

Neuchâtel



Places

Collegiate Church

The Collegiate Church was built beginning in 1185 with a Romanesque choir and a Gothic nave, and was consecrated in 1276. The canons were responsible for the worship services. In 1372, Count Louis of Neuchâtel had a family tomb built in the church. A plaque across from it recalls the removal of images of saints on October 23, 1530, as if it had been the result of a people's movement. In reality, however, drunken soldiers destroyed the church's treasures upon their return from a military campaign in Geneva.

The grave of St. William († 1231), a canon who was considered to be the town's patron saint, can also be found within the church. People swore oaths upon his relics, and carried them in processions whenever famines, plagues, and other catastrophes threatened. In 1430, John of Freiburg, Count of Neuchâtel, introduced a continual mass to commemorate the saints. Following the Reformation, his relics were moved to safety in Burgundy, but have since disappeared.

The white markings in front of the church trace the outline of a chapel dedicated to St. William that was demolished in 1871. A nearby statue, erected in 1875, depicts William Farel holding up a Bible. His left foot rests on the head of a person with a halo, lying on the ground, representing Farel symbolically squashing the veneration of images.

Rue de la Collégiale

Rue de la Collégiale 10 was the residence of the twelve canons. They held a special position not only in the church but in political life as well. While their lifestyle does not however seem to have been particularly pious, they were extremely severe with regard to the people. The collegium soon grew rich through contributions. The building would later become the pastor's home, where William Farel lived.

A school was put in place in Rue de la Collégiale 6 and 8 in 1600 and remained in service through 1835. Education was a matter of central importance to the reformers, as for them every child needed to be able to read the Bible. Rue de la Collégiale 4 is known to be an old parsonage. Before the Reformation it was also occupied by the canons. The theological faculty of the Free Church was to be found across the street at no. 3 in the 19th century. It now serves as a parish center.

Fontaine du Griffon / Maison de la Prévôté

When the Fontaine du Griffon was erected in 1664, it was known as Fontaine de Saint-Guillaume, even though the eponymous source can be found higher up. In 1668, the new Count of Neuchâtel, Prince Charles-Paris d'Orléans celebrated his arrival by having wine flow from the fountain – both red and white!

Rue du Château 12, across the street, is the Old Chancery or Provost House. It was in a poor state when Farel lived there for 12 years and died there in 1565. Farel returned to Neuchâtel in 1538 at the people's urging, and remained there until this death. Bern encouraged the town government to issue laws to "discipline, ameliorate, and punish vices such as blasphemy, drunkenness, games, dance, offensiveness, and the like." The Town Council issued the first church law that also made churchgoing mandatory.

Fontaine du Banneret / Tour de Diesse

The fountain is the town's oldest and once provided water to cows and goats. In 1581, it took on its current appearance with the banner figure by the sculptor Laurent Perroud. The Fontaine du Banneret also played a part in the Reformation: The canons at one point tried to draw a cold bath for Farel in it.

To its left, one can see the Tour de Diesse with its large clock face. The tower once loomed above the eastern town gate or *Maleporte* ("bad gate"). According to legend, the gate owes its name to none other than Julius Caesar, who once hit his head on the low arch. In reality, the gate probably made things difficult for horses in particular. The gate took on its pink color in the town fire of 1714, with the heat changing the color of the lime in the wall and burnt its entablature.

Temple du Bas / Rue des Poteaux

In the late 17th century, many Huguenots (French Protestants) took refuge from persecution in Neuchâtel and settled there. The Hospital Chapel was then too small for church services. The new building, completed in 1696, was primarily the result of the efforts of Pastor Jean-Frédéric Ostervald (1663 – 1747), also known as the Second Reformer of Neuchâtel. The church has since been reconstructed several times. In 1871, 15 soldiers of the French Bourbaki Army were housed there. Today, the Temple du Bas is used as a hall for concerts and festivities.

Jean-Frédéric Ostervald was annoyed by the carts that rattled by the building during worship. The road was therefore closed off during services by posts in the ground (*poteaux*), hence the name of the street.

Pierre de Vingle Printing House

The famous printing house of Pierre de Vingle may have been located at the corner of rue Saint-Honoré and rue du Bassin. De Vingle printed Reformation books and flyers, which lamented the abuse of the mass and the unworthy lifestyles of priests. Many flyers were smuggled into France in 1534 and hung in various places, all the way to the king's bedroom door. The flyers were all thought to have disappeared until 1943 when copies were rediscovered in the binding of a book in the Bern City Library.

