

The History of Murten

History (summary, key facts)

The first documented mention of Murten dates back to 515, when it was referred to as 'Muratum Manor'. It resurfaces again in the historical records in 1013 as a fortress.

The town was established between 1159–1179 by Duke Berchtold IV of the Zähringen noble family as a bulwark against the west. The Zähringen line ceased in 1218.

Murten became a 'free imperial city' under the German Emperor Frederick II.

In 1255, Murten entered into a treaty of protection with Count Peter of Savoy.

In 1377, Count Amadeus of Savoy granted the town its charter.

The last major fire in the town took place in 1416. The buildings were then reconstructed from stone instead of wood.

In 1475, Murten was occupied by Bern and Fribourg. This marked the end of Savoy rule.

The Siege of Murten took place in 1476 by the Burgundian army of Charles the Bold, which was crushed by the Confederates. The anniversary of the battle on 22 June is commemorated every year at the Solennität Youth Festival.

In 1484, Murten came under the joint governance of the cities of Bern and Fribourg for more than 300 years. The municipal magistrate called the 'Schultheiss' was appointed alternately for five years at a time.

The French invaded in 1798.

In 1803, Napoleon assigned Murten to the canton of Fribourg against the will of the town's citizens.

Prehistory

Many millennia ago, a Celtic people known as the **Helvetii** lived in Switzerland. They were skilful **peasants** and lived a happy existence closely connected to the land. They were led by a prince named **Orgetorix** who thirsted for fame and glory. He wanted to be more than just a prince of peasants; he wanted to conquer **Gaul** and then **Rome**. He started to rally the peasants in his community, promising them a better life. Over time, the people's resentment grew and they decided to move to **Gaul** with all their possessions. This did not go unnoticed in the rest of the country and **Orgetorix** ended up in court. He was put on trial, accompanied by 10,000 of his men. The people were seething with anger and a **civil war** loomed on the horizon. But before the situation escalated, **Orgetorix** threw himself onto his own sword and died.

However, his death did not deter the **Helvetii** from their new goal of emigrating to western Gaul. They grabbed everything they could carry and burned the rest to the ground. This included the **Oppidum Mont Vully** on **Lake Murten**, whose excavation site and partial reconstruction can be visited today. The hundreds of thousands of Helvetii were now led by **Divico**, a **pure-hearted hero** who had once fought off the **Romans**. However, the **Romans** were prepared. Under the leadership of the legendary general **Julius Caesar**, they defeated the **Helvetii** after a brutal and bloody battle. Over 100,000 **Helvetii** were killed. The survivors were sent back to their burnt-out towns and villages. The **Romans** were also about to bring the **Valaisians** and **Rhaetians** under their rule. Large towns were built. One of the largest was **Aventicum**, which later became **Avenches**. The Romans ruled the land for 200 years until the **Alemanni** and **Suebi** tribes defeated them. The Helvetii became their **slaves**.

Avenches

After you have left the museum in Murten, you will see the signpost pointing to **Avenches**. Simply follow the **signposts** along the **forest path** and along the **lakeside** to **Greng**. Continue along the **harbour** at **Faug** to **Camping Plage Avenches**. From here, you simply need to follow the course of the river and you will find yourself in the ancient Roman capital of Helvetia.

We highly recommend a visit to this ancient **Roman town** if you have time on your trip to take a brief detour to explore the area surrounding Murten. It is located south of the lake, approximately **eight kilometres** from **Murten**. The ground you will be walking on was part of the Roman Empire a very long time ago. When you take a tour around it, the town reveals its fascinating history as you look upon its old **towers, buildings, staircases** and consider its many **secrets**. The highlight of this trip is the town's **amphitheatre**, the most important and best-preserved building of its kind in Switzerland. To stand within a structure like this and to imagine the events that happened here in the past is a truly **unforgettable experience**.

