

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1979)  
**Heft:** 1749

**Artikel:** The canton of Thurgau  
**Autor:** Schoop, Albert  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686220>

### **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 Swiss Observer

Published Monthly at  
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET  
LONDON EC2A 4AH  
Tel: 01-253 2321  
Telegrams: Paperwyse London

EDITOR: George Sommer  
Editor's telephone: 01-892 5920

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWISS COLONY IN THE U.K.

Founded in 1919 by Paul F. Boehringer

HON. PRESIDENT:

HON. VICE-PRESIDENT: Gottfried Keller  
*Advisory Council:*  
F. Burri (Chairman)  
B. Simon (Vice-Chairman)  
O. F. Boehringer, J.P. (Hon. S.)  
J. Eusebio, A. Kunz, R. M. Suess  
Mrs. M. Meier, Paul A. Ramsayer

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (POST FREE)  
UNITED KINGDOM SWITZERLAND  
and elsewhere  
6 issues £1.50 Frs. 13—or £1.60  
12 issues £2.90 Frs. 25—or £3.10

Swiss subscriptions may be paid into  
Postcheck Konto Basle 40—5718

## Contents

Canton of Thurgau	2
The Conservation of Switzerland's Architectural Heritage	7
Official Communications	11-13
Communications of the Secre- tariat of the Swiss Abroad	15-21
Solidarity Fund	23-26
Local News	28
Competition Winners	29
Ambassador's Message	30
Padre's Message	31
Gottfried Keller Writes	32
Dai Monti e Dalle Valli	39

Front page: Castle of Hagenwil and  
Pro Patria Stamp

### Pro Patria Stamps 1978

in aid of institutions of and for Swiss  
abroad

As was announced in the June issue  
1978, the proceeds of the sale of  
National Day badges on 1st August,  
which go to a different Swiss project  
every year, will be allotted to the  
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
this year. In addition to the sale of  
badges, there is the surtax on the Pro  
Patria stamps. The more of the four  
stamps you purchase, the more you  
support the activities of the institu-  
tions which work for you.

So please buy large numbers of  
these stamps with the castles, which  
have been attractively created by  
Anne Oertle from Winterthur.

## The Canton of Thurgau

The historian *Dr. phil. Albert Schoop* is a teacher of history, political science and German at the Cantonal School of Thurgau at Frauenfeld. He is the author of several works on the more recent history of the Thurgau and Switzerland, as amongst others «The History of the Thurgau Militia», of the jubilee publication «The Canton of Thurgau from 1803-1953» in the young citizens' book «Our Thurgau», now in its fifth edition. He is the publisher of an «Economic History of the Canton of Thurgau». His monograph in two volumes «Johann Konrad Kern» deserves the special interest of the Swiss abroad (see page 4). Dr. Schoop who was Vice-President of the Foundation «Pro Helvetia», is a member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad.

«The fertility of the ground almost surpasses the activities of the country people. Cereals, maize, hemp and flax, potatoes, poppies, artificial and natural meadows, all of it one finds together in one spot, and in addition a large number of apple and pear trees which don't hamper in the least the growth of the land crops. The trees grow in such abundance that one might be tempted to believe these fruit varieties were being grown deliberately. Without doubt, the Thurgau is a very beautiful country; it has very well-cultivated fields, attractive farm-houses; the men are tall of figure, the women handsome; moreover, the country lies on one of the most beautiful lakes of Europe.» This is what a German traveller wrote about the Thurgau in 1842, and on the whole it still holds good today. The Canton, situated on the North-Eastern border of Switzerland, belongs to the medium-sized, more quiet and little-known Cantons. Because it had some difficulties, especially in the 'sixties, to keep in step with the richer regions of the Midlands, in the three times seven fat years of Swiss economy its beautiful landscape has largely remained un-

spoilt. More and more Swiss discover the charm of the Thurgau hills and forests, and anyone looking for an ideal part for rambling holidays away from known centres, will make a note of the shore of the romantic Untersee and the large open Lake of Constance which unites three peoples.

### Geography

The «*Thurgi*» is small, with its just over 1000 square kilometres only half as big as its Southern neighbour St. Gall. Its area not even covers a 41st part of little Switzerland. It looks almost like an equilateral triangle between Lake of Constance, Untersee and Rhine on one side and the pre-Alpine Hoernli on the other. Up above there is the Weiler Hoell; that is why the neighbours call the Thurgau people strange: they have Paradise at the lowest point in the Canton (today it is the Iron Library of Georg Fischer AG, Schaffhausen), higher up Horn, a tax haven, and right on top Hell.

