

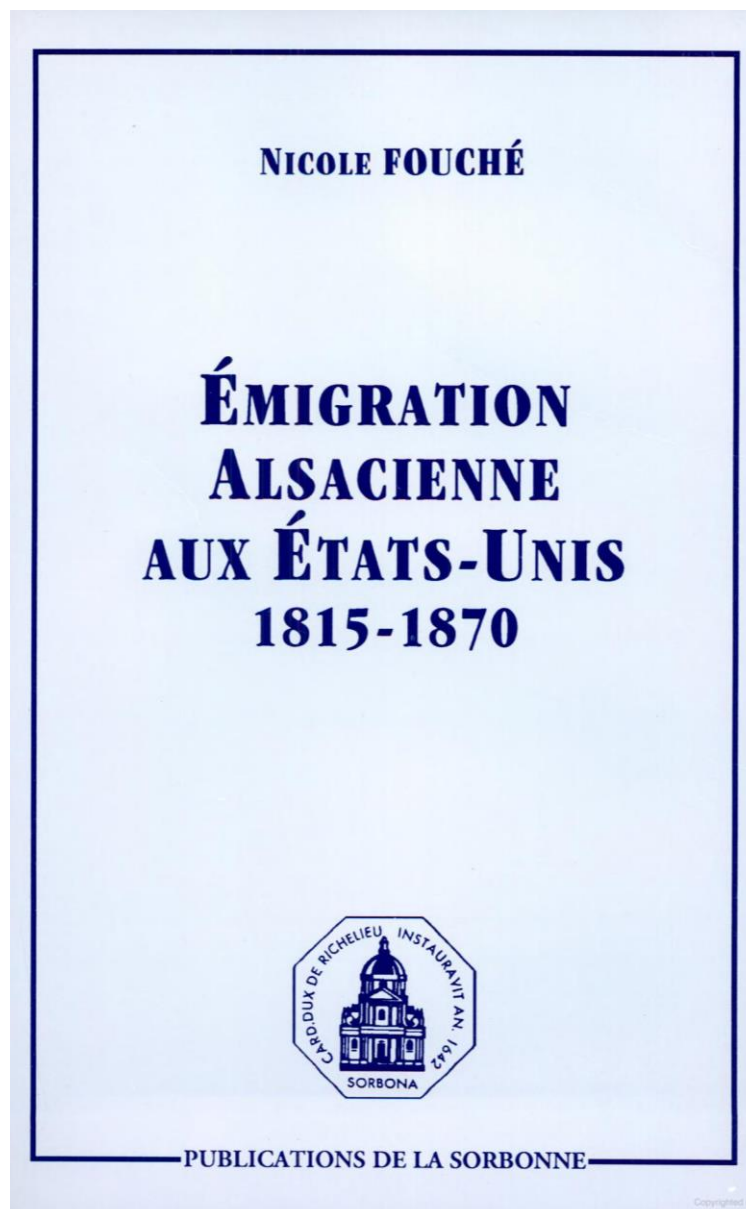
## ALSATIAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA 1815-1870

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*The Grand Dock at Le Havre, Claude Monet, 1872*

## INTRODUCTION

Pages 13-18.

No historian, particularly in Alsace, is unaware of the phenomenon of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century. Although many of them have called for a comprehensive study of the subject, it has never before been treated from a historical perspective. It's easy to see why. Everyone was intuitively aware that such research would not lead to the uncovering of a migratory movement involving masses comparable to those usually studied by historians of American immigration, hence the impression – false but unpleasant – of having only a second-rate subject. Moreover, the patience required to reconstruct the reality of emigration from heterogeneous and disparate sources was a deterrent. Until now, historians may have felt that the end did not justify the means, unless they had been discouraged in advance by the problems posed by the sources.

The first question is how to measure Alsatian emigration to the United States. To do this, we have at our disposal a seemingly attractive source: the “foreign passports” kept in the two Rhine departments in files entitled “Emigration,” or even “Emigration to the United States.” Unfortunately, these documents do not cover the whole of our period. It was therefore difficult to reconstruct the exact chronological curve of emigration (chapter one).

The “passport” series revealed that at least 45,000 Alsations were involved in this emigration (men, women and children), 45,000 known and identified individuals for whom sociological information was available: sex, age, place of residence, marital status, profession, destination. This was enough to attempt to subject this population to simple statistical processing, now easily accessible with computerized tools. Since we were unable to survey the period as a whole, we chose to survey the best-preserved “passports” period by period. The results are not disappointing. They do more than establish a simplified composite portrait of the 19th-century Alsatian emigrant to the United States; they enable us to discern evolutions and changes, and to verify hypotheses (chapter II). It should be noted that, in many cases, the computer has worked with small numbers, which means that the historian is entering the realm of micro-history and its attendant difficulties.

For the rest, the sources used provided a wealth of information and explanations without raising any major difficulties. One tricky issue remained, however: the influence of foreign emigration (German and Swiss) on Alsatian emigration. Historians have often lumped them together, both in terms of departure and arrival. It has to be said that, locally, Alsatian emigration was overwhelmed by the problems raised by German and Swiss emigration across its territory. But what did we find in the end? That, compared to its neighbors, emigration from Alsace developed with relative independence (chapter III).

The researcher interested in migratory movements cannot escape the problem of Pull (the force of attraction that the host country exerts on immigrants) and Push (the force of repulsion that originates in the emigrants' country of departure). As Jean Heffer points out with regard to migration:

[...] This is not a Brownian movement in which individuals travel at random. A certain rationality governs these emigrations [...]. The problem remains, therefore, to prioritize the factors that determine these movements [...].<sup>1</sup>

To address this issue, some historians have seized upon the highly sophisticated tools of econometric modelling and attempted to put historical reality into equation form, thereby measuring the respective influences of Pull and Push. To use this method, you need to be familiar with econometric tools, but above all you need to be able to scientifically establish the series of variables that go to make up a model. Existing models only cover the last third of the 19th century. The reason for this is simple: it is extremely difficult, for the earlier period, to validly establish series of agricultural production, birth rates, ocean

transport costs, grain harvests, the working population, industrial production, unemployment rates, per capita income. This is why, for Alsace, I have not posed the problem in econometric terms. I have simply tried, wherever my sources allowed, to measure the relative intensity of the two forces and to integrate the Pull-Push scheme into classical descriptive history, while avoiding an absolute, strict and impoverishing determinism. Chapter IV, entitled “The Structural Causes of Emigration,” examines the pull factors in the USA, while Chapter V analyses and comments on the “Local Causes” that pushed Alsatians out of their homeland.

The question of travel is examined in Chapter VI. Ports, railroads, prices and the role of American cotton merchants are all examined in detail. Le Havre was clearly “the” port for Alsatian emigration to the United States.

Chapter VII takes us to the other side of the Atlantic, to attempt a geography of Alsatian settlement in the United States. A geography that remains uncertain, given the numerical weakness of Alsatian emigration (relative to the German masses, for example), and the dispersal of Alsatian emigration across many American states.

The episode of Henri Castro’s colonization of South Texas, a very special and interesting case in the history of Alsatian emigration in the 19th century, occupies the following chapters (VIII, IX and X). The traces left in Alsatian collective memory by the establishment of this colony almost single-handedly confiscate the memory of Alsatian emigration to America. A re-examination of the sources – both American and Alsatian – was called for, as well as a quantitative study.

To conclude this introduction, I’d like to say that Alsatian emigration to the United States, like any subject of social history, reminds us that it’s individuals who make history. One Alsatian emigrant is nothing in the eyes of history, but five hundred emigrants are the history of Alsatian emigration. In this kind of research, we can never forget the importance of the private lives of little people, the value of individual wills, which, when they add up, take on a historical dimension, a dimension I’ve always been careful to preserve, even when I’ve been interested in the infinitely small.

### **Nota Bene**

To lighten the reference notes grouped at the end of each chapter, the abbreviations below will be there systematically used:

for the departments: B.-R. (Bas-Rhin) and H.-R. (Haut-Rhin);

for the archives:

AN (National Archives – Paris),

AD (Departmental Archives),

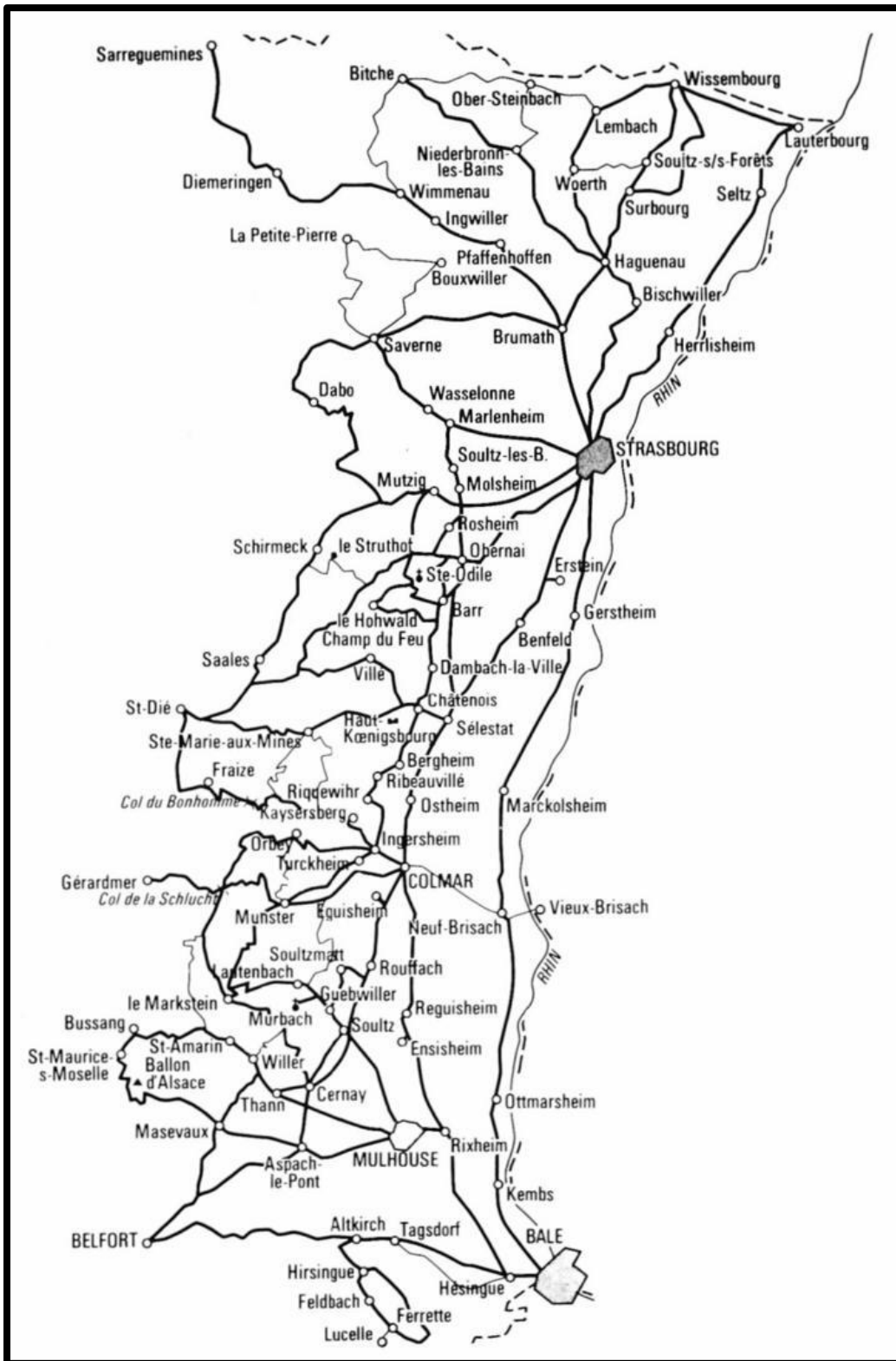
ADB-R. (Bas-Rhin departmental archives – Strasbourg),

ADH-R. (Haut-Rhin – Colmar departmental archives),

AM (Municipal archives).

### **NOTES**

1 Jean Heffer, “DU Pull et du Push,” colloque de l’université de Paris-IV, 10-11 octobre 1986, *les Migrations européennes aux Etats-Unis*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1987, pp. 21-48.



Map II – Alsace



Map III - Administrative map of Bas-Rhin, 1815-1870.



Map III - Administrative map of Bas-Rhin, 1815-1870.

## CHAPTER I. PASSPORTS

Pages 19-35.

### National legislation and Alsace

Between 1815 and 1870, passports were issued under the decree of 10 Vendémiaire, An IV. Under this decree, all travelers passing through the limits of their canton were required to have a passport (an internal passport for travel within France, and a foreign passport for travel outside national borders). This decree was subsequently corrected and supplemented by a series of amendments (decrees of September 18, 1807 and July 11, 1810, order of April 20, 1814, circular of October 23, 1815, instructions of August 20, 1816, circulars of March 4, 1818 and February 1, 1823), all of which, in letter and in spirit, maintained the passport requirement. In principle, the passport serves only to guarantee the traveler's identity, and therefore his or her right to the respect and protection of public authority. The passport is not a repressive measure and, officially, from the point of view of the movement of people, French legislation is liberal.<sup>1</sup>

In 1815, an internal passport cost 2 F. It was issued by the mayor of the applicant's commune of residence. For a foreign passport, the cost was 10 F. The administrative process takes a little longer: the application is always submitted to the local town hall, but is forwarded by the mayor to the prefect of the département, who then submits the authorization to issue the passport to the Minister of the Interior in Paris. Getting a passport would appear to be straightforward. But the reality is far more complex. It depends essentially on the conditions of emigration abroad. In French departments with a high emigration rate, such as Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, national legislation is very often accompanied by prefectural circulars which adapt the conditions for issuing passports to the local situation.

### **The complexity of the process**

At the beginning of the Restoration, Alsatians wishing to emigrate to the United States went to their local town hall. Beforehand, he drew up, or had drawn up, a "petition" in which he requested a passport for America, for himself and his entire family, if he was not going alone. In this petition, he declares his civil status, explains the reasons for his emigration and indicates his destination. For his part, the mayor, before forwarding the application to the prefecture, checks that the petitioner has paid all debts and contributions. If this is not the case, the mayor will not issue the certificate of good conduct required in Strasbourg and Colmar for passport issuance.

By 1817, the situation had changed. At that time, a large number of Alsatian emigrants were in Amsterdam, with no embarkation papers and no money, in a situation of extreme poverty, waiting for a ship bound for the United States. The emigrants

[...] fill the streets of Amsterdam to beg for alms that barely provide enough to sustain their miserable existence [...].<sup>2</sup>

The French Consul General in Amsterdam does not have the means to help them. If he did, he probably wouldn't, in order not to encourage emigration. In short, the Dutch authorities complained to the French authorities, asking them to take steps to limit the influx of emigrants. After an exchange of correspondence between Amsterdam, Paris, Strasbourg and Colmar, Paris recommended a solution that was immediately adopted:

[...] Passports cannot be refused [...] but whenever there is a question of a port in Holland, in order to go on from there to America, [the prefects could] invite the mayors to issue the passport only after having ascertained [the emigrants'] means of existence, certified by two known witnesses. When

these means are known, this will be the only formality that [prefects may] prescribe. In the absence of notoriety, mayors may require the individual to deposit a sum of 50 F at the town hall, for which he or she will be given a receipt. This sum will be sent by [the prefects] to the King's Consul General in Holland to be given to the person concerned at the time of embarkation, and if, for any reason, embarkation does not take place, the 50 F will be given to the owner to give him the means to return home [...].<sup>3</sup>

For this purpose, a register has been opened at His Majesty's Chancellery in Amsterdam.<sup>4</sup> Each emigrant is invited to come and register. At the same time, they were given back the 50 francs they had deposited at their local town hall. The Prefect of Bas-Rhin, finding the measure effective, even proposed extending it to all foreign cities to which the emigrant declared he wished to go.

[...] either in order to continue his journey to his final destination, or in order to have some means of returning to his country, should he be forced to take this course [...].<sup>5</sup>

This rule, which multiplied the number of steps involved, complicated the emigrant's task. It fell of its own accord in 1818, with the collapse of emigration to the United States. It was to rise from the ashes, in a slightly different form, in 1827, when emigration accelerated once again.

[...] Do not grant a passport – the Minister of the Interior told the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin – until you are sure that the emigrants have sufficient resources to cover the costs of travel and stay in the seaports where [they] await embarkation [...].<sup>6</sup>

Emigrants are then simply asked to declare how much money they have at the time of their departure, which they seem to do quite willingly.<sup>7</sup> While the practice of depositing a bond was abandoned, the obligations faced by emigrants were more numerous.

From 1828 onwards, petitioners are required to provide receipts and certificates, duly signed and stamped, to prove that they have paid their personal and movable property taxes, door and window taxes, patente taxes (for those subject to them) and their debts to the municipal fund. For young boys of military service age, mayors must now require them to provide the number they received when their class was drawn in their canton. This number indicates whether or not the candidate for emigration is part of the contingent. If they have been exempted, they must explain why.<sup>8</sup> These new requirements, combined with the need to declare the amount of money available on departure (as we have already seen), acted as a deterrent. In 1827, there was a political reason for all this harassment:

[...] The fact of emigration would be good fortune for the Liberals, who would not fail to circulate and resound the tribunes with their declamations on the misery of the people [...].<sup>9</sup>

Gathering all these documents was very restrictive for would-be emigrants. Nothing was done to simplify the process. The administration applied the legislation with zeal. In this respect, it is exemplary to cite the scrupulous file that Henri Causé, from Strasbourg, put together in 1853: it includes a birth certificate, a certificate of domicile, a form attesting that Causé had not been sentenced to a correctional penalty, the certificate according to which the receiver of judicial acts in Strasbourg certifies that Henri Causé owes nothing to his office, the certificate from the collector of direct taxes attesting that Henri Causé's debts had been settled. In addition, the clerk of the justice of the peace for the canton of Strasbourg certifies, on official paper, that Henri Causé has never been appointed tutor or curator; the mayor of Strasbourg, that he has been released from his military obligations... You'd think the file was complete... Well, not at all! A small note on the letterhead of the Strasbourg prefecture is pinned to the file:

[...] Sieur Causé's passport can only be stamped for America if the Police Commissioner certifies that there is nothing to prevent the holder from emigrating [...].<sup>10</sup>

## **Towards decentralization**



The procedure for sending lists of passport applicants to Paris, in order to obtain authorization from the Minister of the Interior to issue passports, was cumbersome and slow. Viscount de Martignac, Minister of the Interior in 1828, wanted to simplify the process. He decided to abandon the system of prior authorization and, in a circular dated March 11, 1828, delegated his powers to the prefects to issue passports.<sup>11</sup> This decision was subsequently maintained. Everyone was delighted.

[...] Prefects authorized to issue passports abroad without taking orders from the Minister [...].<sup>12</sup>

are, of course, obliged to transmit to Paris indicative statements of emigration. These include the surname, first names, age, place of residence, marital status and destination of emigrants. In 1855, the Minister of the Interior agreed to discuss new formalities. It would take three years, not to simplify the procedures for compiling the files, but to bring the administration closer to its constituents by authorizing, in Alsace, two sub-prefects to issue passports:

[...] I have decided that the sub-prefectures [...] of Wissembourg and Mulhouse will now be able to issue passports abroad [...].<sup>13</sup>

These two sub-prefectures were not chosen at random. In 1858, they were strongly structured and organized around emigration, particularly to the United States.

### **Towards the abolition of passports between France and the United States**

From the 1860s onwards, passport legislation in France entered a very liberal phase. On January 20, 1843, the first blow had been struck against the traditional use of passports. The passport verification service at the Belgian border was abolished.<sup>14</sup>

It's easy to see how the Alsatians made the most of their new-found freedom. Temporarily abandoning Le Havre, they embarked without qualms from Antwerp.

Between 1860 and 1870, the French government definitively abolished passports with many of its European neighbors: England, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Spain, Denmark and Luxembourg, but maintained the passport for the United States until the end of 1868, when

[...] our nationals may [at last] travel to the United States without a passport. However, they are invited, in their own interest and in order to avoid any regrettable action by the agents responsible for policing our ports, to carry some form of proof of identity, which would also enable them to request the assistance and support of our diplomatic and consular agents abroad [...].<sup>15</sup>

This liberality came only a year before the end of our period. Thus, from 1815 to 1869, from the point of view of the French authorities, Alsatian emigration to the United States was continuously covered by the foreign passport requirement.

### **Passports inside**

Mayors played a central role in issuing passports. At the beginning of the Restoration, it was under their control that the certificates of good conduct required to obtain a passport were issued to petitioners. From 1828 onwards, it was under their authority that all the documents making up an emigration file were grouped together. Mayors are often accused of indulgence, even complacency. They are accused of letting their constituents leave too easily, which is probably true. There are many comments by mayors, such as the following:

[...] I am of the opinion that the departure of an inhabitant of the class of which the commune abounds would not be regretted [...].<sup>16</sup>

In the same way, another mayor explains in the margin of a petition from Michel Meyer, a day laborer from the commune of Drachenbronn, married with three children, that the Minister of the Interior can issue him a passport, as his

[...] presence is not absolutely necessary in France, and his absence can hardly harm his homeland [...].<sup>17</sup>

Mayors were also suspected of encouraging emigration to the USA by issuing simple inland passports for Le Havre, leaving no doubt as to the final destination of the applicants. Between 1828 and 1868, many Alsatians used and abused this complaisance. To fool the authorities, they also applied for passports inland, from town to town, all the way to Le Havre. It has to be said that, for an inland passport, there's no file to compile. A few rare Alsatians took advantage of the situation to leave without having repaid their debts or paid their taxes. Some were fined as a result of court convictions. Others left their wives and children in the care of the commune, leaving their villages on the strength of a passport. Others escape the recruitment law. If we add to all these considerations the fact that an inland passport costs 2 F, whereas a foreign passport costs 10 F, i.e. five times more, we will understand that emigration to the United States by the inland passport method results in a dead loss for the Treasury. This is why Alsatian prefects are constantly putting pressure on mayors. The debate began in 1817. It resumed at the end of the 1820s, and continued unabated. From 1845 onwards, the prefects' complaints multiplied:

[...] It would appear from information recently received that emigrants [from the Haut-Rhin to America] are neglecting to provide themselves [with foreign passports] and are setting off, armed only with domestic passports, for Le Havre. I have been informed that, during the past month, several families, comprising a total of thirty-six individuals, left the commune of Lièpvre, arrondissement of Colmar, after having been issued passports for Le Havre [...].<sup>18</sup>

Prefects are at a loss. Their only means of action was a "circular to the mayors" of their department. On October 26 1846, the Prefect of Bas-Rhin asked mayors to refrain from handing in, in future,

[...] passports to individuals [whom they] suspect of wishing to emigrate, than on the declaration of the canton registrar [stating] that [the passport applicants] are fully discharged towards the Treasury [...].<sup>19</sup>

On October 24, 1851, mayors were expressly asked to comply with the previous circular.<sup>20</sup> On June 30, 1853, the tone went up a notch:

[...] Mayors must only issue passports for Le Havre to those who can prove that they have paid their dues to the Treasury. [They must] also refuse travel documents to those who request them for any city other than Le Havre but [whom they] suspect of intending to leave France. In the latter cases, [the mayors must report to the prefects] on their refusals and the grounds on which they are based [...].<sup>21</sup>

The Prefect of Bas-Rhin, who is sending out this type of instruction to the mayors of his department for the umpteenth time, concludes in an unequivocal tone:

[...] I invite you, Gentlemen, to take these instructions to heart and to follow them punctually in the future [...].<sup>22</sup>

The Alsatian prefects also turned to the authorities at the ports of embarkation, asking them to be stricter with emigrants who did not have a passport abroad. The ease with which emigrants find it easy to embark, whether or not they have their papers in order, makes any pressure at commune level pointless and futile. Clearly, this was a difficult problem to solve, as the authorities in Le Havre, the main port of embarkation for the United States from the 1820s onwards, did not wish to use repressive measures to increase the length of emigrants' stay in their city.

In 1855, the Minister of the Interior intervened:

[...] It frequently happens that French people who go to Le Havre or another port of embarkation with the intention of emigrating to America [are] issued with a simple passport for the interior. Those who were informed of the inadequacy of this travel document replied that when they had applied for a passport abroad in their département of residence, they had been assured that it could only be issued at the place of embarkation [...]. The passport abroad rule [must be] regularly followed in the future. In this respect, I am giving the most formal instructions to the authorities at the ports of embarkation. I would ask you, [Messieurs les Préfets, ] to bring these provisions to the attention of [the mayors] in your department, recommending that they not issue their constituents with an inland passport destined for a port of embarkation for America without having warned them that this travel document is insufficient, and that, in order to be authorized to embark, they must carry a foreign passport which cannot be issued to them anywhere other than the capital of their department [...].<sup>23</sup>

This circular solves nothing.

From 1856 to 1865, the phenomenon seems to have accelerated. The mayors, much criticized, tried to justify themselves. They insisted on their good faith. They were very uncomfortable with the role they were being asked to play: was it not a question of putting their constituents on trial? When people apply for a passport for a French town, or even for Le Havre, they usually give good reasons. One of dozens of cases is that of Marie Kauffmann – from Schwabwiller – who explained to the mayor of her commune that she was going to Le Havre to join friends who had promised her “a useful occupation.”<sup>24</sup> No solution was found and, in 1865, the problem was the same as it had been twenty years earlier:

[...] For some time now, the mayors have been issuing passports to French emigrants in the interior, with much greater ease than in the past. Just recently, the mayors of Mertzwiller and Dambach found themselves in the latter situation. As emigration is tending to take on considerable proportions, and as it is in the interest of the government and the Treasury, as well as in the interest of the families themselves, that emigration be officially recorded, [...] the instructions to the Mayors must be renewed [...].<sup>25</sup>

### **Illegal departures**

Some Alsatians didn't bother to obtain a passport for the interior. They left “without fanfare,”<sup>26</sup> i.e. without papers. This perfectly illegal practice was regularly denounced by passport supervisors, but they were unable to curb it. In 1818, the sub-prefect of Wissembourg had this to say:

[...] Several residents of Gumbrechtshoffen are planning to emigrate to America. In other communes, several individuals have already left without passports, or are preparing to do so by emigrating. I have informed the gendarmerie of the families who have been designated to me as intending to abandon their current homes, so that they can be watched and arrested if they try to cross the border [...]. Monsieur le Préfet, we do not hold back individuals who have resolved to cross the border against their will. I therefore count very little on the results of this surveillance [...].<sup>27</sup>

These wise words are constantly borne out. On November 25, 1843, the Prefect of Colmar warned his colleague in the Bas-Rhin department that

[...] emigrants from the Haut-Rhin, who do not even have passports, and who may have been joined by inhabitants of the Bas-Rhin, are currently in Strasbourg, where they are due to embark tomorrow or in two or three days for Holland [...].<sup>28</sup>

It does not appear that these emigrants have been found or arrested. Some Alsatians take no special precautions to evade the police. They traveled quite freely, sometimes under false names. They simply managed to avoid the controls and arrived in Le Havre without difficulty.<sup>29</sup> Alsatians who wanted to leave discreetly were not short of solutions. In 1854, the Haguenau police discovered a “shipping office for America” in Haguenau itself:

[...] Individuals wishing to leave clandestinely for this part of the world apply there, [...] pay for passage to their destination and receive a German passport, which is only given to them when they board the train. They were directed to Le Havre, where they were lodged in a German inn – A l’Ours blanc – where they were kept hidden until the ship’s departure. A woman named Catherine M. acted as matchmaker in this business [...].<sup>30</sup>

The proximity of Kehl, a German town from which convoys of German emigrants to the United States depart, attracts many Bas-Rhinois. They buy tickets in Kehl and travel as if they were German.<sup>31</sup> It’s the same for the people of the Upper Rhine, but instead of getting off at Kehl,

[...] they go to Switzerland, where they deal with companies in Basle, who take care of their transport to America, and eventually give them papers [...].<sup>32</sup>

Infringements of passport legislation are therefore numerous and difficult to counter. In the case of clandestine departures, the emigrants are already far away when the authorities are informed of their disappearance. In the case of inland passports, as we have seen, the prefects were unable to secure the active cooperation of the mayors. The Alsatians much preferred the intermediate route of the inland passport to total illegality (clandestine departure), which gave them absolute protection, at least until Le Havre.

It should be noted that, in the face of these difficulties, the national authorities and the Alsatian prefects never gave in. They continued to insist on the strict application of passport legislation. There was no laxity or casualness on the part of the prefects in enforcing passport laws. As a reminder, in February 1855, Auguste West, Prefect of Bas-Rhin, solemnly addressed the mayors of his department, proclaiming:

[...] I remind you that no French citizen can be authorized to embark unless he or she holds a passport abroad [...].<sup>33</sup>

Three months later, the Minister of the Interior wrote to the Prefect of Haut-Rhin:

[...] I wish [...] to be kept fully informed of the various incidents affecting the expatriation movement and of the facts resulting from them. I therefore recommend this matter once again to your solicitude [...].<sup>34</sup>

### **The Alsatian passport series, a source of emigration history**

The archive series known as the “passport series” covers several categories of documents for Alsace in the 19th century.

**Petitions.** These are drawn up by prospective emigrants wishing to obtain a passport. They are deposited by the petitioners at their local town hall, then forwarded by the mayor to the prefecture.

**Nominative lists.** Nominative lists of passport applicants were drawn up in prefectures and sub-prefectures, and sometimes in town halls, and copies were sent to the Ministry of the Interior in Paris.

**Passport counterfoils.** The form of the French passport remained unchanged throughout the 19th century. The forms consisted of two parts. The larger part, a 29 cm x 40 cm document constituting the passport itself, was given to the applicant. The other part – or counterfoil – remained with the administration, at the place where the passport was issued.

Passport petitions, nominal lists and counterfoils are extremely valuable documents. They generally contain the civil status of the passport applicant (surname, first names, age, place of birth, domicile, marital status, profession), as well as an indication of the applicant’s destination. These documents are always dated, enabling them to be placed in a chronological context.

**“Numerical statements” and “summary statements.”** These are mainly found in the Bas-Rhin department. Whether they concern France as a whole or a single département, and whether they are

quarterly, half-yearly or annual, they are less easy to use than the preceding documents. They are summaries of nominative lists. They bring together information under broader headings than those used for nominative lists. The domicile of the passport applicant is abandoned in favor of his or her departmental origin. Destinations are grouped under the heading “North America.” Age is no longer indicated. Children are divided by sex within the total number of emigrants.

Reading the above descriptions, one might perhaps be inclined to hope that all the conditions are in place to “scientifically” reconstruct the annual curve of Alsatian passports to the USA in the 19th century. Unfortunately, the reality is more complex. The various categories of documents we have just mentioned do not constitute continuous series over time. They are often heterogeneous, and it is difficult to adjust them to one another.

Historians of nineteenth-century French emigration often write at length about the limitations of “passport” series as sources of quantitative and serial history. Some have even gone so far as to renounce the use of this source.<sup>35</sup>

Their arguments can be reviewed in the light of the Alsatian case. First of all, they explain the lack of archives by an irregular and lax application of passport legislation. This interpretation is inadmissible for Alsace. We have shown that passport legislation was scrupulously and regularly applied – even if a minority of Alsations managed to evade it, for example by using the internal passport. We must therefore explain the fact that the four types of sources available to us form only discontinuous and heterogeneous series, making it impossible to reconstitute the annual curve of Alsatian emigration to the United States in a single line, other than by the carelessness of the administration responsible for enforcing passport legislation.

Part of the explanation lies in the poor state of preservation of the archives. If we refer to the introduction to the “Série M” of the Archives départementales du Haut-Rhin – which includes “passports” – we can read that

[...] the numerous and significant gaps in the Série M can be explained by the various calamities that have marked its history [...] including: [...] the elimination of files deemed of no interest, sales [which] at various times considerably lightened the collection [...].<sup>36</sup>

This behavior, which shocks our modern conceptions of archival preservation, was – fortunately – not general, and the Haut-Rhin region has, among other things, a continuous and reliable nominative list (1838-1857) of foreign passports. This list is a remarkable working tool.<sup>37</sup> In Bas-Rhin, the situation is more critical; the archivist who draws up the inventory of the “Série M” explains that:

[...] Numerous significant gaps have been identified [...].

and, by way of example, he cites the virtual disappearance of passport counterfoils.<sup>38</sup> Faced with this situation, the historian has an alternative: either give up studying passports, or attempt to assemble the pieces that remain, as if they were the fragile remains of a puzzle or a mosaic whose image is itself uncertain. This second proposal, despite the uncertainties it entails, seemed more interesting to us.

One of the other arguments put forward by critics of “passports” is that this source does not systematically distinguish between “emigrants” and “voyageurs.” This criticism does not hold true for Alsace, which, at least until the Second Empire, sent very few “voyageurs” to the United States. The definition of emigrant given by the French authorities of the time, and which we have adopted, is satisfactory. Note that it is very broad:

[...] As a general rule, emigrants are individuals who go abroad [...] to establish a settlement of some duration, to earn a living from a profession or a wage [...].<sup>39</sup>

This very flexible definition is in formal contradiction with the idea of considering as emigrants only those people whose death is attested in the host country. This latter idea, which is quite astonishing, forms the basis of Norman Laybourn’s thesis on Alsatian and Lorraine emigration from the 18th to the 20th

century.<sup>40</sup> This problem forced the author to study emigration only in the form of individual cases, laboriously tracked down, slowly accumulated and added to, year after year, from village to village, from family to family, from cemetery to cemetery, like a never-ending game of chase. He was unable to achieve exhaustiveness, let alone generality. By theorizing his rejection of the passport series – because he accepted neither its limitations nor its imperfections – Norman Laybourn denied himself any possibility of assessing the scale of emigration, although this was his ambition. A colossal ambition, since the author had set himself the goal of dealing with the emigration of Alsatians – but also Lorrains – within a vast chronological framework, from the 18th to the 20th century, and to all continents.

The fact remains that, in my work, his book has been used with great profit, for the small part concerning Alsatians and the United States in the 19th century, as a collection of sources.

Another criticism levelled at the passport series is that no conclusions can be drawn from the destinations given by passport applicants, since in the majority of cases they only indicate the port of entry into the USA. This is absolutely correct. Ports of arrival were often no more than a stopover, a stepping stone on the way to new destinies. That said, mention of the port of entry is far from negligible. Communication and transportation networks had developed from New York or New Orleans, to name but two, and it was difficult to escape them. Knowledge of the port of entry was therefore a key factor.

In order to draw up the ideal curve of Alsatian emigration to the USA, it is clear that we would also need to know the number of illegal departures, the number of passports in the country, the number of departures postponed or cancelled, the number of returns. Despite detailed and detailed research, it has not been possible to gather any figures on these phenomena. This kind of imprecision, or the silence of sources, forces the researcher to make choices, to interpret, even to formulate hypotheses, without which the historian would have to give up his research. Such resignation would be a mistake, since – even added together – these restrictions remain marginal in the face of the enormous mass of documents and quantifiable information available to us.

Certainly, if these questions had been answered, we could have modulated and clarified the figures for Alsatian emigration, but without calling into question the essential: the orders of magnitude, the broad outlines and the general structure of emigration. While the figures given in this thesis are not an ideal snapshot of reality, they are at least a copy, an indicative reproduction on which it is possible to reflect and work.

The total number of emigrants (men, women and children) recorded in the Alsatian passport series from 1815 to 1870 is exactly 44,799.<sup>41</sup> To get an idea of the significance of this figure, we can compare it with the increase in the Alsatian population over a known period: between 1821 and 1851, for example, the Alsatian population grew by 208,881 souls.<sup>42</sup> The ratio between the two numbers is approximately one to five. Given that it was mainly young emigrants who left, it is easy to understand the importance of emigration to the United States in the history of Alsace's population.

### **Annual passport statement for the United States<sup>43</sup>**

In Table 1 (see next page), the years marked with an asterisk are those for which the information collected in the “passport” series is incomplete – either because archival sources do not exist in one of the two départements, or because one or two or more arrondissements, or even a few cantons, have been missed, or because the archives have preserved only snippets of information. In the case of years marked with an asterisk, emigration was always higher than announced. Years without an asterisk are those for which we have complete information.

**Table 1. Annual statement of “passports” to the United States  
from 1815 to 1870 (number of emigrants)**

Year	Bas-Rhin	Haut-Rhin	Alsace	Year	Bas-Rhin	Haut-Rhin	Alsace
1815				1844	63 •	764	827 •
1816				1845	8 •	496	504 •
1817	1 194	3,997	5,191	1846	207	983	1,190
1818	•	•	•	1847	243	1,221	1,464
1819	99 •	•	99 •	1848	126	519	645
1820	1 •	•	1 •	1849	190	396	586
1821	1 •	•	1 •	1850	160	427	587
1822	•	•	•	1851	189	644	833
1823	•	•	•	1852	584	923	1,507
1824	•	•	•	1853	545	678	1,223
1825	•	•	•	1854	580	1,500	2,080
1826	•	•	•	1855	505	506	1,011
1827	264 •	160 •	424 •	1856	445	550	995
1828	2,761	588 •	3,349 •	1857	803	620	1,423
1829	2,762	26 •	2,788 •	1858	486	400	886
1830	2,875	•	2,875 •	1859	407	171	578
1831	983	•	983 •	1860	392	315	707
1832	2,482	•	2,482 •	1861	191	104	295
1833	1,016	14 •	1,030 •	1862	18 •	88	106 •
1834	274	•	274	1863	65 •	154	219 •
1835	414	•	414	1864	60 •	230	290 •
1836	573	2 •	575 •	1865	130 •	240 •	370 •
1837	225	24 •	249 •	1866	264 •	407 •	671 •
1838	322	111	433	1867	205 •	205 •	410 •
1839	686	249	935	1868	139 •	207 •	346 •
1840	1,007	303	1,310	1869	145 •	124 •	269 •
1841	768	121	889	1870		43 •	43 •
1842	•	70 •	70 •				
1843	36 •	326 •	362 •	<b>Total</b>	<b>25,893 •</b>	<b>18,906 •</b>	<b>44,799 •</b>

Given the amount of missing information, the totals marked with an asterisk are only indicative, and underestimate reality. The overall total of 44,799 emigrants presented here is therefore the minimum figure for Alsatian emigrants.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusion

At the end of this reflection on Alsatian “passports” from the period 1815-1870, it has to be said that passports are the only archival sources that allow us to attempt a quantified and global approach to the phenomenon of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century; this is why, despite being aware of their limitations and inadequacies, we felt it essential to question them and produce our results.

While the sources at our disposal do not enable us to draw up the ideal annual curve of Alsatian emigration to the United States (1815-1870), they at least give us the opportunity to learn more about the reality of the phenomenon, by interrogating, period by period, the best-preserved “passport” series. The

statistical study of these series, developed in the following chapter, entitled “Sociology of emigration,” is a good indication and a useful contribution to our knowledge of Alsatian emigration.

