Louis Christinat born 26.06.1764, died approximately 1825

Louis Christinat is forefather of the Christenots living now in the United States of America. Louis and if family landed from the ship « Rebecca Ann »the 7th of January 1818 at Philadelphia harbour.
He died we don't know exactly when, approximately 1825. More specific we cannot be because historical sources are lacking.

The registers of births, deaths and marriages from cantons of Vaud and Aargau gave us some useful information of Louis, wife and children. We got much more documents from the archives records from the village of Seon, but unfortunately, only for the period between 1797 and 1803.

On these bases, we shall try to make a portrait of Louis Christinat. We shall allow ourselves, out of the inquires we got to make hypotheses; you shall find them at the end of the present text.
Louis Christinat was born the 25th of June 1764 in Chabrey, in the Vully region, in canton de Vaud. He was baptized in the protestant church of Constantine, near Chabrey. Seven children formed his family, we presume a peasants family. Louis went to the village school. He had no particular profession, but according to the contacts he had during his life in Switzerland with different people, we can guess that he has been a trader, a merchant.

We have no trace of him before we find him in Seon. (canton Aargau) in 1795. But before that, we have to give the historical situation in which was Switzerland at that time. In 1789, the French Revolution turned upside down all political regimes in Europe. Thus, Ancien Regime (mostly monarchic in Europe, but aristocratic in canton Berne. Berne at that time was master from Aargau, where is Seon and from canton de Vaud where is Chabrey. The Ancien Regime was abolished.
The French revolutionary army, very greatly interested in the gold, the Bernese government had acquired by its wise politics, (the Bernese Republic was managed like a farm by a very thrifty rustic master), the French army invaded Switzerland in 1798. The Bernese Republic collapsed. It lost canton de Vaud and canton Aargau. The French brought the republican ideals which can be resumed in these three following words: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. They also gave to every man the political status of citizen which was supposed to abolish the privileges the aritocrats had granted to themselves. Moreover they brought inconveniences connected with the military occupation: taxes increase and levying of troups for the wars made by the Revolution and above all by Napoleon Bonaparte.

Let us go back to Seon. In 1798, the French imposed the Helvetian Republic, a very centralized system, even though the Swiss were accustomed to federalism. In Seon, as everywhere in Switzerland, the new system had its supporters and its adversaries. So was the situation as Louis Christinat arrived in Seon. Which was the reason of his coming? We have to think that he had had, when in Chabrey, contacts with middle classe people (burghers-bourgeois) active in trade business. These people had certainly relations with

people having the same job elsewhere in Switzerland, in Seon too. It is probably this mean that Louis Christinat took to become administrator of the Castle Liebegg, at the end of the 18th century.

The new political situation gave birth to troubles between supporters and adversaries which could even lead to people death. We can understand that Louis Christinat, who had come recently from Chabrey, had been considered to be neutral by both parties. Reason for which he was asked to become Mayor of the city of Seon. I ought to mention here that Louis Christinat gained soon a good reputation to him in Seon, making him know by the business of La Côte vines which he was practising. « La Côte is a vineyard area (about 200 kilometers from Seon), between Aubonne and Nyon, along the lake of Geneva.

In fact, he became supporter of the Helvetian Republic. He was elected Mayor in 1800 and remained in his office until March 1802. As a matter of fact, the Helvetian Republic was running from 1798 to 1802.

Aware of the troubles caused in Switzerland by the French Republican system, Napoleon, then First Consul imposed the Mediation Act which was a clever coming back to federalism. Louis Christinat was dismissed from his office.

Let us go back to 1797. Then administror of the Castle Liebegg, near Seon, he bought a real asset:
a house, cultivated land and orchard; he paid this 9000 Gulden (I'm not quite sure if an ordinary worker got 3 Gulden a day or a week at that time). He gave 2000 Gulden cash, 1000 Gulden with approximately 3000 liters vine of La Côte . (This prouves that he had good abilities in trade affairs).As for the 6000 remaining Gulden , he forced himself by contract to pay them in six 1000 Gulden yearly instalments.

Not being abble to pay them, he solded his real asset, the 25 of March 1800 for 12'000 Gulden. The 12th March 1802, he married Salomea Ringier who was the sister of the protestant Pastor Samuel Ringier. The Ringier belonged to a well renowned family in the region. Their first baby, Anna-Margaritha was baptized the 17th Avril 1802, (a short pregnancy as you see). This child had as baptism godmother Margaritha von Diesbach, born von Graviseth, whose artisocratic family was owner of Castle Liebegg to which Louis Chirstinat had been administrator previously.

As I said before, Louis Christinat and his colleagues in the authorities of Seon were dismissed and accused of abuses of power and of irregularities in the financial managment of the commune of Seon. The archives records of Seon are saying that Louis Christinat went to the village streets always accompanied by a big dog, this might mean that he was not a highly beloved person. According to M. Willy Wyrsch who has scrutinized Seon's archives records, (M. Wyrsch will be with us tomorrow afternoon in Seon). Louis Christinat has been staying in Seon with his family until the 13th of September 1805. The Chrisinat have had three more children, the third one was baptized in 1805 with as

christian name Samuel Louis. A forth child was born in 1807.

The same year, the Louis Christinat family was living in Suhr, canton Aargau, near Seon. That year, Louis paid 1000 Gulden to get the bourgeoisie (citizenship at « commune » level in Switzerland) of Suhr for his all family. In 1817, Louis wanted to give up this bourgeoisie and get the 1000 Gulden back(he then certainy tought of going to America). The little Council of Suhr decided not to give him the money back. Nevertheless, the Council helped Louis to get the necessary documents to emigrate with his family in USA, from the district authorities in Kulm.Concerning the cost of this crossing, it was paid by Pastor Samuel Ringier then in function in Reinach (Aargau). Louis and his family landed from the ship « Rebecca Ann » the 7th January 1818 at Philadelphia harbour; we supposed that they had embarked in Amsterdam. From that time onwards we find no more trace of Louis Christinat.

Let us see now the hypotheses we spoke of at the beggining:

First hypothesis:

Louis Chrisinat was intelligent:the following affirmations prove it:

- despite having had a simple schooling, he became a man of grat learning,
- he had a good ability in speaking and writing german language,
- he became easily integrated in the higher class (aristocrats in Liebegg castle, political authorities in Seon, family Ringier),
- his abilities in business,
- his desire to go to America.

Second hypothesis:

Louis Christinat was ambitious: the following affirmations prove it:

- his desire to get a higher social situation, (administrator of Liebegg castle),
- his desire to become Mayor of Seon

Third hypothesis:

Louis Christinat: a life with failures and successes:

The failures:

- Louis left Chabrey for unknown reasons and never went back there,
- there are no traces of letters to his near parents,
- he couldn't keep his real asset,
- his political career collapsed.

And now the successes:

- from modest background, he acceded of the higher class,
- his marriage with Salomea Ringier, daughter of a well know family, proves this progress,
- to become Mayor of a 1000 people place needs real strategic abilities,
- if we consider his different activities, we allow ourselves to think that he has surely been a trader, a merchant, (his desire to go to America can be understood as the will to make business there),
- at the end, we realise that he had had a great courage to leave the continent.

Conclusion.

Now we let Louis Christinat sailing towards the New World, with his nice family, with, in his heart, in his mind the dream of an America full of all possibilities.

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