

Zeitschrift:	Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber:	Swiss Railways Society
Band:	- (2016)
Heft:	127
Artikel:	The 'Limmat' Donor! : Boyd Misstear recounts the history of SCB Eb 2/4 No. 15 'Speiser' (1857-1946)
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854063

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The 'Limmat' Donor!

Boyd Misshear recounts the history of SCB Eb 2/4 No.15 'Speiser' (1857-1946)



SCB 0-4-4T No.15 'Speiser', built by Kessler in 1857, outside the Transport Hall at the 1939 'Landi'.

Photo: Courtesy of the Model Railway Club

First introduced and built by Maschinenfabrik Esslingen, twelve Engerth-style tender locomotives were supplied to Schweizerische Centralbahn (SCB) in 1857. These were factory numbers 353-364, and SCB numbered them 15-26 respectively. One more followed in 1859 (SCB No.56) and four 'replacements' in 1872. Each of these carried two SCB numbers in their lifetime 71/18, 72/19, 73/20 and 74/21 respectively, caused by the need to free up the higher number for shunters and replace released numbers. The engines had an internal driving gear and the boiler had only a steam manifold and no steam dome. After the introduction of coal firing in 1859, the original conical spark arrestor (as shown reinstalled in our 1939 photograph taken at the "Landi" – the Swiss National Exhibition), had been replaced by a cylindrical chimney. Due to having a weak frame, these locomotives earned the nickname "Spinne" (spider)!

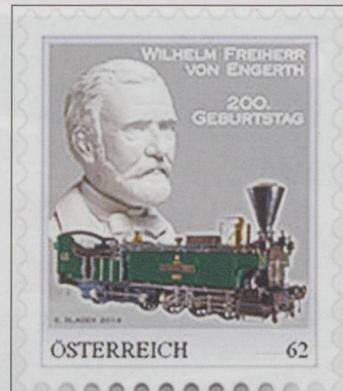
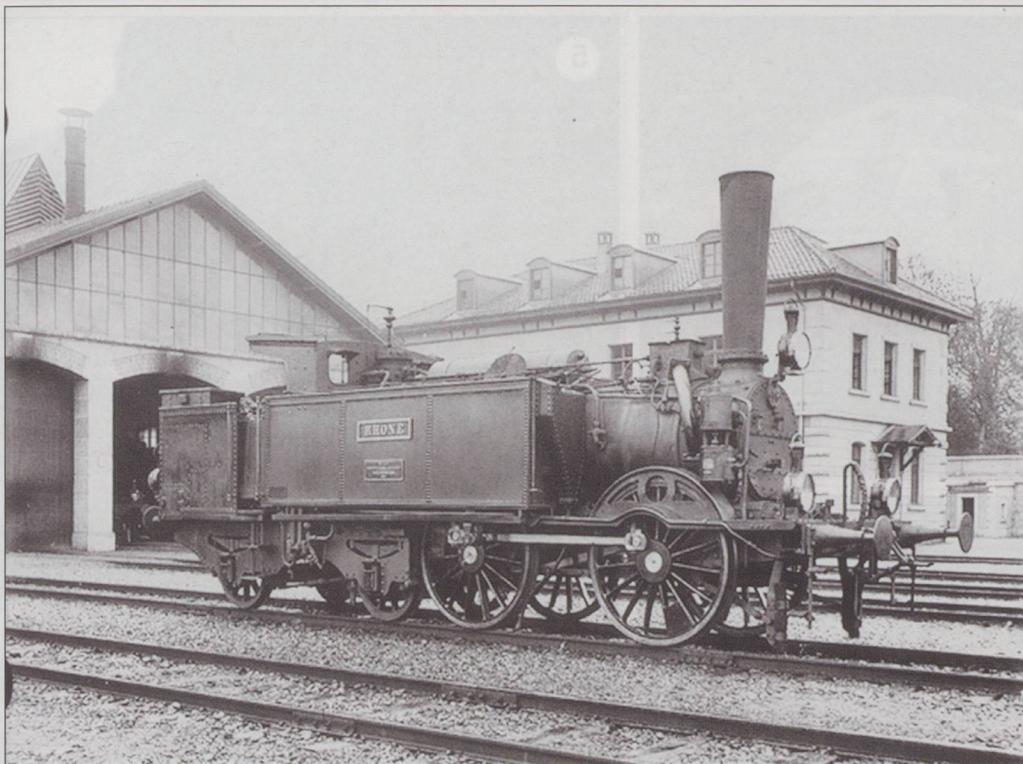
As was typical of the time, brake technology was still pretty basic and these locomotives lived through the period of rapid technological change. The early production units only had a factory spindle handbrake, which just worked on the tender wheels. Then in 1884 a Wegner compressed air brake system was installed in six of the type, while No.15 and one other are reported to have received a pneumatic system. Five years later in 1895 No.15 was the vanguard of the series to receive the then new "Westinghousebremse" (Westinghouse Brake), five others following a year later. However, that wasn't the last change of brakes for No.15

