

The infrastructure of a modern canton

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

The decades after 1848 transformed the physical infrastructure of the canton. In 1852, a steamship service began to operate on Lake Zug.¹ In 1857, the first hospital of the canton opened in the town.² In 1864, the railway line from Zurich to Lucerne through Zug opened, connecting the town with the two largest cities of the region.³ In 1897, a second line from Zurich through Thalwil to Zug and on to Arth-Goldau opened, which connected Zug directly with the Gotthard railway and with Italy.⁴

The town equipped itself with the utilities of a modern municipality. In 1878, the year in which a water supply company was founded, a gas works was established, beginning with 111 subscribers, 786 gas flames and 60 street lamps. In 1890, the water company acquired the gas works, before being reorganised in 1892 as the Wasserwerke Zug.⁵ By 1891, the town had water, sewerage, gas and electricity. In 1879, the remaining city walls were dismantled and the Ägeritor was demolished, opening the old town to expansion.⁶ The population grew slowly at first. The town had 2,809 inhabitants in 1817, one fifth of the population of the canton; 3,302 in 1850; 4,243 in 1870; and 5,120 in 1888.⁷ The canton as a whole grew from 12,749 inhabitants in 1798 to 17,461 in 1850 and to 25,093 in 1900.⁸ The growth was concentrated in the industrialising communes of Baar, Cham and Unterägeri in the 1880s and 1890s, and in the town of Zug in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁹

The railway, in particular, changed the economic geography of the canton. Before 1864, Zug was a regional market town, reached by road and by boat. After 1864, it lay on the main line between Zurich and Lucerne, and after 1897, on the line to the Gotthard and Italy. Goods, workers and capital could now reach the canton easily, just as its products could reach distant markets. The railway made possible the industrial enterprises described in Chapter III and laid the foundations for the later role of the canton as a place of residence and business for people who worked in Zurich. The

proximity to Zurich, measured in minutes of travel, became one of the canton's most important assets.

1 Notes

1. HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": steamship service initiated in 1852. ↩
2. HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": the first hospital of the canton opened in 1857. ↩
3. HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": opening of the Zurich–Lucerne railway line in 1864; Zug in der Welt, "Zugs zweite Industrialisierung 1880–1913": opening of the Zug–Zurich–Lucerne line in 1864. ↩
4. Zug in der Welt, "Zugs zweite Industrialisierung 1880–1913": opening of the Zurich–Thalwil–Zug–Arth–Goldau line in 1897; HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": connection to the Gotthard line in 1897. ↩
5. Zug in der Welt, "Zugs zweite Industrialisierung 1880–1913": establishment of the Gasanstalt Zug in 1878 with 111 subscribers, 786 flames and 60 street lamps; acquisition of the gas works by the Wasserversorgung Zug in 1890 and reorganisation as Wasserwerke Zug in 1892; HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": water works established in 1878; development of water supply, sewerage, gas and electricity by 1891. ↩
6. HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": city walls dismantled in 1879, including the Ägeritor. ↩
7. HLS, "Zug (Gemeinde)": population 2,809 in 1817 (one fifth of the canton), 3,302 in 1850, 4,243 in 1870, 5,120 in 1888. ↩
8. HLS, "Zug (Kanton)", population table: 12,749 in 1798; 17,461 in 1850; 25,093 in 1900. ↩
9. Zug in der Welt, "Zugs zweite Industrialisierung 1880–1913": population growth concentrated in Baar, Cham and Unterägeri in the 1880s and 1890s; rapid growth of the town of Zug in the 1900s and 1910s. ↩

For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.

Online version: [helveticaregister.com/zug-the-infrastructure-of-a-modern-canton](https://www.helveticaregister.com/zug-the-infrastructure-of-a-modern-canton)