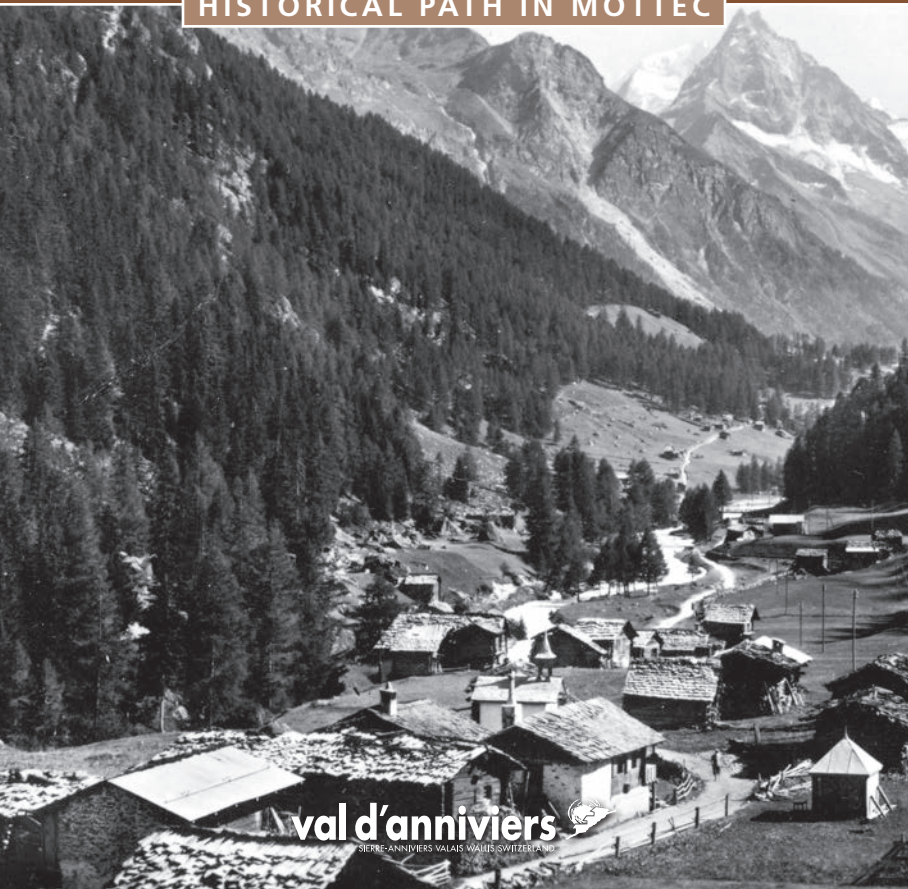


MOTTEC

HISTORICAL PATH IN MOTTEC

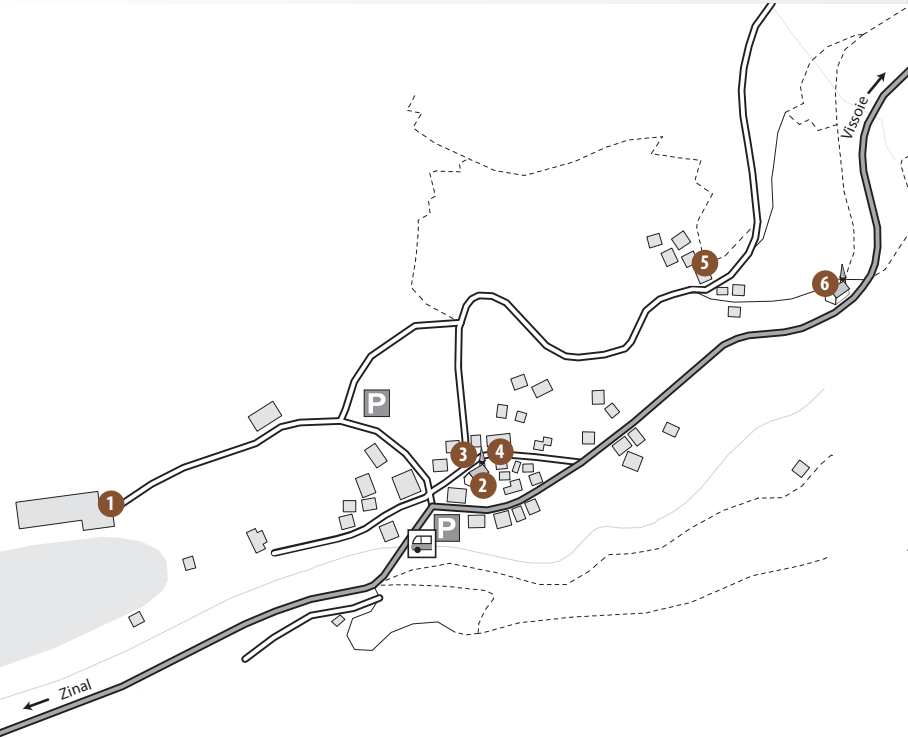


val d'anniviers

SIERRE-ANNIVIERS VALAIS WAUUS SWITZERLAND



Map of Mottec



- 1 Hydroelectric Plant
- 2 Chapel of Sainte-Claire
- 3 Old road and Basin
- 4 Former Edelweiss Café
- 5 Mayen Prabé
- 6 Chapel of Saint-Laurent

Introduction to Mottec



Mottec in the years 1940-1950



Mottec in the years 1960-1970

Located at the entrance of the Zinal valley, at 1550 m altitude, Mottec was once a natural stopover for Anniviards going to the *mayens* and travellers heading for hotels in Zinal.

The village name probably comes from the word *motec* which means "small mound" in local dialect.

The banks of the Navisence were dotted with small rustic *mayens*. (small houses associated with mid-mountain pastures) In January 1897, a traveller numbered about six hundred inhabitants in the valley between Mottec and Zinal.

Until the 1950s, when people were leaving Ayer, last village inhabited all year, on their way to Zinal, they followed the road to the Pont du Bois, then "attacked" the climb to the Lovèrèche chapel.

"This valley [...] appeared then to travellers as a sort of Arcadia. "

They then crossed Mottec, before going to Pralong, Bouillet and Zinal. This valley, with its beautiful green meadows and flat land, appeared then to travellers as a kind of Arcadia, a paradise.

The construction of the road and the hydroelectric plant permanently changed the appearance of the place.

Today, the village has about twenty inhabitants.

Mottec, a stop on the road of seasonal migrations (Remuage)



On the road between Mottec and Pralong in the early twentieth century

Until the years 1950-1955, Mottec was a *mayen*, a stopover for Anniviards travelling from the mountain to the valley of the Rhone for agricultural work and to tend the livestock.

The testimony of Régis Theytaz published in the annex, permits one to follow and understand the *remuage* that was the life of his family until 1955.

In the valley of Zinal, including Mottec, residents of Ayer, Mission, Saint-Jean and Vissoie met.

