

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1932)
Heft: 553

Artikel: St. Gothard railway : 50 year's history
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692749>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

There would be, of course, a great deal more to report, but space does not allow us to go more fully into details.—

The Swiss Colony has every reason to be proud of having given their support to an undertaking which is based on love and international friendship and brotherhood. May this great work which is safely in the hands of a few enthusiastic and capable workers bear fruits, and may it bring a ray of sunshine in many a lonely heart which is left friendless in this great metropolis of the British Empire.

ST. GOTHARD RAILWAY.

50 Years' History.

Great Festivities will take place in Switzerland on the occasion of the 50th Jubilee of the St. Gothard Railway.

On May 31st a Banquet will be held at the Schweizerhof in Lucerne. Nat. Councillor Dr. Walther, President of the Board of the Swiss Federal Railways and Dr. Schradl, President of the General Management of the S.F.R., will speak. Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz, together with delegates from Italy and Germany will be present.

On Wednesday morning, memorial services will be held at Göschenen and Airolo for those who lost their lives during the building of the tunnel, and in the afternoon an excursion to Lugano will be made. In the evening a dinner will be held at the Park Hotel in Lucerne, and a display of fireworks will take place.

From time immemorial large numbers of passengers and huge quantities of goods passing to and from the North of Europe to the South have crossed Switzerland and her Alpine territory, by the St. Gothard, which formed by nature one of the most important passages across the mighty Alpine wall. Here the various chains unite into a junction, thus rendering but one single pass necessary, while it cuts across the Alps at their centre point and leads right to the very heart of the fertile Upper Italian plain. The St. Gothard Railway, which was finished in 1882, had a revolutionary effect on the whole transport traffic to and from Switzerland, and, consequently, on the affairs of the Swiss people generally; the Upper Italian lowlands also experienced a huge increase in industrial activity.

The story of the building of the St. Gothard goes back to 1838, when there was a considerable outcry in favour of a trans-Alpine railway. It fell to Alfred Escher to succeed in his tremendous endeavour to focus attention on the idea of the St. Gothard.

Conference of the Cantons.

In August, 1853, at Lucerne, the first conference of the cantons concerned in the construction of this railway took place, and, twelve years later, fifteen Swiss cantons had already joined the St. Gothard Alliance. In 1866 Italy declared itself in favour of the plan and she was joined in 1869 by the Governments of Prussia, Württemberg and Baden. On October 15th, 1869, the St. Gothard pact was signed in Zürich between Switzerland and Italy, and on October 28, 1871, the newly-formed German Empire joined them. For the entire St. Gothard railway subsidies amounting to 119,000,000 frs. were contributed by Italy, Switzerland and Germany, and in 1872, after the forming of the St. Gothard Railway Company, it was possible to make a start on the gigantic task.

The most difficult part, from the constructional point of view, was the piercing of the St. Gothard itself, and it took nine years to create the double-track tunnel between Göschenen and Airolo, which has a length of 14,900 metres. The credit for this colossal masterpiece goes primarily to the Geneva building contractor, Louis Favre. While the work was proceeding in the tunnel the north and south approach lines were built. June 1st, 1882, saw the whole line, from Immensee-Chiasso, working.

The Complete System.

On June 1st, 1897, two more extremely important northern approach-lines to the St. Gothard railway were opened; these were Lucerne-Immensee and Zug-Arth-Goldau, and they had been provided for in the State agreement and also the additional one of 1878 in order to shorten the distance to the St. Gothard system. As soon as they were finished the whole scheme was thereby brought to fulfilment. The complete St. Gothard system, as carried out on the basis of the State agreements, thus embraces the following lines:—

Lucerne-Chiasso	225.10 km.
Zug-Arth-Goldau	15.76 km.
Giubiasco-Pino	21.83 km.
Cadenazzo-Locarno	12.46 km.

Total 275.15 km.

