



Guebwiller Region  
Region of art and history

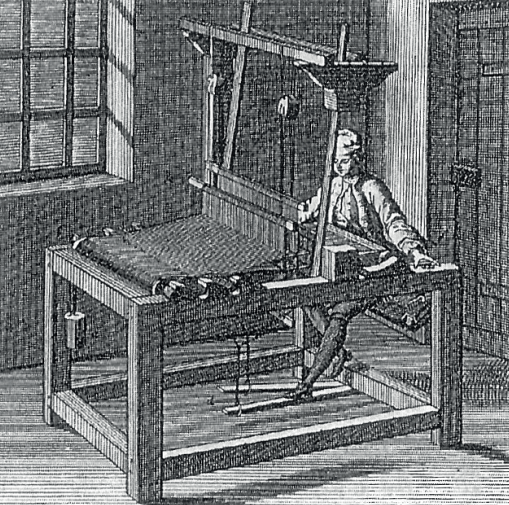
Let us tell you the story of  
**the textile  
industry**





# The Industrial era

In Florival, the textile industry developed over the centuries and visitors can still discover its heritage today.



Before industrialization, weavers were working at home on hand looms.



Ziegler, Greuter & Cie Factory. Lithography by Mieg.

## The Proto-industry

In the valley, before the emergence of industry, the traditional trades were mainly winemaking and craftsmanship. Farming was then the main source of income for the local inhabitants. Carried out at home, weaving provided locals with a second income.

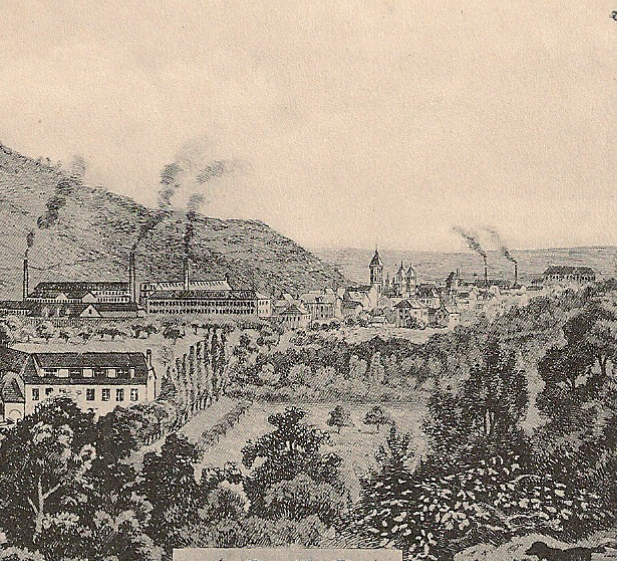
## The Beginning of the industrial era

From the beginning of the 19th century, things started to change. Industry appeared quite early in the Guebwiller region. In 1806, Ziegler, Greuter & Cie was founded and installed its spinning, weaving, bleaching and fabric printing workshop in the enclosure of the local Dominican convent. In Soultz, the ribbon-making workshop, later known as the 'Baumann & Cie' was founded in 1812 by Lucas Preiswerck, from Basel.

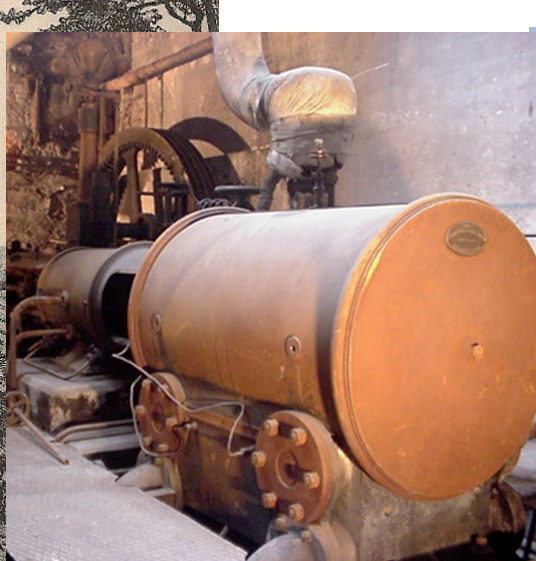
## A changing society

Industrialization spread from the second half of the 19th century and led to major social changes. New businesses first employed artisan weavers. Recruitment then gradually spread to isolated hamlets. Thus, in less than a century, the population deserted their mountain villages, encouraged by the arrival of the railway. Working in industry therefore became the main source of income and agriculture a secondary activity providing extra money.





