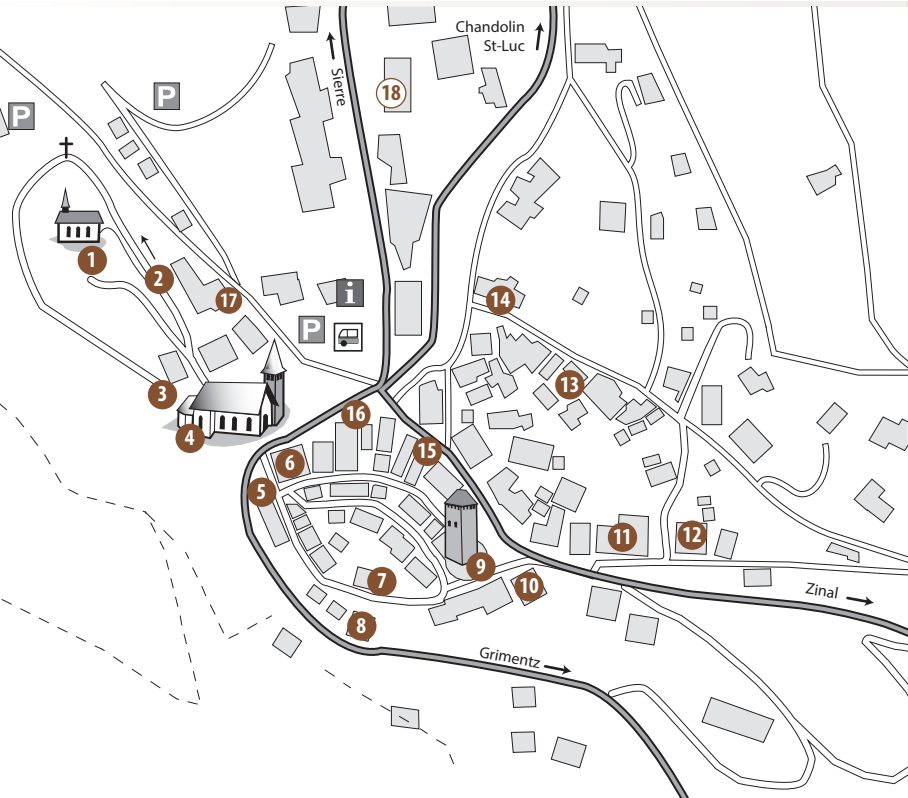


VISSOIE

HISTORICAL PATH IN VISSOIE

Map of Vissoie



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Introduction to Vissoie



Vissoie early in the 20th century

Because of its geographical location, the village of Vissoie has always played an important role in the Val d'Anniviers. Built above the Navisence, this fortified village controlled the main access road to the valley. In addition, its location at the center of the valley, and also at the junction of the roads leading to other villages today, naturally destined it to take on a significant role in the context of Anniviers.

“Because of its geographical location, the village of Vissoie has always played a leading role in the Val d'Anniviers. ”

The village is characterized by its oldest neighbourhoods located around the Tower and above the road.

Vissoie today has about 530 inhabitants.



Village Square and basin in 1928

Vissoie, a medieval village

Vissoie was the residence of the lords of Anniviers, whose castle no longer exists. They governed the valley until 1467. From then until the end of the old regime in 1798, the vice lord of Anniviers administered on behalf of the bishop. He lived in the Tower of the Bishop (Tour de l'Evêque) or Cour Neuve in Vissoie, while the lord apparently lived below, in the valley of the Rhone.

Vissoie was the parish centre for all of Anniviers until the separation of Saint-Luc and Chandolin in 1804. Vissoie also was the centre of trades/crafts of the valley, because it is especially here that were established the persons exercising different trades such as carpentry, blacksmiths, carriage/cart makers and others. From 1849 to 1871 Vissoie was the only postal depot in the valley. On November 1, 1871, Saint-Luc received its own repository to which Chandolin was attached.

Subsequent to the arrival of the carriage road in Vissoie in 1863, mule carts were stored in sheds that also belonged to people from other villages, except for Saint-Luc and Chandolin that kept their carts near Fang at the roadside. From there, goods were



Vissoie, around 1881 : from left to right, tower, church and chapel

transported by mule to homes. Many people from Anniviers owned a house, a barn or a granary in this village, above all the people from Grimontz. The fairs of the Val d'Anniviers took place towards the 31st of May, the 27th of September, the 19th of October and 2nd of November.



Tour de Vissoie, postcard from 1904

Until the twentieth century, Vissoie was the only village in the valley to have stores for supplies. The telegraph and the telephone were introduced in Anniviers, respectively in 1876 and 1899. In 1903, a small electric power station was installed near the Navisence close to Vissoie and, from 1904, electric current, especially for lighting was available. In 1911, the bank Raiffeisen Anniviers opened in Vissoie to serve the valley. Raiffeisen still has an office in Vissoie and there is also a subsidiary of the Banque Cantonale du Valais.

