

Waldstätten (primitive or forest cantons)

Version dated: 27.12.2014

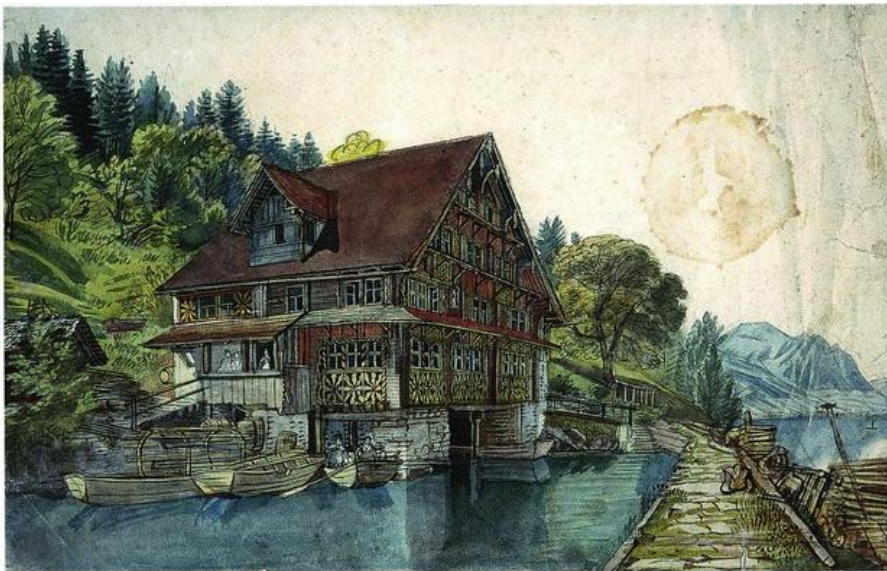
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The Waldstätten designate in French, collectively, the cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden (primitive Switzerland (/fr/articles/026418/2013-11-13/)). The term corresponds to the German *Waldstätte* (sometimes rendered by "forest canton"), in which *Wald* designates the forest in the medieval sense, that is to say a territory where meadows, pastures, fields and silve were mixed. The latter nevertheless predominated, with the marshy areas. Contrary to the royal forest (*silva forestalis*) withdrawn from community exploitation, it was originally freely exploited. It is in such an impracticable and uncultivated forest (*silva invia et inculta*) , in such a desert (*heremus*)that Einsiedeln Abbey was built. Einsiedeln is a forest site (*Waldstatt*) and its inhabitants are called "people of the forest" (*waltluite*) . The term *intramontani* , in Lucerne's oldest charter, the sworn letter of 1252, probably refers to the inhabitants of Unterwalden.

Ze Swiz in der waltstat , is it written in a document of 1289 on the convent of Steinen. Glarus is also called *waldstatt* in 1323, with Schwyz. Insofar as the term

Waldstätte existed in the original of the deed of sale of the property of Anna of Kibourg and is not an addition of the scribe of the regeste, we can affirm that it designates the three cantons in 1273 already . It appears with certainty as a collective name in 1309: Count Werner von Homberg functioned as the emperor's administrator in the *Waldstette* . In 1310 Duke Frederick of Austria reported to the Bishop of Strasbourg that the Emperor (Henry VII) was antagonizing him in his rights *in civitatibus Silvanis* . The formulathat *vulgariter Waldstet dicuntur* appears in an act of the same Henry VII in 1311. Other contemporary sources use the expression sogenannte *Waldstätte* . It was then that the use of designating all three cantons by this term spread. Usage practiced by third parties and by the cantons themselves, thus in the armistices with Austria from 1318: *die lantluite gemeinlich in dien waltsteten zu Uren, ze Switz und ze Underwalden* . The appellation "people of the forest" (*Waldleute*) alternates with *Landleute* , in particular on the occasion of the adhesion to the urban alliance of June 5, 1327. In the pact of alliance signed with Lucerne (1332), the terms *Landleute* ,, *drei Länder* and *jeklich waltstat* are used interchangeably. In that concluded with Bern (1353), mention is almost always made of the *Waldstätte* to designate the three allies of the city, which are therefore considered as an entity. The cantons taken separately are often designated by the expression of *Waltstatt* . From the middle of the XIV^E S., the formula *Stette und Waldstette* appears to designate the Confederates in alternation with *Stett und Lender* and meets until the end of the XV^E S.

Evoking his war against the *Waldstätte* in 1386 , Duke Leopold III of Austria probably only alluded to the three cantons, a core symbolizing his enemies, because Lucerne was only mentioned as the fourth forest canton in the 15th century , notably in an addition of 1456-1459 brought to the *Silbernes Buch* (1433) of the secretary of the city of Lucerne Egloff Etterlin. The *vier waldstetten* are often mentioned in diet recces from the second half of the 15th^{century} . In the history of the Confederation by Albert de Bonstetten, the expression *quartet Loca Silvarum* or *vier Waldstett [...] darumb, dass sy in den welden und daby nach gelegen [...]* seems to be already common. Towards the end of the 15th^{century} , the former deanship of Lucerne also gave itself the name of chapter of the Four cantons (/fr/articles/030730/2013-02-27/) (*Vierwaldstätterkapitel*) and Lake Lucerne became Lake Lucerne (*Vierwaldstättersee*) in the 16th century .



Auberge de Treib in the municipality of Seelisberg on the shores of Lake Lucerne.
Watercolor by Franz Schmid, circa 1845 (Staatsarchiv Schwyz, Graph. Slg. 1268).
[...]

Relations between Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden were regulated by the Pact of 1315, those between the three cantons and Lucerne by the clauses of the alliance signed in 1332 with this city. Until 1798, the delegates of the forest cantons met in their own diets to settle common problems or conflicts and coordinate their policy. These days took place frequently in Beckenried, then in Treib and in various places. But they were not institutionalized according to precise rules. Ancient historiography made the forest cantons the starting point and the nucleus of the Confederation. This vision persisted until very recently, helped to form the historical consciousness of the Swiss and became, in the form of a myth, an essential part of Swiss identity.

Sources and bibliography

Sources	▼
Bibliography	▼

Thematic indexing

Regions / Region, landscape (/fr/search/category?f_hls.lexicofacet_string=2/006800.010400.010700.)

quote suggestion

Josef Wiget: "Waldstätten (primitive or forest cantons)", in: *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland (DHS)*, version dated 27.12.2014, translated from German. Online: <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/fr/articles/007465/2014-12-27/>, consulted on 02.04.2023.

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