## End notes

- 1 Maurice d’HARTOY, *Histoire du passeport français depuis l’Antiquité jusqu’à nos jours*, Paris, 1937, pp. 62-68. Camille MAIRE, *l’Emigration des Lorrains en Amérique, 1815-1870*, Metz, Centre de recherches Relations internationales (C.R.R.I.) de l’université de Metz, 1980, pp. 41-43. René RÉMOND, *les Etats-Unis devant l’opinion française, 1815-1852*, tome I, Paris, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1962, p. 32. Adrien SÉE, *le Passeport en France*, Chartres, 1907, pp. 89-98.
- 2 Copie d’une lettre d’Amsterdam destinée au préfet du B.-R., Amsterdam le 14 mai 1817. A.N., F7 6138 10.
- 3 Circulaire de la Police générale à Mrs les Préfets du B.-R., du H.-R., du Doubs, de la Meurthe, de la Moselle et des Vosges, Paris le 3 juin 1817. A.N., F7 9820.
- 4 Lettre du ministre des Affaires étrangères au secrétaire d’Etat de la Police générale, Paris le 11 juin 1817. A.N., F7 9820.
- 5 Préfecture du B-R, circulaire aux maires, Strasbourg le 7 juin 1817, A.N., F7 9820.
- 6 Lettre du ministre de l’Intérieur au préfet du H.-R., Paris le 26 juin 1827. A.D. H.-R., 6M 375.
- 7 On trouve – aux A.D.B.-R. – un dossier de listes nominatives d’émigrants sur lesquelles sont portées les sommes emportées par chaque famille, arrondissements de Saverne, Sélestat et Strasbourg, 3M 703.
- 8 Préfecture du B.-R., circulaire du préfet du B.-R. à Messieurs les Maires relative aux demandes de passeports pour l’Amérique, Strasbourg le 28 avril 1828. A.D.B.-R., 3M 706.
- 9 Lettre du directeur général des Forêts à Son Excellence le ministre de l’Intérieur, Paris le 18 mai 1827. A.N., F7 9334.
- 10 Préfecture du B.-R., demandes de passeport, dossier Causé. A.D.B.-R., 3M 706.
- 11 Ministère de l’Intérieur, circulaire aux préfets, Paris le 11 mars 1828. A.D.B.-R., 3M 666.
- 12 Lettre du ministre de l’Intérieur aux préfets, Paris le 30 juin 1835. A.D.B.-R., 3M 666.
- 13 Ministère de l’Intérieur, circulaire aux préfets, Paris le 22 octobre 1858. A.D. B.-R., 3M 667.
- 14 Maurice d’HARTOY, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-68
- 15 Ministère de l’Intérieur, circulaire aux préfets, Paris le 8 décembre 1868. A.D. B.-R., 3M 667.
- 16 Préfecture du B.-R., pétition de Georges Henri Brisach, 26 février 1817. A.N., F7 6138 9.
- 17 Préfecture du B.-R., pétition de Michel Meyer, 3 avril 1817. A.N., F7 6138 10.
- 18 Lettre du préfet du H.-R. au ministre de l’Intérieur, Colmar le 13 septembre 1845. A.D.H.-R., 6M 375.
- 19 Préfecture du B.-R., circulaire aux maires, Strasbourg le 26 octobre 1846. A.D. B.-R., 3M 701.
- 20 Préfecture du B.-R., circulaire aux maires, Strasbourg le 24 octobre 1851. A.D. B.-R., 3M 701.
- 21 Préfecture du B.-R., circulaire aux maires, Strasbourg le 30 juin 1853. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 22 Préfecture du B.-R., circulaire aux maires, Strasbourg le 30 juin 1853. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 23 Ministère de l’Intérieur, circulaire aux préfets, Paris le 27 janvier 1855. A.D. H.-R., 6M 375.
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- 25 Lettre du commissaire à l’émigration au préfet du B.-R., Strasbourg le 28 août 1865. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 26 Lettre du préfet du B.-R. au sous-préfet de Saverne, Strasbourg le 24 mai 1853. A.D.B.-R., 3M 706.
- 27 Lettre du sous-préfet de Wissembourg au préfet du B.-R., Wissembourg le 12 mars 1818. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 28 Lettre du préfet du H.-R. au préfet du B.-R., Colmar le 25 novembre 1843. A.D. B.-R., 3M 700.
- 29 Lettre du maire de Dalhunden au préfet du B.-R., 30 septembre 1854, A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 30 Lettre du commissaire de police cantonale de Haguenau au préfet du B.-R., 24 juin 1854. A.D.B.-R., 3M 706.
- 31 Lettre du commissaire de police de Marmoutier au préfet du B.-R., 5 octobre 1853. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.



- 32 Lettre du sous-préfet d'Altkirch au préfet du H.-R., Altkirch le 3 février 1854. A.D.H.-R., 6M 375.
- 33 Préfecture du B.-R., circulaire aux maires, Strasbourg le 1<sup>er</sup> février 1855. A.D. B.-R., 3M 701.
- 34 Lettre du ministre de l'Intérieur au préfet du H.-R., Paris le 18 mai 1855. A.D. H.-R., 6M 350.
- 35 On trouve des critiques très fondées dans:  
 Jean VIDALENC, "Une source d'histoire économique et sociale, les passeports. Problèmes d'utilisation, limites et lacunes", *Bulletin d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, fasc. 8, Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, Paris, 1971, pp. 187-202.  
 Camille MAIRE, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-91.  
 Pierre GUILLAUME, *la Population de Bordeaux au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1972, pp. 82-88.  
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 Norman LAYBOURN, *Contribution à l'histoire de l'émigration des Alsaciens et des Lorrains du XVIII<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et les Strasbourg à travers le monde*, thèse de doctorat de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle, vol. I, 1984, pp. 1-48. Cette thèse a été publiée en 1986 par l'Association des publications près les universités de Strasbourg. Les références de pages données dans le présent ouvrage correspondent à la pagination de la thèse dactylographiée.
- 36 Odile KAMMERER *et al.*, *Répertoire numérique de la série M, administration générale et économie du département, 1801-1870*, A.D.H.-R., 1978, pp. 1-17.
- 37 A.D.H.-R., série M, 4M 126, 4M 127, 4M 128, 4M 129, 4M 130, 4M 131, 4M 132, 4M 133, 4M 134, 4M 135, 4M 136.
- 38 Louis MARTIN, *Répertoire numérique de la série M, personnel et administration générale, 1800-1870*, A.D.B.-R., 1950, p. V.
- 39 Lettre du ministre de l'Intérieur aux préfets, Paris le 6 décembre 1855. A.D.H.-R. 6M 349.
- 40 Norman LAYBOURN, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-48.
- 41 A.N., F7 6138 8, F7 6138 9, F7 6138 10 ; F7 9334 ; F7 9889C ; F7 11930 ; F7 11936 ; F7 12201 ; F20 710 ;  
 A.D.B.-R., 3M 668 ; 3M 701 ; 3M 702 ; 3M 703 ; 15M 55 ; 15M 63 ;  
 A.D.B.-R., D 414, 276, 2154 ; 4M 126, 4M 127, 4M 128, 4M 129, 4M 130, 4M 131, 4M 132, 4M 133, 4M 134, 4M 135,  
 4M 136 ; 6M 350, 6M 351 ; 6M 375 ; 1N 331 ; 1N 333 ;  
*Ship Lists of Passengers who Departed Europe for Castro's Colony, Texas, 1842-1847*, Compiled by James and Doris MENKE, 1971, exemplaire dactylographié, 120 p.
- 42 Charles POUTHAS, "la Population française pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Travaux et documents de l'INED*, cahier n° 25, Paris, 1956, p. 47.
- 43 A.N., F7 6138 8, F7 6138 9, F7 6138 10 ; F7 9334 ; F7 9889C ; F7 11930 ; F7 11936 ; F7 12201 ; F20 710 ;  
 A.D.B.-R., 3M 668 ; 3M 701 ; 3M 702 ; 3M 703 ; 15M 55 ; 15M 63 ;  
 A.D.B.-R., D 414, 276, 2154 ; 4M 126, 4M 127, 4M 128, 4M 129, 4M 130, 4M 131, 4M 132, 4M 133, 4M 134, 4M 135,  
 4M 136 ; 6M 350, 6M 351 ; 6M 375 ; 1N 331 ; 1N 333 ;  
*Ship Lists of Passengers who Departed Europe for Castro's Colony, Texas, 1842-1847*, Compiled by James and Doris MENKE, 1971, exemplaire dactylographié, 120 p.
- 44 Depuis la rédaction de cette thèse, la généalogiste Cornelia SCHRADER-MUGGENTHALER a édité une liste nominative de 21 500 émigrants originaires d'Alsace (mais aussi de Suisse et d'Allemagne), *The Alsace Emigration Book*, 2 volumes, Apollo PA, Closson Press, 1989 et 1991.

## CHAPTER II. SOCIOLOGY OF EMIGRATION

Pages 37-66.

### General characteristics of emigration according to passport series

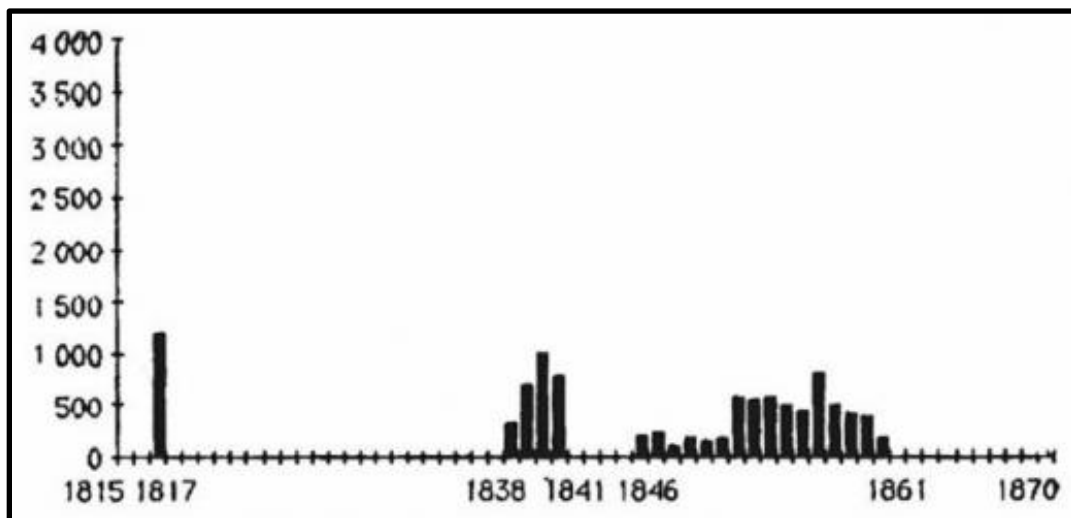
To present the sociological analysis of Alsatian emigration to the United States, we have chosen to present five complete and more or less homogeneous groups of documents: Alsatian passports from 1817,<sup>1</sup> Bas-Rhin passports from 1828 to 1837,<sup>2</sup> Haut-Rhin passports from 1838 to 1857,<sup>3</sup> Texas passports from 1843 to 1869,<sup>4</sup> Bas-Rhin passports via the Wissembourg station from 1865 to 1869.<sup>5</sup> To process the sociological information (gender, age, profession, etc.) contained in these documents, a sampling procedure was used. One passport applicant in ten was selected. All the information concerning this passport applicant was recorded, classified and coded, then entered and processed in 1986, series after series, by a statistical program specially developed for microcomputers, the P.C.S.S. (Programme conversationnel scientifique et statistique) produced by Deltasoft. This is a complete system incorporating all the statistical and data analysis functions required by historians: flat sorting, cross-tabulation, contingency table, chi-square test, correlation, linear regression, etc. For the Alsatian passports, only the simple functions of flat sorting, crossover, correlation and chi-square were used. The analyses are presented later in this chapter.

### Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin

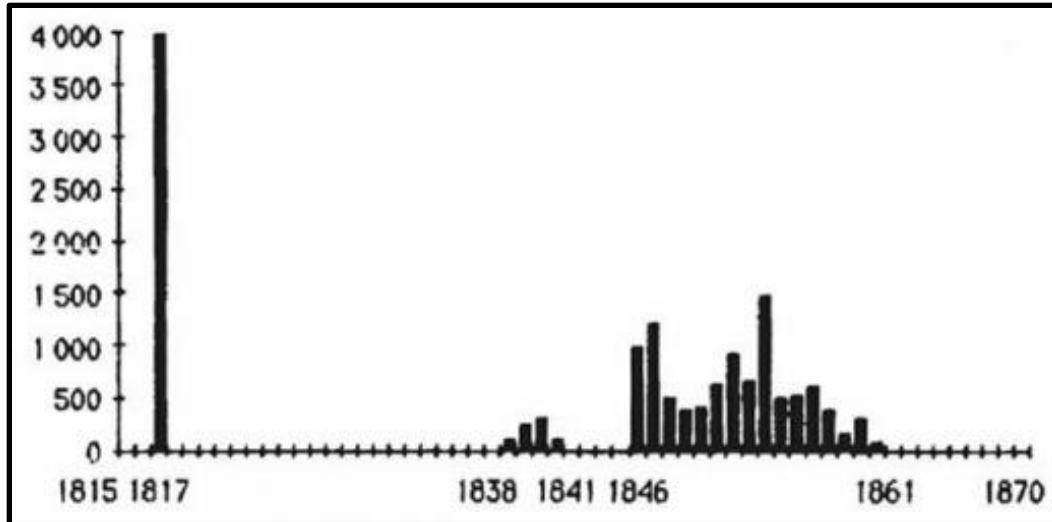
It is worth repeating here the figure of 44,799 individuals listed on passports applied for by Alsatians bound for the United States, from 1815 to 1870. The first point to note (see Table 1, Chapter 1, p. 32) is that emigration from the Bas-Rhin was higher than emigration from the Haut-Rhin. There were 25,893 Bas-Rhinois compared with 18,906 Haut-Rhinois. But we must be extremely cautious: emigration from Bas-Rhin peaked (14,365 emigrants, i.e. 55% of all Bas-Rhin emigrants to the United States) between 1828 and 1837, and – for this precise period – we lack information on Haut-Rhin, hence perhaps this positive balance in favor of Bas-Rhin.

The curves for the two departments (Figures 1 and 2, below), drawn for the common years in which all the information is available (1817; 1838-1841; 1846-1861), show significant differences:

**Figure 1. 1817; 1838-1841; 1846-1861: emigration from Bas-Rhin to the United States. Annual survey.1**



**Figure 2. 1817; 1838-1841; 1846-1861: emigration from Haute-Rhine to the United States. Annual survey.2**



In 1817, Haut-Rhin led the way with 3,997 emigrants, compared with 1,194 for Bas-Rhin. Between 1838 and 1841, Bas-Rhin experienced a significant migration surge (much stronger than Haut-Rhin). 1846-1861: Haut-Rhin took the lead in terms of both quantity and fluctuation of migratory flows. The two départements thus appear to have relatively autonomous migratory patterns.

### The sex

The great constant of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century is its gender distribution. Emigration was predominantly male, and more pronounced at the end of the period than at the beginning. Table 2 below shows the gender breakdown of the total number of adults listed in passports. Men continue to outnumber women. Table 3 (below) shows the percentage of male versus female passport applicants. The percentage of men is clearly higher. The reason is simple: when a family, or a couple, emigrates, it is the man who – as head of the family – applies for the passport.

**Table 2. Breakdown of adult emigrants by gender (percentage)**

	1817	1828-1837	1838-1857	1843-1869	1865-1869
Men	56.41	58.58	70.47	63.92	63.89
Women	43.59	41.42	29.53	36.08	36.11

**Table 3. Distribution of passport applicants by gender (percentage)**

	1817	1828-1837	1838-1857	1843-1869	1865-1869
Men	97.06	88.05	87.88	91.40	71.87
Women	2.94	11.95	12.12	8.60	28.13

### The families

#### *Marital status*

The breakdown of passport applicants by marital status shows a certain instability over time. Overall, emigration is divided between single men and families. However, we can see that the percentage of families (couples, with or without children) decreases as time goes on, while the percentage of singles (men or women) increases (table 4).

**Table 4. Marital status of passport applicants (percentage)**

	1817	1828-1837	1838-1857	1843-1869	1865-1869
Single Men	25.00	37.45	63.17	48.40	59.37
Single Women	2.94	11.55	12.12	8.60	28.13
Families	72.06	51.00	24.71	43.00	12.50

### *The children*

Men who go off on their own are not necessarily single. A small percentage of them are accompanied by children, which suggests that they are fathers and scouts. This would explain why many women, whether leaving alone or accompanied by children, declare that they are joining their husbands (table 5).

**Table 5. Passport applicants and their children (percentage)**

1817	1828-1837	1838-1857	1865-1869	1817
Single men	23.53	37.05	61.07	53.12
With children	1.47	0.40	2.10	6.25
Single women	1.47	10.76	8.86	25.00
With children	1.47	0.80	3.26	3.13
Couples without children	8.82	4.78	3.96	0.00
With children	63.24	46.21	20.75	12.50

Given the large number of single passport applicants (men or women) and the percentage of childless couples, it's not surprising that the percentage of passport applicants accompanied by children is almost below 50%, except in 1817, which saw the highest family emigration of our entire period (table 6). It should also be noted that large families are quite rare, and that the number of children per family usually varies between one and four.

**Table 6. Passport applicants by number of children (percentage)**

	1817	1828-1837	1838-1857	1843-1869	1865-1869
Without Children	33.82	52.59	72.96	59.48	76.12
1-2	41.18	17.63	13.05	17.01	12.05
3-4	17.65	15.44	8.16	13.66	10.50
5-9	7.35	11.95	5.83	9.54	1.33
10 and above	0.00	2.39	0.00	0.31	0.00

### ***Other family members***

Another dominant feature of Alsatian emigration to the United States is that some passport applicants extend their departure to friends, allies, even servants or domestic servants, but families are more often than not reduced to their simplest expression: father, mother and children (table 7).

**Table 7. Extended families (percentage)**

<b>Period</b>	<b>1817</b>	<b>1828-1837</b>	<b>1838-1857</b>	<b>1843-1869</b>
Percentage	7.35	2.39	10.02	6.03

Common sense data explain both the gender distribution of emigrants and their family situation. The fact that more men than women embarked on the American adventure stems from the way societies of the time conceived of the respective roles and responsibilities of men and women, both at the outset and upon arrival. The traditional division of labor between the sexes is illustrated here. The phenomenon extends beyond Alsace. If we consider all European emigration to the United States (1820-1870), we see that the male population represented around 60% of emigrants. This result is very close to the figures for Alsace.

If, as time goes by, passport applicants increasingly avoid taking on a large family, it's because it's less and less easy, less and less obvious, to be able to settle quickly on land. While the presence of wives, children and even grandparents is desirable for work in the fields, what can you do with a large family when you have to stay in a port or a city and, what's more, you've put a considerable strain on your budget by paying for the crossing for the whole family?

### **Rural emigration**

Emigrants from Alsace live in the countryside. This characteristic is almost permanent (table 8).

**Table 8. Distribution of passport applicants by origin: town or country (percentage)**

	<b>1817</b>	<b>1828-1837</b>	<b>1838-1857</b>	<b>1865-1869</b>
Country commune	75.76	91.63	71.79	73.44
County town	13.64	7.57	17.02	12.50
District capital	3.03	0.40	8.16	14.06
Prefecture	7.57	0.40	3.03	0.00

These figures can be compared with those for Alsace's population structure. In 1836, for example, the population of Strasbourg represented 9.9% of the population of the Bas-Rhin region, and that of the arrondissement chief towns 3.5%. This left 86.6% of the population in rural areas. The countryside of Bas-Rhin was therefore severely affected by emigration during this period. In 1836, for Alsace as a whole, the figures were respectively: for the population of the prefectures, 7.56% of the total population, and 3% for the district capitals, leaving 89.44% for the countryside. With a few variations, the structure of Alsatian emigration therefore corresponds to that of the population.

### **Emigrants' professions**

Dividing emigrants by economic sector is a tricky business. It is often difficult to say exactly what is covered by a job description. Laborers and day laborers are particularly difficult to classify. They can just

as easily hire out their hands to the nearest factory as to the next-door farmer. What's more, it's very difficult to draw any conclusions about a person's social status from his or her occupation. Indeed, depending on whether the occupation is practiced in the city or the country, at home or in a factory, on a large or small farm, as a laborer or a craftsman, as a boss or an employee, there is a wide variety of incomes, and therefore standards of living, from one subject to another, for the same occupation. Table 9 below gives a breakdown of emigrants by economic sector. It can be seen that a large number of them did not answer the question of occupation, without it being possible to say whether this was an oversight or whether the passport applicants really either had no occupation, or simply no longer practiced it at the time they submitted their application. In any case, a great many of them did not give an answer, hence the interest in listing them in a special section.

**Table 9. Occupational breakdown of passport applicants (percentage)**

	1817	1828-1837	1838-1857	1843-1869	1865-1869
Without	27.94	11.16	9.79	17.22	31.25
Primary	27.95	37.45	34.04	45.82	46.87
Secondary	38.23	42.23	39.16	22.07	12.51
Tertiary	5.88	9.16	17.01	9.54	9.37
				*5.35	

In this table, day laborers are classified in the primary sector and laborers in the secondary sector.

\* Bivalent passport applicants. Example: farmer-baker.

Despite the uncertainties surrounding the definition of occupations, over the entire period, the tertiary sector was very weak, which is to be expected since, as we have seen, the majority of passport applicants come from the countryside, where service and trade activities are virtually non-existent. Over time, the primary and secondary sectors have evolved in opposite directions, with the former increasing and the latter decreasing. The latter played an important role in the first part of the century. Its share diminishes over time. Could this be a sign of the movement of industry from the countryside to the towns – which, as we saw in the previous paragraph, were much less affected by emigration?

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, certain features of Alsatian emigration to the United States are more or less stable. It's an emigration in which men play the leading role. They leave alone or accompanied only by their closest family members (wife, children). Large families are rare. Emigrants come from the countryside, but they don't all work the land. Among them are many craftsmen and workers who still ply their trade in the countryside.

These general characteristics determine the basic structure of Alsatian emigration, but we shall see that, depending on the period, distinctive and original characteristics emerged and developed.

## **Three waves of Alsatian emigration**

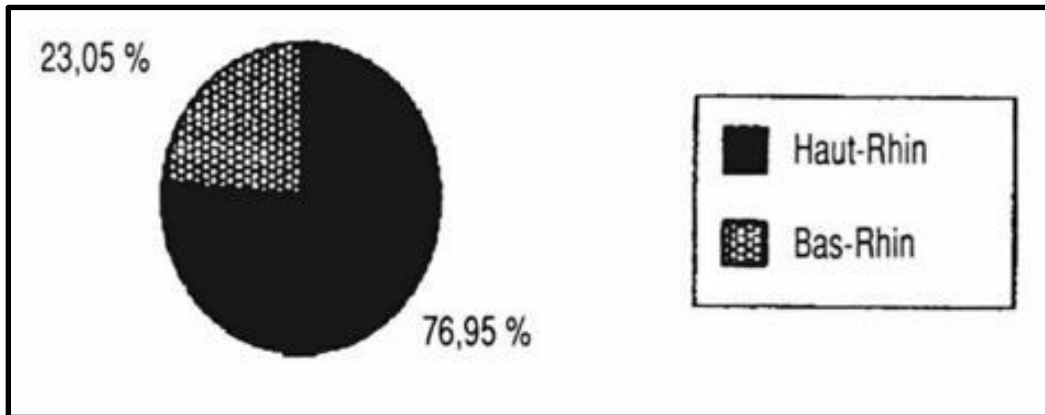
The figures presented here are averages which, like all averages, are highly simplistic. If we want to get a more precise idea of the sociological characteristics of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century, we need to go into detail for each wave of emigration.

## The year 1817<sup>6</sup>

### *Departmental breakdown*

Contrary to what “seems” to be the case if we consider the period 1815-1870 in its entirety – that is, Bas-Rhin is perhaps (see p. 38), of the two départements, the largest reservoir of emigrants – in 1817, Haut-Rhin sent by far the largest contingent of emigrants to the United States (figure 3, hereafter p. 45).

**Figure 3. 1817: distribution of passports by department.**



This difference is not specific to emigration to the USA in 1817. Indeed, historians who have studied Alsatian emigration in 1817, all destinations combined (Russia, Prussian Poland, USA), have recorded 1,009 passport applications for the Bas-Rhin département and 3,996 passport applications for the Haut-Rhin département, making a total of 5,005: 20% for the Bas-Rhin, 80% for the Haut-Rhin.<sup>7</sup>

The difference between the two départements can also be seen in the number of communes affected by emigration. In Bas-Rhin, out of 515 communes counted, 69 – or 13.40% – were affected by emigration. In Haut-Rhin, out of 489 communes, 157 – or 32.11% – released emigrants.

In the Haut-Rhin region, the Colmar district clearly wins out in terms of the number of communes affected by emigration: 104 out of 140, or 74.28%. The Colmar district also leads in terms of the number of passports issued: 775 out of the 945 issued in the Haut-Rhin. Colmar and the surrounding area accounted for 82% of all Haut-Rhin passports issued in 1817, and 63.78% of all Alsatian passports issued during the same period. Further analysis (table 10, next page) reveals that it is the cantons of Munster and Neuf-Brisach that are responsible for the high level of emigration from the Colmar arrondissement.

The cantons of Munster and Neuf-Brisach have nothing in common. The canton of Neuf-Brisach is a lowland, marshy ried canton. Particularly unfertile, the Neuf-Brisach region is made up of marshes, river arms and islands of greenery. The Rhine floods regularly devastate the ried. The canton of Neuf-Brisach has very few natural resources and virtually no industry.

In contrast, the bottom of the Munster valley (Fecht valley), which slopes into the Vosges, is covered with meadows where livestock is often raised. This is a canton of high altitude, forests and rivers; its natural resources are varied and, above all, it has textile and paper industries.

**Table 10. 1817: breakdown of Colmar district passports by canton**

<b>Cantons</b>	<b>Number of communes affected by immigration</b>	<b>Number of passports issued</b>
Andolsheim	13	30
Colmar	2	40
Ensisheim	12	77
Guebwiller	8	47
Kaysersberg	9	45
Lapoutroie	1	17
<b>Munster</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Neuf-Brisach</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>108</b>
Ribeauvillé	7	23
Rouffach	8	83
Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines	2	9
Soultz	7	28
Wintzenheim	10	93
Total	104	775

In Bas-Rhin, the differences between the cantons most affected by emigration are just as striking as in Haut-Rhin. The Strasbourg district accounts for the bulk of emigration, of which Strasbourg-city accounts for half (note in passing that there is nothing comparable in the Haut-Rhin, where the prefecture, Colmar, accounts for barely 5% of passport applications in its district). The Bas-Rhin prefecture can in no way be compared with the impoverished arrondissement of Wissembourg (34.81% of Bas-Rhin passports), in which, curiously enough, it is the mainly industrial canton of Niederbronn that centralizes the largest number of passport applications (59.57%).

The only common denominator of these Upper and Lower Rhine cantons is that, like the rest of Alsace, they suffered from the famine of 1817. However, this catastrophe does not seem to have affected them more than neighboring cantons. The famine was, however, the trigger for emigration in 1817, but it is highly probable that a second factor, added to the first, determined the concentration and location of emigration in certain cantons.

By 1817, it was clear from petitions drawn up by the inhabitants of Niederbronn, Reichshoffen and Zinswiller that their populations were familiar with emigration to the United States. In 1817, in Reichshoffen, five out of eleven passport applicants claimed to have family in Baltimore, and six in America. In Niederbronn, eight families claimed to have relatives in America. Four passport applicants are in the same situation in Zinswiller. So there's no doubt that this is a source of emigration that may have spread. Unfortunately, we have no such information for the other cantons.

### ***Family emigration***

The highest percentage of family departures for the entire period (1815-1870) occurred in 1817. It was never exceeded again. In 1817, 63.24% of passport applications were submitted by heads of families, who left with their wives and children.

All types of emigrant families are possible: large families of eight or ten people, i.e. father and mother, plus six or eight children; medium-sized families with two or three children; couples with an only child or childless couples.



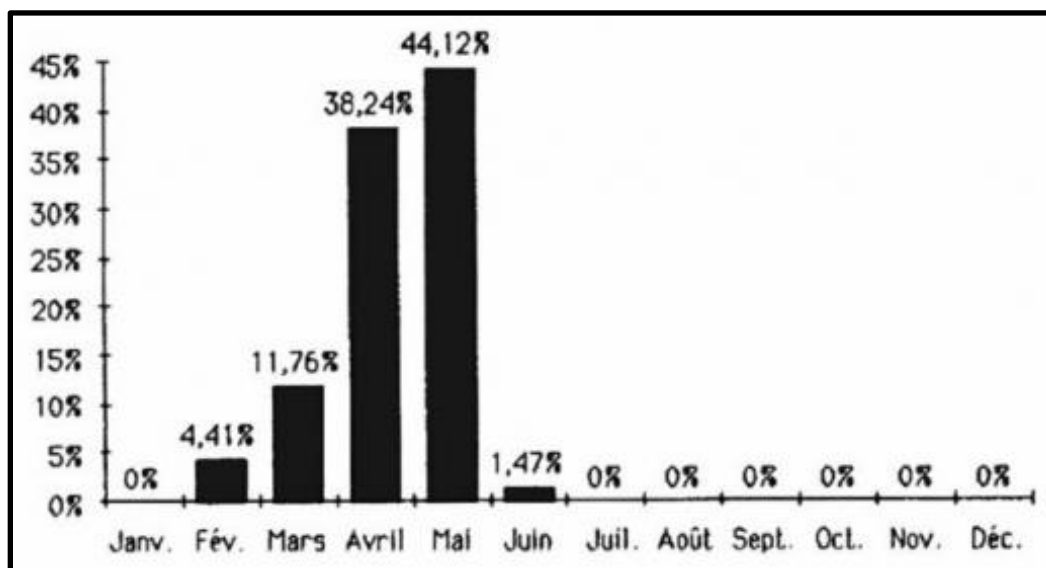
Children account for more than half of all emigrants. Some are already grown-up, nineteen-twenty years old, and well on their way to being able to provide for themselves, and even to being a good provider for the family. There are also a large number of adolescent boys and girls, aged between ten and sixteen. As for the toddler class, it is far from under-represented. It's not unusual for families to apply for passports when their youngest child is just a few days old. This was the case, for example, with the family of Jean Paulus, a weaver from Langensoultzbach. The father applied for a passport for himself, his wife and five children – aged 8, 5, 2, 18 months and 4 days.<sup>8</sup> Equally exemplary is the case of a twenty-two-year-old father planning to leave France with his wife and three children: the eldest is only twenty-one months old, the youngest are fifteen-day-old twins.<sup>9</sup> Apart from these extreme cases, many couples include very young children on their passports, which the authorities modestly call "infants."<sup>10</sup>

Diversity is also the rule when it comes to the age of adults. Isolated emigrants, probably single boys and girls, are sometimes very young. There are also a few older people, most of whom claim to be joining their children. The most represented age group is that of adults aged between twenty-five and fifty.

### *Emigration limited in time*

Let's look at the monthly breakdown of passport applications for 1817 (Figure 4, p. 48). Emigration is entirely condensed in the first half of the year. May alone accounted for almost half of all passport applications.

**Figure 4. Monthly distribution of passports in 1817.**



In general, for emigrants heading for the East Coast of the United States, which was partly the case in 1817, the best time to take the boat was from the end of March to the end of September. We can therefore assume that by applying for their passports in May, emigrants hoped to make the crossing before autumn. A group of emigrants explains:

[...] We beg you to kindly grant us permission to emigrate, in order to avoid any hindrance that might delay our journey [...] so that we can take advantage of the fine weather [...].<sup>11</sup>

### *Alsations by birth*

In 1817, 42% of prospective emigrants intended to leave the village where they were born; 28% were born in a different village from the one they intended to leave, but in the same département; only 18% were born in another département or abroad; 12% of passport applicants gave no indication of either their place of birth or their place of residence. Clearly, the majority – 70% (42% + 28%) – have never left their native Alsace. Emigrants are generally born in the department from which they emigrate, which means they are firmly established in Alsace. Born in Alsace, they had not, until 1817, felt the urgent need to leave their country. In fact, most of them had lived there for a long time, spending their childhood close to their families, learning and practicing a trade there, marrying and having children there.

So it wasn't a marginal or unstable population – as is too often claimed – that was affected by the emigration of 1817. It was the entire Alsatian population.

### *Textile workers*

A detailed occupational breakdown of 1817 passport applicants can be made (table 11).

**Table 11. 1817: Occupational breakdown of passport applicants**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary	Farmers (Agriculteurs)	20.41
	Day Laborers (Journaliers)	18.37
		38.78
Secondary	Textiles (Textile)	30.61
	Wood (Bois)	10.20
	Leather (Cuir)	6.12
	Building (Bâtiment)	4.08
	Iron (Fer)	2.04
		53.05
Tertiary	Food (Alimentation)	2.04
	Domestic (Domestique)	2.04
	Miscellaneous (Divers)	4.09
		8.17

Even if we include all farmers and day laborers in the primary sector, it is less affected than the secondary sector. In the secondary sector, it was the textile industry that released the most emigrants. This industry is based in the countryside: of all textile workers, 80% live in rural communes (the remaining 20% are divided in thirds between county towns, sub-prefectures and prefectures). It's clear that some of their work was done from home:

Hosier (Bonnetier)	Wool Spinner (Fileur de laine)	Tailor (Tailleur)
Hatter (Chapelier)	Canvas Printer (Imprimeur sur toile)	Dyer (Teinturier)
Dressmaker (Couturier)	? (Passementier)	Weaver (Tisserand)

The canton of Munster supplied almost a third of the textile workers in 1817 (28.7%), followed by Masevaux (14.5%). In the other cantons, the figures were much lower, but much more evenly distributed. Munster itself was home to the Hartmann Indian factory. In Masevaux, the Kœchlin family owned spinning mills and weaving mills. We can assume that the concentration of workers in a single location could have encouraged the circulation of information and therefore, to a certain extent, emigration. It should be noted, however, that neither the canton of Mulhouse nor that of Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, major centers of the Haut-Rhin textile industry, were centers of emigration in 1817.

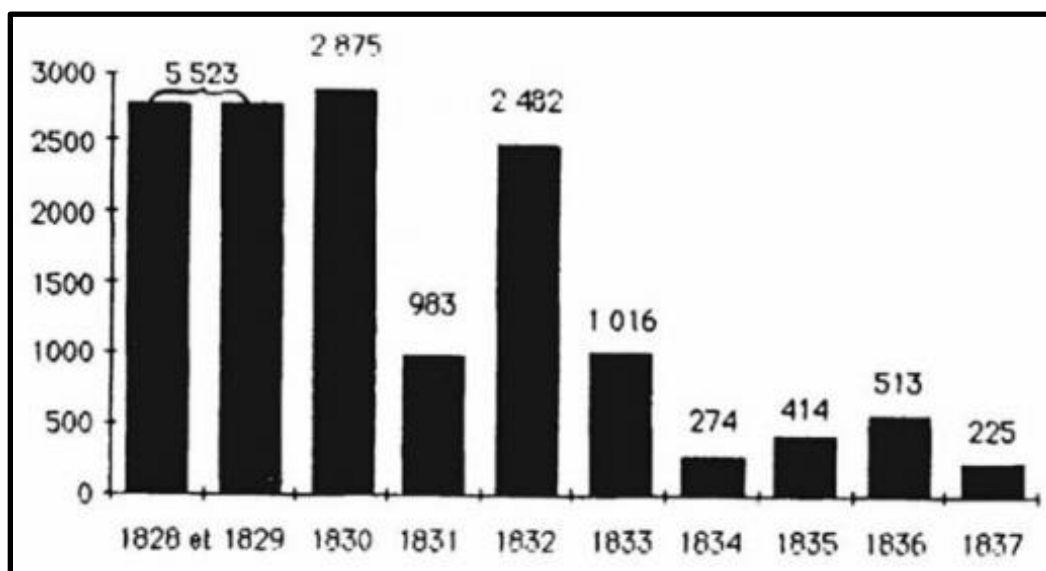
### ***Conclusion***

The emigration of 1817 had a number of specific features that are worth noting. It was a geographically heterogeneous emigration. Fathers of families, born and raised in Alsace, emigrated. In addition to rural dwellers – including peasants – many textile workers also emigrated. It did not extend beyond June 1817.

### **The period 1828-1837 <sup>12</sup>**

Archival sources for the years 1828-1837 are from the Bas-Rhin. 55% of Bas-Rhin emigrants from the period 1815-1850 left during this decade.

**Figure 5. 1828-1837: Bas-Rhin emigration to the United States. Annual survey (in total number of individuals recorded in passport series).**



### ***Annual curve of Bas-Rhin passports (1828-1837)***

To better control the emigration movement – which was of great concern to them – the prefectural and municipal authorities of the Bas-Rhin drew up lists of passport applicants, summary tables, reports and presentations, letters and notes, so that the researcher has a good idea of the phenomenon (figure 5, previous page).

The sources do not allow us to specify how many emigrants returned in each of the years 1828 and 1829 (the number of 5,523 emigrants is given for these two years as a whole), so we cannot judge the start of

the curve. Overall, it can be said that the bulk of emigrants left during the first five years. A radical drop can be observed at the end of the decade.

***Breakdown of Bas-Rhin emigration from 1828-1837, by arrondissement and canton***

**Table 12. 1828-1837: breakdown of Bas-Rhin emigration by arrondissement**

Districts	Number of emigrants	Percentage
Saverne	4,620	32.17
Sélestat	385	2.68
Strasbourg	2,711	18.87
Wissembourg	6,649	46.28
Total	14,365	100.00

In the Bas-Rhin region (table 12, above), the Wissembourg district was clearly in the lead (46.28% of emigrants), followed by Saverne (32.17%) and Strasbourg (18.87%). Sélestat was virtually unscathed, with a turnout of 2.68%. 311 out of 515 Bas-Rhin communes were affected by emigration, i.e. 60.39%. There are, of course, differences between arrondissements. In the arrondissements of Wissembourg and Saverne, emigration affected almost all communes (table 13, below). It's a mass movement.

