DRUSENHEIM: TWO FATES, THE RHINE AND THE WARS

Robert Wideen : 2026

Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History

Alsace ▪ Bas-Rhin ▪ France

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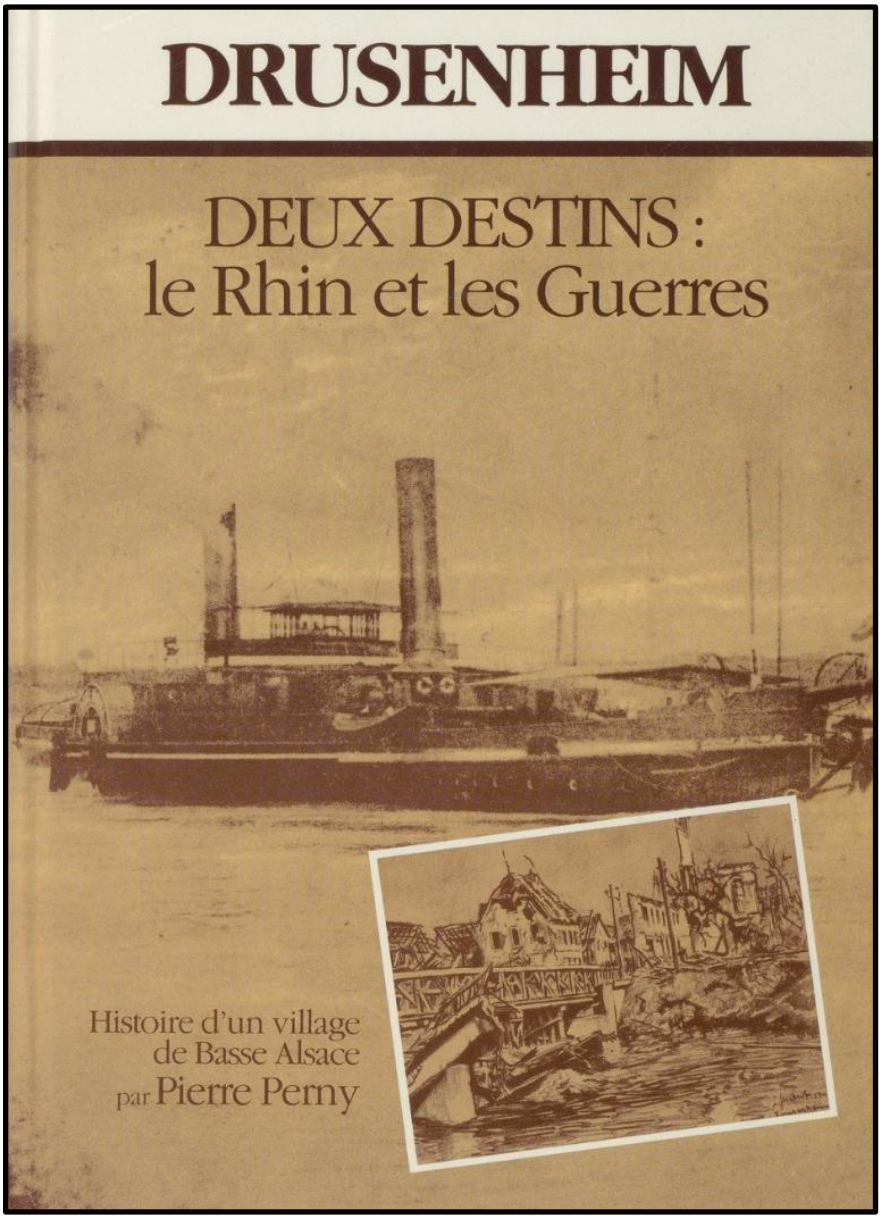
Excerpts from *Drusenheim: Two Fates, the Rhine and the Wars*, by Pierre Perny, 1985, 336 pages. Found at BNF Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France at: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bd6t5358482r Drusenheim, a small town 4.4 miles south of Soufflenheim on the Rhine River, was 99% Roman Catholic in 1807.

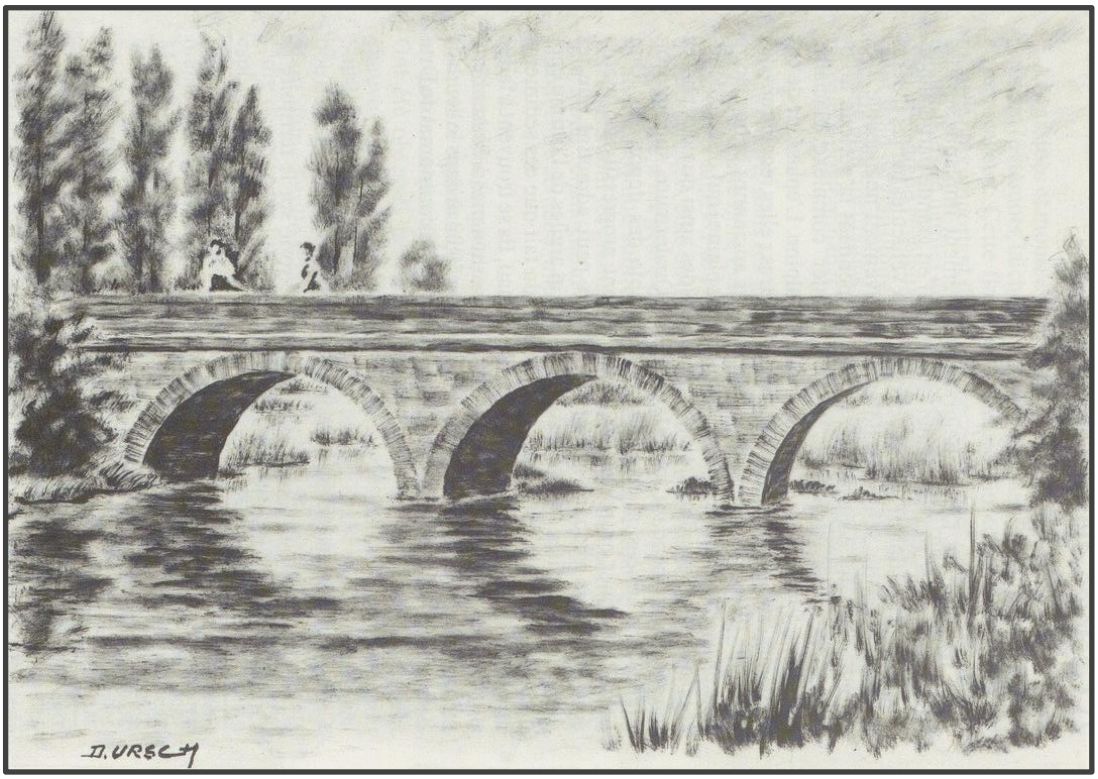
Translated with DeepL Translator by Michael J. Nuwer, September 2026. More writings by Michael Nuwer can be found at: https://sites.google.com/view/nuwerfamily



CONTENTS

DRUSENHEIM: TWO FATES, THE RHINE AND THE WARS 1
UNDER THE COUNTS OF HANAU-LICHTENBERG (1570–1736) 5
The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) 6
The Mansfeld Invasion 6
The Swedes in Alsace 9
Immigration 10
The Dutch War (1672-1679) 12
The Restoration of Catholicism 13
The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) 14
1705: The Imperial forces captured Drusenheim 14
1706: The French recaptured Drusenheim 15
Construction of the Drusenheim Canal 17
The War of the Polish Succession (1733) 15
The War of the Austrian Succession: 1741–1748 16
Drusenheim: Military Post 17
Issues Related to the Rhine 22
Rhine Construction Projects 22
The Rhine Guard 24
The Rhine Islands: 25
Navigation on the Rhine 27
The Administration of the Counts of Hanau-Lichtenberg 30
Life in the Village 34
The Tilemakers[56] 35
Elected officials and villagers 36
FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE EMPIRE 2
The Invasion of 1814 9
THE 19TH CENTURY 12
The municipal government 12
The Church and Religious Life 14
Major Municipal Construction Projects[5] 15
The Notary System 16
Petin Louis-Augustin 16
Beunat Pierre Joseph[7] 16
Beunat Edmond-Balthazar-Aloyse 17
Batiston Laurent-Nicolas-Ignace[8] 17
Klein Alexandre - Louis 17

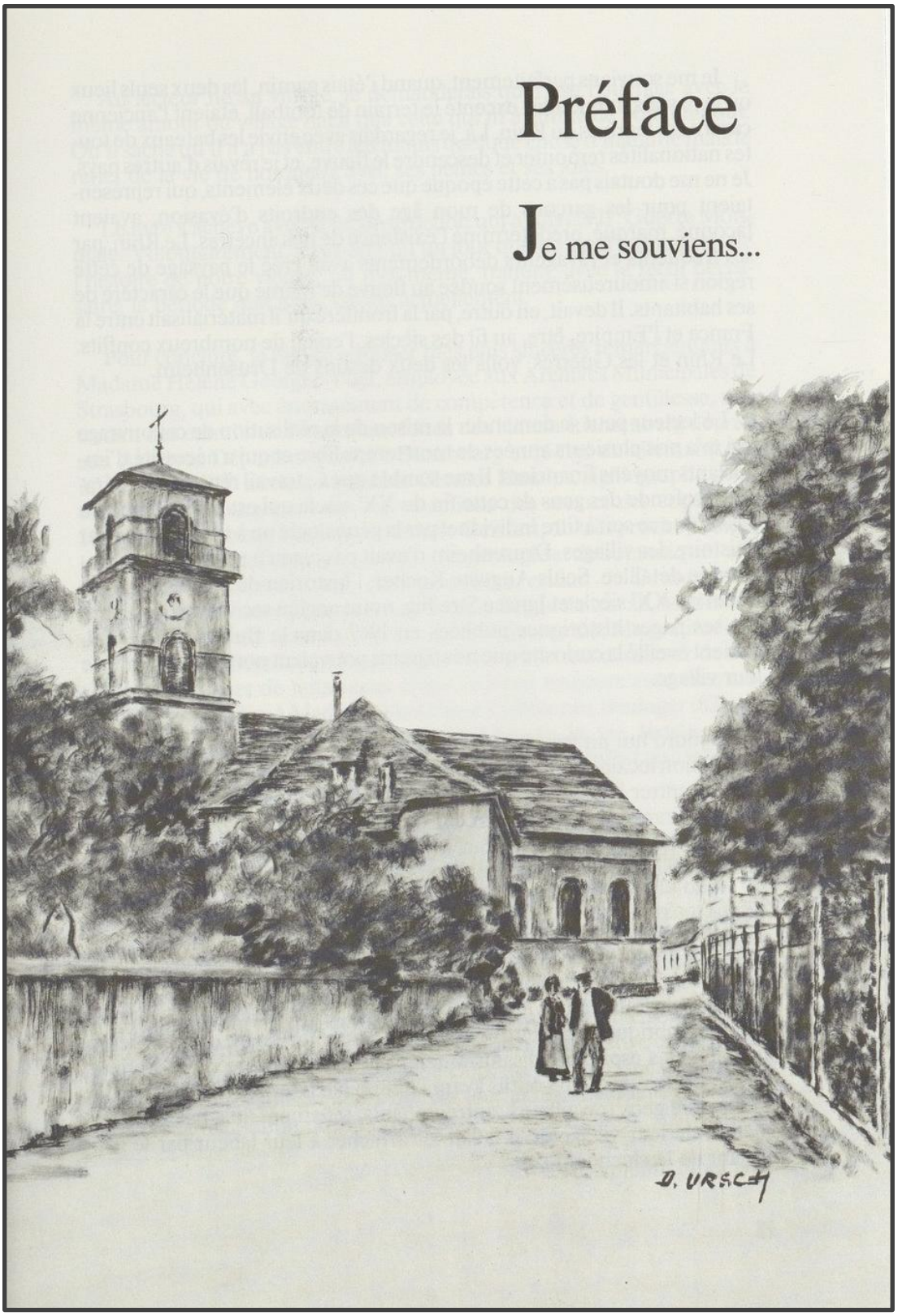
Haug Charles Henri 17
Kléber Frédéric Henry 17
Perception (La perception) 18
The ferry, then the Rhine Bridge 18
Article 1 18
Article 2 19
Article 3 20
Treaties Concerning the Rhine Border 21
The Treaty of Lunéville 21
The Treaties of Paris 22
The Rhine: Restored and Corrected 23
The Wildlife of the Rhine Islands 26
The Decommissioning of Drusenheim as a Military Post 28
The Village's Economic Activity 30
The Spinning Mill 30
The War of 1870 31



The Kreutzrhein Bridge around 1900, by Desire Ursch based on a period photograph.

Préface

Je me souviens...



Drusenheim, by Desire Ursch

UNDER THE COUNTS OF HANAU-LICHTENBERG (1570–1736) AND HESSE-DARMSTADT (1736-1789)

pages 76-151

In 1570, the devoutly Catholic Jacques, the last Count of Deux-Ponts-Bitche, died. His daughter Louise-Marguerite married Philip V of Hanau-Lichtenberg. As a result, the bailiwicks of Offendorf, Woerth, Brumath, and Ingwiller were reintegrated into the family estate after having been separated from the count's domain in 1480.

When our village once again became the property of the Hanau-Lichtenberg family, the Reformation was already well established in the county. Even Philip III was not entirely impervious to new ideas regarding religion. His son, Philip IV, married the Lutheran Eleanor of Furstenberg in 1540, and the territory slowly but inexorably shifted toward the Reformation. The Peace of Augsburg was signed in 1555. Charles V recognized the Protestant reality. The principle "*Cujus Regio, Ejus Religio*" (whose realm, his religion) was adopted, and subjects were required to comply. Adopting the Protestant faith or going into exile was the only choice available to the County's inhabitants, and one by one, the villages replaced their Catholic priests with Protestant pastors. By around 1560, all the villages had embraced the Lutheran faith. The villages of Deux-Ponts-Bitche had to yield to Philip V's demands to achieve religious unity within his territory. The bailiwick of Offendorf, led by Rudolf, the Catholic priest of Oberhoffen, proved to be the most recalcitrant. Philip V's resolve, however, remained unshaken, and little by little, pastors replaced the Catholic priests. Drusenheim converted to Protestantism on September 17, 1570.

That same day, Count Philip IV sent the following letter to the bailiff of Lichtenau, Florian von Furdenheim.

> Philipp the Elder, Landgrave of Hanau-Lichtenberg, owner and ruler of the Offendof estate with all that is therein, etc... Since we are firmly resolved to ensure that the parishes on this side of the Rhine are henceforth staffed by Protestant pastors, and since it has been reported that the papist priests there are still celebrating Mass—even though we had intended that such practices should be discontinued—it is our command that you immediately and without delay take the necessary measures to ensure that in Offendorf, Herrlisheim, Drusenheim, Rohrwiller, and Oberhoven, the Mass and all other papist practices be discontinued and no longer celebrated there; and you shall also report to us who currently serves those churches and what condition the parsonages are in—whether they are in good repair or not. This is our command.
> Date: September 17, 1570.[1]

The first pastor was Jean Zeltenbach. He was succeeded by:

– Wolfgang Kuhn in 1571

– Veit Lieb: 1571–1593, a native of Tübingen who died in Drusenheim in 1593. It was during his tenure that the new ecclesiastical regulations applicable to the entire county were published in 1573.

– Henri Kirchner: 1593–1622, born in Marburg. It was during his tenure as pastor that the new church was built in 1614.

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[1] The book author reproduced the letter in German and then summarized it: "We have decided to replace the parish priests on this side of the Rhine (the left bank) with Protestant preachers, but according to the information we have received, it appears that the papist clergy continue to celebrate Mass. To put an end to this situation, we order you (the bailiff) to issue a prohibition, without delay, against the celebration of Mass in the towns of Offendorf, Rohrwiller, Herrlisheim, Drusenheim, and Oberhoffen. We would also like a report on the condition of the parsonages."

– Jacques Reussner: 1622–1625; born in Bouxwiller, he served successively in Oberhoffen, Drusenheim, and then Lichtenau, where he died in 1637.

– Michel Saxo: 1625–1631. He remained in Drusenheim for 6 years and then left our parish for that of Bischoffsheim.

– Tobias Sutorius was appointed pastor of Drusenheim on April 24, 1631. A native of Altenheim in the region of Baden, he had previously served as a deacon in Lichtenau. During this period of the Thirty Years' War, the Protestant parish was administered for a time by Jean Gashold, pastor of Lichtenau.

– Jean Georges Gross: 1642–1676 (?), originally from Nuremberg. He was appointed to Drusenheim on May 11, 1643; Oberhoffen was incorporated into that parish on July 25.

– George Louis Geck, appointed in 1676, was the last pastor in our community before the return to Catholicism in 1688. He compiled the church's register of pastors and recounts that the minister who initiated the Reformation in Drusenheim was named Wolfgang Kuhn, but that he served the parish for only one year, "propter nimiam scortationem;" indeed, he had danced with his wife and his maid in a costume that was utterly Edenic.[2]

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)

The Thirty Years' War began in Bohemia over two churches that had been built without permission on the lands of two ecclesiastical lords and demolished by their order (1618). The Protestants took up arms, and when Archduke Ferdinand—whom the Bohemians had just recognized as king—sided with the lords, the people rose up against him, deposed him, and, after a series of victories, placed Count Palatine Frederick V at their head, who was crowned King of Bohemia (1619). He was the leader of the confederation that the Protestant states had formed under the name of the Evangelical Union; he succeeded in rallying it to his cause. For their part, the Catholics took up arms under the leadership of Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria, the head of their league.

The conflict was on the verge of engulfing all of Germany when, yielding to more moderate counsel, both sides agreed to confine the fighting to Bohemia and the lands of the Prince-Elector. The war, thus limited, did not last long. Frederick saw his army defeated at Prague and fled abroad, while Spinola's Spanish troops and those of the Duke of Bavaria seized his principalities. (1620).

It would all have been over had it not been for certain personal ambitions that kept the hostilities going—hostilities that were by then powerless to influence Germany's fate but disastrous for the country where they were fought. "Three princes—or rather, three leaders of adventurers—remained at arms: the most famous was Ernest of Mansfeld, who had been the first to bring aid to the Bohemians and who, with 20,000 men lured by the prospect of plunder, had fought his way from Bohemia to the Rhine; the other two were Duke Christian of Brunswick and the Margrave of Baden-Durlach, who each had 15,000 men recruited from among all the bandits in Germany. These three leaders imbued the war with a character of banditry and atrocity that was soon imitated by the Catholic generals and whose memories are still vivid in Germany."[3] Alsace and our region were visited by the first of these three bands in 1621. Until that date, the region had known war only through distant rumors and inconsequential alerts.

The Mansfeld Invasion

Mansfeld's invasion was devastating. Pressed by Tilly, threatened by the Spanish, and unable to retain his soldiers—whom he could no longer pay—Mansfeld first sent them against the bishoprics of

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[2] Baquol: Dictionnaire du Haut-Rhin et du Bas-Rhin (1865)
[3] Lavallee: Histoire des Français III, p. 32 - 1838

Franconia; then he was suddenly seen emerging onto the Rhine, before the Emperor, the Catholic League, or Spain could have anticipated or at least prevented this daring advance.

In November 1621, the famous condottiero ravaged the bishopric of Speyer and subsequently threatened Alsace. It was not until November 17 that news of his arrival in the Palatinate reached Strasbourg. The town of Haguenau took a long time to take the threat seriously. The Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg showed far greater zeal in defending the region. On November 16, Rodolphe von Ossa, a colonel in the service of the Empire, wrote to the bailiff of the Bishopric of Strasbourg, Christophe von Wangen, in a letter dated from Drusenheim, stating that he had just visited Drusenheim and had decided "to have this town of Drusenheim fortified with trenches and a barrier."[4] This was because the road leading to Lauterbourg and Seltz passes through here, and it was necessary to stop Mansfeld, who was already on his way to Lauterbourg.

Christophe von Wangen wrote to Saverne to ask whether the bishop's subjects would assist those of the Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg. He received a positive response.

On November 27, the town of Haguenau finally decided to recruit 400 to 500 people. However, since the bailiff of Haguenau was in Drusenheim that same day to discuss with the Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg how to block certain crossing points, the recruitment could not take place until the 28th. On the 28th, Mansfeld entered Lauterbourg, which had been completely deserted.

On the same day, the bailiffs of Ortenau wrote to the Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg, asking him whether he had granted Mansfeld free passage through his territory. He replied that Mansfeld had assured him he would spare his county, but that he might pass through his territory if necessary. In a postscript to this letter, it was mentioned that Soufflenheim and Hatten had just been plundered.

In the meantime, Von Ossa had met with Mansfeld in Lauterbourg. Mansfeld assured him that his lands would be spared if the count declared his neutrality. Mansfeld also revealed his battle plan to Von Ossa: to take control of Haguenau and Saverne and demand a tribute from the lordships of Lower Alsace and the city of Strasbourg. Mansfeld demanded a war contribution of 100,000 florins from the prefecture of Haguenau and requested the same sum from the Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg in exchange for a general guarantee of the safety of his territory, which was nonetheless terribly ravaged.

On November 30, Mansfeld issued "Safeguards" for the county of Hanau-Lichtenberg, which were immediately sent to Drusenheim.[5]

Mansfeld easily took control of Haguenau and laid siege to Saverne, which Count von Salm successfully defended. His troops swept through the province and reduced it to ruin. Summoned to the Bishopric of Speyer, he left for a time, leaving a strong garrison in Haguenau. Meanwhile, Archduke Leopold—a cousin of Emperors Rudolf and Matthias who had succeeded the Cardinal of Lorraine in the administration of the Bishopric of Strasbourg—attempted to recapture Haguenau under the command of Colonel Ossa (April–May 1622).

Ossa chose Drusenheim and Bischwiller as supply depots for food and ammunition intended for the siege of Haguenau. Since the city of Strasbourg had allowed free passage on the Rhine, the boats were able to travel down the river and reach Bischwiller via the Moder. And if the military operations were to fail, Bischwiller and Drusenheim would serve as a strategic fallback position on the Rhine. Both towns were fortified, and to guard the two posts, Ossa stationed 64 sentries.

Leopold moved his headquarters from Molsheim to Pfaffenhoffen and, on May 6, learned of Tilly and Cordova's victory over the Margrave of Baden at Wimpten. As soon as news of the Margrave's defeat reached Pfaffenhoffen, it was decided that the time had come to begin the siege of Haguenau. On May 8, Leopold set out with his army for Haguenau. On the 13th, he wrote to his brother in Vienna to inform him

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[4] Défendre Drusenheim avec les fossés et les barrages.

[5] Schutzbrief ou lettre de Protection

that he was beginning the siege. On the 15th and 16th, he advanced to the city gates. Löwenstein, commander of Mansfeld's army in Haguenau, informed his superior that he was in danger. Immediately, Mansfeld left his headquarters in Germersheim and arrived in Haguenau on the morning of the 17th with 12,000 men.

Leopold withdrew from Haguenau and ordered Von Salm to retreat to Drusenheim and cross the Rhine. Mansfeld pursued the fleeing troops. The two thousand men—both soldiers and supply troops—who had taken the road to Drusenheim were cut to pieces. The boats they intended to use to cross the Rhine were seized, and all their baggage was taken. The remainder of Leopold's army retreated to Dachstein, Molsheim, and Saverne.[6] Drusenheim was overrun, and Mansfeld returned triumphantly to the prefectural capital. After this bloodbath and a second defeat at Saverne, Mansfeld left Alsace. The invasion had lasted seven months. It took a long time to rebuild what he had destroyed.

Once rid of the audacious adventurer, Alsace—as well as our town—was no less trampled upon by Spanish and imperial troops, who were constantly recruiting or resupplying themselves in our region. This was the era of the substantial war contributions demanded by Commissioner General d'Ossa from the administrators of small territories in Alsace, whose financial resources were modest. Thus, in the fall of 1629, to avoid continuing dependence on the goodwill of the city of Strasbourg for the use of its bridge over the Rhine, Ossa decided to build a bridge between Drusenheim and Grauelsbaum (Grailsbaum) and to fortify both towns.

The construction of the fortifications at Drusenheim and Grauelsbaum, which began in October 1629, was carried out by conscripted laborers from both banks of the Rhine. Soldiers were also employed there, as were subjects of the Bishopric and the Emperor. The local lordships were required to send one hundred laborers for one week. Each laborer's pay was set at 5 shillings per day. In addition, the following villages sent conscripted laborers: Bischheim 3 – Hoenheim 2 – Scharrachbergheim 6 – Plobsheim 12 – Odratzheim 6 – Irmstett 2 – Fegersheim 8 – Kolbsheim 8 – Wilwisheim 4 – Obenheim 2 – Gerstheim 4 – Traenheim 2 – Osthoffen 4 – Blaesheim 4 – Achenheim and Oberschaeffolssheim 5. Equipped with shovels and pickaxes, these men were gathered in Vendenheim before being sent to Drusenheim.

The villages under the Empire's jurisdiction were required to send 500 laborers. The first group consisted of residents from the following localities: Soufflenheim 25 – Surbourg 30 – Gunstett 20 – Forstheim 10 – Eschbach 12 – Hegeney 3 – Kindwiller 6 – Bitschhoffen 9 – Uberach 6 – La Walck 15 – Morschwiller 12 – Ringeldorf 3 – Ohlungen 10 – Keffendorf 1 – Huttendorf 8 – Bossendorf and Scherlenheim 15 – Ettendorf 15 – Lixhausen 10 – Mutzenhouse 5 – Mommenheim 15 – Wittersheim 8 – Batzendorf 8 – Niederschaeffolsheim 9 – Bernolsheim 7 – Berstheim 1 – Wahlenheim 4 – Hochstett 1 – Rottelsheim 1 – Wingersheim 15 – Rumersheim 6 – Mittelschaeffolsheim and Wilwisheim 3. Each team worked on site for three consecutive days.

To monitor navigation on the Rhine, about sixty soldiers were stationed at the fortifications at all times. During the same period, Ossa built a warehouse for storing grain in Haguenau. In addition, major work to make the Moder navigable between Drusenheim and Haguenau was undertaken, again using forced labor. To protect this warehouse, the fortifications of Haguenau were reinforced. Consequently, work continued throughout the winter of 1629 and practically until the summer of 1630 on the fortifications at Drusenheim and Haguenau. On May 15, three companies of cuirassiers commanded by Imperial Colonel Ottavio Piccolomini were able to cross the Rhine at Drusenheim and proceed directly toward Dettwiller.

[6] Laguille - Histoire de la Province d'Alsace.

The Swedes in Alsace

In June 1630, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden intervened on the side of the Evangelical Union in the Thirty Years' War. The Protestant princes, under the command of Bernard of Weimar and Gustavus Adolphus, defeated Tilly and the Imperial army on January 23, 1631, near Leipzig. The Swedes entered the Rhineland in December 1631 and immediately advanced into Alsace. A cavalry detachment led by Rehlingen entered Drusenheim on February 2, 1632. The Imperial forces and the Lorrainers fled.

