

The Coopers' Stay at La Lorraine, 1828

By Norman Barry

Introduction

The significance of the Coopers' stay at the La Lorraine farm just a mile¹ outside of Berne with the distinctive and, to Bernese ears, foreign-sounding name "La Lorraine,"² is a challenge to any researcher. Even the question of who owned what and who leased what has resulted in confusion. Also, the intriguing question of whether La Lorraine had already predetermined the plot of Cooper's third European novel, *The Headsman*, which he had only begun four years later,³ will be considered.

Ownership

The Lorraine estate was in possession of Ludwig Gottlieb Walther from 1795 to 1824. In 1824, it was sold to the Count of Neuenburg (Neuchâtel) and Valangin, in Paris, who never lived on the farm. It remained in his possession until 1845.³

In the bill of sale dated 2 August 1824, La Lorraine was listed as consisting of two houses, a barn with stalls, together with all that was necessary for running the farm. The barn was, according to blueprints of the farm, enormous. The acreage of the farm consisted of 65 "Jucharten" or 58 acres. Walther, apart from continuing to run the farm in the capacity of a tenant, was also responsible for overseeing the "wood of Engli[s?]."⁴ Forests are not alluded to in the bill of sale.

The Pourtalès (Cooper's spelling is "Portales") were Huguenots of noble lineage, who fled from France, and sought refuge in Neuchâtel, at the time a principality of Prussia and, since the Vienna Congress, a Swiss canton. The count was also the chamberlain of the King of Prussia.

From 1637 to 1705 the farm was owned by Johann R. von Steiger, an ancestor of Pourtalès, who gave the farm its Alsatian-sounding name (Alsace-Lorraine). Speculation has it that the name was coined as a gift to his wife, whose own name, Chambrier, was from Lorraine (Lothringen). Hence, both family ties and a financial investment were the chief motivations for Pourtalès' acquisition. Although the residence was intended for the count, should he one day visit Berne, there is no record of such a visit. Instead, it would seem that the count's "residence" (German: "Herrenstock") was rented out to individuals, who might be considered "worthy" of gracing La Lorraine.

The Two Houses Constituting La Lorraine

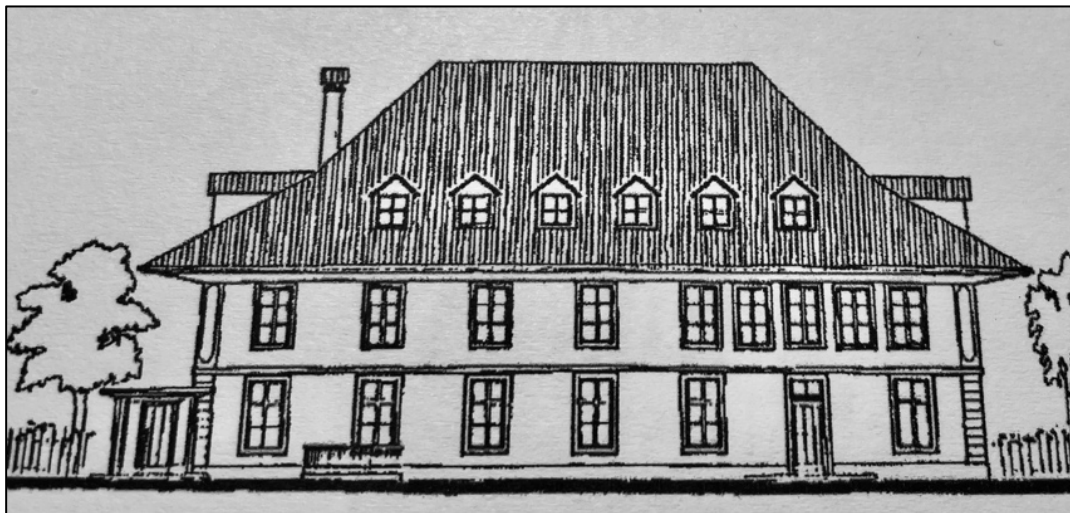
Cooper did not seem particularly impressed by the count's residence at La Lorraine (referred to by Cooper merely as a "country-house" or "villa"), where he and his family (Cooper, his wife, four daughters and son plus his nephew William and domestics⁵) resided during their two and one-half month stay. Conflicting dates of arrival are July 22 and July 26.⁶ The family stayed until October 8.⁷

Although on their way to Berne, the Coopers stopped off at Neuchâtel, there is no mention of a meeting with the count. An interesting phenomenon with a "cloud," which turned out to be none other than Mont Blanc is related. A fascinating parallel is the phenomenon of the hazy "cloud" when approaching America's shores, which turns out to be Sandy Hook, the sands of New Jersey!⁸