**Table 13. 1828-1837: distribution of emigration communes (Bas-Rhin) by arrondissement**

Districts	No. of communes per district	No. of communes affected by emigration	Percentage of communes affected
Saverne	164	134	81.71
Sélestat	114	32	28.07
Strasbourg	160	73	45.63
Wissembourg	77	72	93.51
Total	515	311	60.39

**Table 14. Numerical list, by canton, of Bas-Rhin residents who emigrated to America from 1828 to 1837 inclusive**

Cantons	Number of individuals who left			Population in 1836	Percent of the population
	with family	alone	Total		
DISTRICT OF SAVERNE					
Bouxwiller	893	105	998	17,410	5.70
Drulingen	632	156	788	15,559	5.00
Hochfelden	398	76	474	17,909	2.60
Marmoutier	172	71	243	14,199	1.70
La Petite-Pierre	900	179	1,079	14,759	7.30
Saar-Union	384	46	430	16,017	2.70
Saverne	538	70	608	16,407	3.70

Total	3,917	703	4,620	112,260	4.10
DISTRICT OF SELESTAT					
Barr	11	5	16	20,436	0.07
Benfeld	8	9	17	16,489	0.10
Erstein	54	11	65	12,777	0.50
Marckolsheim	218	27	245	18,333	1.30
Obernai	13	2	15	14,943	0.10
Rosheim	2	1	3	14,763	0.02
Sélestat	11	1	12	18,017	0.06
Villé	12	0	12	19,127	0.06
Total	329	56	385	134,887	0.30
DISTRICT OF STRASBOURG					
Bischwiller	1,046	210	1,256	26,034	4.80
Brumath	441	45	486	21,947	2.20
Geispolsheim	35	9	44	16,474	0.30
Haguenau	448	71	519	21,809	2.40
Molsheim	4	6	10	22,775	0.04
Schiltigheim	23	2	25	17,372	0.10
Truchtersheim	40	6	46	14,671	0.30
Wasselonne	251	56	307	19,872	1.50
<b>Subtotal</b>	2,288	405	2,693	160,954	
Strasbourg-ville	16	2	18	57,885	0.03
<b>Total</b>	2,304	407	2,711	218,839	1.23
DISTRICT OF WISSEMBOURG					
Lauterbourg	393	44	437	9,180	4.50
Niederbronn	902	138	1,040	20,433	5.10
Seltz	747	133	880	16,650	5.30
Soultz	1,836	246	2,082	19,815	10.50
Wissembourg	1,469	232	1,701	16,621	10.20
Woerth	430	79	509	13,174	3.90
Total	5,777	872	6,649	95,873	6.90
Grand Total	12,327	2,038	14,365	561,859	2.56

The Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin hold an extremely valuable document entitled *Relevé numérique, par canton, des habitants du Bas-Rhin émigrés pour l'Amérique de 1828 à 1837 inclus*. We reproduce part of it opposite (table 14, p. 52).<sup>13</sup> Next to the name of each canton is given not only the total number of inhabitants who emigrated, but also the population of the cantons as of 1836, which gives an idea of the relative importance of emigration, i.e. – in total – 2.56% of the total population of Bas-Rhin (in 1836).

In the arrondissement of Wissembourg, the canton of Soultz-sous-Forêts had the highest concentration of emigrants (2,082). After it comes the canton of Wissembourg (1,701), then Niederbronn (1,040). In the arrondissement of Strasbourg, the canton of Bischwiller (1,256 emigrants) clearly stood out from the other cantons. In the arrondissement of Saverne, the canton of La Petite-Pierre lost 1,079 inhabitants,

while Bouxwiller lost 998. These six cantons accounted for more than half of all Bas-Rhin emigration during this period.

As can be seen, the Wissembourg district loses the highest percentage of its population to emigration: 7%. This is a very significant figure, especially for a district that is already much less populated than its neighbors, and whose population is tending to decline. A survey published in 1852 in the *Courrier du Bas-Rhin* shows the population decline in two of its cantons between 1831 and 1851 (see table 15, below).<sup>14</sup> Emigration may have contributed to this negative balance.

**Table 15. Population of two Bas-Rhin cantons (number of inhabitants)**

	1831	1836	1851
Soultz-sous-Forêts	19,920	19,815	18,400
Wissembourg	17,398	16,621	16,130

Explaining the geography of Bas-Rhin emigration is no easy task. The Wissembourg district, wooded and agricultural, is not modernizing fast. As the northern gateway to Alsace, it is off the main communication routes and has not industrialized. It's a poor region overall, of which the cantons of Soultz-sous-Forêts and Wissembourg are representative. The canton of Niederbronn, on the other hand, is organized around an active industrial town (De Dietrich).

We can see that in the Strasbourg arrondissement, it's the industrial "wool" canton of Bischwiller that's affected, while in the Saverne arrondissement, it's the mountainous and very poor canton of La Petite-Pierre that's sending over a thousand inhabitants to the United States. The canton of Bouxwiller, with its commercial center, is much more dynamic than La Petite-Pierre. This does not prevent it from being one of the cantons most affected by emigration.

This makes it difficult to explain emigration by a single cause.

If we compare these results with those for Bas-Rhin emigration in 1817, we see that emigration from the canton of Niederbronn is common to both periods. Was the Niederbronn focus, detected in 1817, revived and branched out in the years 1828-1837?

### ***Solvency of Bas-Rhin emigrants (1828-1837)***

In 1828, the French government required passport applicants to declare how much money they had at the time of departure. As a result, we are able to present the following table, which summarizes the sums taken by emigrants by arrondissement (table 16):<sup>15</sup>

**Table 16. 1828-1837: distribution of sums taken home by Bas-Rhin emigrants (in francs)**

District	Number of emigrants	Total amount carried	Average sum per emigrant
Saverne	4,620	2,217,121	479.90
Sélestat	385	248,520	645.51
Strasbourg	2,711	1,591,605	587.09
Wissembourg	6,649	4,150,595	624.24
Total	14,365	8,207,841	571.38

The amount of money taken per person varies from 175 francs in the canton of Barr (Sélestat district) to 1,155.43 francs in the canton of Truchtersheim (Strasbourg district). Between these two extremes, the sums taken vary between 500 F and 800 F, which corresponds to roughly one year's income for a family of five.<sup>16</sup> We shouldn't conclude from these figures that Alsatians are wealthy emigrants. Some are, others are not. A study of the nominative lists for the arrondissements of Saverne, Sélestat and Strasbourg, on which the sums taken by each family are indicated, reveals the following table (table 17, hereafter p. 55):<sup>17</sup>

**Table 17. 1828-1837: breakdown of Bas-Rhin passport applicants according to sums carried**

	<b>Less than 500 F</b>	<b>500 F to 1 000 F</b>	<b>1 000 F to 2 000 F</b>	<b>2 000 F to 5 000 F</b>	<b>5 000 F to 10 000 F</b>	<b>More than 10 000 F</b>
Passports	951	449	465	381	144	27
Percentage	39.35	18.58	19.24	15.76	5.96	1.11

In 1836, the mayor of Le Havre declared that, for 200 francs,

[...] any emigrant can embark at Le Havre and travel to the United States.<sup>18</sup>

This sum (200 F) covers all expenses, from the border to disembarkation in America.<sup>19</sup> Each member of the family spends the same amount, except for young children, who have reduced fares on the boats. Passport applicants in the first category – the most numerous (less than 500 F) – therefore run the risk of running out of money on arrival, especially if they are heads of family. From the second category onwards, the risks diminish, but are still present. Table 17 above shows that 57.93% of passport applicants have just enough money to cover the costs of their trip. A small minority (7.07%) are wealthy, and 35% are comfortable, but without exaggeration, especially in the 1,000-2,000 F category. Those with very little money to spare may be hoping for a free trip to America. In any case, this is what the Prefect of Seine-Inférieure said to the Minister of the Interior in a letter dated June 1827:

[...] Some have sufficient resources to pay for their passage and meet the initial costs of establishing themselves at their new destination. Others have made commitments with individuals or companies that provide them with the means to carry out their project, but there is a third group, and not the least numerous, in the chimerical hope that they will be able to embark free of charge [...].<sup>20</sup>

### ***Occupation and standard of living of Bas-Rhin emigrants (1828-1837)***

The detailed occupational breakdown of passport applicants in the Saverne, Sélestat and Strasbourg districts gives the results shown in table 18 (next page).

The distribution between the primary and secondary sectors is fairly balanced, with the ever-present reservation that many day laborers may have belonged to the industrial sector. The textile industry was much less affected by emigration than in 1817. 41.9% of textile workers were men who left alone, probably single men. 16.3% of textile workers came from the canton of Drulingen, and 11.6% from the canton of Bouxwiller. Both these cantons belong to the arrondissement of Saverne.

The presence of textile workers is somewhat surprising, as Bas-Rhin is industrializing at a much slower pace than Haut-Rhin. There are fewer factories here. Textile workers in the Bas-Rhin probably worked from home.

The tertiary sector is still underdeveloped. In the domestic category, 71.4% of workers are women. This is the only profession where women are more represented than men.

**Table 18. 1828-1837 occupational distribution of Bas-Rhin passport applicants**

Sector	Occupation	Percentage
Primary		
	Farmers (Agriculteurs)	24.45
	Day Laborers (Journaliers)	18.22
	Total	42.67
Secondary		
	Miscellaneous (Divers)	1.33
	Textiles (Textile)	19.11
	Wood (Bois)	6.22
	Leather (Cuir)	8.00
	Building (Bâtiment)	6.22
	Iron metals (Fer-métaux)	6.22
	Total	47.10
Tertiary		
	Food (Alimentation)	4.01
	Domestic (Domestique)	3.11
	Miscellaneous (Divers)	3.11
	Total	10.23

The figures we're about to present provide further proof that, in the 19th century, it was impossible to derive an indication of the standard of living of the populations studied from their occupation (table 19, next page).

**Table 19. Some extreme examples (individual cases) of cash taken, by profession**

Professions	Amounts taken (in francs)	No. of people per family	Professions	Amounts taken (in francs)	No. of people per family
Farmer	100	8	Weaver	800	5
	1,000	5		2,000	4
	3,200	16		3,500	7
	7,000	6		11,000	6
	11,000	4	Sadler	300	1
Day Laborer	750	4		18,000	5
	3,000	8	Carpenter	300	1
	3,200	4		10,000	7
	9,600	4	Baker	500	1
Winemaker	500	8		4,500	7
	2,500	6		8,000	1
	11,000	6		15,000	4

**Conclusion**



The characteristics of Bas-Rhin emigration in the decade 1828-1837 can be briefly summarized. The arrondissements of Wissembourg and Saverne were the main sources of emigrants. Almost all their communes were affected by emigration. It was a mass movement. The arrondissement of Wissembourg lost 7% of its population; the arrondissement of Saverne, 4.11% (compared to 1836). Emigrants were more or less evenly distributed between the agricultural and industrial sectors. Emigrants' wealth varied greatly, with 57.93% of them very poor.

**The 1838-1857 period**

This time, the focus is on Haut-Rhin sources. It should be noted in passing that the Haut-Rhin passport series for this period is particularly well preserved, which is a great advantage for the historian.<sup>21</sup>

*The annual curve of emigration from Haute-Rhin, 1838-1857*

**Table 20. 1838-1857: Emigration from Haute-Rhine to the United States**

Year	Number of emigrants	Year	Number of emigrants
1838	111	1848	519
1839	249	1849	396
1840	303	1850	427
1841	121	1851	644
1842	70	1852	923
1843	326	1853	678
1844	764	1854	1500
1845	496	1855	506
1846	983	1856	550
1847	1,221	1857	620

**Figure 6. 1838-1857: emigration from Haute-Rhine to the United States. Annual record (total number of individuals).**

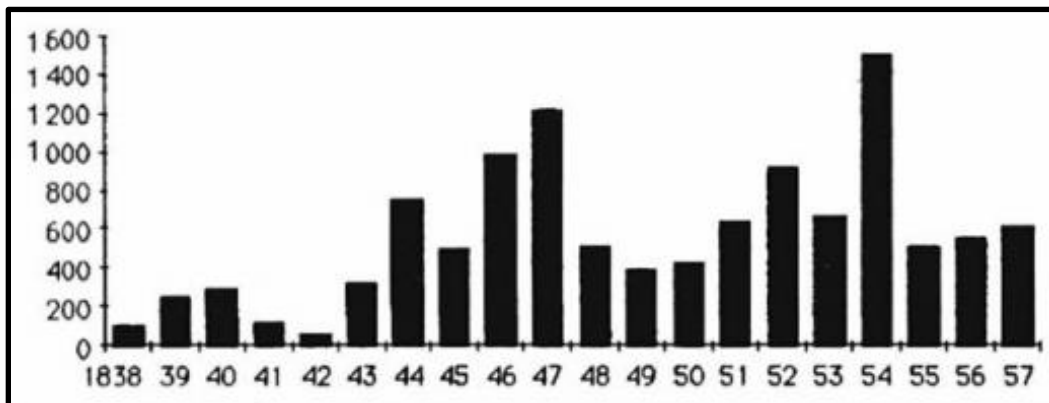
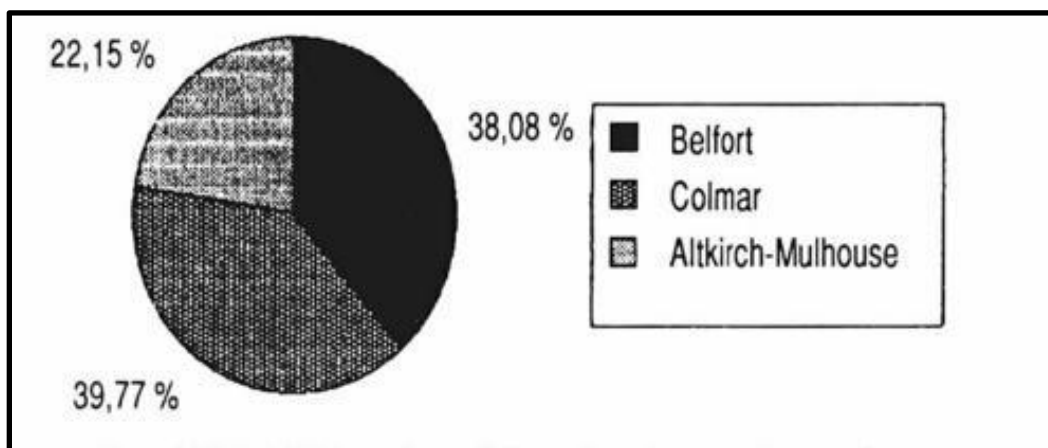


Figure 6 above shows two successive waves. The first – which peaked in 1846-1847 – corresponded to a period of economic crisis in France and Alsace, while the second – which peaked in 1854 – was surely due to the attraction that the United States of the time held for Alsatians.

***Distribution of Haut-Rhin passports by arrondissement and canton (1838-1857)<sup>3</sup>***

Emigration from Haut-Rhin in the period 1838-1857 affected all the arrondissements of Haut-Rhin (figure 7, opposite).

**Figure 7. 1838-1857: distribution of Haut-Rhin passport applicants, by arrondissement.**



**Table 21. 1838-1857: breakdown of Haut-Rhin passport applicants, by canton**

Districts	Cantons	Percentage
Altkirch-Mulhouse		21.93
	Altkirch	2.48
	Ferrette	2.62
	Habsheim	1.19
	Hirsingue	3.54
	Huningue	1.43
	Landser	0.48
	Lutterbach	0.10
	Mulhouse	10.26
	Belfort	
Belfort		4.76
Cernay		2.14
Dannemarie		3.57
Delle		5.71
Fontaine		3.81
Giromagny		3.57
Masevaux		4.05
Saint-Amarin		4.76

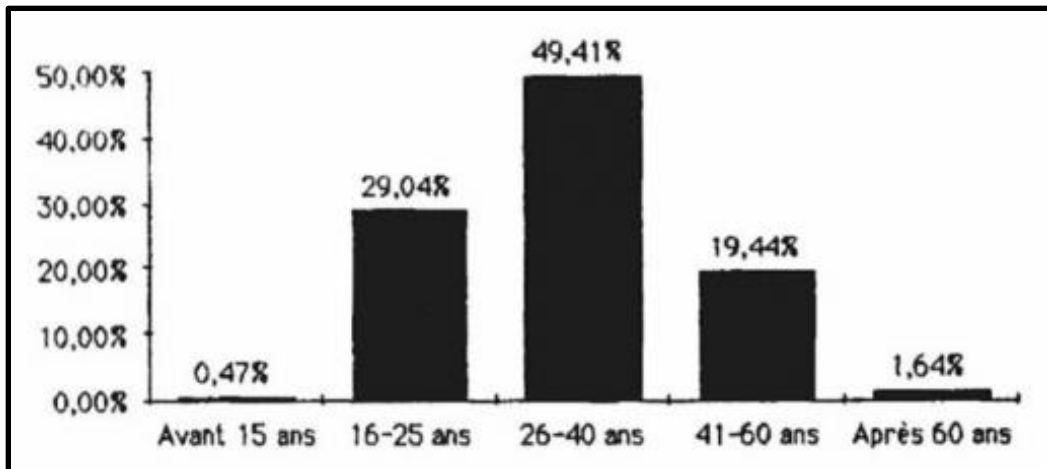
	Thann	5.71
Colmar		39.82
	Andolsheim	3.33
	Colmar	3.81
	Ensisheim	2.14
	Guebwiller	3.33
	Kaysersberg	7.62
	Lapoutroie	0.48
	Munster	0.95
	Neuf-Brisach	1.43
	Ribeauvillé	5.24
	Rouffach	2.14
	Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines	5.48
	Soultz	1.48
	Wintzenheim	2.39

The percentage distribution of Alsatian emigration does not correspond exactly to the percentage distribution of the Alsatian population in each of the three arrondissements (Belfort 26.83%, Colmar 42.84%, Altkirch-Mulhouse 30.33% – 1851 census). Relative to its population, Belfort was the hardest hit, but emigration was much more widespread than in 1817. All cantons were more or less equally affected, with the exception of Mulhouse, which supplied half the passports for its arrondissement and a tenth of the passports for the Haut-Rhin between 1838 and 1857. The canton of Kaysersberg was a close second, accounting for 7.62% of passports to the United States (table 21, p. 59).

***Age of Haut-Rhin passport applicants (1838-1857)<sup>4</sup>***

The very young, like the elderly, are not representative of Haute-Rhin emigration. This does not mean that youth is absent from emigration, but it is clear that the largest share is accounted for by adults aged 26 to 40 (figure 8). This phenomenon is typical of immigration to the United States, although it is somewhat accentuated for Haut-Rhin.

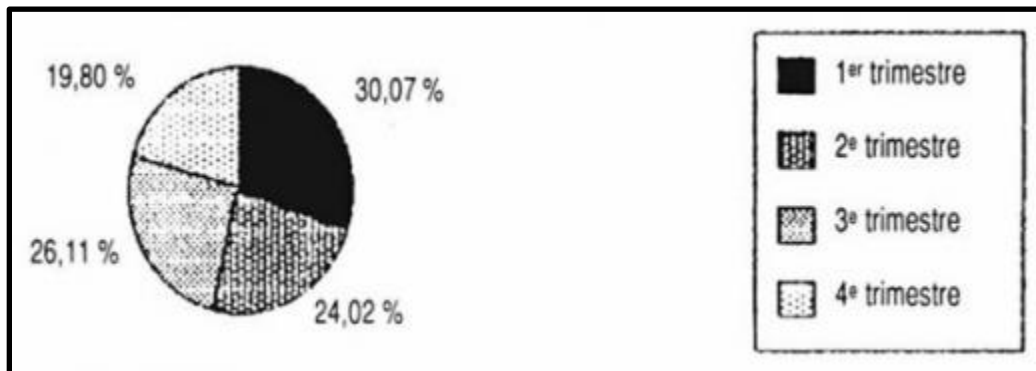
**Figure 8. 1838-1857: age distribution of Haut-Rhin passport applicants.**



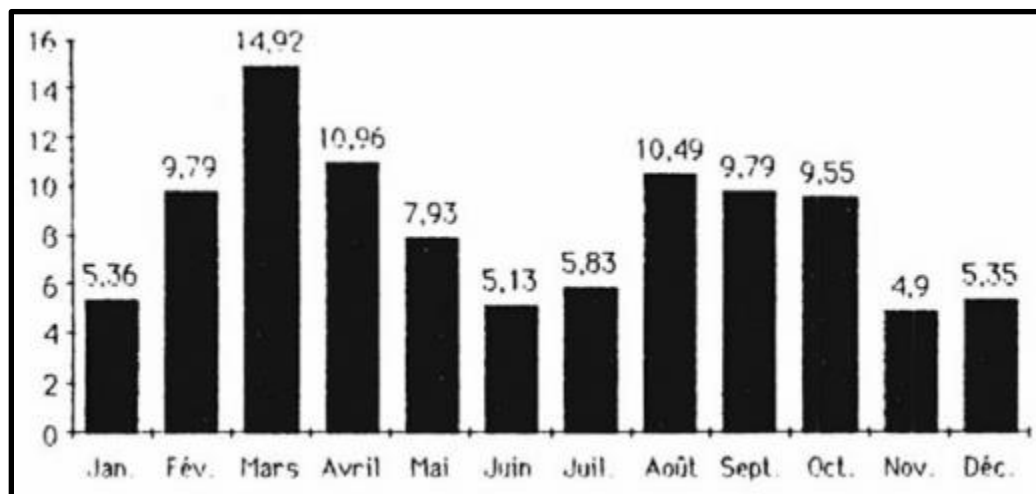
### *Months of departure for Haut-Rhin emigrants (1838-1857)* <sup>23</sup>

If we classify passport applications by quarter, we find a certain equality between quarters. On the other hand, classification by month reveals two poles of low emigration: November, December and January – probably because crossing conditions at this time of year are almost automatically poor – and May, June and July – the harvest season, which undoubtedly keeps workers on the spot (figures 9 and 10, below).

**Figure 9. 1838-1857: Haut-Rhin, distribution of departures, by quarter.**



**Figure 10. 1838-1857: Haut-Rhin, breakdown of departures by month (in percent).**



### *Occupation of Haut-Rhin passport applicants (1838-1857)* <sup>5</sup>

Whether compared to 1817 or 1828-1837, the big news is the increase in the tertiary sector, which now accounts for almost 20% of the total (table 22, next page).

As in previous periods, the primary sector accounted for around a third of passport applicants, a quarter of whom were day laborers. Emigration from the secondary sector continued to affect textile workers, albeit to a lesser extent, and, for the first time, iron workers: blacksmiths, farriers, nail makers. It should be noted that the mechanical industry in the Haut-Rhin, which supplies machinery for the textile industry, was expanding during this period. Iron workers came mainly from the cantons of Mulhouse (23.3%) and

Guebwiller (18.6%) (a total of 41.9%). Textile workers mainly came (60.30%) from the cantons with the highest concentrations of textile industry in the Haut-Rhin (note the absence of the Colmar region):

Mulhouse	15.90 %
Saint-Amarin	11.10 %
Thann	11.10 %
Kaysersberg	11.10 %
Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines	11.10 %

**Table 22. 1838-1857: occupational distribution of Haut-Rhin passport applicants**

Sector	Occupation	Percentage
Primary	Farmer (Agriculteurs)	28.42
	Day Labor (Journaliers)	9.30
	Total	37.72
Secondary	Miscellaneous (Divers)	0.70
	Textiles (Textile)	16.80
	Wood (Bois)	8.27
	Leather (Cuir)	2.84
	Building (Bâtiment)	3.10
	Metallurgy (Métallurgie)	11.63
	Total	43.34
Tertiary	Miscellaneous (Divers)	9.11
	Food (Alimentation)	6.21
	Domestic (Domestique)	3.62
	Total	18.94

### **Geography of Alsatian emigration**

The study of each wave of Alsatian emigration reveals a number of particularities. How they come to light depends on the information provided by the sources. It is regrettable that, due to a lack of homogeneous sources, we were unable to systematically ask the same questions, which may have led to a certain degree of heterogeneity. The best example of the instability of Alsatian emigration is the geographical origin of emigrants, which we have already discussed on several occasions. Depending on the date, pockets of emigration shift. There is no real continuity between periods, except in the Bas-Rhin region, where the Wissembourg arrondissement always provides a high contingent of emigrants, while the Sélestat arrondissement regularly stays away from emigration. Strasbourg's share dropped from 55.49% in 1817 to 2.68% for the period 1828-1837, while Saverne's was the opposite, rising from 5.14% to 32.17% for the same dates (figures 11, below, and 12, next page). The figures vary widely in the Haut-Rhin – where the Colmar arrondissement goes from 82% to 39.77% emigrants, the Altkirch arrondissement from 6.57% to 22.15%, and the Belfort arrondissement from 11.43% to 38.08% (figures 13 and 14, next page).

This great diversity suggests the existence of local microphenomena that are difficult to detect and exert strong, if temporary, pressure. The hypothesis of the existence of emigrant hotbeds, verified for the canton of Niederbronn, seems the most plausible.

### The Bas-Rhin

Figure 11. 1817: geographical distribution of Bas-Rhin emigration.

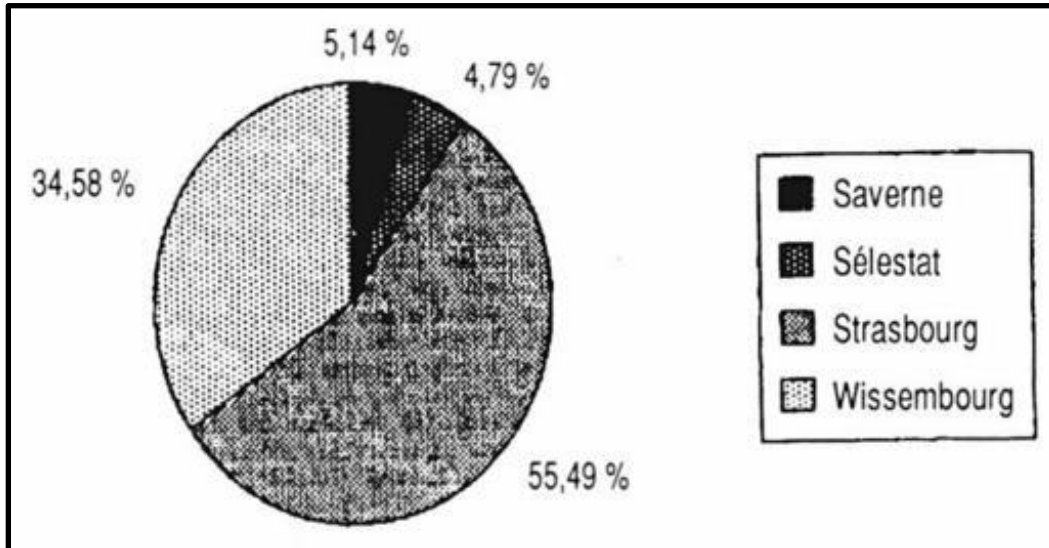
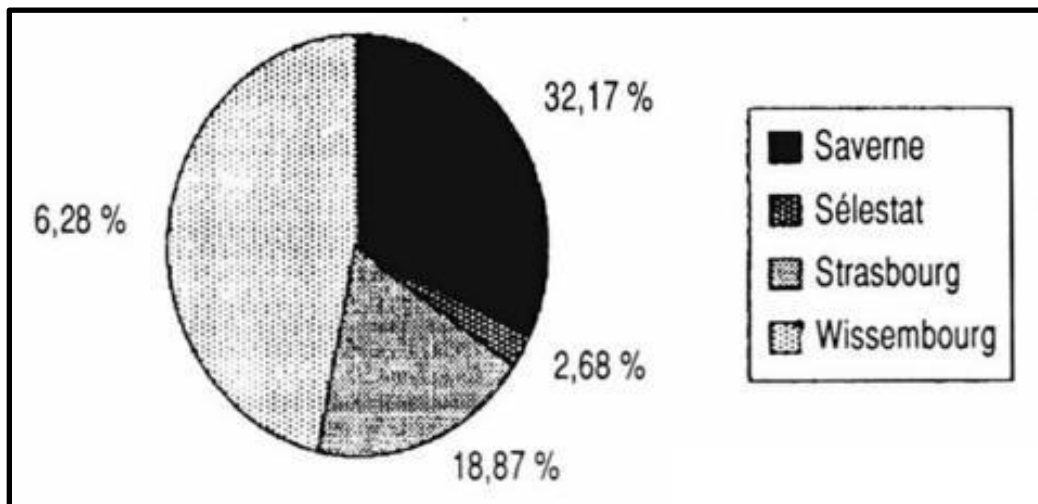


Figure 12. 1828-1837: geographical distribution of Bas-Rhin emigration



### The Haut-Rhin

Figure 13. 1817: geographical distribution of Haut-Rhin emigration.

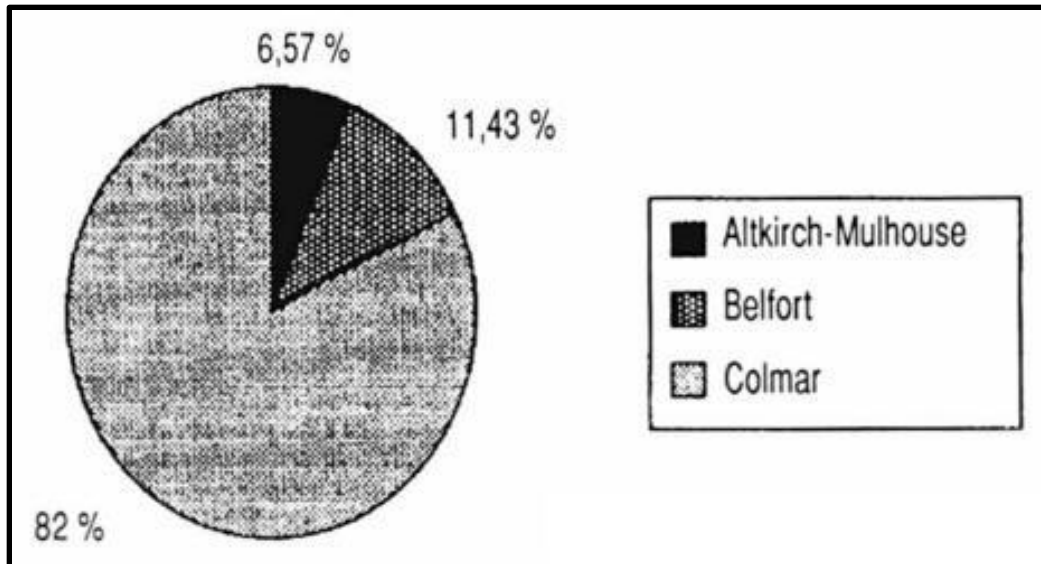
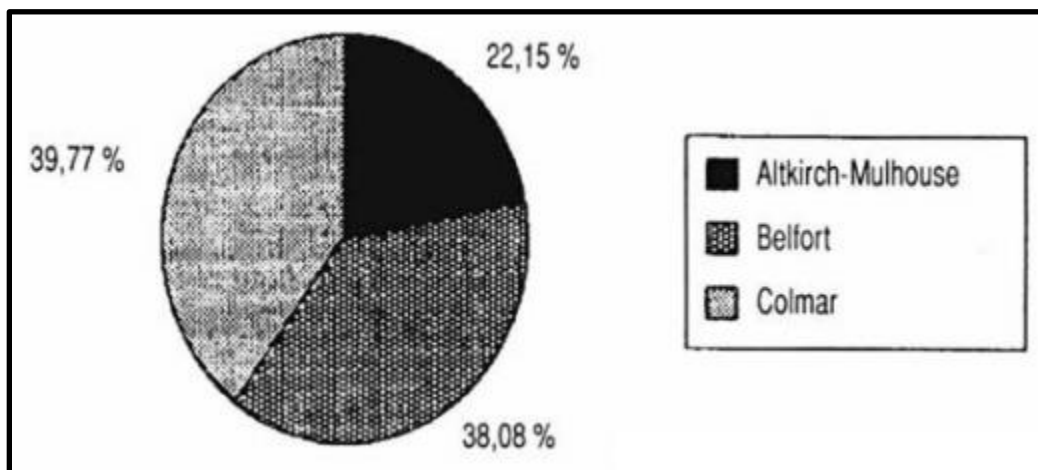


Figure 14. 1838-1857: geographical distribution of Haute-Rhin emigration.6



### Conclusion

During the periods we have just studied – 1817, 1827-1838 and 1838-1857 – the migration of Alsatians took on the appearance of a mass movement. Every department, every arrondissement, every canton participated, albeit very unevenly and irregularly, in these migratory surges. The only arrondissement to consistently send its citizens to the United States was Wissembourg, in the Bas-Rhin department. According to the few documents we have, emigrants do not systematically come from the poorest classes. They came from the countryside. They were rural people who, even if they didn't all work the land, were at least familiar with field work. Non-farmers work in industrial occupations, often in the textile industry. Emigrants are fathers. There is every reason to believe that those who leave alone, often young men, are single. Clearly, Alsatian emigrants to the USA in the 19th century did not belong to an unstable or marginal population. They are, it seems, highly representative of the Alsatian population of the 19th century.

## Notes

- 1 En nombre total d'individus relevés dans les séries "passeports".
- 2 En nombre total d'individus relevés dans les séries "passeports".
- 3 Les calculs qui suivent portent sur les émigrés haut-rhinois aux Etats-Unis excepté ceux qui se rendirent au Texas, pour lesquels une étude séparée est présentée au chapitre X.
- 4 Cf. *supra*, note infrapaginale p. 58.
- 5 Cf. *supra*, note infrapaginale p. 58.
- 6 Cf. *supra*, note infrapaginale p. 58.

## Endnotes

- 1 A.N., F7 6138 8, 6138 9, 6138 10.
- 2 A.D.B.-R., 3M 703. Ce dossier ne contient pas la liste nominative des demandeurs de passeport de l'arrondissement de Wissembourg. Les calculs des tableaux 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18 et 19 ne portent que sur les arrondissements de Saverne, Sélestat et Strasbourg. Les autres calculs sont faits à partir d'états récapitulatifs qui comptent les quatre arrondissements bas-rhinois (Saverne, Sélestat, Strasbourg, Wissembourg).
- 3 A.D.H.-R., série 4M, essentiellement 4M 132, 133, 134, 135, 136.
- 4 A.D.H.-R., 4M 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136 ; 6M 350, 351, 375. James and Doris MENKE, *op. cit.*
- 5 A.D.B.-R., D 414, 276, 2154.
- 6 Nicole FOUCHÉ, *l'Emigration alsacienne aux Etats-Unis de janvier à juin 1817*, recherches effectuées dans le cadre du programme prioritaire sur l'émigration française du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours, Paris, université de Paris-I, U.E.R. d'histoire, Centre de recherches d'histoire nord-américaine, 1981-1982, exemplaire dactylographié, 114 p.
- 7 Imre FERENCZI et Walter F. WILLCOX, *International Migrations, Statistics*, vol. I, New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1929, p. 106. En disant que le B.-R. a fourni "*the largest contingent of émigrants*", Ferenczi et Willcox comparent, à tort, les 4 858 émigrants du B.-R. avec les 3 996 demandes de passeport du H.-R., ce qui, à raison de trois ou quatre personnes par demande de passeport, fait du H.-R., en 1817, le plus fort département d'émigration. Paul LEUILLIOT, *l'Alsace au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, essai d'histoire politique, économique et religieuse, 1815-1830*, tome II, Paris, S.E.V.P. E.N., 1959, p. 35, voir aussi note 4 p. 35. Dans sa note, Leuilliot attribue au B.-R., par erreur, le chiffre de 3 996 "applications". En fait, ce chiffre est le nombre de demandes de passeport du H.-R. toutes destinations confondues.
- 8 Préfecture du B.-R., pétition de Jean Henri Paulus, 4 mars 1817. A. N, F 7 6138 9.
- 9 Préfecture du B.-R., pétition de Georges Henri Fliekinger, 3 avril 1817. A.N., F7 6138 10.
- 10 Préfecture du B.-R., demandes de passeport, 1817, A.N., F7 6138 9.
- 11 Préfecture du B.-R., demandes de passeport, 30 avril 1817, A.N., F7 6138 10.
- 12 Cf. *supra*, note 2.
- 13 A.D.B.-R., 3M 703.
- 14 Charles BOERSCH, "le Mouvement de la population dans le Bas-Rhin de 1831 à 1851", *le Courrier du Bas-Rhin*, 27 mars 1852, 28 mars 1852, 7 avril 1852, 20 avril 1852.
- 15 Cf. *supra*, note 13.
- 16 Camille MAIRE, *l'Emigration des Lorrains en Amérique, 1815-1870*, C.R.R.I. de l'université de Metz, 1980, p. 23.
- 17 Alain LENZ, *Alsatian Emigration from 1826 to 1837. A critic of "the Uprooted"*, maîtrise de lettres, Strasbourg, Institut d'anglais, 1978, p. 27.
- 18 Lettre au préfet de la Moselle, 18 août 1836. A.D. de la Moselle, 89 M 1 bis.
- 19 Camille MAIRE, *op. cit.*, p. 138, note 88.
- 20 Lettre du préfet de Rouen au ministre de l'Intérieur, Rouen le 21 juin 1827. A.N., F7 9334.



### CHAPTER III. FOREIGN EMIGRATION AND ALSATIAN EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Pages 67-91.

Before examining the causes behind emigration to the United States in the 19th century, we need to look at one of the most common explanations put forward, which is that Alsatian migration was a pale reflection of German and Swiss emigration to the United States. Alsatians would have decided to leave, following the example and influence of their neighbors, who, crossing Alsace to embark at Le Havre, would have acted as an impetus and a driving force.

This assertion deserves examination. American statistics clearly show the numerical importance of German<sup>1</sup> (table 23) and Swiss<sup>2</sup> (table 24) emigration to the United States in the 19th century:

**Table 23. German emigration to the United States from 1820 to 1869 (number of emigrants)**

1820-1829	5,753
1830-1839	124,726
1840-1849	385,434
1850-1859	976,072
1860-1869	723,734 <sup>1</sup>

**Table 24. Swiss emigration to the USA from 1821 to 1870 (number of emigrants)**

1821-1830	3,226 <sup>1</sup>
1831-1840	4,821
1841-1850	4,644
1851-1860	25,011
1861-1870	23,286 <sup>1</sup>

Certainly, not all German and Swiss emigration passed through Alsace, but only part of it, which embarked at Le Havre. The mass presence of foreign emigrants in Alsace was the source of much controversy, and Alsatian emigration, whether willingly or unwillingly, was more or less directly linked to foreign emigration. Alsatians, for example, benefited from all the structures put in place for foreign emigration. These were commercial and legislative structures to which Alsace would never have been entitled, given the low numbers of emigrants. Because of the German and Swiss emigrations passing through Alsace, this province was one of the few French regions to be officially staffed by emigration agents, veritable specialists in immigration to the United States and professionals in maritime and land transport. The passage of foreign emigration through Alsace and Le Havre fundamentally changed the

context in which Alsatian emigration took place. This is why it is legitimate to ask what kind of links unite the two emigrations, and what influence foreign emigration may have had on Alsatian emigration.

We'll be surprised to see that Alsatian emigration remains relatively indifferent to the great feverishness that surrounds foreign emigration, and that Alsatisans go about their business without being particularly subject to the fluctuations of German and Swiss emigration.

