

The MoneyMuseum Book Collection: Swiss Chronicles

© MoneyMuseum

As the name implies, chronicles are works documenting events and facts in chronological order. At the same time they give insights into the political lives of communities, but also into geographical and cultural occurrences. Chronicles are rich cultural documents altogether: Thanks to the various sources on which they are based, they contain different types of texts and of illustrations. The latter are a main characteristic of chronicles.

This is especially true for the following Swiss chronicles, among which are several works of magnificent illustrated letter printing.

Berner Chronik 1470

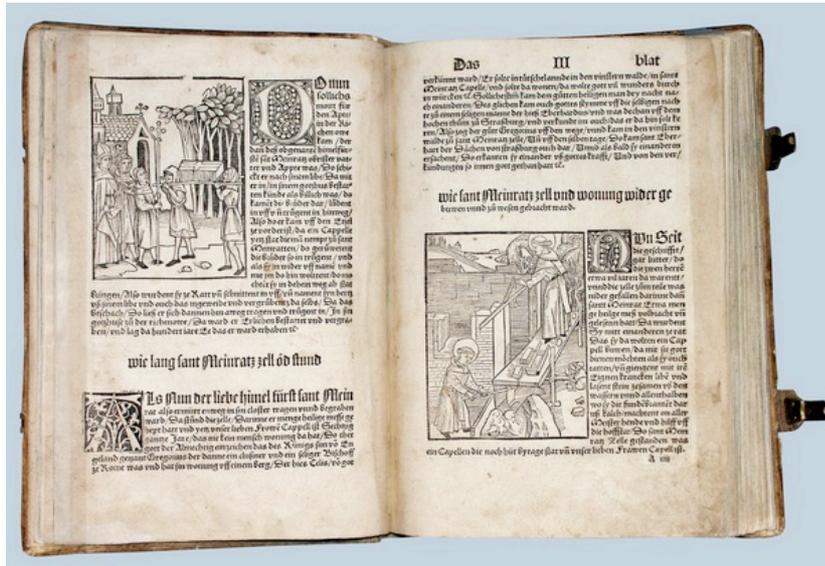


Tschachtlan Genf und Zürich [1933]

Just like the other Swiss chronicles from the 14th and 15th centuries, the Bernese Chronicle from 1470 is "a cultural document of unique and idiosyncratic character," wrote the editor Hans Bloesch (*1878, †1945) in his foreword to the edition published in Zurich and Geneva in 1933. Its most particular feature are the illustrations, namely 231 facsimile tables in copper gravure of which 31 are in color. These illustrations were a total innovation at the time – the "Tschachtlanchronik" was the very first illustrated Swiss chronicle.

The two chroniclers, Bendict Tschachtlan (*c. 1420, †1493) and Heinrich Dittlinger (†1479), were not historians, however, but politicians. Being members of the city council of Bern they gained knowledge about the history of Bern in the course of time. Additionally they reverted to several older chronicles to write their history of Bern.

Kronica von der loblichen Eydtgenoschaft Ir harkommen vnd sust seltzam stritten vnd geschichten.