**Guebwiller in 1843.**



**Steam machine in the Schliff, Jungholtz.**



**Building of the Bary-Mérian factory converted into a secondary school.**

## **A more and more efficient industry**

The presence of rivers was an important element for the installation of factories. The banks of the Lauch River attracted the first pioneers of the textile industry. The wheel was quickly replaced by turbines that offered better performance. In 1820, to better deal with the vagaries of the river, plants opted for steam engines such as those created by James Watt. The technical progress in terms of machines and energy sources influenced industrial architecture that started to take these various elements into account. Industrial buildings from the late 19th to the 20th century were therefore regularly modified.

## **The Aftermath of the First World War**

The textile industry was deeply impacted by the events that took place between 1914 and 1918. Industrial buildings indeed suffered greatly during the war. Many were destroyed, burned or looted.

## **The Textile crisis**

Over time, the textile industry has experienced several crises but the most recent one remains the most serious.

It began in the 1950s and since then, the French textile industry has kept declining. The number of textile workers in the country dropped from more than one million in 1970 to only 200,000 in 2000.

The French textile industry is trying to cope with competition from countries with lower production costs and new manufacturers, but is straining to withstand the pressure.

## **Conversion projects**

The installation of new businesses in old buildings enabled the local area to preserve employment. In parallel, conversion projects were conducted in some abandoned sites. In this case, the original function of the building is totally modified to meet current needs.

For example, the old Bary-Mérian ribbon-making factory in Guebwiller is now the Théodore Deck Secondary School.

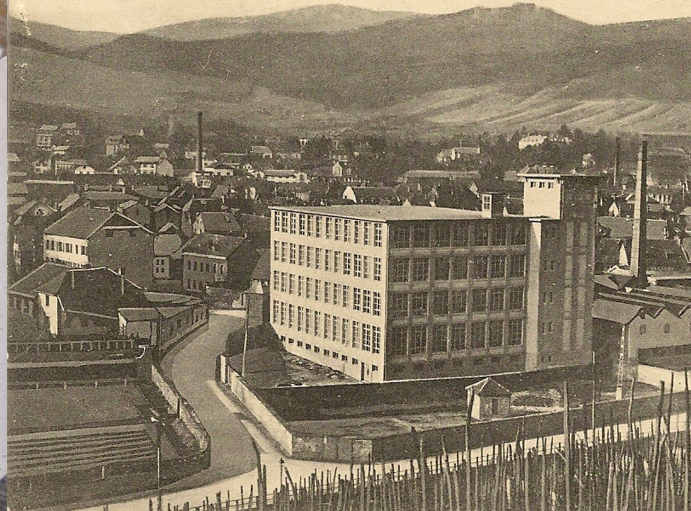


# Industrial architecture

Over time, industrial buildings have adopted different architectural forms to adapt to the machines, the energy sources and its transmission methods.



**Sawtooth weaving factory built by Jean-Jacques Bourcart in 1853, Guebwiller.**



**UTEX Silk throwing factory built in 1911, rue de la Monnaie, Guebwiller.**

## The One-block factory

First type of building used by the textile industry, it has spread from the late 18th century. The building took the form of a rectangular block, narrow and elongated, with three to six levels. The light was provided by multiple windows, aligned along each wall. This feature makes it easy to identify these old one-block factories.

Each floor consisted of a large room with no partitioning. The machines were arranged along the entire length of the room, in two rows. The spinning or weaving looms were usually found on the upper floors, while workers in charge of bale breaking, batting and carding remained on the ground floor.

## The Sawtooth factory

In the industrial world of the time, the emergence of sawtooth buildings was a revolution. These buildings appeared from the second half of the 19th century. Their roofs have the shape of a sawtooth, with one of its sides facing north. The workshop could therefore enjoy zenithal lighting. These single-storey buildings that could accommodate a large number of machines gradually became larger and larger. This type of single-storey factory was first used by the weaving industry, then more generally.

## The Invention of reinforced concrete

One of the first reinforced concrete buildings in Alsace was built in 1911 in Guebwiller. This is the former building of the UTEX Silk throwing factory demolished in 1974. An example of this building technique is still visible today at the 'Louvre' of the Schlumberger factory. Reinforced concrete is made of concrete and steel. It combines the resistance of concrete to compression and the resistance of steel to traction. This material allows for the construction of very long beams that give architects the opportunity to design large open spaces.