### **Alsace at the heart of the problem**

#### **1817: The bad example**

In 1816-1817, Germans from Southwest Germany, Württemberg and Baden, left *en masse* for the United States. At the same time, the Swiss cantons were far from spared.<sup>3</sup> These population movements were not ignored in Alsace:

[...] For some time now, French newspapers and broadsheets have been reporting fairly large numbers of emigrants from Switzerland and Germany to the United States of America [...].<sup>4</sup>

Foreign emigrants organized themselves into convoys and made their destinations known in Alsace. Alsatisans took advantage of the opportunity to join these groups:

[...] Today, six of my constituents [...] presented themselves before me – says the Prefect of Haut-Rhin – to ask for a passport for Philadelphia, where they intend to settle with their families. They informed me that a convoy was due to leave Basle shortly for this direction [...].<sup>5</sup>

Prefectural authorities tended to explain the Alsatian emigration of 1817 by the bad example set by foreigners. The idea that the cause of Alsatian emigration was to be found across the Rhine was frequently expressed:

[...] This emigration fever [...] has been raging for several months, first in Switzerland, then on the right bank of the Rhine, then on the left bank [...].<sup>6</sup>

The prefects saw emigration as a veritable epidemic, spreading from east to west with lightning speed. This interpretation is difficult to support, as Alsatian emigration came to a halt in July 1817, while foreign emigration persisted, and Alsace continued to be a popular stopping-off point for Germans and Swiss.

This foreign emigration gradually became the source of two paradoxes. Firstly, it prompted the French government to legislate on emigration, which was not unavoidable given the general weakness of French emigration. Secondly, Alsace and Le Havre, in particular, were going to have to apply to their own national legislation designed to deal with the problems of foreign emigration.

#### **1830: The first official measures**

At the end of the 1820s, some of the Swiss and German emigrants crossing France were very poor families. Many headed for Le Havre without money, food or travel documents. The passage and stay of these unfortunate people in France posed problems, especially when – having finally arrived in Le Havre – they had to wait a few days before embarking. The Le Havre police are always on the alert, as incidents with the local population are frequent. On several occasions, foreign emigrants were sent home. In France, concern spread and the Minister of the Interior finally intervened. The prefects of the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin regions were instructed to apply a series of instructions designed to restrict foreign emigration.

[...] As it is usually via the border of your department that these travelers enter France, I urge you to redouble your surveillance of them, and to subject their papers to the strictest scrutiny, in order to reject all those who are not in possession of perfectly regular documents. As for those who are not in

order in this respect, it has become essential, in their own interest and in that of the kingdom's internal security, to admit them only insofar as they can justify possession of capital commensurate with their needs. Those found to be in a state of indigence will be forced to turn back immediately. These provisions have been transmitted to the various German courts, so that they can inform emigrants of the risks to which they are exposing themselves. Their advice on this subject and the simultaneous return of many families who were unable to carry out their embarkation plans will, I hope, suffice to keep in their country the majority of those who were preparing to leave it.<sup>7</sup>

### **Towards saturation**

Over the years, both Swiss and German emigration figures have risen sharply. It was only natural that the problems should grow worse. The decisions taken by the French government in 1830 were clarified in 1831. They became increasingly rigid and restrictive:

[...] It has been agreed with the government of Württemberg that those of its subjects who travel to France in order to pass to America must, in addition to the visa affixed by the French legation in Stuttgart to the passport issued to them by the authorities of their country, justify by an attestation from these same authorities that they possess at least 200 florins<sup>1</sup> of cash.<sup>8</sup>

In the period that followed, all those not in good standing were turned away, and on May 8, 1831, these provisions were extended to the Kingdoms of Prussia and Bavaria, the Duchies of Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, and the States of Berne. On May 18, 1831, the sub-prefect of Altkirch requested authorization to extend these obligations to the Swiss of Basel, provoking a polemic between the prefect of Haut-Rhin and the mayor of Saint-Louis. The mayor of Saint-Louis was unhappy to see Swiss emigrants grouped together and stationed at checkpoints in the border town. He claims that

[... the] Swiss almost all travel as a family, having a wagon and a horse to drive their children and their belongings and linen [and that] they are generally without money trouble and sometimes with substantial sums [...].<sup>9</sup>

The declarations of the mayor of Saint-Louis did not prevent France from raising the border crossing fee for emigrants from 200 florins<sup>2</sup> to 400 florins.<sup>10</sup>

In 1836, new requirements emerged:

[...] All emigrants must, on entering France, and independently of the conditions already required, provide proof of an engagement duly contracted with a ship's captain who ensures their transportation to the United States, or justify the prior sum [...] to cover the expense [...].<sup>11</sup>

And, to protect himself against fraudsters, the Minister of the Interior adds

[...] embarkation permits will only be issued in our ports to those whose original travel documents indicate an overseas destination [...].<sup>12</sup>

It doesn't seem that what had just been decided in high places had the desired effect, because from 1831 to 1849, not only did foreign emigration increase, but a number of events exasperated French officials.

In 1832, the cholera epidemic wreaked havoc among emigrants stationed in Le Havre:

[...] The fevers could take on a character capable of compromising the sanitary state of the country and at the very least give cause for serious concern [...].<sup>13</sup>

In 1836-1837, a case of forged papers broke out, which was certainly trivial, but which displeased the government.

[...] It seems that foreign emigrants [have managed] to illicitly obtain passports in Strasbourg [...].<sup>14</sup>

Exasperated, the Minister of the Interior protested to the Prefect of Bas-Rhin:

[...] I find it hard to imagine how such abuses could persist if ministerial instructions were carried out with the rigor demanded by the effectiveness of the measures they aim to achieve [...].<sup>15</sup>

This forged passport industry was probably a lucrative one. Well-to-do mayors and farmers in the Bas-Rhin region were compromised. The affair calmed down, while foreign emigration continued to provoke protests. Descriptions in the Le Havre press speak for themselves. The article published in the *Revue du Havre* on May 31, 1840, gives an idea of what was commonly observed:

[...] The city is crowded with the most miserable Bavarian emigrants [...]. This nomadic population has set up camp on the eastern ramparts. They take shelter under the elm trees. Excavations in the ditch embankments serve as fireplaces. Kitchen utensils scattered on the ground, mattresses covered with an anthill of children, sick women, families, form a most distressing spectacle [...].<sup>16</sup>

In 1843, for the second time, a fire ravaged the emigrant camps in Le Havre. In 1845, the mayor of Le Havre complained bitterly that convoys of 300 to 400 emigrants were able to enter France via Saint-Louis without being in order. The mayor of Saint-Louis protested vigorously. He explains that he controls the convoys, but that unfortunately it's very easy to slip through the net,

[...] due to the lack of effective means of surveillance at all points of the border [...].<sup>17</sup>

The situation became increasingly tense. In 1849, it reached a climax.

### **The rupture of 1849**

The year 1849 was marked by a second cholera epidemic, which wreaked havoc in Le Havre, and by the closure of French borders to foreign emigrants. On March 15, 1849, the prefects of Alsace were asked to

[...] prohibit entry into the territory of the Republic, until further notice, to all emigrants from any country [...] until new measures are studied [...]. You will have to see to it – the Minister of the Interior tells them – that this provision, which is temporary and will only last as long as circumstances require, is strictly applied [...].<sup>18</sup>

In March 1849, the towns of Granville, Ingouville and Le Havre were responsible for more than 600 emigrants, which posed serious financial problems for these towns, as well as important issues of law and order, hygiene and public health. These emigrants were undoubtedly part of the gold-rush movement, which brought more would-be emigrants to Le Havre than ever before – hence, perhaps, the French government's decision to close the borders to stem the tide of foreign emigration.

The solution chosen by the government provoked a general outcry in Alsace. All companies involved in the travel and transport of foreign emigrants, as well as businesses, lobbied for the decision to be reversed.

[...] Henri Boell, a merchant and member of the Wissembourg town council, as well as many other citizens of this town, find their interests and their very existence damaged by the sudden paralysis of a branch of business in which they have been engaged for over fourteen years [...] and since then, there has never been the slightest claim or complaint against them [...].<sup>19</sup>

The transport companies explained that emigrants were unfairly victimized by the border closures, especially those who had paid their travel expenses to Le Havre and their crossing costs before June 1849 – and who were probably already on their way.

The government was besieged by complaints. It authorized Messageries Générales, the Oswald company, the Caillard company and a few others to transport – under their responsibility – emigrants whose transport and stay in France had been fully paid for prior to their departure. In the end, the government had to reverse its decision. This was announced by the new Minister of the Interior on June 6:

[...] Things must be put back on the same footing as they were before the instructions of March 15 [...].<sup>20</sup>

The expression is apt: “things” resumed their previous course, except that from that date onwards, the authorities became more tolerant and flexible in their approach to the problems posed by foreign emigration.

### **The turning point of 1851-1854**

French companies dedicated to transporting emigrants began to organize and multiply during these years. Paris intervened less and less with the Strasbourg and Colmar prefects. In 1852, the Strasbourg-Basel railway company was authorized to conclude treaties with various Swiss agents, providing for the transportation through France, from Basle to Le Havre, of foreigners arriving at the St. Louis border on their way to America. On this occasion, the Sûreté Générale in Paris announced that

[...] emigrants carrying certificates signed by the station chief of Saint-Louis will be admitted, provisionally, to enter France, and to go to Le Havre without producing any justification [...].<sup>21</sup>

We’ve come a long way. It has to be said that, more and more, foreign emigration is creating wealth. The French are beginning to understand this, and here and there we see reports flourishing on the comparative merits of French and German ports for transporting emigrants.

We realize that any hassle that would divert emigration from French ports would be a loss for France. Any indelicacy on the part of transport companies, any vexatious measure on the part of customs or police authorities, would have the effect of pushing Swiss and Germans towards the better-equipped and more competitive ports of the North.

France’s interest is all the more understandable given that in 1853 a Prussian regulation (September 6, 1853) had forbidden that country’s agents to recruit emigrants preparing to leave via French ports, until such time as

[...] sufficient arrangements would be made to ensure the transportation of emigrants [...].<sup>22</sup>

This regulation was obviously motivated by the desire to confiscate Prussian emigration destined for Le Havre, for the benefit of Hamburg or Bremen.

In the eyes of the public, it was justified, as emigrants were encountering very serious difficulties at certain border crossings. At the beginning of 1854, the Kehl bridge police, responsible for checking foreign passports on entry into France, announced ten thousand passengers for the month of March. The formalities involved in checking passports considerably slowed down traffic, creating a bottleneck at the entrance to the Kehl bridge.

[...] crowded with emigrants, most of whom are young [...] and morals often suffer from their conduct on the road [...].<sup>23</sup>

It was only in September 1854 that the French government, through its Minister of the Interior, finally expressed France’s new policy on foreign emigration:

[...] German emigrants arriving at the French border to get to one of the ports where they are due to embark for America usually encounter difficulties due to the irregularity of their travel documents. It is desirable that these difficulties be ironed out as quickly as possible. The French government has no interest in being strict with these foreigners, and as soon as it is established that they are indeed emigrants, and that they only enter France at one point and leave at another, they should be admitted, even if the passports they carry lack some of the formalities required for foreigners in general [...].<sup>24</sup>

## **Preparing the imperial decree of 1855**

The change in foreign emigration was crowned by the imperial decree of 1855, which became the reference text not only for foreigners, but also for nationals. As always, mentalities evolved slowly.

Responsibility for legislating on emigration shifted from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture, confirming that the French had finally decided to look into the commercial benefits of foreign emigration. As early as 1853, the Le Havre Chamber of Commerce, primarily concerned by the profits the town could make from emigration, had pointed out the interest – or, more accurately, the necessity – of setting up an emigration commission with headquarters in Paris and representatives in the ports.<sup>25</sup> In the end, the French government decided to set up a commission. This was charged with giving its opinion and preparing draft regulations on:

- transportation of emigrants, both when crossing our territory and during the sea voyage to their destination;
- the system of charitable institutions designed to ensure the material condition of emigrants at various points along the route;
- the system of surveillance and inspection which it would seem necessary to organize, in order to keep emigration under effective police control.<sup>26</sup>

The commission was chaired by Auguste Heurtier, State Councillor and Director General of Agriculture and Trade. Heurtier was responsible for the final report, which he submitted to the Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Public Works. Associated with the commission: Jules Ancel, deputy of the Corps législatif and mayor of Le Havre; Charles Coulaux, also a deputy and mayor of Strasbourg. The management of Chemins de Fer de l'Est also participated in part of the commission's work. In his final report, Heurtier began by setting out the principle on which his group's work was based. Of course, the State must intervene and legislate in matters of emigration, but in

[...] the smallest possible measure to ensure the least possible hindrance to the free exercise of the profession of emigration agent [...].<sup>27</sup>

Here we find the fundamental preoccupation of the time, to allow the economic consequences of emigration to flourish. This principle, carefully considered, found its definitive expression in the decree of January 15, 1855, which simply proposed to “regulate” emigration.

## **The decree of January 15, 1855**

The final text of the decree corresponds, word for word, to the draft regulations submitted by Heurtier, except for articles 10 and 11, modified by the subsequent decree of April 28, 1855.<sup>28</sup>

These minor changes were made necessary by France's obligation to bring its immigration laws into line with those already in force in the United States:

### ***Title I***

Article 1, establishment of special emigration commissioners in Strasbourg, Paris, Le Havre, Forbach and Saint-Louis, responsible for monitoring French and foreign emigration and enforcing regulations.

Article 2, creation of information offices where emigrants can obtain information free of charge.

Article 3, all emigrants will be required to show proof of the sum of 200 francs, unless they hold a contract guaranteeing their transportation to France, plus the crossing.

Article 4, companies or agencies recruiting or transporting emigrants must receive authorization from the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works. They must pay a deposit. The authorization may be revoked, in the event of problems, by the Minister of Agriculture.

Article 5, conditions for returning the deposit.

Article 6, companies or agencies are authorized to employ agents.

Article 7, agencies are required to provide emigrants with a contract and a list of emigrants to the emigration commissioner. Article 8, transportation of luggage.

## ***Title II***

Article 9, forty emigrants are required on a ship for it to be deemed to be assigned to emigration. Article 10, space allocated to each emigrant according to ship deck height.

Article 11, use of spaces remaining available on ships after emigrants have embarked. Article 12, no dangerous goods on boats.

Article 13 and article 14, quantity of food required according to the duration of the journey and the destination.

Article 15, galley equipment.

Article 16, equipment of the ship in terms of berths. Article 17, ship's toilet facilities.

Article 18, presence of a surgeon on board.

Article 19, life-saving and ventilation equipment.

## ***Title III***

Article 20, the ship's captain or owner shall notify the Emigration Commissioner of the fitting-out and departure of the ship.

Article 21, the ship is visited by special officers who certify its seaworthiness.

Article 22, the passenger list is given to the emigration commissioner.

Article 23, prohibition on taking seriously ill or contagious people on board.

Article 24, emigrants may come on board the day before departure.

Article 25, compensation for late departure.

Article 26, compensation for change of use

Article 27 of Title III stipulates that the provisions of the decree are enforceable from March 1er 1855, while article 28 states that the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance are responsible – each in his own area of responsibility – for implementing the decree. The decree was signed by Emperor Napoleon III and the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works.

Reading the decree of January 15, 1855, we can see that its main purpose is to ensure the comfort, safety and quality of services provided to emigrants. Instead of being left to the initiative of recruiters, shipowners or captains, emigrant-friendly regulations were now codified, imposed and generalized. In a way, emigration was moralized. The members of the commission hoped to attract more foreign emigrants and ensure that French commerce would benefit from their passage.

It should also be noted that this decree was heavily influenced by American immigration legislation. Since emigration to the United States was the driving force behind the work of the commission's members, and that country had long since imposed a number of requirements and obligations on shipowners, France could not avoid aligning itself with American laws.

There are six of these: the acts of March 2, 1819, February 23, 1847, January 31, 1848, March 17, 1848 and March 5, 1849. These acts essentially regulate conditions of safety and comfort on board the ships carrying emigrants. They also set out the conditions for immigration to the United States. They were supplemented by the Federal Act of March 3, 1855.

The American authorities are very active on immigration issues. There are always representatives or senators in Congress introducing bills to improve existing laws. During the period in which the French decree was being prepared, a bill to amend passenger legislation was introduced in the U.S. Senate by a Mr. Fish, on behalf of the committee appointed on December 7, 1853 to investigate the causes and severity of illness and death on board emigrant ships, and the legislative measures most likely to protect the health and existence of passengers. This bill did not become law. It does, however, illustrate the prevailing mood in the United States on these issues. In fact, just as Heurtier was printing the report of the commission he chaired, he learned that, in a circular dated August 26 1854, the American Secretary of the Treasury had reproduced the texts of American laws, and recommended their strict observance. It was because of the need to adapt French texts to American legislation that the French emigration law of July 18, 1860, the decree of March 9, 1861, the order of March 20, 1861 and the two orders of May 21, 1861 were subsequently promulgated, in the same spirit as the imperial decree, and to complete it.<sup>29</sup>

As far as emigration is concerned, France's official policy has apparently gone from one concept to its opposite in the space of forty years. In fact, reluctance and resistance persisted for a long time. Driven by events and necessity, France succeeded in adopting legislation on emigration. As we shall see, it came too late, and the French were not rewarded for their slowness.

## **The decree in Alsace**

### **Emigration Commission**

Article 1 of Title 1 of the decree of March 15, 1855 set up emigration commissariats in Paris, Strasbourg, Le Havre, Forbach and Saint-Louis. Alsace was given two of the five commissariats. Application of the decree thus created a new situation in Alsace. The commissioners report to the Emigration Department, which in turn reports to the General Directorate of Public Safety at the Ministry of the Interior. They are responsible for the smooth running of emigration. They provide emigrants with free information, receive their complaints and often intervene to settle disputes and abuses that inevitably arise with transport companies. The Strasbourg commissariat is located at 87, rue du Vieux-Marché-aux-Vins, while the Saint-Louis commissariat is at the railway station. The commissioners are in constant contact with their counterparts in Paris – 26, rue de la Fidélité – and Le Havre – 8, rue des Etoupières.

In Strasbourg, emigrants stay in the city for several days, whether they are foreigners or Alsatians. It was therefore necessary to protect them from the ever-present scams of carriers, as well as innkeepers and merchants. In fact, the commissaires have a policing role. In this respect, it is interesting to note that, for certain small details of execution, the Minister of the Interior, when seized with a question, does not take a decision without consulting his colleague from the Ministry of Commerce. The "emigration police" therefore have a different character from the ordinary police, which are not directly linked to the country's economic interests. However, the links between the "emigration police" and the official police are very close. This is clearly seen in the choice of personnel. A man named Muller became emigration commissioner in Strasbourg (the former central police commissioner in Colmar), while in Saint-Louis, it was the police commissioner himself who was in charge of the emigration department.<sup>30</sup>



In Strasbourg, the Commissariat à l'émigration had an information office where emigrants, whether Alsatians or foreigners, could come to find out everything they needed to know about the organization of their project: prices for passage on ships, embarkation contracts, railroad timetables and prices, exchange value of currencies, but the old demon that wanted emigration to be an absolute evil was only dormant:

[...] The advice given by the commissioners has often had the result of enlightening needy families about the disadvantages of a hasty departure, and the misfortunes to which a thoughtless emigration would expose them [...].<sup>31</sup>

### **Emigration agencies**

A big mistake would be to confuse emigration agents with emigration commissioners. The former are traders, merchants – transport salesmen. The others are official representatives of the government, with special responsibility for overseeing the former. According to the decree of March 15, emigration agencies are subject to state “accreditation.” They are private companies which, like all the others, make a profit from their activities, namely transporting emigrants to Le Havre and then on to the United States. Their specialty is maritime transport. They are usually run by shipowners who send agents to Alsace, where they open offices. Emigrants came to buy their tickets for America. At the beginning of the century, emigrants organized themselves to get to Le Havre. From 1852, with the opening of the Strasbourg-Paris-Le Havre railroad, emigration agencies signed contracts with railway companies, and emigrants – against payment, of course – were picked up at the departure station.

This branch of trade flourished in Alsace. Emigration agencies catered for both foreigners and Alsatians. They existed before the decree of March 15. From now on, they are subject to strict regulations. They can only exist if they have been duly and previously accredited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Public Works. To obtain this authorization, they must pay a substantial deposit of between 15,000 and 40,000 francs. Accredited agencies have the right to employ agents, i.e. representatives who sell tickets or travel contracts on the spot, in this case in Alsace. Agents and sub-agents must be in possession of a valid power of attorney, endorsed by the Emigration Department of the Ministry of the Interior. When the decree authorizing an agency is published, it sends the administration a model of the contracts it signs with emigrants. These documents state the contractor's civil status, the cost of transport and a few general considerations on the well-being and safety of passengers, which the company undertakes to guarantee. As for the administration, it notifies the emigration commissioners of the accreditations it issues.

The business of transporting emigrants was almost entirely in the hands of companies based in Le Havre. Regularly informed of the regulations being prepared, they were only waiting for a sign to apply for accreditation. At the end of March 1855, the firms Barbe et Morisse, Chrystie Schloesmann et compagnie, Lemaître et Finlay, Marziou et compagnie, Wood Courteville et Bielefeld and William Slade were immediately recognized – by decree – as suitable for recruiting and transporting emigrants. In June and August 1855, three individuals were accredited: G. Mosche, Frédéric Pierre Weiss and Ferdinand Kauzler. At the same time as gaining official government recognition, the emigration agencies obtained powers of attorney for their agents and sub-agents in Alsace. On September 19 1855, the Ministry of the Interior's emigration department sent the two Alsatian prefects the list of accredited agents and sub-agents. The department advises that it will send the lists to the prefects of Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin,

[...] as they are received, the lists to be sent to it by the other authorized houses [...].<sup>32</sup>

In the space of six months, from March to September 1855, Alsace was officially endowed with sixty-six emigration agents and sub-agents, forty-two in the Bas-Rhin and twenty-four in the Haut-Rhin, who operated completely freely, completely legally, under the control of the emigration commissioners.

Five major shipowners from Le Havre (see table 25 below) have a relay in twenty-seven towns in the Lower Rhine. These are relays where emigrants can easily organize their journeys. Strasbourg was the

best served. Barbe, Chrystie, Lemaître and Wood have one agent there, while Marziou has two. Next in order of importance are the district capitals – Saverne: three agents, Sélestat: three agents, Wissembourg: three agents – followed by two towns, Lauterbourg and Woerth, each with two agents.

**Table 25: Distribution in Bas-Rhin of agents and sub-agents of the first five emigration agencies accredited following the decree of March 16, 1855.<sup>33</sup>**

	Barbe	Chrystie	Lemaitre	Marziou	Wood	Total
Bouxwiller		1				1
Brumath				1	1	2
Dettwiller					1	1
Diemerengen			1			1
Epfig				1		1
Haguenau			1			1
Hambach	1					1
Hilsenheim				1		1
Hochfelden				1		1
Lauterbourg	1			1		2
Lembach				1		1
Mommenheim			1			1
Niederbronn					1	1
Niederoderen		1				1
Pfaffenhoffen					1	1
Rhinau		1				1
Roeschwoog	1					1
Saverne		1			2	3
Schwindratzheim	1					1
Selestat		1		1	1	3
Soufflenheim					1	1
Soultz-Sous-Forets	1				1	2
Strasbourg	1	1	1	2	1	6
Stundwiller	1					1
Wasselonne					1	1
Wissembourg	1		1		1	3
Woerth	1				1	2
Total	9	6	5	9	13	42

In Haut-Rhin (table 26 below), the Mulhouse sub-prefecture leads the way with one agent from each company (except Maison Chrystie). They are followed by Colmar, prefecture of Haut-Rhin, with three agents; Belfort, three agents; Saint-Louis, two agents; Thann, two agents.

**Table 26. Distribution in Haut-Rhin of agents and sub-agents of the first five emigration agencies, accredited following the decree of March 15, 1855**

	Barbe	Chrystie	Lemaitre	Marziou	Wood	Total
Ammerschwihr				1		1
Aspach	1					1
Belfort	1		1	1		3
Cernay			1			1
Colmar		1	1	1		3
Guebwiller				1		1
Hirsingen			1			1
Jebsheim		1				1
Mulhouse	1		1	1	1	4
Ribeauville				1		1
Saint-Louis	1			1		2
Ste-Croix-Mines				1		1
Ste-Marie-Mines		1				1
Thann		1		1		2
Wesserling				1		1
Total	4	4	5	10	1	24

There is no homogeneity between the two departments. In the Bas-Rhin, Wood, Courteville et Bielefeld – with thirteen agents and sub-agents in twelve localities – is the best represented. In Haut-Rhin, Marziou is the most powerful, with ten agents in ten localities (table 27, next page).

Looking at Alsace as a whole, we can see that Maison Marziou – with a total of eighteen agents and sub-agents – has the strongest presence.

None of these companies waited for the decree of March 15, 1855 to inaugurate their shipping and emigrant transport activities. Marziou is an old Le Havre company. In 1851, it had been chosen by the French government to transport emigrants from the “Loterie des Lingots d’Or” to San Francisco, and seventeen convoys of emigrants had been loaded onto French ships fitted out by Marziou.<sup>34</sup> Wood and Courteville were also old hands in the trade. In 1836, Augustin Ancel – who, as we have seen, took part in the commission charged with preparing French legislation on emigration – was at that time only deputy mayor of Le Havre; he certifies that

[...] Messrs [...] Courteville and Wood are, as much by their commercial position as by their fortune, in a position to execute all kinds of contracts with emigrants to the United States [...]. Through their position as agents for American ships, they are [...] in a position to procure the ships needed to transport emigrants [...].<sup>35</sup>

**Table 27. Summary table of agents and sub-agents in Alsace for the first five emigration agencies accredited after the decree of March 15, 1855.**

	Barbe	Chrystie	Lemaitre	Marziou	Wood	Total
Bas-Rhin	9	6	5	9	13	42
Haut-Rhin	4	4	5	10	1	24

Alsace	13	10	10	19	14	66
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Maison Barbe was one of France’s pioneers in the field of emigration. As early as 1826, T.B. Barbe – a shipowner in Le Havre – had fitted out the *François-I*, the *Sully*, the *Bayard* and the *Charlemagne*, and reserved these vessels for the transport of emigrants. Subsequently, their trade flourished, and Barbe became a powerful house in Le Havre.

Lemaître and Finlay were traders from Le Havre who hoped to make a large profit from transporting emigrants. As their management left much to be desired, the French government revoked, by decree of July 11 1856, the accreditation they had been granted in March 1855.<sup>36</sup> A decree dated September 30, 1856 softened the blow:

[...] The revocation pronounced against Messrs Lemaître and Finlay [has been] converted into a four-month suspension, i.e. from July 7, 1856 to November 7 of the same year. Consequently, the Lemaître and Finlay emigration company and its agents, duly authorized, will again be able, from November 7 next, to contract to transport emigrants [...].<sup>37</sup>

This was not an isolated incident. Relations between emigration agencies and the administration were often conflictual. It is not possible to list in detail the succession of authorizations, suspensions and other revocations for illegality, non-payment of deposit, indelicacy, irregularity or embezzlement. The administration takes its task very seriously. Its aim is to provide emigrants with a certain number of guarantees, so that they are not tempted to change direction and embark for foreign ports. For this reason, the Ministry of the Interior’s Emigration Department ensures that the emigration “police” are as non-repressive as possible with emigrants:

[...] These arrests seem contrary to the spirit of the ministerial circulars addressed to the prefects on May 27, 1856, March 25, 1858 and December 8, 1868, and are likely to prejudice the transit of emigration through France [...].<sup>38</sup>

In the fifteen years between the imperial decree and the war of 1870, which marks the end of our period, the activity of emigration agencies was intense. It’s easy to imagine that, in this context, Alsatians found it easy to emigrate. Gone were the days when the Alsatian authorities mercilessly hunted down recruiting agents.

It should be noted that, in fact, the decree legalized a situation that had previously existed, except that the exercise of the functions of emigration agent was unofficial rather than official. It does not appear that Alsatian emigration “took off” with the application of the decree (see table 1, p. 32). The liberalism of the new measures was therefore not, as might have been expected, a decisive incentive for emigration.

### **Alsatian independence**

Faced with this surge of activity encouraging foreign emigration via Alsace and Le Havre, it’s easy to understand why historians came up with the idea of explaining Alsatian emigration – which inevitably benefited from the facilities granted to its neighbors – by the example of the Germans and the Swiss.

In an Alsace subject to foreign migratory flows, in an Alsace – then – officially crisscrossed by emigration agents, equipped with intelligence bureaus and means of transport, subject to the crossfire of information and publicity, historians have deemed it natural and easy to emigrate, carried away by the irresistible flow of the Swiss or German model.

The figures are far from so clear-cut. If we compare the curves of Swiss and German emigration to the USA with the curve of Alsatian emigration, the differences are striking (see table 28, p. 85 and figures 15a, 15b and 15c, p. 86).

**Table 28. Emigration to the United States (number of emigrants)**

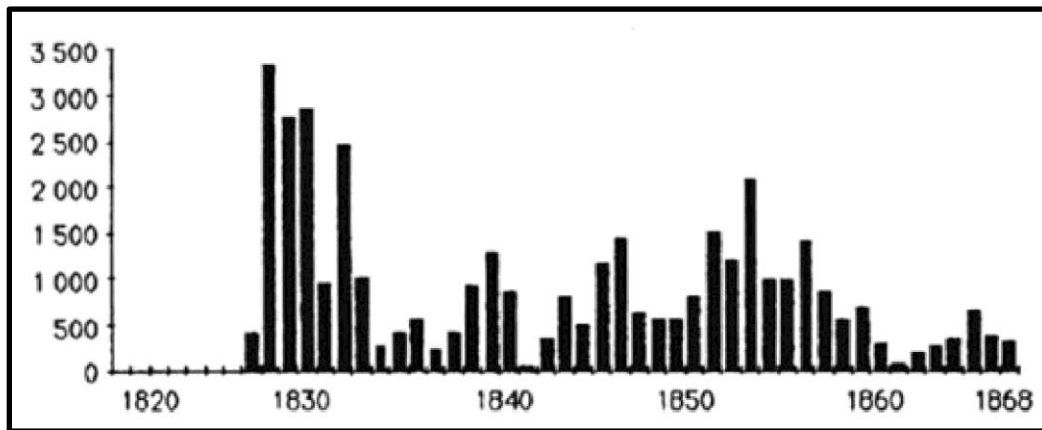
<b>Emigration</b>	<b>Alsace</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>German</b>
1820	1 *	31	968
1821	1 *	93	383
1822	*	110	148
1823	*	47	183
1824	*	253	230
1825	*	166	450
1826	*	245	511
1827	424 *	297	432
1828	3,349 *	1,592	1,851
1829	2,788 *	314	597
1830	2,875 *	109	1,976
1831	983 *	63	2,413
1832	2,482 *	129	10,194
1833	1,030 *	634	6,988
1834	274 *	1,389	17,686
1835	414 *	548	8,311
1836	575 *	445	20,707
1837	249 *	383	23,740
1838	433	123	11,683
1839	935	607	21,028
1840	1,310	500	29,704
1841	889	751	15,291
1842	70 *	483	20,370
1843	362 *	553	14,441
1844	827 *	839	20,731
1845	504 *	471	34,355
1846	1,190	698	57,561
1847	1,464	192	74,281
1848	645	319	58,465
1849	586	13	60,235
1850	587	325	78,896
1851	833	427	72,482
1852	1,507	2,788	145,918
1853	1,223	2,748	141,946
1854	2,080	7,953	215,009
1855	1,011	4,433	71,918
1856	995	1,780	71,028
1857	1,423	2,080	91,781
1858	886	1,056	45,310

1859	578	833	41,784
1860	707	913	54,491
1861	295	1,007	31,661
1862	106 *	643	27,529
1863	219 *	690	33,162
1864	290 *	1,396	57,276
1865	370 *	2,889	83,424
1866	671 *	3,823	115,892
1867	410 *	4,168	133,426
1868	346 *	1,945	55,831

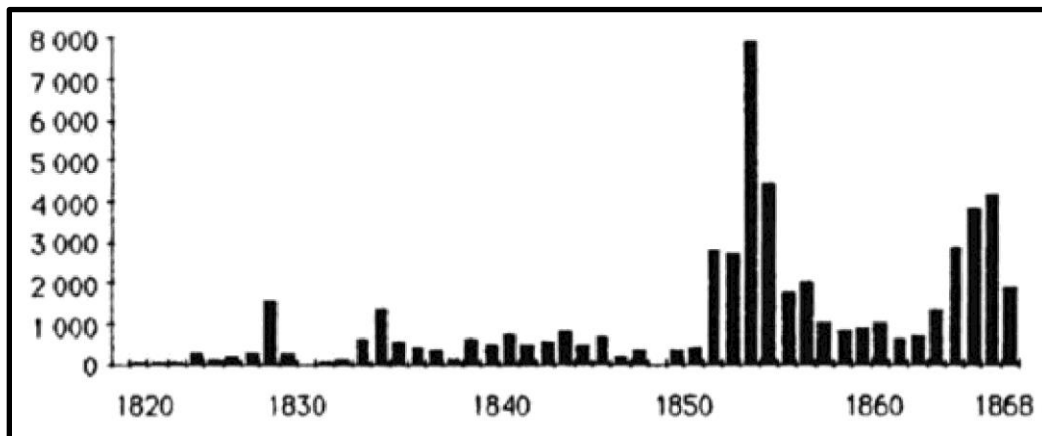
Statistics on Swiss and German emigration are taken from Historical Statistics of the United States, Vol. I, Washington, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975, pp. 97-120.

note \*: Cf. supra pp. 31-33.

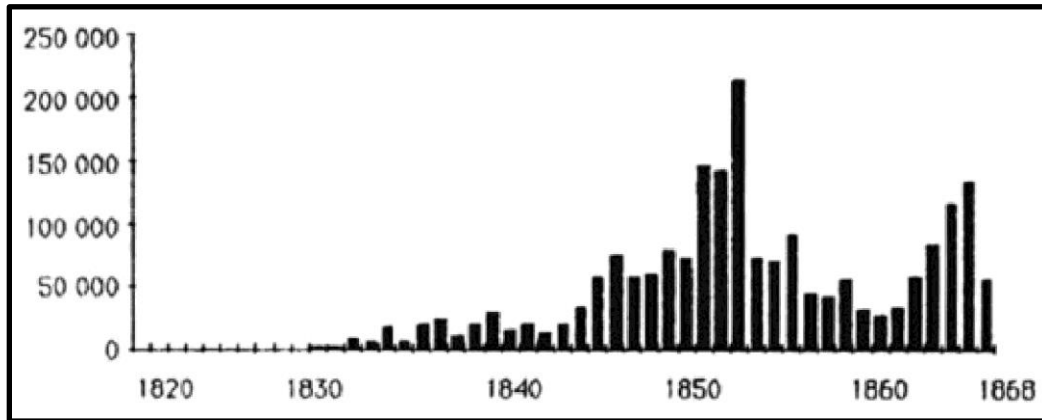
**Figure 15. Alsatian, Swiss and German immigration to the United States, 1820-1868 (number of emigrants).**



**Fig. 15a. – Alsatians.**



**Fig. 15b. – The Swiss.**



**Fig. 15c. – The Germans.**

Despite the lack of information, the Alsatian curve shows a general downward trend. Unlike the other two, which are very similar, the peaks in Alsatian emigration occurred in the first third of the 19th century (1817, 1828-1830). The Alsatian curve starts very high and very strong, with violent fluctuations. It gradually stabilizes, tapering off towards the end of the period. The Swiss and German curves have a very slow start, more regular (especially the German), a sharp rise in the fifties, a dazzling peak in 1854, a slowdown during the American Civil War, followed by a spectacular recovery in the years 1866-1867.

In the long term, it seems that Alsatian emigration is self-sufficient, as it clearly develops an entirely different cycle to that of its neighbors. The overall downward cycle of Alsatian emigration to the USA bears little resemblance to the hump-backed cycles of Swiss and German emigration. On the other hand, in the short term, particularly in the second third of the century, Alsace's curve more closely resembles the other two. Like its close neighbors, it experienced a period of growth until 1854, then a steady decline until the Civil War and, proportionately, an upturn in the years 1866-1867, but without any comparison with the figures achieved at the beginning of the century. In the short term, the revival of Alsatian emigration between 1850 and 1854 could be attributed to the influence of the Swiss and Germans, since emigration from the East was clearly in phase at that time.

In fact, the influence of foreign emigration on Alsatian emigration is not as obvious as is generally believed. No causal link can really be established. From 1845 onwards, Alsatian emigration certainly behaved more classically, joining the typical pattern of Swiss and German emigration, i.e. the general pattern of immigration to the United States (table 29, next page; figure 16, p. 89).

This may tend to prove that, during the second third of the 19th century, Alsatians, Swiss and Germans were – to varying degrees – more attracted to the United States than they were to each other.

As for the French decree, it was clearly too late. Migration to the United States declined from 1854 onwards. This decline is confirmed on all sides. All European emigration suffered – broadly speaking – the same fate (table 30, p. 89).

**Table 29. Immigration to the United States, 1820-1870 (number of immigrants)**

Year	Total	Year	Total
Years ending September 30		1845	119,896

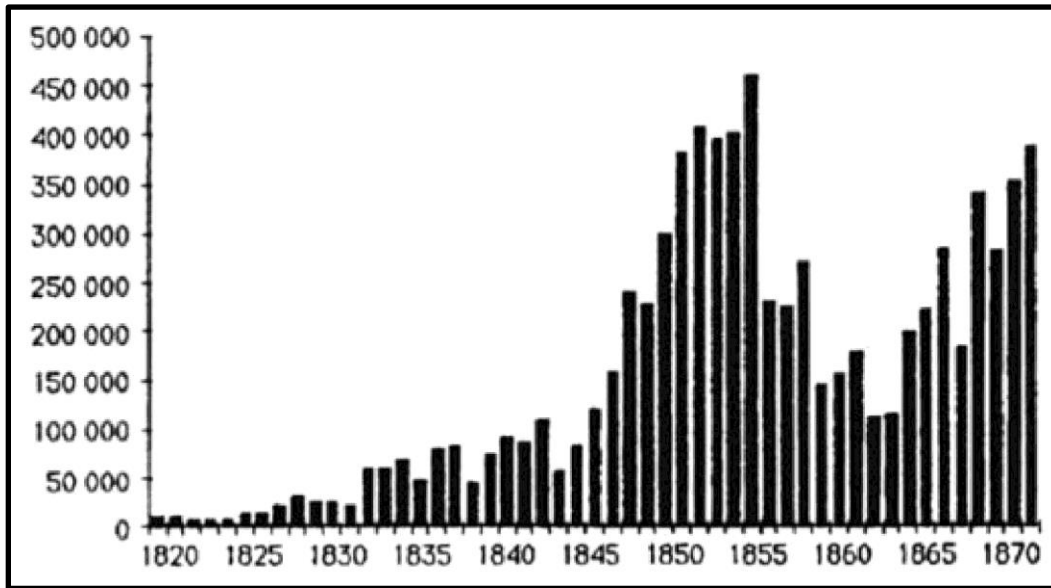
1820	10,311	1846	158,649
1821	11,644	1847	239,482
1822	8,549	1848	229,483
1823	8,265	1849	299,683
1824	9,627	1850	380,904
1825	12,858	Years ending December 31	
1826	13,908	1851	408,828
1827	21,777	1852	397,343
1828	30,184	1853	400,982
1829	24,513	1854	460,474
1830	24,837	1855	230,476
1831	23,880	1856	224,496
1832	61,654	1857	271,982
Years ending December 31		1858	144,906
1833	59,925	1859	155,509
1834	67,948	1860	179,691
1835	48,716	1861	112,702
1836	80,972	1862	114,463
1837	84,959	1863	199,811
1838	45,159	1864	221,535
1839	74,666	1865	287,399
1840	92,207	January 1 to June 30	
1841	87,805	1866	185,892
1842	110,980	Years ending June 30	
January 1 to Sept. 30		1867	342,162
1843	56,529	1868	282,189
Years ending September 30		1869	352,768
1844	84,764	1870	387,203

Historical Statistics of the United States, op. cit. pp. 105-107.