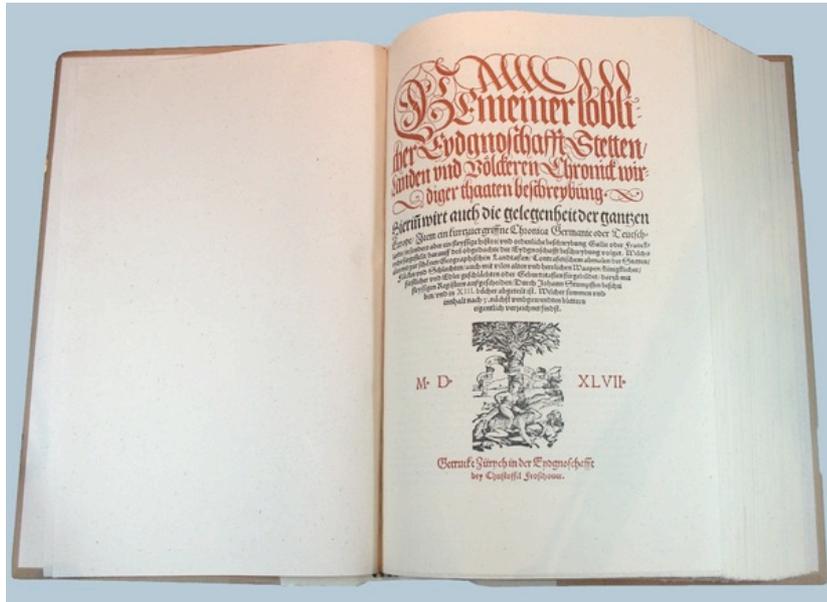
[Von Petermann Etterlin
Basel 1507]

The earliest issue of Petermann Etterlin's chronicle was the first printed chronicle that included the complete story of the Swiss people. It contained 29 xylographs and – for the first time – told the Tell saga. The entire copy of the first issue of the chronicle belongs to the big rarities of the Helvetica, i.e. publications pertaining to Switzerland.

The chronicler Petermann Etterlin (*c. 1430/40, †1509) provided military service in the war of the Swiss against Duke Charles of Burgundy in the 1460s and 1470s. Later, he worked in wine trade and from 1495, he was clerk of the court in Lucerne.

Etterlin's chronicle, printed for the first time in 1507, begins with the foundation legend of the Einsiedeln monastery. As the first comprehensive chronicle of the Swiss Confederation, it tried to justify the existence of the confederation and thus mirrored the newly self-confidence of the Swiss that had been acquired during the Burgundian Wars (1474-1477). The reports on the campaigns, based on Etterlin's own experience, are thrilling.

Gemeiner Loblicher Eydgenoschafft Stetten / Landen vnd Voelckeren Chronick wirdiger thaaten beschreybung



Durch Johann Stumpffen beschriben / vnd in XIII. buecher abgeteilt (...)
Getruckt Zürich (...) bey Christoffel Froschouer, M. D. XLVII. [facsimile of the first edition,
1547/1548]

The magnificently illustrated first edition of the Stumpf chronicle belongs to the highlights of Swiss illustrated prints of the 16th century. It was produced in the Offizin of Christoph Froschauer (*c. 1490, †1564), today's publishing house of Orell Füssli. Froschauer spared neither effort nor costs to create a xylographical and typographical centrepiece. He expected the work to become an immediate bestseller since it fulfilled a profound desire of the time: knowledge about one's own origins.

The two volumes of the Stumpf chronicle, which contained more than 4,000 illustrations, became a bestseller indeed. After the work of the chronicler Johannes Stumpf (*1500, †1577/78) was published in autumn 1547, it was quickly sold out. In the following decades, several reprints came out, which had been overworked and expanded by Stumpf's only son, Johann Rudolf (*1530, †1592).

The Stumpf chronicle remained the peak of Swiss letterpress printing for centuries. At the same time the book laid the basis of Swiss historiography for a long time. The edition shown here is a facsimile.

Gemeiner Loblicher Eydgnoschaft Stetten / Landen vnd Völckeren Chronicwirdiger thaaten beschreibung