The small medieval town

This **romantic little town** has earned a reputation as a **hidden gem** in the **canton of Fribourg**, largely thanks to its beautifully preserved **historic old town**. The town centre is brimming with **historic buildings**,

shops, restaurants and cafés. A **walk** along the **town's historic walls** is a highlight of any visit, offering a glimpse into its tumultuous past when they were subjected to heavy bombardment during a siege centuries ago. From here you can look out over the beautiful old town, the **lake** and the **Vully wine region** in the distance. Enjoy a moment of peace and tranquillity that you will never forget. It's a particularly beautiful spot to visit at sunset. In addition to a German and a French church that are well worth seeing, the **Murten Museum** is the cultural hub of the town. The **Battle of Murten** has been meticulously documented here.

In 2021, the **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** launched an initiative called the "**Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO**". By the end of 2022, 32 villages and rural regions around the world were to receive this award. And Murten was one of them. So, it's official: **Murten is one of the 32 most attractive tourist destinations in the world!**

The Battle of Murten: A turning point in history

The **Battle of Murten** was one of the most pivotal moments in the **Confederates'** quest for **independence** and in the history of Europe.

Charles the Bold had a clear **objective**: He wanted to enlarge his kingdom of **Burgundy**, which spanned a narrow strip of land between **France** and the **German Empire**, into a continuous expanse of land extending from the North Sea to the Alps. The 43-year-old Charles was the last **Valois Duke** of Burgundy and is retrospectively regarded as one of the final embodiments of **feudalism**, where the **monarch**, the **nobility** and the **clergy** reigned supreme. Despite his remarkable abilities, cultivated manners and intelligence, he ultimately met his downfall due to his insatiable **ambition**, a fate shared by many rulers throughout history.

In the middle of **June 1476**, **Charles the Bold** marched from **Lausanne** to the town of **Murten** with an army of over 20,000 men. The **2,000** or so men defending the town were led by **Adrian von Bubenberg**. They had no choice but to fortify their position behind the 200-year-old town wall. Charles the Bold then besieged the town.

The **Confederate** reinforcements arrived on **22 June**: Approximately **23,000** men routed the **Burgundians** in a fierce battle. The following winter, an army consisting of soldiers from **Lorraine** and **Austria**, along

with the **Confederates**, defeated the **Burgundians** again, killing Charles and causing the collapse of his kingdom.

The 18-metre-high **Monument to the Battle of Murten in 1476** was later erected to commemorate the victims of the battle. While exploring the town, take a moment to marvel at the monument and reflect on the important role the Battle of Murten played in shaping the way the country is now structured.

Murten throughout history

Murten in the Middle Ages

The town we see today was built around 1170 on the southern shore of the lake. It was founded by the Dukes of Zähringen, who laid claim to the imperial fiefdom and wanted to fortify their western border territories by establishing another fortress at the border. When the Zähringen line died out in 1218, Murten was freed from the empire and was later fortified with a wall. During the interregnum (a period when there was no central authority ruling over the Swiss Confederation), the town came under the patronage of the Savoys in 1255. This was later briefly disputed by the Habsburgs. Various alliances with neighbouring towns secured Murten's position. The town underwent gradual structural expansion, eventually overshadowing its neighbouring settlements in prominence. In 1416, a fire raged through Murten destroying most of the buildings, which were originally constructed from timber. The town was rebuilt from stone and entered the annals of European history in 1476 due to the victorious battle that took place outside its walls between the Confederates and Charles the Bold. Murten had already been forced to surrender to the Bernese and Fribourgs a year earlier and was then under the joint rule of the two cantons. They recognised the town's historical rights and made sure that Murten was administered alternately by a mayor, who had his official residence in the castle that had been built by the Savoys.

Murten during the age of absolutism

In 1530, the Reformation came to the Murten region from Bern. The consequent religious and political divisions that arose between Fribourg and Bern led to repeated disputes. This meant that Murten had to remain neutral in both the First and Second Villmergen Wars. While the church and schools were governed by Bern, Murten was obliged to join Fribourg in military terms. Bern's significant cultural influence was also evident in the waning of the French language and the increasing prevalence of German. Everything remained the same in economic terms during the

period of absolutism, although religious refugees settled in Murten and there was an expansion in livestock farming, viticulture, grain and tobacco cultivation, as well as trade and commerce.

