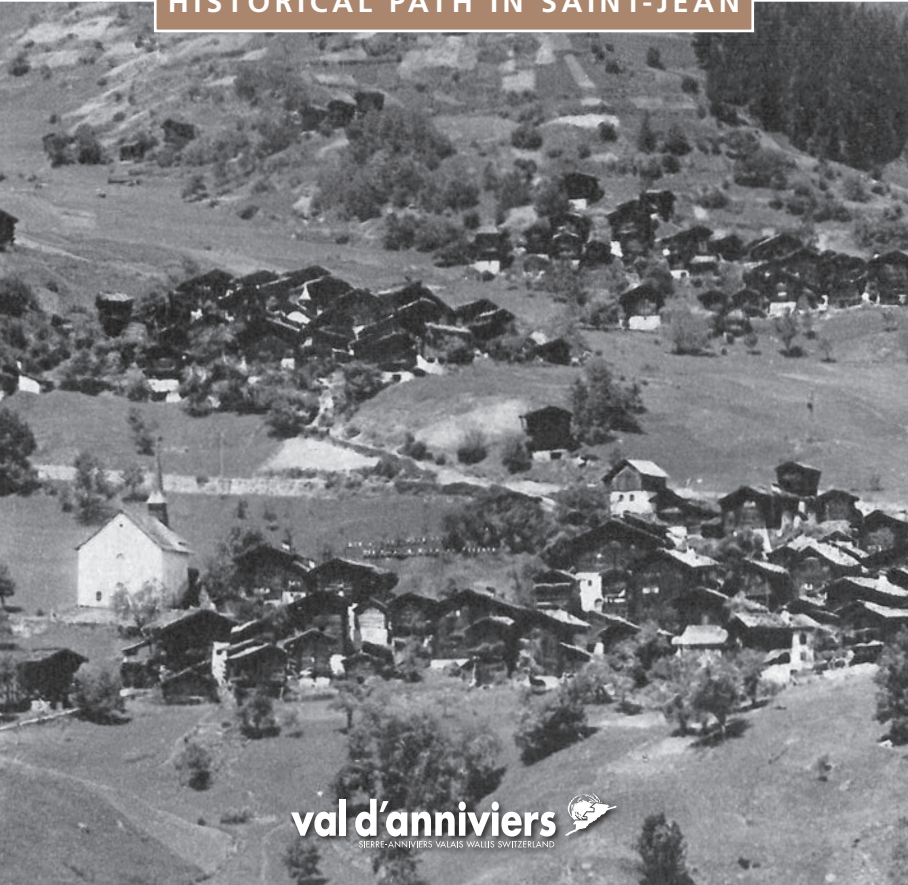


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HISTORICAL PATH IN SAINT-JEAN



Map of Saint-Jean



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Introduction to Saint-Jean



Saint-Jean, as seen from Mission, in the 1930's

On a 1930 photograph taken from Mission, Saint-Jean appears on a moraine formation as a staggered village with three areas. The village can be seen at its best from Mission.

We do not know exactly at what time the village took its current name, but already in 1575, a written act uses this name. Previously, the village was known as "l'Iglisier" and was located higher on the hillside than the current village.

Saint-Jean d'en-haut (upper) is separated from Saint-Jean du-milieu (middle) by the Hombes stream, which is kept free of construction because of danger of avalanches. The last, in 1984, came down to the village without causing damage. This event was at the origin of the construction of avalanche barriers that allowed for the construction of new houses, between the upper and middle parts of the village.

Saint-Jean d'en-bas (below) suffered from a major explosion in 1955, and was built below the main road, and is turned south toward the Chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

On either side of the three residential areas, meadows and grain fields form checkerboards, laid out in the most accessible and sunniest areas.

The cultivation of rye and wheat stopped in the mid-twentieth century, giving way to the empty land and forest. With the beginning of the 21st century, subsequent to the reduction of livestock, in the place of grasslands, a new neighbourhood has emerged in the flat area of Barmes. Young people, mainly from Saint-Jean and Grimentz, have settled here with their families. Today, the village has about 200 year-round inhabitants.

The Mougettes on their way

Over the seasons, the residents of Anniviers were required to live according to the rhythm of the *remuages* (movements) constantly. They owned meadows, vineyards and gardens in the valley of the Rhone; meadows, fields and forest land close to their villages and pasture land in the *mayens* (small houses associated with mid-mountain pastures). Everyone moved: the parish priest, the authorities, villagers and the schools.



The family of Daniel M. and his mule in Saint-Jean du-milieu in the period 1950-1960. This mule belonged to the families of Daniel M. from Saint-Jean and Jerome Z. from Vissoie: every Sunday after Mass, the mule was exchanged for a week.

“It is worth stopping to look at a *remuage* convoy. On the wagon, the people strove to somehow install children, the grandfather and grandmother, cats, a rooster, chickens, goats and a little pig, wood, straw, food, a few wooden utensils, and their Sunday clothes in order to be well-dressed in Siere. Young people followed the cart with the herd. ”

(« Le remuage. Mœurs et coutumes d’Anniviers ». Annales valaisannes, Monnier)

The “Mougettes” (field mice), a nickname given to the people of Saint-Jean, moved at



Postal Car, since 1935

the same time as the residents of other villages until the middle of the 20th century.

The mule track created opportunities for meetings between young people and created welcome alliances.

The history of the valley’s communication channels is inseparable from that of its inhabitants who are, as the likely etymology of Anniviers suggests, on the roads all year.

According to Bernard Crettaz, “the development of the road corresponds to the loss of the community in favour of individualization.” The development of access roads, with the arrival of the carriage road, changed the behaviour of the inhabitants of the valley. The people of Anniviers finally settled down.