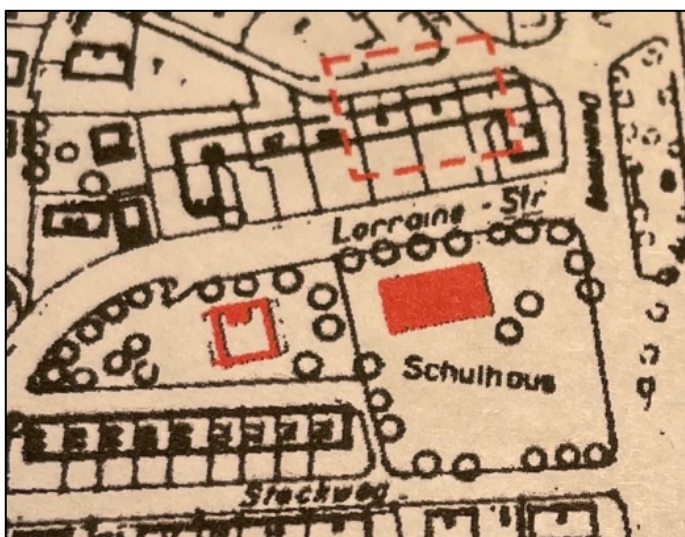
From the Swiss side there is a bit of back-patting in the claim that Count Louis de Pourtalés had graciously allowed the Cooper family to stay in his residence “rent-free.”⁹ Cooper, however, confusing a French franc with a Swiss franc, complained that what had at first seemed reasonable rent was, after conversion, much more expensive than anticipated.¹⁰

“We are in one of the pretty, little, retired villas that dot the landscape, and at the distance of only half a mile from the town.... Our house is about as large as one of the ordinary boxes of Manhattan island [sic]. It is built of stone, and, on the whole, is sufficiently comfortable. We found both house and furniture faultlessly neat. The place had just been occupied by the Spanish Minister....”¹¹

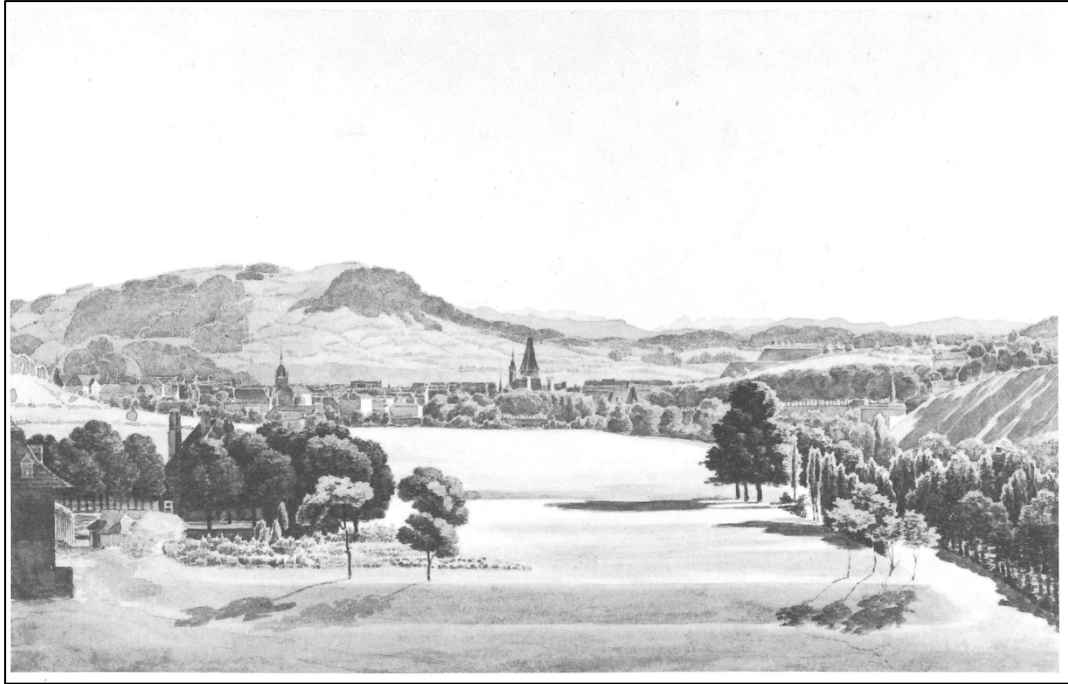
The spacious farmhouse occupied by Walther and his family was much more imposing, as was the enormous barn, which has since become a victim of urban sprawl. Both buildings, the former farmhouse at La Lorraine-Straße 84 and the “residence” at La Lorraine-Straße 80, are still standing, although the square “residence” is now a children’s day care center (“Kita Steckgut”) and the former rectangular farmhouse (now “Volksschule Steckgut”) is in the process of being renovated.



The two-story farmhouse with its striking hipped roof and dormer windows contains Empire-style elements. Although the name of the farmhouse was first documented in the 17th century, its present form has its origin in the second half of the 18th century.¹²



The comparative size of both buildings can be seen in the contemporary street map to the left. Across from the former farmhouse, the location and size of the former barn is provided with a broken line.