Cattle were driven to the *mayens* for a few weeks, until the pastures were ready to receive them, late May-early June. The return from pastures took place, late September-early October. When parts of the meadows were reserved for hay, the inhabitants returned to the *mayens* with the livestock at the beginning of winter.

The *mayens* consisted of simple houses, with a bedroom, a kitchen and a cellar, and *granges-écuries* (barn-stables).

Opposite Mottec, on the right bank of the Navisence in 1940, there were seven *mayens* with at least forty chalets and *granges-écuries* between Mijonette at 1560 m and Barneuze at 2100 m. At the *mayen* of Chapec (1900 m) above Vernecs there were two chalets, dating from 1764 and 1777 and stables, that were sold to the pasture (alpage) of Sorebois and demolished to recover the wood.

“The Chapel of Saint-Laurent marked the limit of the land owned by the « Société de Zinal ».”

The Chapel of Saint-Laurent marked the boundary of the land belonging to the “ Société de Zinal ”. To be a member of the “ Société ”, it was necessary to belong to a Bourgeoisie and to be a landowner .



In Mottec early twentieth century

1. Hydroelectric Plant



Pastures, in the years 1940-1950, before the construction of the hydroelectric plant

This electrical plant has three groups of turbines and generators for the transformation of water into electrical energy with an installed capacity of 69 MW, as well as two powerful pumps that can be used to fill the lake of Moiry, located 600 meters higher, with water from the Navisence and with the watershed of Turtmann.

➤ Follow the road to the plant and park at the first curve on your right. From here you can see the building of the plant and its clearing basin.

The hydroelectric plant of Mottec, whose construction began in 1954, was commissioned in 1959. It is part of the facilities of the Forces Motrices de la Gougra exploiting the waters of the valleys of Anniviers and Turtmann. Its construction had a strong impact on the development of the valley, but also contributed to a great change in the lifestyle of the Anniviards.



