

The geography of Geneva's bankers

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Geneva's banking houses were long concentrated in a few streets of the city, between the old town, the Rues Basses and the districts built after the demolition of the fortifications. The rue de la Corraterie, which runs along the site of the former ramparts, became their symbol: as late as 2016 the *Tribune de Genève* still referred to the head office of Lombard Odier by the name of this street.¹ Other institutions settled on the lakeshore, on the right bank, or in the more recent business districts.²

This geography has a meaning. The proximity of the houses made it easier to exchange information, for partners to meet and to maintain relations with notaries, lawyers and the authorities. It also reflected membership of an urban elite that lived and worked in the same districts. The relocation of certain head offices to modern buildings, larger and better suited to technological requirements, marks the evolution of the houses into international groups, without erasing the symbolic attachment to the historic sites.

1 Notes

1. "Sérieuse amende pour Lombard Odier & Cie SA" (Heavy fine for Lombard Odier & Cie SA), *Tribune de Genève*, 3 January 2016. ↩

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2. RTS, “À Genève, les banques privées délaissent leur quartier historique” (In Geneva, the private banks are leaving their historic district) (rts.ch, 2024): Pictet and BNP Paribas have moved to Les Acacias, Rothschild to the outskirts, and Lombard Odier leaves the centre in 2025 for a head office built at Bellevue by the architects Herzog and de Meuron; the managing partner Denis Pittet explains that the bank was “spread across eight different buildings in the city” and that its motto was “One Roof”; the smallness of Geneva’s territory, sixteen square kilometres, and the size of the historic district, around one hectare, made it impossible to bring everything together on the spot; the city councillor Alfonso Gomez notes that the district will henceforth house restaurants and fitness centres. ↩

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