Murten during the revolutionary era

The French Revolution ushered in a new era in the Murten region. In 1798, when the French first exerted pressure on Fribourg, Bern tried to resist them in Murten. However, the people of Murten were very disappointed when the Bernese garrison withdrew and left the town to the French. Consequently, various battalions were billeted into local homes and numerous citizens were taken prisoner. Murten lost its historical rights and was unwillingly annexed to Fribourg by Napoleon in 1803 during the Mediation period – probably on the advice of the Louis d'Affry, who was the Landammann (governor) of the canton at that time. The decades-long struggle against the patrician and clerical powers in Fribourg ignited a new-found strength among the radical-minded people of Murten. The education and school system was improved and the town was enriched by a series of renovations and the construction of new buildings.

Murten after the founding of the federal state

As the railway had been routed from Bern to Lausanne via Fribourg, Murten was left economically disadvantaged. This had hindered its ability to establish new industries during the age of industrialisation. The town expanded into the surrounding area after it was connected to local railway lines and a small clock factory was also established there. However, in the period leading up to the Second World War, Murten's economic activity was primarily regional in scope. From a tourism perspective, the old town preserved much of its original character and cohesion, largely due to stringent building and preservation regulations.

Murten today

There has been a significant economic upswing since the post-war period. New residential districts have been built and industry and commerce are expanding. Thanks to the A1 motorway, which was strategically routed to minimise impact on the landscape, Murten is better connected to neighbouring areas. The population has grown by around 1,900 people since 1970 – largely due to the inclusion in the municipality of the villages of Burg, Altavilla and Büchslen. The number of jobs in Murten exceeds the number of working inhabitants, and trade and industry are flourishing for the most part. Tourism also witnessed a notable upturn, in part due to the national exhibition 'Expo 02', which was held in Biel, Murten, Neuchâtel and Yverdon-les-Bains. Today, Murten is

not only an attractive visitor destination but also an attractive place to live. In addition to the historic old town, which is well worth a visit, it boasts bilingual schools housed in modern facilities, a well-developed infrastructure and an efficient modern administration.

<http://www.murtenseevully-history.ch>

When Napoleon dined at Murten Castle

Murten Castle has existed for over 800 years. A look behind the doors of the Oberamt office offers fascinating insights into days gone by.

The history of Murten Castle dates back to the middle of the 12th century. The Savoys assumed control of the town after the House of Zähringen's lineage came to an end. The castle remained in the hands of the Savoys until the Battle of Murten in 1476. After the Battle of Murten, the town was governed in accordance with the principle of 'gemeine Herrschaft' (shared governance). This meant that Fribourg and Bern alternately provided the bailiff, who resided in the castle, each five years. This is why both cantonal coats of arms can be seen at the entrance gate and in the castle.

The castle has long served as the focal point for the rulers of Murten. However, it was never used as a residential castle and was never privately owned. Murten Castle has been an official residence right from the start – as it still is today. A tour around Murten Castle is like journeying back to the Middle Ages. Its rich history is embodied in its old walls, the fireplace and the kitchen hearth, which is located in the former castle kitchen. This is still the main room in the castle, as the Oberamtmann (head bailiff) of the lake region, Christoph Wieland, explains. As well as the rooms that offer particularly beautiful views of Lake Murten, Christopher finds the former kitchen the most pleasing room in the castle.

Even Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have dined in this room in November 1779. It is known that Napoleon was on his way to Bern when an axle on his carriage broke somewhere near Murten. It is said that Napoleon dined at Murten Castle while it was being repaired. The office of Oberamtmann Christoph Wieland is located on the first floor of the

castle – a large room with plenty of natural light and a view of the inner courtyard.

An 'Oberamt' (district office) has resided at Murten Castle since 1831 – the year of the first constitution of the Canton of Fribourg, when these offices were mentioned as being representatives of the State Council. Although the practice of representing the cantonal government in the districts in this way has actually existed for roughly 220 years since 1803. To mark the occasion, the 'Oberamt des Seebezirks' (lake region district office) is planning to publish a book specifically about the castle, explains Oberamtmann Christoph Wieland.

