

NEW SOUFFLENHEIM RESEARCH

Robert Wideen : 2025

Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History

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New Soufflenheim Research : November 2, 2025

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More writings by Michael Nuwer can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/view/nuwerfamilyhistory/home>



A Wedding in Lower Alsace, Alfred Pabst

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COMPARISON OF CIVIL AND CHURCH MARRIAGE RECORDS

The main point of interest (given the limited number of documents studied) is that the date recorded in the civil record is not necessary the date of the church ceremony:

Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner

Civil record: 21 Feb 1811 Church: 25 Feb 1811

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284407#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284407-1409792>

Anton Nuwer and Marguerite Ludwig

Civil record: 11 April 1818 Church: 14 April 1818

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414-1410259>

Joseph Voegele and Catherine Muller

Civil record: 1 February 1821 Church: 1 February 1821

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284417#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284417-1410452>

MARRIAGE OF ANTONI NUWER AND MARGARET LUDWIG

14 April 1818 (Civil 11 April 1818), St. Michel's, Soufflenheim, Marriage. Contributed by Michael Nuwer

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414-1410259>

Marriage of Antoni Nuwer and Margaret Ludwig

Our current knowledge of the wedding uniting Antoni Nuwer and Margaret Ludwig is taken from civil documents recorded in Soufflenheim and archived in Strasbourg. The first sentence of that document states: "Marriage record, celebrated at the Soufflenheim town hall, Bas-Rhin department, by the Civil

Status Officer, at three o'clock in the evening on April eleven, eighteen hundred and eighteen." (In the original French: « Acte de mariage, célébré à la Maison commune de Soufflenheim, département du Bas-Rhin, par l'Officier de l'Etat civil, à trois heures du Soir le onze avril mil huit cent dix-huit. »)

Thus, every family tree records Saturday, April 11, 1818 as the wedding day.

Civil record of marriage: <https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414-1410259>

Recently, I obtained a copy of the wedding record written in the sacramental registers of Saint Michel's parish, that is, Soufflenheim's Catholic Church. The actual church ceremony took place on Tuesday, April 14, 1818, three days after it was recorded at City Hall. (Remember, the 1818 wedding ceremony took place in the "old church," which is now demolished.)

The attached image shows the Church record. It is written in Latin by the parish priest. Below is an English translation of the Latin text followed by a transcription of priest's handwriting. Regarding the witnesses, one was the father of the groom, and one was the father of the bride. In these two cases, the priest identified the family relationship. The other two witnesses were Francis Joseph Wilhelm and Joseph Messner. The former was the groom's first cousin; the latter was probably an uncle of the bride (Margaret's mother was Catherine Messner and Catherine had a brother named Joseph.) The witnesses in the church record are not the same people as the witnesses in the civil document, who were Michel Beck, Martin Fuchs, Joseph Jaeger, and one name I cannot identify.

Also note that although the groom and bride were both 22 years of age, she was considered full age (*majorennis*) while he was a minor (*minorennis*). Nineteenth Century French Civil Code required parental permission for the marriage of a woman under age 22 and a man under age 26. Thus, he was a minor and she was full age. Anton Nuwer's father gave his permission for the marriage when he signed the civil marriage certificate on April 11. I think that is what the priest meant in the church record by writing "the authentic testimony of the civil contract having been seen."

If the parents were unable to come to the town hall to give consent in person, a notarized act of consent was required. It was noted in a previous article that Johannes Kieffer signed a notarized document giving his permission for his son Louis Kieffer to get married in the town of Châlons-sur-Marne. Louis was 29 years old, and the Civil Code required men between the ages of 26 and 30 to make three written requests, at one-month intervals, seeking parental permission to be married. If all three requests were denied, then one month after the third denial, a marriage license would be issued. This rule created a four-month minimum waiting period in the absence of parental permission. (For women, the age range was 22 to 25. For men over the age of 30 and women over the age of 26, a single written request and denial was required.) The civil marriage certificate for Louis Kieffer, as well the certificate for Laurent Schmuck (another Soufflenheim-born resident of Châlons-sur-Marne) noted that notarized parental consent was given.

