

The de Luze Family  
and the Printed Linen Industry  
in Neuchatel.

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Extract of the thesis:

"The Printed Linen Industry in Neuchatel"  
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and with her permission.

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Amongst the freedoms given to the Neuchatel inhabitants at the end of the 17th century liberty of work helped most especially the introduction of calico into the Principality of Neuchatel. Industrial and commercial activities were thus developed. Work became a necessity on account of the increase of the population due to the arrival in the country of French refugees, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The State Council having granted naturalization to most of them, against payment of 10 White crowns, the refugees became State subjects, and thus had the right to trade and even to open a shop in town.

Even before 1685 Neuchatel did possess bleach works and dye houses.

Some people became very clever in the art of printing, dyeing and painting the calico, having learned that work in Geneva. In 1711 a man of the name of Jean Labran, of Chezard, studied printing in the firm "Vieux et Michel", of Geneva. He was a refugee coming from Dauphine in France. Jean Labran came back to Neuchatel in 1713, and with the financial guarantee of Jacques de Luze, (son of Jacques de Luze and Marguerite Tartarin, born in Chalais, Saintonge, died March 2nd, 1734. He married Marguerite Bourgeois in 1688.) a tradesman of Neuchatel, asked the concession of some land at Pre Royer, au Val de Ruz. Jean Labran's widow and children got the land in May 1715. In 1720 the two brothers

Labran asked to be allowed to live in the house, called La Poissine, at Boudry, belonging to the King of Prussia, Prince of Neuchatel, on the river Areuse, in order to look after their printing works. The King gave his authorization in March, 1724.

On the 11th August, 1725, Jacques de Luze and his son (Jean Jacques Henri de Luze, 1689-1763, married (1720) Rose Marguerite Chaillet) asked to be allowed to get the necessary wood in order to build up again the said town of La Poissine, which had been burnt down. They got the permission on February 11th, 1727, it being specified "that they were not allowed to wash printed linen in the river three weeks before the opening of the trout fishing". Thus being handicapped they looked for another place.

Jacques de Luze found a very convenient land at Le Bied. He died March 2nd, 1734, but his son, Jean Jacques Henri, was allowed to build his manufacture on the said spot on July 20th, 1734. Jean Jacques Henri de Luze built up, at Le Bied, near the works a beautiful private house, which still exists, and belongs to Mr. Henry de Bosset. - Charlotte de Luze (1731-1751) daughter of Jean Jacques Henri, married Abraham de Bosset in 1749. On February 17th, 1739, Jean Jacques Henri was allowed to take some more land in order to increase his works on the banks of the Lake of Neuchatel. He had 80 workmen.

During the first half of the 18th century, de Luze and his colleagues, used most exclusively linen coming from India, brought to Europe by French, English and Dutch companies. But one thinks that a great quantity of linen from St. Gall, which passed in transit for Lyon, remained in Neuchatel in order to be printed.

As soon as the industry of printed linen had been well established in the country, that is to say, after the brothers Labran and Jacques de Luze had created the manufacture of Le Bied, many others were founded at Vauvillers (Boudry) by Pierre Cartier - at Petit Cortaillod, by Moise Godet sold afterwards to J. J. Jacquier, who took as partner in 1743, M. Chaillet - at Pres du Lac,

belonging to David Guinand, at Cressier, by Henri Paul Despland, born at Anduze, Languedoc, and who sold it to Emmanuel Forel, in 1742 - aux Isles, &c., &c.

The industry of printed linen was taking more and more extension. Nevertheless the manufacture of Le Bied was most particularly prosperous.

Jean Jacques Henri de Luze, on the 16th November, 1745, asked to have a new land, "au bout des allees de Colombier" as he wished once more to increase his manufacture.

In 1750 Neuchatel's population, including the surroundings, was about 33,000 people, and the printed linen industry was using about 250 people, divided amongst the works of Colombier - Cortaillod - Boudry and La Chatellenie du Landeron. In 1752 this industry employed 399 workmen, in 1753: 367 - in 1754: 409 - in 1755: 281 - in 1756: 367 - in 1759: 579 - but in 1760 the manufactures became more important, and in 1767, 1446 men and women worked in the different places, and in 1785 their number increased to 2160.

