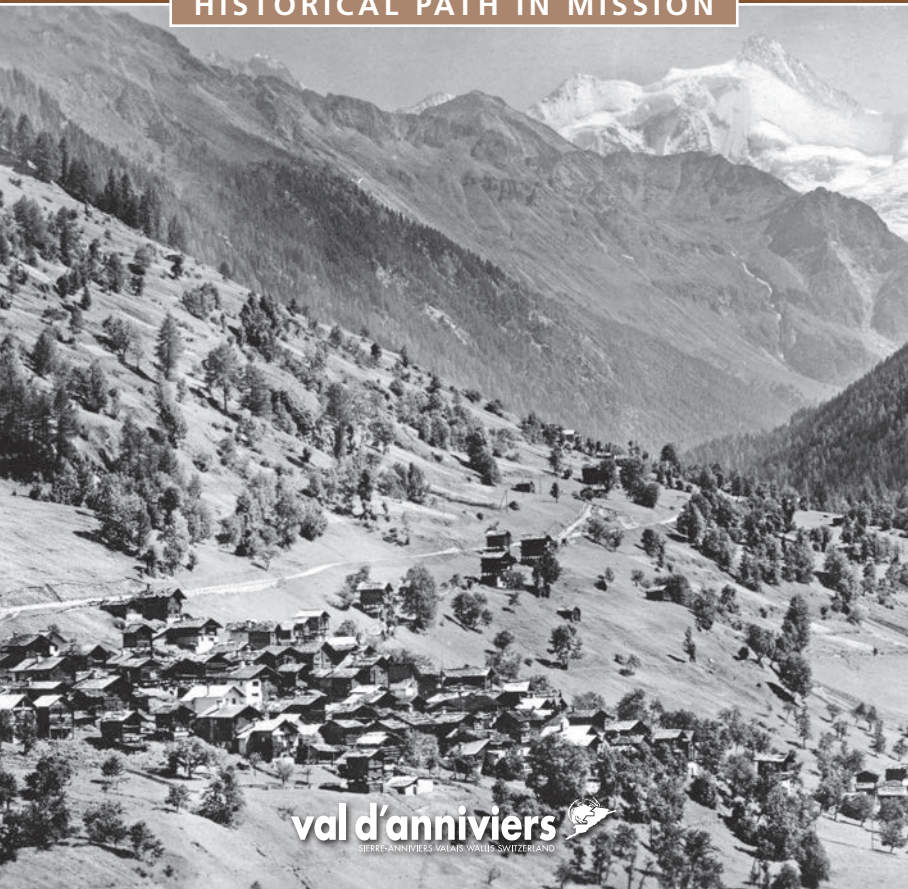


MISSION

HISTORICAL PATH IN MISSION



val d'anniviers

SIERRE-ANNIVIERES VALAIS WALLIS SWITZERLAND



Map of Mission



- 1 Oldest House
- 2 Raccard
- 3 Goat Pen / Partchère
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- 13 Chapel of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine
- ★ Chapel of Morasses

Introduction to Mission



Mission, circa 1920



Mission in the 1940's

Welcome to Mission! This peaceful village, with its beautiful group of houses with larch shingle roof tops, has kept its old charm. According to the Siegfried map of 1892, Mission has hardly changed in size.

Until the 1950s, the inhabitants lived exclusively on livestock and agriculture, moving several times a year at the end of the seasons, according to the work to be done, between the mountain and the valley of the Rhone.

If, previously, agriculture and livestock were the only economic engines of the town, today no one works full-time in these areas anymore. The village has a few companies working in construction and a number of craftsmen. The community stable, that was built in 1976, located below the village is still very active.

Today, Mission remains extremely dynamic with no less than six associations for a population of eighty people. In addition, many people from the village, who are residents elsewhere also are actively involved in the life of the associations: the

“ Société du village ” dates from 1926 and manages various properties, including the chapel and the bread oven; the Cible of Mission (shooting range) dates back to 1784; the Mission Football Club, founded in 1914, can be considered the ancestor of the Anniviers Football Club (FC Anniviers); the ski club “L’Avenir”, created in 1937 and involved in the development of the valley rescue columns, organizes different activities today for its mem-

“Today, Mission remains particularly dynamic with no less than six associations for a population of eighty people. ”

Mission and the fire of 1838



"La Madeleine" Association of fifes and drums in 1990

bers; the " Association des amis de Cholaïc " manages the space for exhibitions in the café-restaurant; the " Société des Fifres & Tambours ", created in 1950, hosts several events.