English translation:

Today, the fourteenth of April of the year one thousand eight hundred and eighteen, after the proclamations of the three banns had been made in my church, in our parish church of Saint Michael the Archangel in Soufflenheim, no impediment having been discovered, the authentic testimony of the civil contract having been seen, the spouses having been prepared by the sacraments of penance and Eucharist, the mutual consent of the parties having been received, they were joined by the sacred bond of

marriage in the face of the Church by me, the proper pastor of the spouses, Anthony Nuber, 22 years of age, minor, legitimate son of Anthony Nuber and of the late Mary Anne Schitt, in her lifetime his lawful wife, on the one part, and Margaret Ludwig, 22 years of age, of full age, legitimate daughter of Joseph Ludwig and Catherine Messner, lawful spouses, on the other part, both single and parishioners of our parish. Witnesses were Anthony Nuber father of the groom, Joseph Ludwig father of the bride, Francis Joseph Wilhelm, Joseph Messner, all residing here, who, together with the spouses, the aforesaid testimony having been seen, signed with their hand.

Signatures

Latin transcription:

Hodie decima quarta Aprilis Anni millesimi octingentesimi decimi octavi factis de, [in] mea Ecclesia in Ecclesia nostra parochiali ad S[anc]tum Michaelis Archangelum in Soufflenheim tribus Bannorum proclamationibus, nulloque detecto impedimento, viso testimonio authentico de facto contractu civili, propositi sponsis, per sacramenta poenitentia et Eucharistia, provié suscepto mutuo partium consensu, in facie xxx Sacro matrimonii vinculo coram me proprio sponsum parochus conjuncti sunt Antonius Nuber 22 annos natus minorennis legitimus filius Antonii Nuber et defuncta Maria Anna Schitt cum hoc viveret conjugum hujatum ex unâ et Margarita Ludwig 22 annos nata, majorennis legitimæ filia Josephi Ludwig et Catharinae Messner conjugum hujatum ex alteris partibus : ambo solutis parochiani nostri Testes erant Antonius Nuber pater sponsi, Josephus Ludwig pater sponsa, Franciscus Josephus Wilhelm, Josephus Messner omnes hujates qui cum sponis viso prefato testimonio manu subscripserunt.

Signatures

MARRIAGE OF JOHANNES NUWER AND CATHERINE KIEFFER

9 May 1843 (incorrectly written in record as 9 April 1843), St. Michel's, Soufflenheim, Marriage.
Contributed by Michael Nuwer

Johannes Nuwer and Catherine Kieffer Marriage

Church record in English

In the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-three, on the ninth day of April [should be May], after the three proclamations had been publicly made in our church, no impediment having been discovered, the prior mutual consent of the parties having been received, the authentic testimony of the civil contract having been previously seen, the law having been observed, I joined in the sacred bond of marriage, in the face of the Church, John Nuber, of full age and single, son of Anthony Nuber and Margaret Ludwig, and Catherine Kieffer, of full age and single, daughter of John Kieffer and Catherine Messner. Present as witnesses were Lawrence Kieffer, Xavier Nuber, John Messner, and Alexander Kieffer, who, together with the spouses, signed with me.

Transcription in Latin

Anno Domini millesimo octingentesimo quadragesimo tertio, die nona Aprilis, tribus proclamationibus in Ecclesia nostra publice factis, nullo detecto impedimento, recepto prævio mutuo partium consensu, viso prius testimonio authentico contractus civilis in facie, legis initi, sacro matrimonii vinculo, a me infra scripto, in facie Ecclesiæ conjunte sunt Joannes Nuver, filius majorem et solutum Antonii Nuver et Margarethæ Ludwig, et Catharinam Kieffer, filia majorem et soluta Joannis Kieffer et Catharinae Messner. Huic statuti est testes adfuerunt Laurentius Kieffer, Xaverius Nuver, Joannes Messner et Alexander Kieffer, qui una cum sponsis mecum subsignarunt.

Note: witnesses at the church were Lawrence Kieffer brother of the bride, Xavier Nuwer brother of the groom, John Messner (relationship unknown), and Alexander Kieffer brother of the bride.