Above: La Lorraine grounds with Berne and surrounding landscape in the background. A corner of the “residence” can be made out in the lower left. —Anonymous water-coloring, ca. 1820. Artist anonymous. In private hands in Berne. Courtesy of the Canton Archive of Berne. Not visible below the tree line curving from lower right to the left, the scenic Aare River.



Above: “The Bernese Alps,” London, Published for the Proprietors by Geo. Virtue, 26, Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, 1835. In the French translation of William Beattie’s *Switzerland Illustrated*. “In a series of views taken on the spot and expressly for the work by W. H. Bartlett,” 1836.

The Coopers’ first excursion of the Bernese Oberland was from Aug. 4 to Aug. 7: “This is the grand tour of the Bernese Oberland, known by all travelers in Switzerland to this day, and including a near view of the Jungfrau.”¹³ It is no wonder that the Coopers were feeling “touzy-mouzy,”¹⁴ i.e., ecstatic.



Above: The former farmhouse before renovation in 2022:
https://www.bern.ch/mediencenter/medienmitteilungen/aktuell_ptk/volksschule-steckgut-wird-saniert-und-umgebaut

The renovation of the present Volksschule Steckgut, which offers a kindergarten and the first two grades of elementary school (the former farmhouse of the Walthers) will last until the fall of 2023 at an expected cost of 8.4 million Swiss francs (ca. 8.76 million dollars). The attic will also be completed for school activities.¹⁵ The above picture is before renovation costs were agreed upon in the summer of 2022. (A soccer ball can barely be made out on the roof below the second dormer window from the right.)



Two pictures of the day care center for children, described by Cooper as “one of the ordinary boxes of Manhattan island [sic].

Above right: The good ship “Seebär” (“Sea Bear”) and a line of children’s buggies to the right of the entrance.

A Stay not Forgotten, but...

To this reader's amazement, a "Leatherstocking" work of art has been adorning La Lorraine since 1959: an imposing copper relief sculpture (186 cm. x 205 cm.) depicting an Indian and teepee (1959) by Swiss artist Serge Brignoni (1903-2002). Strangely, however, the artwork was placed at the entrance of the schoolhouse and not the day care center. A memorial plaque to the right states in German: "James Fenimore Cooper wrote the Leatherstocking in this house." [My translation.] Apart from the misplaced location of Brignoni's gigantic artwork, and the misinformation provided by the memorial plaque (Cooper was not involved in writing a further "Leatherstocking" novel while in Switzerland¹⁶), one might ask, given extensive renovation work to the school, what will be the fate of the copper relief sculpture? An answer is fortunately to be found in a description of the renovation project:

"6.2 Further Artwork on the Premises

At the main entrance on the eastern façade of the Volksschule Steckgut there is a large copper sculptural relief dating from the year 1959 created by the Swiss artist Serge Brignoni. The depiction is a scene from the series of "Leatherstocking" novels of the famous American writer James Fenimore Cooper, who, according to all accounts rented the villa Lorraine (which is now the child day care center next to the Volksschule) at the beginning of the 19th century for a few months. The relief sculpture will remain (after renovations of the school) at its present location and, if at all possible, be restored to its former condition. The present misleading plaque will be replaced with an informative plaque providing information on the historical and cultural background of both Brignoni's artwork and Cooper at La Lorraine."¹⁷



The misleading memorial plaque will be replaced and corrected. The artwork will be refurbished and left at the protected entrance of the school, in all probability because it is simply too large for the Kita. It is likely that the confusion as to where the Coopers had stayed resulted from the belief that they would "obviously" dwell in the larger house. A 1955 article entitled

“Americana in Bern” by the *Swiss Travel Magazine* was devoted to Brignoni’s work in progress and claimed the school was the “*mansion*” of the count!¹⁸



Above:: Serge Brignoni and his incomplete “Leatherstocking” relief sculpture, 4 years before being installed at the former La Lorraine farmhouse.

Why La Lorraine?

Although Robert E. Spiller in his “Historical Introduction” to the Cooper Edition of *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* points out that the choice of Switzerland was simply a vacation for an exhausted Cooper after completion of *The Prairie* in Paris and yet another maritime novel *The Red Rover* together with work on *Notions of the Americans*, one doubts whether Cooper’s choice of Switzerland was simply a means of escaping into a “vacation.”

As the oldest and only democracy in modern Europe, Switzerland offered hope for America’s fledgling democracy. As an acute political observer, Cooper could also record any shortcomings in the Swiss system and pass them on as a word of warning to his fellow

countrymen. Secondly, Cooper's adept talent in depicting nature was equally suited for presenting Switzerland's magnificent Alpine landscape in a travelogue, one seen through "American eyes."¹⁹ With La Lorraine as the starting point, in four separate trips through most of Switzerland totaling over a month, and requiring an amazing physical constitution, Cooper's "American eyes" were remarkably awake. The political structure of Berne, about which Cooper and most Americans knew very little, also offered material for *The Headsman; or, The Abbaye des Vignerons* published five years later. In other words, Cooper had his hands full in Switzerland organizing itineraries, collecting information, and taking notes for works yet to come.