Mottec power plant in the years 1960-1970

The complex is not limited to the Moiry dam, which can hold 77 million m³ of water, and that of Tourtemagne, with its 750 000 m³. It also consists in a supply network of tunnels dug into the rock, penstocks and armoured wells. The water is routed to three hydroelectric plants, located in Mottec, Vissoie and Chippis, allowing to maximize the accumulated energy. Not less than 130 000 households can benefit from the electricity produced each year. The Mottec compensating basin with a capacity of 150,000 m³, allows the plant in Vissoie (lower tier) further flexibility of production. Guided tours by reservation at the Tourist Offices.

➤ Come back to the main road and follow the first street on your left up to the Sainte-Claire chapel.

2. Chapel of Sainte-Claire



Sainte-Claire Chapel,
early twentieth century



Sainte-Claire Chapel, during the period 1960-1970

The date of construction of this chapel, dedicated to Sainte-Claire, is not known. According to records, it did not yet exist at the time of the episcopal visit of Adrien de Riedmatten V in 1687. The three statues of the altar probably date from the eighteenth century. In its size, this building is rather akin to an oratory.

This simple and modest chapel is the setting for a jewel: a wooden altarpiece, carved and polychromed, with statues that are probably executed in part subsequent to the construction of the building. In the centre of the altar, Saint-Pierre is recognizable by his usual appearance with a short beard and his forelock, probably formerly holding a key in his right hand. This sculpture is surrounded on the right by Saint-Antoine l'Ermite with his monastic habit and left, a saint holding his coat with her left hand. His right hand has lost the attribute that would have permitted a clear identification. None of these statues corresponds to the usual iconography of Sainte-Claire, usually depicted as a nun of the Clarisses order.

➤ The basin is located just opposite the chapel.

3. Old road and Basin



Old road, early twentieth century



Road to the old café in 1936-1940

This road was once the main road leading from Ayer to Zinal. It went to the right, below the bridge, and passed through the meadows where the electrical plant is located today.

Until 1957, the year of the construction of the current road, travellers could walk up from Ayer like most of Anniviards, or in carts pulled by mules. Then the carts were replaced by jeeps with seven seats.

With the opening of the construction site for the power plant in 1954, several chalets that were at the location of the storage basin, were moved along the new road, opposite the Edelweiss café.

Before the road construction, in Rotsec there was a sheep fold. The Monnet family owned all the meadows at Rotsec and up to the Pont du Bois, before the land was expropriated for an average sum of CHF 2.50.- per square meter.

“Before the road construction, at Rotsec there was a sheepfold. ”

In summer, at Mottec, there was a lot of movement. The cows were brought there in late spring to “eat grass” and in summer, hay was cut. At the time of the Sorebois Désalpe, cheese produced during the summer was placed in front of the basin before being distributed to the owners of the cows.



Old wooden basin

The basin was once made of wood carved out of a hollowed larch trunk. In every village, there were wooden basins that were replaced later by stone fountains.

People washed in the basin, but the water was so cold that nobody cared to wash too often.

Women washed clothes there, until the 1950s. The arrival of washing machines in homes dates from the period 1950-1960.

Formerly, for the bigger items to be washed (sheets and towels) a caster was used, placed in the garden to boil the cloth with soap or ash. The linen was spun in a large tub then rubbed and rinsed in the village basin on a wooden board.

The clothes were dried outside or over the soapstone stove in winter.



Doing the laundry at the basin, 1944

Women used an iron, which was filled with embers that had to be stirred occasionally. A smaller iron, which was heated directly on the stove or in the kitchen garden, was used for small sized clothes, towels or other items.

Marie-Hélène Monnet Rouffaer remembers the women of the valley with great admiration: *“We saw women working incessantly. They walked with their young children while praying. The men had moments of respite in the bistro and cellars, while the women never stopped.”*

➤ The first house, right after the chapel housed the Edelweiss Café.

4. Former Edelweiss Café

The Edelweiss Café was taken over in 1936 by Marie and Henri Monnet, who spent the summer in Mottec with their seven children (4 girls and 3 boys). The building, with a beam on the ceiling that bears the date 1868, was modified (see photo of previous location) to house a café, probably in the 1920's. A veranda was added at that time.

