

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2006)
Heft: [4]

Artikel: The first electric railway in Switzerland?
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854813>

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THE FIRST ELECTRIC RAILWAY IN SWITZERLAND ?

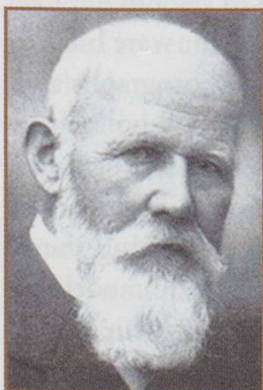
I came across this fascinating photograph in Volume 1 of the mammoth publication *Les Chemins de Fer Suisses après un Siècle 1847-1947*. It shows what is claimed to be the first electric railway in Switzerland. The line was installed in Territet near Montreux in 1884 and led up to a hotel in the resort. The rack appears to be the Riggerbach system. It is not clear how the electric current was picked up, so perhaps it was battery operated. However it is claimed that it featured regenerative braking when moving down the 1 in 33 slope. It was able to carry four people on each trip.

Standing to the left of the vehicle is Ami Chessex, the hotel owner and presumably the instigator of the project. Perhaps more importantly, standing on the vehicle is René Thury, the distinguished engineer who was the designer. At the time he worked for a company in Geneva, Meuron and Cuénod, which later developed into the Sécheron company - one of the leading Swiss locomotive manufacturers. As well as being involved in traction matters René looked into the possibility of distributing electric power nationally using a d.c. grid system rather than the usual a.c. three-phase system. Today the d.c. grid system is used in special situations such as the UK –

France link by submarine cable under the Channel.

Réne Thury (1860 –1938).

Editor's Note: Does anyone know of an earlier electrified line in Switzerland?



The experimental line at Territet with fascinated spectators

One of M. Thury's 'High Voltage' locomotives for a later French line.