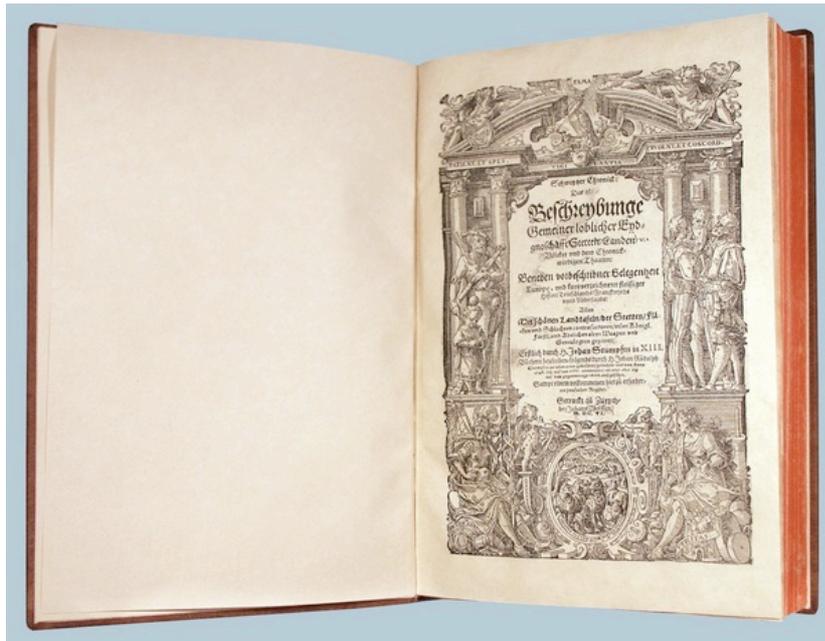


Durch Johann Rudolph Stumpffen beschriben / vnd in XIII. buecher abgeteilt (...).
Getruckt zuo Zürich in der Froschow. M. D. LXXXVI. [1586]

The chronicle of the German pastor and historian Johannes Stumpf (*1500, †1577/78) is perhaps the most famous chronicle of Switzerland. It is a highlight of illustrated Swiss historical print products and was considered as a standard work until the 18th century. It contains 3,917 xylographs as well as many illustrations and historical maps, for instance some brilliant maps drawn by the author himself.

Johannes Stumpf was born at Bruchsal near Karlsruhe, and was educated there and at Strasbourg and Heidelberg. In 1520 he became a cleric or chaplain in the order of the Knights Hospitaller. When his chronicle was issued for the first time, the author had been living in Bubikon in the canton of Zurich for more than 20 years, however. He came hither as a young man, after his theological studies and his ordination a priest in Basel. During his time in Bubikon he converted to Protestantism, was present at the great Disputation in Bern (1528), and took part in the First Kappel War (1529). In 1562 – after about 40 years pf ecclesiastic services – Stumpf retired to Zurich and henceforth devoted himself predominantly to his historical studies.

Schweytzer Chronick: Das ist / Beschreybunge Gemeiner Loblicher Eydgnoschafft Stetten Landen / Voelcker vnd dero Chronickwirdigen Thaaten

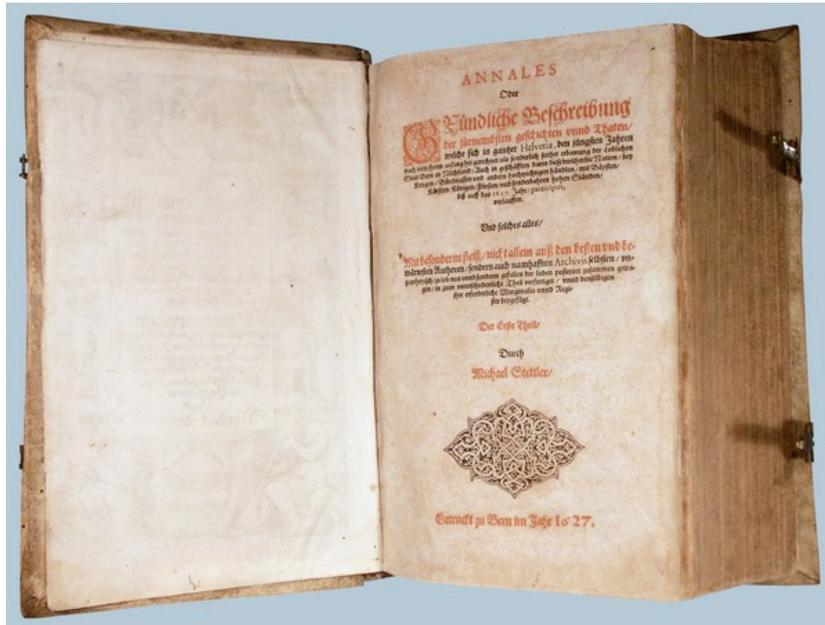


(...) durch H. Johan Stumpfen in XIII. Buechern beschriben (...)
Getruckt zuo Zürich / bey Johans Wolffens. M. DC. VI. [1606]