A main source of information on Switzerland, as related by Cooper, was "a highly respectable man, who is a favourable specimen of Swiss yeomanry, and from whom, I [=Cooper] am quite willing to confess, I have derived a fund of useful information on the subject and usages of his country. He is of the *Bürgerschaft*, and a captain of militia, besides being a moderate aristocrat."²⁰ This was none other than the tenant running the farm at La Lorraine.

How to Communicate?

Needless to say, the German-speaking part of Switzerland with its difficult dialect, was too much for the American family. In the town of Altstetten, the attempt to order a breakfast was daunting. (Even today, when Swiss German is spoken on television, subtitles are necessary so that a German can understand what is being said.)

Cooper: "...we could not make ourselves understood. Our German was by no means classical, and English, Italian, and French, were all Hebrew to the good people of the inn."²¹

Only by Cooper crowing like a rooster and William cackling like a hen was it possible, to the great amusement of the ladies of the house, to get a hot breakfast.

Although Cooper attained to great proficiency in French, one can ask whether, due to his workload in his first two years abroad, he had much time to perfect his French. At one point, Cooper even speaks (truthfully or tongue-in-cheek?) of his "bad French."²² In his letters, Cooper writes to a Parisian bookseller and publisher Gosselin, in English, simply because he is "in a great hurry." A translator must be commissioned for *The Prairie* and *The Pilot*.²³ In Berne, if a tourist's German was not "classical," the next best bet was French. Herr Walther no doubt communicated with the count in French. Yet it seems that the Coopers were quite comfortable in communicating with the Walthers, so much so that four years later a short stopover at La Lorraine to pay their respects was part of their itinerary.

The Genesis of *The Headsman*

It should be clear, both from information garnered from Walther as well as the location and the time spent in Berne, that at least the seeds of *The Headsman* ("the Executioner of Berne;" German: *Der Scharfrichter von Bern*) must obviously have their origin when Cooper and his family were at La Lorraine.

Cooper's eldest daughter, Susan, in her introduction to *The Headsman*, writes:

"The chief incident of the plot was taken from one of those oppressive laws of feudal times, which, from their inherent injustice, he held in abhorrence; in the canton of Berne,

before the changes of the last century, the odious office of the executioner, or headsman, was rendered obligatory upon one family, to be inherited, like a curse—not natural, but arbitrary—not for three or four generations only, but so long as the family should exist. Upon this *fact* [*my emphasis*] the whole plot of the Swiss tale turns...”²⁴

The reader must take a closer look at the “fact” Susan relates. Cooper was looking for a “blemish” in Berne’s form of government, one that showed the dangers of inherited offices in an aristocracy – one that would serve as a warning to Americans to question whether “inherited” offices were at all compatible with a working democracy.

A STRUCTURAL DIFFICULTY IN *THE HEADSMAN*²⁵

The major problem this reader has encountered in the novel has not so much concerned Maso or Sigismund, but rather the office of the Executioner of Berne. As far as this reviewer can tell, no one has ever challenged Cooper regarding his claim that the Executioner of Berne involved an *hereditary* office. Yet viewed from an historical perspective, the headsman, simply had no choice in the matter, not because of unjust hereditary laws but because he and his children were not allowed, due to the prevailing social sentiment, to engage in other occupations:

“The impact of social ostracism penetrated every aspect and even the tiniest facets of the life of the headsman. In a society rigidly built upon social estates, he was an outcast. The bylaws of the guilds of respectable municipal craftsmen forbade every “infamous” applicant access to their professions. A change of occupation was thus to all intents and purposes ruled out. The few exceptions, made possible only by the authorities through complicated pardons and “testimonies of honesty,” only tended to confirm the rule. The executioner, together with his whole family, was a prisoner of his profession and his despised social position.

“A hangman’s son had very few options available. Often, he spent his time of apprenticeship as an executioner’s assistant in another town, achieved promotion as a journeyman, until he had received his “master’s diploma,” a successful decapitation. If he was not yet of age, it was possible to “reserve the office,” until he was able to assume the duties of his retiring father. Should he attempt to avoid becoming an executioner and consider becoming a knacker instead, this would entail a professional demotion. The daughters of an executioner, like other young ladies of their day and age, were obliged to remain in their parental home until marriage. The prospects of finding a suitable husband were, however, limited, just as were those of an unmarried executioner of finding a suitable match among other executioners’ daughters and widows in his own country. Yet, in general, the search was successful; the clan-like, and often “inter-cantonal” and international “dynasties of headsman” of related families are proof of this.”

- Peter Sommer, *Scharfrichter von Bern*²⁶- *My translation from the German*]

Even in *The Headsman*, Balthazar himself was only able to find his own wife, Marguerite, not in Berne, but in Neuchâtel, the only daughter of another headsman:

“Neufchâtel [sic], and other countries besides Berne, have their privileged! My mother was the only child of the headsman of the first.”

