

# It happened in the cantons of Valais & Geneva

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## IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF VALAIS & GENEVA

### VALAIS

On 4th August 1815, the Valais became part of the Confederation. The celebration festivities were planned for October last year, but due to the catastrophe of Mattmark, they were postponed and took place on a reduced scale in June. To commemorate the event, the whole Valais youth was presented with volumes of "The Valais from 1815 to 1965" by Prof. Emile Biollay. The historic survey ended with the statement that "the marriage with the Confederation which was a marriage of convenience for the Lower Valais and a *Muss-Heirat* for the Upper Valais has become a love marriage for both".

The Society for the Valais History is celebrating its Golden Jubilee with a special edition of its historic periodical "Annales Valaisannes". There are over 700 members.

The budget for 1967 predicted a deficit of 18.7m. francs. Expenditure has now been lowered to 15.6m. The revenue total is estimated at 257.1m. francs. The Canton is obliged to spend 14m. francs on several wastewater plants which are in the course of construction. By 1970, this sum will have reached 23m. The Rawil Tunnel is to be started in 1972, but the Council of State has asked the federal authorities to begin already in 1970. This proposal is supported by several interested parties.

The power-works of Grande-Dixence have been opened for tourists; a chairlift is to carry visitors to the top of the barrage. The railway line Brig-Visp-Zermatt has been renovated, and the modernisation allowed 1.1m. passengers to be carried in 1965. At Visp, at the end of September, the Valais Regiment 10 marched past high officers and prominent personalities and — a live lion; Martigny's crest shows a lion, and a soldier who owns such an animal, was allowed to take it to military service as a mascot.

When the Cantonal Parliament met in November, they honoured the memory of the "Glacier Pilot", the late Hermann Geiger. A few weeks earlier, on the Bieshorn, at an altitude of 4,000 metres, men on an Alpine course of a Mountain Division held an ecumenical service in honour of the pilot, and on the top of the Bec-des-Etagnes, a metal cross was erected to commemorate the many Alpine rescues; it had been flown there by helicopter.

A proposal is being worked out to have the Pfywald put under *Naturschutz*. The Cultural Prize of the Upper Valais has been awarded by the "Rottenbund" (every four years) to Hans-Anton von Roten from Raron, who has made a name for himself in historic research.

26m. litres of Valais wine were produced in 1966 compared with 41.7m. last year. 4½m. kg. of apricots, 8m. kg. of pears and 6m. kg. of tomatoes were grown in the Canton this year, no mean achievement.

The "Collèges de **Bagnes**" celebrated its 200th anniversary early in November. The new Commune President of **Hérémece** is the sculptor Emile Mayoraz.

**Martigny** held a cultural week early in September, a few weeks later, its film festival took place, and the seventh *Comptoir* was opened early in October. At **St. Maurice** a new college "Regina Pacis" was opened; some eighty girls are there at present.

The new **Sanetsch** dam has been inaugurated; the power station is capable of producing 39m. kw/h. per year, of which 30m. in summer. In December 1508, the Councillors of the German town of Augsburg sent an invitation to Mathias Schiner, then Bishop of **Sion**, to take part in a

shooting contest. In November this year, President Imesch of Sion and other personalities accepted this invitation — 458 years later. In future, such meetings are to take place regularly. Renovations have started on the Castle of Tourbillon. Sion, too, had its "Quinzaine des Arts" in September.

At the end of July, the village of **Stalden** was badly damaged by mud and water due to a burst in the power-works Ackersand. Early in October, the traditional festival of the mountain guides took place. The Matterhorn North Wall was used by two Austrian experts for their parachute jumps from the mountain side.

*The following items have just come to hand:*

For the first time, over 3 million nights were spent in Valais hotels and inns in 1966, an increase of 100,000. 47% of the tourists were Swiss. — A new review "Le Valais Nouveau — Junges Wallis" is to appear four times a year, published by the newly formed group of young Valais writers.

In 1966, a record harvest of over 20m. kg. of apples was dealt with: 12.5m. marketed immediately and 8m. kg. stored for future consumption. 300 metric tons of apples left Switzerland for Yugoslavia before Christmas. The grape harvest reached 83m. litres.

The Commune of Filet near Moerel has a recruit as Common Councillor, the youngest in the Valais, possibly even in Switzerland. A new avalanche gallery has been opened at Zermatt.

### GENEVA

The population of the Canton of Geneva numbered 306,769 at the end of August, 6,684 of these were foreigners. The town's population was 174,158.

8½m. francs is the surplus which the Canton made in 1965, with expenditure standing at 371m. The budget for 1967 estimates revenue of over Fr.470,000.— and a deficit of Fr.344,000.—. A four-year finance plan has been worked out, and the so-called "Crisis Fund" is to be increased from 4.96m. to 7.5m. francs. The successor to Yves Maître in the National Council is Councillor of State Jean Babel, the Geneva Finance Minister. In most Swiss Cantons, a young man of age at 20 is eligible to the Cantonal Parliament. Only in Fribourg, Berne, Geneva and Neuchâtel, the limit is set at 25 years of age. A Socialist proposal is being studied in Geneva to bring this custom into line with the majority of Switzerland's Cantons.

