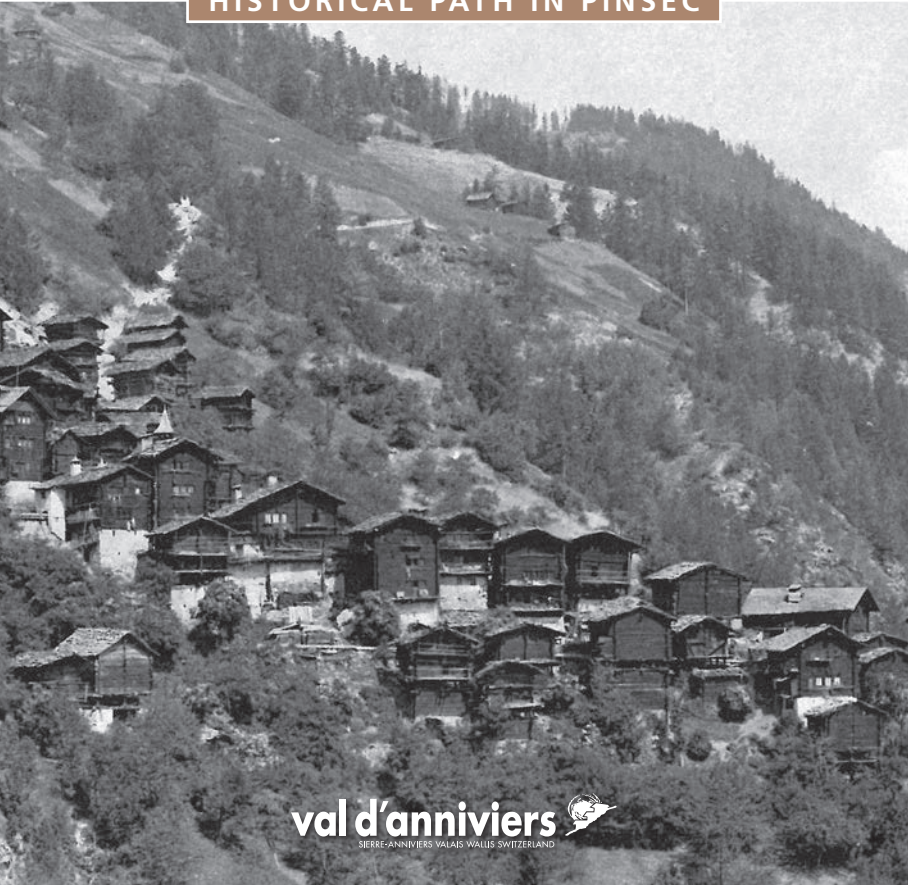


PINSEC

HISTORICAL PATH IN PINSEC



Map of Pinsec



- 1 Bread Room
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Introduction to Pinsec



View of Pinsec in the past

Due to its location, Pinsec is the only village in the valley that went through the twentieth century without experiencing significant changes. Built on a ridge surrounded by steep valleys, it was built in this way in order to protect homes from avalanches. The village is steep, so much so that *"we must even put shoes on the chickens."* But the villagers are brave, that's why they say: *"Even if we have to give up, we don't give up"* which means: *"Never give up"*.

"Thanks to its location, Pinsec is the only village in the valley that went through the twentieth century without experiencing significant changes. "

The village's name refers to the surrounding pine forests.

In 1950 Pinsec had about a hundred and fifty inhabitants, as many cows, eighty goats, a flock of forty sheep, ten mules, pigs and chickens. Formerly, when a non-Annivard came to the village, residents would stare out the window at them; Now they look closely when a cow passes by...

Until 1975, a shop was run by a woman, mother of a large family, and appreciated by all. We remember the day she said: "I can close, they have all come through." In the 1950s, the family took care of the only telephone in the village.

