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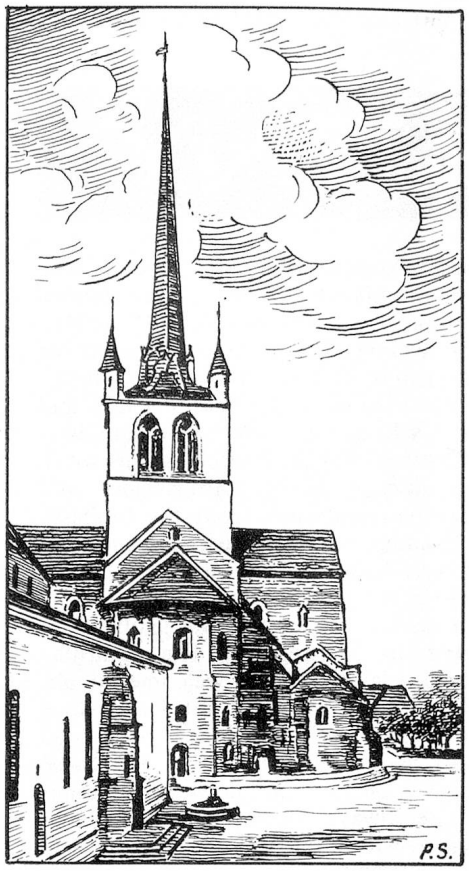
SWISS ABBEYS



PAYERNE ABBATIAL CHURCH

Payerne possesses a remarkable Romanesque abbatial church which belonged to a monastery until the Reformation. According to a tradition, this church was founded in about 595 by Bishop Marius in honour of Sainte-Marie. A convent already existed in Payerne at the beginning of the 10th Century.

It was at that time that the name of Queen Bertha, a woman whose memory has remained very popular in Canton Vaud and especially near Payerne, was first mentioned in history.

Queen Bertha, widow of Rodolphe II, offered the town of Payerne and its dependencies to Saint Mayeul, Abbot of the Monastery of Cluny, Normandy, in order to found a monastery of the same Order in Payerne. This was in 962.

A decree, commonly named "Testament of Queen Bertha" was confirmed by her son, King Conrad, who added land properties and rights. Queen Bertha, whose tomb is in the Payerne parish church, was venerated for her faith and charity.

Until 1220, the patronage of the convent of Payerne appertained to the emperors of Burgundy, but the dukes of Zähringen held the power of patronage in their name. The protection of the convent finally passed over to the House of Savoy in 1314. During its most prosperous days, the Convent had 32 monks.

In 1536, at the time of the conquest of the Country of Vaud by the Bernese, the Abbey and the premises of the Convent became the property of Berne, and so was its Treasure which, like that of Lausanne Cathedral, was taken to Berne. The church, which is the only vestige of this historical abbey, was abandoned. It was eventually transformed into an arsenal and store-house and underwent multiple degradations.

Important restoration works have since given back to the edifice its primitive aspect.

The church forms a Latin cross. The main part of what has been preserved dates from the 11th Century, or the beginning of the 12th. The Gothic tower replaces on the transept side a Romanesque tower and dates probably from the 15th Century. The spire was completed in 1645.

The outside aspect of the building is of great simplicity but presents an imposing ensemble which is particularly interesting because it has been made of a variety of materials coming in part from the ruins of Aventium (Avenches).

The spire rising above the tower contains three bells, one great and two small. Together with those of the parish church, they make a nice ringing song.

The nave is of great sobriety. It is very large for a Romanesque building and is lighted by high windows. The choir is ornamented with frescoes and embellished capitals.

The purity of lines and harmony of proportion gives the visitor the impression of greatness, but also of austerity which is accentuated by the absence of capitals and sculptured decoration in the nave.

This splendid and valorous church is one of the greatest in Switzerland.

Pierre Savoie

TOURIST NEWS

On Foot through the Vaudois Vineyards

A new sort of hiking region is now open in canton Vaud: 70 miles of "chemins du vignoble". There are 16 walking paths within the wine-growing regions of canton Vaud, i.e. at La Cote between Morges and Nyon, in the Bonvillars-Vully regions between Concise and Corcelettes near Grandson on Lake Neuchâtel, at Pranz and Vallamand on the lake of Morat, in the Lavaux and Désaley region and in the Chablais area between Yvonne and Bex. There's an SFR station close to the departure and arrival points of these hiking paths which join up in certain parts. These 2½ to 4 mile long distances can easily be covered in 1½ to 2 hours and lead through traffic-free lanes.

Creative Holidays in the Toggenburg

Unusual holidays are in store for young and old visitors to the resort of Wildhaus in the Toggenburg this summer. Young holiday guests from 11 to 13 years of age will be able to discover and develop their artistic skills by making decorations with paper and colour or by discovering new dance movements, etc. All-inclusive cost: Fr. 260. A creativity training session for young and old will be held from July 29 to August 11. This is to help develop artistic skill by acoustic and optical means. All-inclusive cost: Fr. 320. Information obtainable at the "Zwingliheimstätte, CH 9658 Wildhaus.

Electronic Hotel Information in Zurich

Two self service hotel information booths have just been installed by the Zurich Hotel Association and the Zurich Tourist Office at the main railway station and at the arrival hall of Zurich International Airport. It takes only a matter of minutes to reserve a hotel room in Zurich itself. Hotels in Zurich and its surrounding Winterthur or Lucerne are presented on an illustrated screen by means of colour slides and described in five different languages. At the same time, one can tell if a room is free in a specific hotel. By pressing a button, one can find out on a city-map where the hotel is located. Once a tourist has selected his hotel all he has to do is pick up the phone, press the button of the respective hotel and he is connected, free of charge, with the reception desk of the hotel of his choice.

New Accommodation list for the Swiss Jura Region

The Swiss Jura, a region still hardly touched by tourism, is ideal for quiet, family hiking and riding holidays. "Pro Jura*" tourist office has recently issued a brochure which will prove indispensable to travellers. It is divided into eight regions listing all kinds of accommodation from simple flats and bungalows to large country houses with heated swimming pools. Leisure activities such as hiking, riding, fishing, etc., are also described. Another chapter deals with accommodation in youth hostels, holiday camps, huts, etc. There are five motels in the Jura. Camping is permitted in 13 areas. This brochure and the hotel and restaurant guide are both obtainable from "Pro Jurs", CH-2740 Moutier, Switzerland.

Farm Holidays now possible in Switzerland

Those who want to experience a holiday on a Swiss farm will be interested in the new facilities available at the 300