant meaningful and understandable to his congregations in Geneva and elsewhere.

It was at this time that the Ark of the Covenant came to play a vital role in the sermons of the new Protestant preachers of Switzerland and Protestant Europe, for there is no more famous, more powerful or more memorable symbol of this Holy Covenant than the Ark, which God gave to the Hebrews during the Exodus out of Egypt. The new Bibles prepared for these new Protestant congregations, such as the King James Version, contained beautifully decorated illustrations of the Ark and the Tent of the Tabernacle, so that the people of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have a clearer and more precise image of these Holy Objects and Places in their minds. Clearly, the powerful visual image and material object of the Ark is of capital and critical importance for anyone interested in the study of covenant theology. In sum, the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, and the person of the Christ in the New Testament, are the two essential symbolic centerpieces of the foundation upon which covenant theology, and Protestant theology, rest.

We all remember the story: God led Joseph, who had been thrown by his envious brothers into an empty well, to the land of Egypt, where Joseph became a Prince of the Royal House and chief advisor to Pharaoh. Joseph, guided by wisdom of divine inspiration, subsequently saved the Egyptians from famine and made them prosper, for which achievement he was much adored. The now all powerful Joseph then invited his fellow Hebrews to come to live with him in Egypt. Initially welcomed by the Egyptians and treated as their equals, Joseph’s brethren and their Hebrew compatriots were later enslaved ay a Pharaoh “who did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8) and were condemned to eternal hard labor in the building of Pharaoh’s treasure cities. During the four hundred years of this Egyptian bondage, God did not forget his original covenant with Abraham: during the Reign of Ramses the First,
God miraculously saved the Hebrew slave child Moses from Ramses’ edict that all the first born male children of Israel should be killed. God then caused the Hebrew baby to be placed in a basket of reeds, set adrift upon the Nile and brought the enfant to the bathing pool of Pharaoh’s daughter, who adopted him as her own and once again unwittingly made a Hebrew a mighty Prince of Egypt.

Through manifold wonders and miracles, God used Moses and his brother Aaron to keep his covenant with the Hebrews and to lead them out of bondage in Egypt, in the manner of a wondrous Exodus. Soon thereafter, on Mount Sinai, God renewed his covenant with the Hebrews, this time with his servant Moses, in the form of the Ten Commandments.

However, because of their disobedience and faithlessness, the Hebrews were compelled to wander for forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. It was during this nomadic period of Hebrew history that God gave Moses specific and precise instructions for the construction of the Tent of the Tabernacle, which was to reside literally at the heart of the Hebrew nation and which was to be the center of their faith. (Exodus, chapters 25, 26, 27). At the heart of this Tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies, stood the beautiful golden Ark of the Covenant, whose construction was carefully described and ordained by God. Moses would often converse with God in the Holy of Holies. Indeed, the Pentateuch concludes with these words: “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” (Deuteronomy 34:10).

Given these facts, it is incomprehensible and amazing that no one today knows for sure what actually became of the Ark. And yet this is the case. This article will strive to shed light upon the likely location of the lost Ark of the Covenant in our own times.

First of all, let us consider the chronology of the known historical facts concerning the Ark, as revealed in Scripture. What is most striking about this first portion of this story is the extraordinary historical veracity, historical accuracy and meticulous attention to detail characterizing every phase of these recorded facts.

To begin, a detailed description of the construction of the Ark of the Covenant by Moses, as dictated by God, is provided in Exodus
The Ark was a rectangular box, made of acacia wood and measured two and a half by one and a half by a half cubits. The whole was covered with gold and was carried on poles inserted in rings at the four lower corners. God declared that only the Levites might have the privilege of carrying the Ark. No other tribe of Israel was to touch it or come near it. The lid, or mercy-seat, was a solid gold plate surrounded by two antithetically placed cherubs with outspread wings. Here, on this mercy-seat, God would appear on rare occasions to commune privately with those of his priests whom he deemed to be sufficiently pure and worthy of this honor. When God was present, the Holy of Holies glowed with radiance and could be seen from afar, bearing witness that God was in His residence, among His people.

The ark served as a receptacle for the two tables of the Decalogue and also for the pot of manna and Aaron’s miraculous rod, with which he had wrought miracles in Egypt when seeking to obtain the freedom of the Hebrew slaves. It was also the holiest shrine in all of Israel, since it served as the meeting-place in the inner sanctuary where the Lord revealed his will to his servants. Thus it served as the symbol of the divine presence guiding God’s people. The ark was first made at Sinai by Bezalel to the specifications given by God to Moses. It was used as a depository for the written law during the Exodus in the desert, and played a significant part at the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land, the fall of heathen Jericho, and the ceremony of remembering the covenant at Mount Ebal.

From Gilgal, the Ark was moved to Bethel (Judges 2:1; 20:27), but was taken to Shiloh in the time of the Judges (1 Samuel 1:3; 3:3), remaining there until captured by the Philistines on the battlefield at Ebenezer (1 Samuel 4). Because its presence caused seven months of plagues, the frightened and repentant Philistines perceived its divine and miraculous nature, and so, although pagans, they had the good sense to return it to Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for 20 years (1 Samuel 5:1-7:2), except possibly for a temporary move to King Saul’s camp near Beh-aven (1 Samuel 14:18). King David installed the ark in a tent at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), and would not remove it during Abasalom’s rebellion (2 Samuel 15:25-29).
It was placed in the First Temple with great ceremony during the reign of David’s son King Solomon. Moreover, we know the exact date that King Solomon began to build his magnificent Temple, whose primary purpose would be to house the Ark. According to I Kings 6:1, it was precisely 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt that Solomon began the work of construction on this splendid holy edifice.  

The Bible contains two detailed descriptions of Solomon’s Temple. The first is provided by 1 Kings, chapters 6 and 7; the other is to be found in 2 Chronicles, chapters 3-4. The preparatory undertakings took three years; the construction itself required seven years (I Kings: 6:38). To build this resplendent temple, 100,000 talents of gold and one million talents of silver were used. Since a talent equals about 34 kilograms, that would mean that the Temple of Solomon contained 3.4 million kilograms of gold, which is nearly as much gold as is currently contained in the United States depository in Fort Knox. 

It was at this time, immediately following the completion of its construction, that King Solomon placed the Ark of the Covenant inside this First Temple, with great ceremony, pomp, and splendor. The Bible tells us that the Lord, grateful for this expression of popular homage and affection, filled the Temple that day with a radiant, blinding glow. This memorable event occurred circa 955 B.C. and is described in consummate detail in I Kings 8:1-21. 

Clearly, up to this point, we know everything about the Ark, its whereabouts and its progress through history. It is last mentioned in Scripture during the reforms of King Josiah, which took place circa 622 B.C., when Josiah told the Levites, the guardians of the Ark appointed by the Lord, to put the Ark back in the House of the Lord (2 Chronicles 35: 3). 

However, just as the story of the first centuries of the Ark’s existence is a masterpiece of historical precision and documentation, 

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by the same token, the story of the Ark after this last explicit reference to it by King Josiah in the year 622 B.C., becomes one of the greatest unsolved mysteries of history. This is an altogether strange and inexplicable occurrence: the Ark, for centuries the holiest relic in Israel and the center of the ceremonial and religious life of the Jewish nation, suddenly vanishes from the record. Nowhere is any further detail about it provided; the later books of the Bible virtually ignore it.

The Ark of the Covenant literally disappeared off of the pages of history by the time of the Babylonian Captivity. We do know that Solomon’s Temple was destroyed by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in the year 587 B.C., yet no mention is made of the Ark, in the detailed enumeration of the Temple treasures stolen by the Babylonians, which is provided in the last chapter of 2 Kings.

In addition, nothing is said in the Bible about the Ark in the Old Testament after the return from Babylon, but the Apocrypha does state that the Ark could not be found when the Jewish people rebuilt the Second Temple during the time of Ezra, Zechariah, and Nehemiah, circa 515 B.C., during the reign of the Persian King Darius.
Thus, the Holy of Holies in the new Second Temple became an empty chamber, without the Ark of the Covenant. When the haughty Roman General Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C., he demanded the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, in order to gaze upon this wondrous sight. When he did, he came out disappointed, saying that he could not understand what all the interest was about the sanctuary, when it was only an empty room.

A large number of theories have been advanced to explain the mysterious disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant. Some of these theories maintain that the Ark was actually destroyed and thus no longer exists; others, more enticing and tantalizing, maintain that on the contrary the Ark was hidden away for safekeeping. These latter theories, of course, affirm that the Ark is still with us here on Earth.

For example, in his essay examining the possible solutions to the puzzle of the lost Ark, John Day explores and analyzes the validity of 12 different views about the true date of the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant. Weighing all the evidence, Mr. Day draws the sober conclusion that the evidence strongly suggests that the Ark disappeared around the time of the Babylonian conquest and exile, and the most likely explanation for its disappearance from history is that it was simply destroyed along with the First Temple of Solomon by the Babylonians at the time of their sack of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.\(^9\)

This answer, however, is far too obvious and simple. There are several other theories which logically account for the disappearance and loss of the Ark of the Covenant and which deserve our attention. Chief among these are the following:

First, according to the Talmud (TB Yoma 52b-53b, TJ Shekalim 6:1), the Ark was either hidden by King Josiah or transported to exile in Babylon along with the other Jewish treasures. Maimonides likewise accepts the tradition that King Josiah hid the Ark, long before the Babylonian invasion.

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Secondly, many believe that the wicked Jewish Queen Athaliah (841-835 B.C.) destroyed the Ark. Athaliah was a pagan, a worshiper of Baal, who hated Yahweh and who sought to lead the Hebrews astray to worship foreign idols. Given that the temples of Baal in Judah had recently been destroyed and her pagan kinfolk slaughtered by the righteous Jehu, there is every reason to believe that Queen Athaliah, in a move of vengeance, might have resorted to this last extremity, might have stolen into the easily accessible Temple of Solomon under the cover of darkness, and might have destroyed the Ark, the symbol of her nemesis, Jehovah. Corroborating this particular theory, we have the statement in Scripture: “…the children of the wicked Athaliah had violated the House of God and had even used the sacred things of the House of the Lord for the Baals (II Chronicles 24:7).

Thirdly, some scholars surmise that King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.) gave the Ark to Sennacherib as part of his tribute payment in the year 701 B.C. (2 Kings 18).

Then there is the hypothesis that the Ark might have been removed from Solomon’s Temple by faithful Levite priests when the evil and disrespectful King Manasseh (687-642 B.C.) callously and thoughtlessly placed an idol in the Temple (2 Kings 21:1-9). This school of thought maintains that the Levites clearly never would have tolerated the outrage that the holy Ark would remain in the same place as a pagan idol.

Fifthly, there exists the claim that the Ark was hidden by faithful Levite priests in the warren of passages beneath the First Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, shortly before the Babylonians destroyed it in 586 B.C. Unfortunately, this particular theory cannot be tested, because the site is home to the shrine of the Dome of the Rock, sacred to Islam. Digging beneath this site is simply not an option.

A sixth claim came from Ron Wyatt, an amateur archaeologist who said that in 1982 he found the Ark beneath the hill outside Jerusalem on which Christ was rumored to have been crucified. Blood from the crucifixion, he claimed, had dripped from the Cross through a fissure in the rock and onto the Ark. Wyatt further stated that he personally examined this dried blood, and that it contained only 24 chromosomes rather than the normal 46 found in normal human beings. But nobody
has ever seen it again, and Wyatt has also claimed a number of other archaeological finds that most scholars consider dubious.

A seventh theory has been advanced, proposing that Menelik I, the alleged son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, took the Ark to his new Kingdom of Ethiopia in Africa, before the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem. In defense of this point of view, it is common knowledge that the Queen of Sheba greatly admired the Temple of Solomon and the Ark of the Covenant; one of the main reasons that she came to visit Solomon, shortly after the construction of the Temple in 955 B.C., was in order to admire these wonders. According to this theory, the Ark still resides to this day in the town of Aksum, Ethiopia, inside the Saint Mary of Zion Cathedral. Church authorities, however, say that only one man, the guardian of the Ark, is allowed to see it, and they have never permitted scientists to examine the object for authenticity.

Finally, the most celebrated and glamorous of all the theories surrounding the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant is that Pharaoh Shishak took the Ark to the city of Tanis in Egypt after he invaded and plundered Jerusalem during the reign of Jeroboam in the year 926 B.C. (1 Kings 14:25-28). This theory has given rise to the most famous quest for the Ark: in the 1981 movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, adventurer and hero Indiana Jones travels to Tanis after the CIA in Washington inform him that the Nazis plan to excavate the Ark themselves and use its awesome power to achieve world conquest and dominion. Indiana has received credible information that the Ark is hidden within a pyramid in the recently discovered ancient Egyptian city of Tanis, and he must find and retrieve this holy relic for his employer, the American government, before the Nazis have the opportunity to steal it for themselves and their own evil purposes. The outcome of this particular scenario is well known to all cinema goers: although the Nazis initially do succeed in stealing the Ark, God does not allow them to keep it. Since they are criminals who plan to abuse the Ark and use it to commit horrific crimes, God, outraged by their despicable wickedness, destroys them with fire and brimstone, when they attempt to open the Ark on a remote Mediterranean island in order to discover its awesome secrets. Thereupon, Indiana Jones retrieves the Ark and returns it to its rightful own-
ers, the American government, who proceed to store the holy relic in an unknown location in one of their secret warehouses.

We now come to the heart and central purpose of this essay: the affirmation that the lost Ark of the Covenant indeed still does exist, and the presentation of a serious proposal concerning how best to find it.

Of all the theories which have been proposed concerning the disappearance and the location of the lost Ark of the Covenant, the most plausible and credible, by far, is the ancient, respected tradition that the prophet Jeremiah hid the Ark shortly before the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The story comes from 2 Maccabees 2:4-8 and goes like this: It was also in the writing that the prophet Jeremiah, having received an oracle, ordered that the Tent of the Tabernacle and the Ark should be removed from the Temple of Solomon and should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God (Mount Nebo). And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the Tent and the Ark and Altar of Incense, and he sealed up the entrance. Some of those who followed him came up to mark the way, but could not find it. When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: “The place [of the concealment of the Ark] shall be unknown until God gathers His people together again and shows His mercy. And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that a place should be especially consecrated.”

This would make perfect sense. Jeremiah was extremely active at the time of the disappearance of the Ark, from the 13th year of King Josiah (626 B.C.) until the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. He was the most famous and venerated prophet of Israel at the time. In addition, he was recognized by all his compatriots as the true vicar of God in their kingdom, the holy prophet whom God had anointed and appointed to transmit his divine commandments to his people.

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10 This version of the Jeremiah tradition comes from 2 Maccabees 2:4-8. For this purpose, the author consulted the following version of the Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Note well that Maccabees is not a book of the traditional Bible, but rather a book of the Apocrypha.
essence, the prophet Jeremiah was a new Moses; indeed, in his day, he was the most eminent prophet to appear in Israel since the time of Moses: just as Moses had guided his people at the time of the Exodus, so did Jeremiah guide his own people at the time of the Babylonian exile and captivity. Who better or more worthy to guard and to protect the Ark of the Covenant, the holiest object in all the land?

Obviously, God would have chosen his best and wisest prophet for this crucial and vital task. God knew that he could rely only on Jeremiah for this most important undertaking.

A second point corroborating this particular theory is the fact that God never would have tolerated the capture and desecration of the Ark by the Babylonians, given its extraordinary importance in the spiritual communication between Himself and his chosen people. Under these circumstances, God would have used supernatural means, if necessary, in order to protect this ultimate symbol of his power and his goodness and his grace. Never would He have allowed such a holy and powerful shrine to fall into the hands of ignorant heathens. It was God’s intention to conceal and to preserve the Ark, as the ultimate symbol of His greatness and His capacity to perform miracles.

In this regard, the reader should remember that the Ark was the holiest religious object in history: it symbolized, perfectly, the wisdom and the infallibility of God’s judgment and his infinite capacity for grace and mercy. The Jewish high priest approached the Ark in the Holy of Holies only once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Those who approached the Ark invariably faced God’s omniscient and infallible judgment; this divine judgment was symbolized by the two golden winged cherubs seated on the lid of the Ark, who had the same faces as the two wrathful sword bearing fiery Angels who barred the return of Adam and Eve to the Garden of Eden after their fall from innocence.

Because all men are imperfect and fall short of the glory of God, the intimidated priest and worshiper who approached the Ark in the Holy of Holies could only survive this inexorable divine judgment by sprinkling the innocent lamb’s blood of atonement on the mercy seat above the lid of the Ark. Thus, Yom Kippur was the annual holy
day which served to remind God of his eternal covenant to exercise both judgment and mercy in his dealings with Israel.

Moreover, in this ceremony of Yom Kippur, the reader clearly sees the Ark’s purpose as an omen of the advent of the Christ. The Ark represents both the Old Covenant of the Old Testament—made between Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, and God—as well as the New Covenant of the New Testament, represented by the life and resurrection of God’s divine Son, Jesus Christ. According to the theology of this New Testament, given that all men are imperfect, only Christ can save a person from eternal punishment for his sins in Hell, through the amazing redemptive power of his grace and infinite love and compassion.

Thus, in a very profound sense, the Cross of Christ has replaced the Ark of the Covenant, as the means by which a person can be saved and can lawfully be admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, just as in ancient times, the high priest humbly approached the ark on Yom Kippur, in order to beg God to forgive his wayward people, so do Christians today approach and kneel before the crucifixes, crosses, and Madonnas in their various churches, in order to beg for forgiveness of their own sins and in order to plead for Christ’s and God’s saving mercy and grace.

Under such circumstances, God never would have permitted the irretrievable loss or destruction of the Ark of the Covenant, given that the Ark is consequently the ultimate symbol of both the Old and the New Covenant between God and Man. The Ark is the holiest and most sacred physical object which can possibly be imagined.

A third cogent point corroborating the belief that it was Jeremiah who hid the Ark from the Babylonians shortly before their invasion of Israel, is the fact that the Jeremiah tradition is the most historically accurate, respectable, and credible theory concerning the disappearance of the Ark. This particular theory is corroborated by a great deal of prestigious scholarship, some of which was done close to the time of the Babylonian captivity and Jeremiah’s lifetime, and was thus based on the reports of reliable eye witnesses to the events.

The earliest version of this venerable Jeremiah tradition goes back to the Jewish historian Eupolemus, whose work dates from 157
B.C., and whose words were reported in the Greek historian Alexander Polyhistor’s book *On the Jews* (mid-first century B.C.). These words have been preserved for us in a work by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* (9.39.5). This reads:

“Then he (Nebuchadnezzar), King of Babylon, seized Jerusalem and captured Jonachim the King of the Jews (seemingly a conflation of Jehoiakim, Jehoiahim and Zedekiah). He took as tribute the gold and silver and bronze in the Temple of Solomon and sent them to Babylon, except for the Ark and the tablets of stone in it. This Jeremiah preserved.”

A fourth strong reason to support the contention that it was the prophet Jeremiah who hid the Ark, is archaeology. There is no stronger historical evidence than archaeological evidence. A famous archaeological expedition has already been conducted to Mount Nebo with the express intent to recover the lost Ark. This particular expedition brought forth surprisingly cogent evidence that Jeremiah had indeed concealed the Ark in a cave beneath this mountain. Let us consider the details of this expedition.

We are referring to the expedition which was led by the American Antonia Frederick Futterer, at the time one of the world’s leading collectors of Biblical antiquities. He was convinced that the Ark had not been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.; his research indicated that, in fact, the Ark had been buried inside Mount Nebo in what is present day Jordan at the time of the Babylonian invasion. Therefore, in the year 1926, Futterer embarked on his first trip to the Holy Land, to prove this fact.

His efforts were well rewarded. “Right under my feet is a cave,” he wrote in his diary while exploring the mountain. “Only a few yards from the very top of Mount Nebo. The mouth of it was stopped up with stones, just like Jeremiah said the lost cave would be.”

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Most significantly, during the course of this 1926 expedition, Futterer claimed to have discovered a secret passage within Mount Nebo. This passage was blocked by a wall of some sort, and Futterer did not attempt to break it down. He discovered etched upon the wall an ancient inscription, which he faithfully copied and carried back to Jerusalem. There, he contacted an eminent Biblical scholar at the Hebrew University who helpfully deciphered the hieroglyphs. To the amazement of all present that day, the translator read the following uncanny words: “Herein lies the golden Ark of the Covenant.”

The translator’s solemn pronouncement clearly confirmed the assertion of the prophet Jeremiah that he had hidden the Ark of the Covenant and the Tent of the Tabernacle in a secret cave inside Mount Nebo, for safekeeping.

Curiously, Futterer never named the translator, nor did he reproduce the inscription. Moreover, as surprising as it may seem, he never retraced his steps back to the secret passage on Mount Nebo, in order to retrieve the Ark. Hence, to this day, that passage which was first discovered so long ago, and that mysterious chamber behind the mysterious wall at the end of that passage, remain unexplored.

However, despite Futterer’s incomprehensible negligence in failing to consummate his expedition, the reader can clearly see that he was on the right track and that, of all the theories which have been advanced to indicate the present location of the Ark, this particular theory is the most plausible and the most credible. It is corroborated by powerful archaeological evidence, which matches the story of how Jeremiah hid the Ark, recorded in Maccabees. The location of the secret passage found by Futterer in 1926 also matches the location on Mount Nebo to which Jeremiah reportedly took and deposited the Ark at the time of the Babylonian invasion.

The author consequently believes that we have now found the solution to the mystery of what became of the lost Ark of the Covenant. To those sceptics who would retort that Futterer and his colleagues have already undertaken the examination of the summit of Mount Nebo, yet have failed to find the hidden chamber concealing the Ark and the Tent

12 Hancock, 394.
of the Tabernacle, the author would reply that the Futterer expedition was an undertaking conducted by enthusiastic yet untrained amateurs.

As incredible as it may seem, to the knowledge of historians and Biblical scholars, no serious professional archaeological team has ever gone in search of the Ark of the Covenant. Only well-meaning amateurs have done so. While amateurs might have failed in the past, professional archaeologists with professional high tech equipment exploring Mount Nebo today would possess the professional skill and expertise required to actually locate and recover the lost Ark. Were they to re-discover the secret passage first discovered by Futterer in 1926, and were they to break down that inconvenient wall at the end of that passage, they would probably enter a chamber containing treasures equivalent to those discovered at the time of the discovery of the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty, King Tutankhamun.

Despite the theological fact that the essence of Yahweh is incorporeal ineffability and transcendence, and despite His insistence that He is a purely Holy Spirit, rather than a visible idol, men today still do need to see and to revere physical holy objects as they pursue their religious lives. It was for this reason that John Calvin and other theologians of the Reformation in Switzerland and elsewhere attributed such a high degree of importance to the Ark, and it explains why they illustrated their Bibles with so many splendid images of the Ark and the Tent of the Tabernacle. Hence, 500 years after the Reformation, the quest for the lost Ark of the Covenant continues, as it has for millennia.

We should all remember that the Ark represents God’s dwelling in the heart of any who love Him as well as an extraordinary opportunity to commune directly with His divine presence. It is a most extraordinary blessing to mankind. This should be reason enough to motivate young archaeologists today to return to Mount Nebo and to seek with ardor the mysteriously lost and fabled Ark of the Covenant.

- Bryan College

Militant Switzerland
vs. Switzerland, Island of Peace
Two Monuments, Two Conceptions

by Alex Winiger

Two monumental murals depict Switzerland during the First World War: the votive painting in the Lower Ranft Chapel in Flüeli-Ranft by Robert Durrer (1867-1934), Albert Hinter (1876-1957) and Hans von Matt (1899-1985) from 1920-21, and the cycle of Charles L’Eplattenier (1874-1946) in the Knights’ Hall of the Colombier Castle from 1915-19, depicting the mobilization of Swiss soldiers in 1914.¹ They report in rich details how differently artists in that country saw the war of 1914-18. Both were put into architectural monuments built around 1500.² However, they differ greatly in their


form, fulfilling a completely different function at the time of their execution.

The war triggered a flood of monuments after 1918. An estimate names 180,000 war memorials built in France alone.\(^3\) Many of these confined themselves to simple pictorial elements such as the triumphal arch, an obelisk or the sculpture of a (male) hero, even though the medium of the fresco was predestined for this task: through the commitment to a “public benefit”;\(^4\) a nationalist impetus; the idea of the “readable image” (analogous to the “biblia pauperum,” the “bible of the poor”); finally, the offer of collective self-assurance.

The works in Colombier and Flüeli-Ranft presented below are monuments in Switzerland, a country that escaped the war. For that reason, I add two works from England and France which necessarily illuminate aspects stemming from the actual experience of the war.

Mentioning three Swiss works of the “Landi 39” period may

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\(^3\) Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914-1918* (Cambridge 2003), 166.

\(^4\) “Public benefit” was a criterion used in the context of increased public art funding in the USA. See Meyer Schapiro, *The Public Use of Art* (New York, 1936), 4-6. The idea ultimately goes back to the French Revolution: “The arts will regain their full dignity [. . . ]. Canvas, marble, and bronze will compete in the future with the desire to convey to posterity the unwavering courage of our republican phalanx.” Jacques-Louis David in front of the National Convention, 1794, cited from: Oskar Bätschmann, *Ausstellungskünstler. Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem* (Cologne, 1997), 73.
finally help to distinguish L’Eplattenier’s and Durrer’s representations from the Swiss mainstream of “Geistige Landesverteidigung” (spiritual national defense) practiced in Switzerland) of the 1930s and 1940s.5

Fervor Against Distance

Charles L’Eplattenier, Mobilization cycle, 1915-19, Knights’ Hall in Colombier Castle, Millevigne NE. Oil on marouflaged canvas, approx. 4 x 23 m.

Charles L’Eplattenier’s paintings in the upper one of two halls in the old part of Colombier Castle6 show an oath scene and the occu-

5 The cultural movement of “Spiritual National Defense” in Switzerland has its roots in the beginning of the 1930s. Federal Councillor Philipp Etter (1891-1977) started it officially with his statement published on December 9, 1938. Its aim was the strengthening of values and customs perceived to be ‘Swiss’ and thus create a defence against Nazism and Fascism, later also against Communism. The National Exposition of 1939 in Zurich was very much a consequence of this policy, which even led to the expression of a “Landi”-style (in architecture, in the arts, and other cultural areas). In a broadcast statement in the 1960s, Armin Meili (1891-1982, former director of the “Landi 39”) mentioned that General Henri Guisan (1874-1960, commander in chief of the Swiss army during the Second World War) told him: “Your Landi replaces me a whole army corps.”

6 The older parts of the castle were built in the sixteenth century and used as a noble residence. Around 1800, the castle initially served as a hospital, from the 1830s as a military caserne. The present troop dwellings and the arsenal were built in the nineteenth century, in the style of the former castle. During the war period, the oldest parts of the building complex used to house commander offices and a wardroom.

The portrayed soldiers seem to correspond to members of the 8th Infantry Regiment stationed in Colombier in 1919.7 At the time, Ferdinand-Robert-Treytorrens de Loys (1857-1917) was commander of the second division of the Swiss Army and of the caserne. De Loys had spotted L’Eplattenier drawing his comrades during the first months of the war in Saint-Maurice (Valais), where L’Eplattenier had started his service as a fortress cannoneer. The artist was therefore asked to accompany the commander and to accept a commission sponsored privately by the same.

L’Eplattenier, a graduate in Budapest and Paris, and professor and head of the Ecole d’art in La Chaux-de-Fonds from 1897 to 1912, had already some experience in the monumental decoration of buildings. Among them was a cycle on “War and Peace,” which he created between 1896 and 1902 along with William Victor Aubert (1856-1942) for the La Chaux-de-Fonds marksmen’s clubhouse. His largest work, realized before the First World War and still his most famous one to-

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7 See Pipoz-Perroset (2004), 16.
day, is the interior design of the crematory of La Chaux-de-Fonds, built from 1909 to 1912, which he executed together with his student Jean-André Evard (1876-1972). For the Mobilization cycle in Colombier Castle, L'Eplattenier drew up over 400 studies. Authorized by de Loys, he was able to observe and sketch the mobilization taking place in Delémont and Lucelle. He completed the paintings in 1919 which were stored until being marouflaged to the walls of the “Salle des Chevaliers” in 1925.

The titles of the individual sections are “Le serment” (“The Flag Oath”), “La chevauchée” (“The Cavalry Deployment”), “La montée à la frontière” (“Climbing to the Border”) and “Installation défensive” (“Border Fortification”). The paintings surround the room, interrupted only by doors, windows and a large fireplace. They form a kind

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of seamlessly inserted tapestry that dominates the hall and expands into a landscape perspective.

The endless, rigid ranks of soldiers of the oath scene are looking into the room towards the observer, flanked on the right by the horsemen around the commander (presumably a portrait of Treytorrens de Loys). From this wall, the movement across the window wall and the wall opposite the muster flows steadily to the left, an endless stream of cavalry, guns and marching soldiers circling the viewer. The inner front wall of the hall marks a turning point: soldiers “attack” the Jura rocks in a countermove, crossing the main entrance door, while a guard over the landing, facing away from the observer and the figures of the oath scene, overlooks the area beyond the rocks, i.e. the border.
The hall can be seen as portraying Switzerland itself. The viewer would then be its inhabitant. The muster is for him: come along, defend your country. Military formations deploy around him, while others, entrenching themselves in the rocks, turn to the menace that comes from outside.

The paintings express the faith in the feasible: the militant Swiss close their ranks and prepare for the imminent danger by harnessing all their strength. The danger has not yet passed, and the men have to ward it off alone. The prerequisites for this are the tight, military order and the oath of allegiance. The paintings do not show the war activities themselves. They portray the real effort that the defense of the country implies: men are digging trenches.

The cycle at Colombier Castle, to which L’Eplattenier added a second one 20 years later called “La Fondation de la Suisse” (The foundation of Switzerland)\(^\text{10}\), historically and stylistically stands exactly between Ferdinand Hodler’s Marignano triptych of 1900 and the many patriotic representations in the gravitational field of the Swiss National Exhibition in 1939 (“Landi 39”).