The return of our friends



On the wagon road from Saint-Jean to Grimentz, in the 1930's

Is it possible that the five young people who are walking in An-niviard costumes, a little further on the Saint-Jean-Grimentz road, have taken a postal wagon in 1930? They walk without apparent effort. They “return” from an unknown point of departure, surely in the past. Since the earliest times those who “left” returned to show others the paths. If they are from Saint-Jean, they necessarily know the history. Let’s catch up with them! Our friends who are returning will surely interrupt their trip and accompany us through the village. Saint-Jean’s paths are timeless.

The historical tour of Saint-Jean is a moment of insight to mountain life offered to visitors. Suspended in time at 1400 m above sea level without chronological concerns, the visitor can wander,

and listen to the testimonies of the souls of this place, living or dead, who built, and loved this village. The memories that nourish the journey open a large book full of characters, events, anecdotes that can be subject to discussion, according to the point of view of the person who tells them. Oral history is never uniform, that’s what gives it its charm.

In homage to the first settlers, the route first takes us to Saint-Jean d’en-haut, to finish at Saint-Jean d’en-bas, in the quiet space of the chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. In general, it follows the *roua* with secret escapes through the narrow passages that cross between the houses. The point of departure and arrival is the Café La Gougra where, over a drink, the stories of the village are told.



The history of Saint-Jean can be read on the facades of houses and on the parchment of the hands that shaped it

1. Café La Gougra



Café La Gougra, under construction right, between 1954 and 1956

The construction of the Café La Gougra, begun in 1954, was completed only in 1956, due to the blast of the explosion of 1955 that damaged the building. Known far and wide for its fondues, it is now a place for locals and visitors to meet, those who arrive and those who leave on the postal bus.

Nomadic or sedentary, the community spirit of Anniviers remains an integral part of the heritage of Saint-Jean. Local stories recall the joyful or sad events that have marked the valley of Anniviers. One in particular has marked Saint-Jean.

May 5, 1955 is a date that has not been forgotten. A tragedy occurred three meters from the location of the Café La Gougra, at the time under construction, where a small grocery store opened in 1949.

The companies that had to transport material for the construction of the Moiry dam, needed a sufficiently wide road for their trucks. Until 1952, access to the future site of the Moiry dam was possible only on foot or by mule from Grimentz. A company from Sion stored dynamite for the construction work in a stable along the road opposite the café.

During the evening of May 5, 1955, three men from the village returned from a meeting when they saw flames coming out of the stable. Firemen, like most men in the village, they rushed to try to extinguish the flames. Then came the explosion. Two of them were badly burned, while the third died in the blast, which shattered the stable and the nearby barn that contained the harvesting machine. Debris scattered far and wide, burning surrounding shingle roofs, completely destroying the small shop and a tea-room (which was open in summer).

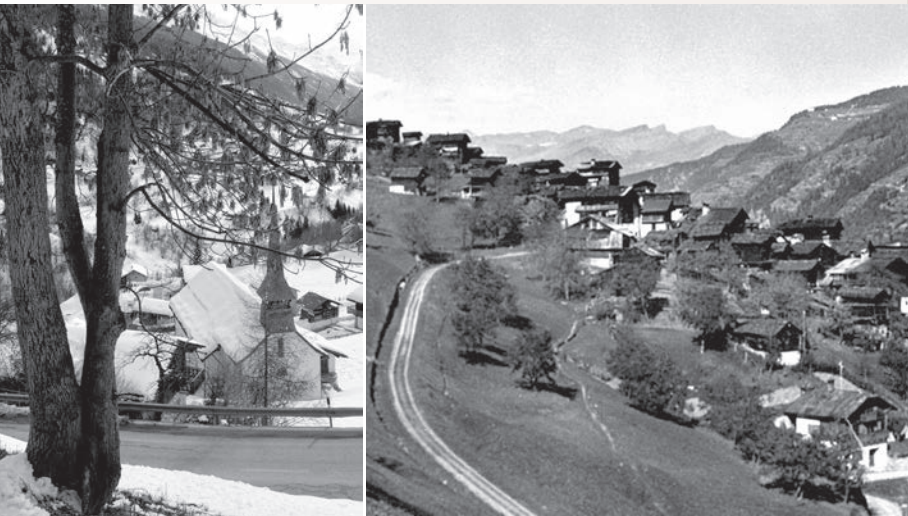
What happened? The truth was discovered later: gasoline was stolen in the depot, a cigarette butt was thrown on the ground, the building ignited and the two guilty parties slip away...

“Debris is scattered far and wide, burning the surrounding shingle roofs...”

This dramatic event is evoked with emotion even today, all the more intensely that the entrepreneur from Sion involved, who had no right to store explosives in the village, got off without a severe sentence.

➤ Our friends who are returning to the village indicate the direction to take for the next location on the historic tour. We walk along the main road toward Grimentz, to the path that climbs on the right.

2. Cohalet



On the *roua* between Saint-Jean d'en Bas and Saint-Jean d'en Haut today

Chalet Soleil, bottom right at Cohalet in the past

In “Cohalet” a dialect word meaning “small place exposed to the sun,” there are a few new houses, below the road. On the south side of Saint-Jean du-milieu the dairy and slaughterhouse were installed in a 1920 structure, called Chalet Soleil. Calving took place in November-December and a butcher worked from December to January. Here developed the first artisans zone of the village.

The bread chamber and oven are above Chalet Soleil. Its position, slightly away from the inhabited area, hints at the ever-present fear of the fire, when the oven is heated white.

It is in the Cohalet area that the population was supplied with bread, milk, and meat-the three basic products of the Anniviers diet. This is where the supply, processing, production, and finally the distribution occurred, according to a highly regulated system.

The merchandise storage areas were located elsewhere. Our friends who are returning to Saint-Jean will show us these places. These are the *greniers*, (granaries, *raccards* (barns), rooms and cellars, that can be discovered as we go along.

The landscape provides us with clues to discovering the economic activities that have replaced agriculture, an activity that can no longer live without subsidies.

Yellow signposts indicate the foot-paths, that follow the old routes.