The book is expected to explore various aspects of history and architecture. The role of the Oberamt is also likely to be explained in the book. In addition to the Oberamt, Murten Castle now accommodates the civil registry office and the police station. Events such as Murten Classics are held in the castle courtyard. The Federal Council also convened here in 2023.

As the castle premises are used by the Oberamt, it is not possible to visit the castle. However, it is possible to walk up to the castle tower during the summer months. Christoph enthuses about the view from the tower.

Murten Castle has been of great importance to the town for hundreds of years – and even more so for the Canton of Fribourg. After all, the canton is also the owner of the castle, explains Christoph.

As the cantonal offices are located in the castle, it is still a symbol of the cantonal administration in the municipality of Murten.

Liebistorf

The village is located in the south-east of the lake region at 523 metres above sea level. It covers an area of 383 hectares (of which 56 hectares are forest, waterways and uncultivated land) and had 626 inhabitants before the merger. The village was first mentioned in a deed of gift on 14 September 1271. At that time, Bechthold von Schüpfen bequeathed a house in Lübistorff to the Order of St John of Fribourg.

In April 1340, the village reportedly suffered severe pillaging by

marauding bands. The village then belonged to the legendary knight Wilhelm Velga. The great names of Erlach, Diesbach and Thierstein are also closely connected to the history of the village. Peat used to be extracted in the area, which gave the village its name ('torf' means peat). The current name Liebistorf has only been in use since the 17th century. The neighbouring Galmwald forest was made available for use by the Counts of Savoy in 1342. Excessive tree felling resulted in extensive devastation. This was why it was seized by the Estates of Bern and Fribourg in the 18th century and only partially designated for use. Nonetheless, a third of the forest later had to be fenced off and excluded from any use at all. Napoleon finally designated it to the Canton of Fribourg in 1803. Consequently, the Galmwald became a state forest, making it unique in Switzerland and legally a municipality without any inhabitants.

Between August 1883 and March 1982, the municipality of Liebistorf was administered together with the municipality of Kleinböisingen. Liebistorf merged with the municipality of Gurmels in 2003.

How the medieval town wall in Murten became a wine cellar

May 2022

Renovation work in the cellar of the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone in Murten has revealed a spectacular new entrance to the town wall on the lake side of the old town. The Office for Archaeology has gained new insights into the route of the old town wall and its present retaining wall.

Until recently, the cellar of the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone located at Rathausgasse 5 in Murten used to be too warm and too humid because of the cold rooms next door and the lack of ventilation. The room functioned as a cross between a disused wine cellar and a storeroom.

“But the owners saw potential in this cellar,” explains Christian Kündig, excavation technician at the Office of Archaeology of the Canton of Fribourg. He also saw potential for a more in-depth analysis of the premises when work was carried out in spring 2019 to improve the indoor climate and perform careful renovation.

Town wall becomes visible

The results of this analysis are now available. They are summarised in an article by Christian Kündig in the latest issue of the *Freiburger Hefte für Archäologie* titled “The town wall in the wine cellar”. Inside the Krone Hotel’s cellar, not only is there evidence of the existence of a second house from the Middle Ages on Rathausgasse, but there are also remnants of the town wall facing the lakeside dating back to the first half of the 13th century. After careful renovation work, the only remaining piece of the northern town wall became visible inside the cellar. And thanks to the knowledge gained, the course of the medieval town wall between the castle and the town hall could also be reconstructed. In addition, information was obtained about the newer retaining wall in front of it. This section of the town wall is now on display for visitors in the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone’s wine cellar, and a film also illustrates the work and its findings (see box).

125 centimetres thick

So far, there have been two references to the part of the town wall on the lake side. Around 20 metres of this section of the wall was revealed during the construction of the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone’s underground car park in 1995. In 2014, remnants of a wall were also uncovered when a pipeline in the passageway from the town hall to the Ryf road was being renovated. This wall’s composition was very similar to that of the walls at the hotel. To some degree, the section of wall in the cellar at the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone serves as an intermediate link between the previously discovered wall sections.