Hodler’s painting was still a rebellion of artistic ambitions against the conventions of historical painting, and therefore caused great indignation.\(^\text{11}\) By contrast, patriotic representations of the 1930s such as “Das Werden des Bundes” (“The Formation of the Confederation”) (1939) by Otto Baumberger (1889-1961) were based on firmly established views of history and were hardly ever criticized.\(^\text{12}\) L’Eplattenier’s position was somewhere between the two: with fervor for the cause, using the still controversial Hodlerian expression,\(^\text{13}\) he created a work that certainly did not cause a commotion in the officers’ mess of the Colombier caserne, but may have succeeded in stirring up enthusiasm for the feat of defense. The painting “Installation défensive” sets itself apart from the almost ornamental oath and deployment scenes, in favor of a virile, haptic realism that heroizes the physical exertion in the crystalline Jurassic rock.

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\(^{10}\) Charles L’Eplattenier, *La Fondation de la Suisse*, 1935-46, Colombier Castle, Salle des Armes (armory), Millevigne NE, oil on marouflaged canvas, ca. 4 x 23 m. The armory in Colombier Castle is located directly above the Knights’ Hall (“Salle des Chevaliers”).


\(^{13}\) In 1915, a parliamentary petition “Heer” in the National Council called for limiting the influence of the artists’ association GSMBA on organizing national exhibitions and awarding prizes and asked for seats for members of competing organizations such as the conservative “Secession” headed by Josef Clemens Kaufmann as well as for laymen in the Federal Art Commission.
Robert Durrer, Albert Hinter, Hans von Matt, Votive painting, 1921, rear wall of the Lower Ranft Chapel, Flüeli-Ranft, Sachseln OW. Fresco, 4 x 9 m.

From 1920 to 1921, Robert Durrer led the restoration of the two Ranft Chapels and of the residence of Niklaus von Flüe (1417-87), the so-called “Ranftheiligtum” (Ranft sanctuary),\(^\text{14}\) on behalf of the Schweizerischer Katholischer Volksverein (Swiss Catholic People’s Association).\(^\text{15}\) Durrer had attended art schools before studying law

\(^\text{14}\) It was only in 1947 that Niklaus von Flüe was canonized by Pope Pius XII.

\(^\text{15}\) The order was preceded by a vow of the SKVV in 1914 to donate a votive offering, if Blessed Brother Klaus would save Switzerland from the war. The editor and politician Hans von Matt (1869-1932), a member of the SKVV and a friend of Durrer, made sure these funds went towards the restoration of the Ranft sanctuary and the associated votive painting, and defended Durrer’s work against attacks from conservative, military-related circles. Von Matt was also the father of the third person involved in the execution of the votive painting, Hans von Matt (1899-1985).


and history in Bern and Geneva. As the author of a volume on the art monuments of the canton of Unterwalden (1899-1928), in which he had examined the Ranft in detail, he was in some way predestined for the accompaniment of the restoration. He was supported by the experienced church painter Albert Hinter from the nearby monastery village Engelberg, which proved to be lucky both for the uncovering and reconstruction of the frescoes dating back to the late Middle Ages, and for the creation of the votive painting respectively. The two men were joined by the art student Hans von Matt Junior.

Photograph by Alex Winiger, 2019.
The Lower Ranft Chapel was built as a pilgrimage chapel in 1501, after the death of Niklaus von Flüe, and was repeatedly modified over the following centuries.\(^{17}\) The work of the restorers initially consisted of restoring the “original” design of the chapel.\(^{18}\) Durrer reconstructed a gothic wooden ceiling and bricked four windows, but left and restored the baroque altar, as no adequate medieval alternative was available. The sixteenth-century painting cycles, which depict the life of “Brother Klaus”\(^{19}\) on one side, the life of Christ on the opposite side, an Annunciation scene, the Adoration of the Shepherds, and the Magi on the altar wall, were completed. Frame lines also show the former limitations of the painting fields where they are lost. The never decorated back wall of the chapel was supposed to serve as a support for a votive painting designed by Robert Durrer in 1920.\(^{20}\) Following the restoration of the historic building, in the summer and fall of 1921, Durrer, Hinter, and von Matt executed the painting true to Durrer’s design within a few weeks.\(^{21}\) Durrer claimed the authorship with the inscriptions “invenit” and “pinxit”, Hinter is listed as another painter (“pinxit”), while von Matt is missing: he is said to have removed his name shortly after completion, fearing his involvement in the execution of this artwork could damage his future career.\(^{22}\)

The painting is framed by a banner that expresses gratitude for God’s salvation from harm. Through this framing and the stylistic and color adjustment, the picture unobtrusively adapts to the historical paintings. From a sea of flags and dead, skulls and skeletons, the apocalyptic riders swing upwards like a wave and thus threaten the rock of Switzerland, which rises from this boundless misery. On top of it, Brother Klaus implores God,\(^{23}\) surrounded by angels whose colors

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\(^{17}\) According to Durrer’s inventory taken about 1900, the chapel was in an unsightly state at that time. There was no sign of the paintings anymore.

\(^{18}\) See Durrer, Kunstdenkmäler, p. 1139. To understand the character of the restoration, see also Hans-Rudolf Meier, *Konventionelle Pioniere*, 381-390.

\(^{19}\) Niklaus von Flüe’s common nickname in Switzerland is “Bruder Klaus.”

\(^{20}\) See Odermatt-Bürgi (2018), 156-173.

\(^{21}\) See Odermatt-Bürgi (2018), 158-159.

\(^{22}\) See Odermatt-Bürgi (2018), 169.

\(^{23}\) Albert Hinter depicted God as a glass painting in a baroque window opening, which the restorers had refrained from bricking.
adumbrate the French tricolor,\textsuperscript{24} one of them opposing the war threat by resolutely holding a shield with a Swiss cross. A children’s dance around an apple tree and a plowing farmer represent the idyll that is to be preserved. That’s the extent of the patriotism.

About two steps below the angels stands a group of officers representing the General Staff, appearing somewhat goofy and vain,\textsuperscript{25} while some brave soldiers guard a bridge. All sorts of candid and shady characters enter through the “back door” to the rock and are welcomed there by a waiter. References to the modern gas and machine war are used very cautiously. Visible is a gas mask, a sinking passenger ship, and one of the apocalyptic riders has taken the pose of an airplane.\textsuperscript{26}

The representations as well as their form draw on historical models. The dance macabre as well as the apocalyptic riders could have come from Albrecht Dürer’s Apocalypse of 1498,\textsuperscript{27} the turmoil of the battle from Albrecht Altdorfer’s “Alexanderschlacht” (Battle of Alexander at Issus) of 1529. The spiraling homeland rock with the partly sinister actions of its inhabitants on the other hand is reminiscent of Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s or Abel Grimmers’ representations of the Tower of Babel. These reminiscences create distance and authority at the same time. The viewer does not have to feel affected at all costs. There is a frame between him and the story. The depicted drama could possibly mean something remote, or something much more general: “Such is the war at all times.” At the same time, the painters gain respect through their reference to traditional and historical representations. Even Hans Meyer-Rahn, a critic of Durrer, remarked in 1922 that “especially in ecclesiastical art, a much sharper criticism […] can be detected, without having harmed the church in the least [...].”\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} See Marchal (2007), 460.
\textsuperscript{25} See Odermatt-Bürgi (2018), 165-166.
\textsuperscript{26} Comprehensive descriptions and interpretations of the elements of the votive painting can be found in the publications by Bürgi-Odermatt, Mougeli, Marchal and Sarasin.
\textsuperscript{27} In 1911, Albert Hinter had already completed a dance macabre painting on the wall of an ossuary in the neighboring village of Kerns.
\textsuperscript{28} Letter from Meyer-Rahn to Eduard Nager of October 31, 1922, see Marchal (2007), 450. Hans Meyer-Rahn (1868-1954), attorney and long-time secretary of the Gottfried Keller Foundation, had incidentally criticized the lack of militancy in the portrayal of military personnel and the inadequate, non-national character of the Helvetic rock in Durrer’s votive painting.
The historicizing “camouflage” seemed to calm the public. The critical potential was either not perceived by the press and visitors to the place, or felt to be harmless. Religious and military circles reacted more sensitively. Still today there are voices that point out that this is not a true votive painting. The gratitude for God’s protection expressed in it is mingled with the criticism of the fellow citizens: “Our dear fatherland was wonderfully protected ...,” in other words: that you were saved is not your merit.

It remains to be noted that the painting is dedicated to the pilgrims for peaceful contemplation. It is a didactic medium that shall act slowly and sustainably. Not created during the war, but after danger was overcome, it did not need to shake up or unite, but was intended to stimulate reflection on what had happened. Durrer had operated similarly in 1915 with his text “Kriegsbetrachtungen” (“Reflections on War”): he warned the Swiss of affective partisanship due to cultural neighborhoods, and to calculate where their existential (i.e. economic) interests lay (in this case, in a good relationship with England).

The votive painting in Ranft is indeed fatalistic and tied to a religious message, but surprisingly realistic in its representation of the forces that preserved Swiss peace. The actionist, physical realism that Charles L’Eplattenier introduced in Colombier, however, addresses physical strength, not critical intellect.

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29 On (positive) reporting, see Bürgi-Odermatt (2018), 159. On “Identitätspräsentation” (presentation of identity) of the “island of peace” see Marchal (2007), 461. The newspaper Obwaldner Volksfreund wrote on September 21, 1921: “Der Eindruck ist ein ganz gewaltiger. Man ist nur im Zweifel darüber, ob die grosszügige Auffassung, welche das Ganze beherrscht, oder die Mannigfaltigkeit der zahlreichen Gruppen, in denen der Grundgedanke zum Ausdruck kommt, mehr bewundert zu werden verdiene.” (“The impression is quite enormous. One is only in doubt as to whether the generous conception which dominates the whole, or the multiplicity of the numerous groups in which the basic idea is expressed, deserves to be admired more.”) Similar contributions appeared on Sept. 28, 1921, in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung and on Oct. 1, 1921, in the Unterwaldner.

30 See note 13. On Durrer’s tense relationship with the clergy, see Bürgi-Odermatt (2018), 168-169.


32 Robert Durrer, Kriegsbetrachtungen (Zürich, 1915).
Memorials of the “Great War”

*The Menin Road (1918) by Paul Nash.*

*Nympheas (1914-26) by Claude Monet*

According to an initiative by Lord Beaverbrook, from 1918 on, twenty large-scale paintings depicting the warfare of eyewitnesses were to be shown in a pavilion designed by Charles Holden (1875-1960), on Richmond Hill in London. Although the project of this “Hall of Remembrance” was abandoned in 1919, a large part of the paintings

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33 The Canadian-British publisher and politician, Lord Beaverbrook (William Maxwell Aitken, 1879-1964) was commissioned by the Canadian government in 1916 to design a tribute to Canada’s war contribution. He developed the exhibition of a series of large-format paintings for a National War Memorial. In 1918, he was appointed Minister of Information by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George (1863-1945). In this capacity, he proposed to transfer eyewitness paintings of the Western Front that had been created according to an initiative of the War Propaganda Bureau of 1917 into a memorial hall in London.
were executed and finally handed over to the Imperial War Museum.\textsuperscript{34} The collection is exceptional in its scope, ranging from academic to avant-garde painting, and contains works that go beyond the usual stereotypes of patriotic heroism. The mood is elegiac. The scale of the British Empire’s merits is measured by the magnitude of the disaster. Thus, the memory of the traumatic experiences receives the imperial\textsuperscript{35} consecration: “these our common sacrifices.”

In his painting “The Menin Road,”\textsuperscript{36} Paul Nash (1889-1946) shows a rugged landscape in violent contrasts, dotted with rubble and burnt tree stumps protruding into the sky covered by smoke and clouds. Some scattered Tommies who seem to be searching the area, represented as tiny figures, can be recognized. Steely, two pillars of light in the background break through the clouds, which could stand for a supernatural force at work. Neither the heroic deed nor the conquest,

\textsuperscript{34} See Claire A.P. Willsdon, \textit{Mural Painting in Britain, 1840-1940} (Oxford, 2000), 122-130.

\textsuperscript{35} The term is used here as an analogon to the “national” in the French or German context.

\textsuperscript{36} Paul Nash, The Menin Road, 1918-19, oil on canvas, 182.8 × 317.5 cm (Imperial War Museum, London).
but rather the destruction itself, is the motif of the painting. Nash does, so to speak, the opposite of L’Eplattenier, the latter showing only the (heroic) deed, but not the effect (of war).

Monet’s “Nymphéas” cycle in the old orangery of the Tuileries Palace in Paris is not commonly perceived as a war memorial. Selected as a gift to the French state in 1914 by Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929), the paintings have been created partly during the war, in Monet’s studio in Giverny, virtually within earshot of the cannon thunder. The installation, inaugurated in 1927 at the purpose-built destination, faced much opposition in the inter-war period. One reason for this was the “submarine” or “bunker atmosphere,” which the oval room was said to have evoked together with the nearly non-objective images, visually affording little hold. At the same time, the dissolved, deserted idylls can be perceived as a counterpart to contemporary battlefield representations. Thus, the cycle has unintentionally, at least temporarily, fulfilled the function of remembering the war.

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37 See Jacques Emile Blanche, “En me promenant aux Tuileries,” L’Art vivant, Sept. 1*, 1927, 694-696. Golan writes furthermore: “[…] installed in the space of the Orangerie that was apparently assigned to billet soldiers on leave from the trenches during the First World War, the Nymphéas tended to be yoked not so much to peace and beauty, the way they had been intended by Monet, as to the lingering memory of war.” (Golan, 2009), 25. On the impression of a trench or bunker in the Orangerie, see Golan (2009), 26-28.

38 Golan compares the “Nymphéas” with, for example, the Borodino Panorama (1912) in Moscow by Franz Roubaud (1856-1928), see Golan (2009), 29-32.

Images of contemporary warfare remained rare in Switzerland, even in the heyday of patriotism, the 1930s and 1940s. At the Swiss National Exhibition in 1939, the “Landi,” two depictions stood out: Fred Stauffer’s striking “Die starke Schweiz 1914 und die schwache Schweiz 1798” and the epic, 45-meters long “story book” “Das Werden des Bundes” by Otto Baumberger.40 In Baumberger’s illustration, the

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40Fred Stauffer (1892-1980) and Otto Baumberger (1889-1961), who worked as commercial graphic designers at the time like many other painters of the 1930s, created their monumental depictions at the Landi for the department “Heimat und Volk” (“Homeland and People”), where military mobilization and (continued on page 61)

Otto Baumberger, *Das Werden des Bundes*, 1939, Swiss National Exposition, department Heimat und Volk (Homeland and People). Visitors had to defile from one end to the other. Photograph by Michael Wolgensinger, Zurich. Source: gta Archives / ETH Zurich, Hans Hofmann.
phalanx of closely aligned military men appears above the words of “In Labore Pax” as the conclusion of a story full of warlike turmoil, while Stauffer confronts Switzerland overrun by foreign armies during the Napoleonic wars with an idyll surrounded by stalwart soldiers. Baumberger’s monumental drawing was mounted in an otherwise empty, long corridor, illuminated by an opposite window front. The spatial arrangement forced the visitors to follow this history. This ensured that they saw the same thing: a “canonized” view of history for “ein einig Volk” (“a united people”, to speak with Schiller).

In the same year, graphic designer Willi Koch (1909-1988, active in St. Gallen) created a cycle of paintings on mobilization 41 in a canteen of the Walenstadt caserne where he served, which contains a compressed but realistic war scene: two soldiers in combat uniforms and masks attack a sowing farmer with hand grenades. The land is devastated, a dead man lies beside the plow, a woman and children stare lost into space. Especially the expression of these surviving war victims shows similarities with contemporary images from besieged Barcelona shortly before the collapse of the Spanish Republic. 42 Although Koch’s cycle is not at the same artistic level of the mentioned Landi artworks, this work in its awkward authenticity is nevertheless staggering. Like Baumberger’s and Stauffer’s, Koch’s uniformed citizens stand to attention at the border, and there is no lack of genre scenes of conviviality. However, this last picture of the cycle bursts the “Landiggeist” (“expo spirit”) with its propagandistic conventions.

40 (continued) political alliance were evoked in the face of immediate danger of war. Millions of visitors—the Landi counted slightly more than ten million admissions—Switzerland having four million inhabitants at the time—filed past the linearly arranged works of Baumberger and Stauffer.


42 The US-American writer, artist and socialite Ione Robinson (1910–89), for example, tried to raise money and support for the Spanish Republic among the New York upper class with her drawings and photographs of the faces of war victims, especially children, created in Barcelona in 1938. See Francie Cate-Arries, Ione Robinson and the Art of Bearing Witness. Picturing Trauma in the Ruins of War, in: Nancy Berthier, Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (Ed.), Retóricas del miedo. Imágenes de la Guerra Civil Española (Madrid 2012).
Durrers and L’Eplattenier’s works mark independent and different positions in this spectrum. The historical distance and the partial loss of their original function merges them as musealized forms of a monumental art, which has long since lost its outstanding position. However, even after a hundred years, the paintings reveal the war threat in different facets.
Notes on the Author

Alex Winiger, born in 1966, studied from 1987 to 1993 at the School of Design Zurich. As a result, he worked as an art teacher, visual artist, and as a museum and archives employee. Since 2006, he has been operating the online documentation mural.ch, a data collection on modern and contemporary mural art. He wrote the present text commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.
Niklaus Leuenberger:
Predating Gandhi in 1653?

Concerning the Vindication of the
Insurgents in the Swiss Peasant War

by Hans Leuenberger

The Peasant War

The 1653 Peasant War can be subdivided in the following phases:

• The beginning of the rebellion in the Entlebuch Valley, Canton Lucerne.

• The massive popular revolt under the leadership of Niklaus Leuenberger, chairman of the “League of Huttwil,” as of the signing of the Oath of Huttwil [Bundesbrief] with the aim of a renewal of the Oath of Rütli of 1291 [author’s remark], through to the conclusion of the Murifeld Peace Treaty.

• The willful and unilateral violation of the Murifeld Peace Treaty by the government in Bern following the jubilant withdrawal of the armed peasants as defined in the treaty.

• The abatement of the rebellion by the Bernese troops (Battle of Herzogenbuchsee) and the Federal Diets’ troops (Battle of Wohlenschwil) under the pretense that the rebels had no right to gather in assembly as declared in the Treaty of Stans.

• The persecution, torturing and conviction of the ringleaders which culminated in the quartering of leader Niklaus Leuenberger and in the compilation of an extensive list of rebels to be convicted.

• The assassination of Lucerne councilman Kaspar Studer (†1653) and the end of the rebellion in the Entlebuch.
Niklaus Leuenberger: Predating Gandhi in 1653?

Better understanding will be gained through a brief explanation of the contents of the Treaty of the Federal Diet of Stans and singular aspects of the six phases of the peasant war.

The focus of the text, however, is the impact of leader Niklaus Leuenberger, from his formulation of the Oath of Huttwil to his dismemberment by the executioner in Bern.

The Federal Diet of Stans
“Fasnacht” in Lucerne and the Secret Message from Nicholas of Flüe

On Shrove Tuesday [Fasnacht, pre-Lenten carnival] in February 1477¹ in the city of Lucerne some 2,000 men² from central Switzerland resolved to procure the missing payments which had been promised them as compensation for their having fought in the Burgundian wars. These men formed a “hog-banner campaign” [Saubannerzug] and marched towards Geneva. Interestingly, this peasant revolt happened 200 years after the first revolt against the Habsburg Empire in the thirteenth century. This incident caused a crisis within the confederation of the eight cantons, the independent small states in the Old Swiss Confederacy. Delegates of the eight governments therefore met in December 1481 as a Federal Diet [Tagsatzung]³ in Stans.

According to the Lucerne chronicle, it was a message from Nicholas of Flüe⁴ which led to agreement, even though the specific contents remain unknown. It is conceivable that Nicholas of Flüe, who had served as a judge and a member of Obwalden’s government and participated as an officer in the Zurich war, himself demanded that his message be treated as strictly confidential.

Council from the Wise Nicholas of Flüe (b1417-†1487)

Nicholas of Flüe was consciously aware that the general public would not accept a banning of Fasnacht. Therefore, it may be assumed that Nicholas of Flüe counseled the eight cantons of the Old Swiss Con-
federacy to not ban Fasnacht but to listen to the criticism from the public in order to avoid such insurrection. Additionally, it may be possible that he even suggested to consult the subjects to avoid revolts, a measure which was introduced after the Old Zurich War (1440-46).

“Ausburger” as Burghers of Bern and Burgdorf

Burghers of the cities of Bern and Burgdorf who lived in rural areas were designated as “Ausburger” ([i.e., non-residential burghers] and in case of war had the right to seek protection behind the surrounding walls of the town.

Through their privileges as burghers, this group belonged to the upper class of wealthy free peasants and were assured security and legal assistance from Bern and Burgdorf in case of disputes with a neighboring lord. This agreement of the cities with wealthy free peasants was a “win-win” situation for both parties. Within the framework of the expansion of the territorial sovereignty of Bern [Landeshoheit] regarding Burgdorf and neighboring rural areas, the “Ausburger” and their descendants, free peasants, played an important role as allies, as the “fifth column” of Bern.

This upper class of free peasants residing in the environment of the city of Bern represented the backbone of the rural economy, owning farms, grain mills, oil mills, smithies, taverns, tanneries etc. These free peasants kept the economy alive, also during the decline of the lords who often were knights in the service of the Habsburg Empire. In this context, it has to be kept in mind that the lower court jurisdiction is an integral part of the bailiwick of the lord as long as this bailiwick does not belong to Bern.

Power Causes Greediness for More Power

With the decline of the feudal system, the patrician families in the cities started to purchase territories of the lords, i.e. its bailiwick with its lower court jurisdiction, along with their serfs. At the same time the city started to purchase the freedom of the families of serfs of a lord living in a specific territory. Unfortunately, a consolidation of all subjects followed—ransomed serfs were recognized as equals to free peasants.
Through this consolidation the hardest hit of all subjects was the “fifth column” of free peasants (“Ausburger”), burghers of Bern and Burgdorf and their descendants, who owned free farms within territories of a lord. All subjects residing in the territories purchased by Bern were obliged to pay a new feudal tax. These free peasants were opposed to paying this tax and felt cheated by the city of Bern. The discontent was fueled by the fact that they were asked to prove in court that they were not serfs of the lord but descendants of free peasants. Since there was no separation of powers, the descendant of a free peasant often lost the case in court.

**Concerning the Wording of the Diet of Stans**

It makes sense that the proceedings from Stans remain silent about the secret message of Nicholas of Flüe. It only included phrases which could be accepted by all parties: the ban of forcible attacks; the security of cantons; the punishment of culprits; no free assembly of peasants without the permission of the authorities etc. The presumed secret message from Nicholas of Flüe not to ban the Fasnacht, to consult the subjects and not to punish the peasants for their revolt is clearly a step forward to a more democratic system.

In the public awareness, Nicholas of Flüe was on the side of the peasants. The William Tell Song mentioning Nicholas of Flüe supports this hypothesis.5

**The Beginning of the Rebellion in Entlebuch and the Magnitude of the Disturbances**

**The Entlebuch District Procession to Heiligkreuz**

The pilgrimage procession to Heiligkreuz at the beginning of the rebellion is particularly significant. It was customary in times of crises and emergencies that Entlebuch’s inhabitants sought comfort and consolidation through the veneration of the relics in the Heiligkreuz church. The fact that this pilgrimage took place on a Monday rather than a church feast day is especially noteworthy.

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What were the reasons that caused Hans Emmenegger (1604-1653), the regional banneret [Landespannermeister] of the Entlebuch District, to support this pilgrimage on February 10 (Gregorian calendar), ten days before Fat Thursday? Did he want to soothe the enraged tempers of the peasants with this pilgrimage? Did Hans Emmenegger want to avoid having the Lucerne Fasnacht in 1653 get out of control to avoid a “hog-banner campaign” from being formed—as had happened following the fifteenth century Burgundian wars—and to preclude the rage of the rural inhabitants from being discharged? Had he originally planned that at the beginning of the Lucerne Fasnacht on Fat Thursday—where according to Swabian-Allemannic tradition criticism of the authorities was unexceptional—the three Tells, carrying truncheons and wearing costumes as William Tell, Werner Stauffacher and Arnold von Melchtal would appear?

Based on the Lucerne government’s stance on refusing the demands, which provoked the demonstration of peasants armed with truncheons on February 6, 1653, it appears that Hans Emmenegger arguably decided—with the consent of the clergy of the Entlebuch parishes—to undertake an Entlebuch District procession on February 10th to the Church of the Holy Cross [Heiligkreuzkirche] above the village of Hasle, Canton Lucerne.

On the other hand, no documents confirm that the three Tells wearing the costumes donated by Hans Emmenegger participated in the Lucerne Fasnacht. It therefore remains a mystery as to whether or not Hans Emmenegger originally planned to have the three Tells appear at the Lucerne Fasnacht of 1653 in their efforts to call the attention of the government authorities to their lost freedoms.

Refusal of the Oath (Untertaneneid) Demanded from the Peasant Subjects

On Fat Thursday, February 20th (Gregorian calendar), in front of the gates of Lucerne, the bailiff of the Rothenburg Bailiwick (Canton Lucerne) promised his peasant subjects—who felt that they had been treated unjustly—an improvement of their situation if they would take an oath bowing to the government authorities. However, the peasants refused to swear the oath and on that same evening Kaspar Steiner (1614-1653) assured the Entlebuch peasants that they had the support of their fellow men from Rothenburg.
Meanwhile, the turmoils had spread further and even included the inhabitants of the little town of Willisau. That was the purpose why Lucerne’s city mayor (Schultheiss), Knight Heinrich von Fleckenstein visited the town of Willisau on February 20th, the Saturday following the beginning of the Lucerne Fasnacht on Fat Thursday. He reminded the local people in the little town that the city of Lucerne had provided them with diverse benefits in 1472 (five years prior to the turmoil of 1477!), but he was not able to calm the people in Willisau.

In 1653, Fleckenstein was the richest person in the Swiss Confederation since he provided foreign powers with the much sought Swiss mercenaries which was a major business of the leading patricians in the cities.

**Attempted Intervention of Mayor Waser from Zurich**

The disturbances encompassed the Bernese region and further areas in Switzerland. Bern requested Johann Heinrich Waser (1600-1669), the mayor of Zurich, to attempt an arbitration between the peasants and government authorities. In contrast to Mayor Fleckenstein of Lucerne, Waser was able to gain the confidence of the peasant deputies. His proposal was ultimately accepted by the representatives of the attending bailiwicks. Niklaus Leuenberger was also one of the deputies. On March 30, 1653, in the Bern city hall, under threat of punishment, all of the representatives took a new oath of allegiance as a reminder that all subjects still had to swear an oath of loyalty.

**Regional Assembly of the Peasants in Signau**

The next day, hundreds of discontented peasants from the entire Emmental and Aargau regions, members of the Swiss Reformed Church, as well as Roman Catholic peasants from the Entlebuch region and from Willisau, along with peasant farmers from the Solothurn bailiwicks, the Bernese Oberland and the communal dominion of Schwarzenburg were present in Signau. With a great majority, the representatives resolved to convene a new regional assembly with the goal—as defined by the founders of the Swiss Confederation in 1291 (Oath of Rütli)—to form an alliance for assistance when in need. Simultaneously, none of the peasants should swear the demanded oath of loyalty on the coming Sunday in the church.
The Assembly of Sumiswald

This new regional assembly with representatives from the farming communities in the cantons of Bern, Lucerne, Solothurn, and Basel, along with the communal dominion, was held on April 13/23 in Sumiswald.

At the assembly in Sumiswald, Niklaus Leuenberger was elected as commanding leader (Bundesobmann) of the insurrection. Niklaus Leuenberger was a man of noble aspect and an excellent speaker.

This skill of logic and eloquence could be acquired in the Society of Jesus’ school (Jesuitenschule) in the city of Fribourg, which was founded in 1582 by Peter Canisius (1521-1597) to train students in the German language, which was unique since in other schools such as Lucerne the students were trained only in Latin. Inasmuch as lists of the names of students in Fribourg do not exist—as opposed to the Society of Jesus’ school in Lucerne, where Kaspar Steiner had studied—the verification of Leuenberger’s having studied there is difficult.

The Oath of Huttwil 1653

On April 20/30 the representatives of the peasants of the Confederation met under the leadership of Niklaus Leuenberger in the little town of Huttwil in order to take the Oath of Allegiance, i.e. the Oath of Huttwil 1653. The peasants chose the town Huttwil since it was their goal to renew the Oath of Rütli of 1291 for residents living in a town and / or in a rural village of the Swiss Confederation.

As an emblem of recognition banneret Emmenegger presented Niklaus Leuenberger with a magnificent red coat, a Casaque, which was to be worn on official occasions.

The Personality of Niklaus Leuenberger

Open Questions as a Result of His Controversial Assessment of his Qualification in Historical Literature

• How was it possible for Niklaus Leuenberger as an alleged “weak personal leader” to be able to contain the sharpshooters in 1653 when his troops besieged the city of Bern?

• Was he a fatuous peasant?
• Did he only believe in that which is good?

• Did he hope that with the successful signing of the Murifeld Peace Treaty in 1653 the conflict could be solved between the urban and rural population?

**Figurative Portrayals of Niklaus Leuenberger**

Fig. 1a shows Niklaus Leuenberger without a masculine hairdress. The first thing that happened when a criminal was captured was for his beard to be cut off. Did the authorities have the intention of portraying the peasant leader as a penitent criminal?

The portrayals of Fig. 1b were confiscated within the entire Swiss Confederation by the order of the Bernese authorities.