"At the same time, the Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg stormed the entrenchments that the Imperial forces had built near Drusenheim. He captured this village, which lies on the German side of the Rhine, and Lichtenau, which lies on the Swiss side. He fortified these two positions and stationed troops there, intending to block the river and facilitate the passage of Swedish troops. But the count was unable to hold his position for long; for while the bulk of the Swedish army was engaged in Lower Alsace, Westphalia, and Hesse, General Ossa took the necessary measures to secure Lake Constance and the neighboring towns; from there, he moved his troops along the Rhine and advanced into Lower Alsace, where he joined up with the Haraucourt Regiment."[7]

The Swedes occupied almost all of Alsace, with the exception of Haguenau, which was in the hands of imperial troops.

In 1633, "Louis XIII took the Count of Hanau under his protection, as the count had grown weary of seeing his lands fall prey to the two armies. It had not been long since Jean-Wolfgang and Philippe-Wolfgang, Counts of Hanau, had sent notice to the Chamber of the Bishopric of Metz—one in 1626 and the other in 1628—that they were prepared to swear fealty and pay homage for Buschweiller, Ingweiller, and other fiefs as dependencies of the Bishopric of Metz. It was on this basis that the King felt obliged to grant his protection to the Count of Hanau and that Marshal de la Force ordered Colonel de la Broquerie to approach Buschweiller with three cavalry cornettes, to assure the inhabitants of this small town of reinforcements numbering four thousand men, undertaking to defend their town as soon as it received a French garrison."[8]

In fact, the protection afforded by the King of France was limited to the towns of Bouxwiller-Ingwiller and Neuwiller. Drusenheim remained under fire from the warring parties.

Haguenau had placed itself under the protection of the French army, commanded by Cardinal de la Valette. The Imperial forces requested to occupy the town jointly with the French. Having firmly established themselves in their fortified camp at Drusenheim, they waited for an opportunity to attack Haguenau. On May 11, 1636, Gallas, from his post at Drusenheim, informed King Ferdinand that he had built a bridge over the Rhine at Drusenheim. On June 7, Cardinal de la Valette's dispatch of 804 cavalrymen to Haguenau had caused quite a stir within the fortifications of our town.

On June 13, Imperial forces intercepted a ship loaded with wine on the Rhine; it had been sent to Valletta by the city of Strasbourg. On July 23, Gallas received a visit in Drusenheim from the future emperor, Ferdinand III. While still king of Hungary, he inspected his troops at the fortified camp in Drusenheim. The prince wanted to encourage the soldiers and settle the disputes that had broken out among the officers.

La Valette and Bernard of Saxony tried to provoke a battle against the Imperial forces. But Gallas, despite having 26 regiments at his disposal, withdrew to his entrenchments at Drusenheim and did not allow himself to be taken by surprise.

Soon summoned to Burgundy, the two armies left Lower Alsace, which brought a measure of calm to our town. Since the beginning of 1637, Drusenheim had been under the control of the city of Haguenau. The Imperial forces, under the command of Colonel von Metternich, regained control of Drusenheim on

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[7] Laguille Histoire de la Province d'Alsace.
[8] Laguille Histoire de la Province d'Alsace

November 19 and took control of traffic on the Rhine: “und also den edlen rheinstrom wieder mit gottes gnad und hulff frey gemacht” [and so, by god’s grace and help, the noble Rhine River was once again made free]. Despite a series of skirmishes, the Imperial forces maintained control over our town.

From that point on, the “Great War” was over as far as Alsace was concerned, since the bulk of the Weimar army went on to fight in Franconia, Thuringia, and Saxony.

Immigration

When peace was restored in 1648, Alsace—which had become part of France—was in a state of chaos. Those who had escaped the danger of being put to death by the soldiers were swept away by famine and disease. Entire villages disappeared, while others were completely deserted.

“We do not know exactly what measures were taken to repopulate the country. The only document that reveals that foreigners were invited to settle there is the memorandum by M. de Rosselange,[9] written around 1656 and addressed to Minister Colbert. Mr. de Rosselange states that the governments of Hanau-Lichtenberg, Württemberg, and the French government sent (this took place before 1656) heralds and trumpeters to neighboring countries, inviting foreigners to settle there and promising them that, without paying any land tax, they could choose a house and as much land as they were able to till, and that for a certain period, they would be exempt from all taxes.”[10]

There are no comprehensive statistical data on the county’s population prior to the Thirty Years’ War. Similarly, the parish records of Drusenheim from that period have been lost. However, two documents provide information about the wave of immigration to our village.

First, a document filed with the Karlsruhe Archives[11] and dated 1581 provides the names of the tenants farming the lands belonging to the parish of Drusenheim. Another document[12] from 1531, drawn up for the renewal of rents, also lists the names of the tenants. Thus, we have the family names of our locality prior to 1600. The names we were able to identify are as follows:

Adolff	Goll	Reiff`
Arbogast	Griss	Reyffer
Ball	Grass	Reychardt
Bastian	Heintz	Ruff
Bein	Helck	Schwob
Burg	Herst	Schon
Berck	Hoick	Schwem
Burck	Hyleck	Schuff
Brantz	Jeckel	Schuster
Bull	Jundt	Schmidt
Clauss	Klauber	Seytz
Conrad	Lutsch	Seyser
Contz	Lux	Sigrist
Diebolt	Mattern	Stoffel
Dorn	Martin	Theubuss
Drager	Martzolff	Veltin
Endriss	Meichel	Vischer
Ellen	Meiser	Vogelin

[9] fonctionnaire lorrain d’après Reuss
[10] L’immigration Suisse dans le Comté H.L. Bodmer p. 13
[11] Abteil 66 n° 5075
[12] ADBR H 488

Ernst Fuchs Gilg Gless Glesel	Meyer Michel Nisius Oll Peter Reichmann	Weber Weiss Weisskopff Wendling Zoll

The same document reveals, through marginal notes, that as early as 1652, 60 of the 81 plots had been allocated to various owners. The repopulation of the village was apparently underway. On January 18, 1662, a roll was drawn up listing the names of the young men (Junge Mannschaft) on the left bank of the Rhine who were fit to bear arms:[13]

The following are listed for Drusenheim:

Georges Gabel Hans Hezel Lux Riemann Lambrecht Helckh Adam Seyfert Hans Seyfert Jacob Thoman, le jeune Michel Thoman Hans Hoch, le jeune Georg Gloss	Andres Hoch, le jeune Hans Weniart Hans Frey Michel Gabel Simon Gabel Martin Gabel Hans Naas Hans Glos Adam Sibermann

For the first time, we find names that were previously unknown in our community. These newcomers were likely part of the wave of immigration that swept across the whole of Alsace. Where did they come from? Most likely from the Palatinate, Switzerland, and Bavaria. Immigration continued throughout the second half of the 17th century. The renewal of the population was definitively complete by the early 18th century.

As early as this period, we find a number of surnames still known today in our community in the list of free residents who were granted citizenship rights in 1736, namely:[14]

	Johannes Feith, le Stabhalter (Notary) Philipp Stoltz Michel Gabel, le “moyen” Lendel Heitz Johannes Mosser Hans Jacob Giess Hans Georg Gümpel Martin Syfried Hans Gabel, le “Moyen” Hans Jacob Gabel, le vieux Philipp Ostertag, le jeune Jacob Kieneissen Georg Stocket Georg Hermann Jacob Stephan	Hans Gabel, le vieux Christian Eble Daniel Braun Georg Reiff Philipp Gabel, le jeune Hans Jacob Schwaab, le vieux Hans Jacob Schwaab, le jeune Conrad Klein, le jeune Hans Jacob Klein, der Beck (le baker) Hans Jacob Reif, le jeune Caspar Claus Caspar Braun Conrad Klein, le vieux Hans Jacob Gabel, le jeune Josieh Bolender

[13] ADBR E 2297
[14] Archives de Haguenau JJ 267

Peter Christmann, le vieux	Johannes Feith, le jeune
Jacob Liess	Martzolph Gabel
Philipp's Walck	Hans Georg Gless
Jacob Doriat	Hans Michel Vixram
Hanns Doriat	Hans Georg Wixram
Ulrich Dietler	Jacob Eichler
Friedrich Gabel, le vieux	Martin Gabriel, le jeune
Hans Michel Gabel	Adreas (Andreas) Uesch
Hans Georg Romer	Michel Eichler
Philipps Jacobi	Martzolph Wagner
Martzolph Wagner, le jeune	Martz Jung, le jeune
Hans Michel Hoch	Hans Adam Romer
Johannes Wagner	Hans Georg Braun
Martin Uhlmann	Mathis Hoch
Diebold Gumpel	Hans Michel S'Cheerer
Joseph Urseh	

The Dutch War (1672-1679)

The bells of the thanksgiving services had barely stopped ringing in the distance, and the singing of the Te Deum still echoed in the ears of the townspeople and villagers of Alsace, who were overjoyed to learn that peace had been signed. This peace—which the current generation had scarcely known—was not to last very long.

In 1672, war broke out between France and the Netherlands, which became allied with the Holy Roman Empire in 1673. Alsace became a theater of military operations beginning in early 1674.

During the 1674 campaign pitting Turenne against the German general Caprara, Drusenheim saw a constant flow of troops passing through. First came the Imperial forces, who, after being defeated at Germersheim, marched back up the Rhine toward Strasbourg. Next came the French forces, who left the Haguenau region to head for Philippsburg in the Palatinate. Turenne defeated the Imperial forces at Sinzheim in June 1674. Both armies then advanced toward Strasbourg to clash once again at Entzheim. This constant back-and-forth of troops caused the population to flee "to such an extent that in ten villages there were no more than three peasants left, and there was nothing left to eat."[15] Thus, the food shortages and famine of 1675 were set in motion. Many residents of Drusenheim sought refuge on the Rhine Islands or even in villages in Baden.

Thus, Georg Frey and Jorg Wagner—the latter being the postmaster in our town—had their children baptized in Freistett.[16] In 1675, Jakob Frauel, the carpenter, Jorg Alt, and Martin Gugrnann (Guhmann?) were married in Gutlach. The year 1676 was hardly any better. Zimmer Wolf, Lux Reichmann, Hans Heib, and Hans Weymert had their children baptized in the same town.

On the military front, 1675 saw Turenne face off against Montecuculi on Imperial territory near Drusenheim, between Freistett and Sasbach (July 1765 [*sic*.]). Turenne died on July 27, 1675, in Sasbach after being struck by a German cannonball.

Troops continued to pass through Drusenheim until 1676. "Marshal de Luxembourg, whom the King had chosen to command in Alsace, having received orders to come to the aid of Wissembourg, left Brumpt on July 3 and took up position between Weyersheim and Drusenheim, in open countryside

[15] Reuss: L'Alsace au 17e siècle
[16] quoted in A. Kocher

suitable for refreshing his army, while preparations were made for the siege engines he intended to use to burn the pontoon bridges that the enemy had set up near Philippsbourg."[17]

Since Turenne's death, the war had held little interest from a military standpoint. Nor had it been any more decisive from a political standpoint. Success was undeniably on France's side. What the Empire's forces had been unable to wrest from France in five campaigns would be confirmed by the Treaty of Nijmegen: namely, that Alsace was definitively attached to France.

The Restoration of Catholicism

Under the Very Christian King, Alsace once again became largely Catholic. In the County of Hanau, representatives of the King of France exerted pressure to bring the inhabitants back into the fold of the Catholic Church. Drusenheim, along with Offendorf, Herrlisheim, and Rohrwiller, resumed the veneration of the Virgin Mary in 1687–1688. Until the Revolution, the following parish priests served in our community.[18]

Anselme Huber (1688-1692)
- Benedictine monk at Schwarzach Abbey
- Parish priest of Drusenheim on January 8, 1688
- Parish priest of Dangolsheim from December 10, 1692, to 1716
- Died on February 10, 1725, in Dangolsheim

Anselme Trutschler (1700-1711)

Antoine Burgstetter (1731-1739)

Martin - Hubert Bollenbach (1739-1751)
- Born August 14, 1708, in Rouffach
- Ordained February 28, 1733
- Parish priest of Staffelfelden from 1733 to 1739
- Parish priest of Drusenheim from May 25, 1739, to June 17, 1751

Jean Baptiste Froehlich (1751-1764)
- Ordained on May 19, 1742
- Assistant pastor in Eberbach/Seltz from August 11, 1744, to August 28, 1745
- Assistant pastor in Beinheim from October 1, 1745, to July 8, 1746
- Assistant pastor in Drusenheim from October 10, 1746, to 1751
- Pastor of Drusenheim from January 17, 1752, to June 4, 1764
- Pastor of La Wantzenau from 1764 to 1786

Jean Scheitel (1764-1776)
- Born on December 26, 1723, in Molsheim
- Assistant pastor in Bischoffsheim on May 3, 1750
- Assistant pastor in Strasbourg-St. Jean from May 26, 1750, to April 17, 1753
- Assistant pastor in Dingsheim in 1757
- Pastor of Stutzheim from August 13, 1758, to September 18, 1764
- Pastor of Drusenheim from October 29, 1764, to June 25, 1776

Florent Simon (1776-1796)
- Assistant pastor in Villé from February 3, 1750, to August 14, 1750
- Assistant pastor in La Wantzenau from April 1, 1751, to July 18, 1753
- Assistant pastor in Widensolen from April 29, 1755, to January 16, 1756

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[17] Laguille: Histoire de la Province d'Alsace
[18] Louis Kammerer: Répertoire du Clergé d'Alsace sous l'Ancien Régime 1648-1792 (1983)

– Assistant pastor in Rohrwiller and Drusenheim on October 26, 1756
– Assistant pastor in Gougenheim from March 12, 1757, to August 8, 1757
– Assistant pastor in Andlau from August 2, 1762, to February 3, 1763
– Pastor of Sessenheim from March 4, 1763, to August 3, 1769
– parish priest of Hatten from September 2, 1769, to December 25, 1771
– parish priest of Sessenheim from January 2, 1772, to September 2, 1776
– parish priest of Drusenheim from November 25, 1776, to April 12, 1790
– emigrated during the Revolution
– died in exile on May 23, 1796, in Baden-Baden at the age of 72

The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713)

The 18th century began with a long and bitter war sparked by the succession to the Spanish throne. Charles II, King of Spain, had named his successor in his will: the Duke of Anjou, the second son of the Dauphin. Louis XIV accepted this and, as he bid farewell to the young prince, said, "There are no more Pyrenees." The other powers refused to consent to this and declared war on France. Alsace was not spared, and the Holy Roman Empire made great efforts to regain our province. The war lasted 12 years and was marked by the profound humiliation of the great king, who, on more than one occasion, was threatened with losing the fruits of his conquests along the Rhine. The outcome of the conflict, however, was not entirely unfavorable to France, which, under the terms of the Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt, was able to retain Alsace.

The first battles took place in the Palatinate. Prince Louis of Baden, victor over the Ottomans, led the imperial army to lay siege to Landau. After capturing the city, he advanced into Alsace as far as the Moder River, between Drusenheim and Haguenau. Catinat, who commanded in the province, was unable to repel him, and Villars rushed to his aid. In 1702, Villars returned to Alsace, captured Kehl, and defeated the Prince of Baden at Friedlingen, near Brisach. Tallard and Villars met at Kochersberg Castle and coordinated their military operations. Tallard marched on Landau, which he recaptured in 1703 after a hard-fought battle.

Meanwhile, the Prince of Baden had been working on the famous Stollhoffen lines. "The lines extended on the Rhine side to Talunde Island, one large league upstream from Fort-Loüis, and on the other side they reached Buhl, whose mountains had been cut away down to the very tip: the Stolhoffe River served as their moat, and by means of locks and cofferdams, the waters of the neighboring rivers had been managed so that it was easy to flood the front of the lines, which had become, in part, nothing more than a vast marsh where two narrow causeways had been built to preserve the roads: not only were they well fortified and crowned with several redoubts, but they were also defended by a large artillery force and by the army of the Prince of Baden, ever ready to thwart the enemy's advances. Marshal de Villars, despite himself, gave this prince the opportunity to perfect the entrenchments; the need to ensure the safety of Alsace had forced him to wait for Marshal de Tallard before crossing into Germany."[19]

The year 1704 was marked by the disastrous Battle of Hochstaedt, in which Marlborough and Prince Eugene defeated Tallard; they then invaded the Palatinate and supported the siege of Landau led by Prince Louis of Baden. After the city fell, Villars and Tallard occupied Wissembourg and Lauterbourg.

1705: The Imperial forces captured Drusenheim

The Allies' successes continued, however, in 1705. The lines at Wissembourg were breached, and those at Haguenau were abandoned. "The Prince of Baden, finally realizing that his forces outnumbered those of Marshal de Villars, resolved to breach the lines at Haguenau—a venture he deemed necessary to

[19] Laguille: Histoire de la Province d'Alsace

lay siege to or blockade Fort Louis. He set out to breach these entrenchments on the mountain side and capture Pfaffhove, where the Marquis de Silly was in command. He was ordered to abandon that position, as the Marshal did not believe himself capable of defending those lines along their entire length. This movement spread alarm throughout Alsace, where people feared that the Germans might come and wreak havoc deep within the province. But Prince Louis stopped short on a hill where he set up camp; opposite it, the Marshal had a large entrenchment built to at least delay the enemy's advances. The disparity in his forces and the weakness of his lines finally forced him to abandon them after bombarding the German camp. He withdrew to the outskirts of Strasbourg and had the cavalry camp for one night on the Isle de Rupertchaut, content to leave the troops in Haguenau, Drusenheim, and Bitschweiller. Bourbonnais, who was holding the latter position, was ordered to leave it a few days later; Drusenheim—where 400 men were entrenched behind hastily constructed ditches and earthen ramparts—was formally besieged by the Count of Frize on September 24. The garrison held out for five days, but when it was on the verge of being overrun, it surrendered, and 280 men were taken prisoner of war."[20]

The capture of Drusenheim had been feared for several weeks already. Marshal Villars wrote on July 21, 1705: "We have learned that the Count of Frize is attacking Drusenheim, which is defending itself very well. It is said that on the first night, the enemy attempted to capture a small fortification along the dike and suffered heavy casualties there. We are working to divert the river into the meadows stretching from here to Offendorf and Herrlisheim. If this succeeds, we will cut off the enemy's access to its bridge upstream from Drusenheim, and I will then order an attack on that bridgehead (...). We are doing everything imaginable to harm the enemy. (...) As you surely know, they outnumber us by at least 15,000 men. You know how short we are on horses. The four regiments are completely decimated. The disease is subsiding somewhat, and perhaps God will grant us the grace to stop it. I confess that I am so deeply grieved by this—and by the sight of the enemy acting without it being in my power to hinder them—that I will greatly need your steadfastness so as not to be overcome by despair (...).[21]

As lord of Haguenau and Drusenheim, the Prince of Baden "had strong lines of defense built along the Moutre [Moder] and blocked the Rhine with a bridge that connected to the lines at Stollhoffe."[22]

1706: The French recaptured Drusenheim

The campaign of 1706 was less disastrous for France; Marshal de Villars relieved Fort Louis and recaptured Haguenau and Drusenheim.

> "Having received orders from the King to break through the lines at the Moutre [Moder] and lift the blockade of Fort Louis, Marshal de Villars assembled his army in April with such great secrecy that even on the very day it marched through Strasbourg for this important expedition, the people of the city were unaware that the troops were on the move. It was only noticed the day before at Benfeld, where the Marshal displayed extraordinary cheerfulness, that he was planning a grand undertaking, the success of which seemed certain to him. Marshal de Marcin, who was to join the army he commanded on the Moselle with that of Marshal de Villars, was no less successful than the latter in concealing his march from the enemy; he crossed the Vosges and arrived at Brumpt, where he joined Marshal de Villars. The two generals, having resolved to break through the enemy lines at the Moutre River via Bischweiller—where the enemy had a large force—assigned the Marquis du Bourg Mestre to lead the vanguard and take the cavalry camp. He marched with a detachment of five hundred horses, encountered eight hundred enemy horsemen, and routed them. This event led the Prince of Baden to conclude that his army would be unable to resist the French and that he could only extricate himself from this predicament through a hasty retreat. He abandoned Bischweiller and marched to

[20] Laguille: Histoire de la Province d'Alsace
[21] S.H.A.T. Série Al n° 1846
[22] Laguille

Drusenheim, from where he had a large part of his army cross the Rhine, leaving five Saxon battalions in Haguenau, a garrison in Drusenheim, and scattered units at various posts between the Loutre and the Moutre, which he did not have time to withdraw.

Monsieur de Villars then advanced unopposed against the garrison of Fort Louis, where he brought in military supplies and large quantities of provisions, which he seized from the warehouses that the Imperial forces had generously stocked for their own sustenance—especially in the small town of Seltz, where they had stockpiled large quantities of flour in a large square tower defended by forty men. They were attacked and surrendered as soon as they heard the sound of a few field guns; before yielding the position, they threw several barrels of flour into the Rhine, the rest was transported to Fort Louis, and the tower was razed along with what remained of the old castle of that small town. Everywhere in Lower Alsace, one saw nothing but outposts raided and captured, retreats, flights, and skirmishes. The Marquis de Vieux-Pont, having received orders to attack Drusenheim, found the enemy holding out there for several days. But as soon as the Moutre River was dammed—a task that took only twenty-four hours—to divert the river's waters into an old canal that discharged them near Offendorf, the waters that had surrounded the town on all sides receded; since the enemy could no longer withstand the cannon fire—which easily shattered the earthworks made of sandy soil and sent cannonballs crashing into the village houses, where they caused great damage—the Marquis de Vieux-Pont found the town empty, with the Imperial troops having retreated to an island with a few cows. The French swam across the Rhine, drove out the enemy, and seized their spoils. The Count of Bourg fared even better; he captured the redoubt on the island of Dalhund and took prisoner everyone he found there."[23]

Details of the French capture of Drusenheim are provided in a letter written by Marshal de Villars to the king.

"At the Drusenheim camp, March 2, 1706

Sire,

Your Majesty was informed by the courier dispatched yesterday that the orders had been carried out with the utmost diligence. The enemy, taken by surprise by the approach of Your Majesty's armies—the vanguard of the force marching on Bischweiller having routed 800 horsemen upon arrival—resolved to abandon their camp at Haguenau, where the Prince of Baden had surrendered on the 30th. But this decision was carried out with such haste and terror that they abandoned their camp; Your Majesty's troops entered Bischweiller at daybreak, and the enemy had left a veritable arsenal behind. Twelve thousand pounds of gunpowder and a large quantity of other military supplies and provisions were found there.

The enemy had left small detachments at the gates to prevent the townspeople from warning others of their retreat; our hussars killed some of them and, with their natural boldness, set off in pursuit of the carriages. They captured a very large number of them, including those belonging to the Count of Frize, along with all the silverware. The enemy had left small detachments at the gates to prevent the townspeople from warning others of their retreat; our hussars killed some of them and, with their natural boldness, set off in pursuit of the carriages. They captured a very large number of them, including those belonging to the Count of Frize, along with all the silverware.

It is believed, Sire, that we should have pressed the enemy hard and, if possible, deprived them of the means and time to occupy a position near Drusenheim that was considered excellent.

When I had the honor of receiving Your Majesty's orders, I took the liberty of telling you that when an enemy does not occupy a position at least a few hours in advance—no matter how skilled he

[23] Laguille

may naturally be—by closely monitoring his movements, one can prevent him from taking advantage of it; and that is precisely what was done.

The Grenadiers of Your Majesty's army, who were marching toward Basse-Motter, arrived at Drusenheim at 8 o'clock in the morning; at the same time, cannons were trained on the enemy troops, who appeared to be forming a battle line behind the ravine and the Drusenheim embankment. I felt it my duty to send word to Marshal de Marcin that if he would be so kind as to march directly on Sessenheim; the enemy, fearing they would be surrounded and attacked on all sides, would undoubtedly be routed. The latter has arrived, Sire, and since Marshal de Marcin wished for me to go with him to examine where we might attack them, we found that there were no longer any enemy forces and that Your Majesty had regained control of the entire Motter region and the entire Rhine as far as Lauterbourg.

I am having Marshal de Pery attack Haguenau. The enemy has 12,000 to 13,000 men there. Your Majesty may rest assured that we will soon take these men prisoner. The enemy still holds Drusenheim, which I am having attacked by Monsieur de Vieux-Pont. I cannot guarantee, Sire, that those men will be taken prisoner, because the garrison may escape by boat across the Rhine. Once Drusenheim is taken, I will see what can be done on the Isle of Talhund.

Finally, Sire, this event—so grand and so auspicious, and for which Your Majesty alone conceived the plan—is not lacking in men, while its enemies have already lost more than 400, not counting all those who will be found in Haguenau, from which we are assured that the heavy cannon have not been removed. What is quite certain is that Monsieur de Pery informs me that 36-pound cannonballs are being fired at him. The siege of Haguenau and Drusenheim will keep us occupied for 3 or 4 days.

In the meantime, Sire, I believe the best course of action is to march toward Lauterbourg—not that I flatter myself that we can take its fortifications, since they proved difficult to breach last year. It is quite certain that they have been severely neglected this winter due to the grand plans they were making for Alsace. I will take only a small force of cavalry there—first, so as not to wear them out—and, moreover, 40 or 50 squadrons stationed near Vilstett will, for two or three days, convince the Prince of Baden that I intend to march on his lines at Stollhoffen, thereby holding him back.

Finally, Sire, Your Majesty has just gained a considerable advantage, but I would not wish to stop there. It seems to me that in war one must always have some objective. The prisoners who had been ordered to cut the line from Rohrweiler to the Rhine in the event that the enemy held onto Drusenheim will be employed to repair the lines that the enemy had the audacity to leave us entirely intact, so convinced were they that Your Majesty's forces could not drive them from their camp at Haguenau. Thus, this latter stronghold formed the right flank, and Bischweiler—which is a true stronghold—formed the left flank, with the entire front line covered by fortifications on which they were still working even as they abandoned them."[24]

Construction of the Drusenheim Canal

"While the generals were busy fortifying Alsace against the enemy's advances, Monsieur de la Houssaye, Intendant of Alsace and later Controller General, devoted himself with tireless zeal to supplying the army's needs and alleviating the suffering of a people weighed down by such a long war. He saw that the canal that had been built from Rouffach to Neuf-Brisach had been of great use in supplying the materials needed to build that fortress, and that the one running from Molsheim to Strasbourg was no less useful. From this, he concluded that much expense and effort could be saved if, for the transport of ammunition and provisions to the far reaches of Lower Alsace, one could make use of

navigation from Vantzenau—where the Ill flows into the Rhine—to Drusenheim and from there to Seltz. An engineer, whose long experience had made him highly skilled in water management, judged that this would be very easy to accomplish via the Ill, the Soor, and the Moutre, whose waters could easily be diverted across terrain that is entirely flat and unobstructed by mountains or rocks anywhere along the route. The project was presented to the Court, to which it was demonstrated that the canal would be of great benefit, since instead of transporting ammunition and provisions along the Rhine to Fort-Louis and the front lines—which were always exposed to enemy forces stationed either on the opposite bank or on the islands— the canal would make transport safer, and that the boats could be brought back in a single day—a journey that would take five or six days to travel up the Rhine. At first, the King could not reject this project, as his keen judgment always enabled him to distinguish the specious from the true and the sound; and we see in a letter from M. de Chamillard, Minister of State, dated November 18, 1706, that His Majesty's reluctance was based on the fear that enemies penetrating into Alsace might take advantage of the canal to transport artillery, ammunition, provisions, and fodder, should they find themselves in a position to launch an operation in the Strasbourg area. The King was subsequently reassured by the measures taken to counter the drawbacks he feared, and the advice of Monsieur de la Houssaye—whose wisdom he held in high regard—finally led to the decision to proceed with the canal. The project was a success, and for the remainder of the war it was used to transport the large boats intended for building pontoon bridges and to carry fodder to the army—the transport of which is always dangerous on the Rhine. But once peace had restored free navigation on the river, the canal was abandoned; its maintenance had been a financial burden on the province, and during floods it even caused hardship for large villages by flooding their meadows."[25]

The engineer Laguille refers to is Jean Baptiste de Regemorte, the inventor and builder of the canal.

