

## SOUFFLENHEIM EXILES IN THE GREAT FLIGHT

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In late 1793, fearful of reprisals from the French Revolutionary Army and other anti-Monarchist elements for supporting Monarchist forces in their attempt to restore the Monarchy during the Fall of 1793, an estimated 40,000 people fled from Alsace, most from the departments of Weissenburg and Haguenau, including over 128 people from Soufflenheim.



*Vosges Peasants Fleeing Before the Invasion, Gustave Brion*

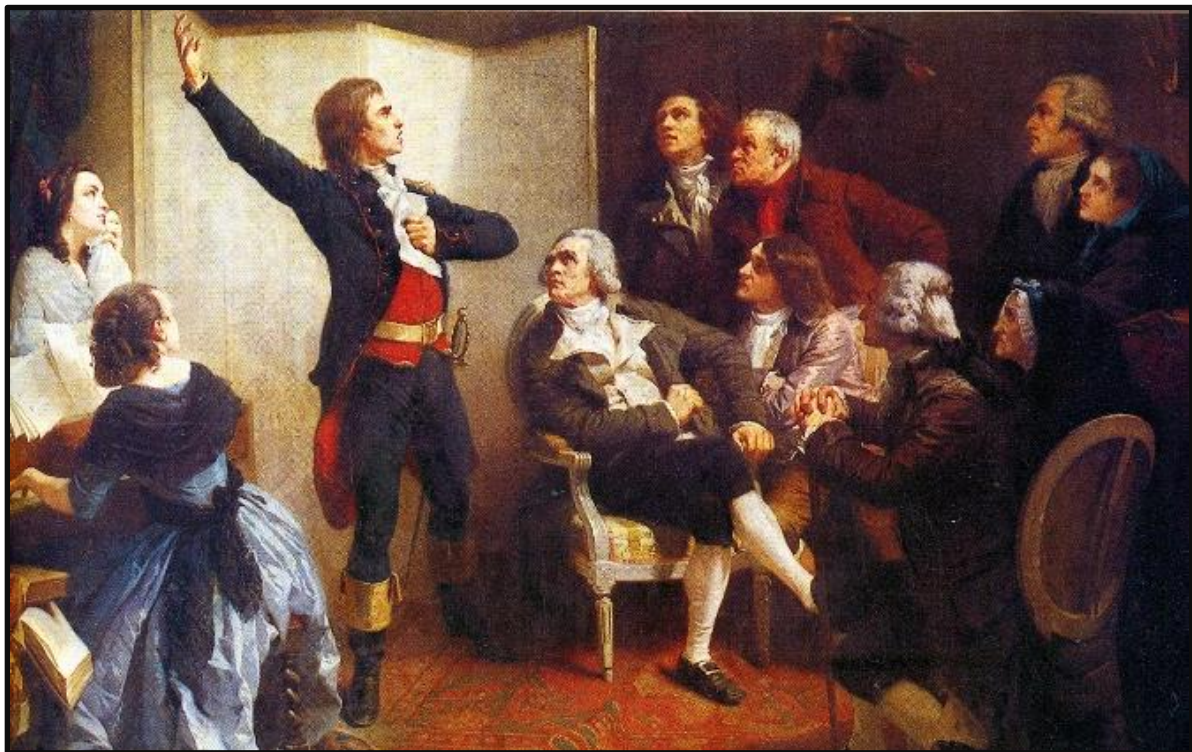
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**THE GREAT FLIGHT**

Following France’s declaration of war on Austria on April 20, 1792, Strasbourg was threatened by invasion from Habsburg armies massing on the east side of the Rhine River. On April 25, 1792, Philippe Dietrich, mayor of Strasbourg, asked a guest, Rouget de Lisle, a young officer and poet garrisoned in the city, to compose a marching song to boost morale. That evening he wrote “War Song for the Army of the Rhine”, which became the rallying call to the Revolution (Arise, children of the Fatherland, the day of glory has arrived!).



Rouget de L'Isle Singing La Marseillaise, Isidore Pils.

It became the French national anthem in 1795 and was renamed "La Marseillaise" because of its popularity with volunteers from Marseillaise, prominent in storming the Tuileries Palace in August of 1792, the residence of Louis XVI. Rouget de L'Isle, a royalist, was imprisoned in 1793, narrowly escaping the guillotine, and was later freed. Mayor Dietrich was guillotined December 29, 1793.

The imprisonment of L'Isle and guillotining of Dietrich occurred during the time of the "Great Flight". According to Joseph S. Height, in *Paradise on the Steppe: The Odyssey of a Pioneering People*:

"During the reign of terror, the people of Alsace saw their churches and monasteries suppressed, their priests exiled or imprisoned, their property requisitioned or nationalized, their youth drafted in to the revolutionary armies. They endured the criminal terror organized by the infamous monk, Eulogius Schneider, former professor in Bonn and Episcopal vicar of Strasbourg, who turned Jacobin and became the Public Accuser of the Revolutionary Tribunal in Strasbourg. Under his ruthless regime the terror-stricken Alsatians saw the gruesome guillotine hauled from village to village, and witnessed the death of some of their sons upon it. But the greatest tragedy that befell the inhabitants of Lower Alsace was "la Grande Fuite" of 1793, the mass flight which compelled tens of thousands of Alsatians to forsake their fatherland and find refuge on German soil.

In mid-October 1793, the Austrian and Prussian forces invaded the Lower Alsace in order to defeat the Revolutionary Rhine Army and thereby hasten the restoration of the French monarchy. In a few weeks, the Austrian general Wurmser had driven the French troops back to the ramparts of Strassburg and restored peace and order. The general's plan was to remain in winter quarters in the occupied territory and to continue the attack in the spring. But a counter-offensive by the reinforced Rhine Army compelled him to beat a hasty retreat, and before the end of the year the whole of Lower Alsace was cleared of foreign troops. The French now invaded German soil and, in a few weeks, succeeded in occupying the entire Palatinate.

