

Zurich

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ZURICH

Short Survey of the History of the Guilds

In 1336, Rudolf Brun, offspring of a noble family, overthrew the decayed town-government of Zurich by a *coup d'état* and set up a new constitution which was put down in the so-called "Sworn Letter". Before this riot, only noblemen, land-owners and rich merchants had been able to take part in the government, but now the craftsmen and smaller merchants, united in guilds, had their share in the command of the city. Each of the thirteen guilds delegated their guildmaster to the council, in which the corporation of the "Constaffel", i.e., the guild of the citizens already formerly privileged, were equally represented by thirteen members.

The medieval guilds, "Saffron", "Tomtit", "Smithy", "Loaf", "Tanners", "Shoemakers", "Ram", "Carpenters", "Tailors", "Boatsmen", "Camel" and "Balance", formed the foundation of the professional, political and military life of the citizens. Further, they were the centres of social activity, as each guild owned its house of meeting, to which an inn was attached.

As the centuries passed by, the guilds lost more and more of their professional character and became unions with political and social ambitions within the strongly secluded class of the burghers.

After the revolution of 1798 the guilds were deprived of their political importance and were dissolved, but took up their social activity again in 1803. In 1866 the guilds entirely lost their influence in Zurich's professional life, and from then a number of new guilds of a purely social

character were founded in the various quarters of the city.

Nowadays the main activity of the guilds consists in the organization of Zurich's annual Spring Festival, the "Sechseläuten", or "Six o'clock chimes". This most popular Festival takes place every year in April and received its name in remembrance of that Monday on which, according to old tradition, the churchbells peal out again at 6 p.m. instead of 5 p.m., to announce that the day's work is over.

GUILDS

Saffran: merchants, spicers.

Schneidern: cloth-shearers, tailors, furriers.

Meise: wine-merchants, wine-dressers, painters, saddlers.

Weggen: bakers, millers.

Waag: wool- and linen weavers, hatmakers, cloth-merchants, dyers and bleachers.

Schmidn: sword makers, armourers, pewterers, bell founders, surgeons.

Gerbe- und Schuhmacher: tanners, shoemakers.

Widder: cattle-dealers, butchers.

Zimmerleuten: carpenters, masons, cartwrights, turners, joiners, coopers.

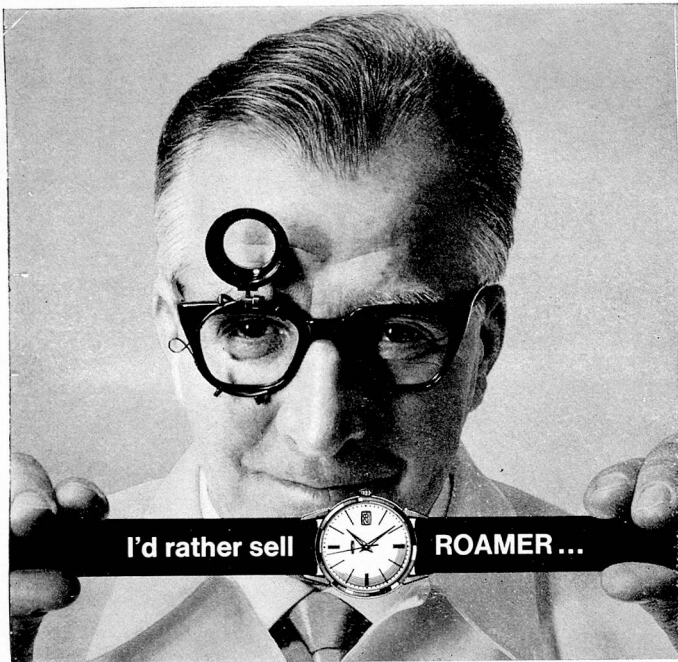
Schiffleuten: fishermen, boatsmen, rope-makers.

Kämbel: gardeners, oil merchants, dealers.

Constaffel:* patricians.

*At the sign of the hound, Guild-house: the Rügen.

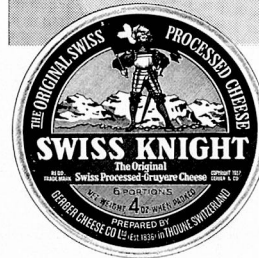
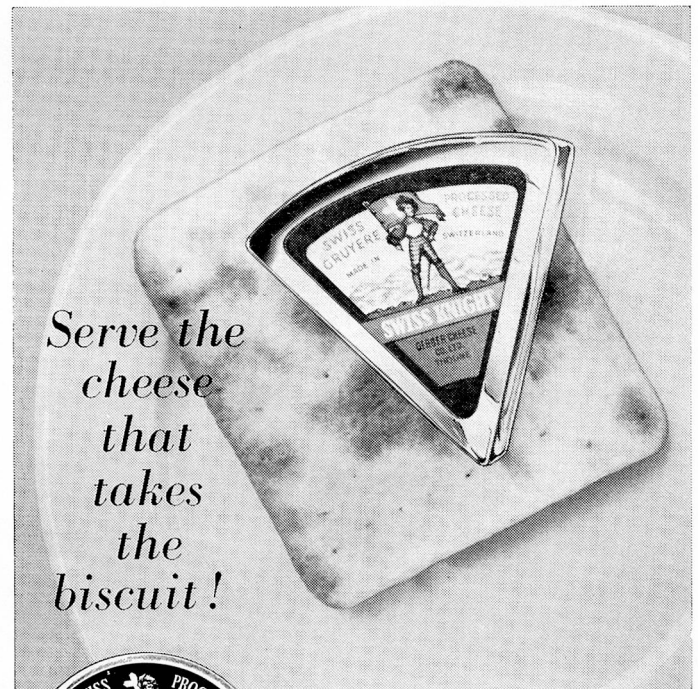
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