

SOUFFLENHEIM EMIGRATION AND THE NAPOLÉONIC CADASTRE

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Emigration from Soufflenheim to North America in the 19th century, by Michael J. Nuwer. More writings by Michael Nuwer can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/view/nuwerfamilyhistory/home>



View of South Street, from Maiden Lane, New York City, circa 1827, William James Bennett
Metropolitan Museum, Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures
<https://www.americanyawp.com/text/08-the-market-revolution/>

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SOUFFLENHEIM EMIGRATION 1839: OBERMEYER, MESSMER, AND SCHALL

By Michael J. Nuwer, August 2024

United States immigration data show that the years between 1827 and 1845 were marked by a sustained rise in the volume of immigrants to U.S. ports. “Immigrant volume underwent a substantial increase during a fairly short period of years, and ... the increase occurred well in advance of the potato famine.”¹

Although many of these immigrants originated from Ireland and Great Britain, large numbers also came from states in southwest Germany² (Baden, Wurttemberg, the Rhenish Palatinate, Rhenish Prussia, and Hesse), from Switzerland, and from Alsace, France.

Reviewing immigration volume during the period between 1820 and 1870, Nicole Fouché found that Alsatian emigration before 1845 was an important element of the mass immigration. She showed that Swiss and German emigration had “a very slow start” while Alsatian emigration “started very high and very strong.” Therefore, “the influence of foreign emigration on Alsatian emigration is not as obvious as is generally believed.”³

The French government expressed concern about Alsatian emigration well before 1845. “The Kingdom risks becoming impoverished” by the departure of “craftsmen or farmers who possess an establishment commensurate with their status and sufficient resources for their needs.” The flight of cash was part of this concern. “Rich and poor alike took cash with them, which could pose a local problem at a time when cash was in short supply.”⁴

Evidence of that concern came in 1838, when the mayors of Alsatian towns were required to provide a list of all emigrants to North America for the years between 1828 and 1837. In particular, they were asked to provide the amount of cash taken from their commune.

Soufflenheim’s report contained 70 names. There were 42 solo travelers who left town with a median average amount of cash of 330 francs. There were also 28 families with a total of 159 individuals departing Soufflenheim. The families left with a mean average of 4.3 children and a median average of 1,600 francs.⁵

The following article discusses a group of 23 Soufflenheim emigrants who left their homes during the first phase of mass immigration (1827-1845), specifically in the year 1839. The article relies on information from Cadastre folios to show important characteristics about these emigrants.

The Emigrants

On September 6, 1839 the sailing ship *Lausanne* arrived in New York Harbor with merchandise for A.G. & A.W. Benson and 159 steerage passengers. Genealogists Brian J. Smith and Mark Drexler have identified 23 of those passengers as residents of Soufflenheim.⁶ The immigrants left Le Havre, France on July 12, 1839 and spent a long 56 days crossing the North Atlantic Ocean.⁷ The following table shows the names of the Soufflenheim immigrants onboard the *Lausanne*.

1839 Emigrants	Children
Ignace Obermeyer, age 54 and Richarde Buchmüller, age 49	Martin Obermeyer, age 11
Phillip Obermeyer, age 21	
Joseph Schall, age 38 and Marie Anne Messmer, age 40	Adrienne Messmer, age 24 Joseph Schall, age 14
Vincent Messmer, age 35 and Marie Anne Rund, age 37	Marie Messmer, age 3 Josephine Messmer, age 1
Marguerite Messmer, age 48 widow of Joseph Lengert	Joseph Lengert, age 23 Xavier Lengert, age 20 Vincent Lengert, age 18 Marie Anne Lengert, age 16 Ophilia Lengert, age 14 Josephine Lengert, age 13 Marguerite Lengert, age 10
Emmanuel Schmitter, age 31 and Madelaine Lengert, age 26	Michel Schmitter, age 2

Kinship ties connected 19 of the 23 emigrants who sailed on the *Lausanne*. Marguerite Messmer and Marie Anne Messmer were sisters. Vincent Messmer was their brother. The twelve children of these three families were cousins. One of those cousins was Madelaine Lengert (Marguerite Messmer's daughter), who was herself married with a child.

The Data

Soufflenheim's Napoléonic Cadastre was created in 1836. The project produced records for each of the town's landowners. Cadastre registers (the folios) enumerated information about an individual's house, yard, garden, plowed land, meadows, and more. A numbering system was used to identify each parcel of land. Soufflenheim's Cadastre plan divided the town into four sections, each designated by a letter A through D. The residential village was found in section D. The other three sections contained agricultural land. These documents provide useful information about the emigrants on the *Lausanne*.

For purposes of the Cadastre, dwellings were assigned a classification number and a corresponding tax rate. The housing class is useful because it implies the quality of the dwellings. The table below shows the housing classes and tax rates for Soufflenheim in 1836. There were seven dwelling classes. Class 1 was the highest quality house, and it carried a tax rate of 40 francs per dwelling. Class 7 was the lowest quality house with a tax rate of 4 francs per dwelling.

A social status scale can be constructed from this classification system. Houses in class 1, 2, or 3 are defined as upper class houses, which comprise 10.5 percent of Soufflenheim's housing stock. Houses in class 4 are defined as upper-middle class dwellings (17.4 percent of the housing stock). Houses in class 5 are defined as lower-middle class dwellings (32.7 percent of the housing stock). And houses in class 6 or 7 are defined as lower class dwellings (39.3 percent of the housing stock).

Soufflenheim Houses, 1836

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

At the age of 54, Ignace Obermeyer was the oldest of the 1839 emigrants. His wife was 49 and they had an adopted son named Martin. The 1836 census reported that Ignace worked as a baker and lived in the village at house number 190.

Ignace Obermeyer's Cadastre registry provides information that supplements the census. His records were found in folio 580. That document identifies his house and yard. The dwelling number was 190, which matches the number found in the census. In the Cadastre plan, that house was located at parcel number D 311. The house was a class 4 dwelling which was an upper middle-class quality. There was also a garden (parcel D 312) and an orchard (parcel D 310) at the same address. Finally, Ignace Obermeyer owned one small parcel of farmland. It was one-tenth of an acre, and it was located in Section A.