Marie-Hélène Monnet Rouffaer, sixth child of the owners, was born at the café in August 1936. *"My father left to get the mid-wife in Mission, but by the time they returned, my mother had already given birth all alone. Then my father deposited me in a wooden crate inside the Sainte-Claire chapel so that my brothers and sisters could discover me, and believe that I was a gift from God. "*

In the café, you could buy basic necessities: milk, bread, and cheese. Chocolate was carefully locked away because it was reserved for tourists.



The old Café Edelweiss, left, and "Gloriette", right



The Monnet sisters and tourist (left) outside the café in 1946-1948



Outside the café, about 1925

The café also housed the postal depot and sold postcards. Sometimes the Monnet brothers would go up to the Cabane du Petit Mountet to deliver messages to climbers staying there. The café had the only telephone in the village.

Marie Monnet tastefully decorated the veranda opposite the café: "La Gloriette". The veranda, with pretty wicker chairs, welcomed customers of the Zinal hotels who walked to Mottec along the river. They were served wine, taken directly from the barrels in the cellar, and desserts made with forest berries that were picked by the children.

5. Mayen du Prabé

In 1954-1959, during the construction of the hydroelectric plant, newspapers in several languages were sold. Many workers, mostly Italians, were staying in Mottéc and Barneuza. The people remember memorable fights between local people and Italians, the latter being accused of frequenting the village girls. Most of the workers came from Sicily and Calabria and were illiterate. Martine, one of the Monnet sisters, engaged to Adriano, a worker from northern Italy, and having learned Italian, read and wrote the mail for the other workers.

“The café had the only telephone in the village. ”

At the café, the centre of village life, Anniviards, tourists and mountaineers going to Zinal with their luggage and equipment on the backs of mules all came into contact.

In the late 1950s, Marie and Henri Monnet built the Edelweiss Auberge, which operated until 1980, along the new road to Zinal. In 2007, the inn was transformed by its new owners into a guest house, for mainly English clientele.

> Return to the Sainte-Claire chapel and follow the dirt road that goes up in front. The mayen of Prabe is on the left after the second turn. In winter, snowshoes are recommended, depending on snow conditions. You can also follow the road to get to the last location, the Saint-Laurent chapel..



House of the *mayen* today



Former stables

The *mayen* of Prabe, consisting of a house and several farm buildings is virtually intact, and remains a remarkable witness to the *mayens* of the past.

In the early 1900's, the children went to school in Zinal on foot and went down to Mottéc on sleighs, and then back up to Prabe. In January 1897, there were 114 children from the *mayens* of the valley in the school of Zinal.

Rémy Massy bought the *mayen* of his uncle Oscar Theytaz in 1978. Previously, the Massy family had a *mayen* at the entrance to Mottéc near the current location of the cable car that goes up to Barneuze, but it was destroyed by fire in the 1960's. The *mayen* of Prabe was built in several stages, but the main buildings date back to the early eighteenth century-three stables, one for mules and another for pigs, a *grange-écurie* and a *raccard* that date back to 1730. The *raccard* was dismantled in the late 1940s, leaving an intact cellar.

6. Chapel Saint-Laurent

The house consists of several parts, built at different times. The small room, for example, dates from 1908. The main room has not been modified since the early eighteenth century. The beams of the walls and ceiling, carved with an axe, are also original. Low ceilings and small windows were used to keep heat in the room, which is still heated with a soapstone stove dating from 1900. The date of 1716 is indicated on the door of the cellar. The two small windows of the south facade, are apparently original. The windows even have air bubbles which is an indication of their age.

Rémy Massy, born in 1938, remembers that between the age of 8 and 13, he would spend three weeks in Prabe in the spring and autumn, before and after the Alpine pasture. *"We ascended on foot from Mission, with my aunt Crésence, my uncle Oscar, four cows, two heifers, a calf and three goats. In Prabe, I kept the cows, heifers and goats and picked up the litter (bedding) in the stable. While my aunt milked, I was busy cutting wood. With the milk, my aunt made tomme cheese. My uncle went down to the valley of the Rhone for the work of the vineyards, for haymaking, etc ... For the vigils however, we were all together in Mottec; the big ones playing cards in the kitchen and small ones playing zapa-fau dans la chambre (blind man's buff)."*

Today, his son Yannick and his family ensure the continuity of Prabe, using it as a second home, in the greatest respect of the traditions of their ancestors.

➤ Follow the road down to the main road to the Saint-Laurent chapel.



Chapel of the Lovèreche, early twentieth century

The construction of this chapel dates back to 1766, according to the inscription painted under the ridge board.