- *The Headsman*, Ch. XI, p. 203

It should also be pointed out that the executioner's house was directly beside the municipal brothel, which would seem to have supplemented his income.²⁷ Cooper does not mention the various forms of execution practiced in Berne (“*the gallows, water and fire, the wheel and the sword*” or the deft use of torture by the executioner to extract confessions.²⁸ Nor is the significant anatomical knowledge of the executioner emphasized, although he sometimes served as a physician or a veterinarian. . . .

As there would seem to be no middle ground between Cooper's and Sommer's presentation, the fundamental structure underlying *The Headsman*'s plot is, at least in part, seriously flawed. Also, the depiction of the “meek-mannered” Balthazar hardly seems in keeping with the actual duties of the Headsman of Berne. That the Headsman's son should have even been considered as a suitable partner either by Adelheid or by her father, Baron Melchior de Willading, of Berne (of all places!), is unthinkable. Sigismund, too, understands the dilemma in the following dialogue:

[Adelheid:] “As for me, placed in the scale against thy merits, they have never weighed at all. If thou canst not become noble in order that we may be equals, I shall find more happiness in descending to thy level, than by living in heartless misery at the vain height where I have been placed by accident.”

[Sigismund:] “Blessed, ingenuous girl! – But what does it all avail? Our marriage is impossible.”
- *The Headsman*, Ch. X, pp. 190-191

When Jacques Colis, Christine's fiancé, refuses to go through with the marriage during the Fête des Vignerons because Christine's identity was revealed by “the cunning Pippo,” the buffoon, a question is put to him which he answers honestly:

“No doubt the respectability of the parent is the next thing to a good dowry, in the choice of a wife,” returned the bailiff, “but one of thy years has not come hither, without having first inquired into the parentage of her thou wert about to wed?”

“It was sworn to me that the secret should be kept. The girl is well endowed, and a promise was solemnly made that her parentage should never be known. The family Colis is esteemed in Vaud, and I would not have it said that the blood of the headsman of the canton hath mixed in a stream as fair as ours.”

- *The Headsman*, Ch. XVIII, p. 306

How can Cooper talk of “hereditary privilege” in such a family as Christine's if no one but other headsman families can bear to consider marital ties?

One possible explanation for Cooper identifying the Office of the Executioner with “hereditary rights” is the mistaken belief that the Executioner must be a member of the *Burgerschaft* of Berne, citizens of an aristocratic order enjoying [as Cooper would put it, “unmerited”] hereditary privileges. Yet is it possible that those very citizens, whose status Balthazar supposedly shared, would shun one of their own and view him and his family as outcasts? . . .

A second possibility is that the children of a headsman generally had no choice but intermarriage within other headsman families with the consequent creation of “*dynasties of headsman*” [Sommer: “Scharfrichterdynastien”],_ which, of course, were anything but “noble” or “hereditary,” but cruelly self-sustaining due to the bigotry of social compulsion.

Sommer even points out that executioners were relieved of their offices for – shall we say? – “forgivable” infractions or misdemeanors:

“Berne dismissed those serving as Headsmen more than once. For example, Abraham Hotz, who ‘was negligent in fulfilling his duty but too diligent in filling his cup full of wine.’”

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Peter Sommer, *Scharfrichter von Bern*, p. 19. [- My translation]

It is most unlikely that a man who enjoys his office as an hereditary right could be relieved of that office, simply because he liked to imbibe. The Executioner may more properly be viewed as a man *devoid of* hereditary privileges in the employ of Berne, who, if the authorities so deem, may be dismissed at their pleasure.

Concluding Remarks

There is little reason to doubt that Cooper — as a writer of fiction — did not hesitate to bend facts involving European history so as to serve his own didactic purposes. In *The Heidenmauer* the list of historical transgressions is undeniable.²⁹

It should be noted that Cooper felt no compunction in totally exaggerating the magnitude of a storm on Lake Geneva (Lac Léman). The harrowing passage through a veritable hurricane from Geneva to Vevey and the dramatic rescue mission of Maso’s beloved dog Nettuno must count as one of the most thrilling passages Cooper ever crafted.³⁰ Yet in his second travelogue on Switzerland, which attempts a more objective picture of Switzerland than his third European novel, Cooper confessed:

“We have had a touch of the equinox, and the Lemman has been in a foam, but its miniature anger, though terrible enough at times, to those who are embarked on its waters, can never rise to the dignity of a surf and a rolling sea”

Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine (Cooper Edition/SUNY), Letter XX, p. 194.

In my correspondence with the friendly and knowledgeable archivist of Berne, Vinzenz Bartolome (lic. Phil, wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter), in the summer of 2011, the following was pointed out:

“Gottlieb Walther [1788 – 1854] was a citizen of the town of Berne —although one of the patricians, he was not a member of Berne’s Parliament exercising legislative authority. He was, however, naturally very well-informed as to customs and usages in Berne.” —my translation.