From the late nineteenth century, in the time of mining operations, there was a policeman in Vissoie. Since then, the police station remained in this village. From 1924 on, Vissoie had a doctor who assured medical care throughout the valley.

To complete this description, which does not claim to be exhaustive, it is still necessary to add that in Vissoie today, there is a medical centre, pharmacy, dairy plant, the Anniviers school centre and an emergency centre in the event of a disaster.

1. Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Compassion

➤ To get to the first location, from the central square, go towards the church entrance and take the stairs to the right. Go up the path to the chapel.

The Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Compassion, commonly called “Chapelle du Château”, was built in 1688 on the hill where once stood the residence of the lords of Anniviers. Unoccupied after the fourteenth century, the castle fell into ruins over time.

A legend says that an underground staircase led from the castle to the Navisence river. Many tales and legends mention this fact, such the story of J. Prilet. Marie du Château de Vissoie, Editions à la Carte. Sierre. 2001.

During the restoration of the chapel in 1968, a room of the former castle was discovered beneath the newer building. Currently, around the hill, the ruins of the foundation walls of the old building are still visible. Inside, the high altar, dedicated to “Notre-Dame-des-sept-douleurs”, holding her son Jesus in her arms after his descent from the cross, dates from 1692, according to an inscription on the back of the altar. The right side altar dedicated to “Notre-Dame-Immaculée”, has at the top in the middle, a statue of “Saint Antoine l’Ermit”, below, in the middle, the Virgin and Child, and on the right, Saint-Barthélemy with his knife. The side altar on the left, dedicated



Castle Chapel today



Chapel on the Hill, right, seen in the past

to Saint-Bernard of Menthon, was sold to the parish of Ausserberg (Upper Valais) in 1959 to raise funds to transform the chapel into a “youth and entertainment centre.” This work was replaced by a magnificent “Pieta” from the early eighteenth century, a part of the altar today of “Notre-dame-Immaculée”, right. The altar was purchased in 2012 and brought with great pomp to its place of origin on January 27, 2013. After restoration in 2013, it has found its permanent location in the Castle Chapel. Two paintings, dating from the seventeenth century, decorate the sidewalls. One represents the Saint-Michel Archange (1647); the other the Virgin and Child crowning Saint-Georges, Saint-Antoine l’Ermit and Sainte-Euphémie, patron of the parish. The bell of the chapel once served, amongst other functions, to announce baptisms and deaths in the village. For boys and men the bell was rung three times, three strokes while for girls and women, it was twice, three times. Formerly, in the cellar under the north chapel, wine was kept that the parish offered for participants in the festival of Corpus Christi (Fête Dieu), who met in the afternoon before vespers. On this occasion, the speeches were delivered by religious and civil authorities, while the fife and drum band enlivened the party.

➤ Go down and take the path that skirts the hill on the left, to the Grotto of Lourdes.

2. Path towards the Grotto of Lourdes and Cemetery



Grotto of Lourdes today

This road was completed in 1895 for processions that took place on the third Sunday of the month in the summer. The crucifix was erected in 1896 in memory of the parish retreat, called "mission". Missions were usually held every ten years and lasted about two weeks.

The grotto of Lourdes was due to the initiative of the Association of the Lourdes Pilgrimage and was founded by Father Joseph Francey in 1916.

➤ Continue along this road to the cemetery.



Vicariate upper chapel and cemetery in the past

In the past, the cemetery was located only in the direct vicinity of the church. In 1919, lack of space forced the parish to build another one below.

In the upper Vissoie Cemetery, north of the church, the tombstones and grave crosses date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One can still read very interesting inscriptions: the names of individuals, but also their political functions and the cause of their deaths. It is a sort of history of the parish, which over time, may become illegible.

➤ The building located above the cemetery is the former vicarage.

3. Vicariate and Parish House



Vicariate in the past

As of 1678, the Parish of Anniviers had a Vicar who lived at the beginning in the village. It is only in 1751, that a Vicariate was built next to the Parish house.

From 1924 to 1931, it served as a house as well as a medical cabinet for the first doctors working in Anniviers. On the ground floor, there used to be the office of the local Civil Registrar.

> Follow the path that is next to the church for a few meters until you arrive at the Parish house.

A building intended specifically to house the parish was constructed, probably in 1740, by Father Michel Jacquier (1667-1742).

In 1730, he had a second church built, that the bishops of the diocese of the time, found too modest to consecrate.

In 1832, the old towns of Ayer, Saint-Jean and Grimetz financed the first renovation of the Parish. In 1964, following the death of Father Francey, who had served the parish as vicar and later as parish priest from 1902 to his death, the building was

transformed from top to bottom. A new renovation was completed in 2012.

> Return to the church.

