

The name „Schleife“

The "Schleife" derives its name from the factory premises of the same name. Since the Middle Ages, the textile industry had played a significant role in the economic life of Winterthur. Today's factory building of the Schleife was built during 1829-1831, while the name "Schleife" (engl: grinding shop) originates from the mechanical "Schleifwerke" (engl: grinding factory).

Johann Jakob Weber (1814-1901), a dyer from the canton Thurgau, expanded the "Schliifi" to a large company working in textile finishing. Fabric for vests and lining, cloth for parasols and umbrellas were dyed in single colors. The more significant part of the company soon focused on finishing and dressing colorfully woven cloths and ties. This included washing out and accurately folding the fabric as well as wrapping the cloth nicely with ribbons of silk and paper wrappings, in appealing cases and solid boxes. In the bloom years of the Swiss cotton industry, main purchasers were cotton weavers and printers from the Eastern part of Switzerland (Toggenburg, Zurich Oberland, region of Glarus). Merchant houses from Winterthur made relationships with the South European countries, Central and South America and East Asia. These were the bloom years of the Swiss cotton export industry.

Exceptional social commitment

J.J. Weber was an entrepreneur of foresight and generosity and he was equally committed to family and public life. He opened an account to support employees, yearly paying ten percent of the net profit. This fund relieved the distress of many, caused by sickness, accidents or military service. As early as 1854, a health insurance was founded. From the very beginning, laborers administered the insurance; however, the patron always covered any loss-making financial statements.

Battle against social injustice

Furthermore, originating from the artisanal-patriarchal roots, an eating-house for laborers was built, which offered meals at modest prices. In 1873, about seventy laborers ate there every day. In order to relieve the housing shortage of the working class, Weber built and financed a number of apartment buildings at Oberer Deutweg and Pflanzschulstrasse (1867-1878). In addition, he founded the kindergarten at "Oberer Deutweg" and financed it from his own resources. Later on, the kindergarten was transferred to the municipality.

Takeover by Carl Weber jun.

His son, Carl Weber, entered the father's company in 1869, after having completed a Science degree at the University of Zurich and returning from years of traveling to Germany, Austria, France, England and Scotland. Around 100 years ago, as the export of colorful fabrics declined, the bleach plant gained in importance (finishing of raw materials into linen goods, such as lace, etc.). Up to November 1999, textile machines were in operation. (Source: Year Book Winterthur 1988)

1980 - today

This present day, many small-scale enterprises are located in the "Schliifi" building, along with the Swiss confederate photo archive and, of course, the Stiftung Schleife!