

# Ballif et Cellier, Horlogers de La Neuveville

Ballif and Cellier clockmakers of La Neuveville are described in the journal, "La Federation HORLOGÈRE SUISSE", in an article published in the edition of 06 April 1938. A translation of the Ballif and Cellier excerpts follows:

## Cellier –

**Francois-Charles Cellier**, goldsmith, is mentioned from 1713. He was, in all likelihood, the apprentice to the goldsmith and fitter Jean-Jacques Petitmaitre, father of Jean-Rodolphe. In 1719, Cellier is called a "goldsmith shop". He was the son of **Jacques Cellier**, of the lifetime Master Bourgeois of La Neuveville, the very one that the Party oligarchy did depose and was reinstated in his rights and property, through the intervention of Bern. The year 1720, Cellier and his wife Anne-Marie Chiffelle borrowed one hundred crowns of good Venerable Consistory of the City of Neuchatel, in the bond of Jean-Jacques Petitmaitre, councilman and goldsmith of La Neuveville. In his capacity as fitter of boxes and jewelry-designer, Cellier was a pioneer of watchmaking in his hometown.

**Charles Cellier**, son of **Francois-Charles**, mentioned in 1755, continued the watchmaking career of his father.

## Ballif –

By 1690, **Jacques Ballif** was host of the Hotel du Poisson at La Neuveville. His son **Jean-Jacques Ballif** was a watchmaker. The Manuals of the Council of Bienne tell us that he instituted in 1718, a trial of Samuel Rengger, watchmaker in a small volume and bourgeois of Bienne. The cause and outcome of the conflict are not mentioned anywhere. It was in all likelihood, challenges between clockmakers.

**Jean-Daniel Ballif** was first single master watchmaker and merchant of La Neuveville. On June 4, 1745, the Board granted the certificates of origin to Ballif, Abram Klenck, and Mary Magdalene Ballif for their trip to Paris. He granted in addition to two crowns, on loan to Ballif. In 1749, Ballif is among the brévards of Clianet. In 1759, the Board issued an authentic certificate, "as he is master watchmaker established and domiciled in this city." On February 2, 1760, he hired "a Bernese apprentice," whose name we have not been sent.

**Jean-Michel Ballif**, Neuveville watchmaker, is mentioned in La Chaux de Fonds in 1748 and 1749. An act of November 26, 1749 appointed one of his apprentices: Daniel, son of David Humbert-Droz in La Chaux de Fonds.

**Jean-B. Ballif** worked in Basel at the distinguished master watchmaker and merchant Dietrich Meyer; he took the oath of companion watchmaker on July 8, 1753. Under the date of April 9, 1755, Frédéric Tissot-Daguët, sworn expert goldsmith and monteur of boxes in La Chaux-de-Fonds, issued the certificate of apprenticeship to **Jean-Jacques II Ballif**, son of the late **Abram Ballif** of La Neuveville, who was his apprentice for three years. Established at La Neuveville, Ballif sold a vine in the vineyard of Landeron, on December 6, 1774, to the merchant watchmaker Jean-Jacques Racle. He was appointed sergeant in 1787 and candidat of the Council the following year.

In 1777, the etablisserieur watchmaker **Charles-Henri Ballif** - he was monteur of boxes -

asked the Council for a certificate of origin. He had suffered bad business, which decided him to leave Neuveville. Ballif went to settle in Grenoble. In year 1780, the Board fined him for marrying a foreign woman. Our watchmaker again established in La Neuveville. Between 1780 and 1784, he had as an apprentice monteur of boxes the Parisian François Maréchal, who was also at times his worker. By 1787-88, Ballif occupied the Geneva watchmakers Mark Chaves and Aime Grenier as workers, and also watchmaker Simon du Chenit, aged 27. Already around 1786, Jean-François Chaux, a Geneva watchmaker established at La Neuveville, was the debtor of Ballif, and he helped bring bankruptcy, which broke out in 1790. In its meeting on 1 May 1787, the Council appointed guards to frequently watch **Charles- Emmanuel Ballif**.

In February 1788, the watchmaker **Francois-Charles Ballif** presented his candidacy to the Council.

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