

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 4 (1994-1996)
Heft: 7

Artikel: Private railways in Switzerland. Part 2
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855049>

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Private Railways in Switzerland - 2

by Brian Hemming

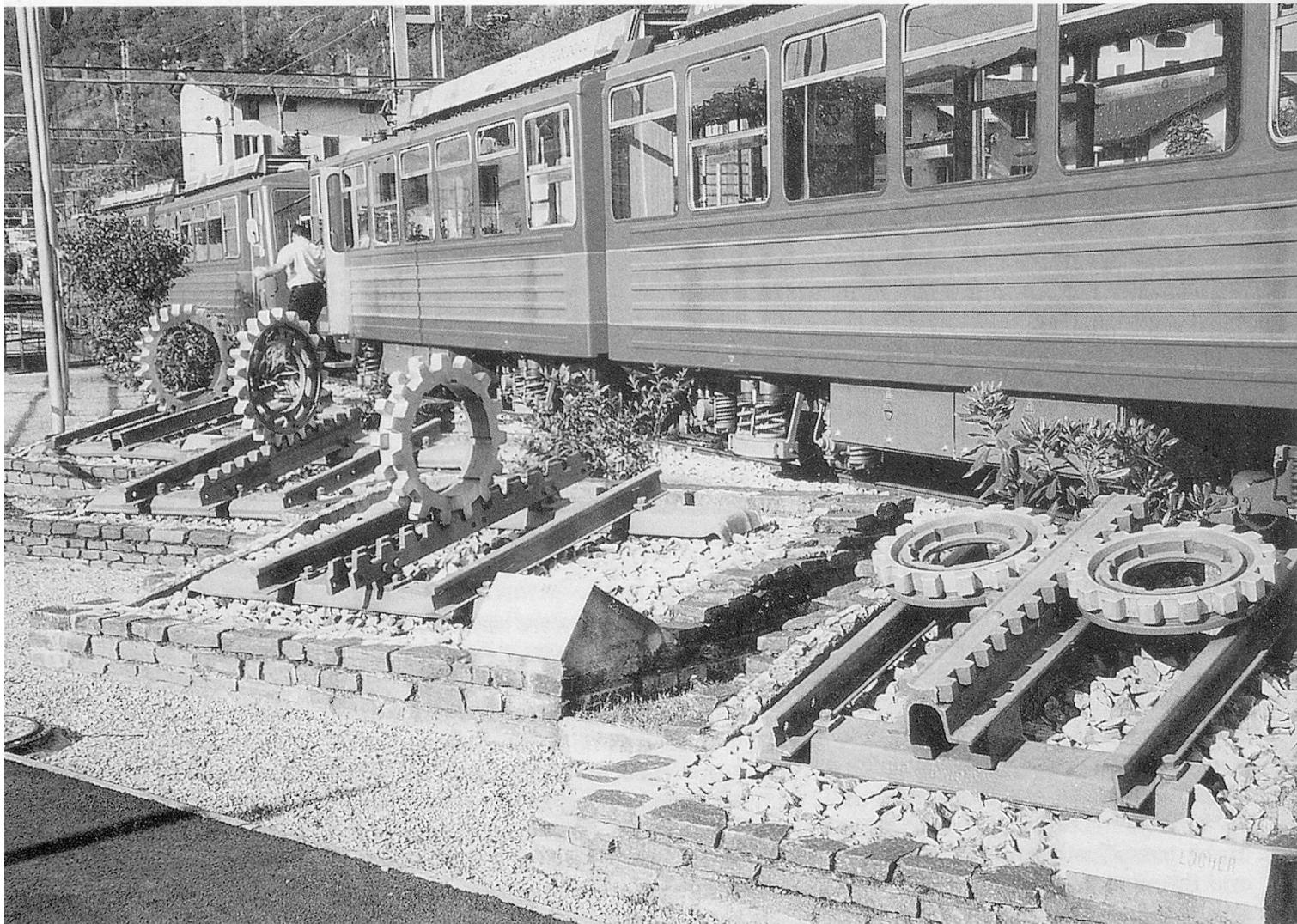
Continuing this series we cover in this issue another five of the smaller private railways of Switzerland. The common thread between them is that they all start from outside a Federal Railways station, and so can easily be reached by the rail traveller. As in the first part of this series, the railways have been selected from different areas of Switzerland.

