

# Ernst Gertsch, the Father of the Lauberhornrennen

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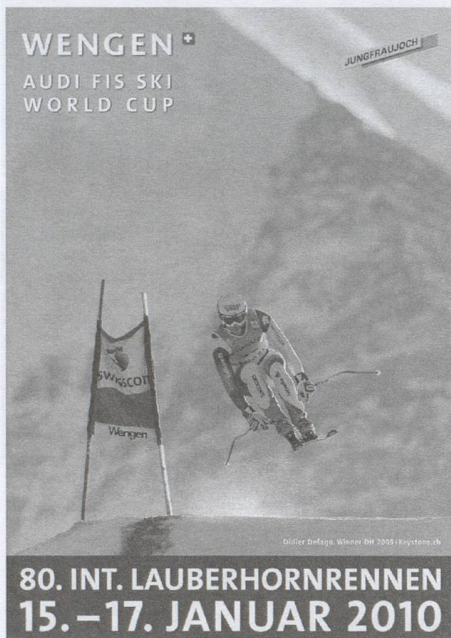
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## Ernst Gertsch, the Father of the Lauberhornrennen

Ernst Gertsch, born on January 1, 1900 as the oldest of 7 children grew up in Wengen. His father managed a small farm, was a railway employee and had the license to sell salt in his small shop named "Central". The children skied down to Lauterbrunnen to secondary school in winter. Ernst only embarked on the long journey to Interlaken at the age of 9 years - on foot of course.



When he left school, Ernst Gertsch worked in the telegraph office in Wengen and later on in Bern. After his father's death he returned, without work, to Wengen. There he opened a sports shop, went to England to learn English, became tennis and ice-skating instructor and founded the Ice-Hockey Club Wengen in December 1923.

At the beginning of the thirties Gertsch was made President of the Lauberhorn section of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC). He was coach, instructor, race director for the Swiss Ski Association, Technical Delegate and delegation leader of the Swiss Ski Association expeditions to World Championships and Olympic Games.

The Jungfrau Massive roused his curiosity for the Alps and fuelled his ambition. Together with his friend and mountain guide Christian Rubi he reached the summits of nine mountains in the Jungfrau Massive never climbed before. On the Jungfrau he met Blanda Leisinger, 13 years his junior, who became his wife. They had four sons and one daughter.

1930 marked the beginning of a new era for Ernst Gertsch and also for Alpine ski racing. The founding document of the Lauberhorn Race was signed in November 1929. With this race the wonderful story of Alpine ski racing really began to unfold.

One of the factors leading to the success were the many connections that Gertsch had made with the Ski Associations of other European countries, the FIS and also within Switzerland. He carefully kept up the relationships by attending no less than eight Olympic Games and twelve Ski World Championships.

In 1970 his son Viktor took over the reigns, along with Fredy Fuchs. The two got on very well and, for many years, operated like a kind of dream team.

In no other classic sporting event in Switzerland, or probably even in the whole world, is there another example of a father and son acting as Presidents of the Organising Committee of the same race for 75 years from the moment of foundation.

Ernst Gertsch was not only the father but the heart, the soul, the brain and the conscience of the Lauberhorn Race. On November 28, 1986 Ernst Gertsch was carried to his grave by a large international community of mourners.

A memorial at the starting house at the top of the Lauberhorn reminds us of Ernst Gertsch.

*contributed by Paul Werthmüller*

## Jeremias Gotthelf

Albert Bitzium (1797-1854), best known by his pen name of Jeremias Gotthelf, was born at Murten, where his father was pastor.

In 1804 the family moved to Utzenstorf, a village in the Bernese Emmental. Here young Bitzium grew up, receiving his early education. In 1812 he went to Bern for further education and to study theology. In 1821 he visited the University of Göttingen, but returned home in 1822 to act as his father's assistant. He worked as pastor in Herzogenbuchsee, and later in Bern. Early in 1831 he went as assistant to the aged pastor of the village of Lützelflüh and was soon elected his successor. He married one of the pastor's granddaughters. His first work, the Bauernspiegel, appeared in 1837. It purported to be the life of Jeremias Gotthelf, narrated by himself, and this name was later adopted by the author as his pen name. It is a living picture of Emmental village life, true to nature, and not attempting to gloss over its defects and failings. It is written, like the rest of his works, in German, but contains many expressions from the Emmental dialect. The book was a great success, as it was a picture of real life.

His best known work is without doubt the short novel 'Die Schwarze Spinne' (The Black Spider), a semi-allegorical tale of the plague in form of the titular monster that devastates a Swiss valley community, first as a result of a pact with the devil born out of need and a second time due to the moral decay that releases the monster from its prison again.

Among his later tales are Leiden und Freuden eines Schulmeisters, Uli der Knecht, with its continuation Uli der Pächter, Anne-Bäbi Jowäger, Käthi die Grossmutter and Die Käserei in der Vehfreude.

He died on October 22, 1854 in Lützelflüh. *from wikipedia*