

Comparative portraits

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The four Genevans presented in this chapter followed different trajectories, but taken together their careers illuminate the role of the financial centre in eighteenth-century European finance.

Figure	Principal role	Legacy
Isaac Thellusson	banker in Paris, representative of Geneva	a house that trained others, a dynasty established in England, the will of Peter Thellusson
Jacques Necker	banker, Director-General of Finances of the kingdom	<i>Compte rendu au roi</i> , life annuity loans, the Coppet group
Isaac Panchaud	banker, reformer of credit	Caisse d'escompte, debates on speculation
Étienne Clavière	merchant, Genevan politician and later French minister	link between the Genevan and French revolutions, assignats

These careers share several features. All four placed their financial expertise at the service of a great neighbouring state. All combined private business with public engagement. All had to contend with the risks of fragile public credit and an unstable political situation. And all bear witness to the capacity of a small republic to produce financial talent of European stature.

The contemporary Geneva financial centre continues to supply financial expertise to international institutions, governments and companies throughout the world. The tradition of Genevans in the service of other people's finances, inaugurated by these eighteenth-century figures, continues in other forms.

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