Likewise, emigration to the United States via Le Havre, exactly like Alsatian emigration, fell sharply after 1854 (table 31, next page).



**Figure 16. Graph of immigration to the United States, 1820-1870 (number of emigrants)**



Historical Statistics of the United States, vol. I, Washington, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975, pp. 105-107.

**Table 30. European emigration to the United States<sup>39</sup>  
(number of emigrants)**

1854	460,697
1855	206,085
1856	279,242
1857	341,809
1858	185,059

**Table 31. Emigration to the United States via Le Havre<sup>40</sup>  
(number of emigrants)**

1851	44,159
1852	65,800
1853	75,000
1854	97,000
1855	28,000
1856	21,000

The decree therefore failed in its attempt to attract and multiply emigration through its territory. As for the Alsatians who could have taken advantage of the facilities made available to them by the government, they were far from rushing. They probably analyzed the news from the United States, which heralded the end of prosperity, at least temporarily.

## **Conclusion**

The phenomenon of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century is very interesting. At first glance, one might think that it depended entirely on occurrences that were foreign to it, that went beyond it, such as the emigration of Swiss or Germans, such as French and American migration laws, such as the power of American attraction. However, we are seeing the development of an Alsatian emigration curve that is relatively autonomous, at least in the long term, and more independent than expected. The study of the causes of emigration, developed in the next two chapters, is an attempt to explain the relative independence of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century.

## **Notes**

1 A florin is worth 2.15 francs.

2 A florin is worth 2.15 francs.

## **Endnotes**

1 U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of U.S. Colonial Times to 1970*, Washington, D. C, 1975, p. 105. Quoted in Stephan THERNSTROM (ed.), *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1980, p. 410.

2 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Report, 1975*, Washington, D.C., 1975, pp. 62-63. Quoted by Stephan THERNSTROM, *op. cit.* p. 985.

3 Kathleen Neils CONZEN, "Germans", in Stephan THERNSTROM, *op. cit.* pp. 405-425. Leo SCHELBERT, "Swiss", in Stephan THERNSTROM, *op. cit.* pp. 981- 987.

4 Letter from the Prefect of H.-R. to the Minister of the General Police, Paris, January 29, 1817. A.N., F7 6138 10.

5 Cf. *supra* note 4.

6 Letter from the Minister of the Interior (probably to the Prefect of H.-R., draft), Paris May 29, 1817. A.D.H.-R., 6M 375.

7 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefects. Paris, July 19, 1830. A.N., F7 9334.

8 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, April 16, 1831. A.D.H. R., 4M 253.

9 Letter from the mayor of Saint-Louis to the prefect of the H.-R., Saint-Louis May 28, 1831. A.D.H.-R., 4M 253.

10 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, November 27, 1831. A.D.H.-R., 4M 253.

11 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, July 22, 1836. A.D.H. R., 4M 253.

12 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, July 22, 1836. A.D.H. R., 4M 253.

13 Jean LEGOY, *le Peuple du Havre et son histoire*, 2 vols, Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, E.D.I.P., 1982, p. 234.

14 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of the B.-R., Paris, September 20, 1836. A.D.B.-R., 3M 704.

15 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of the B.-R., Paris, September 20, 1836. A.D.B.-R., 3M 704.

16 Jean LEGOY, *op. cit.* p. 234, note 109.

17 A.D.H.-R., 4M 253.

18 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the prefects of H.-R. and B.-R., Paris, March 15, 1849, A.D.H.-R., 4M 253.

19 Préfecture du B.-R., Strasbourg, Causé file, May 1949. A.D.B.-R., 3M 705.

20 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, June 6, 1849. A.D.H.-R., 4M 253.

21 Quoted in Gustave CHANDÈZE, *l'Emigration, intervention des pouvoirs publics au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Imprimerie P. Dupont, 1898, p. 100.

22 Cf. *supra*, note 19.

- 23 A.D.B.-R., 3M 704.
- 24 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, September 14, 1854. A.D.H.-R., 4M 253.
- 25 Gustave CHANDÈZE, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 29 Almanach du commerce du Havre, 1865, Le Havre, Imprimerie du Commerce, 1865, pp. 76- 80.
- 30 Paris, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Arrêté du 21 février 1855. A.D.H.-R., 6M 349.
- 31 Rapport à Son Excellence le Ministre de l'Intérieur, sur l'émigration, 1857-1858, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1858, p. 17.
- 32 Letter from the Director General of Public Safety to the Prefect of the H.-R., Paris, September 19, 1855. A.D.H.-R., 6M 349.
- 33 Lists sent to the H.-R. prefect on September 19, 1855. A.D.H.-R., 6M 349.
- 34 Madeleine BOURSET, "Une émigration insolite au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les soldats des barricades en Californie, 1848-1853", in Nicole FOUCHÉ (ed.), *l'Emigration française, Etudes de cas, Algérie, Canada, Etats-Unis*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1985, p. 160.
- 35 Letter from Auguste Ancel, deputy mayor, to the prefect of the B.-R., Le Havre, August 30, 1836. A.D.B.-R., 3M 704.
- 36 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, August 11, 1856, A.D. H.-R., 6M 349.
- 37 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of H.-R., Paris, October 11, 1856, A.D. H.-R., 6M 349.
- 38 Letter from the Strasbourg emigration commissioner to the B.-R. prefect, Strasbourg, December 19, 1869. A.D.B.-R., 3M 704.
- 39 Corps législatif, Session de 1860, Annexe au procès-verbal de la séance du 22 juin 1860, Rapport au nom de la commission chargée d'examiner le projet de loi relatif à l'émigration, par Monsieur Ancel, député au Corps législatif. Le Havre, A.M., fonds moderne i2, carton 1, liasse 10.
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## CHAPTER IV. STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF EMIGRATION

Pages 93-112.

### **The tradition of Alsatian emigration to the United States**

#### **Alsations and the English colonies in America**

Alsations did not discover America in 1815. They had been crossing the Atlantic to the English colonies for over a century. Most often, they left for religious reasons. In Alsace, there was no question of revoking the Edict of Nantes – which had never been in force there – but rather

[...] to use the room for manoeuvre left by the Treaty of Munster and the capitulation of Illkirch [...]<sup>1</sup> to encourage the development of Catholicism and to lead a general offensive against Protestantism. Alsatian Protestants, who had a strong aptitude for migration, headed for the New World.<sup>2</sup>

The particularly harsh winter of 1708-1709 – with its disastrous consequences for vineyards – and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) rekindled a long and vast movement of Protestant emigration in the upper Rhine provinces and Alsace, known as Palatine emigration. Palatine emigrants headed *en masse* for the English colonies in America.

### ***Alsations in Pennsylvania***

From its very beginnings, William Penn's Quaker colony was a gateway to the plains of North America, a land of welcome for the persecuted of Europe, and a hope for would-be emigrants. In 1683, Anabaptists – expelled from Switzerland by the Helvetic authorities – stayed for a time in Alsace, then went into exile in Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup>

In 1711, 413 Alsations were recorded as having left Alsace for Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> In 1738, fifteen Lower Rhine families emigrated clandestinely to Pennsylvania.<sup>5</sup> Around 1749, far from slowing down, the movement gained momentum. The Bailli of Oberbronn approached the Intendant of Alsace and explained that a large emigration movement was developing in the Bailliages of Oberbronn, Niederbronn and Schoeneck, despite the edicts and ordinances prohibiting emigration and an order given to the provosts of the communities to seize the money from the sale of émigrés' property.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these cases of emigration, which are known to us thanks to the archives, there are others whose knowledge has come to us through the intermediary of genealogists. By following the history of the Hauser family from Riquewihr, for example, we can recognize the broad outlines of what has been said above. In 1686, Catholicism was officially restored to Riquewihr and the large Lutheran church was placed under Catholic control. The Hauser family are Lutherans. Like all village families, they paid double taxes: to France, but also to the German dukes who had been left in place on condition that they swore allegiance to Louis XIV. When Martin Hauser married in the early 1720s, his wife's mother left for Pennsylvania with a group of Mennonites. By the end of 1726, the couple had made up their minds. They're off to America. They take their two-year-old son, Martin junior, with them. They set sail from Rotterdam on the *Molly*, touching down in England, and from there sailed to Philadelphia in the company of seventy Rhine families. Their son dies during the crossing. They arrived in Philadelphia on September 30, 1727, reunited with Marguerite's mother (his wife), and stayed with the Mennonites until 1830. But Martin is Lutheran at heart. So he left the Mennonites. He and his wife moved inland. They become farmers in Maryland and, later, in North Carolina, where they make friends with Moravian Brethren.<sup>7</sup>

On October 2, 1749, young Frédéric Pfoersching, born in 1730 near Strasbourg into an Alsatian family that was probably Protestant, arrived in Philadelphia. The family emigrated to Holland, but young Frédéric preferred America. Although destitute, he embarked in Amsterdam for Philadelphia, hiring out his services during the crossing to pay for his journey. He settled in Pennsylvania, where his descendants would remain for over a century. It wasn't until 1857 that a Pfoersching-Pfirsching-Pershing moved west to Missouri. It was in Missouri that John Joseph Pershing, future commander of the American army in France (1917), was born to this family of Alsatian origin.<sup>8</sup>

Another anecdote is indicative of the ties forged between Alsace and America as early as the 18th century. The Anschütz family, originally from the Saarland, had settled in Alsace. Young Georges-Louis, a specialist in iron ore smelting, worked for a long time for the De Dietrich family, who operated the blast furnaces and forges at Jaegerthal-Zinswiller. He became assistant to the director of the Zinswiller mines, before deciding to emigrate. He moved to Pennsylvania with his wife and five children. He was the man behind the first blast furnace in Shadyside, Alleghany County (Pittsburgh region). Georges-Louis died in Pittsburgh in 1837. Between 1790 and his death, he brought many Alsations to Pennsylvania.<sup>9</sup>

The above portrait gallery is not merely anecdotal. It shows, through real-life examples, that mobility was already part of the Alsatian mentality in the 18th century.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina***

This mobility is mirrored at the finish line. Few Alsations settle once and for all. The Hausers, as we've seen, moved down through Maryland, eventually settling in North Carolina.

Hauer, from the Lower Rhine, left his homeland at the age of twenty, on May 18, 1749, for Lancaster, Pennsylvania. After the birth of his fourth child, he moved on (1767) to Maryland and settled in Frederick, fifty-five kilometers from Washington, where emigrants from the Palatinate had settled.<sup>11</sup>

Some emigrants settled directly in Virginia. In 1748, near Winchester, in the Shenandoah Valley, there was a small community of Alsatians, Protestants from Mulhouse.<sup>12</sup>

### ***New England and New York State***

Philadelphia, which attracted many Alsatian emigrants in the 18th century, is not the obligatory port of arrival. Those heading further north often enter via New York. They enter inland via the Hudson River. Alsatians founded the village of Rheinbeck, which became Rhinebeck. Their center was present-day Schoharie County, west of Albany (from there, some went on to Pennsylvania).<sup>13</sup>

An official report dated June 4, 1740, preserved in the Strasbourg notary archives, refers to individuals from Sunhausen, Muttersholtz and Baldenheim, arrested for wanting to emigrate clandestinely to New England, and detained at the Strasbourg citadel.<sup>14</sup>

In Strasbourg, in an intendance file, we also find a document dated 1751 that contains interesting information about the life awaiting settlers in New England, particularly in Massachusetts Bay, where many Protestants had already settled: flax and hemp – products well known in Alsace – fruit trees could be grown, and hunting and fishing were free. It's easy to imagine the impact such assertions could have had on the minds of a population subject to feudal rights in these areas.<sup>15</sup>

### **Alsatians and Louisiana**

At the time of Louis XIV's death, there were two hundred and fifteen inhabitants, including military personnel, in the vast territory of Louisiana.<sup>16</sup>

Settlement had been neglected. Things were to change with the advent of John Law and his team. The "Compagnie d'Occident," later known as the "West India Company," had been created by letters patent in August 1717. Financier John Law was granted a monopoly on the trade and sale of land in Louisiana, with the task of populating the colony. He began by organizing a forced emigration of fraudsters, vagrants and prisoners. It was not among these emigrants that the first Alsatian emigrants of this period were to be found, but among the families of volunteers, some of whom went on to form the economic and social elite of French Louisiana.<sup>17</sup>

From 1719 to 1721, Alsatian settlers, along with German emigrants, settled north of New Orleans, in an area known as the Germans Coast. These Alsatian emigrants, probably Protestants, were joined in the years 1753-1759 by several groups of Alsatian Lutheran families, who were arrested as they prepared to cross into Germany, apparently more to acquire land and livestock than to escape religious persecution. These families agreed to convert to Catholicism and settle in Louisiana, in exchange for escape from life imprisonment or the galleys. They were very well received on the "German Coast" and adapted remarkably well.<sup>18</sup>

### **Alsatian emigration to the United States from revolution to empire**

The period from 1797 to 1814 was characterized by a succession of maritime conflicts between France and the United States, leading to a state of latent war between the two states. Embargoes, races, captures and illegal ship visits followed one another until 1800. The Consulate was a period of relative détente, but under the Empire, the United States found itself inexorably embroiled at sea in the economic war between France and England, which resulted in a blockade.<sup>19</sup> It's hardly surprising, then, that Alsatians wishing to

emigrate preferred to look eastwards. According to Leuilliot, who studied the emigration of Alsatians under the Empire, it was – at this time – in the Crimea that emigrants settled.<sup>20</sup> The great flight of 1793 – which had contributed to the uprooting of workers and farm owners<sup>21</sup> – and the political situation and economic regime resulting from the Revolution, had fueled the spirit of emigration, and this did not abate. Emigration from the Bas-Rhin was almost entirely concentrated in the Wissembourg district. Occasionally, despite the ever-present navigational difficulties, Alsatians managed to embark for the United States.

In 1803, for example, the Bas-Rhin region was looking for an American settler born in Alsace who had recently returned to France to collect estates. This settler would invite his compatriots to leave with him. The investigation confirmed that several heads of family

[...] have sold their property and intend to go to America [...].<sup>22</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It's clear from these few paragraphs that Alsace and America have a long and enduring tradition of emigration. In the 18th century, Alsatians certainly crossed the ocean to escape religious intolerance, but at the same time they understood that the religious freedom offered to them by America brought other freedoms and other successes – particularly economic – that they probably wouldn't have even hoped for if they'd stayed in Alsace. In the 19th century, as religious motives disappeared from the facts and from people's minds, economic motives took their place, allowing the tradition to continue. The happy results of the first emigrations could only encourage the departure of the following ones.

## **The American pull**

### **Friends and relatives in the United States**

At the beginning of the Restoration, when the American ships that had been driven out of the Atlantic and English Channel during the hostilities reappeared, Alsatian emigration to the United States resumed. Everything had changed: both the host country and the country of departure; but the ties forged in the previous century were ready to be revived. Tracks had been blazed, paths opened; tradition was alive and well. Many families had relatives or friends in the United States. Information therefore arrived directly, without passing through official channels, outside the often hostile press, outside the more or less tendentious accounts that politicians were always tempted to spin. The Alsatian community already established in the United States was one of the causes, one of the driving forces behind 19th century Alsatian emigration.

### ***The motivating role of letters***

Take, for example, the letter written by George Philippe Anshutz (an anglicized form of Anschütz), brother of the engineer Georges-Louis,<sup>23</sup> to some of his family back in Zinswiller, a powerful incentive to emigrate:

[...] There are no hard times here [...]. Workers' wages are high, and government royalties are low [...]. This country is vast [...]. There's room for thousands of families [...].<sup>24</sup>

The consequences of this letter are well known. Six months later, Pierre Anschütz, a forge worker in the Bas-Rhin region of France, living in Zinswiller, applied for a passport to the United States. Having just lost his job, he decided to emigrate, knowing full well that his American family would provide him with assistance and, perhaps, work. He takes his wife and six children with him. What's more, his example

inspires many fellow workers at the forges, to such an extent that the Count of Steinthal becomes concerned and informs the authorities, mistakenly believing in a poaching of skilled workers.<sup>25</sup>

In 1817, the sub-prefect of Wissembourg had this to say:

[...] People who leave do so in response to the letters they receive [...].<sup>26</sup>

For example,

[...] in consequence of a letter written by a close relative of his wife, who is established in Baltimore [who] [engaged them to join him...],<sup>27</sup>

that the Berton couple decided to leave for America.

Similarly, a letter from Baltimore to

[...] an inhabitant of Gumbrechtshoffen, named Freehlig, determined to leave. He is due to arrive in Amsterdam at the beginning of May, to take advantage of the return of a ship. Several other inhabitants of the same village want to follow Freehlig [...] in the sole hope of improving their condition [...].<sup>28</sup>

When emigration resumed at the end of the 1820s, Alsatians once again mentioned the mail they received from the United States:

[...] The favorable news given by their relatives or friends already established in America contributed greatly to determining the petitioners to follow their example. If letters received from the United States are to be believed, new arrivals would be perfectly welcomed there, especially craftsmen and farmers. They would immediately be granted a certain amount of land. All kinds of work would be well rewarded. And they would have no taxes to pay. There is undoubtedly some exaggeration in this news, but it is believed because it has not been contradicted by any letter from the United States [...].<sup>29</sup>

In fact, the success of some is the best possible incentive for others to leave:

[...] Some of their compatriots [...] took [the] decision [to emigrate] a few years ago. Having succeeded completely in their enterprise, they urge their friends to follow their example. Hence this emigration of entire families [...].<sup>30</sup>

[...] As Charles Goutzwiller recounted in 1827, letters from émigrés extolling the immense resources of this new country were exchanged, and relatives and others were invited to come and seek their fortunes in this Eldorado [...].<sup>31</sup>

1832, 1838, 1841, the letters arriving from the United States did not change in tone:

[...] The frequent letters arriving from their former compatriots, who have been in America for several years, are encouraging many inhabitants, even those with some fortune, to come and join them.<sup>32</sup>

[...] Emigration is an infatuation provoked by relatives and friends who have long since left home, some of whom gave enticing accounts of their current happiness [...].<sup>33</sup>

[...] People are attracted by letters from Alsatians who are already there [...].<sup>34</sup>

Alsatians didn't always rely on the mail to convince their compatriots to emigrate. Sometimes, they travelled themselves to fetch their families:

[...] In the course of the month [of August], several families made up of 36 individuals left the commune of Lièpvre [...]. Among these emigrants, several had already been to America and had returned to bring their parents [...].<sup>35</sup>

Alsatians become unprofessional recruiters.

From the 1850s onwards, there were few references to this persuasive correspondence. The letters continued to circulate, but the authorities – who until then had tried to limit their influence – were changing. German and Swiss emigration was sweeping across France, bringing with it a host of problems, and Alsatian emigration was no longer the main concern of Alsatian prefects.

### **Alsations succeed in the United States**

Throughout the period prior to 1855 (imperial decree), one of the unofficial objectives of national and prefectural authorities was to reduce emigration. To counter the impact of correspondence arriving directly from the United States, the authorities, for their part, worked to forge a “counter-image” of the United States. The prefects presented the most pessimistic descriptions, the blackest pictures. They did not hesitate to force the tone:

[...] A large number of the inhabitants of this department, driven by a blindness that nothing can explain, have decided to expatriate themselves to seek their fortune across the seas in a country that is unknown to them, and where for the most part they will encounter only misery and death. I can only lament the fate that awaits these unfortunate people who are lulled into such foolish hopes [...].<sup>36</sup>

In 1828, the sub-prefect of Belfort sent the mayors of his district a letter from New York, dated July 25, 1828:

Monsieur le Maire, I'd like to warn you that for some time now, many people from your arrondissement have been arriving in this country. They find themselves reduced to absolute poverty, as they don't know the local language. For the most part, they are stateless and consequently unhappy. I beg you, Monsieur le Maire, to persuade all those who would like to come here that they will be much more miserable in America than at home. I have no interest in what I am advising you; it is only as a compatriot that I find it my duty to warn you [...].<sup>37</sup>

The letter is signed J.-B. Meyer, son of Pierre Meyer, Clerk of the Justice of the Peace in Colmar. This missive is so perfectly suited to the administration's aims that one wonders if it wasn't commissioned, from the son of a friend, for example.

Two years later, it's the same old story. On May 30, 1830, the Minister of the Interior himself explained:

[...] Most [of the emigrants], on the faith of chimerical hopes, [who] embarked in recent times for the new world, found, upon their arrival, nothing but misery and total abandonment, and the small number of those who survived the illnesses, the inevitable result of a change of climate, accompanied by fatigue and privations of all kinds, must have considered themselves fortunate when they were able to procure the means to return to their country [...].<sup>38</sup>

The following excerpt from 1844 is also in the dark genre:

[...] Misery, the change of climate, absence and remoteness have affected [the emigrants'] health. Many have died and, at the moment, the doctor accompanying me is caring for the others, sick with misery [...].<sup>39</sup>

The purpose of these assertions is unique: to divert emigrants from their projects. The administration doesn't even hide this fact:

[...] This paternal advice will undoubtedly help [the emigrants] to abandon a risky undertaking that the government would reproach itself for encouraging [...].<sup>40</sup>

It would be a mistake to fall into the same trap as the French authorities, simply reversing the poles and claiming that everything was ideal for the emigrants. Between these two extremes, assured success and absolute failure, the margin is wide, all scenarios are possible and we must try to identify the law of the greatest number. Certainly, emigrants who were expected in the United States, either by family or friends,



were very fortunate. For them, the game was, in a way, won in advance. For the others, those who left on the strength of advantageous descriptions, once the ordeal of the crossing was over, they had to face up to an often intractable reality.

### *The case of farmers*

The Alsatians who left for America did so with the idea of “improving their lot.” They consented to expatriate themselves and their families, in the ultimate hope of being able to buy a few acres of land: indeed, they knew that land in America was cheap. Nothing to do with the value of land in Alsace. Those who have no savings to transport themselves to America practiced the engagement system. They are accepted free of charge on a ship, on condition that on arrival they serve a master whose demands they are initially unaware of. Although morally reprehensible, this system was a great success. It enabled many young, poor emigrants to accumulate enough money in just a few years to finally set up on their own and buy their first plot of land. Those who didn’t sign up for the scheme could, on arrival, work for richer people than themselves.

[...] In 1820 – says the Comte d’Harcourt – the poor European who lands in the United States finds to rent his arms for a wage of six gold francs a day, six to ten times higher than that which he finds in France. In a few years, he has amassed enough to acquire a train of crops, and, land being at a low price, here he is the owner of what would be in France a large piece of land [...].<sup>41</sup>

A guide for emigrants, published in 1849, provides similar information:

[...] A farmhand, fed, housed and laundered, can earn 40 to 60 francs a month. [...] He saves his money, and soon becomes self-employed [...].<sup>42</sup>

The same guide explains:

[...] In the United States, land and food are cheap, and wages are high [...].<sup>43</sup>

If those who arrive destitute manage to buy land, what can be said of those with a small nest egg? Alsatians were eager for land, and during the first part of the 19th century, they were able to satisfy this desire with ease. In 1830, the French Legation in Washington conducted a survey of French consular officials on the situation of the French in the United States. The response from the French representative in New York referred to the behavior of Alsatians:

[...] The recent emigrations from the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin departments [...] are made up of farming families. It is believed that 600 Alsatians have arrived in New York harbor in the last six months. They bring with them a few farming implements, some furniture and sometimes the fruits of their savings in cash. They stop only a few days in New York and head inland, some to upstate New York, others to Pennsylvania, or even to the western states, but what should inspire confidence is the low price of land in these new countries [...]. Their immense fertility offers immense resources to active, industrious men accustomed to field work [...].<sup>44</sup>

The response from Philadelphia confirms the growers’ success:

[...] Several Alsatian families are said to have recently settled in the Reading and Pottsville areas [...]. The emigrants [...] especially the farmers, will soon be free from want [...].<sup>45</sup>

The more time passed, the further inland the Alsatians penetrated, following the progress of colonization to the west.

At this point, it’s worth briefly summarizing the conditions under which public land sales took place in the United States. In 1817, when the Alsatians set foot on American soil, they could buy a minimum of 320 acres of public land at \$2 an acre.<sup>1</sup> They received an 8% discount if they paid cash; if they could not, they were granted a four-year credit. In 1820, the law was amended. An acre of land was now worth

\$1.25, and the minimum area to be purchased was reduced to 80 acres. The credit system was abolished. In 1830, the system of pre-emption was introduced, and legalized in 1841. This system allows settlers who have settled on virgin land without any title, and who have cultivated it for a certain number of years, to become owners, in return for payment of the value of the soil. The Free Homestead Act, passed in 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, offered 160 acres of land, free of charge, to heads of families over the age of twenty-one after five years of occupying and developing the land. This law, which came into force at the end of our period, probably only concerned a tiny minority of Alsatians.

This set of federal laws determines the fate of public lands, but there are other markets. States sell land. Land can also be bought from individuals who, either for speculative reasons or simply because they're moving elsewhere, sell all or part of their land. For newcomers, the choices are therefore very open. It all depends on their budget. From pre-emption to the purchase of expensive land on the coast or near a city, there is a wide range of possibilities.

For those who opt to clear uncultivated land, the first year is a difficult one. His first task is to build a wooden hut (tree trunks):

[...] Expenses are reduced to the purchase of scrap metal, doors, window frames (which he buys ready-made) and glass. All this can be done in a few days, with the help of neighboring settlers and at almost no cost. The houses can be solid and warm in winter. In the United States, a wooden house is not a sign of destitution [...].<sup>46</sup>

[...] The emigrant must patiently go through this always difficult transition period which forms the first period of any settlement in [the American solitudes]. He will soon reap the rewards of his constancy... from his second year, his subsistence and that of his family will be entirely assured [...].<sup>47</sup>

By the third year, results are often positive. Barring accidents, farmers start to make a profit.

[...] The French in the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin departments [...] have established settlements [of this kind], and their success no doubt explains the numerous emigrations that have taken place in recent times. The first settlers established in the newly-cleared interior have a great interest in multiplying the number of dwellings in their vicinity, and they call close to them those of their relatives and friends whom they have left behind in France and who are seduced by the hope of soon becoming landowners [...].<sup>48</sup>

The benefits of cultivation are not the only advantage for landowners. The price of land rises from year to year, reaching appreciable sums by the end of the century. In Illinois in 1875, the widow Scheidecker owned 656 acres of land valued at \$32,800. Edouard Retz owned, after twenty-five years of occupation, a thousand acres valued at \$55,000.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The case of craftsmen and workers***

[...] The success of workers [and artisans] is less certain than that of farmers [...].<sup>50</sup>

The situation of workers was theoretically more delicate, as industrialization in America, particularly in the first part of the century, was much less advanced than in Europe. Apart from major public works, which employed many European workers in the wildest parts of the United States (opening canals and railroads), crafts and nascent industry were concentrated in the cities and ports. Labor emigrants were more sensitive to fluctuations in the American economy than peasants. The depression of 1837, for example, brought down the price of labor. On the other hand, the expansion of 1849-1856 absorbed a large proportion of workers.

The most lucrative trades fall into three groups. The top group includes wheelwrights, blacksmiths, carpenters and lumberjacks. The second group includes tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, mechanics and cabinetmakers. The third group includes haberdashers, innkeepers and peddlers.<sup>51</sup>

In an 1838 report, the Bas-Rhin departmental gendarmerie confirmed that the construction trades were doing well in the United States:

[...] Anyone who works with wood, iron or stone is sure to earn a living [...].<sup>52</sup>

### *The case of retailers*

They prefer to settle in urban areas, where they try to sell their compatriots products that resemble those they knew in their home country. Food is a case in point.

An advanced class of emigrants settled in trade and business. This latter class of Alsatian emigrants was in the minority, if not non-existent.

One might ask whether, as far as Alsations are concerned, there is a match between the opportunities offered by the host country and the emigrants' qualifications. Take a look at the breakdown of Alsatian emigrants by profession:

- Primary sector : 48.35 %
- Secondary sector : 38.83 %
- Service sector : 12.82 %

We can see that workers in the primary sector barely outnumber those in the secondary sector. What's happening with Alsatian emigrants is that even workers are buying land and becoming farmers. America awakens agricultural vocations, favored by the fact that Alsatian emigrants overwhelmingly belong to the rural world of their country of origin: 78.15% come from the Alsatian countryside.

### *Naturalization*

It should not be forgotten, when considering the fate of Alsatian emigrants across the Atlantic, that American law allowed emigrants to quickly become American citizens. The Constitution of 1787 gave Congress the power to regulate naturalization. The combined Acts of April 14, 1802, May 26, 1824 and May 24, 1828 make up the legislation in force during our period. These acts authorized the naturalization of immigrants after a few years' residence in the United States. This advantage was a factor in assimilation, as once the immigrant had become an American citizen, he could more easily exercise his civil and political rights in certain states, and even qualify for public employment. In the first three quarters of the 19th century, xenophobic and nativist movements – which at various times agitated American history – were unable to prevent the integration of emigrants:

[...] Each class takes its place in the distribution of work as in society, and this fusion makes the emigrants disappear fairly quickly among the masses of the urban population. They soon cease to have separate interests. They are allowed to take part in the affairs of the country that received them. A small property and a short residence entitle them to do so. They enter the great American family, embrace its mores and even show themselves affected in imitation, as if seeking to make people forget their foreign origins and further court public favor.<sup>53</sup>

On the whole, then, immigration conditions in the United States are favorable to emigrants. They did not miraculously eliminate all problems, but at least they allowed everyone to hope, in the long term, for an improvement in their situation, whatever that may have been at the outset. It is often said that, for courageous men, there is no such thing as poverty in the United States at this time. Baron Van der Straten Ponthoz's judgment, in his book on American immigration, goes further, explaining that, even in the worst case, immigration is a hope:

[The European] with no money and no plans [who] comes to New York to try his luck in America [...] has not changed his situation by changing continents. The only difference is that there will be a

greater chance for the more industrious, and their children may not continue the miserable life of their parents, whereas in Europe, the only assured prospect was to go further down [...].<sup>54</sup>

During the years 1815-1870, when emigration failed to achieve its goal, perhaps we shouldn't look for the causes in the host country, but rather study how its resources were understood and used by the newcomer.

### **Real-life stories and spectacular cases**

The adventures of emigrants have left deep traces in individual memories and in the collective imagination. Stories of travel, hardships, successes and anecdotes have been passed down from generation to generation, and it is now possible to collect testimonies and get families to talk. Norman Laybourn has collected many life stories. All those quoted here are borrowed from him.

Fritz Wolf, born in the canton of Haguenau in 1837, arrived in New York at the age of twenty-six. He made his way to Saint Louis, and there, in the center of the city, spotted an Alsatian inn called "Strasburger Hans Sebastian Burgi," on which the Strasbourg cathedral had been painted. The owner immediately hired him as a waiter. He entertained the guests with Alsatian songs. After six weeks, he left and joined the northern army.<sup>55</sup>

Sally Muller emigrates with her parents in the early 19th century. She suddenly disappeared. She is found in New Orleans, married to a black man. She then worked as a slave for a landlord. Settlers raised enough money to sue the innkeeper, who was forced to set the Alsatian free by a decision of the Louisiana Supreme Court.<sup>56</sup>

Henri Bernard and his brother Jean Georges Bernard left Ban-de-la-Roche on March 14, 1842. Arriving in Le Havre without passports, they discreetly embarked. Discovered by the captain, they were saved by a storm which prevented him from turning back, as he had originally intended. In the United States, they made their way to Buffalo, then to Chicago, where they received the hospitality of an Alsatian who drove them in a wagon to the east of Chicago. Satisfied with their lot, they sent for their parents and siblings, and the family settled in Millington, near Chicago.<sup>57</sup>

The Kochersperger family, originally from Drachenbronn (canton of Soultz-sous-Forêts), emigrated in 1835. They landed in New York, then went to Rome (New York State) to stay with Alsatian friends. Some of their traveling companions, also from Drachenbronn, left them en route. One was hired in New York by a brewery; another, again in New York, by a dairyman; two others were hired by a farmer. Finally, the whole group, plus a few others, came together to buy land in the Chicago area. They settled on a "huge, wild, gently rolling meadow with a superb oak forest," all for \$75. They settled there and, nine years later, Peter Sondericker returned to Alsace. He returned with forty-five Alsatians, including forty-two from Drachenbronn.<sup>58</sup>

Born in Strasbourg in 1821, Adolphe Pfister arrived in New York in 1844 and moved to California in 1847. He made his fortune there. He was twice elected Democratic mayor of San José. In 1850, he built the Washington Hotel. In 1854, he opened his first general supplies store. Then a second one in 1871.<sup>59</sup>

Peter Balz, from Alsace, moved to the United States in 1833. He worked as a baker. He first worked in several cities on the East Coast, before moving to Los Angeles (1856). There, he opened a bakery. The business grew rapidly, and he acquired land and a hotel.<sup>60</sup>

To these individual stories – all of which, in one way or another, exemplify the success of Alsatian emigration to the United States in all areas of social life – we must add a selection of more spectacular success stories. Philippe Sensenbrenner, born in Soufflenheim (1832), emigrated in 1847. He settled in Philadelphia. He sent for his father and a cousin. Philippe's great-great-grandson was recently elected Congressman from Milwaukee, and has served in the House of Representatives in Washington. Another Philippe descendant, Franz Joseph Sensenbrenner, became president of the Kimberley-Clark Corporation, one of America's leading paper manufacturers. He was behind the creation and marketing of Kleenex

tissues and the Kotex brand. He was Chairman of the Board of the University of Wisconsin from 1943 until his death.<sup>61</sup>

Charles Miller was the son of Alsatian emigrants who had settled near Boston as farmers in the 1850s. After the American Civil War, he and a partner founded an oil-manufacturing firm in Buffalo. His son, Rosnell Miller, an ensign in the U.S. Navy, married Marguerite, the only daughter of steel king Andrew Carnegie.<sup>62</sup>

In 1859, seventeen-year-old Eugène Meyer set sail from Le Havre for New York, where he changed ships and headed for San Francisco via Panama. He found work in Los Angeles as a salesman. Eventually, he formed a partnership with the owner of the store where he worked, and went into business for himself. After setting up one of the first banks in Los Angeles, acquiring the city's largest store, the City of Paris, and helping to found the French Hospital, the Alsatian went on to manage the London Paris and American Bank, the future Anglo California National Bank. Ten years later, in New York, he joined forces with Lazard Frères.<sup>63</sup>

It would be unthinkable to end this list of famous Alsatians without mentioning the well-known case of Eugène Victor Debs, the son of 19th-century Alsatian emigrants, who led the American Socialist Party for around a quarter of a century. His father, Jean Daniel, a schoolteacher born in Colmar in 1820, had emigrated in 1848. In 1849, he was joined by his fiancée. They married in New York, then settled in Indiana to devote themselves to business. Ten children were born of this union, including Eugène Victor, who wanted "a world where fraternity would reign, where everyone would have an equal share."<sup>64</sup>

How many anonymous people for a few dozen famous Alsatians? This table does not claim to be exhaustive. It simply illustrates, through examples, the diversity of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century.

## **Conclusion**

Reading the above, it's easy to see how the United States could have had a positive image in the minds of Alsatians. The Alsatians who emigrated to the United States (1815-1870) did not do so by chance. In each of them, there was certainly a gambler, one who was betting on his lucky star, particularly in terms of health, because more than any other, the physical conditions of emigration were painful and difficult to endure. Everything has already been said about the crossing, the insects, the diseases (yellow fever and cholera), the cold, the sun, the wind, the sometimes precarious hygiene conditions, the non-existent health care, the feeling of isolation, the loneliness; not to mention, in some states, the problems with the Indians. Yet despite all these difficulties, Alsatians resolutely continued to prefer the United States to other destinations throughout the 19th century. They soon gave up on the Danubian countries they had previously tried out, and then on Russia, which had been a favorite destination for a while. By the middle of the century, they were most interested in Algeria. In 1843, 5,000 Alsatians settled there. By the 1960s, there was a strong Alsatian community in Algeria, but it was only after the annexation of Alsace by Germany that Alsatians flocked to Algeria.

If Alsatians have remained loyal to America over such a long period, it's because the hopes that emigrants placed in the United States have not been dashed.

## **Notes**

1 One acre equals 40.47 acres. One dollar is worth 5.42 French francs.

[an "acre" is a unit of area in the metric system, equal to 100 square meters and the equivalent of 0.0247 acre. Its multiple is the hectare, equal to 100 acres. "—Editor"]

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## CHAPTER V. LOCAL CAUSES OF EMIGRATION

Pages 113-142.

### **The attitude of the authorities: a hindrance**

Prior to 1855, the official policy of successive governments in France had been not to legislate for or restrict national emigration. As already noted, the publicly stated principle was that people could move freely in and out of the country when it was established that they enjoyed their civil rights and had fulfilled the obligatory formalities. This official policy was at odds with the “intimate conviction” of those responsible for issuing passports. It was always reluctantly that the Alsatian prefectural authorities, unofficially supported in their reluctance by the various Ministers of the Interior, issued passports to emigrants. The verdict on emigration was clear: it was a disease, a fever, a madness, a dangerous evil. Pressure from the authorities to limit emigration was not always discreet. In 1817, the Prefect of Bas-Rhin even went so far as to suspend, on his own initiative, the issue of passports that had already been signed by the Minister of the General Police. He also wanted to

[...] be authorized to absolutely refuse passports, to ban emigrants and to arrest, for lack of a passport, any individual who attempts to leave illegally [...].<sup>1</sup>

The supervisory authority officially protested. Nevertheless, it acquiesced in substance. At the same time, it protested against the Bas-Rhin prefect's proposals. Paris was looking for ways to reduce emigration from Alsace. Emigration did not enjoy good press in the upper echelons of the capital, and since the law could not be invoked, other solutions would have to be found. The only solutions available to the authorities were moral coercion, and oral, insinuating and more or less honest pressure exerted on emigrants as they applied for passports:

[...] There is no doubt that there is no legal way to prevent men, who have the misfortune not to appreciate all that France has to offer in terms of resources to anyone who knows and wants to work, from going wherever they please in search of a well-being that is even fanciful, But a paternal administration would not have fulfilled its task if, each time passports were requested for distant and unfamiliar countries, it did not endeavor, through persuasion, to dissuade the applicants from the risky undertaking which has so far had only unfortunate results for all Europeans who have attempted it in recent times [...].<sup>2</sup>

### **Objective problems**

So, in the minds of the French authorities, there's a feeling of discomfort and unease at the idea of French people wishing to settle in other countries. Outside France, there's no salvation.