having, along with a sister loco, been equipped with the Hardy vacuum system in 1891 to evaluate the effectiveness of this braking methodology. This appears to have been unsuccessful and reports in 1895 indicate No.15 was back using the Westinghouse system. By 1904 most of this class of locomotive had been scrapped and only No.15 had somehow survived. It was exhibited at the "Landi" in 1939 but without its spring buffers, which had only been equipped to this class from 1861 onwards (along with screw coupling and cab screen!), as shown in the photograph. Then in 1946 No.15 met its end as it was used as a parts donor for the replica "Limmat" (SNB D 1/3) built to show the first Swiss locomotive.

No.15 is named after Johann Jakob Speiser (1813-1856), a Basel banker, entrepreneur, politician, Grand Council member from 1852, and who co-founded

Plaque located at Olten Station.





ABOVE: The first selling day of this stamp was 3rd May 2014, the 200th anniversary of Von Engerth's birth.

LEFT: Locomotive No. 18 "Rhone" understood to be in Basel depot in 1902.

with Karl Geigy (1798-1861) and Achilles Bischoff (1795-1867), the SCB. This was established on 4th February 1853 and he was the Chief Executive Officer between 1853 and his death in 1856. Ahead of the vote on the Railways Act of 1852, Speiser advocated for a state railway and warned against private monopolies. Also in 1852 he had called for the construction of the Gotthard Bahn.

Austrian Wilhelm von Engerth (1814-1884), took up mechanical engineering in 1834 as a profession. By the late 1850s he was the General Manager of the Imperial Austrian State Railways. Von Engerth first patented his design

for an articulated locomotive on 11th December 1852. The Engerth design articulated the tender with the main locomotive frame, allowing some of the weight of the fuel and water to be carried on the driving wheels to improve adhesion. Because the tender was articulated, rather than directly attached to the frame, the locomotive could traverse relatively sharp curves, while still enjoying the advantage of the additional adhesive weight gain. The design proved popular, especially for use in Alpine mountain railways and thus he is credited for being the designer of the first practical mountain locomotive. 

Swiss Tip: Good ideas and information about Switzerland from travellers.

Michael Donovan

Most communities charge a small, fixed tax per night for those staying in hotels, guest houses, apartments, etc., which is added to the nightly rate charged by the accommodation provider, and this goes towards supporting local services. Sometimes these taxes are compensated by, usually, small benefits within the community. Those I've noticed include a free croissant when buying a coffee at certain locations (at Bergün – for early travellers at the restaurant at the top of the ski-lift, and at the Hotel Preda in Preda), or a free train ticket (at Filisur, to Davos and return). The best I've ever come across was experienced this summer, when staying in the Savognin area, where the tax is less than SF3 per night. An Ela card was provided. This included free travel on the post buses within the area – from Salouf on the valley side in the north, through Cuntér, as far as Bivio in the south – with a 50% discount on the occasional (to selected locations on selected days of the week, during the summer) buses that take cyclists and hikers to remote locations. The ski-lifts at Savognin are also free (two of the three legs are open in summer), and there are other benefits, such as free access to the library, the local museum, etc. See <http://www.savognin.ch/ela-card.html> (regrettably, only in German). That's an amazing return for the tax paid! It's well worth checking what's offered when thinking about where you're going to stay! 

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For anyone on holiday in the Jungfrau Region contemplating the walk from First to Grosses Scheidegg, a "package ticket" is available from the Firstbahn station in Grindelwald. This covers the Firstbahn cable car one-way and the bus back from Grosses Scheidegg. You get 50% off with the Swiss Travel Pass, the reduced price in 2015 being CHF27.40. 