No portrayal exists showing Niklaus Leuenberger as a triumphant leader after he had signed the Murifeld Peace Treaty and declared the 37 articles of the treaty to his

**Fig. 1b (right): Contemporary Portrayal of Niklaus Leuenberger before he was captured.**
fellow peasants as promised by the Bernese authorities, along with the additional merely verbal promise that after returning home the peasants would receive an indemnity payment of 50,000 pounds of Bernese currency.

The Leader’s Personality as Seen in the Achievements of the Rebels

The following texts are an effort to gain a further description of the leader’s personality based on the services rendered by the insurrectionists under the leadership of Niklaus Leuenberger.

The Oath of Huttwil—a Remarkable Accomplishment of the Rebels

The text of the Oath of Huttwil, aimed at replacing the Oath of 1291 (Bundesbrief, i.e. Federal Charter, author’s note), as transcribed by André Holenstein (b. 1959) appears in the appendices of the book mentioned in the chapter Acknowledgments and References: “Niklaus Leuenberger, the ‘Swiss Gandhi’ of the 17th Century?” The Oath of Huttwil comprised seven articles, however, only articles 1, 2 and 5 will be mentioned in the following observations to show the visionary views of initiators.

In the first, most important article reference is made to the confederates’ alliance, which was concluded several centuries earlier.

This article not only includes the basic principle of mutual support when life, property and personal possessions are in danger, but also the principles that inequities are to be eliminated and not least that religious freedom is guaranteed, inasmuch as no difference is made between Reformed and Catholic peasants. This article simultaneously holds that all confederates are obligated to pay taxes to the authorities, and in so doing the authorities are not contested and should not be replaced by peasants.

The second article concerns the question of the dispensation of justice, in the case of new laws and unjust decrees being made: How are controversies with the authorities to be settled and how can inequities be avoided? It was the view of the responsible initiators that disputable
issues could be resolved for all Swiss citizens—those in rural as well as urban regions (e.g., Huttwil, Willisau)—in accordance with a unified, legally binding arbitration process.

The third article is a supplement to the second article, in case the authorities should attempt to enforce unjust new decrees through the employment of domestic or foreign troops, the confederate allies commit themselves to disallow such actions and mutually assist one another.

In the fourth article a detailed definition of the third article is given, in case a fellow confederate should be aggrieved by measures taken by the authorities.

The fifth article states that the federal charter is to be renewed each decade. Simultaneously, an account of the effectiveness of the articles in the federal charter is to be made. In so doing, it should be clarified whether complaints against authorities remain by individual confederates in order that they can be given assistance.

The sixth article concerns the relationship among the fellow confederates and how they should deal with traitors within their own ranks.

In the seventh article the fellow confederates commit themselves to not conclude a one-sided treaty with the authorities which contradicts the matters outlined in the Oath of Huttwil.

**Commentary on the Freedom of Religion**

As already mentioned concerning the freedom of religion, no difference between Reformed and Catholic beliefs were made. That is a difference between the Oath of Huttwil and the first version made by the public assembly in Sumiswald, where Catholic belief was given priority. It is reported that Niklaus Leuenberger’s father, Hans, was an Anabaptist. Anabaptists were heavily persecuted. Therefore, many Anabaptists emigrated. Amongst others, descendants are living in the United States as Amish and as Mennonites.

If the authorities in Bern and their fellow confederates at the Federal Diet in Baden had accepted the Oath of Huttwil on April 21/May 1, 1653—which does not contest the role of the authorities—and showed strength for religious freedom as stated in article 1, Switzerland would have been spared from internal religious and fratricidal wars.
Accomplishments of the Oath of Huttwil 1653 (Summary)

In summary, it can be stated that the articles as understood in our contemporary, positive perception are revolutionary in the positive sense of the word:

- It concerns the introduction of freedom of religion, of a uniform dispensation of justice and, in this context, of political participation on the level of the entire population of Switzerland (towns and rural areas).

- Following the Thirty Years’ War, the Oath of Huttwil corresponds thereby with a modernized version of the Oath (Federal Charter) of 1291 of the old Swiss confederates, an Alliance which according to tradition was concluded at the time of William Tell.

- The Oath of Huttwil does not challenge the authorities as an institution enabled to levy taxes (article 1).

- The right of mutual support and self-defense in case the authorities should war against their own subjects, either with local and/or foreign soldiers (article 3).

Commentary

Article 1 would have enabled authorities at that time to enter into constructive dialogue with the rebels in order to become acquainted with their views, problems, opinions and ideas, and examine them more closely. Thus, article 1 complies with the secret message of Nicolas of Flüe to consult the subjects.

The Oath of Huttwil does not question the authorities, and conforms to a convergence of a parliamentary democracy, wherein the executive authorities are in permanent dialogue with the representatives of their subjects. In the Oath of Huttwil 1653 the question is raised concerning dispensation of justice. That question—in the sense of a further evolutionary, democratic development—finally leads to a general requirement of separation of powers between the authorities and the subjects’ representatives, as well as to the additional establishment of an
adjudication authority independent of the government. The peasants in 1653 realized the deficiencies of the existing legal framework in case of disputes with the authorities and could not understand why a descendant of a free peasant should pay a feudal tax. The freedom of the free peasants who swore the Oath of Rüti in 1291 was formerly granted by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, since the legal separation of the Swiss Confederation from the Holy Roman Empire in 1648, the Emperor could not be addressed for an arbitration process.

Why did the rebels include article 3 in their oath? During the Thirty Years’ War everything went well economically for the patricians in the city as well as the peasants. The patricians were able to earn considerable wealth through the intermediation of soldiers (human trafficking of mercenaries) and the peasants were able to export agricultural goods to the warring countries. In Switzerland, an economic recession followed the peace treaty of 1648 and the Swiss mercenaries fighting abroad enlisted by the patricians were out of work. The population was aware that in their mission soldiers were not only paid but were also officially allowed to increase their wealth through plundering. The fears of the population that the local patricians could wrongly use their mercenaries for their own purposes is understandable.

Reasons for the Rejection of the Contents of the Oath of Huttwil by the Bernese Government

The events in England must have played an important role. King Charles I was executed on January 30, 1649. Cromwell fought against King Charles I, who wanted to transform England into an absolutist monarchy. Events in that country were importantly influenced by the draft of a constitution that included the postulates freedom of religion, equality before the law, general political participation and the end of prison punishment for debtors. Regarding references and the close relationship between the patricians of Bern and the personal physician of Oliver Cromwell see the book Niklaus Leuenberger, the ‘Swiss Gandhi’ of the 17th Century.

Can the Oath of Huttwil (1653) be interpreted as being a Swiss version of the Cromwellian and Miltonian Agreement of the People? As a person, Oliver Cromwell is controversial, however the Cromwellian...
Republic, known as the “Commonwealth of England,” was an important step towards England’s democracy.

**Commentary on the People’s Assembly at Huttwil 1653**

The Oath of Huttwil (1653) can be referred to as an important step on the way to Switzerland’s democracy in the nineteenth century. Representatives of all social levels of the population participated in the assembly in Huttwil and no difference was made between Catholics, Protestants, registered citizens and residents without civic rights. Such residents were known as Hintersässen and held a residence permit (in the USA a green card) to live in the municipality but had no civic rights as the burghers had. In this context it must be understood that a Swiss citizen is primarily a citizen of a Swiss municipality, the place which appears in a Swiss passport as Heimatort (i.e., “municipality of origin,” or “municipality of heritage”). Swiss citizens may have several “municipalities of origin.” The oldest Heimatort denotes the municipality in which an ancestor of an individual first became a burgher. That place is of utmost importance in doing genealogical research.

**The Siege of Bern under the Leadership of Niklaus Leuenberger**

The siege of a city such as Bern is conditional upon an accurate general staff plan. Furthermore, it requires outstanding logistics in order to nourish some 16,000 armed peasants before the gates of the wealthy city of Bern.

In this context, the high level of discipline in the rebel’s army is recognized without exception by all historians. No comparison can be made between the armed peasants under Niklaus Leuenberger’s leadership and the “hog-banner campaign” of the rebels in 1477. The high level of discipline impressed the authorities of the city of Bern without fail.

**Was the Commanding Leader Erratic in his Decisions or did he Follow a Plan?**

Among other things, Niklaus Leuenberger feared that in his plan not to attack, plunder and burn Bern, he could be overruled by
his own council of war. In order to avert such danger, Niklaus Leuenberger recruited the following men for the council of war from his army camped at Murifeld: Hans Stampach, Daniel Ruch, Jakob Leuenberger, Joseph Kämpfer, Klaus Mey, Hans Kolb, Andres Leuenberger, Baschi Sommer, Alexander Leuenberger, Hans Frei, Melcher Hunziker, Bendicht Tschanz and Ulrich Krieg. Joseph Kämpfer from Kleinemmenental was a neighbor of Jakob Leuenberger. Some insurgents, reportedly, were ‘hawks’, some were ‘doves’; these men, hand-selected by Niklaus Leuenberger, seem to have been of calmer sense.

**Was Niklaus Leuenberger Hungry for Power and Wealth?**

Niklaus Leuenberger did not have the ambition to take power. He also did not want to gain wealth, in a profitable military business like, for example, the Bernese patricians.

Due to his noble stature and because of his appearance when mounted and wearing his red coat, Niklaus Leuenberger was often referred to in the vernacular as “king of the peasants” (*Bauernkönig*), a title which in the end brought him the harsh conviction of the maximum death penalty of being “quartered.”

**The Murifeld Peace Treaty of 1653 and the Rebel’s Contribution of Achievement**

A plausible and successful siege of Bern necessitated the occupation of strategic access roads, bridges and passes in order for the surrounded population of the city to realize the earnestness of their situation. This objective was achieved by the besieger, whereby should the siege of Bern be lifted, the rebels were guaranteed not only exemption from punishment but, also, orally agreed upon—reparation in the amount of 50,000 pounds in Bernese currency.

The Murifeld Peace Treaty of 1653 represents a compromise and is not a dictation from the peasants. The three documents had to be drawn up by representatives of the Bernese authorities and the rebels within a short period of time. *It materialized on the basis of negotiations—without a drop of blood having been shed.* The results represent an outstanding achievement of the participants. *It came*
about only because during the siege of Bern, Niklaus Leuenberger and the peasants could bargain from a position of their strength.

The Peace of Murifeld

In confidence of the honesty of the Bernese authorities and compliance of the treaty, Niklaus Leuenberger announced the contents of the signed agreement to the rebels and ordered the armed insurgents to return home. The siege of Bern was rescinded. On May 19th, the Feast of the Ascension of Christ (Holy Thursday), all sections of the troops were informed about the peace agreement and thousands of the rebels started with massed pipes and drums, flags and weapons towards home, where work was waiting for them. On the same day, dispatches were received stating that in the Sternenberg rural court jurisdiction at Neuenegg, insurgents had been arrested by authorities. Various bailiffs captured further rebels contrary to contract on Friday, May 20th. Niklaus Leuenberger admonishes the Bernese authorities to abide by the peace treaty. Contrary allegations resulted and the situation continued to become more acute, which on Saturday, May 22nd, caused Leuenberger to write a first official letter to the authorities in Bern because no improvement had taken place.

After dispatches arrived from the Aargau region concerning pillage and looting by Zurich troops of the Swiss Confederation, Niklaus Leuenberger is once again forced to proclaim military landsturm, a general mobilization, and writes to the authorities a last time on May 24th to observe the peace treaty because only then are the rebels willing to pay homage.

The Battle of Wohlenschwil

According to the Peace Treaty of Murifeld, the return journey of the armed peasants occurred on May 19, 1653. They responded to the peace treaty and withdrew from all of the important strategic points around the city of Bern. After some four days, it is an unbelievable accomplishment to convince the returning armed peasants that their situation is not futile and that they are competent to defend themselves.
To maintain their validity, they had to be prepared on one hand to fight against possible attacks from General von Erlach’s army in the west in case the Murifeld Peace Treaty was not observed. In the east, on the other hand, the further advance of General Hans Conrad Werdmüller’s Zurich troops had to be prevented.

It is impressive that with some 15,000 troops on May 23 / June 2, 1653, in Mägenschwil, he and the peasant army were able to resist the penetration of Lenzburg by General Hans Rudolf Werdmüller (chief of staff of the army of Hans Conrad Werdmüller) from Zurich with his cavalry, four canons and 1,500 musketeers, a fourth of the well-armed Zurich Federal Diet troops. Lenzburg namely was war-weary and ready to surrender. The population had fear of pillage by the mercenary army of General Hans Rudolf Werdmüller, who had fought on the side of the Swedes in the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) and was known for his brutality and for looting.

Leuenberger was aware that his peasant army had no cannons at their disposal and were not as well armed. Therefore, he wanted to better his situation and in a thundershower on May 24, 1653, along with Christian Schibi (see Fig. 2 on the next page), unsuccessfully attempted an assault on Zurich’s artillery. Werdmüller’s mercenary army cavalry broke through the lines and set fire to the villages of Wohlenschwil and Büblikon. Niklaus Leuenberger was aware that this pillage would demoralize his troops. He was also aware that he could no longer negotiate from a position of strength as he had with the siege of Bern.

Niklaus Leuenberger was convinced that General Hans Conrad Werdmüller did not know that the authorities in Bern had concluded a legally valid peace treaty with the insurgents. His only strength consisted in the fact that on his person he was carrying the legal peace treaty which he had concluded with Bern at Murifeld. By courier he sent a copy of the Murifeld Peace Treaty to General Hans Conrad Werdmüller, head of the Zurich troops.

In the meantime, Schibi unsuccessfully attempted to convince Leuenberger to violate the cease-fire and make a surprise attack in the dark on the Zurich army.

On May 25, 1653, peace was declared at Mellingen.
Sigismund von Erlach’s Vengeful Campaign Against the Rural Population

On May 27, 1653, General Hans Conrad Werdmüller received a message from Niklaus Leuenberger in Herzogenbuchsee complaining of the violence being leveled on the rural citizenry and the need for mutual continued compliance with the peace treaty agreed upon at Mellingen.

In the meantime, Daniel Küpfer, the deputy of Niklaus Leuenberger, the Emmental’s commanding officer, had mobilized some 5,000 armed peasants at Herzogenbuchsee.

On May 28, 1653, Leuenberger received a clear reply from commanding General Hans Conrad Werdmüller supporting his request of compliance by the Bernese troops. Thus, Leuenberger decided to instruct his troops that peace was at hand and that they should return to their homes. At the same time he had a premonition regarding his own mortality, thanking his fellow freedom fighters for their support and
leaving them with the hope that the Peace Treaty of Mellingen which he did not sign, would grant some minimum of freedom and safety of the peasants. Thus, he could avoid that the 5,000 poorly armed peasants had to pay a high death toll in the battle of Herzogenbuchsee without a chance that the Bernese government would comply with the Peace Treaty of Murifeld, which would have boosted the democratic, legal, economic and cultural evolution of people residing in the rural areas and in the cities.

**Commentary**

Niklaus Leuenberger had a foreboding that the atrocities against the people committed by General von Erlach were actually directed towards him according to the principle of “Sippenhaft”—when the clan of an offender could be subject to revenge—and that his life was in danger. On the other hand, based on the intervention from Zürich, he trusted the commanding officer of the Federal Diet army that the Bernese government would acquiesce. He still believed in the good of mankind and that the Bernese authorities were interested in peace with the rural population. He therefore sent the soldiers home. Also, in part, because he knew the price they would pay would be extreme.

The Bernese authorities decided to reneg on their agreements with the peasants, immediately after the abolishment of the siege of Bern. They attacked the peasants on their way to their homes, families, and their peacetime endeavors, now overdue. Was this decision agreed upon by all of the allies of the old Swiss Confederacy? When was the decision among the members of the Bernese authorities unanimously decided—before, during, or after the Peace Treaty of Murifeld had been signed? Were the frightened Bernese authorities primarily dealing an action of punishment in order to prevent future revolts and to show the people “where God is seated”?

**The Battle of Herzogenbuchsee**

Thanks to the decision of Niklaus Leuenberger to send the 5,000 armed rebels home based on the peace treaties of Mellingen and
Murifeld, greater carnage in the Battle of Herzogenbuchsee versus the mercenary army of General von Erlach was avoided. Among other reports from sources, some partisan and some independent, the chronicler Jost von Brechershäusern reported an uncalled for attack on 200 peasant insurgents en route home, in Herzogenbuchsee by the troops of Sigismund von Erlach. His report did not comply with the official narrative that von Erlach defeated 2,000 insurgents.⁶

Jost von Brechershäusern was a wealthy peasant from Wynigen. Among other things, he also reported, in addition to the peasant war of 1653, about the First War of Villmergen in 1656. He was murdered in 1657 not far from his home. The murder, however, was never clarified. Was this violence politically motivated? The latter cannot be fully excluded since he had his own opinion regarding the battle of Herzogenbuchsee and he had probably his own comments regarding the First War of Villmergen.

Commentary

With the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and through the efforts of Johann Rudolf Wettstein (b1594–†1666), the mayor of Basel, the old Confederacy of Switzerland was officially recognized as being independent of the Holy Roman Empire. As a result, there was no longer a possibility for Confederacy members and their subjects to appeal to the emperor as the final authority. It cannot be forgotten that the first treaty of the Confederacy only came about inasmuch as the emperor was the highest authority to guarantee special liberties to the original cantonal states.

The Rebels’ Punishment

The vengeance campaign of the authorities under the leadership of General von Erlach can be seen in the sense of Sippenhaft tactics as a part of the rebels’ punishment. Those who betrayed an insurgent received a reward.

Niklaus Leuenberger “confessed” while being tortured that the peasants had not urged, but instead forced him to accept the office as the

head leader. He confessed nothing other than that. Perhaps he hoped for a reprieve owing to a passage recorded in the minutes of the examination proceedings: “As he [Leuenberger] adjourned from the last public assembly at Langenthal to his home town, Hobi, a man from Wynigen, called out ‘That [he] is our authority!’ Clearly, he [Leuenberger] was very indignant [about that] and he hit him with his pole.”

Commentary

The official representatives of the Reformed and Catholic churches supported the government authorities in the peasant war. Niklaus Leuenberger’s appeal for clemency was not accepted and his death warrant—“quartering” (i.e., dismemberment)—conformed with that of regicide, that punishment reserved for attempts to murder a monarch. Evidence in favor of him was disregarded.

Executions of insurgents preceded the higher leaders’ doomed legal precedings and the displays of their body parts reportedly were particularly psychologically harsh on at least one of Niklaus Leuenberger’s deputies.

The peasants were therefore clearly shown that participants in such a rebellious assembly had to reckon with the quartering of the body as the maximum death penalty.

The unity between the Bernese authorities and the church is supported by the fact that new government regulations were announced from the pulpit during Sunday church services.

Furthermore, in addition to secular courts, a church “consistory court” (Chorgericht) existed in an ecclesiastical parish. Infringements were punished with monetary fines, whereby the bailiff, as the representative of the authorities, could mete out the fines and collect the fees. The pastor served as secretary and noted the monetary fines in the consistory court manual.

Niklaus Leuenberger, the Penitent Rebel, Put on Exhibit in Bern

Niklaus Leuenberger, the most important prize of the peasant war, was portrayed to the public, in the city of Bern on June 2/12, 1653,

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7 On horse with his magnificent red coat.
as a penitent leader who had been appointed against his will. He was put in handcuffs and marched through the streets in a triumphal procession. Finally, he was put in irons in the so-called “killer’s cell” in the Prison Tower.

The Conviction of Niklaus Leuenberger

On September 6, 1653, (Gregorian calendar) Niklaus Leuenberger’s sentence was pronounced. The peasant leader was condemned for violating the authority which God had placed in the city leaders. He was also condemned to be beheaded, drawn and quartered, and to have his body parts mounted for display at the main square and the four gates of the city of Bern.

Commentary

The conviction of the leader of the peasant league did not take place until after the arrest, torture and questioning of Uli Galli and Hans Konrad Brenner. Both of them (not only) confirmed the leader’s testimonies and confessions (in the examination minutes) but also provided closer and significant information concerning the (author’s remark: so far unknown to the Bernese government) selfish intentions and plans of some of his hawkish chiefs of the revolt, in that they avowed that it had been agreed upon by them that upon capturing the city, it would be relinquished and plundered, the government council abolished and a new one installed, whereby Leuenberger and Daniel Küpfer be given the position of governing mayor (Schultheiss), Uli Galli that of treasurer, Michael Aeschlimann, called “Bergmichel,” that of military ensign (Venner), and notary Konrad Brenner that of state and court scribe.

In point of fact, Niklaus Leuenberger’s confession made no mention of the allegedly existing plans of his fellow campaigners (the hawks of the rebellion) no commensurate assignments of guilt and not even a clue that he had said anything verifying plans to pillage Bern. He never betrayed his colleagues and their plan, even in order to enable a better stance for or to save himself.
The End of the Peasant War and the Assassination in Entlebuch on September 19/29, 1653

The peasant war started in Entlebuch where the three peacefully demonstrating peasants dressed in historical garments represented the three first confederates of 1291: Walter Fürst, Werner Stauffacher and Arnold von Melchtal. Following the legend of William Tell and symbolized as the “Three Tells,” they wanted to call the attention of the Lucerne authorities to the lost liberties in the area of their bailiwick. As a result, Niklaus Leuenberger needed his full commitment in order to restrain those three hawks, when the siege of Bern took place with 16,000 men, from attacking the city with fellow hawks.

The peasant war ended in Entlebuch with the so-called “Tell’s shot” by Kapar Unternährer (b1621-†1653) when he attempted to assassinate Lucerne’s Schultheiss Ulrich Dulliker, who was wounded, and Lucerne councilman Kaspar Studer, who was killed. Kaspar Unternährer came from Schüpfheim, where he was born on January 2, 1621. Ueli Dahinden also participated in the assassination of September 28, 1653, and was killed on October 8, 1653, during his attempted seizure by Protestant troops.

Although the government troops were unsuccessful in their attempt to capture both men alive, they were subsequently tried in court. Kaspar Unternährer was beheaded, as was Ueli’s corpse and both had their body parts displayed at key sites as a warning to the populace.

After regional military ensign Hans Emmenegger presented the “Three Tells” their costumes, Kaspar Unternährer internalized his role as William Tell and carried a crossbow in his right hand. The second “Tell,” Ueli Dahinden, represented Werner Stauffacher. The Lucerne authorities were not certain if the identity of the third assassin was Hans Stadelmann or a peasant who was called, “long [tall] Zemp” and was known as the third “Tell.” Hans Stadelmann was able to flee abroad as many other insurgents of the peasant revolt. After being captured abroad he was betrayed by “long Zemp”, who was therefore able to save his own skin. Hans Stadelmann was transferred to Lucerne in 1654 and beheaded on July 5/15.

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Kaspar Unternährer is the only known assassin in the history of the old confederacy.

Conclusions

_Not one drop of blood was shed between the composition of the Treaty of Huttwil and the Murifeld Peace Treaty._

The peasant war was a war of the authorities against the peasants as a result of the unilateral termination of the Peace Treaty of Murifeld by the Bernese authorities in harmony with the advice of ‘The Prince’, Niccolò Machiavelli’s guidebook originally written with the intention of governance and not of tyranny in order to gain a subsequently better military situation.

The fact that relatively few rebels lost their lives on the battlefield is clearly due to the outstanding merit, the humanity, of Niklaus Leuenberger.

The Treaty of Huttwil and the Peace Treaty of Murifeld, which came about without the shedding of blood, are parallel milestones on the path of the old Confederacy towards democratization. They could only be reached from a position of strength and are comparable to the Glorious Revolution in England. The path of the Bernese patricians towards an aristocratic republic, however, continued. The erosion of democratic liberties was only stopped with the invasion by Napoleonic troops in 1798. The law of May 4, 1798, spelled the end of the Swiss Ancien Régime.

A study of the events during the European revolutions in the nineteenth century and during the peasant war of 1653 presents a rich source for conflict research. In that conjunction diverse questions present themselves:

The questions of liberty—especially religious freedom—equality and fraternity, “forerunners” of the French Revolution and about a more social tax system. All were present during the peasant movement in Niklaus Leuenberger’s lifetime and addressed in the Oath of Huttwil and in the Peace Treaty of Murifeld, see the book “Niklaus Leuenberger, the ‘Swiss Gandhi’ of the 17-century with the transcription of the relevant documents (German edition).
How can the questions be dealt with concerning the deeper reasons for the government’s revenge campaign against the peasants following the conclusion of the Peace Treaty of Murifeld, and the circumstances of wealthy rural farmers acquiring a so-called “document of protection” (Schutzbrief) in order to be spared from looting by the government troops?

And, what about the question of councilman Studer’s assassination, as well as that concerning the legal judgment of the assassin of Kaspar Unternährer, who was one of the “Three Tells” and an exponent of the insurgent’s hawks?

Nelson Mandela asked himself when the use of force could be justified and thereby differed from Mahatma Gandhi who completely renounced the use of force.

Within the scope of the total abolition of the rebels at the end of the peasant war in Entlebuch, where the “Three Tells” were protected and hidden by the Catholic population, it became necessary for Protestant Bernese troops to be deployed. Needless to say, this fact created additional hatred. As a result, in the subsequent first religious war in 1656, 5,000 Catholic soldiers from Central Switzerland under the leadership of Christoph Pfýffer won the battle of Villmergen against 9,800 Bernese Protestant soldiers under the leadership of General Sigismund von Erlach. During this battle 600 Protestants and 200 Catholics were killed. The ecumenical oath of Huttwil was lost between Protestants and Catholics. Thus, tensions between Christians also remained after the second religious war of Villmergen, where more than 3,000 people were killed in 1712.

It is significant for church history that Nicholas of Flüe, who was later canonized by the church, was on the side of peasants at the time of the peasants’ rebellion in 1477. However in 1653 the church sided against the rebellious party. This positive position of the church towards the government never changed through the nineteenth century and is responsible for Martin Disteli’s anticlerical parodies and the introduction of the article in the Federal Constitution of 1848 which forbade any activity of the Jesuits in church or state affairs.

Interestingly, however, the Catholic priests supported the rural procession to the Heiligkreuz Church at the beginning of the rebellion
in Entlebuch. This *ecumenical unity is pioneer work* in Swiss church history. As seen on the whole, however, the Reformed and Catholic churches supported the authorities. The churches and the theologians were responsible for the entire scope of human life before the secularization. Religion was not a private matter.

The Reformed pastor Michael Ringier was also on the side of the rebels in 1653: In his dairy he referred to “murder,” i.e., to a “crime” about the Battle of Herzogenbuchsee. *In this respect the church betrayed their own values through their support of the authorities who induced a war against its subjects.*

In this context, the national and international role of the church in the history of Crusades, of European Peasant Wars, of the persecution of Jews, of Anabaptists, of Witches (in Switzerland!) etc., should be revised in order to restore the credibility and the primary mission of the church: “Forgiveness”. An objective analysis of the history of the church including the Thirty Years religious war⁹ from 1618-1648 would be helpful to explain why eight million people were killed in this “holy” war in the name of God? Was the driving force money and/or power? Even though the contemporary frozen conflict in Northern Ireland is not considered as a religious war,¹⁰ the Unionists/loyalists, who were mostly Protestants, wanted to stay with the United Kingdom and the Irish nationalists/republicans, who were mostly Catholics and wanted to join Ireland. Interestingly, the “underlying physics” of this frozen conflict in Northern Ireland has some parallels in Switzerland, which lead to the foundation of the Canton Jura.¹¹

Expedit, therefore, to the Peasant War of 1653 and for justification of the title “Niklaus Leuenberger, der ‘Swiss Gandhi’ of the seventeenth century?” are the following quotations from Mahatma Gandhi:

- *An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.*

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⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War  
¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Troubles  
Niklaus Leuenberger: Predating Gandhi in 1653?

- The world has enough for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed.
- Be the change you want to see in the world.
- There are no roads to peace, peace is the way.
- Strength does not come from physical capacity but from indomitable will.
- Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary.
- The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.
- At first they ignore you, then they laugh over you, then they fight you and then you win.

Since the founding of the Confederacy, there is no historical precedent for the disproportionate punishment on the part of the authorities.

The question concerning remuneration of the rebels who betrayed friends has not been discussed in this article. The Bonus-Malus-System and the issuing of documents of protection by the authorities is a further research domain.

The following question and statements come to mind: Why is the history of the ‘victors’ still oppressively being imposed on the populace and what can be done to bridge the ancient gulf?

- The Peasant War plays a very menial role in official Swiss historiography.

- The texts of the Oath of Huttwil and the Peace Treaty of Murifeld do not appear in any school textbook.

- It may have been necessary to keep the message of Nicholas of Flue secret in order to reach a peaceful solution at the Diet of Stans in 1481, however it is a pity, that later the message did not become public.
• The impact of the Carneval allowing to criticize the government on the Freedom of Speech and on the democratization process in Switzerland should be a topic in school books.

• Should the Swiss Catholic and Protestant Church declare the date of the Oath of Huttwil (April 30) as an ecumenical church festival in memory of the worldwide first ecumenical event after 30 years religious war from 1618-1648?

• As the ancient agreements were darkly swept aside, so is the truth of history being shaded, moved out of the light.

An answer is that the descendants of Swiss patrician families that hold public offices or are in diplomatic services have achieved outstanding accomplishments—now, in the sense of the statesman-like conduct of Nicholas of Flüe, the historic reparation of the rebels of 1653 should be initiated by these patrician families. Such an obliging gesture would enable the victims of the Peasant War and their descendants to cleanly rule off a dark chapter of Swiss history.

**Appeal for Amnesty for the Rebels in 1653**

*It is left to the readers and most especially the Swiss politicians whether the rebels of 1653 are worthy of an official vindication* and are recognized as the true heros preparing the democratic system of Switzerland and its constitution in 1848 which is an adapted copy of the American Constitution of 1787.

**Acknowledgments and References**

The author thanks Andreas Suter for his work regarding the correct narrative of the Swiss peasant war in 1653 in his habilitation thesis, as well as in the Historic Dictionary of Switzerland (https://hls-dhs-dss.
Niklaus Leuenberger: Predating Gandhi in 1653?