The town of Aigle which is situated in the Rhône valley south of Montreux is a centre for viticulture as well as having an industrial base. From the railway point of view it is on the SBB/CFF Rhône valley main line and has three private railways and a variety of PTT bus services all operating from the main line station forecourt. The three private railways, all

members of the Transports Publics du Chablis (TPC) group, stand side by side but depart in different directions which gives ample opportunity for a wide variety of photographs, including some street running.

In contrast the seasonally operated Ferrovia Monte Generoso in Canton Ticino is entirely rack operated and depends very much on tourist traffic, whilst the Frauenfeld-Wil-Bahn is an urban light railway connecting two important towns in the north east of Switzerland.

Below: A display of the different types of rack systems used in Switzerland, at Capolago - Riva S. Vitale on the Monte Generoso in August 1994. They are from the left Rigganbach, Strub, Abt, and Locher
Photo: Anne Williams





AL

Chemin de Fer Aigle-Leysin

The AL was the first of the private railways in Aigle. Initially a tramway was opened in 1900 from Aigle CFF to Grand-Hôtel d'Aigle, to be followed later in the same year by a rack section from Aigle Dépôt to Leysin Feydey. An extension of the rack section was opened in 1916 from Leysin Feydey to Leysin Grand-Hôtel. The tramway service from Aigle CFF to Grand-Hôtel d'Aigle was operated until the end of August 1952. Plans are currently in hand to extend the line from Leysin Grand-Hôtel for a further 3.87km to La Berneuse.

The line runs as a tramway through Aigle to the depot station where reversal takes place and the rack section commences for the climb through vineyards and forests to Leysin Grand-Hôtel. Passenger traffic is operated by single railcars with driving trailers. There is virtually no freight on the line; the only locomotive being used mainly for works trains.

BDeh4/4 305 and Te2/2 101 at the Depot just above Aigle.

Photo: Les Heath

Length: 6.2km
 Gauge: 1000mm
 Rack system: Abt (part)
 Voltage: 1300v dc
 Maximum gradient: 38% (adhesion),
 230% (rack)
 Depot: Aigle
 Works: Aigle
 Nearest SBB station: Aigle (adjacent)
 Kursbuch table: 125
Powered Stock (brown & ivory livery)

Class	Numbers	Built
He2/2	12	?
Te2/2	101	1915
BDeh2/4	201-203	1946
BDeh4/4	301, 302	1966
BDeh4/4	303, 304	1987
BDeh4/4	305	1994



AOMC

Chemin de Fer Aigle-Ollon-Monthey-Champéry

This railway came into being as the result of an amalgamation in 1946 of two older railways, the AOM and the MCM. The Aigle- Monthey (AOM) opened in 1907 to be followed in 1908 by the Monthey-Champéry (MCM). They run on common track from Monthey-En-Place to Monthey-Ville. An extension opened in 1909 from Monthey- Ville to Monthey CFF lasted until 1946. At Champéry the line was re-aligned in connection with new roadworks and extended to the foot of the cable car to Planachaux.

The line leaves Aigle in a southerly direction and proceeds via Ollon with mainly roadside running to cross the Rhône near the closed CFF station at St. Triphon. There is some street running through Collombey and Monthey before reaching the terminal station at Monthey-Ville. Here connection is made with the service on the rack sections to Champéry.

The passenger service is normally operated by railcars and driving trailers from Aigle to Monthey, whilst that to Champéry is in the hands of rack fitted railcars with driving trailers attached

From the left, Be4/4 103, BDeh4/4 14 and 11, at Monthey Ville station .

Photo: Les Heath

as required. Freight is confined to local traffic which is usually carried in goods vehicles attached to passenger trains.

Length: 23.1km

Gauge: 1000mm

Rack system: Strub (part)

Voltage: 850v dc

Maximum gradient: 50% (adhesion), 135% (rack)

Depot: Monthey

Works: Monthey

Nearest SBB stations: Aigle (adjacent), Monthey (1km)

Kursbuch table: 126

Powered Stock (red & white livery)

Class	Numbers	Built
BDeh4/4	1, 2	1987
BDeh4/4	11-14	1954
Be4/4	101-105	1966



ASD

Chemin de Fer Aigle-Sépey-Diablerets

The railway opened in two parts, being electrically operated from the beginning. The first section from Aigle CFF to Le Sépey opened in December 1913, to be followed some 7 months later by that from Les Planches to the resort of Les Diablerets. The viability of the line has always been very marginal, particularly in the summer and the threat of closure or "bustitution" has never been far away. Modernization was put in hand in 1964 which secured the future but new railcars did not arrive until 1987 by which time the original vehicles still in service were over 70 years old. A further cost reduction has been that the branch to Le Sépey hitherto served by all trains now only has a two hourly service, and the station facilities have been demolished.

