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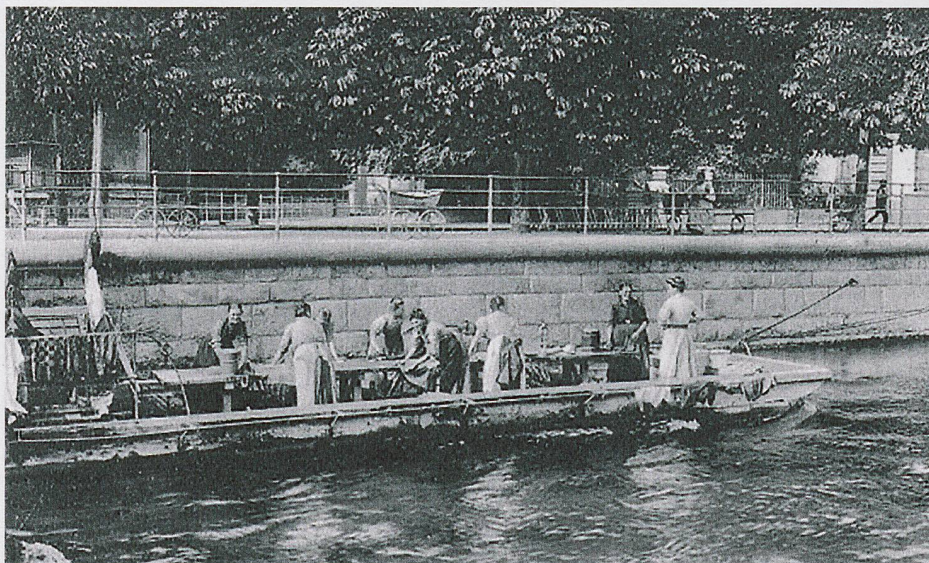
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Waschschiff on the Rhine



Washing and gossiping on the Rhine. Washing is an emotional topic in Switzerland - anyone who has had their own washing machine in their four walls is extremely reluctant to give up this privilege. It often seems as if - if you are looking for a new apartment - you would rather forego a balcony or a lift than a private washing tower. The mystery of the communal laundry room of an apartment block can be explained as follows: People who meticulously adhere to wash schedules and hourly tables meet those who declare the laundry room to be a legal space. A constellation that guarantees an explosive encounter.

Anyone who thinks that everything used to be easier is wrong. The following anecdote from 1945 proves this. Prominent protagonist: alien researcher and bestselling author Erich von Däniken was ten years old at the time and lived at Steigstrasse 36 in Schaffhausen. Back then, washing was not done by machine, but by hand. For this purpose, two washing ships were stationed on the Rhine - one at the "Rhybadi" and one at the level of the Beckenburg restaurant.

However, the issue of washing apparently caused controversy earlier. Apparently the women from the new town and those from the rest of the old town deliberately avoided each other, as the climate between the two districts was not good and it must be assumed that this included all facets of life.

A washing ship looked like a kind of raft. A wooden structure with an iron frame and a rain roof made of corrugated iron. In the middle of the raft was a large table, which was used to process the laundry with curd soap and sisal brush.

The Schaffhausen wash ships, especially the one on the «Rhybadi», were mostly in very poor condition. Some of the women were knee-deep in the Rhine while washing because the raft was permeable to water. In addition, towering screws tore open the women's underwear. Again and again they complained to the police command post or to the city. Even in the "Schaffhausen Intelligenzblatt" there were always comments from women who were upset about the "bad situation in the washing boat at the bathing establishment". Finally a second floor was built over the water-permeable one. But after a while the double floor became rotten and water got through again.

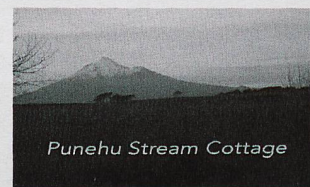
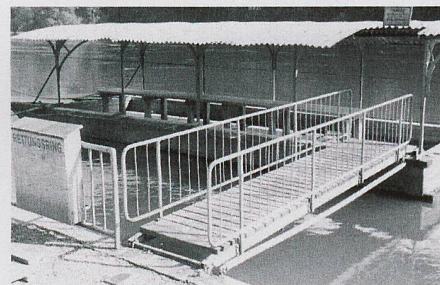
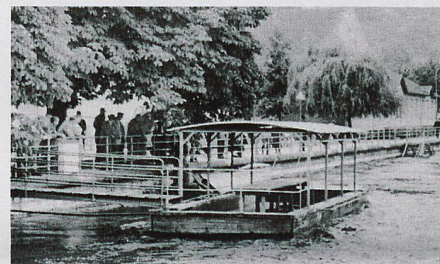
In 1925, the barrels on the washing ship next to the "Beckenburg" had leaked. The raft suddenly sank - with it the women and their laundry. The women and their sheets could only be rescued from the Rhine with difficulty and with the help of men who observed the disaster from the shore and provided immediate help. Although the washing ships kept worrying women, they were happy to stay there. It was a popular meeting place to chat and pick up the latest rumors. Even women who had their own laundry room at home carried their dirty laundry onto the Rhine.

In 1955 it was rumored for the first time that the city was planning to demolish the washing ships. Back then a shock for the laundresses because the women always claimed that their laundry became softer when they washed it with water from the Rhine. The first washing ship suffered an unforeseen end. In 1956 a motor ship crashed into the bridge pillar of the Feuerthal Bridge. The attempt to pull the boat stuck in the pillar

to the shore with thick ropes failed. The boat detached itself from the ropes and drifted down the Rhine. It then collided with the washing ship at the "Rhybadi". The boat sank and tore the entire washing ship to the bottom of the Rhine.

In 1962, the almost 100-year-old wash culture ended abruptly when the municipal building authorities announced in a letter that the second wash ship would also be taken off the water. This is because Kraftwerk Schaffhausen AG started building the Rhine wall. At that time, this decision had to be noted not only by the women with a heavy heart, but also by the men, who meanwhile did their laundry themselves on the ships intended for this purpose.

<http://www.stadtarchiv-schaffhausen.ch/>



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