The contract for the Drusenheim works in Seltz was awarded on February 4, 1707, under the chairmanship of Intendant de la Houssaye, assisted by Tarade, based on an extremely comprehensive and precise set of specifications that established, among other things, the wages to be paid to the soldiers employed on the earthwork: 20 sols per cubic toise (7.3 m^3).

On February 17, 1707, Lieutenant General de Cheyladet, who commanded in this sector under Villars, broke ground on the works at Drusenheim and, to that end, had the waters covering the lines at the Moder and Fort-Louis drained. Three thousand workers (*pionniers*), conscripted from the rural population of Alsace and Brisgau, and 500 soldiers were deployed. Since the section from Drusenheim to Seltz had been completed, as promised, in early April, and the King had approved the continuation of the project in the meantime, the 3,000 workers (*pionniers*), reinforced by three infantry regiments, immediately began work on the section from Drusenheim to Strasbourg, which was completed by the end of May 1707.

Regemorte had established a rule that all vessels using the port of Strasbourg must be able to navigate and pass each other there. The canal basin was at least 7.80 m wide at its highest point and 12 m wide at water level. The water depth was 1.30 m, which allowed for navigation by vessels with a draft of 1 m. These dimensions corresponded exactly to those of the Bruche Canal, which Vauban had converted into a navigable canal as early as 1682.

Regemorte was never concerned about the water supply. Aside from the Landgraben, the Zorn, the Moder, and the Sauer, he could ensure a steady supply along the entire length of the canal. The very large number of drainage gates and locks proves that, on the contrary, the canal actually suffered from an excess of water.

To overcome the approximately 17-meter elevation difference between the starting point at the Moulin de la Wantzenau canal and Seltz, there were seven locks. About twenty bridges provided access; according to local residents, this number was significantly less than what was needed.

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[25] Laguille

Even today, you can still follow the course of the canal from one end to the other. Admittedly, it is not preserved in good condition everywhere, but there are intact sections scattered throughout the area—for example, west of the Wantzenau mill, north of Herrlisheim, at the northern edge of Drusenheim, to the left of the national highway toward Lauterbourg, in the Sessenheim Forest, and southeast of Roppenheim.

The canal is still remembered by locals as the "Canal des Français," the "Canal des Pandours," or the "old canal." Some local place names also evoke it; for example, on the outskirts of Drusenheim, there is a place called "Le Canal" and the "Hohe Brücke" neighborhood on Route 68.

Passing through the fortress of Drusenheim—which the canal approached along with the Moder River at the southern corner of the pentagon—was a tricky maneuver. The Moder River, which at that time flowed into the Rhine at the southeastern corner, was blocked at its mouth by a sluice gate that diverted the water into the fortress's moats. Boats followed the winding western course of these moats. When passing the Germany Gate (the northern exit of the Lauterbourg road), the drawbridge had to be raised. The boat then entered the eastern moat of the half-moon, which it exited through a lock. Beyond that, the canal ran parallel to the road at a distance of about 50 meters for approximately 350 meters, then crossed the road under a high bridge (Hohe Brücke). A small house was built at this location to house either the lock keeper or another employee working for the navigation service. It now belongs to Roger Jochem and is likely the oldest house in the village. In his report dated March 9, 1707—drafted after construction had already begun in Drusenheim—Regemorte provides a comprehensive overview of the construction costs for the entire canal. In the absence of a final accounting for the completed work, we can only summarize the prices from the estimates as follows:

– Downstream section of Drusenheim 46,475 L for 24.3 km
– Upper section of Drusenheim 25,225 L, 18.00 km

The state of the kingdom's finances after the War of the Spanish Succession, the lack of maintenance of structures built hastily with short-lived materials, and the exasperation of the peasants, who had received no compensation—neither for the land occupied, nor for the losses caused by flooding resulting from the backwater, nor, finally, for the removal of certain rural roads—all of these factors stood in the way of preserving the canal. Its structures fell into ruin.[26] ([1])

The War of the Polish Succession (1733)

After a brief period of peace, a new war broke out in 1733, known as the War of the Polish Succession. It lasted from October 1733 to October 1735 and pitted France—allied with Stanislas Leczinski, the deposed King of Poland—against Austria, the Republic of Danzig, the Rhineland, and Piedmont. Our village was once again to become the scene of military operations beginning in January 1734. The following letter, whose sender and recipient are unknown to us, confirms this.

At Fort Louis, January 14, 1734.

Your Excellency,

I visited Drusenheim the day before yesterday. Only the ruins of the old fortifications remain; consequently, the defenses are in a state of disrepair. If one were to restore them, it would be necessary to survey the moats and repair all the terraces and palisades. It is a major undertaking. Upon my arrival, I found the bridge to be ready and definitively completed at 9:00 p.m. I trust, Your Excellency, that it will have the effect you intended, which is to unsettle the enemies who are in a state of constant movement ...[27]

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[26] Information provided by Adrien Weirich, Alsatian Journal of Archaeology, Art, and History (1965)
[27] S.H.A.T. A 1723

The War of the Austrian Succession: 1741–1748

The death of Charles VI in 1740 led to the War of the Austrian Succession. After the armies of Louis XV had advanced as far as Bohemia and Flanders, they were forced to retreat toward the Rhine, threatened by the British in the Palatinate and by Prince Charles of Lorraine in Upper Alsace.

Marshal de Coigny had just been appointed governor of the province. Marshal de Noailles took up position between Landau and Germersheim and reinforced the lines at Wisembourg. On August 14, 1743, Wisembourg wrote to his superior, Marshal de Coigny: "... I am leaving no stone unturned, Your Excellency, to put Lower Alsace in a state of defense. It is partly with this in mind that I have just completed a new inspection of the lines at La Loutre [Lauter], Lauterbourg, Fort Louis, and Drusenheim. I assure you that I could not have devoted more care or attention to these matters, even if I were to remain in command of this section of the border throughout the winter ..... Drusenheim, a post of great importance due to its location, will, I hope, soon be safe from attack by means of palisades that are being used there in various ways, until we have the time and opportunity to construct more solid fortifications there....."[28] The two armies were to withdraw to their winter quarters. An invasion took place the following year. Prince Charles crossed the Rhine on July 1, 1744, and captured the lines at Wissembourg. Coigny withdrew to Haguenau and, more specifically, to Drusenheim. "At Drusenheim, on the right were 10 battalions under the command of Messrs. de Balincourt, de Clermont d'Amboise, and de Maulevrier, lieutenant generals of the Infantry Corps at Haguenau, and on his left were the remaining imperial troops, so that his army corps—or his center—faced Prince Charles, who was still encamped at Drunbach, near Lauterbourg, his right flank facing General Bernklau near Fort Louis, and his left flank facing General Nadasti at Wert. On the night of the 28th to the 29th, Marshal de Coigny evacuated Drusenheim and Haguenau, departed from Bischwiller, and encamped with the entire army behind the Zorn River; the right wing took up position at Hert [Hoerdt], and the left wing, composed of Imperial troops, moved toward Brumpt [Brumath]."[29]

The enemy army spread throughout the country. Composed of the dreaded Pandurs in their "red coats," it pillaged everything, destroyed whatever it could not carry off, and committed unspeakable atrocities. The majority of the population, seized by wild terror, fled to the fortified towns or to the mountains. All the streets and squares of Strasbourg were crowded with fugitives. This situation is described in a letter sent on August 14, 1744, by Marshal Bohu to Baron de Tornaco, Major General of the Armies of Her Majesty the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, in Drusenheim:

"It is certain that there is hardly a soul in these villages and the surrounding area, nor a single horse. The men whom the commander, at my request, had sent to search for and seize wagons returned without having been able to find more than two carts for transporting palisades in all the places they visited."[30] On the same day, Tornaco ordered the town of Haguenau to supply materials for the fortifications of Drusenheim:

– 50 wagons, each drawn by 4 horses
– 50 carts, each drawn by 2 horses
– 1,800 laborers, 200 of whom will be equipped with axes and the rest with shovels and axes
– 4 master carpenters
– 12 apprentice carpenters
– 10 masons with their tools
– 200 double planks
– 1,400 single planks.

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[28] S.H.A.T. A 2982
[29] S.H.A.T. A 3040 (introduction)
[30] Archives de Haguenau EE 107

"The transport was carried out partly by floating the logs down the river and partly by wagon."[31]

Marshal de Noailles was preparing to engage in battle when Prince Charles was sent to Bohemia. In a letter from Marshal de Noailles dated August 24, 1744,[32] we learn that the Imperial forces abandoned Drusenheim that same day and crossed the Rhine at Beinheim.

In a postscript to this letter, it is stated "that the enemy retreated so hastily that they abandoned four iron cannons in Drusenheim, threw 7,800 muskets and barrels of gunpowder into the Moutre River, and also left behind flour and even cooked bread." The war continued for several more years and ended with the Treaty of Aachen on October 18, 1748, the centennial anniversary of the Treaty of Westphalia.

Drusenheim: Military Post

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Nijmegen (1679) and the capture of Strasbourg (1681), Louis XIV built a series of fortresses intended to protect Alsace. "Germanis Gallia Clausa" appears on the commemorative medal struck to mark the capture of Strasbourg. Northern Alsace was to be defended by a triple line of fortifications. First, by the Queich lines, including Landau and Germersheim; second, by the Lauter lines, including Wissembourg and Lauterbourg; and finally, by the Moder lines, including Haguenau and Fort Louis. Between these fortified strongholds, military outposts were built; these offered far less protection and consisted, in fact, solely of entrenchments.

Drusenheim was classified in this defensive category and belonged to both the Moder and Rhine lines, whose purpose was to defend Haguenau and form a barrier against the Stollhofen lines.

Various plans for our village were drawn up by military engineers of the time—and not just any engineers. Tarade wrote in 1705: "This lock will be positioned so that it will remain in place when the king orders the construction of the four-bastion fort that Marshal Vauban proposed for Drusenheim, which is to be built on this side of the river where Redoubt 8 is located, in which case it will be necessary to raze the entrenchments that have been built along the riverbank and that enclose the village between bastions 1 and 5."[33]

Redoubt 9 is complete:

Marshal de Vauban himself worked on the project to build a fort in our town, as evidenced by his letter dated January 4, 1704, and the various plans signed by Louis XIV's great engineer:

In Paris, January 4, 1704

> You will see, Sir, from the two plans enclosed herewith, that my opinion differs from that of Mr. Tarade regarding the fortifications at Drusenheim. It seemed to me, when I passed through there, that a large fortification was not appropriate at this time, since we will have major strongholds upstream and downstream to support major operations, and that here a sort of staging post is sufficient to secure our convoys heading down the Rhine and to prevent the enemy—at a time when we might be vulnerable—from crossing opposite this location, seizing this admirable position, and establishing themselves there. To forestall such designs, it seems to me that a square fort with four bastions, each 100 toises in polygonal perimeter, firmly anchored at the root of the Rhine, would be perfectly suited to this purpose. This earthen fort, well compacted and covered with turf or timber shoring, with a rampart at the top and bottom and along the edge of the moat, surrounded by two half-moons and covered approaches, and equipped with all the structures listed on the plan, will be capable of housing a standard garrison of 400 men, which will suffice for all the needs of a fortified position, for it will command the Rhine, control the crossing at

[31] Archives de Haguenau EE 107
[32] S.H.A.T. A 3041
[33] Lettre de Tarade - Archives du Génie

Moeter, be able to cause extensive flooding in the surrounding area through its sluice gate, and greatly benefit any entrenched camp situated there by the overflow of its waters. In short, this fort will cost little, require minimal garrison and maintenance, and will not ruin the town. The main military road will not pass through it—another advantage—and it will be capable of performing, more or less, the service of a large fortress. As for its sluice gate, it will be excellent for managing flooding in the region, but it will not be of great use for the defense of the town, since it cannot be concealed sufficiently to completely block the enemy's view of it; the enemy will always find a way to destroy it, though this would only occur after the trench has been opened. The table shows the quantity of building materials required and a rough estimate of the cost. It will be no small task to one day surround this town with a solid, milled, and palisaded entrenchment, in whose moat a considerable stream of water can be channeled whenever desired. In my opinion, this location is the best of all those along the Rhine from Basel to Strasbourg.

Here are two designs for barracks. One is very simple and intended for field forts. The other is standard. Both can be built using timber framing, which will be much less expensive than other methods, but I recommend this only because of the current necessity. In the first design, which houses a company in a single room, we spare them some of the staircases, partition walls, and many fireplaces, and the soldiers are always within sight of their officers, who, being nearby, can inspect them at any hour of the day or night and immediately determine who is present and who is absent—thus ensuring that nothing has prevented them from fulfilling their duty. However, they are very inconvenient for companies that include women, because there is nowhere to put them unless a second story is added, in which case they can be housed in the attic.

The King may choose whichever of the two plans he prefers: His Majesty must bear in mind that if he considers this fort to be a fortification—which, in my opinion, should be maintained indefinitely—the best course of action is to construct solid bastions there; otherwise, we will always have to start over. Furthermore, I expect that in peacetime, when all is calm, His Majesty will have it partially reinforced; but whether it is reinforced or not, once this fort is fully completed, it will always be capable of providing a strong defense, and the enemy will only be able to overcome it by attacking it in every possible way, even if it takes a considerable amount of time.

I forgot to mention that a wattle-and-daub wall, built in the German style, is just as good—and even better—for 3 or 4 years than masonry that lasts 10 or 12 years. They must be easy to build in that region and well-made, since there is plenty of wood. Tarade hasn't sent you any cross-sections. Yet these are absolutely essential, because without them, one cannot judge the strength of the structures or draw up estimates except by trial and error. He also doesn't indicate any cofferdams. However, this is because water must not be allowed to flow into the ditch; it would have filled them up very quickly.

Marshal de Vauban

Chermont, another fortification engineer, wrote in 1706 in a "memorandum on Drusenheim and the works that could be proposed for its fortification": "The post at Drusenheim, located at the mouth of the Moter River, 6 leagues from Strasbourg, 2 leagues from Fort Louis, and 2 leagues from Haguenau, is of great importance and can be considered absolutely essential for communication between these three strongholds and for maintaining an army smaller than that of the enemy along the banks of the Rhine from Bennem [Beinheim] to Strasbourg."[34]

Not all of these projects will come to fruition. Forty years later, there was still talk of a fortification project for Drusenheim. "The location of this village is very advantageous; it is not exposed on any side and is suitable for the most perfect fortification. The proposed defenses would not only protect it from

[34] Archives du Génie

attack and surprise, but would also force the enemy to advance in an orderly manner. Generals have always ordered this village to be fortified whenever the Empire faced a military threat. Marshal de Noailles began the work last July. There has never been a general staff headquarters in this earthen fortification."[35]

Thus, we learn that the defense of our village has always consisted of entrenchments [*fortifications en terre*] and not of actual fortifications.

A valuable document dating from 1736, titled "Military Report on the Drusenheim Outpost and the Adjacent Sections of the Rhine," provides a detailed description of the Drusenheim outpost:

> "Drusenheim lies at the confluence of the Rhine and the Moutter; it is an imperfect pentagon. The side facing the Chemin de Strasbourg is where the marked imperfection lies: the flanks do not extend from the corner of the shoulder inward toward the interior of the square, but outward. This causes the curtain wall to project outward rather than recede inward, as is customary in fortification design.
>
> The flank outside the right bastion was designed for the same reasons to take advantage of the current of the Moutter River. However, since it was possible to gain the same advantages without depriving the curtain wall of the crossfire that was to come from the front, nor the flanks of their mutual support, this construction deviated from the rule without sufficient reason; but there is no point in entering into a discussion of fortification; Drusenheim is not suited to becoming a stronghold worthy of changes to its ramparts, but merely a good outpost, capable of keeping all the small outposts along the Rhine—from Fort-Louis to the Ill River—in order, of securing convoys, of guarding the Rhine, and of serving as a warehouse for certain supplies.
>
> The rampart and the parapet have become one and are only 8 feet wide at the top. It rises only 12 feet above the moat; the moat fills with water when the Rhine and the Moutter swell and feed into it, and then the entire town and the surrounding meadows are flooded—not by overflowing water, but by seepage.
>
> Here's what I noticed that was unusual about it ....
>
> Drusenheim could become a very good strategic position in wartime, if the waters are used in the same way they were in the previous war—by flooding the countryside through a lock. Its usefulness has been demonstrated by the fact that we and the enemy have alternately held it. Hence, it follows that it is necessary to make some repairs to it if the enemy were to penetrate into Alsace—or even if he were merely able to wage war on equal terms—for then, while concentrating his efforts on the Landau front, he would attempt to clear a passage at Drusenheirn for his convoy, which he would find difficult to get through Lower Alsace—whether he were to force his way in or outflank us.
>
> Since the water level at Drusenheim is very low and the Rhine and the Moutter are almost right up against the rampart, it would cost the King a great deal to acquire the land needed to raise the rampart from a distance—land that could not be found close enough due to the lack of depth—which would make the repairs very slow. Therefore, I believe it would be advisable to propose: 1) To strictly prohibit the local inhabitants from taking earth either from the rampart or near the Rhine and in the vicinity of Drusenheim within musket range—which they do every day to improve their fields; 2) I further believe it would be necessary to order them to fill in the excavations they have made between the rampart and the Rhine with earth taken from unused areas beyond musket range, and, after filling these excavations, to continually bring a certain amount of earth there. This would entail no expense and would provide a very useful supply.

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[35] Lettre de Baudoin (1744) Archives du génie

A second necessity also demands this, one that is just as compelling as the first. The Rhine has its waterfall just above the point where the Moutter flows into it, and when its waters rise, they flow into the river, causing its waters to swell; from there, the waters of the Rhine and the Moutter spill into the ditch and surround the square: but since the waters, driven by other currents, erode the ground severely, and since what separates the rampart from the Rhine is only a narrow, low strip of land riddled with excavations made there by the people, it is certain that, unless this open and eroded terrain is fortified, this strip of land—which is very useful for safeguarding Drusenheim and providing the site for a half-moon and a covered way—will collapse within a few years, to the detriment of the King's interests and the well-being of the garrison.

At the mouth of the Moutter River, there used to be a lock that served its purpose by holding back the river's waters and flooding the countryside when necessary.

This lock was positioned in the current of the Rhine so that it would offer only its side to the fire that would be set from the island across the river to destroy it, and the strip of land I mentioned supported and reinforced it. In doing so, as with a front where the flanks are exposed, a small benefit arose quickly, but a great harm—no less likely to arise—could be foreseen with a little foresight. Thus, the terrain was tapered to protect Drusenheim from the river's fury. Next, an inlet was created in the river to encircle this tapered and weakened spit from behind along its entire length; we positioned, as a support, pivot, and shoulder for the lock, the tip of this tapered spit, which the Rhine strikes as it wraps around it and which the Moutter strikes as it flows by—and this was done by somewhat neglecting the principles of hydraulics and knowledge of the terrain, which is full of small channels through which, the waters of the Rhine, when high, always tend to open up more and more land, lift it, and separate it. It was not difficult to take advantage of what was found, while at the same time ensuring that this was not done at the expense of the certain ruin of the outpost after a few years.

The location of a lock was better protected from enemy fire and better defended by the rampart, which was a hundred paces higher, beneath the bridge leading to the road to Strasbourg.

Since the area between here and the Rhine (after the width left by a ditch) has been filled in and reinforced with wattle and daub, it would protect Drusenheim by preventing any access to the Rhine and, on the contrary, acting as a new dike.

From this lock, by diverting the river toward the Rhine via a bend that would encircle the redoubt located one hundred paces further on along the Rhine bank, this redoubt would be secured and there would be a connection (which was overlooked), the approaches would be kept at a distance, and the river's waters, thus serving as obstacles to those of the Rhine before the rapids formed against this strip of land and blocking the river's course at its outset, one could easily divert its force to the great advantage of Drusenheim, which would thereby cease to be struck by the Rhine with the same violence, and whose communication would thereby receive two distinct benefits

On the ramparts of Drusenheim, it should be noted that it would be impossible to widen them to the standard width without a great deal of work and expense, which is unnecessary since it is merely a strategic outpost and not a fortified stronghold.

To make it strong enough for the defense it may need to provide, it is only necessary to steepen the outer rampart, build a parapet at the flanked corners, and construct a somewhat sturdy wattle-and-daub wall along the rest of the perimeter, lined with a second layer six inches thick, with the space in between filled with small fascines.

This small parapet along the outer edge, supported every ten toises by small posts, will suffice for musket fire and will avoid the lengthy and costly task of widening the rampart and

rebuilding a standard parapet there; and if, if, below this small parapet, a palisade of wattle and daub is extended outward, secured by the parapet and by thick slats crossing it from the inside, this simple method will provide everything needed to bring Drusenheim, at no cost and in just a few days, into the condition it needed to be in at the end of the last campaign (in 1734). The Courten Regiment, in which I commanded a company of grenadiers, was entrenched in all three quarters, like all the others, but no engineers were sent there, and Mr. de Courten, the brigadier commander, took it upon himself to secure all his battalions.

I almost used this method with regard to the redoubt I built in the Rhaunen quarter, as a place to retreat to and take cover in case the enemy breached the palisade that simply surrounded the entire quarter; it was determined that this redoubt could only be taken by cannon, because this small parapet, equipped with flanks, was situated on a small escarpment—a feature easily found in almost all cemeteries—and when one wishes to abandon a position of this kind, one has the advantage of destroying it within two hours so as to leave no trace of it.

Since Drusenheim would never be the site of a particularly strong garrison, there is no point in building a covered walkway there—one that could not be defended, that would be exposed and flanked by the houses on the outside, and that would run counter to the essential purpose of the flooding. I merely thought it necessary to take advantage, little by little, of the time when the waters are very low to have the people dig the ditch, giving them this earth to raise and improve their inner gardens. For if the need to repair Drusenheim were to arise suddenly while the waters are somewhat high, it would be impossible to work on either the ditch or the escarpment; and since the water there would be only two to three feet deep, the enemy would cross it and the post would be attacked. Any soil from this ditch that exceeds the needs of the gardens would be just as usefully employed in raising the side streets, which are constantly like ruts; and should we wish to widen and raise the rampart, this soil would be readily available.

Moreover, the Moutter River can be easily diverted before flooding occurs, and as soon as its bed is lower than the ditch, its waters will flow into it—which makes it necessary to make this ditch very deep and wide. For then, apart from the water that the river would carry into it and be unable to take back, there would always be a volume of water sent underground by the level of the Rhine, which would become all the greater the deeper the ditch were made.

On the other hand, since Drusenheim has been repaired to this extent and restored to good condition, the artillery convoys transported from Strasbourg to the Lower Rhine—which spend the night of their passage in the meadow, at great risk of falling prey to a raiding party that might learn of their presence—will be able to spend the night safely in Drusenheim and deploy effectively in the large open spaces there.

Here’s what’s most interesting about the interior of the place: anything else that can be said about it is easy for me to recall thanks to what has been written.

If the officer to whom the post at Drusenheim had been entrusted were attacked by a force so vastly superior that it were mathematically impossible for him to expect reinforcements, and if it became necessary to withdraw, it seems to me impossible for him to do so successfully toward Fort Louis or toward Strasbourg, unless he shamefully took too great a lead; but he would have a secure route suitable for retreat in the moment of extreme peril, which is the legitimate moment for a retreat.

Here it is:

The Moutier River winds its way through the landscape; he need only be familiar with its course, as well as the woods that lie near Drusenheim on the Bischwiller side and extend as far as the range of a rifle and the rampart—that alone will save him and allow him to retreat safely to Haguenau.

Knowing the woods well, he will head straight for a mill that has a small bridge, while the enemy will be forced to follow the path along the winding course of the Moutier. He will cross that bridge and destroy it. The enemy will rebuild it using materials from the mill and cross to the left bank of the Moutier, but by then the officer will have crossed it again a quarter of a league further upstream on another bridge, which he will have destroyed in the same way.

If the force numbers at least one hundred men, it will be able to rush from there into the castle of Bischwiller and certainly hold it for as long as necessary, until the generals have taken definitive measures against this enemy force; if the force has been reduced to a smaller number, there is only a good league from that small broken bridge to Haguenau through a forest where they will not be pursued.

If we imagine extending the right side of the bastion—which is to the right of the Strasbourg Bridge—across the Moufter, and if we also extend the counterscarp, we have, roughly across the river, two parallel lines that form a figure with the riverbanks they enclose. Suppose further that you have drawn the diagonals of this figure; then, despite appearances to the contrary, you will always have a very safe ford with a sandy bottom by following the diagonal that points toward the village of Rorwiller"

Thus, throughout the 17th century (beginning with the Thirty Years' War) and the 18th century, Drusenheim was regarded as a fortified village and military outpost with a small garrison, but one that was unable to withstand a siege worthy of the name without outside help.

Of the 18th-century fortifications, only one redoubt remains today. The redoubt was a simple earthwork intended as a temporary fortification. The defenders could be left to fend for themselves there for a short time.

Four redoubts were built in 1705 along the Rhine to defend Drusenheim. The first was located near Offendorf, the second at the border between Herrlisheim and Drusenheim at a place called "Neuried," the third at "Woerth," and the fourth near Dalhunden. The first two still exist today.

Redoubt No. 2 was surrounded by a moat that could be fed by water from the Kreutzrhein, which was only about ten meters away.

The third redoubt must have been built at the location we still call today "Hochhazielle" (or "acacia-planted hill"). Indeed, on the one hand, Cassini's map allows us to locate it approximately at "Woerth," and on the other hand, the place evokes an acacia grove. Redoubt No. 2, incidentally, is still covered with acacias today.