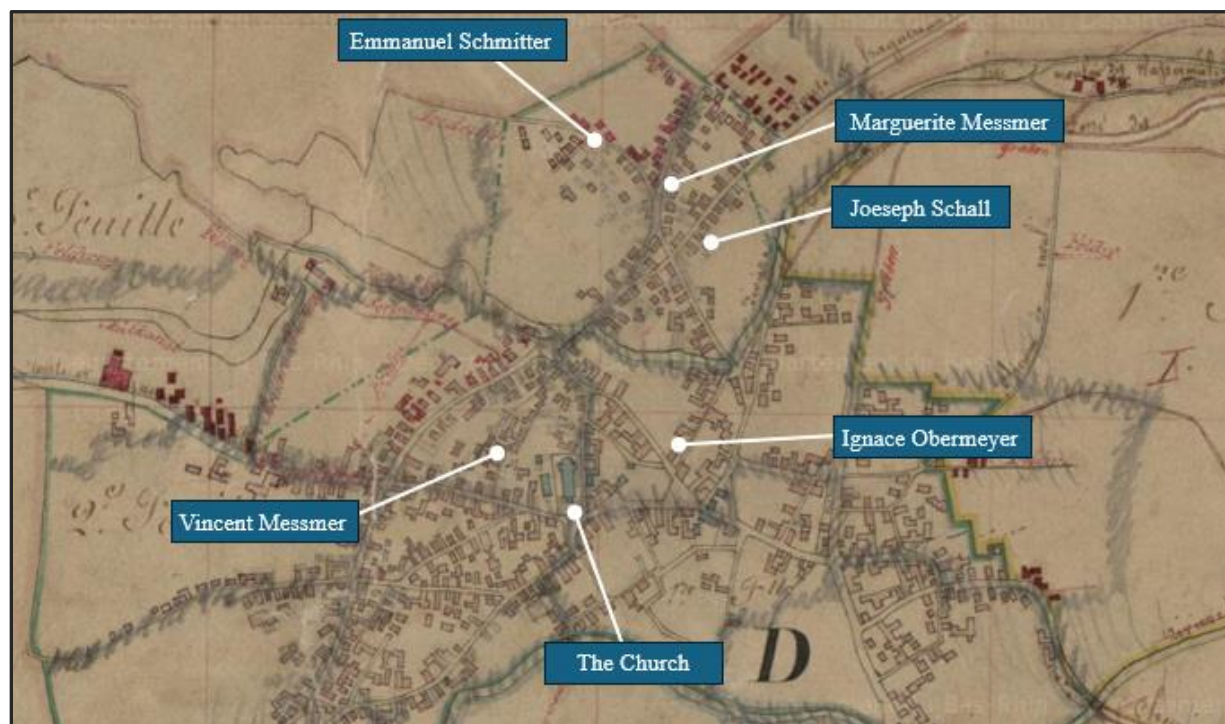
In 1836 Vincent Messmer was 32 years old, married to Marie Anne Rund, and the father of one daughter, also named Marie Anne. He earned a cash income as a well digger. The census counted Vincent as family number 363. They were living in house number 355. Vincent and his wife had a second daughter born after the census was recorded, and they emigrated in 1839 with two young girls.

Vincent Messmer's Cadastre folio was number 523. He owned a house and yard in the village and three parcels of farmland. The house was at parcel number D 735 and the yard was 0.08 (2/25th) of an acre. The house was assessed to be a class 6 dwelling. The three parcels of plowed farmland totaled 0.92 acres.

The 1836 census counted Joseph Schall, his wife, Marie Anne Messmer, and his son, Joseph, Jr. as family number 231. They were living in house number 224. Joseph, Sr. was identified as a tailor. When he emigrated in 1839, Joseph Schall was 38 years old; his wife was 40 and they traveled with two children, Joseph, Jr., who was 14 years old and Adrienne who was 24 years old. Adrienne was born before her mother married Joseph Schall.

Joseph Schall's Cadastre folio was number 618. It identified his village house at number 224, which was located on parcel number D 831 of the Cadastre plan. The house was in the Brunnenberg neighborhood of the village. The yard was very small, only 150 sq meters—that is, 0.04 (1/25th) of an acre. There was no attached garden nor was there an orchard. The house was rated as a class 6 dwelling. Joseph Schall owned no farmland.

The 1836 census identified Marguerite Messmer as the household head of family number 252. They were living at house number 244. Marguerite Messmer was a widow with 9 children. (The tenth child listed in the census, Ferdinand Lengert, was a stepson.)



The Soufflenheim Village Cluster, 1836

Marguerite Messmer's husband, Francis Joseph Lengert, had died in January 1830. When the Cadastre was created six years later, Joseph Lengert's property was recorded in his widow's folio (number 425). The house number was 224, which matched the number found in the census. The house and yard were at parcel D 883 and an attached orchard was at parcel D 884. The Cadastre rated the family house as a class 6 dwelling. Marguerite Messmer owned no farmland.

Marguerite Messmer's oldest daughter, Madelaine, was a member of her household in the 1836 census and married Emmanuel Schmitter later that year. Emmanuel Schmitter did not own property, and it appears that his parents had very little property to pass down. His father, Roman Schmitter, died in 1809 and his mother was the owner of a class 6 house in the village. She owned no farmland. Emmanuel Schmitter grew up in a lower-class house and in 1836 he was working as a day laborer.

The following table summarizes key characteristics of the emigrants discussed in this article.

Characteristics of Emigrants

	Emigration Age	Class of House	Farmland (acres)	Garden Orchard	Profession
Ignace Obermeyer	54	4	0.11	Y / Y	Baker
Joseph Schall	38	6	0.00	N / N	Tailor
Vincent Messmer	35	6	0.92	N / N	Well digger
Marguerite Messmer	48	6	0.00	N / Y	
Emmanuel Schmitter	31	6	0.00	N / N	Day laborer

“[Alsatian] emigrants,” writes Nicole Fouché, “did not systematically come from the poorest classes.” The above pages have shown that the Soufflenheim emigrants discussed in this article were lower-middle class residents of a rural community. They were owners of property and they possessed craft skills. Nevertheless, they were not well off. If they owned farmland, it was not much land—even by Alsatian standards.