Note: the priest made an error when he wrote “nona Aprilis” (i.e. 9 April) as the date of the wedding. The civil Marriage Act is dated 9 May 1843. If the church ceremony had taken place a month before the civil marriage act was recorded, then the parish priest could not have written: “the authentic testimony of the civil contract having been previously seen, the law having been observed.” If the wedding took place on 9 April, the law would not have been observed. In France, civil marriage was required before the Catholic Church would perform a religious marriage. A civil marriage can only be conducted by an official of the state, and clergy were not state officials for that purpose.

Looking more closely at the Sacramental register from Saint Michel’s parish, the Nuwer-Kieffer marriage was entered as item 12 for the year 1843. The previous entry, item number 11, was dated May 4 and the subsequent entry, item number 13, was dated May 30. This suggests that the parish priest made a mistake when he entered “9 April.” The Nuwer-Kieffer wedding ceremony almost surely took place on May 9.

The civil record of marriage (9 May 1843) is at this link:

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284439#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284439-1412136>

MARRIAGE OF JOANNES KIEFFER AND CATHERINA MESSNER RELIGIOUS

Contributed by Michael Nuwer.

Joannes Kieffer and Catherina Messner Religious Wedding Certificate

Translation in English

Today, the twenty-fifth of February, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eleven, at the ninth hour in the morning, in front of our church, I joined in the sacred bond of Matrimony, after only one proclamation had been publicly made in our parish church, the two others having been dispensed with by

the Most Reverend Vicariate of Strasbourg, as granted on the twelfth day of this month, and after dispensation had likewise been granted for the impediment of third-degree collateral kinship.

I united Johann Kieffer, son of Laurent Kieffer, farmer, and of the late Catherine Lehmann, his lawful spouse while living, residing here; and Catherine Messner, daughter of Joseph Messner and Margaretha Eck, also lawful spouses residing here. Present as witnesses to this act were Laurent Kieffer, father of the groom, Johann Mockers, our moderator, Joseph Messner, father of the bride, and Peter Messner, uncle of the bride, farmer, all residing in this parish; who, after having first seen the civil record extract, together with me, signed the present act.

(Translated by Claude Geyer)

Transcription in Latin

Hodie vigesima quinta februarii Anni Millesimi octingentesimi unadecimi hora nona matutina in facie ecclesiae nostrae sacro Matrimonii vinculo junxi una tantum proclamatione in Ecclesia nostra parochiali publice facta, super duabus una aliis alias ad huc de xxx Ecclesia Catholica faciendis xxx et super Tertii gradu collateralis agicalis consanguini, salis impedimento dispensatum est a Reverendissimo Vicariatu Argentinensi sub duodecima hujus [mensis] Joannem Kieffer, filium Laurentii Kieffer agricola et defuncta Catharina Lehmann, licite conjugem hic commorantem : et Catharinam Messner, filiam Josephi Messner et Margareta Eck, conjugum partier hic commorantem, huic Actus et Testes adfuerunt Laurentii Kieffer sponsi pater, Joannes Mockers, Huic moderator Noster, Josephus Messner sponsa pater, Petrus Messner sponsa avunculus, agricola, omnes in hac parochia commorantes, quos Viso prius extractu civili omnes, una mecum signarent.

Comments

Johannes Kieffer (1784–1852) and Catherine Messner (1781–1828) signed a marriage contract on 9 February 1811.

Their civil marriage took place at the Soufflenheim town hall on 21 February 1811 (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284407#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284407-1409792>).

The Church marriage took place at the Old Church located on the Olberg. The ceremony was on 25 February 1811.

Johannes Kieffer and Catherine Messner were second cousins. The Church register used the phrase “third-degree collateral kinship.” The groom and bride shared a set of great grandparents, namely, Lorentz Sensenbrenner and Otillia Traher.

Johannes Kieffer

his father Lorentz Kieffer

his grandmother Margaretha Sensenbrenner

his great grandparents Lorentz Sensenbrenner and Otillia Traher

Catherine Messner

her mother Margaretha Eck

her grandmother Elisabeth Sensenbrenner

her great grandparents Lorentz Sentzenbrenner and Otillia Traher

The Roman Catholic Church has a long history of marital prohibitions called impediments to marriage. Among these was a restriction on the marriage of two close relatives. During the High Middle Ages, canon law prohibited marriage between individuals within “seven degrees.” The method of calculating a degree was to simply count the number of generations back to the common ancestor. This meant that marriage to anyone up to and including a sixth cousin was prohibited. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 decreed a change in the prohibition from seven degrees to four degrees, that is, marriage up to and including third cousin was prohibited. Because Johannes Kieffer and Catherine Messner were second cousins, they needed a dispensation from the Diocese of Strasbourg which was given by the Most Reverend Vicariate of Strasbourg.

