

150 Years CAHN - The Company History 1863-2013



Four generations of numismatists, art historians and archaeologists have contributed to make “Cahn” one of the leading names in the art trade.

The Cahn dynasty was founded by Adolph Emil Cahn (1840-1918). At the age of thirty-four, he opened his numismatic firm at Zeil 17 in Frankfurt am Main, and in the same year, 1874, he published his first catalogue. According to family tradition, Adolph Cahn had been active in the numismatic trade since 1863. As his wife was née Baer, it is possible that he learned the trade in Frankfurt’s oldest numismatic firm, “Leopold Hamburger und Baer”, established in 1863.

Left: Adolf E. Cahn (1840-1918) as a 17-year-old youth. Mainz, 1857

Right: Adolph E. Cahn’s second catalogue, published in 1876.



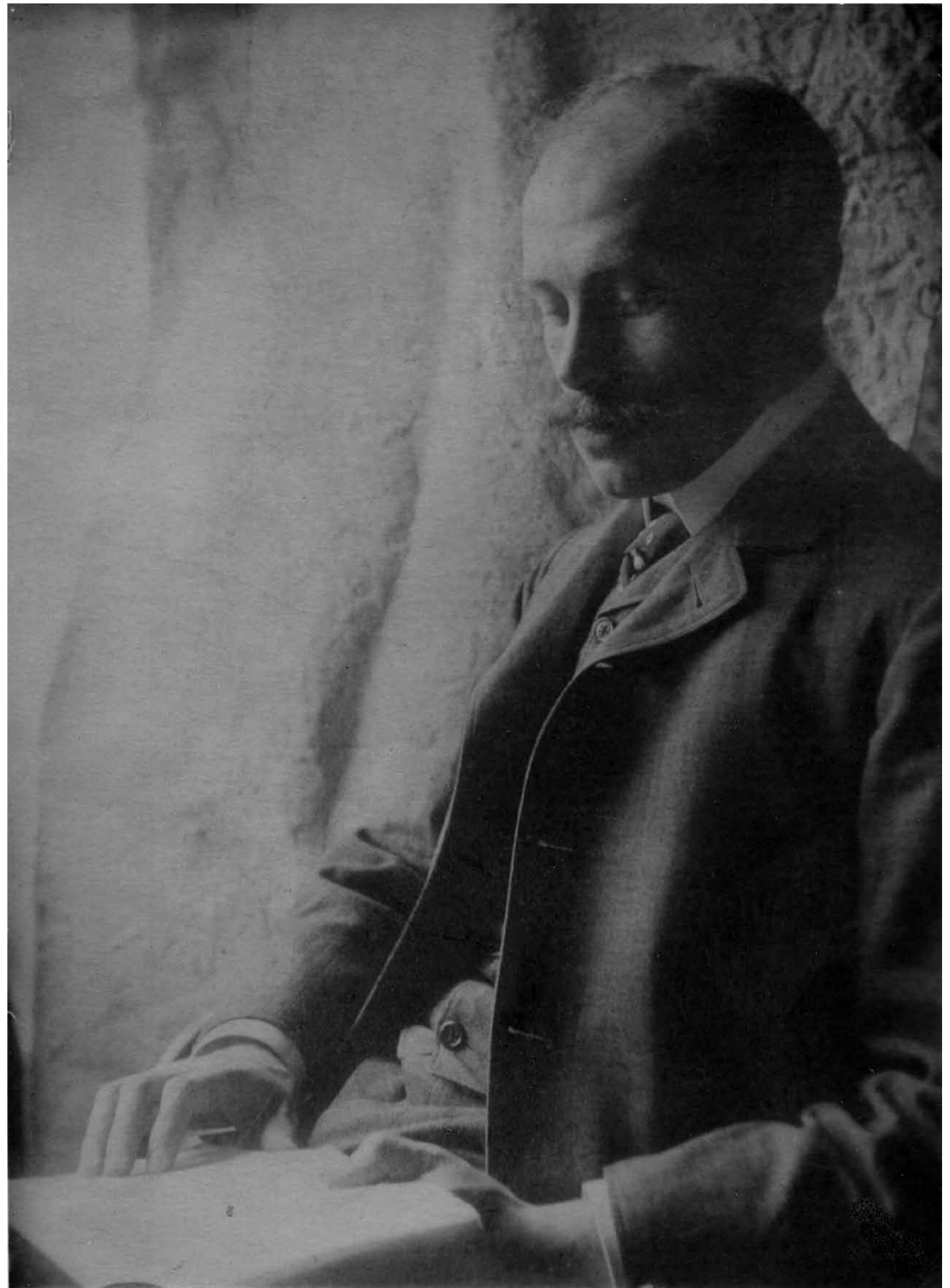
Adolph's sons **Julius** (1871-1936) and **Ludwig Theodor** (1877-1924) joined the company, and, after Ludwig's untimely death, his widow, **Johanna Cahn**, née Neuberger (1881-1963), also played an important role in managing the family business. Despite the ravages of the First World War, and the havoc inflicted by massive inflation, business was good and many first-rate collections were sold at auction.