Issues Related to the Rhine

In the 17th and 18th centuries, our ancestors' view of the Rhine was not much different from that of the Roman legions. At Drusenheim, the river spread its sprawling branches, nearly 4,000 wide, across a multitude of islands. One of the branches, "as substantial as the Great Rhine,"[36] flowed right past the outermost houses of the village and, moreover, merged with the current bed of the Moder.

Rhine Construction Projects

Our village was vulnerable to "the flooding and devastation caused by the river whenever its waters rose in the spring due to the melting snow in the Swiss mountains, which usually occurs around St. John's Day."

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[36] or the full width of the Rhine—that is, the Thalweg, or the riverbed of the Rhine

Around 1780, the provost of Offendorf wrote to Baron de Blair, the intendant in Alsace:

"Thirty years ago, a branch of the Rhine that flows through this provostship changed its course toward the village of Drusenheim, and in order to protect that village and to prevent the main channel of the Rhine from following the same route and flooding and ravaging the lowlands, wooden fences and embankments have been constructed there ever since, incurring considerable annual expenses and numerous, costly labor duties, in addition to an endless supply of wattle, stakes, and wattle fences; and this provostship, which, thanks to its favorable location, the fertility of its land, and its communal holdings, could be among the most prosperous in the province, now finds itself impoverished, nearly ruined, and crushed under the burden of frequent and continual forced labor, which prevents the farmer from tending to his fields and the other inhabitants from pursuing their trades, industries, and commerce. Two years ago, when the waters of this river were at their lowest level in living memory, the petitioners observed that by damming the branches of the Rhine with a levee, the entire task would be completed once and for all, and the costly and arduous construction work would cease forever.

You approved this plan, Your Excellency, and ordered me to carry it out. Monsieur de Clinchamps [Director of Rhine River Works in Alsace], who went to the site himself and supervised the work, deemed it best, for greater safety and stability, to build two dikes, one a short distance above the other: the petitioners supplied more than 300 fascines from their Rhine islands and forests. Everything was going smoothly. The dikes were almost entirely completed, and there was only a small section left to fill in, when, unfortunately, the waters rose, and since the season was too far advanced to allow further work, part of the water from the branch of the Rhine—which we had intended to divert—forced its way through this opening and even widened it; however, the remainder of this dike still stands.

It is true that, given the care and diligence with which these projects were supervised and carried out by those in charge, they could have been completed before this unfortunate accident; but the problem was that they were carried out as forced labor by both local residents and outsiders, most of whom were women and children; and it is a well-established fact that conscripted laborers who arrive late, leave early, and work as if under forced labor do not accomplish even half the work of a man paid by the day.

It was this circumstance, combined with several other related factors, that led the petitioners to conclude that it would be better for the success of the project to have it completed by a contractor. They made inquiries to that end in order to find a contractor. Mr. Bruck, the contractor for the fortifications of Landau and Fort Louis on the Rhine, was unwilling to undertake the work for less than 37,500 livres, according to his attached bid. Since this amount seemed too high to them, they sought elsewhere and found Mr. Charpentier, an employee working on the fortifications of Fort Louis, who was more reasonable. After lengthy negotiations with him, he agreed to complete the work for the sum of 16,600 livres, payable in two installments: 9,000 livres upon completion of the work and the remaining 7,600 livres six months later, all in accordance with his attached bid.

However, of all those whom the petitioners consulted, no one was willing to undertake the work at a lower cost; moreover, according to the opinion of those familiar with such projects, the execution of the project in question is not only feasible and virtually certain to succeed, but the sum requested is also reasonable; furthermore, the profit and benefit that would result—not only for the Provost's Office, which has groaned under this burden for 30 years, but also for the entire County of Hanau—far exceed the cost of this undertaking, even surpassing all estimates in that:

1) These frequent chores and the resulting loss of time and productivity will cease in the future.

2) The entire parish will enjoy a marked improvement in its standard of living.

3) The communities will be able to share among themselves and sell the abundant produce of their Rhine Islands, which until now has served only to be swallowed up by the river.

4) And the entire, quite substantial category of expenses incurred by this project and payable from the funds of the County of Hanau will also be eliminated."

Signé Grunder, Prévot[37]

In addition to substantial monetary contributions, the municipalities along the Rhine were required to provide wood for the construction of fascines. In Drusenheim, the wood was cut from the 11th "so-called Drusenheimer Gotteshauserwert" in the vicinity of the Drusenheim district, the Kelberkopf, located within the jurisdiction of Dalhunden, adjacent to the Drusenheimer Gotteshauserweth," as well as in the manorial forest known as "Drusenheimer Wald or Barrwald, near the confluence of the Moder and Zorn rivers." The fascines were transported either by boat on the Moder or by wagon.

The scale of the work required to contain the Rhine and the dire conditions in the towns along the river's banks compelled Intendant de Lucé, by an ordinance dated August 8, 1759, to levy a tax on the entire province.

The same ordinance also specified the dimensions of the wattle fences needed for the construction of the Rhine break-wall as "12 feet in length and 30 inches in circumference," at a price of "10 pounds per hundred, 3 pounds for the wood and 7 for labor," as well as the quantity of wood and the location where it was to be cut.

The Rhine Guard

All the towns along the Rhine had a guard stationed in a redoubt, a house, or often even a simple barrack. The orders given to the guards are contained in a document drawn up by Baron de Trélans, the King's lieutenant in the government of Strasbourg, and dated 1743:

1) Never to leave his post without our permission; and when he needs provisions, he shall send for them from the nearest locations, as the lighting and other supplies necessary for the maintenance of his post are to be provided on site, and his pay is to be disbursed based on our certificate of his current service.

2) He must have at least eight able-bodied peasants on guard duty at his post; he shall keep them there for the eight days they are required to remain and until they are relieved by an equal number.

3) We order the peasants under his command to obey him in all matters he commands for the service of the King.

4) He shall not permit any peasant from his post to be absent under any pretext whatsoever.

5) If any peasant from his guard is missing or fails to report for duty, he shall inform us immediately on pain of being held accountable and of being punished with the same penalty that the said peasant has incurred.

6) He shall send us every week, on the day after his post has been relieved, an accurate list of the names of the villagers who are on duty at his post and those who are absent, as well as the village and bailiwick from which they come.

7) He shall ensure that the weapons of the villagers under his command are always in good condition and that each of them has enough gunpowder and bullets for twelve shots.

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[37] ADBR C 522

8) He shall pay particular attention to everything that occurs in the vicinity of his post as well as on the Rhine, and whenever he becomes aware of the approach of any enemy force, or receives any other news of interest to the King's service, he shall immediately and with the utmost diligence send word of it through a civilian from his guard to the officer commanding the troops in the village nearest to his post.

9) He shall at the same time notify us of said news through the provost of the village also nearest to his post, to whom we order that he forward it to us by a mounted courier with the utmost haste, on pain of disobedience.

10) He shall post one or two sentries, as he deems necessary, in front of his post or on the ramparts, if there are any, to observe the approaches; these sentries shall not allow anyone to approach without first identifying them.

11) He shall have the sentries relieved at night every hour and during the day every two hours.

12) He shall have patrols sent from his post to the one above and below his own, as far as the connecting roads allow.

13) He shall not allow any boats or barges to pass in front of his post on the Rhine without a valid passport; and in the event that the boatmen are not in possession of one, he shall detain them and not release them without Our order.

14) He shall not accept money or any other equivalent payment from any civilian under his guard in exchange for allowing them to be absent, nor from any boatmen, fishermen, or others in exchange for letting them pass without valid passports, on pain of exemplary punishment.

15) He will acknowledge Mr. Focq, Captain in the retinue, as a visitor and inspector of the aforementioned redoubts of the garrison at this post, charged with overseeing the conduct there and ensuring that the commanders and peasants on guard duty perform their duties; he is the bearer of our orders, and when he makes his inspection, the guard shall line up in formation, and the commander shall present him with a roster of the peasants on duty, listed by name.

16) The said commander shall ensure that no damage or disorder is caused by the peasants under his command, whether at the house, the barracks, or in the surrounding area; and if anyone commits such an act, he shall notify us, providing the name of the peasant.

17) Finally, he shall be diligent and vigilant in reporting to us all news he learns and everything that occurs at his post, on the Rhine, and in the surrounding area.

The Rhine Islands:

Varying in width from 2 to 6 km depending on the location (4 km at Drusenheim), the Rhine followed an erratic course, with wide meanders and numerous side channels forming many islands that are clearly visible on Chevalier Beaurain's map, drawn around 1680.

The configuration of the riverbed near our village is described to us by the officer who wrote the report on the Drusenheim outpost.

> "If the enemy were able to wage war on equal terms, he would take great care to seize the Island of Talund; his reasons would be that the island is very large, that it contains a village, and can accommodate a force large enough to disrupt Alsace, to cross into it en masse, and to cut off our communications between Strasbourg and Fort Louis. This island's tail lies one league from the head of the island of Fort Louis, and its head faces Drusenheim, two leagues away. Its head is separated from Drusenheim by a large island known as the Isle of Drusenheim, which is also cultivated. Between the tail of the Isle of Talund and Fort Louis lies a large island known by three

different names because, when the water is high, the Rhine flows through it in currents. First is the Isle of Statmat, opposite the village of Stamat; it is separated from the tail of the Isle of Talund by a strong current that cuts across them diagonally, and it is quite large. Next comes the Isle of the Ducks, which is not very large, and finally the Isle of Joseph, which is also quite large. Since the Rhine makes wide bends in this area, it sometimes forms islands four leagues in length within a single geographical league, which certainly makes these islands more significant than they have appeared to be so far—especially once they are better understood, which is no easy task. These islands are also quite wide, as the Rhine spans more than one league in width at this point.

The head of Talund Island is separated from the tail of Kolwird Island—which is also a large island—by a cross-current that carries boats on the Rhine at all times.

The head of Kolwird Island is likewise separated from the tail of Jonkrom Island, which is also very large; but the current there is not as strong, and Jonkrom Island extends all the way to Salmkopf Island.

It follows from this that the enemy can hardly cross the Rhine to advance on Drusenheim or its surroundings except via these currents, because it would be very difficult for them, once landed on the islands, to carry their boats all the way across to a point directly opposite our shore."[38]

These islands were therefore inhabited. The people who lived there were called "accolae Rheni" or "inhabitants of the Rhine" (Rheinbewohner). Far from any major settlements, the "inhabitants of the Rhine" felt all the more united with one another precisely because they were isolated. A spirit of harmony reigned not only within families but also between families and other residents. All these adventurers of the Rhine formed a sort of extended family.

Why did these people come to live near the Rhine? What were they looking for? We can answer this with certainty. They came to look for gold.

"It [the Rhin] is teeming with fish and has the property of carrying gold in its sand, so that after floods, the residents living along its banks busy themselves searching for it and derive a profit from it—admittedly a modest one—but one that nonetheless provides a livelihood for many poor people living on the islands and along the banks of this river. The gold they collect is very fine, and goldsmiths use it to gild silverware; the sovereign lords and those bordering the Rhine grant the right to fish there."[39]

Gold panners would wash the gravel or alluvial deposits from the Rhine several times to extract the gold flakes: a fascinating but not very lucrative endeavor. The stretch of the Rhine between Drusenheim and Neuhaeusel was one of the areas in Alsace most frequented by gold prospectors. Known since ancient times and celebrated in legends, the gold of the Rhine (Rheingold)—which is also the title of an opera in Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle—remained one of the main activities of these residents until the Rhine was regulated in the 19th century.

In addition, the inhabitants of these islands engaged in agriculture as well as forestry. They were also of strategic importance:

"I believe it would be necessary, first, to move the Kopfel garrison to the island of Jonkrom at the far end of the strait, from where it could even see what is happening on the enemy shore. Second, that one was placed on the Isle of Kolwird—also at its tip—on the strait. Third, and another on the Isle of Talund in the strait, still within sight of the enemy shore. I do not know

[38] SHAT MR 1067
[39] Mémoire sur la Province d'Alsace de l'indendant de La Grange

which geographer recommended placing some of these outposts along the Rhine, but it is certain that a fleet can reach our shores in many places without being spotted.

Another benefit would result from establishing these posts on these islands. They are quite large and contain forests, houses, and cultivated land, and serve as pasture for all the livestock on this side that we wish to fatten; on the other side, the enemy is free to take them away. As long as the enemy's shore remains out of sight from our outposts, groups can hide there; and since they have only a narrow strait to cross to reach us, they can, at will, raid a treasure or a convoy, ravage the countryside, spread panic, and unsettle the region with swift raids.

The peasants living on these islands, as well as those in the village of Talund, would thus be prevented from engaging in the constant back-and-forth they carry out, in which they shuttle people from one side to the other and vice versa—a practice that poses an infinite danger to the interests of the service, all the more so because the women and children in those districts are remarkably skilled at steering boats. I even had in prison a seventy-two-year-old woman from File de Kolwird who had ferried a peasant from the enemy's side to ours; certainly, if a woman of that age gets involved, one can be sure that no one is exempt from doing so.

In addition to these drawbacks, there are those caused by hunters—particularly those from the Hanau estate and Father de Schwarzach—who, under the pretext of hunting, enter the area whenever they please and who, having crossed over to the enemy's shore, may become agents harmful to the interests of the service."

And he concluded regarding the behavior of the inhabitants:

"One must be extremely wary of the deceptions of the villagers living along our coastline. They pretend to have purchased certain enemy ships when in fact they are merely harboring them, having conspired with the enemy through great cunning against a very essential part of the King's service." In general, those I have found most prone to this monopoly are the people of Vanzenau, Gamzheim, Offendorff, Stamat, Talund, and Seltz—whose bailiff pays little heed to the reprimands directed at him—as well as the provosts of Offendorff and Erlesheim.

We must pay just as much attention to the people living along the banks who are not far from the shore, since they are generally related to enemy peoples; they trade with them constantly, either by crossing the Rhine with their friends from the shore, or by simply asking you for permission to go fishing or cut wood on the islands, or to tend to their livestock there. And since the German language always inspires in them a certain inclination toward the Germans, it is certain that they inform the Germans—out of malice and foolishness—of everything that happens among us. One must also be wary of the local magistrates on the enemy's shore—whether they are subjects of the Count of Hanau, of certain neutral princes, or of the enemy—for they often come to visit the people on this side under the pretext of bringing us a duck, a pike, or a small fish, which is very dangerous to the King's service. They are usually accompanied by someone who comes to ask you for some small favor. The safest course of action is to treat all such people with the same strictness that German officers apply to those they suspect."[40]

Navigation on the Rhine

Before the Thirty Years' War, Strasbourg's boatmen enjoyed a sort of monopoly on the Rhine, primarily along the border of Alsace. They sailed down the river as far as Mainz and Cologne, transported cargo upstream to Basel, and traveled on the Main as far as Frankfurt. The Treaty of Münster categorically proclaims freedom of navigation on the Rhine in Article 87: "Above all, navigation on the Rhine shall be free, and no party shall be permitted to hinder, detain, stop, or harass, under any pretext

[40] Mémoire sur le Poste de Drusenheim SHAT MR 1067

whatsoever, vessels passing, traveling downstream, or traveling upstream, except for the sole purpose of the customary inspection and examination of goods."

The provisions of the Treaty of Münster would remain a dead letter. Nevertheless, Strasbourg's privileges began to come under attack. First came Mainz, whose successes encouraged other riverside cities to claim a share of Strasbourg's navigation rights. The boatmen of Basel in 1711, followed by those of Brisach in 1725, and finally those of Drusenheim and Freistett in 1737, entered into disputes with Strasbourg.

> "The boatmen of Freystett, subjects of the Empire, demand solemn treaties—public and perpetual treaties—such as the most recent one concluded in Vienna. Should not the boatmen of Drusenheirn, subjects of His Majesty, have the same prerogative as foreigners? These treaties concern them all the more. Despite such clear principles—based as they are on the law of nations and on public treaties, which are among the noblest aspects of the conventional law of nations—the boatmen of Strasbourg dare to claim exclusive rights to navigation on the Rhine and trade on the river, to the exclusion of all others ...
>
> Not only do the boatmen of Strasbourg have no claim over the boatmen of Freystett and Drusenheim, but on the contrary, the latter have always enjoyed the right to free navigation on the Rhine.
>
> According to the brief to which we are responding, the boatmen of Strasbourg were the first to make the Rhine navigable. They surveyed it, cleared it, and established navigation channels that they still maintain today by cleaning the river twice a year. They add that it was in recognition of these discoveries and expenses that they obtained various privileges from the emperors; they cite four such privileges. The first, which served as a model for the others, is attributed to Frederick II and dated 1236, while the other three, which confirm the first, are from the years 1310, 1413, and 1582. It is, first of all, merely assumed that the privileges we are about to examine were granted in recognition of the fact that the Strasbourg boatmen must have made the Rhine navigable; they do not prove this fact, and it can be disputed; but what is certain is that the so-called privileges never had any underlying cause
>
> Moreover, it is a fact that, throughout history, the lords bordering the Rhine have contributed considerable sums to the maintenance of this river and continue to do so, as evidenced by the schedule of taxes levied annually.
>
> But really, what do these privileges that the Strasbourg boatmen invoke actually entail? None of them grants their group the exclusive right to navigation and trade on the Rhine ...
>
> The Rhine is subject to the sovereignty of the territories or states from which it originates. In Switzerland, it falls under Swiss sovereignty; from Basel to the southern tip of Alsace, it falls on one side under the sovereignty of His Majesty, and on the other, under that of the House of Austria, the House of Baden, the House of Hesse-Hanau, and several other rulers; further south, it falls under the sovereignty of the House of the Palatinate and an innumerable number of Imperial States from whose territories it originates. And the Emperor cannot interfere with the Imperial States' ownership of the rivers any more than he can interfere with the exercise of their other sovereign rights. What the head of the Empire cannot do, can the boatmen [in Strasbourg] do? ...
>
> The boatmen of Freystett are able to prove that, for more than 60 years, they have enjoyed free navigation on the Rhine. They already have this proof in the form of testimony from very elderly witnesses who say that, for as long as anyone can remember, the boatmen have loaded and unloaded their boats at the location where their warehouse stands today.
>
> The boatmen of Drusenheim have the same right of possession. If necessary, they can verify this through witnesses and by consulting old port letters and toll records; this right has even been

recognized by the city of Strasbourg, for when its boatmen, a few years ago, detained three boats from Drusenheim and the owners were each fined, the magistrate ordered the boats released and waived the fine. They themselves (that is, the Strasbourg boatmen) have been convinced of the right of the Drusenheim boatmen to navigate the Rhine by selling them boats that can be used solely for the transport of goods. Recently, they have sold them three more ...

The boatmen of Freystett, subjects of the Empire, hope that His Majesty will not allow anyone to interfere with their trade or with the free navigation of the Rhine, which is guaranteed to them by international law and by the treaties of Münster, Ryswick, and Baden. And the boatmen of Drusenheim, subjects of His Majesty, conclude by requesting that He dismiss the claim of the boatmen of Strasbourg."[41]

Strasbourg invoked its right of warehouse and the lack of long-term possession or title on the part of the boatmen under the Regency of Hesse-Hanau, and the Council of State dismissed their claim.[42]

To ensure effective oversight of shipping and prevent the smuggling of goods, the Magistrate of Strasbourg had proposed that ships be stopped and searched at Fort Louis. The Council of State's ruling of September 23, 1773, broadly adopted the Strasbourg proposal. However, the facility's lack of utility gradually became apparent, and the Fort Louis office was permanently closed on March 31, 1786.

The Fort Louis inspection office is just one aspect of this policy, which is designed to disadvantage non-Alsatian boatmen. As early as 1729, Intendant de Bron, in his ordinances of April 11 and November 8, prohibited merchants from Upper and Lower Alsace from entrusting their goods to them and prohibited boatmen from the province from assisting them by providing boatmen, pilot guides, and other forms of assistance. Another ordinance by Intendant de Lucé, dated July 28, 1758, renewed the ban on merchants from Alsace using foreign boatmen. The provincial boatmen themselves were affected by these measures: on July 28, 1756, the Intendant prohibited "the boatmen of Drusenheim and all others in the province from loading, at Mainz, Frankfurt, or any other such city on the Lower Rhine, goods destined either for Strasbourg or for Upper Alsace and Switzerland; all under penalty of a fine of five hundred livres, or a greater fine, if the case so warrants."[43]

This ordinance was renewed by Intendant la Galaiziere on August 20, 1788. Decisions whose renewals indicate their ineffectiveness and demonstrate the failure of French diplomacy.[44]

Access to the Rhine was of paramount importance for trade at that time. Roads, in fact, were unsafe, and the small rivers were not truly navigable. Here is what Intendant de La Grange had to say about the two rivers in our region: "The Sorr (Zorn) is strong, and it could be made navigable at some cost." As for the Moder, it "rises in the Vosges Mountains near Bouxwiller, flows through Pfaffenhoffen and past the Abbey of Neubourg, through the town of Haguenau—where it carries boats—as far as Drusenheim, where it joins the Rhine five lieux downstream from Strasbourg. The Dutch float down this river the timber they come to buy, in times of peace, from the Haguenau Forest." Under these circumstances, the Rhine was monitored by the Strasbourg boatmen with ever-vigilant jealousy, and as we have seen, they tolerated no competitors for as long as they could.

The main channel (thalweg) of the Rhine was marked by sturdy stakes driven into the river, and to minimize the risk of accidents, its course was checked twice a year by expert pilots between Strasbourg and Germersheim. Anyone aspiring to become a chief boatman or helmsman had to make a "test run" at least twice a year to assess any shifts the river's current might have undergone in the meantime.

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[41] Mémoirepourles Bateliers de Drusenheimen basse-Alsaceet Freystett, terre d'Empire, tous du Comté de Hanau, pour servir de réponseà unepièce intitulée "Mémoire pourla tribu des bate liers de Strasbourg-février 1739 A.M.S. AA 2448

[42] Claude Koenig: Revue d'Alsace 1979

[43] ADBR E 2199

[44] AMS AA 2470

Accidents were quite common. The riverbed carried tree trunks and boulders. There were also whirlpools that sank more than one ship, according to chroniclers of the 16th and 17th centuries. This gave rise to the “right of salvage” or “Standrecht”—that is, the right to claim the wrecks or cargo of ships that were wrecked. In the 17th century, ships were generally built of oak. Their dimensions were set by ordinance: 120 feet long, 11 feet wide, and 5½ feet high. The maximum cargo capacity had been set at 800 quintals of goods by a decree of 1645. Later, ships capable of carrying up to 1,500 quintals were built.

Toward the end of the 17th century, it took one day to travel down the Rhine from Basel to Strasbourg. Boats carrying only passengers (Personenschiffe) took two to three days, while those loaded with cargo (Lastsehiffe) took three to five days to travel from Strasbourg to Mainz.

To conclude this chapter on river transport, one might wonder what role the Drusenheim guild played. We have no archival records that could shed light on this point. To conclude this chapter on river transport, one might wonder what role the Drusenheim guild played. We have no archival records that could shed light on this point.

We can, however, make a comparison with the large Strasbourg corps, whose numbers fluctuated between 150 and 230, depending on the period.

It is a safe estimate that about thirty men in our community were boatmen.

The Administration of the Counts of Hanau-Lichtenberg

When Jean-Regnard III, the last Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg, passed away on March 28, 1736, the Alsatian territories of the county passed to his son-in-law, Louis VIII, Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt. The Alsatian possessions of the House of Hanau-Lichtenberg, which in terms of area ranked second only to those of the Bishopric of Strasbourg, comprised 12 bailiwicks, namely:

Bouxwiller	9600 habitants	Kutzenhausen	454 habitants
Pfaffenhoffen	4219 habitants	Hatten	5546 habitants
Ingwiller	4803 habitants	Offendorf	4092 habitants
Neuwiller et Saverne	1433 habitants	Wolfisheim	3112 habitants
Brumath	7833 habitants	Westhoffen et Balbronn	5463 habitants
Woerth	5050 habitants	Lemberg	13144 habitants

for a total of 138 villages with a total population of 65,123 in 1779.

According to Reuss, in the bailiwick of Offendorf, “Drusenheim was the only place of any significance.” This does not seem accurate to us.

In fact, here is the number of households in the various villages of the Offendorf bailiwick, as cited by Schoepflin: In fact, here is the number of households in the various villages of the Offendorf bailiwick, as cited by Schoepflin:

Year	1720	1750
Offendorf	84	141
Herrlisheim	180	211
Drusenheim	64	112
Oberhoffen/ Rohrwiller	65	101

Thus, Drusenheim was not the most important town in the bailiwick of Offendorf. This is confirmed by the population census of the County of Hanau-Lichtenberg, compiled in May 1798. It contains the following figures:

Offendorf	76 habitants
Herrlisheim Breymühle Drusenheim	1495 habitants
Rohrwiller	12 habitants

"The county's highest administration was entrusted to a Regency Council established at the prince's residence in Bouxwiller, which exerted all the greater influence over affairs because the sovereign—who was very frequently and sometimes for long periods absent—was less aware of the country's needs. The Regency of Bouxwiller consisted of a president and several councilors—knights and legal experts—whose number varied on several occasions. It is believed that it was not tasked with dealing with matters of high politics, which were reserved for the sovereign's closest advisors; its mission was purely administrative: to oversee the bailiffs and their judicial activities; to supervise the management of the numerous seigneurial estates, mills, sheepfolds, forges, etc.; to allocate extraordinary labor duties and war taxes; and to oversee religious instruction in the parishes and the conduct of members of the clergy. It was the Regency that put forward nominations for all civil and ecclesiastical offices: it was the Regency that appointed the bailiff (Amtmann) of each territorial district or his deputy bailiff (Stabhalter).[45]

In the Hanau region, the bailiffs were not particularly imposing figures and, it seems, did not interfere in a very disruptive manner in the internal governance of the communes, provided that the labor duties were performed exactly as required and the taxes were paid in full. Nowhere in Alsace do the peasants seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than under the patriarchal rule of the Counts of Hanau. If we consider these village bodies—which, it is true, had their provost appointed by the prince but elected their mayor, his deputy (Zumeister), and their alderman, enjoying a simple police jurisdiction exercised by the inhabitants, and the right to assemble to discuss matters of interest to the community, one must admit that there is not such a great difference between the situation of these rural populations then and now, provided that these theoretical freedoms were consistently put into practice.

The sovereign's rights were governed by ancient customs. Eager to secure, for the sake of his income, a more solid basis than mere old traditions—which the royal administration was gradually setting aside all around him—Count Jean-Regnard III requested and obtained, in April 1701, letters patent from Louis XIV, which codified and sanctioned the rights of his 'dearest and most beloved cousin,' to prevent any future difficulties between the lord and his subjects, between the suzerain and his vassal, and to give the latter "signs of our goodwill and the special esteem in which we hold him."[46]

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[45] The institution of the Stabhalter can be explained by the royal decree that required all lords and towns in Alsace to appoint only Catholics as officials. Only the City of Strasbourg was exempted, thanks to its capitulation, but it had to comply with the Common Law of 1685 for its rural bailiwicks. Here and there, attempts were made to circumvent the regulation by not appointing a Catholic bailiff, but only a Lutheran deputy. When the princes were in good standing at Versailles—such as the last of the Hanau-Lichtenbergs—the intendant would sometimes turn a blind eye. But many towns, which were entirely Protestant, were administered by a provost who was the only Catholic there, either a recent convert or an immigrant who had come to obtain that position.