The " Société des Fifres & Tambours " called " La Madeleine " was founded by young people who were already playing some of these instruments and wanted to participate in local events. A sober, simple uniform was chosen for the musicians, intended to bring to mind old work clothes. It is said that the first fife and drum players in Anniviers were inhabitants of Mission...

We wish you a nice walk discovering Mission.

Until 1798, a system of farming communities existed in Anniviers, some of who were linked through politics. The valley was divided into four neighbourhoods " quartiers ", including that of Ayer, made up of Ayer and Mission. In 1798, during the French Revolution, the neighbourhoods were replaced by the *Tiers* and the district of Ayer incorporated La Combaz.

One event particularly marked memories and constitutes even today the major event in the history of Mission. The memory of this disaster has passed from generation to generation. On July 23, 1838, a house caught on fire and the fire, helped by the summer drought, propagated very quickly. Even the pump of Saint-Luc, the only one in the valley, was not of much assistance. In two hours the entire village, except one house, went up in flames. Two people lost their lives. The total loss caused by the fire was estimated at Fr. 510 000. Luckily, most of the cattle were at pasture at the time of the incident.

The story of the fire described in the book of Erasme Zufferey* was selected as the most reliable



Farmers in the past

1. Oldest House



The street of Mission in the past

account of the disaster. In the register of baptisms, Jean-Baptiste Rouaz, pastor of Vissoie, also recounted this dramatic episode (extract of the story attached).

At the moment of the fire, the village had a hundred inhabitants. In the 1840s, after rebuilding the houses, residents of the village repaired the chapel, the House of the Bourgeoisie, the bread oven and the house of the village.

You can admire the only house that was not destroyed by the fire of 1838. An inscription in local dialect :*"E youc lô fouãmanta"* which means *" I have seen the fire"*, was put on the house in remembrance of the catastrophe.

This large house, built of larch, with several floors, probably dates in part from the seventeenth century. The house formerly did not have a third floor. It was added at a later date. At the third level, on the west facade, the windows still have their original openings. Note that enhancements were carried out on the northern part of the building together with painted decorations on the ridge beam and horizontal beams at the base of the roof.

On the façade of the house, a rusty sign says *"Défense de trotter. Amende 5fr"*. (No galloping, 5fr. fine). Formerly the main road passed through here. All roads and paths were unpaved. This sign therefore invited carts to slow down.

> The next location is immediately on your right. Walk near the building and observe it from the balcony side to see the whole structure.



The oldest house today



A panel with the indication "Défense de trotter" (No galloping)

2. Raccard



Raccard today

The raccard (*barn*) like the grenier, (*granary*) was built on wooden stilts, topped by large round stones. The pilotis (stilts) were usually placed on a masonry basement which had the advantage of providing a solid foundation for the building. The empty space between the basement and the wooden part was used to protect the building and its contents from moisture and rodents.

The raccard was exclusively used for beating grains. The outdoor balcony was used to store grain sheaves two or three days so they could dry. Then they were placed inside, in what was called *le chantier* (the work site) before beating them in the central area. The raccard was accessed to by a ladder or by stairs.

In the fields surrounding the village several cereals were cultivated. Rye and wheat produced flour which was used to make bread for the whole year. Farmers also sowed other grains. Broad beans also processed into flour, were cultivated for the feeding of calves.

As there were no machines nor any plows to till the land, everything was done by hand. The land was turned using a pick and a shovel. Cereals were sown by hand. A rake was used to bury the seeds.

Just opposite and a little further on the left, there are raccards that have been converted into holiday chalets.

