

Where is Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, Alsace?

Excerpted from J. Virgil Miller's book "Both Sides of the Ocean"
(see credits and ordering information at the end)

The first group of Swiss Anabaptists who could be called Amish on French territory are on a list of refugees from Canton Bern, Switzerland, at Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, Upper Alsace, in 1697. Alsace was a largely German-speaking area which France acquired during the course of the seventeenth century. So they were under French laws and the king was Louis XIV, who was known as a strong Catholic. The defeat of the Huguenots (French Protestants) caused them to be expelled by a law called the Edict of Nantes in 1685. For the time being, this did not apply to Alsace where the Protestants were protected by other treaties. Yet it did not look like a permanent sanctuary. The followers of Ammann knew that they were not tolerated in Canton Bern, and Alsace was still one of the safe havens. Jacob Ammann was there as the leader.

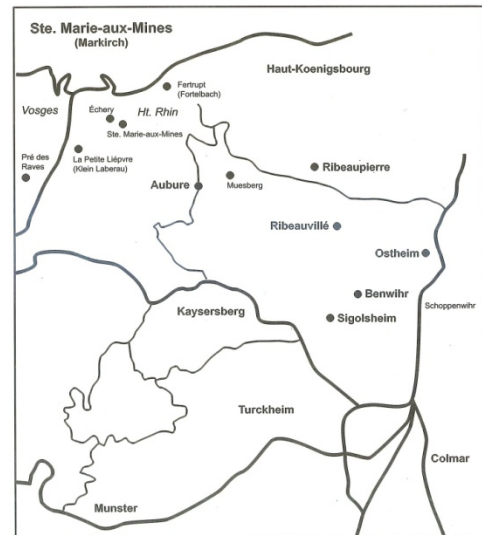


The earliest record of Anabaptists in Alsace was at Ste. Marieaux-Mines, where twelve families met at a farm in the Val de Liepvre (French for Leberau), the farm being called La Tuillerie. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, large numbers of Swiss Anabaptists and others came to Alsace, especially to **Markirch (German for Ste. Marie)**, but also along the Rhine River in the vicinity of Breisach. They were not all Amish or Anabaptists, their common feeling being that Zwingli's Switzerland was far from the state of toleration, especially in matters of religion. In contrast, the Anabaptists of Holland, after undergoing severe persecution in the 1500s, had entered a period of tolerance. They were also deeply divided into conservative and liberal factions, but at least the authorities allowed them to worship freely.

In 1632 a group of ministers, led by the Dutch but including some from parts of Germany, drew up the Dortrecht Confession of Faith, signing it in Dortrecht, Holland. In 1660, before the Amish division, a group of ministers from Alsace (not Amish) met at Ohnenheim in Alsace near the Rhine and also signed the Dortrecht Confession. They were of the Mennonite group rather than Amish, but when the Amish came to Alsace later in the century, some of them settled in the same region and it later became their confession as well. In fact, the Amish have kept the Dortrecht Confession to this day, and it, as well as

the Dutch Martyrs Mirror, remain their two most valued books after the Bible. This did not lead to union or even talks with the Mennonites of either Holland or Germany, and the Amish and Mennonites have remained separate until our times.¹

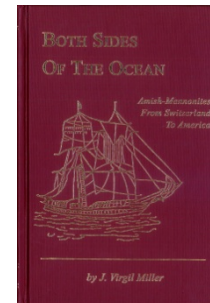
These communities figured in the Amish division after 1690, especially when Jacob Ammann met with leaders of the Mennonite party in 1695 at the mill of Ohnenheim. The communities near the Rhine continued, although the larger center became Markkirch, farther inland in the Vosges area. The Ohnenheim region became an important stage for migrations from Alsace to Baden on the other side of the Rhine after 1712.



Ste. Marie-aux-Mines and vicinity.

CREDITS

The preceding information has been excerpted from J. Virgil Miller's exceptional book entitled, "**Both Sides of the Ocean**". It is a must for any emigration enthusiast of this era regardless of surname. It can be ordered from Mastof at this [link](#).



¹ nortrecht Confession of Faith, 1660, signatures from Alsace (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing Co.).