In a rather surprising way, Saint-Laurent does not refer to the saint to whom the chapel is dedicated, but to the locality where it is situated. The locals once called it the Chapel of Lovèreche.

The altar, still visible in the 1950s, was probably sold and no trace of it remains.

In the nave one can admire a Baroque sculpture, evoking Sainte-Anne teaching Mary to read as a child. The Crucifixion above the altar is the only element still present that dates from the time of the construction.

The windows were made by the Swiss artist Emile Aebischer who was called "Yoki" (1922-2012). Beginning in 1949, he painted numerous murals and stained glass windows in Switzerland, France, Germany, England, Italy as well as in Israel and Africa. In particular, he created stained glass windows for the cupola of the Basilica of Nazareth, those of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Basel and in Vevey-Corsier. He was co-founder of the Stained

Suggested Visits

Glass Museum in Romont and the father of Patrick Aebischer, President of the EPFL in Lausanne.

The Chapel was renovated twice, in 1936 and 2009. Georgina Hubscher and Jocelyne Budry, who have lived in Mottec since 2002, together with other villagers, were looking for solutions that would permit them to address the state of abandonment of the chapels. Celebrations organized since 1994 permitted the renovation of the Sainte-Claire Chapel in 1998 and that of the Saint-Laurent Chapel in 2008. Because it had no assigned owner, it was neglected for a long time. In 2009, work began with the roof, and a small bell tower was added. Then the exterior and interior walls and the ceiling and floor were completely redone, as directed by the authorities of the Monuments Historiques. A drain was installed to fight against humidity. The benches dating from 1774 were also restored.

The cable car, located at the entrance of the village, to the left of the road, was built in the 1960s by Max Koffler from Lucerne, who bought the mayen of Barneuze and turned it into a hamlet with several chalets.

➤ The Mottec historical visit ends here. In summer, you can discover the old mayens while walking toward the pasture of Sorebois or that of Barneuza.



Saint-Laurent Chapel, today

Mayen of Biolec

➤ After the mayen of Prabe, follow the road and take the path up indicated on the left, to the mayen of Biolec, situated at an altitude of 2021 m.

This *mayen* is known as the “Mayen 1903” since the filming by Swiss television of a documentary series, which was a major ratings success in 2003. The *mayen* of Biolec, rented since 1983 by the old town of Ayer to a family from Fang met the expectations of the director Beatrice Barton, “a pretty *mayen* without comfort, with a barn, stables and above all, land that lends itself perfectly to the filming of this series.”

One family was selected to be filmed live, for two months, in the living conditions of Valais in 1900. The Cerf family of Jura origin, consisting of parents and their four daughters, lived in Biolec without running water or electricity, with a mule, three cows, three goats, four sheep, five chickens and a rooster.

The anthropologist Bernard Crettaz was chosen as a consultant and put together a “Council of Elders” who explained how to reap, milk, bake bread, etc.

The success of the show is undoubtedly also due to the sympathy and charisma of the Cerf family. After the filming, they decided to keep the goats and chickens, while the mule Isidore remained in Anniviers with its new owners. The Cerf family, meanwhile, decided not to leave the valley, buying a second home in Zinal.

Annex

Remuage and school

Régis Theytaz attended the last nomadic school that moved between Zinal, Ayer and Sierre. His mother was the last teacher to have classes in Sierre and in Zinal when the lifestyle of remuage stopped in 1955.

“Before explaining remuage I must describe my whole family. From my personal experience, a family must consist of at least four members. I was born March 22, 1939. My parents were Florentin Theytaz and Marguerite née Vianin, born in Ayer. I have a sister, Monique, two years my senior. My father was a mountain guide during the summer and farmer the rest of the year. My mother was a teacher and helped her husband in the countryside, like all women of that time. My two grandfathers were also guides.

My grandfathers and my father earned a bit, thanks to their profession as mountain guides. As soon as they had money, they bought vineyards in Sierre, land in the village of Ayer and mayens in every corner of the valley.

Following the death of my father, swept away by an avalanche in 1940, my mother returned with her two children to her parent's home. My grandfather, Elie Vianin, became my father in some sense. It is with him that I learned all the workings of farming life and life in general.

November 1. *We put each cow in its own section, in the barn. My grandparents are in charge because it is also the time of calving. It is the cows that determine the remuages. Mother takes care of the house. My sister and I go to school. My sister is in the girls class with Hermine, and I am in the boys class with my uncle Pierre. The*

teachers are in charge of both classes of Ayer that include of course all ages between 7 and 15. Often the older students teach the little ones to read. My mother, being younger than the teacher Hermine, is a teacher only when Anniviards ascend or descend from Zinal to Sierre and vice-versa. The school year begins on November 1 and ends on April 30.