“Calving took place in November-December and the butcher worked from December to January. ”

To the west, Tsirouc and Sorebois have long offered their meadows to graze cattle that were brought up for the summer. Today, this is where our friends discover the pylons of the Grimontz-Sorebois cabin lift, inaugurated in 2014.

➤ Follow the path to the converted granary.

3. Converted Granary



Granary Saint-Jean du-milieu, left



Pilotis

This old granary, to left the road, is now a house. Like other *greniers*, it originally belonged to several families and had doors for each compartment corresponding to a family.

A *raccard*, usually belonged to a single family. The *grenier* and *raccard* both consist of an upper floor made of large wooden boards, usually in larch, raised on stilts. These are based on large flat, round stones, themselves resting on wooden pilotis. With this system, mice, attracted by stored victuals, are not able to enter. The planks are closely laid to prevent flies from entering.

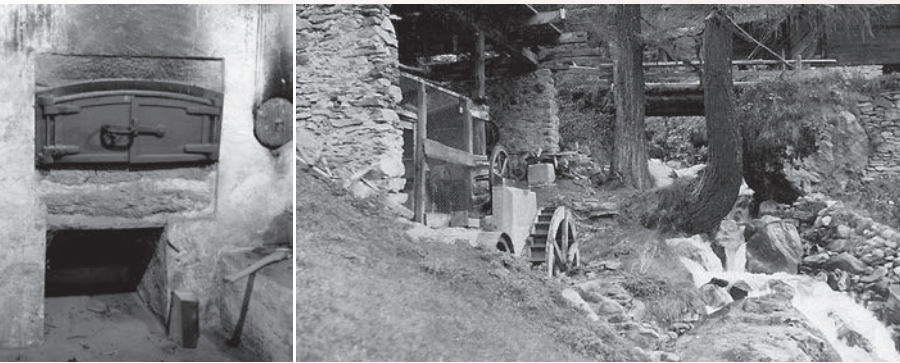
The *greniers* were used to keep dried meat, bread, Sunday clothes, but also cherries, *crodzettes* which are apples cut into quarters and distributed like candy to children and *mounettes*, pine cones.

In the “rooms” located below, built in masonry, two narrow windows allow ventilation in summer for the conservation of cheese. In winter, these openings were sealed with rags.

The cellars, rarely completely below ground were used to conserve vegetables and potatoes, as well as the wine of the Glacier, produced in Sierre and bottled in Anniviers.

➤ Follow the flat path that continues up to the Bread chamber.

4. Bread chamber and Oven



The bread oven today

Mill of Saint-Jean, at a place called "Le Martinet," below Vissoie

The bread chamber consists of two parts: one part where the dough is prepared, and the second, the oven which belongs to the community, where it is cooked. The building, originally built in 1893 by the "Société du village", was rebuilt in 1925.

The bread of Saint-Jean was traditionally made with rye flour and wheat, cereals grown on small plots close to the village. The grains to be ground were transported by mule to the mills at Le Martinet below Vissoie.

Bread making took place two or three times a year, usually during the winter months. The oven was heated two days before the bread was baked. The person who last used the oven, was the custodian of the leaven and was responsible for heating the oven. Each family was required to give wood, a *rètze*. For several days and nights, families came in turn, to the bread room, preparing, kneading the dough, and letting it rise. Each family had their own recipe. It is said

that the oven was at the right temperature when hair on a forearm near the vault, would start to burn after ten seconds. The vault of the oven had to be, according to local expression, "beautifully white". When the correct temperature was reached, the first batch took about twenty minutes to cook, the second forty. Each family stored a hundred loaves in its *grenier*. Four months later, the bread was cut with an axe and had to be dipped in soup so as not to break teeth. Those whose reserve was exhausted ate polenta until the next batch of bread could be cooked, on decision by the village leaders.

The bread chamber and oven still belong to the "Société du village", which, in 1930, managed several jointly owned facilities. The accounts of the "Société" are carefully preserved in a wooden box, under the care of one of three village leaders. Leaders were elected at the general meeting, usually held in the bread room.

The "Société du village" operates according to very specific community regulations. Each member owns a house in the village, pays a contribution, participating in chores and duties on the properties of the "Société".

➤ Our friends want to show us a strange, rather mysterious place. Going up a few meters along the creek near the bread room, on the right, there is a barely visible cavity.

" It is said that the oven is at the right temperature when hair on a forearm near the vault starts to burn after ten seconds..."

5. Mysterious Cache



Most likely an oven to dry fruit

Opinions differ as to the use of this kind of small stony cave, now invaded by the roots of ash trees that grow above.

For some, these must be the remains of the first bread oven, for others, it was a private oven used to dry the fruit brought up from Sierre, especially pears which do not keep well. Or was it a cache? But to hide what?

> We go back to the grenier to resume the ascent to the roua. Our friends tell us that, even if the village is almost entirely devoid of barriers, we can not cross the meadows or enter buildings without being invited. After the grenier, we find ourselves facing a beautiful three-storey house.

6. Houses and Architecture



M. House in Saint-Jean du-milieu

The residential houses all have several floors that housed several families.

“The houses were not well insulated. We insulated the walls with newspapers. Everyone slept in the bedroom and the little room where there were, under the beds, other pull-out beds. The girls slept in the large room with the parents. ”

If we take the time to observe, we can even estimate the period of construction, and that of when a floor was added or a masonry wing. There are subtle hints, such as an inscription in stone, another on a beam, a frieze on planks, frosted glass, a difference in window heights. These clues allow us to observe the built heritage of the village in another way.

> Go beyond the newly renovated buildings on the left, a chapel on the right and we arrive on the paved road.

