

BERNHOEFT Charles

(1859 - 1933) ¹

Luxembourg-city

Biography

Wikipedia describes BERNHOEFT's biography as follows: ²

Charles (Carl Michael) Bernhoeft (22 July 1859 – 1933) was a photographer in Luxembourg, where he took portraits of the Grand Ducal court as well as numerous landscapes which he turned into postcards.

Born in Luxembourg City on 22 July 1859, Bernhoeft was the son of army officer Carl Johann Adolph Bernhoeft and Marguerite Specht, the daughter of a merchant. He was the only son but had six sisters. In 1889, after studying photography and lithography, Bernhoeft married Marie-Louise Bernardy, a schoolteacher's daughter. They had two sons.

Apart from his photographic work, few details remain about Bernhoeft's life. There are, however, still a number of his luxurious photo albums, illustrated magazines and above all several series of postcards, one of which contains 1,600 different images. An advertisement indicates that some 20 people were employed by his firm, Editions photographiques Bernhoeft.

In 1895, together with the journalist Jean-Nicolas Moes, Bernhoeft launched Luxembourg's first illustrated weekly magazine, "Das Luxemburger Land in Wort und Bild", which, however, could only publish nine issues.

Much of his commercial success resulted from his appointment as court photographer in 1891. His first studio in Luxembourg was at 1, rue du Génie (now avenue Monterey) but by 1900 he was in a position to construct impressive new three-storey premises for what he called Atelier Bernhoeft at the corner of rue de l'Arsenal (Grand-Rue) and boulevard Royal. For his portraits, he used the widely available carte de visite and cabinet card formats.

Flash invention

Bernhoeft was also successful as an inventor, developing systems providing indirect artificial lighting to facilitate portrait photography. He adapted the approach to magnesium flash photography, which proved particularly successful for photographing children, unable to keep still for very long. He patented the device as Bernhoeft's Blitzlichtapparat Sanssouci and succeeded in selling some 300 units.

In 2014 Edmond THILL published a 800-page book dedicated to BERNHOEFT, providing extensive details of his professional life as a photographer in Luxembourg. ³

A few additional facts will help to complete his biography:

- 1 - BERNHOEFT received his training in the *Staatsdruckerei und Kunstanstalt* in Vienna. ⁴

Der betr. Künstler hat eine 7-jährige Lehrzeit in der weltberühmten österreichischen Staatsdruckerei und Kunstanstalt zu Wien gemacht.

The Viennese training presumably took place in the years 1870 to 1878. This professional experience enabled BERNHOEFT to open his studio in Luxembourg in September 1878.

- 2 - BERNHOEFT had in fact 8 sisters and no brother. The family must have left Luxembourg around 1863 for Trier, where the two youngest sisters were born. The Luxembourg-city Census of 1880 shows that the family came back to Luxembourg (2 rue de Génie) in 1879.

BERNHOEFT sold his business in 1910 to Ch. SIEGERS.

He died in 1933 in his house situated in 222 rue de Beggen, leaving his wife Marie-Louise BERNARDY and his 2 sons: Marcel, medical doctor in Verviers and Charles, engineer in Thun. ⁵

¹ [FamilySearch database](#) (G32B-8T1)

² [Wikipedia](#)

³ [Edmond Thill et al, Charles Bernhoeft : photographe de la Belle Époque \(2014\)](#)

⁴ *Obermosel-Zeitung*, 2 August 1892, page 1

⁵ *Escher Tageblatt*, 4 September 1933, page 6