Further thanks are due Urs Hostettler for his documentation of the events in 1653 published in the book Der Rebell vom Eggiwil (Zytglogge Bern 1991). Numerous persons are cited in the book Niklaus Leuenberger, the “Swiss Gandhi” of the 17th Century published at Amazon (German edition),12 which contains more than 100 references, as well as further details including transcriptions of the relevant documents such as the Oath of Huttwil, the Peace Treaty of Murifeld, the Song of William Tell, and illustrations such as the public execution of the rebel leaders in Basel in 1653. This brutal event became a theme during the liberal uprising in Basel which led to the formation of the cantons Basel-Stadt (city) and Basel-Landschaft (rural part of the former Canton of Basel) and last but not least to the liberal constitution of the Swiss Federation of 1848.

Thanks to the liberal constitution, Switzerland evolved to be a prosperous, peaceful country with a strong economy, a low unemployment rate, a highly developed health care system, an educational system of high standard which enables teachers in primary classes to be well paid, a high social security network helping to avoid domestic terroristic attacks, despite the fact that the density of weapons per resident is comparable to the United States. The constitution allows a cultural, religious, linguistic diversity which includes four official languages and a diversity of different political parties forming the government, taking care that the diversity and the minorities are well represented.

Additionally, the book shows that thanks to computational science, artificial intelligence, all the sciences have a chance to converge for the benefit of mankind. In this context, the findings of Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogine and the philosopher Isabelle Stengers (see the book: Order Out of Chaos) play an important role since processes far from equilibrium in an open system with an influx of energy are present in the exact sciences (see publication What is Life? In SWISS PHARMA 1-19, www.ifiip.ch/downloads) and can be modeled as well as in social sciences such as the history of mankind.

12 The English edition will be published soon at Amazon.com.
This process far from equilibrium in an open system is responsible for the development of life and acts in an opposite direction of the second law of thermodynamics, which is responsible for the process of aging (= increase of entropy, disorder, chaos). Thus, in history the energy of such a process far from equilibrium can be used for a peaceful positive evolutionary process leading to a higher order in a democratic system, if this process is not suppressed as in the case of the Swiss peasant war in 1653.

On the other hand, the energy of a process far from equilibrium may lead to a violent revolution such as the French Revolution of 1789 which did not lead quickly to a sustainable equilibrium. In this context, the book *Niklaus Leuenberger, the “Swiss Gandhi” of the 17th Century* also presents the question as to why only Switzerland and no other European Country has adopted and adapted the American Constitution of 1787?

It has to be mentioned that the English version of the book *Niklaus Leuenberger, the “Swiss Gandhi” of the 17th Century*, will contain an additional chapter regarding *The Impact of Computational Science on the Future of Historical Research*. The conclusions of this chapter are summarized as follows:

1) Last, but not least, Prigogine’s works, together with those of philosopher Isabelle Stengers will lead to a convergence of the natural sciences and the humanities. This convergence will be accelerated through digitalization and the application of computational science in the era of artificial intelligence for the benefit of mankind. In this context, people must be aware that the “tool-kit” of artificial intelligence can be used, as the invention of fire by Prometheus, in a positive or in a negative way, to be a source of energy or to burn down the home of the neighbor.

2) Artificial Intelligence and the availability of a Super Quantum Computer will accelerate this convergence of all sciences for the benefit for mankind. On the other hand, this revolutionary technology can be misused for evil purposes and not for the benefit for mankind. In this context, it is important to recall the book *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, published in 1932, as well as his essay “Brave New

3) Needless to say, “good” and “evil” are part of our world. Thus, in the good case, a system of checks and balances is needed leading to a democratic institution as a result of the process of “Order out of Chaos” (Prigogine/Stengers). On the other hand, in the worst case scenario the principle of “Order out of Chaos” will end up in a world of tyranny and dictatorship. Currently the chaos in the world is increasing in an unprecedented speed which may culminate in a world war. In order to avoid such a situation, Winston S. Churchill suggested in his famous Zurich speech (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giilcPJsYuw) in 1946 to create the “United States of Europe,” It is unclear whether he chose Zurich and Switzerland as a model of states (cantons) with different cultures, religions and languages living peacefully together.

The author of the book Niklaus Leuenberger, the “Swiss Gandhi” of the 17th Century appreciates the comments of historian Marc Tribelhorn writing in the NZZ (Neue Zürich Zeitung) of May 4, 2018: “Switzerland does not suffer from too many historical narratives but of not enough and the wrong ones. Swiss History needs to be re-written from the perspective of unselfishness”, i.e., not just to please the nation or its government. Thus, the author hopes with the book to contribute a small chapter of Swiss History without taking into account the nation’s wish of complacency.

Last, but not least, the author thanks the great support of Paul-Anthon Nielson, bilingual American Swiss historian and genealogist for the translation of the German version of the book. At the same time, the author thanks Daniel Lionberger, a U.S. citizen descended from ancestors who immigrated in the eighteenth century in Philadelphia, being a descendant of a brother of Niklaus Leuenberger, for proofreading the English version and for checking this condensed contribution to the SAHS Review. Daniel Lionberger is the author of the e-book “Dream View Two—The Kamikaze Candidate,” a political environmental thriller (…).
Canton Ticino and the Italian Swiss Immigration to California

by Tony Quinn

“The southernmost of Switzerland’s twenty-six cantons, the Ticino, may speak Italian, sing Italian, eat Italian, drink Italian and rival any Italian region in scenic beauty—but it isn’t Italy,” so writes author Paul Hofmann1 describing the one Swiss canton where Italian is the required language and the cultural tie is to Italy to the south, not to the rest of Switzerland to the north.

Unlike the German and French speaking parts of Switzerland with an identity distinct from Germany and France, Italian Switzerland, which accounts for only five percent of the country, clings strongly to its Italian heritage. But at the same time, the Ticinesi2 are fully Swiss, very proud of being part of Switzerland, and with an air of disapproval of Italy’s ever present government crises and its tie to the European Union and the Euro zone, neither of which Ticino has the slightest interest in joining.

Today’s Ticino is a popular holiday destination for thousands of other Swiss. Hofmann, writing in the New York Times in 1984, described its unique appeal, an appeal that has finally allowed Ticino to enjoy Swiss style prosperity after lagging behind for centuries. “The dominant sounds in the Ticino’s hotels are Teutonic. To many German-speaking Swiss, as well as to uncounted Germans, Dutch, and Scandina-

2 The people of Canton Ticino call themselves “Ticinesi” (people who live in Ticino) in Italian. This is usually rendered in English as “Ticinese.” The canton is often simply called “The Ticino” after the river whose tributaries form most of its valleys.
vians, the Ticino is the South they like best: A soft climate with plenty of sunshine, lazy hours in outdoor cafes, lush gardens, palm trees, pastel-colored arcaded buildings at lakefront promenades, spaghetti with piquant sauce, full-bodied wines, mandolin music wafting through jasmine-scented nights—all this without the exuberance, frequent strikes and usual unpredictability of present-day Italy.”

Yet the Ticino as part of Switzerland is an accident of history, an accident that ultimately required thousands of Italian Swiss to leave their native mountains and valleys for life in the New World. But this is an historical accident that has worked out.

The earliest known settlers of the Ticino valleys located just south of the Alps was a Celtic tribe known as the Lepontii, who may have arrived there as early as 900 BC. Just to the north were other Celtic tribes, including the Helvetii, so the initial settlers of today’s Switzerland were a series of Celtic tribes. And they stayed a long time. Recent

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4 At the time of the Roman conquest of Switzerland in the first century, the region was inhabited exclusively by Celts, organized into three nations: the Raeti, the Gaesatai, and the Helvetii. The Lepontii were in the southwestern corner of Raeti including the southern slopes of the Simplon and St. Gotthard Passes. Dwight Page, “The Golden Age of Roman Helvetia,” SAHS Review, Vol. 33, No. 2, June 1997, 6.
DNA testing of living Italian Swiss whose ancestry is in the more isolated villages of Ticino shows a high degree of Celtic ancestry.

Even the coming of the Romans seems not to have disturbed that Celtic past. The Romans may have been the first to recognize the strategic value of the Ticino valleys since at their northernmost junction is the St. Gotthard Pass, one of the few passes that allowed transport from the Italian Peninsula into the Germanic lands. For the Romans it was important to control that Pass, but there is little evidence they settled extensively in the Ticino area during the 600 years Ticino was part of the Roman Empire, although there are some Roman ruins in Lugano and Locarno, and some evidence of Roman ancestry in Ticino DNA.

The next occupiers were different. In the 5th Century, came the Barbarians into Rome, sacking the great city several times and ending the Roman Empire in the west in 476 AD. Barbarians is a name we give to the Visigoth and Ostrogothic tribes that conquered the western Roman Empire. Less than a century later, however, the Emperor Justinian tried to reconquer Rome in what are known as the Gothic Wars. He did not succeed, and instead savaged what is now most of northern Italy. Retreating before Justinian’s armies, Goths fled into the high mountains and deep valleys of the southern Alps. And here they stayed; DNA testing shows that today’s Italian Swiss are indeed direct descendants of the Gothic tribes as well as the early Celts.

Sometimes the most important thing that happens is nothing. After Justinian, northern Italy was invaded by the Germanic Lombard tribes who give Lombardy its name today. They also established, interestingly, the Italian language, and more importantly the dialects of northern Italy. Eventually, Lombardy became a sleepy outpost of the Holy Roman Empire where it remained largely undisturbed until the 1400s.

This vast empire\(^5\) began dissolving, and by the 1400s, Lombardy was beset by two squabbling Italian families, the Visconti and the Sforza, that ruled the region from Milan. This invited foreign intervention, mainly the French, and that reality frightened the Swiss Confederation, realizing they could be invaded through the St. Gotthard Pass.

\(^5\) Voltaire correctly noted that it was not holy, not Roman and not an empire.
In 1440, the Canton of Uri sent a small force over the Pass and took control of the Leventina Valley in northern Ticino. Sixty years later, again fearing French intrusions, Uri, Schwyz, and Nidwalden took the fortress town of Bellinzona, strengthening its three castles. In 1512, the three “forest cantons” annexed Locarno, the Maggia Valley, Lugano, and Mendrisio.

They found the French threat was very much for real. In the summer of 1515, King Francis I sent an army of 37,000 across the Alps determined to conquer Milan. The Swiss Confederation sent its own army of 200 cavalry and 25,000 infantry south to stop them, and they met at a place called Marignano on September 13 and 14, 1515, where the French Army decisively defeated the Swiss. Only about 3,000 of the Swiss who fought there made it back into Switzerland. The Confederation Army retreated back across the Alps, never again to venture outside the boundaries of Switzerland. The forest cantons now realized they had to hold the Ticino valleys to protect their homeland from invasion from the south.

Oddly enough, there was never again a threat of invasion of Switzerland from the south. But that did not deter the forest cantons from setting up essentially a colonial administration of the Ticino valleys. Governors known as “landfogti” were appointed for two-year terms and installed in the castles in Bellinzona. From there they provided a protective shield against any threat to the Confederation from the south.

The landfogti system was both a benefit and a disadvantage for the Ticino peasants. The German Swiss made no attempt to integrate this area into the Confederation; consequently, its Italian culture continued undisturbed. But young men were not drafted into the army, absentee landowners did not absorb the peasant property,
and no attempts were made to suppress the Italian-centered Catholic religion. At the same time, there was also no attempt at economic development in this region; famously, the Torretta Bridge over the Ticino River at Bellinzona washed out in 1515, and was not rebuilt for 300 years.9

For the natives, life was changed very little from when they were under the rule from Milan. A system of village governance evolved with the village borders defined by the Catholic Church parish lines. After the Council of Trent (1545-1563),10 local priests were instructed to give their parishioners surnames and to maintain records of births, marriages, and deaths. The village then became the social and governing unit for the Ticino peasant. To avoid problems with the authorities in Bellinzona and the other large cities, villagers built their homes high up in the protected valleys and mountainsides, always building with stone rather than wood to gave their villages permanence, evident even to this day.

Italian Swiss novelist, Plinio Martini, wrote of the Ticino villagers, “They built with neither ruler nor plan. Their art was an immediate response to the problems posed by daily toil: land conformation and periodic changes of pasture. Decoration was rare, and then always modest, simple, and unerring. Only religious sentiment room for provided room for a painting. Building in this way was a product of an ancient civilization, of an age-old experience that was

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9 This bridge was originally commissioned by Lodovico Maria Sforza, known as Lodovico il Moro, (1452-1508), who was Duke of Milan from 1494 until 1499. The stone bridge consisted of medieval arcades that were too heavy for the rushing winter waters of the Ticino River, leading to its collapse in 1515. The bridge provided easy access from the south to the St. Gotthard Pass, which was not in the interest of the forest cantons and the landfogti. They replaced the bridge with a ferry system that remained until a new bridge was built in 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic period. In 2016, a passenger and bicycle bridge was built in the same place using the remaining part of the medieval arcade and a medieval tower.

10 The Council of Trent met over two decades in the northern Italian town of Trento with the purpose of launching a Counter Reformation to Luther’s Protestant Reformation. This meant reforming the Catholic Church, and among the reforms was insisting that local parish priests know their parishioners. This required assignment of “cognomen,” or last names to parish families, and maintaining the vital statistics on these families.
based in deeply rooted moral values.” Martini called their villages “an architecture that binds man to nature.”

Life in the village was unchanging. Marriages were generally confined to the village so as not to introduce outside claims on village land and resources. By the 1800s, this meant that a dozen or so village families would have the same last name, and everyone was a cousin to everyone else. The oldest families instituted a system called the “patriziato” whereby the village privileges, such as grazing cattle on the village green, or baking bread in the village oven, was limited to the “patrizi” (patrician) families.

This splendid isolation from their neighbors, their local government, and the country they were part of lasted 300 years until the coming of Napoleon and his creation of a new Helvetic Republic to replace the Swiss Confederation.

In 1798, French armies overran Switzerland. On April 12, the Helvetic Republic was proclaimed in Zurich by the occupying French who decided the Confederation was too “feudal.” This did not sit well with the Swiss who had spent centuries guarding their independence. Almost immediately, the Helvetic Republic came under attack by Swiss insurgents. In 1803, Napoleon proclaimed the Act of Mediation restoring the Swiss Confederation, but established six new cantons including Ticino as its own self-governing canton and the landfogti system was abolished.

For the first time in three centuries, a foreign army, this time the French, appeared in the Ticino valleys. In 1808, Napoleon directed a census of all the males in Ticino, listing them by age within each village. This provided a useful list for soldiers, and some Ticino men

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11 Plinio Martini was born in Cavergno, Canton Ticino, in 1923 and was a school teacher most of his life. He wrote two novels, the best known of which is Il fondo del sacco (1970), about harsh peasant life in the Val Bavona in the 1930s and the trauma of villagers abandoning their ancient homes and emigrating to America. He died in 1979. In 1976, he published a short paper for Modern Architecture in Ticino, titled “Costruivano senza Metro” from which this quote is taken.

12 Pierre Cordey, Focus on Switzerland, the Historical Evolution (Lausanna, Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, 1982), 53-55.

13 Copies of this census, known as the Circolo del Ticino, have survived and provide a very good picture of the population of Ticino at the beginning of the nineteenth century.
were drafted for Napoleon’s various campaigns. But their village isolation protected the Ticinese even from marauding French armies. By the time Napoleon was finally defeated in 1815, Ticino was a fully fledged canton, and any thoughts of leaving the restored Swiss Confederation to be reunited with northern Italy were soon abandoned.

However, the changes wrought by the 19th Century brought problems to the Ticino villages that they had not experienced before. The area had been completely passed over by the Industrial Revolution; it was not until 1822 that there was a passable road over the St. Gotthard Pass, and not until 1882 that a train tunnel was cut through the Pass. This did bring German Swiss and others from northern Europe into the Ticino area where they found a Mediterranean climate in Switzerland. For the lakefront cities such as Locarno and Lugano, this meant a new prosperity of tourism. But, this also further isolated the peasant villages from the growing cities and contributed to deepening poverty in the hillsides where the usually illiterate peasants still lived in the ancient stone houses built by their ancestors.

Two events in the nineteenth century made this situation close to intolerable. After 1850, Europe experienced something of a warming trend; this meant more food could be grown. Prosperity brought sanitation even to peasant villages. The Ticino River had long spilled across the Magadino Plain from Bellinzona to Locarno, leaving rancid pools along its banks that were breeding grounds for malaria. Now the Ticino River was channeled and the malaria pools disappeared.

But increased food and sanitation had an unexpected side effect, babies born in peasant villages now lived; the traditional pattern may have been to have eight children and expect six to die, but now six lived. As infant mortality fell suddenly in the Ticino, along with elsewhere in Europe, a population boom occurred. In the next century, the search for “living space” would help set off two world wars; in the

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14 Until the train tunnel, it was difficult and slow to travel from the German speaking cantons to Ticino. In 1842, the Gotthard Post, a stagecoach drawn by five horses with ten seats, took 23 hours to get from Flüelen in Canton Uri to northern Italy’s Lake Como.

15 This was known as the Bonifica del Piano di Magadino and actually lasted from 1888 until 1939.
middle of the nineteenth century it caused a crisis as the villages could not support the sudden increase in population.

There was only one solution: to leave the native village that had been home for 1,000 years and try to find work elsewhere. Fortunately for the Ticinese, their land was covered with chestnut trees and soon enterprising young men figured there was a market for roasted chestnuts in European cities, and so they left their homes to try their luck at selling chestnuts.

An immediate problem became apparent; once north of the St. Gotthard Pass, no one spoke their Italian dialect, and none of the Ticinese spoke German or French. So Zurich and Geneva proved less than fertile markets. But that problem was solved by heading south. Despite the fact that Lombardy and Ticino had been separate politically for more than 300 years, the Lombard dialect was still virtually the same as the Ticino dialect, so selling chestnuts in Milan was no problem.

The Ticinese also marketed another useful skill. Because of decades of village poverty, Ticino men were smaller and less developed than other Europeans. This meant they were better equipped to crawl into confined areas, and the Ticino men developed a new talent, chimney sweeps, called “spazzacamini.” So successful were they that the spazzacamini even developed their own language to communicate with one another.

In the 1840s and early 1850s, several thousand Ticino men went south to work largely as chimney sweeps, but the Lombardy in which they now sought employment was beset with its own problems. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Austrian Empire had taken control of northern Italy from Venice to Milan. Nineteenth century nationalism soon affected the area, and Italian patriots rallied to the call of “Risorgimento,” the reunification of Italy that had not been a unified country since the fall of Rome.16

While neither the authorities nor the population of Canton Ticino had any desire to return to Italian control, there was much sym-

16 The effort to reunify Italy dates from the end of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the proclamation of an Italian kingdom in 1861 and the capture of Rome from the Papal States and in 1871. Over this time, the French, Spanish, and Austrians who claimed sovereignty over parts of Italy were driven out.
pathy for reunification among the Ticinese who had themselves only recently achieved self rule. And that caused major problems for the Austrians trying to retain control of Lombardy.

In early 1853, an anti-Austrian uprising took place in Milan. The military ruler of northern Italy was one Field Marshall Josef Radetzky, who held the title Viceroy of Lombardy-Venetia.\(^{17}\) Radetzky determined that the Lombardy-Ticino border was a sieve through which were passing men and money to support the Italian cause, so he ordered the border sealed and on February 16, 1853, he ordered all 6,500 Ticinese living in northern Italy expelled and forced to return to their homes.\(^{18}\)

Although no one knew it at the time, that date would be one of the most important in Ticino’s history. The young men, often landless second sons (the patrimony of the Ticino villages allowed inheritance of whatever property the family had by the eldest son and his family) returned home with no money and no work. The unsettled conditions in northern Italy had hurt the Ticino economy which depended on trade across the common border. The poverty of their ancient villages was by now overwhelming, and so these young men, first in a trickle and later in a flood, did what countless millions of other impoverished Europeans did, they left for the New World.

Forced to emigrate north they crossed the St. Gotthard Pass and headed to port cities like Le Havre where they could sail in steerage to America. But where to go? There was a rumor of gold in Australia, and in the mid-1850s, some 3,000 Ticino Swiss sailed there. Most found little gold and settled down as farmers. Few ever returned to Switzerland. Another favorite locale was Argentina which had a large Italian

\(^{17}\) Josef Radetzky was born in Bohemia in 1766. He fought with the Austrian army in the Napoleonic Wars. In 1836, he was assigned to Italy, and in 1848, he was made Viceroy of Lombardy and Venetia at the age of 82 where he directed all military affairs in Austria’s unsuccessful effort to retain its Italian possessions. He died in Milan in 1858 just before Austria was expelled from northern Italy. He is considered a great Austrian hero, and Johan Strauss Sr. wrote his famous “Radetzky March” in his honor. He was married to an Austrian countess with whom he had eight children. He also had another eight children with an Italian mistress.

\(^{18}\) Joseph Gentilli, The Settlement of Swiss Ticino Immigrants in Australia (University of West Australia, August 1988), 2.
population; some early Ticino immigrants went there, mainly from the Sottocereni, the area south of the Cereni mountains that divides the canton in two.

But it did not take long for the most popular destination to emerge: California. Word of the discovery of gold in 1848 spread quickly throughout Europe, including Ticino, and dreams of easy riches led young men from all parts of Switzerland to embark for the west coast. Small numbers of Ticinese seem to have arrived in California in 1852 and 1853, but by now the gold rush was over.

That did not stop the emigration. By March 1856, some 948 persons had left the Val Maggia, of which only two were women. While most went to Australia, 146 took passage to California. By the census of 1870, some 3,000 Swiss natives were living in California, and it would appear that probably about half were from Ticino.19

This immigration would continue for another half century, and it came from a very specific part of Ticino called the Sopraceneri, the north of the canton. Very few immigrants were from the southern part of the canton where Lugano was the dominant city, and where the economy was stronger. The immigrants were from the north, but not from the cities like Bellinzona and Locarno. Instead they were almost entirely rural people, often from the most remote upper valleys such as Val Maggia, Val Verzasca, Centovalli, and Val Morobbia.

For centuries, these villagers had scoured out a living herding a few goats or making a little wine along mountain streams that cut through the slate and granite of the Alpine foothills. When they arrived in California, they found a similar Mediterranean climate to Ticino with a long growing season and rolling green hills perfect for dairy farming especially along the California coast. Soon word went from village to village in the Sopraceneri about opportunities in California.

The first immigrants were unmarried young men, and if they had a wife or children, these remained in Switzerland. According to Maurice Perret who did a detailed study of the Italian Swiss immigrants in the 1940s, “They came with little money. Only poor people left Ticino. Statistics in the 1890s indicated the amounts of money deposited with the agencies of emigration to be redistributed in America show that the Ticinese had the lowest sums among the Swiss, from two to 20 francs per person (forty cents to four dollars). From other Swiss cantons, the average in 1891 varied between 70 and 600 francs ($14 to $120 dollars.)”

But the opportunity for making money was quickly apparent. California produced little in the way of milk during its Mexican days as that was not part of the Mexican diet. But the influx of post gold rush Americans provided a ready market for milk and cheese. Most Ticino men knew something about dairy farming, and even twelve hours a day milking and chasing cows was better than life had been in Ticino. In 1856, a dairy industry was established in Marin County north of San Francisco and the labor force for the new dairies heavily consisted of Ticinese “milkers,” many of whom quickly established their own dairies.

California’s population growth in the late 19th Century included Italian and other southern Europeans who generally went to the cities, becoming fisherman and grocers. For them, wine was part of a meal, and Ticino immigrants quickly saw an opportunity to make wine in their rural farms for sale in the cities.

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21 Haup, 309.
A dairy farm and a vineyard need workers. Once established, the first immigrants gathered a small nest egg and sent off to Ticino for brothers, cousins, fellow villagers, and often for wives. From 1880 on, virtually all the Ticinese coming to California had either a sponsor or a specific ranch in California they were heading for. This eased passage to and across the United States. It also meant that virtually all the Ticino Swiss came to the same place, California.

But not to California’s already growing cities. From Marin County, Ticino dairymen headed up the north coast toward Humboldt County which provided perfect land for dairy farms. Those with an interest in vineyards, headed for Napa and Sonoma Counties. Others headed down the coast, populating Monterey County’s Salinas Valley and establishing dairy farms as far south as Santa Barbara County. Others headed inland to San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties. But virtually none settled in San Francisco or Oakland, or ventured into Los Angeles or San Diego. These were rural people, and for the first half century of Ticino immigration in California, almost all settled in the rural agricultural counties.

Consider one Ticino village, Monte Carasso, and one California town, St. Helena. Today Monte Carasso is a suburb of the cantonal capital of Bellinzona; in the nineteenth century, it was a typical hillside village. St. Helena in Napa County is today the heart of California’s multi-billion dollar wine industry; in the 1880s it was a town of 1,800 people in the upper Napa Valley where some immigrants had noticed the land was especially conducive to growing wine grapes.

Monte Carasso is first mentioned in 1348 as Monte Carassio. From 1430 to 1465, it had its own local government, and in 1440 it was allowed to send representatives to the local council in Bellinzona. The absorption of Bellinzona into the Swiss Confederation in 1500 meant that Monte Carasso became a Confederation possession as well, but the destruction of the Torretta Bridge in 1515 cut Monte Carasso off from Bellinzona, and its population retreated to small enclaves high in the village mountains. The flatland along the Ticino River was occupied by an Augustinian Monastery built there in the 1500s. The monastery had acquired virtually all the agricultural land adjoining the river, leaving the villagers to fend for themselves in the mountains.
Ruins of the ancient stone houses in Monte Carasso.
In 1800, Monte Carasso had a population of about 500 people, and that number doubled in the nineteenth century. They were organized into four “squadre,” or hamlets, at various points in the mountainside. The squadra of Poncetta consisted of thirty-five families of which fourteen had the last name of Grossi. Farther up the hillside, the squadra of Corte di Sotto consisted of thirty-seven families of which eleven were named Guidotti. Pozzeranco consisted of seventeen families, and Montiglione consisted of twelve families, eleven of whom were named Locarnini. In the general area, were another twenty-four families that were not of native Monte Carasso origin. In all, Monte Carasso consisted of 125 family units, almost all interrelated and many sharing their stone houses with other families.22

The poverty experienced in Canton Ticino throughout the 19th Century also affected Monte Carasso. In 1857, the Augustinian Monastery was suppressed, that is seized by the village following passage of a cantonal law allowing them to do so. Its property was divided among the “patrizi” families of Monte Carasso and this did make more farm land available.23

But also in these years, opportunities overseas beckoned. In 1860, Antonio and Carlo Locarnini and Pietro Pestoni of Monte Carasso sailed for Australia on the ship Swiftsure.24 But California had more promise, and in the next two decades, a significant migration of young men from Monte Carasso to California occurred.

It is not clear who was the first to reach California, but several early immigrants settled along California’s central coast. After 1880, a steady stream found their way to the Napa Valley to work in various aspects of the viniculture business. Here they found a small settlement of Ticinese and northern Italians who provided necessary financial help to establish themselves in the vineyard business.

The first Italian Swiss in Napa was Francesco (Frank) Salmina25 who left his small village of Intragna in the remote Centovalli for Cali-

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22 Maestro Rinaldo Guidotti, Notizie Storiche su Monte Carasso (Instituto Editoriale Ticinese Bellinzona, 1965), 41-42.
23 Guidotti, 124-184.
24 Gentilli, 62.
25 Virtually all the Ticino immigrants Americanized their first names, which are shown here in parenthesis.
fornia in 1858. He quickly prospered and in 1864 settled just outside the city of Napa. Here he and a partner farmed more than 700 acres of land, including thirty acres of vineyards with a small winery, and sixty dairy cows.\textsuperscript{26} In the early 1870s, he was joined by his first cousin from Intragna, Battista Salmina, who had also arrived in California in 1858. Battista returned to Intragna in 1875, and after two years returned to Napa with a wife, Sabina Salmina. However, relations with Frank Salmina had deteriorated and in 1879, Battista and Sabina, with an infant daughter, Katie, went up the Napa Valley to St. Helena where he found a small hotel for sale.

Battista bought the hotel, with a bar and restaurant, and named it William Tell after the great Swiss hero. In 1880, they brought Sabina’s brother, Felice (Felix) to St. Helena and he immediately immersed himself into learning the wine business, while helping run the hotel.

Battista formed a partnership with another Ticinese, Angelo Borla, and the two of them began buying property in St. Helena. The William Tell Hotel became the gathering place for recently arrived Swiss workers. The 1880 U.S. Census for St. Helena shows seven Swiss laborers living in the hotel.

\textsuperscript{26} Illustrations of Napa Co., Calif., Historical Sketch (Smith and Elliott, Oakland, 1878), 8.
The first Ticino Swiss from Monte Carasso to arrive in California was not really a Ticinese. He was Alessandro (Alexander) Merga, whose father was from near Lake Como in Italy but whose mother was from Monte Carasso. He was born there in 1846. In 1871, he married Maria (Mary) Angelina Pestoni of a very old Monte Carasso family. They had a daughter, Lucia Merga, born in 1872. The following year, Alessandro departed for America, leaving his family in Monte Carasso. For two years he worked in New York, and then in 1875 took a train to California, finding his way to Sonoma County on California’s north coast. Having learned the basics of the vineyard business, he moved to St. Helena in 1883 and decided it was time to bring over his family. But his Pestoni in-laws did not want Maria and Lucia travelling all the way to California alone, so they decided to send her 25-year-old brother, Albino (Albert) Pestoni, to accompany them.

