THE REGISTER OF EMIGRANTS (DI 358)

In 1871, the decision was taken to establish a cantonal register of emigrants. Its purpose was to provide information about the persons and families who emigrated to Argentina, North America or North Africa between 1849 and 1879.

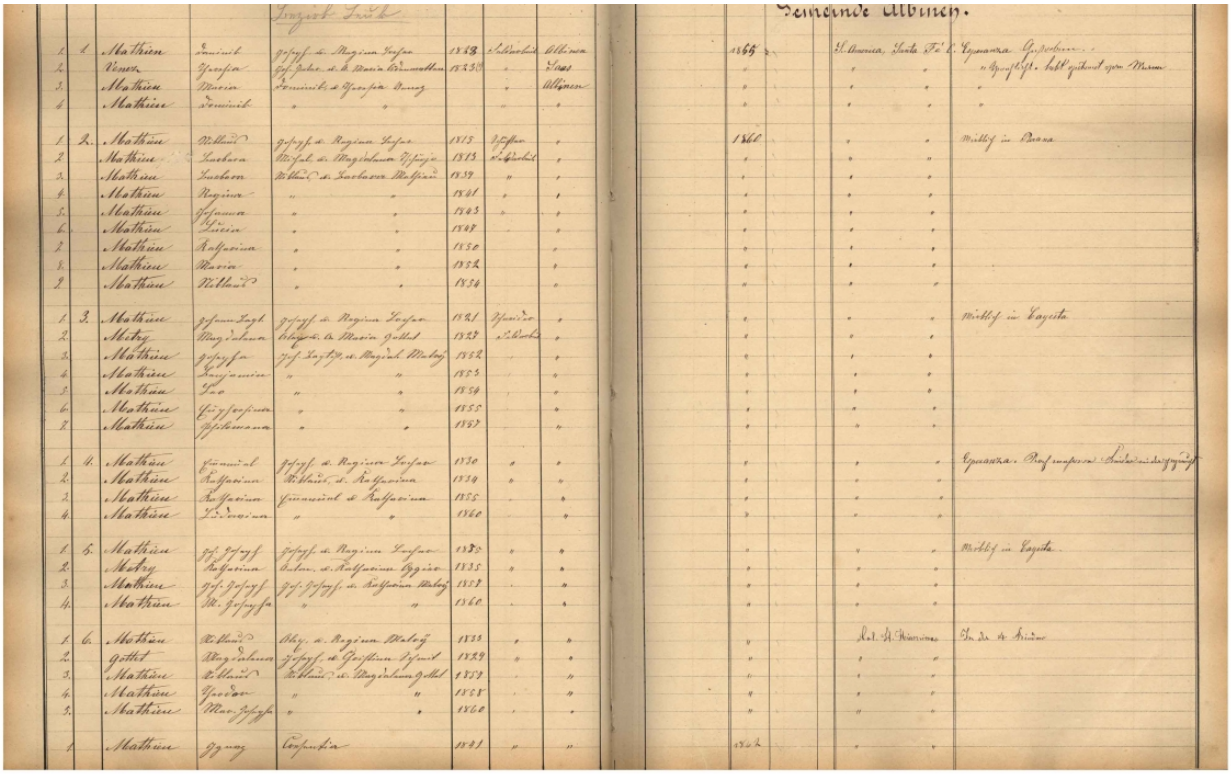
It contains the names of 6,629 persons.
The information recorded is as follows:

- the emigrant's registration number
- first name and surname
- paternal and maternal lines of descent
- date of birth
- profession
- home municipality
- last place of residence
- date of emigration
- destination
- a section for "other general information"

In the Rapport de gestion du Conseil d'Etat of 1871, a memorandum of the Department of the Interior indicated the date of the elaboration of the Register and the sources that were used to establish it: "Since the State did not have a complete register of emigrations, we had the municipalities take a general census since the beginning of the emigration". This document was therefore established retrospectively for the periods from 1849 to 1871. From 1871 to 1879 it was kept by a state agency based on information provided by the municipalities, and is unfortunately far from being complete. Indeed, it displays the following gaps:

- There is no information under the heading "last place of residence"; this means that the last domicile was probably identical with the home municipality.
- There are inaccuracies in the mention of destinations.
- The profession of the head of the family is often missing.
- For the French-speaking part of the Valais there are few observations on the position of the family in its home municipality?to be mentioned under "other general information"?, while there is more information for the Upper Valais.
- The information was noted with more or less accuracy depending on the municipalities.
- The departures are sometimes mentioned out of chronological order.

To summarize: this register only covers the peak period of emigration, mentions only in vague terms the destinations of the emigrants and does not include the returns to the Valais that took place. When the rate of overseas departures fell after 1880, the register was no longer kept up to date.
Nevertheless, in spite of its errors and lacks, this register represents the only document that consistently gives details about the individual emigrants; the reports of the State Council provided only general statistics.
Federal registers of emigration were also kept starting in 1868.



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Emigrantenregister (1871)

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