Fouché also writes that the Alsatian emigrants “came from the countryside, [not the city]. They were rural people who, even if they didn’t all work the land, were at least familiar with field work.” The Soufflenheim emigrants had craft skills: a baker, a tailor, and a well digger, and they were very likely familiar with field work.

Finally, Fouché writes that the Alsatian emigrants traveled in family groups. “Emigrants were fathers. There is every reason to believe that those who left alone, often young men, were single.” Again, the characteristics of the Soufflenheim emigrants are consistent with this conclusion.

Nicole Fouché concludes that “Alsatian emigrants to the USA in the nineteenth century did not belong to an unstable or marginal population. They were, it seems, highly representative of the Alsatian population of the nineteenth century.”⁸

Settling in North America

Following their arrival in North America, Marguerite Messmer and her seven children settled in New York City. Genealogist Kelly Cooper has identified marriage documents for each of the children. All the documents are from Manhattan. Six of them were dated in 1844, 1845, or 1846. The seventh child, Joseph Lengert, was married in 1849 and another document indicates that he worked in New York City as a laborer. Cooper also reports New York City death records for six of these children.

Madelaine Lengert and her husband Emmanuel Schmitter also settled in New York City. Kelly Cooper has birth records for four children born in Manhattan between 1840 and 1847.

The other three immigrant families settled in Western New York—in the City of Buffalo. Ignace Obermeyer was found in the 1840 census living in Buffalo’s 4th Ward, which was the heart of the city’s “German Village.” The Obermeyer household included Ignace, Richarde, and their son, Martin. Ignace was employed in manufacturing.⁹

On April 27, 1842 Ignace Obermeyer became a property owner. This purchase was made roughly two and one-half years after he arrived in North America. The house was located at 12 Walnut Street and the purchase price was \$500.¹⁰ No mortgage was found.

The 1850 census found Ignace (age 65) and Richarde (age 60) living in a two-family dwelling. Many houses in Buffalo were two-family wood-frame structures. The typical layout was one flat on the first floor and a second flat upstairs. This style of home made it possible for a working-class family to afford home ownership by residing in one of the flats and renting the other flat to another family. The census indicates that Ignace was the owner of the two-family dwelling; the second family was a young immigrant couple (ages 30 and 24). The household head worked as a joiner.¹¹ Ignace Obermeyer owned this property until April 25, 1859.¹²

Vincent Messmer and his family were found in the 1840 census living in Cheektowaga, a town immediately east of Buffalo. He was employed in commerce.¹³ Early the next year, on January 7, 1841, he purchased a parcel of land in the City of Buffalo. The land was located on the south side of Kane Street and was 100ft by 50ft, that is, 0.11 of an acre.¹⁴ Vincent Messmer paid \$200 for the land and he financed the purchase with a mortgage.¹⁵ Vincent purchased a second residential lot in 1848. The deed was dated October 12, the purchase price was \$200, and the lot was located on Genesee Street near Spring Street.¹⁶

Vincent Messmer's entry in the 1850 census is similar to Ignace Obermeyer entry. It shows a two-family structure. Vincent Messmer was the owner and his family of six was living in one of the flats. An immigrant family of eight was living in the second flat. Unfortunately, the census does not offer a way to determine whether the Messmer family was residing at the Genesee Street property or at the Kane Street property.

Vincent's wife, Marie Anne Rund, died on August 20, 1850 (age 48). One year later he sold the Kane Street property. The original lot was 100ft by 50ft and he sold it in two pieces of 100ft by 25ft each. The first piece was sold on August 13, 1851 for \$125 and the second sold on September 6, 1851 for \$325.

In 1855 the New York State census found Vincent (a widower) and his 9 years old son living in Buffalo's 7th Ward. Vincent was 52 years old and working as a pump maker. He was probably living at the Genesee Street house, as it was within the 7th Ward.¹⁷ The building was at that time a three-family structure.¹⁸

On August 23, 1855 Vincent Messmer sold his Genesee Street house and about that time he and his son moved to New Germany, Canada.

Joseph Schall's history in Buffalo has been a bit more difficult to assess. He was found as the head of a household in the 1840 census. The family of three was living in Buffalo's 4th Ward.¹⁹ A year later, Joseph Schall became a Buffalo property owner. On November 29, 1841 he purchased a residential lot near the intersection of Jefferson and Sycamore Streets. The price was \$58, and the purchase occurred a full two years after Joseph arrived in North America.²⁰

The 1850 Census found Joseph Schall living in Cincinnati, Ohio; he was working as a tailor in Cincinnati's first ward. His wife, Marie Anne Messmer, and his son, Joseph, Jr., had contracted cholera and died there in June 1849. Joseph Schall, Sr. remarried in 1850. At that time, he was still the owner of a house in Buffalo. The Buffalo house was sold July 19, 1853. Joseph Schall received \$90 for the property.²¹ Joseph Schall then disappears from history.

Summary

The Soufflenheim immigrants discussed in this article can be described as middle-class members of a rural community. They were property owners with craft skills, but their resources were meager even by Alsatian standards.

Nicole Fouché identified the economic status of two groups of emigrants: those who left Alsace with enough money to settle in North America under good conditions and those who left with just enough to pay for their travel.

It would be a mistake to think it was always the poorest Alsatians who emigrated. To take the example of the Bas Rhin from 1828 to 1837, it was found that 35 percent of the families took with them large sums of money which probably enabled them to settle in the United States under good conditions. 7 percent of people asking for passports took even larger sums with them and this brings the number of families able to settle in America without any problem up to 42 percent from the financial point of view. The remaining 58 percent had just enough to pay their passage and the overland journey.²²

Vincent Messmer, Ignace Obermeyer, Joseph Schall, Marguerite Messmer, and Emmanuel Schmitter were not poor nor were they from the unstable and undesirable elements of society.