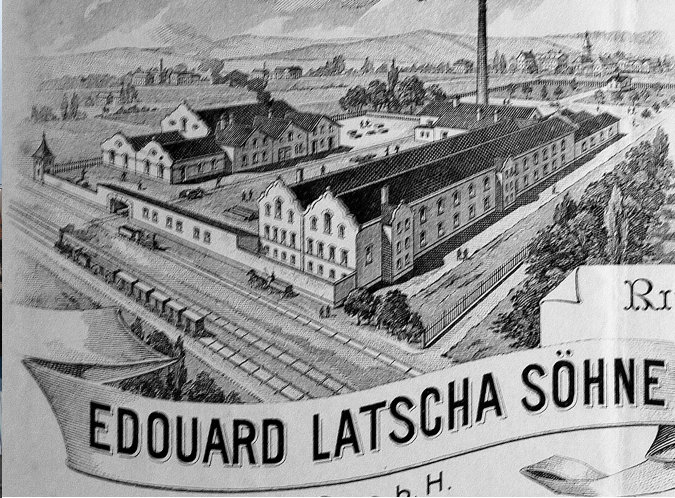




Portrait of Jean-Jacques Bourcart.



Bourcart workers' houses in Guebwiller.



The 'Manufacture Alsacienne de Broches' in Soultz, built at the height of the industrial power of the Latscha family.

Men and innovation

Mathias LATSCHA

(1792-1857)

Born in the Duchy of Baden, Mathias arrived in Guebwiller in 1805 and worked as a passementerie worker in the Bary & Bischoff ribbon-making factory. Over the years, he managed to move up the social ladder. In 1835, Mathias and his son Charles founded the 'Latscha & Cie' factory at the site of the old mill, in the locality of Jungholtzermülhe. They used the driving force of the mill wheel to operate the forge hammer. Other factories appeared later in the area. These small businesses drove the industrial development of the Rimbach Valley thanks to their energy, their entrepreneurial spirit and their audacity.

Jean-Jacques BOURCART

(1801-1855)

Son of J.-H. Bourcart, an industrialist who directed the Wesserling factory, he joined Nicolas Schlumberger & Cie in 1822 as a partner. In 1853, after having worked thirty years with the Schlumberger family, he founded the spinning and weaving company 'Bourcart & Fils.' J.-J. Bourcart is famous for his philanthropy: he founded the first workers' housing in 1856. Particularly influential in the Société Industrielle de Mulhouse, he engaged in a social struggle for the welfare of workers, especially regarding children's working conditions, obtaining the vote of a law in 1841.

Edouard GAST

(1810-1887)

Trained at Zimmermann Frères, the spinning and weaving company owned by his uncles in Issenheim, he took over the company in 1840 under the name 'Gast & Spetz' and expanded it. In 1850, he passed on the business to his partner, Jean-Baptiste Spetz, to create his own company in Issenheim: the Gast spinning factory. Built from 1851, it is the first one-storey spinning factory in Alsace. Edouard Gast was also at the origin of the creation of the Gast workers' housing of Issenheim.





**One-block building of the De Bary silk works. Lithography by J.-B. Jung.**



**The Ziegler-Greuter factory built on the site of the Dominican convent and transformed into housing after World War II.**

### Neueunburg Castle

The former castle of the Prince-Abbots of Murbach, sold as a national property during the Revolution, hosted the first Guebwiller factory in 1793. Pierre Dollfus transformed this 18th century castle into an ‘indienne’ factory (a workshop dedicated to fabric printing). The company did not prosper and the only fabric printing factory ever established in Guebwiller closed down in 1805. The former castle of the Prince-Abbots was then acquired by Bary & Bischoff, a company based in Basel.