Erich Bernhard (1913-1993) and **Herbert Adolph** (1915-2002), the sons of Ludwig and Johanna Cahn, were involved in the trade from an early age, as the minutiae of daily business were eagerly discussed over lunch, and the boys soon joined the business meetings held in the evenings.



Left: Johanna Cahn
(1881-1963)

Right: Ludwig T. Cahn
(1877-1924)



With the rise of Hitler and increasingly aggressive anti-Semitism, the Cahns decided to emigrate. In 1934, the twenty-one year old Erich Cahn was recalled from his studies at the University of Vienna and sent to Basle, where, together with his nineteen-year-old brother, Herbert, he founded the Münzhandlung Basel with the generous support of the art dealer Christoph Bernoulli and numerous collector-friends.

Their mother Johanna joined them in 1937, after the Frankfurt firm had been Aryanised. Julius had died in 1936, and his wife, Emma emigrated to London, where she handled Seaby's foreign coin department.

In the five years preceding 1938, when the company was forced to close, the two brothers held ten auctions, selling many important collections, including the Cabinet of Prinz Waldeck.

Assisted by the same group of friends and collectors, Münzen und Medaillen AG was founded in 1941, and the brothers were nominated as directors. Erich was responsible for modern coins and Herbert for ancient coins. Parallel to his activities for the company, Herbert resumed his studies, specialising in Classical Archaeology, and earning his doctorate with his dissertation on the coins of Naxos, which was published in 1944.



Erich B. Cahn (1913-1993) with his son, ca. 1954



Herbert A. Cahn (1915-2002) with a client, 1940's

Herbert A. Cahn became increasingly interested in ancient art, and, from 1958 onwards, when the domain of ancient coins had been assigned to Pierre Strauss, Herbert devoted himself entirely to the ancient art trade. The meticulous, scholarly descriptions and the high quality of the illustrations of his auction catalogues set international standards and played a major role in establishing Basle as one of the leading centres of the market in classical antiquities.

Herbert A. Cahn also retained a strong interest in numismatics, focusing on scholarly research and teaching at the University of Heidelberg, where he was honorary professor of numismatics, and at the Universities of Freiburg im Breisgau, and Freiburg in Switzerland.



Herbert A. Cahn (front), surrounded by students after a performance of “The Clouds” by Aristophanes, on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Karl Schefold, 1965



Amphora by the Berlin Painter, which was sold to the then president of Ciba, Robert Käppeli, by Herbert A. Cahn in the late 1950's. Currently on display in the Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig



At the great age of 73, after almost 50 years in the service of Münzen und Medaillen AG, Herbert A. Cahn decided, in 1988, to found his own company, H.A.C. – Kunst der Antike. For the next decade, he continued to write auction catalogues, and exhibit at art fairs with unflagging energy and great enthusiasm, retiring only in 1998.

Left: Herbert A. Cahn in his office at Malzgasse 23, Basle, 1990
Below: Herbert A. Cahn at KAM Basle, 1970's-80's



In 1999, following the dissolution of H.A.C. – Kunst der Antike, Herbert's son, the classical archaeologist **Jean-David Cahn**, founded Jean-David Cahn AG. The companies Cahn International AG and Cahn Auktionen AG were established in 2006 and 2007. With these three companies, Jean-David Cahn continues the proud family tradition of expertise and excellence in the ancient art trade.



Right: Jean-David Cahn (*1961)

Bottom left: Jean-David Cahn at the opening of an exhibition at Malzgasse 23, Basle, 2012

Bottom right: Exhibition at Nauenstrasse 71, Basle, 2010