At the end of August, nearly 5,000 flats and houses were needed in Geneva, and to ease the position, the State proposes to increase their present sum of 689m. for mortgages to 900m. francs. Cointrin, Geneva's airport, received the international medal, an award for the greatest effort by any airport to further aviation.

Pastor Willem A. Visser't Hooft, former Secretary-General of the Churches' Ecumenical Council, was awarded honorary citizenship of the Canton in spring. The Savings Bank of Geneva celebrated its 150th anniversary in September. The grape harvest in the Canton resulted in 12½m. litres, half of which will be used for grape juice.

"A place to stay on the way to the Alps" was the heading of an article in the "Sunday Times" about a year ago. In it, the town of **Geneva** was called "strangely impersonal, invested in an aura of sadness as too many hopes had been pinned upon the League of Nations." Be this as it may, the town is full of life. It has its problems,

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too, but its budget for 1967 is balanced at 122.59m. francs.

The new station inspector is Harry Mayer in succession to Henri Chappaz. Rodo Mahert, theatre critic of the "Journal de Genève" has also retired.

The Town of Geneva recently awarded its prizes for 1966 for watchmaking, jewellery, goldsmith's work and enamel work. In the first stage of this contest this spring, the jury had already judged 980 designs submitted by 188 competitors. Fifteen designs were selected for actual execution in the watchmaking category, 12 in jewellery, 21 in goldsmith's work and 9 in enamel work. The Watchmaking Prize was won by Mr. Roger Ballmer, of Vacheron & Constantin in Geneva. For jewellery, the first prize went to Mr. Gunter Krauss of Pforzheim. In the Goldsmiths' Work category, no prize was awarded. The Enamel Work Prize was won by Mr. Luigino Gignando, of Bräuchi & Sons, at La Chaux-de-Fonds.

Jean-Georges Lossier and Albert Py are the winners of Geneva's Literary Prize. The Geneva Lions Clubs have given a valuable artificial kidney to the Cantonal Hospital. The "Pro Ticino" also contributed money towards the Lions Clubs' special efforts.

Events in Geneva have been numerous recently. Concerts were given in the newly restored courtyard of the Town Hall. The new library of the World Health Organisation was opened and a monument to Léon Nicole unveiled. The "Fêtes de Genève" were held in August, with over 200,000 people attending the grand firework display. In October, there was a "Bonjour Danemark" week and a "Grand Gala" in aid of the renovation of the Russian Church in Geneva. The 14th "Salon des Arts Ménagers" was opened at the end of the month and early in November, the exhibition "Romain Rolland and Switzerland". The traditional meeting of the Geneva Protestants, the Festival of the Reformation, was held on 7th November, and at the end of the month, a centre for contemporary engravings was opened. The new indoor swimming pool Les Vernets was inaugurated; it cost 12m. francs and took four years to build.

The Geneva pyromaniac has been caught — for months, fires have broken out every few days, and it is possible that the same young man is responsible also for the many fires in Lausanne.

**Carouge** celebrated the 150th anniversary of its annexation to Geneva. 1,200 people took part in a procession, and Federal Councillor Chaudet gave an official address. The foundation stone was laid for the Orthodox Church at **Chambésy**. At **Collonge-Bellerive**, the statue "La Nympe du Léman" was unveiled. The first buildings of the satellite town of **Lugnon** were opened in September.

On 11th November, the new houses of the home for old people at **Petit-Saconnex** were opened. A few days later, a large building (housing some of the departments of the International Labour Office) was gutted by fire. Over 200 people helped to fight the flames.

(This report was based on news received by courtesy of "Agence Télégraphique Suisse", S.N.T.O., O.S.E.C. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

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## BARONESS VON THYSSEN TO BE IN "THE ASSIGNMENT"

It has been announced that Baroness Fiona Von Thyssen will play a brief but important role in Sheldon Reynolds' movie "The Assignment", now being filmed on location in this famous winter resort (*St. Moritz*).

Beautiful Baroness Von Thyssen, the former Fiona Campbell-Walter, was one of England's top fashion models and is an internationally-known socialite.

Being an excellent skier and a prominent resident of *St. Moritz*, Baroness Von Thyssen was asked by Reynolds to appear in the movie. Both the Baroness and Reynolds have chalets in *St. Moritz*.

Asked if her appearance in "The Assignment" meant her *début* as an actress, Baroness Von Thyssen shook her head and laughed.

"Absolutely not" she said. "I don't really act in this film. I ski down the mountain, tumble into the snow and discover a dead body".

The proceeds from her appearance in the film will be given to charity, the Baroness said.

"The Assignment", written and directed by Sheldon Reynolds, co-stars Patrick O'Neal and Joan Hackett in the leading roles, strongly supported by such internationally-famous actors as Sir John Gielgud, Oscar Homolka, Leon Greene, Herbert Lom, Peter Van Eyck and Eric Portman.

"The Assignment" is being filmed in Panavision and colour for Warner Bros.

(By courtesy of "St. Moritz Courier".)

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