In Lower Alsace, the revolutionists threatened to kill all "the cowards and traitors" who had collaborated with the invaders and then fled with them into German territory. On November 22, while the flight of the inhabitants was rampant everywhere, the rabid representative Lacoste wrote to the Comité, "The only measure to be taken is to guillotine one-fourth of the inhabitants of this area, drive out the rest, and confiscate their property". Another Jacobin fanatic, Baudot, threatened to "make a fricassee of the damned Alsatians who had polluted the fair soil of Alsace".

A panic terror gripped the poor people as they fled from their homes and villages in utter confusion and frenzied haste. The Prefect of the Bas-Rhin reported that "everybody fled, forsaking father, wife, children, and all their belongings. People fled without their clothes, the rich without their money, the mother without the baby to whom she had recently given birth. Entire villages became empty and deserted; the shops had no workers; the plows had no farm hands". All the roads leading to the Rhine were crowded with swarms of wretched, confused and terror-stricken humanity. The Rhine crossing at Lauterburg was jammed with a mounting flood of refugees.

It is estimated that some 40,000 people fled from their Alsatian homeland, most of them from the departments of Weissenburg and Haguenau. When the victorious French armies advanced into the Palatinate districts of Bergzabern and Germersheim, another 30,000 fled in terror from their villages to find safety on the right bank of the Rhine. These masses of refugees were scattered far and wide all the way from Heidelberg to Freiburg in the heart of the Black Forest. Here they eked out their wretched existence in direst poverty, exposed to the rigors of winter and the constant threat of starvation.

As early as January of 1794, the notorious Jacobins, St. Juste and Lebas (representatives from Paris) lost no time in confiscating the property of those who fled. Agents pillaged and looted everything from cellar to attic, including the hinges on the doors. The horses and wagons, the hay and the grain were sent to the army depots. The furniture and clothing, the money, the jewelry, and the metal were shipped to Strasbourg. The land and the buildings were auctioned off or simply given away.

The former district officials of Weissenburg and Haguenau were sent in chains to Paris, where they were guillotined. The churches in the two districts were looted, despoiled and closed. The relatives of those who had fled were hunted out and hauled into the dungeons at Strasbourg. Among the 2,000 incarcerated people were many old men and women and some 600 children. Another 2,000 prisoners were comprised mostly of priests, teachers, lawyers and refugees who had secretly made their way back to Alsace.

On January 11, 1795, a decree was issued permitting all refugee "artisans and peasants" to return to Alsace. However, they were required to have 8 testimonials of citizenship attested by 8 witnesses and certified by the village council and the revolutionary committee. They could then reclaim any unsold property upon paying the costs of the confiscation. The authorities made no attempt to make the decree known to the refugees. Those refugees who found out about the decree and tried to return were stopped by border guards posted along the Rhine by the new owners of the ill-gotten property. As well, the greed of the boatmen proved to be an obstacle and only the rich with a handful of coin were able to obtain passage. On March 21st, the "open door" to the fatherland was again slammed shut condemning thousands of poor, innocent people to further years of misery and deprivation on foreign soil. The number of returnees would indeed have been pitifully small, if many of the exiles had not ventured to force their way back under the cover of darkness with the collusion of friends and sympathetic border officials.

In September of 1795, the Convention granted the émigrés an additional 20 days for their return, but the obstructions were even greater than before. Nevertheless, despite dangers and difficulties, numerous refugees kept coming back, determined to "suffer all horrors, even death itself, rather than return to exile in Germany". Religious animosities flared because the vast majority of refugees were Catholics who now discovered that foreign intruders of another denomination had enriched themselves from other people's misfortune and were determined to retain their acquisitions. The refugees were labeled as "spies, vagabonds, insurgents and riff-raff" and it became more and more difficult for them to receive clearance.

After the Fructidorean coup d'état of September 4, all refugees who had returned illegally were ordered to leave the country within a fortnight. Houses were searched for hidden priests and émigrés. Village mayors and municipal officials were forced to resign from office. All churches were closed and all public services, pilgrimages and even the use of the traditional Church calendars was prohibited.

With the inauguration of the Triumvirate in 1799, the refugees were permitted to return unhindered to their fatherland. The peasants and artisans who had been languishing with their families in the fetid dungeons of Strasbourg for five years were now set free and sent back to their villages. The government did not deem it necessary to make amends nor did it undertake to rehabilitate these poverty-stricken people. Not all of the refugees regained their former homes and land but were fated to eke out a bare living as farm hands, day laborers or sharecroppers.

The aftermath of revolution and war left Alsace in a critical economic condition; the common people had become impoverished and agriculture suffered from chronic neglect. A new wave of inflation depreciated the value of money and raised the cost of living as never before. The people were forced to pay arrears in taxes, subjected to increasing taxes, new taxes on wine and salt and illegal seizure. Forestry agents imposed excessive fines on the poor who collected wood and dead foliage from the communal forests.

Thus, the mayor of Seltz was forced to protest in 1808: "My people absolutely need the dead foliage to fertilize the potato fields. We are living here on potatoes and cottage cheese." The price of lumber had risen three times its normal cost and there was a shortage of communal plow land because much of it had been appropriated by those who had chosen to remain behind during the Great Flight. The poor refugees faced a disheartening future."

*Paradise on the Steppe: The Odyssey of a Pioneering People*, Joseph S. Height, published by The North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Bismarck, ND (2/e, 1973). Translated by Vince Falter.