In other words, there is no way for Cooper not to have known that the headsman was indeed an outcast. After the sale of La Lorraine to Count Pourtalés (who was also a banker), Walther leased and administered the farm at La Lorraine. He was also overseer of a large forest only a few kilometers from La Lorraine, which is mentioned when the Coopers visited La Lorraine four years later on their way to Vevey.³¹ That Walther and Cooper did not see eye to eye on Berne’s aristocratic form of government becomes clear during that short stopover. The very fact that such rather abstract political topics could be discussed is evidence that communication was not a problem.

Sommer points out that the executioner of Berne was required to attend church.³² A special pew was designated for the headsman and his family. One wonders whether, as was the case

with the notorious canopied pew of *The Redskins*, the headsman and his family might have been *screened* from the horrified eyes of the congregation, not because of any alleged *aristocratic* or *hereditary* status but because the very sight of the executioner would have been odious. This is, of course, the very opposite of Cooper's use of the "aristocratic" canopied pew in *The Redskins*, which irate Ravensnest tenants, identifying it with "privilege," "inherited nobility," and "aristocracy," deposit in a pigs' pen.

One might have thought that Cooper would have attacked hereditary privilege by contrasting it with a democratic society resting on a foundation of meritocracy, i.e., the social status one enjoys is ideally the status one deserves, not the status one blindly and without merit inherits, or, even worse, the social status that injures and continues to injure, from generation to generation. Such an hereditary system as Cooper presents would seem, after all, to be self-destructive.³³

The executioner of Berne even had a special three-legged stool in the inns he frequented (the gallows also had three legs). Anyone who touched him was immediately stigmatized as disreputable. An outcast, an untouchable, trapped in a profession due to social prejudice, he and his family suffered the same unjustified fate as grave diggers, butchers, knackers, any profession dealing with death. Also travelling folk such as gypsies or travelling theaters or the ladies of the night working after hours beside the headsman's house were viewed with suspicion and received the stigma of infamy.³⁴ They were victims, not beneficiaries, of deep-seated prejudices, which, in many cases, have even extended into our own times.

A school and a day care center, clouded by confusion as to where the Coopers had actually stayed, the misguided belief that Cooper was somehow writing his "Leatherstocking" during his stay, the belief that he was able to stay rent-free due to the generosity of Pourtalés, all of these misconceptions make La Lorraine a fascinating study. That Switzerland could celebrate La Lorraine with a scene from Brignoni's Leatherstocking artwork evinces the fame and esteem enjoyed by Cooper in the modern world's oldest democracy. Cooper was not simply an American writer – his work was world literature. That he walked a tightrope between truth and fiction in *The Headsman* showing the dire consequences resulting from a man's family trapped by social ostracism without openly putting his finger on the cause can, as a thrilling writer of fiction, be regarded as poetic license. La Lorraine in Berne is documented by Cooper himself through the help of his neighbor Walther as the fountainhead of *The Headsman*. The magic of La Lorraine in 1828 continues to this day in that both Lorraine houses still open their doors to awaken the power and poetry of the spirit of Leatherstocking to the youth of a nation.

Works Consulted and Abbreviations

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Sommer, Peter, *Scharfrichter von Bern* (Berne: Lukianos- Verlag, 1969). Henceforth: **Sommer**

Notes:

1) Although Cooper states in *GS CE*, p. 33, that the “country-house” was “only half a mile from the town,” presumably the outskirts, the present distance from the main train station to La Lorraine is 1.6 km or 1 mile. Nowadays, “Lorraine” refers to the northeastern borough *within* the city of Berne.

2) “La Lorraine” in German is “Lothringen.” A prominent spelling deviation is Neuchâtel or Neuchatel (in German: Neuenburg). Cooper, in *The Headsman*, uses Neufchâtel.

3) Hebeisen, „Die Lorraine in Bern,“ pp. 13-15. The bill of sale is quoted verbatim on p. 14. Hebeisen provides detailed information on transfer of ownership, and the coining of the name “La Lorraine” (formerly an unnamed farm or “Gut” with only a reference to its general location, the little “Wyler” (derived from the German “Weiler” and Latin “Villa,” just to the north of La Lorraine.)

4) L&J, Vol. II, p. 321: See map at end of article. The “Engewald” (circled) is split into two sections. In his journal, Cooper notes that the Walthers were “about to give up the farm.” The capacity as farmer *and* forester may have been a bit too much.

5) An interesting question is just how many servants the Coopers required. Although this reader has found no exact number for Switzerland in 1828, the following lines suggest that the answer might have already been four:

“All thought of a secret or semisecret re-entry to the country had been abandoned when the Coopers disembarked from the *Samson* in New York on 5 November 1833 with their four Swiss servants and a magnificent tiger cat Coquelicot.”

L&J, Vol. III, pp. 3-4.

6) L&J, Vol. 1, p. 269 & p. 273, fn. 1.