The manufacture of Le Bied had a great reputation, not only in the country, but also abroad. In 1742 Claude Abraham Dupasquier and his brother Jean Jacques became directors. Many foreigners came and worked, some of them learning so much that they created in their own countries similar establishments. Amongst them J. J. Schmalzer, of Mulhausen (Alsace) who worked in 1743-1744 and created with a painter Jean Henri Dollfus, and a tradesman, Samuel Koechlin, the well known industry of printed linen of Mulhausen.

Claude Abraham Dupasquier left the directorship and was authorized on March 9th 1751 to create la "Fabrique Neuve de Cortaillod", whose goods became known on the Basel and Frankfort markets in 1752. This manufacture belonged to the firm Bovet Dupasquier & Cie. and was bought in 1753 by the Society Pourtales & Cie. which saved the manufacture of its financial difficulties. The two leading men of this company were Claude Abraham Dupasquier and Jacques Louis de Pourtales (son of Jeremie de Pourtales and Esther Marguerite de Luze, born August 9th, 1722,

married June 29th, 1769 his cousin Rose Augustine de Luze. She was the sister of Charles Henry, our great grandfather.) who was one of the greatest tradesmen of the time and who learned his work in the firm of de Luze Meuron & Cie., Neuchatel, proprietor of the manufacture of Le Bied.

"La Fabrique Neuve de Cortailod" worked only for the Soc. Pourtales & Cie., which was buying calico from India, coming through London, Lorient and Holland. The Society P. & Cie. was also selling the manufacture gum coming from Senegal, madder-root coming from Hagenau and Holland, indigo coming from Guatemala and St. Domingo.

In 1766 another manufacture was created at "Le Val de Ruz" by the firm Abraham & Jean Frederic de Montmollin and was the last one created in the principality of Neuchatel.

The commercial firms of Neuchatel interested in printed linen can be divided into firms of first and second importance.

Firms of first importance:

The first established was Jacques de Luze, in 1713, which became de Luze and Meuron, in 1749, and afterward de Luze, Meuron & Co. in 1766, de Luze Pere & fils et Bosset in 1768, and de Luze Pere Fils & Co. in 1770. (Jacques de Luze and his son Jean Jacques Henri de Luze).

In 1750 was created Bovet Dupasquier & Co., which became Pourtales & Cie. in 1753.

In 1766 was created Pierre Cartier and de Luze, which became Pierre Cartier and de Luze Freres, afterwards de Luze Freres which amalgamated with Henri Chaillet & Fils, founded in 1766 also, in order to form de Luze Freres & Chaillet in 1767-1769. (Jacques Henri, Francois, Jean Frederic de Luze, sons of Abraham de Luze, the vicar).

In 1770 Pourtales & Co. was the leading one, then de Luze Pere Fils & Cie., then de Luze Freres & Chaillet.

1°. Pourtales & Cie. existed up to the 31st December, 1795, the partners forming on one side Vaucher Dupasquier & Cie., on the other side Pourtales & Cie. This firm amalgamated with de Luze & Cie. on the 17th January 1802 and became Petitpierre Robert & Cie. in 1805. (See firm de Luze Pere Fils & Cie.)

2°. de Luze Pere Fils & Cie. amalgamated 17th January 1782 with Montmollin Freres & Cie. which had been established in 1767. In 1794 the partners divided, forming on one side de Luze & Cie., on the other de Montmollin Berthoud & Cie., which became Berthoud Perregaux & Cie. on the 1st of January 1815.

de Luze & Cie. took into partnership 1st January 1802 M. Petiepierre, of the firm Pourtales & Cie., and became Petitpierre Robert & Cie. in 1805, and Robert Dovet & Cie. on December 31st, 1810.

3°. The firm de Luze Freres & Chaillet existed up to January 17th 1790, and on that date the partners formed on one side de Luze Gouhard & Cie., on the other Motta & Cie.

Firms of second importance.

1°. Messrs Brandt freres established in 1736, became in 1770 Brandt de Montmollin Jeanrenaud & Co. and failed in 1771.

2°. Sandoz, de Montmollin Barbier & Cie., established in 1759, became in 1764 Sandoz, de Montmollin Freres & Cie. In 1767 this firm became on one side Sandoz Freres Jeanneret & Cie., which failed in 1772 under the name of Jeanneret & Cie., on the other side Montmollin Freres & Cie., which became on January 1st, 1782 de Luze Montmollin & Cie. (see firms of first importance, No. 2).

3°. Osterwald Leydecker & Cie., created in 1768, and became Borrel Guyenet Leydecker & Cie. in 1769, afterwards Borrel, Guyenet & Cie. in 1771, which disappeared in 1778.