

THE SOUFFLENHEIM FARM OF JOHANNES KIEFFER

Johannes Kieffer (1784–1852) of Soufflenheim was married on 21 February 1811. He was 26 years old. His new wife was Catherine Messner (1781–1828). The father of the groom was Laurent Kieffer, a 64-year-old plowman. The father of the bride was Joseph Messner, a 52-year-old plowman.

Johannes' wife, Catherine Messner, gave birth to six children. Those children are listed in Table 1. All but one of the children grew up to adulthood.

Table 1
The Children of Johannes Kieffer and Catherine Messner

Name	Born	Wedding date (age)	Spouse	Died (age)
Laurent Kieffer	2 Jun 1812	20 Jan 1843 (30)	Catherine Schmuck	30 Jul 1885 (73)
Louis Kieffer	12 Aug 1813	22 May 1843 (29)	A.M. Antoinette Aubriet	2 Aug 1849 (35)
Alexander Kieffer	27 Apr 1815	Never married		20 Nov 1871 (56)
Joseph Kieffer	20 Feb 1817			9 Mar 1819 (2)
Catherine Kieffer	10 Oct 1819	9 May 1843 (23)	Johannes Nuwer	11 Nov 1882 (63)
Johannes Kieffer	8 Aug 1822	9 Oct 1849 (27)	Celestine Nuwer	5 Apr 1905 (82)

Source:

Birth record, Laurent Kieffer, 2 June 1812 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284291#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284291-1409843>)

Birth record, Louis Kieffer, 12 August 1813 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284292#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284292-1409908>)

Birth record, Alexander Kieffer, 27 April 1815 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284294#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284294-1410055>)

Birth record, Joseph Kieffer, 20 February 1817 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284296#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284296-1410179>)

Birth record, Catherine Kieffer, 10 October 1819 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284298#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284298-1410320>)

Birth record, Johannes Kieffer, 8 August 1822 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284301#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284301-1410502>)

Throughout the Early Modern period (about 1500–1800) much of the land in Alsace was farmed by smallholders. Many of the peasant proprietors of these small holdings supplemented their farming by working as artisans in trades like weaving, shoemaking, or tailoring. A few peasant proprietors, however, could live from their patrimony. They often worked as plowmen and tended to be among the better off members of the rural population.¹

Johannes Kieffer was one of those better off peasant proprietors. Vital records identified him as a farmer (*cultivator*) in February 1811, June 1812, August 1813, and April 1815. He was then identified as a plowman (*laboureur*) in February 1817, October 1819, August 1822. He was also identified as a plowman in the 1836 census and again in the 1841 census.² In short, he worked as a plowman for about 25 years.

Cadastre records provide additional support for the view that Johannes Kieffer was one of Soufflenheim's better-off farmers. Soufflenheim's Cadastre was completed in 1836 and provides detailed information

about the property an individual owned. The Cadastre information for Johannes Kieffer was entered on folio 358, and it is presented in Table 2.

The folio shows that Johannes Kieffer owned 21 pieces of property in 1836. He owned a house, yard, and orchard in the village cluster and farmland in the agricultural fringe. The farmland was scattered in all four sections of Soufflenheim's Cadastre plan.

Table 2A
Cadastre Folio, Soufflenheim
Jean Kieffer, son of Laurent, folio number 358

Section	Parcel	Type	Meters ²	Class	Tax	Yr Added	Yr Removed	Owner/seller
A	226	plowed	1240	3	2.73		1844	Deed not found
A	245	plowed	980	3	2.16		1844	Deed not found
A	322	plowed	1970	2	5.91		1844	Johannes Kieffer
A	550	plowed	2160	2	6.48		1844	Deed not found
A	962	plowed	1480	2	4.44		1844	Children
A	1085	plowed	2330	1	8.15		1844	Johannes Kieffer
B	235	plowed	1720	5	1.38		1844	Children
B	236	meadow	220	2	0.66		1844	Children
B	395	meadow	870	2	2.61		1844	Deed not found
B	519	meadow	670	1	2.35		1844	Children
B	690	plowed	830	4	1.25		1844	Children
B	710	plowed	680	4	1.02		1844	Children
C	57	plowed	1970	4	2.96		1844	Johannes Kieffer
C	283	plowed	1485	5	1.19		1844	Johannes Kieffer
C	369	plowed	1570	4	2.35		1844	Johannes Kieffer
C	609	meadow	2285	3	5.26		1844	Deed not found
D	267	Orchard	400	1	1.40		1844	Johannes Kieffer
D	268	House		4	20.00		1844	Johannes Kieffer
D	268	Yard	480	1	1.68		1844	Johannes Kieffer
D	1202	plowed	875	5	0.70		1842	Sold in 1841
D	1358	plowed	1565	5	1.25		1844	Deed not found
A	776 half	plowed	1530	4	2.30	1839	1844	Children
B	693	plowed	1160	4	1.74	1839	1844	Children
C	494	plowed	1900	4	2.85	1839	1844	Deed not found
A	240	plowed	965	3	1.12	1842	1844	Deed not found

Table 2B
Cadastre Folio, Sessenheim

Section	Parcel	Type	Meters ²	Class	Tax	Yr Added	Yr Removed	Owner/seller
C	597	plowed	2680	3	6.70		1847	Johannes Kieffer
C	747	plowed	1720	3	4.30		1845	Johannes Kieffer
C	748	plowed	1690	3	4.23		1845	Johannes Kieffer

Table 2C
Cadastre Folio, Schirrhein

Section	Parcel	Type	Meters ²	Class	Tax	Yr Added	Yr Removed	Owner/seller
C	638	meadow	950	2	5.32		1849	Deed not found
C	641	meadow	1400	2	7.84		1849	Deed not found
D	415	meadow	8790	1	65.92		1845	Joh. Kieffer & children

The Village House

Johannes Kieffer's Cadastre folio provides definitive information about the location of his house in the village of Soufflenheim. That yard and dwelling was situated at parcel number 268 of the 1836 Cadastre plan. The property was on the corner of what is today Rue des Pierres and Rue du Marché. Johannes Kieffer also owned an attached orchard, located at parcel number 267. The house, yard, and orchard are marked in Figure 1.



Figure 1
Cadastre Plan, 1836

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/LIGEO-1513780#visio/page:LIGEO-1513780-14310>

Johannes Kieffer may have lived in this house for more than thirty years. Indeed, it was probably his boyhood home. Before Johannes Kieffer married in 1811, the families of the bride and groom—the Kieffer

family and the Messner family—entered into a marriage contract. Among other things, the contract conveyed to Johannes Kieffer “a single-story house with a barn, stables, pigsty, shed, garden, rights, and dependencies located in Soufflenheim, identified as number 89.” The contract expressly stated that this acquisition was not “included in the marital community.” In other words, Johannes Kieffer was the sole owner, and Catherine Messner had no ownership rights in the house.

This was the same house that was recorded in the 1836 Cadastre. Figure 1 shows the location of Johannes Kieffer’s house at parcel number 268. The Cadastre also recorded the house number of that dwelling, which was 132. That house number was used in the 1836 census, and it provides a way to determine Johannes Kieffer’s neighbors. From the census we know that house number 133 was occupied by the family of Joseph Messner and house number 134 by the family of Antoni Nuwer. The precise locations of those two houses are also shown in Figure 1.

What can we say about the occupants of these houses before 1836? Evidence from historical documents tells us that the houses numbered 132, 133, and 134 in 1836 were the same houses that were numbered 115, 116, and 117 in 1819. When the 1819 census was taken, that document recorded Johannes Kieffer living at house number 115. Although not the same number as reported in the 1836 census, it was probably the same house. We can infer this because, in the 1819 census, Johannes Kieffer had the same neighbors as he had in 1836—Joseph Messner was living at house number 116 and Antoni Nuwer was living at house number 117.

Birth records for the families of these three neighbors confirm the house numbers found in the 1819 census. Table 3 presents the house numbers used in the birth records for the Kieffer, Messner, and Nuwer families. Before the 1819 census (specifically between 1815 and early 1819), the house numbers for the three neighbors were sequential: 109, 110, and 111. The entry for February 1817 (“98” was entered) was probably an error. The village clerk entered the old, pre-1815, number instead of the new number that should have been entered in the birth record.

Soufflenheim house numbers were then modified before the end of 1819, perhaps to accommodate the census which was certified by the mayor in December 1819. Table 3 shows that the numbering sequence from the vital records corresponds to the numbers used in the 1819 census, that is, 115, 116, 117. These numbers were used until at least 1829. Beginning in 1830, house numbers were no longer recorded on Soufflenheim birth certificates. Table 3 thus shows that the house Johannes Kieffer sold in 1843 was the same house that he received from his father in 1811.

