

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST, WITH LOUIS SAUGY

PANEL 1

1.A Louis Saugy

My name is Louis Saugy and I will be your guide on our journey. Born in 1871, I was a postman during the 1890's and then became a paper cutter, I have cut out the life of Pays-d'Enhaut with my scissors.

1.B Chaletty: my house

It is here in this house that I spent three-quarters of my life on my paper cutting career. Times were spent happily with family and friends.

1.C Complete success: everyone wants their own Saugy!

W. Churchill, Field-marshal Montgomery and many other celebrities came to see me cut paper in this very house.

1.D A memorable Christmas

Ciné-Journal Suisse came to film my work and to interview me on Christmas eve, 1950. I cut sheets of black and coloured paper which have been folded in two, I never draw the subject first.

Scan to see an excerpt of the film.

1.E The Royal Family

of Spain came to visit

One day the Royal Family of Spain appeared at my door asking to watch me cut. As they had not made an appointment and I was in the middle of a discussion with the parish priest and the pastor, I asked them to take a tour of the village and come back in a while.

1.F La Gentiane: a panacea

In the cellar I distilled litres of Gentiane, which was drunk by connoisseurs while singing songs and telling good stories.

Cigarette ends, cigar ends and matches may only be thrown in the fire; if you disobey this rule you will be asked to leave and never return.

I posted this notice in the cellar for the benefit of my friends.

PANEL 2

2.A Personalised paper cuts

When I am cutting I always try to put myself in the shoes of the person it is intended for. I think of their profession or their favourite pastime.

A cutting made for a lawyer. Here we see the judge and the accused (a poacher?), a weeping woman, a nervous tramp and a child on a swing

2.B A basket full of waste paper

I worked until four in the morning to complete this wagoner with his mare and load of logs: my waste paper basket was full, but then I did it “literally”.

2.C A nice gift

I give members of my family paper cuts on special occasions.

This is a paper cut I gave to my nephews, Gabriel and Rose for their wedding.

I gave this paper cut to a woodcutter.

PANEL 3

3.A The Institute

Videmanette

On this postcard you can see the Town Hall behind the cart and, to the right, a café with feed troughs outside for the horses. It was demolished to make way for the Bon Accueil hotel, and then the Videmanette Institute. Young girls from good families would come here to finish their education and learn to ski. Lady Diana, the future Princess of Wales, came here to study for a few months.

Lady Diana (in red)

3.B From chalets made of wood

to chalets cut from paper

Take a good look at the façade of the Bon Accueil, you can see my Uncle’s name, he was a carpenter. In my youth I would work with him before cutting my own chalets in paper...

3.C Give me a frame, I am going to make you a paper cut.

It was with these words that I suggested to Louis Yersin that I make him a paper cut of his stepfather, Charles Cottier. He was well-known as a country butcher, hunter and wagoner.

PANEL 4

4.A Each day I would wait for the

Federal Post stage-coach.

Do you recognise me with my post bag? I came to get the mail brought by the stage-coach of the Federal Postal Service.

4.B “It’s not about cutting with scissors,

one needs to be an observer...”

In my paper cuts every detail counts, the number of windows, the clothes, the accessories such as pipes and hats... For a single character I might superimpose up to 15 layers of paper.

4.C The Café du Cerf, opposite the Town Hall

We used to play cards in the Café du Cerf. We always cheated outrageously! Whenever I met up with my friends I would bend their ears with my anecdotes filled with rich colour and funny details.

The man standing is helping out the player opposite him

4.D The great disaster

In January of 1953 a huge fire ravaged the centre of the village. It destroyed the beautiful chalets on the square which I had so carefully portrayed in my cuts.

That was a cold winter, below -20C°. The water pumped by the firemen froze instantly. You can see the icicles hanging from the windows.

The locals tell of how many old people died before the end of that winter. My time had also come. I died at the age of 82.

PANEL 5

5.A Tobogganing, what fun!

In winter, the village street would become a fantastic toboggan run. Until the policeman, Pilou, put up a notice! (*No tobogganing, you will be fined*). We skied, skated and were pulled along by horses.

5.B If you cannot draw, you will not get there with scissors.

The school was in the chalet "Arolles". There were three classrooms, each holding about forty children.

My mother was a school mistress and drew beautifully, it was she who taught me the basics of art. My father, Jules, was a farmer and butcher and would sometimes cut large paper silhouettes of animals and people in the evenings.