## LIST OF EXILES: SOUFFLENHEIM UNE CITE

Exiles from Soufflenheim in the Great Flight. Source: *Soufflenheim Une cite* (p.147). Source: A.D. B-Rh., Serie Q, Domaines Nationaux, ventaire pp. 813-814 comme emigres sont cites pour Soufflenheim

### Soufflenheim Exiles: 1793

Name	Name	Name
Adam, Joseph	Halter (freres)	Rinck, Jean
Albrecht	Hochendel	Schaeffer, Antoine
Babinger	Hoehn, Casimir-Antoine	Schlosser
Beck, Francois-Antoine	Hummel, Jean (Potier)	Schmuck
Beller	Jaeck	Schoeffler
Bitschi	Kieffer	Schwoerer
Bourg	Kleitz, Brigitte	Simon, Henri
Brotschi, Joseph	Leppert	Steiner
Burger, Catherine	Libert	Stoll
Burger, Ignace	Mary	Strack

Daul, Barbe	Messner, Joseph	Stupffler
Daul, Jean-Michel	Mey, Joseph	Thomen
Eck	Meyer, Antoine (tuilier)	Ulrich, Jean
Eissen	Meyer, Jean-Leonard	Voegele, Antoine
Elchinger, Joseph	Meyer, Pierre	Wagner, Jean
Ernwein	Mohler	Wahlung
Ernwein, Laurent	Monnet	Wendereich
Friedmann, Francois-Joseph	Montbarrey	Wendrich
Friedmann, Jacques	Moser	Wintz, Madeleine
Goetz, Jean	Muller, Andre	Wunsch
Gress	Muller, Jean	Zittwoch
Haberkorn, Marie-Anne	Ostreicher	Zollenmeyer
Haberkorn, Laurent	Poppinger	

## LIST OF EXILES: SOUFFLENHEIM, TERRE DE POTIERS

Exiles from Soufflenheim in the Great Flight. Source: *Soufflenheim: Terre de Potiers*, Soufflenheim Tourist Office, 1998

### Soufflenheim Exiles: 1793

Names	Names	Names
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Adam, Joseph	Herdel, Antoine	Muller, Anne veuve Thomen
Albrecht, Antoine	Himmel, Richarde veuve Obermeyer	Muller, Antoine
Albrecht, Pierre	Hoehn, Michel	Ney, Jacques
Arbogast, Marcel	Illenberger, Balthazard	Obermeyer, Joseph
Babinger, Michel	Jaeck, Elizabeth veuve Barye	Osterreicher, Antoine
Barth, Catherine nee Hager	Jaeck, Laurent	Pfefferkorn, Joseph
Beck, Joseph	Kapp, Armand	Reutner, Catherine ep. Bruger
Beck, Michel	Kapp, Marguerite nee Eisenkirch	Rieder, Madeleine veuve Schwoerer
Beckers, Catherine	Kehrer, Joseph	Roth, Michel
Bitsch, Ignace	Kelhoffner, Jean	Schaeffer, Antoine
Brotschi, Joseph	Kelhoffner, Joseph	Schaeffer, Joseph
Burgard, Michel	Kieffer, Antoine	Schaeffer, Francois
Burger, Antoine	Kieffer, Georges	Schmitt, Jean
Burger, Ignace	Kieffer, Joseph	Schmitt, Joseph
Burger, Laurent	Kieffer, Laurent	Schmitt, Michel
Burger, Michel	Kieffer, Marguerite	Schoeffler, Ignace
Burger, Pierre	Kieffer, Marie Anne ep. Halter	Schuller, Marie Anne
Daul, Barbe ep. Arbogast	Kieffer, Michel	Schwoerer, Barbe
Daul, Catherine	Knepfler, Jean	Schwoerer, Marie Anne
Daul, Françoise	Lehman, Georges	Simon, Catherine

Daul, Jacques	Lehman, Jacob	Simon, Sebastien
Daul, Joseph	Leiser, Jacques	Steiner, Joseph
Daul, Marie Anne	Leiser, Schmuler	Strack, Joseph
Ehler, Joseph	Lengert (Linger?) Joseph	Strack, Madeleine nee Schwoerer
Ehler, Marguerite nee Haberkorn	Ludwig, Jean	Thomen, Ignace
Eiskirch, Richarde	Mahler, Jean	Thomen, Michel
Eissen, Ignace	Messner, Antoine	Ulrich, Michel
Elchinger, Joseph	Messner, Jacques	Ulrich, Nicolas
Frank, Egide	Messner, Joseph	Voegele, Frederic
Friedmann, Ignace	Messner, Madeleine nee Frank	Voegele, Ignace
Friedmann, Michel	Messner, Michel	Voegele, Joseph
Goetz, Dominique	Messner, Therese nee Bitschi	Wagner, Antoine
Goetz, Joseph	Metzler, Catherine	Wagner, Jacques
Goetz, Michel	Metzler, Pierre	Wagner, Joseph
Half, Feysel	Mey, Ferdinand	Wagner, Laurent
Harter, Joseph	Mey, Marguerite ép. Duke	Wagner, Michel
Hass, Bernard	Mey, Michel	Wenderich, Madeleine
Hasser, Madeleine ép. Wagner	Meyer, Joseph	Wintz, Madeleine ep. Zittwoch
Hasser, Marguerite	Meyer, Pierre	Zittwoch, Joseph
Hasser, Marie Anne ep. Ludwig	Mockes, Jean	Zittwoch, M.A. ep. Eisenkirch



Hatten, Catherine nee Halter	Moser, Jean	Zinger, Catherine nee Wagner
Hatten, Joseph	Paul Moser	Zinger, Philippe
Helmer, Georges	Muller, Andre	

### **Father Saglio**

Father Bernardin Saglio is of a family of Haguenuau, with Italian roots. He was ordained as a priest in the year 1784. In the year 1791 he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the King and the constitution of the time [the revolutionary government]. This refusal makes him a “refractory” priest and he is obliged to act clandestinely. On December 22nd, in the year 1793, many families fled the advance of the French troops. Among them, Father Saglio, exhausted by dysentery, which he has contracted in tending the sick, dies in the arms of his mother near Soufflenheim. He has been buried on the Oelberg hill, and a grit cross marked the place where he died. This cross has been destroyed by a tempest. The Association for Culture Paul Messner, and the municipality of Haguenuau, joined by the National Office of Forests, replaced it with a new one. Since October 1992, a grit cross with the inscription “Father Jean Claude Bernardin Saglio died here on December 22nd in the year 1793 at the time of the "Great Flight” marks again the place of his death. A number of citizens of Soufflenheim, faithful to the ideas of old Regime, and reluctant to accept the new republican laws, left for exile.