Not surprisingly, Alexander and Albert, as they were now known, decided to go into the vineyard business together and soon were able to buy twenty-five acres in a small valley called Crystal Springs just northeast of St. Helena. Adjoining their property was the 101-acre ranch and vineyard of Carlo and Fulgenzio Rossini, two brothers also from Monte Carasso. They had arrived in 1882 and began working immediately in Napa County vineyards. In 1884, they borrowed $1,000 to buy the 101-acre ranch and built a small winery on their property.27

The $1,000 loan came in the form of a mortgage and the mortgagee was Battista Salmina. Battista Salmina, Felix Salmina, and Angelo Borla were now successful enough with their property holdings in St. Helena that they were able to make loans to fellow Ticinese and they ended up essentially being the bankers for the Swiss immigrants. The American banks would probably have refused to extend loans to these immigrants because few of them spoke good English, and so Battista, an astute businessman, realized he could fill the need.

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27 In the nineteenth century, Californians paid a property tax based on their real and personal property holdings. The State Board of Equalization assessed each farm annually to determine the tax. This included determining the size of the farm, the acreage in vineyards, any wine the farm had, and mortgages on the property. Microfilm of these Board of Equalization assessments are available at the Napa Valley Genealogical Society. In 1895, Napa County officials mapped the entire county, showing the location of all existing farms and their acreage.
In 1887, Carlo Rossini married Lucia Merga who was living in the adjoining ranch with her parents, thus uniting these two pioneering families. By 1889, the Rossini operation was making 3,000 gallons of wine a year. That same year Fulgenzio Rossini married Giuseppina (Josephine) Poncetta, whose family owned a neighboring ranch of thirty-four acres. Josephine was born in Monte Carasso in 1860 and came to California about 1885 to be with her brother Giovanni (John) Poncetta.

John Poncetta was born in Monte Carasso in 1858. He came to California in 1879 and had attained his citizenship in 1884. By then he too had established himself in the Crustal Springs area, operating vineyard which he ran for the rest of his life. In 1893, the 35-year-old John married 16-year-old Elvezia (Elva) Madonna, whose family also farmed in the Crystal Springs area.

Elva was the second of four daughters born to Giacomo (James) and Marianna Madonna who were natives of Cambedo, Switzerland. Cambedo was a long distance from Monte Carasso, located at the end of the Centovalli which extended west of Locarno to the Italian border. Giacomo was born there in 1848, his wife was born Marianna Rizzoli in the same village in 1852. They were married in 1872 and had three daughters in Cambedo before Giacomo departed for America in 1885.

While Giacomo had no ties to the Monte Carasso immigrants in Switzerland, he had an important connection to the Salmina family when he arrived in California. Cambedo is just up the road from Intragna where the Salminas were from, and a part of the Madonna family lived in Intragna. It is very possible that the Salmina and Madonna families knew each other in Ticino; at any rate, in 1888, Felix Salmina and Angelo Borla lent James Madonna $800 which he used to pay for a twenty-acre plot of land on which he too planted grapes.

He also used some of this money to pay for passage for his family to come to California. In 1889, Mariana Madonna arrived with three daughters: Maria, aged fourteen, Elvezia (Elva), aged twelve, and Giacomina (Ponnie), aged eight. A fourth daughter, Josephine, was born in 1891.

Not only did Elva Madonna marry John Poncetta, but Giacomina Madonna married his brother, Bernardo Poncetta—thus two brothers married two sisters. And in 1891, Maria, the eldest of the
Madonna daughters, married Albert Pestoni. The Ticino marriages did not stop here. John and Bernard’s sister, Lodovina Poncetta, born in Monte Carasso in 1871, married Rocco Morisoli, who was born there in 1861. They settled in Rutherford, the next town south from St. Helena and started a vineyard there that still remains in the Morisoli family to the fifth generation.

The inter-Swiss marriages continued into the next century. After the arrival of Mary Angelina Merga in 1883, she and Alexander had a second daughter, Serafina (Sarah), born in December 1883. In 1900, she married Cherubini (Charles) Martinelli who was from Maggia, Ticino. He too worked in the vineyard business.

In 1920, Mary Jennie Rossini, daughter of Carlo and Lucia Rossini, married Joseph Antone Varozza who operated a vineyard and small winery in St. Helena. He was the son of Vincenzo (James) Varozza and Giovannina (Jennie) Dodini. Jennie Dodini, who was born in 1854, had come to San Francisco as an unattached young woman in 1874. In 1877, she married James Varozza, who had come to California in 1870 and they came to St. Helena in late 1879. James quickly mastered the vineyard business, rising to foreman of a major St. Helena vineyard. The Varozza family continues in the wine business today, in the fifth generation.

In 1889, James and Jennie returned to Ticino as she was suffering from health problems. But in 1892, seeing no opportunities in Ticino, they decided to return to St. Helena. Along with their own three children, they brought back with them Jennie’s nephew, 16-year-old Fulgenzio (Frank) Morosoli. Fulgenzio was part of the Morisoli family of Monte Carasso, but as he had been born in a different village, the spelling of his last name was changed. In 1898, Frank married Katie Salmina, eldest daughter of Battista and Sabina Salmina, thus giving the Salminas a direct connection to Monte Carasso.28 In 1893, Felix Salmina, Sabina’s brother, had married Teresa Borla, the niece of their Ticino business partner, Angelo Borla.

So by the turn of the twentieth century, twelve intermarried Ticino Swiss families, all of whom had a direct or indirect tie to the

28 Fulgenzio Morosoli and Katie Salmina are the author’s grandparents.
small Ticino village of Monte Carasso, were working in the vineyards or allied industries in the upper Napa Valley. As the wine industry grew and prospered in the Napa Valley it attracted immigrants from other parts of Europe, especially Italians. The major wine market before the coming of Prohibition in 1920 had been Italian, French, and German families throughout California for whom wine was part of their daily lives. Numerous small wineries shipped wine in barrels via the Southern Pacific Railway to restaurants and private homes up and down the state.

Because wine was, until well into the 20th Century, a “foreign” drink for most Americans, the early California industry was dominated by immigrant families. As late as 1940, the four major Napa Valley wineries were still owned by the immigrant families that had founded them.29

Whether it was picking chestnuts in Ticino, milking cows in rural California, or tending vineyards in Napa, the Ticino Swiss were used to working long hours. Their one day off was Sunday and that was to attend church as the Swiss were strong Roman Catholic. Soon their social life revolved around church socials and picnics, and that brought them into contact with Italian and German Catholics, almost all immigrants as well.

These twelve immigrant Ticino families had forty-five children among them. But the lives of the first and second generations were very much different. Living in a rural community, the initial immigrants had little need to learn English, although most of the men could be understood in heavily accented English.30 While the second generation was raised hearing the dialect at home, once in school they quickly learned English. While they generally married other Roman

29 The wineries were Beringer Brothers, founded in 1876 by two German brothers; Beaulieu Vineyards, founded by Georges De Latour from France in 1900; Ingle-nook, started by a Finnish sea captain in 1879 and still owned by his descendants; and Larkmead, owned by the Salmina family.

30 The Ticino immigrants had to create new words that combined both Italian and English. They lived on “ranches” which had no Italian word, so they created “i ranceri” to describe where they lived. A dairy farmer with cows would need a fence on his ranch, but there was no Ticino word for “fence;” so if the fence needed repair, it was “fixa la fenca.”
Catholics, this now included Irish and in many dairy communities Portuguese from the Azores. By the third generation, some of whom lived into the twenty-first century, knowledge of the dialect and of Italian had largely disappeared.

This is not to say that the first generation immigrants did not blend into American society, despite clinging to their Ticino cultural roots. Many were astute businessmen and did very well in a rurally oriented town like St. Helena. In 1895, Battista and Felix Salmina rented a large winery on Larkmead Lane five miles north of St. Helena. In 1902, they bought the winery and soon thereafter built their own large stone cellar that is today on the National Register of Historic Places.

Most of the property adjacent to their winery was owned by George W. Tucker who had come to the Napa Valley with his father Reason P. Tucker in the 1840s. The Tuckers were part of the original Donner Party that crossed the plains in covered wagons in 1846 but had divided from the party before the Donners were trapped in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In 1847, Reason, accompanied by his son George, led the first rescue party to find the Donner Party. By any measure,
the Tuckers were a pioneering California family, settling near St. Helena even before California became a state. In 1908, George Tucker’s grandson, Robert Eachus, married Mary Salmina, youngest daughter of Battista and Sabina Salmina. It was a major social event in the upper Napa Valley and evidence that within a generation, the Ticino Swiss had advanced to full acceptance in American society.

According to Maurice Perret, between 1868 and 1937, a total of 35,558 Ticinese left their homes to emigrate overseas, and four-fifths came to the United States. Of these, virtually all came to California. In the 1930 census, there were 20,063 people born in Switzerland living in California, and 29,635 American born citizens had one or two parents born in Switzerland.

These numbers suggest that the total number of Ticino Swiss who came to California between the mid-1850s and World War II was about 30,000. Most seem to have come during the great immigrations of the late nineteenth century. The Ticino Swiss and Italians immigrated in roughly the same time period, driven by the extreme poverty in Europe south of the Alps, but the two groups settled in different parts of the United States and followed different professions.

The Ticino immigration was a small part of overall immigration to America following the Civil War. But it played a unique role in the agricultural history of California, and in the kaleidoscope that is America today.

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The sources for the lives of the first generation Ticino Swiss immigrants are varied. For information on the births of the immigrants, the author wishes to thank Antonio Guidotti of Monte Carasso who supplied many of the family records on the Ticinese who immigrated. The U.S. censuses for 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 give a picture of the families as they expanded in Calif., and often included the year of immigration. Finally, the St. Helena Star, St. Helena’s weekly newspaper founded in 1874, reported the deaths of the Ticino immigrants with detailed obituaries on their lives in St. Helena.

Perret, 25, 33.
A History of the Swiss in California

by Richard Hacken

In 1848, the same year that Switzerland’s political structure took on its present constitutional form as a modern nation-state, a Swiss settler-entrepreneur named John Sutter became aware of gold deposits at his mill in Alta California. This led directly to the California Gold Rush. Two years later, in 1850, the United States accepted the freshly acquired and promising region now known as “California” into the Union as a state. Swiss immigrants enhanced the development of California from its very inception.

Sutter, the charismatic chameleon-adventurer, had marketed himself at times to prospective clients and business partners as “Captain John Sutter of the Swiss Guards.” His contribution to the development of California, which was transitioning from being part of a sparsely populated Mexican province to a booming American state, was significant. He had begun his career as Johann Augustus Sutter, a failed tradesman in Burgdorf, Canton Bern; but by the 1840s, he had established a

1 Full disclosure: the Swiss and American author of this article was born in Sutter Memorial Hospital, a short distance from Sutter’s Fort in an area of California that was once called “New Helvetia.”

2 John Sutter was born in Germany to a Swiss family; lived and worked in Canton Bern as a Swiss citizen; traveled to North America on a French passport; became a Mexican citizen; a reluctant accomplice to the Bear Flag Revolt for California’s independence, and an American citizen. See Richard Dillon, Fool’s Gold: The Decline and Fall of Captain John Sutter of California (New York: Coward-McCann, 1967).

3 See Agathon A. Aerni, “The Swiss Guards of San Francisco,” Swiss American Historical Society Newsletter, vol. 2, no. 2 (June 1966), 5-6. Not to be confused with the Pontifical Swiss Guard that has served in the Vatican since the fifteenth century, the Swiss of California organized their own “Swiss Guards” in 1860, also known as “Swiss Sharpshooters,” more as a shooting club and later, benevolent society, than as a militia. General Sutter himself was considered a good marksman.
settlement in California’s Central Valley at the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers that he named “New Helvetia” in honor of his Swiss homeland. In addition to a well-fortified “Sutter’s Fort,” he had acquired extensive ranchlands, hundreds of native Indian slaves on his vast land holdings, and the aforementioned “Sutter’s Mill” in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Range. It was in the millrace there that his foreman, James W. Marshall, had found the rich gold nuggets. Unable to prevent the secret from escaping to the world, ironically, Sutter helped to set the stage for the collapse and loss of his own extensive land holdings amidst the wild greed of the Gold Rush.4

John Sutter had not been the lone Swiss citizen at New Helvetia. Heinrich Lienhard from Bilten, Canton Glarus, whose autobiographical writings provide us with numerous details about Sutter’s crumbling realm,5 served as overseer at Sutter’s Fort, manager of a horticultural project on the Yuba River and then again as a supervisor at the Fort. In the winter of 1846-47, even as the Donner Party found itself caught in the snows of the Sierra Nevada, Sutter enjoyed the company in the Fort at New Helvetia6 of Lienhard and of Samuel Kyburz from Aargau7 and his wife, as well as two other Swiss hired men, Schmidt from Appenzell and Huggenberger from Aargau. In 1849, Sutter’s son asked the trusted Lienhard to undertake the arduous seven-month assignment of returning to Canton Bern, chancing robbery, storms at sea and yellow fever,

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4 In addition, Sutter’s drinking binges, his sloppy accounting practices, and his unrequited generosity practically guaranteed that hardened swindlers would siphon off his holdings. He ruled over Indian slaves with a heavy hand, but could not stand up to Gold Rush hucksters. See Dillon, 332, 340 et passim.


6 Sutter was bitterly disappointed when his eldest son later founded a city there and named it “Sacramento” rather than “Sutterville” or “New Helvetia.” See John Paul von Grueningen, The Swiss in the United States (Madison, Wisconsin: Swiss American Historical Society, 1940), 86-87.

7 A full chapter in Grueningen, The Swiss in the United States, 88-92, is devoted to Kyburz, who had become a trusted lieutenant to Sutter. An unincorporated winter-resort community of “Kyburz,” located along the South Fork of the American River at 4,000 feet elevation in the Sierra Nevadas, was named in honor of Samuel Kyburz by his Postmaster son Albert. See also Martin Hochstrasser, “Kyburz, CA 95720, USA,” Swiss American Historical Society Review 35, no. 2 (June 1999), 3-20.
to bring Sutter’s wife, Anna, and the rest of the family to California, which, for a negotiated price, he did.

The relatively scant number of Swiss at Sutter’s Fort (compared with the native Indian workers, Mexicans, Americans, and other immigrants) increased till the middle of the century by arrival of the Barben family (relatives of Kyburz); Jacob Wittmer from Solothurn; Laufenberg from Aargau; David Engler from St. Gallen; someone listed only as “Berner Jakob;” Jacob Dürr from Basel-City; “Baumeister Bader” from Basel-Country; a Vaudois surveyor Jean Jacques Vioget; and the Kramer family of Bern, who had come with Sutter’s family. Christian Brunner (canton unlisted) and his wife cared for orphaned children from the Donner Party.

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8 Sutter had left the family (and his creditors) behind 15 years earlier, though his eldest son Johann Augustus Jr. joined him in 1848.
9 Lienhard, A Pioneer at Sutter’s Fort, chapters XXI-XXIII.
11 From a compilation of biographical sketches from Lienhard in Grueningen, The Swiss in the United States, 92. Family names of other probable Swiss include Thomann, Rippstein, and a goldsmith named Steinach. The orphaned sisters from the Donner Party were Eliza and Georgia Donner.
The 1850s: Swiss Surveyors and City Planners in the Bay Area

The entry of California into the Union in 1850 turned a formerly remote coastal Mexican border area into an internationally recognized American whirlwind of metallurgical and economic promise, but also increasingly into a state with great agricultural, civic and demographic possibilities.

Due to the 800-mile length of California, along with dichotomies in climate and terrain, the designations of “Northern California” and “Southern California” often point to the semblance of two separate states. At the time of the Gold Rush far to its north, Los Angeles was still a small village and had scarcely reached 5,000 occupants by the 1870s, with no recorded Swiss immigrants. Thus, the bulk of the state’s growth was at first in Northern California, where Californians from Switzerland naturally gravitated. The largest population center was centered around San Francisco, which numbered 775 Swiss immigrants in 1870. Los Angeles and San Francisco were not to reach rough equity in Swiss American population until 1960, at which time both cities had over 4,000 each.12 For the nine- teenth-century narrative of immigrants from the Swiss Confederation, therefore, the historic scene remained squarely in the Bay Area, while the predominantly Italian Swiss preferred rural, mainly north or central coastal, areas.

The written account of Gustav Schläfli, a nephew of Sutter’s wife Anna, bears witness to the diversity of California landscapes, towns and countryside, in 1850. Of the city of San Francisco, Schläfli gushed: “One year ago St. Francisco [sic] consisted of only a few houses and now it is already an immensely big town, and I believe it will get to be the biggest town in the world.”13 Schläfli characterized the more rural but eminently inhabitable areas of the new state in similarly optimistic fashion: “Speaking about the Californian land, it still looks quite

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13 *America Experienced: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Accounts of Swiss Immigrants to the United States*, ed. Leo Schelbert; trans. Hedwig Rappolt (Camden, Me.: Picton Press, 1996), 369. Schläfli’s ultimate growth prediction for a city confined to a narrow peninsula has proven to be less than accurate.
wilderness-like in many places. But towns are being built as if there were no tomorrow. Oncle [Sutter] has again planned two new towns; one of them he named ‘Elisa’ in honor of his very worthy daughter, and the other ‘Blumas.’ The former has a splendid location and already numbers 20-30 houses and is growing by the day.”

The middle of the nineteenth century was the lull before the gathering storm of rural and urban growth in the Golden State that eventually led to today’s population of 40 million people, of which less than one percent claim single or multiple Swiss ancestry. Nevertheless, at least two Swiss immigrants among the state’s very earliest surveyors and city planners helped to pioneer the state’s development.

The earlier-mentioned Swiss surveyor, Jean Jacques Vioget from Combremont-le-Petit in Canton Vaud, had the distinction in 1839 of being the first person to make a survey and map of Yerba Buena, which later became San Francisco. With great foresight, he attempted to orient the blocks to approximate the lines of the solstices, hoping to provide for the maximum amount of sunshine at both the north and south declinations. Yet, his ideas were too advanced for the bureaucratic establishment who insisted on a more conservative grid plan. He was also an artist whose watercolors and drawings serve as unique historical documents depicting a nearly bare coastal peninsula, from the time of Mexican rule, that would soon sprout into the City on the Bay. Hired in the 1840s to survey land grants in the Sacramento area and to serve as Sutter’s agent in San Francisco, the polyglot Vioget also witnessed Sutter’s purchase of Fort Ross from the Russians in 1841.

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14 American Experienced, 371. Neither of the two settlements named can be found on the California map today. “Blumas,” however, the original settlement in Yuba County had disbanded by 1862. Because of Rio de las Plumas (anglicized to Feather River), “Plumas” became the name source for a small community in Lassen County as well as an entire county through which the river flows and a national forest for which the river is the main watershed.

15 Mick Sinclair, San Francisco: A Cultural and Literary History (New York: Interlink Books, 2004). Vioget’s Yerba Buena map of 1839, with its trapezoidal blocks, covered only the area of San Francisco now known as the Financial District. Fort Ross, settled in the early nineteenth century on the coast of what is now Sonoma County, had represented the southernmost Russian outpost in North America.
Vioget’s life story also included earlier stints as a soldier who was wounded in Napoleon’s fourth Swiss Regiment, as a captain in the Brazilian Navy and in the merchant marine. Though a seaman at heart, he turned to hospitality to take advantage of his outgoing personality, setting up a saloon at Yerba Buena on the corner of Kearney and Clay in 1840. It became the primary meeting place for well-to-do patrons, not to mention deep-sea skippers, to conduct their public and private business over good liquor. The proprietor with the gentle French accent installed one of the first billiard tables on the Pacific Coast of North America, and his “sparkling wit and genial hospitality soon became proverbial from Mazatlán to Sitka.”

When the building became recognized as a hotel four years later, it became known as the first hotel in early California. Vioget invested his profits well in real estate, owning ranchos in Sonoma and Marin Counties that came to total forty-one square miles of land.

John Sutter was the best-known Swiss in America, but not the best representative of Swiss behavior. Sutter has been called, rather, an exemplar of the American frontier: bold, grandiose, a self-aggrandizing

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risk taker. The lesser-known Vioget, on the other hand, apparently more accurately represented recognized Swiss virtues of “technical competence, good citizenship, modesty in behavior, amiable fellowship and the respect of the community, ability to live within one’s means . . . and independence of judgment and action.”17

A decade later, in 1851, just as J. J. Vioget was spending his retirement years in San Jose, a German-Swiss contemporary from Baden in Canton Aargau, Julius Kellersberger, had just moved to San Francisco with his new wife and with dreams of riches. Quickly realizing that mining was not his forte, and, having been trained as a surveyor in Vienna with additional practical experience in New York City’s Central Park, he turned to his professional métier. It was a time when surveying had started to boom. After California’s acceptance into the union in 1850, each of the counties had been established with requirements for its own surveyors. In the following year Congress created the office of a U.S. Surveyor General for California to lay out the basic grid of meridians, base, and standard lines.18

Kellersberger settled on the bay shore opposite San Francisco to the east, in the lands of the aptly named “Contra Costa” (“opposite shore”). With his background in surveying and city planning, he was hired as City Engineer for laying out a town in 1852. The town of Contra Costa was incorporated as “Oakland” the following year in the newly formed county of Alameda. Following his platting of properties and streets, Kellersberger was assigned the duty of establishing important public highways and of extending them to their termination at the Bay. When the job of City Engineer became subject to an election in 1854, an opposing candidate outmaneuvered him despite having lesser qualifications than Kellersberger.19

The loss of municipal surveying opportunities actually led to Julius Kellersberger’s appointment as United States Deputy Surveyor for California in 1855 and to more important work. His first contract,

19 Studer, Julius Kellersberger, 8.
Julius Kellersberger’s Memoirs, manuscript format, New York Public Library, as quoted in Studer, “Julius Kellersberger,” 11. In several final twists to Kellersberger’s life story, he left California to survey and lay out the roadbed for a railroad across Mexico from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific; served as an engineer for the Confederacy in East Texas during the Civil War; returned to Mexico as a construction engineer on the Vera Cruz and Mexico City Railroad during the short reign of the Austrian-born Mexican Emperor Maximilian; and he then returned to Switzerland to live in Baden for the final years of his life. See W. T. Block, “The Ghostly-Silent Guns of Galveston: A Chronicle of Colonel J. G. Kellersberger, the Confederate Chief Engineer of East Texas,” *East Texas Historical Journal*, vol. 33, no. 2 (1995), 23-34.
The Swiss in California: A Snapshot from 1853

A Swiss notary from Bern, C. A. Scheurer, published clearly and carefully worded observations on his new California home in 1854, claiming to provide “a general description of the situation there, with particular consideration to satisfying the interest of those planning to emigrate or to invest capital there.” To these views, augmented by a number of helpful statistics, he also appended an annual report on California conditions in 1853 sent by the Swiss Consulate in San Francisco to the Federal Council of the Confederation (Bundesrat), dated January 12, 1854. The Swiss consulate was only one of many quickly set up to profit from the economic and geographic advantages of the new state of California: Scheurer also listed the consular presence in San Francisco of Austria, Prussia, Hanover, Hamburg and Bremen.

The consular report represented of necessity a temporary snapshot of the state of affairs within a rapidly changing scene. For instance, the Swiss population in California had increased in the single year of 1853 to some 2,500 souls, showing an annual increase of 67% from the previous year’s total of 1,500 Swiss-Californians. Even at this early point, though, the only canton not represented in the Golden State was Zug, and, as would continue for decades, the most strongly represented was Ticino (Tessin). Such quick growth was mirrored in almost all of

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23 C. A. Scheurer, Das jetzige Kalifornien: Allgemeine Schilderung der dortigen Verhältnisse, mit besonderer Rücksichtnahme auf das Interesse Derjenigen, die eine Uebersiedlung dahin oder die Anlegung von Kapitalien in diesem Lande beabsichtigen (Bern: Dalp’sche Buchhandlung, 1854). Despite his claim of attending to the interests of prospective emigrants, he went on in his foreword to disclaim that it was “not necessarily his intention to encourage emigration to California” (“nicht in [meiner] Absicht liege, dadurch zur Auswanderung nach Kalifornien besonders aufzunutzen.”) Rather, he wished “to lay simple facts before the reader, leaving each to make an independent judgment.”

24 The first Swiss Consul after California statehood (the Consul in charge of the report to the Federal Council) was Rudolph Kellersberger from Aargau, brother of Julius Kellersberger mentioned above.

25 Scheurer, Das jetzige Kalifornien, 15.

26 Scheurer, Das jetzige Kalifornien, 65. The Italian-language name for this canton (“Ticino”) recurs throughout this article, rather than the English term “Tessin,” in order to match the journalistic and general practices found in written California sources from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to honor the emigrants’ own usage. Accordingly, the plural noun “Ticinesi” indicates citizens from this canton and their offspring, while the adjective “Ticinese” appears in descriptions.
the statistics. The descriptions and numbers of Swiss societies, imports, ships and cargos mirror a city quickly leaving behind the rough-and-tumble social crudeness of the Gold Rush.

Natives of the Swiss Confederation introduced customs and activities of Switzerland to their new California neighbors: Scheurer reports that “the Swiss shooting matches near the city of Sacramento on May 7-8 [1853] created great enthusiasm due to their focused planning and appeared there, as in Switzerland, to be a general festival of public joy.”27 The Freischießen in May had been a success due to scrupulous organization, but Swiss participation in the Fourth of July parade that year required agility and adaptability after fireworks in a house at the corner of the main plaza [presumably Union Square] exploded and burned the edifice to the ground.28 Almost immediately after the successful quenching of the fire, Sutter, dressed in his impressive general’s uniform, led a parade of international militia volunteers through the streets. Reviews afterwards were mixed: the appearance and armament of the troops were good, though the exercises and maneuvers themselves had left something to be desired.29

The influx of Swiss immigrants to California was paralleled in a way by the import of Swiss goods. Among the statistics offered by the San Francisco Consulate to the Federal Council were trade balance figures between the two countries and in particular a list of the popular and less-popular 1853 Swiss imports to California. The most popular imports (both for the Swiss abroad and for their new neighbors) were the foodstuffs and beverages: 428 boxes and 20 barrels of extrait d’absynthe; 286 boxes of Kirschwasser; 760 cheese wheels; 6 centner [metric hundredweight] of chocolate and cocoa products; 480 bottles of champagne, matched by 480 bottles of wine from Cortaillod (in Neuchâtel); and 200 containers of Schabzieger curdled cheese (from

28 Scheurer, Das jetzige Kalifornien, 48-50.
29 Scheurer, Das jetzige Kalifornien, 49-51. The performance review was not a part of the report to the Federal Council.
Glarus). Also high on the list were clocks, clock parts and music boxes, 80,000 cigars, and various forms of textiles and ribbons. Less resonant Swiss imports for Californians were jewelry and silk goods.\textsuperscript{30}

Worthy of note in the consular report are the disembarkations of passengers and goods in San Francisco Harbor in 1853 of 1,902 ships, an average of one ship arriving every 5 hours through the year, and an increase in shipping over the previous year of some 44\%. Likewise, the number of passengers arriving from foreign ports (39,285) compared to those leaving California by sea (30,316) throws partial light on immigration growth, even without taking into account those arriving overland, around 22,000 that year.\textsuperscript{31} An estimated one in eleven (9\%) of those arriving to settle were Swiss.

By the end of the year in 1853, the population of California approximated 400,000, consisting of 250,000 Americans; 32,000 German

\textsuperscript{30} Scheurer, \textit{Das jetzige Kalifornien}, 66-67. It is possible that Chinese immigrants, also quickly establishing themselves in San Francisco, may have become keen competitors in the silk trade locally around this time.

\textsuperscript{31} Scheurer, \textit{Das jetzige Kalifornien}, 69-70.
and Dutch speakers, including German-Swiss; 30,000 French, French-Swiss and Belgians; 19,000 Chinese and Malay; 23,500 with “Spanish blood”; 13,000 “other foreigners,” presumably including Italian-Swiss; 30,000 Indians of various tribes; and 2,500 Blacks and Mulattos. Among the 400,000 residents were approximately 65,000 women and 30,000 children.\(^{32}\)

The Appeal of California to the Swiss

Immigration from Switzerland to the United States reached its apex in the second half of the nineteenth century. Over 21% of all Swiss-Americans who arrived in the nineteen decades between the presidency of James Monroe and the presidency of Barack Obama did so in one single decade: the 1880s.\(^{33}\) Relative Swiss-American population rankings for California, compared to those for other American states, were to move from \textit{ninth} place in 1870 to \textit{sixth} place in 1890 to \textit{first} place from 1930 onwards.\(^{34}\)

In 1859, as the Gold Rush was fading, a front-page feature article of the \textit{California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences} directly contrasted the growing conditions of Switzerland with those of California, advising Swiss farmers to take advantage of the agricultural promise which was about to supplant gold fever in the Golden State:

\begin{quote}
How would the Swiss exult in the superior advantages afforded by the mountains of California! Here the arable land is abundant, cheap, and prolific, needs no costly terracing and walling, and below the line of winter snows, can be cultivated for various purposes all through the year. The vine yields double, or more than double, what it does in any other country, and wine is made of a quality so excellent that it is already in demand for exportation. The pasturage for
\end{quote}

\(^{32}\) Scheurer, \textit{Das jetzige Kalifornien}, 70. Note that the population numbers listed in the consular report are not ordered strictly by diminishing totals, but perhaps reflect the perceived racial hierarchies of the day.

\(^{33}\) Calculated from Leo Schelbert, \textit{Switzerland Abroad: Historical Contours of a Nation’s People Global Presence} (Morgantown, Pa.: Masthof Press, 2019), 239.