In 1836, the Cadastre characterized the Kieffer house as a class 4 dwelling. For purposes of the Cadastre, dwellings were assigned a classification number and a corresponding tax rate. The classification number was based on the rental value of the property and reflected the quality of the house. Table 4 shows the classes and tax rates for Soufflenheim’s housing in 1836. The Cadastre contained seven dwelling classes. Class 1 was the highest quality house, and it carried a tax rate of 40 francs per dwelling. Class 7 was the lowest quality house with a tax rate of 4 francs per dwelling.

The quality of Johannes Kieffer’s class 4 house was above average; 72 percent of the houses in Soufflenheim were classified as lower quality dwellings. Table 4 also presents an estimated social status scale. Houses in class 1, 2, or 3 are defined as upper class houses (10.5 percent). Houses in class 4 are upper-middle class (17.4 percent). Houses in class 5 are lower-middle class (32.7 percent). And houses in class 6 or 7 are lower class (39.3 percent). Johannes Kieffer’s house was thereby an upper-middle class dwelling.³

Based on the quality of his house, Johannas Kieffer can be described as a member of Soufflenheim's upper middle class.

Table 3
House Numbers from Vital Records

Record Date	Kieffer	Messner *	Nuwer
8 May 1812		77	
2 June 1812	98		
12 August 1813	98		
27 April 1815	109		
20 June 1815		110	
20 February 1817	98		
18 September 1817		110	
12 February 1819			111
1819 Census	115	116	117
10 October 1819	115		
28 December 1819			117
27 November 1820		116	
2 November 1821			117
8 August 1822	115		
22 September 1823		116	
8 December 1823			117
5 October 1825		116	
27 December 1825			117
13 October 1827		150	
15 December 1827			117
28 March 1829			117
29 July 1830		—	
16 December 1831			—
10 September 1834			—
1836 census	132	133	134
Cadastre Folio	132	133	134
30 August 1837			—

* There were two different people named Joseph Messner living at house number 110/116/133. In 1836 the resident at that location was Joseph Messner, son of Pierre Messner & Marie Anne Meyer. He married Marie Anne Friedmann on 15 November 1821. The 1836 census house number was 133, his folio was 500, and the Cadastre parcels were 233 and 234. He was living in house number 116 when his daughter Catherine was born in 1823.

The previous resident of that property was also named Joseph Messner. He was the son of Fredrick Messner and Marie Anne Messner. He married Marie Anne Ludwig on 8 August 1802. This Joseph Messner was reported at house number 116 in the 1819 census and his daughter Marie Anne was born there in November 1820. The younger Joseph Messner moved into this house between 1820 and 1823.

Table 4
Soufflenheim Houses

Class of House	Tax rate per dwelling	Number of houses	Percent of houses	Status Class
1	40	10	1.8	Upper
2	32	14	2.5	
3	25	34	6.2	
4	20	96	17.4	Upper-middle
5	15	180	32.7	Lower-middle
6	8	208	37.7	Lower
7	4	9	1.6	

The Attached Orchard

When Laurent Kieffer gave his son the family house in 1811, the property included the house and yard, but not the orchard that was identified in the 1836 Cadastre at parcel number 267. Laurent Kieffer acquired that orchard after his son's wedding. On 14 November 1831, Laurent Kieffer made his Last Will and Testament. That document states that he had acquired the "orchard and garden adjoining my house... about four years ago," that is, about 1827.

The Will bequeathed the orchard to Johannes Kieffer "by préciput and apart from his hereditary share in my estate." In other words, the orchard was excluded from the estate that was to be divided equally among Laurent Kieffer's heirs.

Similarly, Laurent Kieffer was the owner of two debts from his son Johannes. The aggregate amount of the debt was 1,089 francs. In his Will, Laurent Kieffer released "him from having to account for it in my estate, fully forgiving the debt ... also by préciput and apart from his hereditary share in my estate."

Laurent Kieffer stated that these bequests were made "in recognition of the special care that my said son, Jean Kieffer, has provided me."

Laurent Kieffer died on 20 May 1832, the death certificates said he was 85 years old.⁴ At the time of his death, Laurent Kieffer's estate would have been divided into four shares. In addition to his son, Johannes, he had two surviving daughters (both were married) and the children of a third daughter who predeceased her father. The heirs were:

- Maria Anna Kieffer (1769-1853)
- Margaretha Kieffer (1772-1838)
- The children of Marie Catherine Kieffer (1776-1814)
- Johannes Kieffer (1784-1852)

Although the evidence is not conclusive, it appears that at the time of his death Laurent Kieffer's estate was the orchard and the debt. There was no notarized after-death inventory of his estate, suggesting that the estate was too small for such a legal document. Laurent Kieffer probably transferred his land to his children long before he died, and at the time of his death, there was little left in his estate. He therefore used his Last Will and Testament to give the orchard and the debt to his son Johannes rather than letting the law divide those assets equally among the four heirs.

Farmland

The Cadastre registers for Soufflenheim show that Johannes Kieffer owned 2.5 hectares (6.2 acres) of farmland. These documents designated farmland as plowed land or meadow land. Johannes Kieffer owned four parcels that were meadows, totaling 0.4 hectares (about one acre), and 14 parcels that were plowed, totaling 2.1 hectares (5.2 acres).

The Cadastre recorded both meadows and pastures as distinct types of land, so meadows were not the areas used for grazing livestock. Instead, meadows were grasslands intended for producing hay. Farmers did not plow their hay field. Instead, they cultivated a grass turf to build up a matted layer of grass. Plowing the sod would destroy that mat.

Johannes Kieffer owned a very large farm for that time and place. Ninety-five percent of the land holdings in Soufflenheim were smaller than 2.5 hectares (6.2 acres).

At the start of 1839, Johannes Kieffer's Cadastre folio recorded the addition of three parcels of plowed land. That land came from the estate of Joseph Messner, Johannes's former father-in-law. Johannes Kieffer's wife, Catherine Messner, died on 26 August 1828. She had five surviving children. Her father, Joseph Messner, died at the age of 77 on 12 June 1836. At the time of his death, he owned 1.35 hectares (3.34 acres) of farmland, and he had three heirs. His son, Jean Messner (folio 492, husband of Catherine Adam), the children of his late son, Joseph Messner (folio 499, husband of Catherine Messner), and the children of his late daughter, Catherine Messner (wife of Johannes Kieffer). The Kieffer children inherited three parcels of land totaling 0.46 hectares (1.1 acres) from their maternal grandfather. Johannes Kieffer was the administrator of that land, but he was not the exclusive owner.

In addition to the farmland in Soufflenheim, Johannes Kieffer owned land in neighboring towns. In Sessenheim, which is east of Soufflenheim, Johannes Kieffer had three parcels of plowed land. Together they totaled 0.6 hectares (1.5 acres). In Schirrhein, to the south of Soufflenheim, Johannes Kieffer owned three more parcels of land. These were meadows and together totaled 1.1 hectares (2.75 acres). Thus, Johannes Kieffer's farm contained 4.2 hectares (10.4 acres) of land spread across three towns.

When Johannes Kieffer and Catherine Messner were married in 1811, their families entered into a marriage contract. Section one of the contract states that the married couple would adopt "the system of community property as regulated by the Napoleonic Code."

Under French law, community property belonged to both spouses, and the community of property remained undivided during the duration of the marriage. In the case of Johannes Kieffer and Catherine Messner's marriage, the community of property applied to land acquired during their marriage. However, land owned before the marriage or acquired through inheritance remained separate property.

Ownership of property did not permit Catherine Messner to hold administrative control of her property. French law specified that community property was under the control of the husband whose powers were almost as extensive as if he was the sole owner. The separate property of the wife was also under the control of her husband, but with a few restrictions. The husband could not alienate (i.e., sell), pledge, or exchange his wife's separate property without her consent. Moreover, under the law, the husband was treated as if he was an agent of his wife's property, and therefore, was required to account for the financial and physical status of the property. For example, a husband had to report to his wife the rental income generated by her property.

These legal strictures were fundamentally connected with the patrimony of a family.⁵ When Catherine Messner died in 1828, her after-death inventory identified specific parcels of land that she owned separately from her husband and specific parcels that were community owned. The land that Catherine Messner owned separately from her husband had been inherited from her father and mother. If her husband, Johannes Kieffer, had full ownership of that land (either as community property when they were married or as inheritance when Catherine died) and if Johannes Kieffer fathered additional children with another wife (before or after his marriage to Catherine), then those children, having rights to the property owned by their father, would inherit part of the Messner family's patrimony, even though those children had no genetic link to Catherine Messner and her father. The law's structure prevented this. Any land that came to the Johannes Kieffer family through his wife was reserved for her children.

The order of precedence for inheritance was as follows:

- children (or, if they are deceased, their children)
- parents and privileged collateral heirs (siblings or, if deceased, nephews and nieces)
- grandparents
- surviving spouse
- other collateral heirs (uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.).