Johannes Stumpf (*1500, †1577/78) was a Protestant priest and the most renowned historian and chronicler of the 16th century. The first issue of his *Schweytzer Chronick* (Swiss Chronicle) was published in 1548 and had a print run of supposedly 2,000 books. Its success was enormous, even though the chronicle cost 13 guildens; the first edition was soon out of print.

In 1586 a second edition was printed, and in 1606 a third edition followed. This third edition had been overworked and broadened by Stumpf's son Johann Rudolf (*1530, †1592). Containing 13 maps and hundreds of woodcuts, it is the most comprehensive edition of all. In 13 books, Stumpf's Swiss chronicle by far not only described the history of Switzerland, but also that of Europe, Germany, and France. The text is illustrated with the greatest Swiss woodcuts of the 16th century; they depict the coat of arms of European sovereigns and noble families, various country maps, a map of Europe and – a world map! The Stumpf chronicle remained *the* standard work of Swiss history for a long time.

Annales Oder Gruendliche Beschreibung der fuernembsten geschichten vnnnd Thaten



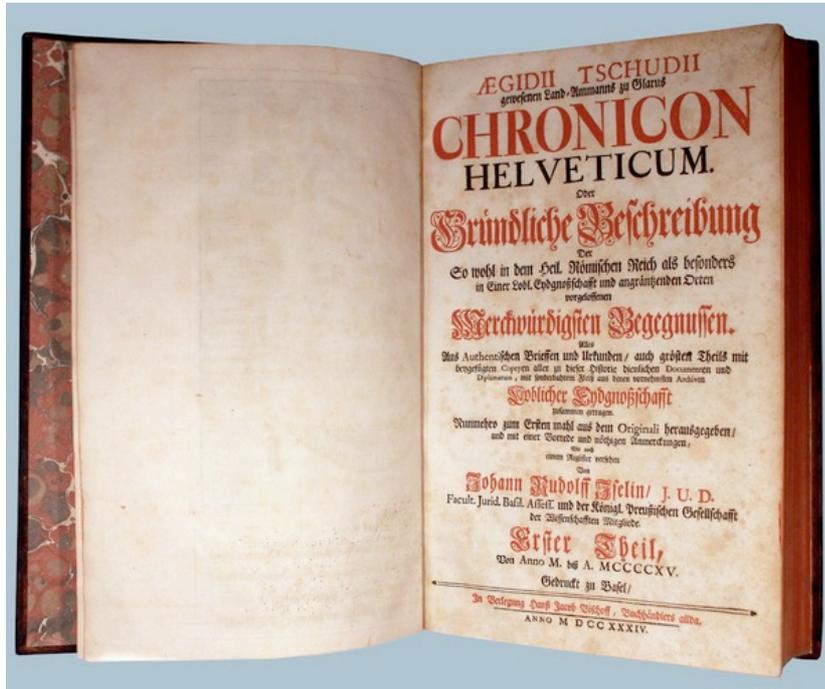
Der Erste Theil

Durch Michael Stettler

Getruckt zu Bern im Jahr 1627.

The work of Michael Stettler (*1580, †1642), who was by the way the only statesman of Bern originating from a family of craftspeople, is a true chronicle of Bern, despite its rather wide-ranging name. Nevertheless, thanks to its vast sources, it is at the same time an important contribution to the history of Switzerland in general. The chronicle begins with the description of the Burgundian Wars and the foundation of Bern, and ends in the year 1627. The biggest part is dedicated to the 16th century, thus making the record an important source for the history of the Reformation in Switzerland.

