

MILITARY RECORDS

Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History
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OPTING FOR GERMAN NATIONALITY 1872-1873

Alsaciens-Lorrains Opting for German Nationality: 1872-1873

National Archives Historical Center: BB/31/508 to 510, BB/31/531. Alphabetical directory, established by Ségolène Barbiche, chief curator, 1995. <http://www.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/>

Introduction

Pursuant to article 2 of the Frankfurt Treaty of May 10, 1871 signed with Germany and article 1 of the additional convention of December 11, 1871, persons born in the territories annexed by Germany were able to 'opt'.

Those who wanted to retain French nationality had to be domiciled - or domiciled - in France which was not annexed, in the colonies or abroad. They also had to make a declaration of option for French nationality at the town hall of their domicile in France or in the colonies, or with French embassies and consulates. Choosing French nationality therefore often meant emigrating.

The Alsatian-Lorrainers domiciled in the ceded territories **had no declaration to make to the French authorities to lose their French nationality.**

There was the case of the Alsatians-Lorrainers who did not reside in the ceded territories, at the time of the annexation. They had the option of opting for French or German nationality at the town hall of their residence. This directory concerns these Alsatians-Lorrains, **who did not reside in the ceded territories** and who opted for German nationality. They are, in fact, more difficult to find, since the opting states for German nationality have not been published in the Bulletin des Lois (1). With rare exceptions, they are

soldiers, detainees (notably in the Melun and Fontevault power stations) and probably convicts in Cayenne (Guyana). Article 1 of the protocol of closure of the additional convention of December 11, 1871 stipulated, in fact, that the soldiers and sailors under the flags were immediately released from the French service by opting for the German nationality. As for the detainees, they were handed over to the German authorities.

It was the African army corps that provided the largest contingent of opters for German nationality. Prisons and military penitentiaries also counted a significant number. On the other hand, there is only one officer, Lieutenant Lauthe, garrisoned at Cayenne. Civilians include only 3 women: Emma Burskide, at the asylum for the insane in Rennes, Mélanie Meyer, detained at the Parisian prison at Saint-Lazare, and finally Barbe Schwartz with no known profession. The typical profile of the optant for German nationality is therefore that of a young soldier or a civilian or military prisoner in French prisons and prisons.

At the National Archives, the option sheets for German nationality are kept in 3 boxes marked BB/31/508 to 510; the corresponding nominal statements are in box BB/31/531.

But the present directory was not established according to these documents. It is the copy of an old file which included the indications provided by the options and the states, in order to be able to quickly verify the German option of the Alsatians-Lorrains concerned. As this file is in the process of being destroyed due to the poor quality of the paper, we deemed it useful to copy it as an alphabetical directory, using a microcomputer and SDB software. It is therefore possible that the directory is sometimes less precise than the options themselves, in particular for the profession or the department of birth of optants; but it is also possible that some of the corresponding options no longer appear in BB31 508 to 510.

As it stands, however, we hope that this directory will facilitate genealogical, historical or onomastic research.

(1) On the contrary, the nominative opting states for French nationality were published in the 11 volumes of the additional part of the Bulletin des lois de 1872, to provide proof of the French nationality of the persons concerned.

Record Structures

The records include the fields or headings detailed below.

Names and first names: names are in capitals, except, where appropriate, accented letters which are in lower case; the software does not allow accentuation of capitals. The first names are separated by a dash and their initial always in capital.

Date and place of birth: the date is, without exception, indicated very precisely, because it determined the ability to choose oneself or with the authorization of the tutor [guardian]. Recall that the majority was then fixed at 21 years.

Unless there is an obvious spelling error, the old spelling of place names has been respected; for example, Poutroye (La) or Loupershausen, for Lapoutroie and Loupershouse currently. Similarly, the birth department indicated is that of the time, not the current department; for example, Château-Salins (Meurthe). The faculty of option being rigorously based on the place of birth, only opted those who were born in a ceded commune. Were sold:

The entire Bas-Rhin department.

- 384 municipalities in the Haut-Rhin, out of a total of 490 municipalities. France kept the territory of
- Belfort.
- 242 municipalities in the Meurthe, out of a total of 714 municipalities.
- 504 municipalities in the Moselle, out of a total of 629 municipalities.
- 18 municipalities in the Vosges out of a total of 548 municipalities.

With the remaining French parts of the departments of Meurthe and Moselle, the present department of Meurthe-et-Moselle was formed. The parts of the Meurthe and the Moselle annexed in 1871 constitute the current department of the Moselle since 1919. The territory of Belfort remained separated from the Haut-Rhin.

Professions

The types of occupations represented are very few, as shown in the table below.

- Military personnel on duty: 2,515 opting.
- Soldiers detained in a penitentiary or a military prison: 116 optants.
- Civilian prisoners: 24 optants.
- Transported (ie sentenced to forced or political labor): 2 optants.
- Insane: 1 opting.

