

Glarus : Ernst B. Leutwiler describes his home Canton and its railway

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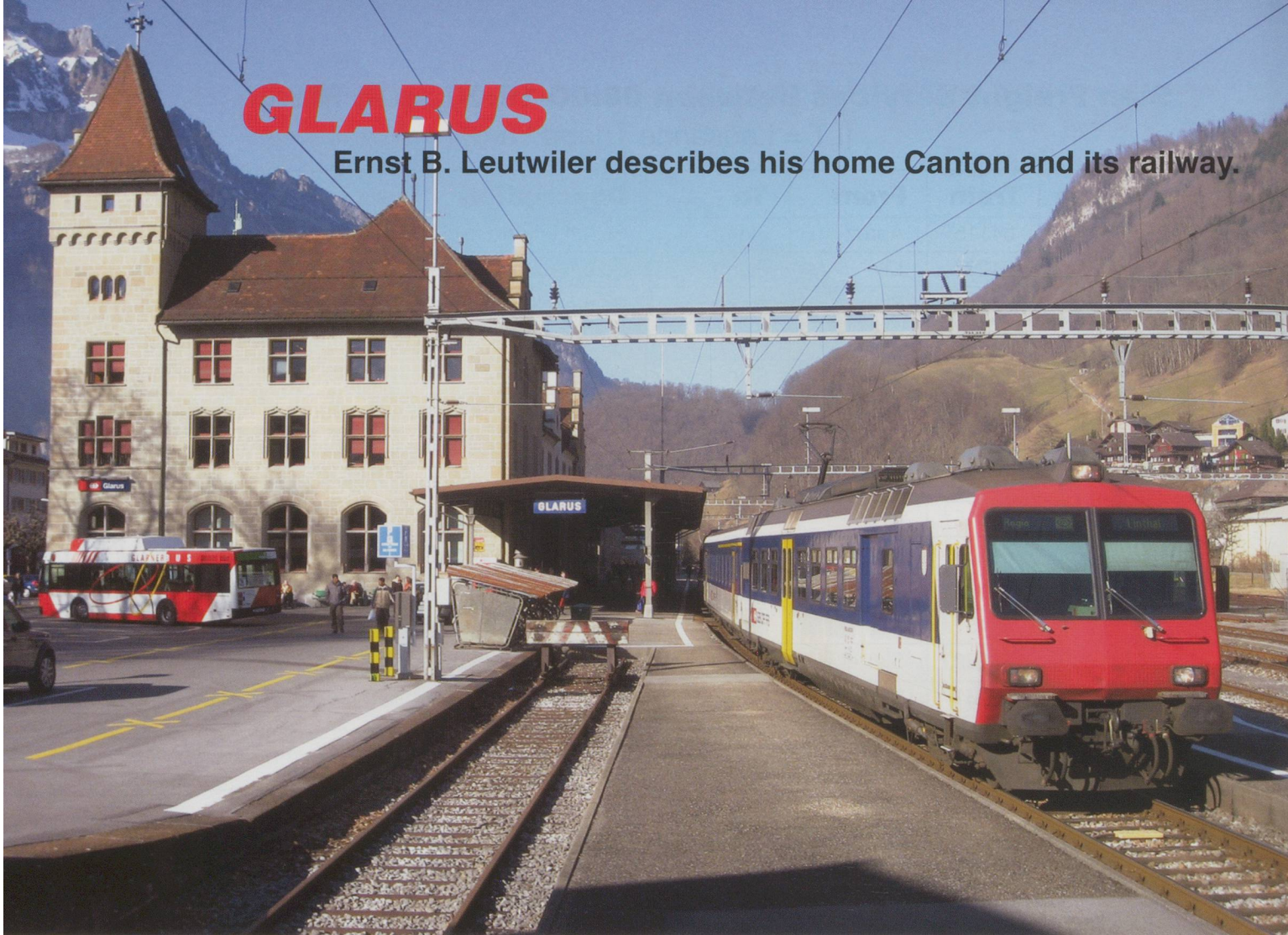
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GLARUS

Ernst B. Leutwiler describes his home Canton and its railway.



The impressive station at Glarus.

