

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 46 (2019)  
**Heft:** 3

**Rubrik:** Images : the village photographers

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 01.04.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

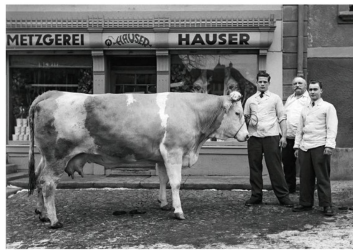
# The village photographers

Weddings, confirmations, funerals, village parties, company photos, children's photos, family photos, photos of accidents – spanning Rudolf, Robert, Ruth and Peter Zbinden, Photo Zbinden from the Bernese municipality of Schwarzenburg is a century-old professional photography dynasty that has seen and done it all. Comprising half a million images, the family's body of work is a chronological record of how rapidly rural life in Switzerland has evolved. The Zbindens are those archetypal village photographers whose collection resembles a long-term anthropological study. Within their rural microcosm, the Zbindens have documented key changes with regard to the working world, daily family life, family ideals, and society as a whole.

No one can compare 1936 with 1976 – or 1976 with 2016 for that matter. But the Zbindens have been an enduring presence in Schwarzenburg – the 'go-to' documenters of a changing world. This journey has not been without its dramas. For example, when Robert Zbinden (alias 'Fotoröbù') captured on celluloid the blaze that consumed the Schwarzenburg short-wave radio transmitter in 1936, he was documenting a piece of history. Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Swiss in the 'Fifth Switzerland' were suddenly bereft of a radio signal from their home country. Even the familiar call sign fell silent.

Regardless of whether or not Schwarzenburg is on your radar, the recently published book showcasing a century of Zbinden photographs is a remarkable and quite fascinating historical record of a specific locality in Switzerland. MARC LETTAU

Photo Zbinden – Drei Generationen Fotografie in Schwarzenburg 1916–2016 (Photo Zbinden – Three generations of photography in Schwarzenburg 1916–2016). Stämpfli Verlag, Berne, 2019. ISBN 978-3-7277-6038-4, CHF 34.00



Swiss Review / May 2019 / No.3

Swiss Review / May 2019 / No.3