In Catholic canon law, a vicar is the representative of a ecclesiastical entity. Because there are various ecclesiastical entities within the Catholic Church, vicars perform various role within these entities. In the context of this marriage act, a vicar in Strasbourg exercised authority as the agent of the bishop of the diocese. The disposition was granted by the vicar and carried the authority of Bishop.

Among the witnesses at this wedding was Johann Mockers, who the priest described in Latin as “Huic moderator Noster.” In English, the description could be “our moderator.” But a different term might better describe the individual.

In their history of *Soufflenheim: A Town in Search of its History*, Lucien Sittler, Marc Elchinger, and Fritz Geissert writing in French, described Mockers as “d'école, organiste et sacristain.” Marie-Odile Peres translated this as “schoolteacher, organist and bedel.” The DeepL machine translator used “schoolmaster, organist and sacristan” to translate the three French words.

A Wikipedia page describes “bedel” as “A beadle, sometimes spelled bedel, is an official who may usher, keep order, make reports, and assist in religious functions” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beadle>). Another Wikipedia page describes “sacristan” as “an officer charged with care of the sacristy, the church, and their contents.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacristan>). Similarly, a French Wikipedia page for the word “sacristain” states: “the sacristan prepares all the liturgical objects needed for mass, and is responsible for the upkeep of the church and all its ancillary rooms. For religious services, the sacristan places flowers, rings bells and prepares liturgical vestments. He opens and closes the premises and informs the altar boys.”

En français : « Le sacristain prépare notamment tous les objets liturgiques nécessaires pour la messe et se consacre à l'entretien des églises et de toutes les salles annexes. En ce qui concerne les services religieux, il met en place les fleurs, actionne la sonnerie des cloches et prépare les vêtements liturgiques. Il ouvre et referme les locaux et informe les enfants de chœur. »

Another term that could be used to translated “sacristain” is “sexton,” which means a person who looks after a church and churchyard. Thus, “Johann Mockers, our sexton,” or “Johann Mockers, our sacristan” might be a better description than “Johann Mockers, our moderator.”

MARRIAGE OF LAURENT KIEFFER AND CATHERINE SCHMUCK

Contributed by Michael Nuwer.

Laurent Kieffer and Catherine Schmuck Civil Marriage Act

The civil marriage act for Laurent Kieffer and Catherine Schmuck was recorded on 20 January 1843; the church ceremony took place 24 January 1843.

Link to the civil marriage act:

<https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284439#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284439-1412131>

English translation of church record (translation by Carla Ratcliff)

The year of Our Lord 1843, the 24th day of January preceded by three proclamations publicly [made] in our church, no impediments detected, prior authentic testimony of the legitimate civil contract was seen, previous mutual consent of the parties was received, me the undersigned joined in Sacred matrimony, in the eyes of the church, Laurentius Kieffer, adult and single son of Joannes Kieffer and deceased Catharina Messner, and Catharina Schmuck adult and single daughter of deceased Joannes Schmuck and still living Catharina Helmer (...) witnesses were Michael Elchinger, Felix Goetz, Johannes Schmuck, and Joannes Nuwer who, one with the spouses and me, signed under.

The father of the bride was Francis Schmuck, not Joannes. The priest made a mistake.

The weddings of Laurent Kieffer/Catherine Schmuck (January 1843) and Johannes Nuwer/Catherine Kieffer (May 1843) were both officiated by Father Cazeaux, the parish priest at Soufflenheim. Louis Cazeaux was born in the village of Klingenthal, commune of Bœrsch, on 25 October 1803 and died in Strasbourg on 11 February 1870. A biography is presented by The Federation of History and Archaeology Societies of Alsace (FSHAA) at this web address: <https://www.alsace-histoire.org/netdba/cazeaux-louis/>

“Son of Benoît Cazeaux, artillery officer, and Elisabeth Pfeiffer. As a teenager he joined the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd organized by Mühe, where he met Axinger. Then he entered the diocesan Minor Seminary, studied theology at the Major Seminary. Ordination in August 1826. Vicar at the parish of Strasbourg Cathedral (October 1826 – September 1837), he was responsible for French preaching alternating with the Vicar General Achon de Saint-Alyre. He was also director of the nuns of Notre-Dame (April 1831 – September 1837). On 24 September 1838, he was appointed cantonal priest in Soufflenheim; there he showed great energy, but being authoritarian, he fell out with his former friend Axinger, at the time serving in Leutenheim.