All photos: Ernst B. Leutwiler

Canton Glarus, located to the south of the Walensee, comprises the valley and catchment area of the River Linth and its tributaries. Following the Linth upstream from Ziegelbrücke (425m), a major junction on the SBB main line between Zürich and Chur, the trip passes the town of Glarus (472m) Schwanden (521m) and Linthal (648m) after which the river, its source in the Limmersee lying just below the 3614m peak of the Tödi on the border with Graubünden. The valley is flanked by a series of mountains rising to between 2000m and 3000m. Glarus joined the original Swiss Confederation in 1358. The Canton currently

has a population of some 38,000 that, until the 1st January 2011, lived in 25 Gemeinden that were amalgamated into three large municipalities on that date, something the Federal Government would like to happen in other areas. Although go-ahead in this area of governance Glarus still retains its Landsgemeinde, an outdoor assembly of all citizens eligible to vote. This takes place on the first Sunday in May. Prior to the introduction of the textile industry in around 1700, the economy of the Canton was primarily based on agriculture and forestry. By the 1860s some 11,000 people were employed in spinning, weaving, textile printing, etc. and

the Canton boomed. By 1900 the small town of Ennenda claimed that for its size it was one of the richest on earth - its elegant Town Hall still giving an indication of this wealthy period. The Linth valley was also home to many small industries and it had become famous worldwide for its herb infused, green, Schabziger Cheese, the standards for which were laid down in the 15thC, hence becoming one of the first-ever 'branded' goods. By the end of the 19thC the Canton also started to become a tourist destination. Until the coming of Ae 3/6' 10637 + passenger train North of Netstal on July 8, 1991.



the railway all the commerce of the thriving valley relied on narrow roads that linked with the little boats that plied the Walensee, the Linth and then the Zürichsee to reach out to the wider world. By 1857 horse-drawn Post Coaches linked the valley with Zürich, Luzern, Uznach and St Gallen but a better communication network was needed.

Following the construction by the United Swiss Railways (VSB) of the railway from Rapperswil to Sargans, a branch line to serve the town of Glarus was opened from Weesen in February 1859. In September 1875 the North East Railway (NOB) opened a line on the left side of the Zürichsee, via Ziegelbrücke, to Näfels-Mollis where it joined the existing VSB tracks. The line south from the town of Glarus to Linthal then followed, opening in June 1879. The VSB and NOB were bought by the Confederation in 1902 and the 27.3km line up the Linth Valley has been operated by the SBB since then. The standard gauge line is easily graded (max. 2.2% - 1:46), has just eight bridges and only one short (45m) tunnel near Rüti (GL). Passenger services on the Weesen – Näfels-Mollis line were withdrawn in 1918, and the line totally closed in 1931, concentrating all traffic on Ziegelbrücke. Until 1933, when the line was electrified at 15kV/16.7Hz, the steam service to Linthal operated from Uznach. Following electrification the service from Ziegelbrücke became the normal preserve of Ae3/6 locomotives right up to 1992 when NPZ EMUs took over. In recent years freight services along the valley have declined. A Class Am840 diesel loco works regular trains from Ziegelbrücke to Nieder-und-Oberurnen and Näfels-Mollis, whilst there is a daily train, usually hauled by a Re6/6, from Limmattal (near Zürich) to Netstal servicing its paper mill and lime works. Between 1960 and 1963 several daily trains up to Linthal were needed for the construction of the Linth-Limmern Hydro-Electric Power Station at the head of the valley. From January 2011, for about five years, this complex is being reconstructed as a Pump-Storage operation and special freight trains are again operating up the valley. Every workday the Re6/6-operated Netstal service is extended to Linthal carrying steel, cement, construction materials, etc. to a transshipment shed from which the loads are forwarded on by truck to the construction site. Some 26,000t of material were moved this way in 2011 for the building of a huge underground hall to accommodate the machinery required for the scheme. This is at a location some 1,700m up in the Glarner Alps.

The basic service on the valley line comprises an hourly regional NPZ working from Rapperswil to Linthal with



Top: Ae 6/6 No 11659 on a timber train at Ennenda.