In the specific case of Johannes Kieffer, he did not father any children outside his marriage to Catherine Messner. Therefore, Catherine's children would have inherited her land regardless of the order of precedence for inheritance. But no one was assured of that outcome when Johannes and Catherine were married in 1811.

The structure of the law illustrates the fundamental connection between the family and patrimony. For our ancestors, a family was more than a network of individuals. It was also a collection of properties. Today we think of farmland as a factor of production, that is, an economic asset that generates income. Our ancestors had a different view of their property. "To conceive of property without the family—the family without property—is impossible" was a dominate view.⁶ The Catholics Church supported and advocated for this view. Family life was built around bonds between parent and child in which spiritual and moral values were transferred from the parents to the children. Property ownership and patrimony were thought to strengthen those bonds and were thus fundamental to maintaining the spiritual and moral values of the family, while the loosening of parental-child bonds was viewed as the primary cause of spiritual and moral decline. And those parent-child bonds were loosened by the loss of property and patrimony.

Bonds of family affection and bonds of property were in principle thought to be the complementary foundations of family solidarity and its cohesiveness.

In this view of family life, the family functioned harmoniously when each of its members performed its designated function, in the same way as the organs of a human body contribute individually to its general health and functionality. The success of this family life depended on the willingness of both parents and their children to subordinate their individual interests to those of the family. In this way of thinking, individual liberty was a fundamental threat to family life.

Heritable property was the glue that bound this family structure together. "[Without heritable property] there is no family, and the poor man is proof.... His children disperse, succeeding generations soon forget their names. ... The family is nothing, or nearly nonexistent for the poor."⁷ Johannes Kieffer and his family acted in ways that illustrate their acceptance of this link between property and family bonds. Sensing the threat to these bonds in Soufflenheim they sought to transplant them in North America.

Emigration

Johannes Kieffer and his family emigrated from Soufflenheim in August 1843. The year before he left, he controlled 27 parcels of land in three towns.

Parcels	Type	Meters ²	Acres	Town	Deeds of sale found	
					Parcels	Meters ²
17	plowed	25,535	6.3	Soufflenheim	11	16,725
4	meadow	4,045	1.0	Soufflenheim	2	890
3	plowed	6,090	1.5	Sessenheim	3	6,090
3	meadow	11,140	2.8	Schirrhein	1	8,790

At the beginning of 1843, Johannes paid taxes on this land. In Soufflenheim, his village house, yard, and orchard were assessed for 23.08 francs. The 21 parcels of farmland that he controlled in Soufflenheim were assessed for 60.16 francs. In addition, Johannes Kieffer paid 15.23 francs for three parcels of land that he controlled in Sessenheim and 79.08 francs for three parcels of land that he controlled in Schirrhein—one of those parcels was a very large meadow.

Most of that land was sold in 1843 before Johannes Kieffer left Soufflenheim. A deed-of-sale was found in the Alsace Archive for his house and for 17 of the 27 parcels of farmland. In two instances, two parcels of land were sold on the same deed, thus, 15 deeds of sale were used to transfer 17 parcels of farmland. Together these deeds account for approximately two-thirds of the farmland that Johannes Kieffer controlled.

The house, yard, and orchard were sold to Mathieu Kieffer, a Soufflenheim farmer, and his wife, Régine Haaser, on 5 May 1843 (deed number 516). The property was described as: “A single-story dwelling on the ground floor, barn, stable, stall, pigsty, well, garden, courtyard, rights, appurtenances, and dependencies, all located in Soufflenheim.” Mathieu Kieffer and his wife lived in that house until 1862.

The selling price was 1,500 francs. Interestingly, the value of the house in 1843 was the same amount as it was in 1811 when Laurent Kieffer gave the property to his son. In a sense, the value of the house declined because in 1811 the property did not include the attached orchard while in 1843 the sale included the extra land containing that orchard. One way to look at it is that the orchard added no value to the property. Alternatively, the value of the house and yard declined over the 30-year period.

The buyers of the house, yard, and orchard did not pay the full purchase price in 1843. According to the sales agreement, the buyer would pay “in three equal annual installments, the first installment shall be due on 1 May [1844], and the next two on the same date in the two following years, each with five per cent annual interest from this day forward.”

It is also interesting to note that the sellers of the house were identified as “Jean Kiefer, farmer, and Barbe Voegélé, spouses, residing and domiciled in Soufflenheim.” This means that Johannes Kieffer’s children did not inherit any portion of the house from their mother when she died in 1828. This fact confirms that the 1811 marriage contract gave the house and yard to Johannes as a wedding gift, but the house was not part of the community property of the marriage.

One final observation is that this deed-of-sale, which was signed on 5 May 1843, said “the buyers may from this day forward take ownership of and dispose of the property as their own as of, today and begin enjoyment of the same as of the upcoming June twenty-five....” The fifth of May was a Friday, and the

Kieffer family was permitted to continue living in the house for another seven weeks, until Sunday, 25 June.

As emigrants, the Kieffer family embarked from Le Havre on 16 August. Thus, there were seven weeks and three days between the time the family left their house in Soufflenheim, and they embarked on a sailing ship to North America. The family remained in Soufflenheim for some of this time. Deeds for the sale of farmland were signed after 25 June. One deed was signed on 27 June and another on 5 July, placing Johannes Kieffer in Soufflenheim on those dates. This leaves six weeks between the embarkation date and the last known date he was in Soufflenheim. The journey from Soufflenheim to Le Havre took about three weeks. The travels passed through Châlons-sur-Marne where Louis Kieffer and his new wife were living.⁸ Johannes Kieffer and the other travelers may have stopped for a visit. It is also possible that the Kieffer family arrived in Le Havre well ahead of their actual departure date. In the 1840s, it was not uncommon for travelers to wait several weeks before available space on a vessel could be purchased.

In addition to the family house, Johannes Kieffer sold his farmland before leaving Soufflenheim. The first known sale took place in late April 1843. Seven of the 15 deeds found at the Archives were dated April 29. Seven more sales were made in May and June. Although deeds were not found for ten parcels of farmland, the Soufflenheim Cadastre clearly indicates that the land was sold in 1843.

There were three forms of owners among the 15 deeds found in the Archive. Seven of the documents sold land that was owned by Johannes Kieffer and his second wife Barbara Voegelé. Another seven deeds sold land “on behalf of” Johannes Kieffer’s children. Johannes was not himself the primary owner of that land. Finally, one of the deeds, the one for the very large meadow in Schirrhein, was sold by Johannas Kieffer, his wife Barabra, and all five of his children. These seven individuals owned an undivided interest (although not an equal interest) in that meadow land.

In 1843 when the Kieffer family was preparing to emigrate, Johannes Kieffer sold these parcels of land. The very large meadow in Schirrhein was identified in Catherine Messner’s estate inventory as community property from her marriage with Johannes. When she died, one-third of that property was inherited by her children. Thus, when the meadow was sold in 1843, the sellers were identified as “Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker for himself and on behalf of Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer living in Soufflenheim, Catherine Kieffer, spouse of Jean Nuwer, residing in Soufflenheim, and Jean Kieffer” (Deed number 608). In other words, both Johannes Kieffer and his children were owners of that parcel of land. That meadow sold for 1,800 francs!

There were seven other deeds in which Johannes Kieffer had no direct ownership interest. These properties were owned exclusively by his five children. The land was inherited by the children from their mother in 1829 or from their grandfather in 1838. The deeds-of-sale identify the seller as: “Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, *on behalf of their children*, namely: Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker; Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer and Catherine Kieffer, residing in Soufflenheim; and Jean Kieffer, the latter still a minor” (emphasis added).

The children/owners were not signatories to the sales contracts and thus separate legal documents were needed so that the children could ratify these sales. On 28 June 1843, Laurent Kieffer, Alexandre Kieffer, and Catherine Kieffer declaring before a notary “that they ratify and approve the said contracts in all their parts.”

Louis Kieffer and his younger brother Johannes Kieffer were not parties to this document because they were not living in Soufflenheim when it was signed. Louis was a soldier living elsewhere. He gave his brother Laurent private power of attorney to ratify the contracts. Thus, Laurent Kieffer signed “acting both

in his own name and in the name and as the general and special agent of Louis Kieffer, soldier in the 12th Regiment of Light Infantry at Châlons-sur-Marne, under private power of attorney.”

Ratification by Johannes Kieffer, Jr. was more complicated. He was living in New York, USA. The younger Johannes left Soufflenheim with a large group of emigrants in early April 1843. The group embarked from Le Havre on 24 April, which was before any of the properties were sold. In other words, Johannes was not in France when the properties deeds in which he had an ownership interest were signed. Thus, he had to send his power of attorney from North America.

That document, signed in Buffalo, New York, was dated 13 December 1843, which was after his father and sibling had arrived in Western New York. The document was then sent to his brother, Louis Kieffer, who was a resident of Châlons-sur-Marne. Louis traveled to Soufflenheim and ratified the sales contracts for his brother on 16 August 1844.