“In 1964, following the death of Father Francey, who had served the parish as vicar and then as parish priest from 1902 to his death, the building was transformed from top to bottom.”



Parish house, in the past

4. Parish Church of Sainte-Euphémie

The parish church, dedicated to Sainte-Euphémie was built at the initiative of the Vissoie priest Thomas Gillet (1778-1847) in 1808 and opened in 1809. Two other churches, of which only the steeple remains had preceded it at the same location.

Father Antoine Clivaz (1734-1821), a child of the parish, contributed significantly to the financing of this construction. His name is engraved on the tomb stone located at the end of the nave of the church: *FIERI FECIT Cliva + 1809 (translated literally " Cliva made possible + 1809" which was understood to mean the financing of the construction.)*.

The current tower was built in 1785, following a fire in 1784. The six bells were manufactured locally and hoisted to the belfry in 1785. They have the following respective names: *Euphémie, Marie, Georges, Théodule, Barbe and François*.

The choir of the church, damaged by fire in 1846, was immediately restored.

A significant earthquake in January 1946, damaged the building that had to be closed for more than a year. The last major restoration dates back to 1975.

The church has a single large vaulted nave and a narrow, elongated choir. The main altar of Sainte-Euphémie dates from 1848, after the fire of the choir. In the middle, a painting represents Sainte-Euphémie, patron saint of the parish. On the left is the statue of Saint-Barbe and, right, that of Sainte-Catherine of Alexandria. At the top, one can see the representation of the

Ascension of Christ. On both sides of the altar, one can see the statues of Saint-Pierre, left, and Saint-Paul, right. The lateral altars date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The altar of the Rosary, left, is dedicated to the Virgin and, on the right to Saint-Georges, second patron saint of the parish. On the beam of glory, at the entrance of the choir, there is a crucifixion with Saint-Jean and the Virgin.

The first pipe organ was installed in 1812. It was replaced, around 1938, by an electronic organ that never gave full satisfaction. The purchase of the current organ dates back to 1952. It consists of 17 registers, two manual keyboards and a pedal. Stained glass, depicting the life of Christ, are the work of J. Bessac, Grenoble and date from 1902.

➤ At the exit of the church, turn left and proceed to the Vissoie-Grimentz road.



Church of Sainte-Euphémie in 1901

5. Oratory of La Terra

In the past, here at the side of the road to Grimentz, there was a small round shaped oratory, called "Oratory of La Terra". In 1954, when the road was expanded, it was demolished and the statue was placed in a fitted niche in a new retaining wall.

The company that managed the oratory was not disbanded until 1981. The district oratories once served as altars for the celebrations of Corpus Christi. Each oratory was maintained with flowers for the occasion provided by an association of people of the area concerned. In Vissoie, there were three that were demolished beginning in the late nineteenth century. The oratory of the area of "La Terra" was the last of these.

"The neighbourhood oratories once served as altars for the feast of Corpus Christi. "

The feast of Corpus Christi, instituted in the thirteenth century, was celebrated with great pomp in the Catholic cantons from that time and still is today. On this occasion, a procession takes place around the village, with the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by the fife and drum band, a military detachment and all the parishioners. During the procession stops are made at small altars erected for the occasion. There, hymns are sung, followed by the blessing of the Holy Sacrament.

> The next location is the house to the left of the lane.



Site of the former oratory



Former oratory of La Terra, since demolished

6. Monnier House



Monnier House today

This house, inhabited by the Monnier family housed the Anniviers telephone centre. Crésence Monnier, still in school at the time, was the first telegraph operator of Vissoie and later she was responsible for the manual telephone centre. In 1942, she passed along this function to her daughter-in-law.

The telephone system was installed in the house in 1907 and worked there until 1956, when an automatic system was introduced in Anniviers. Until 1921, the ground floor of the building housed the post office.

➤ Continue along the road for about 40 meters to the Doctor's House on your left.

7. Doctor's House

Since the 1930s, this house has been known by the inhabitants of Vissoie as "the Doctor's House." In 1931, the town of Vissoie, owner of the building, set to work to accommodate the doctor and his office on the second floor and develop a town meeting room on the first floor.

In the beginning, there was no waiting room. Patients waiting their turns sat on a bench at the top of the staircase in front of the medical office, which was not heated in winter. It is likely that many patients became even more ill during these long waits!

To overcome these drawbacks, the building was modified in 1949. A waiting room, heated during the cold season, was created in the newly designed entrance. Until 1956, the doctor resided in this house. A space for firemen was installed on the ground floor.

➤ The next location is opposite, on the right of the path.



Doctor's House today



Doctor's House in the background, in the past

8. Old School

This house was home to the school of Vissoie until the opening of the Centre scolaire d'Anniviers in 1973. Built in 1910, it consisted of two classroom areas: one reserved for girls and one for boys, with all ages mixed together.

