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# The Swiss Observer

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## Contents

The Canton of Appenzell	2
Eminent Swiss Cabaret Artists	8
Pro Juventute News	10
Official Communications	
— Adoption of foreign children	11
— New legitimacy law	11
— Federal Ballots	11
— The Swiss National Map	11
Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad	
— Reflections on the 55th Assembly of the Swiss Abroad	15
— Skiing Camps	16
— Book Review	17
— The Swiss Army Band plays for new «echo» readers!	17
Switzerland	19
Swiss National Day Collection 1978 for the Swiss Abroad	21
Old Traditions and Folklore Festivals in Switzerland	22
Local communications	24
La Gazette Nostrana	36

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## The Canton of Appenzell

### Biographical notes

The historian, Prof. Dr. phil. Walter Schläpfer, citizen of Herisau, was born on 5th April 1914. Formerly he was active in the Commune and Cantonal Councils. He has published several works on his home Canton of Appenzell. Apart from his job as Deputy Headmaster of the Cantonal School at Trogen, he has the additional occupation as Custodian of the Cantonal Library.

In the colourful mosaic which is the Swiss Cantons, the State of Appenzell represents a particularly characteristic stone, small though it is; its area of 414 square kilometres constitutes but one per cent of the total Swiss territory. But this little country offers so many special aspects which have made its inhabitants (about 60 000 which equals one per cent of the Swiss population) special favourites of its federal compatriots, even of its near neighbours abroad. It boasts attractive scenery, a turbulent history in whose course two Half-Cantons emerged on very confined space, inhabitants known for their wit and quickness of repartee, quaint state structures in many ways different from those of Appenzell's neighbours. And finally, there is the strange fact that the Canton is

completely surrounded by St. Gall. This state of affairs can only be explained by historical evidence. This will show that it is not Appenzell which is an unnatural creation, but that it is the Canton of St. Gall which was formed in 1803 only, an artificial body «out of Napoleon's hands».

It was not by any means obvious that the Appenzell people should form their own State. The land at the foot of the Saentis is not a natural unit. On the contrary, the wanderer will soon realize that this little country with its many hills and gorges shows an extremely complicated structure. The Canton lies far away from the large communications network; it has not one single road which could be called important other than for local traffic. To such communications pioneers as the Romans, this wild land covered in thick forest was utterly unimportant. It is thus not a coincidence that Appenzell is the only Canton on whose territory no Roman finds have ever been made. The same applies to prehistoric times. In the whole of the Canton, there is only one attractive relic from primeval eras, the «Wildkirchli» cave in Inner-

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\*  
\* Dear Compatriots \*  
\*  
\* Once again a year draws to its close, and we are on the thresh- \*  
\* hold of a new one which, we hope, will be a happy one for you \*  
\* in every respect. \*  
\* As far as we are concerned, we shall try and contribute to this by \*  
\* letting you have as before news from Switzerland which \*  
\* concern your new rights as well as your duties, and also cultural \*  
\* and general information, and sports news. \*  
\* It is with pleasure that we should like to thank in your name all \*  
\* those compatriots abroad who help us year after year to realize \*  
\* this review. \*  
\* With best wishes. \*  
\*  
\* The Executive Commission on Information from \*  
\* and to «Fifth Switzerland» \*  
\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

# Features

rhoden, where traces of Stone Age hunters were found. In Appenzell, documentary evidence goes back only to about 800. At that time, Alemannic immigrants from North-West presented the Monastery of St. Gall with various gifts. It is probable that much of the Appenzell, at that time still undeveloped, came under the dominion of the abbots of St. Gall when the Monastery was founded. During subsequent centuries, large parts of the Canton were made arable in laborious colonisation work. And so the name *Abbatis cella* was first mentioned in 1071, by which was meant not the refuge of the abbot, but an economically important estate of the Monastery of St. Gall. And that name was given to the whole of the area.

For centuries, the people of Appenzell remained subjects of the Monastery, and they had to pay considerable tributes to their masters. Spurred on by the federal liberation movement, the people of Appenzell threw off the old St. Gall yoke in the admirable battles for freedom around 1400 (Voegelinsegg in 1403 and Stoss in 1405). Although the citizens of the town of St. Gall were by no means satisfied with the abbot, no State of St. Gall and Appenzell came into being, because the anxious townfolk let down the people of Appenzell at the crucial moment, so that the latter decided to create their own State. That, however, was only possible because they found the right time to join the Confederate State with which they concluded alliances in 1411 and 1452. These gave them a legally inferior position within the Confederation. Because the Appenzell people had fought valiantly in the Milan Wars, the Confederates gave them equality of rights at last in 1513, when they became the thirteenth member of the Federation.