In 1979, the "Rose de Pinsec" was filmed by Jacques Thévoz. This film recounts the life of the past, the pace of the work, following in the footsteps of Rose Monnet. *"Rose, the Anniviers 'ant', this prodigious craftswoman (...) cutting hay like a man, better than a man. "*

Pinsec and the religious Chapter



Pinsec under the snow, around 1980

In 1985, Bernard Savioz from Pinsec published a book, " Valaisans descendants d'Attila " (Ed. La Matze, Sion, 1985), where he drew parallels between Hungarians and Anniviards, referring to older sources (Bourrit in 1781, Desor, and Fischer). Huns who fled after the defeat of Attila (451 AD) to Italy, might have lived in Anniviers. This explains why Hungarians come to Anniviers looking for clues proving their common origins.

Today in Pinsec, there are thirty persons domiciled year-round. During Christmas, Carnival and Easter, one hundred and fifty persons occupy secondary residences.

Around 1300, the village whose name was written Pessey, Pense, or Pensey, was a special case in the history of Anniviers. The religious Chapter (*Chapitre*), formed by the canons of the Cathedral of Sion, had land there and owned a quarter of all common property that was under the management and responsibility of a local ministerial. Civil administration depended on a canon who took the title of Viscount or Vice Lord. The Viscount meted out justice in front of the chapel during his visits to the village. Despite its partial ownership by the Chapitre, Pinsec was part of the Quarter of Vissoie and the Anniviers community, at parish and military levels.

An archival document tells of the arrangement made with the religious Chapter in 1778. Written in French at the time by Jean-Georges Roux, notary, it reveals the enormous distance that existed between the people and their masters. A class of persons cited there: the *terrementiers* were represented by a certain Augustin Seulio. The *terrementiers*



Rose de Pinsec, on a mule around 1960

1. Bread Room



Village women, at the Mayens de Pinsec, in the 1940's

sometimes referred to as *terriens* owned land, the right to walk the routes, and forests, without being *communiers* (community members). The last rights of Pinsec owned by the Chapter were bought in 1804.

Until 1892, the access road that followed the current road alignment ended at the village. The connection to Vissoie was by a very steep path leading from the village to the Navisence. The access road was gradually improved during the twentieth century.



Village and bread room, right, in the past

> From the parking lot, cross the bridge and follow the road until the bread room, to the right, below the road.

The bread room is on the second level of the building which, even today, allows ten persons to make handcrafted bread. The furnace, located outside, can receive batches of eighty-five loaves of eight hundred grams.

Premises located on the ground floor once housed a butcher, and a dairy. Nineteen cattle owners brought milk to the dairy until the creation of the Laiterie centrale d'Anniviers, in Vissoie in 1956. The " Société du village " has undertaken the creation of a small museum on this site.

2. Farmhouse

This building has an unusual aspect. In 1912, villagers installed inside the butcher's wall, a pipe, that served to bring water for irrigating the meadows below the village, and also for the evacuation of coal and ash from the oven.



Bread room today

The bread oven, built in 1912 remained operational until 1957. During forty years, it suffered the ravages of time: broken windows, crumbling walls, sagging roofs, etc. In 1997 the oven was renovated, thanks to financial contributions from various sources, the generosity of the public and members of the "Société du village" who volunteered more than 1500 hours of work. On the village feast day, visitors can see this building and witness the making of bread.

North of the bread room is the workshop of a former craftsman and sculptor.

➤ Follow the main road to the house a few meters on the left.

Until the twentieth century, three families lived in this house. On the façade, we see the date 1783. On each floor there was a kitchen and a room.

Sometimes families with more means had a small extra room. The land was so steep, that the access to the house was directly on the third floor.

Each house was equipped with a soapstone stove, which was the only way of heating. In the kitchen, there was a small dresser and a table. The fireplace rack and tripod allowed residents to prepare meals and heat the room. A large pot on the side was used to cook the food for the pig.

Parents and children slept in the same room in bunk beds filled with straw mattresses. Intimacy left much to be desired. The toilet, with no running water, was outside. Everything possible was buried in the gardens. Canned foods did not yet exist.

➤ After the house, left, take the stairs, go around the small wooden building and climb up to the old pigsty.