5.C The children

My wife and I were able to have three children: Alice, Elisa and Ernest. My paper cuttings depict the children of my era playing ball, playing with hoops and on the swings.

They would help take the animals up to the high pastures, accompanied by a goat or a pig.

PANEL 6

6.A The MOB railway

The MOB railway connects Montreux and the Bernese Oberland. It arrived at our village in 1904 and would replace the Federal Postal Service stage-coach for delivering the mail. The train also carried wood chips used to make paper, you can see them at the side of the station.

The Rougemont tile factory, a good idea whose time was cut short.

On the other side of the tracks the Rougemont tile factory was built on land now occupied by the crafts area. This huge building was constructed in 1907. Fierce competition led to its closure. There only remain a few barn roofs covered with the tiles made at this factory.

6.C Tourism

Many travellers now began to arrive by train. They were welcomed at the numerous small hotels, children's homes and girls' boarding schools. That is when tourism began in our village.

There was an ice-rink in front of the station which everybody loved.

PANEL 7

7.A Timber: the local raw material

Timber has always been a very important commodity in the region. In this cut I depict the process undergone by the tree as it is turned into a beam or a plank, later to be used in the construction of a chalet. In the centre we can see the auctioneer auctioning off his timber.

In winter, the logs are transported by sled.

7.B Timber rafting

When transporting timber to Fribourg it was floated down the river Sarine. This practice was prohibited in 1894

Logs at Chaudanne, 1894

7.C Resonance wood

The forest located under the gondola lift produces a very rare type of wood: resonance wood .

It is used in the manufacture of musical instruments. It is even exported to Australia. We all love music in the Saugy household. We would get together as a family and each would play their own instrument.

Today, Rougemont church is a venue for a large number of classical concerts.

PANEL 8

8.A The fountains

We find ourselves at the "des Fontaines" reservoir, this was constructed in 1935 and forms a part of the Rougemont water supply system.

Before this, none of the houses had running water. We had to go to the fountain.

The fountain is also where the women would do their washing. You can see the planks on which the women would scrub the clothes.

8.B The orchards

As you can see in my cuttings, the fruit harvest was an important time of the year.

8.C Fashion in TIMES gone by

During the 1900s women would always wear long dresses, never trousers. They would often wear hats as well.

In fact, there was even a hat shop in the village.

PANEL 9

9.A Assault on the snow-capped peaks

There gondola lift had not yet been built when I was alive. We would walk up to the Videman on seal skins.

In this chalet my nephew Isaac would wait for skiers with cinnamon tea and biscuits.

9.B The Videmanette GONDOLA lift

This project took 20 years and was finally completed in 1959.

The ascent took 20 minutes and a round trip ticket cost 7 francs. During its construction much of the equipment was hauled up on a service cable-way, which could handle loads of up to 500 kg.

The men worked 11 hours a day, Saturdays included.

PANEL 10

10.A Ascent to the high pastures

The principle subject of my paper cuttings was the ascent to the alpine pastures, a major event in mountain life. Every summer the farmers take their herds up to their mountain chalets. It is in these that large vats are used to make the famous "Alpage" cheese.

10.B Hay

At the bottom of the cutting you can see a man carrying a scythe getting ready to cut the hay, his wife has a pitchfork which she uses to spread they hay out so it can dry in the sun.

Below that, the hay is ready to be taken to the barn where it is stored ready for the winter.

The cows are well fed in winter-time.

PANEL 11

11.A Abbaye : the major festival in the village

The Abbaye is a shooting festival which has been held on the 1st Saturday of May for over 100 years. In the morning, the participants parade down through the village to the shooting range, decorations are supplied by the younger members. In the evening the champion shot is announced and the party goes back up through the village to the sound of a fanfare. Both young and old love the Abbaye as it is a good opportunity for a party.

At the head of the procession you will recognise my uncle Alexandre, a trumpeter in the cavalry.

In my time, festivals and other social events were held at the shooting range.

The Abbaye today.

PANEL 12

12.A The monks of Cluny come to Rougemont

In around 1080 the Count of Gruyère donated land in Rougemont to the monks of Cluny. They would go on to build a priory and a Romanesque church dedicated to St Nicholas.

12.B The Bernese take over and construct the castle

A few centuries later, Count Michel was forced into bankruptcy and his assets were divided between Bern and Fribourg.

From 1555 onwards the bailiffs of Bern ruled over Rougemont and imposed the Reformation. The Bernese constructed a castle for themselves on the site of the old priory.