The countryside itself is undramatic. Hill ranges prevail, most of them created from moraines of the prehistoric Rhine Glacier, and they run from East to West. Shady, loosely scattered woods enliven them; altogether there are over 20000 hectares of forest or one-fifth of the productive area. The river Thur which gives the Canton its name, runs through the green plain in the middle, and everywhere, in valleys and on hillsides, villages and hamlets are situated. The Thurgau is a Canton without an urban centre; its capital Frauenfeld lies on the Western border; the rising village in the geographical middle, the marketplace of Weinfelden in the Thur valley, has never considered itself

# Features

as central point of the whole Canton; for the regional centres in the Upper Thurgau (Arbon, Romanshorn, Amriswil), Kreuzlingen, Steckborn-Diessenhofen and in the Hinterthurgau (Muenchwilen, Sirnach) are a match for it:

## History

Already 2800 B.C., the first men settled in this part. The marsh settlements of the neolithic age at Egelsee near Niederwil and Breitenloo to the West of Pfyn belonged to the Pfyn Culture. These people of neolithic times, who were tillers and cattle breeders, were followed in turn by immigrants of various kinds, as the string potters in about 1800 B.C., traders from the South in the Bronze Age, and the Celts in the Hallstatt period. And then, the sparsely populated country on the Lake of Constance belonged to the Roman Empire for over 400 years: brick-making, masonry, fruit- and wine-growing were introduced; generously constructed trade and military routes connected places like Arbor felix (Arbon), Ad fines (Pfyn) and Tasgaetium (Eschenz) with the Midland network. Roman soldiers settled in the forts. Later, the Alemans immigrated and penetrated the area; they gave the country their language, their style of living and building. The Franconian «Gau» organisation knew a Thurgau for the first time; at the beginning, it comprised a quarter of Switzerland, known as the Pagus Durgaugensis according to a St. Gall document of 744. From the earldom as geographical term evolved a judiciary and administrative district. The earldom titles were vested in the House of Kyburg, and from 1264 onward with their heirs, the Habsburgs. The political unity of the Thurgau is owed to their strict leadership. In 1460, the strong and mighty Confederates incorporated the



Home with typical frame and fill work architecture in Ermatingen

Thurgau in their realm, which gave the Canton a short military and spiritual rise. As low dominion, the region was subordinate to the representative (changing every two years) of the Seven, from 1712 onward the Eight «*Alte Orte*», right up to 1798. As opposing force to the federal bailiff at Castle Frauenfeld, served the «*Gerichtsherrenstand*», representing the interests of the lower courts. The military organisation of the Eight Cantons, too, gave an opportunity to the people of the Thurgau of political participation after the Thirty Years War. Slowly, a sense of unity grew in the Canton, especially after Frauenfeld became seat of the Diet in 1712. At the beginning of March 1798 – the French were already in Berne – the Confe-

derates released the Thurgau from submission as a cantonal committee under Paul Reinhart had demanded. Immediately, the Thurgau militia marched Westwards in order to defend the Confederation. But they could not prevent the collapse of the Old Confederation which had been unable to renew itself. The new «Canton de Thurgovie» was only an administrative district in the Helvetic Republic, which introduced districts and municipal communes. The Thurgau has been an independent political unit since 1803. The fact that it grew to a modestly successful Canton, starting from nothing and without financial support to an impoverished people, was the merit of excellent statesmen. The eras of

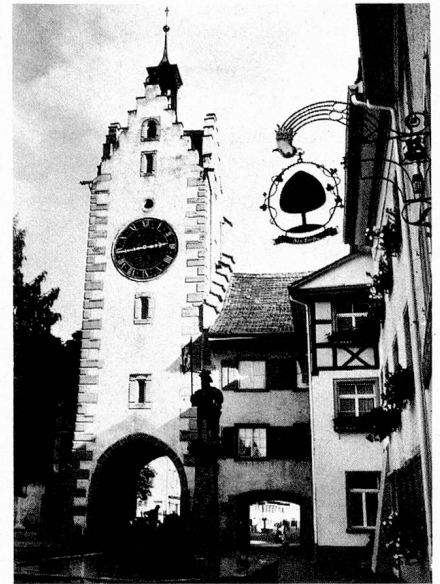
# Features

Mediation and Restauration provided opportunities to a steady build-up of a cantonal administration. A fine sense of citizenship developed under the wise regime of a provident government, especially under men like «*Landammaenner*» Johannes Morell and Josef Anderwert. Consciousness of the Canton's history played no small part in this. The era of regeneration of 1830/31, during which Pastoir Thomas Bornhauser encouraged the people to political acts, was responsible for liberal principles in the Cantonal Constitution. It needed the weight of lawyers trained at German universities to set in motion representative democracy. Amongst them, Dr. Johann Konrad Kern was the most effective politician; he presided the Grand Council nine times, was the originator of the constitutional revision of 1837, later the first President of the Thurgau Government, a far-sighted economist and politician, chairman of a bank and railway manager. In the federal crisis of the 'forties, the Thurgau was on the side of the Cantons which encouraged a revision of the Confederation. Since 1848, the Canton with its well-balanced political and economic conditions, has been a member of the Confederate State. Three of its politicians became Federal Councillors, namely Fridolin Anderwert, Dr. Adolf Deu-