They “sold their little house with its patch of land” to raise the money for their journey to North America. They traveled in family units, indeed four of the families formed a kinship network. These emigrants may not have been among the 42 percent who settled in America under good conditions, but they were among the group who had enough to pay for their passage and the overland journey.

Ignace Obermeyer, Vincent Messmer, and Joseph Schall sold land in Soufflenheim and became landowners in Buffalo. However, neither of the three immigrants purchased Buffalo land within a year of their arrival. Ignace Obermeyer purchased his property 31 months after arriving; Joseph Schall purchased his property 26 months after arriving; and Vincent Messmer purchased his property 16 months after arriving in North America and that purchase was made with a mortgage. The evidence does not suggest that these immigrants liquidated their Soufflenheim holding at a price enabling them to cross the sea to America *and* buy property immediately upon their arrival.

The emigrants discussed above were lower-middle class members of Soufflenheim’s community. They were neither large landowners nor unskilled laborers. They did not travel under indentured contracts nor on behalf of a colonization company; they were not funded by a labor recruiter; they were not transported at government expense attempting to be rid of undesirables. This article has shown that these emigrants were people “who traveled on their own resources;” who “had property that could be turned to cash;” and who “relied upon their own skills and wished to do so in the future.”²³

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2. See Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1964), Chapter 2: “The Auswanderer, 1830-1845.”

3. Nicole Fouché, *Émigration alsacienne aux États-Unis 1815-1870*, Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2020 [1992], Chapter 3, (<https://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/49333>).
4. *Ibid.*, Chapter 5.
5. Bas-Rhin Archive, "Emigration pour d'Amerique et les autres pays," (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSNT-7CZY?i=99>).
6. Brian J. Smith, "Matches for Ship: Lausanne 1839," (<http://www.smithancestry.com/sources/ships/ships18201850notes.htm#lausanne1839sepmatch>)
7. The *New York Evening Post*, the *New York Morning Courier*, and the *New York American*, each reported a 56-day westward passage. The *New York Morning Herald* reported a 66-day westward passage. The *Morning Herald's* reporting is assumed to be an error. All four newspaper reports were made in their respective September 6, 1839 editions.
8. Nicole Fouché, *Émigration alsacienne aux États-Unis 1815-1870*, Chapter. 2.
9. 1840 Census of the United States (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YYV-3JVG>).
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16. Erie County, New York Deeds, (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9WX-3HL7?i=764>).
17. The house was at 304 Genesee Street and can be seen on this map, (<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e3-1b5a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>).
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SOUFFLENHEIM EMIGRATION 1847: HALTER, VOEGELE, AND ZINGER

By Michael J. Nuwer, August 2024

Soufflenheim Emigration in the Agrarian Crisis of 1845-1848

On July 9, 1847 a sailing ship named *Exchange* arrived at New York Harbor. Three families from Soufflenheim were among the arriving passengers. The Halter family of seven, the Voegele family of nine, and the Zinger family of eleven disembarked on North American soil. The names of these passengers are presented in Table 1. The sailing ship had departed from Le Havre, France on June 7th, in ballast, with 170 passengers—a 32-day transatlantic voyage.

Historians generally agree that the main reason Europeans immigrated to new places in the first half of the nineteenth century was because of a shortage of land to support their family. Inheritance law in Alsace and southwest Germany passed property equally among a family's sons and daughters, and thus farms were divided and subdivided among all the heirs. This left each heir with smaller parcels of land than their father had. These laws became especially problematic in the early nineteenth century when falling mortality in Europe caused faster population growth. In other words, fixed amounts of land were being divided among a growing number of surviving children. The parcels of land became smaller and smaller for each generation and by the nineteenth century the size of many parcels was not viable to sustain a family. This phenomenon produced an incentive to emigrate, as people sought farmland in North America, a place that was seen to have an abundance of land. In the words of historian Mack Walker:

The principal means of production was agriculture; its main capital resource was land, which permitted of little expansion. In southwestern Germany, an area of divisible inheritances, agricultural lands had been divided and subdivided to match increased intensification. The family plot decreased in size and remained marginal or submarginal in terms of its capacity to support those who depended upon it, so that in Baden, Wurttemberg, the Rhenish Palatinate, Rhenish Prussia, and the Hesse a large part of the landowning population stood perpetually on the verge of hunger.¹

United States immigration data shows that the years between 1827 and 1845 were marked by a sustained rise in the volume of immigrants to U.S. ports. This period marked the beginning of mass immigration and was characterized by travelers with the intension of permanent settlement in North America. Beginning in 1846, immigrant volume again rose sharply, finally peaking in 1854. It is common to explain this second jump in the volume of immigration to the 1846 spread of the potato blight across Europe.²

The potato blight in Europe was first noticed in June 1845 in Belgium and quickly spread across Northern Europe. The failure of the 1845 potato harvest caused hardship, but it did not cause a crisis. The failure of the 1846 harvest was more severe. To make matters worse, in 1846 the continent lost almost half of its rye harvest and had a below normal wheat harvest, thereby exacerbating the failure of the potato crop. As a consequence of these crop failures, the prices of grains rose substantially throughout Europe and remained high into 1847.³

Table 1 : Immigrants on the Ship *Exchange*, June 7 to July 9, 1847**Family of Joseph Voegele**

Name	Born	Age at immigration
Joseph Voegele	14 Jul 1790	56
Catherine Muller	11 Apr 1799	48
Joseph Voegele	23 Feb 1823	24
Henry Voegele	14 Jul 1827	19
Francois Xavier Voegele	06 Aug 1830	16
Jean Baptiste Voegele	06 Jun 1834	13
Madelaine Voegele	15 Jul 1836	10
Marie Anne Voegele	24 Apr 1838	9
Margueritha Voegele	01 Jul 1841	6

Family of Martin Halter

Name	Born	Age at immigration
Martin Halter	28 Nov 1796	50
Richarde Schmuck	10 Feb 1799	48
Antoine Halter	06 Jul 1825	22
Marie Eve Halter	25 Dec 1827	19
Martin Halter	11 May 1830	17
Auguste Halter	18 Sep 1835	11
Louis Halter	08 Aug 1839	7