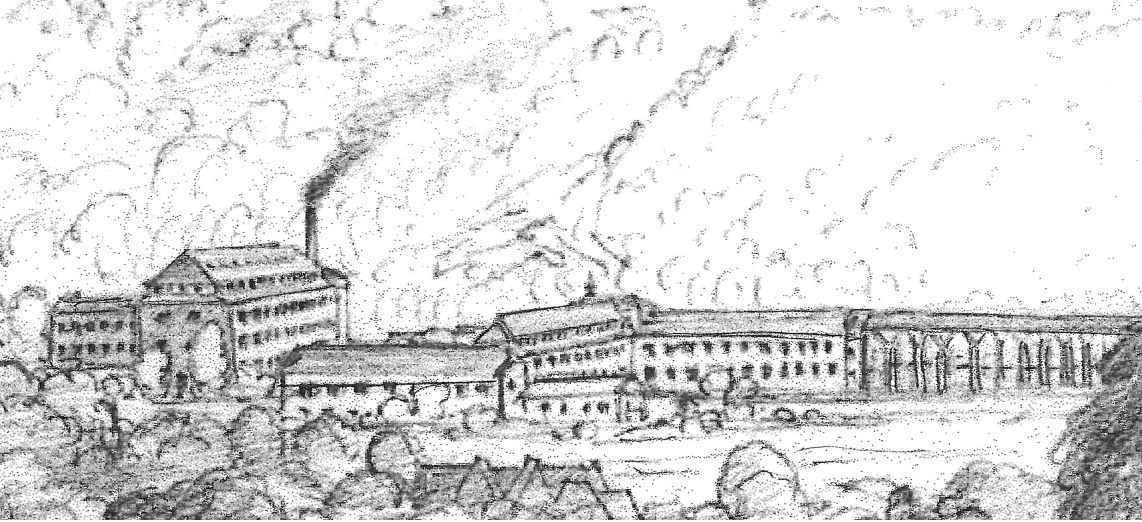
### The Ziegler, Greuter & Cie factory

Ziegler, Greuter & Cie was established in the former Dominican convent in 1806. The company combined spinning, weaving, bleaching and a print workshop for printing on fabric (indienne), thus undertaking all stages of manufacturing. The Saint-Nicolas Chapel, now lost, was used as a workshop and then a drying tower. On-site production was complemented by more than a thousand looms operating in the homes of weavers. In 1902, the company merged with Frey-Witz. After World War II, the premises were converted into housing.

### The De Bary silk works

The De Bary family first acquired Neuenburg Castle in 1805, where they installed their silk ribbon-weaving factory. 200 workers were brought from Switzerland and constituted the core of the working class and the Reformed Church of Guebwiller. New buildings were added between 1851 and 1856, housing 300 power looms. At their peak in the late 19th century, the companies owned by the De Bary family employed nearly 800 people. The buildings were converted into a training centre in 1947 and have housed the Théodore Deck Secondary School since 1962.





**Ziegler & Cie factory in Buhl (later known as Marin-Astruc), in 1840, with its wooden aqueduct that supplied water to the wheel. Drawing by H.-P. Bourcart.**



**The Nicolas Schlumberger & Cie factory, still in business today.**

### **The Baumann silk works**

Considered one of the champions of the local textile industry, the Baumann silk works were renowned for the quality of their high-end products. Often rewarded at international exhibitions, the company counted the famous Dior among its clients. Ties, scarves, satin... its products were sold worldwide. Originally from Switzerland, the Baumann company was first installed in 1888 in a former ribbon-making factory founded in 1812. Then, at the height of its reputation, the factory was enlarged in 1905. Anticipating the future legislation, the company had a cutting-edge social approach, offering its employees social benefits, showers and guaranteed pensions.

### **The Schlumberger factory in Guebwiller**

In 1810, Nicolas Schlumberger bought an old mill called 'Bleichenmühle' and began the construction of a spinning mill. He expanded his textile business in 1820 by adding engineering works to it. Many buildings were added throughout the 19th century. The damage caused by the First World War led to the reconstruction of a large part of the factory, leading to the building of 'Schlumberger Louvre,' built of reinforced concrete, in the 1920s. The company gradually abandoned weaving in favour of mechanical engineering.

### **The Marin-Astruc factory**

The site spreads out on both sides of the Lauch River, with two parts corresponding to the former weaving buildings (1865) and mill (1835), in order to better use the driving force of the river. Since its inception, the Ziegler cotton mill used a wooden aqueduct. Bought by Mr. Astruc in 1848, the spinning mill was complemented with a Gothic Revival water tower to improve water supply. Francis turbines were installed on the waterfall in 1908. In 1963, the weaving and spinning business closed down and only the twisting activity went on until 1983. The site was then used for a different activity, with the hydroelectric power station still continuing to produce electricity to this day.