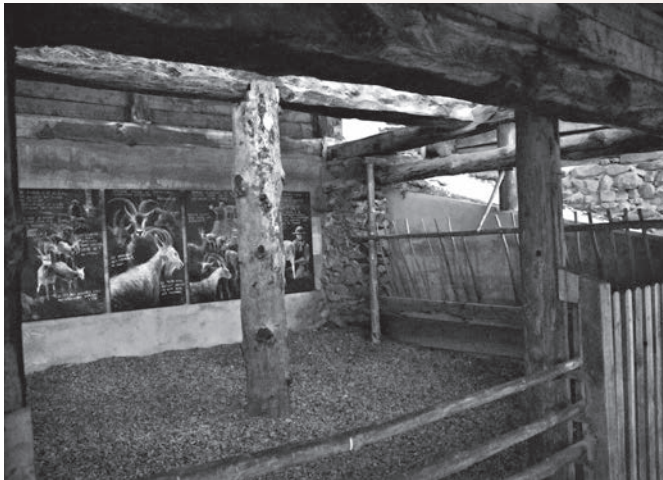
Several barns and stables line the streets of the village.

➤ Continue along the street for about 50 meters to the building indicated by a red sign, and continue down until you reach the ground floor where the old village goat pen is located.



A raccard located below the village, in the past

3. Goat Pen / Partchère



Partchère de Mission today

The goat pen, called partchère in patois, was used to house goats, and sometimes sheep. This community barn belonged to the villagers.

Until 1950, when the cows were at pasture in summer, every family kept a cow and goats in the village for milk in order to feed the often large families.

The *partchère* is part of the *Chemin des nourritures* (road of food) of Ayer and Mission, which was conceived in 2000-2001, at the initiative of the Ayer Development Association. The project and the texts for the panels have been executed by Bernard Crettaz, a sociologist and former director of the Museum of ethnography of Geneva. Their designs were made by Pierre-Alain Bertola (1956-2012), as well as the large panels, located at the back of the goat barn, scenes evoking the work of the shepherds and the importance of the herd and milk in the economy of the past.

“Until 1950, when the cows were at pasture in summer, every family kept a cow and goats in the village for milk ...”



Scenes evoking the work of the goatherd

➤ The next location is at the same level as the partchère, left of the road.

4. Mule Stable



The mule stable today

This stable was once used to house a mule. The mule stable differs from that of the cows by its size. It is, indeed, higher and was used, in general, for a single animal.

Formerly, mules were used to transport people and goods. A mule could have several owners.

This stable was provided with a feeding system that was more practical than others. A hatch made it possible to drop hay directly in the manger, whereas usually it was necessary to bring the hay in big fabric bales making several trips between the hay barn and stable.

Once essential, and due to the progressive abandonment of the old way of life, mules gradually disappeared. In 2003, for the filming of the Swiss television series " *Mayen 1903* ", in Anniviers, a mule had to be found elsewhere. After the filming the mule Isidore was kept in the valley where it lived until its death in 2013.



Transportation of hay on a sled pulled by a mule in the 1950s

> Go back on the main road and continue for approximately 40 meters to the house on the left.

5. Farmhouse and Basin



Farmhouse today

This house is a fine example of a traditional dwelling. Several families lived in the house, each occupying one floor. Each household was made up of a room with a hearth for cooking and a main room that also served as a bedroom at night. The families of the past, more numerous than today, slept in the same room whether they had two, four or eight children.

The typical Valais house was built using both wood and stone. A base made of masonry, used as a cellar, supports the timber that houses the rooms while a section in masonry usually housed the kitchens. Observe the details on the west facade that borders the road: the inscription and the date 1824 cut by windows that were enlarged on the second level; the coat of arms above the windows on the third level; the date of 1840, under the ridge board.



Basin

The basin at the foot of the house, next to the cross, dates from 1926, a year marked by the partial replacement of wooden basins by ones made of cement.

Along the road, after the next location, is a basin made of larch, identical to those used previously in all the villages of the valley. The basin was of great importance. Before the arrival of drinking water in homes, the villagers came there to fetch water, do laundry, water the animals and clean tools.

In Mission, there are seven basins and fountains that we invite you to discover on your own.

➤ Follow the main road for about 20 meters.

6. Old Store

You are on the old village road. Around 1950, the house to the left of the road housed a store for food and products of all kinds. You can make out the old windows with arches.