The boys class on the second floor, was run by a male teacher and on the third floor, the girls were taught by a female teacher.

In the past, the school year lasted six months, from November 3 to May 3. The rest of the time the children had to help their parents in the work of the fields. No classes were held Thursday afternoons, on Sundays and "obligatory" religious holidays. Otherwise, there were no holidays. Classes lasted from 8 am to 11 am and from 1 pm to 4 pm. Homework was ample.

It took two to three hours a day and even more on Sunday. The students were also required to attend Mass every morning at 7:15.

Teachers controlled attendance. Students missing mass without an excuse were punished by the priest, who was also the president of the school board. This obligation was included in the regulations. After a school absence (for illness or other reasons), students could not return to class without a written

"In the past, the school year lasted six months, from November 3 to May 3."



Former school building today



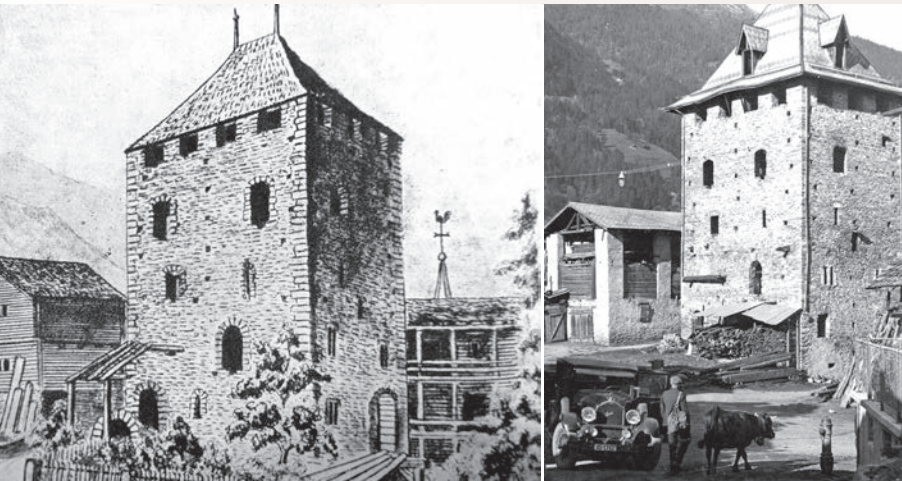
Old school, to the left of the roadside, in the past

note by the president of the school board, which was known as a "ticket" (billet).

The house was sold to private owners in 1973 after the opening of the new school for the entire valley.

> Follow the path to the Tower.

9. Tour d'Anniviers/Anniviers Tower



Tower and Baillos (old wooden tower) right (drawing by E. Wick).
The Tower square, in the late 1920s

In the thirteenth century, the Tour d'Anniviers, also called the "Tower of the Bishop" or "Cours Neuve" was part of a complex of adjacent stone houses, located in the village of Vissoie. These houses were a kind of fortress whose tower was the keep. At that time, it consisted of only three levels.

In 1235, the Bishop placed the village, also called *castrum* under the feudal control of the lords of Anniviers. In 1467, Bishop Walter Supersaxo took back his rights over Anniviers and had the valley administered by a lord and a deputy lord. On this occasion, he raised the tower to its present height. It was the administrative centre of the valley until the end of the old regime in 1798. The first Lord was Georges Supersaxo, son of Walter. In 1481, it was he who engaged the witchcraft trials in Anniviers, in which thirty people, men and women were condemned to burn at the stake.

The notary Pierre de Torrenté and his son Nycollin, were amongst those condemned to the stake. By 1798, the tower fell into private hands. The town of Vissoie bought it in 1975 and had it restored between 1982 and 1984. The first three floors were transformed into a cultural center in 2011, while the fourth floor has an auditorium with a capacity of approximately sixty places. The fire that destroyed the neighbourhood of the Tower in 1880, marked the end of Baillos, the old wooden tower. The only part that resisted the fire was the cellar, currently still located near the Tower to the northeast, beneath the path that leads to the Tower from the north-west. It is accessed by a concealed staircase.

"These houses formed a kind of fortress whose tower was the keep. "

➤ Observe the last house on the right of the square, on the Vissoie-Zinal road.



From left to right, the town with the Tower and the Baillos before the fire in 1880 and after 1895

10. House of Mines and Former Post Office



Former Mining house and post office today

In the early twentieth century, the engineer of the Anniviers mines had a home and an office in this house. In 1730, mining, particularly of copper, was exploited in Anniviers during periods of variable duration.