[46] Reuss L'Alsace au XVIIe siècle.

This sovereign act granted the counts the right to exercise high, middle, and low justice, provided that it was carried out by Catholic bailiffs, provosts, and clerks, and subject to appeal to the Sovereign Council of Alsace. It allowed them to appoint and remove the aforementioned officials, as well as public notaries, on the condition that those elected be competent and devout Catholics. They were authorized to levy an annual tax of 4,000 livres on their subjects, and in addition, an extraordinary levy of 12,000 livres each time they married off one of their daughters. The edict then lists a whole series of useful duties and special levies that the territorial lord is authorized to collect from his estates, including excise duties on salt and meat, death duties, emigration duties, and wine taxes, among others.

The count was also authorized to admit new burghers to his lands or to deny them admission, and to set the amount of the burgherage fees; he could also temporarily take foreigners under his protection, without granting them the privileges of burghers proper. These peasants, or Schirmer, paid very different sums, depending on whether they were Jews or Christians. The prince was authorized to compel his subjects to take their grain to the seigneurial mills to have it ground. This was a right that the Regency had strictly enforced at all times, even during the Thirty Years' War. It goes without saying that hunting and fishing rights, as well as the exploitation of his forests, were also reserved for the lord."

Let's also mention:

– the beth: This is the monetary equivalent of the lodging tax. Depending on the date on which it was paid, it was called Hornungsbeth, Martinsbeth, or Erntebeth. It could also be a personal tax, in which case it was called Leibbeth.

– The Carnival Hen (Cappenzins de Cappel = Kapaune = Capon): This was an old hen that farmers sacrificed at the end of winter during the "Cappensitzung" (Capon Festival), whereas the harvest hen was a young hen, born that year.

In addition to all these various taxes and levies, the peasants owed the Count labor duties: road maintenance, fortification, castle upkeep, hunting, guard duty, etc. According to letters patent from 1701, those subject to corvée were required to perform 12 days of labor annually for the Lordship of Hanau-Lichtenberg. The corvée could be replaced by a financial contribution equivalent to 12 days of labor; only prominent figures in the count's service were exempt. When paid in cash, the payment was made quarterly.

The 1716 Drusenheim register of corvéables tells us that the quarterly total of "Frongeld" was approximately 42 florins, paid by the following individuals:[47]

Philippe Stoltz
Pierre Krebstein
Mathieu Gless
Martin Vix
Martzolff Jung
Jean Klein
Jean Gabel, le vieux
Jean-Jacques Schwaab
Léonard Wagner
Conradt Klein
Jean-Jacques Reiff, le vieux
Pierre Christmann, le vieux
Jean-Michel Gal
Jean Wolfauer
Frédéric Kern
Matthieu Kohrmann
Jean-Jacques Gabel
Matthieu Hoch
François Muller
Nicolas Muller
Jean-Adam Sigfridt
Georges Naas
Philippe Gabel
Jean-Georges Gumple
Jean Benninger
Laurent Hoch
Michel Gabel

[47] ADBR J 215 Supplément

Corvées Labor

Jean-Michel Hoch
Jean-Michel Scheer
Jean-Michel Meyer, un mendiant
Wendel Heitz
Jacques Uhlmann
Joseph Ursch
Paul Naas
Léonard Wagner
Caspar Clauss
Pierre Christmann, le vieux
Caspar Braun
Jean-Jacques Gabel, le jeune
Martin Uhlmann
Jean-Jacques Uhlmann
Jean Gabel, le moyen
Martin Gabel
Diebold Klein
Jean Veith
Pierre Portal dit "La Violette"
Martzolff Gless
Jean-Georges Gless
Jean Gabel, le jeune

Widows

the widow of Nicolas Rohmer
the widow of Jean Michel Rohmer
the widow of Martzolff Reiff

Exempt From Corvee Labor

Jean Hans, Stabhalter
Jean-Jacques Klein, maître de poste

Peasants were also required to pay the tithe, which, however, was a church tax. It was not paid at the court or at the town hall, but at the tithe barn, unless the abbey collected it directly from the fields.

In addition, the parish priest of Drusenheim collected two levies known as "Wachszins" and "Olzins," which were taxes on church wax and oil.

Thanks to various archival documents, we have been able to observe the Hanau-Lichtenbergs' uncompromising stance toward their subjects regarding the collection of taxes.

In 1772, a dispute arose between them and Father Scheitel, the parish priest serving in our town. Here are the facts: Father Scheitel "had, at the beginning of last winter, purchased twelve oxen through his servants to fatten them, and not to use them for a team or for plowing." However, Article 8 of the Letters Patent of 1701 granted the Counts of Hanau-Lichtenberg the right to collect "one-thirtieth of all movable property, except, in particular, that which may serve as food for humans and livestock." Although Pastor Scheitel argued "that fat oxen are necessary for human consumption," he was ordered to pay the duties on the sale and resale of livestock by a ruling issued by the Sovereign Council of Alsace.[48]

The Hanau-Lichtenbergs, still under the rule of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, were to prove no less unyielding toward the community of Drusenheim. In 1770, the deputy provost, aldermen, burghers, and residents of the community of Drusenheim requested a deferral until 1771 of an annual tax of 12 sacks of wheat known as "Vierlingsfruchtcn," having "in this year 1770 suffered considerably from the food shortage and high prices prevailing everywhere, in addition to the fact that the meager harvest, as well as other foodstuffs, had long been flooded by high waters right up until the time of ripening, to such an extent that part of it had rotted and perished and the surplus could barely be used; this would have meant that the majority of the petitioners would not even have had, at harvest time, the grain they had sown."[49]

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[48] ABDR E 3006
[49] ABDR E 3006

The community of Drusenheim was granted credit until St. Martin's Day of the year 1771. However, since it had not paid the dues by the stipulated deadline, the tax collector sued it for payment of the said rent for both 1770 and 1771. "He summoned them to appear before the Bailly on March 30 of last year, where they were ordered to pay 24 sacks of wheat owed for the tax known as 'Vierlingsfrüchten' for the years 1770 and 1771." It was only after this summons that the said community began to contest the Prince's claim. These proceedings against the residents of Drusenheim concluded with a ruling by the Sovereign Council of Alsace ordering them to settle the rent.

The Hanau-Lichtenberg family and our community were involved in a dispute over acorn gathering in 1790. Here is an excerpt from the Sovereign Council's report: "The community of Drusenheim had historically (since 1569) enjoyed access to the Wissmatterwald forests, which border the territory of Sufflenheim; the Detschmatterwald, entirely surrounded by communal land; the Rottmatterwald, which borders partly on the territory of Sufflenheim and partly on that of Schirain; and the Barrwald, provided there was sufficient acorn harvest. Under the right to send one pig per inhabitant to the acorn harvest, the Abbey of Schwarzach would have sent forty pigs there, and the landowner would have had sole disposal of the surplus from the acorn harvest. But since the acorn harvest is not always successful—and sometimes there are none at all or very few—it is then impossible to provide one pig per inhabitant, 40 to the abbey, and also satisfy the landowner's rights. Hence the regulations of 1707 and 1713, and finally the ratio established to this day of three-quarters for the landowner and the division of the remaining quarter between the residents (3/5) and the Abbey of Schwarzach (2/5). Such was the custom until 1789. This custom served as a rule; today, the community of Drusenheim has just violated it. It sent its herds to graze on the acorn-bearing land; the abbey and the landowner were entirely deprived of it, and the acorn-bearing land had already been exhausted by December. The Landgrave is therefore justified in taking legal action against it."[50] The community of Drusenheim will be ordered to pay damages. Numerous lawsuits also pitted the Hanau-Lichtenbergs against the abbey, among other things, regarding the rights to exploit the forest and the tithe. They went so far as to "seize the tithe in the cantons known as Schleisrhin, Weitenpietz, and Geisffeld, two-thirds of which belonged to the abbey and one-third to the parish priest of Drusenheim." However, the latter's rights were upheld by the Sovereign Council in 1721.[51]

Life in the Village

We have seen that the first half of the 18th century was a turbulent period for our ancestors, marked by three successive wars. The clatter of boots from armies on the march gave way to a period of calm from 1750 until the Revolution. For our community, the second half of the 18th century was a time of reconstruction and expansion of the village.

Numerous applications for building permits were submitted to the Intendant. The first came from families who had lost their homes due to the war. For example, François Meiderer, Joseph Ulmer, Jacques Christmann, and Henry Ostertag—all four citizens of Drusenheim—had their homes destroyed by the Austrians in 1744. They sought permission to build outside the village due to a lack of space within the town. "The large number of townspeople, which is growing day by day, has caused houses and building lots to become so scarce that whenever a vacant lot becomes available, about ten people come forward to purchase it."[52]

In another petition dated 1778, we learn "that in recent years, Drusenheim has grown considerably in population and that local burghers, who did not own their own homes, in the area, have obtained permission from Your Excellency (the Intendant) to build alongside the ditches above and below the said

[50] ABDR 2303
[51] ABDR H 489
[52] ADBR C 157

location, where there are already ten houses next to the road; those who have built on communal land are required to pay the community a certain annual sum as land rent."[53]

This period of renovation would, moreover, coincide with the expansion of the church. The work consisted of "extending the nave in length and height." Below are some excerpts from the cost estimate prepared in 1777 by the "Ponts et Chaussées d'Alsace":

"– The foundations, as well as the walls on both sides, will be built of rubble stone quarried from Wolxheim, and the mortar will consist of one-third of the finest lime from the surrounding area and two-thirds of sand from the bed of the Rhine, which will be delivered to the construction site by the community's conscripted laborers

– The paving for the church's expansion will be made of cut stone slabs from the quarries of Wasselonne, three inches thick

– The new roof section will be covered with well-fired, resonant tiles of the same shape and proportions as those used on the existing roof.

– A door made of the finest quality oak, one and a half inches thick, will be installed at the main entrance.

– TOTAL expenses for the proposed expansion of the church in length and height: 3,494 livres; and for the expansion in length only, the sum of 2,874 livres

Done at Hatten, April 17, 1777
Signé Charpentier[54]

Still on the topic of major construction projects, we must mention the improvement of the road from Strasbourg to Lauterbourg between Gambsheim and Drusenheim. (1) "About twenty years ago, the late M. de Lucé conceived the plan to build a new road leading from the village of Gambsheim to that of Herrlisheim and from there directly to Drusenheim, whereas until then the road had run from the first of these villages to Offendorf and from there to Drusenheim."[55] This project, begun in 1767–1768, was not completed until after 1789 by the Empire. This road, which passed through Drusenheim, was one of three major routes crossing Alsace from north to south—namely, first the Landau–Haguenau–Strasbourg–Colmar–Mulhouse axis; second, the old "Bergstrasse," which ran along the foothills of the Vosges and went from Wissembourg via Saverne–Molsheim, Colmar to Belfort, and finally the road that followed the course of the Rhine, namely Frankfurt–Lauterbourg–Drusenheim–Strasbourg–Neuf-Brisach–Basel. Throughout history, Drusenheim served as a post station along this important thoroughfare.

The Tilemakers[56]

In the 18th century, Drusenheim had two active tile factories within its municipal boundaries.

– One belonged to the Klein family, who were postmasters, and was located at "Sandberg," fairly close to the village, at the entrance to the "Schureinerweg" (Schirrhein Road). At this location, the sand is a light red color. Jean-Jacques Klein had obtained permission from the Lordship of Hanau in 1723 to build a brickworks there. His heirs continued the business until around 1744, when the brickworks was completely destroyed during the war by the Hungarian General de Tornaco.

– the other, which would be familiar to several generations of our village's residents until the early 20th century. A tile kiln already existed in Drusenheim in the 17th century. Around 1700, Ulrich Dietsch,

[53] ADBR C 157
[54] ADBR C 157
[55] Lettre du Landgrave de Hesse-Darmstadtà l'Intendant -1780-ADBR C 458
[56] ADBR E 2199

a tile maker from Hatten, purchased it from the municipality. Following a land swap with the municipality, the new owner completely rebuilt the kiln at a different location in our village. Destroyed during the War of the Polish Succession, his son Jean Adam rebuilt it at its final location between "Spangenfeld" and the county road (Landstrasse) leading toward Offendorf. The annual fee payable to the lordship was set at 12 florins. The lease also stipulated the obligation to supply the lordship with materials at the following prices:

– tiles and bricks for 4 schillings per hundred.
– a quarter of a chaux for 3 schillings.

Upon the death of Jean Adam Dietsch, the tile factory passed into the estate of his daughter Catherine, wife of Jean Stoll, a surgeon in Gries. Catherine, by a deed dated September 22, 1767, sold it to her brother Henri for 900 florins. It remained in the possession of Henri Dietsch's family until the Revolution.

Elected officials and villagers

We found the municipal accounts for the year 1788 in ADBR C 702. Under the "Revenue" section, we were able to identify the following items:

– revenue from the right of citizenship;
– revenue from royal dues;
– revenue from seigneurial dues;
– land rents;
– revenues or farm rents;
– the Waaggeld—a weighing tax collected at the public scales;
– rent for the lease of the communal stove to the royal bailiff;
– revenues from the auction of fishing rights in communal waterways

The report also noted that cabbage cultivation was, once again, unprofitable and that the sheep pasture could not be leased. Expenses, meanwhile, consisted of fees paid to the Lordship, the Province (Landkosten), and the staff employed by the municipality. Thanks to this document, we see the following figures appear before our eyes:

– Ambroise Heiz: Mayor in 1787
– Jean Weith: Mayor in 1788
– Father Simon
– Michel Lehmann: schoolteacher
– Royal bailiff Schmitt
– Postmaster and notary Klein
– Jacques Hoch – Innkeeper at "Au Tilleul"
– Jacques Veith – Innkeeper at "Au Lion." This inn also served as the town hall.
– Ignace Veith—innkeeper at "A la Rose." In 1788, the town paid him 3 florins and 4 schillings to cover the cost of brandy consumed by the conscripts during their celebration.
-- Jean Gabel: shoemaker
– Gottfried Reimundt's wife: midwife
– Michel Vizekam: forest ranger
– Jacques Rist: night watchman and "also operates the organ bellows."
– François and Jean Gabel: rural constables
– Christmann: tax inspector
– Jacques Klein: sheepfold inspector
– Georges Eichler: carpenter
– Antoine Link: farrier

– François Heidel: wheelwright
– Louis Gabel: Caretaker of the community stove
– Florent Mosser: grocer
– Joseph Fischer: sculptor.

The rendering plant operator did not live in our village but was a resident of Herrlisheim and traveled regularly to Drusenheim.

Among the other occupations, the most common were those of various artisans, day laborers, and fishermen. The fishermen, who were particularly numerous in Drusenheim, were organized into a guild with the other fishermen of the Offendorf provostship as early as 1669. Their bylaws, filed with the Sovereign Council of Alsace, consisted of 46 articles. Among others, we may mention:

– "Any fisherman who wishes to fish may not go out in a boat on Sundays and full holidays except in the evening and after the conclusion of all religious services; on those days, he is required to be at home—namely, from Easter until St. Michael's Day at 7:00 a.m. and from St. Michael's Day until Easter at 8:00 a.m.—and to have hung his nets, ropes, stones, and everything else used for fishing."

– "When one fisherman sets a bait, another may not set one, nor may he set one within a distance and length of three boats from the other, on pain of a 5-shilling fine."

– "Those who set traps and bait lines for monkfish and barbel must remove all stakes by Carnival."

– "No one may catch young pike or young carp until Saint Arbogast's Day."

– "It is forbidden for fairground vendors to transport fish and crayfish from place to place for sale; however, they are permitted to sell them at public markets; they are also permitted to catch fish and crayfish in foreign waters."

– "Any fisherman who wishes to fish in the old riverbeds or Altwasser must knit and keep ready a net with 80 meshes, 18 toises in length."

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE EMPIRE

pages 152-169

On the eve of the Revolution, the Province of Alsace—although entirely subject to France—retained its traditional administrative structure and its numerous ecclesiastical and secular territories. Part of the region, including the territory of the Count of Hanau-Lichtenberg, still belonged to German princes, known as the "Princes with Possessions in Alsace." These princes recognized the sovereignty of the King of France over their lands in Alsace. The king was represented in the province by the Intendant "for justice, public order, and finance." In 1787, an edict decreed the establishment of Provincial Assemblies in all provinces. This was the last major administrative reform of the Ancien Régime, which would strip the Intendants of their authority, which had lasted for more than a century. Below the Provincial Assembly were the District Assemblies, created by the Law of January 15, 1790; in the Bas-Rhin, there were four of them: Benfeld, Strasbourg, Haguenau, and Wissembourg. Thus, Drusenheim became part of the Bas-Rhin Department, the Haguenau district, and the Bischwiller canton following the establishment of cantonal municipalities by the Directorial Constitution of Year III. The royal edict convening the Estates-General was issued on January 24, 1789. The Estates General had quickly declared itself the Constituent Assembly in July 1789. It was Mayor Veith who ensured the transition from the Old Regime to the New Regime in Drusenheim. Few traces remain of this municipality's administration, and we do not even know the date on which its term ended. The Constituent Assembly seized the clergy's property. The parish of our town was auctioned off on October 19, 1791, after six bids, for the price of 8,600 livres to citizen Ignace Meyer, a laborer in Drusenheim. Similarly, on September 3, 1791, Ignace Veith purchased 31.25 arpents of land belonging to the parish for the same price, payable in several annual installments. The parish's assets were later sold to Antoine Schneider of Haguenau.[1]

The dispossession of the clergy was followed by persecution. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was enacted on November 27, 1790, and an oath of allegiance to the Republic—rather than to the Pope—was imposed under penalty of removal from office.

The conduct of the Alsatian clergy was admirable, and the number of defections was minimal. In Drusenheim, in 1790, the parish priest Florent Simon retired "for reasons of health and age after 14 years of service." The Diocese of Strasbourg granted him a substantial lifetime pension to ensure he could live decently. His successor, Father Jacques Bastian, would witness the tragic events of the Revolution and would be forced to suspend his pastoral duties until 1800.

The Constituent Assembly was followed by the Legislative Assembly in August 1791. In Drusenheim, the first revolutionary municipality was established under the authority of Mayor Bladner, assisted by the following "municipal officers": Jacques Ostertag, Jacques Gabel, Francis and Antoine Schwoob, Conrad Klein, Errard Mille, and Hubert Gabel. The property of the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt was seized and sold. The monarchy was abolished on August 10, 1792, and the Convention succeeded the Legislative Assembly on September 21, 1792—the first year of the One and Indivisible Republic and the fourth year of Liberty.[2]

Previously, on April 20, 1792, war had been declared on the Holy Roman Empire. On April 29, the National Assembly organized the National Gendarmerie and established 17 brigades in the Bas-Rhin department, including one in Drusenheim. On July 23, the Minister of War informed the Assembly "that the post at Drusenheim, located near the banks of the Rhine in the district of Haguenau, is in a state of war." At first, the war was taking place far from our region and seemed to be receding after the Battle of Valmy (September 20), Custine's entry into Speyer (September 30), Mainz (October 21), and Frankfurt. It was not until early January 1793, following Custine's defeat at Frankfurt, that the situation in Alsace

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[1] ADBR -Q 531 - 6183 - 6218
[2] ADBR 2 Q 90

worsened. In October, a powerful Austro-Prussian offensive overran the Lauter line. Wurmser entered Haguenau on the 16th of that month. The Army of the Rhine retreated and took up a position between Haguenau and Bischwiller, thereby holding the Moder line.

> "These lines, built during Turenne's campaigns, stretched from Ingwiller to Drusenheim and consisted of a series of redans that, depending on the terrain, formed a more or less right angle with the curtain walls. In some places, they were in as good condition as the lines at Wissembourg.
>
> "Elsewhere, particularly in the vicinity of Haguenau, they had almost entirely disappeared from the sandy soil. Situated on the crest of a modestly elevated hill, they overlooked the very wide and shallow valley of the Moder; but they were too far from the river and were all the less able to defend the crossing because the Sainte Forest, or Haguenau Forest—which lay very close to the Moder—concealed enemy attacks. They did, however, offer some advantages. The army occupying them was supported simultaneously by the mountains and the Rhine. In the center, it is true, lay Haguenau, and all that remained of the town's fortifications were outworks that cavalry could easily scale, a covered way barely recognizable and disrupted every year by the spade or the plowshare, a wall flanked by turrets and protected at intervals by semicircular bastions whose parapet, made of loose sand, was not even half as thick as it should have been. However, directly opposite this position, the village of Drusenheim—surrounded by well-cut and well-palisaded entrenchments—provided a solid bridgehead on the Moder River, facilitating a counteroffensive and the resupply of Fort-Louis. As they stood, the lines along the Moder were as valuable as those along the Lauter or any other position in Lower Alsace and the Palatinate between the Rhine and the Vosges."[3]

The Army of the Rhine evacuated Haguenau, moved its headquarters to Hoerdt, but retained Drusenheim. Its right flank stretched along the Zorn River from Drusenheim to Herrlisheim and Offendorf. On October 17, the Imperial forces captured Haguenau. Our village was abandoned on the 18th by the French army, which retreated to the outskirts of Strasbourg.

The Revolutionary Army was in full retreat, and the soldiers' morale was so low that even the slightest cannon shot sent them into a frenzy.

The incredible turnaround would occur two months later with a victory, near Drusenheim, by French troops commanded by Pichegru and Desaix. Before recounting the events, let's take a look at the situation at the Drusenheim outpost at that time.

Drusenheim was once regarded merely as a temporary outpost: it remained abandoned from 1745 until the beginning of the Revolution.[4]

Orders were given to reinforce its earthen fortifications so that they could withstand a full-scale assault. To this end, its ditches were surveyed and fitted with a row of palisades; its parapets and benches were restored; the edge of the counterscarp was raised slightly to form a glacis; and, along the roads to Strasbourg and Lauterbourg, the suburbs that were already beginning to take shape were demolished.

But these preparations were of no use to the French army, which—defeated and taken by surprise on October 13, 1793, along the Lauter lines—never considered itself strong enough to dare oppose the enemy between Haguenau and Drusenheim along the old lines established by Turenne, which can still be seen there today. The enemy thus took control of this position almost without a fight.

He followed the French army as far as Brumath, extending his left flank to La Wantzenau and his right flank to Reichshoffen.

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[3] A. Chuquet-Wissembourg 1793
[4] S.H.A.T. MR 1186 (1825)

It was from this widely spread-out position that he prepared, between Haguenau and Drusenheim, a fortified and concentrated position where he intended to spend the winter and await the fall of Landau, which was blockaded by a Prussian army corps. But our armies on the Rhine and the Moselle, having joined forces on December 22, 1793, broke through and routed the right wing of the Austrian army at Reichshoffen and Freschweiler and forced the remainder of the enemy army to retreat hastily from Haguenau to Drusenheim and from the lines it had erected between the two points."

The account of the battle that took place near Drusenheim—perhaps near Rohrwiller—is provided by Pichegru, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Rhine, in a letter dated 3 Nivôse, Year 11 (December 23, 1793) to the Minister of War, Bouchotte.

> "I did not write to you about yesterday because General Hoche, with whom I was, sent you a message in my presence. Our troops displayed truly republican courage there, and the most formidable positions—fortified by everything that art can add to nature—were taken by bayonet charge. We resumed the attack this morning. But since I left the left flank early to come to the right, I do not know what Hoche has done today. The enemy has abandoned Bischwiller, Drusenheim, and Haguenau despite the almost continuous entrenchments and fortifications with which it had covered the line connecting the three posts; it had fortified the latter in particular with such care that it took nothing less than the measures we had taken on the left and the courage that only our soldiers can muster to force them to retreat. We are pausing only long enough for the troops—who are very weary—to rest a little, and we will give them no respite. I have urged the municipal authorities to identify the aristocrats who may still be in the city; together with the representatives of the people, I intend to treat them as they deserve.
>
> "I am not yet fully aware of everything that has been seized from the enemy: cannons, ammunition, ammunition wagons, and a large amount of baggage. At least a thousand prisoners have been taken. I hope to give you more good news tomorrow.
>
> "Pichegru"[5]

A Report on Certain Actions Carried Out by the Army of the Rhine (Read to the National Convention—Session of the 6th Nivôse, Year II)

> "The Commander-in-Chief, pleased with the conduct of the First Battalion of the Indre on the 12th of Frimaire, sent it a sum of 1,200 livres as a token of his gratitude. The brave sans-culottes who made up the battalion returned this sum, adding 642 livres and 10 sols, which they set aside to provide relief for the widows and orphans of the defenders of the fatherland. In addition to these acts of bravery and generosity, the battalion has further earned numerous claims to national recognition through its courage and fearlessness in storming redoubts with bayonets—redoubts that were bristling with cannons and from which a terrifying barrage of fire emerged, to which they responded with cries of 'Long live the Republic!'
>
> "During a cavalry charge that took place on the 12th of Frimaire, a lieutenant from the 8th Regiment of Mounted Chasseurs, having been dismounted, was leaving the battlefield to find another horse when he encountered another chasseur from the same regiment, named Faton, who was leading the horse of an Austrian dragoon he had just knocked down. The lieutenant asked to buy the horse; the chasseur replied, 'This horse cost me nothing but a few saber cuts; I cannot be better paid for it than by the blows it will enable you to deal. Mount it, and let's charge. The next day, when the officer saw that the hunter had not come to ask for payment for his horse, he sent for him and offered him, to no avail, what he deemed the horse to be worth; despite his strong insistence, he could not persuade him to accept even a sol. Pichegru, the Commander-in-Chief, upon learning of this act of generosity, sent for the hunter and invited him to his home; he offered him, on behalf of the Republic, some compensation, but could not persuade him to accept it."

[5] ADBR 1 L 404

The triumph of the Republican troops would lead to the exodus of part of the Alsatian population, mainly from towns along the Rhine, "These people—and this must not be forgotten—had, for the most part, lived until the eve of the Revolution as subjects of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Duke of Deux-Ponts, the Prince-Bishop of Speyer, the Margrave of Baden, and so on. Undoubtedly, these German princes recognized the sovereignty of the King of France; but one could not fairly expect these country folk from the new districts of Haguenau and Wissembourg to show great patriotic fervor for the Convention that had sent that king's head to the guillotine, along with so many others, both illustrious and obscure, and whose revolutionary government was, at that very moment, in Strasbourg—so patriotic and so loyal—the most extreme regime of terror, at the behest of Saint-Just, Lebas, and several of their colleagues.