Bottom: A snowy scene on the Linthal branch.

connections at Ziegelbrücke with the InterRegio Zürich – Chur service. Since December 2004 this has been supplemented on Monday to Friday with the GlarnerSprinter (GS) which runs every two hours from Zürich to Schwanden with two workings extended to Linthal at weekends. From mid-2014, following the opening of the new “Durchmesserlinie DML” in Zürich, the GS will run every hour to Linthal with the hourly regional train being cut back to Schwanden. The GS trains are normally formed of Domino EMUs (refurbished NPZ units) that carry a special livery. The NPZ regional trains are scheduled to be replaced by Domino units in the near future. The GS service has proved popular with over 2,000 passengers/day using it, whilst the local trains down the valley carry another 5,000 people daily. Signalling on the line is basically controlled from the Betriebsleitzentrale (BZ) Zürich Flughafen, Local signalling can be switched-in when needed for freight working and special manoeuvres at Näfels-Mollis, Netstal and Glarus but from 2016 these manual controls will be replaced by local electronic signal boxes controlled by BZ Zürich Flughafen under SBB’s “ATR Glarnerland” project. Apart from the main line junction at Ziegelbrücke only four of the thirteen stations on the line are now manned: Näfels-Mollis;



Ae 3/6' 10646 on a freight train between Hätzingen and Betschwanden on October 10, 1983.

Glarus; Schwanden, and Linthal Braunwaldbahn.

Apart from short stretches of the Zürich-Chur main line the whole rail network in the Canton now comprises this long branch line, plus the funicular from Linthal up to Braunwald. This was described in the December 2007 Swiss Express. Between 1905 and 1969 the metre-gauge Sernftalbahn (SeTB) ran 13km from Schwanden up the valley of this tributary of the Linth, climbing 441m to the resort village of Elm (962m). At Engi, halfway along the Sernftal, there is a small museum based in the former SeTB goods shed that recalls this little line. At Oberurnen Eternit AG, manufacturers of fibre cement roofing and cladding materials, once operated a 600mm-gauge industrial line that also ran along a street linking the SBB line at Nieder-und-Oberurnen station with their works and storage facilities. 

STAMP NEWS

Michael Farr

Stanserhornbahn

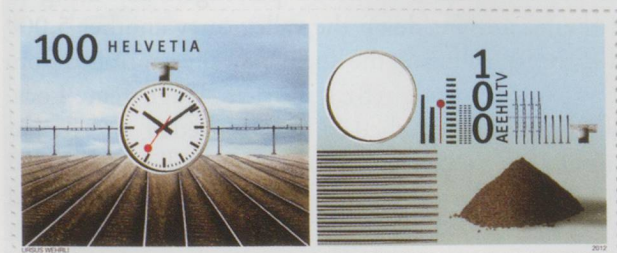
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to problems. Originally built as a conventional three-stage funicular opened in 1893, disaster struck in 1971, when the hotel at the summit and its popular restaurant were destroyed by lightning. This was conducted along through the rails also damaging the funicular. Instead of restoring the three sections, they replaced the top two with a cable car giving magnificent views over Lake Lucerne, whilst retaining the bottom stage funicular and marketing it as "old time". The overall journey was speeded up considerably and another benefit was that the service could be maintained for longer as the cable car was high above the snow on the mountainside, which had put the funiculars out of action in early and late season. Another, more recent innovation was the installation of a revolving restaurant, the "Rondorama" at the summit. To experience the "Cabrio" you can reach Stans and the SthB from Luzern, either directly by the Zentralbahn's Engelberg service, or by ship to Stansstad, joining the train there. Just a 5 minute walk away from Stans station the attractive traditional funicular terminus is where you begin your journey on-board a wooden bodied car (one of which had to be rebuilt after an accident with a lorry on a level crossing), for the 8 minute journey to Kälti. From here the 60-person "Cabrio" will whisk you from 711m to 1,850m on a 2,320m cable. Other statistics are impressive; the journey will be completed in 6¼min. at a speed of 8m/sec. and with each car taking 60 passengers the system should carry 465 people/hour.

SBB Clock

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face image can be used as the timepiece for my HO scale Swiss station buildings. Both stamps will be available at post offices so long as stocks last, and from Swiss Post Philately until June 2013. 

At the same time as issuing the "Cabrio" stamp, SwissPost re-issued the stamp illustrating the iconic Swiss railway clock - but with a difference. Ursus Wehrli has designed each stamp with two images, one conventional and the other where the various components of the design have been "tidied-up". Thus the station clock is represented by a circle with two black and one red hand plus twelve lines representing the hour markings. The country's name is shown anagrammatically as AEEHILTV! Our modelling members may wish to acquire some of these stamps as I have found that the clock