

Alexander Clavel and the origins of Ciba

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The first producer of synthetic dyes in Basel was Alexander Clavel, a silk dyer from Lyon who had settled in Basel and operated a silk dyeing business. In 1859, he began producing fuchsine in his works in the St. Alban district, under the conditions of freedom that Swiss law allowed.¹ As his business grew, in 1864 he moved production to a new site on the Klybeck, in the north of the city, close to the Rhine.

In 1873, Clavel sold his dye business to Robert Bindschedler and Albert Busch, who expanded it under the name Bindschedler & Busch. In 1884, the firm was converted into a joint-stock company, the *Gesellschaft für Chemische Industrie in Basel*, whose initials, CIBA, gave the company its later name.² The conversion into a joint-stock company allowed Ciba to raise capital from a broader circle of investors and to finance its expansion. It became the largest chemical company of Switzerland, producing dyes, and later pharmaceuticals, plastics and other chemicals.

1 Notes

1. On Alexander Clavel (1805–1873), silk dyer from Lyon, who began the production of fuchsine in Basel in 1859, see HLS, article "Clavel, Alexander". To be verified. ↩
2. On the development of Clavel's business into Bindschedler & Busch (1873) and the Gesellschaft für Chemische Industrie in Basel (1884), later known as Ciba, see HLS, article "Ciba". To be verified. ↩

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