Chronicon Helveticum Oder Gruendliche Beschreibung (...) Merckwuerdigsten Begegnussen



Erster Theil

**Aegidii Tschudii, gewesenen Land-Ammanns zu Glarus
Getruckt zu Basel / In Verlegung Hanss Jacob Bischof, Anno M D CC XXXIV. [1734]**

Aegidius Tschudi (*1505, †1572) was an eminent member of the Tschudi family of Glarus in Switzerland. Besides writing historical chronicles, Tschudi held various offices and in 1558 became bailiff of Sargans, later of Rorschach and Baden. He used these offices to gain insight into old records and other documents and later reflected these sources in various scientific works. The historical reputation of Tschudi has suffered after later research, however. He is said to have copied Roman inscriptions that never existed and amended others in an arbitrary fashion, as well as deliberately forging documents to push back the origin of his family to the 10th century. Tschudi's historical credit is thus low today, and no document printed or historical statement made by him can be accepted without careful verification and examination.

Tschudi was a mercenary commander, a politician and also a humanist. His chief works were not published until long after his death. In this chronicle he describes the history of Switzerland from 1000 to 1470 in a literary style. It served Friedrich Schiller as an inspiration for his *Wilhelm Tell* and remained a standard reference until the 19th century.

Memorabilia Tigurina Oder Merckwuerdigkeiten, Der Stadt und Landschafft Zürich, In Alphabetischer Ordnung

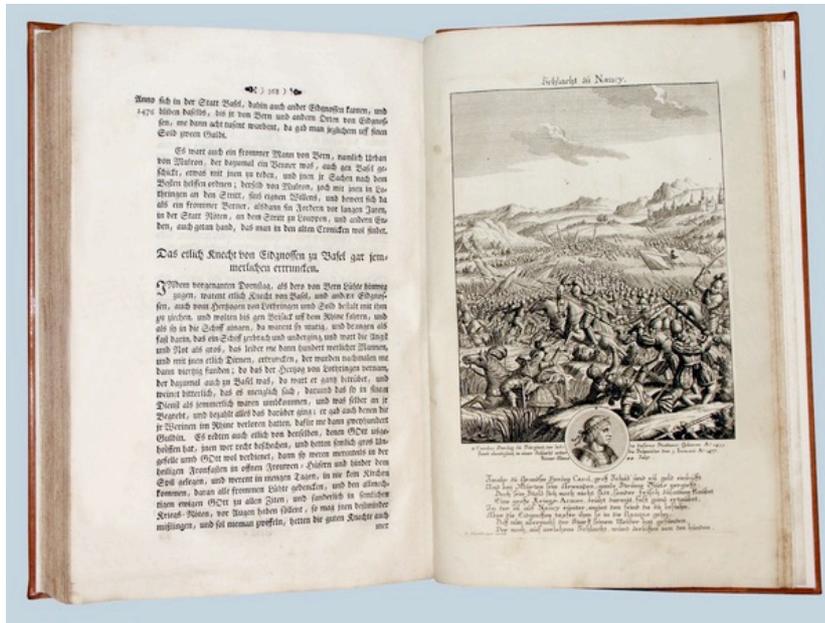


Von Hrn. Hans Heinrich Bluntschli.
[Zurich 1742]

Zurich was an important intellectual centre in the 18th century. Personalities like Johann Kaspar Lavater, Johann Jakob Bodmer and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi lived and worked here. During this time the Ancien Régime started to un hinge, thus giving way to a new civic self-confidence. In this context it might be understandable why the chronicler Hans Heinrich Bluntschli (*1656, †1722), overly enthusiastic, traced the origins Zurich in his *Memorabilia Tigurina* back to the time of Abraham (around 2000 BC)! According to Bluntschli, Zurich had been built 1,220 years before the foundation of Rome – yet among its founders had been personalities such as Gaius Julius Caesar (*100, †44 BC) and Charlemagne (*747, †814).