Pierre de Vingle was expelled from Lyon in 1525 because he printed and distributed the New Testament in French. De Vingle then settled in Neuchâtel, where he printed the famous Olivétan Bible in 1535. The translation by Pierre-Robert Olivétan is considered to be a masterpiece and served as the basis for further Bible translations into French for several centuries. It has also served as the Bible of the Huguenots and the Italian Waldensian Protestants.

Faubourg de l'Hôpital 4: Old Hospital / Old Hospital Chapel

A chapel was also part of the hospital in Neuchâtel. Because it was difficult for old people and pregnant women to reach the Collegiate Church, especially in winter, the decision was made for a mass to be held in the Lower Town's Hospital Chapel as well. As the canons feared losing influence and income, they made sure that no bell was installed in the chapel. William Farel preached there when the pulpit of the Collegiate Church was denied to him. The hospital was reconstructed by David de Pury in 1779, and city services have been administrated there since 1914.

Hôtel DuPeyrou

The lordly building, surrounded by generous gardens reaching to the edge of the lake, was built between 1764 and 1771 by the Bernese architect Erasmus Ritter for Pierre-Alexandre DuPeyrou (1729 - 1794). DuPeyrou owned overseas plantations and was a close friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was also an Enlightenment thinker, deist, and freemason. The views of the Enlightenment would later have an influence on the separation of the Free Church (Eglise indépendante de Neuchâtel) in 1873.

History

Neuchâtel was first mentioned when King Rudolph III of Burgundy presented the Neuchâtel residence to his wife Irmengard, with its serfs, servants, and all connected with it. Count Ulrich II had work begun on the Collegiate Church in 1185, which was consecrated in 1276, and founded a collegiate chapter to ensure the clerical supervision of the town. In 1529, Bern, which had a strong influence over Neuchâtel, sent William Farel of France to reform the town. The zealous reformer from the town of Gap, was already effective in reforming Aigle under Bernese rule, which became the first Reformed area in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Farel attended the Bern Disputation in 1528 and translated the theses there into French.

Despite his letter of recommendation from Bern, Farel was not permitted to preach in the Collegiate Church of Neuchâtel. He would not, however, be discouraged and preached in the streets or in private quarters. In November 1530, the majority of burghers voted to abolish the mass in an election. First the town and then the surrounding rural areas adopted the Reformation, and do so in opposition to the will of the rulers of the land, who would remain Catholic for nearly another 200 years.

William Farel was a tireless traveler through several countries of Europe, working toward establishing the Reformation. John Calvin would also call him to Geneva to strengthen and guide the Reformation. His final journey took him to Metz, after which he returned home exhausted. He died soon thereafter

on September 13, 1565.

William Farel

Born in Gap in southeastern France in 1489, William Farel studied at the Sorbonne in Paris beginning in 1509. It was there that he first learned of the teachings of Martin Luther, which he was quickly drawn to. In 1521, Farel moved to Meaux, from which he was, however, expelled in 1523 due to his views. From there we went to Strasbourg, Zurich, Bern, and Basel. He then reformed Mömpelgard (Montbéliard) and soon after that the Bernese dominion of Aigle. Bern, which adopted the Reformed faith in 1528, sent the strident and disputatious reformer to Neuchâtel, who arrived there in late 1529.

At first, Farel was not given permission to preach, and only upon pressure from Bern was he then allowed to preach on the streets. Later he was even allowed to use the Hospital Chapel. His sermons against the veneration of saints and images resulted in the iconoclastic riot in 1530. The burghers of Neuchâtel would soon vote to adopt the Reformation formally. In 1532, Farel took part in the Waldensian Synod in Chanforan, where he took on the task of having the Bible translated into French. The translation was then carried out by Olivétan and printed in Neuchâtel.

Apparently on his way home, Farel stopped off in Geneva, gathered the Protestants there and spoke to them, but the Episcopal Council there was able to have him expelled from the town. He would, however, return a year later with Bern's support, was able to evade several attacks, and was ultimately successful in Geneva adopting the Reformation in August 1535, although it was precarious there at first. In July 1536, he met John Calvin, who sought refuge in Geneva, and Farel convinced him to stay. In 1538, Farel returned to Neuchâtel, where he –interrupted only by missionary travels – remained until his death in 1565.

Christophe Fabri

Although Fabri was actually a physician, William Farel appointed him to a clerical office in Neuchâtel. Fabri was born in Vienne, France in around 1509, and had begun to preach in various towns and villages near Neuchâtel in 1530. From 1536 to 1546, Fabri was active in Thonon, which was under Bernese rule at the time, and then returned to Neuchâtel, where he remained until 1562. He then returned to his place of birth, where he was held prisoner for a while. He would then succeed Farel upon his death in 1565. Fabri died in Neuchâtel in 1588.

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