Mr, Louis Kiefer, former soldier, residing in Châlons-sur-Marne, now in Soufflenheim, his native town Acting as agent for Jean Kieffer, his brother, a settler in the United States of America, residing in Buffalo, State of New York, pursuant to a power of attorney written in German, dated Buffalo 13 December 1843, executed before James Rochester, Public Notary of the said State. ... Declares that he ratifies and approves in all their parts the said contracts signed by Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife.

Louis Kieffer's Share

It is likely that Louis Kieffer received his share of his father's inheritance in 1843, that is, at the same time Johannes Kieffer, Sr. and his other four children immigrated to North America. Johannes liquidated his property in Soufflenheim and based on his future actions, will use the money to help his children get started as farms in Western New York. Each of his four immigrant children will inherit a part of the liquidated Soufflenheim wealth. It seems reasonable to think that Louis, who did not emigrate, received his inheritance before the rest of the family left France.

There is a document in the Alsace Archive that supports this view. As we noted above, some of the farmland recorded on Johannes Kieffer's Cadastre folio was owned by his children via inheritance from their mother and maternal grandfather. The ratification documents mentioned above identify seven parcels of land that Johannes Kieffer sold on behalf of his children.

Each of the children held rights to one-fifth of the proceeds from the sale of that land. On 5 July 1843, Laurent Kieffer, Alexander Kieffer, and Catherine Kieffer transferred one-fifth of the proceeds to their brother Louis. The document states that Laurent, Alexander, and Catherine were acting “on behalf of, and providing guarantee for,” their brother, Johannes Kieffer, “who is currently absent.”

The amount of the transfer was “four hundred twenty-eight francs, ninety-three centimes, and one third.” The proceeds from the seven deeds sold by Johannes Kieffer on behalf of his children were 2,120 francs, one-fifth of which is 424 francs. The transfer to Louis Kieffer was within five francs of this amount.

It is presumed that Johannes Kieffer made a transfer to his son Louis representing about one-fifth of the proceeds from the other liquidated Soufflenheim properties.

Financing the Move to North America

Among the 15 deeds-of-sale for farmland plus the deed-of-sale for the family house, only four buyers paid cash for the property. The remaining buyers arranged some kind of payment plan. In all cases, the payments were scheduled for once a year. The due dates used in the different deeds included Saint John's Day, Saint Michel Day, Christmas Day, four were scheduled for Saint Martin Day, and a few other dates. One deed arranged for a single installment, three deeds arranged for two installments, the remainder of the deeds arranged for three or four installments.

In effect, Johannes Kieffer became a creditor, converting his real property into financial assets. The problem, however, was that Johannes needed cash for his journey to North America. Today, in the 21st century, turning real property into cash (i.e., liquidating property) is straight forward. When someone sells real property, if the new buyer is unable to pay cash, they can easily obtain a bank loan (usually in the form of a mortgage) and use the money from the loan to pay for the property. Whether paid in cash or with the proceeds of a loan, the seller receives cash which is then available for use in purchasing a different piece of real estate or for any other purpose.

In 1843, Johannes Kieffer needed cash to emigrate, but liquidating property in the early nineteenth century was not so straight forward as today. The banking system at that time was much less developed compared to the services provided by today's banks. This was especially true for the kind of banking we call commercial banking—that is, banks which accept deposits from the public and issue loans for the purpose of personal consumption or business investment.

Because installment payments were used to finance most of the land sales, Johannes Kieffer could not take his wealth to North America. To address this problem of illiquid assets (assets that have value but cannot be readily turned into cash), the notary added a third party to the sale contracts. This additional party was Jacques Schick, a "tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller."

From a legal perspective, Johannes "assigned" (a legal procedure) to Jacques Schick his and his wife's rights to receive and manage the installment payments from the buyers. The legal assignment was made in exchange for cash, "which the assignors [Johannes Kieffer and his wife] acknowledge having received from the assignee [Jacques Schick], minus a small agreed discount, all of which has been paid in the presence of the notary and witnesses." In other words, Jacques Schick paid Johannes Kieffer a cash amount and in return he received the right to collect the buyer's debt plus interest. Through this mechanism, Johannes Kieffer was able to receive cash that he could carry to North America.

That cash would be used to finance the family's journey to North America and to buy farmland in Western New York.

Guardianship

Johannes Kieffer had one more matter that needed to be addressed before he could emigrate from Soufflenheim. Johannes was the guardian of his late brother-in-law's children. Johannes's first wife, Catherine Messner, had a younger brother, Joseph Messner, who died in 1828. Joseph's surviving children are listed in the following table:

Name	Born	Age in 1834	Age in 1843
Ignace Messner	8 August 1817	17	26
Joseph Messner	15 September 1819	15	24
Laurent Messner	9 August 1821	13	22

Catherine Messner	29 October 1824	10	19
Thérèse Messner	31 December 1826	8	17

Joseph Messner's widow, the children's mother, died 4 December 1934. At that time all five children were minors, and Johannes Kieffer was named their guardian on 15 December 1834. Nine years later, in 1843 when Johannes Kieffer was preparing to leave Soufflenheim, the three oldest boys were no longer minors, but the two youngest girls were still under 22 years of age.

In 1836, a Cadastre folio for Joseph Messner's children (folio no. 499), contained six parcels of farmland and a village house totaling three-quarters of a hectare. Three more parcels of farmland were added in 1838 when the children inherited land from their grandfather. The total was then almost 1.2 hectares.

Johannes Kieffer managed that land. The family house, which was number 154 in 1836, was rented to Marie Anne Burger, a widow with seven children. The farmland also was rented. These assets generated an income of 77 francs in both 1835 and 1836, the income increased to 94 francs after the grandfather's land was added.

The notarized document "declared that, wishing to settle to the United States of America, [Johannes Kieffer] had convened a family council to appoint a new guardian, and that by its resolution dated 29 May, that Council, chaired by the Justice of the Peace of the Canton of Bischwiller appointed the eldest of the aforementioned children, Mr. Ignace Messner, a plowman residing in Soufflenheim, as guardian."

When Johannes Kieffer left for North America in 1843, Thérèse Messner was one of the travelers. She was 17 years old. Thérèse remained in Western New York after immigration. She was married in Tonawanda on 11 August 1857 and died in Dunkirk on 22 February 1861. Childbirth appears to have been the cause of death.

An interesting piece of information found in this guardianship document noted that Johannes Kieffer loaned 250 francs to Laurent Messner in June 1840 "when the latter departed for North America." Laurent Messner, who was 19 years old at the time, probably traveled with his cousin Leon Messner. Leon, his wife and 2-year-old daughter, traveling on the Ship *Ilzaide*, arrived in New York City on 13 June 1840 and settled in New Germany, Waterloo County, Canada.⁹ There can be no doubt Johannes Kieffer was aware that many emigrants from Soufflenheim settled in New Germany, Canada. Yet Johannes Kieffer chose to settle his family in the hinterlands of Buffalo, New York.

The guardianship document notes that the loan Johannes Kieffer made to Laurent Messner generated interest. For the period "from July 1, 1840 to next July 1" the interest on the 250 francs loan was 37.50 francs. Johannes Kieffer withdrew 287.50 from the guardianship account and debited it from Laurent Messner's share of the assets.

The interest paid on this loan, which was essentially a personal loan, was set at an annual rate of 15 percent. That rate of interest can be compared to the rate of interest that was charged for the real estate Johannes Kieffer financed with installment payments. The sale of his house, for example, was financed at an annual interest rate of five percent.

Immigration

Johannes Kieffer and his family arrived in New York City on 20 September 1843 and on 21 October 1843 he purchased a bit more than 51 hectares (127 acres) of farmland in the town of Lancaster, in Western New York. He paid \$2,646 for the property (about 14,341 francs¹⁰) and there was no mortgage on the land. Clearly, Johannes Kieffer was able to liquidate his Soufflenheim property and to use the money to buy a much larger farm in Western New York.

Johannes Kieffer was 59 years old when he purchased the New York land. Two years later he transferred parts of that land to his heirs. On 24 June 1845, three land deeds were recorded by the Erie County Clerk in which Johannes Kieffer conveyed parts of his land to his sons and son-in-law. The first deed was between Johannes Kieffer and Laurent Kieffer ("son the John Kieffer"). The second was between Johannes Kieffer and Johannes Nuwer ("son in law to the said John Kieffer"). The third deed was between Johannes Kieffer and Johannes Kieffer, Jr. ("son the said John Kieffer party of the first part"). Each deed conveyed 31.5 acres of land (12.75 hectares).

Laurent Kieffer, Johannes Nuwer (Catherine Kieffer's husband), and Johannes Kieffer, Jr each became owners of one-quarter of the Lancaster, New York farm. Johannes Kieffer, Sr. retained the remainder of the land, comprising 31.5 acres. Each of the four subdivided parcels had road frontage. A railroad ran through the land and owned a one-acre right-of-way.