7. House of the Bourgeoisie



In front of the House of the Bourgeoisie in Saint-Jean du-milieu

Here, we are in the presence of a large stone and wood house, called "Gite de Saint-Jean", where since 1996, the training of guides for the middle mountains was undertaken. This building is, above all, the home of the bourgeois citizens of Saint-Jean, originally from Saint-Jean, Mayoux, and Pinsec, the villages that formed of Saint-Jean until 2008.

A remarkable octagonal stove dated 1641 is in the Bourgeoisie room. It is made of soapstone, a soft stone used because of its refractory properties.

To be part of the Bourgeoisie, it is necessary to submit an application at the age of eighteen and to appear before the Assembly of active citizens, called the "Rogation". The Bourgeoisie of Saint-Jean owns forests, buildings, such as the House of the Bourgeoisie, the main cellar, the small chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire in Saint-Jean, and vineyards in Sierre. In the cellar, the Bourgeoisie cares for barrels of Malvoisie and Glacier wine. The wine of the Glacier, once made with r ze only, now consists of r ze kept in barrels that are never completely emptied, and are supplemented with Hermitage wine. The bourgeoisie offers wine at Corpus Christi, the feasts of the patron saints, the National Day, the days of lotteries, etc... Ren  Z., former president of the Bourgeoisie of Saint-Jean recounts a brief history of the various political changes in the Valley from 1327 to the present (Annex).

Our returning friends specify that the two upper floors of the building housed the school. In the 1930s, about forty-five students were in attendance. The "School House" also hosted many meetings. Subsequent to the end of one these meetings, the large

8. Chapel of Notre-Dame-du Rosaire

house underwent a major disaster that could have caused the disappearance of much of Saint-Jean du-milieu.

The citizens of Saint-Jean had gathered to review the accounts of the Bourgeoisie. It was so cold that the heating was turned up high. A fire started between the wall and the furnace. Terrified families woke the children up, dressed them and took them to a place of refuge away from the fire.



The furnace and its "scars"

Since then, the building was enlarged. Some beams retain traces of the fire as does the stove. It broke into forty-two pieces with the thermal shock of the cold water of the fire fighters. Erasmus Z. completely rebuilt it with the original stones.

The one who best knows the House of the Bourgeoisie is probably the president without a head, called "the ghost of Saint-Jean" who is said to have haunted the building for years. Sentenced to return each night to correct falsified documents, it is believed that he has now finished serving his sentence...

> Our friends lead us to the small chapel situated below the House of the Bourgeoisie



Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire

In 1687, Bishop Adrien V Riedmatten visited a small building in Saint-Jean du-milieu, probably the chapel of the Bourgeoisie, which was founded in 1519 by Jean Martin. The building has a cellar which is its veritable treasure and peculiarity. It houses the archives of the Bourgeoisie of Saint-Jean, some religious objects, paintings and portraits, including that of the priest Egide Massy, who died in 1697, a key character of the church in Anniviers in the seventeenth century.

Formerly, this chapel was known by the villagers as Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours. A resident of Saint-Jean born in 1924, recalls that the people of Saint-Jean regularly attended Mass, celebrated by the priest of Vissoie and have always called the chapel

9. Fountain



Eighteenth century altarpiece of the chapel

Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire was known as the old chapel.

Over time, the chapel was the subject of several renovations. Visible in the ceiling, the two large beams supporting the bell tower, were, in 1755, outside of the building. The chapel, was then the size of an oratory, but was enlarged, at an undetermined date. The altar is surmounted by an altarpiece that dates from the second half of the eighteenth century. It represents the crowned Madonna with Child, holding a rosary in her right hand. She is surrounded on the right by Saint-Jean-Baptiste and on the left by Sainte-Agnès. The chapel, generally closed, can be visited by contacting Anna Z.

➤ Return to the House of the Bourgeoisie.



The fountain in front of the House of the Bourgeoisie, as of 1918

It's hard to leave the neighbourhood of the House of the Bourgeoisie without bending down to savour a few sips of the cool water of the fountain.

Here, we say "the basin" and its water flows all year. There are several in the village. These basins were put in place in 1918 along with fire hydrants.

Before then, there was only one wooden basin in Saint-Jean d'enhaut.

➤ Our friends speak of a former bisse (irrigation-canal) which is just below the fountain. Let's go to the car park and the gate of the stream and follow the path that leads to the stable.

10. Grand Bisse of Saint-Jean



Stonework of the Grand Bisse between Saint-Jean and Mayoux, in summer

The Grand Bisse which passes through Saint-Jean du-milieu, is one of the prides of the village. It was restored and opened in 2012. This irrigation canal with a length of about 4 km, begins at the Gougra stream below Grimentz, and ends at the Puchottaz stream in Mayoux.

The Val d'Anniviers is located in one of the driest regions of Switzerland and the Bisse is inseparable from agriculture. Until the decline of the latter in the years 1950-1960 the Bisse was used to water the meadows and grainfields.

Its date of construction is unknown. According to the writings of Abbot Erasmus Zufferey, it already existed more than 500 years ago. A *raccard* sales deed from 1475 mentions it.

The "Société du Grand Bisse" is a *consortage* governing water rights to the Fios, Saint-Jean and Mayoux. Chores were carried out in common. In the spring, before the water was allowed to flow, all owners were invited to "the day of the Bisse." After the winter, there was much work to clear land, larch needles, and branches and to repair damaged embankments.

The water flowed in the Bisse between mid April and early May until late September. After the *refoins* the second cutting of hay, the water was stopped to prevent freezing.

From the opening of the water flow into the Bisse, it took a day for the water to reach the end. Landowners had rights according to the size of their plots, but the expression used in Anniviers of "we are at the end of the Bisse" suggests that people who are at the end of the Bisse were less advantaged. The "right to water" entitles the holder to use the Bisse water for fields for a set time. Once the watering is complete, the owner then places across a *torno*, a small metal plate, to block water and direct it to the next field to be irrigated. When finished watering, the *torno* was removed and the water continued to flow on.