\(^{34}\) Grueningen, \textit{The Swiss in the United States}, 17; see also Schelbert, \textit{Switzerland Abroad}, 241.
sheep is extensive and lasting, and for cattle during the summer season, very rich and easy of access. Above all, we have a climate which rivals that of the plains of Italy. These facts warrant the belief, that, if every gold-field was exhausted, there would still be in the Sierra Nevada attractions sufficient to draw thousands in search of homes, and advantages great enough to hold them there contented.\footnote{California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences (San Francisco, August 12, 1859), 1. In this and all subsequent quotes from newspapers and journals of the nineteenth century, the original forms of syntax, spelling and punctuation are retained.}

In 1869, the California Immigrant Union was founded as a booster organization to promote immigrant settlements by touting the benefits of California, considering itself the “proper source to obtain general information in reference to the State.” In 1872, for example, the Union sent 903 letters answering inquiries and received 1,652 visitors in its office.\footnote{Daily Alta California (San Francisco), October 14, 1872, front page. Reflecting the prejudices of the day, which would be reflected by an anti-Chinese employment statute in section 2 of article XIX in California’s 1879 constitution, the Union only encouraged and entertained queries of interest from the Eastern United States and Europe.}

The efforts of the California Immigration Union to attract Swiss immigrants to the Pacific Coast were assisted by interested entrepreneurs and corporations. In one case, H. Meiss, general agent of the North German-Lloyd in Switzerland, “[having] had many inquiries of late from would-be Swiss emigrants about . . . California,” made an offer to translate and distribute literature in Switzerland at his own expense, \textit{e.g.}, pamphlets and other materials “describing [the state’s] climate, lands, products, etc.” This offer was relayed by the U.S. Consul in Zurich, who called the Swiss “a most desirable class of immigrants, being frugal, industrious and naturally good citizens.”\footnote{“Swiss Emigrants: United States Consul Sends for California Literature,” Los Angeles Times, March 11, 1897, 14. In the twenty-first century, this type of transatlantic outreach is somewhat approximated by organizations such as the Swiss-California Foundation: www.swisscalifornia.org (viewed 12/8/2019).}

There were, of course, darker sides to the immigration story. For some decades in the nineteenth century, certain Swiss communal officials had made an economically advantageous habit of “shipping to the United States paupers and diseased persons, so as to get rid of the
cost of maintaining them.” After U.S. negotiators made the point that America “ought not to be looked on as a poor-house for the reception of the imbecile, crippled, diseased, helpless or criminal classes of Europe,” the Federal Council of Switzerland “adopted a law . . . to correct [that] long-existing evil.”

Seldom announced were also the cases of Swiss emigrants who were unable to make a living in the new land, were cheated out of their savings, or suffered from home sickness too much to remain in the New World. We do not know the numbers of repatriated emigrants from California as precisely, nor are they recorded as faithfully, as those of the immigrant arrivals.

Following a series of disappointments and losses, John Sutter had left California for good, moving to the Washington, D.C. area to petition Congress, to no avail, for reimbursement of his property losses. The search for gold in California had, in practical terms, ended for individual placer miners by 1853, as corporations with the means to divert entire streams and dig more deeply took over the lion’s share of profits until even those corporations faced the law of diminishing returns by the 1860s.

Following Sutter’s impetus to the growth of California, it was corporations growing out of the Gold Rush that made huge subsequent financial strides. They morphed and adapted to other fields, to other products and to other purposes, feverishly taking over the economic landscape that had been lost to the Swiss “Captain.” Touching on both the Gold Rush and emigration, Maureen Jung has noted:

California’s unique contribution to the history of corporations has been neglected, in part, because of the long-standing interest in the more romantic, individualistic, and un-

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38 “Swiss Emigration,” Daily Alta California (San Francisco), April 8, 1881, 2.
39 The word “placer” rhymes with “Vassar.” “Placer mining” was done by dredging streambeds with anything from shallow “gold pans” to heavy machinery, then winnowing or processing the tailings to isolate the heavier gold. Thus, it was in mid-nineteenth-century California that the unique idiom for failure came into existence: “It didn’t pan out.”
organized aspects of the Gold Rush. Thus, we still think of the Gold Rush as an adventure undertaken by individuals, although historians have recognized for more than a century that most emigrants traveled to California as members of companies.41

The Italian Swiss Colonies in California

The Swiss companies of immigrants were not long in arriving. Various communal forms of immigration assistance, often based on an aid society or a company for profit, soon sponsored immigrant colonies more interested in farming or ranching than in the mining of precious metals. Such endeavors, whether individually or in a company, had to be financed via private, family or speculative means. This was especially true for a flood of Italian Swiss emigrants from Ticino, the major supplier of Swiss workers to California. On June 13, 1855, following a great population decline by loss of local workers bound overseas, the cantonal Ticinese parliament tightened into law a series of measures restraining municipalities from financing emigration expenses. In particular, the law put strictures on loaning or advancing travel costs to a departing citizen of the canton, levying a loan guarantee of 20,000 francs on public agencies in each instance.42 Even so, “the community often paid the expenses of the voyage and guaranteed the debts contracted for it. The emigration was extremely high.”43

Settlements or colonies of like-minded emigrants from Swiss communities pooled resources for starting afresh in the Golden State, always with the expectation that earnings in California would find their way back home in order to more than repay the investment. As an early example preceding the cantonal restrictions on community support for emigration, we read from the biography of Attilio Martinelli:

The father [of the Martinelli family] came to the United States in 1852 with a party of thirty of his countrymen from the town of Maggia, which municipality “staked” the party to thirty thousand francs to defray the expense of the trip to the New World. As an instance of the integrity of the Swiss people, be it noted that all of this money was eventually repaid. During their long voyage on a sailing ship around Cape Horn they encountered severe storms, and it was a frequent remark among the members of the party that the prosperity of Maggia hung in the balance, depending on their safe passage.

From biographies and other data available about Italian Swiss immigrants to California, concentrating on ranchers, vintners, dairy-men and real estate investors, the historian Giorgio Cheda estimates that the total extent of property belonging to the Ticinesi in California eventually grew to around 1,800 square kilometers by the end of the nineteenth century, corresponding to two-thirds the surface area of the Canton of Ticino itself. The potential pathway to individual progress for rural workers in California began as a hired laborer, then as a farmer on rented land, and finally as a landowner.

Meanwhile, as the historian Cheda outlined, the causes for extensive local Italian-Swiss emigration and the resultant absence of (principally male) citizens back home in the Maggia Valley were cyclical and sometimes punishing. A serious food crisis during the first years of the Risorgimento at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which necessarily impacted the import-dependent mountain valleys of Ticino, forced some to grind corn stalks, walnut husks, bark of the beech tree, vines, hay and straw into polenta and flat bread. Yet the relatively minor demographic changes of those years were to be dwarfed.

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44 In the eponymous Maggia Valley north-northwest of Locarno in Canton Ticino.
48 In Italy, the movement that would eventually lead to freedom from foreign dominance and to Italian unification.
by later waves of emigration in the second half of the century, fueled successively by economic depression, an isolating Austrian blockade at the Italian border, hoof-and-mouth disease among the cattle, massive flooding,\footnote{Following the catastrophic floods of 1868, an “Appeal to the Swiss of California” went out from the Swiss Consulate in a number of newspapers, culminating in a request for assistance: “There remains no doubt but that we find ourselves confronted by a calamity such, perhaps, as our [Swiss] history has not recorded for centuries. . . . the deaths are numerous. . . . In the canton of Tessin more than 60 persons have been drowned or crushed to death, and more than 1,000 head of stock have perished. . . . The undersigned respectfully announces to the Swiss population of California, and all others who may desire to assist the unfortunate victims of the inundations, that he has opened a subscription book at his office, No. 527 Clay Street, corner of Leidesdorff.” Francis Berton, Consul for Switzerland, \textit{Daily Alta California} (San Francisco), November 21, 1868, front page.} and, ironically, improvements in nutrition and health that caused the population to far outpace what the valley’s resources could sustain.

Between 1851 and 1856, as one example, almost a third of the population (of men for the most part) left the village of Maggia to go overseas. As the demographics of the village of Maggia went, approximately so went the Maggia Valley, which registered a population in 1900 that was only 70\% of what it had been in 1850.\footnote{Arlettaz, \textit{Émigration et société}, 327.} Due to the gender imbalance back home, marriages became a rarity and the larger part of the work fell to the remaining women of the valley. Coincidentally, the cattle population in the village of Maggia alone steadily decreased from 182 in 1850, to 133 in 1865, and by the end of World War I to only 66.\footnote{Cheda and Grossi, \textit{Maggia: Brief Report on Emigration to California}.} These numbers also clarify why the funds and resources sent back from California, and to some degree from Australia, by the successfully employed family members and relatives overseas were so crucial to bolstering the economy of the Maggia Valley in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

After having settled in various counties of California and having lived and labored about a quarter of a century in California, the Italian Swiss were seen as a well-liked, respected and prosperous people, according to an article of 1878 in the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle} entitled “Our Ticinese Population:”
One of the most industrious, frugal, temperate and well-to-do elements in this cosmopolitan State is the Ticinese, composed of former inhabitants of the Canton of Ticino, Switzerland. Their number is estimated at 7,000, distributed principally in Marin, Napa, Santa Clara and San Luis Obispo Counties. The great majority are engaged in the dairy business, and notably so in Marin County. Quite a number of the Ticinese are small farmers, some of whom own their own land, but as a rule, both for farming and dairy purposes, the land is rented. Their property in cows, horses, wagons and other things necessary to their business is very large.

As a reward of their unceasing industry and frugality, they are never “hard up,” and, when the proper occasion offers, are generous to a fault in spending their money. In their feasts and convivial parties, they are as jolly a lot of fellows as ever sat down to do honors to the inner man.

Given the evident good will of the California newspaper editors in welcoming the Swiss to California, it is possible to pardon certain simplistic stereotypes, such as those of one journalist who claimed: “. . . it is found that nearly all the Italian-Swiss . . . bring with them the echoes of the Ranz des Vaches in their ears, or else have not wiped off the bloom of the ripened grapes from their fingers.”

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52 This number would nearly double in size during the twelve following years, as an 1890 statement from the same newspaper declares: “Out of 17,000 people who emigrated from Switzerland to make California their future home, fully 13,000 came from Canton Ticino, which is the only Italian speaking canton in the little European republic.” San Francisco Chronicle, September 17, 1890, front page. It should be added that Canton Grisons (Kanton Graubünden, Chantun Grischun, Cantone dei Grigioni) has also historically had an Italian-speaking population ranging between 10 to 17%. Though there may have been Swiss speakers of the Rhaeto-Romanic dialects that emigrated to California from Grisons, there was no organized colony, nor was there an obvious presence.

53 Marin County, the county immediately north of the San Francisco metropolitan area, provided a ready and lucrative market for quality dairy goods. In Marin’s County Seat, San Rafael—more recently, in 1971—the part-Swiss filmmaker George Lucas founded Lucasfilm, a breeder organization for the Star Wars franchise and for the Pixar animation studio.


55 Also known as Kuhreihen, Ranz des Vaches is a melody traditionally played by Swiss Alpine herdsmen driving cattle to or from the pasture. A well-known version of it appears in the overture to Rossini’s opera, William Tell.

56 “Our Swiss Citizens,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 20, 1884, front page.
time, the reporter appeared to show genuine respect to those who “pay but little heed to the blandishments of the city” in order to “turn their faces to the dairy nooks of Marin and Contra Costa or the vine patches of St. Helena.”\textsuperscript{57} The final analysis, he suggests, comes down to character, since the “sun-browned, dark-haired dairymen and vineyardists” are “good, honest, self-helpful, family-helping fellows” who “[save] up their money, [purchase] a little plot here and a little meadow there, [grow] up into competence from nothing and [send] $100 or $200 now and then to bring a cousin, or a brother, or a father over to this wonderful country, where a man can own what he tills and be . . . a nobleman in his own right.”\textsuperscript{58}

The rhapsodic judgments of Swiss character by the big-city San Francisco editors were perhaps influenced by earlier reports of journalists in more rural areas. One case in point was an 1874 article from San Luis Obispo County:

Switzerland is the oldest republic on the face of the earth. . . . The Swiss who have left their native land and adopted this as their home do not show any disposition to forget the claims of the mother [country]. They are not wanting in patriotism. When their day to celebrate comes round the emblem of their land is seen floating in the breeze even in this far-off country of their adoption. In this county there are about fifty Swiss families. They nearly all come from the Maggia valley in the north \textit{sic} of Switzerland,\textsuperscript{59} and were close neighbors and therefore acquaintances before emigrating. They are principally engaged in dairying here, and are prosperous because they are temperate, industrious and honest.

This year their anniversary was celebrated by a grand ball given in Granger Hall, Cambria, on last Tuesday night… Many came in from the adjoining county. Old Creek\textsuperscript{60} was

\textsuperscript{57}“Our Swiss Citizens,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, January 20, 1884, front page.
\textsuperscript{58}“Our Swiss Citizens,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, January 20, 1884, front page.
\textsuperscript{59}More accurately, Canton Ticino and the Maggia Valley are situated in the very south of Switzerland.
\textsuperscript{60}As mortality, entropy and the passage of time dictate, the Swiss-American farming community at Old Creek has now disappeared, though an “Old Creek Road” does proceed east from the ocean just south of Cayucos to cross an old creek and eventually loop north, renamed, to Cambria.
well represented: as were also Morro,61 San Simeon62 and San Luis,63 and other parts of the county. . . . Long live the Swiss! The republic contains about two and a half millions, and if they were all right here in California it would be a blessing to the State, for they make the very best class of citizens.64

From a Marin County newspaper came an explanation for the rapidity with which Ticinese Swiss assimilated into American culture while still holding ties to the land of their birth:

61 “Morro” was a name familiar to the Italian-Swiss, as it shared with Spanish the connotation of a great rock, and in fact at Morro Bay on the Pacific is one of the seven large and distinctive volcano plugs in San Luis Obispo County. Next to another “morro,” abutting San Luis Obispo, the descendant of a Swiss-Italian pioneer, Alex Madonna, constructed a famous and quirky “Madonna Inn” with a pseudo-Swiss-Alps exterior. Having been denied permission to place his inn on top of the rock, he apparently decided to build a rock on top of his inn.

62 San Simeon is now probably best known as the site of William Randolph Hearst’s unique hilltop complex, “Hearst Castle.”

63 That is, San Luis Obispo itself.

64 “The Swiss Ball,” Weekly Tribune (San Luis Obispo), September 26, 1874, 3.
The Swiss population of this section is constantly increasing by immigration from the old country. . . . Born in a country in which compulsory education is a law of the land, in the oldest Republic of the world, and trained under the influences of Republican institutions, they assimilate very rapidly with the American people, and most of them, as soon as they are eligible, become naturalized citizens. Their wives and sweet-hearts come after a while, and steadily the Swiss element of the population of this section, both youth and adult, is increasing. . . . Our Swiss inhabitants form a very desirable portion of our population. As a mass they are law-abiding and industrious, and take an intelligent interest in development and future welfare of their adopted country. A large majority of those here are employed in the dairy business, an occupation in which they were principally engaged in their native land.65

Italian-Swiss societies and organizations, devoted to service, fraternal gatherings, leisure pursuits and political action, became central features and comfortable retreats for the immigrant population:

Of our Ticinese population, about one-third are married; the other two-thirds are composed of robust bachelors, ranging in age from 20 to 40 years. In this city [San Francisco] they have the Bachelors’ Society,66 which gives a costly banquet yearly, following on the evening of their annual picnic day. They have organized benevolent societies in San Francisco, San Jose, Petaluma, Cambria and Old Creek (San Luis Obispo County), and other points. The Ticinese Liberal Society of this city is a strong organization, and is a branch of the parent society in the mother country, established to defend the principles of civil liberty against ultramontane aggression.67

66 A *Chronicle* article of two months later, May 1878, commented on this society in terms that may have been considered high wit at the time: “The Bachelors’ Club is a moneyed social organization, but is not violently anti-marital as there is scarcely a month during the marrying season that some member is not violently attacked by Cupid and carried off by some Venus. If the attacks keep up as has been the case lately, women’s rights in the legitimate sense can claim a victory over man’s wrongs, for is it not wrong for a man to be a bachelor in this California paradise with all its budding, blooming Eves?” “The Swiss Societies,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 27, 1878, 3.
67 Regarding resistance to the Ultramontane Party, this *Chronicle* article of 1878 predates by 12 years a revolt in Ticino. George F. Cavalli, the (continued on next page)
The Swiss Sharpshooters and the Swiss Philharmonic Band are mostly composed of Ticinese. All speak the English language, and in religion are Catholics or Free Thinkers, the latter said to be the most numerous. They send considerable sums of money home yearly to parents or friends, and pay the passage for many who come here to settle.68 The more wealthy visit their native land occasionally, and then return to the home of their adoption.69

Though the rural Italian-Swiss immigrants far outnumbered their city-dwelling counterparts, it is natural that the big-city paper would want to feature the urban Swiss, especially in regards to their hotelier and business skills:

The Ticinese are masters in the difficult role of “knowing how to keep a hotel,” according to their ideas, the guests of which seem to congregate together as one family. They eat, chat, smoke and drink as if around the family board, never thinking that the principles of the Blue Ribbon Brigade70 are in any way violated. Temperance in all things is much more natural to them than total abstinence. With music and songs they delight to pass the time away when the more arduous labors of the day have passed. In their domestic relations they live happily and have large families. . . . As business men, of whom there are several in this city, they are upright and honest, their word being as good as their bond.

67 (continued) editor of San Francisco’s Swiss-Italian weekly journal L’Elvezia, would explain: “The trouble now agitating Ticino is an old one, and originates from the fact that liberalism is becoming daily stronger in that canton, so as to become a power to be feared by the Ultramontane or Conservative party, which has ruled the canton from time immemorial . . . [A] section . . . in the Constitution governing the canton of Ticino . . . provided that if . . . a petition signed by 7,000 citizens [were] presented to the Government asking for a revision of the Constitution an election [should] be ordered. On the seventh day of last month 10,000 people presented such a petition to President J. Respini . . . but no action was taken. The consequence of this refusal to listen to a constitutional demand is the cause of the present rebellion and the installation of a liberal government.” As quoted in “About the Revolt: Information in Regard to the Present Trouble,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 17, 1890, front page.

68 See Arlettaz, “Émigration et société,” 326.


70 A euphemism for those who shun alcohol, i.e., tee-totalers.
Not believing in the perplexities and costly luxury of law, they have no legal representative amongst them. . . .

Other Ticinesi who lived in San Francisco found themselves somewhere along the restaurant-business spectrum between waiters and proprietors:

What few Italian-Swiss remain in town seem somehow to follow their noses and drift into the savory cook shops. Fewer still rise to be the proprietors of popular houses, such as old John Jung, whose two sons are now in the wine business, the original Campi, and N. Giamboni, who succeeded him, but the rest remain waiters, and admirable waiters they make, understanding Italian, French and English, being civil and obliging. Ask any one of the “French” waiters at the fashionable restaurants what his nationality is and the chances are a score to one that he will smile, flick off an imaginary crumb from the table-cloth and answer, “I am Suisse, Monsieur.”

The German Swiss in California

While the Italian-speaking Swiss outnumbered their fellow countrymen from other cantons, settling in the countryside as dairymen, ranchers, vintners, and so forth, the German Swiss formed a majority in California’s developing urban areas, particularly San Francisco. A number of these were to make a name for themselves as trusted businessmen and craftsmen:

The German-Swiss having the strongest representation in the city . . . have an independent turn of mind and like to have a little shop or bench of their own, where they may ply their handicraft as carpenters, machinists, tailors or cabinet-makers. Being particularly adept at the lathe, they are largely employed in billiard manufactures, some of the cleverest turners here being German-Swiss. They are found to be strictly trustworthy and temperate also, these qualities having given the German-Swiss a stronghold on the favor of Wells,
Fargo & Co., their most trusted porters being of the above nationality. . . . These immigrants, who chiefly come from the cantons of Uri, Zurich and St. Gall, bring with them much perseverance and business shrewdness, which qualities have enabled them to accumulate for themselves quite respectable fortunes. Among the more prominent German-Swiss are John C. Rued, the leather merchant; Harry W. Syz, Treasurer of the Helvetia Insurance Company; Musser Brothers, the importers; J. J. Pfister, a manufacturer of woolen goods; Moritz Stuber, the capitalist; Messrs. Fri and Luchsinger, the furniture men; and J. Steinegger of Britton & Rey. The German-Swiss have no particular liking for the country and even when they go afield keep as near to the town limits as possible. So it happens that while these self-exiles from the little republic make the best dairymen, they seldom venture into the distant ranches, but are to be found on the milk farms immediately contiguous to this city.73

Analogous to the lives of many other German-Swiss immigrants in California, and illustrative of the varieties of landscapes into which they settled, is the biography of John Hilfiker (1857-1940) from Kölliken in Canton Aargau. As many other newcomers before and after him, he soon adopted an anglicized given name, in his case “John.” After crossing the country in 1884 and arriving in San Francisco, he booked passage to Portland, Oregon, intending to visit friends of the family, who had farms on the Columbia River. One of the ports of call was Humboldt, on the northwest coast of California, though, and he was so taken by its appearance that he got off the ship and made Humboldt County his home.74

Hilfiker, with his background in farming in Switzerland, managed a large ranch that principally supplied dairy products. Simultaneously, he was the bar pilot for ships coming into Humboldt Bay. The ranch cook became his wife, and his father-in-law was the cooper who made barrels for the butter to be shipped to market. He then moved his

73 “Our Swiss Citizens,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 20, 1884, front page.
74 William Hilfiker, “Swiss Immigrant’s Dream Realized in Hardwork & Faith,” The Humboldt Historian (May-June 1980), 3. After Hilfiker arrived, the sandy “town” of Humboldt gradually washed into the bay, and Eureka, on higher and more stable ground, became the county seat.
growing family to Eureka, patiently reclaiming swampy tideland for a truck garden. Gradually, this Swiss immigrant from land-locked Aargau learned how to profit from the river, subdue the bay, and coexist with the ocean. When he partnered with a well digger to make concrete well casings, he would use gravel from the beach, including clam shells for his aggregates. In time, he was able to build and own a concrete pipe plant. With increasing population and the construction needs in the county, he became well to do.75

In the twentieth century, Othmar Ammann from Canton Schaffhausen (1879-1965) became a celebrated bridge engineer, designing and directing construction in New York for the George Washington, Bayonne, Triborough, Bronx-Whitestone, Throgs Neck and Verrazzano Narrows bridges and diversifying to plan and supervise construction of the Lincoln Tunnel. His California connection was as a member of the Board

75 Hilfiker, “Swiss Immigrant’s Dream,” 4-5.
of Engineers in charge of the Golden Gate Bridge linking San Francisco with Marin County (1929-1937). It was also in California, after the death of his first wife, née Lilly Wehrli, that he married his second wife, Klary Vogt Noetzli.76

**The French Swiss in California**

Though relatively small in numbers—forming only one-fifth of the Swiss element in California—the “Frank Contingent” from Geneva, Vaud, Valais, Fribourg and Neuchâtel became in many ways the most influential portion of the colony for some decades after the Gold Rush.77 This was due to the rise of prominent individuals in crucial positions, such as the previously mentioned Jean-Jacques Vioget, but also an ongoing series of French-speaking Consuls. For decades following the service of Rudolph Kellersberger, Swiss consular guidance for California was entrusted to a series of French-Swiss businessmen/diplomats who had settled in San Francisco.

Henry Hentsch and Francis Berton, both emigrants from Geneva, became highly successful bankers before serving in turn as unsalaried, honorary Swiss Consuls.78

Following the death of Berton in 1885 and the subsequent naming of Antoine Borel79 of Neuchâtel to the consular post, the Swiss-Californians of San Francisco made a grand show of their respect for the latter: “The Swiss Sharpshooters, the Swiss Benevolent Society and a number of prominent Swiss residents tendered a public serenade . . . to Antoine Borel, the Swiss Consul, in order to celebrate his [appointment] to office.”80 The serenade proceeded in grand fashion:

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77 “Our Swiss Citizens,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 20, 1884, front page.
78 See the “Banking” section below for further details.
79 Borel, like Hentsch and Berton, was a banker. One of his key financial transactions was to purchase the California Street Cable Railroad from Leland Stanford in 1879 in order to help complete a much-needed San Francisco cable-car line expansion. This company proved profitable well into the twentieth century. See [http://www.cablecarmuseum.org/co-california-st.html](http://www.cablecarmuseum.org/co-california-st.html) (Viewed 11/18/2019).
A History of the Swiss in California

The societies . . . headed by a band, paraded the downtown streets and then proceeded to the residence of Consul Borel on Stockton Street, between California and Pine. The large house was lighted up to receive the serenaders, the porch and sidewalk being illuminated with over 200 torchlights. [The societies and friends] assembled on the large veranda of the house and sang Swiss national airs, after which the band discoursed music, while a crowd of over 1,500 people congregated on the street. Speeches were made . . . to which [Borel] feelingly responded. On the conclusion of the music and speeches the friends and guests of the Consul were invited into the house to partake of a collation.81

Antoine Borel was, by all appearances, beloved among all segments of Swiss-American society, not just those from Romandy. He was a proponent for a monument to the Swiss minister Pioda that was later erected in the latter’s home canton of Ticino, for instance, and Borel also led a fundraising effort during a Sempach celebration on July 11, 1886, to support one of the Swiss-American aid societies.82

Borel held a position of trust throughout San Francisco’s business community, as he became “a director of many of the State’s most important businesses, including the Bank of California, the Spring Valley Water Company, the San Francisco Dry Dock Company, the United Railroads Company, the Bankers Investment Company, the San Francisco Gas and Electric Company, the Los Angeles Railway Company . . . as well as many lesser known companies.83

Three years later, the same Borel residence that had been the scene of pride and celebration for the newly-named Consul became the center of an international conspiracy theory with headlines like “The Borel Robbery: Rumors that Its Motive Was Political” and “The German-Swiss Affair: Helvetian Residents Excited Over Extradition of Refugees.”84 On
Sunday, July 8, 1889, the house had been broken into and “thoroughly ransacked.” The conjecture was that the robbery was actually staged in search of certain documents regarding “the Helvetian republic allowing its territory to be the abiding place of German socialists and Russian nihilists.” The sheltering tendencies of the Swiss in California seemed to be the main issue: “An informant of the Chronicle states that there are between 300 and 400 Russians, Germans and Italians in this city who owe their presence here to the neutral position of Switzerland. . . .”\(^8^5\) It is unclear how much credit went to this conspiracy theory or what eventually became of it.

As Antoine Borel increasingly spent time in Switzerland, his son, Antoine Borel Jr., served as Swiss Consul in his turn and oversaw the business interests of his father. The elder Borel was in Neuchâtel at the time of the infamous 1906 earthquake and fire, and his son reported back to him in letters, e.g. from Alameda on April 20, 1906:

> A terrible thing has happened. San Francisco is no more. . . . Many persons killed downtown . . . Market Street near the ferries sank many feet . . . Portions of the City Hall were destroyed, but worst of all was the fire. The whole city is destroyed—from the Ferry Building to the Presidio and from the Beach to the Potrero.\(^8^6\)

> Though the family and its businesses lost a good deal of money in the disaster, the home of Antoine Borel, Jr. (at 1882 Washington Street) itself was left mostly intact: “The house was saved from fire though the demon crept to Van Ness . . . also swept out California Street . . . then returned to Van Ness. . . . It is a very sad sight, but with Yankee grip I think it will not take long to make a new San Francisco.”\(^8^7\)

Other prominent French-Swiss in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the time of greatest Swiss immigration to California, were “Vignier, the wine importer; Pichoir, Secretary of the North Bloomfield Mine; Edouard Galliard, Berton’s partner; Deuerraud, an associate of

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\(^8^5\) “The Borel Robbery,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 12, 1889.


\(^8^7\) Borel and Fick, “San Francisco is No More,” 15. After the fire, Borel allowed the Pacific Union Club to use his mansion as their clubhouse.
Borel; Dirking and Huguenin, the watch importers; and Jullierat of the firm of Paillard & Co.”

The resettlement of a small number of French-speaking Swiss from Canton Valais to Placerville, El Dorado County has been narrated by a descendant of one of the California immigrants, whose book title refers to Placerville as the epicenter of the Gold Rush. That title is geographically accurate but chronologically somewhat misleading, since the rush for gold was well past when the first of the Valaisans arrived in 1887. The new immigrants didn’t seriously pan for gold as individuals, but they could find employment in large mining operations that still existed. As Leo Schelbert notes in a review: “The immigrants hailed from the neighboring Valais communes Martigny-Combe, Martigny-Bourg, Salvan, Vernayaz, Dorénaz, and Trient to find employment in mining, but then gradually shifted from mining to cattle raising and farming.”

The products of the Valaisan farmers of El Dorado County included wine grapes, walnuts, pears and dairy products. An advertisement placed by the Pierroz Brothers Dairy in the local Mountain Democrat in the early twentieth century read as follows:

End Label on a crate of Bartlett pears from the Revaz farms. Courtesy of the El Dorado County Historical Museum, Placerville.

88 “Our Swiss Citizens,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 20, 1884, front page.
89 Philippe Pierroz, Des Valaisans à Placerville. Haut lieu de la ruée vers l’or. [Valaisans in Placerville, Epicenter of the Gold Rush] (Martigny-Combe: Imprint Vert, 2017). Placerville had the more infamous name of “Hangtown” at the time, reflecting the lawlessness and violence of that earlier age.
90 Leo Schelbert, book review of Pierroz, Swiss-American Historical Society Review, 54, no. 3 (November 2018), 104-106. See also SAHS Review, 29, no. 1 (February 1993), an issue dedicated to the history of Valaisans who settled elsewhere in the U.S.
“YOU USE MILK
and we have it to sell from well kept
stock and sanitary equipment, in
any quantity desired. Route delivery
twice daily, and no trouble spared to
please customers. For prompt service
call up Phone 84x2.

PIERROZ BROS. & CO.91

Trades and Occupations of the Swiss-Californians

The choices of employment for Swiss immigrants to the Golden State were largely a matter of inclination, tradition and training brought from their home cantons, but the choices also had to adapt to California employment opportunities, available resources, and circumstances of varying landscapes. Farming and ranching depended on soil quality, water supply and suitability of climate. Thus, emigrant dairymen found the coastal regions of California amenable to their profession, while former Jura-hillside vintners discovered the excellent conditions of Sonoma and Napa counties. Analogous considerations governed the ways that other Swiss Californians made their rural or urban livings. As always, proximity to similarly situated countrymen from Switzerland provided social and labor associations of value.

