

# The canton of St. Gall

Autor(en): **Thürer, Georg**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1978)**

Heft 1740

PDF erstellt am: **23.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687279>

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# The Swiss Observer

Published Monthly at  
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET  
LONDON EC2A 4AH  
Tel: 01-253 2321  
Telegrams: Paperwyse London

EDITOR: George Sommer  
Editor's telephone: 01-892 5920

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### Cover:

Mr Willi Ritschard, Head of the Federal Department of Communications and Energy, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION 1978 at an Open-Air Parliament (Lands-gemeinde)

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A Swiss woman wishing to retain her Swiss nationality on marrying a foreign national **must** make a declaration in writing to that effect, **before the marriage**, on a form obtainable from the Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

## The Canton of St. Gall

The author, Prof. Dr. Georg Thuerer, born in 1908, lectures in German language and literature, as well as Swiss history at the Graduate Institute of Economics in St. Gall. His major work as a scholar is the «St. Gall History» (1953/1972) which presents civic life, culture and economics from prehistoric times to the present. Apart from that, he has written poetry in German and in dialect.

The Federal State of St. Gall counts amongst the larger Cantons of Switzerland. With regard to population, it comes fifth with its 388 000 inhabitants, and as to area it is in sixth place with 2014 square kilometers. Looking at its geographical position, one is struck by two things. St. Gall is a frontier Canton which borders on three neighbouring countries: the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria and the Principality of Liechtenstein. Secondly, it is a «ring Canton», for it surrounds the Canton of Appenzell completely. This already indicates that the

Canton of St. Gall is not a natural creation, but was formed artificially. How did this strange formation come about?

### History

Even two hundred years ago, nobody would have thought that the districts between the Lakes of Constance, Zurich and Walenstadt would one day be united in one single political structure. At that time, there existed some very different dominions. The largest domain was under the rule of the Prince Abbot of St. Gall. He reigned supremely from the palatinate of the famous Benedictine Monastery over his «Principality» between the urban corner-stones of Rorschach and Wil, whilst the Toggenburg was more like a constitutional monarchy in the 18th century. The free imperial city of St. Gall was entirely surrounded by the abbatial estate. The trade

The Baroque Stiftskirche of St. Gall

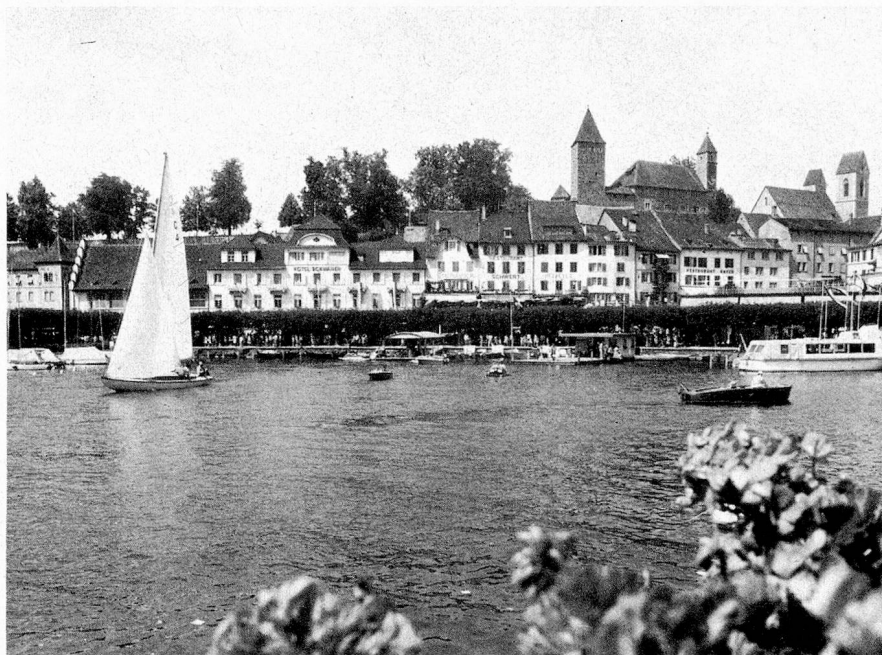


# Features

relations of this dwarf republic extended to Spain and Poland, mainly linen, cotton and embroidery. Both St. Gall's, i.e. the Monastery State and the Urban State, were «associated territories» of the old Confederation. The attachment to the old Swiss Federation was also a feature of those territories that belong to the Canton of St. Gall today. The majority of the governing old territories sent their provincial bailiffs to the common domains of Sargans and Rheintal. Schwyz and Glarus ruled over Uznach, Gaster and Gams, whilst Werdenberg was ruled by Glarus and Sax by Zurich as their own dependencies; finally, the town of Rapperswil was a protectorate of three territories. What chequered political map on such small ground!