The store and the small "Café Cholaïc" were managed by Helène and Séraphin Viaccoz. In local dialect the term "Cholaïc" means "sun". The rudimentary café, was in an old wooden shack with only a stove used for heating in winter and a kerosene lamp for lighting. Then, in 1958, it was transformed into the "Pension des Gorges de la Gougra " managed by Paul and Irma Revaz. During the same year a small Coop store opened in a house at the entrance to the village on the left of the main road.



Former shop and café, left today

In 1988 the Cholaïc building was built and included a café, restaurant, an exhibition gallery, a studio and a shop, a public laundry and a rental agency that is no longer active. The Cholaïc construction project was carried out by the former commune of Ayer, the resident and non-resident, local population. A hundred people were shareholders of the SA Cholaïc.

➤ Return to the basin and follow the little path down to the left, to the house left of the road, with a terrace.

7. Old House



Old house today



Residence on the ground floor

This house, which dates in good part from the nineteenth century, has several elements of interest in terms of local built heritage. Observe the windows of the third level: they all have the original openings and braces.

On the west side, on the second level, there are fragments of a text with a date, probably 1820, " the year 1820 Jean Epiney and Euphémie Monet. " The inscription was cut off by the enlargement of the windows at a later date. At the third level initials are marked, most likely those of the owners " M M M T M I H F ", and the date 1823.

The apartment on the ground floor has preserved the original ceiling and walls made of axe-hewn beams (see interior photo).

➤ Go down to the road, cross it and follow the path that descends to the lower road. The last building on your right is the next location on the tour.

8. House of the Bourgeoisie and the Old School



House of the Bourgeoisie today

In 1798, inhabitants of the communities of Ayer and Mission united to form a Tiers. On this occasion, the House of the Bourgeoisie in Ayer was enlarged by the two communities that are now “united in one heart” (uni(e)s en un seul cœur). The House of the Bourgeoisie in Mission reflects the independent status of the community of Mission prior to 1798.

On the ceiling of the main hall, it is written: “The fire of July 23, 1838 reduced me to ashes. The courage of the Tiers of Ayer rebuilt

me (in) the year 1842. Preserve me from a second fire “ (L’incendie du 23 juillet 1838 m’a réduit(e) en cendres. Le courage du Tier(s) d’Ayer m’a réédifié(e) (en) l’an 1842. Préservez-moi d’un second incendie). An inscription on the facade cites the Tiers d’Ayer which built the house. At the third level, “IHS” is of course the abbreviation of “Iesus hominis Salvator” (Jesus Saviour of men).

The building belongs to the Bourgeoisie of Ayer. The assembly of bourgeois of Ayer and Mission is held annually in rotation in Houses of the Bourgeoisie in these villages. The house includes a meeting room on the third level and a wine cellar on the ground floor.

Until June 1971, the second level housed the village school. Since 1973, the Centre scolaire d’Anniviers in Vissoie has become the main school for all the students of the valley.

“ In Mission, classes could number twenty to thirty students from seven to fifteen years of age..”

In Mission classes could number twenty to thirty students from seven to fifteen years of age. Most older children helped the younger ones. The school year began early in November and ended early May. Students were in class all week, including Saturday.

The subjects taught were French, calculus, science, the history of Switzerland, geography and religion. Once or twice a year, school inspectors, councillors and the parish priest visited the class.

In the spring, families who owned vineyards in valley of the Rhone moved to Sierre. From mid-December to late January, the families that had a *mayen* (houses or structures associated with medium

9. Old Chapel of Saint-Marc



Old water pump

altitude pastures) in Zinal, went up with their livestock. The school was then given on site.

With the essor of ice skating, the schoolyard, which dates from 1960, was transformed into a skating rink for students. Then, later, it became the town square.

Observe the water pump located on the balcony. An inscription mentions the 1838 fire.

> Just opposite the House of the Bourgeoisie, there is a small square with a cross.



Current square



Chapel of Saint-Marc, in former times

A chapel dedicated to Saint-Marc, since demolished, was built on this location, opposite the House of the Bourgeoisie to replace the chapel destroyed by the fire in 1838.