Bluntschli's *Memorabilia* was published in 1704 for the first time, and for the most part related to the Republic of Zurich. In Zurich, the book immediately became a best seller – whoever wanted to be presumed to be somebody had to have a copy in his bookshelf. As a result the *Memorabilia* was published several times until the end of the 18th century. This issue belongs to the third publication which was printed 20 years after Bluntschli's death.

Diebolds Schillings Beschreibung Der Burgundischen Kriegen



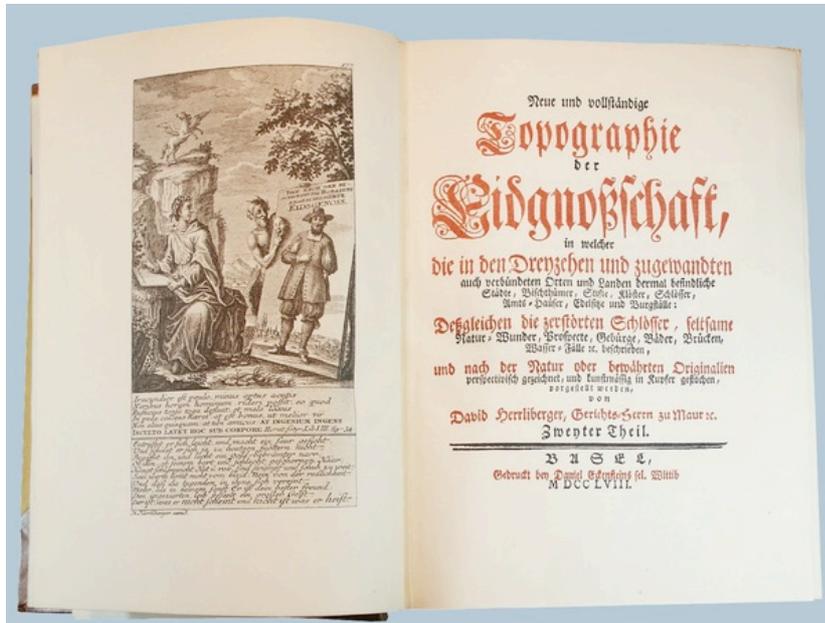
Und einicher anderer in der Schweitz, und sonderlich zu Bern, Um selbige Zeit vorgefallenen Merckwürdigen Begebenheiten. Mit Lobl. Evangelisch-Eydgnoeessischem gnaedig-ertheiltem Privileg.

Bern, Gedruckt bey Frantz Samule Faetschern, 1743

What is the education of the ideal historian? He must have taken part in the events he describes. He must have held an office which granted him a deep look into important documents and contracts. He writes without self-interest in the service of the truth. This at least was the opinion of the editor of the famous *Zurich Schilling*, a chronicle of the Burgundian Wars (1474-1477), written by this "ideal author." His name: Diebold Schilling.

Diebold Schilling the Elder (*c. 1445, †1485) was the author of several Swiss illustrated chronicles. He took part in the Burgundian Wars, worked in Lucerne as a chancellor and in 1460 moved to Bern for a post as a scribe to the city council. Being an independent historian, Schilling didn't have to flatter any prince. His Burgundian chronicle is by far the most original and most comprehensive source of the Burgundian Wars. The etchings that Schilling included as illustrations of the events are particularly charming.

Neue und vollstaendige Topographie der Eidgnossschaft



Zweyter Theil.