House, circa 1970



Same house today

3. Pigsty



Go around the small building in the centre and go up



Pigsty today

This small rudimentary building once housed the pigsty. Look to the left of the door, the wooden basin, called the bourlett in dialect was where food for the pig was placed, usually twice a day.

In the past, almost every family had a barn like this, located fairly close to home. Every year a piglet was bought at the fair of Sainte-Catherine in Sierre, that took place around November 25. In winter, it lived with two or three sheep to keep warm. At the end of the year, when it had reached a weight of almost a hundred kilos, it was butchered to supply meat for the whole family. This commodity was precious because grocery stores were scarce, sometimes distant from the village, and in many cases, funds were in short supply.

“At the end of the year, when it had reached a weight of almost a hundred kilos, it was butchered to supply meat for the whole family.”

In the past, the slaughter day was important. Several families came together and it was well before dawn that the butcher ended the life of the pig first, then the cow around 10 am. Mothers were responsible for preparing the first boiled meat from the slaughtered animals. It was a great day of work, but also a festival that ended late at night. The next day was reserved for the curing of meat in large wooden vats.

➤ To reach the next location, go back on the road and take the first road on your left. The raccard is located upstream of the path.

4. New village wine cellar



A poster announcing the inauguration of the village wine cellar

In 2011, the «Société du village» of Pinsec inaugurated its new jewel: a wine cellar in the purest tradition.

The initiative taken by the former village of Saint-Jean, eager to preserve heritage, was carried out jointly by the Commune of An-niviers and the “Société du village”.

The old wine cellar, located under the *raccard* contains five barrels of Rèze, Petite Arvine, Hermitage, Cornalin and Malvoisie, that can be enjoyed by the guests of the very active Association. Many donors have their names inscribed on the goblets lined up in the cellar.

➤ Continue a few meters to reach the next location.

5. Old Goat Pen



Current village hall, left

The small building that now houses the village hall, was once a pen for goats and sheep, called *partières* in dialect.

After about twenty-five years of abandonment, in 1986, the pen was transformed into a village hall that can hold about fifty people. In 2006 the roof was renovated. In the 1950s, the villagers had about eighty goats and forty sheep. Goats provided milk when cows were in the pastures, while the sheep provided the wool needed for making clothes. Each family had two or three goats that schoolchildren were responsible for. They took them to graze in the forests that belonged to the Bourgeoisie. Every morning, they gathered in the pen, and were driven back in the evening when the sun set on Saint-Luc.

➤ Continue up to the house after the village hall.

6. House with painted décor



House with painted décor, circa 1970

This old house has very interesting wall paintings. Observe the facade. On the top floor, there is a carved frieze, partly stenciled while the eaves are decorated by painted cartouches.

The date 1828 is inscribed below the ridge board. Formerly, four families lived in this three-story house.

> Return to the main road and continue left until the old village café.

7. Old Village Café



House of the old café today



Old café in the centre. View taken from the east

This building is of no particular interest in terms of the built heritage, but is of great importance in the memory of the villagers.

Opened in 1956 by a young couple, the Bel-Air café-restaurant, located on the ground floor of the main house, was closed, when the owners went into retirement. Located along the road that leads to Vercorin, this property has welcomed the people of Pinsec and those passing through. This is where residents and visitors met to share a friendly drink, savour fondue and sometimes for routine business.

On the south façade, a sentence in dialect is inscribed: “ *Oung Pillho dô Cômoug po lè Cômôni. Oun llièjè pö lè Pèrotsing. Oung Paradèt po lè Brâvo Monndo. Oun Enfèr po lè Rôfê. Öna Pëingté po lè J’Amêc* ” which means: “A communal house for communiers. A church for parishioners. A paradise for good people. Hell for beggars. A coffee for friends. ”

> Return towards the centre of the village, to the chapel.

8. Chapel of Saint-Symphorien



Saint-Symphorien Chapel in the past

The chapel of Pinsec is dedicated to Saint-Symphorien, the martyr who, around the year 180 AD, was beheaded because he had confessed his Christian faith to the governor Heraclius.