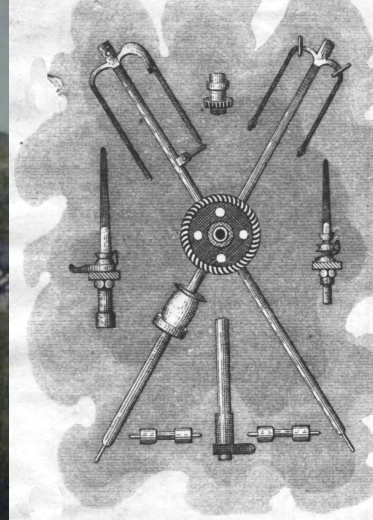
### **The Gast spinning factory in Issenheim**

The architecture of the building dating from 1851 and which housed Edouard Gast's spinning factory, is quite unusual in Alsace. Its 'Tudor Revival' style drew its inspiration from the English industrial architecture of the time. With its crenelated towers and lancet arch windows, the stone facade is evocative of medieval castles. The building offers a large interior space without partitioning, with false arches supported by cast iron columns. The building was listed on the additional inventory of Historical Monuments in 2005.

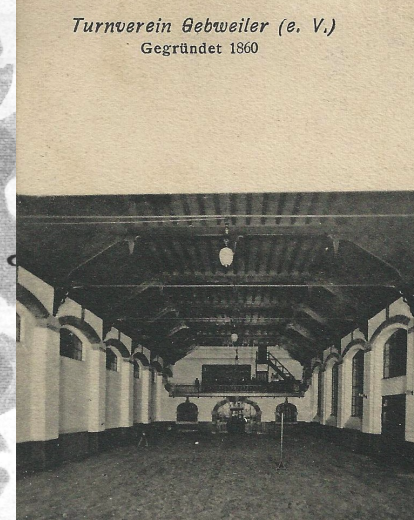




**The 'Upper factory' of the Latscha in Jungholtz.**



**Manufacture Alsacienne de Broches.  
Detail of a company letterhead.**



**Société de Gymnastique of Guebwiller.**

## The Lastcha factory in Jungholtz

While two-thirds of the entrepreneurs of the Second Empire were the sons of industrialists, the upward mobility of the Latschas is that of real self-made men. In 1835, they bought an old mill in the locality of Jungholtzermülhe, where the current upper part of the factory is now located, to turn it into a spindle factory. In 1856, they undertook the construction of a spindle sharpening factory (called 'Schliff') upstream of Jungholtz and equipped it in 1866 with a steam engine, so as not to rely on the unpredictable Rimbach River. In 1898, they bought the Lang & Cie spinning factory in the centre of Jungholtz.

## Manufacture Alsacienne de Broches in Soultz

In 1904, Edouard Latscha's sons founded the 'Manufacture des Broches des Fils d'Edouard Latscha.' Bought in 1922 by N. Schlumberger's construction company, the company was then renamed 'MAB': Manufacture Alsacienne de Broches. It made spindles and modernized spinning machinery. The company indeed launched several innovations protected by patents, which increased the performance of textile machines. But MAB declined at the same time as the textile industry. The factory was refurbished and has housed La Farandole association since 1996.

## The Gymnasiums

Following the large influx of population due to industrialization, the local communities of the Guebwiller Region equipped themselves with various facilities such as schools and gymnasiums. Gymnastics associations were created in Buhl, Soultz and Guebwiller for example, and impelled the construction of buildings to train athletes. This trend was encouraged by industrialists who saw it as a healthy activity for their employees.





**The bandstand of the Parc de la Marseillaise in Guebwiller.**



**Villa du Bois-Fleuri, called 'Schimmelrain' in the 19th century.**

## The Bourcart workers' housing in Guebwiller

Workers' houses were built in the streets near the various mills. In that respect, the impetus of industrialist and philanthropist Jean-Jacques Bourcart was decisive. Three years before Mulhouse, he built the neighbourhood that still bears his name. The first houses, built in the Rue de la République, were followed by the Cité Bourcart comprising of several buildings accessible through a central staircase.

## Workers' housing in Issenheim

In 1851, industrialist Édouard Gast founded the Gast spinning factory. Nearby, as well as his villa, he also built workers' houses, in line with the social philosophy of industrialists of the time.

Other industrialists in Issenheim quickly followed suit.

In 1867, Jean-Baptiste Spetz built 18 houses for his factory workers.

## The Villa du Bois-Fleuri in Guebwiller

The Bois Fleuri villa was built by Charles Bourcart. It is surrounded by beautiful English-style grounds. Like many of the villas built by local industrialists, Bois Fleuri boasts a remarkable architecture, with its medieval tower, its pavilion roof, machicolations, pediments, crow-step gables and a veranda on the facade. It was renovated in 1870 after a fire.