cher and Heinrich Haeberlin. The Cantonal Constitution, still in force today, was accepted on 28th February 1869 after the democratic movement. It gave the people further rights of political participation. As regards a total constitutional revision, the people of the Thurgau will deliberate during the coming months (or years?).

### Political structure

In the Thurgau, too, democracy grows from below. As only Canton in Switzerland, it has preserved the Helvetic Municipal Commune and with it an interesting Commune-dualism. This means that ever since the creation of the Canton in 1803, the duties of the political Commune are divided into two parts, that of the local Commune and the Municipal Commune comprising several local Communes. Both have a dual function; they are independent, solve their own tasks, and on the other hand, they are administrative centres of the Canton, especially the larger, the Municipal Commune. This results in the fact that many citizens hold political offices and thus share in decision-making and responsibility. There is a lively interest in public affairs. In addition, there are the educational Commune supervised by the Education Department, the Church communities of both



Typical clock – or seal-tower built in 1545 at Diessenhofen

denominations which look after the general forms of religious life, the various school authorities (primary, secondary and upper schools), the Citizens' Communes and of late also Commune utility organisations – no wonder if communal diversity is sometimes more of a hindrance. For instance, a Thurgau group of houses may belong to the local Commune of A, the Municipal Commune of B, the school Commune of C, the parish of D, the secondary school authority of E and the *Abschlussklassenkreis* of F, and thus it has to pay taxes on five sides. This is why a communal reorganisation is under way; one would like to rationalize and create so-called Unit Communes. With that, however, much historical substance would be lost. Since 1803, a District (*Kreis*) comprises one or several Municipal Communes. It is the area of jurisdiction of the three *Kreis-aemter* Justices of the Peace (at the same time bailiff and secretary of the bankruptcy office), notary and land registrar. In the eight Districts, the *Statthalter* is the highest executive official and head of the District Office, whilst the District

### A few figures

Surface area:	1 006,56 km <sup>2</sup>
Population:	185 463 inhabitants in 194 communes (18 500 in the town of Frauenfeld)
Denominations:	79 633 Roman Catholics 100 638 Protestants 2 564 other religions
Language:	German
Agricultural estates:	6 051
Tourism:	213 hotels (3078 beds)
Industrial undertakings:	422 (27 692 employees)
Limited companies:	1 193
Net of roads:	2 921 km
Total of engine-vehicles:	59 584

# Features

Councillor is in charge of supervision of the Communes, as well as of guardianship and welfare concerns. In each District, there are three courts of justice, which are competent according to the seriousness of the case in question: the District Court President, the District Court Commission and the actual District Court which consists of five judges and three deputies.

The Grand Council is the representative of the people, the legislative and highest supervisory authority; it is elected every four years according to the proportional system. It has 130 members. At the moment, 63 Cantonal Councillors belong to the Liberal-Farmers Party (FDP and SVP), 32 to the Christian Democrats (CVP), 25 to the Social Democratic Party (SP), 7 to the Evangelical People's Party (EVP) and one each to a few splinter groups. The Cantonal Parliament sits in the capital Frauenfeld in winter, in summer, however, at Weinfelden. The executive, the *Regierungsrat*, has five full-time members and is the highest Court of Law in the Thurgau is the *Obergericht* whose three President and Vice-President begin their year of office on 1st June. As in the other Cantons, the government is a corporate body, but each member is in charge of a department. Over fifty ordinary and often some extra-ordinary meetings take place, the Clerk as head of Chancery and the Chief of Information take part in all of them, the latter informing the electorate of anything of importance. The highest Court of law in the Thurgau is the *Obergericht* whose three elected members (university graduate lawyers) and the four non-permanent High Judges are also elected every four years.