" From the opening of the water flow into the Bisse, it took a day for the water to reach the end. "

➤ Stop near the Bisse, to observe the two operating stables in Saint-Jean.

11. View of the Stables



Stable of Raphy Z., in Saint-Jean d'en-haut

Community or private, the stable is a place that attracts attention, irresistibly. It is a warm home in the heart of winter. The private stable of Raphy Z., built in 2007 is located in Saint-Jean d'en-haut. Below, the community stable of Saint-Jean, built in 1976, is a symbol of the spirit of solidarity in the village.

Following the abandonment of stables by the local farming community in the 1960s, a group of friends decided to do something together. In 1975-1976, twenty of them spent hours working to build a community stable, aided by subsidies and credits from the Swiss Confederation. They agreed to manage the barn with a cowherd for twenty years. Cows were brought to the community stable for the first time in 1977.

The people have inexhaustible anecdotes about cows. Let us listen to René Z: *"What does it bring to have cows in the barn? If you count everything, nothing remains and if you count nothing, everything remains."*



Community Stable, Saint-Jean d'en-bas

The cows were brought here for the first time in 1977. 1976 was a year of severe drought. This was a disaster for the farmers from Vaud who keep their livestock throughout the year in the village. It was so dry that they had no more grass for their animals. They were ready to liquidate everything. In Valais, we had water.

They phoned the Department of Agriculture in Valais to see if and where there was grass to graze. (...) Thus two Vaudois families came to the brand new barn with their livestock, while the cows from here were out to pasture. (...) Since then, a beautiful friendship was born, and every year they return for the cow fights (match de reines). "

➤ Before going to Saint-Jean d'en-haut, separated from Saint-Jean du-milieu by the stream, our friends point out ruins overgrown with shrubs to the left of a large wooden cross.

12. Partières / Goat Pens and Tsablos

This was the *partière* a term that refers to a pen where all the goats of the village were put in the morning before the goatherd would take them to graze at Montagnette.

While the cows were at pasture, goats, that also supplied milk, spent the summer in the village. Every household owned a goat or two. One cow was left in the village for all of the families.

To reach the Montagnette, up at the edge of the forest, you have to cross the *tsablos*, a dialect term that indicates the corridor dug out by the stream. Apart from wooden logs, avalanches also come down this slope. One would not linger in the *tsablos*. These corridors belong to the Bourgeoisie.

Every day, young goatherds went in turn to the Montagnette with the goats of the village. They were given a meal for each goat, plus bread and cheese. The goatherds came down only when the sun no longer lit the Navisence stream.

Since the last avalanche of 1984 that came down to the square where we are, avalanche barriers, visible above the forest, were built at Chaché and Montagnette. Then new constructions began to extend into the *tsablos* corridor between Saint-Jean d'en-haut and Saint-Jean du-milieu. Previously, barriers were limited to the ridges of the mountain.

> Continue the visit by going toward the *raccards* above Saint-Jean du-milieu.



Ruins of the *partière* or goat pen



On the right, above the forest, the Montagnette and avalanche barriers

13. Raccards of Agyrle



Raccards of Agyrle overlooking the Zinalrothorn

It is worthwhile to go up to a place called the Agyrle to admire the silhouettes of two barns, elegantly poised on the slope. From close up one can see that the pilotis are still in good condition. These barns are under the protection of Valais Heritage. The *raccard* was used to store the fruit of the harvest. Rye and wheat were harvested with a sickle and bound into sheaves in fields near the Herdés.

Before being stored inside the *raccard*, corn was dried on the *longuerines*, wood pieces that horizontally define the drying gallery on the outside, which runs on one or two of the building's sunny facades.

It is in winter that the farmers threshed with a scourge. The wheat was separated from the chaff with a van, a wicker tool.



Raccards of Agyrle, south side

The lighter chaff flies off and grain remains at the bottom. Thus rid of its shell, it is stored in adjacent lockers on the threshing floor which occupies the core of the building.

The grain was then transported in bags by mule or on a sled if the path to the Martinet mill was snowy.

The *raccard* which usually has a single entrance, was also used for beating beans. The arrival of the harvester diminished the role and use of the *raccard*. But it remains a beautiful building still looming proudly against the background of the valley.

➤ Our friends guide us through the village, to houses where they know all the stories, but they cannot cross the threshold anymore.

14. House of Florine and Henri



House of Florine and Henri

After crossing the stream of Hombes, inhabitants are considered as being from Saint-Jean d'en-haut. In the early twenty-first century, the "kids" of the 1930s still lived here... Observe the houses and listen to what their inhabitants have to say. The first house is a beautiful two storey structure that may be the second oldest house in Saint-Jean. An inscription on the masonry part indicates the date of April 24, 1623.

The planks are axe hewn. The cellar is the only completely buried one in the village.

Florine and Henri live here, upstairs. Florine came from Ayer to marry Henri, fifty years ago. Take time to listen to them talk about the goats. A pure delight.

"In the 1950s, there were 70 to 80 goats. It was nice with the goats jumping everywhere. (...) In 1962, everyone had goats. In summer we kept a cow and a goat for milk. Everyone took care of the male goat in turn. Those who refused to keep the goat were taken to court and were ordered to pay for someone else to look after it.

Around 1980, a writer from the city, Jean-Marc L. kept the last male goat in Pinsec in his kitchen with a clay floor. They were like cave dwellers, those two guys!

In those years, we sold the last three goats. Children didn't want the milk; they preferred a milk carton. Only a family with a sick child in Vercorin who could only consume goat milk, still came every two days to get some (...)"

➤ Follow the road for 40 meters, between old converted barns and granaries.



Alley between the two buildings, in the 1930's

15. House of Jeanne, Weaver



House of Jeanne Z

At the corner of the road is the home of Jeanne, renovated in a modern style by her grandchildren who live there.

In Anniviers, as in all valleys, the army, mobilization, and major projects took men out of the valley. With the men absent, each village saw women assuming all the work. Excluding those of the countryside and home, they were still artisans, mothers, wives, daughters-in-law, healers, etc...

