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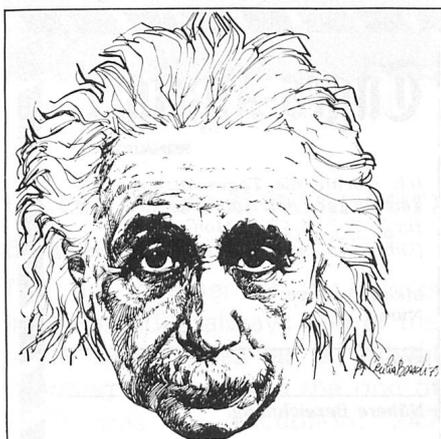
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# Two famous Swiss abroad

## Albert Einstein

He was born in Ulm in the German Federal Republic on 14th March 1879, a child of a Jewish family. He went to the *Gymnasium* in Munich before he moved to Switzerland where he received the citizenship of the town of Zurich in 1901.



In retrospect, it seems very strange that his parents and teachers considered him little talented if not even somewhat backward ... In 1902, he terminated his studies with the 'diploma of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. It was in our country that he worked out his first theory of relativity and developed the basis for numerous other discoveries. Already in 1907, he advanced his hypothesis on gravitation. At the time, he was employed as an official at the Federal Office for Intellectual Property at a salary of 3500 francs *per annum*.

As an intellectual revolutionary, he upset the traditional image of the world. Admired by the specialists, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Geneva in 1909.

After teaching physics and mathematics in Berne and Zurich for a number of years, he was called to

Berlin as professor and scientific researcher. He was a pacifist and saw himself confronted with numerous difficulties due to the political developments, so he left Germany in 1932 in order to settle in USA. In Princeton, New Jersey, he became a member of the «Institute for Advanced Study», and he devoted himself to scientific research right up to his death on 18th April 1955.

Although he took out American nationality in 1940, he kept up his Swiss citizenship, which is evident from the records at the Swiss Consulate in Philadelphia where he had extended his registration card for five years in 1950. In 1921, he was awarded the Nobel Prize. His most ingenious discovery was the connection between substance and energy. Einstein liked using simple pictures. In order to elucidate his

theories, he made use of trains or lifts, as for instance in explaining the experience made by everyone: two trains are stationary side by side ready to depart; if one of these two trains moves off, the traveller in the stationary train has to orientate himself on a different object, such as a pole, so that he knows which of the two trains has been set in motion. Thus the laws of physics are only valid in relation to a supposed fixed object.

The consequences of this relativity are more difficult to conceive: time and space are not absolute; a ruler changes its length according to speed, a watch will lose. At the speed of light, all length would become nil, every watch would stop, and above all, substance would become indefinite, since one could not accelerate it, not even with immense energy.

*Lucien Paillard*

Einstein in 1904 as official at the Federal Office for Intellectual Property



One of the commemorative coins which are legal tender  
Theory of relativity  
Realization by Kurt Wirth



## Othmar Hermann Ammann

An American personality said of one of our compatriots appreciatively: «It is a pity that he cannot live for another hundred years, for he would certainly have constructed a bridge across the sea.»



This praise refers to a man from Schaffhausen, born a hundred years ago, on 26th March 1879, O. H. Ammann, who died in New York on 22nd September 1965. This compatriot who was considered as the greatest builder of bridges of all times, studied at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, and two years after acquiring his doctorate, he left for the United States where he remained due to the practical opportunities which offered themselves to this genius of a constructor. First as a specialized expert, then as deputy to the responsible manager and later as principal himself, he devoted his life to the construction of bridges, in which he progressively became a respected initiator and promoter. He constructed the George-Washington Bridge, the Queensboro Bridge, the Goethals Bridge in the heart of New York and later others such as the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, the most important of all, which spans the Hudson 300 m above and is over 4 km in length. But one has to remember that these fabulous creations which

attract one's eyes like a brilliant show, are also marvels of intelligence and calculation. Ammann had brought the prudence of the watchmaker to the country of pioneers, and when he introduced the novel method of suspending the bridges by simple cables rather than constructing them on arches, he could do it because he knew every millimetre, resistance, weight and length and was as familiar with it all as one could be after having measured the field patiently for decades, finally loving it all to the core. He represents the typical Swiss emigrant. To this he added a helvetic spirit born of modesty and careful ways, of seriousness and simplicity, and the need for solving problems and difficulties. Where the love of gigantic things and technical challenge flourish, the mixture is most effective: «For half a century of extraordinary inspiration in the aesthetic and material conception of bridges.»

Ammann receiving the National Medal of Science from President Johnson on 8.2.1965



O. H. Ammann in front of the George Washington Bridge

In November 1964, Ammann received supreme recognition from President Johnson himself: the «National Medal of Science». Switzerland immortalized O. H. Ammann in 1979 devoting a postage stamp to him, on which, apart from his portrait, there is the picture of one of his greatest bridges.