Dairy Farming

One well-known Swiss occupation calling for a cooperative effort by its nature is that of dairy farming, since some of the final products, e.g. cheese, butter, condensed milk, require processing skills beyond what a single dairy farmer could reasonably carry out. The first dairy farms of Swiss emigrants were in Marin County near the markets of San Francisco. With an average (annual) yield per cow of 150 pounds of butter and with cheese manufacturing that reached a yearly output of 250,000 pounds by 1897, Marin County became known as “the Switzerland of California.”

91 Pierroz, Des Valaisans à Placerville, 50.
A simple secret for dairy success brought over from the cantons to the California coastal regions called for what Americans peers called “underfeeding,” i.e., the Swiss dairy farmers’ almost exclusive reliance on grass and hay for the fine milk- and butter-producing animals’ fodder throughout the year. The Americans’ provision of “cotton seed and oil cakes, ensilage, boiled fodder” and other artificial feed, they had learned, impaired the quality of the milk. The Swiss in California felt that “good sweet grass,” “pure running water” and “systematic economy” were the foundation of dairy success.93 While they made fine products by American standards, there were barriers to reaching the quality found back home. One newly arrived cheese maker from Vaud, Ulysse Greidaux, claimed that the most important of the grasses was a species of Swiss bunch grass that grows between the rocks, “finer, more tender and delicate than anything . . . in this [California] climate . . . and . . . . it possesses that peculiar savor for which Swiss cheeses are noted.”94 If Greidaux’s claim is true, then cheese produced in California, even by the most talented Swiss, would never quite match in taste those from the Alpine valleys.

A dairy ranch established in San Luis Obispo County employing a number of Italian-Swiss emigrant laborers became the second largest dairy enterprise in the state by the 1880s. This was in spite of the lack of rail transportation to San Francisco, the nearest potential market, since “by 1875 the problem had been solved by means of coastwise steamers which made regular trips to the city.”95 There were close relations between the Ticinesi of San Luis Obispo County and those of geographically distant Marin County, where the aforementioned dairy ranch had earlier been situated. The mild climate of these coastal counties made year-round grazing possible and almost negated the need for barns: “the coast had much to recommend it to the Swiss milkers.”96

96 Raup, “The Italian-Swiss Dairymen of San Luis Obispo County,” 5.
According to one report from the late nineteenth century, the milk for San Francisco, Sacramento and other California cities was being furnished almost exclusively by immigrants from Uri, Unterwalden and Ticino.97 One journalist stated “upon good authority” of the Ticinesi dairymen, “that they manufacture fully one-half the amount of butter and cheese made in this State, and the products of their labor always bring the highest price in the market because of the excellence of quality and fullness of weight.”98

### Wine Making

In 1880, the land under cultivation for wine grapes in the United States totaled 181,583 acres with an annual yield of 23,453,827 gallons. Of that total acreage, it is reported, California had 32,268 acres, only around 18% of the land dedicated to viticulture but profited from almost 58% of the total production, 13,557,155 gallons.99 These figures point to a yield of over 500 gallons per acre in California (in 1880) versus less than 70 gallons per acre for the rest of the nation.100 It is clear why Swiss and Italian immigrants would be drawn to such a wine-growing region.

Italian-speaking Swiss had planted vines in the Napa Valley from 1860 on. Within 20 years, five Italian-Swiss vintners had 47,000 vines under cultivation in that county, and the Swiss owned six wine cellars, one of which was excavated into the side of a hill, imitating the same conditions for keeping wine as those in Canton Ticino. Other Italian Swiss had vineyards in Sonoma Valley, Santa Clara Valley, and around Stockton, Modesto, Fresno and Livermore.101

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99 Steinach, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien*, 236.
100 These statistics may be the result of early and unimproved methods of wine-making rather than the natural outcome of soil suitability alone. Nowadays, the Calif. wine yields, converted from tonnage, average anywhere between 300 and 1,500 gallons per acre. (*Sonoma County Fact Sheet*, 2018).
In 1879, a telegram arrived on the desk of a Southern California newspaper editor that announced the imminent arrival of “200 Swiss emigrants [who proposed] settling in the state to engage in the cultivation of the grape.” This was seen as a win-win situation for the region and for the nascent wine industry in the Golden State:

The immense strides in public favor which have been made of late by California wines is turning the attention of some of the most frugal and industrious classes of Europe to the advantages offered by us to the cultivator of the vine. There are thousands of acres of land in the southern portion of this state, now classed as unproductive, that with proper tillage may be made the finest wine-producing district in the world. The Swiss colonists will undoubtedly receive a hearty welcome from the residents of San Bernardino and vicinity.102

Two years later in 1881 and 500 miles further north, Andrea Sbarbaro founded the Italian-Swiss Colony Wine Company on 1,500 acres in Sonoma County. Sbarbaro was Italian and the colony itself became chiefly Italian. It did, however, take on the name “Italian-Swiss” (with the marketing panache and soothingly sibilant sounds of the word “Swiss) because a Ticinese investor was on the board of directors. In an interview, Sbarbaro had once claimed that “few Swiss Americans in California were interested in wine making.”103 Nevertheless, a visit in 1895 of the Swiss Ambassador to the United States, Minister Pioda from Ticino, to the Italian-Swiss Colony seemed to contradict Sbarbaro’s off-hand comment about Swiss disinterest in viticulture. The president of the colony, P. C. Rossi, greeted Pioda on that occasion by saying that the work there “showed what the Swiss and Italians by co-operation were able to accomplish in California” and the Minister in turn expressed his pleasure at “seeing his countrymen and the Italians working hand in hand.”104

102 “Swiss Immigrants for California,” Ventura Signal, April 5, 1879, 3.
104 “Minister Pioda at Asti: Pays a Visit to the Swiss-Italian Colony,” San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 20, 1895, 8. Pioda continued his visit to other nearby towns with a “large Swiss population,” Petaluma, Tomales and Olema.
The obituary of a “prominent member of the Swiss Italian Colony,” Giosuè Rottanzi, originally from Faido in Ticino’s Valentinia, reports a few years later that Rottanzi had been “greatly interested in the propagation and development of the California wine industry, and in order to further this cause became a director in the Swiss-American Bank.”

Similarly, a second-generation Swiss-American, Henry M. Naglee (an anglicized form derived from “Nägeli”), is said to have cofounded the first bank in California at San Francisco. After serving as a brigadier-general for Union forces in the Civil War, he spent his last years as a vintner in Santa Clara County, becoming the “father of California’s brandy industry.”

Another beverage business founded by a family of Maggia Valley emigrants got its start in the coastal area now known as Watsonville, with hard apple cider first bottled in 1868:

In the mid-1850s, as the promise of gold lured migrants from around the world to the newly formed state of California, two Swiss immigrants [Luigi and Stephano Martinelli] settled in the Pajaro Valley near the Monterey Bay.

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105 “Death of Giosuè Rottanzi,” San Francisco Call, May 15, 1899, 10.
106 See “Banking” section below.
This valley, with its mild coastal climate and fertile soil, was perfect for farming uniquely sweet and tart apples. These migrants, [Americanized as Louis and Stephen Martinelli after 1861], would make a successful apple crop of their own and eventually pressed those apples into cider. Credited as the first family of American cider, few may know that the first sips of Martinelli’s taken in 1868 were a hard version of the famous sparkling cider and juice we know today.108

S. Martinelli & Co. won its first Gold Medal in 1890 at the California State Fair. When Stephen died in 1917, just as many cities in California and Arizona were going dry as a precursor to Prohibition, his wife Jane suddenly had to keep the family business together through the coming turmoil. Her son, Stephen, Jr., developed an unfermented but bubbly cider before leaving for service in World War I, and she was able to oversee sales of the adapted product for the Prohibition market (1917-1933). The company survived by gradually widening the market and the promotional buzz, aided by the use in Hollywood of Martinelli’s sparkling cider as a counterfeit for champagne in the movies.109

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Breweries

Some German-Swiss in California, having had no experience with viticulture in the fatherland, built and managed beer breweries. This industry was largely centered in Sacramento, thanks to its setting in the agricultural Central Valley with easy access to barley and hops. Two Sacramento breweries worth mentioning were Arthur Hensler’s Schweizer-Brauerei, and Frank Rustaller’s City-Brewery.110

Ranching and Farming

The extreme variability in California landscapes and soils conditioned the availability of arable lands for the emigrant farmer: in this single state there were, and are, alkaline deserts; forests; sandy coastal meadows; swampy delta lands; loamy, sandy and baked clay regions of the Central Valley; and Alpine-like valleys in the High Sierra Nevada.

In 1870, one quarter of the Ticino natives and their descendants in California were located in the Sierra Nevada mountain valleys. This was the landscape most reminiscent of home, resembling by nature the Maggia and Leventina Valleys. Many of the immigrants had been drawn there by gold before turning to other mining professions. As mining declined in yield, much of the Ticinese presence transferred to the San Francisco Bay area and the Central Valley. Once away from the mines, the Italian Swiss often changed their focus to farming. A significant segment of the Ticinesi remained in the mountains, though, especially in Plumas County. They had come for gold, but the lingering attraction was land similar to that back home.111

As the Italian Swiss of Plumas County, bolstered as a close-knit settlement by community support, land purchases and business partnerships, began farming, their natural Swiss inclination was to develop a dairy enterprise. Over time, a good number of them found the market

110 Steinach, Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien, 349.
111 Jacqueline and JoEllen Hall, Italian-Swiss Settlement in Plumas County 1860 to 1920 (Chico, California: Association for Northern California Records and Research, 1973), 14-15.
for butter, milk and cheese dwindling in their mountain locale, and they converted their dairy ranches into beef operations.\(^{112}\)

In one daring and dangerous calculation at the beginning of the twentieth century, pioneer Swiss farmers settled in the Imperial Valley of Southern California, a flat, hot and dry desert more than 200 feet below sea level. It was a touch-and-go existence up through the Depression, as the settlers often lived in tents and endured alternating extremes of heat and Colorado River floods. “In place of [Switzerland’s] sparkling spring mountain water, they gagged on the dirty, muddy and almost unpotable water from . . . ditches and sump holes.”\(^{113}\) One compensation was the unbelievably fertile land, which, when adequate water was available, produced bumper crops that could vary from cotton to lettuce, sugar beets to tomatoes, carrots to melons. Finally, in the 1940s, “a permanent and effective water sup-

\(^{112}\) Hall, *Italian-Swiss Settlement in Plumas County*, 46-47.

\(^{113}\) Joseph H. Anderholt and Dorothy M. Anderholt, *The History of the Imperial Valley Swiss* (Holtville, California: The Imperial Valley Swiss Club, 1984), 9.
ply [was] achieved due to the building of the Hoover Dam and of the All-American Canal. . . .”114

Nicholas von Rotz, an immigrant farmer from Obwalden, who had come to work at various farm jobs in California in the first part of the twentieth century, sat down with an interviewer to give his impressions of how farm life in the Golden State differed from that in Switzerland. Of his life in Obwalden, he said, “In the mountain country where I was you don’t farm the land. You cut the grass in the winter . . . you put the manure out . . . fix the fences, cut the grass in the spring. . . . Then you start haying when the hay comes; and it’s not easy to make hay back home, especially that type of land—real, real steep.”115

The boredom and long hours made him want to emigrate: “Morning and night make cheese. You’re up four o’clock in the morning til eleven-thirty at night. And that’s seven days. No other way. So, I figured there must be another way of making a living. That was one thing I had always in my mind. America was in my mind many years before, because we hear of it.”116

In California, by contrast, von Rotz had to help an uncle in Imperial Valley with his harvest,117 deal with a cranky, mean Norwegian co-worker in Humboldt County,118 choke down alkaline water in San Diego,119 and work a variety of jobs up and down the 800-mile-long state to make a living. But finally, he made the Americans around him jealous, because he had attained the luxury of a decent savings account.

Silk Cultivation

Despite low demand for imported Swiss silk in the 1850s, as reported in the 1853 consular report,120 the ideal conditions for silk cultivation in the Golden State and a growing market for silk products

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114 Anderholt, The History of the Imperial Valley Swiss, 8.
116 Rotz and Bacon, The Americanization of a German-Swiss Farm Worker, 35.
117 Rotz and Bacon, The Americanization of a German-Swiss Farm Worker, 10-11.
118 Rotz and Bacon, The Americanization of a German-Swiss Farm Worker, 26.
119 Rotz and Bacon, The Americanization of a German-Swiss Farm Worker, 28.
120 See footnote 30.
tempted potential sericulture farmers. A report from Louis Prevost lays out his own numerous setbacks and ultimate success, aided by the banker and fellow immigrant, Henry Hentsch:

In 1863 or ’64, I had occasion to meet with Mr. Henry Hentsch who had the same opinion of our beautiful climate, and its adaptability for silk cultivation . . . From that conversation was born the culture of silk in California. Mr. Hentsch imported the mulberry seed from France, from which I raised a number of fine mulberry trees. Mr. Hentsch was informed as soon as the trees were of some size, and he made arrangement to import silk-worm eggs from China.

The eggs arrived dead, and Prevost was unable to hatch any of them. The same thing happened the following year, and he decided to destroy most of his mulberry trees. The third year was different, however, as Hentsch persisted:

Mr. Hentsch imported eggs again from the same place, and at the same time from France. I was then very sorry to have destroyed so many of my mulberry trees, as the eggs from France proved to be in good condition and hatched out very well . . . the worms did well and produced fine cocoons of silk of the first quality, as I can prove by certificates from the two highest silk societies in Europe [where they were tested] . . . the question of labor is now fully settled, and silk can be raised in California with great profit.

Prevost seems to have gone overboard in the enthusiastic preface to his book: “California alone can produce silk . . . for exportation. With

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121 See the sections on “French Swiss” above and on “Banking” below. Hentsch was also an early Swiss Consul.
122 Louis Prevost, *California Silk Grower’s Manual* (San Francisco: H.H. Bancroft, 1867), 136. Prevost himself was a Frenchman working closely with his French-Swiss banker Hentsch.
123 Prevost, *California Silk Grower’s Manual*, 137-138. In Henry Hentsch’s subsequent remarks, he noted that the California climate is best for producing silk because of “the absence of rains and storms during the months of May, June, and July, which, prevailing in Europe, kill millions and millions of silkworms annually.” (141-142).
that staple only, we would soon be able to pay our national debt. . . ."  
By 1889, the German-Swiss in the nation as a whole, while not having paid off the national debt, were nevertheless credited with having saved the American silk industry and having expanded it successfully.  

**Merchant, Manufacturing and Service Industries**

The reputations of Swiss quality workmanship and conscientious service are not only recently won. As one San Francisco journalist noted: “Of the Swiss residing here, they represent nearly all the mechanical arts and are superior workmen. There are about twenty Swiss watchmakers in the city, who command the highest prices paid for that kind of labor. A number are commission merchants, on small and large scales, and are very successful.” The French Swiss without a business of their own were drawn to become employees within the profession of watchmaking or as hired help in the hospitality industries.

Whenever American journalists reviewed Swiss hoteliers, restauranteurs or saloon keepers in the nineteenth century, it seems, the discussion inevitably turned to the hosts’ ethno-sociological features. These quirks came down to their Swiss manner of hosting countrymen and customers, or to a quaintness of family life foreign to Anglo society, as in this example:

The Swiss have hotels, saloons and coffee shops, but they are kept in a style very different from what is known as the English and American plan. A Swiss does not go up to a bar, Drink Like a Horse, and then walk off with his harness on for hard work. . . . The Swiss sits down, makes himself at home, feels that he is one of the family, and that mine host is the recognized father. The affair is entirely of a domestic character with him, so that repugnance to drinking in a saloon

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never comes into his mind. Songs and music invariably en-
liven his festivities. The wife of the landlord sits down at the
same table with the visitors, and side by side enjoys the fom-
ing lager, while her children may be scampering and playing
about the saloon. This is the Swiss idea of drinking, and it is
interesting to note that the children grow up without the least
love of liquor of any kind, although guests frequently invite
them to taste a glass of this or that kind of fermented liquor,
an invitation which is accepted as a social courtesy.128

The bottom-line analysis of such a review, however, inevitably
shows the Swiss mannerisms in a positive light, albeit with a touch of
patronizing appreciation: “In miniature we have here the picture of a
colony which is notable as a feature of our cosmopolitan society. It at
once represents the charming social life of the Old World and the pro-
gressive, practical life of the New.”129

**Banking**

Henry M. Naglee, a second-generation Swiss-American,130 is
credited with having formed the first bank in the state of California
(January 9, 1849) on San Francisco’s Portsmouth Square. It is said that
“the chief requisite to become a banker in the wild and woolly days of
’49 was ownership of a strong safe.”131 Following his lead, fifteen or
twenty other private bankers soon opened for business. Among the suc-
cessful financial pioneers were Henry Hentsch132 and Francis Berton,
both from Geneva and both of whom later served as Swiss Consuls.133

Henry Hentsch arrived in Gold Rush country from a Geneva
banking family, after the unexpected death of his father, with plans for

128 Steinach, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien*, 346. The phrase
“mine host” refers to the proprietor of the establishment.
130 See Naglee also in “Wine Making” section above.
131 “Remarkable Record is Made by Banks Here: First Opened in 1849: Confusion
132 The name of Hentsch is perhaps best known, at least in numismatic circles, for
having been engraved on gold ingots recovered in 1988 from the *S.S. Central America*,
which had sunk off the Carolinas in a hurricane in 1857.
133 See also “French Swiss” and “Silk Cultivation” sections above.
processing gold miners’ proceeds. To do so, he created an early hybrid business of assay and banking in San Francisco. Francis Berton, an acquaintance of Hentsch from Geneva, soon joined him in the banking business, which also served the Swiss Mutual Benevolent Society, a small but flourishing beneficial association.\(^{134}\) The business incorporated in 1863 as “Hentsch and Berton.” The type of banking they managed was principally based on proceeds from the Gold Rush and other types of mineral mining, including fiduciary duties for successor businesses and individuals.

The Ticinese emigrants to rural areas of California, on the other hand, were in need of a totally different type of financial arrangement. They were in the habit of maintaining close ties to their home canton, but the banking models of Ticino arising in the last decades of the nineteenth century offered no physical presence abroad. *La Banca Svizzera Americana* (The Swiss-American Bank), founded in 1896 in Locarno, became an exception that was designed to fit the Ticinese economic realities as an “Immigrant Bank.”\(^{135}\) Emigration was accompanied by financial flux in the form of remittances, principally back to family and friends in the Maggia and Leventina Valleys.

The immigrant needs forced a new financial twist, answered by *La Banca Svizzera Americana*, which broke the mold by setting up dual branches in Locarno and San Francisco. The “immigrant bank” was designed in the first instance to facilitate fund remittances from Ticinesi

\(^{134}\) “Our Swiss Citizens,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 20, 1884, front page.

Californians back to their home canton (in transfers considered to be monetary repatriation to family, friends and creditor businesses) with a concomitant economic boost, and only secondarily to provide banking services to the immigrants themselves in their new country.136

San Francisco was quite inaccessible for many of the emigrants located in agrarian areas far from that powerhouse financial center.137 In fact, the reach of banking services would extend to at least San Luis Obispo (230 miles distant), the home of two of the bank’s founders, as the following local newspaper account of the bank’s founding and purposes suggests:

Mr. [Henry] Brunner and Mr. Antonio Tognazzini will leave on Saturday morning for Switzerland, where at Locarno, the bank will be established. It is to be incorporated under the laws of Switzerland with a capital of $1,000,000. Of this $300,000 will be paid up, one-half by the Swiss residents of this state. . . . The bank proper will be established in Locarno, under the direction of a board of directors named there. Mr. Pioda, the brother of the Swiss Minister, will probably be a prominent member and Messrs. Brunner and Tognazzini will have charge of the San Luis Obispo house.138

An article in San Francisco the next day, while repeating the financial news, also clarified: “The scheme is to loan money to Swiss

137 It was also in San Francisco that A. P. Giannini, an Italian American, founded the Bank of Italy in 1904. That bank initially served the ignored Italian immigrants and eventually grew into the Bank of America. In its infancy, it was also instrumental in helping the city to rebuild after the 1906 earthquake and fires. See: Juliana Dana, A. P. Giannini, Giant in the West: A Biography (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1947), 21.
138 “The Swiss-American Bank of Locarno, Switzerland and San Luis Obispo, California. A New Institution of Profound Importance to the Future of This County,” Morning Tribune (San Luis Obispo), July 3, 1896, 3. The article also indicated that the two local Swiss-American moguls would make an important business stop before embarking for Europe: “On their way east, Messrs. Brunner and Tognazzini will stop in Nebraska and deliver to parties there the deeds to the Burnet tract of 2,000 acres in the Estrella. This is a sale consummated with a colony of Mennonites . . . described as people of great industry and intelligence. . . .” The “Estrella” was an area near current Paso Robles in San Luis Obispo County. According to “A Centennial History of Mennonites in the Paso Robles Area,” California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin, no. 35 (January 1998), a group arriving in the area in 1897 indeed established the first recognized Mennonite congregation in California.
residents in the county at very low interest rates. There are 145 Swiss of means [behind] the scheme.”

The Banca Svizzera Americana established an agency in New York in 1902, but by 1904 it had to close. The California branches, in response to American banking regulations, split apart in 1909. The San Francisco branch became Swiss American Bank and was then folded into Anglo California Trust Company around 1912.

In the end, the San Francisco branch of the bank, perhaps as a result of its distance from many of the rural Italian-Swiss immigrants, had been much less active in promoting mortgage payments than its southern office, since in the final tally 48% of the loans were taken out in San Luis Obispo, 28% in Santa Barbara, and only 6% in San Francisco. On the other hand, the San Francisco location had permitted the bank a concentration on healthy gains from equity investments, especially in public railroad projects.

While the beginnings of the Banca Svizzera Americana had allowed Ticinesi immigrants to place their savings in, and to get loans from, a bank conducting most of its business in California, bit by bit the relations between Locarno and California weakened until finally the Locarno location became autonomous. The American operations rapidly diminished, and the California emigrants soon had to search elsewhere for their banking services.

Andrea Sbarbaro, the founder of the Italian Swiss Agricultural Colony in 1881, “learned about the operation of ‘cooperative banks,’ which allowed people to deposit their money; that money was then loaned to their neighbors to build homes. This type of banking, a forerunner of credit unions, was new and innovative.” He then applied this idea in the San Francisco Bay area, becoming a principal in numerous “mutual loan associations” while bolstering the commercial success of his own Italian-Swiss Colony winemaking business in the

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139 San Francisco Call, July 4, 1896.
140 Nosetti, “La Banca Svizzera Americana,” 114.
142 Gazette de Lausanne, February 19, 1914.
143 See the “Wine Making” section above.
process. The “Swiss” contributions to, and profits from, this colony remained minimal, however, since workers and shareholders were mainly Italian.145

Swiss Clubs & Societies in California: Then and Now

On September 11, 1881, a vast rockslide thundered down on the village of Elm in Canton Glarus, killing 115 people and destroying 83 buildings. Collections for relief and aid spread through Switzerland. The efforts extended overseas as well, and in far-off California an event was held to raise funds: “Half a dozen of the Swiss societies of this city united in a ball at Platt’s Hall Saturday evening, the proceeds of which are to be equally divided between the sufferers of the village of Elm, Switzerland, and the Swiss Relief Society of San Francisco. The laudable object conduced to the sale of a large number of tickets, and quite a sum was realized.”146

In this and other instances, expats of the Swiss Confederation, having resettled in the Golden State, were willing to provide what help they could. While this occurred most visibly through a number of Swiss societies in urban and rural locations, at times it was handled spontaneously. Ten years before the Elm disaster, the San Francisco residents had contributed to recovery efforts of Swiss residents who had been victims of the Great Chicago Fire:

The Swiss Residents . . . Held a meeting in Mozart Hall, and after electing officers, appointed the following collectors to canvass among the Swiss residents: F. Berton, A. Borel, C. Croce, G. Sturzenegger, M. Schmidt, W. Hardmyer, Wm. Jury, John Jury, Chas. Murizet, Paul Surry and S. Petruzzi. Subscription papers can be found at all prominent Swiss places in the city. The sum raised will be forwarded to the Swiss residents of Chicago.147

145 See “Wine Making” section above.
146 San Francisco Chronicle, November 21, 1881, 4.
147 “The Swiss Residents,” San Francisco Chronicle, October 14, 1871, 3. The first two names of the collectors will be recognized as those of Swiss Consuls.
Swiss clubs and societies in Northern California, especially in San Francisco, began organizing for the following purposes (among others):

1. Philanthropy and mutual financial support; *e.g.*, Swiss Mutual and Benevolent Society of San Francisco; Swiss Relief Society; Swiss Sharpshooters Benevolent Society; and the Grütli Society.\(^{148}\)

2. Engagement in song and societal enjoyments; *e.g.*, the Grütli Men’s Choir; the Dramatic Society.\(^{149}\)

3. Honoring traditional Swiss weapons and festivals; *e.g.*, Swiss Rifle Club; Garibaldi-Company.\(^{150}\)

4. Participation in practical, literary and political discussions; *e.g.*, The Liberal Ticinese Society; Swiss Club; Agricultural Society.\(^{151}\)

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the *San Francisco Chronicle* regularly reported on celebrations such as Swiss National Day and other festivities, usually sponsored by small clubs in smaller Northern and Central California towns, such as Petaluma,\(^{152}\) San Luis Obispo,\(^{153}\) and Tomales.\(^{154}\) The 600\(^{th}\) Anniversary of the founding of Switzerland in 1891 called for multi-day reveling in San Rafael and San Francisco with bands playing, parades that included the Carbineer Corps and numerous Swiss clubs, speeches, poetry, song, reenactments of the Rütli pledge, excursions to Schützen Park, tournaments, and the presence of “four little girls dressed in white, garlanded in flowers, ...


\(^{149}\) Steinach, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien*, 342-343; *Der Grütli-Männerchor* and *Der Dramatische Verein*.

\(^{150}\) Steinach, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien*, 344; *Der Schweizer Schützen-Klub* and *Garibaldi-Compagnie*, the latter composed of both Italians and Italian-Swiss.

\(^{151}\) Steinach, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien*, 343-344; *Società Liberale Ticinese*; *Schweizer-Klub*; and *Der Landwirtschaftliche Verein*.

\(^{152}\) *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 21, 1888, 6.

\(^{153}\) *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 21, 1888, 6.

\(^{154}\) *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 21, 1889, 6. The *Chronicle* reported the Tomales festivities one year to the day after those in Petaluma and San Luis Obispo.
which were caught up at the shoulder and waist by bows of red and white ribbon, the national colors of Switzerland.”

Other areas with conglomerations of Swiss settlers gathered together regularly in clubs and societies as well.

In Los Angeles, for instance, there was a long-standing “gymnastics club” (Turnverein), which became a social gathering place as well. There was, from 1887 on, a club named “Helvetia” for entertainment, social gatherings and support of any sick or needy fellow Swiss Californians; a section of that club formed both a men’s chorus and a mixed choir. Los Angeles Swiss then followed the example of compatriots in other states (and San Franciscans) in creating a Swiss Club (Schweizer-Klub).

In Santa Cruz, emigrants formed a Swiss Aid Society (Schweizer Hilfsverein); those in Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco, created their own Swiss Rifle Society (Schweizer Schützen-Gesellschaft); and the Swiss in San Jose organized a Swiss Gymnastics Club (Schweizer Turnverein). In 1888, in San Diego, new arrivals from the Confederation formed a Swiss League (Schweizerbund) near the Mexican border.

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155 San Francisco Chronicle, August 3, 1891, 10.
156 Steinach, Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien, 347-348.
157 Steinach, Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien, 349.
Italian-Swiss societies included a Bachelors’ Society, the Ticinese Liberal Society, Swiss Sharpshooters, a Swiss Philharmonic Band, and benevolent societies in large towns and small, mostly Swiss enclaves such as Old Creek and Cambria.\textsuperscript{158}

Into the twenty-first century, Swiss-American emigrants and their descendants in California have continued the Swiss sense of gathering. A list of active clubs in Northern California, as compiled by the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco,\textsuperscript{159} includes the following: Aelpler Gruppe Swiss Club, Feldschuetzenverein, Golden Gate Swiss Club, Humboldt Swiss Club, Monterey County Swiss-American Club, Monterey County Swiss Rifle Club, Peninsula Swiss Club, Pro Ticino Nord California, Sacramento Helvetia Verein, San Francisco Helvetia Society, San Joaquin Valley Swiss Club and its Swiss Echoes Singing Society, Stanislaus County Swiss Club, Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce-San Francisco Chapter, Swiss Athletic Club, Swiss Benevolent Society of San Francisco (the oldest continuous Swiss society in California, founded in 1886), Swiss Club Tell and United Swiss Societies of Northern California.

A list of active Swiss clubs in Southern California, also compiled by the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco,\textsuperscript{160} includes the following: California Swiss Youth Society, Colonie Suisse Romande, Pro Ticino South California, San Diego County Swiss Club, Santa Barbara Swiss Club, Swiss Athletic Society, Swiss Club of Imperial Valley, Swiss in the South Bay, Swiss Ladies Society, Swiss Mixer San Diego Area, Swiss Park, Swiss Relief Society, Swiss Singing Society Harmonie, Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce—Los Angeles Chapter, The Matterhorn Swiss Club and United Swiss Societies of Southern California.

The contributions of Swiss-American immigrants to American life in California continue as they have since the days of the Gold Rush.

\textsuperscript{158} See footnote 60.
\textsuperscript{159} PDF downloadable from https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/usa/en/home/living-in/clubs.html. (Viewed 11/19/2019). The San Francisco Consulate serves as a representative and service point of Switzerland for 13 western states.
FIFTY-SIXTH SAHS ANNUAL MEETING

Harbor Hills Yacht Club in Maryland

October 12, 2019

Minutes of the Fifty-Sixth Business Meeting

The Swiss American Historical Society met at the Harbor Hills Yacht Club in Maryland on Saturday, October 12, 2019.