## **CIVIL, CHURCH AND NOTARY RECORDS**

### **JOSEPH BURGER & ELIZABETH JAECK**

#### **23 February 1789 Soufflenheim Marriage On-Line Page 26**

Joseph Burger, tiler, widower of Catharina Moser, married Elisabetha Jaek, daughter of Antoni Jaek, royal forest guard, and Maria Eva Paulin, in Soufflenheim on the 23 February 1789.

[Mark Drexler comments: There is no direct record establishing this Joseph as the son of Michel Burger and Margaretha Stickelreisser; but the body of indirect evidence, including his occupation 'tiler', is convincing. Judging from his description in a series of Soufflenheim church records, Joseph became innkeeper of 'The Crown' in 1786 or late 1785. He died in Baden, Baden on 21 February 1795, according to the Soufflenheim marriage records (dated 18 November 1809 and 16 August 1810) of his children Barbe Burger and Ignace Burger. This family apparently participated in the Great Flight, and the daughter Catharina might have been born in Baden about 1794 or 1795 (her birth was not recorded in Soufflenheim).]

### **IGNATIUS LEPPERT**

### **27 January 1793 St. Michaels Church, Soufflenheim, Baptism, On-Line Book, Page 125/135**

Ignatius Leppert baptized Ignatus, son of the tailor Gerogius Leppert and of Magdalena Burger, local citizens, married and residing here, was born today 27 January 1793; he was baptized in his father's home by the midwife during the time of the Schism; the [prescribed] ceremonies [or rites], exorcism and sacred anointing's were performed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November of the same year. Godfather Antonius Schofter citizen here in this place, godmother Margaritha Hecht who, together with me and the father, signed their names below. No signatures. [Ignatz emigrated in 1821 to Kleinliebental, near the Black Sea]

[From Mark Drexler: Regarding the discrepancy in dates in the baptism record of Ignatius Leppert (Sacraments several months after the birth date). It is pretty clear that a batch of these 'midwife baptisms' were recorded (in the book) well after-the-fact. They all indicate, by one wording or another, that Sacraments were administered on 04 November 1793. Pages 120-133 contain such records of births from September 1792 to September 1793. The priest apparently returned to baptizing babies himself by mid-October 1793, as pages 133-135 have records from October to December with no midwife baptism. It is easy to understand why there are no signatures on the records that were written after-the-fact. It is not so easy to understand why signatures are absent from records dated October to late November. Signatures did not return thoroughly until mid-December. The priest wrote an explanatory paragraph at the beginning of the 'midwife baptisms' (on-line page 120)].

### **JOSEPH STIEGER**

#### **05 July 1793 St. Michaels Church, Soufflenheim, Baptism**

Has been baptized Joseph Stieger, son of Dominic Stieger, volunteer soldier and of Magdalena Kieffer. He has been baptized by the midwife at home in these schismatic times. The ceremony was held in supplement on the 4th of November of the same year. Godfather: Joseph Messner burgher here. Godmother: Magdalena Nuber. All undersigned with me.

### **MAGDALENA BURGER**

#### **18 March 1795 District Office of Haguenau, Return from Exile**

The 28 ventose year 3 (18 March 1795), the mayor and the town council of Soufflenheim certify with the testimony of 8 citizens of Soufflenheim that Magdalena Burger, 30 years old, left the soil of the Republic the 3 nivose year 3 (23 December 1793), before that date she was a day laborer in Soufflenheim and she came back in the town 27 ventose year 3 (17 March 1795), with four of her children, Margaretha Lebert 11 years, Joseph Lebert 8 years, Georg Lebert 5 years and Ignaz Lebert 2 years. In front of the town council and the witnesses she made a sworn statement that she was never in touch with any foreign agent. [Note: In the French Text for the District office of Haguenau, there is a note in the margin that says she was the widow of George Lebert of Soufflenheim. Except for the spelling of the surname, the names and ages of the children match the record for those of Johannes Leppert and Magdalena Burger.]

[Magdalena Burger and her husband Johannes George Leppert, a tailor, lived in Soufflenheim. After his death in May 1793 she left in the "Great Flight", returning to Soufflenheim on 17 March 1795 with her four children: Margaretha, Joseph, George, and Ignatz. Magdalena married Johann Jacob Gell on the 15 October 1797. She presumably emigrated in 1805 with her family to Kleinliebental in the Ukraine.]

## **JOSEPH KIEFFER & MICHEL KIEFFER**

### **10 February 1799 Roeschwoog 7E44 Guardian**

Came here the guardians : Johannes Moser and Joseph Brotschi, for Joseph and Michel Kieffer, sons of deceased Michel Kieffer of Soufflenheim, concerning their interests and payments of these from the 4th June 1789 (election as guardians) in district Fort Vauban, town Roepffenheim. Refers to one more account passed in Year 6 the 22nd of Messidor. The father having emigrated to the other side of the Rhine, his property had been put under sequestration, and the guardians named. They deliver receipt of these accounts.

## **MICHEL KIEFFER**

### **24 February 1803 Haguenau 7E20 Inventory**

Inventory after death of Michel Kieffer, who died 6 years ago in Soufflenheim and was a mayor of the place. His widow being : Catherine Wenger, assisted by Louis Wenger, burgher of Rohrwiler, her brother. Witnesses : Joseph Messner, mayor and Philipp Kieffer, mayor's help. Children and heirs are : Joseph Kieffer, burgher in Soufflenheim, born of first marriage of Michel Kieffer to Anna Maria Halter, Catharina, aged 17, Ignace, aged 14, the last two born of second marriage to the present widow Catharina Wenger. A marriage contract was passed the 4th February in year 1782 in front of notary of Haguenau, the 6th of February ; and concerned the house granted to the wife during her life ; this house has been sold at time of emigration of the deceased during the Revolution, and bought back on his return. This house with one side Joseph Strack, the other side the Allmend Gassel, upper side the Bischwiller path, and down Joseph Daul's widow is estimated 1300 florins.