When the profession is not known, then the mention "unknown" appears. The opted without profession domiciled in Cayenne (Guyana) are probably convicts.

Option Date

The deadlines for opting had been fixed until October 1, 1872 for those who resided in Europe and until October 1, 1873 for those who resided outside Europe. The oldest options date back to December 1871 (the date "July 4, 1871" on an option seems to be wrong). The greatest number of options were made from April to July 1872. Only 55 options were subscribed from October 1872 to September 1873.

- July 1871: 1 option (error?).
- December 1871: 2 options.
- January-March 1872: 28 options.
- April-May 1872: 1406 options.
- June-July 1872: 981 options.
- August-September 1872: 380 options.
- October-December 1872: 25 options.
- January-September 1873: 30 options.

The date of some options is not known.

Home

This is the commune, followed by the department, at the town hall from which the option was made. The department indicated is that of the time; for example, Paris (Seine), Rochefort (Charente-Inférieure). For Algeria, figure "Algeria"; for example, Oran (Algeria).

Most represented countries or departments of residence.

- Algeria: 1,661 optants.
- Seine: 112 optants.
- Seine-et-Oise: 99 optants.
- Guyana: 84 optants.
- Rhône: 75 optants.

Notes

Additional information is given at the end of some notices:

- "authorized by his father (or his mother or his tutor)" for minors; or "unauthorized minor", "unassisted minor", if the minor opting agent has omitted this formality - details on the place of detention, for civilian or military detainees - any gaps in the notice; for example, "unidentified place of birth".

Or any remark that the seizure of it suggested and that it seemed useful to formulate.

In total, the directory contains 2,872 records. They do not refer to the options themselves, classified in an approximate alphabetical order, under the ratings BB / 31/508 to 510. Indeed, the consultation of these options, in poor condition because of the poor quality of the paper, does not seem more justified now, except for very seriously reasoned verifications.

March 1995, Ségolène Barbiche

Soufflenheim Opting for German Nationality

People from Soufflenheim not residing in Alsace who opted for German nationality following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War: four soldiers and one convict (likely). The option sheets for German nationality are found at the National Archives Historical Center, BB/31/508 to 510. Corresponding nominal statements are in BB/31/531.

The following information is from an alphabetical index created by Ségolène Barbiche, chief curator, in 1995. *Option Date* is the deadline for opting for German nationality.

LOUIS EHRENTREICH

National Archives of France Alphabetical Directory of Alsations-Lorrains having opted for German nationality 1872-1873. BB/31/508-510, BB/31/531), by Ségolène Barbiche, curator, 1995.

- Louis Ehrentreich
- Born January 21, 1851 in Soufflenheim, Bas-Rhin
- Zouave in the 3rd Regiment

- Option Date: 22 August 1872
- Home: Philippeville, Algeria

JOSEPH FRIEDMANN

National Archives of France Alphabetical Directory of Alsatians-Lorrains having opted for German nationality 1872-1873. BB/31/508-510, BB/31/531), by Ségolène Barbiche, curator, 1995.

- Joseph Friedmann
- Born January 30, 1850 In Soufflenheim, Bas-Rhin
- In the 14th Mounted Artillery
- Option Date: 23 May 1872
- Home: Bordeaux, Gironde

FRANÇOIS JOSEPH JAECK

National Archives of France Alphabetical Directory of Alsatians-Lorrains having opted for German nationality 1872-1873. BB/31/508-510, BB/31/531), by Ségolène Barbiche, curator, 1995.

- François Joseph Jaeck
- Born January 5, 1847 in Soufflenheim, Bas-Rhin
- Soldier in Naval Artillery Regiment
- Option Date: July 1, 1872
- Home: Rochefort, Charente-Inférieure

CORNEILLE VONHATTEN

National Archives of France Alphabetical Directory of Alsatians-Lorrains having opted for German nationality 1872-1873. BB/31/508-510, BB/31/531), by Ségolène Barbiche, curator, 1995.

- Corneille Vonhatten
- Born November 13, 1846 in Soufflenheim, Bas-Rhin
- 1st Marine Infantry
- Option Date: 8 June 1872
- Home: Cherbourg, Manche

NATURALIZATION DECREES

ANTOINE GOETZ

Naturalization decrees of the year 1883. Algerian naturalization decree of June 9, 1883 (FOREIGN LEGION). National Archives of France, BB/34/387 Document 92, Reference Code 1795 X 83 (file to consult in sub-series BB/11)

- Antoine Goetz
- Born on July 13, 1859 in Soufflenheim, Bas-Rhin

PIERRE WILHELM

Naturalization decrees of the year 1885. Algerian naturalization decree of January 19, 1885. National Archives of France, BB / 34/389 Document 12, 6326 X 84 (file to consult in sub-series BB/11)