Alexander Kieffer did not receive an ownership share of the real estate. Although a reason has not been discovered, Alexander Kieffer may have been—in today's language—a person with special needs. He was born in 1815 and was seven years older than his younger brother Johannes. In 1845 Alexander was 30 years old. He never married. He was found in the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Censuses living with his sister, Catherine Kieffer, and he was listed as a laborer on Johannes Nuwer's farm. Records from the local Catholic Church (Saint Mary's in Lancaster, New York) registered his death on 20 November 1871. He was 56 years old. There is no evidence that he lived independently from other family members. These demographic characteristics, in combination with the fact that he did not receive a share of his father's real estate, are consistent with the possibility that Alexander had a physical or mental disability.

Johannes Kieffer, Sr died on 24 March 1852 at his home in Lancaster, New York. His Last Will and Testament dated 19 February 1852, bequeathed his real estate in the Town of Lancaster (31.5 acres) to his second wife and his son Alexander during the lifetime of his wife. Upon her death, the property was to go to his son-in-law, Johannes Nuwer, with a provision that Johannes Nuwer financially compensated his sons, Johannes Kieffer, Alexander Kieffer, and Laurent Kieffer.¹¹

Barbara Voegele died fifteen months after her husband, on 11 June 1853. As specified in Johannes Kieffer's Will, Johannes Nuwer inherited a legal interest in his father-in-law's land. Laurent Kieffer left New York and moved to Michigan in 1856. In 1859 he transferred his 31.5 acres as well as his interest in his father's 31.5 acres of land to Johannes Nuwer.

Johannes Kieffer, Jr.'s did the same, but not until 1873. The long period between Johannes Kieffer, Sr.'s death in 1852 and Johannes Kieffer, Jr.'s surrender of his interests in the farm in 1873 was probably related to his brother Alexander Kieffer. Johannes Kieffer, Jr. may have retained his interest in the land for twenty years in order to ensure Alexander was cared for. After Alexander died in 1871, that insurance was no longer needed.

We conclude this article with the observation by the historian Mack Walker. He showed that the bulk of the emigrants from Central Europe who went to North America in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s did so not to build something new but rather to regain and conserve something old. Those emigrants made the long journey "ultimately to keep the ways of life they were used to, which the new Europe seemed determined

to destroy.” In Walker’s view, emigration was not so much an act of radical affirmation as an act of conservative rejection.

They wanted to escape rootlessness (or mobility, if you prefer); or rather, they felt their roots being torn up, and sought a place to sink them again, for they could not contemplate living in another way. They were not characterized by “the willingness to break with old traditions ... to gamble the peace of their families and the security of their heirs on an uncertain future,” to quote a typical description. ... They were rather, I think, people who traveled thousands of grim miles in order to keep their roots, their habits, their united families and the kind of future they wanted for their families. They did not wait passively for their roots to be broken, to be sure; yet they were conservatives, who acted radically in order to preserve, and who journeyed to another world to keep their homes.¹²

The descendants of Johannes Kieffer took part in the creation of such a conservative community in Western New York, centered around a Catholic parish and a rural economy insulated from financial fluctuations.¹³ This community was sought to perpetuate the intertwined family unit, its farm, and the salvation of the souls of its members.

The immigrant farms in Western New York were family farms in the fullest sense of the term. They were owned by the farmer, worked by family labor, and used to provide an equal start in life for each child. This was a social structure transplanted from the old country. The farm insured the dedication of time and resources that religious practice required, while religion provided the farm and its family with protection from God’s seasonal wrath. Nowhere is this family focus more evident than in the norms governing the transmission of the farm from one generation to the next.

This community was not an adaptation of American practices by immigrants seeking a new way of life. The dominant practice among Yankee farmers dictated that their farms were sold outright when the farmer retired or were retained and rented until the farmer’s death and then sold at auction. Then the proceeds were divided among the heirs according to the provisions of the will or intestacy law.¹⁴

A different pattern prevailed among the German-speaking, immigrant farmers in Western New York. Exemplified by the actions of Johannes Kieffer, the usual practice in New York, as in Central Europe, was for the farmers to turn the ownership of the land over to their children.

APPENDIX 1

Louis Kieffer, Some New Discoveries

Louis Kieffer did not immigrate to North America, but until recently there was no known record of him after 1836. We have a Soufflenheim birth record for Louis, he was also included in the 1819 census, and he was named in 1829 as an heir to his mother’s estate. Louis was then listed as a member of Johannes Kieffer’s household in the 1836 census. But there are no further records of Louis Kieffer in Soufflenheim after that census: no marriage record, no birth certificates on which he was a father, and no death record.

An 1844 power-of-attorney document found at the Alsace Archive identified Louis Kieffer as a resident of Châlons-sur-Marne, France, which is information that turned out to be a major clue for a family history researcher. Châlons-sur-Marne was a town in the Champagne province of Northern France. Today it has the name Châlons-en-Champagne. The province of Champagne is west of Lorraine and, as it turns out,

Châlons-sur-Marne was on the main road between Strasbourg and Paris. Every Alsatian immigrant who embarked from Le Havre would have passed through Châlons-sur-Marne on their journey from Alsace to Normandy.

In the 1840s, Châlons-sur-Marne was one of France's large urban towns. Its population was more than four times the population of Soufflenheim (14,000 vs. 3,000). It was even larger than Haguenau—29 percent larger.

The Department of Marne Archive has a marriage record and a death record for Louis Kieffer. Both documents are unambiguous. They name his father and his mother, and they note that Louis was born in Soufflenheim. Louis Kieffer married Anne Marie Antoinette Aubriet on 22 May 1843.¹⁵) The bride was born on 6 September 1815 in the city of Reims. She was 27 years old while Louis was 29 on the wedding day.

The marriage certificate provides the following information about the groom:

Mr. Louis Kieffer, *chasseur* in the twelfth light infantry regiment on unlimited leave, residing in this city, duly authorized to contract marriage by permission of the field marshal commanding the department of the Meuse on April 20th last. Born in Soufflenheim (Bas-Rhin) on 11 August 1813, over 25 years old, legitimate son of Mr. Jean Kieffer, a farmer residing in Soufflenheim, who gave his consent to his son's marriage by an act executed with Me Kausseison, notary in Bischwiller (Bas-Rhin), in the presence of witnesses on 10 May of this year, and of the late Catherine Messner.¹⁶

Another document found in the Bas-Rhin Archive was a consent to marriage signed by Johannes Kieffer. That document was dated 11 February 1843 and states that Johannes Kieffer consented to the marriage of his son Louis Kieffer. It identifies Louis Kieffer as a soldier in the 12th light regiment; it states that the regiment was garrisoned in Lyon; and that Louis Kieffer was "currently on indefinite leave in Soufflenheim."

Interestingly, the bride-to-be was named Mademoiselle Adélaïde Obry, of Châlons-sur-Marne. This is not the same person Louis Kieffer married on May 22nd. Moreover, the marriage record quoted above gives 10 May 1843 as the date Johannes Kieffer consented to his son's marriage. Clearly, for some yet unknown reason, Louis' first attempt at marriage did not come to pass.

The May 22nd marriage document identified Louis Kieffer as a *chasseur* in the twelfth light infantry regiment. The French word *chasseur* translates into English as "hunter." In the French Army, *chasseur* was used to designate military units that were specially trained for rapid action. According to one description, "the *chasseurs à pied* were the light infantrymen of the French Imperial army." They were "independent units or companies within existing regiments." *Chasseur* units were "armed the same as their counterparts in the regular line infantry (*fusilier*) battalions but were trained to excel in marksmanship and in executing maneuvers at high speed."¹⁷ The "hunters" were considered elite troops.

In 1832, French law established that every male citizen owed military service to the State. All male citizens who were 20 years of age were eligible for service. Louis Kieffer was born in August 1813 and turned 20 years of age in 1833. It is likely that he entered the French Army on 1 January 1834. He may have been conscripted into the army, but it is more likely that he voluntarily enlisted. Members of the elite units were typically volunteers.

The 1836 Census identified Louis as a soldier but did not give his regiment. His service obligation would have been for seven years, and he would have been discharged on 31 December 1840. It appears that Louis extended his military service through at least 1843. This extension would explain why he was not

reported in Soufflenheim's 1841 Census.¹⁸ It was common for soldiers to be sent home in anticipation of their discharge, which could explain the unlimited leave he was awarded in 1843.

In the 1830s and early 1840s, the 12th light infantry regiment had been assigned to various locations across France. In 1838 the regiment was in northern France in the department of Pas-de-Calais, while the following year it was garrisoned at Verdun, in the province of Lorraine. In the summer of 1841, the unit was camped at Châlons-sur-Marne, but then the regiment left for Lyon in September and October.¹⁹

Another piece of information from Louis Kieffer's marriage certificate is that one of the witnesses was a man named Laurent Schmuck. Laurent was also from Soufflenheim. He was born there on 9 August 1815. His father was Gabriel Schmuck; his mother was Catherine Eck.