The cellar today is divided into four rooms and is 12.5 metres long and 6.5 to 7 metres wide. Three boundary walls are made from small sandstone blocks, while the fourth wall on the north side has an embrasure window that is partially bricked up. Christian Kündig and his team hoped that this was part of the original town wall right from the start. This hope has now been validated. The thickness of 125 centimetres corresponds precisely with the walls discovered in the Murtenhof & Krone Hotel excavations. This construction of the wall dates back to 1238.

As explained in the article in the *Freiburger Hefte für Archäologie*, there were probably seven construction phases in the area where the cellar and walls are located. The original cellar at the Murtenhof & Krone Hotel did not quite reach the town wall; this only happened when it was extended in a second phase. This was when light slits were also built into

the town wall. While one of these slits can still be seen in the cellar today, only the outline of a second slit is recognisable.

It is possible that this second slit was bricked up after the town fire of 1416 as traces of the fire can still be seen on the wall. Christian points out that there are remnants of a grille in the preserved slit. This explains why they were light slits and not embrasures.

A retaining wall in front of the curtain wall

Around 1600, a new retaining wall was built on the side facing Ryf road. Terrain was gained as a result and the section between the retaining wall and the town wall was subsequently raised to create a terrace. Elevating the land obscured the embrasure in the cellar and prevented light from entering inside. Consequently, the slit was bricked up and a new ventilation window was created above it.

The cellar was rebuilt in 1669 and further rooms were created, which were connected via windows. Above the door to the large cellar is an inscription with the year 1669, which marks the time the extension was built. The courtyard between the retaining wall and the old curtain wall was probably not built over until the 19th century. Christian explains in his article that many buildings in Murten were extended and enlarged during this time. This demonstrates how the entire Hotel Murtenhof & Krone building was constantly changing. The hotel was also remodelled after two fires in 1970 and 1975.

As the findings show, the medieval town wall formed a continuous ring around the entire town. For defensive reasons, however, this area between the Murtenhof & Krone Hotel and the castle did not have houses built upon it to prevent fire from spreading to the castle.

Eastern section still unexplored

The section of wall that was uncovered in the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone enables a reconstruction of both the town wall and the retaining wall, which is also only partially visible from the outside. Old plans show the existence of a round tower that no longer exists today. These plans also show an opening that could have been an entrance to the castle from the lake. Between the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone, the old town wall and the new retaining wall would have formed a sharp bend, although the exact location and reason for this have not yet been established.

Christian explains that the section of wall between the town hall and the French Church has not yet been explored. He is unable to say whether

there will ever be opportunities to excavate there. Certain interventions may be possible, including those using non-invasive methods such as georadar. He also points out that the investigations in the cellar at the Hotel Murtenhof & Krone did not cause any delays in the renovation process.

*Source: Freiburger Hefte für Archäologie
23/2021; <https://www.fr.ch/document/473711>*

Further information on the Battle of Murten

The Battle of Murten 1476

The Battle of Murten was fought on 22 June 1476 during the Burgundian Wars between Swiss Confederation troops and the Burgundian Duke Charles the Bold.

Charles the Bold, otherwise known as the Duke of Burgundy, ruled over a patchwork empire from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. His lands were sandwiched between France, then ruled by Louis XI, and the Holy Roman Empire, ruled by Emperor Frederick III. Charles' aim was to consolidate his kingdom through diplomacy and war in order to become king. However, the Canton of Bern and the Confederates got in his way. In March 1476, Charles suffered his first defeat against the Confederates at Grandson on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel. But he didn't give up and wanted to take his revenge on the Confederates. So, he rallied his army again and marched through the Broye Valley towards Bern. The Confederates were expecting a counterattack and had already stationed 2,000 men in Murten in April under the command of Adrian von Bubenberg. On 22 June 1476, the Confederates succeeded in taking the Burgundian army by surprise and defeating Charles the Bold, who managed to escape. In January 1477, Charles the Bold lost his life in the third battle of the Burgundian Wars at Nancy. This wiped the Burgundian empire off the map of Europe. Charles the Bold had lost three battles. As the saying goes: "In Grandson verlor er das Gut, in Murten den Mut und in Nancy das Blut" (He lost his land in Gransdon, his courage in Murten and his life in Nancy).

