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Having read the article in the June edition of *Swiss Express* that described the early railway layout on the north-eastern approaches to Bern, SRS Member Ken Rogers recalled a print that he had purchased in a charity shop in Dartmouth the previous September. This was a panorama of the city dated 1860 that showed a Swiss Central Railway (Schweizer-Centralbahn) train entering the new terminal which was located alongside the Church that is still standing on the corner of the Bahnhofplatz. The station shown was opened in November 1858 after the great Aare ravine in Bern was bridged, allowing trains to enter the heart of the city. The area occupied by the station building illustrated on the print is now the large area that is the forecourt to today's busy Hauptbahnhof.

Switzerland - A Different Country

Der Beobachter

Taxing a Vehicle

All visitors to Switzerland soon become aware that motor vehicles, with just a few exceptions, are registered in individual cantons. In practice the registration number is actually allotted to the owner and it is transferred from vehicle to vehicle as the person changes them. The registrations normally consist of a two-letter abbreviation of the canton (BL – Basel Land, LU – Luzern, etc.) followed by a number. Some exceptions exist such as the prefix P for postal vehicles, or M for those belonging to the military. If the owner moves to another canton they have a 3-month tolerance to re-register the vehicle there. However you can get around the system if you own a business in another canton and register the vehicle under the company name, although doing this would probably raise other tax issues. One reason for trying to tax a vehicle in a different canton is due to the fact that each canton can set its own vehicle tax levels. Remember that all our 26 cantons are autonomous states and these annual taxes can vary considerably. Using June 2016 figures, the tax on a 1.4 litre petrol VW Golf in Vaud costs CHF123 whereas in Jura it costs CHF582. Trade-up to a 4.0 litre diesel BMW X5 4x4 then Schwyz is the best place to live, as the tax is CHF384, move to Ticino then you pay CHF1455 in Bellinzona – live 10km away at San Vittore in Graubünden you would pay CHF809! If you run a petrol 875cc Fiat 500 then you do not pay any tax in five cantons as it has low pollution levels, yet the zero emissions electric Tesla S70 is only free of tax in six cantons, whilst Basel Stadt charges CHF1780 to own one. Some cantons offer deals to large fleet operators so there is the anomaly that Appenzell Inner has more vehicles registered there than it has inhabitants!