It would have been natural to punish the bad citizens who had openly colluded with the enemy—those who had accepted public offices from him, who, under his protection, had violated the laws of the republic, stirred up trouble in the communes, and mistreated their political opponents. It was also understandable that, in the unbridled fervor of the struggle, action would be taken against the reckless individuals who had expressed support for the invaders—whether foreigners or émigrés—on the soil of the fatherland. But the rulers of the hour—the representatives on mission, the Jacobin administrators of the Bas-Rhin, the Revolutionary Surveillance Committee, and the Revolutionary Tribunal of that department—had no intention of allowing their revenge to be limited in this way because of the fear they had momentarily felt; Their decrees, their threatening language, and their bloodthirsty judgments instilled such terror in the unfortunate inhabitants of the regions between the Moder and the Lauter that, in the course of December, a vast crowd, seized by mad panic, fled their homes at the approach of the French and followed, in an indescribable jumble, the retreating coalition regiments. It was not only former princely officials, émigrés and deported priests who had returned, young deserters, and foreigners who had remained in the country until then who were fleeing in this way—it was thousands upon thousands of petty bourgeois, workers, and above all peasants (farmers, as they were called at the time), who were tearing themselves away from their homes and fields, abandoning all their possessions to seek refuge from the sword of the Law.[6]

Thus, the unfortunate fugitives, facing such a threat, rushed toward the banks of the Rhine to seek refuge on the river's right bank. In a letter written to her sister on January 3, 1794, the Baroness de Bode—an Englishwoman married to a landowner in Alsace and herself driven from her castle in Soultz—described these lamentable scenes: "The patriots have once again occupied all of Alsace, utterly defeated the Germans, and committed the most terrible atrocities, slaughtering in the most inhuman manner everyone who fell into their hands—the elderly, women, and children. ...This entire part of Alsace lies in ruins; all those who could have done so have fled. There was such a rush to cross the Rhine that it was impossible for everyone to make it, and mothers, with their small children in their arms, threw themselves into the river and drowned rather than fall into the hands of these merciless monsters."[7]

To Jacques Klein, a gunner in the 77th Regiment, stationed near Brest, who had requested news of his family in Drusenheim, the Directory replied: "You seem concerned, fellow Republican, about the fate of your family. We wish we could give you satisfactory news regarding them. However, upon checking the list of emigrants from last 4 Messidor, it appears that Jacques Klein of Drusenheim, his wife, and nine children have abandoned their homeland. If you desire further information, please contact both the municipality of Drusenheim and the District of Haguenau."[8]

The list of Drusenheim residents who were deported, emigrated, or convicted included the following names:

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[6] Reuss, La Grande Fuite
[7] Quoted by Reuss
[8] Quoted by Reuss

Klein Marin Ostertag Henri Klein Jacques Baldauf Mathieu Becht Jacques	Benninger Martzoff Braun Jacques Bannerlen François Antoine Boeurnelen Mathieu Christmann François Louis
Eichler Louis Eschelmann Mathieu Fridmann Jacques, le Boucher Fridmann Flaurent La Veuve Fridmann Antoine Gabel Jean le Cordonnier Gabel Vincent Gabel Joseph Gabel François Louis Gabel Luc Gabel François Antoine Gabel Frédéric Gabel Jacques Gabel Michel Haus Jean Heitz Andre Hoch Jean le Vieux Hoch Georges Hoch Théodore La Veuve de Hoch Nicolas Jung Michel Jung Bernard Klein Charles Krumholtz Michel Kohrmann Ignace Kohrmann Jean Les héritiers de Kohrmann Jean Kohrmann Pierre Lampfrid Michel Moser Florent Les héritiers de Adam Lohend Martz Georges La Veuve de Muller Valentin Muller Jacques Marin Muller François Mutterer François Les héritiers de Muller François La Veuve de Nass Paul La Veuve de Ostertag Philippe Oberholtzer Français La Veuve de Oberholtzer Balthazard Schiur François	La Veuve de Schlur Michel Schwoh François Joseph Schwab Elisabeth Schwab Mathieu Schneider Ambroise Siegfried Chrisostome Siegfried Michel Thomas Jean Ulmer Antoine Veith Ignace Veith Jacques Veith Jean lainé Veith Jean le jeune Vitzikam François Antoine Vitzikam Pierre Antoine Zinsenbach Joseph Hartmann Joseph Braun Magdelaine Fridmann Catherine Fridmann Marie Barbe Benninger Marcelle Liner Antoine Gabel Jean Klein Jean La Veuve de Rischmann Mutter Jacques La Fabrique de Drusenheim L'Abbaye de Schwartzach Schmit, Huissier de Drusenheim Klein André Gumbel Valentin Grunder Marie Eve Gabel Simon Hoch Charles Les héritiers de Kohrmann Michel Gumbel François Klein Véronique Doll Joseph Heitz Ambroise Klein Louis Benninger Etienne Gles Hypolite
Grumholtz Michel Teutsch François Léopold François Roemmer Michel	Raimond Geofroi Schneider Nicolas Uhlimann Paul Ursch Joseph

Schwob Jacques	Reinhold Jean
Schwob Catherine	La Veuve de Heisser Jean
Link Antoine	Lehmann Michel
Lockenhuhl Bernard	Schneider Jean
La Veuve dg Etienne Vitziham	Bieth Jacques
Schmitt Chrétien	Haus Antoine
Peter Français	Heidt Ignace
Schmitt Jean	Jung Jacques
Siegfried Jean	Grumholtz Michel
Schwob Augustin	Schwob Jean
Vitziham François Joseph	Dumont

Thus, a very large number of families had left Drusenheim to seek refuge on the other bank of the Rhine. Even Jean Veit, who served as mayor in 1793 and had succeeded Citizen Bladner, was among the émigrés. The position of mayor—then known as "Municipal Agent"—was subsequently filled by Joseph Ganter. He and his deputy, François Antoine Schwob, were replaced "due to their ties to the emigrants" by Louis Ganter and Ignace Klein, respectively, on November 15, 1795. Louis Ganter, too, was suspended from office by a ruling issued on October 26, 1797 by the Administration of the Bas-Rhin department "considering that, according to the statements of several citizens, the aforementioned Ganter accepted money from the émigrés, promising them that he would protect their stay on the territory of the Republic, and that he permitted the presence of several émigrés in his commune in defiance of the law."

Meanwhile, there was talk of the possibility of a near-universal amnesty for émigrés. Here is the text of an "Address to the Council of Five Hundred" dated December 21, 1796. "Representatives of the people," it read,

> "the Bas-Rhin department, like the rest of France, has been prey to the tyranny of the Decemvirs. Moreover, its southern region has endured all the misfortunes and vicissitudes of war. Saint-Just and Lebas, Lacoste and Baudot sowed terror there on all sides. An Austrian priest and his agents, along with an army and revolutionary committees, imprisoned and guillotined all those who were the target of their resentment. It was enough to be perceived as a follower of the cult of the Assermentés to be considered a criminal in their eyes—and to have one's very existence threatened. It was amid these turbulent revolutionary circumstances that, in 1793, the enemy—which had invaded the districts south of Strasbourg—withdrew. The inhabitants of those districts had been informed of all these abuses; public rumor had even exaggerated them. Already, rumors were circulating that the all-too-famous Schneider[9] was following the victorious French army, along with the Revolutionary Tribunal and the guillotine. No one was to be spared. A decree by Lacoste and Baudot, which threatened to execute by firing squad any peasant found at the outposts, had done more than a little to lend credence to all these alarming rumors. The result was a general flight. Entire towns retreated with the enemy; proof of this is recorded in the numerous lists we present to you, which do not yet include all of these so-called émigrés, whose number amounts to at least twenty-five or thirty thousand.
>
> "The Convention was informed by our predecessors and by the representatives on mission of this depopulation. Through its laws of 22 Nivôse and the 4th supplementary day of Year III, it enabled farmers and laborers to return to their homes. It set deadlines for them; many took advantage of this. But these benevolent laws did not reach the huts of the poor, most of whom had been forced to leave the banks of the Rhine and retreat beyond the forests of the Montagne Noire;

[9] The bloodthirsty revolutionary Schneider, who was traveling the country with his guillotine in tow, stopped in Drusenheim at the Auberge au Lion d'Or. He spent the night there feasting. Thanks to the innkeeper's courage, no heads rolled. In Rohrwiller, however, seven residents are said to have been beheaded.

or, if they did reach them, it was only very late. The wealthy—men who had received some education, who, through reading newspapers, kept abreast of political affairs, and whom the text of the law seemed to exclude—were the first to learn of it; they flocked to the right bank of the river and bought their passage there at the price of gold. The day laborer, the unfortunate artisan who could not satisfy the German ferryman's greed—the one who could not pay him a ransom of fifty écus, 200 francs, or who lacked the means to cover the cost of a journey through Switzerland—had the misfortune of seeing the deadlines pass and being forced to remain outside his homeland. From the opposite bank, one could see them reaching out their arms to their compatriots and despairing that, as victims of fate—which had led them one day, one hour too late to their homeland—they were forced to turn back.

"It is a fact, fellow citizens and representatives, that a married couple arrived together on the banks of the Rhine; that, because the wife's illness prevented her from traveling in the same boat as her husband, he had the sorrow of being separated from her forever by a fateful order that came at that very moment and forbade the military checkpoints from allowing their passage. This unfortunate woman died on the other side of the Rhine and is now considered an emigrant. It is a fact that this crossing was permitted for only a very few days and at only a few points, due to the obstruction by the French and Austrian generals. Consequently, these unfortunate people seize every opportunity to return on a daily basis. When our victorious armies entered Germany, they were seen returning in groups. In vain did we remind the municipal administrations and the commissioners of the Executive Directory that the law deemed any individual who returned after the expiration of the deadlines to be an émigré. In vain did we make it clear to them that, as passive enforcers of this law, it was their duty to bring them before the courts; whether out of humanitarian principles or because of the impossibility of enforcing such severe measures against such a large number, very few were arrested.

"It is upon these unfortunate people, fellow legislators, that we ask you to turn your attention for a moment. Without property, without refuge, and as fathers of large families, they languish in the deepest misery; they proclaim loudly that they are determined to endure all its horrors rather than return to a foreign land. We therefore appeal to your wisdom and justice to determine the appropriate course of action regarding them. These will determine whether it is appropriate to forcibly expel several thousand French citizens whom fanaticism, terror, fighting, the burning of their homes, and various other circumstances of war have caused to flee in large numbers, and who, due to ignorance of the laws, illness, or lack of financial means, have been unable to return within the deadlines set; whether these unfortunate farmers and artisans are more guilty than the Vendéens and the Chouans, who have nevertheless been granted amnesty; whether it is in the Republic's interest to support hundreds of children—most of them very young—after their parents have been forced to abandon them; finally, whether entire tracts of land must remain uncultivated rather than allow the hard-working hands of these farmers to restore them to their former fertility.

"We are not proposing that you establish new exceptions in favor of emigrants; we know that the Constitution precludes this; but we are asking you for an extension of the deadline for those residents of this department who, having returned to their homes, are literally covered by the laws of 22 Nivôse and the 4th supplementary day. We also ask you to rule on whether those among these so-called émigrés whose death, prior to the expiration of the initial deadlines, has been legally established, must—notwithstanding the presumption in their favor—be deemed émigrés. Finally, fellow legislators, it would also be important for you to decide the matter concerning the inhabitants of Fort Vauban, whom the enemy forced, without exception, to take refuge on the opposite bank to avoid becoming victims of the general explosion of the fortifications, and who have all returned to France at various times. We have never considered them to be emigrants, but our opinion, based on justice, needs to be reinforced by law."

Prisons were not opened for émigrés until after Bonaparte seized power on 18 Brumaire, Year VIII (November 9, 1799). At that very moment, the risk of conflict with Austria was once again very high along the Rhine border. French troops—namely the 8th Cavalry Regiment—were stationed in Drusenheim. The last Municipal Agent of the Revolution, Citizen Naehbauer, oversaw the transition to the Consulate, as he too was dismissed from his post on 18 Nivôse, Year VIII (January 8, 1800).

The signing of the Treaty of Lunéville on February 9, 1801—which brought an end to the decade-long conflict with Austria—along with the restoration of the Catholic faith, thanks to the First Consul's tolerant religious policy, restored calm and tranquility. Father Jean Jacques Bastian, born in 1759 in Bitschhoffen, resumed celebrating Mass in 1801—after a hiatus of nearly 10 years—under the authority of Bishop Saurine, the first bishop of Condor. Jean Veit, Jr. was appointed mayor and remained in office until 1808. Drusenheim had had a notary's office since Year 13 (1804). The first notary was Pierre Joseph Beunat, who came from a prominent family originally from Fort-Louis. In the mayoral election, Pierre-Joseph Beunat faced competition from the following candidates:

Veit Jean,	the incumbent mayor, "who would stop running a cabaret if he were to receive an annual stipend of 500 francs."
Klein Antoine,	"the son of the former postmaster, who is also a bar owner, and who, like the current mayor, enjoys the trust of the residents. He is also one of the largest taxpayers."
Beunat Joseph,	a notary in Drusenheim, he served as royal notary in Fort-Louis, chief secretary of the District Directorate, chief secretary of the canton's municipal administration, and chief secretary to the subprefect of Sarrebourg.
Schwoob Antoine,	current deputy.[10]

By decree of the Council of State dated June 22, 1808, Antoine Klein was appointed mayor, and Antoine Schwoob was appointed deputy mayor. The city council members were as follows: Beunat, Klein, Léonard, Martz, Vitzekam, Benninger, Mosser, and Heitz.

The gendarmes, who had recently arrived in the village, were staying with local residents, and their horses were housed in a private stable, since the municipality had neither "a national building nor a municipal building" to house the brigade.

The Invasion of 1814

Alsace saw little of the campaigns of General Bonaparte—who became Emperor in 1804—other than the repeated passages of troops heading to reinforce the Grande Armée. The campaign of 1813, after a few brilliant successes, ended with the crushing defeat at Leipzig, and all of Germany, freed from the Napoleonic yoke, poured across the poorly defended French borders. On December 20, 1813, the allies crossed the Rhine near Basel. On January 2, 1814, the coalition forces—Austrians, Russians, and Prussians—were in our region. Fort-Louis, renamed Fort-Vauban, fell that same day into the hands of Russian Lieutenant Colonel de Lützow. Running low on ammunition and certain they would be captured sooner or later, the infantrymen and military laborers defending the stronghold retreated to Drusenheim. The Russians built a bridge across the Rhine; once completed on the 3rd, it allowed the cavalry vanguard to enter Alsace.

Major General de Rudinger advanced with the Grodno Hussars and Vlasov's Cossacks through Drusenheim to Gambsheim. After the Upper Rhine, the Lower Rhine suffered the ravages of the Cossack invasion.

[10] ADBR 1 M 54

The Allied powers entered Paris on March 31, 1814. Napoleon abdicated on April 4 in favor of Louis XVIII. The year 1815 would be marked by the desperate "Hundred Days" campaign. The Emperor's return on March 20, 1815, sparked a clash between pro- and anti-Napoleonic factions. Even in Drusenheim, tempers flared considerably. Some of the residents of our town demanded the removal of Mayor Klein. Here is the full text of a letter addressed to the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin:

"Monsieur le Préfet,

"We, the undersigned residents of the municipality of Drusenheim, wholeheartedly share in the joy of the French people at the return of our august Emperor. We had hoped that the certainty of these happy events would change the conduct of our mayor, whose behavior grows more reprehensible by the day.

"It is our duty to report this to you, as it tends to disturb the peace of the residents. On March 22 of last year, this official—overzealous in his support for the House of Bourbon—at a time when all hope had been lost, summoned the town assembly and told them that the King was threatened by Bonaparte's arrival. He ordered the residents to take up arms against this man, an enemy of public peace, and forbade them from speaking well of him on pain of arrest.

"Since then, this civil servant has made no secret of his loyalty to the House of Bourbon—as evidenced by his indifference to his duties, his close ties to all the royalist families in our town (who serve as sources of bad news through their correspondence with foreign countries), and the sarcastic manner in which he carries out the orders he receives, as one might carry out orders from an unstable government or one that one dislikes.

"For these reasons, we ask you, Mr. Prefect, to remove this mayor, who has sought to sow discord among us, and to send a commissioner to audit his accounts, as he has on several occasions received quota payments without notifying the residents, and we wish to know how and why the 6,000 francs borrowed by the municipality in 1814 for the relief of the poor were spent.

"Done at Drusenheim, April 20, 1815
Signé Devaux, Wenger, Masse"[11]

The Prefect's response was swift: during an extraordinary session on May 27, 1815, Mr. Antoine Schwoob, the acting deputy mayor, was appointed mayor, and Ignace Gabel was named deputy mayor. This did not last long, however, as Klein—who had emigrated during the Hundred Days—would once again become the chief magistrate of our municipality upon the return of Louis XVIII's administration.

This politically turbulent period was marked by the death of Father Bastian on October 7, 1813. Father Jean Baptiste Gerber succeeded him on October 30, 1813, and served until early 1816. He, in turn, was succeeded by Father Michel Zehner, who remained in office only from March 19, 1816, to July 1, 1817, when he left for the village of Schaefersheim.

The occupation by the Russians, Austrians, Badeners, and Württembergers was to last until 1818. The enemy soldiers committed numerous acts of violence, and the suffering of the local population was immense.

Here is what we can read in a letter dated May 10, 1814, from Drusenheim:

"All the towns are overrun with troops, both from Fort Vauban and the Baden Landwehr, who roam from one town to another, causing harassment. The Chasseurs of the Baden Honor Guard, with the consent of their commanders, seized two horses yesterday from a coachman.

"I went to Soufflenheim to see their commander, accompanied by the coachman, who identified his horses. He told me he would have them returned. But a quarter of an hour later, I

[11] ADBR 1 M 98

saw things take a different turn: I was forced to mount a horse and ride away, while the owner of the horses went into hiding to escape events that were too painful for a Frenchman to bear.

"Finally, my dear Lieutenant, the forests are in such a state of disrepair that you cannot even begin to imagine it; the inhabitants are being mistreated, and even theft is beginning to increase.

"I find myself without support; the officers from Baden are behaving badly, and I am receiving one complaint after another from the residents. The parish priest of Soufflenheim was also beaten. The taxes and requisitions are still continuing."[12]

The enemy occupation made it necessary to hold a weekly market in Drusenheim. Here is what Mayor Klein wrote to the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin on July 29, 1817:

"The time is approaching when the barracks in Drusenheim will be occupied, and this will lead to a significant increase in the population. The troops would not be able to find the food necessary for their sustenance in our town alone."[13] The coalition forces left our village in 1818, and starting in 1819, the market was canceled.

[12] ADBR 38 J 335

[13] ADBR 12 M 61

THE 19TH CENTURY

pages 164-207

"Residence of a direct tax collector, a forest ranger, a Rhine works supervisor, and a tax collector; headquarters of a customs office (4th line) and a customs brigade, a mail distribution office, and a horse-drawn stagecoach relay station; wool spinning mill and tile factory." This is how Baquol, in his dictionary of the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin departments, described our village in 1865.

For Drusenheim, the 19th century was a century of revolutions: a demographic revolution, as the population grew from 552 in 1805 to 1,496 in 1820; an industrial revolution, thanks to the spinning mill, the tile factory, and the Rhine riverworks—the once-devastating Rhine finally tamed and confined between two high levees; and a revolution in military affairs with the decommissioning of the Drusenheim garrison.

The municipal government

The main characteristic of local political life is the remarkable stability of incumbent mayors. From the Restoration through the 20th century, only four mayors held office, despite the widespread practice of removal from office in the previous century. They took their oaths of office according to the regime in power—whether to the King, the President of the Republic, or the Emperor.

We saw in the previous chapter that Mayor Antoine Klein took office on June 22, 1808, a tenure that was interrupted during the Hundred Days by Mayor Antoine Schwob. He remained the chief magistrate of our town until November 27, 1831—a total of 24 years. His failure to be reelected in 1831 was, in effect, a dismissal. In fact, various complaints filed against him by residents must certainly have tarnished his reputation, to the point that he lost the confidence of the prefect of the Bas-Rhin. Mayor Klein was able to defend himself against an initial series of complaints filed against him in 1819 by 35 fellow citizens, instigated primarily by the two former mayors, Jean Veit and Antoine Schwob, as well as Charles Devaux. When asked, "Finally, there are complaints about the despotic and uncivil manner in which you treat your constituents," he replied, "My accusers call despotism my unwavering resolve to enforce police regulations, my efforts to prevent and suppress all disturbances, and my refusal to tolerate, at inappropriate hours, either at the establishments of the innkeepers—who are the chief accusers [former Mayor Veit used to run a nightclub]—or elsewhere, turbulent gatherings or scandalous orgies. They call it uncivil behavior not to take part in these orgies, to conduct oneself in an orderly manner, to habitually associate with a more select society, and not to be in the habit—as was the practice under my predecessors—of discussing the affairs of the Commune in taverns, glass in hand."

Further attacks launched—following the 1830 revolution and the fall of Charles X—by nearly the entire population of Drusenheim would prove fatal to him. Here is an excerpt from the request for his dismissal addressed to the Prefect:

"During our glorious revolution, this municipality had hoped that its mayor, Mr. François Antoine Klein, would be immediately removed from office, but great was its astonishment when it saw that wherever public opinion—which always goes hand in hand with that of a good government—demanded changes, those changes took place; yet here, where they would have been more necessary than anywhere else, the higher authorities have so far resisted the numerous demands that have been made."

Mr. Klein, the current mayor, is in no way fit to administer this town, where everyone is well aware of the views he has consistently and ostentatiously displayed; as a zealous supporter of the government of Charles X, he took pleasure in being an absolute ruler, for it is characteristic of a weak mind to abuse power in order to demonstrate its strength; He knew full well that, since he was highly regarded by higher

authorities, the cries of indignation provoked by his abuses would have no effect; thus, he treated his constituents as serfs, and, like a feudal lord, his whim was the rule of his administration."[1]

In fact, Mayor Klein was forced to step down because Louis-Philippe's new administration could no longer retain a mayor who remained loyal to the ideas of Charles X—ideas that France had completely rejected during the July Revolution of 1830. The administration of the July Monarchy would treat Klein favorably, as it requested on October 24, 1832, that the legal proceedings against him be dropped.

Mayor Klein's successor will be Charles Wagner, who "swore an oath on November 27, 1831, to loyalty to the King of the French and obedience to the Constitutional Charter and the laws of the Kingdom."[2] The following city council members will serve with him: Romer (deputy), Veith, Beunat, Ganter, Schwob, Brucker, Kormann, Halter, Vitzikam, Hahn, Mosser, Lehmann, Kormann, Heytz, and Klein.

When he took office, Mayor Wagner—born on December 10, 1798, a Catholic, married, and the father of five children—worked as an innkeeper and had a fortune estimated at 1,900 francs. The deputy mayor, Jean Michel Romer, born on November 22, 1783, a widower and father of eight children, was a farmer by profession and had a fortune estimated at 600 francs. Mayor Wagner would govern the town until July 1, 1855.

In the municipal administration, Mayor Wagner was likely dominated—or at the very least influenced—by Edmond Beunat, a notary practicing in Drusenheim and certainly the most educated man in the village at the time. To illustrate our point, we cite here an altercation that took place in September 1832 between the municipal authorities and Mr. Brissac, captain of the 1st Battery of the 6th Artillery Regiment, which was then stationed in Drusenheim:

"Captain Brissac had his saddlery warehouse in a house belonging to Mr. Beunat. Mr. Beunat, in accordance with the reservation he had made, had the house demolished, and the saddlery was moved to the town hall. But since the space was small, he requested a larger and more suitable one. As this request was ignored, Captain Brissac became displeased and wanted to change his quarters. To that end, he traveled to Soufflenheim to inspect the premises there. This action offended the mayor and Mr. Beunat, who drafted a letter on behalf of the mayor; the content and tone of which displeased and irritated the captain, who went to the mayor's house to reproach him and express his doubts about the wording.

The mayor confirmed this; as he was leaving, he (the captain) ran into Mr. Beunat and asked him, "Did you write that letter?" When Mr. Beunat confirmed it, the captain reproached him for the bitter tone of the letter. Mr. Beunat retorted, and a heated exchange ensued between them, which escalated into a provocation but which, so far, had had no consequences.

The mayor of Drusenheim does not, in truth, possess the level of education necessary to administer the municipality. However, he enjoys the trust of the majority of the residents and, in that regard, is able to fulfill his duties. But he is under the influence of Mr. Beunat, who, through his domineering and often violent temperament and his harsh manner, compels him to act only through him and robs him of the decisive action that should be the hallmark of a municipal leader in order to secure the approval of the head of the Administration."[3]

Mayor Wagner's term in office will be remembered for the construction of two buildings that we still use today: City Hall, completed in 1830—previously, the mayor's house served as the town hall—and the church, built between 1837 and 1839 by the construction firm Jean and Georges Wenger under the direction of architect Samain, who also designed the church in Brumath.

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[1] ADBR 1 M 223
[2] ADBR 1 M 176
[3] ADBR 1 M 223

On July 1, 1855, during the Second Empire, Georges Wenger began his term as mayor—a term that would go down in local history as the longest, ending only 40 years later in 1895. Georges Wenger was the son of Jean Wenger (November 19, 1779 – February 18, 1841), a contractor in Drusenheim, and Reine Rheinbold. Jean Wenger had a son, Joseph, who had taken over the public works business and amassed a considerable fortune; during the reign of Louis-Philippe, following the liquidation of the Livio family—bankers in Strasbourg—he purchased the elegant mansion on Rue du Dôme, which is now the headquarters of the Société Générale Alsacienne de Banque. As for his brother, Georges, he continued to work in the family's public works business until around 1860. Around 1860, Georges Wenger purchased the carded wool spinning mill built in 1843 by Auguste Reibell of Herrlisheim.

Georges Wenger, who had since been elected mayor of Drusenheim, would hold that office until 1895, shortly before his death in 1896. The Wenger family owned a beautiful estate, built on land that still belongs to them today. Mayor Georges Wenger had two sons: Paul, who became director of the Staehling-Valentin Bank in Strasbourg, and Henri, who managed the Drusenheim spinning mill and who himself served as mayor of our town from 1919 to 1929.

Georges Wenger's successor was Louis Schindele (1841–1901), son of Louis Schindele (1810–1842) and Thérèse Klein (1812–1876). An entrepreneur and the husband of Philomène Philipps (1848–1876), Mayor Schindele served as the town's chief magistrate for six years (1895–1901) and oversaw the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. In a rather rare occurrence, his son Léon would also succeed a member of the Wenger family as mayor of Drusenheim in 1929.