November 15. *The first remuage takes place in Mottéc where we own a chalet and have kept the summer hay. My grandparents go there with the cows, goats and sheep. The last calving takes place here.*

December 15. *The climb continues to Zinal with cows and everything that can walk. So this is the great remuage. Mother leaves Ayer for Zinal. The mule pulls a sled with supplies, rye bread for a month and those who do not walk: chickens, rabbits, and the little pig that we bought at the Fair of Saint-Catherine.*

We stay in Zinal for a month. The boys class with their teacher Pierre, my uncle, moves as well. That's when my mother teaches girls of the valley, because the class of Hermine continues to teach students who do not participate in the transhumance. Later there was to be only one mixed class in Zinal. Students come on foot from Mottéc, Pralong, Bouillet and Zinal. Each had to bring a log to help heat the classroom.

During this period, if weather permits, the mailman takes care of the distribution of newspapers, letters and packages that are not too heavy. During the day, Grandfather cuts wood to heat the soapstone stove, Grandmother spins wool, while my sister and I are in school.

January 15. The return to Ayer, the main village is underway, with the same program as the movement up to Zinal. We leave some hay in case of times of hardship, such as an avalanche at Pralong, that could delay the passage of the herd and the mule's sled by two or three days.

Our cat feels that the time of departure has come and hides. A week later, she joins us in Ayer. The whole family gathers in Ayer. We move the cows from barn to barn so they will eat the hay. At that time, we had no means to store hay in large barns as we do today.

March 1st. Now the family splits in two. My mother teaches in Sierre to all the children of the valley, except those of Saint-Luc and Chandolin. Grandfather works in the vineyard. My sister goes to school with my mother. I stay in Ayer with Grandmother to help with the pig, hens and rabbits.

End of April. The entire family gathers in Ayer and separates often for three to four days to continue the work in the vineyards.

June 1st. With my grandparents we go up to a mayen at Barneuza. We take cows, goats and sheep with us. We go there for grazing, to make tommes (cheese) and to prepare the cows for the pasture. Mother and Monique remain in Ayer to look after the pigs, chickens, rabbits and cat.

June 20. The cows are in their Alpine pastures and the whole family is in Ayer to begin the cutting of the hay. This is the greatest work of the year. For a month we fill all the barns. The hay is cut by hand and transported on the back.

Late July. We continue to cut the hay in Mottec.

August 1st. We are in Zinal.

Towards August 15. We go down to Ayer and cut the new growth in the fields until September 15.

September 20. A break of just five days and the Désalpe begins for the cows. Here we get the cheese, serac, and butter. The butter, melted with lard from the pig we kill in November, will allow us to cook for the whole year.

The day of the Nava Désalpe in Ayer, we return to Zinal with the cows, goats and sheep to graze in the meadows. Then we descend to Mottec and finally to Ayer.

October. The time of harvesting in the vineyards comes, and again the family is divided. Grandfather, Mother and Monique go to pick the grapes. Grandmother and I will take care of the cows and everything else in Ayer. Grandfather makes his wine in the cellar in Sierre that will be brought up to Ayer in March and will give us a chance to party with the neighbours.

November. We all are back in Ayer. Grandfather is the village butcher. He kills the pig and a heifer that will provide meat for a year.

The circle is complete. "

Régis Theytaz, 2013, Zinal



Motec in about 1900

Cover photo: Mottec in about 1950

Backcover photo: On the road between Mottec and Pralong, beginning of 20th century

Texts

Georgine Hubscher and Adriana Tenda Claude, with the collaboration of Marie-Hélène Monnet Rouffaer, Rémy Massy, René Baumann.

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Images and photos

Collection of old postcards of Marco Epiney, Jean-Marc Caloz, Rose-Marie and Hermann Vianin, Georgine Hubscher, Jean-Louis Claude; old photos of Marie-Hélène Monnet Rouffaer; old photos of café given by Myriam Chapatte – archives of Historical Monuments (EAD): archive Rudolf Zinggeler; recent photos by Adriana Tenda Claude.

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The 14 Historical Paths are available at the Tourist Offices and Editions Monographic. They are grouped together in a book titled « Parcours historiques d'Anniviers »

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