[...] I hope – says Esmangart, prefect of Bas-Rhin in 1830 – to divert the inhabitants of this department from the disastrous determination [to] seek their well-being in a foreign and distant land where they will find only misery and regret [...].<sup>3</sup>

That said, we have to recognize that emigration poses a number of objective problems.

### ***The indelicacy of certain emigrants***

Alsatian farmers disappear without having repaid the loans granted to them by local merchants or moneylenders. In most cases, these farmers complained to the authorities, who were unable to intervene



in private affairs, and were therefore totally powerless to resolve the problem. Similarly, there was no recourse for victims of emigrant fraudulent bankruptcy.

It also happened that Alsatians left discreetly, leaving their families, wives and children, either in the greatest destitution, or in the care of a brother or friend, or in the care of the communes. Although not a frequent occurrence, this fact is nevertheless reported on several occasions. In 1854, the administrative commission of Strasbourg's civil hospices finally asked the prefect to

[...] to take the measures it deems appropriate to prevent the abandonment of children by their emigrant fathers and mothers [...].<sup>4</sup>

To this picture we must add the unpaid bills left by emigrants at the local and municipal tax offices. Owed small (or large) sums of money – school benefits or fees, property taxes, patents, forestry fines, various contributions – families found themselves unable to pay and, fearing that they would be “enforced” by bailiffs, ended up emigrating. Young men also emigrated to avoid the recruitment law. The authorities feared that, in the long run, these absences would create a shortfall in the army contingent.

All these problems led to the 1828 circular. For the first half of the 19th century, it set out the obligations of emigrants. It's no coincidence that prospective emigrants were required to fill out strict application forms:

[...] Strasbourg, April 28, 1828. Circular to MM. les Maires, concerning applications for passports to America. [...] [Petitioners] must justify by receipts or certificates from the tax collector that they have fully paid their personal and movable taxes, door and window taxes, as well as the patente [...]. Individuals applying to go to America [must] have paid in full any sums they may owe to the municipal fund [...]. Young people [who belong], by age, to recruitment classes that have not yet been released, [must make known] the number they obtained in the drawing for such and such a class, in such and such a canton, whether or not they are part of the contingent, whether they have been exempted for infirmity or any other reason [...]. The surnames, first names and ages of all persons they intend to take with them, as well as the financial means they have to meet the costs of the trip [must be indicated]. [...] Among the emigrants, there may be guardians whose management is not yet complete, or who have not rendered a final account of their guardianship. In such cases, their departure may have disastrous consequences for the minors whose interests are entrusted to them. It can also happen that, before having rendered their account of guardianship, they sell real estate, at the time of their departure for a foreign country, to people who, finding no mortgages registered on these assets, believe them to be free and buy them with confidence, unaware that under the terms of article 2135 of the Civil Code, the legal mortgage on a guardian's real estate exists in favor of minors, independently of any registration, from the day of acceptance of guardianship. This lack of attention on the part of purchasers would place them in the position of being obliged to pay all the debts owed by guardians to minors under their guardianship, or to relinquish any real estate they may have unwisely acquired [...].<sup>5</sup>

We can see that emigration is the source of problems that are sometimes difficult to resolve. It's understandable that if these kinds of cases accumulate in a given département, they can create problems for the administration, and even destabilize local civil society. It's hardly surprising, then, that the administrative authorities and political powers seek to avoid them.

### *The departure of wealthy emigrants*

Thankfully, not all emigrants are in the situations we've just described. There are many heads of family who are perfectly legal, perfectly solvent and perfectly honest. In such cases, the authorities deplore their departure for other reasons. When it comes to

[...] craftsmen or farmers who possess an establishment commensurate with their status and sufficient resources for their needs [...], the Kingdom risks becoming impoverished by their departure [...].<sup>6</sup>

As early as 1817, the authorities were denouncing the departure of landlords and people of means. In 1828, 1832, 1841 and 1854, the same kind of remarks were made by officials, who viewed the emigration of this category of Alsatians with severity.

### *The flight of cash*

It has to be said that emigrants don't leave empty-handed. Rich and poor alike took cash with them, which could pose a local problem at a time when cash was in short supply. We can get an idea of the size of the sums taken by the Bas-Rhin between 1828 and 1837 by comparing them, for example (table 32, below), with the Bas-Rhin's land tax revenues in each arrondissement (in francs).

**Table 32. Cash flight (Bas-Rhin)**

Districts	Land taxes in 1835 <sup>7</sup>	Average annual sums taken <sup>8</sup>	Percent of land taxes
Saverne	339,506	22,171	6.53
Sélestat	489,073	2,485	0.51
Strasbourg	807,934	15,916	1.97
Wissembourg	246,035	41,505	16.87

It's understandable that, in the already impoverished Wissembourg district for example, this cash drain could have caused problems.

### *The departure of skilled workers*

In addition to the desire to retain wealthy Alsatians and prevent money from leaving the country, the authorities – often alerted by industrialists – also wanted to retain skilled workers, whose departure could be a cause of unfair competition for France. When Pierre Anschütz, a worker at the Zinswiller forges, emigrated to the United States, many Zinswiller workers were inspired by his example, applying for passports to America and leaving Alsace to work at the Pittsburgh steelworks. In the meantime, twelve families from Wissembourg had obtained passports to go to America. The Count of Steinthal, although concerned, denied – after investigation – that this was a foreign plot:

[...] Everything will prove – he writes – that no secret agent of a foreign government is involved in this affair [...].<sup>9</sup>

The departure of one or two workers would not, in itself, be a problem, but industrialists feared that the phenomenon would spread, so they were very vigilant. In 1843, it was the mayor of Mulhouse, Charles Emile Dollfus, who, in a letter to the prefect of the Haut-Rhin department, expressed his concern about the recruitment of Henri Castro's agents for Texas. We also see Aimé Philippe Roman, mayor of Husseren, but above all a partner in the management of the great Wesserling factory, protesting against Castro's commitments, which seem to affect skilled labor.<sup>10</sup> The sub-prefect of Belfort also echoes the concerns of industrialists:

[...] Emigration is the result of men working in industrial professions such as engravers, draftsmen and weavers, who will take their useful industry to the various countries where they are needed. Most of them come from factories in the Saint-Amarin valley, and Wesserling has lost a large number of its workers [...].<sup>11</sup>

Much later, in 1859, the Minister of the Interior issued the following note, reflecting a legitimate concern:

[...] Only issue foreign passports with caution to workers admitted to work in our weapons of war factories [...].<sup>12</sup>

Prefects, sub-prefects, mayors and industrialists had no legal means of retaining Alsatians. All emigrants – unscrupulous paupers, bad payers, debt-laden poor, well-to-do Alsatians, landowners, skilled workers (agricultural or industrial), honest and respectable workers – were then, if not forbidden to emigrate, at least subjected to incessant pressure from the authorities.

### **Pressure from the authorities**

The strict and rigorous application of passport legislation enabled the authorities to control would-be emigrants quite legally. The prefects closely monitored the actions of the passport police, approving and supporting them:

[...] I observe – said the Prefect of Bas-Rhin to the Minister of the Interior – that surveillance of travelers is being carried out with greater rigor and continuity [...]. The attention of the police will not slacken from its extreme surveillance as long as the circumstances impose it, as today the imperious duty [...].<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, all these steps are opportunities for the administration to try and dissuade would-be emigrants. The metaphors used in official correspondence to characterize the situation are indicative of their authors' innermost thoughts: leprosy, epidemic, chimerical hopes that need to be contained, and set the paternalistic tone of the discourse that prefectural authorities will adopt to convince would-be emigrants to abandon their plans:

[...] The local authorities [have] been instructed to halt the course of this disease and to seek the origin of the evil [...].<sup>14</sup>

[...] Gentlemen, It is not without sorrow that we see so many of our unfortunate compatriots, seduced by false promises, deceptive illusions, led astray by perfidious advice, fleeing our beautiful lands, abandoning the places where they were born, moving away from the churches and temples where they were baptized with the name of Christian, renouncing even the religious hope of reuniting their bones with the mortal remains of their father, and why? To go and seek imaginary goods in an unknown land, renouncing the real goods promised by the coming harvests, goods from which they are separated only by the short space of 50 days; to exchange temporary privations for the horrors of destitution, famine, abandonment and the anguish of despair; our gullible constituents, through lies alone, have rejected the truth, disregarded our solicitude and laughed at our terrors. [...] Gentlemen, it is in the sole interest of our compatriots that we have made them hear the voice of the fatherland! Like a tender mother, she watches over her children, she fears for them, not for herself, the misfortunes that are already punishing those among them who have remained deaf to this maternal voice; may the cry of their despair at least be heard by those who can still learn from others the lesson of experience; may it not be lost on all. Consult with the ministers of the various cults, make this letter known to all, so that they may all become aware of the frightening truths it contains, and [...] so that they may shudder [...].<sup>15</sup>

This piece is worthy of an anthology of Alsatian emigration. It's not entirely feigned, for it was indeed the prefects' duty to consider with benevolence the living conditions in which their constituents might have had to struggle. However, in France, political and administrative leaders are sincerely convinced that foreign lands are dangerous places where you can only get lost. On the other hand, the tone is grandiloquent and affected, the intention fundamentally dishonest. The prefect seeks to move simple people, to put pressure on them in a roundabout way, appealing to their good feelings, their religiosity,

their sense of country. The process is not very elegant, even if the aim is justified, in the eyes of the prefect.

At the end of the 1820s, the authorities were still using dubious methods. The prefect of Haut-Rhin had two documents published, a letter addressed from New York to the mayor of Belfort:

[...] I beg you, Mr. Mayor, to persuade anyone who might want to come here that they would be much more miserable in America than at home [...].<sup>16</sup>

and an article in the *Journal du Havre* which is really discouraging:

[...] We have before our eyes a most distressing sight, that of the unfortunate Swiss and Alsatians, who, without any resources, have come to Le Havre to seek passage to the United States. These unfortunate people, almost all with large families, wander the streets half-dressed, begging passers-by for mercy [...].<sup>17</sup>

Apparently, nothing gets through to the emigrants. Those who want to leave are leaving, but the French government isn't giving up:

[...] In order to put an end to expatriation, which can only be an unfortunate step for those who undertake it, and to preserve for France a host of workers and craftsmen whose industry is necessary to her prosperity, I believe I must ask Your Excellency to kindly obtain through diplomatic channels documents on the fate of French people who have emigrated, most likely to protect weak minds from the attempts of greed, and to enlighten them about the dangers and abandonment they have to fear in distant lands where the action of the King's government is powerless to protect them [...].<sup>18</sup>

This letter clearly illustrates the state of mind that presides over emigration in France. A state of mind that remained steadfast, despite changes of government, and that even the hope of profiting from foreign emigration for French commerce would have difficulty in reversing. Thus, in the 1840s, Charles Bret – prefect of the Upper Rhine region – drafted circular after circular to contain Alsatian emigration to Texas. The content of the circulars was always the same:

[...] I can only invite you, Gentlemen [the Sub-Prefects and Mayors] to use all your influence to dissuade [the inhabitants] from a project whose realization could only have the most disastrous consequences for them [...].<sup>19</sup>

And yet, in 1843, Guizot, Louis-Philippe's Minister of Foreign Affairs, dropped a big word:

[...] On February 14 last, Monsieur Guizot told me that emigration to Texas could be tolerated [...].<sup>20</sup>

This stance had no immediate effect. The Alsatian administration was overwhelmed by the publicity and initial success of Henri Castro's Texas colony project in Alsace. They immediately retreated into a narrow, negative view of emigration.

These French attitudes to emigration should be set against the slowness of French leaders to understand the benefits that the country could derive from foreign emigration, which far outnumbered domestic emigration. The drafters of the decree were faced with a difficult contradiction: they had to intervene so that French commerce could benefit from emigration without contributing to the development of national emigration; they had to legislate without legitimizing; they had to attract without encouraging. A perilous task! In any case, the 1855 treaty sounded the death knell for complaints, lamentations and official pressure against emigration.

## Conclusion

The impact of repeated pressure from the Alsatian authorities on Alsatian emigration to the USA is very difficult to measure. It's hard to believe that they were without consequences. The most credible is to think that they affected the most hesitant, the most undecided. Were the sentimental, patriotic paternalism

of the Alsatian authorities, their slightly threatening predictions of the supposedly appalling fate awaiting the poor immigrants, really effective? The Alsatian local authorities, unofficially charged with restricting emigration, were forced to maneuver flexibly – taking from the right hand what the left gave. They hid their opposition to emigration under humanitarian pretexts, which they no doubt had no trouble convincing themselves of. As for the Alsatians determined to emigrate, they did not let themselves be lulled by the “admonitions” or “persuasion” of the local authorities, since their decision was probably irreversible and the insinuations of the officials not convincing enough to stop them.

## **Additives**

### **Family expenses**

[...] Contributions [are] a burden that is becoming more and more unbearable every day, a burden from which we are freed in the other hemisphere [...]. They make a great argument [...].<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the taxes that burden Alsatian families, it's important to know that in the event of even the slightest crisis, consumer price rises are immediate. In times of food shortage, speculation on cereals develops at an alarming rate, ruining and starving the most destitute. Wages in industry and agriculture are low. When industrial crises hit, workers had to face unemployment. In agriculture, farm prices are high. Land is scarce and expensive. Family debt is a real plague. Usury is a common practice that disadvantages the middle classes. Some Alsatians subsisted on begging and public charity. This brief overview gives an idea of the difficulties that some of Alsace's population were likely to face in the 19th century, difficulties that were exacerbated in the event of bad weather, epidemics or war. Some families, plunged into the infernal cycle of poverty, preferred to emigrate. The sub-prefect of Wissembourg himself acknowledges that the emigration of the inhabitants of his arrondissement is proof of this,

[...] that they suffer more than their patience [allowed him] to suspect [...].<sup>22</sup>

### **Sale of property**

[...] Along with concentrated settlement, soil fragmentation is the most characteristic feature of the Alsatian landscape [...].<sup>23</sup>

This fragmentation goes back a long way, to well before the Civil Code – which is generally, and wrongly, held solely responsible for the parcelling out of land – because it requires properties to be divided up by inheritance.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, the division of the soil had been in the making since the Middle Ages, and worsened considerably over time. In the 19th century, the situation stabilized, but the land was still divided into strips.<sup>25</sup> The result was a class of small and micro-property owners who had very little to live on.

[...] What makes their situation even worse is that their properties are encumbered by annuities that they are unable to pay, and that they are constantly being pursued by their creditors [...].<sup>26</sup>

Owning property in 19th-century Alsace was not synonymous with affluence, let alone wealth. In the agrarian system of parcellism and extreme division of property, it was common for families, albeit very poor, to own the land they farmed. Paradoxically, this makes emigration easier, as these families can sell their small holdings and thus raise the money they need to travel:

[...] Valentin Haas, tailor in Rott, married, nine children [...] is completely without work and without resources. His only possessions are a house and a small garden, which he has put up for sale, hoping to earn enough to make the trip [...].<sup>27</sup>

[...] Most people who emigrate to America after having exhausted all their resources, head for Le Havre [...].<sup>28</sup>

In so doing, these emigrants from Alsace showed that they had made a definitive choice. They forbid themselves any possibility of returning, but at the same time, if they raise enough money, they give themselves the means to successfully establish themselves in the United States. It's not just the poor who do this. There are also those whose real estate holdings represent significant capital:

[...] The [two families] from Schwerzhausen did not leave the commune by stealth. They had had their furniture and real estate put up for auction several times over a two-week period [...]. They collected a small fortune in cash [...].<sup>29</sup>

These sales are not always in the best interests of the emigrants. Speculators,

[...] vile purchasers of goods at a low price, watch [...].<sup>30</sup>

One of the methods used by speculators is as follows. They buy

[...] by obtaining powers of attorney, by means of which they sell the buildings in the name of the owner himself, making a profit from the excess price [...].<sup>31</sup>

Without going to such extremes, it is certain that in periods of high emigration, prices tended to fall, which was not attractive to emigrants. Emigrants also demanded cash sales, which was another reason for buyers to negotiate lower prices.

During these periods of high sales volumes, the Treasury records an increase in revenue in the form of registration fees.

### **Religious issues**

In the 19th century, there were no major religious problems in Alsace. Catholics and Protestants lived side by side. Catholics were the most numerous. On the other hand, Jews were well established in Alsace, and Anabaptists (Mennonites, Amish) formed well-structured communities. The only religious reasons given by emigrants to justify their emigration were Protestants, who persisted in refusing to serve a Catholic king, and Anabaptists, who refused to bear arms.<sup>32</sup>

[...] An Anabaptist who lived at Zellerhoff had eight boys and several girls. He left to keep all his children with him and to avoid conscription [...].<sup>33</sup>

The Protestants, who refused to serve a Catholic king, had – perhaps – a second religious reason for emigrating: a certain disappointment linked to the evolution of the Augsburg Confession Church in Alsace, which was becoming increasingly conformist.<sup>34</sup>

Religious causes were, in fact, only secondary, and all religions were equally affected by emigration.

Alsatian Jews also emigrated between 1815 and 1870, but at no time do the sources mention a Jewish emigration that would have been distinguished, by particular traits, from Alsatian emigration. We know, for example, that between 1864 and 1869 all emigrants from Niederbronn were Jewish, as were those from Wissembourg. They made their way to New Orleans, where, unfortunately, their traces have been lost.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that, once in the United States, Alsatian Catholics, Protestants and Anabaptists tried to group together with compatriots of the same religion. When they settled on the frontier, one of their first tasks was to build a temple or a church. Several examples illustrate this model perfectly. Emigrants from Ban-de-la-Roche – Oberlin's stronghold – built a "French Protestant church" as soon as they arrived in Serena (Illinois) or Woolstock (Iowa).<sup>36</sup> As for Henri Castro's Catholic émigrés, as soon as they arrived they laid the foundation stone for a Catholic church dedicated to Saint Louis de France.<sup>1</sup>

As for the Anabaptists, they always traveled in groups. In 1817, some 50 Alsatians were reported to be heading for Philadelphia. Pennsylvania was home to an Anabaptist community – founded in 1725 by Swiss and Alsatians – through which new settlers usually passed.<sup>37,38</sup> The *Courrier du Bas-Rhin* of July 29, 1819 reproduced an excerpt from the *Philadelphia Gazette* announcing the arrival of one hundred and thirty Anabaptists from the Strasbourg area with

[...] considerable funds. They have just left for the State of Illinois where [they] bought land for themselves last summer [...].

Finally, two anecdotes which illustrate a certain type of Alsatian ecumenism which – when circumstances did not allow, as we have just said, for grouping by religion, or simply when personal convenience demanded it – must have been widely practiced by emigrants:

[...] I understand John David was Protestant and his wife Catholic and that they had an agreement whereby the boys would be brought up Catholic and the girls Protestant. The first six children were boys [...].<sup>39</sup>

[...] Francis Anthony Lantzner arrived in the U.S.A. [Georgia] at the age of twelve [...]. The nearest catholic church was miles away [...], consequently he became a Baptist and took an active role in civic church activities and even joined the masons [...].<sup>40</sup>

### The demographic question

The demographic surplus of the 19th century is one of the most common reasons given for Alsatian emigration. Between 1801 and 1866, Alsace enjoyed exceptional population growth. During this period, the population of Bas-Rhin increased by 50%, and that of Haut-Rhin by 74%.<sup>41</sup> they are among the French departments with the highest human density. As for establishing a causal link between population density and emigration, there's a fine line to tread. Indeed, if we look at the six French departments with the highest population density, we see that they don't necessarily have high emigration.<sup>42</sup>

**Table 33. 1851**

Department	Density	Number of emigrants (U.S.)
Seine	2,996.90	1,549
Rhône	205.90	13
North	203.80	6
Bas-Rhin	129.10	189
Seine-Inférieure	126.10	265
Haut-Rhin	120.20	644

The surplus population argument is further weakened by the fact that, in the Bas-Rhin region, it was the least populated arrondissement – Wissembourg – which lost the highest percentage of its population, 7%, between 1828 and 1837. If strong population growth alone were sufficient to explain Alsatian emigration, how can we account for the fact that, at the same time as Alsatians were emigrating to the USA, Swiss, Germans and Italians were immigrating to Alsace? We can only be cautious on this point. If the links between emigration and population growth exist, they are probably complex and indirect.

## Recruiters before 1855

Recruiters were an obsession of the civil authorities, police and gendarmerie. A recruiter was any person who encouraged emigration, either by offering “engagements” to emigrants – free transport on condition of serving a “divine right” boss on arrival – or by having emigrants sign contracts on behalf of a colonization company, or by advertising for a shipping company, or by privately organizing the voyage of a certain number of compatriots. In reality, there were few successful recruitments in Alsace. The only successful one was Henri Castro (1843-1847), who worked in Alsace for a time, assisted by two agents. The aim was to populate Henri Castro’s land holdings in Texas. Castro and his agents were partially successful. Their adventure is the subject of Chapters VIII and IX (pp. 181-222) of this book.<sup>43</sup>

Next to Henri Castro, the other recruiters pale into insignificance and seem totally ineffective. Yet the Gendarmerie sees recruiters everywhere.

**In 1817, recruiters were a veritable phobia.** The authorities were suspicious of anyone whose words alone might encourage emigration. This is how Madame de Deux-Ponts came to be suspected by the Bas-Rhin police:

[...] I have no material evidence against her, but I am convinced, as an administrator, that she is no stranger to this idea of emigrating to America [...] and I have her under surveillance [...].<sup>44</sup>

Still in 1817, the police were convinced they were on the verge of discovering those responsible for the emigration. To this end, they question the would-be emigrants:

- what are the names of those pushing Alsatians to emigrate?
- who writes the petitions?
- what expectations are given to them to encourage them to leave their department?
- where is the meeting point for the convoys they’ll be leaving with?

The answers they receive are always imprecise: hearsay, word-of-mouth, opinion, rumor. Most of the people interviewed – suspected of having been in contact with recruiting agents or of being “secret enrollees for America”<sup>45</sup> – say that they have simply helped to spread rumors of unknown origin. Despite repeated police investigations, it was never possible to catch the recruiters red-handed. There was always a shortage of evidence to support the case against the recruiters. The authorities tried to explain the emigration as the result of a conspiracy:

[...] Everything points to a combined plan, to views directed against France and its people. The causes [of emigration] must be sought in political intrigues [...].<sup>46</sup>

The wildest rumors are circulating:

[...] It is claimed that the U.S. government is encouraging desertion for its own country, sending ships to Holland at its own expense to pick up passengers and feed them on the way. Others claim that it is the French banis established in the New World who give the impetus to this emigration and that they seek to populate, for clearing, the country’s lands which they have bought from the government [...].<sup>47</sup>

In December of that fateful year 1817, the Prefect of Bas-Rhin was still battling with faceless recruiters:

[...] It is said that several individuals disguised as English, Dutch or French travelers are seeking, through false promises, to encourage emigration to America. [...] As it would not be impossible that these gentlemen would again seek to make victims of their guilty speculations, I recommend that you [mayors] exercise the most active surveillance in this respect, and, should such facts come to your attention, to immediately arrest the perpetrators and have them brought before me by the gendarmerie and submit a report of this operation to the Public Prosecutor’s Office, to be prosecuted by them as appropriate [...].<sup>48</sup>



However, according to our sources, there is no trace of recruitment in Alsace in 1817. On the other hand, it seems – though not in Alsace itself – that the engagement system flourished. It was once they reached the port of Amsterdam that emigrants met those who bought their labor in exchange for passage. At this stage, the French authorities were totally powerless.

**1819**, the phoenix rises from its ashes. This time, there are some indications. In a letter to the sub-prefect of Wissembourg, the prefect of Bas-Rhin warned his colleague:

[...] An American colonization company seems to want to publish a prospectus, a few copies of which might be distributed in the district you administer [...].<sup>49</sup>

The leaflet was enclosed with the prefect's letter. It was intended for both Germans and French. It was written in both languages, and one could indeed fear for Alsace. The company was based in Mannheim: it seems to have gone completely unnoticed in Alsace.

**1820**, Joseph Kieffer, agent for the Frenchman Le Ray de Chaumont – whose son, Vincent, wanted to develop the land his father had bought in America – scoured Alsace for would-be emigrants.<sup>50</sup> Joseph Kieffer not only circulates in Alsace, he is also spotted in Lorraine.<sup>51</sup> He works in liaison with a certain Bettinger, from Le Havre, who is the author of a guide for emigrants.<sup>52</sup> All these individuals act as “rabatteurs.” They do not encourage emigration.

1827. [...] I am assured that some wealthy individuals from Strasbourg, including Monsieur de Turckheim, have purchased a large tract of uncultivated land in North America, and that it is with the intention of developing it that they have imagined provoking emigration to this part of the New Continent by spreading the most exaggerated rumors about the advantages of this region, and the facilities provided by the government for making the crossing [...].<sup>53</sup>

1830. [...] The agents and instigators in France [for emigration to America] are five in number [...]. [These are] Barthélemy Mahler, Pont-Sainte-Catherine, no. 167 in Strasbourg, reported as a matchmaker and agent. Originally from Seltz, where he does not enjoy a good reputation [...]. Weiskopf, Alsatian, lives in Paris, rue des Vieux-Augustins, no. 41 [...]. He is the author of lithographed letters. Niehel, an innkeeper in Phalsbourg [Meurthe] and valet, driving emigrants and their belongings to Le Havre, seems doubly interested in these operations as a go-between. Nicolas Price, who we assume to be Anglo-American, is the agent in charge of departures by sea [...].<sup>54</sup>

Also around 1830, two “characters,” living respectively in Niederlauterbach and Niederroedern in the Wissembourg district, acted as recruiting agents.<sup>55</sup>

**1832**. A private individual from Alsace proposed sending poor emigrants to America at public expense, thereby ridding the country of undesirables:

- transport to America, at government expense, of all those wishing to leave France, especially Alsace;
- maintenance for a year in a foreign land;
- purchase of land from the U.S. government;
- concession of this land to émigrés, repayable with interest;
- supply of utensils and seeds needed to cultivate the land.

The prefect's response was embarrassed:

[...] I cannot address to the Minister of the Interior a project whose execution I myself recognize to be impossible. If you do not share my opinion in this respect, there is nothing to prevent you from addressing your views on emigration to America to the higher authority [...].<sup>56</sup>

**1839**. An Alsatian woman from Le Havre managed to charter a ship to take a number of her compatriots to America. She claims to have obtained good prices and proposes to repeat the experience.<sup>57</sup>

The prefect replies:

[...] If Mrs. Hettinger's offers to the mayor of Wissembourg are dictated by philanthropic considerations, she may make them known through the press. Under no circumstances may the administration act as an intermediary between emigrants and this lady, whether her intention is solely to oblige or to speculate [...].<sup>58</sup>

**1845.** A man named Carteywels is reported, who claims to be a priest and is encouraging residents to emigrate to America. The address of the person in charge to whom people wishing to emigrate should go is that of Ignace Garner, in Schweighausen. Carteywels succeeded in convincing two Lower Rhine families to sell their possessions before leaving.<sup>59</sup>

**1855.** Two individuals from the cantons of Hochfelden and Brumath engage in clandestine recruitment of emigrants. One is a farmer in Schwindratzheim, the other a schoolteacher in Mommenheim.<sup>60</sup>

In the same year, the special commissioner of St. Louis complained that emigration agencies were delegating their powers to individuals who travelled the countryside urging people to leave for the United States.<sup>61</sup>

1855 marked the officialization of emigration (imperial decree), and thus the freedom for all those who made a living from it to work in broad daylight. The big question is whether, in the years leading up to 1855, recruiters – with the exception of Henri Castro, whose success in Alsace cannot be ignored – were really behind emigration. Measuring the impact and influence of an event on the behavior of a population is always a tricky business. Here, objective measuring instruments are lacking. The idea that remains, after studying the recruiters' files before 1855, is that this was not really an industry, but rather individual initiatives – more or less successful, more or less serious – which often had no future, but which probably contributed to maintaining a climate of emigration in Alsace. Recruiters' cases were always minor and rarely followed up by the police themselves. Rather than provoking emigration, "recruiters" sought to take advantage of it, more or less skillfully.

## **The economic climate**

### **The year 1817 and the famine**

5,191 emigrants in six months. Never again will Alsace see such a large emigration movement. This was undoubtedly due to the tremendous food shortage that hit France in 1817, and from which the eastern provinces suffered particularly badly. In the spring of 1817, Alsatians paid for the disasters of 1816. Natural disasters – rain, storms, hail, floods – had destroyed crops and harvests. Vineyards had been hit, as had potatoes. Cereal harvests also failed. By the winter of 1816-1817, food supplies had been completely exhausted. Speculators drove the price of what was still available to unaffordable heights. Strasbourg speculated on bread made from grain purchased abroad.

In addition to this food shortage, which distressed and impoverished the population, Alsace in 1817 was still occupied by allied soldiers. Feeding them (and their horses!) was an enormous ordeal for an exsanguinated province in the throes of one of the most serious subsistence crises in its history. All these soldiers were the responsibility of the local population, who had a hard time putting up with their presence. Brawls even broke out between Alsatians and allies.<sup>62</sup> In a letter to the Minister of the General Police in Paris, the Prefect of Bas-Rhin summed up the living conditions of his department's inhabitants in January 1817:

[...] It cannot be concealed that circumstances of varying severity have long weighed heavily on this department. The evils inseparable from a long war have been compounded by the mediocrity and inadequacy of the last harvest, and the absolute lack of a grape harvest. This has been followed by an excessive rise in the cost of all items increasingly indispensable to life, beyond the means of many

classes of day laborers and workers, and perhaps we should not be surprised by the resolution of unfortunate families to seek in other countries resources they cannot find in their homeland [...].<sup>63</sup>

As money became scarce, shortages began to affect all sectors of economic life. Begging, misery and theft increased. Impoverishment became widespread. Poverty is one of the causes most often cited by emigrants to justify their departure. The fathers who wrote the petitions declared themselves destitute and deprived of the bare necessities of life, without resources, without work, and unable to provide for their wives and children. By leaving, they hope to escape this state of extreme destitution. According to the petitions, there is – for emigrants – a serious employment problem. Almost all of them refer to the fact that the father no longer earns any money. The lack of work and the certainty of not finding any are leitmotifs. Urbain Kudzy, for example, from the commune of Zinswiller,

[...] very humbly presents [that he has been unable to practice] his profession of wheelwright for a very long time in this commune which, for the most part, is made up only of day laborers and artisans, and that there are still two of the same trade in this place [...].<sup>64</sup>

This wheelwright no longer has enough customers. Through his example, we can see that the craft industry is affected by the problem of unemployment. Other areas of economic life are also affected. In industry, for example, foundry worker Georges Fritzinger, from the same commune, was laid off by the director of the forges. When he received his notice, he decided to emigrate.<sup>65</sup>

Agriculture has not been spared. Jacques Bernhard can no longer do his job

[...] because the property he [operated] was sold and his lease terminated [...].<sup>66</sup>

In a region temporarily impoverished by the hurricane of food shortages and their knock-on effects on the local economy, emigration acted as a safety valve. While social unrest and even riots broke out in many French departments as a result of the food shortage, the particularly hard-hit departments of Alsace remained aloof from violent demonstrations.<sup>67</sup> This interpretation of emigration as a safety valve is supported by the fact that it was concentrated in the spring of 1817, during the most difficult months. Emigration ceased almost as abruptly as it had begun, as the population regained hope in better harvests. As early as June 1817, the Prefect of Bas-Rhin was able to write:

[...] No passport applications have reached me since the last fortnight of this month [...]. I have reason to believe that this movement is coming to an end in my department. The result is mainly due to the prospect of a generally abundant harvest, which has revived the hopes of the inhabitants [...].<sup>68</sup>

In the event of a serious crisis, emigration acts as a safety reflex for the population. America is seen as a recourse.

## **The Bas-Rhin in 1828-1837**

### ***The Forestry Code***

The trigger for the Bas-Rhin emigration of 1828-1837 was undoubtedly the application of the 1827 Forestry Code. Until then, forest use had been unrestricted. The Bas-Rhinois enjoyed long-standing rights of use: collecting dead wood for heating; removing dead leaves used either as animal bedding or fertilizer; cutting heather and broom for fodder; frequenting livestock, especially pigs; picking wild berries and fruit; collecting mushrooms. All these operations were significant benefits in kind for the inhabitants of wooded regions, which were generally poor. The forest provided a few head of cattle, which in turn supplied the manure needed to grow potatoes and cereals. Usage rights were widely exploited. Abuses were committed and constantly punished. Fines for forestry offences often went unpaid, due to the poverty of the local population. Deprived of dead leaves – their natural fertilizer – and overexploited, the forests were withering away, and it had become urgent to concern ourselves with their conservation and reforestation. In any case, this was the argument put forward by the political authorities to justify the

authoritarian standards of the new Forestry Code of 1827. All of a sudden, usage rights were called into question. They were suddenly reserved for a minority whose rights had been recognized by government acts or final rulings, or as a result of administrative or judicial proceedings. Communes and individuals had been warned of the procedure to follow and the formalities to be completed if they believed they were entitled to claim the maintenance of their usage rights. The clause was far too complicated, and amounted to an outright annulment of the old usage rights as practiced by the inhabitants of the Bas-Rhin region. The Forest Code was immediately very unpopular, but had to be accepted. Initially, however, the populations for whom the forest was an indispensable auxiliary continued with their previous practices. Fines and prosecutions rained down on them. In a second stage, some decided to emigrate:

[...] All these individuals [...] left this commune because it is located on the heights of the Vosges where the soil is so unyielding that a lot of manure is needed. And they were deprived of the free right to remove dead leaves from the forests surrounding the commune [...].<sup>69</sup>

Testimonials of this kind abound:

[...] When you know the canton they live in, the ungratefulness of the land, the impossibility of harvesting without fertilizer, and the impossibility of obtaining fertilizer without the resource of dead leaves collected in the forests, you can understand how discouragement sets in among families who have no other prospects than misery [...].<sup>70</sup>

[...] The inhabitants of this department asked for permission to collect the dead leaves needed to fertilize their land. This was refused. Such severity makes people unattached to the government and leads them to leave to seek opportunities elsewhere. This emigration stems from the discouragement they feel at the prospect of misery as the price of their labor, and the certainty of a happier future offered to them by their expatriate compatriots [...].<sup>71</sup>

This analysis clearly shows how the two sides of emigration are combined. On the one hand, a good reason to leave; on the other, a good host country.

The suspension of usage rights led to such protests that the administration was forced to back down and give in, at least on the question of dead leaves, for which it authorized – temporarily – collection between March 3 and April 15, 1827, which was clearly insufficient to alleviate the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of poor forest regions.

The forest problem became a veritable litany. The district councillors of Saverne and Wissembourg, whose communes were heavily affected by emigration, regularly asked the Prefect of Bas-Rhin to renew the authorization to remove dead leaves from royal and communal forests. It was only after painful and laborious discussions that they obtained meagre concessions.

### ***The repercussions of the Haut-Rhin industrial crises***

In addition to the problem of the Forestry Code, the decade between 1828 and 1837 was also marked by uncertainty in the Lower Rhine textile industry, due to the cotton crisis in Mulhouse between 1826 and 1828. Unemployment spread from the Haut-Rhin to the whole of Alsace (10,000 unemployed). 1830-1831: the economy falters again. The government votes a credit of five million to provide work for the unemployed. The main communes of Bas-Rhin ask to benefit from this favor. The Bischwiller drapery, which had been spared until then, saw its situation deteriorate in 1832: fewer workers, lower wages.<sup>72</sup>

From 1828 to 1837, as in 1817, Alsatians were quick to respond to local instability and crisis by emigrating to the United States. Emigration to the United States was the natural response of the Bas-Rhinois to the dangers that threatened them. During the years 1828-1837, America had to offer a good chance of success. In 1837, the banking and financial crisis in the United States was a deterrent. The Bas-Rhinois cautiously avoided leaving.

### **The years 1838-1857 and emigration from Alsace**

Alsatian emigration increased with the economic problems of 1839. The cotton crisis, which began in the Haut-Rhin, spread once again to the Bas-Rhin. Spinning mills, draperies and hosiery were producing less, as were forges and machine shops. Emigration did not reach the heights of 1817 or 1828, probably because it was held back by the crisis that was simultaneously developing in the United States, a crisis largely responsible for Alsace's problems.

From 1842 to 1846, emigration – despite Henri Castro's recruitment efforts – did not soar spectacularly. On the other hand, the return of the economic crisis in 1846-1848 brought an upturn in Alsatian emigration.

### ***The 1846-1848 crisis in Alsace***

The crisis of 1846-1848 was not unique to Alsace, but once again the province was severely affected. A latent industrial crisis was compounded by a new shortage of grain and potatoes. As early as August 1846, it was clear that harvests would be insufficient. By February 1847, the price of wheat had returned to 1817 levels – a disaster.<sup>73</sup> The sharp rise in agricultural prices once again impoverished the population. This agricultural crisis was compounded by an industrial and political crisis, which accentuated the negative effects for the working class. The authorities tried to help the most disadvantaged. Strasbourg made enormous sacrifices to keep the price of bread within reasonable limits. The city voted a credit of 20,000 francs to ensure that the poor were served bread below the posted price. A credit of 60,000 francs was released to keep over a thousand unemployed workers busy. A home survey was carried out for the poor. It brought in 40,000 francs. In Mulhouse, there was a scuffle because the long-awaited reduction in the price of bread did not come quickly enough. This situation lasted until the end of May 1847, when large grain deliveries began to bring prices down. The average price per hectoliter of wheat returned to affordable levels:

- May 14, 1847 : 49.15 F
- May 21, 1847 : 45.10 F
- May 28, 1847 : 39.02 F
- June 4, 1847 : 27.75 F.<sup>74</sup>

The situation in 1846-1848 was locally reminiscent of that in 1817. It seems, however, that relief was organized more quickly. Perhaps this is why Alsatians emigrated less than in 1817. At the same time, the United States was enjoying a period of prosperity, marked by the discovery of gold in California, the development of the railroads and the growth of trade. This situation was attractive to Alsatians who, suffering from the impoverishment caused by the French crisis, had a double reason to emigrate.

### ***The refusal of military service***

From 1851 onwards, Alsatian emigration resumed and grew until 1854, the date of its third and final surge. At this point, the lure of the United States clearly played a decisive role (discovery of gold in California, development of colonization, extension of railroads, growth in trade). As for Alsatian emigration, it changed in nature. Whereas at the beginning of the century it had mainly involved families, it was now increasingly recruiting young, single men, probably bachelors looking to seize the opportunities offered by America. Many of these young men are seeking to escape military service.