In order to forge a firm ring of this loose mosaic, it needed first of all a powerful impulse from outside. It came from the West. The French Revolution demanded freedom, equality and fraternity. That is when the humble subjects in the Switzerland of that time – the majority of the population – pricked up their ears. The rulers unfortunately failed to recognize the signs of the times. At the entry of the charging revolutionary armies, the construction of the Old Confederation burst asunder on account of the exaggerated federalism. Broken fragments everywhere. How could they be put together again in a new political structure?

The Helvetic State of 1798 created an unified state, the *République helvétique une et indivisible*. In it, the Cantons were nothing more than administrative districts. Over night, there were two new political creations in North-Eastern Switzerland, the two Cantons «Säntis» and «Linth». But they proved not to be durable. Switzerland became a theatre of war of foreign armies, and once those left, civil troubles broke out.



The quayside of Rapperswil with Castle and Parish Church

It was then that the most powerful man intervened. Napoleon Bonaparte's new policies, the so-called Mediation of 1803, recreated the old Cantons, but not the dependencies. The Associated Territories and the former dependencies of North-Eastern Switzerland were put together in the new Canton of St. Gall. The question now was whether this integration would be successful.

Without doubt, it was to the new political structure's great advantage that its first *Landammann*

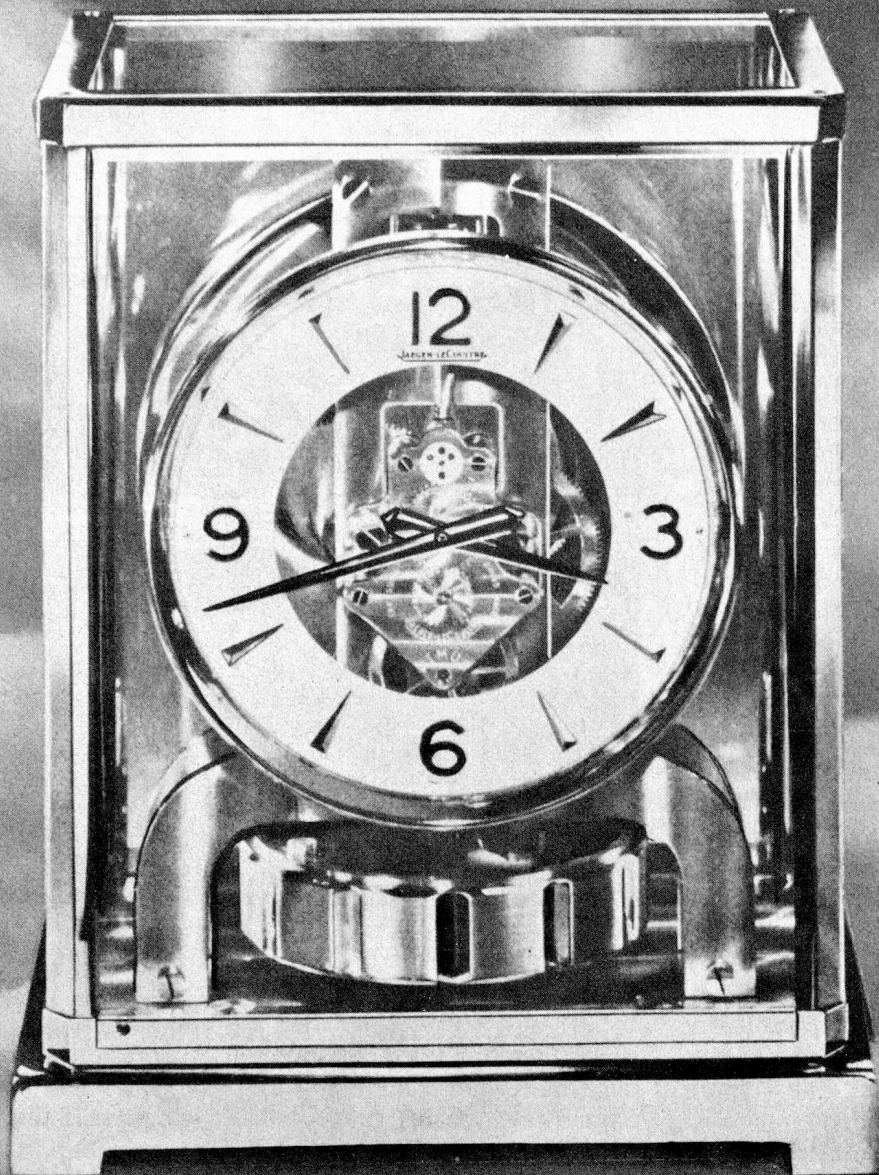
(president) Karl Müller-Friedberg, was a man who knew the districts on the Rhine, on the Thur and on the Linth from his own political experience. From 1803 to 1831, he was the undisputed first citizen of the Canton. He knew how to combine the sense for diplomacy of the 18th century with the republican conviction of the 19th century.