The St. Gothard tunnel divides the line into two steep gradients, one on the north and the other on the south. The laying of the path of the railway line which is exceptionally rich in constructive works of various kinds, is worthy of admiration. The loop-tunnels and double horse-

shoe curves are amongst the most famous in the world, and the very finest loop-tunnels are to be found by Wassen station, where the line is laid at three levels one above the other.

A Remarkable Adhesion Railway.

In the Wassen double curve a difference in height of 256 metres is overcome, and it is all the more remarkable inasmuch as the two ends of the curve are only 3 km. apart as the crow flies. It is just here that the tremendous advantages of the loop-tunnel system — which alone makes it possible for an adhesion railway to negotiate such extreme differences in height without loss of time — are made so manifest. Göschenen Station, situated at the northern entrance to the St. Gothard tunnel, forms the terminal point of the northern gradient; it is 1,109 metres above sea-level, and the railway, in reaching there from Erstfeld, has to accomplish an ascent of 634 metres. The southern gradient from Airolo to Biasca falls at the rate of as much as 27 per 1,000 and is of a total length of 45.6 km. It descends through the Ticino valley, which is divided into two terraces. The first terrace is situated at Dazio Grande and the second one at Biaschina.

Altogether, in order to overcome the difficulties of the land traversed, the laying of the St. Gothard railway involved the construction of eighty tunnels of a total length of 46,356 metres, 450 bridges spanning 6,333 metres between them, and, in addition, 785 culverts and a countless number of protective works against avalanches, broken rocks and high water. The amount of goods traffic in terms of km.-tons rose from 79.7 millions in 1884 to 243.9 millions in 1908, and the number of passengers carried rose from 44,000,000 to 187,000,000 over the same period.

Electrification.

In 1908, the St. Gothard Railway Company was taken over by the Swiss Federal Railways, and this acquisition by the State caused a further and undreamt of increase in traffic, amounting to 80 per cent., which, was encouraged considerably by the adaptation of the railroad for double track, but, above all, by the electrification which was decided on in 1913 and completed in 1923. Whereas in 1883 the number of axle-kilometres traversed on the St. Gothard was 63.3 millions, it is to-day 215 millions. The maximum daily load for goods traffic of 11,000 tons in 1913, when steam traction was used, has risen to 23,000 tons with electric traction (in 1929 it actually reached 35,000 tons). It would be impossible for steam locomotives to cope with modern-day traffic on this railway. Whereas formerly it took three steam-engines to haul a train of 450 tons, to-day 600-ton fast and express trains are hauled up gradients with a rise of 26 per 1,000 by a couple of electric locomotives at 60 km. per hour. The saving of time effected by electrification on an express journey between Basle and Chiasso amounts to seventy minutes.

The efficiency of the electrical operation of the St. Gothard railway is to be still further increased by two giant locomotives which have recently been delivered, each of which is of over 7,000 h.p. These locomotives, which are being used both in fast train service as well as for goods haulage, are able, for example, to haul a goods train of 750 tons on a gradient of 26 per 1,000 at a speed of 50 km. per hour, while the heaviest and most modern steam locomotive on the St. Gothard railway in 1913 could only haul trains of 300 tons at a speed of 28 km. per hour, over the same course.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

SWISS GYMNASIC SOCIETY.

Hundertjaehriges Eidg. Jubiläumsturnfest, Aarau, July 1932.
Centenaire Fête Fédérale de Gymnastique, Aarau, Juillet 1932.

Readers of the Swiss Observer have no doubt wondered what has happened to the Swiss Gymnastic Society London, and why no reports on the activities of the society have appeared in these columns for such a long time.

Although the society is perhaps suffering more than any other from the crisis and consequent absence of young Swiss from these shores, all the old members have returned to the fold in order to send a strong team to Aarau for the Centenary Swiss Gymnastic Festival which promises to be the largest competition ever held in our native country.