The Church and Religious Life

The various parish priests of the 19th century:

	Came from	At Drusenheim		Left for
		From	to	
Bastian Jean-Jacques		1804	07.10.1813	Died in Drusenheim
Gerher Jean-Baptiste	Ingenheim	30.10.1812	15.03.1817	Rulzheim
Zehner Michel	Oberbronn	15.03.1816	01.07.1817	Schaeffersheim
Stenzhorn Aloyse	Bénédictain at Lichtenau (Bade)	01.07.1817	16.02.1821	Truchtersheim
Dangelzer François-Joseph	Herrlisheim	01.10.1821	25.08.1852	Died in Drusenheim
Kuhn Joseph	Uffheim	30.08.1852	02.03.1862	Died in Drusenheim
Kieffer Florent	Offendarf	11.03.1862	01.07.1885	Retired
Engel Antoine-	Morsbronn	01.07.1885	10.11.1885	Rhinau
Hasenfratz Ignace	Neewiller	03.12.1885	30.06.1892	The Robertsau
Laugel Jean	Gertwiller	04.07.1892	09.08.1901	Died and was buried in Drusenheim

The canonical visit of January 26, 1893,[4] provides the following details:

- The church was consecrated in 1837. - It has a capacity of 950 seats. - The last major repairs were carried out in 1892.

- The three bells were cast:
  - the medium-sized one on March 19, 1807, during the tenure of Father Bastian;

[4] A.E.S.

- the other two during the tenure of Father Dangelzer in 1844 by Jean-Joseph Edel.

- The three altars are dedicated to St. Matthew, St. Joseph, and the Virgin Mary.

- The Stations of the Cross were erected in 1860.

- Weekday Mass is held at 7:30 a.m. from Easter to All Saints' Day and at 8:00 a.m. from All Saints' Day to Easter. High Mass is celebrated on Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

- Catechism classes for children are held every Sunday, and for teenagers every other Sunday.

- The customary processions are:
  - the Bannprocession (Bannprocession)
  - Rogation Days (Bittwoche)
  - the Assumption, in the afternoon after Vespers
  - for St. Matthew's Day before High Mass.
  - at the cemetery (on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day).

- Do men take part in the processions? Answer: the entire parish.

- In addition to his salary, the parish priest receives a supplement from the municipality:
  - 240 marks in cash
  - real estate for the priest's use: 80 marks and 24 steres of firewood.

- There are only 4 or 5 people who rarely attend Sunday and holiday services.

- At least two-thirds of the men receive Communion twice a year.

- 10 parishioners did not receive Easter Communion.

- Number of births to unmarried mothers over the past 5 years: 21.

- Customs that are harmful to morality include:
  - the tradition of feasting and dancing on Easter Monday, Pentecost Monday, and during the village festival.
  - the 14 taverns, all of which are frequented.

Major Municipal Construction Projects[5]

- In 1821, the municipality carried out a boundary survey and purchased 1,000 boundary stones from Nicolas Knoll in Reichshoffen—each 70 cm tall and bearing the "municipal mark." This put an end to the constant disputes that had arisen from a very precarious boundary marking system consisting of wooden stakes.

- In 1822, the question of building "a community center and school" was raised. - The contract was awarded to Mr. Mathieu Philipps, a contractor in Drusenheim. Construction began in 1826 under the direction of architect Reiner. The building includes:

- Ground floor: a guardhouse, a classroom, a jail, restrooms, and a fire pump shed.
- Upstairs: the community hall, the mayor's office, a kitchen, and the living quarters of the "Sisters of Providence."

The building is topped by a turret that still stands today. Construction was completed in late 1829, and the project was officially accepted in February 1830. Thus, Drusenheim now has a town hall, whereas previously one or two rooms in the mayor's house had served as the town hall.

[5] ADBR SERIE 0

- In 1829, a new cemetery fence was built, consisting of a brick wall topped with wooden slats.

- The following year, in 1830, the town undertook work to manage rainwater runoff: ditches were dug in the village and at the intersection of what are now Rue du Gal de Gaulle and Rue du Collège, along with "an aqueduct to facilitate the flow of rainwater."

- In 1839, construction of the church—or rather, its reconstruction, as indicated by documents from that period—was completed. In fact, the new church was built on the site of the old one but facing the opposite direction. A significant amount of reclaimed materials from the old building were reused. During construction, services were held at the newly completed town hall.

Jean and Joseph Wenger, building contractors in Drusenheim, and Mr. Batiston, a contractor and mayor of Fort-Louis, were consulted for the project. Ultimately, the bid submitted by the family of the future mayor of Drusenheim was accepted. The construction work, carried out under the supervision of Engineer Samain, cost 111,946 francs. In 1842, new pews and four confessionals were installed.

- The year 1842 also marked the renovation of the Catholic rectory, for which major work was undertaken. These extensive repairs cost 7,497 francs and were carried out by the contractor François Felter of Leutenheim.

- In 1849, the municipality built "an economical building for the schoolteacher's use." This project involved converting a former school outbuilding into a residence.

- Finally, the boys' school, for which we were unable to find the construction date but which we estimate was built shortly before 1870. In fact, the City Council, in its session of May 25, 1862, had already noted: "The lower-grade classroom is barely spacious enough to accommodate half the number of students who attend it today; it is separated from the upper-grade classroom by a simple wooden partition."[6]

Thus, over the course of about forty years, under the leadership of Mayors Klein, Wagner, and Wenger, our town came to have facilities that few other towns in the area could boast.

The Notary System

It consists of the minutes of the Offendorf bailiwick dating back to 1760 that were not destroyed by fire or lost during the emigration of the bailiff at the time, Mr. Petin.

Petin Louis-Augustin

Last clerk of the bailiwick of Offendorf from 1778 to September 28, 1793—the date of his emigration—and after his return, from 6 Vendémiaire, Year I, to 14 Thermidor, Year XII. This notary resided in Offendorf until his emigration; upon his return, he resided in Herrlisheim until 18 Prairial, Year IX. From that time on, his office was moved to Gambsheim until 11 Florial, Year XI, then to Offendorf until the following 11 Thermidor, and finally back to Herrlisheim.

Beunat Pierre Joseph[7]

Royal notary in Fort-Louis from 1768 to 1778. He gave up his notary practice to devote himself exclusively to the financial management of the "town of Fort-Louis." From March 1771 to 1789, he is listed as the collector of the town's patrimonial revenues and charitable donations. A decree by the Constituent Assembly transformed the office of "royal notary" into that of "public notary." It was then that he was appointed notary in Drusenheim from November 12, 1804, to June 24, 1814.

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[6] ADBR P 518

[7] Blattner J.-F. Histoire de Fort-Louis

Beunat Edmond-Balthazar-Aloyse

Born March 15, 1782 – died August 24, 1833

He succeeded his father and remained in office in Drusenheim until August 18, 1833.

He married Françoise Veith in Drusenheim on September 14, 1829. He served continuously as a city council member and undoubtedly played the most influential role in the municipal administration.

Batiston Laurent-Nicolas-Ignace[8]

Born in 1808.

Son of Christophe Batiston and Marie-Anne Grisch. He served as a notary in Drusenheim for a very short time, from March 16, 1834, to July 31, 1834, the date of his death.

His father, a native of northern Italy, settled in Fort-Louis in 1815; his wife was a native of the town. He was a lumber merchant and a contractor for major construction projects, as well as a contractor for work on the Rhine and for the maintenance of the levees. He quickly became the wealthiest man in Fort-Louis and a major landowner. It was he who, after 1835, built the Château de Fort-Louis—or Château Batiston—the beautiful estate we still know today. Christophe Batiston served as mayor of Fort-Louis from 1815 to 1835 and from 1837 to 1849. He did a great deal for his town, primarily by draining large areas of unhealthy marshes. He died in Roeschwoog on May 7, 1856.

Klein Alexandre - Louis

From December 19, 1835, to January 6, 1854

The notary who succeeded Mr. Batiston was dismissed in 1854.

Haug Charles Henri

From January 6, 1854, to April 13, 1864

Before his appointment in Drusenheim, Mr. Haug was a notary clerk in Haguenau. He paid 16,000 francs for the practice, which had become vacant following Klein's dismissal. Charles Haug remained in office in Drusenheim for 10 years. In 1861, his son Emile was born in our town; he would go on to become a renowned geologist, to whom we will devote a chapter of our book later on.

Kléber Frédéric Henry

From April 13, 1864, to 1872

Attorney Haug and Attorney Kléber will engage in a practice exchange. Kléber, who is based in Niederbronn, will sell his practice to Attorney Haug at the following price:

- Kleber's fee was estimated at 40,000 francs

- Haug's fee was estimated at 32,000 francs

The latter will therefore pay a cash settlement of 8,000 francs to the former owner of Niederbronn.

Mr. Kleber was the last notary in Drusenheim, as the Drusenheim office was closed in 1872. From that point on, the residents of our town would go either to Bischwiller or to Roeschwoog to handle their notarial matters.

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[8] Blattner J.-F. Histoire de Fort-Louis

Perception (La perception)

Our village also served as the headquarters for the collection of direct taxes for the following geographical area: Drusenheim, Auenheim, Dalhunden, Herrlisheim, Offendorf, Sessenheim, and Stattmatten. The various tax collectors, up until the annexation by Germany, were:

1822 : Schmitt
1831 : Bronner
1868 : Jodocius

The ferry, then the Rhine Bridge

Throughout the 19th century, Drusenheim served as a crossing point over the Rhine and had a customs office. "The fees for ferries, boats, or small craft used to cross the Rhine"[9] were awarded through public auction to a contractor known as a "ferry operator." Around 1850, the ferry operator for the Drusenheim ferry was Jacques Gabel, a local resident. The ferry rights were awarded for a period of six years through a public auction. In 1839, the starting bid for the ferry had been set at 70 francs. The bid was not met, since Jacques Gabel—apparently the sole bidder—became the ferry operator for an annual lease price of 20 francs. The successful bidder was required to provide the administration with a surety in the form of an individual who owned real property. Joseph Eichler served as surety on behalf of Jacques Gabel. In 1833, the items intended for the crossing of the Rhine at Drusenheim had been appraised at

—a ferry	625.00
—two sturdy small boats, total	395.00
—a gondola	35.00
—a large maneuvering oar	5.00
-- two standard oars	8.00
— four large iron-tipped oarlocks	12.00
— a wrought-iron fork for the rudder	10.50
— a heavy mooring chain with a padlock	16.50
— a boarding rope in 4 pieces	16.00
— one towline	20.00
—3 standard oars with irons	10.25
— 1 fir wood oar with iron	3.00
— 1 mooring chain for the first rowboat	8.00
— 1 mooring chain for the second rowboat	12.00
Estimated amount as of December 31, 1833	1,176.25 francs

Crossing the Rhine was regulated by a decree dated February 17, 1855, signed by Emperor Napoleon III.

Article 1

(1) Water crossings at Rhinau, Garnbsheim, Drusenheim, Fort-Louis, Seltz, Münchhausen, and Lauterbourg, located on the Rhine:

For the passage of a person carrying no load, or carrying a load in any manner—whether carried on the body or dragged—ten centimes 0.10

Children under the age of five are exempt from fees.

For foodstuffs or goods not loaded onto a cart, horse, or mule, but placed on the ferry, for each myriagraetme (10 kilograms), two centimes 0.02

[9] ADBR S 474

The shipper will declare the weight, which may be verified by the customs broker.

For a horse, mule, bull, ox, or cow, whether loaded or unloaded, thirty centimes 0.30

For a donkey or female donkey, loaded or unloaded, an unshod female foal, or a heifer: twenty centimes 0.20

For veal or pork, ten centimes. 0.10

Per sheep, ewe, billy goat, goat, suckling pig, pair of geese, or pair of turkeys: five centimes 0.05

The fee will be reduced by ►half if the number of animals covered by this article exceeds ten.

The rider or driver will pay the fee for one person.

If there is no horse crossing available, the boatman may not be compelled to transport the horses, mules, oxen, and other animals covered by this article across the river one at a time on a ferry unless he is guaranteed a fee of at least one franc. 1.00

For the passage of a horse-drawn carriage, including the driver, fifty centimes 0.50

Fifty centimes for each additional horse. 0.50

Each traveler will pay the fee applicable to one person.

For the passage of a loaded car, or one horse, including the driver: forty centimes 0.40

For each additional horse, forty centimes 0.40

For the passage of an empty car, or one horse, including the driver, thirty centimes. 0.30

Thirty centimes for each additional horse. 0.30

Harnessed donkeys and female donkeys will pay only half the fees set for horses.

Cars and animals used for agricultural purposes will pay only half the price set in the above rate schedule.

During high-water periods, tolls will be increased by half.

The water will be considered high when it reaches the red-painted section of the height marker post on the towpath bank.

The crossing will be closed when the water rises above the red-painted section of the pole, when the river is carrying ice floes, and during the ice breakup.

Boats must never be loaded beyond the weight that would cause them to sink to the waterlines marked in red on their sides.

Article 2

Special Provisions for Ferries Operating on the Rhine:

The following are exempt from tolls, but only on the ferries at Rhinau, Seltz, Gatnbsheim, Fort-Louis, Drusenheim, Lauterbourg, and Munchhausen:

1° Rhine Navigation Inspectors;

2° The director of the Middle Rhine District, the government prosecutor, the bailiff, the mayor, the engineers and officials of the Department of Public Works, the director and employees of the customs office, and, in general, all officials of the Baden government—who are comparable to the French civil servants listed above—only in the same cases and under the same conditions.

Article 3

The ferry operator is required to transport a single person only after that person has waited on the shore for a period of one hour for ferries and half an hour for horse ferries and [small boats. The only exceptions are the crossings at Seltz and Lauterbourg, for which the waiting period shall be five minutes for the motor ferry and fifteen minutes for rowboats and small boats.

The farmer must, without delay, admit the officials, agents, and other persons designated in Article 2 of this document.

Any other person who wishes to cross on their own and without waiting for that period of time to elapse will pay the fee set, in this case, by the rate schedule:

The farmer shall be required to allow access, either before or after sunset, without demanding any fee, but solely for the purpose of performing their duties, to prefects and subprefects, mayors, investigating judges and imperial prosecutors, justices of the peace and their clerks, police commissioners and other judicial police officers, employees of the indirect tax and customs authorities, the gendarmerie, ministers of the various religions recognized by the State and their assistants, rural constables, firefighters, and persons who, in the event of a fire, would go to provide assistance from one bank to the other, along with the necessary equipment."

The Drusenheim ferry was the least heavily used of the seven ferries operating on the Rhine. In the first half of 1846 and the second half of 1848, the following people used it:

	1st semester 1846	2nd semester 1848
Personnes	1096	2544
Bestiaux	3	6
Voitures	24	8

At that time, a steamboat was already in service on the Beinheim–Tezheim route, which was much better situated in relation to northern Baden.

The long-awaited bridge between Drusenheim and Greffern was inaugurated on August 8, 1875. Its cost totaled 137,860 marks, shared between the State of Baden and Alsace. Consisting of 35 floating pontoons, it was 250 meters long. With the opening of the bridge, traffic crossing the Rhine increased significantly. So much so that the local road from Rohrwiller to Drusenheim—"used by the residents of Haguenau, Kalterihouse, Bischwiller, Oberhoffen, 1-lanhoffen, and Rohrwiller to transport hop poles"—was classified as a branch of the main road connecting Haguenau to Bischwiller.

The Drusenheim ferry was the least heavily used of the seven ferries operating on the Rhine. In the first half of 1846 and the second half of 1848, the following people used it:

	1st semester 1846	2nd semester 1848
Personnes	1096	2544
Bestiaux	3	6
Voitures	24	8

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Treaties Concerning the Rhine Border

When Alsace was annexed to France under the Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, the main branch of the Rhine—known as the "Thalweg," which remained navigable even during periods of low water—formed the border between France and the Holy Roman Empire.

At the same time, another boundary was retained, because, since time immemorial, it had defined the respective locations of the properties belonging to the neighboring municipalities. From that point on, therefore, there were two boundaries between France and Germany: the so-called "sovereignty" boundary and the so-called "property" or "municipal boundary."

The first varied with the frequent changes in the river's thalweg.

The second was fixed in position and generally divided the entire bed of the Rhine into two parts along a longitudinal line.

Since the two frequently overlapped, of any two adjacent municipalities, there was always at least one in which part of the properties fell under the sovereignty of the opposite bank.

On the other hand, since property boundaries could largely be drawn only on the islands, they were destroyed along with the islands, and reestablishing them on the new islands required human effort.

The ongoing disputes that inevitably arose from the destruction of the physical boundary line led the governments of the bordering states to decide, in 1769, to proceed with a demarcation. The King of France appointed sieur Noblat as his commissioner; the boundary he established is still known today by his name. The commissioners' work continued until 1790 and was not yet fully completed at that time.

The Treaty of Lunéville

To avoid having two boundaries that intersect, the authors of the treaty signed in Lunéville on February 9, 1801, fell into an even more serious predicament. Under Article 6 of this treaty, each state seized all the land that the municipalities on the opposite bank owned within its territory; as a result, the property boundary—which had become identical to the territorial boundary—was subject to all the capricious variations of the river's thalweg.

Article 6 states: "The French Republic now possesses, with full sovereignty and ownership, the lands and territories located on the left bank of the Rhine that were part of the German Empire, such that the thalweg of the Rhine shall henceforth serve as the boundary between the French Republic and the German Empire."

Under this treaty, Drusenheim received the islands of Junggrund and Kœpflen from the Baden municipalities of Grauelsbaurn and Lichtenau, with areas of 19.72 ha and 10.28 ha, respectively. Our village, on the other hand, did not have to cede any land to the Baden authorities.

This treaty did little to improve relations between the French and Baden villages along the Rhine. Indeed, "this river, in the stretch it flows between France and the Grand Duchy, is so swift that it changes its course—or thalweg—at least every six months, and consequently, the boundary changes at the same time."[10] Under these conditions, the border shifted in accordance with the river's constantly changing thalweg. On August 7, 1813, the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin wrote to the Subprefect of Strasbourg: "I have been informed that between Fort-Louis and Drusenheim, posts bearing the coat of arms of Baden have been placed on the left bank of the Rhine and in several other locations as a sign of taking possession of

[10] ADBR 15 M 312

the territory."[11] These acts of encroachment on French territory by the Baden forces, or on Baden territory by the French, were to be settled by the Treaties of Paris.

The Treaties of Paris

The Treaties of Paris of 1814 and 1815, with regard to the Rhine border, were intended to remedy this disorder. Their provisions reestablished the principle of a fixed boundary of ownership, distinct from that of sovereignty, but without altering the application of the former. These provisions mandate the restoration of the state of possession of the islands as it existed at the time of the Treaty of Lunéville; they require the appointment of commissioners charged with determining the ownership status of the islands following a new survey of the river.

The provisions of the Treaties of Paris were to apply only to the Rhine Islands. Consequently, it was agreed:

1) What would be called an all-terrain island surrounded by the waters of the Rhine at the time of their average high water level.

2) That land areas connected to the mainland by dams or engineering structures may be regarded as islands only to the extent that such structures have not caused sufficient siltation to establish an open passage between the land areas and the mainland that would still exist after the removal of the engineering structure.

The Commission for the Reciprocal Restitution of the Rhine's Silt worked from November 11 to 22, 1817, in the Kehl-Drusenheim sector, and from November 30 to December 8, 1817, between Drusenheim and Iffezheim. Drusenheim was granted the following islands by an official report drawn up on November 12, 1817:

-- Le Salmenkopf, Le Salmenkopfgrund, Le Rubenkopf in the municipality of Heimlingen
-- The Rossmoerder of the municipality of Schertzheim
-- The Bischoffsheimergriinde, the Geisenkopf, and the Wechdornenkopf in the municipality of Freistett were ceded by the protocol of March 23, 1823:
-- The Kaelbergrund and the Bernhardskopf in the Baden municipality of Greffern.

On the other hand, the canton of "Koeplflen"[12]—over which a dispute arose in 1819 with the German municipalities of Lichtenau and Grauelsbaum—was not an island and therefore did not have to be returned.[13] It appears from documents filed with the administration that they have no standing to claim rights in the canton of Koepfflen, which comprises the "Ober and Untergrund," also known as Lichtenauer- Koepffel, and which was allocated to the French Domain by the Treaty of Lunéville. During the operation carried out pursuant to the orders of the respective governors dated September 19, 1817, it was established that the canton—which had been connected to the French mainland for 20 years by engineering structures that still exist— did not fall into the category of those whose reciprocal restitution had been ordered by the Treaty of September 20, 1815."

The Treaties of Paris settled the issues regarding the return of islands in our area, with the exception of Junggrund, "which was to be returned to the municipality of Grauclsbaum, while at the same time it could be included among the lands to be exchanged in order to rectify the boundary."[14] When Mayor Klein declared on August 30, 1826 "that there are no longer any properties owned by the Baden municipalities in the suburbs of Drusenheim, but that it is to his full knowledge that the municipalities of

[11] ADBR 15 M 324
[12] Aujourd'hui Koepfel
[13] ADBR 15 M 326
[14] ADBR 15 M 333

Lichtenau, Greffern, Grauelsbaum, and Schertzheim, which border said outskirts, own properties still located on French territory—that is, between the Rhine and the boundaries of the Drusenheim district,"[15] he was likely referring, among other places, to the Junggrund.

Even today, people still speak of the "Schwoowegarte" or "Germans' Garden"—that is, a strip of land located near Junggrund, which at the time belonged to the Baden municipality of Scherzheim but lay within French territorial boundaries. The municipality of Grauelsbaum was to sell 3 ha 41 of arable land from the Junggrund to two Strasbourg residents, Messrs. Moerlen and Husson, improperly, since it was under the agreement of April 5, 1840, signed between France and the Grand Duchy of Baden, that the Junggrund was to be transferred to the municipality of Drusenheim. Other plots of land located between Offendorf and Stattmatten appeared on the list of sales unduly made by the Baden municipalities, namely:

– In Offendorf, the Rohrkopf, sold by the municipality of Scherzheim to Henri Masse of Drusenheim
– at Dalhunden, the Altenkopf, the Kohlfeld, the Kohlfeldwald, and the Girodkopfel—via the municipality of Greffern—to Jean Wenger of Drusenheim.

All of these plots of land will be transferred to the municipalities of Offendorf and Dalhunden under the 1840 Convention.

The property boundary established under the Treaties of Paris was marked from Basel to Lauterbourg by 120 boundary markers, or Rheinmark, generally placed in the riverbed. The four vertical sides, each 90 cm high, bore the coats of arms of Baden and France, the marker's number, and the date of manufacture (1820). Between 1870 and 1918, the coat of arms of France was removed and replaced with the letters "E.L.", standing for "Elsass-Lothringen." The horizontal face indicates, via a line running down the center of the marker, the direction of the next marker and the initials of the four neighboring villages. Boundary markers Nos. 92 and 93, located within the municipal boundaries of Drusenheim, are still preserved today. Markers 94, 95, and 96 were placed within the municipal boundaries of Grauelsbaum, Greffern, and Dalhunden. The boundary demarcation between Râle and Lauterbourg was completed by the end of 1823.

The Rhine: Restored and Corrected

There are no maps accurate enough to clearly trace the river's course from the Middle Ages through the 19th-century river-regulation works. A map by Chevalier Beaurain, engraved in France to depict Turenne's campaigns along the banks of the Rhine from 1674 to 1675, shows a multitude of wooded islands in the riverbed, separated by an equal number of water channels of varying widths. Our village, now a kilometer away, was then located on its bank. Deep channels flowed past La Wantzenau and Gambsheim, while Dalhunden was on the right bank. Left to its own devices, the Rhine long followed a disorderly course, changing its bed with every major flood, winding through a shifting and variable network of secondary channels, spreading over large areas to the detriment of agriculture and the riverside population, which were exposed to incessant flooding.

The first genuine attempt to regulate the Rhine dates back to the late 18th century and was the work of General d'Arçon (1733–1800) through his "General Plan on the Means of Gradually Concentrating the Rhine's Branches into a Permanent Channel."[16]

General d'Arçon writes,

"Not only would it be honorable for an administration to control the tributaries that form so many destructive torrents (for it would be a shame if, even now, the Rhine were still being compared to

[15] ADBR 15 M 314
[16] BNUS MS 146 AL 786

the rivers of the wildest parts of America), but this project also offers other advantages that are worth mentioning:

1) Navigation on the Rhine, as it stands today, is extremely arduous and costly, to the point that it can even be considered impractical when traveling upstream; this is because there are no towpaths, and it is impossible to establish them along a riverbank that is constantly interrupted by a large number of side channels, whose branches multiply in a highly variable manner. It is clear that a towpath, established along a clear and defined bank, would remove this obstacle. One might object that any kind of channel straightening would increase the speed of the current, which would necessarily require an increase in the motive power used for towing. But it must be noted that the major—and indeed the only—difficulty in this navigation stems from the fact that, in the current state of affairs, one is forced to unhitch the horses at every turn to load them onto the boat and help them cross the side channels that interrupt the tow. Moreover, the river's speed would become more uniform, and even if it were increased overall, it would still be less than it is now at certain points, due to the bottlenecks encountered there. Now, since under current conditions the few boats that travel up the Rhine navigate these passages quite well, it follows that upstream navigation would generally become easier.

2) The current border between France and its neighboring states is as shifting as the river's whims, since it is determined by the direction of the main current, which, from one moment to the next, astonishes the riverside inhabitants by causing them to change rulers. This results in unrest, or at least in constant negotiations and provisional treaties that are scarcely more stable than the river's fluctuations, which are the very cause of them. The proposed project will first establish the boundaries of the states, putting an end to pretexts for discord among the riparian states over matters that often do not merit the government's attention, but to which commissioners with a vested interest in schisms find a way to attach great importance. Finally, the very outline of this plan (even before any part of it is implemented) will put an end to endless commissions, which are all the more burdensome because they have no end in sight.

3) All the branches and false channels that currently divide the river and spread out loosely over an average width of nearly 1,000 toises would gradually fill up. Agriculture would yield a tremendous return. Worthless land would be made productive. At least in the early stages, we would obtain a vast expanse of woods and pastures, which, as the soil improved, would yield meadows and even arable land.

4) As things stand, countless oxbow lakes serve as perpetual breeding grounds for epidemics. Consequently, the banks of the Rhine are generally rife with fever. We would thus rid ourselves of an inexhaustible source of disease that will most certainly affect future generations. It is true that we could only enjoy this benefit after the successive filling-in of the oxbow lakes that we propose to eliminate as part of the overall straightening project. Instead of the piecemeal efforts being carried out today—which are merely temporary stopgaps—we are perpetuating foul swamps that breed disease-causing germs..

5) It is important to note that the residents along the river, in addition to the spurs, bank-reinforcing embankments, and dams they construct right along the riverbank to prevent the floods that threaten them, are forced to build earthen levees along nearly the entire length of both banks. These dikes are not, nor can they be, intended to prevent new diversions. Their composition of sandy soil renders them incapable of doing so. They are built solely to prevent, during major floods, the floodwaters from spreading over vast tracts of cultivated land.

They must therefore withstand only the surface flow of the water and must be distinguished fundamentally from other embankments or "epys" used for bank reinforcement and damming, which consist of fascines firmly anchored to the riverbed. Now, the overall project we are proposing would serve a dual purpose: not only would it confine the Rhine to a permanent

channel, but that same channel would be sized so as to accommodate the entire volume of water during the most severe floods. As a result, we would be spared those poor-quality sandy dikes that degrade the soil, are very costly, are constantly breaking, and create numerous stagnant pools due to the ditches from which the earth needed to build them is excavated.