Each house has lodged one of these modest and discrete heroines. Through the testimony of the life of Jeanne, the last weaver from the village and the valley, who died in 1997, a place is given to all the women of Saint-Jean.

Jeanne used flax and hemp plants that went into the making of the cloth, but also knew the plants that heal. She took care of her own and sometimes of the cattle with a plant she called sacred, because of the miracles it accomplished in her family: the Masterwort (impéatoire plant) (*peucedanum ostruthium*), called *argo* in Anniviers.

Textiles were the affair of women who spun, knitted or mended. Jeanne, born in 1908, began weaving at the age of 13 with her aunt Adèle in a business owned by her grandmother. At 19, she went to follow a weaving course at the school of Châteauneuf.

Jeanne was 88 years old when she answered the questions of Paul-André Florey in 1996.

"I had linen woven for my mother who died when I was 20, I still have some. It was solid. But linen was more difficult to weave than wool. (...) I wove cloth to make costumes, when my father became an MP. I bought the wool but I wove it myself. Then I sent the cloth to tread. A tailor made a magnificent costume. My father wore it to go to the Grand Council. (...) People brought me wool and I wove it to make cloth for them. I remember that you asked 20 cents for an aune, which was 1 m 20 long. People came to help me, because you had to be two to mount the structure. They brought me wine and bread that I did not want. It was called the "pittance". (...)

My mother, first dyed the cloth and then sent it to Sion to be bated. This cloth became beautiful. I have worn my dress made from the cloth of the country for 20 years. (...)

Oh! I enjoyed that people appreciated my work. Recently I wove my granddaughter's wedding dress. "

The daily life of Jeanne, almost entirely summed up in a letter to one of her seven children in October 1951, reflects the uninterrupted labour of women in these times:

October 22, 1951

"My dear Claude,

We have not been diligent in answering your letter. You must excuse us. Right now, we have so much work. Luc and Urbain are taking care of the livestock. Romain and Bruno kept the cows of Fridolin during the past week. And Wednesday and Thursday, I went down to Sierre to harvest our grapes. I was sorry to not have sent you grapes, but as we were not alone, I could just take a full carton for here. I asked Monique to give you some, but I do not know if she dared ask. Today, it is cold and there is a layer of snow of about 10 cm. Father Romain and Urbain, went to move the cows from Zampelets to Flaubovis. We still have to dig the potatoes of the field at the Crêts.

We hope that the good weather will return. There is still bedding to bring and a quantity of manure to bring out. Monique was to come last Sunday and will not come back until next Sunday. I know that you are lacking the right jackets and jersey, but I have not yet had time to mend the jacket and Marguerite has not yet done the knitting. As soon as it is ready, we will send you all this. I bought you a nice shirt in Sierre for Sunday. I hope it will please you. We will make the slippers for you shortly. I bought solid soles and we are knitting the tops. We will make good warm slippers for you. Let us know if you can hold out.

We often pray that you reach the goal you desire. This would bring us so much happiness.

So the whole family is in good health, there is no shortage of work. I forgot to tell you that with Luc and Romain, we went to



Jeanne at the loom. Shuttle and bobbin

the pines above the mayen of Clovis Z. It was a very difficult day. We picked up four sacks. The whole family sends you our most sincere greetings, and we embrace you with all our heart. Mother "

> The last house inhabited year round is situated at the right angle of the road that leads to the Mayens of Pinsec. You cannot miss it.

16. House of Albert and Cécile



House of Albert and Cécile S.

When there is sun, Cecile sits on her balcony and is the only lady of her age that has kept her pretty white hair in a bun. When Albert was still there, they sat every afternoon on the balcony and chatted with the people who passed by. But let us hear them tell of the day of their wedding.

Albert's family lived on the first floor of the house. Cecile, who was from Pinsec, was hired as a assistant to Jeanne, the weaver. But it was in Noës that they met and in 1948 they married. The dress of the bride was made by the seamstress of Vissoie.

On the wedding day, they had a party at the House of the Bourgeoisie. Dried meat, raclette and cake were served. Directly after the wedding dinner, Albert went to run the snow plow on the road between Leuk and Leukerbad, while Cécile accompanied grandfather Symphorien (her father-in-law, a very nice man) to Nava to mind the cows.

Agricultural activities came one after the other for Cécile tending vineyards, cows, gardens, and manure to be transported.

"Before, we hardly had any time to ourselves. But we stayed up and played cards, even if we were tired or when we had to get up early. Sometimes there were so many of us that we had only three cards each, so it was quickly done. (...)

" It would take us 5 hours to get from Saint-Jean to Noës. No, we were not tired, we were used to it."

It would take us 5 hours to get from Saint-Jean to Noës. No, we were not tired, we were used to it. The women would knit while they walked. Then we picked up branches. We always had something to carry when we came from the mayens: bedding, wood, etc".

➤ Let us venture between the last buildings of Saint-Jean d'en-haut, to the right and left of the road.

17. Former Farm Buildings



Last farm buildings at Saint-Jean d'en haut, in 1986

They are called *granges*, *raccards*, *greniers* or *écuries*, (barns, granaries or stables). One no longer sees hay nor pigs in the small stable, nor cows in the barn with its low ceiling.

Traditional agriculture was maintained until 1992 by some farmers who were also working at the aluminium factory in Chippis. The breeding of two cows and two *modzons* (two-year old calves) permitted the continuity of the cutting of hay in the surrounding meadows and provided extra food for three or four families, that was much appreciated.

When, in 1992, the law made it obligatory to open windows in the stables, to whiten the walls, build a manure pit, and to deliver milk elsewhere, the last traditional farmers abandoned this activity. Today, the mountain farmer maintains the landscape and perpetuates the values related to land.

➤ Continue to the cross. Our friends await us.