- Pierre Wilhelm
- Born February 15, 1860 in Soufflenheim, Bas-Rhin, France

[Possible soldier. Listed in an Algerian naturalization decree, same as Antoine Goetz, Foreign Legion]

MINISTRY OF PENSIONS 1914-1918

War 1914-1918. Files of the Ministry of Pension Book of the Dead for France, Department of Bas-Rhin (1919-1935), National Archives of France, 19860711, <http://www.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/>

Presentation of Content

From 1914, the quality of "Death for France" was attributed to civilians and soldiers victims of the First World War; thus, throughout the conflict, the War Ministry kept a file of all the soldiers honored with this mention which met specific criteria: only those who died between August 2, 1914 and October 24, 1919, who died on the battlefield or because of damage directly attributable to the conflict, were likely to receive it.

By the law of October 25, 1919, "relating to the commemoration and glorification of the dead for France during the Great War", the State launched the project of a *Guest Book* including the names of all these anonymous heroes, who would be deposited in the Pantheon. The newly created Ministry of Pensions is responsible for drawing up, from the existing file, the list of the Dead for France in each municipality; in 1929 he sent it to the mayors who controlled and amended it. Correspondences often testify to these exchanges between the two parties. However, the discrepancies between the names appearing on the war memorials and those in the Guest Books stem from the fact that the list of the ministry was established in 1929 while the war memorials were almost all erected between 1920 and 1925. In 1935, the material presentation of the future Golden Book is fixed: 120 volumes were to be printed in several copies, one of which would be deposited in the Pantheon. Budget constraints,

The National Archives thus preserve for each French commune, the list of soldiers who died for France, classified in alphabetical order of the departments then of the localities. These municipal nominative lists allow to know the name and first name of each person, as well as the date and place of his death. The

place of burial, however, is not indicated. In principle, the persons mentioned are those who were born or resided in the commune at the time of the mobilization, but a vague question remained for a long time on this question; this explains, for one part, the divergences between the communal lists of Dead for France and the names carried on the war memorials.

It should be noted that with regard to the department of Bas-Rhin, just like the departments of Moselle and Haut-Rhin, which had been annexed to Germany since 1871, the death lists for France are extremely reduced even non-existent.

Soufflenheim Military Pensions

War 1914-1918. Files of the Ministry of Pensions Book of the Dead for France, Department of Bas-Rhin (1919-1935), National Archives of France, Soufflenheim: 416-19860711, 418-19860711/418:

<https://francearchives.fr/en/facomponent/5c10e88468bafb3368ffd3cc2241ca3ac66ccf4c>

Golden Book

Town of Soufflenheim, Department of Bas-Rhin. Ministry of Pensions, Direction de la Liquidation, Law of October 25, 1919.

CLEMENT JAËCK

National Archives of France, Ministry of Pensions Book of the Dead for France 1914-1918, Bas-Rhin

- Name: Clement Jaëck
- Born: October 26, 1876 in Soufflenheim
- Regiment and Rank: 7th Zouaves, Soldier?
- Place of Death: November 19, 1914 Ecurie, PdC

[Village of Ecurie in the Department of Pas-de-Calais, France. First Battle of Ypres was fought near Ecurie from October 19, 1914 to November 22, 1914.]

PIERRE MOSSER

National Archives of France, Ministry of Pensions Book of the Dead for France 1914-1918, Bas-Rhin

- Name: Pierre Mosser
- Born: February 14, 1883 in Soufflenheim
- Regiment and Rank: 74th R.I. (Regiment Infantry) Soldier
- Place of Death: June 13, 1915, Deauville, Calvados

[Village of Deauville in the Department of Calvados, Normandy, France. During World War I, wounded soldiers were cared for in Deauville's famous hotels and casino. The 74th Infantry regiment fought in the Artois sector, north of Deauville, from May to October of 1915.]

MINISTÈRE
DES PENSIONS.

LIVRE D'OR.

Loi du 25 Octobre 1919.

DIRECTION
DE LA LIQUIDATION.

COMMUNE DE

Soufflenheim

BUREAU
DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL
Rue Oudinot, n° 8.

DÉPARTEMENT DE

Bas-Rhin

NOM ET PRÉNOMS.	DATE ET LIEU DE NAISSANCE.	RÉGIMENT ET GRADE.	DATE ET LIEU DE DÉCÈS.
<i>Jacch Clement</i>	<i>26 octobre 1876 Soufflenheim</i>	<i>7^e zouaves sold.</i>	<i>19 novembre 1914 Souris (P. C.)</i>
<i>Mosset Pierre</i>	<i>14 février 1883 Soufflenheim</i>	<i>74^e R. I. Soldat</i>	<i>13 juin 1915 Beauville Calvadot.</i>
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