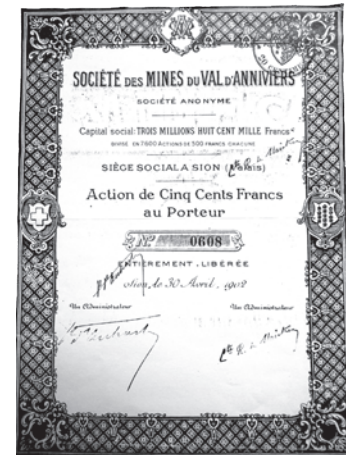
The most important mines were in Grimentz, Zinal and Ayer. From this period, there are still copies of letters written between February 4 to March 20, 1901, by Gustave Roussel, engineer, in charge amongst other things, of the "Baicolliou" mine near Grimentz. It may be interesting to note the amount of wages earned by workers in 1901 and 1942. In 1901, a foreman earned 33 cents an hour, a miner 28 cts, and a worker 20 cts. In 1942, a foreman received 90 cents an hour, a miner 80 cts and a simple worker 70 cts.

In 1921 the house was bought by Daniel and Emilie Crettaz-Florey to house the post office.

Emilie was in charge of the post office, a position she gave to her son Philibert in 1940. In 1956, a new building for the post office, was built on the village square, near the church.

From 1921 to 1956, the square of the Tower was designated as the area of the postal buses. Indeed, in the summer, the square was used by four of five 21-seat postal buses from Sierre, before they went on to St-Luc, Ayer and Grimentz. It was the meeting place of the inhabitants of Vissoie who came to hear the news and watch the tourists, especially at night, during the last scheduled stop of the buses.

> Cross the road and follow the lane for about 10 meters to the big house topped by a tower.



Share of the Mining Company of the Val d'Anniviers, 1902

11. Gillet House

The Gillet house was part of the houses that the bishop put in hands of the feudal lords of Anniviers. It is part of the history of the fortified town, the castrum, of which the tower was the dungeon.

A deed dated may 21, 1235 already referred to the Gillet House formerly called "Juillet", corresponding to the middle part of the current building. In 1758, Georges Gillet of Vissoie, an officer in the service of Spain, who had married the Duchess Maria-Elena di Mentina Tarra-gona, built the western part with the round tower, topped by a halberd. Currently, the middle part belongs to the descendants of Jean Gillet, son of Ferdinand, founder of the "Clefs d'Or International". (Golden Keys) Several members of the Gillet family held political or clerical responsibilities. Amongst the personalities retained by history:

Pierre Gillet, founder of the school of Zinal in 1600; Etienne, lieutenant in 1759; Benoit, juror in 1805 and his son Georges (1792-1866), President of Ayer; Louis, prosecutor in 1804; Jean-Benoît, juror and counsel of Ayer in 1806, and finally Thomas Gillet (1778-1847), the Vissoie priest from 1807 to 1814. It was he who was the initiator of the construction of the present church.

Ferdinand Gillet (1895-1975), a descendant of Georges after completing school, took on the laborious activities required of mountain



Gillet House in the past



The Gillet House, with its tower left, early twentieth century

peasantry with his family. However, having seen the beginnings of a local hotel industry in Anniviers, he already dreamt of going to discover the world of hotels abroad.

In 1918, he went to England, starting to work there in modest jobs. He began a successful career, moving up the professional ladder by force of will and perseverance. Later he went to Evian and finally to Paris. In 1925 he obtained the rank of Chief Concierge. It was in 1928, with a few friends, that he began to work in the organisational aspects of his profession and founded the French section of the Golden Keys (Clefs d'Or), the "Union européenne des portiers des grands hôtels". He later became President of the Union Internationale des "Clefs d'Or". From the beginning, Vissoie was the seat of the Ferdinand Gillet Foundation "International Concierge Institute".

➤ Continue along the lane to the house on the corner to your right.

12. House of the Father Erasme Zufferey

This house was built in 1768 by the Vicar Savioz, who was probably the great-grand uncle of Father Erasme Zufferey (1883-1931). A doctor of theology, and a lover of local history, Erasme Zufferey became the historian of the Val d'Anniviers. Here he finished writing his work: "Le Passé du Val d'Anniviers" in three large volumes.

A man of great culture and tenacity was needed to go through all the records and to translate documents from Latin into French, kept in the Chapel of the Castle of Vissoie as well as other documents belonging to private persons or the *Bourgeoisies* of Anniviers. This enormous task was accomplished thanks to his persistence, often at the limit of human endurance. He completed his work, written in school notebooks, around 1930 in the attic of the house, without heating.

"On the west side, one can admire the beautiful old drawings."

On November 23, 1931, the Abbot Erasme Zufferey died on the road leading from the Turtmantal to the Val d'Anniviers, by the Meiden pass. He was returning from Ergisch where he had replaced the parish priest. Having broken his leg in a fall, he froze to death. A few days later, his body was found under a thin layer of snow. His grave is in the main cemetery in Vissoie, near the large retaining wall to the east.



House of the Father
Erasme Zufferey

The part of this house in masonry is older. On the west side, one can admire beautiful old drawings. Dates figure in these drawings: 1514, 1580 and 1592.