18. New Cross of Saint-Jean-Baptiste

On the way to the mayen of Pinsec, at the confines of the village, 1440 m above sea level, stands a cross dedicated to Saint-Jean-Baptiste. The new cross was erected by parishioners in 2013, replacing the former one, probably erected there by one of the many missions preached in the Val d'Anniviers by the Capucins of Sion.

This is an opportunity to take a last look at the barns and granaries suspended on the crest of Saint-Jean d'en-haut, but also at the mountain peaks. The Zinalrothorn, 4221 m, was first climbed in 1864 by L. Stephen, F. C. Grove, M. and L. Anderegg.

Our friends remind us that the mountains, populated by legends, inspired fear and respect in their inhabitants. Indigenous people rarely went beyond the pastures. That is why the summits were conquered by the British, always adventurers. Mountaineers however always hired the most agile hunters of the valley, to accompany them. Some became famous tourist guides.

➤ Now, still guided by our friends, we will go down to Saint-Jean d'en-bas by taking the Cohalet path. Upon reaching the main road, we cross it and follow the roua up to the Saint-Félix oratory and its large cross.



New Cross

19. Oratory of Saint-Félix



Saint-Félix Oratory



Saint-Félix de Valois

The Saint-Félix oratory, built in 1711, belongs to the Confrérie Saint-Félix, which is composed of thirty-five members, descendants of its founders, the transmission being from father to son.

It is difficult to accurately date the Saint-Félix Brotherhood. Its secretary, in 1959, would have referred to the fourteenth century. For 300 years, every village in the Valais had to provide a contingent of mercenaries to serve the kings of Spain, Naples and France. In fact, the men of Anniviers, as well as other Valais residents, were engaged in France as mercenaries of the King.

They did not all return. Some died, others were captured. But that year, those of Saint-Jean all returned. After receiving their pay, they went to kneel at the tomb of Saint-Félix, in Cerfroid, France. To thank and obtain graces and favours, they bought a statue of the saint that they had shipped to Saint-Jean. In order to receive this representation of Saint-Félix, an oratory was built.

"They did not all return. Some died, others were captured."

In 1996, the statue of Saint-Félix, found in 84 pieces on the floor, was completely glued back together.

➤ According to our friends... it has been a long time that France has not been recruiting mercenaries in Saint-Jean...

Let's go back to the oratory and move forward a few meters. The House of the Tower is to the left of the road that goes towards the Chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

20. Tower House

This house, which dates from the sixteenth century, is probably one of the oldest houses of Saint-Jean and the only one to have four floors of living space.

Its hexagonal masonry tower was rebuilt by the fathers of the current owners in 1960. The inscription above the entry porch is not original. It was cemented in place by one of the owners during repair work.

It's worth taking a look at the staircase to admire the beautiful stones that constitute each step up to the fourth floor.

To the west of the house, a newer addition is linked to the main building by a small bridge. This is the *remija* (storage room), damaged in 1955 by the fire of the explosion and renovated in 2008.

➤Let us take some steps towards the Chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Let us turn around. We are then facing a mural painted on the south facade of a building, which illustrates a fife and drum band.



The house and its tower in 1955

21. Fresco of Fife and Drums

This fresco is a copy of a panel announcing the 1984 festival, which inaugurated new costumes and a new flag. It was designed by Martial M. then president of the "Société des Fifres & Tambours" "La Gougra" and was carried out by Gilbert S. The Gougra is the river that runs between the Moiry glacier and joins the Navisence, near the village of Saint-Jean.

This "Société", created in 1954, reflects the soul of Saint-Jean. It has its place in the history of the village. In 2013, the company had more than forty members, men and women. Many young people beginning at the age of eight, are in training.

The drum is one of the oldest musical instruments known to the Val d'Anniviers. It was later accompanied by the fife, and became a part of community work in the vineyards. In March or April, during the work of Lent, the workers left the villages of Muraz, Villa, Zarvettaz, and Noës to form a procession to the sound of the drum, with the communal banner in the lead, as they made their way to the vineyards. The drum also sounded the rhythm at major processions and was used to announce an event,



Fresco of Fife and Drums

22. Chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste

underlining the importance and solemnity of the information announced. This type of music has its roots in the army, in the many conflicts that marked the end of the Middle Ages. Fifes and drums became an important component of the federal army corps during the fifteenth century. Over the following centuries, many Valaisans engaged themselves as mercenaries with various foreign regiments. Once back home, many of them adopted these instruments.

Listen to Henri B., co-founder of the Association: *"Originally, there was a single drum, Joseph E., who beat the drum alone, on the occasion of the feast of Corpus Christi or for the day of the patron saint. He learned to play the drum during the mobilisation of 1914-1918. It was fun to hear him play. Suddenly, two men from Saint-Jean, including my brother Vital, went to learn to play the fife in Mission with the father of Elie T. (...)*

At 12, I played during the work in the vineyards in Sierre for the first time. This was unusual. But in the regulations of the Bourgeoisie, it is said that if the father died, the last male child in the family could be recognized by the bourgeoisie at the age of 12. (...) Albert S. and Robert V. who played the drum in the military went to play the drum in the valley of the Rhone. Then we started to train the fife players. René C. Seraphin M., Victor P., Michel A., Philibert R., Edgar S., Robert S., my brother Albert, and I, had the idea to launch the Association that we founded in 1954".

Today, the music of the fife and drum band of "La Gouggra" is inseparable both from the Corpus Christi and the feast day of Saint-Jean, celebrated on August 29, in the chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

➤ Our heads filled with music, we head to the chapel.



Chapel in the past

The Chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, located in Saint-Jean d'en-bas, inevitably attracts the attention of visitors because of its proportions and the complicity of its bell tower with the top of the Zinalrothorn. Built between 1661 and 1686, the chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste replaced an older chapel, present since the early sixteenth century.