His successor was Gallus Jakob Baumgartner, an artisan's son from the Rhine Valley, who was so prominent and influential as a

## A few figures

Surface area:	2014,2 km <sup>2</sup>
Population:	385,300 inhabitants in 90 communes (77,300 in the town of St. Gall)
Denominations:	244,625 Roman Catholics 133,557 Protestants 6,293 other religions
Language:	German
Agricultural estates:	9,310
Tourism:	508 hotels (11,456 beds)
Industrial undertakings:	800 (49,141 employees)
Limited companies:	3,236
Net of roads:	2,830 km
Total of engine-vehicles:	106,418





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# Features



View from Säntis to the Toggenburg and Churfirsten

Liberal pioneer that elsewhere one referred to St.Gall simply as Canton Baumgartner. But after the distinguished statesman had moved over to the Conservative camp, the Canton of St.Gall was given another nickname. At that time the question was whether Switzerland should remain a Federation of States or become a Confederate State. Eleven Cantons were in favour of the new solution. But it needed the majority of the 22 States. «*Douze voix font loi!*» declared the French-speaking Swiss. It was therefore with great tension that in the rest of Switzerland, but also abroad, one waited for the result of the elections in the «Canton of Destiny» St.Gall. They produced an extremely small majority for the Liberals who were willing, together with their Swiss partisan friends, to oppose with armed force the *Sonderbund* which was attached to the old regime. This actually happened in the *Sonderbund* war of 1847.

In the Confederate State of 1848, the Canton of St.Gall has co-operated most adequately. So far, it has produced five Federal Coun-

cillors (W.Naef, A.Hoffmann, K.Kobelt, Th.Holenstein and K.Furgler). It was with gratitude that the Canton accepted federal assistance in the construction of canals in the Rhine Valley, which helped to prevent the former catastrophic floods; the «Valley Tyrant» Rhine was tamed as the wild Linth between the Lakes of Zurich and Walenstadt had been mastered before. Thanks to the «locomotive» Mathias Hungerbühler, the Canton of St.Gall constructed the communications triangle Lake of Constance-Rorschach-Zurich in an exemplary manner. That was the time when railroads were being developed rapidly. With the «Ostalpenbahn» (Eastern Alpine Railways), however, no progress was made once the Confederation had given a promise. On the other hand, the Canton of St.Gall has its fair share of National Roads.

## Political structure

The Canton of St.Gall has a *Grosser Rat* (Cantonal Parliament) with a total of 180 members, who are elected in the 14 districts according to the system of proportional representation. The Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) provides roughly half of the Cantonal Parliament, followed by the Liberal Democrats (FdP), the Social Democrats (SP) and the *Landesring der Unabhängigen* (National Ring of Independents) (LdU).

The Government consists of seven members. It is chaired by the *Landammann* (President), changing every year.

The highest legal authority is the Cantonal Tribunal. The 14 districts have their own judiciary power within their District Courts.

The 90 Communes enjoy remarkable administrative autonomy. They are the schools of democracy as it were, and so are the larger Communes, the *Ortsgemeinden* which, as economic

corporations have a lot to say in naturalisations, as well as in cultural matters. Their importance, not least that of the capital, is not to be taken lightly.