“Recalled to Strasbourg (27 November 1859) as parish priest of Saint-Jean, he fulfilled his duties there with his characteristic energy. Honorary canon of the cathedral, Cazeaux became famous for his defense of the teaching of German in primary schools, following the school regulations of 1859 which made it optional. In 1867, he published a pamphlet entitled Essay on the conservation of the German language in Alsace, in which he spoke out in favor of bilingual teaching in primary schools. The essay was published in German in the *Courrier du Bas-Rhin* on 20, 21 and 22 February and 7 and 8 March 1867. Cazeaux intervened with the prefect, the rector and Napoleon III, so that the 1859 regulation could be reversed. *L'Univers* published, on 5 Sept 1868, an open letter from Cazeaux in which he compared the policy of francization pursued in Alsace to that pursued against the Polish nation. Cazeaux was also the promoter of bilingual asylum rooms (nursery schools) in Strasbourg.”

In their history of *Soufflenheim: A Town in Search of its History*, Lucien Sittler, Marc Elchinger, and Fritz Geissert wrote the following:

"In 1839 [*sic.*], the new parish priest arrived, Louis Cazeaux, born in 1803 in Klingenthal, where his father was a captain (attached to a major industrial arms company). Initially vicar at Strasbourg Cathedral, he inaugurated his arrival in Soufflenheim with the purchase of two new bells made by the Strasbourg foundryman [named] Edel. He was an extremely active priest. ...

"Father Cazeaux was very concerned with the education of young people, and donated 18,000 francs to this end. A new presbytery was built (1838). On several occasions, mention is made of the Confrérie du Rosaire, created in 1839, but dating back to the 18th century. ... Cazeaux left Soufflenheim in 1859 after 22 years of dedication, to head the parish of Saint-Jean in Strasbourg, and was buried in Soufflenheim."

Soufflenheim's elementary school is named after Louis Cazeaux. The Mayor's office at Soufflenheim offers the following explanation (<https://mairie-soufflenheim.fr/monuments/ecole-elementaire/>):

"The first traces of the presence of a school in Soufflenheim appear in the municipal account books from 1655, which mention the presence of a schoolmaster. From 1824, boys were educated in the new town hall. The girls' school was built using materials salvaged from the old Oelberg church.

"Why is it named after Louis Cazeaux? Born in Klingenthal in 1803, Louis Cazeaux was appointed priest in Soufflenheim in 1837. Concerned about the education of young people and a fervent supporter of teaching and schooling, he used his own money to buy a house to set up a day care center. These institutions were initially intended to help working-class children, left to their own devices when their parents worked. However, despite themselves, they provided a much broader response and allowed middle-class parents to benefit from a very practical childcare system. Formerly, this school was the boys' school 'd'Büweschül.'"

BAPTISM RECORDS OF MARIE ANNE AND CLÉMENTINE LUDWIG

Contributed by Michael Nuwer.

The following two baptism records are for Marie Anne Ludwig and her sister Clémentine Ludwig. There appears to be little new information in the baptism records compared with the civil birth records. Both children were baptized the same day they were born. In both cases the child's godfather was also a witness to the civil record.

Marie Anne Ludwig, born 1808

Civil record: <https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284287#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284287-1409590>

date: July 6
witnesses, both male: Amand Kapp and Michel Lappert

Church record
date: July 6
godfather: Amand Kapp
godmother: Catherine Wilhelm wife of Michel Mary

Clémentine Ludwig, born 1810

Civil record: <https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284289#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284289-1409723>

date: November 17
witnesses: Michel Mary and Michel Lappert

Church Record
date: November 17
godfather: Michel Mary
godmother: Marguerite Eisenkirch wife of Amand Kapp

Background concerning the selection of these two baptism records

I am researching a minor mystery. In the process, I obtained these two baptism records. The mystery concerns the wedding date of Joseph Ludwig (1767-1826) and his second wife, Catherine Messner (1768-1850). Their first child, Marguerite, was born 21 February 1796. A birth record can be found in the Alsace Archive (at this link: <https://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284272#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284272-1408671>).

