

Europe – Extra Credit

France

Directions: This is an extra credit reading, research and response assignment about a particular location in Europe. You will read a short article and answer questions about it. Additional questions will require you to research further information about the country or subject.

It can be printed or can be hand-written on lined paper. All questions must be answered to receive credit.

THE CHAPPE OPTICAL TELEGRAPH

SAVERNE, BAS-RHIN

Messages needed to travel swiftly across the country during the French Revolution, and Claude Chappe's optical telegraph was just the device for the job.

In 1791, Chappe debuted his chain of stone towers—topped with 10-foot (3 m) poles and 14-foot (4.3 m) pivoting crossbeams, and spaced as far apart as the eye could see—on the Champs-Élysées. He also created a language of 9,999 words, each represented by a different position of the swinging arms. When operated by well-trained optical telegraphers, the system allowed messages to be transmitted up to 150 miles (241.4 km) in two minutes.

The French military saw the value of Chappe's invention and built lines of his towers from Paris to Dunkirk and Strasbourg. Within a decade, a network of

optical telegraph lines crisscrossed the nation. When Napoleon seized power in 1799, he used the optical telegraph to dispatch the message, "Paris is quiet and the good citizens are content."

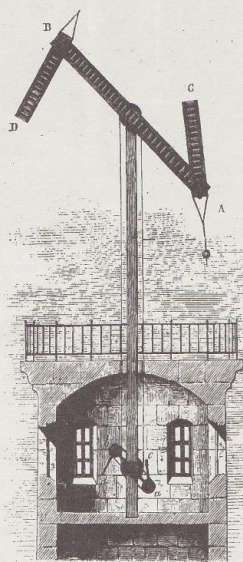
Renovated in 1998, the optical telegraph next to the Rohan Castle in Saverne functioned as part of the Strasbourg line from 1798 until 1852. It is one of several

remaining relay points in the system that can still be visited today.

Rohan Castle, place du Général de Gaulle, Saverne. The castle is a 5-minute walk from the Saverne train station. 📍 48.742222 📞 7.363333



A key to the letter and number positions in the Chappe signaling system.



Excerpt from *Atlas Obscura: An Explorer's Guide to the World's Hidden Wonders* by Joshua Foer, Dylan Thuras and Ella Morton 2016. Workman Publishing

Part One – About the Article

1. The Chappe Optical Telegraph was built during what war in France? _____
2. What is the purpose of the telegraph? How fast was it? _____

3. What famous general used the telegraph when he became ruler of France? _____

Part Two – Digging Deeper

4. What new kind of telegraph replaced optical telegraphs in the 1830s? _____
5. What technologies have replaced the telegraph in the present day? _____
6. What is one way you can imagine communication technology improving over the next 30 years?