## Economic life

Like the whole of Western Europe, the Canton of St.Gall shows a decline in the farming community, which today comprises only a twelfth part of the population. Around 1900, the embroidery industry was the real queen. At that time, embroideries of Eastern Switzerland were put on the world markets for more money than for example for watches or machinery. After the first world war, the golden era of St.Gall embroidery gave way to a leaden crisis. The efforts to build the economy, so to speak, on one single branch, and a luxury fashion article at that, proved wrong, and the miscalculation had to be dearly paid for. Since then, the textile industry has become more versatile, and in addition, machine industry and precision industry have taken their places. Incidentally, the largest industrial concerns are not situated in towns, but in larger villages, as for instance Gebrüder Bühler AG at Uzwil, the optical works of Wild AG at Heerbrugg and Heberlein AG at Wattwil. The largest town is the capital St.Gall, which,

Historic oriel window dating back to 1606 giving into the Gallus





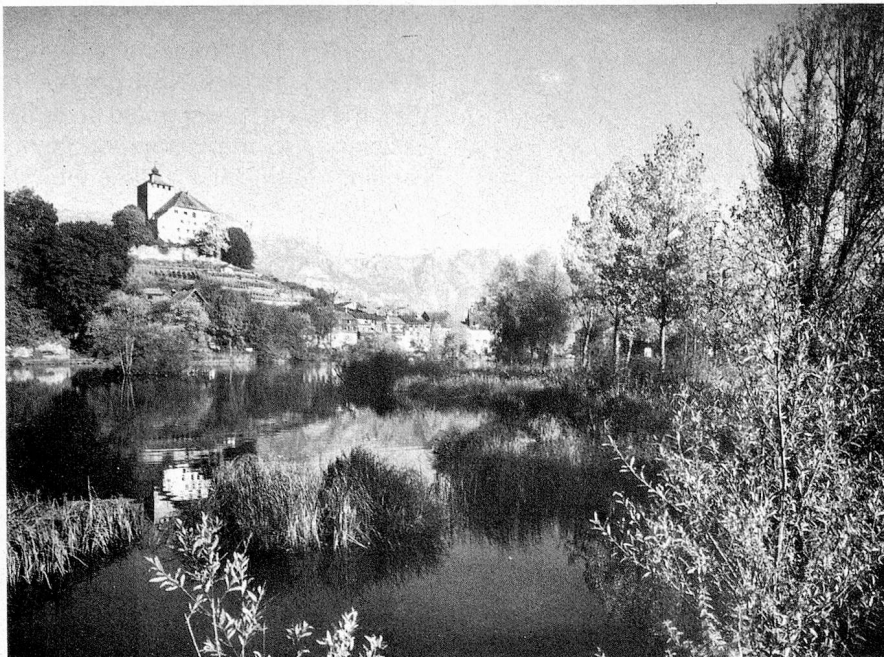
# Features

however, has hardly more inhabitants than two centuries ago. All other «towns» have a population of well below 20 000 inhabitants. Thus one may speak of migration from the country and the mountains, but hardly of gross urbanization. The fact that agriculture has kept its position in the green pre-Alpine regions, is shown by the OLMA (the Eastern Swiss agricultural and dairy exhibition) which is held in St. Gall every autumn. It is the «Green Fair» of Switzerland. This fourth in the row of Swiss fairs has been visited by well over 400 000 people every year in recent times.

## Nature

The Canton of St. Gall mounts like a large flight of steps from Lake Constance (399m above sea level) up to the Ringelspitze (3251m). Dairy farming is more important than wine- or cereal-growing. Indian corn plays a special part in the Rhine Valley. The «Türggeribel» (corn-on-the-cob) has always been a speciality of the valley region, just as nothing can be compared to the excellent sausages of the capital. Viniculture (in the Rhine and the Seez Valleys) produces predominantly red wine. As to dairy farming, the traditional brown cattle herds have recently been augmented by other breeds. In cheese-making, the Appenzell cheese has been dominating for some time.

As to game-keeping, St. Gall may be proud of one particular merit. The ibex, now extinct in the Alps, has been acclimatized again and bred successfully over the past few decades at the St. Gall Animal Park of Peter and Paul. Special reserves like for instance along the Murgsee where the *Arve* (Arolla pine) thrives, as well as peat-bogs assure the preservation of rare species of plants and flowers. It may be mentioned as a peculiarity that figs ripen regularly at Quinten on the Lake of Walenstadt



Castle Werdenberg (Photos SNTÖ)

watched over by the Churfürsten range. St. Gall is poor in mineral deposits. The iron ore mine on the Gonzen has been closed since 1966. On the other hand, more and more visitors frequent the warm springs at the world-renowned spa of Bad Ragaz.

