

1813–1815: the Restoration and entry into the Confederation

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The fall of the Napoleonic Empire gave Geneva the opportunity to regain its independence. At the end of 1813 the French troops left the city as the allied armies approached, and the Genevans proclaimed the restoration of the Republic on 31 December 1813.¹ A provisional government, formed of members of the former elite, took charge of the city's affairs.

Geneva's leaders understood that the restored Republic could not survive on its own, enclosed within French and Savoyard territory. They sought to join the Swiss Confederation, whose neutrality and protection would offer a lasting guarantee. In June 1814 Confederate troops landed at Geneva, at Port-Noir, an event still commemorated today.² The Federal Diet accepted Geneva's entry into the Confederation, which became effective in 1815.³

Attachment to Switzerland raised a territorial problem. The Genevan territory of the Ancien Régime was fragmented, separated from Switzerland by the French Pays de Gex and surrounded by Savoyard lands. The Genevan diplomat Charles Pictet de Rochemont negotiated the necessary boundary adjustments at the Congress of Vienna, in Paris and in Turin. Geneva obtained communes from the Pays de Gex and from Savoy, which secured the continuity of its territory with the canton of Vaud and thus with Switzerland.⁴ Free zones were created around Geneva so as to preserve the city's supplies despite the new customs frontier; in the twentieth century they would be the subject of a dispute between France and Switzerland brought before an international court.⁵

In the same year the powers recognised the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland and the inviolability of its territory.⁶ For Geneva this neutrality was an unprecedented protection. The city, which for centuries had been at the mercy of its neighbours, now enjoyed the international guarantee granted to the Confederation.

Key points. Restored on 31 December 1813, the Republic of Geneva joined the Swiss Confederation in 1815. The negotiations conducted by Pictet de Rochemont secured it a territory contiguous with Switzerland, and the recognition of Swiss neutrality gave it lasting international protection. Geneva became a Swiss canton.

1 Notes

1. Archives d'État de Genève, "L'annexion à la France en 1798": end of the French occupation on 31 December 1813 following the advance of the Austrian troops; Ville de Genève, "Entrée dans la Confédération" (geneve.ch): on 31 December 1813 the Austrian troops drove the French out of Geneva. ↩
2. Archives d'État de Genève, "Arrivée des Suisses au Port-Noir le 1er juin 1814" (archives-etat-ge.ch): landing of two companies from Fribourg and one from Solothurn, authorised by the Diet to reinforce the garrison; a date that has remained in Genevan memory as "the true date of Geneva's entry into the Confederation", the treaty of union having been signed on 19 May 1815. ↩
3. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse (DHS), art. "Restauration": Geneva admitted, together with Neuchâtel and Valais, as a new canton to the Federal Pact of 12 September 1814 (Pact adopted on 9 September 1814); Ville de Genève, "Entrée dans la Confédération": constitution approved by the people on 14 August 1814; "On 19 May 1815 Geneva became the 22nd Swiss canton". ↩
4. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse (DHS), art. "Communes réunies": Treaty of Paris of 20 November 1815 (six communes or parts of communes ceded by France, 49.3 km², 3,343 inhabitants) and Treaty of Turin of 16 March 1816 (twenty-four communes or parts of communes ceded by Sardinia, including Carouge, 108.8 km², 12,700 inhabitants); "Charles Pictet de Rochemont conducted the negotiations for Geneva". ↩
5. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse (DHS), art. "Zones franches" (Jean-Claude Favez): zone of the Pays de Gex established by the Treaty of Paris of 20 November 1815 (Art. 1 § 3; 396 km²), zone of Savoy by the Treaty of Turin of 16 March 1816 (Art. 3; 151 km²), zone of Saint-Gingolph added in 1829; the "Grande Zone" conceded by Napoleon III after the annexation of Savoy (1860) covered 3,790 km²; note of 5 May 1919 annexed to Art. 435 of the Treaty of Versailles; judgment of the Permanent Court of International Justice of 7 June 1932 (six votes to

- five) restoring the small zones of Haute-Savoie, Gex and Saint-Gingolph; arbitral award of Territet of 1 December 1933. ↩
6. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse (DHS), art. “Neutralité”: “Acte portant reconnaissance et garantie de la neutralité perpétuelle de la Suisse et de l’inviolabilité de son territoire” (Act recognising and guaranteeing the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland and the inviolability of its territory), signed in Paris on 20 November 1815 by the powers, following the recognition obtained at the Congress of Vienna; codification of the law of neutrality by the Hague Conventions of 1907. ↩

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