## Economy

Malicious tongues used to insist at one time that the only culture in

Thurgau was agriculture. A country of farmers? The general scenery seems to indicate this, but the changes must not be overlooked. The once self-contained farming villages with their comfortable *Riegelhaeuser* have been opened up by farm estates in between them. The milk payday is still the most important source of income of the approximately 4000 farmers who have over 113000 heads of cattle between them. The densely-planted impressive orchards as they used to exist in Egni (Egnach and Upper Thurgau) have given way to low-trunk plantations. They have been added to by the cultivation of strawberries, peas, sugar-beet and vegetables; production has been rationalized and intensified. In the mild climate of the Untersee and on the Southern slopes of Ottenberg and Seeruecken, the local wines grow, much appreciated by connoisseurs; the wine-growing area has been increased to almost 19000 *ares* of lake. Yet the number of people employed in agriculture and

forestry is going back: 12% only; the Swiss average is 8%. Yet the Thurgau is well above the Swiss average of 48% in the industrial and trade sector, where the figure stands at 58%.

Industry is well distributed all over the Canton, closely tied to the country which still disposes of a reservoir of a trained workforce. Many workers own their homes and look after their gardens in their leisure time, since practically in every village there are one or several industrial undertakings. 115 years ago, Franz Saurer settled at Arbon. In the Upper Thurgau, machine and metal industries are predominant. Amriswil, where Josef Sallmann from Limbach, a political refugee, settled and founded the Swiss weaving industry, is still the centre of the clothing industry, whereas Bischofszell houses a paper factory and the largest and most modern canning factory. The frontier town of Kreuzlingen has a number of industries to show, and the Bernina sewing machines leave Steckborn on the

Covered wooden bridge going over the river Rhine



# Features



The former Benedictine abbey in Fischingen (photos SNTO)

Untersee for all parts of the world. Amongst the more important industries of the Thur Valley are mills, cardboard, machine and metal ware factories, and a world-wide undertaking which produces emery and abrasive products. The Hinterthurgau in the South, too, has been industrialized more intensively: fairly large concerns in the textile and furniture industries, factories producing kitchen equipment and sunblinds, as well as chemical works are established there. What a colourful variety! In the service sector (banks, insurance, education, hospitals, administration), only 30% of all wage-earners in the Canton are employed, 14% fewer than the Swiss average. The large service industries are concentrated in the neighbouring centres of Zurich, Winterthur, St.Gall, Constance and Schaffhausen. That may be the reason why the average income per head of the Thurgau population lies somewhat below the Swiss average.

*What distinguishes the Thurgau*  
«The Thurgau people are generally well-made and strong people, hard-working and industrious in their occupations, their homes and on their land. They shy no effort to make their land – in many parts of poor quality – fertile and productive by their diligence.» Thus wrote the Zurich pastor, Johann Conrad Faesi, two hundred years ago in his history of the County of Thurgau. The old simplicity has almost disappeared nowadays, but diligence, love of order and cleanliness still count as national virtues. The Thurgau people are frank, open-minded men and women, not least to spiritual and cultural values. There is a historic museum at Frauenfeld Castle, which presents history and culture most impressively; there is the Napoleon Museum at Castle Arenenberg, which reminds one of that particular epoch in history; and now these have been joined by a modern museum of natural history of the Canton at Frauenfeld. A founda-

tion in which the Canton has a considerable share, would like to restore the unique Carthusian Monastery at Ittingen which was bought back by private hands; they want to turn it into a cultural and educational centre. Local museums with some valuable exhibits exist at Bischofszell, Arbon, Kreuzlingen, Steckborn and Diessenhofen; some art collections of international order are in private possession. In many places, modern churches, stained glass windows and plastic sculptures may be found. Scientists of repute, well-known musicians, authors and artists confirm that the well-balanced, quiet landscape of the Thurgau stimulates them to spiritual achievement. Towns and villages lie with one another in the cultural field with their music schools, the many choirs and orchestras, the small galleries and extra-mural study centres, and at Castle Wolfsberg, the educational centre of a large bank has made a world-wide mark. Schools are abundant: the 34 secondary schools prepare pupils for their vocational life, as well as for the high schools. At the educational centre at Weinfelden, commercial and trade apprentices are trained in a novel manner; and the *Berufsmittelschule* Frauenfeld prepares for the higher Technical College. The Thurgau Cantonal School, now 125 years old, has lately been joined by two *Maturitaetsschulen* on the lake, at Kreuzlingen and Romanshorn. The Thurgau Teachers' Training College at Kreuzlingen has a well-deserved reputation. To all the good qualities of the Thurgau – high standard of housing in well-cared-for surroundings, recreation centres practically on the doorstep, favourable labour market, educational and cultural abundance, an enlightened and friendly population – naturally come some disadvantages, too, but the responsible people try to recognize and reduce them.