## **JEWISH EXILES**

### **Feisel Half, Samuel Leiser, Jacques Leiser**

Feisel Half went to Haguenau, a traditional place of refuge for Jews during times of crisis, and the home of his son Samuel Half. Samuel Leiser and Marianne Bloch went to Konigsbach in Baden, where their son Daniel was born in 1794. The site of a synagogue, Jewish families had first settled there in 1699, working mainly in the cattle trade. All eventually returned to Soufflenheim.

## **APPENDIX**

## **SCHIRRHEIN, SCHIRRHOFEN AND THE GREAT FLIGHT**

The villages of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen border Soufflenheim on the southwest. Both were affiliated with the town of Haguenau and, like Soufflenheim, were Catholic. Schirrhoffen also had a large Jewish population. The three communities shared a similar experience during the Great Flight and its aftermath. The following information provided courtesy of Vincent Falter and excerpted with his permission from his website: <http://www.genealogy.com/ftm/f/a/l/Vincent-E-Falter/index.html>

## **À La Lisière de La Forêt: Schirrhein/Schirrhoffen**

Extracted and translated by Vincent Falter from *À La Lisière de la Forêt: Schirrhein/Schirrhoffen*, by Rose-Marie Vetter, Editions Coprur, Strasbourg, 1995. The book recounts the history of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen from 58 BC through 1995.

### **Schirrhein Personalities During the Revolutionary Terror**

The years of Terror were very difficult for the local population. The ceaseless requisitions, which resulted in conscription into the army, the many annoyances, plus the continual fear of being stopped by authorities, were the daily lot of the population. The economic situation became increasingly catastrophic. The continual drudgeries prevented many peasants from completing their work for weeks. And prices increased at the blink of an eye. All food products became increasingly scarce. The population was greatly destitute. One of the greatest tests for the population of Alsace of Bas-Rhin during the Revolution was the war of 1792 to 1794 and its disastrous consequences. In April 1792, France declared war on Austria. At the beginning, Alsace was not touched directly by this conflict, except by the raising of battalions of volunteers. The first raising of volunteers took place in July 1792, but they were very few of them. On 5 August, there were only 750 of them in all of Bas-Rhin. It was definitely insufficient. To escape the fate of defeat, it became necessary to impress all of the population capable of carrying weapons. August 5, a first battalion of 800 men joined the Army of the Rhine. On December 17, five other battalions were formed. At the same time, one (battalion?) prepared the fortifications along the Rhine. One created supply depots to equip, nourish and dress these mobilized men. As always in the event of war, the population was asked to contribute. The drudgeries required by the army were numerous. Thus, on December 31, 1792, Antoine Biam, George Halter and Laurent Dannenmüller of Schirrhein were required to provide to the army their horses and their wagons to convey fodder to the army at Wissembourg. They refused, under the pretext that their horses were sick and out of condition to fulfill this service. The director of Haguenau, after having examined their case, ordered them to take part in the next convoy. On October 19, 1792, Michel Lehmann addressed a complaint to the Director of Haguenau. He and his servant could not ensure order in Schirrhein any longer because they were obliged to assemble the army guard being formed at the same time. The Directory gave him ordered that the guard be maintained so that there is always somebody securing the homes in Schirrhein. On February 29, 1793, with danger threatening more and more, the Convention ordered the raising of 300,000 additional men. The Bas-Rhin was to provide a quota of 5,254 men. Each commune had to raise a certain number of volunteers, according to his population. But the defections were numerous. Many young people fled and took refuge in the forests. Initially, there were not enough police forces to track these fugitives. Then the Republican authorities formed mobile columns to assist the gendarmes to conduct the searches. The Republican authorities found defenders of the fatherland only with difficulty. The Alsatian French were not very concerned by this war. ...

... A document called the "state of the requisitions" drawn up the 25 frimaire year IV (16 Dec 1795) mentions that Schirrhoffen had provided eight volunteers: Mosser Hetzel of the 10th Regiment of the Jaegers with horse of the Army of the West, George Heisserer, Christian Baechtel, François Muller, François Kauffmann, Keim Kahn, Andre Colmer and Nicolas Dorffer, engaged in the Battalion of the Army of the Rhine. (NOTE: THE DATES OF THE NARRATIVE ARE OUT OF SEQUENCE AND JUMP BETWEEN 1793 AND 1795). On March 18, 1793, it was announced to the director that two volunteers of Schirrhoffen had returned without passport, nor leave. The reaction of the director was brutal: all the citizens, being useful in the battalions of volunteers, returned without passport, nor leave, will be stopped everywhere where they will be and will be led in the prison of the district. The municipalities are charged to stop all the deserters on their territory. The statement, drawn up the 27meadow year IV, mentions eight volunteers of Schirrhein: Jean Halter, George Martin, George Berrwiller, George Halter, Antoine Lohr and Nicolas Steinmetz became members the Army of the Rhine, Sebastien Stâbler in the Army of the Alps and Ignace Schlosser in the Army of the Vendée.

According to the records of the district of the 1<sup>er</sup> vendémiaire year VII, the young people were of relatively small size: Jacques Heisserer, 20 years, 1,66 meter; Louis Hochheim, 20 years, 1,62 meter; Leib Solomon, 22 years, 1,60 meter; Nicolas Linck, 22 years, 1,71 meter; Nicolas Hochheim, 22 years, 1,69 meter and Leib Ruff, 22 years, 1,54 meter.

The military jury released Leib Ruff, who was too small, like Louis Hochheim, a Private who had no use of the index finger of his right hand. At the beginning of the year 1793, France's military situation was very poor. The Austro-Prussians confronted Mainz. The Alsatian General Kléber resisted for a few months. But during the summer, the French Armies collapsed. With the approach of the autumn, the Alsatian General Wurmser forced the line at Wissem and invaded Alsace in the North, occupied Haguenau and pushed his victorious army to the doors of Strasbourg. Demoralized by these advances, the French Army was unable to reorganize itself. ...