Family of Joseph Zinger

Name	Born	Age at immigration
Joseph Zinger	10 Jun 1784	63
Catherine Schoeffter	02 Apr 1786	61
Jean Zinger	27 Dec 1826	20
Euphenie Zinger	14 Apr 1812	35
Mathieu Schlosser	20 Sep 1810	36
Caroline Schlosser	14 Jan 1835	12
Therese Schlosser	13 Feb 1837	10
Michel Schlosser	28 Sep 1840	6
Jean Schlosser	27 Jan 1843	4
Louis Schlosser	24 Nov 1844	2
Julius Schlosser		

Archival research has identified genealogical information about each of the three Soufflenheim families who arrived in New York on July 9, 1847. Marriages dates, birth dates, and death dates are transcribed and available.⁴ That information is not reproduced here. Instead, this article uses the following pages to introduce new information taken from the Cadastre land registry.

Soufflenheim's Napoléonic Cadastre was assembled in 1836. The project contained two parts. First the Cadastral plan created a set of maps showing the boundaries of every parcel of residential and agricultural land within the commune of Soufflenheim. A numbering system was used to identify each house and parcel of land. The detailed maps divided the town into four sections, each labeled with a letter A through D. The residential village was found in Section D. The other three sections contained agricultural land.

The second part of the Cadastre land registry contained records for each landowner. Cadastre registers (the folios) recorded information about the land owned by an individual. On one page, information about an individual's house, yard, garden, plowed land, meadows, and more was enumerated. Cadastre folios were found for Martin Halter (folio 263), Joseph Voegele (folio 749), and Joseph Zinger (folio 832). Each of these folios was included in the original plan from 1836 when Soufflenheim's Cadastre was assembled.

The folios described the parcels of land owned by the three future immigrants. The information included the section letter and parcel number which locate each parcel on the maps. Also included was a description of the parcel. Farmland was described as either plowed land or meadows. Land in the village cluster included the yards on which dwellings were constructed, gardens, and small orchards. The dwellings were identified separately from their yard. The folio also contains the size, expressed in hectares, and the tax assessment, expressed in francs, of the respective land parcel. Finally, the folios contain the year each parcel of land was added to the folio and the year it was removed from the folio.

For purposes of the Cadastre, dwellings were assigned a classification number and a corresponding tax rate, which indicates the quality of the house. Table 4 shows the housing classes and tax rates for Soufflenheim in 1836. Soufflenheim's Cadastre contained seven dwelling classes. Class 1 was the highest quality house, and it carried a tax rate of 40 francs per dwelling. Class 7 was the lowest quality house with a tax rate of 4 francs per dwelling.

From Table 2 we can estimate a social status scale. Houses in class 1, 2, or 3 are defined as upper class houses (10.5 percent). Those in class 4 are upper-middle class (17.4 percent). Houses in class 5 are lower-middle class (32.7 percent). And houses in class 6 or 7 are lower class (39.3 percent).

It appears that the year in which a parcel was added or removed from a folio was not the year the property was bought or sold. A review made of folios for individuals whose date of immigration is known showed that in almost all cases their folio recorded the year a parcel was removed as the year *after* the property owner emigrated. Jean Kieffer, for example, emigrated from Soufflenheim in the second half of 1843. Before he left, he was the owner of 24 parcels of property. However, the year these parcels were removed from his folio (number 358) was given as 1844. The same issue appears on the folios of many others whose date of immigration is known. It seems doubtful that such a pattern would occur in so many cases. In this article, therefore, it is assumed the property was sold the year before it was removed from the folio.

Table 2 : Soufflenheim Houses

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

The 1836 Census

The year 1836 was a census year and the census information can be combined with the Cadastre information.⁵ The census identified Martin Halter as the head of household number 368. The family was living at house number 361 Oberdorff. The census identifies Oberdorff as a street, but in fact it was a neighborhood which translates as “upper village.” Martin Halter was 40 years old. His wife Richarde Schmuck was 38 years old and they had four children: Antoine (age 11), Eve (age 8), Martin (age 6), and Auguste (age 9 months).

Joseph Voegele was found in the census as the head of household number 290. He was 44 years old and his wife Catherine Muller was 36. They had five children: Joseph (age 13), Marguerite (age 11), Henry (age 9), Xavier (age 5), and Jean (age 2). The Voegele family was living at house number 282. The street was given as Brunnenberg, but again this name was a neighborhood, not a physical street. Brunnenberg, which translates as “mountain spring,” was a region of the village north of the Eberbach River.

Joseph Zinger was identified in the census as the head of household number 110. He was 54 years old and his wife, Catherine Schoeffter was 51. They had four sons living in their household: Barnabe (age 22), Jacques (age 17), Joseph (age 12), and Jean (age 9). The family was living at house number 101 and the street was given as Rue Dite im Gübel, a street name that is not found on any known map of Soufflenheim.

The Cadastre folios that were created in 1836 used the same house number system as the census. This means that the house number from the census can be matched to the house number on a Cadastre folio, and, thereby, the specific location on the Cadastre maps can be identified. Table 3 presents that information and Figure 1 identifies the houses.

Table 3

Item	Halter	Voegele	Zinger
Census house number	361	281	101
Census street name	Oberdorff	Brunnenberg	Rue Dite im Gübel
Cadastre house number	361	281	101
Cadastre district	Village	Brunnenberg	Village
Cadastre parcel number	Sec D #729	Sec D #997	Sec D #170