The drawings show blacksmith tools for shoeing mules and objects that would have been made by the craftsman himself. To their left, there are remains of the round frame of a doorway from the sixteenth century, that may have given access to a forge. The drawings were restored in 1980 by Nicolas Martin Venthône. The work was funded by the former commune of Vissoie and the "Etat du Valais".

➤ Continue along the path and take the road down to your left. Continue for about 20 meters.



Detail of the drawings, today

13. Museum of Patois Culture

The museum is located in a farmhouse dating from the early sixteenth century. It consists of a kitchen, a bedroom and a closet on the ground floor, while the basement houses a cellar.

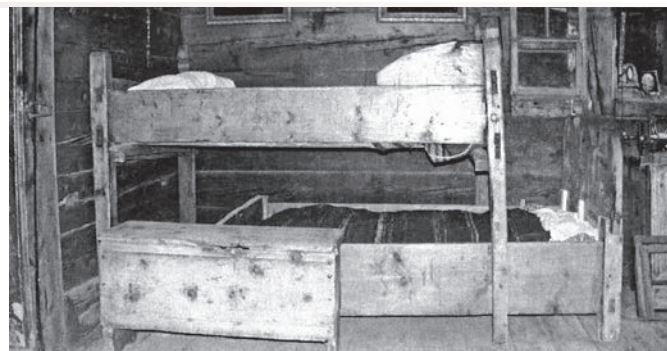
This old house displays many objects and tools that were part of the household of the mountain farmer. With these objects, it is possible to get a more accurate idea of the life once led by the Anniviards.

In the 1950s, agriculture and breeding livestock gradually yielded to the winter tourism that developed as of the 1960s. In the past the Anniviards raised animals not only for food but also for clothing. The cow for example, supplied milk, butter, cheese, meat and leather for making shoes and other household items. Sheep were primarily wool producers. Spun and woven, this rough and long lasting local cloth, was used to make clothing. Pigs provided not only meat, but also the bacon, fat and lard that was used in cooking often mixed with butter.



Museum entrance on the left, today

The Anniviards cultivated hemp for the manufacture of very coarse cloth of excellent quality that was subject to little wear. Linen was used to make shirts, underwear and bed sheets. Beans, cabbage and potatoes were cultivated. Rye was used for the production of bread, three to four times a year. This bread, with time, became very hard and had to be cut with a blade specially designed



Museum of Patois Culture,-a drawer-bed

for this purpose, called a "tsapapan" in local dialect. In Sierre, the Anniviards worked in vineyards and the vinification of wine which was transported by mule, from the valley of the Rhone up to the villages in small elongated oval barrels called "barrots". Life was very hard for everyone, but especially for women, particularly for mothers who often after many pregnancies, died in childbirth. It was only on Sundays and religious holidays, and in the afternoon, that women had few moments of rest. Men often found a moment to share a glass of wine in the cellar, with a neighbour or friends. Local politics were often decided in this discreet place.

A visit to the museum is highly recommended. This can be arranged through the Tourist Offices.

> Follow the street up until the crossroads.

14. Oratory of the Brotherhood of Florey



Statue of Saint-George today

Until the early twentieth century, on the site of the statue of Saint-Georges, there was a small neighbourhood oratory that served as altar, during the Corpus Christi procession.

It was called "Florey Oratory," even if it did not belong to the Florey family. This name was given because the Oratory was built against the southern wall of the building known as the House of Florey.

A society called "*Tsapellèt-a di Florey*" in patois (meaning, "the small chapel of Florey") formed by local residents, maintained the oratory with flowers for the solemn occasion of the feast of Corpus Christi. Like all old Anniviard societies, this one had its own vineyard in Sierre, a wine cellar in the village, and a room for meetings. Around 1901, the society was dissolved and the Oratory demolished. The vineyard, wine cellar and meeting room were all sold. This information comes from William Florey (1894-1984) who, as a child already, was one of the last heirs of the society and who attended the session deciding its dissolution.

In 1981, a new chapel dedicated to Saint-Georges, was built in the same place by descendants of the Florey family of Anniviers in memory of the previous association. On this occasion a new society was created under the name of "Confrérie de l'oratoire des Florey" But in turn, it was dissolved in 2010. The Oratory along with the capital of the society, were bequeathed to the « Société du village » of Vissoie.

See www.notrehistoire.ch ("Oratoire des Florey," two documents: one audio, one written).

➤ Follow the lane toward the Zinal road. The house of the baker Epiney is a large three-story masonry building.



Old Oratory of Florey attached to the house left

15. House of the Baker Epiney



House of the Baker Epiney today

This building was built on the foundations of a house that was destroyed in the fire of 1880. The fire ravaged the whole neighbourhood behind the tower.

The first postal depot in the valley was located on the ground floor of this building before the fire. The custodian, Jerome Florey (1847-1922), on this occasion, almost lost his life trying to save money and valuable documents from the flames.