... On March 18, 1793, it was revealed to the Director (of Haguenau) that two volunteers of Schirrhoffen had returned with neither passport nor leave. The reaction of the Director was brutal: all the citizens, being useful in the battalions of volunteers, returned with neither passport, nor leave, will be stopped and they will be taken to the prison of the district. The municipalities are charged to stop all deserters on their territory. The statement, drawn up the 27 Messidor year IV (8 Jul 1796), mentions eight volunteers of Schirrhein: Jean Halter, George Martin, George Berrwiller, George Halter, Antoine Lohr and Nicolas Steinmetz were engaged in the army of the Rhine, Sebastien Stâbler in the army of the Alps and Ignace Schlosser in the army of the Vendée. According to a table of information of the district dated 1<sup>er</sup> Vendémiaire year VII (22 Sep 1798), the young people were of relatively small size: Jacques Heisserer, 20 years, 1,66 meter; Louis Hochheim, 20 years, 1,62 meter; Leib Solomon, 22 years, 1,60 meter; Nicolas Linck, 22 years, 1,71 meter; Nicolas Hochheim, 22 years, 1,69 meter and Leib Ruff, 22 years, 1,54 meter.

### **Schirrheiners Attempt to Return to Their Homes and Property**

"Several people illegally returned from Germany. It appears they were the farmer Philippe Steinmetz, the writer Joseph Dorffer, the wife of Joseph Heisserer, Marianne Linck, and the wife of the late Joseph Heisserer, known as Merikal. Upon their return, they were placed under the general protection of the community.

Soon, the director of Haguenau sent the commissioner Hild and a troop of soldiers with orders to arrest and bring back these people under secure escort to face the military commission of Strasbourg. He was asked to carry out his mission with all necessary prudence, and to maintain public calm. He provided the troops that accompanied him with the provisions needed for the mission.

However, the commissioner was unable to meet the secret requirements of his mission, for when he arrived at the site, neighbors who were protecting those in hiding discovered him and his soldiers. They hid the refugees, some in the neighbor's houses, others in the nearby forest. [The soldiers knew] that a journey into the forest was not without risk. In effect, near the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many wolves infested the forests of Haguenau and its environs, ravaging the area, wounding and devouring many animals. On the 12th of December 1798 the forestry administration organized a hunt of the wolves. The community of Schirrhein was to furnish 70 men and that of Schirrhoffen 40. They assembled on the appointed day, at eight in the morning near the Langbruk bridge, under the direction of Joseph Adam, the forestry guardian of [nearby] Soufflenheim, ready to hunt and trap the wolves. On this day, many wolves were killed.

When the general Napoleon Bonaparte, conqueror of Italy, reversed the Directorate by a coup d'etat and proclaimed himself First Counsel, the revolutionary period was over, and calm returned to the country.

The years of the revolution brought about grave disorders and many worrisome events in the country. Bands of rogues formed and attacked travelers and isolated farms. The police in the areas were unable to control efficiently all the bad elements hiding in the forest and elsewhere. They were obliged to call for reinforcement by mobile troop units and the national guard to search the woods and chase the suspects, the army deserters, the Austrian deserters, those who evaded the draft, the refugees who came back illegally, and other undesirable elements.

Ten years after the end of the Ancient Regime, fortunes profoundly changed. The region began to find unity. The old splits began to dissolve. Eventually the province had the same laws and the same administration as the other provinces of France."

"For the two communities, the Revolution had brought about long lasting and durable changes. They became independent communities. They were no longer under submission to the magistrate of Haguenau. The Revolution permitted the simple peasants to acquire land and to live more decently. They no longer had to pay the tributes and unjust taxes. They could farm their land and keep the produce.

But the Revolution was also the source of a form of vandalism. The chateau of Schirrhoffen was sold off. The chapel was found dismantled. The small bell was taken to the bell tower of the Church of St. Nicolas of Schirrhein. The Revolution also included intolerance and religious persecution. The measures taken against the Church and the persecutions of priests led to religious agitation among the population. And then the economic disruptions caused a profound malaise among the people."

At the northern end of Schirrhein there is a city limit sign which marks the end of the village and the beginning of the adjoining village of Schirrhoffen. Schirrhoffen is smaller than Schirrhein. It was once larger than Schirrhein. In 1766 Schirrhoffen had a population of approximately 125 persons and, by 1794, the population had swollen to 406, again as a result of the settlement of refugees who fled the Revolution.

St. Nicolas is the only church (it is Catholic) in either town and it serves both Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen. St. Nicolas church maintained separate parish books for each community for many years. The reason for this unusual arrangement is not known, definitively. It is suspected that this might have something to do with the history of the two towns. According to the volume on Bas-Rhin in the series *Paroisses et communes de France*, Schirrhein was the parish. But historically Schirrhein belonged to the city of

Haguenau while Schirrhoffen was part of the Seigneurie de Warstatt. When Alsace was first divided into departments, arrondissements and cantons during the French Revolution Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen were put into different cantons, despite their proximity. That indicates there were probably administrative reasons for keeping separate records.

### **Our Parish of St. Nicolas**

"Until the beginning of XVIIth century, the parish of Saint Nicolas de Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen was a dirty [grubby, of minor importance] extension of the parish of Saint-Georges de Haguenau. It was managed by the Franciscans. Dr. Pflieger wrote in his work " Die elsässische Pfarrei: ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung [The Alsatian Parishes: Their Emergence and Development]" the priests from Haguenau in Schirr Rhin [sic] were provided 'cold living and hard living, removed far [from Haguenau]." Throughout the XVIII century the Franciscans extracted a yearly donation, fixed by a contract. The monastery signed this contract with Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen. Each year, Schirrhein provided 100 guilders to the convent of Franciscans. This sum was payable quarterly. It also annually donated 40 guilders to the landlord of the village where the Franciscans in service to the community were fed and boarded. These two villages [Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen] also delivered 13 cartloads of wood per annum to the monastery.

As of 1693, Schirrhein had a small church or chapel which made it possible to celebrate the mass. This small church was located between Church Street and the street of the Gentlemen. The material and financial administration of the parish was entrusted to a Heiligenmeyer. The Heiligenmeyer [this interpretation is not exact, but it roughly means Holy Mayor, something like a Church Deacon] took care of the purchases, kept the books on the expenditures of the church, and drew up the parish accounts each year. The first known Heiligenmeyer was Abraham Halter, husband of Agathe Halter. In 1682, he bought a house in the village for 400 Guilder.