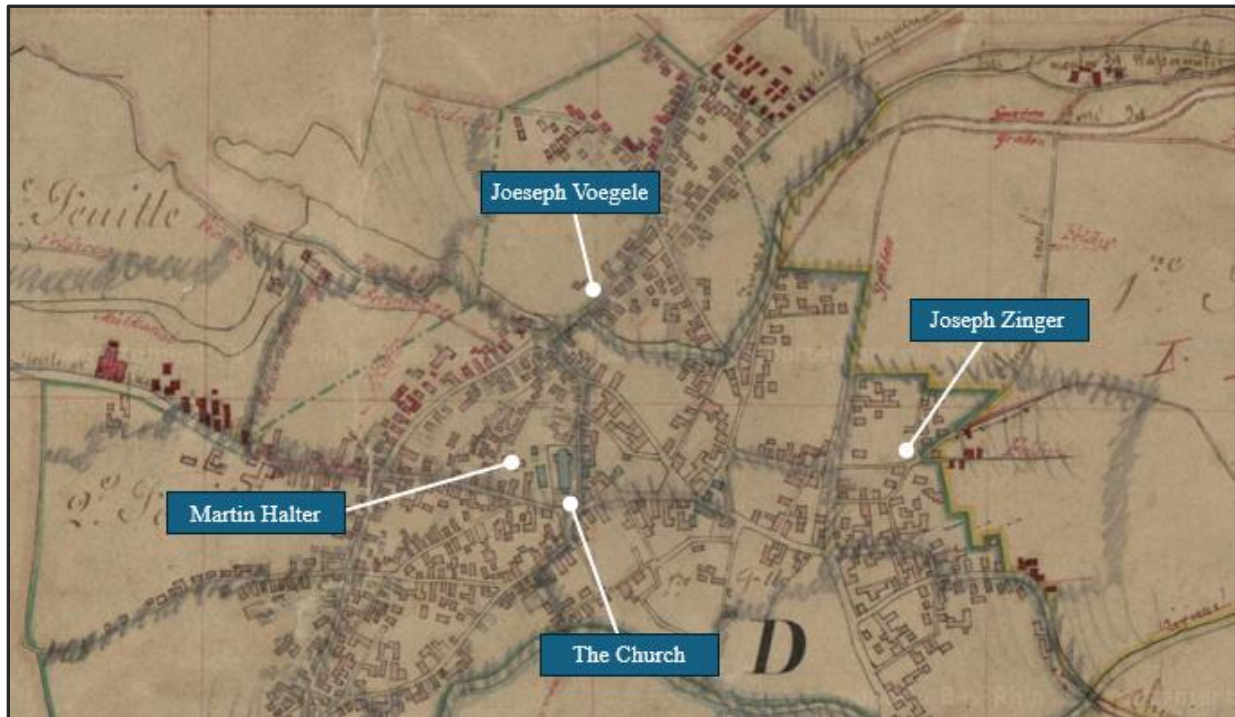


Figure 1 : The Soufflenheim Village Cluster, 1836

The Cadastre plan and the Census were both completed in 1836. The Halter, Voegele, and Zinger families lived in Soufflenheim another ten years before they emigrated. Yet many Soufflenheim residents had already immigrated to North America. In March 1838 the town Mayor submitted a report of all residents who had emigrated between the years 1828 and 1837. The list contained 70 names: 28 families and 42 solo travels. Martin Halter, Joseph Voegele, and Joseph Zinger would have known about these emigrants and probably had known some of them as friends. Be that as it may, it would be another 10 years before the Halter, Voegele, and Zinger families would leave their hometown.

Cadastre Property

Transcriptions of the Cadastre folios for Martin Halter (folio 263), Joseph Voegele (folio 749), and Joseph Zinger (folio 832) are presented in the Appendix of this article.

In 1836, the year that Soufflenheim's Cadastre plan was completed, Martin Halter was the owner of one-half acre of land (0.557 acre). The land included two houses and yards in the village and the yards were next door to each other. The parcel numbers were 728 and 729, the house numbers were 362 and 361 respectively. The Halter family was living at house number 361 and Marie Anne Lehmann, a 70-year-old widow, was living at house number 362. Both houses were rated as class 5 dwellings. Martin Halter also owned one parcel of plowed land in 1836, which was 0.4 acres in size.

In 1841, Martin Halter sold the house at number 361. He probably moved into the house next door. In the same year he acquired additional farmland. He purchased two parcels of plowed land and two parcels of meadow land. At the beginning of 1842 when taxes were due, Martin Halter was the owner of a house and yard in the village and 1.65 acres of farmland. The farmland included three parcels of plowed land totaling 0.98 acres and two parcels of meadow land totaling 0.66 acres.

Table 4 presents the occupations reported in the 1836, 1841, and 1846 censuses. Martin Halter worked as a woodcutter in 1836 and 1841, and he worked as a plowman in 1846. As a woodcutter, he may have been involved with the harvesting and transport of trees from Soufflenheim's communal forest and from the Haguenau Forest.

In 1846, on the eve of his journey to North America, Martin Halter was 49 years old, he had four sons and a daughter (the youngest, Louis, was seven years old), he owned a class 5 house, and he owned 1.6 acres of farmland.

Table 4 : Census Occupations⁶

	1836	1841	1846
Martin Halter	Woodcutter	Woodcutter	Plowman
Joseph Voegele	Charcoal Maker	Charcoal Maker	Charcoal Maker
Joseph Zinger	Plowman	Plowman	Plowman

Joseph Zinger was also a landowner. In 1836 he owned two houses and two yards in the village. Like Martin Halter, these houses were next door to each other. The parcel numbers were 170 and 171, the house numbers were 101 and 100 respectively. Joseph Zinger also owned an attached orchard. His folio suggests that the house at number 100 was demolished in 1836. Although it was recorded on the folio, it was never taxed. The demolition of this house did not change the quantity of land Joseph Zinger owned. Taken together the land in the village totaled one-quarter of an acre (0.245). The house at number 101 was a class 5 dwelling.

Joseph Zinger also owned farmland in the Soufflenheim fringe (the *bann*). In 1836 he had six parcels of plowed land. There were no meadows recorded in his folio. The farmland totaled almost two acres (1.96 acres). Between 1836 when the Cadastre was created and 1847 when he left Soufflenheim, Joseph Zinger purchased no additional land, nor did sell any of his land.

Each of the three census years presented in Table 4 report that Joseph Zinger worked as a plowman. In 1846, he was 62 years old, he had four sons and a daughter, he owned a class 5 house, and he owned 1.96 acres of farmland.