7) L&J, Vol. 1, p. 348 & GS CE, p. 261.

8) L&J, Vol. 1, p. 272

9) Hebeisen, p. 14.

10) GS CE, p. 140.

11) GS CE, p. 33.

12) Both the street map with the location of La Lorraine’s buildings (the former enormous barn indicated with broken lines) and the sketch of the “Lehenhaus” or tenant’s house of the Walther family were provided by courtesy of the Canton of Berne’s Archive through the kind efforts of its informative archivist Vinzenz Bartlome in June 2011.

13) GS CE, p. xxiv.

14) GS CE, p. 19.

15) “Volksschule Steckgut:”

[https://www.bern.ch/politik-und-verwaltung/stadtverwaltung/prd/hochbau-stadt-bern/projekte/gesamt-sanierung-volksschule-steckgut:](https://www.bern.ch/politik-und-verwaltung/stadtverwaltung/prd/hochbau-stadt-bern/projekte/gesamt-sanierung-volksschule-steckgut)

After renovation is completed, the school can be expanded for several additional grades and to be in use as a day school. Already in 2018, plans for a complete renovation of the former farmhouse occupied by the Walthers in Cooper’s day were underway. This, of course, was not the first attempt to save an historically valuable part of Berne’s cultural history:

“In the years 1951/52 the interior of the farmhouse (“Lehenhaus”=tenant’s house) was renovated, so that it could be used for educational purposes. Afterwards, less extensive measures were taken: the façade and roof were renovated in 1995. In 1996 the heating system was replaced and in 2014 minor changes in the interior were undertaken....” —My translation.

https://laebigi-lorraine.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Stadtratsvortrag-PK_Steckgut.pdf

16) Hebeisen, pp. 14-15: It is quite possible that Hebeisen’s unjustified claim that Cooper wrote his “Leatherstocking tales” while in La Lorraine may have been the source of this part of the misunderstanding. Hebeisen, however, did not confuse the Walthers’ farmhouse with the Count’s “smallish” residence where the Coopers resided.

17) 2018.PRD.000040. Vortrag des Gemeinderats an den Stadtrat, Gesamt-sanierung Volksschule Steckgut; Projektierungskrediterhöhung und Baukredit (Abstimmungsbotschaft): Paragraph 6.2.

18) In the 1955 article “Americana in Bern” in the official *Swiss Travel Magazine*, Heft 11, p. 12, four years before dedication of Brignoni’s relief sculpture at the Steckgut School, we read the following announcement: “Serge Brignoni, a Ticino artist, is now working on a metal bas-relief plaque to mark the mansion where the famous storyteller James Fenimore Cooper lived during his stay in the city of Berne.” A caption in this article to the left of the Steckgut

Volksschule asserts that Cooper “spent three months in the former *mansion* [*my emphasis*] of the Count Pourtalès.” At the top of the page, an arrow points to the Volksschule with boys playing soccer in the foreground and with the main entrance to the school in the background: <https://www.e-periodica.ch/cntmng?pid=swz-003%3A1955%3A28%3A%3A282>

19) L&J, Vol. 1, March 11th, 1828, p. 258).

20) GS CE, p. 34.

21) GS CE, p. 91.

22) GS CE, p.149: “Thinking it time to retreat, I wished them good night, in bad French, and hurried off.”

23) L&J, Vol. I, 1-7? April 1827, p. 211.

24) SFC – N, p. 304.

25) This entire section is, with few deletions, excerpted from section XVI of my 2010 article in the John Maynard homepage:

“James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Headsman; or, The Abbaye des Vignerons* and the Legend of Arnold von Winkelried; John Maynard’s European Roots.” pp. 26-29:

<https://johnmaynard.net/Headsman2.pdf>

When in Berne, I took in the Canton Archive (Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern) and received much support from the friendly archivist Vinzenz Bartlome, who assured me that Peter Sommer was *the* authority on the history of the executioner of Berne.

26) Sommer, pp. 18-19.

27) Ibid., “Das Haus des Henkers,” pp. 14-15.

28) Ibid., “Hinrichtungsarten,” p. 31.

29) See Norman Barry, “The Heidenmauer: or, Have We Progressed beyond the Pagans?” in *The James Fenimore Cooper Society Journal*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2021, pp. 43-62. This article is also accessible online at: <https://johnmaynard.net/Heidenmauer.pdf>