The 1836 Census found Laurent Schmuck living in Soufflenheim with his widowed mother and four siblings. He was 20 years old and had learned the trade of a tailor. When the 1841 Census was recorded, Laurent was no longer living with his mother and family.²⁰

The Marne Archive has a marriage record for Laurent Schmuck. He had been married in Châlons-sur-Marne a few months before Louis Kieffer. His marriage certificate was dated 25 February 1843. But Laurent had been living in Châlons-sur-Marne since at least 1841. The marriage certificate said that Laurent's mother had given her notarized consent for the marriage on 11 November 1841.²¹

Thus, by the end of 1841, both Louis Kieffer and Laurent Schmuck were living away from Soufflenheim. Louis Kieffer's military unit was camped at Châlons-sur-Marne in the summer of 1841, while Laurent Schmuck's marriage certificate placed him there in November 1841. Both Laurent Schmuck and Louis Kieffer were married in Châlons-sur-Marne a few years later.

It is possible that when Louis' regiment was camped at Châlons-sur-Marne in the summer of 1841, he connected with his hometown friend, Laurent Schmuck. Louis then returned to the town with "unlimited leave" when his military term of service was near completion.

After he was discharged from the army, Louis Kieffer became a woodworker. In 1849, he was identified as a *menuisier*, which was a person who made and repaired wooden objects. Louis and his wife had no children; or at least none were found in the records at Châlons-sur-Marne. In 1844 Louis was given power of attorney by his younger brother, Johannes. Louis Kieffer died in Châlons-sur-Marne on 2 August 1849. He had been married for six years and was only a few days shy of his 36th birthday.²²

APPENDIX 2

The 1819 Census

The 1819 Census identified the name of the household head, but no other household member was identified by name. Johannes Kieffer was listed in the census as the head of the household for family number 115. The household members were identified as follows:

Number of Male Children	3
Number of Female Children	1
Number of Male Servants	1
Number of Female Servants	-
Total Number of Persons in the House	7

Source: <https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7276#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7276-57490>

There were seven members of the household, four of whom were children. The three male children were Laurent (7 years old), Louis (6 years old), and Alexander (4 years old). The Soufflenheim mayor dated the 1819 Census as 1 December 1819. Johannes Kieffer's son Joseph died in March 1819 and so was not counted in the census. Catherine, who was born in the second week of October 1819, was the one female child.

The three remaining household members were Johannes Kieffer, his wife Catherine Messner, and his father, Laurent Kieffer. Johannes Kieffer's marriage contract and Laurent Kieffer's will both indicate that Laurent lived with his son after 1811. Laurent lived in the house with Johannes' family until his death in 1832. Thus, the male servant was probably Laurent Kieffer.

APPENDIX 3

Marriage contract of Jean Kieffer & Catherine Messner

Archives d'Alsace, site de Strasbourg, cote 7 E 44/41.
Office of Me Marie Joseph Alexandre Pareth, notary in Roppenheim, Bas-Rhin. Deed 33.
English translation by Claude Geyer

9 February 1811

No. 33

Kiefer and Messner of Soufflenheim

Contract of Marriage

Before Joseph Pareth, Imperial Notary for the jurisdiction of the justice of the peace of the canton of Bischwiller, arrondissement of Strasbourg, department of Bas-Rhin, residing in Roppenheim, undersigned,

Appeared Jean Kiefer, 26 years old, adult and legitimate son of Laurent Kiefer, farmer residing in Soufflenheim, and the late Catherine Lehmann, his wife, with his said father also present, duly authorized and assisting for the purposes hereof, future husband on the one hand; And

Catherine Messner, 28 years old, adult and legitimate daughter of Joseph Messner, farmer residing in Soufflenheim, and Marguerite Eck, his wife, with her said father also present, duly authorized and assisting for the purposes hereof, future wife on the other hand.

The parties, in view of the marriage which will shortly be celebrated between the said Jean Kiefer and Catherine Messner, have drawn up, concluded, and agreed upon the following civil conditions and conventions of the said marriage.

Namely

1. They adopt the system of community property as regulated by the Napoleonic Code. As a result, they establish a community of movable property and immovable acquisitions, which will be governed, managed, and divided according to the provisions of said Code.

2. The real estate contributions of the future husband are documented in the maternal inventory concerning immovables. Additionally, he brings to the marriage a sum of eight hundred francs in cash,

partly from said inheritance and partly from his earnings and savings, of which the future wife acknowledges awareness. This amount will be immobilized and subject to recovery if necessary.

3. The said Joseph Messner and Marguerite Eck, his wife, whom he authorizes, hereby establish a dowry for the future wife and their daughter, who accepts, as an advance inheritance from their estate, a sum of seven hundred francs in cash, at the legal value of the franc, on the wedding day, without interest. The future husband assumes responsibility for this amount, guaranteeing it to the future wife and her heirs. This sum is hereby immobilized and will be subject to recovery if necessary.

4. In consideration of this marriage, the said Laurent Kieffer, the father of the future husband, hereby renounces, cedes, abandons, and transfers from now on and forever, guaranteeing it against any encumbrance or hindrance, to the future husband, his son, who accepts for himself and his heirs, without this acquisition being included in the marital community. He conveys a single-story house with a barn, stables, pigsty, shed, garden, rights, and dependencies located in Soufflenheim, identified as number 89. It is bordered on one side by the heirs of Jean Moser, on another by the communal street, with in front another communal street, and behind by the said Moser heirs. The property is conveyed in its current state, as known and accepted by the future husband, who takes ownership as of this day but will not take possession or enjoy [the property] until after the father's death. The father reserves absolute control and enjoyment until then, free from charges, servitudes, debts, and mortgages, except under the condition that the future spouses may share the ground-floor stove room with the father, set up their bed, cook and bake in the kitchen, do laundry, place their kitchenware, and thresh their grain in the barn's threshing area. Plus one-fourth of the barn space, half of the last stable, one-third of the attic; and, in case of disagreement, they may at their expense convert the shed into living quarters. If the father relinquishes control earlier, the future spouses will take possession parts of the house he assigns to them. This reserved portion is valued at an annual income of ten francs or a capital of two hundred francs. The father specifies that movable objects affixed with nails, stones, or cement will remain with the future husband as part of this transfer, at an annual income of ten francs or a capital of two hundred francs.

The father specifies that movable objects affixed with nails, stones, or cement will remain with the future husband as part of this transfer. This transfer is made for the price of fifteen hundred francs, of which the future husband commits to paying his father on the wedding day, °+ without interest. The eight hundred francs remaining will be paid in eight equal installments of one hundred francs each, the first due on Saint Martin's Day, one thousand eight hundred and twelve, and the following seven installments on the same day of each seven subsequent year, also without interest, under the specific obligation of the transferred property. °+ that of seven hundred francs

[Note in margin] Cross-reference of five words approved Containing the words, that of seven hundred francs

5. The future spouses agree, as an express condition of their union, that if the future wife only in the event that she outlives the future husband, with or without children, she will have the right to become the unchallenged owner of the entirety of the said house and its dependencies for the sum of fourteen hundred fifty francs from which she may deduct the seven hundred francs she brings to the present marriage under Article Three. As for the remaining seven hundred and fifty francs, she shall pay them into the estate of the future husband in four installments, the first of which shall be due one year after his passing, and the following three on the same date in each of the three subsequent years, without interest. Each of the first three installments shall be for two hundred francs, and the final one for one hundred and fifty francs. Similar installments of two hundred francs each shall be granted to the future husband for the reimbursement of what he will owe to the heirs of the future wife, should he outlive her, also without interest.

6. The marital bed will remain the free property of the surviving spouse. Thus, all the above has been irrevocably agreed upon between the parties. Done, read, executed, and interpreted in German in Soufflenheim, at the transferred property, on February nine, one thousand eight hundred and eleven, in the presence of Pierre Mezler, joiner, and Sébastien Simon, carpenter, both residing in Soufflenheim, required witnesses, who signed with the parties and the notary. The future wife declared that she is unable to write or sign in any manner and made her usual mark with a cross.

Signatures

APPENDIX 4

Will of Laurent Kieffer

Archives d'Alsace, site de Strasbourg, cote 7 E 15 /56.

Office of Me Edmond Baltazar Aloyse Beunat, notary in Bischwiller, Bas-Rhin. Deed 3252.

English translation by Claude Geyer

N° 3252

Will

Sufflenheim 14 November 1831

Master Edmond Baltazar Aloyse Beunat, Royal Notary, practicing for the jurisdiction of the Justice of the Peace of the Canton of Bischwiller, in the Communal District of Strasbourg, Bas-Rhin Department, at the residence in Drusenheim, assisted by the witnesses named at the end,

Was present Mr. Laurent Kieffer, a plowman residing in Soufflenheim, who appeared in person in sound mind and body, with clear memory and judgment, as evidenced by his statements and conversation both with us, the notary, and with the said witnesses, all of whom expressly rendered the following in person at the office of the said notary.