Just as the creation of the Canton



The Säntis offers breathtaking views of the Toggenburg and the Churfürsten.

of Appenzell shows certain parallels in many ways with the liberation of Central Switzerland, one finds similar events and results in the era of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Like elsewhere in Switzerland, the Reformation could not succeed in the whole Canton. On the other hand, it was impossible to keep Zwingli's teachings out of it. In the Inner *Rhoden* (districts or communes), the inhabitants remained mostly Catholic, whereas the Outer *Rhoden* (Urnaesch – Herisau – Hundwil – Teufen – Trogen) professed the new faith. From 1525 to 1588, Appenzell people lived on a footing of equality, more or less at peace with one another. After 1580, the Counter-Reformation pressure from Central Switzerland made itself felt, and suddenly, under the influence of the capuchin monks, Protestant minorities were no longer tolerated in the Inner *Rhoden*, and they were expelled unless they returned to the Catholic faith. There were quarrels about the Gregorian Calendar and joining an alliance with Spain. All of a sudden one heard the word

«separation», and in 1597, the two Half-Cantons Ausserrhoden and Innerrhoden were created by the Confederation's good offices. From that moment, too, the Ausserrhoder people would no longer tolerate Catholics, and thus Ausserrhoden remained exclusively Protestant and Innerrhoden totally Roman Catholic right into the 19th century. Until 1848, the two Half-States had only one voice in the Diet, because the Confederation upheld the fiction of a single Canton of Appenzell. This meant that a voice for each State could not be established at all in times of denominational obstinacy. Ever since 1848, they each have half a voice in federal plebiscites. This and the fact that they have only one Councillor of States distinguishes them from the full Cantons.

Unlike the two Half-Cantons of Basle where efforts have been made to re-unite the two separate parts, no such steps have been taken in the two Half-Cantons of Appenzell. Nowadays, the denominational differences are not quite as obvious any more, but the



# Features

two Half-Cantons have deliberately kept and developed their individual political characteristics. The consciousness of political and cultural independence has strengthened in the course of centuries.

Economic development, too, advanced in opposite directions: whilst Innerrhoden has remained largely agricultural with its population often living in very modest circumstances, Ausserrhoden developed into an industrial Canton in the 18th century. Its inhabitants evolved an efficient export trade which enabled them to integrate over-population. By the end of the 18th century, geographers and travellers realized with amazement that no other country in Europe except Malta was as densely populated as Appenzell-Ausserrhoden. In the 17th century, its people engaged above all in linen weaving and sold their products on St.Gall markets. Since 1700 they have had their own markets at Herisau and Trogen, and actual trading dynasties grew up, such as the Wetters and Tanners at Herisau and the Zellwegers at Trogen. In about 1750, cotton weaving began to thrive, and the Appenzell craftsmen showed their mastery in producing fine muslin textiles.

## A few figures

Surface area:	415,2 km <sup>2</sup>
Population:	62,200 inhabitants in 26 communes (5,000 in the town of Appenzell)
Denominations:	34,816 Protestants 26,011 Roman Catholics 1,320 other religions
Language:	German
Agricultural estates:	2,742
Tourism:	176 hotels (3,202 beds)
Industrial undertakings:	131 (5,515 employees)
Limited companies:	393
Net of roads:	542 km
Total of engine-vehicles:	18,025

Soon weaving was complemented by embroidery which later also became a famous speciality in Innerrhoden. The Appenzell textile industry was above all a cottage industry; even when, in the 19th century, the well-known mechanization of the textile industry set in, most weavers and embroiderers carried out their work at home in their own weaving cellars or embroidery rooms, rather than in factories. After the conquest by the Jacquard loom and the handembroidery machine in the 19th century, the cottage industry structure remained intact in the Appenzell economy. From the 17th to the beginning of the 20th century, the Appenzell

people unfortunately concentrated exclusively on the textile industry, so that its collapse after the first world war brought a serious crisis. This manifested itself largely by young people emigrating. Since 1910, there has been a decrease in population. It was not until after the second world war that Appenzell recovered from this crisis, and an unexpected boom enabled the people to change over to other branches of industry. The thriving economy of the past 20 years – as everywhere in Switzerland – has naturally changed the face of villages and countryside, and not always to the good. A visitor from outside, however, will still find that the Appen-