The roof, formerly covered with shingles, and the windows had to be rebuilt after the explosion of 1955. It was last refurbished in 2003.



Presentation of the head of Saint-Jean-Baptiste to Salome, painting on the left of the altar

Saint-Jean-Baptiste is an exceptional saint in several respects. The day of the Saint is celebrated twice: first, on June 24, near the summer solstice, and the second time on August 29, day of the Feast of Saint-Jean. After he was beheaded, Saint-Jean's head was brought on a platter to Salome, daughter of Herodias.

The immense size of the sanctuary is due to its instigator, the priest Egide Massy (1634-1697), who had benefited from a rich inheritance. Priest of Anniviers, Egide Massy wanted to build a parish church in his village of Saint-Jean. At the time, there was only one

parish church for the whole valley, in Vissoie. The chapel never achieved this status, whence the lack of a cemetery, a bell tower and a baptismal font.

It is one of the few chapels in Anniviers that has retained its authenticity and furniture. The altarpieces of the three altars are the real treasures of the chapel. Works in carved, painted wood, framing of paintings representing the patron saints of the altars, come from the hands of skilled craftsmen established in Valais or passing through at that time.

The high altar has two paintings. The principal one represents the baptism of Christ by Saint-Jean, with the donor, Egide Massy, kneeling right, and bears the date 1684. The small picture above represents the Assumption of the Virgin.

“This is one of the few chapels in Anniviers that has retained its authenticity and furniture. ”

The tabernacle still has the original polychrome, with painted figures of the risen Christ, surrounded by Saint-Georges and Saint-Maurice. In the nave, to the right is the altar of Saint-Charles and Saint-Théodule. On the left, the altar of the Holy Family, with a beautiful canvas depicting Saint-Joseph and the Virgin Mary around the Baby Jesus, surmounted by the dove of the Holy Spirit and God the Father. Half of the benches on the side of the choir are original and half date from the time of the restoration in 1881. The stations of the Cross and altar fronts date from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In the choir, a painting that dates from the nineteenth century recalls the beheading of John the Baptist.

The chalice offered by the priest Egide Massy in 1680, is preserved with some objects and period furniture and a fine collection of chasubles, that date from 1670 to the present.

➤ After enjoying the peace and freshness of this remarkable building, we go down to the door that we close on this historical journey through Saint-Jean. Well, our friends are gone. It's time to go to the bistro. So many stories still to be told...

Suggested Visits

Prarion

➤ Follow the road left directly after the community stable or the Bisse from Saint-Jean. Prarion is a very nice picnic site, with a playground for children.

In 1991 the mill was transported to Prarion without prior disassembly from Vissoie.

Formerly, the grains to be ground were transported by mule from Saint-Jean to the mills at Martinet, below Vissoie. Saint-Jean did not have a sufficiently constant and abundant stream on its territory to run a mill. The Bourgeoisie of Saint-Jean bought the mill in 1815.

Mayens de Pinsec

➤ From Saint-Jean d'en-haut, follow the forest road that leads to the mayens of Pinsec (1 h 15).

This walk allows you to admire the *mayens* of Pinsec. It was used to drive cattle to the *mayen* at the end of May and on the return from the pastures, in late September.

Annex

Political Evolution of Saint-Jean from 1327 to today by Rene Z.

- A document, dated 1327 indicates that the valley was divided into four areas or neighbourhoods. Saint-Jean and Grimetz then formed the district of Grimetz.
- In 1798, an organisation in Tiers (thirds) was the rule, and Vissoie joined the district of Grimetz.
- In 1821, the town of Saint-Jean, made up of Saint-Jean, Les Frasses, and Pinsec, became completely autonomous and created a first flag. Politically the townspeople had all the powers in the town Bourgeoisie.
- In 1912, non-bourgeois formed the majority in the Town Council, an institution created by the constitution in 1848. The citizens probably fearing for their ancestral privileges, sought and obtained the creation of a separate Bourgeois council.
- The bourgeois retained the presidency of the municipality until 1968, when a citizen originally from Ayer became president.
- There was no town office in Saint-Jean. It was in Mayoux.
- In 2008, forty years later, the six municipalities of the Anniviers Valley merge into one entity named Anniviers; however the Bourgeoisies remain.

Texts

Madeleine Daly Wiget, based on « Promenade à travers St-Jean et son histoire », written and illustrated with the archives, stories and photos/images of: Abbé Charly, Annales Valaisannes, Anniviers Tourisme, Besse Alain, Bonnard Florine and Henri, Boucard Louis, Caloz Jean-Marc, Cassina Gaëtan, Crettaz Bernard, Crettaz Simon, Crettaz-Stürzel Elisabeth (reproductions of the Maison Rurale Valaisanne, Brigue/Sion), de la Providence Calixte, Epiney Regolatti Dominique, Epiney Marco, Florey Edouard, Florey Paul-André, Florey Symphorien, Gabbud Catherine, Genoud Fernande, Journal de Sierre, Jungsten Norbert, Kettel Max, Kittel Urbain, Massy André, Massy Francis and Thérèse, Massy Jean-Baptiste, Massy Marie-Hélène and Martial, Mathieu Pierre, Moser Christian, Nolens Dominique, Regolatti Marc, Salamin Nicole, Savioz Albert and Cécile, Savioz Gilbert, Savioz Michel (Notrehistoire.ch), Société du village de Saint-Jean, Vianin Rose-Marie and Hermann, Wiget Mali, Wiget Simon, Wikipédia, Zuber Denis, Zufferey Anna, Zufferey Bruno, Zufferey Claude, Zufferey Dominique, Zufferey Erasme, Zufferey Jeanne, Zufferey René.

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 »

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Religious Heritage

Elisabeth Crettaz-Stürzel, art historian.

Built Heritage

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Translation

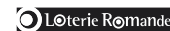
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Cover photo: Saint-Jean seen from Mission
Backcover photo: Saint-Jean and the chapel

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