French legislation on military service is the work of Marshal Gouvion-Saint-Cyr. It dates back to 1818. Military service was not compulsory. The army finds its quota of men by drawing lots. Those who drew the wrong number had to serve seven years in the army. The wealthiest buy replacements. The rest are

exempted. Traditionally, Alsace is a reservoir of replacements. In this way, young men from the poorer classes found a way out of the employment problems they periodically faced. Soldiers were recruited in several stages:

- Each year, the age group is entered on the recruitment tables;
- the cantonal quota is based on official counts;
- the draw determines who will be part of the contingent;
- young people who have drawn the right number are released from military service;
- those who can afford to do so pay for a replacement;
- when operations are over, the names of new recruits are entered on the army's departmental list, and it is only then that young civilians come under military authority.

### *The turn of the century*

At the turn of the century, when entire families were heading for America, sons of military service age would sometimes take advantage of the opportunity and set sail, never to return. In such cases, the main motivation was not to escape military service, but to follow their families. We can be sure of the opposite when young people leave just before the drawing of lots. In such cases, the authorities would like to be able to refuse passport applications, but this would not be legal, as the Minister of the Interior points out:

[...] As for young people who, because of their age, belong to a recruitment class, but who have not yet been designated for the contingent, we cannot, in the current state of legislation, refuse them passports to go abroad. The only condition, if they are minors, is to have the consent of their parents or guardians [...].<sup>75</sup>

[...] The administration may not take any measure against them which would tend to restrict the exercise of their individual freedom [...].<sup>76</sup>

During the first half of the century, the phenomenon remained marginal. Nonetheless, the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin region called on mayors to monitor the issue carefully and precisely: in the event of passport applications from young people

[...] belonging, by age, to recruitment classes that have not yet been released, [...] you must make known their exact position, the number they obtained in the drawing of lots for such and such a class, in such and such a canton, whether or not they are part of the contingent, whether they have been exempted for infirmity or any other reason [...].<sup>77</sup>

During this surveillance, a few passports were refused. Not many, it's true.

### *Momentum is building*

The turning point came in the 1850s. Alsace – which until then had been a large reserve of voluntary recruits and replacements – began to change its face. Young people were refusing military service. By 1853, the phenomenon was gaining momentum:

[...] Already, on several occasions [...], during the drawing of lots, and particularly this year, young men in the class have been reported to me as having left just a few months ago to avoid military service [...].<sup>78</sup>

[...] Passports are requested by young men aged twenty [...], for America, before they have drawn lots, and whose aim seems to be to evade the law on recruitment. As the situation is becoming more widespread and could cause serious inconvenience, I have had to report it [...] so that measures can be taken [...].<sup>79</sup>

The response from Paris is always the same: we can oppose the departure of young people before they have been drawn.

### *The Crimean War*

Events took a critical turn with the outbreak of the Crimean War. As early as February 1854, local authorities had expressed concern about the situation:

[...] The emigration of young people to avoid military service is becoming so frequent that it is becoming essential for the government to take measures to stop it [...].<sup>80</sup>

A kind of shift could be observed. Young boys were less and less careful to leave before the draw:

[...] Many young men, after having drawn lots, when they are included in the contingent, or at the time of drawing lots when they are included in the contingent, or finally having been admitted as replacements, leave for America and thus evade the law on recruitment and the obligations they may have contracted. This practice is becoming so frequent [that it must be stopped ...].<sup>81</sup>

On April 18, 1854, a law increased the French contingent from 80,000 to 140,000 men. This law had a major impact on Strasbourg, a garrison and border town. An enlistment register was opened. The first company of the fifteenth infantry regiment was ordered to stand ready for war.<sup>82</sup>

A few months later, young Alsatians were still refusing to join the army:

[...] Quite a large number of individuals, who, by their age, are likely to draw lots, are asking to emigrate to America, in fear no doubt of being included in the upcoming troop levy that the state of war makes necessary [...].<sup>83</sup>

More and more illegalities are being committed:

[...] In his letter of November 6, 1854, the police commissioner of Ferrette informs me that a certain Mr. Roth Jean, aged 24 [...] replacement for the class of 1853 [left for America] on the 5th of this month, taking with him the amount of his replacement [...].<sup>84</sup>

This was not an isolated case. In June of the same year, the police commissioner for the canton of Haguenau had already reported:

[...] It frequently happens that young people sign up for military service, receive the payment for their commitment and leave, as they say, for America [...].<sup>85</sup>

It's the prospect of having to fight that determines the departure of young emigrants. The Drulingen police commissioner admits as much when he declares:

[...] The situation is calm and tranquil in this canton. The population is in good spirits. Every day, they await news from the theater of war. Quite a few young men aged 18 to 20 are currently leaving their commune [...] to avoid the recruitment law [...].<sup>86</sup>

The authorities are worried:

[...] I have reason to fear – says the prefect of the Bas-Rhin – that this category of emigrants is considerable enough that the quota which, very probably, will be requested, cannot be supplied, in certain cantons [...].<sup>87</sup>

### *Confidential letter of December 21, 1854*

The fears of the prefectural authorities were soon shared by the French government, and on December 21 1854, the Alsatian prefects received a confidential letter worded as follows:

[...] The government [has so far] only put obstacles in the way of young men emigrating when, by closing the list of departmental contingents, they definitively belonged to the army. In the present situation, this tolerance cannot be as great as in the past. I therefore invite you, Mr. Prefect, to refrain from issuing, until further notice, any passports abroad to young people who have reached the age of 19 and have not been released from military service, whenever it appears to you that the motives behind the applications submitted to you are a plan to emigrate and a desire to evade the obligations of the recruitment law [...].<sup>88</sup>

The measure was enforced, but of course many illegal departures were recorded, either with domestic passports, or via foreign countries, mainly Basel. In 1856, the government upheld the decision of December 21, 1854:

[...] Even in times of peace, a certain number of young people seek to leave France to avoid [military obligations, so] you will continue, Mr. Prefect, to use dilatory means, as in the past, to maintain the restriction until the closing of the departmental contingent lists for those who, having to take part in the army lottery, will apply for passports abroad [...].<sup>89</sup>

On May 9, 1859, a new confidential circular insisted on the absolute necessity of implementing the instructions in the confidential letter of December 21, 1854.<sup>90</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Prevented from leaving, held back on their native soil by “paternal” (!) authorities, Alsatians, on the other hand, suffered the lure of America and the call of their compatriots. When the economic and social situation in Alsace temporarily deteriorated due to a crisis – the 1817 famine, the 1827 Forestry Code, the 1846-1848 crisis, the Crimean War – and the United States offered a wide range of opportunities, emigration flourished. This is pretty much the only overall conclusion that can be drawn from a study of the structural and cyclical causes of Alsatian emigration to the USA in the 19th century. For the rest, we have seen that Alsatian emigration did not follow a single, stereotyped model that would work in all cases: the triggering factors were many and varied. Several causes may have combined. As for responses, they varied in speed, intensity and duration.

## **Notes**

1 Cf. infra, chapter IX, “La Fête de la Saint-Louis”, pp. 214-216.

## **Endnotes**

1 Letter from the Prefect of the B.-R. to the Minister of the General Police, Strasbourg, January 23, 1817. A.N., F7 6138 9.

2 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the prefects of B.-R., H.-R. and Moselle, Paris, July 19, 1830. A.N., F7 9334.

3 Circulaire à Messieurs les Maires relative à l’émigration pour l’Amérique, Strasbourg February 3, 1830. A.D.B.-R., 3M 706.

4 Préfecture du B.-R., July 12, 1854. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.

5 A.D.B.-R., 3M 706.

6 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of the B.-R., Paris, April 6, 1827. A.N., F7 9334.

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- 19 Préfecture du H.-R., circulaire à Messieurs les sous-préfets et maires du H.-R., Colmar January 17, 1845. A.D.H.-R., 6M 375.
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- 21 Report from the B.-R. departmental gendarmerie, April 12, 1838. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 22 Letter from the sub-prefect of Wissembourg to the prefect of the B.-R., Wissembourg, March 12, 1818. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 23 Etienne JUILLARD, La Vie rurale dans la plaine de basse Alsace. Essai de démographie sociale, Paris, Les Belles Lettres / Strasbourg, publication de la faculté des lettres de l'université de Strasbourg, fascicule 123, 1953, p. 196.
- 24 Fernand de DARSTEIN, "le Morcellement des terres en Alsace", M.S.S.A.A., 1865, pp. 79-114; J. F. FLAXLAND, "Quelques considérations sur le morcellement des terres en Alsace", Revue d'Alsace, 1860, pp. 81-95; Etienne JUILLARD, op. cit. pp. 182- 194; Dominique LERCH, "le Paysan haut-rhinois au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle. Contribution à l'histoire des mentalités en Alsace" in Histoire de l'Alsace rurale, Paris / Strasbourg, Istra, 1983, pp. 305-345; Marie-Noëlle DENIS, "Système économique et évolution démographique en Alsace rurale aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles", Entretiens de Malher, Paris, December 12, 1983; Albert BLAS, De la transmission héréditaire intégrale d'une propriété en Alsace-Lorraine, law thesis, Strasbourg, 1927, 141 p.
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## CHAPTER VI. THE JOURNEY

Pages 143-166.

### Secondary ports of embarkation

Looking at the period as a whole, it's indisputable that the majority of Alsatians embarked at Le Havre. There are a few exceptions to this rule. These exceptions are dated and clearly circumscribed in time. Let's start by eliminating the case of the port of Dunkirk, which, despite the determination of its merchants, never succeeded in attracting emigration.<sup>1</sup>

### **Amsterdam: 1817**

For many Alsatians in 1817, the Rhine was the natural route to the sea. In 1817, it was not unusual for inhabitants of the same village to organize themselves to sail down to Amsterdam. Xavier Schies, from the village of Offendorf (Bas-Rhin), near the Rhine, a young farmer and "boatman," gathered around him a few emigrants, in order to transport them to Amsterdam,

[...] on the Rhine, on a boat belonging to him [...].<sup>2</sup>

All the emigrants organized in this small group declare themselves bound for Philadelphia. They will make the entire trip together, from the commune of departure to the port of arrival.

Some Alsatians, tempted by the idea of emigration, were employed to drive timber down the Rhine to Holland, thus reaching Amsterdam. Others simply took advantage of the passage of a boat loaded with Swiss or German emigrants. A number of such ships passed through in 1817. On March 30 of that year, the *Courrier du département du Bas-Rhin*, in its column “On écrit des bords du Rhin,” reported:

[...] A few days ago near Kehl, many country people and day laborers from Alsace joined [the foreign emigrants on the boats going down the Rhine]. Other transports will follow [...].<sup>3</sup>

The Alsatian emigrants waiting to embark in Amsterdam in 1817 were generally very poor:

[...] We really don’t know where to begin, just to give you an idea of the sad situation these unfortunate people find themselves in. On their arrival in our city, weak, sick and deprived of the first necessities [...], they have no other choice but to leave, and they will [then] pile into boats for the United States [...].<sup>4</sup>

Some of these emigrants hope to get on board for free.

### ***Hope for free passage: the commitment system***

What happened in Amsterdam in the 19th century with the Alsatians had already happened in the 17th and 18th centuries with the English and Dutch settlers to North America. Those who didn’t have the funds to pay for all or part of their crossing signed contracts with ship captains who agreed to transport them free of charge, provided that, on arrival, the emigrants served under them or their associates for many months, under conditions that were advantageous for the master but often humiliating and harassing for the emigrant. This system was called the “engagement” system, and those who resorted to it were called “engages.” In Holland, in 1817, this solution was far from having dried up. The *Courrier du département du Bas-Rhin* warned its readers to beware of

[...] Dutch speculators who have undertaken to send men to America, where they will fall into the power of the contractors [... as it is not possible for them to pay their transportation and maintenance costs [...]. They are therefore obliged to serve until their debt is paid [...].<sup>5</sup>

This practice is commonplace:

[...] On arrival, they fall into a kind of slavery until the expenses paid for their transport are paid by them or by the work of their hands [...].<sup>6</sup>

and its sometimes dramatic consequences:

[Alsations] from the countryside are commonly employed to clear uncultivated land in the interior of North America. Unaccustomed to the climate, the food and this kind of work, many of them end up dead [...].<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, the abuses committed in the name of this debt of passage were numerous. The profits made by the organizers of this mode of immigration, at the expense of poor immigrants, were out of all proportion to the value of the service rendered. The term “slavery” was often used, and rightly so, in the press of the time.

The Alsatians were informed. However, they did not give up their plans to emigrate. On arrival, those lucky enough to work under acceptable conditions found what they needed. That’s why, despite its excesses, the system lasted, to the great satisfaction of some of its users.

It's a tough leap to conclude that all Alsatians embarking in Amsterdam in 1817 did so at this price. Many Alsatians were undoubtedly able to embark under the conditions prevailing at the time, i.e. by paying in advance the sum required for the crossing, and by providing, at their own expense, the food and supplies indispensable for the duration of the sea voyage.

### ***Return and rescue***

At the last moment, just before embarking, some emigrants hesitate, others give up:

[...] Many want to return home, but lack the money [...].<sup>8</sup>

[Desperate families could engage in] crime or acts of desperation if they were not provided with the means to get home. Relief [has been] granted to them by foreign authorities from Holland to this border, according to the passports they carry, and [the Prefect of Bas-Rhin has] ordered that relief be granted to them [...].<sup>9</sup>

Fears of failure, always possible, always feared, were undoubtedly what drove emigrants to accept the draconian conditions of the “Dutch speculators.”

### **Antwerp: 1843-1846**

Antwerp is closer than Amsterdam for Alsatians, but the access routes are far less convenient. You either had to travel down the Rhine to Cologne, and from there by land or rail to the port, or travel by road and rail through northern France and Belgium. The Rhine was then served by steamboats, some of which went as far as Rotterdam. Cologne-based “Les bateaux à vapeur du Rhin” offered direct daily service to Mannheim, Mainz, Koblenz, Belgium, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. They departed daily from Strasbourg – from inside the city, opposite the Quai des Pêcheurs – at around 11 a.m., sometime after the arrival of the train from Colmar.<sup>10</sup>

In Alsace, the years 1843-1846 coincided with the wave of recruitment initiated by Henri Castro. He had made a commitment to the Texas government to bring six hundred families to the land that had just been granted to him by Texas. Castro had no trouble convincing the Alsatians that the adventure was worth trying. Many volunteered.

The Alsatian authorities are worried about this and want to curb emigration. They are becoming very fussy about issuing passports. As a result, there are more and more illegal and clandestine departures. And this illegal emigration is heading for Antwerp.

It's easy to see why. On February 2, 1843, the *Courrier du Haut-Rhin* published the following circular, dated January 26, 1843:

[...] The Belgian government, wishing to promote relations between France and Belgium through its international railroad sections, has abolished the passport verification service established at the border of the latter country [...].

The circular added that passports could be checked inland. This is doubtful, as it was precisely at this time that hundreds of Alsatian emigrants without passports were found in Antwerp, ready to embark for Galveston, Texas.<sup>11</sup>

Antwerp has the same problems as Amsterdam or any other port of emigration. Poor families find it difficult to embark. They clog up the city, prompting the Belgian government and local police to deport destitute foreigners. Alsatians were directly affected. The prefect of the Haut-Rhin department issued a circular to the mayors of his department:

[...] Families should be warned that they cannot obtain free passage to any Belgian port [...]. In Antwerp, for example, their passage can only be granted if they have, on arrival, a sum of 150 francs per head, a sum necessary for their travel expenses, the purchase of provisions and the possible expense of a more or less long stay in this port; that, in all cases, it would be more prudent not to leave their homes until they are assured, by a regular contract, that all arrangements have been made, at the place of embarkation, for their departure [...].<sup>12</sup>

In the years following 1846, emigration to Texas declined. Antwerp ceased to be the port of choice for undocumented emigrants. Alsatians found their way back to Le Havre.

### **The main port: Le Havre**

#### **American cotton and Alsatian emigration**

In fact, whatever the period, Le Havre was frequented by Alsatians. It's just that special circumstances – as in the case of Amsterdam and Antwerp – temporarily diverted some Alsatian emigration from the national port. At the start of our period, maritime traffic on the Atlantic was essentially in American hands. At the entrance to Le Havre, there were many cotton workers. On the way out, they were heading for New York, as many cotton merchants from the southern United States passed through New York before returning to their home ports.<sup>13</sup> As we know, New York is “the” port of American immigration.

We also know that, for lack of export products, American cotton growers risked leaving Le Havre in ballast, which was a scourge for the trade. Shipowners soon realized that emigrants or “steerage passengers” – as they were also known – constituted an extraordinarily advantageous return cargo, requiring no handling, no hoisting, a cargo that could be loaded and unloaded without outside intervention. In 1855, the situation was confirmed:

[...] The passage of emigrants became the means of return for American ships bringing cotton to Le Havre, which lacked cargo elements on the way out. This element found, the freight rate on cotton, which in the past had to cover the expense of two voyages, dropped and the construction of the ships themselves was modified. The Americans, abandoning the slender, elegant forms of their freighters, found ways to build ships that carried more bales of cotton, and then presented larger accommodations to the families of emigrants [...].<sup>14</sup>

American cotton accounted for a very high percentage of cotton imported into France: <sup>15</sup>

**Table 34. Percentage of US cotton in French cotton imports**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1821-1825	52.72
1826-1830	76.22
1831-1835	82.03
1836-1840	86.26
1841-1845	92.13
1846-1850	94.16
1851-1855	93.23
1856-1860	91.64

This trade took place mainly through the port of Le Havre. As can be seen, the years 1846-1855 saw the highest imports of American cotton, followed by a decline. Subsequently, the American Civil War

temporarily interrupted cotton deliveries.<sup>16</sup> European emigration (French and foreign) to the United States via Le Havre increased until 1854, after which it declined. The link between American cotton imports at Le Havre and emigration to the United States via Le Havre is therefore close. It's hardly surprising, then, that Alsatians always found enough cotton at Le Havre to embark for America, especially when we know that the cotton unloaded at Le Havre was largely sent to factories in Alsace and the Vosges, which were major consumers of American cotton.<sup>17</sup>

This Alsatian outlet was the arrival point for cotton and the departure point for Alsatian emigrants to the United States.

### *Alsations in Normandy*

Cotton creates links between Alsace and the United States, but more specifically between Alsace, Le Havre and Normandy, which have been familiar to Alsatians since the 18th century. As early as 1774, Jean and Michel Haussmann (from Alsace) set up a factory in Rouen. A year later, they were among the founders of the famous Logelbach factory, near Colmar. Gaspard Schlumberger of Mulhouse prints indiennes in Rouen at the end of the 18th century. In 1808, the indienne factory in Dieppedale (Seine-Inférieure) was run by the Risler brothers, originally from Mulhouse. They were associated with Alexandre Vogel, also from Mulhouse. In 1826, the Feer and Dollfus brothers, also from Mulhouse, took over management of the factory. Jean-Jacques Horr, whose family originated from Durrenentzen in the Haut-Rhin, set up a factory in Deville-lès-Rouen in the late 1820s. He had previously worked at Dieppedale. As for the painted canvas factory in Darnétal (Rouen region), in 1832 it was run by the Alsatians Abraham and Isaac Kœchlin. Around 1855, Charles Henri Benner (Mulhouse) was one of the most assiduous members of the Société industrielle de Rouen.

The Stackler factory in Saint-Aubin-Epinay was one of the most important printing works created in Normandy by Alsatians. The Stacklers came from Ribeaupillé. Thomas André Stackler was in constant touch with Alsace. In 1842, he became an ordinary member of the Mulhouse Industrial Society. In 1850, his factory employed two hundred and twenty workers. He often recruited in Alsace the collaborators he needed – chemists, colorists, engravers.<sup>18</sup>

In Le Havre, the situation was similar. In 1841, an Alsatian born in Benfeld took over management of the spinning and weaving mill Courant et compagnie in Gravelle. In 1842, his brother Ernest joined him, working for the Pourtalès cotton company. The last brother, Auguste, arrived in 1845. All three set up major cotton companies. The Kablé, Rœderer and Siegfried brothers then arrived from Alsace. Jacques and Jules Siegfried left Mulhouse and founded their cotton company in Le Havre in 1862.

The cotton industry, whether trading or processing, created powerful links between Alsace, Rouen and Le Havre. These links were not just between the bosses. Cotton inevitably attracted workers from Alsace. The cotton route to America was well known in Alsace: 37% of the families who settled in the Rouen region between 1770 and 1870, attracted by the work, came from Alsace.<sup>19</sup>

Is it excessive to think that the existence of these small Alsatian colonies on the road to America could have encouraged emigration via Le Havre, serving as a relay or backup in the event of major difficulties for Alsatian emigrants? Is it possible to hypothesize that some of the Alsatians leaving for Le Havre with a simple passport had two real options: either leave for the United States, or find employment in Alsatian factories in Normandy, and settle there? Known cases of Alsatians – from the communes of Weiterswiller, Eywiller and Gumbrechtshoffen, who left in 1832 for the United States, and who, instead of embarking at Le Havre, stayed on after finding work there – support this hypothesis.<sup>20</sup> It is not clear, however, that Alsatian emigrants who did not embark found it easy to find work. In 1833, they were to be found not only in Le Havre, but also in Rouen,

[...] a number of Alsatian families [...] who came to these towns with the intention of crossing over to America [...]

are struggling to cope with an extremely difficult waiting situation.<sup>21</sup>

What is certain is that the Alsatians found small Alsatian communities on their way to America, and that these might be in a position to help them. In 1848, for example, a census of Lutherans in Le Havre revealed that 25% of them were Alsatians.<sup>22</sup> Alsatians did indeed make their home in Normandy.

### ***Conclusion***

In short, cotton played a significant role in Alsatian emigration to Le Havre. It brought to Le Havre the cotton merchants who would leave for New York or New Orleans with their loads of emigrants. He helped establish and maintain commercial and industrial relations between eastern France and Normandy. It was the source of population movements and familiarized Alsatians with the road to America.

### **Emigration from Alsace via Le Havre**

#### ***The advantages of the port of Le Havre***

Cotton was far from being the only reason for Alsatians to set sail from Le Havre. The port had a number of other advantages that were not lost on Alsatians:

- the crossing is shorter from Le Havre to American ports than from German, Belgian or Dutch ports;
- from Le Havre, there is no stopover. The journey is direct to the American ports, which is an advantage over English ports, whose lines often allow a stopover in Le Havre!
- the emigrant only comes aboard at departure time. The boat sets sail directly for the open sea, without having to wait in a river for a favorable wind;
- Alsatian emigrants who don't have a passport abroad are able to embark at home; it's not certain that the same will be true abroad;
- as long as the emigrant has not left the land of his birth, he is protected by French law and can still receive assistance from the authorities in his own country;
- In the same vein, it was easier for French people to use French trade channels;
- finally, the Le Havre route passes through Paris and:

[...] Such is the attraction of a single day in this capital of Europe that all the other advantages offered by other competing ports could not compensate, in the eyes of emigrants, for the passage of railroads through Paris [...].<sup>23</sup>

#### ***From commune of origin to port of embarkation***

To get to Amsterdam or Antwerp, Alsatians use the Rhine for most of the journey. For Le Havre, they used the railroads. Before the railroads, they used the carts that brought American cottons overland to factories in the East:

[...] Wagons returning empty from Basle or Strasbourg to Le Havre carried passengers who were willing to travel slowly, while the more affluent had their large luggage transported by these carriages and used the faster stagecoaches [...].<sup>24</sup>

These very picturesque carts capture the imagination:



[Families] cross France to get to Le Havre. [...] They make short journeys in heavy carts loaded with tools and household utensils [...].<sup>25</sup>

[...] Families made up of eight to ten individuals each, a light cart, a little straw and a few coarse pottery cooking utensils and a sack of corn flour made up the entire crew and the provisions for the journey. These were supplemented by water from the fountains we encountered. On arrival in Le Havre, the horse that had pulled the wagon from the start was sold, but the vehicle and harnesses were kept for re-use across the Atlantic. Carefully dismantled, it slept with the straw, pottery and additional foodstuffs loaded on board the ship, in the steerage where the emigrants piled up [...].<sup>26</sup>

Other emigrants made the journey by horse-drawn carriage driven by a professional valet. This was the case, for example, in 1836:

[...] A convoy of emigrants from Alsace, forty-six in number, led by the valet Adam Kieffer, set off on October 6 or 7 [...] from] Pfaffenhoffen and its environs for Le Havre [...].<sup>27</sup>

Things changed with the installation of local railroads, providing easy access to Mulhouse and Strasbourg. The last section of the Basel-Strasbourg railroad opened on September 19, 1841. The Bischwiller-Strasbourg line opened a little later. By 1852, it took two hours to get from Bischwiller to Strasbourg. The Strasbourg-Paris line was completed in 1852. Paris had been connected to Gravelle since 1847. With the completion of the Strasbourg-Paris line, the railroads unloaded their emigrant wagons almost on the docks of American ships.

The Favier-Gervais-Voinier company signed an agreement with the Strasbourg-Paris railway company. It undertook to transport 27,000 emigrants a year from Strasbourg, under conditions of 27 francs per emigrant (half-price for children under 16 and free for children under one), including baggage. The agreement did not apply to ordinary passengers, was valid for five years and came into force on September 1, 1852. Favier immediately canvassed shipowners in Le Havre, asking them to refer their customers to him. Normal fares from Strasbourg to Paris are 40.95 francs. The profit offered to emigrants was therefore substantial. Favier succeeded. He earned 6 francs on each emigrant transported, making a profit of 150,000 francs in the first year. As for the railroads and shipowners, they did not benefit from this operation. Protest after protest, they succeeded in having the treaty annulled. The railroads wanted to retain control of their cuts. Subsequently, the companies took part in the work of the commission responsible for drafting the imperial decree of 1855, where, among other things, railway tariffs were discussed.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Weak traffic between Le Havre and America from 1816 to 1822***

The presence of Alsatians in Le Havre was attested as early as 1817, but the French port was unable to compete with Amsterdam because shipping between Le Havre and the United States was not very active at that time. In January and February 1817, no ships left Le Havre for New York. On the other hand, there were five departures in March, just as emigration from Alsace was beginning to grow. At that time, shipping was irregular, meaning that ships waited until they were sufficiently loaded to leave. Navigation was also very slow during the winter months.

The tax war that raged between the United States and France from 1816 to 1822 did not facilitate maritime relations between the two countries. The Restoration had introduced taxes on foreign goods as early as 1816. In return, four years later, the Americans, hoping at last to induce Louis XVIII to give in, instituted exorbitant taxes (eighteen piastres per ton) on French goods.<sup>29</sup>

The French responded with a new tax on American goods, which had the effect of bringing traffic between Le Havre and America to a virtual standstill. The only American ships entering Le Havre were empty. They had called at Cowes or Amsterdam and were leaving in ballast. On July 31, 1822, news finally reached Le Havre that a navigation and trade agreement had just been signed in Washington

between Baron Hyde de Neuville and John Quincy Adams, settling, among other things, the problem of taxes and allowing navigation to resume its normal course.

It's easy to understand why, throughout this period, and particularly in 1817, Alsatian emigrants did not rush into difficulties, preferring to embark in Amsterdam. By contrast, the period 1827-1834 saw the return of Alsatians.

### ***1827-1834: Le Havre, port of Alsatian emigration***

The January 1, 1827 issue of the *Journal du Havre* reported the presence of Alsatians in Le Havre:

[...] For some years now, at roughly fixed times, i.e. from May to September, Le Havre has been the meeting point for emigrants. Not only do the poor farmers from Alsace meet there, but also those from other parts of France [...].<sup>30</sup>

[...] For some time now, a very large number of families have been arriving in the city of Le Havre from the eastern departments, particularly the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin, with the intention of moving [...] to the United States [...],

confirmed the mayor of Le Havre on June 16, 1827.<sup>31</sup>

If we look at the annual record of Bas-Rhin passports for the United States (cf. supra, chap. II, fig. 1, p. 38), we see that the period 1827-1832 was the peak of Bas-Rhin emigration. It's hardly surprising, then, that the effects of this emigration were felt in Le Havre, whose maritime and commercial relations with the United States had just taken on a new lease of life. The 1822 treaty was not immediately put into effect. It wasn't until 1828 that there were no longer any surcharges, either on goods or on the flag. By then, reciprocity between the two nations had finally become complete. Only a small, identical import duty remained on both sides. The American sailing navy and American cotton had been waiting for this. They immediately reinvested the French port.

In Le Havre, the American naval monopoly of 1817, broken by the tax war, was revived in 1828 and intensified. Le Havre's shipping industry obviously suffered from this situation, but as far as the Alsatian emigrants were concerned, it mattered little which flag carried them. The most important thing for them was to be sure of finding an active port, abundant traffic and, at the quayside, ships bound for the United States. And such was the case in Le Havre between 1828 and 1834.

In 1828, the conditions for transporting emigrants from Le Havre were as follows:

[...]

1. There is no set departure time for French or American passenger ships, but wind permitting, they will leave for New York at least every two days.
2. The cost of transporting each person who wants to embark for two months' food is 110 to 120 francs. The ship provides only the wood and water needed to cook the food. Those who prefer to be fed pay 170 to 180 francs. These prices are roughly halved for children aged seven and under.
3. Passengers' belongings pay nothing, but if they wish to take on board any quantity of goods or bulky items, the freight charge is 45 to 50 francs per 1,000 kg volume.
4. The average crossing time is forty to sixty days, which is why each passenger who eats is obliged to take on board two months' worth of food [...].<sup>32</sup>

### *Our commitment*

Le Havre, like all ports of emigration, saw the "engagement" trade flourish:

[...] Most individuals emigrating to America [...] head for Le Havre to embark, but either their numbers exceed the means necessary for transport, or ship captains act in the interests of personal greed, or those of the agents provoking emigration, and travelers experience long delays before they can embark. As life is too expensive in Le Havre, they are forced to withdraw to neighboring villages, and when their resources are exhausted, agents will offer to pay for their crossing on condition that they undertake to work for them at a low price for several years, which they are obliged to accept [...].<sup>33</sup>

### *Returns*

Those who did not accept such offers, and who were rejected by ship captains for lack of money to pay for their crossing, tried to return to Alsace. On July 13, 1830, the government's attention was drawn to

[...] the serious inconveniences associated with the constant and considerable emigration of inhabitants of our departments of Haut and Bas-Rhin [...] who go to Le Havre, most of them destitute [...] in the hope of passing free of charge to America [...]. These unfortunate people, obliged to abandon their plans, resort to public charity [...]. They are issued pauper's passports with travel assistance, resulting in a considerable burden on the general funds [...].<sup>34</sup>

The mayor of Le Havre had in fact been authorized to sign

[...] for Rouen the passports carried by the indigents and to grant them the relief of three sols per league as far as [Rouen] where they were required to present themselves before the prefect of Seine-Inférieure. On their arrival [in this city] they [were] granted new regular passports and if necessary relief to return to their country [...].<sup>35</sup>

It is impossible to give an estimate of the number of returns from Le Havre. The only figures available concern the period from April 2 to July 25, 1828. Thirty-four heads of household, accompanied by their wives and children, almost all from Alsace, received roadside assistance to return to their homes.<sup>36</sup>

### *Cholera*

The year 1832 is infamous for being the year of the cholera epidemic that cruelly struck the emigrants from Le Havre, who were housed in highly unhygienic conditions. Against all expectations, cholera did not stop emigration:

[...] In the Altkirch and Belfort arrondissements, entire families emigrated via Le Havre.<sup>37</sup>

### ***1835-1846: uncertainties***

Little is known about this period. Le Havre became increasingly specialized. The American sailing ships that traveled between Le Havre and America adapted to American requirements for the transportation of emigrants. Le Havre became more organized, with more inns and businesses. By the end of this period, Le Havre was fully competitive. It was even the leading port for German emigrants bound for New York.\*

\* The breakdown of German emigration by port of embarkation is highly indicative of Le Havre's emigration activities.<sup>39</sup>

Alsations, on the other hand, showed a marked preference for Antwerp, especially those emigrating to Texas. This disaffection was circumstantial (cf. supra, chap. VI, pp. 145-147), and Alsations were back *en masse* to Le Havre as early as 1846.

Year	Amsterdam	Antwerp	Bremen	Hamburg	Le Havre	Liverpool	London	Rotterdam
1844	295	2,030	6,374	1,911	<b>5,897</b>	-	-	1,292
1845	745	3,718	9,647	2,525	<b>11,225</b>	38	225	1,959
1846	516	8,530	10,187	3,631	<b>20,681</b>	1,392	4,823	1,990

### ***1846-1854: Alsatians in Le Havre***

The year 1846 saw an upsurge in the number of Alsatians departing for the interior simply in possession of a passport. Despite their illegal status, they were issued embarkation permits in Le Havre. The reasons for this tolerance are easy to understand. In 1846, a third of the population of Le Havre was made up of emigrants (Alsations, Germans and Swiss). The *Journal du Havre* of April 4, 1846 noted:

[...] Some neighborhoods, especially Rue Royale, have a very special feel. The stores are always full. Special guides take families to the shops and aboard the ships. The shops are insufficient and the streets too narrow to hold all this mass of people, so that carts containing several families are parked on the Quai de la Barre in long lines, and emigrants pitch their tents on the Quai de l'Isle and cook in the open air [...].<sup>38</sup>

It's worth noting that the *Journal du Havre's* tone is far less alarmist than the one it used twenty years earlier to describe the same phenomenon. Emigration has gained a foothold in Le Havre thanks to the benefits it brings to the city's commerce. Under these conditions, it is clear that the systematic expulsion of Alsatians who have not taken the trouble to apply for a passport abroad, as well as the expulsion of all illegal aliens – for it's not only Alsatians who break the law – would create a state of mind not conducive to the smooth running of emigration, and therefore to Le Havre's image as a port of emigration.

What's more, the authorities in Le Havre are always concerned that emigrants may be the cause of disorder or unrest, which may or may not be easy to control. So, for the safety of Le Havre, for its trade, for its reputation, an emigrant on board is better than an emigrant sent back. Alsatians understand this very well, which is why they use and abuse passports inland. Emigration was possible because maritime traffic had become so dense. In 1845, the port authorities announced that 6,270 ships had entered Le Havre and 6,920 had left. A large proportion of this traffic was cotton to the United States. Emigration had thus become an indispensable commodity for Le Havre, a "necessary evil" (it had taken years to reach this point). Construction of the Paris-Le Havre railroad line, begun in 1841, reached the Gravelle landing stage in May 1847. In 1852, the Strasbourg-Paris railroad was operational. The train arrives from Kehl. Alsatians go up to Strasbourg. Alsace is now directly connected to Le Havre.

### ***1855-1870: the decline of Alsatian emigration***

The imperial decree of 1855 created a Commissariat for Emigration in Le Havre. Its role was more important than that of its counterparts in Paris or Strasbourg. It was responsible for inspecting ships, checking supplies and boarding emigrants. The commissariat comprises a special commissioner, two assistant commissioners, a clerk and two agents.<sup>40</sup>

The commissioner of Le Havre had no problem enforcing the standards for emigrant transport, since the people of Le Havre had not succeeded in breaking the monopoly of the star-spangled flag, and it was still the American sailing navy which, although beginning to be seriously challenged by European steamers, continued to transport emigrants between Le Havre and the United States. The American ships had been fitted out to American standards, ahead of the French.

In the years following the French decree, emigration fell sharply. We have already said that the drop in Alsatian emigration after 1854 was not an isolated event, but a significant example of the decline in European emigration to the United States. The port of Le Havre is bitterly affected:

[... Referring] to the figures for emigrants who passed through our port, we find that in the years 1852, 1853, 1854, the movement of these travelers was 65,774, 74,957, reaching 96,878 and declining in 1855 to 27,919 and then successively until 1864 to 5,426 [...].<sup>41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the absence of any figures on the ports of emigration from Alsace to the United States in the 19th century, we can only come close to the reality. From this reality, we can say that when there is nothing to prevent emigration via the major national port – namely Le Havre – Alsatians clearly prefer to use the French circuit. There are only two known exceptions to this rule: Amsterdam at the turn of the century, and Antwerp in the 1840s.

## **Price list**

The study of travel prices poses a problem due to the imprecision of sources. Prices are rarely detailed, i.e. they do not always specify all the services offered for the price indicated. In some cases, we don't know whether the price is for the journey – from the commune of origin to the port of disembarkation – or simply for the crossing. On the whole, it can be said that in the period prior to the establishment of the railroads, shipowners were not concerned with the emigrants' journey to the port of embarkation: the prices quoted related solely to the crossing.

## **The price of the crossing**

The Alsatian travels at his own expense to the port of embarkation, where he buys a ticket for a sailing ship bound for the United States. He then has two options: either he provides his own food for himself and his family, or the ship's captain procures it for him. In the latter case, the cost is included in the price of the crossing. At the beginning of our period, prices for the first category of travelers hardly dropped below 110 francs. For the latter, the maximum price encountered was 180 francs per adult passenger. Within this range, anything is possible. Prices are not regulated. Shipowners and captains are private individuals who act on an ad hoc basis, and whose policy can vary from one shipment to the next, depending on the ship, the season, and the business they have done or intend to do. In 1839, Mrs. Hettinger, an Alsatian living in Le Havre, studied prices in Le Havre, with the aim of facilitating the passage of fifty-five emigrants from Sélestat who had been recommended to her. Maison Barbe offered them passage at 120 francs, excluding food. The Alsatian didn't agree.

She denounced the practices of shipowners:

[...] Gentlemen ship suppliers are forcing [emigrants] to buy their supplies at home instead of facilitating the means to buy their provisions where they could find them more cheaply [...].<sup>42</sup>

She managed to charter a vessel at a cost of 80 francs per person.

[...] a saving of 2,220 francs for these people, plus what they earned on the provisions they were able to obtain fresh and of good quality, i.e. 800 francs, making a total profit of more than 3,000 francs, which works out at 240 to 300 francs per family [...].<sup>43</sup>

It's clear that isolated Alsatian emigrants pay a high price. Shipowners were not philanthropists devoted to the interests of emigrants. Their *raison d'être* was the profit they could make from trade and emigration.

From 1840 onwards, the average price of a crossing for an adult, on a sailing boat, with provisions, seems to have stabilized at around 150 francs. *The Journal du Havre* of February 3, 1855, presents the following table:

- Purchase of foodstuffs for the crossing 45 francs
- Packing of foodstuffs, bedding, incidentals 15 francs
- Average price of passage from Le Havre to New York 90 francs.

### **Contracts of carriage**

At the same time, a phenomenon occurred that changed the emigrant transport market. Shipowners and merchants in Le Havre began to sign agreements with the railroads, offering emigrants transport contracts that enabled them to benefit from reduced prices on the railroads, from the station of departure to the port of departure. Sailing tickets – included in the contract – were then sold by local representatives of the shipping companies. By 1840, competitive prices were being offered to emigrants:

[... Companies] established on the frontier take charge of transporting emigrants to New York, at 140 francs per head, all expenses included [...].<sup>44</sup>

Signing a contract with a transport company in Alsace itself has become standard practice over the years. It was recommended by the Ministry of the Interior. In 1855, the Paris emigration service emphasized that it was more economical for emigrants to sign a contract from their place of residence:

[...] A number of French emigrants only conclude their contract of carriage after arriving at the port of embarkation. [... I was led to wonder] whether, in most cases, it would not have been in these emigrants' interest to obtain their contracts before leaving home. [I put the question to the emigration commissioners in Le Havre and Strasbourg, and] according to their reply, port engagements would always be at a higher price than elsewhere [...]. When the emigrant is in possession of a contract, he also benefits, without any possible dispute, from reduced rates on the railways [...].<sup>45</sup>

This advice is not necessarily to be taken literally. It could be dictated by the ambition of the French authorities to push emigrants towards French emigration agencies with agents and sub-agents in Alsace. In Le Havre, Alsatian emigrants have an even wider choice, including the possibility of dealing with foreign shipowners, and it's not certain that this is to their disadvantage.