Built in 1715, it was restored in 1779, according to a legible inscription on the gable of the facade. A 1617 document mentions an earlier chapel built in honour of Saint-Symphorien. The chapel, which belongs to the Bourgeoisie of Saint-Jean, had its roof and facades redone in 1980. A gate was placed between the choir and the benches to protect the altar.

The Baroque altar, shows Joseph and Mary holding the Child Jesus by the hand, and, below, the patron saint of the chapel, Saint-Symphorien, with the sword of his martyrdom. To the right of the choir and the altar, one can see a statue of Sainte-Barbe, patron saint of artillerymen and miners. The main altar is decorated with a Baroque altarpiece, composed of two parts. The tabernacle, placed on the table of the altar was executed by Pierre Abbé, in 1937. On the tribune, there is a sculpture dedicated to Saint-Symphorien, which was created by an inhabitant of the village, Jules Abbot, in 1980.

A small bell tower, supported by an assembly of beams, is placed on the roof. It houses a bell dating from 1857, which is engraved with the following inscription: *“Louis Walpen His godmother Euphémie Bonnard and his godfather Georges Bonnard and President Jean Antille”*.

➤ On leaving the chapel go left, to the basin that sits at the foot of the chapel.

“A 1617 document mentions an earlier chapel built in honour of Saint-Symphorien. ”



Altar with Saint-Symphorien in the centre, today

9. Basin



At the basin, in the 1970s

This cement basin located east of the chapel dates from 1919. Behind the basin in the building of the chapel there are two private cellars. Formerly, the basin had three important functions: providing water, washing and watering the animals.

The families of the village came to the basin for drinking water, because the houses had no running water. Washerwomen regularly did their laundry here.

In the morning and evening the herds of cattle came to drink from the basin according to a rhythm established by the owners. The animals were waiting for this moment. Untied, they could take a breath of fresh air. Sometimes they travelled 400-500 m to get to the basin, almost always quietly. In winter, one could see the outline of their bellies, on each side of the path in the wall of snow. After having quenched their thirst, they returned alone to the barn.

➤ Walk down the alley to the bread oven on the left.

10. Old bread oven



Bread oven, circa 1970

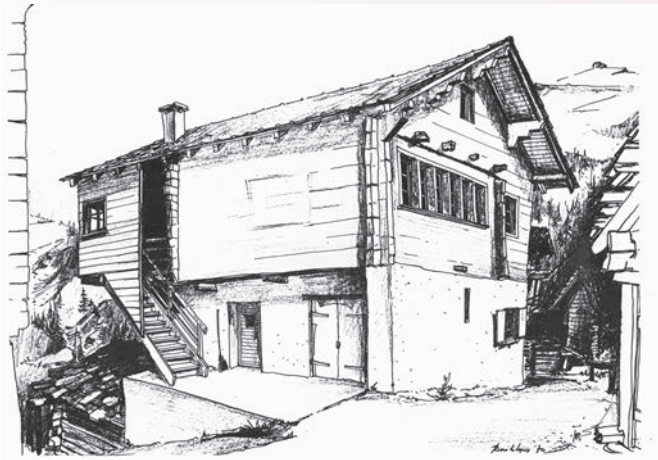
The furnace was operating in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, probably until 1912, when a new oven that is still used today was built.

“This bread was particularly good, because the flour used was from grain grown in terraced fields surrounding the village. ”

In 1930 it was sold to Julien Epiney. Unfortunately, no archive exists about its construction and the end of the baking of rye bread in Pinsec that marked the memory of the inhabitants. This bread was particularly good, because the flour used was from grain grown in terraced fields surrounding the village. The grain was ground at Martinet in Vissoie by Symphorien Florey who was also a storyteller.

➤ Continue to the building of the old school to the left of the lane, the third after the oven.

11. Old School



Drawing of the old school

The building, surrounded by barns and granaries, housed the school of Pinsec until 1965. It was in 1927 that the old town bought it for about CHF 700.- from the Bourgeoisie. In 2012, a young couple from Neuchâtel became the owners of the house of the old school turning it into a guesthouse.

