

Swiss Abbeys

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SWISS ABBEYS

The Convent at Rheinau



The former Benedictine abbey of Rheinau, the locality beautifully situated on the Rhine, down stream the celebrated Falls, had its first cloister founded in 778. The convent, already very flourishing, was destroyed in 925 at the time of the Hungarian invasions. It was rebuilt soon afterwards.

Under the Saxon emperors, the convent enjoyed the direct protection of the empire. Later, it was placed under the protectorate of the Counts of Rheinfelden, of Lenzbourg, and of Habsbourg — Laufenbourg. In 1126, the counts of Lenzbourg raised Rheinau to the rank of town. They fortified it with walls and trenches, and probably built also a stronghold.

In 1455, Rheinau placed itself under the protectorate of the Confederates until 1798.

At the time of the Reformation, the convent was placed under laical administration, but was re-established after the second war of Kappel.

In the 18th century, its prior and archivist, Van der Meer, displayed a great scientific activity. He composed a short history of Rheinau on the occasion of the convent's millenary anniversary.

In 1798, the convent was sequestrated, then suppressed in 1799. The

Cantons of Schaffhausen, Thurgovie and Zurich quarrelled for its possession. The Act of Mediation re-established the Convent and awarded it to Zurich.

The ancient convent was eventually suppressed in 1862 and transformed in 1867 into a home for the sick. In spite of enlargements, the home was always crowded, and in 1898, a new building was constructed; it possesses much land, pasture-grounds, fields and vineyards; valid patients are helping with the work.

Our sketch shows the abbatial church (Klosterkirche). The edifice, reconstructed at the beginning of the 18th century, except the southern tower (16th c.), presents a fairly severe façade. The interior impresses vividly with its decoration of the purest Baroque tradition. The lofty nave, whose vault is covered in frescos, is flanked on each side of four chapels ornamented with a profusion of marble and gilding. The choir, closed by a superb wrought-iron gate, has beautiful stalls.

The architectural style of this church, constructed in 1708 to 1732, is one of the most remarkable of the Canton Zurich. Even today, Rheinau possesses still a quantity of historic treasures.

CULTURAL ITEMS

Swiss Arts Gallery in Paris

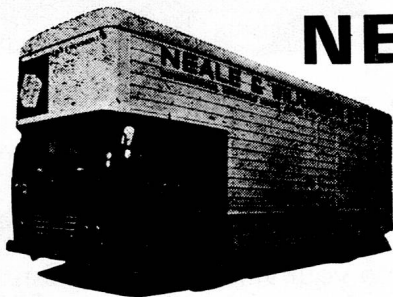
Swiss arts gallery is under project in Paris. Sponsored by an art enthusiast from Neuchatel, Mr. P. Von Allmen, the Gallery will be opened if all goes well at the rue Saint Sulpice, in the heart of Paris, where premises have already been set aside. Two persons have already been named to run the gallery. This will be financed by an issue of 1000-franc shares redeemable at par in three years. Those that subscribe to five shares will have the privilege of naming an artist of their choice whose work will be given preference by the Gallery. According to the Gallery's statutes, only artists whose works have originated in Switzerland will be allowed to exhibit. Occasionally, Swiss artists residing abroad will also be given a chance to produce their works.

160 Keyboard Instruments

A piano maker from Zurich, Mr. Otto Rindlisbacher, himself the descendant of a family specialising in the trade for centuries, has published a remarkable book with a survey of every kind of keyboard instrument manufactured in Switzerland from 1700 to 1900. This does not only include pianos, but also harpischords, spinets and other rarer instruments. The book is called *Das Klavier in des Schweiz* and is published by Francke (Berne and Zurich). It supplies details on 161 different instruments and outlines the biographies of their makers.

Phenomenal growth of Giro

The Swiss postal giro system recently registered its 500,000th account. Founded in 1909, the system had 3,190 subscribers after one year. It required 27 years to reach the figure of 100,000, but only three years to climb from 400,000 to 500,000 accounts. This phenomenal rise was partly due to the strong publicity that was made for giro-transferred wages and the suppression of the deposit. The giro service must handle 1.6 million transactions worth 239 million francs every day. Each employee of the service clears 255,500 orders. In comparison, employees on 48-hour weeks who were clearing only 102,000 orders in 1939.



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