“The disaster did not spare the old chapel. The walls remained, and the bell was removed with a chest of sacred objects; but the roof was destroyed along with the bell tower, as were the altar and sacred images.” Extract of the description of Erasme Zufferey.

The date of construction of the first Mission chapel is unknown, but church records indicate that the Bishop Adrien V de Riedmatten visited it in 1687. The Mission community maintained the chapel and celebrated three “mandatory” Masses per year. The cross at the back of the square was erected in 1996 in memory of a solemn mass. In 1927 it was decided to build the chapel dedicated to Sainte-Marie-Madeleine.

> Continue on the main road to the village centre, about 30 meters towards the barn to the left of the road.

10. Granary

The *granary* was used primarily to store the provisions. The *grenier* and *raccard* are often confused because they are both elevated on stilts, topped by flat stones that prevent mice from entering. But the *grenier* is better finished, beams are set tightly against each other. The frame is thinner, and the doors close perfectly.



Granary today

In *greniers*, wheat grain was deposited in safe spaces, but also bread, dried meat and ham. The *grenier* belonged to two families or more, each family having their own compartment with a solid door and a good lock. The *grenier* was used for the safeguarding of valuable assets: money, documents and festival clothes.

The grain was easier to keep than flour, which is why it was transported to the mill for grinding only to the extent needed for rapid use. The flour obtained, was used quickly to make enough bread, that would last for long periods.



Example of a granary in the upper area of Mission

Previously, mills were operated by the force of the water from mountain streams. The weight and force of the water, projected against a vertical wooden wheel mounted against the building, caused the movement of the wheel.

The mill at Mission was below the village, near the Navisence at the site of the former mill dating from 1929. There remains little of this structure except for one part. The stone wheel that was used to crush the wheat, barley, rye and beans, became the fountain in the village square.

➤ Continue for about 20 meters until the building of the bread oven (four banal) to the right of the road.

11. Bread oven / Four banal



Mission with its oven (white building, left), 1900



Four banal today

The oven was used by the villagers to bake rye bread four to five times a year, in sufficient quantity for several months. The term banal in the Middle Ages indicated the property owned by a lord, that peasants could use in exchange for a fee. Then the oven, like the mills, became the property of a commune, a bourgeoisie or a village association.

This building, which dates from the years 1909-1910, belongs to the " Société du village " that still operates the oven once a year. On the first floor of the building is the room where members of the Association gather for their annual meeting, the Saturday before Ascension. The " Société du village de Mission " still organises the Corpus Christi celebrations and the patronal feast, as well as taking care of the chapel and oratories, the oven and the old goat park.

" This building, which dates from the years 1909-1910, belongs to the « Société du village » that still operates the oven once a year. "

In 1890 the old oven gave rise to major repair costs. A list of persons who participated in the costs was established and sixty-four people thereby received the right to use the oven.

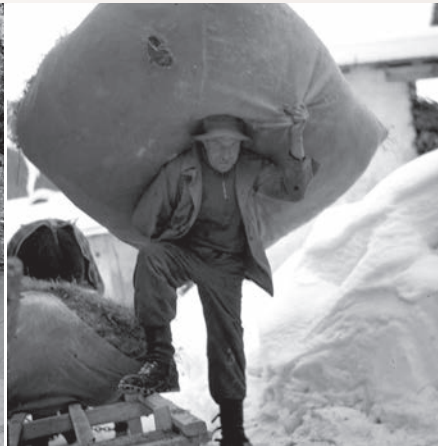
The oven is part of the *Chemin des nourritures*. (food path)The explanatory panel on site outlines its use in the past.

➤ Follow the road to the crossroads and look at the building located a little higher on the right.

12. Former Barn-Stable



Old barn-stable today



Transportation of hay in bales in the 1960's

The cows wintered in the stables. Just above the stable in the barn, hay and second growth hay were stored and used as feed in winter. Formerly, cows raised in Mission, as in the rest of the valley, belonged exclusively to the Hérens race.

The morphology of this breed makes it easier to adapt to the mountain environment. The Hérens cow is an excellent walker. Formerly, during the seasonal *remuages*, the cows had to move from the mountains to the valley of the Rhone, and vice versa.