In the 1950s, the school of Pinsec had thirty students between seven and fifteen years of age. Given the differences in level, the teacher was helped by the older students to teach the younger children to learn to read. The school lasted from November 2 to May 3. The only days off were Sundays, Thursday afternoons and holidays.

In 1965, the school was closed permanently because the number of children of school age continued to decrease. The students of Pinsec were joined with those of Mayoux until 1970, when they



School house, in the center. View taken from the north in the past

all went to the old school in Vissoie and then to the " Centre scolaire d'Anniviers ", in Vissoie beginning in 1973.

Not hearing students in the streets of Pinsec, morning, noon and evening, created such a vacuum that older people spoke of the death of the village. It was somewhat the case, as the population, which was a hundred and fifty in the early twentieth century, had decreased to twenty-five in 1990. Following the construction of the Moiry dam and the development of tourism, young people ceased to follow their parents in agriculture.

➤ Continue a few meters to reach the transformed *raccard*.

12. Trasformed raccard



Transformed *raccard* today Same *raccard*, 1950

This *raccard*, like the majority of granaries and barns of the village, was transformed into a secondary residence.

Formerly the balcony on the south made for the happiness of students during recess.

Thanks to the regulations imposed by the Department of construction of the municipality and Canton, the village remained authentic. It should be noted that if the many barns had not been renovated, they would have fallen apart and Pinsec would not appear as it is today.

➤ Continue a few metres to the *raccard* on the right.

13. Raccard

The *raccard* was used to store rye, wheat and other cereals. Its construction, which dates back to 1700, was less precise than the «*grenier*» because the passage of air between the beams was important to air the grain and prevent it from moulding.

The grain was stored, first on the balconies, so as to dry and mature, and, once ready, it was beaten with a scourge.

Some barns had two functions because they had a floor for wheat and another for foodstuffs.

The granary was called “lo Guerni” in dialect and the *raccard* was “lo raha.” The *raccards* had fewer owners than the *greniers*. Inside such buildings, there were sometimes separations for the various owners.

➤ Continue for about 40 meters to the stable at the back of the alley to the left.



Raccard today



Threshing wheat in a *raccard*, 1960

14. Mule Stable



Mule stable, centre, today



Young man with his mule around 1955

This mule stable is the only existant example in Pinsec. In the 1950s, there were a dozen mules in the village. At the time, the mule was a method of transportation.

It carried manure in the gardens and fields, cheese and wood in the mountains. Mules drew fir and larch logs in forests. Harnessed to a cart, they accompanied the nomadic Anniviard families to the valley of the Rhone and vice versa, three, to four times a year. In March, it was again the mule that pulled the cart carrying wine from Sierre to fill the barrels in the wine cellars. On this occasion, many villagers were awaiting the arrival of the cart to give a hand unloading and to taste the precious cargo. A mule could have up to four owners.

> After the stable, turn immediately left.

15. Old Cellar



A small lane in Pinsec



Door of the wine cellar today.

On the ground floor of the small building adjoining the stable there is a wine cellar, an example of all the good old cellars of the village that kept the wine cool in summer and warm enough in winter, with walls 80 cm thick.

This is where the vintners of Anniviers kept the wine of the Glacier which was brought up from the valley of the Rhone every year in March. Old cheese was kept on racks that were for the meals organized for each burial. Potatoes that never germinated because they were arranged in holes covered with moss were also kept there. It is here that the social life of the village took place... Oh, if these walls could talk!

> Continue to the *grenier* to the left, above the alley.

16. Grenier / Granary



Grenier today

Grenier left. View taken from the north, in the past

This *grenier*, like all the others, belonged to different owners. Based on available space, close to the houses, granaries were raised and placed on large round stones, so that mice could not reach their contents.

Thanks to its beams, in principle tight and interlocked, this type of construction did not let in flies and other insects that were attracted mainly by the meat.

Several *greniers* have been demolished or have been converted into homes. A *grenier* which no longer exists, located north of the chapel, had eight doors that corresponded to eight owners.

➤ The last location, the *grange-écurie* for cows, lies at the foot of the *grenier*.