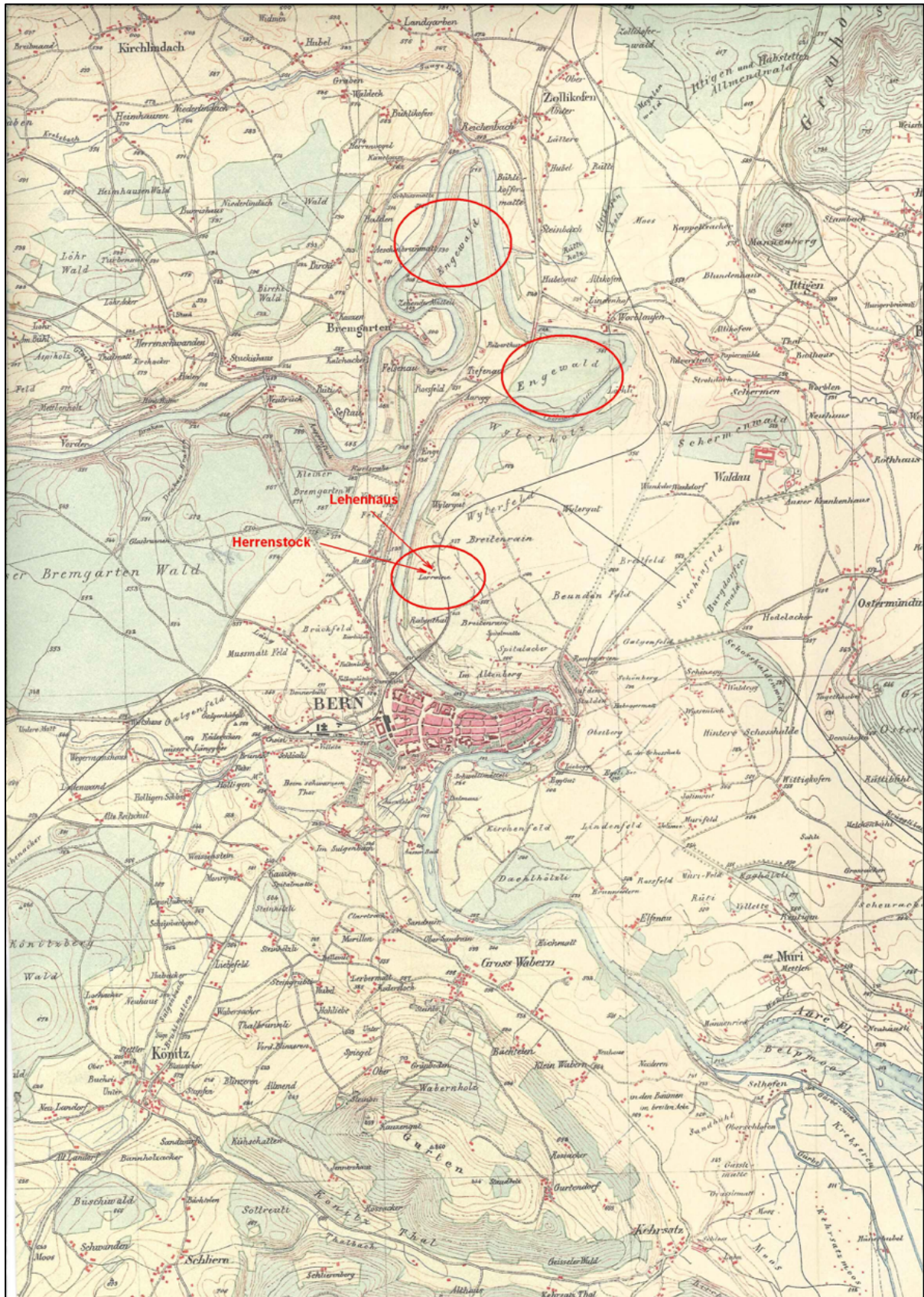
30) Not only old Hector, “the pup,” in *The Prairie* or old Turk on Cooper’s short 1832 visit to La Lorraine (L&J, Vol. “, p. 321), but Nettuno, Maso’s faithful dog receives high praise in *Headsman*, Ch. VII on pp. 132-133, when Maso fears his dog may have been lost in an effort to save passengers swept overboard. Also, the St. Bernard, old Uberto, who rescues the wanderers lost in a snowstorm on their way to the hospice (Ch. XXIII, pp. 385-387) and his noble race (which to this very day is bred at the hospice of the Great St. Bernard Pass on the Italian-Swiss border) deserve special mention.

31) L&J: Vol. II, p. 274: “At Vevey, the novelist rented for a month from 5 September [1832] a large, clean, uncarpeted cottage named Mon Repos, obtained the use of a boat and boatsman, and began *The Headsman*.” Cooper’s nephew William, who had been “in poor health for many months,” had died unexpectedly in Paris at the age of twenty-two the previous year on October 1. Cooper, in his letter to Horatio Greenough, described the cause of death as “the breaking of an abscess.” See L&J, Vol. II, pp. 144-145.

32) Sommer, “Unehrllich und verfemt,” p. 20.

33) *Headsman*, Ch. XII, p. 220: Cooper suggests that “human institutions” can be bent to undermine recognition of merit. See Sandel’s *The Tyranny of Merit* for the dark side of a meritocracy.

34) Sommer, p. 20.



Above: 1854 Dufour map of Berne and surroundings (courtesy of the Archive of the Canton of Berne.) showing location of La Lorraine relative to Berne. The forest (Engewald) that Walther oversaw is circled.

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