Memorial to the battle:

The obelisk in Merlach: In 1822, the Canton of Fribourg erected an obelisk to commemorate the battle. It stands on the site of a former ossuary that was destroyed during the French invasion in 1798.

The Bodemünzi: Charles the Bold had set up his tents on the 'Feldherrenhügel' (Commander's Hill) and from there he directed the siege of the town. Information boards at the site provide information about the Battle of Murten. This hill to the south of the town is clearly visible from the Tournaletta.

Multimedia Show: Murten Museum offers a multimedia presentation that vividly portrays the events of the battle.

The Solennität and Murtenschiessen events are held to this day to commemorate the Battle of Murten.

Source: www.fribourgregion.ch

The Diesbach-Watt Trading Company

At the end of the Middle Ages, the parts of Switzerland that lay north of the Alps were part of the large southern German economic area, which experienced a significant boom from the 14th century onwards. Trading companies that operated all around the world emerged, the most important of which was the Ravensburg Trading Company. Of the many Swiss trading companies, the Diesbach-Watt Company, documented in sources from 1420 to 1460, stood out as being the most similar. Its founder was the Bernese Niklaus von Diesbach, who lived around 1375 to 1380 to around 1436. His main business partners were Peter and Hug von Watt, two equally successful, albeit less wealthy merchants from the textile manufacturing hub of St. Gallen. The two traders served a large network of customers in north-eastern Europe.

Niklaus von Diesbach and the von Watt brothers joined forces to form a 'multinational' trading company. The company headquarters were located in Bern until the end of the 1440s. From the very beginning, St. Gallen supplied its main trade commodity: canvas. The textile business was the focal point of their activities. The company sold canvas in Geneva, southern France and Spain, while a wool-cotton fabric called

Zwilch was also sold in Wroclaw and Krakow. The company purchased fustian fabric from the German weaving towns of Ulm, Augsburg, Memmingen and Biberach, which it supplied to Silesia and Poland. The company also exported felt hats from Upper Germany to Barcelona. It was also involved in trading woollen cloth from England, Brabant, Lower Germany and the Rhineland to eastern Germany and Poland. In return, the Diesbach-Watt Company purchased wax and furs from Silesia and Poland. The Diesbach-Watt Company bought marten, squirrel, rabbit, mink and ermine furs at the markets in Warsaw, Krakow, Wroclaw and Poznan, which it primarily supplied to the cities of Upper Germany. The traders also tried their hands at selling Polish cattle for slaughter to Germany. Their range of goods also included light metal goods, especially brass from Nuremberg and copper from the mining towns of Upper Hungary. These products were then supplied to Eastern Europe, Italy and Spain. They also sold woollen cloth from Como as well as damask and velvet from other parts of Italy in Krakow. Gold wire and glaze were transported to Catalonia and Aragon via Barcelona. Conversely, saffron and other Mediterranean products such as cotton, coral, dates, sugar, jam, malmsey wine, rose liqueur, cloves, ginger, caraway, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, frankincense, indigo and ammonium chloride were mainly sourced from Spain.

What truly distinguished the Diesbach-Watt Company was not so much the range of goods they traded in, which were similar to other trading houses, but the remarkable extent of its geographical reach. The extensive trading network required a well-functioning communications infrastructure, strategically located places of business, continual adjustments to the business strategy and new partners with fresh capital in Bern, St. Gallen and Nuremberg. The Diesbach-Watt Company reached the height of its success in the 1440s. After 1445, it endured increasing losses, largely attributed to the turbulent events in the Confederation and southern Germany. Disputes among the partners also had a paralysing effect on the leaders of the company. After poor business performance around 1460, the Diesbach-Watt Company, which had been active for at least three decades, was dissolved.