17. Barn - Stable (Grange-écurie)



Grange-écurie, today

This *barn* was once destined to cows. The *barn* for cows was in general quite small, its surface ranged from 20 to 25 m². It could house a dozen animals.

Formerly, the cows of the Hérens were smaller than today. Milan, *reine* (queen) in 1944, weighed 500 kg, while Pinson, *reine* in 2000, weighed 750-800 kg.

The *barn* ceiling was quite low, forcing the farmer to work five hours a day, back bent.

The words "stable" (*étable*) and "farm" (*ferme*) only appeared in the valley in the 1970s.



Milan, Reine of the Torrent Pasture / Moiry in 1944 (500 kg, 8 litres of milk daily)

The barn, built above the stable, contained the hay needed to feed the livestock for twenty-five days. The hay was transported to the barn on their backs and inserted through the roof, accessed thanks to a board.

A hundred *granges-écuries* were spread across the agricultural territory of Pinsec, from the Navisence up to the *mayens*, located an hour's walk from the village.

During haymaking, at four in the morning, farmers went in single file with the scythe, rake and fork on the trail leading up from the village. In November and December, it is with the storm lantern that they left the village at the same time to go feed the cattle, trampling through thirty to forty centimetres of snow that sometimes fell overnight.

"The words "stable" (étable) and "farm" (ferme) only appeared in the valley in the 1970s".

➤ Enjoy the panoramic views across the valley from the bench that is a little lower.

Suggested Visits

Oratory of Melly

> The oratory of Melly is located on the mule and forest road, laid out in 1921, which connects Vercorin to the mayens past the cave of Sainte-Barbe, five minutes from the village.

This small chapel was built by the " Société du village " in the early 1800s to seek protection for the inhabitants. It was bequeathed to the " Société de Pinsec " in 1905. It contains a sculpture of the Passion, a crucifix, statues of Sainte-Barbe, the Pieta and Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The last three, stolen in 1974 were returned to the priest of Vissoie and given to the " Société du village " in 1984.

In 2003, the chapel was renovated, and a new cross was erected in memory of the mission of 1885. On a panel, it is written: " Sweet heart of Jesus, be my love. Sweet heart of Mary, be my salvation. My Jesus of Mercy. A Pater and an Ave Maria = 700 days of indulgence. " *Doux Coeur de Jésus, soyez mon amour. Doux Coeur de Marie, soyez mon salut. Mon Jésus miséricorde. Un Pater et un Ave-Maria = 700 jours d'indulgence.* "

Cave of Sainte-Barbe

>The cave of Sainte-Barbe is on the left of the marked trail that leaves from Pinsec towards the mayens of Ziettes and Vercorin. Walk about thirty minutes.

You can see a small cave where the Bourgeoisie of Saint-Jean placed a statue of Sainte-Barbe patron saint of miners, in 1921.

Paw print of a bear

> On a rock in the middle of road from Pinsec to Orzival, at a place called " Les Brunes " there is the mark of a bear paw.

Neither the date of the footprint nor that of its discovery are known. But we do know that the last bear in Anniviers was shot in 1856, in the pasture of Ponchette above Chandolin.

Bisse of the Sarrasins

> Follow the path that leaves from beneath the cross, after the last location in the direction of the Bisse of the Sarrasins.

According to oral tradition, this *bisse* was built by the Sarassins (or Moors) in the eleventh century. The intake of the stream of Pinsec dates from the fourteenth century. A fatal accident that occurred in 1830, is meant to have caused the end of the use of the Bisse for water supply in the sector of Briey. The upstream part, which took its waters from the Moulinets beneath Pinsec and which watered Tarampon was still in service in 1922.

Information on the status of work and routes: www.sarrasins.ch.



At the entry of the village, in the past

Cover photo: Pinsec, old postcard

Backcover photo: View of Pinsec and the valley, in the past

Texts

Charly Abbé.

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Gaëtan Cassina. *Chapelle St-Symphorien*. Paroisses vivantes, Anniviers, 1996.

Images and photos

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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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