In 1836 Joseph Voegele owned a bit more than six and one-half acres of land (6.69 acres). He was also the owner of two houses. In 1836, the Voegele family was living in the house at parcel 997, house number 281. That house number matches the house number in the 1836 census. The second house was at parcel 1217, house number 321. According to the census, Joachim Strack was living at house number 321. This suggests that Joseph Voegele was a landlord. The house at number 321 was a class 4 dwelling.

Joseph Voegele's Cadastre folio tells us that his house at number 281 was demolished in 1836 (presumably after the census recorded him as a resident there). Evidence from the 1841 census tells us that the Voegele family moved into their house at number 321. We know Joachim Strack was living at house number 321 in 1836. His neighbors (at house number 322) were Joseph Schlosser and Appoline Besson. The 1841 census does not include house numbers, but it identifies Joseph Voegele as family number 360 and Joseph Schlosser and Appoline Besson as family number 361, suggesting that they were next door neighbors.

When the Cadastre was initially constructed in 1836, Joseph Voegele owned 5.58 acres of plowed land and 0.74 acres of meadows. His folio shows that seven parcels of farmland were added and three were removed in the years between 1836 and 1846. In 1847 he owned 19 parcels of farmland, and all but one was plowed land. Aggregated together, the farmland totaled 6.14 acres.

Table 4 shows that Joseph Voegele worked as a charcoal maker in 1836, 1841, and 1846. In 1846, Joseph Voegele was 56 years old, he had four sons and three daughters, he owned a class 4 house, and he owned 6.14 acres of farmland.

Leaving Home

We know that the Halter, Voegele, and Zinger families were in Le Havre, France on June 7, 1847, the day the sailing ship, *Exchange*, departed for North America. The journey from Soufflenheim to Le Havre would have taken about three weeks and the travelers would have waited in the port city before their ship departed, perhaps a week or so. Thus, the three families left Soufflenheim no later than the beginning of May.

In January 1847, the emigrants would have paid their property taxes. To obtain a passport needed to leave France, an emigrant had to certify with the town mayor that their taxes and debts were paid. Then between January and May most of the property owned by Martin Halter, Joseph Voegele, and Joseph Zinger was sold or otherwise transferred.

Martin Halter liquidated his house, yard, and five parcels of farmland, which was everything he owned. Joseph Voegele liquidated his house, yard, and garden in the village. He also sold 16 parcels of farmland. There were three parcels that remained unsold when Joseph left Soufflenheim. One was sold in 1848 and the other two in 1849.

The emigration story for the Joseph Zinger family was a bit different. Joseph and his wife Catherine Schoeffter left Soufflenheim with one son (Jean) and one married daughter (Euphenie). They had two other sons (Barnabé and Jacob) who did not emigrate. In 1847, Joseph Zinger transferred his property in the village, a house, yard, garden, and orchard to his son Jacob (0.25 acres of land). Jacob also received a parcel of plowed land which was 0.51 acre. Joseph Zinger then liquidated the other five parcels of farmland (1.45 acres).

In addition, Joseph Zinger's daughter, Euphenie, was married to Mathias Schlosser. They had six children who emigrated in 1847. Mathias Schlosser was the owner of a house and yard in Soufflenheim, but he had no farmland. When he left Soufflenheim with his family and in-laws, his brother Antoni became the owner of Mathias' village property.

In summary, Joseph Zinger sold 1.45 acres of farmland; Martin Halter sold 1.65 acres of farmland plus a house and yard in the village; Joseph Voegele sold 5.24 acres of farmland plus a house, yard, and garden in the village.

We don't know the money prices for this property, and so we don't know how much money each family carried with them when they left Soufflenheim. One estimate might be that a house and yard were worth about as much as 1.25 acres of farmland. In 1841, Martin Halter sold a class 5 house and yard in the village and purchased 1.25 acres of farmland. This may have been a zero-sum transaction. If that was the case, then Martin Halter would have left Soufflenheim with twice as much money as Joseph Zinger. Joseph Voegele would have left with considerably more than both Joseph Zinger and Martin Halter.

A common estimate for the cost of travel from Alsace to New York City in the era before the railroads is about 200 francs per adult. The Halter family traveled with seven people and the Voegele family traveled with nine. Martin Halter needed about 1,400 francs and Joseph Voegele needed about 1,800 francs. The Zinger family traveled with five adults and six children. The travel cost would have been about 2,200 francs. Prices for the Atlantic crossing may have been half for children aged seven and under. In that case, the travel cost would be closer to 1,800 francs (seven adults at 200 francs each and four children at 100 francs each).

After disembarking in New York City, the three Soufflenheim families traveled up the Hudson River to Albany, New York and then west along the Erie Canal to western New York. The families of Martin Halter and Joseph Voegele settled in the town of Lancaster, New York, about fifteen miles east of the City of Buffalo. The family of Joseph Zinger continued from western New York, north into Canada, and settled in the town of New Germany, in Waterloo County.

We know that the Halter and Voegele families proceeded directly from New York City to western New York. Their ship arrived on July 9 and on September 3, 1847 Joseph Voegele and Martin Halter purchased land in Lancaster, New York.⁷ The purchase was an undivided interest in a 50-acre parcel of land located in the southeast part of town. Less than two months after arriving in North America, they paid Hiram Clark \$600 for the northern part of lot 57. No record of a mortgage was found, and it is inferred that Joseph Voegele and Martin Halter purchased the land with money they brought from Alsace. Since one US dollar was worth 5.42 French francs, \$600 was equivalent to 3,252 francs.

Summary

Martin Halter, Joseph Voegele, and Joseph Zinger emigrated from Soufflenheim during the second phase of mass immigration from central Europe. Phase one is recognized by historians to include the years between 1827 and 1845. Phase two began in 1846 and continued through 1854. The jump in the volume of emigration from central Europe was composed of two elements: an extension of the social sources of emigration to include a larger number of poorer people (propertyless day laborers) and a geographic extension to include new areas in central Europe (northern and eastern Germany).⁸

This change in the social composition of emigration from central Europe was "a response to the economic insecurity, the anxiety, the frustration, and the sense of impending crisis that characterized" the years after 1845. An economic crisis in central Europe began in 1845 and hit the rural lower classes especially hard. "The lower classes, who relied particularly on home-grown potatoes, now had to resort to more expensive grains. ... The increased prices left many families in dire need."⁹

In lower Alsace “the potato was hit by a terrible disease in 1845, which lasted for several years.” The general economic crisis, reflected in rising prices for grain, made “it extremely difficult to make a living. The phenomenon was amplified by a succession of agricultural crises linked to climatic conditions: 1837-1840, 1845-1846 and potato disease, which exacerbated food shortages.”¹⁰

At Soufflenheim “many people were threatened with hunger.”