The line, which is adhesion operated throughout, departs from the main line station forecourt at Aigle, and after proceeding through the town eventually reaches the depot where the almost continual climb to Les Diablerets commences. The journey is very scenic with the railway hugging the hillside above Grande Eau river. The line is notable for a number of bridges;

the largest being that at Les Planches on the branch to Le Sépey which is 106m long and 84m above the river.

Traffic is now in the hands of modern railcars with driving trailers. Two of the old railcars are still active on special trains, and this traffic has been further promoted by the addition to stock of two ex Brünig open panoramic (aussicht) wagons.

Length: 22.3km

Gauge: 1000mm

Voltage: 1350v dc

Maximum gradient: 60‰

Depots: Aigle, Les Diablerets

Works: Aigle

Nearest SBB station: Aigle (adjacent)

Kursbuch table: 124

Powered Stock (light blue & white livery)

Class	Numbers	Built
ABDe4/4	1, 2	1913
BDe4/4	401-404	1987



FW Frauenfeld-Wil-Bahn

The Frauenfeld-Wil-Bahn was opened in 1887 as a steam operated street railway to link the two towns and serve the various developing communities en route. Various economic difficulties were encountered, but nevertheless electric traction replaced steam in 1921. Whilst electrifying the opportunity was taken to realign most of the track onto reserved track at the side of the road.

As well as operating a regular interval passenger service the railway also derived freight traffic from a number of industrial premises along its route. Originally this traffic was transferred to the SBB at both Frauenfeld and Wil, but in 1977 the company acquired 16 rollböcke and built the necessary handling facilities at Wil to enable through working of standard gauge wagons to and from the FW. A further 16 rollböcke were purchased in 1985.

Above: Frauenfeld terminus, the SBB station and goods shed are visible on the left.

Photo: Alan Pike

The only electric locomotive was withdrawn in 1969, leaving the freight traffic in the hands of railcars.

Length: 17km

Gauge: 1000mm

Voltage: 1200v dc

Maximum gradient: 46‰

Depot: Wil

Works: Wil

Nearest SBB stations: Frauenfeld, Wil SG (both adjacent)

Kursbuch table: 841

Powered Stock (red & white livery)

Class	Numbers	Built
Be4/4	11-15	1985
Be4/4	16, 17	1993
Be4/4	205, 206	1947



MG

Ferrovia Monte Generoso

The Ferrovia Monte Generoso, which is the only rack railway in Switzerland south of the Gotthard, was opened in 1890 as a steam rack railway. It operates from Capolago on Lake Lugano to a station some 100m below the 1704m summit of Monte Generoso. After many years of financial difficulties the line was closed in 1939, but the company was purchased in 1941 by Gottlieb Duttweiler, the founder of Migros, restructured and reopened. In 1953 economies were effected by discontinuing steam in favour of diesel traction. Further investment took place and the line was electrified in 1982.

The line, which is rack operated throughout, starts from Capolago Lago where connection is made with boats on Lake Lugano and in 300m reaches the main line station of Capolago-Riva S. Vitale. Of interest here is a display on the lineside of the four main rack systems used in Switzerland with plaques detailing the railways on which each is used. From Capolago-Riva S. Vitale the mountain climb starts; there being two passing places en route to the terminus at Generoso Vetta.

BRe4/8 13 "Salorino" at Capolago - Riva S. Vitale, August 1994.

Photo: Anne Williams

The service on the line is now operated from April to October by the newer two car railcars which also push small wagons which carry luggage and supplies to the hotels on the mountain. Some of the older steam and diesel stock has been retained for special workings.

Length: 9km

Gauge: 800mm

Rack system: Abt

Voltage: 850v dc

Maximum gradient: 220%

Depot: Capolago

Works: Capolago

Nearest SBB station: Capolago-Riva S. Vitale (adjacent)

Kursbuch table: 636

Powered Stock (blue & orange livery)

Class	Numbers	Built
H11/2	2 (preserved)	1890
Hm2/3	1, 2	1953, 1954
Hm2/2	7	1957
Bhe4/8	11-14	1982



Seen at Basel

Below: DB tram/light train leaving main station to Basel Bad?

Above: Re4/4" 11141, how much longer in the Swiss Express livery.

Bottom of page: One of the powerful Em6/6's 17004

