

# Union's two hundred years in the field of fashion

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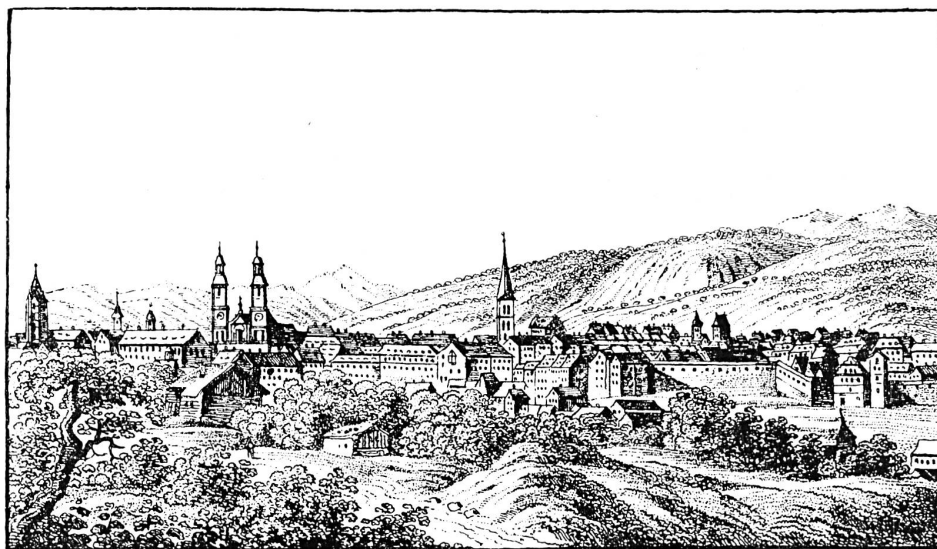
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# Union's two hundred years in the field of fashion



Nürnberg bei F. Lange.

St Gallen.

In 1759, one Ulrich Vonwiller, a member of a family that had been settled in this country for many years, founded a firm for trading in textiles. It was only ten years previously that muslin had begun to be woven at St. Gall. Shortly afterwards came the first embroideries, but Vonwiller took little interest in them. He was nevertheless a most enterprising man with an inexhaustible supply of energy since in addition to his commercial activities he successfully fulfilled a score or so of public functions. This firm was established right in the middle of the transformation period when the St. Gall textile industry changed over from linen to cotton and was taking up embroidery. In spite of the political upheavals that took place at the end of the century, Vonwiller's firm succeeded in maintaining its position and thriving; it continued to expand its commercial relations and finally took up manufacture itself.

Towards the end of the 19th century, this firm moved into huge premises in the centre of St. Gall, to which it gave the name of Union, in honour of the United States of America, a country in which great commercial hopes were placed at that time. It was the period when it was often said jokingly that St. Gall was a suburb of New York... The firm established by Caspart Vonwiller was then known as Hoffmann, Huber & Co. Ten years or so later, in 1909, the firm was converted into a limited liability company under the name of Union. At the height of its success, the firm was making an annual turnover of some 10 million Swiss francs and in 1907 its net profits exceeded a million francs. At that time the share capital amounted to 4 million francs. Then came the Great War... At the end of it, however, the universal need for fresh supplies caused business to boom. But a slump was not far

away; the impoverishment of the classes from which its customers came, the change in fashions, which were becoming simpler and more austere, foreign competition, customs duties exceeding 100 % *ad valorem* and, finally, the world slump itself, all struck a heavy blow at the Swiss embroidery industry. In spite of its dismissals of staff and other restrictions (suppression of dividends for 10 years!) the firm of Union survived, and after the devaluation of the Swiss franc in 1936 its exports began to increase; the bottom of the curve seemed to be passed. But a second world war made its situation precarious all over again! However the small team that was left continued the struggle and its tenacity was rewarded at last when in 1944 it once more became possible to do business with America. In its new premises at Teufenerstrasse, the firm of Union recovered under the energetic management of Friedrich Hug, to whom we have often had occasion to refer in this periodical.

To celebrate its 200th anniversary, Union invited its friends and members of the press to a very simple commemorative ceremony held during the St. Gall Horse Show. The originality and high standard of the extremely interesting and beautifully produced commemorative booklet (from which we have taken the above information) are eloquent proof that the firm of Union, under the present management of Mr. Victor Widmer, is determined to maintain its high traditions of quality and progress.

On their own behalf and on behalf of their readers, to whom the products of Union are well known, the editors of this periodical address their hearty congratulations and best wishes to this great St. Gall firm: *ad multos annos!*



STOFFEL & CO., SAINT-GALL

Photos Schmutz

Jacquard cotton fabric for winter wear  
Modèle El-El S. A., Zurich

## Sport and elegance

At the end of each summer, the élite of the equestrian sporting world flock to St. Gall for the annual « Journées hippiques ». Horses are very much in the limelight in eastern Switzerland, a part of the country that, it should be remembered, was agricultural and has remained so to a certain extent in spite of being industrialised. It is by no means unusual therefore to find many famous names

from the world of textiles among the prizewinners at the horse show.

This is not exactly the place to dwell at length upon the International Horse Show and the Official International Dressage Championship in which leading horsemen of thirteen countries took part. Let us just say that as in other years everything went off most successfully and that the Official International Dressage Championship, which had a very large number of entrants including some Soviet officers who were very strong favourites, was won by a Swiss rider. Let us also add that the St. Gall « Journées hippiques » was held under the patronage of H.S.H. Prince Francis-Joseph II of Liechtenstein and the former Federal Councillor, K. Kobelt, and that prominent among the many well-known riders was the athletic figure of H.R.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

The charming town of St. Gall, which was gaily decorated and decked with flags in honour of this great occasion, and the green hills surrounding it made a magnificent setting for the sports events and fashion displays that were held in the brilliant sunshine which has now become traditional.

St. Gall always combines its great sporting event of the year with the presentation of the loveliest creations of its



UNION S. A., SAINT-GALL

Embroidery  
Modèle Haury & Co., Saint-Gall



FORSTER WILLI & CO.,  
SAINT-GALL

Organdie with chenille  
embroidery  
Modèle Gack, Zurich



METTLER & CIE S. A.,  
SAINT-GALL

Fancy cotton rips  
Modèle Gack, Zurich



JAKOB SCHLÄPFER,  
SAINT-GALL

Embroidered cotton poplin  
Modèle H. & A. Heim S. A., Zurich

industry. A fashion show was therefore once more held at the hippodrome, in between the different events. But guests and journalists had already seen the best of these models the day before and at the same time had an opportunity of admiring the famous Iklé and Jacoby collection at the Museum of Industrial Arts, as well as a small collection of the oldest Swiss embroideries surviving today (including priceless treasures from the beginning of the 14th century) and the new display of embroideries and fine cotton fabrics. Like the others, the last-mentioned exhibition has been arranged with excellent good taste by Mr. Hans Stettbacher. The fine fabrics and embroideries on display are so lovely in fact that any undue emphasis, any exaggeration would only detract from the effect; the simplicity of their setting therefore heightens the remarkable impression they make. This wonderful collection of the present-day achievements of St. Gall industry is intended to give visitors to the capital of