Nearly all Swiss Colonies abroad will be represented by teams — for instance, Paris with about 50 men — and for this reason alone, in spite of crisis and its consequences, the Swiss Gymnastic Society London considers it its sacred duty that the Swiss residing in the United Kingdom must be worthily represented as well. Since February last a strong team has been in training and is doing well — the only fly in the ointment is the question of Finance. A Finance Committee composed of our old friends has been specially appointed, and it is confidently hoped that our compatriots residing in the U.K. will not let the gymnasts down but support them to the best of

their ability to uphold the prestige and the honour of the Swiss in London and the U.K.

Owing to the depreciation of the £, about £100 are needed to defray the expenses. Any donation will be gratefully received by M. P. Hiltner, Chancellor of Legation, 32, Queen Anne Street, London, W.1. Many thanks in anticipation to all supporters. E.S.B.

SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

We have much pleasure to give below the result of the three best marksmen of the Swiss Rifle Association on each of the two ranges for Saturday's Swiss Sports at Herne Hill:

300 METRES, SWISS RIFLE.

1st.	Mr. P. Odermatt	83 points
2nd.	Mr. Ed. Brüllhardt	75 "
3rd.	Mr. F. Suter	74 "

100 YARDS RANGE.

1st.	Mr. E. Gubler	89 points
2nd.	Mr. Ed. Brüllhardt	87 "
3rd.	Mr. P. Odermatt	77 "

"OBERHOLZER MEMORIAL."

The unveiling of the above memorial will take place on Saturday, June 4th at the Great Northern Cemetery, New Southgate, N.11, at 3.15 p.m. A short service will be conducted by the Rev. H. J. Gillson, M.A. All subscribers will be welcome.

MISS GRACE NOTARI †

We deeply regret to inform our readers of the death of Miss Grace Notari, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. Notari, and sister of the President of the Unione Ticinese, which occurred on Monday after a short illness. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family Notari. The funeral will take place on Saturday, May 28th at St. Pancras Cemetery, East Finchley, N.2.

(Service at 12 noon at the Cemetery).

PERSONAL.

Readers of the Swiss Observer will be interested to learn that Mr. Oscar Gambazzi, so well-known in the Swiss Colony, has severed his connection with "The Monaco" after 24 years, and has taken over the management of the Chandos Restaurant, corner of St. Martins Lane and Chandos Street, W.C.2. This establishment is one of the numerous ones of the famous catering firm Carrs (London) Ltd. We have no doubt that Mr. Gambazzi, with his long experience, affability and tact which were his outstanding features at The Monaco will make a success of his new venture, success which we most sincerely wish him.

* * *

Notre compatriote, M. Léonard Forrer, "Helvetia," 14, Homefield Road, Bromley, (Kent), vient d'être nommé Lauréat de l'Institut de France, et son grand ouvrage "Biographical Dictionary of Medallists, Die-engravers, etc.," en 8 volumes, 1904 - 1932, a été couronné par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, avec le Prix Duchalais. Nos meilleures félicitations.

ANOTHER ACHIEVEMENT FOR

"SCINTILLA" MAGNETOS.

Our readers will no doubt be interested to hear, that Miss Amelia Earhart, who accomplished the solo Atlantic flight, relied on "Scintilla" magnetos, which are manufactured by the well-known Swiss firm, Scintilla Limited, thus adding one more laurel to those already attained.

THE EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

To the Editor of *The Swiss Observer*.

Dear Sir,

Could any Swiss compatriot, through your esteemed journal, inform me the origin and date of the reputed Horloges Neuchâtelaises and the makers name.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

Alf. Muller.

When at HAMPTON COURT

have Lunch or Tea at the

MYRTLE COTTAGE

Facing Royal Palace, backing on to Bushey

Park between Lion Gate and The Green.

SWISS HOME MADE SCOTCH A SPECIALITY.

P. GODENZI, PROPRIETOR.