Cows of this breed have a very lively and combative temperament that is rendered obvious in the ritual fights organized in the region. When cows of different stables meet in the pasture, for example, they naturally clash in battles that determine the leader of the herd, called the *Reine* (queen).

This cow is the descendant of the cattle that were present in the Alps since ancient times.

Formerly, when a cow was slaughtered, everything was retrieved except the horns and hooves. If the cow was an old alpine *reine*, the horns were then fixed above the front door of the stable, as trophies and souvenirs.

The hay was cut with a scythe, and then transported on a cart pulled by a mule or on the backs of men and women. Today, the meadows around Mission exclusively produce hay for the *consortage* of Mission.

The barn, owned by a *consortage* is exploited by a private individual. It houses about forty Hérens cows.

Observe the old stable located in the meadow below the road. The small building at the corner of the road, left, housed the local firefighters. A little higher, on the right, was the slaughterhouse, which operated until the 1950s, as well as the storage area for farm machines used during the years 1945-1950.

“Once, when a cow was slaughtered, everything was retrieved except the horns and hooves. ”

➤ Continue until the chapel.

13. Chapel of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine

The chapel in Mission is dedicated to Sainte-Marie-Madeleine. It was built in 1930 in neo-Romanesque style, with a baroque appearance. The roof is topped by a “typical anniviard” steeple.

In 1930, Ayer, main town and seat of the former municipality, whose territory included that of Mission, had been endowed with a church for ten years. A building committee was formed in Mission chaired by Joachim Theytaz. Most of the villagers participated actively by contributing to the costs. On September 20, 1931, during a meeting, Mission residents heard that the cost of construction amounted to CHF 49,700.-, while the village had collected only a sum of CHF 34,700. Depreciation and debts of the association were then divided into equal shares per capita, according to the taxable capital of each member.

Inside, the altar is surmounted by a retable. Its tabernacle serves to support a Calvary representing figures of the Virgin and Saint-Jean on either side of the crucifix. At the foot of the latter is the kneeling patron saint of the chapel Saint-Marie-Madeleine, kissing the cross.

Only the two paintings above the benches probably date from before the current sanctuary. Observe the striking realism of high-relief representations of the stations of the cross.

The historic visit of Mission ends here, but if you wish, you can continue the tour by visiting the oratory of the Gouggré and the chapel of Morasses. Before leaving the Mission chapel, stop and enjoy the view of the village of Saint-Jean.



Mission chapel and view of Saint-Jean today



Stations of the Cross

Suggested Visits

Raccard of la Cible

➤ Take the path down from the square where the old Saint-Marc's chapel was located

Rather steep, but nice, this path corresponds to the old road leading from the Navisence to Saint-Jean. It is bordered by interesting old buildings.

At the intersection with the paved road is the *raccard de la Cible*, home to the annual meeting of the "Société de la Cible" probably created in 1784 with the aim of promoting friendship and the spirit of patriotism through target shooting. Today, all the members still have an obligation to do a day of *corvée* (chores) in the vineyards, the third Saturday of March, and to attend the annual meeting, on the last Sunday of April.

The *raccard* was built above a cellar where the wine of the Glacier is kept. The cellar is marked by a wooden sign that says "le sèli dè la Chìgba dè Missioung" which means "the cellar of the Cible de Mission."

➤ By following this path to the end, you reach the football field near the Navisence. From there you can continue on the left to the bridge to get to the Gougré oratory or the chapel of Morasses. On the right, the road continues to Saint-Jean.

Oratory of Sainte-Apolline du Gougré

➤ The oratory is located just outside of the falls of the Gougrou on the route that leads from the Mission bridge to Grimentz.

After crossing the bridge, right, look at the old sawmill built in 1929. On the same location was the former village mill.

In 1880, Jean Theytaz, owner of the oratory dedicated to Saint-Apolline, formed an association to avoid it being abandoned. The statutes provide for succession exclusively to the eldest family member, but also require to observe a dignified attitude at each meeting. Like all meetings of that time, the meal was washed down with "Rèze" wine matured in Sierre and kept in larch barrels in Anniviers.

The archives mentions a visit of the Bishop of Sion in 1883 and a renovation in 1907.