## Culture

The old Monastery of St. Gall was a cultural centre of the first order. The Monastery Library adjoining the beautiful Baroque Cathedral has an unique collection of books which comprises such treasures as the oldest book in the German language, the finest manuscript of the Nibelungen song and marvellous specimens of mainly Benedictine book art. The town of St. Gall reveres its most famous burgomaster Joachim von Watt, known as Vadian, who, from Wildhaus in the Toggenburg, introduced the Reformation in his home town, in the spirit of his friend Ulrich Zwingli. In the year 1597, the first paper of the Occident was published near Rorschach, the «Annus Christi». A few

weeks ago, it appeared again in a facsimile edition. The most famous book of St. Gall in the 18th century was the biography of Ueli Bräker, the Poor Man of the Toggenburg, whilst Friedrich von Tschudi's «Animal Life in the Alpine World» enjoyed high repute in the 19th century. Johannes Dierauer wrote the fundamental «History of the Swiss Confederation».

St. Gall art produced no old masters of the first order, perhaps, as a St. Gall citizen once remarked, because «our forefathers preferred the unpainted linen to the painted canvas». Amongst draughtsmen, the talented and brave Carl Böckli should be mentioned. He brought success to the «Nebelspalter» which is published at Rorschach. Friends of the popular song owe the Alpine air «Lueget vo Berge und Tal» to Ferdinand Fürchtegott Huber. Amongst creative artists of today, Paul Huber has to be mentioned in first place.

St. Gall architecture of today is represented in the Graduate Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, famous far and wide.

# Features

The modern Municipal Theatre shows that an interesting building can attract over more visitors. As far as secondary education is concerned, a much desired decentralization has been evolved in the last two decades. At Sargans, Wattwil and Heerbrugg, new can-

tonal schools have been created; Buchs and Rapperswil have their own new technical college. Primary education, too, enjoys great care, following the text inscribed on the walls of one of St. Galls rural schools: «*Volksbefreiung durch Volksbildung*» (for people

to be free they must be educated). True democracy demands that the future fellow-citizens are trained at an early age to insight and respect.

Georg Thürer

## Swiss Patriotic Songs and Marches

This production which every Swiss society and every Swiss abroad should own, is now available. Who could fail to appreciate the songs of his youth, now that he lives away from his homeland? For your Swiss evenings and for the admirers of our well-known tunes, the Claves Company has undertaken to publish the works played by the Swiss Army Band, conducted by Walter Spieler. The record runs for about 40 minutes. A sheet is attached which has the first two verses of each song, so that one may not only listen but join in the singing. In addition, our Swiss patriotic songs and marches are also described in detail on the same sheet.

Here are a few examples:

«**Cantique Suisse**» A. Zwysig

Sur nos monts, quand le soleil annonce un brillant réveil,  
Et prédit d'un plus beau jour le retour,  
Les beautés de la patrie parlent à l'âme attendrie;  
Au ciel montent plus joyeux les accents d'un cœur pieux,  
Les accents émus d'un cœur pieux.

«**Notre Suisse**» J. Bovet

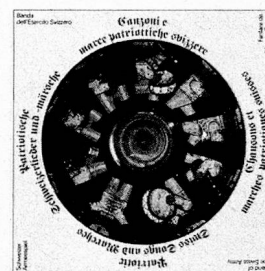
Beau pays,  
Cher pays,  
Noble terre où dorment nos aïeux;  
Au sein des campagnes,  
Au flanc des montagnes,  
Tout, chez toi, respire un air joyeux.  
Helvétie,  
Ma Patrie,  
Noble terre où dorment nos aïeux.

«**Die Vaterlandshymne**» O. Barblan

Heil dir, mein Schweizerland!  
Heil dir, frei Alpenland,  
im Völkersturm!  
Weit in der Länder Kreis  
leuchtet aus Nacht und Eis  
dein Banner rot und weiss  
vom Felsenturm.

«**Ode an Gott**» J. H. Tobler

Alles Leben strömt aus dir,  
alles Leben strömt aus dir  
und durchwallt in tausend Bächen,  
und durchwallt in tausend Bächen,  
alle Welten, alle sprechen:  
Deiner Hände Werk sind wir,  
deiner Hände Werk sind wir,  
deiner Hände, Hände Werk sind wir,  
deiner Hände Werk sind wir.



Furthermore,  
the following songs  
are reproduced:

«**Notre Suisse**»  
«**Prière patriotique**»  
«**Sacra Terra del Ticino**»  
«**La Ligia Grischa**»  
«**Mon beau Valais**»  
«**Le Jura**»  
«**Cé qu'è l'ainô**»

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