During the revolution of Vaud in 1798 the castle was declared to be the property of the State. It subsequently changed hands several times and in 1924 my American friend, Mr Tuck became the owner. He adorned it with antique furniture and several of my cuttings, so creating a veritable museum.

12.C The castle in flames

On the 6th of February 1973 the castle was ravaged by fire. The firemen were unable to control the flames. Within 2 hours the castle had been burned to a ruin. However, some of the beautiful furniture and a few of my cuttings were able to be saved.

Happily the church was spared and Mr Tuck's family subsequently rebuilt the castle.
The inside courtyard of the castle.

PANEL 13

13.A The church

The church constructed by the monks of Cluny has undergone several transformations over the years, particularly during the time of Bernese rule. The octagonal tower of the Oberland, with its steeply-sloping sides and overhanging roof, allows snow and rain to slide off easily.

Everything is covered with wooden tiles which provide good protection against water, snow and ice.

As with all Romanesque churches, it faces eastwards and has areas of high energy. It is worthwhile going in to admire the architecture and feel the vibrations within its walls.

The interior of the church has not always been as it is today.

Plastered walls from the Bernese period.

A wood-burning stove.

When my granddaughter came to choose a cutting for her confirmation, I told her "take that one, it has the church in it".

After restoration work in 1919: visible stonework and arches painted with patterned motifs, reminiscent of the church at Romainmôtier (another Cluniac site).

Close-up of the cutting below.

PANEL 14

14.A On foot or by bike

In my day you needed to be very fit to be a postman. I had to carry the heavy mail on foot or by bike in all weathers.

Coming down from the passes you would pick up speed, you had to trail branches from the back of the bike to slow you down.

There were no letter boxes, I knocked on the door, it would open and I would give them their mail. If they had any letters to send they would give them to me.

On the way I would admire the cuttings made by my predecessor, J. -J. Hauswirth, and when I talked to people I would observe their posture and mannerisms so I could transfer them to my own cuttings.

In the middle you can see me with my beautiful Peugeot bicycle, I was very fond of it.

The roads were not paved.

Cars were a rare sight.

PANEL 15

15.A The granary

We are now in front of the most beautiful granary in the village. Farmers from remote villages would store their reserves there, as well as their Sunday suits and shoes to go to church.

One of my first cuttings.

The Café de la Croix Bleue was situated on this square. No alcoholic drinks were served there.

15.B Flowers and bouquets

I love flowers, as do all people from these parts, and tending my garden is one of my favourite pastimes. I use flowers abundantly in my cuttings, either in bouquets or as decorative frames.

15.C Trees, another decorative feature

I have the habit of cutting many different varieties of trees. You can see hardwoods at the bottom of the cutting, going further up we find firs, which are more resistant to altitude and cold temperatures. Enjoy the flower-filled frame!

"Sunday".

PANEL 16

16.A Deer, chamois, hare and bears: Hunting...

There were many hunting aficionados in the valley, and there still are today. There were also a number of poachers.

Do you recognise Pilou, our policeman? He is hiding among the rocks to surprise the poachers.

Here we can see a poacher caught in the act.

16.B Fishing: my second passion

During the high season I fish all the time and hardly ever cut paper.

In the Sarine we mainly fish trout and there is always a competition to see who can catch the biggest. I even drew a map of the best fishing spots which is still used by anglers to this day.

PANEL 17

17.A I have inspired members of my family and others in the Pays -d'Enhaut to take up the craft

One day, my cousin Isaac came to see me cut and asked me to give him a sheet of paper as he also wanted to make cuttings. He was an antique dealer and a beekeeper and he would only cut during his free time in winter.

17.B The Saugy sisters

The twin sisters, Christiane and Jacqueline Saugy are my little nieces. One evening they went round to watch their uncle Isaac cutting paper. He asked them if they wanted to cut out a cow. The two sisters returned home and proudly showed off their first cuttings to their parents. "My daughters, you could earn a living from your scissors!" exclaimed their father. He was right. They have been supporting themselves through their art since 1977.

PANEL 18

You must always get better. I never tried to sell anything before the age of forty as I knew I could do better. My artwork is the result of a combination of observation and perseverance.

Our trip into the past must stop there. My cuttings are continuing their journeys to the four corners of the world. They are in Egypt, America and Tokyo. They are on display in several museums and also at the Musée du Vieux Pays-d'Enhaut, in Château-d'Oex. I hope you have a wonderful stay in my part of the country.