In 1987, members handed over the oratory to the "Société du village de Mission" which, in 1989 helped by many volunteers, undertook the restoration. Further work took place in 2013.

Chapel of Saint-Félix and Sainte-Agnès of Morasses

➤ Follow the road below the village that descends to the bridge and cross over the Navisence. Take the forest road that leads to the chapel.

According to legend, a church was buried under a landslide at Morasses.

The chapel of Morasses is dedicated to Saint-Félix and Sainte-Agnès. In 1771, ten people founded an association that took the decision to restore the chapel which was in a deplorable state. The statutes of the "Société de la chapelle" stipulated that the property was to be transmitted to the eldest heir.

The "Société" bought a vineyard in Sierre and land in Mission to build a cellar. Formerly, all Anniviard associations owned vineyards in order to produce a sufficient quantity of wine to be served at meetings.

In 1966, the "Société du village de Mission" took the decision to undertake the maintenance and to initiate restoration work that could be done due to the generosity of the population. The roof and steeple were covered with shingles. The stained glass windows and a bell helped to embellish the building.

The chapel and altar date from the years 1771-1785. The altar as a whole is the real treasure of the chapel of the Morasses. In the main register we see the risen Christ in the centre, surrounded by holy bishops including Saint-Félix; left, Saint-Pierre, wearing the papal tiara; right, Sainte-Agnès, carrying a lamb on a plate and holding the palm of martyrdom.

Observe the votive in carved wood, representing legs, arms and hands. The oldest are dated from 1895.



The Path of La Reinda

Annex- A bit of history

An extract of the story: *“The more we progress in years, the more we suffer, God willing it so, of new, surprising unheard of events. Regarding these situations dear reader, I should not hide from you what I will explain on this page.*

On July 23, 1838, around 2 in the afternoon, Mission! Mission! This very town, the first in the valley if the pseudo-historians tell the truth, had ceased to exist. In this unfortunate moment-I shudder to tell the story: with the cruel gust of the north wind, a fatal flame appeared on the roof of the house of Benoît Martin; old Catherine Epiney was making a fire on the lower of the three floors of the deplorable house (we ignore the final cause of the fire).

From all sides men, women, boys and girls flocked; they climbed on roofs, acting very quickly; but the flames stronger than ever consumed the part towards the south. A drought of several weeks had prepared the buildings for their fate. In the end, there was neither enough advice nor enough water nor resources. And now a quarter of the locality perished in a fire that devoured people's efforts trying desperately to delay the accelerating progress of the terrible volcano, pulling objects from its voracity, to prevent it from reaching the barns along the Ayer road, not least to preserve the new house of Simon Martin, located at the entrance of the village to the north, and somewhat separated from other buildings. But they could do nothing more, although finally, the pump of Saint-Luc was of great help, even in those days, as it was the only one in the valley. At nightfall, there were no longer any flames nor dangerous glowing embers but only the sad ashes and ruins of the walls. Crossing the streets, you would not find the slightest piece of wood. The disaster did not spare the

ancient chapel. Its walls remained, but the bell and a chest of sacred objects were removed; the roof was destroyed, as well as the tower, together with the august altar and sacred images. According to the judgement of prudent people, the total cost of the disaster was evaluated at 510,000 francs. Add to this, the mortal life of the pious Jean Epiney, son of Mathias, who disappeared so completely that until this day, no trace of his remains was found; similarly, the death of the little Elisabeth Savioz, daughter of Pierre from Pinsec, who, at the end of the fire (she was 13), wanted to cross the Navisence on poorly consolidated beams, fell into the deadly waters in which she drowned.”

Zufferey Erasme. Le passé du Val d'Anniviers. L'époque contemporaine 1798 – 1925, presented and updated by Michel Salamin. From the series Le passé retrouvé, volume III. Editions du Manoir, Sierre, 1973.



A ride on mule-back on the Mission road, beginning of the 20th century

The Historical Paths are based on written and oral information. We welcome any comments or suggestions.

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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 »

Cover Photo: Mission towards 1920

Backcover photo: Fife and drums in Mission, in front of the old café Cholaïc, towards 1960

Texts

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Images and photos

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