### **The First Priests**

It was in 1712, thanks to an intervention of the lord Niedheimer de Wasenbourg, owners of the fields around Schirrhoffen, that Schirrhein was set up as a parish, and Schirrhoffen became an appendage. The first [resident] priest of Schirrhein was François Joseph Rothjacob. He was born on June 15 1685 in Haguenau. His father was Basile Rothjacob. His mother was Anne Marie Charissin. He received his priestly orders on December 17, 1709. He was initially a Vicar at Haguenau, and was named pastor of Schirrhein on October 23, 1712. He occupied this station until January 21, 1725. He then was named pastor of the parish of Saint-Georges de Haguenau. He died of apoplexia tactus on October 28, 1732 in Haguenau. In 1718, the lord Niedheimer de Schirrhoffen presented a chalice to the new parish placed and placed it under the protection of Saint Nicolas - Nicolas was a rather widespread first name in this community. This chalice witnessed the first days of the existence of our parish and is currently carefully and securely preserved in the parish presbytery.

The second priest of the parish was Joseph Grau. He was born in Boersch on September 20 1687. His father, was François, and his mother was named Madeleine Bodmer. He was named to lead the parish of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen on October 17, 1725. As he took his station, there arose litigation against his predecessor. Father Rothjacob had continued to receive the benefits and the income of his pastorate, even after his departure, whereas the [replacement] priest Joseph Grau received no income during the first five months of his presence in Schirrhein. He took this unseemly business to a Diocese judge. The Diocese judge directed Father Rothjacob to return to his successor the proportion of the income that he

received during the time that Father Grau was there [in Schirrhein], and to begin counting from Saint-Jean-Baptiste day, June 24, 1725 [before Father Grau had been selected to go to Schirrhein]. He was also ordered to pay 46 guilders for the court expenses.

Father Joseph Grau remained very a long time in Schirrhein. It is he who made the arrangements to build the new church. In 1768, he was reassigned to Mutzig, because of his great age and his illnesses. The magistrate of Haguenuau granted to him a pension of 350 pounds, payable every six months. He left this world on December 11, 1778.

Joseph Richard Zipp succeeded him in 1769 and remained in the parish until 1805. He was born on September 2, 1738 in Haguenuau. His father, Georg, was a tanner and his mother was Anna-Marie Mosser. He began his studies of theology in 1756 and was ordained a priest in 1762. He and his nephew were stopped on March 28, 1791 and detained for seditious writings. Released, he emigrated [fled] to the Country of Baden [Germany]. He returned to Schirrhein in 1802 and continued to lead its ministry until his death on March 16, 1805.

### **Financial Administration**

The Heiligenmeyer or Heiligenpfleger was responsible for the financial administration of the parish. He performed this function during a period of one year. The mandate was renewable. Abraham Halter, for example, was Heiligenmeyer for eight years and his successor Michel Halter was for seven years.

The Heiligenmeyer recorded the receipts, the expenditure and established the accounts of the parish. The clerk of the town of Haguenuau, in the presence of the priest, of the Heimbürger, and of the old and the new Heiligenmeyer audited these accounts each year in March.

Let us examine, for example, the accounts of the year 1727 written by Heiligenmeyer Franz Halter. The receipts of this year, for a total of 280,40 Guilder, were distributed as follows:

- Surplus of the preceding period: 141,50 Guilder.
- Interests on capital: 29,80 Guilder.
- Dîme on rye: 85,00 Guilder.
- Christliche Lehr: 10,60 Guilder.
- Trunks: 10,50 Guilder.
- Wax: 3,00 Guilder.

The budget of the parish was thus balanced. There remained at the end of the year a surplus of 178 Guilder that was carried over to the beginning of the following year. All the accounts of the years 1701 to 1758 can still be consulted in the archived files of Haguenuau. Accounts of the years 1759 to 1790 are missing.

As of this time, the parish also occupied a social role and one of financial mutual aid in regard to its members. The Heiligenmeyer could propose an obligation, or quite simply a loan of money at 5 % interest subscribed in the form of a recognition (Handschrift [an IOU]), to assist needy parishioners. This avoided the necessity to borrow money at high rates from usurers. This practice increased during the XIXth century but was abruptly prohibited by a decree of the Episcopal ordinariat, of March 1906.



## **Construction of The New Church In 1749**

During first half of the XVIIIth century, the population of the two villages had greatly increased. In 1693 Schirrhein was a very small village of only 30 families. In 1773, the village counted 660 inhabitants. It was thus necessary to build a new church.

Built in 1749, the parish church was expanded in 1866. Its [current] bell-tower goes back to 1776. This church was partly destroyed by the bombardments during the combat of the Liberation. At the side of it we can still see the presbytery built in 1772.

On 18 August 1721, Fez, the Vicar General and an official of the Diocese of Strasbourg, in a visit to Schirrhein, noted that the old church was in very bad condition and too small to contain all the parishioners. He ordered it to be rebuilt or at least increased [in size]. But the two communes, without resources, were unable to support such a significant project. On July 9, 1736, Father Grau addressed a letter to the magistrate of Haguenau, begging him to undertake the construction of the new church. He invited the magistrate to come to the village to negotiate an arrangement. On February 18, 1771, Stettmeister Rothjacob ordered the committee of the church to make a new plan and an estimate and to present it to him in order to finally put the work into action. The new presbytery was built and 1772. Today this building is still used and is undoubtedly the oldest building of the village.

## **At the Time of The French Revolution**

On July 12, 1790, the National Assembly voted upon the civil constitution of the clergy, which marked a turning point in the Revolution. Based on this [constitution], the members of the clergy were regarded as functionaries of the State and were thus to be paid by the State. They had to swear an oath to the new constitution and to commit themselves to respecting it scrupulously. Those who refused to swear the oath lost both their office and the right to conduct worship services. They were treated like rebels and disturbers of law and order.