The said Mr. Laurent Kieffer, appearing in the face of death and having commended his soul to God, requested that we receive his will as dictated by him, as follows:

I hereby revoke the public will I made at my domicile in Sufflenheim on February sixteen, one thousand eight hundred thirty, which shall be deemed null and void.

I give and bequeath to my son, Jean Kieffer, a plowman who resides with me in Soufflenheim, by préciput and apart from his hereditary share in my estate, the property of the orchard and garden adjoining my house, as I acquired it from Joseph Mosser, a turner of this place, about four years ago, so that from the day of my death he may use and dispose of it as he sees fit.

I declare, among other things, that my said son, Jean Kieffer, owes me one hundred eighty pieces of five francs and eighty centimes, amounting to one thousand forty-four francs, and nine pieces of five francs each, amounting to forty- five francs, which together total one thousand eighty-nine francs; of this sum, I hereby release him from having to account for it in my estate, fully forgiving the debt and making any necessary donation, also by préciput and apart from his hereditary share in my estate.

I make the above bequests in recognition of the special care that my said son, Jean Kieffer, has provided me.

This was thus executed and dictated by the testator in the German language, in the presence of the witnesses, to us, the Notary, who successively translated it into French and wrote it by hand as it was pronounced by the testator; and thereafter, by us, the notary, always in the presence of the said witnesses, read aloud and interpreted in a clear and intelligible voice to the testator, and re-read and re-interpreted due to the testator's deafness, who declared that he fully understood everything and expressly wished for it to be recorded as the faithful expression of his will.

Thereof record is made.

Done and executed at Drusenheim, in the notary's office, in the presence of André Klein, Jean Huck, known as "the young one," Jacques Ostertag – the three plowmen – and Étienne Eichler, a carpenter, all four residing in Drusenheim, on one thousand eight hundred thirty-one the fourteenth day of November, between five and six o'clock in the evening. The testator, together with the said four witnesses and us, the notary, then signed these presents after a reading and interpretation in German, spoken aloud in a clear and very intelligible voice, all of which was perfectly understood by the testator as he declared.

Signatures

APPENDIX 5

Jean Kiefer's deed of sale for his Soufflenheim house

Archives d'Alsace, site of Strasbourg, cote 7 E 5.1/126.

Office of Me Eugène Kauffeisen, notary in Bischwiller, Bas-Rhin. Deed 516.

English translation by Claude Geyer

5 May 1843

No. 516

Sale and transfer of 1,500 Frs

Before Me, Eugène Kauffeisen, Notary residing in Bischwiller, undersigned, and in the presence of the witnesses named below,

Appeared

Jean Kiefer, farmer, and Barbe Voegélé, spouses, residing and domiciled in Soufflenheim, the wife duly authorized by her husband. Who, by these present, declare that they have sold, transferred, and conveyed, with joint and several warranty against any disturbance, debt, mortgage, or other encumbrance whatsoever

To Mr. Mathieu Kiffer, farmer, and Ms Régine Haaser, spouses, residing in said Soufflenheim, the wife duly authorized by her husband, both of whom are present and accept

A single-story dwelling on the ground floor, barn, stable, stall, pigsty, well, garden, courtyard, rights, appurtenances, and dependencies, all located in Soufflenheim, street known as "vers le Gaentzeck," bordered on one side by a street, on the other by the widow Georger, in front by the street, and in the rear partly by a path and partly by Ignace Moser.

As this building stands, continues and behaves without reservation or exception, but without any guarantee as to the condition of the buildings, and with everything wall, nails, dowels and other parts of the real estate or by destination real estate nature.

It belonged to the seller Kieffer, having been transferred to him by his father, Mr. Laurent Kieffer, son of Pierre, a farmer in Soufflenheim where he deceased, as part of his marriage contract with Catherine Messner, his first wife, executed before Me Pareth, then notary in Roppenheim, canton of Bischwiller, on 9 February, eighteen hundred eleven, duly recorded, and furthermore, subject to various conditions which have since expired due to the father's death and fulfillment of payment terms, for which he must provide proof.

The buyers may from this day forward take ownership of and dispose of the property as their own as of, today and begin enjoyment of the same as of the upcoming June twenty-five, including all rights, active and passive servitudes and attachments, as previously held or claimed by the sellers or their predecessors, and shall be responsible for the payment of all taxes beginning from the date they take enjoyment.

This sale has been made for the price of fifteen hundred francs, which the buyers jointly and severally promise and commit to pay to the seller's order in three equal annual installments, the first installment shall be due on 1 May, one thousand eight hundred and forty-four, and the next two on the same date in the two following years, each with five per cent annual interest from this day forward.

As a guarantee for said payments, the inheritance sold shall remain subject to lien and mortgage as security.

At this time, and by these same present, the sellers assign and transfer with joint and several warranty as to the legitimacy of the debt and the present and future solvency of the debtors,

To Mr. Jacques Schick, tobacconist and annuitant, residing in Bischwiller, who is present and accepts,

The sum of fifteen hundred francs, representing the full price of the sale as of this day,

For the assignee to collect and receive said sum and its accessories upon simple receipts, according to the above-mentioned due dates.

This assignment has been made in consideration of a matching amount of fifteen hundred francs, which the assignors acknowledge having received from the assignee, minus a small agreed discount, all of which has been paid in the presence of the notary and witnesses, with full discharge and without reservation. To this end, the assignors fully subrogate the assignee in all their rights, titles, claims, privileges, and mortgages resulting from this deed, including the full effect of the resolutive clause.

All payments shall be made in current gold or silver coins legally circulating in francs, and not otherwise, either at the office of the undersigned notary or at the domicile of the assignee, at the assignee's discretion.

For the execution of this deed, all parties elect domicile at our notarial office

Thus executed

Done and passed in Soufflenheim, at the residence of Mr. André Hellmer, innkeeper, on one thousand eight hundred and forty-three, 5 May, in the presence of the said Helmer and Pierre Schmuck, clog maker, both residing in Soufflenheim, upon request.

After reading and interpretation, the parties, witnesses, and notary signed the document.

Signatures

APPENDIX 6

Summaries of deeds of sale English translation by Claude Geyer

Sale to Joseph Bastian	Deed No. 497
Date of deed:.....	29 April 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife.
Buyer:	Joseph Bastian living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	23.30 ares of land in Soufflenheim, canton Werb, cadastral reference section A number 1085
Operation:.....	sale of 800 francs and transfer of 600 francs
Payment terms:	200 francs cash and 3 equal terms, the first in one year from today and the other two on the same day of the following two years, with interest as prescribed by law starting from this day
Third-party assignment:	Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller
Sale to Michel Mary	Deed No. 498
Date of deed:.....	29 April 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife.
Buyer:	Michel Mary living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	34.10 ares of land in Sessenheim, on one side Joseph Rieff, on the other side Michel Dobler
Operation:.....	sale and transfer of 800 francs
Payment terms:	800 francs in 4 equal terms, the first on next Saint Martin's Day and the other three on the same day of the following three years, with interest as prescribed by law starting from this day
Third-party assignment:	Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller
Sale to André Issele	Deed No. 499
Date of deed:.....	29 April 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife.
Buyer:	André Issele and Françoise Obermeyer, spouses living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	20 ares of land in Soufflenheim, canton Haeglum, on one side Jean Messner, on the other side Jean Haberkorn, up and down a path
Operation:.....	sale and transfer of 400 francs
Payment terms:	400 francs in 2 equal terms, the first on 1 April 1845, and the other on the same day of the following year, with 5% interest
Third-party assignment:	Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller
Sale to Germain Wilderotter	Deed No. 500
Date of deed:.....	29 April 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife.