The reconstruction of the masonry house was undertaken by a private individual, Baptiste Rouvinez from Grimontz, as well as the former municipalities of Ayer-Vissoie and Grimontz-Vissoie.

The baker established himself on the ground floor, while the first floor housed a classroom, as well as the telegraph and later the first manual telephone centre which was run by Crésence Monnier (1871-1960). She held this position from the age of 13. As a schoolgirl, she attended class, and when duty called, without explanation, she went to the adjacent room where the telegraph was installed, to fulfill her duties.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the baker Epiney bought the entire building, whence its name.

> Go down towards the square staying on the left side of the road.

“At the beginning of the twentieth century, the baker Epiney bought the entire building, whence its name. ”



House of the baker Epiney, on the left, and the former Hotel des Alpes in the middle

16. Café des Alpes



Old « Hotel des Alpes » beginning 20th.

The Café des Alpes, formerly called the Hôtel des Alpes, was built around 1885 by Baptiste Rouvinez from Grimentz and a person called Roduit, a native of Lower Valais.

Initially, the building had only four levels: the basement, the ground floor and two levels above that. At the end of the nineteenth century, it was raised one floor by Basile Vocat (1863-1959) from Vissoie, the son-in-law of Baptiste Rouvinez.

At the end of the 1920's, and in the early 1930's, well-known people stayed there including the painter Albert Gos (1852-1942) from Geneva and Hans In der Ghent (1882-1947) from Zurich, a specialist in Swiss folk songs. He transcribed the old songs of the Val d'Anniviers that people came to sing at night at the "Café des Alpes". He is the author of the song « La petite Gilberte de Courgenay » from the film of the same name. Albert Gos also played the violin beautifully and knew all the melodies of the folk dances of Anniviers.

Léon Monnier (1902-1988), the son of Chrétien and Crésence, had just created the "Société des vieux costumes" in Vissoie. During his stay at the Hotel des Alpes, two to three weeks a year, Albert Gos participated as a musician in rehearsals of old dances.

Over the decades, the Café des Alpes has undergone transformations and improvements, the last of which date from 2011, but the core of the old establishment has not changed much. It now should be considered an historic building of Vissoie. It is a convivial meeting place for villagers and passersby. Many anecdotes and stories have emerged from the "Alpes", as local people call it. It is also in this place where village politics have taken form. This is where lovers of "reines", the fighting Hérens cows, meet to discuss, make predictions and develop tactics. For quite sometime, the establishment gave up its hotel activities to focus on the café and restaurant.

➤ Cross the road to the square and follow the road down to the left for about 20 meters.



Hotel des Alpes in the centre, about 1895

17. House of the « Confrérie du Saint-Esprit »

This house, located along the old road of Sierre-Vissoie, belonged to the “Confrérie du Saint-Esprit” who possessed many properties through donations.

During recent decades the building has undergone many transformations, but its original structure remains unchanged.

The Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit was founded in 1204 by Guy de Montpellier to help the poor and needy. In Anniviers, it existed as of 1250 and was dissolved between 1792 and 1800.



Front of the house today

“Over the past decades the building has undergone many transformations. ”



House of the Brotherhood to the right of the parish house, early twentieth century

At the end of the nineteenth century, to the right of the building, was the first bakery in Anniviers, run by Joseph Rouvinez, the son of Baptiste who built the Hotel des Alpes. Subsequently, Joseph Rouvinez established himself in the building that was later called the “House of the Baker Epiney”. He was the predecessor of Rémy Epiney.

➤ The next stop, the former Hotel d’Anniviers, no longer exists. The building that was built at the location is to the right of the road going in the direction of Sierre, opposite the police station.

18. Old Hotel d'Anniviers



Hotel d'Anniviers, around 1900

There are no longer any traces of the former Hotel d'Anniviers. Indeed, it was completely demolished in 1986 and replaced with a modern three-star hotel, which in the mid-2000s, was converted into apartments.

Despite its demolition one cannot ignore, what was, in its time the flagship of Vissoie tourism and, thus by implication, of the Val d'Anniviers.

We know that in 1859, hotels began to operate in Anniviers, first in Zinal, then in Saint-Luc, Chandolin and Grimentz. In 1863 Vissoie was the only village in the valley connected to the valley of the Rhone by a modest carriage road on which transportation was

“According to oral testimonies the hotel was successful, thanks to the many English and German customers”

assured by mules harnessed to carts. Vissoie's role in local tourism was all set; from here, foreign customers could travel throughout the valley, by mule or sedan chair.

It was between 1876-1878 that the Hotel d'Anniviers was built by the company “Vissoie Hotels”. Its shareholders were called Seiler, de Sépibus and Tabin. As of its opening, it carried the name Hotel d'Anniviers. It was classified “1st class house.” At first it was run by the Tabin brothers: Antoine (1864-1933), Benjamin (1868-1932) and Daniel (1869-1930). Then later, and for nearly half a century, by the spouses Ludwig Jossen and Albertine, born Blatter Mörel (Upper Valais). Ludwig died in 1928 and, as of that date, his wife took care of the establishment alone.