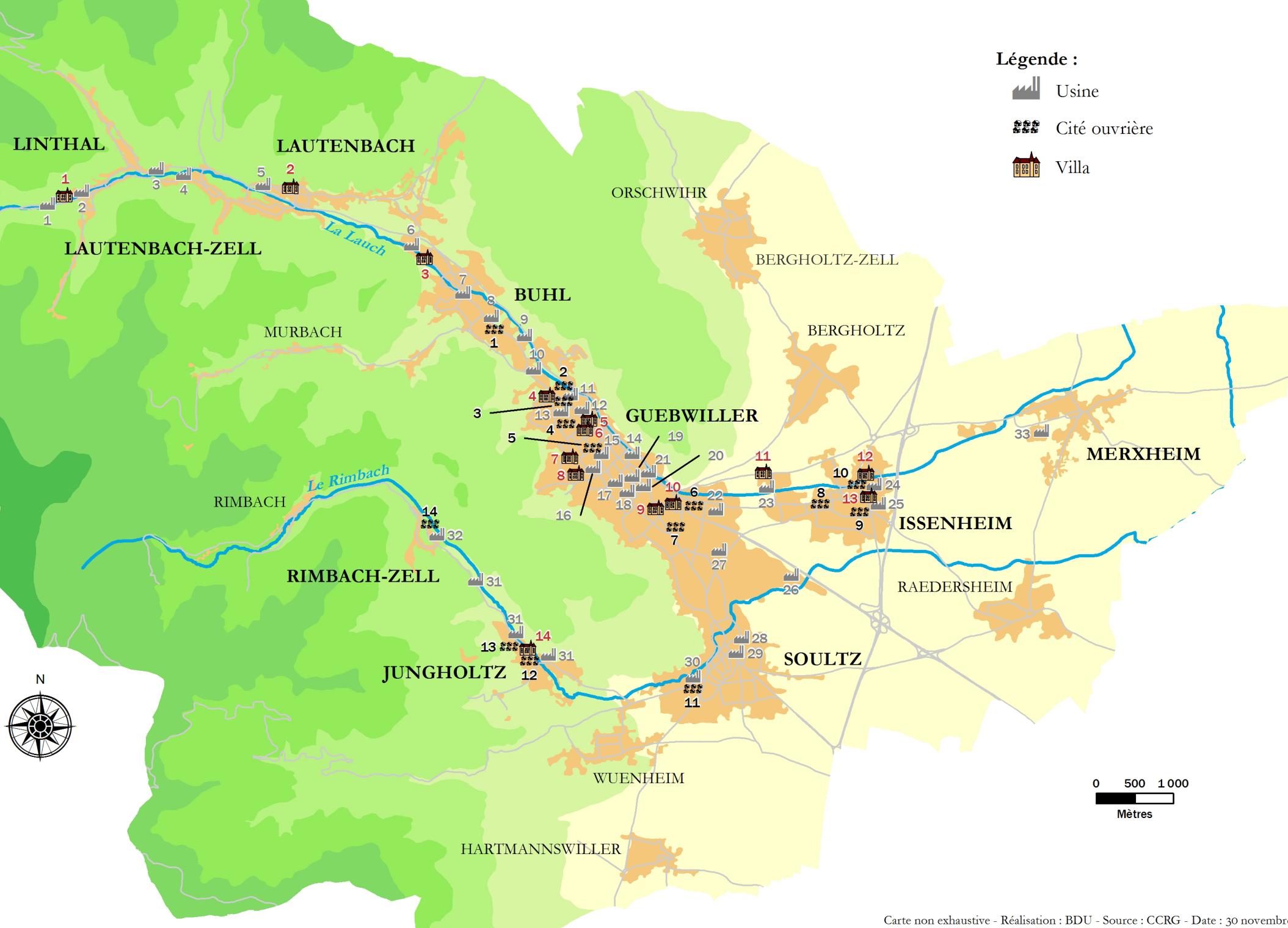
In 1936, the building served as a holiday centre for working class children. After the war, it hosted the NSC Schlumberger company's restaurant.

## Parc de la Marseillaise in Guebwiller

Between 1897 and 1899, industrialist and patron Aimé Gros-Schlumberger asked the Parisian landscape architect Edouard André to create a public park that was 'a place of pleasure, but also a place for education and introduction to botany.'