As time goes by, contract prices increasingly include the rail portion of the journey.

### **Cost of trip**

It's interesting to compare the average costs of emigration according to the ports of departure and arrival chosen by emigrants. Le Havre is an expensive port. The least expensive ports are Antwerp and Rotterdam, immediately followed by London and Liverpool. Bremen and Hamburg are too far away for Alsatians who don't want a long crossing.

The crossing to New Orleans is generally cheaper than to New York. This is almost an absolute rule, and is true in most ports of embarkation, even though the crossing is longer. It's a question of supply and demand. It should be noted that New Orleans is a more difficult port than New York, not least because of the diseases – yellow fever and cholera – that thrive there in the summer months. Table 35 below gives an idea of the variations in cost depending on the route chosen by the emigrant in the early 1850s.

The average price of 250 F advertised by Le Havre for New York includes the trip from Kehl-Strasbourg to Le Havre via Paris on the French railroads, the crossing on a sailing ship with provisions, the duty to be paid in America for each passenger disembarking there, and the cost of transporting two quintals of luggage for each adult, i.e. 168 F. To this must be added the cost of maintaining the emigrant from the station to the day of departure, bedding, kitchen utensils and out-of-pocket expenses on the boat. These costs are estimated at 82 F, bringing the total to 250 F. Compared with the period before 1850, the overall cost of emigration has risen considerably. Before 1850, emigrants were able to travel to Le Havre for 33

F, spent an average of 6 F in port, paid around 150 F for the crossing (sailboat), with provisions, and counted 11 F in miscellaneous expenses, bringing their total costs, on average, to 189 F per adult.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 35.** <sup>47</sup> **Travel costs**

Route			Price (in francs)
Departure station	Port of embarkation	Port of arrival	
Kehl-Strasbourg	Le Havre	New York	250
-	-	New Orleans	217
Mannheim	Antwerp	New York	214
-	-	New Orleans	183
Mannheim	Rotterdam	New York	202
Mannheim	Bremen	New York	246
		New Orleans	248
Mannheim	Hamburg	New York	220
-	-	New Orleans	215
Mannheim	Liverpool	New York	209
Mannheim	London	New York	203

The most expensive period seems to have been the peak of emigration, in the mid-1850s. Afterwards, as emigration declined, ports and shipping companies engaged in fierce competition, and prices tended to fall.

In the 1850s, there were a number of shipping companies in Le Havre offering steamer crossings. Prices were considerably higher. In 1854, Chrystie and Schloëss-mann offered a Le Havre-New York crossing for 310 F, second class, with four adults per room. Bedding and food were included. Competitors offer lower prices. Ottmann et fils offer a steamer crossing, second class, for 250 F, with food and bedding. In both cases, passengers came to the port of Le Havre at their own expense. Alsatians, who emigrated more in the first part of the 19th century than between 1850 and 1870, made little use of steamers, except at the very end of our period. In 1864, for example, we find a certain number of contracts, signed on steamer, for 250 or 300 F.

Finally, it should be added that children generally benefit from advantageous transport conditions, both by land and sea.

### **Crossing conditions**

Nothing very original can be said about the Alsatians' crossing of the Atlantic. Historians, novelists and film-makers have already written extensively on the subject. There is one period of the year when the crossing is a little less arduous. It's from the end of March to the end of September. This is undoubtedly why, in 1817 for example, a peak in emigration applications was recorded between April and June. It's likely that passport applicants hope to make the crossing before autumn. They were well aware of the difficulties involved:

[...] We beg you to kindly grant us permission to emigrate so that we do not find obstacles that could delay our journey and make us spend our little money uselessly, and so that we can take advantage of the good and beautiful season [...].<sup>48</sup>

At the beginning of the 19th century, emigrants or “steerage passengers” traveled in a small space, usually designed to accommodate part of the cargo. The ship’s captain, apart from providing transport, was limited to supplying water, fire and light! Passengers organized themselves to cook, wash and care for themselves – in short, to survive the crossing. Profitability was the decisive factor for shipowners and captains. They had little respect for the equinoxes. Their sailing ships, relatively more stable than those of the eighteenth century, were subject only to bad weather, winds and tides... Of course, storms were not the only evils that emigrants had to contend with. Epidemics also wreaked havoc on the ships: cholera, typhus, smallpox.

[...] It would be difficult to imagine what these men, women and children [...] had to suffer in the warehouses of the liners during a forty to fifty day crossing, crammed together, deprived of air, malnourished and in a deplorable state of filth [...].<sup>49</sup>

In 1853, out of 38 ships entering New York from Le Havre, loaded with 15,122 passengers, 254 died. The American press raged against these “floating coffins” and called for strict enforcement of immigration regulations. Very early on (1818), the State of Pennsylvania had passed a law repressing abuses by captains and limiting the number of passengers aboard ships. On March 2, 1819, the federal Congress adopted the terms of this Pennsylvania law and applied them to all American states: a ship could only load two passengers per ton of port. Heavy fines and penalties were imposed on captains who failed to comply with the law. Five acts had been passed since the one of March 2, 1819, and five circulars relating to the application of the texts had been promulgated.<sup>50</sup>

New York State and the Port of New York had their own legislation. The aim of these laws was to protect emigrants by obliging shipowners to provide them with acceptable transport conditions. It took a long time to put in place, but by the 1840s, American legislation was making great progress. In France, the imperial decree of 1855 applied the same standards to French ships as to American laws.

### **A few stories**

In 1977, the Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Saverne published a letter dated New York, August 1, 1852. An Alsatian, Edouard Emrich, describes his Atlantic crossing in the summer of 1852. He gives his first impressions as he approaches land, after the unexpected good fortune of a trouble-free crossing:

[...] Once you’ve been on board for twenty days, you think you were born for it, and once you get ashore, the whole trip seems like a dream. Some of these passengers will be angry when the time comes to disembark, knowing that they will have to worry again, not knowing the language, having no state, no money [...].<sup>51</sup>

This is in stark contrast to the harrowing accounts of the sea voyage from Le Havre to New York.

Unfortunately, not all Emrich’s compatriots were so lucky. Disasters punctuated the history of Alsatian emigration to the United States. In March 1860, for example, news reached Strasbourg that the ship *La Luna*, which had left Le Havre on February 15 – bound for America – with Alsatian emigrants on board, had been lost on the coast of Barfleur on February 17. The names of eight Alsatian emigrants who were victims of the shipwreck were sent to the sub-prefect of Wissembourg, who was responsible for notifying the mayors and their families.<sup>52</sup>

Abbé Claude-Marie Dubuis, second parish priest of the colony Henri Castro founded in Texas with Alsatian settlers, who had become bishop of Galveston, had returned to Europe to recruit missionaries for Texas. In September 1866, he returned to the United States. He was a quality passenger. He traveled on a steamer belonging to the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique. He was accompanied by forty-five future French priests, nuns and seminarians, twenty-five of whom were destined for the Galveston diocese. They set sail from Le Havre on the *Europe* on September 29, 1866



[...] The captain of the *Europe* notes with a smile that his ship is transformed, sometimes into a cathedral, at the time of the sung mass, and sometimes into a convent seminary when the bishop gives lectures to seminarians and nuns [...].<sup>53</sup>

*Europe* arrives in New York on October 11. The missionaries continued their journey on another ship. They arrive in Galveston on October 23, 1866.

## Conclusion

When it came to organizing their trip, the Alsatians were well placed. The cotton route opened the way to America. The communication routes – land, rail and sea – set up for foreign emigration were undeniable facilities that they made extensive use of. They preferred the French port of Le Havre, but this did not prevent them from finding alternative solutions when the need arose. The voyage, the first step towards America, marked the first step towards a new destiny.

## End Notes

1 VANDEREST, *Question de l'émigration des colons et des transports des émigrants par le port de Dunkerque*, Dunkerque 1854, in-8°, 200 p. Dans cet ouvrage, Vanderest expose tout l'intérêt que Dunkerque aurait à prendre sa place dans le duo cotonémigration. Dans ce but, il crée la Compagnie commerciale de Dunkerque. En avril 1855, Vanderest est autorisé à entreprendre le recrutement et le transport des émigrants sous les conditions déterminées par le décret impérial du 15 janvier 1855. A.D.H.-R., 6M 349. Cette accréditation ne réglera rien et Dunkerque restera en dehors des bénéfices de l'émigration.

2 Préfecture du B.-R., Strasbourg, pétition de Xavier Schies. 24 avril 1817. A.N., F7 6138 10.

3 *Le Courrier du département du Bas-Rhin*, 30 mars 1817.

4 Lettre d'une maison de commerce d'Amsterdam à MM. Sahne et compagnie à Paris, Amsterdam le 12 mai 1817. A.N., F7 9820.

5 *Le Courrier du département du Bas-Rhin*, 30 mars 1817.

6 Cf. *supra*, note 4.

7 Cf. *supra*, note 4.

8 Cf. *supra*, note 4.

9 Lettre du préfet du B.-R. au directeur de la Police générale, Strasbourg le 30 juin 1817. A.N., F7 9820.

10 *Le Courrier du Haut-Rhin*, dimanche 21 septembre 1845.

11 Ruth Curry LAWLER, *The Story of Castroville. Its people, Founders and Traditions*, Lacoste Ledger, 1974, pp. 29-39.

12 Préfecture du Haut-Rhin, *Emigration pour l'Amérique. Notification à faire aux émigrants relativement aux ressources pécuniaires qu'ils doivent posséder pour être admis à s'embarquer*, le préfet du Haut-Rhin aux maires du département, Colmar le 25 novembre 1846. A.D.H.-R., 3M 375.

13 Pierre DEROLIN, *les Paquebots du Havre à New York, 1815-1848*, thèse de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle, histoire, 2 volumes, Paris-IV, 1977, pp. 43-69.

14 Jean LEROY, *le Peuple du Havre et son histoire*, 2 volumes, Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, E.D.I.P., 1982, p. 237 ; note 122, p. 279.

15 "Annales du commerce du Havre", *Almanach du commerce du Havre*, 1864, p. 29.

16 Raymond OBERLÉ, "la Guerre de Sécession et la famine du coton en Alsace", *Bulletin de la Société industrielle de Mulhouse*, n° 2, 1985, pp. 93-102.

17 Claude FOHLEN, *l'Industrie textile au temps du second Empire*, Paris, Plon, 1956, 534 p.

18 G. BARTHELMÉ, "les Alsaciens et les Lorrains en Normandie" in *l'Alsace française*, 5 janvier 1930, pp. 4-6 ; André BRANDT, "Alsaciens, Suisses et Allemands dans l'indienne rouennaise aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles" in *le Textile en Normandie*. Etudes diverses, Société d'émulation de la Seine-Maritime, 1975, pp. 57-73.

- 19 André BRANDT, *op. cit.*
- 20 Camille MAIRE, “Des Alsaciens au Havre”, *Bulletin du cercle généalogique d’Alsace*, n° 2, 1984, pp. 255-259.
- 21 Camille MAIRE, *l’Emigration des Lorrains en Amérique*. Centre de recherches Relations internationales de l’université de Metz, 1980, p. 132, note 49.
- 22 Philippe MANNEVILLE, “les Protestants étrangers au Havre au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in *Actes du 101<sup>e</sup> Congrès national des sociétés savantes*, 1976, Société d’histoire moderne et contemporaine, tome I, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 1978, pp. 193-204.
- 23 Délibérations du conseil municipal du Havre, séance du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1866.
- 24 Camille MAIRE, *op. cit.*, note 29, p. 129.
- 25 *Le Magasin pittoresque*, novembre 1844.
- 26 *Le Journal du Havre*, 15 mai 1827.
- 27 Forbach le 9 octobre 1836. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 28 A.D.H.-R., 6M 349.
- 29 *Considérations sur la loi passée en Amérique imposant un droit de dix-huit piastres par tonneau sur les navires français, ce qui revient à une prohibition*, Paris, Imprimerie Antoine Boucher, juin 1820, 48 p.
- 30 Jean LEGOY, *op. cit.*, p. 233.
- 31 *Id.*, *ibid.*
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- 33 Lettre du ministre de l’Intérieur au préfet de la Seine-Inférieure à Rouen, Paris le 27 février 1828. A.N., F7 9334.
- 34 Lettre du préfet de la Seine-Inférieure au ministre de l’Intérieur, Rouen le 13 juillet 1830, A.N., F7 9334.
- 35 Lettre du ministre de l’Intérieur au préfet de la Seine-Inférieure, Paris le 13 septembre 1828. A.N., F7 9334.
- 36 Ville du Havre. Etat des secours payés sur l’ordre du maire par le commissaire de police chargé de la comptabilité des filles publiques, à des indigents retournant dans leur foyer depuis le 26 avril jusqu’au 25 février 1828. A.N., F7 9334.
- 37 Le préfet du H.-R. aux maires du département du H.-R., Colmar le 16 mai 1832. A.D.H.-R., 6M 375.
- 38 Cité par Jacqueline GOUBÉ, “les Etrangers au Havre en 1846”, in *Actes du 101<sup>e</sup> Congrès national des sociétés savantes*, Lille, 1976, Section d’histoire moderne et contemporaine, tome I, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, pp. 173-191.
- 39 Norman LAYBOURN, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
- 40 *Rapport à Son Excellence le Ministre de l’Intérieur sur l’émigration*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1857-1858, p. 17.
- 41 Délibérations du conseil municipal du Havre, Séance du 10 janvier 1866.
- 42 Lettre de madame Hettinger au maire de Wissembourg, Le Havre le 30 avril 1839. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 43 Lettre de madame Hettinger au maire de Wissembourg, Le Havre le 30 avril 1839. A.D.B.-R., 3M 701.
- 44 Lettre du sous-préfet de Wissembourg au commandant de la gendarmerie, Wissembourg le 14 août 1840, A.D.B.-R., 15M 63.
- 45 Ministère de l’Intérieur, Service de l’émigration, Paris le 26 octobre 1855, lettre au préfet du H.-R., A.D.H.-R., 6M 349.
- 46 Jean LEGOY, *op. cit.*, p. 237.
- 47 Ce tableau a été réalisé à partir d’une enquête publiée par Heurtier en annexe de son rapport de 1854, enquête portant sur les “questions qui se rattachent à l’émigration européenne”. Les prix étaient donnés en florins. Ils ont été convertis en francs compte tenu de la valeur du florin de cette époque, soit un florin égale deux francs français quinze centimes, et arrondis au chiffre supérieur. Auguste HEURTIER, *Rapport à Son Excellence le Ministre de l’Agriculture, du Commerce et des Travaux publics fait au nom de la commission chargée d’étudier les différentes questions qui se rattachent à l’émigration européenne, suivi d’un projet de règlement et des annexes*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1854, 482 p.
- 48 Préfecture du B.-R. Strasbourg, demandes de passeports, 30 avril 1817. A.N. F7 6138 10
- 49 *Le Magasin pittoresque*, s.l., novembre 1844, pp. 373-374.
- 50 Actes du 22 février 1847, du 2 mars 1847, du 31 janvier 1848, du 17 mai 1848 et du 3 mars 1849 ; circulaires du 22 juin 1842, du 17 mars 1847, du 13 mai 1847, du 20 mai 1847 et du 9 mars 1849.

51 “Traversée de l’Atlantique en été 1852 et premières impressions de New York”, *Pays d’Alsace*, Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Saverne et de ses environs, cahier 98, I, 1977, pp. 49-51.

52 Lettre du préfet du B.-R. au sous-préfet de Wissembourg, Strasbourg le 6 mars 1860, A.D.B.-R., 15 M 63.

53 Joseph STREBLER, *Alsaciens au Texas*, Strasbourg, Culture alsacienne, 1975, pp. 52-54.

## CHAPTER VII. ALSATIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

Pages 167-180.

In this chapter, we will not study the Alsatians who emigrated to Texas, to whom the following chapters are entirely devoted, and whose emigration obeys specific laws that are not necessarily found for other destinations.

### Ports of Entry to the United States

Series of passports which bear the mention of the port of entry or that of the final destination of emigrants are quite rare. In this chapter, we worked on the series of Haut-Rhinois passports 1838-1857, 1, which – for each passport applicant – indicates a destination.

**Table 36 Ports of Entry to the United States**

<b>Destinations</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>1</b> New York	66.43
<b>2</b> New Orleans	15.38
<b>3</b> Interior of the United States	13.99
<b>4</b> Philadelphia	2.33
<b>5</b> Various ports	1.17
<b>6</b> San Francisco, Los Angeles - California	0.47
<b>7</b> Charlestown	0.23

### **New York and New Orleans**

New York is the first port of entry for Haut-Rhinois in the United States; New York is followed, but very distantly, by New Orleans (table 36, previous page). It is quite obvious that when emigrants indicate New York or New Orleans in the destination section, it is not necessarily that they intend to settle in one of these two cities, which are, most often, places of transit towards new destinies.

This average distribution varies depending on the year (table 37, below). The preponderance of the port of New York is absolute, except in 1842, when New Orleans welcomed a greater number of immigrants.

**Table 37. Distribution of passport applicants by destination and by year (in percentage)**

Cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Year	New York	New Orleans	Interior	Philadelphia	Various	San Francisco	Charleston
1838	42.90	42.90	14.20				
1839	72.70	9.10	9.10	9.10			
1840	76.90	15.40	7.70				
1841	66.70	33.30					
1842	25.00	75.00					
1843	33.30	16.70	33.30	16.70			
1844	73.30	6.70	13.30	6.70			
1845	78.90	15.80	5.30				
1846	66.70	3.70	25.90	3.70			
1847	73.90	8.70	15.20	2.20			
1848	72.70	13.60	9.20	4.50			
1849	66.60	16.70	12.50	4.20			
1850	50.00	16.70	22.20	5.50	5.60		
1851	65.20	26.10	8.70				
1852	47.50	25.00	20.00	7.50			
1853	69.00	13.80	13.80	3.40			
1854	68.80	21.80	7.80	1.60			
1855	63.20	10.50	26.30				
1856	64.30	14.30	14.30	7.10			
1857	86.40	9.10	4.50				

***New York Harbor***

The Alsations, by emigrating to New York, do not show originality. New York is in fact the main port of entry into the United States. It is also the first to have adopted laws intended to ensure the reception and protection of immigrants. Until 1824, when New York State passed immigration laws, ports were not subject to any regulations.

On the other hand, the federal law of 1819 regulated the conditions of transport during the crossing. As early as 1824, the State of New York developed its own legislation, first establishing the obligation for ship captains to declare the identity of each immigrant disembarked. In 1847, the State of New York added, to the obligation of this declaration, the payment, by the captain of a ship, of a poll tax of 1.50 dollars per head of immigrant – for the creation of a fund of the poor intended for immigrants who arrive in New York and who, for one reason or another, are no longer able to provide for themselves or their families.<sup>2</sup> The funds thus collected are administered by an emigration commission composed, on the one hand, of six members appointed by the governor of the State, and, on the other hand, of the mayor of New York, the mayor of Brooklyn, the president of the Irish Society of New York and president of the German Society of New York.

In the port of New York, commissioners are responsible for protecting immigrants against the systematic fraud to which they are exposed due to their ignorance of the American language and customs. Above all, it was a matter of preventing touts, working for innkeepers and private transporters, from ruining newcomers as soon as they arrived. In 1855, new legislation required all ships arriving loaded with immigrants to disembark at a single dock, at the southern end of Manhattan, at Castle Garden (Fort

Clinton). This place has been designed to ensure the most peaceful disembarkation possible for immigrants (baths, catering, information, advice, translation, luggage surveillance, sale of railway tickets, steam tickets, etc.).

All of these developments give New York great superiority over other ports in the United States. Alsations are sensitive to the amenities offered by New York. How can we be surprised?

### *The Port of New Orleans*

There are still a certain number of Alsations who choose New Orleans. However, in Louisiana there are many problems for immigrants. First of all, the crossing is longer. Then you have to arrive during the cold season. This helps avoid the risks of yellow fever and cholera, diseases that are much less virulent during the winter months. From June, the port is deserted, all activities are reduced, the exodus begins and the steamships of the Mississippi are filled with inhabitants fleeing the contagion. Yellow fever is very serious if contracted from May to August. September fevers are less violent. From December to April, the city is healthy. In all seasons, those most exposed to danger are obviously newcomers, and therefore immigrants.

**Map V. – Routes of penetration into the United States.  
(According to Norman Laybourn, *op. cit.*, p. 281.)**



The legislation of the State of Louisiana regarding immigration is much later than that of the State of New York. It dates from 1850 and 1853. It boils down to the obligation of captains to submit a detailed list of passengers who are not citizens of the United States, and to pay a fee of \$2.50 per passenger. These rights

are used to maintain the Charité hospital, which uses them for necessary medical relief for poor and sick immigrants. There is no special infrastructure in New Orleans for disembarking immigrants. As for the advantage of being able to speak French, it is slim for Alsatian emigrants who, when they arrive in New York, immediately find themselves speaking German.

### **The ways to the interior**

By the 1840s, the routes to the interior of the United States were wide open. From New York, as from New Orleans, the Alsatis penetrated the interior of the United States. The choice of port of entry is an indication of the regions where the Alsatis intended to settle.

It is far too often believed that, at the beginning of the 19th century, the United States was still the wilderness dear to the English Puritans. In fact, many communication routes (trails, roads, canals and railways) went inland. For example: from New York, it was very easy to reach Albany by boat (cost: half a dollar). Albany is the center of communications to the West. Thanks to the Erie Canal, emigrants could then continue by boat to Buffalo, for a very low price. From there, they returned to Cleveland, Toledo and Detroit. At Toledo, a canal joins the end of Lake Erie to Cincinnati, on the Ohio. The Wabash Canal, which crosses Indiana, also ends at Toledo. Immigrants can, by this route, reach La Fayette. The canals, whose main network is oriented north-south, are crossed by an increasingly dense network of railways with a main east-west orientation.

From New Orleans, the royal route is the Mississippi, which allows you to go north and access the newly colonized plains of the West. The steamer quickly triumphed over the speed of the currents, the force of the wind and the towpaths. The steamer succeeds where the sail does not pass and where it is necessary to resort to oars.

From New Orleans it was possible to go up to Saint Louis and Cincinnati on the Ohio. From Saint Louis, the railways and canals made it possible to reach Chicago, which is 1555 miles from New York, by canals and 1518 miles by railways.<sup>3</sup>

A small minority of Alsatis emigrated to Philadelphia. They probably intend to settle in Pennsylvania, particularly in the Pittsburgh region, where many of their compatriots are already settled. If they change their mind, they can always, through Pittsburgh, return to the West down the Ohio and up the Mississippi. But this transport is quite expensive.

Alsatian emigrants do not innovate. They simply follow the trade routes already laid out. The big problem for them is to avoid large luggage transfers and long trolley journeys. East of the Mississippi, it was, as we have just seen, relatively easy to travel. Things get complicated west of the Mississippi.

It was not until 1869 that the Central Pacific joined the Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah. Until then, tracks allowed colonists to cross from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but this with great risks.<sup>4</sup>

The Alsatis, except those who settled in Texas and California, were concentrated east of the Mississippi. They seek a preferably temperate climate, where their agrarian experience can be useful.

### **Geography of Alsatis in the United States**

A systematic analysis of this question has not been carried out, because the American sources capable of answering it are scattered throughout the American territory. We have to look for them at the level of each county, each township, which is, strictly speaking, unfeasible. In the United States, the classic sources for immigration are passenger lists submitted by ship captains to the American customs service,<sup>5</sup> naturalization registers or even censuses. It is very easy to obtain these documents. Unfortunately, none of them bears, for the period that concerns us, the mention of the region of origin of the immigrants, even less that of their place of birth. On passenger lists, for example, Alsatis are listed as coming "from

France,” when they are not confused with Germans, because of the resemblance of surnames and especially because of their practice of the Alsatian dialect, close to the German language.

The only exploitable sources would be discovered at the regional and local levels. Civil records, registers of different churches, cemeteries, local press (obituaries), local monographs and genealogies would all be possibilities. This type of sources, perfectly suited when it comes to studying a geographically specific location, is poorly suited to a study covering the entire American territory.

As for French archives – which we have used extensively, particularly passports – they do not give the emigrant’s place of definitive establishment. Furthermore, the Alsatians, like all immigrants of the 19th century, did not hesitate to move from state to state, in search of a definitive home port that truly corresponded to the criteria of their choice. Subsequently, the descendants of the first arrivals, numbering in the hundreds for certain surnames, did not stay on the family land. They dispersed, over time, throughout the United States, and their current distribution cannot be an indication of what it was originally. This shows the difficulty there is, at present, in drawing up a map of the distribution of Alsatian emigrants to the United States in the 19th century.

It follows from what has just been explained that any attempt at the geography of Alsatian emigration to the United States in the 19th century can only be presented with reservations. Evidence and experience show, however, that a number of big ideas can be retained.

### **The States of New York and Pennsylvania**

We observe, for example, that in the northeast of the United States, the states of New York and Pennsylvania were powerful centers of attraction for the Alsatians. In the 18th century, these states had already received numerous settlers from eastern France. The tradition, as we have seen, continued into the 19th century. In Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh region in particular, highly industrialized at the time, was a “mine” for the Alsatians: glassworks, blast furnaces, mechanical construction workshops and various construction sites offered well-paid jobs.<sup>6</sup>

In the State of New York, the regions of the northwest are the most popular: Buffalo, Rochester, Oneida, Cheektowaga, Amherst, Alden, Lancaster, are localities in which very many residents of the Lower Rhine, mostly Catholic.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Midwest**

In the Middle West, the lands of choice for the Alsatians were primarily Ohio, Illinois and Iowa. Leaving Pennsylvania or New York State and entering Ohio was, at the beginning of the 19th century, joining the march of colonization towards the West. This is what the Alsatians did not fear to do, who largely participated in the growth of the regions of Cleveland, Cincinnati, Akron, Toledo. Illinois was at the crossroads, on the one hand, of the routes coming from the East coast (entry via New York, Philadelphia or Baltimore) and, on the other hand, of the routes coming from the South (entry via New Orleans, ascent by the Mississippi). In Illinois, the Alsatians settled in at least seventeen counties. The main centers of their establishment were the Chicago region and, in Missouri, that of Saint Louis. In neighboring Iowa, the Alsatians found land “in complete freedom.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Southern States and California**

In the South, Texas, as we will see in the next chapter, absorbed a good part of the Haut-Rhin emigration, while Louisiana and Arkansas, due to the presence of New Orleans, a port cheaper than New York, also retained the Alsatians.<sup>9</sup>

In the American West, California, where gold attracted many emigrants, received a contingent of Alsatians in the 1850s.<sup>10</sup>

### **Some additional information**

To the preceding list we must add that ports of entry to the United States inevitably detain a portion of immigrants. We therefore find an Alsatian community in New York and New Orleans, to name just these two ports.

We can also mention, in support of the succinct geography that we propose here, an interesting observation: the Alsatians were not content to settle in the United States, they baptized, before and during the 19th century, certain places with the name from an Alsatian locality – the one, perhaps, from which they came. A way like any other not to forget Alsace.

Pennsylvania comes first with five localities which bear Alsatian names:

- Colmar,
- Elsass,
- Oberlin,
- Strasburg,
- Upper Strasburg.

In Illinois, three localities were baptized with Alsatian names:

- Colmar,
- Strasburg,
- New Strasburg, Chicago.

In Kansas, three villages are reminiscent of Alsace:

- Marienthal,
- Oberlin,
- Strasburg.

The states of New York, Ohio, Virginia, Louisiana and Indiana each have two “Alsatian” villages:

- New York - Belfort, Strasburg,
- Ohio - Oberlin, Strasburg,
- Virginia - Strasburg, Strasburg,
- Louisiana - Alsatia, Oberlin,
- Indiana - Millhousen, New Alsace

We must also add to this list, a Strasburg in Wisconsin and one in Michigan, a Colmar Manor in Maryland, a Colmar in Kentucky, a Strasburg in North Dakota, one in Colorado, one in Nebraska, one in Missouri and one in Alabama.<sup>11</sup>

The problem with this toponymy is that we absolutely do not know what concentration of Alsatians these villages attracted.

We can also test the proposed geography by drawing up the list of American localities given, by some of the Haut-Rhinois passport applicants (1838-1857), as definitive destinations.<sup>12</sup>



Fourteen percent of passport applicants indicate, in the destination section, the name of a city or state within the United States:

[...] There are many individuals – explains the Minister of the Interior to his colleague from Foreign Affairs – who, instead of requesting passports for the large maritime cities of the United States in which they could have some connections, indicate for the end of their journey, the new establishments formed in the interior, such as Cincinnati or Pittsburgh [...].<sup>13</sup>

The cities and states of the interior of the United States, chosen by Alsatian emigrants, are presented below in table 38. This list is only indicative. It only concerns Haut-Rhin between 1838 and 1857, and we do not know how many times each of these towns was given as a destination. It is nevertheless interesting, because it indicates the points of establishment of the Alsatians in the United States. We see that the State of New York is represented by three cities; Ohio, Missouri, Kentucky, by two cities; Virginia, by two cities also; and several states on the East Coast and Midwest by one city; which makes a total of twenty-two cities in the interior of the United States to welcome immigrants from Alsace.

**Table 38. Some towns in the interior chosen by the Alsatians**

City	State
Augusta	Georgia
Buffalo	New York
Burlington	Iowa
Cambridge	Arkansas
Chicago	Illinois
Cincinnati	Ohio
Dayton	Ohio
Detroit	Michigan
Dover	Delaware
Jefferson	Missouri
Lexington	Kentucky
Louisville	Kentucky
Milwaukee	Wisconsin
Mobile	Alabama
Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania
Providence	Rhode Island
Richmond	Virginia
Rochester	New York
Saint Louis	Missouri
Toledo	New York
Wheeling	Virginia
York	Indiana

The list of Alsatian-Lorraine companies or associations active in the country between 1871 and 1926 also makes it possible to specify the locations of establishment in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Of the thirty-nine associations recorded, it is possible that only eight were born at the time of the Franco-Prussian War of

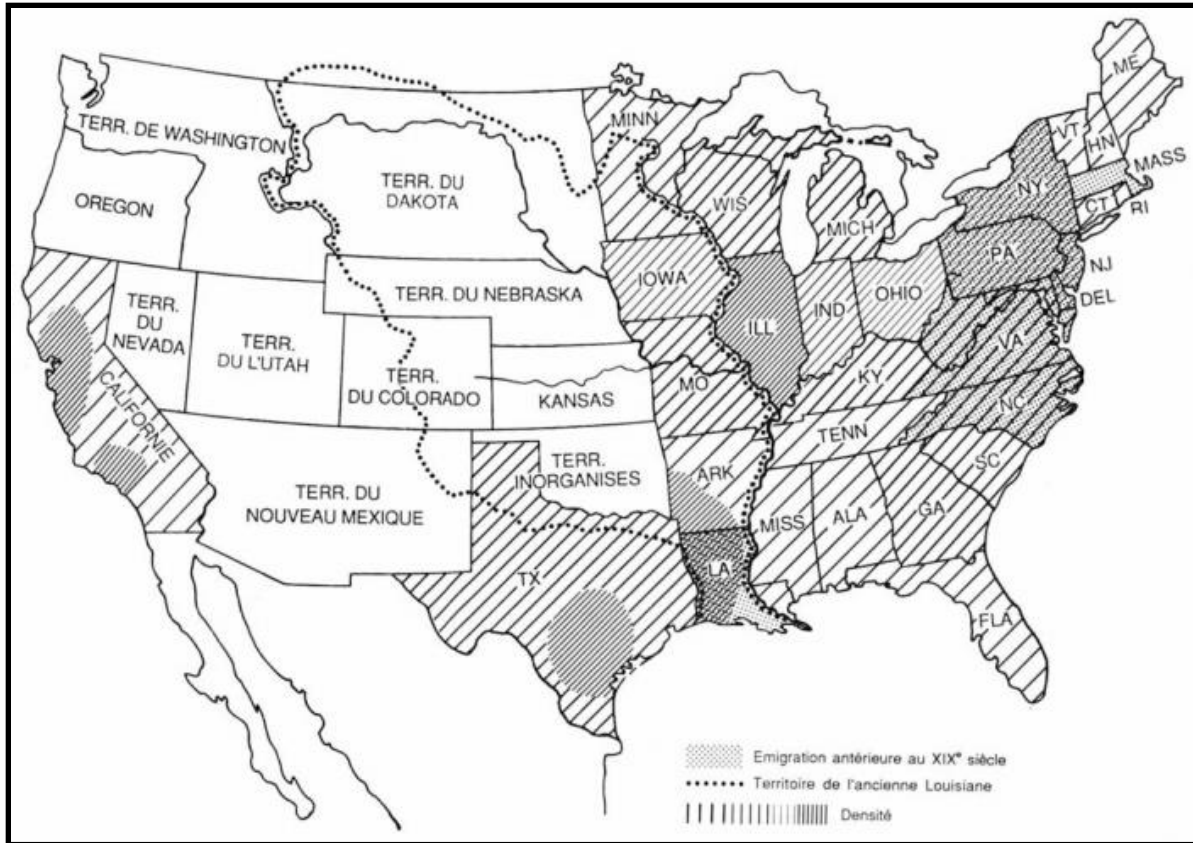
1870, with the aim of demonstrating patriotic support for annexed Alsace. The others, although we do not know their exact date of creation, seem to be older, that is to say before 1870.

**Table 39**  
**Distribution of Alsatian-Lorraine companies** <sup>15</sup>

State	City	Number of companies
New York	New York	5
	Brooklyn	3
New Jersey	West Hoboken	3
	Paterson	1
	Passaic	1
	Elizabeth	1
California	San Francisco	1
	Los Angeles	1
	San Diego	1
Massachusetts	Boston	1
	Plymouth	1
	Lawrence	1
	Roslindale	1
Ohio	Akron	1
	Cincinnati	1
	Hamilton	1
	Toledo	1
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	1
	Pittsburgh	1
Illinois	Chicago	2
Colorado	Denver	1
Connecticut	New Haven	1
Kentucky	Louisville	1
Louisiana	New Orleans	1
Michigan	Detroit	1
Minnesota	Duluth	1
Missouri	Saint Louis	1
Washington	Seattle	1

Step by step, we can therefore say that we are succeeding, although very imperfectly, in approaching the reality of the Alsatian settlement in the United States. That said, we must remain very careful, because the measuring instruments available to us are imprecise and still too rare (an overview is given in Map VI, next page).

**Map VI. – The establishment of Alsatians in the United States.**



Legend text: Emigration prior to 19th century; Territory of the old Louisiana; Density

### Adaptation

Here again the question is delicate. Historians who have been interested in this problem have tended to explain that the Alsatians, due to their practice of the Alsatian dialect, close to the German language, merged into the German Stock, 16, which, in our opinion, is contradicted by the existence of these thirty-nine Alsatian societies, some of which created in 1870-1871 were openly anti-German.

Furthermore, it seems that in certain places the Alsatians succeeded, for at least four generations, in preserving the dialect. An investigation, carried out in 1929 by Frank L. Schoell, showed that at the beginning of the 20th century, two Alsatian islets – one in Woolstock (Iowa), the other in Serena (Illinois) – had perfectly managed to resist the flood surrounding English.<sup>17</sup>

The same observation will be made in Castroville in Texas, where the grouping of Alsatians allowed the conservation of certain particularities, including the dialect. There are other examples of this type in Illinois, in McHenry County. In any case, it should be noted that the fifth generation has lost the fluent understanding of the dialect.

To say that the Alsatians preserved their associations and their dialect for several generations, does this mean that they resisted assimilation? Each nationality, each community created its own associations, its own circuits and sought to bring together the surrounding “countries”. The Alsatians did not escape the rule, wherever they were numerous enough. When their numbers were too low, we understand why they moved closer to German communities. In all cases, they adapted perfectly well to the geographical, economic, political and cultural imperatives of their new homeland, contributing, through their activities, to forming its substrate.

## **Conclusion**

The Alsatians were not in large enough numbers to impose original networks of penetration into the interior of the United States. They used those that existed. They settled, preferably, in the eastern regions of the United States and the southern Great Lakes; an original and unexpected exception to this rule, the settlement of the Alsatians in southern Texas, a colonization whose study is developed in the next chapter.

## **Endnotes**

1 ADH-R., 4M 131, 132, 133, 134, 135. Alsatians emigrating to Texas do not appear in the sample we used to study ports of entry to the United States.

2 This poll tax was at the origin of multiple problems, the details of which can be seen in Jean HEFFER, *The Port of New York and American foreign trade, 1860-1900*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1986, pp.170-171.

3 Guillaume Tell POUSSIN, *American Railways, history of their construction. Cost price and product. Method of administration adopted. Summary of the legislation which governs them*, Paris, 1836, 4°, 271 p., maps. Jean-Baptiste MARESTIER, *Memoir on the steamboats of the United States of America, with an appendix on the various machines*, Paris, Imprimerie royale, 1824, 4vo, 291 p.

4 Jean-Louis RIEUPEYROUT, *History of the Far West*, Paris, Tchou, 1967, 729 p.

5 Véronique GAZZO, *French Emigration to the United States from 1845 to 1855. Statistical study based on the lists of passengers arriving in New York*, master's thesis, director Claude Fohlen, North American History Research Center, 1984 -1985, pp. 7-10.

6 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paris, April 7, 1827. AN, F7 9334.

7 Glenn R. ATWELL, "The Alsatian Community in Western New York," *WNYGS Journal*, vol. X. n° 1, June 1983, pp. 6-11.

8 Norman LAYBOURN, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-356 and 370-392.

9 *Id.*, *ibid.*, pp. 415-425.

10 *Id.*, *ibid.*, pp. 459-460.

11 *Id.*, *ibid.*, p. 104; pp. 330 sqq.

12 See note 1.

13 Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paris, April 7, 1827. AN, F7 9334.

14 Benjamin VALLOTTON, "Alsations and Lorraines in the United States of America", *l'Alsace française*, n° 21, March 21, 1927, pp. 401-402.

15 *Id.*, *ibid.*

16 Frederick C. LUEBKE, "The Alsatians" in Ann ORLOV, Oscar HANDLIN, *Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1980, pp 29-31. Glenn R. ATWELL, "The Alsatian Community in Western New York," *WNYGS Journal*, vol. X, No. 1, June 1983. Ismar S. ELLISON, "The Germans in Buffalo", *The Publication of the Buffalo Historical Society*, vol. II, 1980, p. 124.

17 Frank L. SCHOELL, *op. cit.*, p. 91.