The Diesbach patrician family

A Bernese patrician family bearing the name of Diesbach has been documented since the 13th century. The name is associated with the noble family which ruled Diessbach (or Diessenberg, today

Oberdiessbach) near Thun and belonged to the political ruling class of the Bernese city state from the 15th century. One branch of the family settled in Fribourg after the Reformation. According to genealogical records, the family was of Burgundian descent and were servants in the retinue of the German Emperor Frederick I, the Zähringen family and, from 1218, the Counts of Kyburg. People bearing the surnames *Diezbach, Diezebach, Dyesbach, Dyespach* and holding castle rights in Bern during the 13th century are documented in Aarberg and Thun. As the progenitor of the noble family, Niklaus is documented as a merchant in Basel and Frankfurt in 1412 and as a goldsmith in Bern in 1414. Together with Hugo and Peter von Watt from St. Gallen, he grew the Diesbach-Watt Company, which primarily traded in canvas and metal goods and operated local places of business across a wide area from Spain to Poland. His second wife, Katharina du Ruz, came from an upper-class family from Fribourg, which was also engaged in international trade. In 1427, Niklaus acquired half of the Diessbach estate from Imer Bokess, as well as Kiesen and Holligen Castle. His sons Loy (1451), Ludwig (1452) and Hans (1456) marked the time the family transitioned from trading to serving as magistrates. All three married into patrician families. Consequently, members of the family are documented in the oldest records of an association formed through the merging of two noble families, which saw the creation of a coat of arms bearing a court jester and a goldfinch. Klara von Büren granted Loy the Signau and Worb estate, while her son Niklaus acquired the other half of the Diessbach estate in 1469. He was the first of the family to marry into an old Bernese noble family when he married Barbara von Scharnachtal. The estates were divided up in 1479 when Wilhelm granted his cousin Ludwig the Diessbach estate and the lower court jurisdiction in Kiesen. Ludwig had to cede the Landshut estate, which he acquired in 1479, to Bern in 1514. He also had to cede the imperial fiefdom of Spiez in 1516 due to debt. He had acquired this fiefdom through his second marriage to Agatha von Bonstetten. Ludwig had become a mercenary leader in Italy and sold the Signau estate in 1528. His half-brother Niklaus (1478–1550) built the old castle in Oberdiessbach in 1546, which his later heirs sold together with the estate to the von Wattenwyl family in 1647. Christoph (1519–1577) acquired estates in Liebistorf through marriage. Heinrich Gottlieb (1727–1787), Knight of the Order of Baden, Grand Councillor and Director of Salt at Roche (VD), was the last representative of the Liebistorf family line. The Bernese line died out in 1917 with the death of the lawyer Robert (born 1858). A total of 20 family members were minor councillors in the patrician city of Bern. Just as many pursued a military career and ten of them served in foreign postings.

Two of Ludwig's sons (1452–1527), Sebastian and Johann Rochus (1501–1546), established the Catholic Fribourg lines. Sebastian lost his positions in Bern as he was suspected of being involved of corruption. He and Johann Rochus were granted citizenship in Fribourg in 1534 and returned to their old faith. Johann Rochus' son Georges became Lord of Bellerive (VD) and Baron of Prangins. The Bellerive estate remained in the hands of the Fribourg family for around 200 years. In 1792, the violent death of François Romain (born 1773), an officer in the Swiss Guard in Paris, ended the Johann Rochus line. Georges (1575–1648) established the Torny and Belleruche lines through his marriage to Marguerite d'Alex. His son Josse was Lord of Belleruche and Maggenberg. The Fribourg lines were notable for the prevalence of individuals who embarked on military careers, such as François Romain and Fridéric from the Torny line and Romain from the Belleruche line. The von Diesbachs were part of Fribourg's political ruling class until the end of the Ancien Régime. According to Philippe, several of Diesbach's political supporters were committed to promoting agriculture in western Switzerland. The French branch was established by Xavier Eugène von Belleruche (1817–1905). He was a royalist living in Gouy-en-Artois, who became a French citizen in 1867.

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