6) The maps accompanying this report will give an idea of the extent of the land that would be acquired as a result of the proposed project. They show that the Rhine, taken along its average course, together with its islands, the pools, and the oxbow lakes that re-emerge from time to time, an area more than 900 toises wide; this, over the total length of 100,000 toises that the Rhine flows through Alsace, amounts to an area of 90 million toises squared, which is entirely at the mercy of the river's destructive forces. If, therefore, it were decided to confine it to a width of 200 toises between parallel banks, it would occupy no more than 20 million toises squared.

It is true that part of this large acquisition would initially consist only of woods, the soil of which would rise only over time, through sediment deposited by the water; but the debris from these woods and other vegetation would soon form topsoil; one would then have pastures, and 15 or 20 years later, meadows, and eventually even arable land."[17]

General d'Arcon called for the convening of a commission comprising representatives of the princes of the right bank to put an end to "the war of the fascines." Each of the riverside residents was then striving to protect their villages from flooding using makeshift dikes reinforced with fascines; however, the construction of these dikes resulted in diverting the river's waters toward the opposite downstream bank, so that every improvement made locally on one bank led to a worsening of the situation on the other side. D'Arcon devotes the 18th century "sheet" of his report to the Drusenheim-Dalhunden area. Unfortunately, this sheet or map, like all the others, no longer exists. "At the level of Drusenheim and Dalhunden, the main current hugs the right bank and threatens the village of Grauelsbaum, from which it has already swept away three houses and part of the shoreline. It is said that this is the third time this village has been forced to relocate."

The battle over the barrier between the owners of the opposite banks was more intense in the stretch depicted on this sheet and the next than in any other part of the Rhine. The town of Druzenheim had erected a dam at points 2-2. This operation appeared intended to divert the main current through the Empire branch and away from our banks. The Imperial forces, for their part, had attempted to dam the river at points 3-3 by preparing the B.B. cut. This operation would certainly have succeeded, but it appears they did not persist with it because, being occupied with the defense of the village of Grefferen and, of greater importance, with the complete capture of the Empire branch, they judged that it would be much more advantageous for them to carry out the major dam at points 4-4 without worrying about the consequences that might result for our banks. Then the main current surged in the most threatening manner toward the village of Dalhunden. The entire river was about to converge via the C.C. branch, which would inevitably have struck the D.D. bank, threatening to break through precisely in the middle of the village of Dalhunden, but that was not yet the greatest danger, since the Rhine still threatened another breach at points F.F. against the villages of Dengelsheim and Statthaten—and who knows how far the consequences of such a catastrophe might have extended? This was the state of affairs in July 1787 when, alerted by the dangers they faced, our residents finally recognized the need to coordinate their efforts. This misfortune might thus have led to a positive outcome. But that positive outcome was accompanied by a terrible drawback: that of having allowed ourselves to be pressed to the point of being forced to beg the Margrave of Baden for mercy regarding this threatening dam at Grefferen, the completion of which we asked him to suspend—and one can believe that he agreed to this only because of a project whose benefits are for him and all the expenses for us.

[17] BNUS MS 146 AL 786

The Revolution and then the war prevented General d'Arçon's plans from being carried out. Negotiations between France and the Grand Duchy of Baden on the Rhine did not resume until 1817, after the Treaties of Paris, and entered a more decisive phase beginning in 1825. A French proposal for the straightening of the Rhine was drawn up to be submitted, along with that of Baden Colonel Tulla, for review by a joint Franco-Baden commission. But Tulla, who was to die shortly thereafter, faced strong opposition in Baden at the time. The disagreement between the French plans, which favored a curved course, and the Baden plans, which advocated a straight course, persisted until 1840.

In the end, it was Tuila's design that was adopted when the Convention between France and the Grand Duchy of Baden was signed on April 5, 1840. The work, which began around 1850, consisted mainly of:

– by establishing two straight, stone-paved banks, 200 m apart at Huningue and 250 m apart at Lauterbourg, on which the towpaths run and which define the river's channel.

– and then through structures connecting the levees built over the centuries by the villages, so as to form a floodplain designed to accommodate floodwaters and eliminate or reduce the risk of flooding. This riverbank is far from having a regular course parallel to the river's flow: at times it runs very close to the Rhine, as in the Drusenheim sector, and at other times it is quite distant, since it connects village dikes and winds around countless marshes and oxbow lakes, which could not provide a solid foundation for the construction work. The construction of the levees was completed downstream of Strasbourg before 1870. The risk of flooding was considerably reduced, while at the same time vast tracts of land were reclaimed from the river's former bed. However, these projects—which were massive and costly for the time—had adverse consequences for navigation.

– By shortening the route from 218 km to 184 km along the Alsatian border—a section that was straightened over a distance of about ten kilometers—they proportionally increased the gradient and thus the speed of the current, which made navigating upstream so difficult that it was, at times, impossible.

– On the other hand, as soon as the current reaches a speed of 0.50 m (it is approximately 1.50 m at Drusenheim), the gravel on the riverbed becomes mobile, following the movements of the scouring water, and it is just as impossible to predict where it will accumulate as it is to stop the effects of this phenomenon; The average river level dropped; sandbars formed on both sides of Strasbourg, threatening the navigable channel, particularly in the area between Gerstheim and Offendorf

– Finally, the increased current erodes the riverbed, sometimes exposing rocky shoals that are dangerous to ships—either simply because of their presence or because their emergence creates eddies that are difficult to navigate.

It was to address these various problems that the river was straightened in the early 20th century.

The Wildlife of the Rhine Islands

Here we quote a passage from Charles Grad's "Alsace, the Region and Its Inhabitants (1888), an eyewitness account from the time of the river regulation of wildlife on the islands of the Rhine."

"Even more than the plains, the islands of the Rhine attract both hunters and naturalists. By connecting the North Sea to the great lakes of Switzerland, the river provides a natural route for the migration of waterfowl. Web-footed birds, long-winged gliders, and long-legged shore runners—all species, large and small, of the feathered world, forced by the Arctic ice to retreat to a milder climate—flock to the Alsatian Rhine. It is impossible to find a more favorable migration route for the countless ducks, wild geese, scoters, and teals coming from the Gulf of Finland and the Arctic Ocean. Also appearing along its course, though more rarely, are the magnificent black swan, the Scandinavian short-toed eagle, the osprey, and the cormorant—rare, accidental, lost, or disoriented species, swept off course

by major atmospheric storms, but which resume their journey by following the current of the green waters of the thalweg.

The stagnant waters of the river's old branches—erased by river-regulation projects and gradually transformed into dense, impenetrable marshes—offer a comfortable refuge for wading birds: snipes, bitterns, herons, crake, coots, rails, and moorhens—all marsh birds with long toes suited for walking on mud. As accommodating hosts, the waders also share their domain with the paddlers—the families with webbed feet. When the evening bell rings, the ducks leave the vast expanses of the deep waters and submerged meadows—their daytime home, where they believe themselves to be unapproachable—to descend, whistling, onto the muddy pools. For their part, the lapwings, by the hundreds, circle morning and evening over the nearest plowed fields, but bask during the hot hours of the day on the sandbars and pebbles in the middle of the straightened riverbed. Ringed plovers, which nest on the bare sand, are also very numerous, as are the starlings in the reeds. Two or three species of terns—those graceful marine swallows, passing through only to raise their young broods—trace their endless curves along the banks during the warm season.

The Rhine has long been a great infidel, as capricious as a beautiful woman, often changing its course, moving shamelessly and without restraint from one bank to the other, flowing from Alsace to Baden, shifting back and forth between them, leaving them dry or lavishing its favors on them as it pleased, without rule or principle. In order to curb these disturbances—which were intolerable in a highly developed agricultural region—the governments of the neighboring countries agreed to impose a correction on the river that now confines it to an artificial channel, from which it must not and can no longer escape. Before the channelization work—now nearly complete along the entire length of Alsace—the main current had spawned, along its entire course to the right and left, a multitude of small tributaries, like so many lost children, which are called not the "sons" but the "arms" of the Rhine. Now these little Rhines—which people are striving to make disappear as part of the river's realignment by filling their beds with stones and mud—these illegitimate children, as a result of modern legal decisions, still form a network of islands, home to the birds mentioned above. Doomed to disappear as the river's old branches are obliterated or silted up, the islands tend to merge and grow larger year by year—much to the regret of future hunters. Some of these islands are merely simple banks of pebbles, often submerged by high water and devoid of vegetation. Others, more extensive and separated by wide, deep stretches of water, feature high banks and fine sandy beaches, ancient willows with stumps gnawed by floods, dense oak forests, meadows in the low-lying areas, and cultivated fields on the higher ground, inaccessible to floodwaters. Roe deer graze in groups within the clearings and behind curtains of tall grass, where young peasant girls, fresh from their baths, watch them in the summer. Wild boars seek out their favorite wallows in the low-lying areas, amid thickets of thorns, where hares find a peace unknown on the plain. In the fall, when venison is scarce elsewhere—in the great forests between the Ill and the Rhine—pheasants abound in the shelter of these refuges, and partridges seek asylum there, a sanctuary they consider inviolable. On hunting days, this area presents the hunter with many difficulties due to the multitude of small streams that must be crossed in all directions.

Here, the pleasure of fishing can be combined with the joys of hunting. Despite advances in land reclamation—accelerated by river correction projects—the old river branches still hide many unfathomable pits. Centenarian fish live at the bottom of these pits amid a tangle of thick weeds and worm-eaten branches. It's impossible to set a net there to catch moss-backed carp and old catfish. On the other hand, beautiful perch and enormous pike take the bait. In May, the shad appears—a migratory species like the salmon and the sturgeon. The sturgeon is rare in the Upper Rhine; but salmon continue to provide excellent fishing between Strasbourg and Brisach, despite the difficulty of spawning in a narrow riverbed with a current that is too fast. Capable of living equally well in both saltwater and freshwater, salmon leave the North Sea in the summer to swim up the Rhine as far as the Laufenburg Falls. Fishing for salmon takes place mainly from June through December, the spawning season. It is upon its arrival in the river that its red flesh is at its most delicate. During its stay in freshwater, the fish loses weight. When

it is time to spawn, the female uses her head to dig a hole in the gravel and lays her eggs in this sort of nest. The male follows and fertilizes the eggs with his milt. Seven to eight weeks later, the young salmon hatch. They remain in the Rhine for fifteen to sixteen months and migrate to the sea in schools in April of the year following their birth.

"Salmon fishing in the Rhine, says Maurice Engelhard, is done using nets, but it is practiced in various ways depending on the location. The standard gear consists of a large square net equipped with a long pole. This square net is placed on the riverbed, and in front of it, another net with very wide mesh is stretched vertically. The salmon can pass through it easily, but it always brushes against the net to some extent, which, by means of strings, causes a bell to ring. Immediately, the fisherman rushes over, moves the frame's counterweight, and the salmon is caught. At other times, the fishermen go to spend the night on a sandbar in the Rhine. They take care to choose a cloudless sky and a beautiful moonlit night. A few meters from the sandbar, a small scaffold three meters high is erected with poles, ending in a sort of seat. There the lookout takes his place. He watches the river, and since the salmon swim just below the surface as they travel up the Rhine, a wake reveals their approach. As soon as this happens, the lookout waves his hat; at this signal, a boat sets out upstream from the sandbar, and the catch is made… unless, of course, the lookout has been misled by the moon's shimmering effects. Good and bad luck vary with the waxing and waning of the moon."

The most abundant catches occur during the spawning season. When the river's waters recede in the fall, after the snow melts, our fishermen from Artzenheim build a small hut for an extended stay by the water's edge. They choose a small stretch of clear, fast-flowing water in the Rhine's bed—neither too wide nor too deep—where the pebbles glisten and form a basin suitable for holding salmon eggs. The October fogs have spread along the banks. Two nets are set in the water: one stretched across the stream perpendicular to the current, the other—with a surface area of 3 square meters—placed at the bottom in front of the first. The two nets, tied together, form a right angle; the perpendicular net is fixed, while the submerged net is movable, so that it can be lifted and folded back against the perpendicular net using ropes that lead to the hut. A male salmon secured by a rope serves as bait. It swims among the nets with the rope under its nostrils, secured in place of two broken teeth, while the other end is connected to a bell inside the hut, where the fishermen, lying in wait, quietly smoke their pipes. After a wait of varying length, a female salmon appears, followed by one or two males.

They bicker a bit while keeping their mate company, but eventually they come to an understanding and share their mate's affections. Upon reaching the spawning grounds, the large female salmon is captivated by the clarity of the water: she cannot resist the pleasure of laying her eggs on this bed of sparkling pebbles. Her two traveling companions prepare to slip lovingly into the nest chosen by their good friend. Not so fast, though, because the captive salmon wants to join the party. This new rival will be driven away. Two is already too many; three is too many! Shooting forward like an arrow, one of the companions lunges furiously at the newcomer. The unfortunate fish, with a rope around its neck and broken teeth, cannot defend itself and flees. The carp-like leap it makes to escape violently tugs on the rope and sets off the bell inside the hut—whereupon the fishermen rush over. One grabs the rope tied to the fugitive's gills to guide it toward the net, where the jealous salmon leaps in pursuit. Meanwhile, the other fisherman pulls on the horizontal net, which rises against the vertical net, and jealousy claims yet another victim. Thus, the finest fish of the Rhine, like the magnificent black grouse of the High Vosges, succumbs to the recklessness of love. Under favorable conditions, two skilled fishermen can catch up to six salmon in a single day, each weighing between 10 and 30 pounds."

The Decommissioning of Drusenheim as a Military Post

In the early 19th century, following the enemy occupation of 1815–1818, the fortifications of Drusenheim—which consisted more of entrenchments and redoubts than of masonry structures—were in a sorry state. "The property owners whose land bordered the ramparts extended the hedgerows of their

gardens all the way to the crest of the parapet, planting the embankment of the rampart with fruit trees; others living near the Moder Bridge took advantage of the demolition of the rampart—carried out at that location by the Corps of Engineers to rebuild the bridge—and seized the fortification land for buildings and gardens; outside the said post, a suburb has sprung up to the right and left of the Strasbourg road, which would need to be encircled by a bridgehead; on the Lauterbourg road, another suburb has sprung up, no less detrimental to the defense of the said post. If we add to this picture the deterioration of the parapets—which are barely one meter wide at the top—the deterioration of the escarp and counterscarp slopes, and the various openings that the municipality took the liberty of cutting through the ramparts to allow water to drain from the village, we will have a complete picture of the current state of the fortifications."[18] How did we arrive at this situation described by the Corps of Engineers in 1824?

The Law of July 10, 1791, declared as national property not only the fortifications of military strongholds or outposts, but also all structures forming part of the border defenses, such as redoubts and entrenchments.[19] It would be difficult not to include Drusenheim in this category. In 1792 and 1793, the wars of the Revolution necessitated the restoration of Drusenheim's fortifications; at the same time, it was deemed necessary to add outer works and an inner rampart with a military road at the foot of the rampart's embankment.

The owners of the land on which these new structures were partially erected, claiming that they had not been compensated for the dispossession of their property, reclaimed it when the troops evacuated Drusenheim. Not only did some of the residents reclaim what had just been temporarily taken from them, but they also encroached on the city walls, which were considered national property. The Military Engineering Corps lodged a complaint against these encroachments.

These disputes were submitted to the Prefectural Council of the Bas-Rhin Department, which, after careful consideration, issued a decree stating that since the State could not prove through legal documents that the residents from whom land had been taken had been compensated, they were authorized to reclaim it, but only within the boundaries of the land they had owned prior to 1790. These boundaries were set at the foot of the embankment of the former rampart on one side, and the crest of the counterscarp of the moat on the other.

Private individuals, for their part, argued that according to the town's land register compiled in 1729, properties bordering the city wall must extend "all the way to the rampart." From this, the adjacent property owners concluded that "their properties must extend to the inner crest of the parapet, since the parapet formed the rampart." A lawsuit against the state ensued, but the plaintiffs' claims were dismissed in 1841. The 24 "offenders," according to a report prepared in 1840 by the Corps of Engineers, were as follows:

1) those in the first category who dug the ditch that was incorporated into private properties as a result of the lowering of the crest of the counterscarp:

Gless Jacques	Devaux Anselme
Schwob François Antoine	Wagner,Joseph
Gumbel Joseph	Wenger Jean
Starck Mathieu	Robin Jean
Doriath Ignace	Kormann Ignace et Michel
Beninger Jacques et François	Halter Joseph
Huck Jean	Schmitt Laurent
Beunat Edmond	Ursch Jean

[18] ADBR 2 Q 90

[19] ADBR 2 Q 90

2) those in the second category who plowed the outer slope of the parapet down to the bottom of the ditch and planted hedges at the foot of said slope:

Beunat Edmond	Benig Nicolas
Gander Louis	Pfad Jacques
Delord Théodore	Gabel Jacques

In 1834, given the state of neglect of the fortifications, the Bas-Rhin General Council had requested that our village be decommissioned as a military post. The Ministry's response on May 31, 1836, was negative: "considering that the Drusenheim post is suitably located for the purpose it is intended to serve and that there can be no doubt as to its preservation until Fort-Louis is restored and brought into good defensive condition,"[20] However, the decommissioning was not far off. On Wednesday, October 8, 1851, the state-owned land—nearly 4.20 hectares, originating from the former fortifications—was to be auctioned off at the Drusenheim town hall. Thus ended Drusenheim's history as a fortified village.

The Village's Economic Activity

Further details are provided in the report commissioned by Prefect Migneret in 1854: "Good conditions regarding means of employment. Agriculture, where wages have risen steadily; the communal plots enjoyed by 250 out of every 300 families; a spinning mill; the industry in Bischwiller when it is active; work on the Rhine; logging operations; and the knitting of fishnet stockings would be sufficient to ensure the livelihood of the working class, which is numerous in the municipality; but given the spending habits of the majority and the usurious practices that are particularly prevalent in small-scale farming, the first industrial or food crisis will see the resurgence of poverty—which is currently limited to the elderly and the infirm—through a charity office subsidized by the municipality and a mutual aid society among the workers at the spinning mill. Education is in good shape."

There is no doubt that the main employers of the working class in the 19th century were the Antoine Meyer family's brickworks, established in 1817 at a place called Spangenfeld on the site of the former Dietsch brickworks, the Rhine riverworks beginning with the start of the river correction project, the construction of the Strasbourg-Lauterbourg railroad line, which opened in July 1876, and, above all, the spinning mill.

The Spinning Mill

The Drusenheim spinning mill was founded in 1843. As early as the beginning of the 19th century, the "Breymuhle" mechanical spinning mill was already in operation. As early as 1810, it had one of the first wool-carding machines, built in Passy by a man named Douglas, who had brought the plans from England in 1802. It was the only factory that had been established on the Moder River in our area. In 1810, Klein and Masse—the latter being the father-in-law of Imperial General Salm, with whom he lived at Junggrund—submitted an application "to establish a mill on the Moder River for grinding grain and processing hemp and plaster."[21] (1) However, the two applicants did not follow through with their project.

In 1837, Auguste Reibell, a landowner residing in Herrlisheim and the general's uncle, requested from the prefect of the Bas-Rhin authorization "to establish a starch factory and a spinning mill—either for cotton or wool—on a plot of land located in the area known as Neurieth, on the outskirts of Drusenheim and belonging to the municipality of Drusenheim." The municipality granted its approval for the lease of the land, "considering that the proposed establishment would provide the residents of Drusenheim with ample employment, whether through construction or ongoing operations, and even more so if the

[20] SHAT M R 1187
[21] ADBR S 949

petitioner were to build a two-wheel mill on the premises, which would be of great benefit to the municipality."[22]

On March 13, 1838, Mr. Reibell received a favorable decision from the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin, on the condition that the petitioner comply with the following requirements:

1) All wool shipments destined for the facility must be presented at the Drusenheim market for inspection and entry into an open account, as must the wheat produced there.

2) Only wool yarns of No. 4 and below may be manufactured at the facility. Any yarn of a higher number found there shall be deemed to have been smuggled in and seized as such.

3) With regard to the starch factory, the petitioner shall be required to comply with the formalities imposed by the general customs regulations concerning the movement of raw materials sent to the factory and of the starch.

4) Customs employees shall be free to carry out their duties in the various workshops under the supervision of a municipal officer.

A few weeks later, on June 20, 1838, Reibell, as part of a public hearing, applied for permission to build a dam on the Moder River at a place called "Kuhlaeger" to raise the river's water level by 70 cm and channel the water to his factory via a canal running in a straight line from the dam to the natural course of the H. River. The mill would be located approximately 1,100 meters from the ramparts of Drusenheim, 200 meters from the royal forest known as Barrwald, and 200 meters from the upper mill called Breimühle.[23]

Opposition from several residents delayed the government's final approval to build a diversion canal until June 6, 1843. In 1854, Reibell obtained permission to dredge the bed of the Moder River from his mill to the bridge in our village. He requested and obtained the concession for the head of water he was able to gain through this dredging. The Wenger family, owners of the Dalhunden mill, did not agree with this; to reconcile the interests of the various parties involved, they were authorized to construct, 107 meters downstream from the Drusenheim bridge, in the bed of the Moder, a partially movable dam, for the purpose of raising the water level of this river and diverting a portion of it into the Kreutzrhein via the Altrhein, forming the intake canal for the Dalhunden mill.[24]

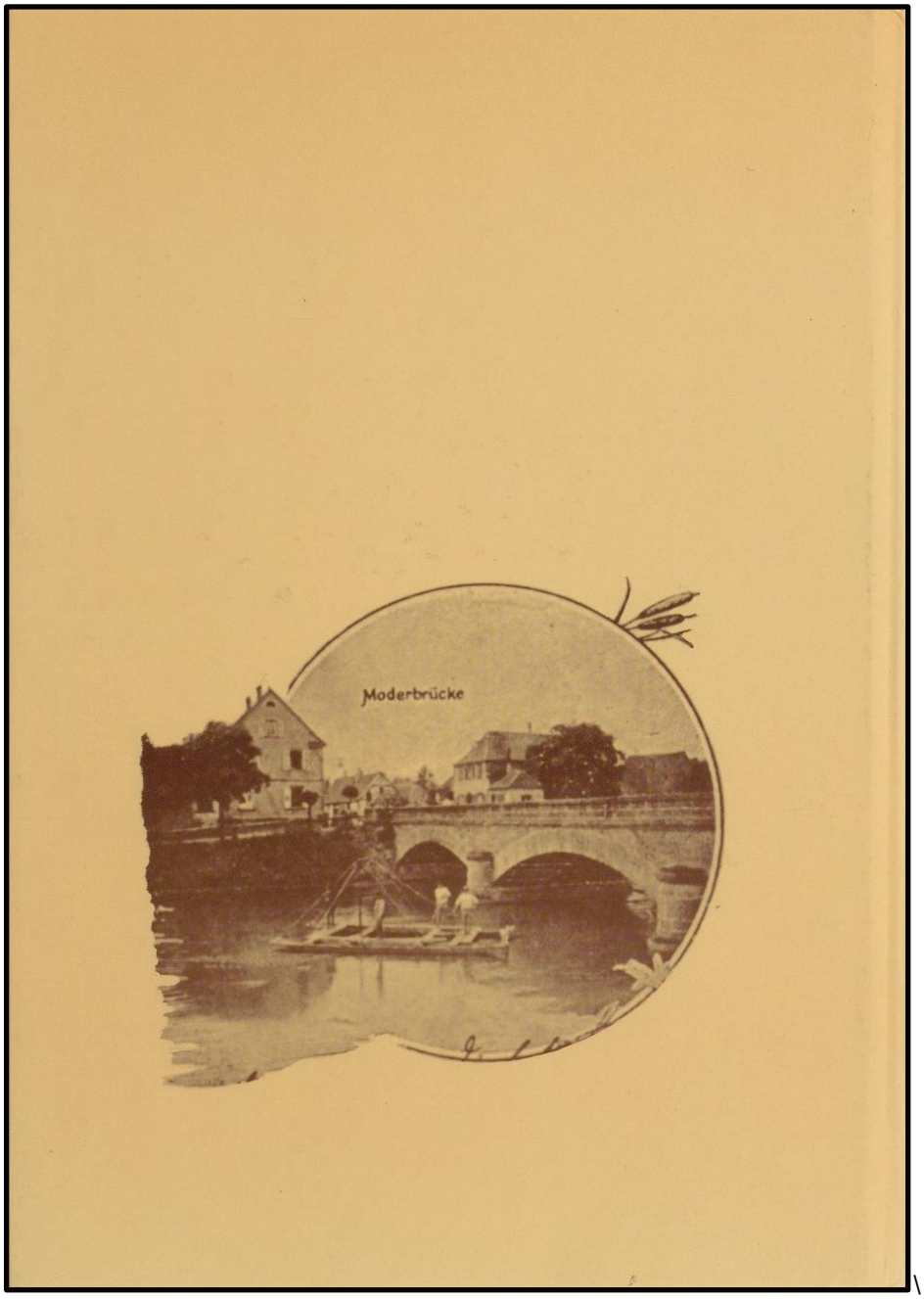
The Drusenheim spinning mill was sold around 1860 by the Reibell family to the Wenger family. At that time, it was the largest of all the mills located along the Sauer, Zinsel, Zorn, and Moder rivers. In 1860, it had 12 sets of spinning machines, 8 fulling machines, and 5 washing machines. It employed about 100 female workers and was the village's main industry. Its clientele consisted of weavers from Bischwiller, who had previously had their yarn spun on a contract basis in Germany. After 1870, the Wenger spinning mill suffered the repercussions of the collapse of the textile industry in Bischwiller but eventually overcame these difficulties by undertaking contract manufacturing of carded wool yarn.

The War of 1870

In 1870, war broke out between France and Germany. Military operations spared our region. At most, we could hear the cannon fire from the Battle of Woerth on August 7. Ignace Streibig reports in his historical account that Father Winter observed the course of the battle through a telescope from the top of the church bell tower's terrace. When he came down around 4:00 p.m. and told the local people that the French troops had been defeated, no one wanted to believe him. They asked him if he might have confused the German and French positions. Abbé Winter's claims were confirmed the very next day when

[22] ADBR 5 M 183
[23] ADBR S 950
[24] appelé plus tard Altwasser

the first wounded soldiers passing through Drusenheim confirmed the defeat of our army. In late August, German troops marched through our village on their way to lay siege to Strasbourg, and after Strasbourg fell, entire cohorts of French prisoners followed.

After the defeat, Alsace was annexed by Germany. The Catholic population of Alsace greatly feared this annexation by Protestant Prussia.

However, religious life did not suffer as a result. On the contrary, the late 19th century was marked by the beautification of our church: a beautiful high altar, as well as two side altars and a pulpit, were installed. Religious life experienced a new surge of vitality.