Meet and Greet. Members met and greeted starting at 9 a.m.

Business Meeting. Ken Schelbert stared the business meeting at 10:20 a.m. by thanking all the people who contributed to the Society. He hoped to integrate the SAHS with other Swiss Societies in the Washington, D.C., area.

Attendance. About 24 or 25 people were in attendance.

Accepted Minutes. There was a motion to accept the minutes of the 2018 annual meeting. The minutes were accepted unanimously.

Confirmation Number. Rosa Schupbach has a confirmation number that the SAHS is a non profit organization, which makes us tax exempt. Documents from Rosa to be placed in the February 2020 SAHS Review. The tax exempt number is #H36-4034203.

Membership Report. Membership has remained stable. See accompanying membership report.


Donald Tritt’s Donation. Donald Tritt donated $10,000 for the Leo Schelbert Publications’ Fund with the intent of publishing additional books.
New Board of Directors. Rosa Schupbach presented the names of the new Board of directors. Please see the accompanying report. The names were accepted unanimously.

Membership Report. Ernie Thurston’s membership report was distributed. Please see the accompanying report. Membership in the Society remains constant.

Barack Obama’s Membership. Fred Gillespie has given Barack Obama a membership to the Society in hopes that he would attend the annual meeting.

Treasurer’s Report. Heinz Bachmann’s Treasurer’s Report for 2019 was distributed. Please see the accompanying report.

Swiss Chapter Membership Report. Barbara Mueller presented the Swiss Chapter membership and articles report. Please see the attachment.

Swiss Chapter Treasurer’s Report. Bill Gassler presented the Swiss Chapter Treasurer’s report. Please see the attachment.

Slide Show for Meetings of the Swiss Chapter. Barbara Mueller presented a slide show of the meetings of the Swiss Chapter.

SAHS Review Report. Dwight Page reported on future issues of the SAHS Review. He mentioned that Masthof Press will make extra copies of the Review as needed. Simply contact Masthof with any questions.

SAHS Book for 2020. Dwight Page stated that Robert Hales’ Study on Swiss in the American West will be published as a book in 2020. The proposal was accepted unanimously.

Proposal on the Swiss Rifles in the Civil War. There was a proposal to print an article in the SAHS Review on the Swiss Rifles in the Civil War.

Change in Location of the 2020 Annual Meeting. A proposal was made to change the location of the 2020 annual meeting to New Glarus. The proposal was accepted unanimously. The SAHS will meet in New
Glarus, Wisconsin, for the 175th anniversary of the town’s founding, in October 2020. This meeting will replace the annual meeting that would normally be held in Philadelphia. The following year, 2021, the annual meeting will be back on schedule, and the 2021 meeting will be held in New York City. The 2022 meeting will be held in Washington, DC.

**Further information on the meeting in New Glarus.** Beth Zurbuchen of the Swiss Center in New Glarus will provide further information on accommodations in New Glarus; perhaps we can receive a special rate at the Chalet Landhaus. Members attending the annual meeting in New Glarus in October 2020 can either drive to the location or fly to Milwaukee or Madison, Wisconsin. They could then rent a car to drive to New Glarus.

**Change in the Date of the Annual Meeting.** Heinz Bachmann requested that the annual meeting be held on the third Saturday in October to provide another week to assemble the needed information for the financial report. The proposal was accepted unanimously. The next meeting will be held in New Glarus on Saturday, October 17, 2020. Future annual meetings of the Society will also be held on the third Saturday in October.

**Proposal to make SAHS Review Articles Available Online.** Richard Hacken proposed to make articles in the *SAHS Review* available online. The proposal was accepted unanimously.

**Ken Schelbert not to Continue as President.** Ken Schelbert has been serving as the President of the Swiss American Historical Society for the past three years. He decided not to serve a second three-year term as president at the meeting in Washington, DC. Everyone would like to thank Ken for his work as President.

**New President of the Society.** The new President of the Society is Albert Winkler. His nomination was accepted unanimously. He has been a member of the Society since the 1980s, and has worked in several capacities for the Society over the years including as annual meeting recorder and editor of the *SAHS Review*. He looks forward to working with the membership of the Society in the coming years.
President’s Report

By Ken Schelbert

Dear colleagues and members of the Swiss American Historical Society:

I wish to welcome you to the annual meeting and the Harbor Hills Yacht Club in Davidsonville, Maryland. I also wish to thank Heinz Bachmann, Barbara Müller, Rosa Schupbach, Dwight Page, Ernie Thurston, and Albert Winkler for their diligent work in coordinating the logistics to set up our annual meeting. It is through the commitment of our officers, members and colleagues that we are able to host these annual meetings. It is my deep hope that all in attendance experience the value of their efforts.

The past year has been extraordinarily busy and there are several highlights that bear mention. One of the major initiatives I have undertaken as part of my president’s agenda, is to better integrate the SAHS with the other Swiss clubs in the Washington, D.C. area. These efforts are starting to pay dividends in a variety of forms. This past spring, I represented the SAHS (also the Swiss Rifles of Washington, D.C. in my role as president of that organization as well) at the Jungburgerfeier hosted by the Swiss Embassy. Representatives of other Swiss organizations were there as well and each was given ten minutes to introduce their organization to the young, new Swiss citizens and their families. It was a great opportunity to share the impact of the Swiss on the history, culture and infrastructure of the United States.

In September, we bid farewell to Ambassador Martin Dahinden. In honor of the work accomplished by Swiss Societies, I and three other guests were invited to a farewell dinner for Ambassador Martin and Anita Dahinden. While it was a formal event, the Dahindens saw to it that the conversation was lively and engaging; the dinner Michelin star quality; and the atmosphere utterly gemütlich. Ambassador Dahinden, a devoted researcher of the Swiss culinary arts, expressed regret at not having been able to address the SAHS. He has published a series of
monographs on numerous Swiss chefs (several of which I have here today). I plan to reach out to him to gauge his interest in publishing a book on Swiss chefs and the culinary arts, as this is another aspect of Switzerland’s impact on the American culinary landscape.

On September 8 of this year, the Swiss Club of Washington, D.C. held its annual picnic at the Thurmont Conservation and Sportsman’s Center in Thurmont, Maryland. This presented yet another opportunity to “knit together” the interests, participation and energy of the Swiss community in the Washington, D.C., Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware area. While the Swiss community in the U.S. is strong, the geographic dispersion of Swiss living abroad and those who identify as Swiss-American presents challenges for societies, such as ours, in the current “attention economy.”

Perhaps the greatest threat to cultural and interest-based societies is the dearth of younger generations who share the interests and passions. Many clubs must either diversify the focus of their missions or “confederate” with other similar organizations to survive. As you will hear later on, our membership census has remained stable over the past several years, but without concerted effort from the members, our membership roll could be in peril. To that end, I have invited members of the Swiss Embassy, the Swiss Club of Washington D.C. and the Swiss Rifles of Washington D.C. to our annual meeting. Over the coming years, I pledge to continue to link up with other Swiss organizations both here and in Switzerland.

This brings me to a more difficult topic, namely, loss. This past September, we lost our long time friend and SAHS member Mr. Philip Gelzer. I was informed of his passing by his daughter, Claudia Gelzer. Many of you knew Mr. Gelzer well and his passing is difficult. Claudia wanted the Society to know of her father’s love and respect for the Society and its mission. She also provided a wonderful obituary, the full text of which follows my report.

In the 2018/19 period, the Swiss American Historical Society published three SAHS Reviews. The November 2018 Review (a special edition) featured a deep exploration into the Germans and Swiss at the Battle
of Little Bighorn by SAHS member Albert Winkler. Winkler’s article delves far deeper into the backgrounds, lives and experiences of the German and Swiss soldiers than one typically draws from historical accounts of the battle. While much has been written about the tactics and maneuvers surrounding the battle itself, much less has been covered on the men (and their spouses) and their lives that brought them to their involvement in the battle. Further, the article also addresses the lives of the combatants in the aftermath and ensuing years of the battle. I highly recommend Dr. Winkler’s article to any who have an interest in American history, particularly the common people who made the history.

In the February 2019 Review, we were treated to two excellent articles. The first, by Frederick Schmid, entitled “Katarina Morgan-Schmid, from Schuepfheim: El Paso Texas 1918: Presumed Spy Affair,” provides us with a preview of the presentation by today’s keynote speaker Ruth Koch-Mäder. I don’t want to give away any details, but I believe today’s talk will be extraordinarily fascinating. SAHS member Dr. Richard Hacken authored an article entitled ‘Gottfried Keller and the Fictionalization of Switzerland.” In his deftly crafted article, Dr. Hacken addresses the content, tone and romanticism of Keller’s series of Seldwyla novellas. As a fan of Keller’s Das Fähnlein der Sieben Aufrechten, I found Dr. Hacken’s analysis illuminating and insightful.

In the June 2018 edition of the SAHS Review, there were four articles; “Return of the Native Swiss-American Missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the Nineteenth Century” by Cindy Brightenburg; “The Wonderful Touch” by C. Naseer Ahmad; “‘Why does it always have to be Switzerland?’” Daniel Silva’s Treatment of Swiss Society and Culture in Selected Mossad Spy Novels” by Brian Champion; and lastly, “Panic, Erratic Behavior and the Psychological Impact of the Battle of the Little Bighorn on the Soldiers, Including the Swiss Troopers.”

The members, contributors, authors and officers of the Society continue to be the life blood of the organization. To this end, it is also important to take note of the generous monetary donations the SAHS has received in the past year. On August 8, 2019, the SAHS received
a gift of $1,000.00 from the Gonzenbach Family Foundation. As many
will recall, last year we awarded Iris and Ruedi Steck, the publishers
of Susann Bosshard-Kaelin’s book *Einsiedeln Elsewhere – Immigrants
and Their Descendants in Louisville, Kentucky*, the Gonzenbach Award
for their wonderful layout, presentation and feel for Mrs. Bosshard-
Kaelin’s work.

Further, and very importantly, on October 2, 2019, the SAHS received a
qualified gift of $10,000 from long time SAHS member, officer and Ad-
visory Board member Dr. Donald G. Tritt. Specifically, Dr. Tritt states
“It would be my special joy to see this fund named as the Leo Schelbert
Publication Fund—now made ready and waiting to receive additional
donations/bequeaths and the like in a forever tribute to [Leo Schelbert].
Perhaps my humble initial amount could be used to court a matching
donation.” Dr. Tritt, on behalf of the members of the SAHS, we ac-
cept your gift and thank you deeply for your kindness, generosity and
service to the Society over the years. It is my hope that others may be
inclined.

Recent world events point toward continuing upheaval, strife and un-
certainty. Yet, in recent trips to Switzerland, one finds an island of calm,
civility and genuine interest in art, culture and craftsmanship. In the
past year, I have strived to introduce the local Swiss societies to one
another. It is my sincere hope that together we can continue to educate,
engage and enlighten our current members and, hopefully, attract more
Swiss and Swiss Americans to this endeavor.

This last year marked the Society’s either 55th or 92nd anniversary de-
dpending on how one counts the time. As we slowly transition into 2020,
addressing these issues becomes all the more important. We have a con-
tinuing need for manuscripts and articles to publish. We will need to
continue our recruitment efforts to keep the Society’s membership in
good stead. It is only through the commitment, dedication and work of
all in the Society that we will succeed. Thank you all for making the
Swiss American Historical Society what it is today. I wish you all a
good annual meeting.
In Memorium
Philip C.R. Gelzer

We wanted to let you know that a most beloved father, Philip Christian Renatus Gelzer, died on Wednesday, September 11th, after a noble fight. He loved life to the very end and endured suffering with courage and fortitude. In the last months, he was surrounded by our stepmother, Joe, and his three daughters and saw or spoke with his grandchildren often, offering in his usual graceful way his goodbyes and gratitude. He told us all repeatedly, he felt very grateful for our close relationships. In an important way, he was much more than a father, taking on a special role after our mother’s death in 1982.

As you know, our Dad was a man of great faith, fiercely independent and dignified. In the end, he prayed for God to bring him home, and he listened with intent as we sang some of his favorite hymns at his bedside.

He lived an interesting and joyful life, always yearning and looking for meaning and connection with others. He was an immensely devoted spouse, father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather, sibling, son, friend and servant. He was an original in every sense of the word, with a sharp sense of humor, complex and creative in his approach, always promoting deep and thoughtful discussion, and thirsty to learn about others and everything until the end. Throughout his life, he lived with gusto and was passionate about new ideas and serving others.

We are grateful beyond words for our learnings and his influence. He will live in a place where we go to touch our memories and seek inspiration in daily life and know his spirit remains partially with us always. And of course we pray he will meet his God and those from his past who have gone before him, most especially our Mother, Lorayne.

We are thankful for the many lessons we absorbed by knowing and watching him. These extend beyond the obvious as he taught us about faith, persistence, humility, kindness, loyalty, forgiveness, resolution, honesty, acceptance, hard work, striving to be one’s best and the many gifts of giving and loving.

Thank you for your support during this difficult last few months. Please join us in giving thanks for his life and God’s grace. We have attached a biography of his life.

Love,
Naomi, Gabrielle, and Claudia
Philip Christian Renatus Gelzer, 91, died on Wednesday, September 11th, surrounded by his family. He was born October 4th, 1927 in Basel, Switzerland, son of the Reverend, Dr. Heinrich Gelzer-Luedecke and Charlotte Margarete Elisabeth Gelzer-Luedecke. He was the seventh of eight children: four boys and four girls, known as the “Mission House Kinder” because they grew up on the campus of the Theological Seminary of the Basel Mission Society, where his father served as the Dean of the Seminary.

Gelzer first attended the grammar school affiliated with the seminary, alongside the children of missionaries stationed overseas. In the 5th grade, he entered the Humanistisches Gymnasium for Classical Studies. During World War II, as a school boy, he served as a courier of air defense efforts in the service of protecting the Swiss border during bombing attacks on German ammunition factories built along the Rhine River. In addition, his parents housed fleeing Jewish refugees and facilitated their emigration to the United Kingdom and United States.

He attended “Ecole Superieure de Commerce,” in French-speaking Neuchatel, Switzerland, and graduated with a degree in commerce in 1948 followed by a three year work-study program at the Swiss Society Commerce Association in Basel. This period included mandatory basic training and three years of military service in the Swiss Army. Gelzer served first as a corporal and then attended Officer Training School in Bern, where he was promoted to Lieutenant. As he awaited a visa in order to gain business experience in the United States, Gelzer spent a summer washing dishes in Paris hoping to strengthen his French and witnessing first-hand the devastating impact of the war.

In 1949, Gelzer arrived in New York City on the French liner S.S. De Grasse. Upon arrival, he took a job as a runner for American Express, delivering checks to banks while seeking other employment. Four weeks later, he accepted a position at J. Henry Schroder Bank working for one year in their exports division, before being hired at Geigy Corporation, a Swiss company, in the dyestuff and chemical division.
in 1951. In 1954, Gelzer was drafted into the U.S. Army late in the Ko-
rean War. He made the pivotal decision to accept this assignment rather
than returning to Switzerland, which enabled him to remain in the U.S.
long-term by competing basic training in Montgomery, AL, and receiv-
ing U.S. citizenship upon his honorable discharge in 1956. During his
military service, he was assigned as an Army security police officer in
Germany and ultimately promoted to the rank of sergeant.

In 1956, Gelzer returned to Geigy, which became the Ciba-Geigy Cor-
poration in 1973, where he worked in the dye-stuff and agricultural
divisions. In 1968, he completed the Executive Program in Business
Administration at Columbia University. In 1973, with the move of his
division from New York to North Carolina, he assumed the role of Vice
President, Director of North Carolina Operations, in Greensboro, N.C.,
and remained there until his retirement in 1989 after a successful and
stimulating 38-year career.

In 1958, he married his first wife, Lorayne Gelzer, with whom he raised
three daughters in New York and North Carolina. They were happily
married until her death in 1982. In 1984, he married Joe (Padgette) Gelzer, who he met at the church.

For Gelzer, community service was an essential part of life. He had
a lifelong commitment to Early Childhood Development and Public
Transportation in Greensboro. He served as the Chairperson of the
Greensboro and Guilford County Commission for Strategic Planning
(Visions), and Chairman of the Greensboro Transit Authority. Gelzer
was president of the Foundation of Greater Greensboro, a board mem-
ber of Cone Hospital, and the Moravian Music Foundation. He served
as President of the Board of Visitors of Guilford College, as well as on
the Board of Visitors of NC A&T University, and the Wake Forest Bab-
cock Graduate School of Management. He was an active member of
the Swiss American Historical Society. In 1992, Gelzer was inducted
into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame of Central Greensboro. Dur-
ing his later years, as a resident of the independent living community at
Wellspring, he helped with weekly worship services for Assisted Liv-
ing residents, led a bible study and was often requested to give lectures
on Switzerland.
Throughout his life, Gelzer was active in many capacities, including as an officer of the church at Rye Presbyterian Church in Rye, NY, New Philadelphia Moravian Church in Winston-Salem and for many years at First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro. Coming from a long line of ministers on both sides of his family, his faith informed every aspect of his life and inspired others.

A proud and devoted American, Gelzer always stayed connected to his rich history and beloved family and life-long friends in Switzerland through extensive correspondence and travel. Gelzer was interested and a dedicated scholar of religious history, Swiss-American History, both sides of American politics, and always intensely interested in his many friends and family members who surrounded him. He was an active mentor with a gift for recognizing the potential in young professionals, was a lively conversationalist and masterful debater and was known for his dry “Basel-style” sense of humor.

Gelzer is survived by his wife Joe, Greensboro, NC, his three daughters, Naomi Kettler, and husband, Jim, of Chevy Chase, MD, Gabrielle McCree and husband, Don, of Rye, NY, Claudia Gelzer, and wife, Wendy, of Boston, MA, 7 grandchildren, Lorayne, Charlotte, Christopher, Philip, Andrea, Nicholas, and Alex, and one great-granddaughter, Madeline. He is survived by his sister Priscilla Grob-Gelzer of Solothurn, Switzerland and dozens of nieces and nephews. He is survived by 3 step-daughters, Susan Starr, and husband, Frank, Sandy Smith, and husband, Roy, Page Weethee, and husband, Chip. Gelzer was predeceased in death by his step-daughter Catherine Maxwell. He is survived by 11 step-grandchildren and four step-great grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, NC, on Tuesday, September 17th at 2:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be made to: First Presbyterian Church at www.fpcgreensboro.org, Hospice and Palliative Care of Greensboro at www.hospicegso.org, Well Spring Retirement Community at www.well-spring.org, or the Moravian Music/Heritage Foundation at www.moravianmusic.org.
Membership Report

By Ernie Thurston

To: Members of the Swiss American Historical Society  
From: Ernie Thurston, Membership Secretary  
Subject: Annual Membership Report

IN BRIEF: We have 214 current members, a 0% decrease from the 214 reported last year at this time.

CURRENT MEMBERS BY TYPE AND COUNTRY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Type</th>
<th>US/Canada</th>
<th>Switzerland/Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular ($50/yr.)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ($25/yr.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution ($75/yr.)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Members</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES, 10/01/2018 to 9/30/2019

Members as of 10/01/2018  
214

Plus: New Members Enrolled  
9

Plus: Former Members (not “Current” last year who have Rejoined  
0

Less: Dropped by Request or Decease  
- 5

Less: Dropped for Non-Payment of Dues  
- 4

Current Members, 09/30/2019  
214
**BREAKDOWN OF CURRENT MEMBERSHIP BY COUNTRY AND STATE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Abbreviation</th>
<th>Membership Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC</td>
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<td>IA</td>
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<td>IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>WY</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUSTRIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC, CANADA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ON, CANADA</td>
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<tr>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWITZERLAND</td>
<td>42</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Treasurer’s Report

By Heinz Bachmann, Treasurer

1. Consolidated Account
   a. Income
   b. Annual Dues (incl. life memberships) $ 6,923.50
   c. Capital Appreciation $ 8,110.00
   Total Income $ 15,033.50

Expenses
   Meetings/Events $ 1,227.00
   Administration/Postage/Fees 250.00
   SAHS Review (Masthof Press) $ 9,622.79
   Total Expenditures $ 11,308.99

Net Budget Outcome + $3,723.71

Opening Balance, October 1, 2018 $ 83,401.91
Closing Balance, September 30, 2019 $ 87,125.84
Net Result + $3,723.93

2. Balance Sheets

OPENING BALANCE, October 1, 2018
   Checking (First Bank & Trust of Evanston) $ 6,561.95
   Savings (Vanguard STAR Fund) 76,839.96
   Total Assets $ 83,401.91

CLOSING BALANCE, September 30, 2019
   Checking (Byline Bank, Chicago) $ 628,647.88
   Savings (Vanguard STAR Fund) 58,477.96
   Total Assets $ 87,125.84

NET RESULT + $3,723.93

Comments: The SAHS had a good financial year, thanks to an excellent performance of the Vanguard STAR Fund, but also reflecting a decline of very costly activities within our own organization such as book publishing.
Annual Report of the Swiss Chapter, Switzerland

By Barbara Müller

Dear Members,

I am pleased to report that the Swiss Chapter seems to be doing well at this time. We had one member to pay dues for a life time membership which as in the U.S. is ten times a yearly membership. This was Margrith Ledermann now living in South America but her postal address is c/o Markus Ledermann Hegenweg 237 in 5733 Leimbach AG. All dues are paid except one member who has been contacted. Also this year/next year we had two members to leave the society due to age or illness; they are Peter Hillenberg and Dr. Aloys von Graffenried. Dr. von Graffenried paid a donation/last of membership of 450.00 to the society. We had several members to join, one Stefan Schmid through the internet, Paul Nielson an old member to rejoin, and William Olenick through another member. At this time, we have forty-four members on the books which includes seven institutes. I would like to thank Richard Hacken for his good work on the new internet site. However, we need to make provisions for the website to be actively managed and maintained. The Swiss members have suggested a good reading list on the site from our scholars.

For our 3rd annual outing, the Society visited the town of Solothurn. We held a short general meeting. At this time, officers were elected (for the Friends of the SAHS). Re-elected as President was Barbara Müller. Elected to replace Anselm Zurfluh as Vice President was Mary Brunisholz. Re-elected as treasurer was Dr. William Gasser, and elected as secretary to replace Peter Hillenberg was Regina Lanford. With these members, I feel that I will have a sound board who help the society continue to grow and achieve new goals and keep in conform to the Swiss by laws so as we can have a bank account. Both William Gasser and I will serve one last term. Kurt and Irene Morf were elected as auditors for the books 2018/2019. Some ideas were expressed on the new website that perhaps a good reading list could be published by the scholars of the Society for the benefit of members. Also a motion was made to add a list of attendance to the report of the annual meeting from 2018 which has been done (there were nineteen people attending with one guest of the society, Susann Boshard-Kalin and four guests...
from the States, one Boger Brodmann, a member in the States). After our meeting which was held at the Baseltor in Solothurn with an attendance of fifteen people comprised of eleven members, four guests, one a member from the U.S., Fred Gillespe, one member cancelled but donated his payment to the Society of SFR 120.00. Our outing cost 1636.50 and the money collected was 1810.00, the difference will go to the next event to be held as a presentation open to the public to help present the society at this time we are looking for both a speaker and a venue. After our meeting, we had a tour of the City in English by a very interesting lady who then brought us to La Couronne for our lunch. The lunch was held in this beautiful totally renovated building in the middle of town. We had an *aperitif* outside on a beautifully sunny day and the main meal in a room to ourselves. I felt the restaurant made a large effort in every way and that it warranted a larger tip than usual in Switzerland. After lunch, we went to the Kunst Museum to view the works of Frank Buchser who had been featured in the November 2017 *Review*. Also a film has been made about his life. Our member Hr. Wirz who has written for the *Review* has comments that Buchser made on his relative the Confederate Major Henry Wirz. We had a presentation made by the curator of the Museum Robin Byland and a comparison of Buchser works and those of Winslow Homer by Regina Lanford, an Art Historian from the Society. After this, the outing was finished.

Also at this time, I would like to mention to the board members that perhaps we should make the Swiss and/or overseas dues the same in both countries, as two of our members pay through the net which only has dues for American members. I have taken over the dues that Fred Jenny had used which are SFR 65.00. This, I believe is a fair price as shipping costs overseas are relatively expensive. One *Review* costs around $7.91 to send; therefore the almost $15.00 difference is warranted. I would suggest that the website be changed for dues as of 2021 to read that overseas dues, due to shipping cost to be $65.00 and overseas life membership to be ten times that amount or $650.00. This gives us a one to one for $ and SFR. Also two new members said they would consider submitting an article to the *Review*. They are Bill Olenick and Paul Nielson.

I would like to thank you for your support of the Swiss Chapter and I looked forward to the meeting here in the D.C. area and, of course, to the presentation by Ruth Koch-Maeder from the Swiss Chapter.

*Barbara Müller, President Swiss Chapter*
**Friends of the Swiss American Historical Society**


**Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member Dues</td>
<td>2,030</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Meeting Income</td>
<td>2,180</td>
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</table>

Total Income: 4,330

**Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Meeting Expenses</td>
<td>2,011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Event Expenses*</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Fees</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Expenses</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Expenses: 2,327

**Fiscal Year Operating Surplus** 2,003

**Extraordinary Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funds returned from US SAHS**</td>
<td>4,683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Balance, Sept. 30, 2017** 3,287

**Bank Balance, Sept. 30, 2018** 9,973

*May 26 Winkler Presentation in Murten

**$5,000 check less $40.00 charges by Drewee Bank at 0.9522 CHF:USD
Less CHF 40 charge by drawing bank (UBS)

W. Gasser, Treasurer
October 2, 2019
Friends of the Swiss American Historical Society

(in Swiss Francs)

Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Member Dues*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations**</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Meeting Income</td>
<td>5,390</td>
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8,860

Expenses

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<td>Annual Meeting Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Event Expenses*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank Fees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Expenses</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2,327

Fiscal Year Operating Surplus 3,193

Balance Sept. 30, 2017 9,973
Balance Sept. 30, 2018 13,166

Extraordinary Obligation^ - Swiss 2018 contribution due US SAHS 2,000

^Funds earmarked to support SAHS Swiss Franc publication expense.
*Includes one life membership (CHF650.00)
**Includes one Special Donation by a resigning member (CHF450)
***May 12 Bosshard-Kahlen presentation in Schwyz

W. Gasser, Treasurer
September 30, 2019
Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee is made up of the following:

Heinz Bachmann
William Gasser
And myself, Rosa Schupbach, as Chairperson

First, as the three-year term of the Board of Directors has expired, we have to elect a new Board. Second, the three-year term of the Class of 2016-2019 has also expired, therefore we have to elect a new Class of 2019-2022.

Board of Directors: Kenneth Schelbert, our previous president informed me last year that he no longer wishes to be on the Board after 2019. Alber Winkler has agreed to be nominated as President. I now present to you the following nominations to be elected as Directors of our Society:

Albert Winkler, President
Rosa Schupbach, Vice President for North America
Barbara Mueller, Vice President, Swiss Chapter
Heinz Bachmann, Treasurer
Richard Hacken, Secretary
Ernie Thurston, Membership Secretary

Are there any nominations from the floor? If not, the nominations are closed. I move that all those nominated be elected. Seconded? All those in favor say aye, any opposed? Therefore, those nominated are duly elected.

We now proceed to the Board of Advisors Class of 2019-2022. Urspeter Schelbert who lives in Switzerland has resigned as member of our Society, and Jurg Siegenthaler has kindly agreed to replace him on the Board of Advisors. I tried to contact Donald Hilty. I never received an answer to my letter and when I tried to call him, his telephone was discontinued. This does not sound good, but as I don’t know any of his family, I had to find a replacement for him. Robert Sherwood who has been active in our Society has agreed to serve on the Board of Advisors.
I also wrote to Marianne Burkhard but received no reply. As some of you may remember, she has been an active member of our society for many years; in fact, she was President from 1980-1986. In 1987, she entered the Benedictine Religious Order, but still she did come to our Annual Meeting once or twice more and kept in touch with us even as a Sister. In 2018, she retired as a Judge from the Marriage Tribunal in Peoria. I suspect she is either on vacation in Switzerland or on a religious retreat where she receives no outside communication. I, therefore, kept her name as member of the Class of 2019-2022. I hope you agree with me.

Therefore, the following are nominated for the Class of 2019-2022:

- Marianne Burkhard
- Diana Larisgoitia
- Robert Sherwood
- Jurg Siegenthaler
- Donald Tritt

Are there any nominations form the floor? If not, the nominations are closed. I move that those nominated be elected. Seconded? All those in favor say aye, any opposed? Therefore, the Class of 2019-2022 is duly elected.

Just to give you an overview of the remaining Classes of the Board of Advisors, to be taken at future Annual Meetings, as these Classes expire:

Class of 2020:
- Karl Niederer
- Franz Portmann
- Elsbeth Reimann
- Paula Sherman
- Randal Gafner (has resigned and needs to be replaced)

Class of 2021:
- Susan Keller
- Dwight Page
- Davis Sutton
- Franz von Arx
- Kenneth Schelbert (has resigned from that class, needs to be replaced)

This is the end of my report.
SAHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Check out our website at:
www.swiss-american-historical-society.org

Name: ________________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________

City: _______________________________________________________

Phone: _______________________________________________________

Email: _______________________________________________________

Dues:
___ Individual $50.00 per year
___ Institution $75.00 per year
___ Student $25.00 per year
___ Life Membership $500.00

Make check payable to: SAHS.

Mail this form, with your check to:
   Ernest Thurston Membership Secretary
   65 Town Mountain Road
   Asheville, NC 28804
   Email: Eswisst@gmail.com (mail to: EswissT@gmail.com)

Membership in the Swiss American Historical Society is open to all. Each year, members receive three copies of the Swiss American Historical Society Review, a personal copy of each book newly published by the Society, and an invitation to attend the Society’s national meeting held consecutively in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.