The park was planted with flower beds and several exotic trees. There is also a Renaissance well, a large fountain and a stone bench in the form of an exedra. First built in the plane tree pathway near the train station, the bandstand was then transferred to the Parc de la Marseillaise.





Légende :

- Usine
- Cité ouvrière
- Villa

Factories

- 1 Tissage Klein
- 2 Tissage Gerrr
- 3 Retordage Gerrr
- 4 Tissage Marin-Astruc
- 5 Fabrique de Jong
- 6 Usines Marin-Astruc
- 7 Usine Temming
- 8 Usine Rogelet
- 9 Fabrique de draps Meny
- 10 Filature et tissage Bourcart
- 11 et 12 Usines Schlumberger
- 13 Corderie Meyer Sans-boeuf
- 14 Retordage UTEX
- 15 Filature Freyhof
- 16 Filature de Guebwiller
- 17 Bonneterie de Guebwiller
- 18 Etablissement Grün
- 19 Rubannerie de Bary-Mérian
- 20 Indienne Pierre Dolfus
- 21 Etablissement Ziegler et Greuter
- 22 F. et Th. Frey
- 23 Tissage Hartmann
- 24 Etablissement Spetz
- 25 Filature Gast
- 26 Fabrication de non-tissés Jacob Holm
- 27 Tricotage Greuter Jersey
- 28 Manufacture Alsacienne de Broches
- 29 Soierie de Bary
- 30 Tissage Bourcart
- 31 Etablissement Latscha
- 32 Althoffer
- 33 Usine textile Gerrr

Workers' housing

- 1 Cité Rogelet
- 2 Cité Bourcart
- 3 Première cité ouvrière Bourcart
- 4 Cité Pasteur
- 5 Quartier Freyhof
- 6 Cité Frey
- 7 Cité Grün
- 8 Cité ouvrière construite par l'UTEX
- 9 Cité Gast
- 10 Maisons ouvrières Spetz
- 11 Logements ouvriers Bourcart
- 12 - 13 Maisons ouvrières Latscha
- 14 Logement ouvrier Althoffer

Industrialists' villas

- 1 Maison Klein
- 2 Maison Gerrr
- 3 Villa Marin-Astruc
- 4 Villa du Bois Fleuri
- 5 Villa Bourcart

- 6 Villa Schlumberger
- 7 Villa des Tilleuls, famille Schlumberger
- 8 Villa Warnery
- 9 Villa des Glycines, famille de Bary
- 10 Villas Frey
- 11 Villa Hartmann
- 12 Château Spetz
- 13 Villa Gast
- 14 Villa Latscha

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Conception

Communauté de Communes de la Région de Guebwiller / Service Pays d'art et d'histoire



Let us tell you the story of the **Region of Guebweiler** - a region of art and history

... Discover a region of art and history in the company of guide approved by the Ministry of Culture.

The guide his your host. He si fully familiar with all aspects of the region of Guebwiller, and will carfully explain everything you need to know to understand the landscape, and learn about the development of the region through its various towns and villages. The guide is there to help you. Please feal free to ask any question.

#### **The heritage services departement**

brings together various initiatives of the region of Guebwiller - a region of art and history.

It runs guided tours for residents of the region of Guebwiller and the schools throughout the year and provides research services for all types of projects.

#### **Informations, reservations**

Communauté de Communes de la Région de Guebwiller  
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F-68500 Guebwiller  
+33 (0)389621 234

#### **The region of Guebwiller belongs to the national network of Towns and Regions of art and history**

The architecture and heritage departement of the Ministry of Culture and Communication awards the "Towns and Regions of art and history" title to local authorities who have made a special effort to enhance and promote their heritage. This title guarantees the skills of the guide and heritage officers, in addition to the high quality of their activities. From ancient ruins to 20th century architecture, these towns and villages show the sheer diversity of France's heritage at its best. Today this network of 184 towns and regions offers you a wealth of knowledge and know-how to be enjoyed right accross the country.

#### **Nearby,**

Val d'Argent, Mulhouse and Strasbourg are officially a Town or Region of art and history.

" A long street following the valley. At each end a square and a beautiful red sandstone church... But our children's eyes do not linger on this architecture. Modern life is elsewhere, in the five-storey plants that stand at the two extremities of the town. »

Jean **SCHLUMBERGER**, Eveils, 1950