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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

BIG WATCH FIRST

A Swiss watch factory at La Chaux-de-Fonds (Neuchatel) recently presented the first fully electronic quartz wrist-watch with continuous digital indication based on liquid crystals. This firm comprises several production centres in Switzerland as well as a factory in the United States and expects by the end of the year to have sold over 20,000 watches of this type at a price between 600 and 700 Swiss francs. This watch, which is still in the prototype stage, is about the same size as traditional timepieces but is probably one of the smallest of the quartz generation, of which it possesses all the other characteristics.

It is a rectangular watch, in which the dial and hands have been replaced by a window in which the hours and minutes appear, the seconds being indicated by two dots of light. Inside the case, the quartz crystal no longer controls a watch mechanism but electronic circuits which command the continuous indication of the time. The liquid crystals are substances that become opaque when an electric current is passed through them; the shape of the figures is thus determined by impulses which make visible segments similar to those used for indicating times in sports reports on TV.

STONE-AGE FARMING AND BURGUNDY SPOILS

One of Switzerland's most important historical and antiquarian collections, the Historical Museum of Bern, was founded in 1894. Looking back on 75 years of extremely multifarious activities it recently celebrated its anniversary with three unusually interesting exhibitions. One of these exhibitions showed "Agriculture from a prehistoric and ethnographic point of view". This field of research is of particular interest to Switzerland because its farming culture has been proven to go back to the third millenium B.C. (later stone age) and forms part of a wider pattern.

Another exhibition showed "The Burgundian Spoils and Works of Burgundian Court Art". The Museum owns unique treasures made by Burgundian art workshops of the fifteenth century which warranted a special exhibition covering the fields of history of art and culture, with magnificent tapestries as its highlight.

The exhibition "The Museum Then and Now" was of special retrospective value because it illustrated the changes in museology and the impressive growth of the Historical Museum of Bern, now 75 years old.