Sale to Madeleine Wilhelm	Deed No. 503
Date of deed:.....	29 April 1843
Seller(s):.....	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife

Buyer:	Madeleine Wilhelm, widow of Joseph Messner, living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	15.70 ares of land in Soufflenheim, cadastral reference section C number 369, canton Brannengewand, on one side the Kirchdoerfer heirs, on the other side the widow of Joseph Müller
Operation:.....	sale and transfer of 200 francs
Payment terms:	200 francs at next Saint-Michel Day, 29 September with 5% interest per year starting from this day
Third-party assignment:	Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to Jean Müller	Deed No. 504
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Date of deed:	1 May 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife
Buyer:	Jean Müller and Marguerite Daul, spouses living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	15.30 ares of land in Soufflenheim, canton Kirlenfeld bey den Hartzöpfen, on one side Joseph Messner, up and down a path
Operation:	sale and transfer of 460 francs
Payment terms:	460 francs in 4 equal terms, the first today's day a year from now, and the others on the same day of the following years, with interest as prescribed by law starting from this day
Third-party assignment:	Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to André Helmer	Deed No.515
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Date of deed:.....	5 May 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife.
Buyer:	André Helmer, living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	18 ares of land in Soufflenheim, canton Oberkohlgrub, on one side Félix Goetz, on the other side Michel Elchinger the old, up and down a path
Operation:.....	sale and transfer of 300 francs
Payment terms:	300 francs in 3 equal terms, the first on 11 November 1843, and the two others on the same day of the following years, with interest as prescribed by law starting from this day
Third-party assignment:	Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to Laurent Haberkorn	Deed No. 539
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Date of deed:	19 May 1843
Seller(s):	Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, on behalf of their children, namely: Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker; Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer and Catherine Kieffer, residing in Soufflenheim; and Jean Kieffer, the latter still a minor.
Buyer:	Laurent Haberkorn and Sophie Schitt, spouses living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property:	11.60 ares mainly arable land, in Soufflenheim, canton Hungerfeld, on one side Antoine Beck, on the other side the Bitsché heirs, on one end a path, on the other end through

Operation:..... sale and transfer of 300 francs
Payment terms: 300 francs in 3 equal terms, the first on 11 November 1844, and the two others on the same period of the following years, with interest as prescribed by law starting from 11 November 1844
Third-party assignment: Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to Valentin Müller	Deed No. 567
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Date of deed: 9 June 1843
Seller(s): Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, on behalf of their children, namely: Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker; Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer and Catherine Kieffer, residing in Soufflenheim; and Jean Kieffer, the latter still a minor.
Buyer: Valentin Müller, living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property: 8 ares of meadow, in Soufflenheim, canton Ritterberg, on one side Michel Kieffer, on the other side Ignace Messner, a ditch at one end, a field at the other.
Operation:..... sale and transfer of 200 francs
Payment terms: 200 francs paid in this way: 50 francs on 1 April 1844, and 150 francs on the same day of the following year, with interest as prescribed by law starting 6 May 1843
Third-party assignment: Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to Pie Ernewein	Deed No. 568
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Date of deed: 9 June 1843
Seller(s): Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, on behalf of their children, namely: Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker; Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer and Catherine Kieffer, residing in Soufflenheim; and Jean Kieffer, the latter still a minor.
Buyer: Pie Ernewein, living in Soufflenheim
Nature and origin of the property: 14 ares of arable land, in Soufflenheim, canton Langenthal, on one side Michel Messner, on the other side Georges Vogel, a path at one end, communal land at the other.
Operation:..... sale of 400 francs
Payment terms: 400 francs paid cash
Third-party assignment: none

Sale to François Haertel	Deed No. 569
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Date of deed: 9 June 1843
Seller(s): Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, on behalf of their children, namely: Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker; Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer and Catherine Kieffer, residing in Soufflenheim; and Jean Kieffer, the latter still a minor.
Buyer: François Adam Haertel, living in Soufflenheim

Nature and origin of the property: 11 ares of arable land, in Soufflenheim, canton Hungerfeld, on one side the Rauchel heirs, on the other side Jean Messner, on one end through, on the other end the road to Sessenheim.

Operation:..... sale and transfer of 240 francs

Payment terms: 240 francs paid cash

Third-party assignment: Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to Michel Dobler	Deed No. 599
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Date of deed:..... 27 June 1843

Seller(s): Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, on behalf of their children, namely: Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker; Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer and Catherine Kieffer, residing in Soufflenheim; and Jean Kieffer, the latter still a minor.

Buyer: Michel Dobler, living in Soufflenheim

Nature and origin of the property: 7 ares of arable land, in Soufflenheim, canton Haarentochel, on one side the Jacques Messner, on the other side Ignace Obermeyer, on bottom end through, on up a path.

Operation:..... sale and transfer of 120 francs

Payment terms: 120 francs paid cash

Third-party assignment: Jacques Schick, tobacconist and owner, resident of Bischwiller

Sale to Jean Wenger & others	Deed No. 608
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Date of deed:..... 5 July 1843

Seller(s): Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegelé, his wife, Laurent Kieffer, a clog maker for himself and on behalf of Louis Kieffer, a soldier stationed in Châlons; Alexandre Kieffer living in Soufflenheim, Catherine Kieffer, spouse of Jean Nuwer, residing in Soufflenheim, and Jean Kieffer

Buyer: Jean Wenger, Georges Wenger and Théodore Wenger, living in Drusenheim

Nature and origin of the property: 87.90 ares of meadow in Schirrhein, canton Bildery, cadastral reference section D number 415, on one side the path to Drusenheim, on the other side abutments, on one end a path, on the other end a Binder from Sessenheim

Operation:..... sale of 1,800 francs

Payment terms: 1,800 francs paid cash

Third-party assignment: none

Sources:

1. Frederic O. Sargent, "Feudalism to Family Farms in France," *Agricultural History*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1961), pp. 193-201.

2. 1836 Census, (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7464#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7464-78749>). 1841 Census, (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7465#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7465-78812>)
3. Michael Nuwer, "Occupational Status in Soufflenheim, 1836" (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hSuxSoG5nBNMvoqklc4td5PUkXoSUrgq/view>)
4. Death record, Laurent Kieffer, 20 May 1832 (<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284542#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284542-1411260>)
5. Katherine A Lynch, *Family, Class, and Ideology in Early Industrial France: Social Policy and the Working-Class Family, 1825-1848*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
<https://archive.org/details/familyclassideol0000lync/page/n5/mode/2up>. Michelle Perrot and Anne Martin-Fugier, "The Actors," *A History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, eds. Philippe Ariès, Georges Duby, and Michelle Perrot, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990.
https://archive.org/details/historyofprivate0000unse_s1j6/page/98/mode/2up
6. Katherine A. Lynch, *Family, Class, and Ideology in Early Industrial France: Social Policy and the Working-Class Family, 1825-1848*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 36.
7. Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux, quoted in *ibid.*, pp 36-37.
8. See Appendix 1 for more details about Louis Kieffer.
9. The ship's manifest identified "Jacob Messner" a 19-year-old traveling with Leon Messner and his family. The current author thinks this individual was probably Laurent Messner. Leon was Laurent Messner's first cousin, the son of Jean Messner.
10. One US dollar was worth 5.42 French francs.
11. Lynda Goldman (<https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/kieffer/241/>).
12. Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885*, (Harvard University Press, 1964)
13. See Michael Nuwer, "Immigrant adaptation to a new home: patterns from the first generation" (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17ImHRXQKj2F0AggqbHAn861sSFPzcXFV/>); Michael Nuwer, "The Independent Cultivator" (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y7qe7id78IGg9cotjdYAcbeYOpXPWGzt/>); Michael Nuwer, "A History of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster" (https://drive.google.com/file/d/12wWAZVk-96_EI-p93O13EOG3L18Tbj1O/); Michael Nuwer, "The Failed Assimilation of German Immigrants in Lancaster" (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E1wRQ9tXd9GEJ1qZmAVZo1qVvhdELNXx/>).
14. Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer," *German Historical Institute Washington, D.C., Annual Lecture Series No. 3*; Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Peasant Pioneers: Generational Succession among German Farmers in Frontier Minnesota," in Hahn and Prude, eds., *Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, 259–92; David A. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism*: Buffalo, New York, 1825-60, (University of Illinois Press, 1989).
15. Record of marriage: <https://archives.marne.fr/ark:/86869/ht6jx13cm2dz/cc5cedfa-4c83-416d-99f5-8d65d226b177>
16. The wording in French was: "Le sieur Louis Kieffer, chasseur au douzième régiment d'infanterie légère en congé illimité domicilié en cette ville dûment autorisé à contracter mariage par permission de M. le maréchal de camp commandant le département de la Meuse du 20 avril dernier né à Soufflenheim (Bas-Rhin) le onze août mil huit cent treize, fils majeur et légitime du sieur Jean Kieffer cultivateur domicilié à Soufflenheim lequel a donné son consentement au mariage de son fils par acte passé devant Me Kausseison, notaire à Bischwiller (Bas-Rhin) en présence de témoins le dix mai dernier et de feu Catherine Messner."
17. Wikipedia, "Chasseur," <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chasseur>

18. The 1836 census identified family members who were soldiers. The 1841 census did not identify soldiers.
19. Charles-Joachim-Edgard Malaguti, *Historique du 87e régiment d'infanterie de ligne: ex-12e Léger*, 1892, pp. 536-537.
20. Census of Soufflenheim, 1841, family #480.
21. Record of marriage: <https://archives.marne.fr/ark:/86869/ht6jx13cm2dz/67b671fe-a4bb-4541-8323-06d967ac5b4f>
22. Record of death: <https://archives.marne.fr/ark:/86869/q47dp1v6zs90/1b439634-c3de-4fa5-ab49-5eaa95c3f152>