Characteristic houses in Gais

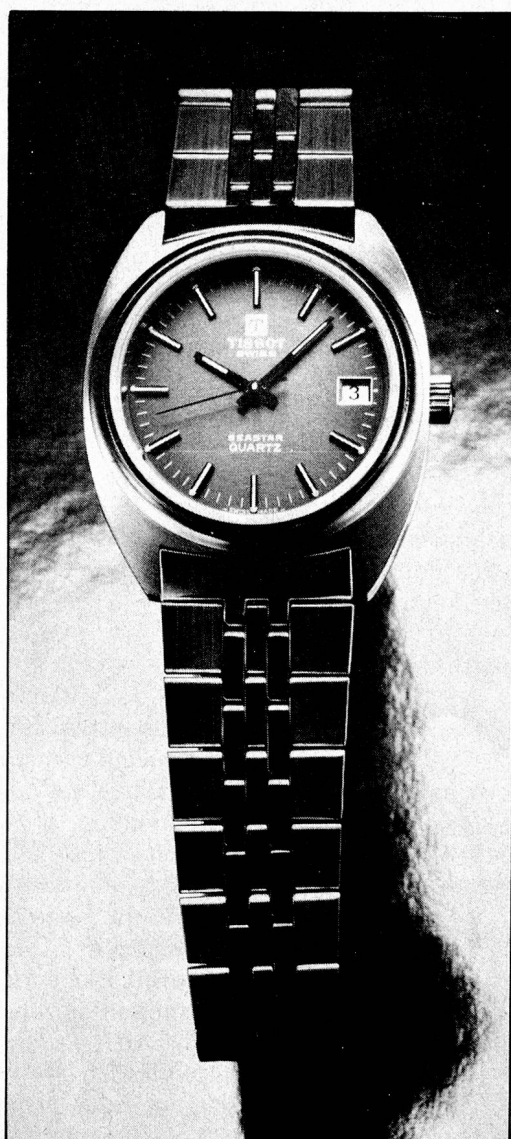


Driving cattle up to the alpine meadows of Schwägalp



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# Features



Appenzell's main street

Appenzell scenery has generally kept its peculiar charm. The fact that the economic boom was kept within bounds was probably due to unfavourable communications: just as the Romans did not include the Saentis region in their roadnets, so have the communications pioneers of the recent past left Appenzell alone as unsuitable: It is not accidental that Appenzell is the only Canton which has not a single metre of SBB and will never have a single metre of national roads either. This has cost the Canton dearly in private railways, and the burden has been lessened only in recent times when neighbours and Confederation have given some support.

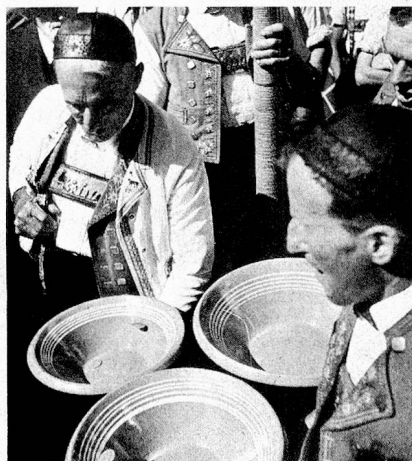
The fact that the Canton lies outside the large communications network and yet is not at great distance from these, brings considerable advantages to that particular branch of economy which shows great promise for the future: tourism which prefers quiet corners more and more. The Alpstein deservedly attracts increasing numbers of visitors; it is a unique mountain in a comparatively small area not far from developed starting-points and offers an amazing variety of safe rambles and difficult mountaineering excursions.

In recent years, the attraction of

folklore and peasant art has grown to such an extent that circumspect citizens have become uncomfortable. On the other hand, it must be mentioned that the Appenzell people have achieved in one field at least an incredibly original success in the 19th and early 20th centuries, namely in the art of peasant painting. Simple herdsmen and cottage workers designed tablet pictures showing pastoral life, which are justly admired today as primitive art and thus – the artists never expected this – have been accepted by art galleries throughout the country. The decorative need of the Appenzell people shows itself also in articles in everyday use: furniture, vessels, clothing such as braces. They are all given delicately worked ornaments. Many products of Appenzell rural art have recently been removed from their natural surroundings and have been sold to outsiders. A recently founded museum of customs and folklore at Urnaesch now has as its aim to reclaim old pieces in order to preserve them for the Canton.

In addition, quite a lot of old customs have been kept alive in the Appenzell. Among them, the *Silvesterklausen* at Urnaesch and

A five-franc piece is kept rolling. The bigger the bowl, the lower the note produced



Ladies of Appenzell in her Sunday best  
(Photos SNTÖ)

Herisau is particularly interesting, not only because of the circulating of the *Klausen* carrying huge bells, but because this does not happen on 31st December, but on 13th January according to the old Julian calendar.

Religious customs have particular importance in Catholic Innerrhoden, especially the Corpus Christi festival, which has always enabled women to show off their beautiful, rich costumes during the procession. Even the people of Ausserrhoden will admit without envy that the women's costumes of Innerrhoden are amongst the most attractive in Switzerland.

And finally mention must be made of a political custom: ever since the formation of the Appenzell State, its citizens have decided political matters at the *Landsgemeinde*, the open-air Parliament. Up to 1597, they held it in Appenzell. Since the partition, the Innerrhoden citizens meet in their capital Appenzell, and those of Ausserrhoden at Trogen in even years, at Hundwil in uneven years. At the *Landsgemeinde*, the people of Appenzell elect their Government and decide on the laws of the country. It is here, standing side by side, that the citizens experience to the full the function of their State.

Dr Walter Schläpfer