In 1846, according to the [Town] Council’s deliberations, Mayor [Joseph] Messner drew attention to the misery “currently weighing on a large number of families without work.” ... He proposed the creation of a charity workshop. A number of people were also hired to build two dikes to protect the Obermattwald and Niederfeld fields from flooding. In November of the same year, the Council became aware of the high cost of living and the misery caused by the lack of work and granted a credit of 5,000 francs to the charity workshop. The commune had to abandon plans to install new organs, for which a credit of 9,000 francs had been earmarked. The charity workshop should be up and running as soon as possible.¹¹

In 1845 the potato blight struck hard. Its effect was most severe where the population was dense and there was little industry. These areas depended most upon the potato. More harm was done by the disease in 1846. A very large proportion of central Europe’s potatoes were destroyed. The rye crop, too, was seriously damaged by frosts and food prices rose sharply under the pressure of consumer demand and speculation. “As the economic situation worsened and the tense atmosphere of foreboding grew more oppressive, the spring of 1847 brought unprecedented swarms of [emigrants] by road, river, and rail to the seaports of northwestern Europe.”¹²

The three Soufflenheim families discussed in this article joined that “swarm.” Yet, the three families did not exhibit the characteristics that defined the second phase of mass immigration. They did not originate from a new geographic area. Soufflenheim, and lower Alsace in general, had been a major source of immigration throughout phase one of the process. Moreover, the three families were not poor, propertyless day laborers.

Martin Halter, Joseph Voegele, and Joseph Zinger were people who had skills they could rely upon and who had property that could be turned into cash. They were from Soufflenheim’s middle class. Their choice to emigrate appears to have been rooted in characteristics that gave shape to the earlier phase of mass immigration, although their timing overlapped with the second phase. Thus, the jump in the volume of emigration that defined the second phase of mass immigration was not the result of a shift in the nature and character of emigration, but rather a transcendence which incorporated elements of the first phase while growing and spreading with new elements in the second phase.

Appendix

Voegele, Joseph, Charcoal maker of Soufflenheim : Folio number 749

Year Added	Section	Parcel Number	Parcel Type	Size (hectares)	Size (Acres)	Class	Year Removed
	A	218	Plowed land	0.0895	0.22		1848
	A	240	Plowed land	0.0965	0.24		1842
	A	304	Meadow	0.1540	0.38		1849
	A	699	Plowed land	0.0825	0.20		1848

	A	1033	Plowed land	0.1180	0.29		1850
	B	420	Meadow	0.0740	0.18		1847
	B	422	Meadow	0.0720	0.18		1847
	B	455	Plowed land	0.0920	0.23		1850
	C	297	Plowed land	0.1480	0.37		1848
	C	395	Plowed land	0.2710	0.67		1848
	C	397	Plowed land	0.1370	0.34		1848
	C	433	Plowed land	0.1440	0.36		1848
	C	527	Plowed land	0.0940	0.23		1848
	C	603	Plowed land	0.1830	0.45		1848
	D	977	Plowed land	0.0870	0.21		1842
	D	997	House				1842
	D	997	Yard	0.0705	0.17		1842
	D	998	Plowed land	0.4020	0.99		1842
	D	1217	House				1848
	D	1217	Yard	0.0570	0.14		1848
	D	1218	Garden	0.0230	0.06		1848
	D	1219	Plowed land	0.0770	0.19		1848
	D	1303	Plowed land	0.1075	0.27		1848
	D	1406	Plowed land	0.1300	0.32		1848
1839	D	776	House				1841
1839	D	776	Plowed land	0.0460	0.11		1841
1839	D	1201	Plowed land	0.1940	0.48		1848
1842	D	1202	Plowed land	0.0875	0.22		1848
1842	B	423	Meadow	0.0700	0.17		1847
1843	B	536	Meadow	0.0730	0.18		1846
1846	C	396	Plowed land	0.1510	0.37		1848
1847	C	586	Plowed land	0.1155	0.29		1848
1847	C	587	Plowed land	0.1050	0.26		1848

Martin Halter of Soufflenheim : Folio number 263

Year Added	Section	Parcel Number	Parcel Type	Size (Hectares)	Size (Acres)	Class	Year Removed
	D	728	House			5	1848
	D	728	Yard	0.0425	0.105	1	1848
	D	729	House			5	1842
	D	729	Yard	0.0210	0.052	1	1842
	D	1260	Plowed land	0.1620	0.400	5	1848
1842	A	866	Plowed land	0.0810	0.200	1	1848
1842	B	67	Meadow	0.1470	0.363	1	1848
1842	D	939	Plowed land	0.1550	0.383	5	1848
1842	B	314	Meadow	0.1210	0.299	1	1848

Joseph Zinger, son of Jacob, of Soufflenheim : Folio number 832

Year Added	Section	Parcel Number	Parcel Type	Size (Hectares)	Size (Acres)	Class	Year Removed
	A	51	Plowed land	0.0780	0.193	2	1848
	B	172	Plowed land	0.2060	0.509	5	1848

	B	768	Plowed land	0.0670	0.166	5	1848
	C	259	Plowed land	0.1570	0.388	4	1848
	C	559	Plowed land	0.1230	0.304	4	1848
	D	170	House			5	1848
	D	170	Yard	0.0065	0.016	1	1848
	D	171	House				démolie
	D	171	Yard	0.0645	0.159	1	1848
	D	172	Orchard	0.0280	0.069	2	1848
	D	1427	Plowed land	0.1620	0.400	4	1848

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