The civil constitution of the clergy also removed the old Episcopal sees and set up one in each Department. Alsace was divided into two; Strasbourg and Colmar. It prescribed, finally, that all the bishops and priests were to be elected by the whole of the citizens, i.e. also by Protestant, Jewish and atheistic citizens. That created a major scandal throughout the country.

Later, Prince Talleyrand stated: "do not fear to recognize that the civil constitution of the clergy, issued by the Constituent Assembly, is the greatest political fault of this assembly, independently of the dreadful crimes which were the consequence."

The reaction against the civil constitution for the clergy was extremely critical in Alsace. As of June 13, 1790, the bishop of Strasbourg, i.e. the Cardinal of Rohan, left his residence in Saverne, where he no longer felt safe. He settled in Ettenheim, which was in Baden, Germany.

Father Zipp was not impressed by the constitution, however. The following Sunday, he publicly denounced it from the pulpit.

Alsace then underwent a major religious crisis. The majority of the priests refused to take the oath [to the state]. And the population supported them. The priests who did swear were badly treated in the parishes. The government increasingly abandoned its revolutionary ideas, but it continued to condemn the

recalcitrant priests. At that moment, many priests left the country. Those that remained were forced to hide and work clandestinely. Thus, opened a dark period in the history of our country [France].

The contrary declarations and the orders published by the bishop were distributed clandestinely throughout the diocese and put the revolutionists in a rage. They saw these as seditious writings, of which the only goal was to cause a counter-revolution in the province.

The situation became increasingly difficult for him [Father Zipp]. Opinions started to heat up in the village. The local quarrels became more frequent. The " warlike " conflict of the municipality of Schirrhein with Schirrhoffen in March 1792 was a typical example of these quarrels. The incident started when a woman reported that some people of Schirrhoffen threatened the priest and that there was over there [in Schirrhoffen] a great conflict between the patriots [peasants] and the aristocrats [landholders]. Immediately, the mayor of Schirrhein, Mr. Halter, sounded the alarm bell and got under way towards Schirrhoffen. The Schirrhein municipal officer and schoolmaster Chrétien Richter accompanied him. Mr. Bertrand confirmed in his report of April 6, the violence of the attackers who had seriously wounded several citizens of the guard of Schirrhoffen, and who appeared to have had their hatred and that of their neighbors excited by the patriotism and opposition to the priests [by the people of Schirrhoffen]. The Director suspended the mayor and the schoolmaster of Schirrhein and directed the remaining primary municipal officers to take over the functions of the mayor at the time of the meeting, held May 18. He denounced the three culprits to the court and required that the court's deliberation be read by one of the [Schirrhein or Schirrhoffen?] municipal officers before the gathered community, and then be transcribed in the registers of the commune. The expenses of the investigation were charged to the culprits, that is to say, 41,10 [sic] pounds. Moreover, the Director wrote a letter to the Ministry of the Interior to denounce to him the illegal and guilty control by these civil servants.

Feeling that their presence in Schirrhein would cause still other disturbances, Father Zipp and his Vicar left the territory on August 14, 1792. They went to Buhl in the Country of Baden [Germany] where, awaiting him was the former Master of Schirrhof, the Baron de Vorstatt, as well as other emigrants of the [Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen] area. The parish did not remain for a long time without a priest after the departure of Father Zipp. On October 2, 1792, the new bishop named as priest of the parish, Father Alexandre Ruch.

Alexandre Ruch - his Christian name was Jean-Baptiste Ruch - was born in Sélestat on January 4, 1768. His father was François, a tanner. His mother was Elisabeth Schaeffer. Jean-Baptiste Ruch entered to the seminary of the Capuchins of Haguenau and took the name of Alexandre. He was ordained a priest in 1791. This seminary counted 20 monks and 5 [religious] brothers at the beginning of the Revolution. All of these monks had been pensioned by the Director who fixed their pension at 700 pounds. But one did not leave them time to enjoy this pension. All of them refused to swear the oath, except Alexandre.

On May 15, 1791, the bishop appointed Alexandre Vicar of Saint-Georges de Haguenau. Then, after the departure of Father Zipp, he was named head of the parish at Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen. He probably did not reside at the presbytery, since this building had been declared property of the nation and had been allocated to Citizen Lux of Schirrhein who then resided in it. The father, Alexandre Ruch did not remain a long time in Schirrhein.

The commune proposed to sell Father Zipp's goods at auction. The Zipp family of Haguenau then addressed a petition to the Director of Bas-Rhin, through a general intermediary who was the guard of the national forest, Joseph Hartrich, to oppose this sale and to claim the goods of their son. According to the family, Father Zipp had departed the territory to go to Switzerland, in conformity with the law of August 26. He could thus by no means be regarded as an emigrant. The Director examined the certificate issued by

the commune, checked the passport and stated that it was not necessary for him to declare that he was removing from Schirrhein like an emigrant. He also declared that the inventory drawn up by the municipality was null and void. The Zipp family was authorized to have the goods of her son [Father Zipp].

Father Zipp, actually, did not go to Switzerland, but to Buhl, in the territory of the Margraviat of Baden [German], where he joined other old associates and friends. One year later, he was listed on the roster of emigrants. His goods and rent were put under sequestration and sold at auction.

A short time afterwards, whereas this lease was always in force, the municipality wanted to sell the presbytery, its garden and its other properties. Joseph Halter, Christian Richter and D. Heisserer were prepared to acquire them in court for 4,000 pounds. Outraged [at the proposed sale of the church property], George Lux protested to the Director of Haguenau. Article 6 of the law of November 17, 1794 specified that the presbyteries were to be sold, with the profit to the Republic to be placed at the disposal of the municipalities to be used for housing teachers and to receive pupils. Finally, however, the presbytery was not sold and it remained property of the commune.

It was also during this revolutionary period that part of our [parish] files disappeared. The registers of baptism, of marriage, and of death of all persons before the Revolution are untraceable. The [Haguenau] Departmental records state that these registers would have been destroyed by fire.