What makes this a mystery is that the Alsace Archive contains a civil marriage record for Joseph Ludwig and Catherine Messner that is dated 30 January 1823, that is, 29 years after their daughter Marguerite was born. This marriage document acknowledged all Joseph and Catherine's children by name and age, but offers no hint as to why the record was made in 1823.

Section D of the 1823 record states: "The said spouses have declared that they have procreated together before the present marriage 7 children named Joseph Ludwig aged 28, Marguerite Ludwig aged 29, Georges-Adam Ludwig aged 23, Célestine Ludwig aged 18, Madeleine Ludwig aged 17, Marie Anne Ludwig aged 15 and Clémentine Ludwig aged 13, which children are the fruits of their union and consequently recognize them in the presence of the mayor and the undersigned witnesses as their own and legitimate children and heirs." (emphasis added)

In French: « Les dits époux ont déclaré qu'ils ont procréé ensemble avant le présent mariage 7 enfants nommé Joseph Ludwig âgé de 28 ans, Marguerite Ludwig âgée de 29 ans, Georges-Adam Ludwig âgé de 23 ans, Célestine Ludwig âgée de 18 ans, Madeleine Ludwig âgée de 17

ans Marie Anne Ludwig âgée de 15 ans et Clémentine Ludwig âgée de 13 ans lesquels enfants sont les fruits de leur œuvre et les reconnaissent en conséquence en présence du maire et des témoins soussignés pour leurs propres et légitimes enfants et héritiers »

The mystery is whether Joseph and Catherine were legally married when their children were born.

The civil birth certificates for the children of Joseph and Catherine indicate that the father and mother were married at the time of the time of birth. The birth certificate for Clémentine Ludwig, born in Soufflenheim on 17 November 1810, states:

“Joseph Ludwig, aged forty-two, farmer domiciled in this village, who presented us with a female child born yesterday, the sixteenth of the said month at eight o'clock in the evening to him and Catherine Messner, his wife, to whom he declares he wishes to give the first name of Clémentine.” (emphasis added)

In French: « Joseph Ludwig âgé de quarante-deux ans cultivateur domicilié dans cette commune, lequel nous a présenté un enfant de sexe féminin naît hier seize du dit mois à huit heures du soir de lui déclarant et de Catherine Messner son épouse, auquel il déclare vouloir donner le prénom de Clémentine. »

Similarly, in Marie Anne's birth certificate, July 6, 1808 the words "Catherine Messner son épouse" are used.

The church records also indicated that the couple was married when the children were born. The baptism records for Marie Anne and Clémentine Ludwig state that the newborn was the legitimate daughter of husband Joseph Ludwig and wife Catherine Messner. Moreover, there is no church marriage record for Joseph and Catherine in 1823.

In the typical sequence of events, the marriage of Joseph and Catherine should have occurred between January 1794 (the date of death of Joseph's first wife) and February 1796 (the date of birth of the first child, Marguerite). Civil registers for that date range exist, but those registers do not contain a marriage certificate for Joseph and Catherine. Church records can be found in the Alsace Archive up to 1792 and after 1800, which leaves a gap corresponding to the expected time when Joseph Ludwig and Catherine Messner would have been married under typical conditions.

1794 and 1795 were tumultuous years in Soufflenheim. They correspond to the period of the Great Flight. The events of that period probably affected Joseph Ludwig and Catherine Messner. The fathers of both the groom and the bride may have been living in exile at the time of Joseph and Catherine's marriage. The names Jean Ludwig and Jacques Messner are cited in *Soufflenheim: Terre de Potiers* (1998) as two of the individuals who left Soufflenheim. Jean Ludwig was a unique name in Soufflenheim. He was almost certainly Joseph's father. Catherine Messner's father was named Jacques. Although there were multiple residents of Soufflenheim with the name Jacques Messner, it is possible that Catherine's father was also a refugee who left Soufflenheim during the Great Flight.