

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 16 (1951)
Heft: [10]

Artikel: New Swiss guards take oath
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942737>

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NEW SWISS GUARDS TAKE OATH

(The following article has appeared in the issue of May 9th in "The Irish Press" and is herewith reproduced by courtesy of the Editor.)

A colourful ceremony took place in the Belvedere courtyard in the Vatican recently; the annual taking of the oath of service by the latest recruits to the Swiss Guards.

Seventy of the hundred Guards that make up the corps lined up and paraded the courtyard in full dress uniform with shining breastplates, helmets and halberds, and the nineteen new recruits of recent months took the oath: "I swear to serve faithfully and loyally His Holiness the reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, and his legitimate successors, as well as to devote to them all my strength and, if needs be, to sacrifice my life for their defence. . . ."

May 6th is a sacred day for the Swiss Guards, the anniversary of the most glorious page in their history. On that date in 1527, only 22 years after the Corps had been established, all the Guards—42 of them—lost their lives in defending Pope Clement VII against the forces of the Emperor Charles V.

Having sacked Rome, the German and Spanish troops attacked the Vatican Palace. They easily disposed of the Papal Gendarmes and the other Vatican Guards, but the little group of Swiss resisted valiantly against overwhelming odds. One by one they were slain in hand-to-hand combat as they covered the Pope's retreat through the 500-yard covered passage that led to the fortress, Castel Sant' Angelo. The last Swiss Guard fell before the spears of the attackers as he banged the door of the fortress behind the Pope.

Twenty years later the corps was reconstructed and increased to the strength of 200 men. The massacre of 1527 set the headline for the fidelity of this chosen Corps, and in 1848, when Pope Pius IX was besieged in the Quirinal Palace by a Roman mob, the Swiss Guards were the only ones to remain loyal to their posts. On this occasion, too, many of them fell before the muskets of the crowd, but they managed to repulse the attack.

At the moment the Swiss Guards are a hundred in number. The commander is a full colonel, and he is assisted by a lieutenant-colonel, a major and four captains, including the chaplain, Mgr. Kreig, who has captain's rank. There are twelve non-commissioned officers—four sergeants and eight corporals—and the rest are all simple privates.

In their fancy mediaeval dress (designed for them by Michael Angelo himself), with their striped uniforms of red and gold and blue, these Guards are on duty at every entrance to the Vatican City, in the Pope's ante-room during audience hours, and outside his private apartments during the night.

At Papal functions in St. Peter's they are present in a body in their full dress uniform, flanking the Sedes Gestatoria as the Pope is carried in to the Basilica, and lined all around the Throne and Papal Altar during the ceremony.

There is little in their daily lives to attract them to the service—no adventure, no booty, no gain. Their discipline is most rigid, their free time very restricted, their pay rather meagre, like that of soldiers everywhere. They sleep in their own quarters, in Vatican City, where they have their chapel, library and canteen.

Service at the Vatican gives them a chance of picking up a foreign language or two, in addition to their own "Schweizer-Deutsch," and this enables many of them to enter the hotel and tourist business in their native country when they return. Most of them use their free time to educate themselves: they study music and art, and one of them, Sergeant Scheiss, has made quite a name for himself in Rome's artistic circles as a painter and sculptor.

But those sturdy lads from the mountains of Switzerland are all staunch Catholics, and they are not seeking material advantage or worldly gain: for them the honour of serving the Holy Father is ample reward.

Candidates for admission must be under 25 years of age, unmarried and at least five feet eight inches in height. But the most important qualification of all is

the certificate from their local Parish Priest testifying to their moral character. They may retire at will on two months' notice. Ten years' service entitles them to half pension, twenty years to full pension.

Of all the different Corps of Papal Guards, the Swiss are the ones that give the unmistakable impression of perfect training and physical fitness, as they parade and change guard at their various posts, or as they jump smartly to attention at the sergeant's call of "achtung" whenever a high-ranking ecclesiastic passes by.

They are very faithful in their attendance at morning Mass and at weekly Communion. They run a St. Vincent de Paul Conference of their own for the benefit of the poor in the Roman Borgo, and each year they sponsor the education of a few students for the foreign missions.

On Sunday last, as the new recruits stepped from the ranks one by one, and, with their left hand on the Papal flag and their right hand raised to God, pronounced the solemn words of their oath, one felt that those medieval helmets and breastplates concealed heads and hearts that are worthy to continue the glorious and honoured traditions of which the corps can boast during its 400 years of service to the Vicar of Christ.

SWISS FARMING

(Continued.)

Types of Buildings.—The following main types of agricultural buildings are to be found in Switzerland today. In French-speaking western Switzerland, the influence of the Celtic-Romantic style as embodied in the farmhouse of the Jura is particularly noticeable. As of old, the Burgundian chimney is its main feature. In the Celtic farmstead small houses were arranged around the yard. By roofing the yard a farmhouse resulted having a low broad-shaped roof. The house of the Engadine type reminds one through its hall of Roman architecture. Indeed, the Engadine style house belongs to the finest agricultural architecture. The house of the Ticino style is equally of Romanic if not of Italian origin. Its characteristic features are its loggias and vaults. The population with the Latin tradition gives preference to stone buildings while the population of Alemannic strain is in favour of timber buildings. Block structures are particularly noticeable in the Alpine regions. Ranging from the plain modest haybarn to the splendid characteristic structures of the Bernese Oberland, and to the houses of the farmers in the mountains of the Cantons of Fribourg and Vaud all forms of architectural transition may be found.

The handsome characteristic houses of the Appenzell country and Toggenburg region belong to the type of farmhouse peculiar to the mountain regions. In the Midlands, many buildings may be traced back to the Argovian thatched house, specimens of which are only rarely to be found. It was the fundamental form from which the various kinds of the three-division house developed. The three divisions consist of the dwelling-house, the barn floor and the stable. The finest specimen of this architecture may be seen in the characteristic