Suggested Visits

HÔTEL & PENSION d'ANNIVIERS à VISSOIE - Valais (Suisse)



tenu par **M. ANTOINE TABIN**, Propriétaire
Lith. Renner & Roth, Vevey.

Hotel d'Anniviers, early twentieth century

According to oral testimonies collected, the hotel was successful, thanks to the English and German customers in particular. This was a golden age for local tourism. Then, when the First and Second World Wars broke out, the number of customers declined. After these events, successively, the hotel was renovated and adapted to the times. However, in 1985, the last owners, Lindo and Raymonde Rossi-Florey, reached the age of retirement after thirty years of activity and put an end to the exploitation of their establishment.

It was sold to a real estate company that built a three-star hotel on the site. That year, a page in the history of tourism in Vissoie turned. A witness to a bygone age disappeared, making room for visions of a future better tailored to customer expectations and needs in the 21st century.

➤ To visit these sites, it is advisable to go on foot since there is a ban on driving beyond the picnic area called "Le Ranch". The road starts from the STEP at the fourth bend of the Vissoie-Grimentz road just before reaching the hydroelectric plant. Le Ranch is on the right, near the Navisence stream, about a 5 minute walk from the bend.

Coal furnace and glacial pot

➤ About 8 minutes further on.

The coal oven was built in the nineteenth century by the brothers Frédéric and Pierre Kittel, blacksmiths in Vissoie. The two craftsmen made the charcoal needed to operate their forges. At the same location, there is a glacial pot, a stone that was dug out by the passage of water probably during the last Ice Age

Pirra Lou Zenta

➤ Follow the road, 2 minutes further on.

This stone is located to the right of the road leading to the STEP, a hundred meters from the picnic area "Le Ranch", just after the coal furnace. It was almost completely demolished during the construction of the forest road, probably in the 1960s. Here remains only a modest vestige of this famous stone where once children, who were guarding the goats slid on it as one would on a toboggan.

It was a "sliding stone". According to a legend, infertile women who wanted to have children, would go at midnight under the

moonlight, and slide on this megalith, wearing no underwear. The same legend also exists in Brittany where two similar stones still exist.

Pierre-aux-Fees

> Follow the road, 6 minutes further on.

This stone with ancient carved cups is located immediately below the route of the STEP, and measures 2.6 x 3.25 m (Coordinates. 610 850/118750, alt. 1,010 m). To get there, follow the road of the STEP, where there are two passing areas, one left and one to the right of the road. Slightly above, there is a large slab of natural stone, which was apparently placed there to serve as a picnic table. From the left passing area, a small path descends to the riverside leading to the "cup" stone.

Stones with cups or bowls probably date back to the first inhabitants of the Val d'Anniviers, who may have been Celts. They are probably places of worship. Cups in the stones are widespread throughout the valley. There have been thirty-six of these stones listed/indexed.⁴

In Switzerland, the largest number of such stones have been found in the cantons of Valais, Graubünden, Bern, Vaud and Ticino where they are often designated under the name "Pierre-aux-Fees, Pierre-du-Diable, Pierre-des-Sorcières", references to fairies, the devil or witches. Worldwide, similar stones have been found on all continents. Unfortunately many stones have been destroyed over the centuries through ignorance.



Mass held at the Sainte-Euphémie Church in 1937

Notes

- 1 Chantal Ammann-Doubliez. Les chasses aux sorciers en Valais au Bas Moyen Age. ANNALES VALAISANNES 2003.
- 2 Dr Hans-Rudolf Hitz und Glozel. Als man noch protokeltische sprach. Zürich 1982 (page 75).
- 3 Stone mentioned in the "répertoire de Urs Schwegler. Schalen-und Zeichensteine der Schweiz." Basel 1992.
- 4 Claudia Schnieper und Nicolas Faure. Die Schweiz vor Christus, Rätsel der Urzeit. Vevey 1993.



Square in Vissoie, in front of the Grocery Shop, towards 1920

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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 »

Texts

Paul-André Florey.

Bibliography

Paul-André Florey. Vissoie, village médiéval du Val d'Anniviers. Ed. à la Carte. Sierre, 2003 (disponible chez l'auteur).

Images and photos

Collection of old postcards of Marco Epiney and Jean-Marc Caloz; archives E. Crettaz-Stürzel, Zinal, reproductions of the Maison Rurale Valaisanne, Brigue/Sion; recent photos by Adriana Tenda Claude.

Religious Heritage

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Built Heritage

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Translation

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Cover Photo: Vissoie, post-card in 1957

Back cover Photo: Old road of Vissoie beginning of twentieth century

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