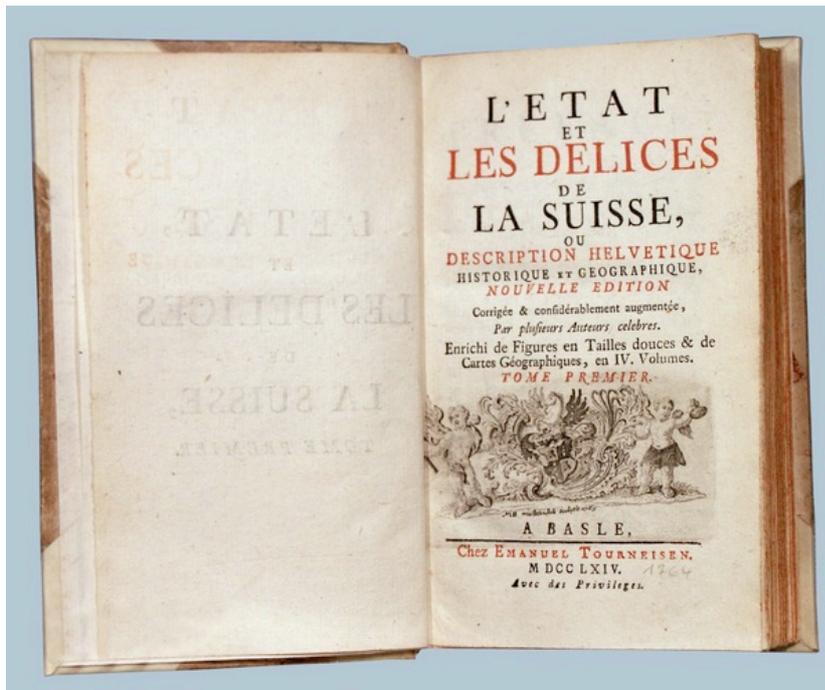
Von David Herrliberger, Gerichts-Herrn zu Maur sc.

Basel, Gedruckt bey Daniel Eckensteins sel. Wittib. M DCC LVIII. [1758]

Hardly anybody interested in Swiss history has not held this book in his hands – whether in original or as a facsimile: The *Neue und vollständige Topographie der Eidgnossschaft* of the engraver David Herrliberger from Zurich (*1697, †1777).

Herrliberger was not "only" engraver, but also publisher. He issued works of greatest significance for illustrated letterpress printing, for Zurich as well as for the whole of Switzerland. With his *Topographie der Eidgnossschaft* (Topography of Switzerland), Herrliberger tried to unite art and science, therewith following the example of the Stumpf chronicle which had been issued in 1547. Moreover he regarded his illustrations of Switzerland, the depictions of villages, towns and landscapes, but also of natural phenomena, as supplementation to the *Schweizerische Lexicon* (Lexicon of Switzerland) of Hans Jakob Leu that had been published from 1747 to 1765. Herrliberger's *Topographie der Eidgnossschaft* contains 328 etchings and is a joint work of different artists who delivered sketches on Herrliberger's commission. The authors remain unknown.

L'Etat Et Les Délices De La Suisse, Ou Description Helvétique Historique Et Géographique



Par plusieurs Auteurs celebres.

A Basle, Chez Emanuel Tourneisen. M DCC LXIV. [1764]

At the beginning of the 18th century, the theologian and historian Abraham Ruchat (*1678, †1750) wrote several works regarding the history of Switzerland. Not all of this works were published, however. Ruchat's lifework, the *Histoire générale de la Suisse*, remained incomplete and was never printed, different to his *Les délices de la Suisse*, which was published in Leyden in 1714.

Some years later, a pastor from Bern by the name of Johann-Georg Altmann (*1685, †1758) also published a history of Switzerland. He had not written it himself, but merged two older works: *L'Etat de la Suisse, écrit en 1714* by the British diplomat Abraham Stanyan, and the above mentioned *Histoire générale de la Suisse* by Ruchat. Altmann titled this compilation *L'Etat et les délices de la Suisse*.

In the years that followed, Altmann's anthology became the standard work of Swiss historiography. It was so often cited and copied that at the beginning of the 1760s it was decided to republish Altmann's work once again. The four volumes of the first issue were revised and published in Basel in 1764. The exemplar in the MoneyMuseum belongs to that issue.