



Bertha Benz and the First Long-Distance Drive with an Automobile.

30 years after its establishment on the present location, the "Stadt-Apotheke" became part of an epochal event once again. She was no longer in the Bronner hands, but belonged to the pharmacist, Willi Ockel.

"It was during the first days of August 1888, the beginning of school holidays ..." This is how the story begins, describing this pioneer drive. The wife of the automobile inventor, Berta Benz (39), was on her way from Mannheim to Pforzheim to visit her mother over the vacation break with her two sons Richard (13) and Eugen (15). Without her husband Carl's knowledge or permission, she began the 120 km drive with the 3-wheel Benz - Patented Motorcar, "Model 3", rather than taking the train as usual. This was, without a doubt, a courageous act, considering the times and street conditions, and it remains a fact most worthy to be praised.

That everything didn't go smoothly is understandable. That's how it all began that one early morning just outside of Wiesloch, when the car ran out of fuel and she had to ask for Ligroin in the "Stadt-Apotheke". This solution, used to remove stains, naturally wasn't available in the entire amount needed,

but it was plentiful enough to get them to the next pharmacy, to move the automobile out of an epoch and to make it famous for that which was about to follow. Based on this remarkable customer demand, the "Stadt-Apotheke Wiesloch" became known as the 1st filling station of the world, and pharmacist, Willi Ockel, became "the first filling station attendant".

Technical difficulties like defective ignition cables or clogged fuel pipes could be fixed by the pioneers themselves. The battered brake pads, made of leather, were repaired by a shoemaker in the town Bauschlott. A constant, however relatively easy-to-solve problem, was the refilling of the cooling-down water. Berta Benz confirmed later, that this voyage is definitely worthy to bear the name, "the 1st long-distance drive," mainly because of the technical difficulties that needed to be overcome along the way.

This turn of an era can be viewed today, in front of the pharmacy, where a monument designed by the artist Pit Elsasser,



captures the moment dynamically.

Automatically, this location became a regular place of pilgrimage in old-timer rallies.

"The Berta Benz Journey", initially held in 1988 - to mark the 100-year anniversary of the story - is now an annual event. It normally takes place on the 1st weekend of August. The route goes from Mannheim - Ladenburg - Heidelberg - Wiesloch - Bruchsal - Wilferdingen and on to Pforzheim. The return journey goes over Bauschlott - Gondelsheim - Bruchsal - Forst and then back to Mannheim. Automobiles made prior to the years 1930 can take part.

It is historically ironic that the 1st filling station of the world is now located in a designated pedestrian zone, and that the limits of growth for the automobile community are already visible. That this condition would be reached after just 120 years was certainly not imaginable for those first 3, run-away mavericks.

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Wiesloch's Town Pharmacy

A Landmark in History

In the year 1858, when this distinctive building was constructed, the "Stadt-Apotheke Wiesloch" was already 123 years old.

Read here, how an exciting story later unfolded.



The History of the „Stadt-Apotheke Wiesloch“

The earliest existing document of the firm is the electoral privilege dated 1735. It states that the pharmacy was privately owned by the pharmacist Tholläus, unusual for this period of time, when tenure contracts were more common. It is also known



that another pharmacy had previously existed in Wiesloch, but had been neglected by its former owner, Hoffmann, because of other economic interests.

In the course of the 250 year company history, the location of the pharmacy moved from one place to another around the church square.

The building, known today as the historical "Stadt-Apotheke," was built and furnished when it changed its hands to Johann Ph. Bronner's son, Georg Philipp, and was in business for 107 years until 1965. After that the business moved directly next door, where no stairs were needed to be climbed in order to enter. The beautiful outer staircase seemed to become more and more of an obstacle for entry in the 1960s, which almost endangered further business. Today this can be seen as a stroke of luck because the original furnishings would certainly have otherwise been lost.

From the very beginning all the pharmacists' names and time

spans are documented. However, it is quite strange that this pharmacy was not passed on from generation to generation, with a few exceptions, even though this would have been possible for such a privileged pharmacy, based on old laws.

The historical pharmacy could still be in use today. However, for practical reasons (the steep steps) and the preservation of original materials (the outer stairs and the tiles made out of Solnhofener lime slate), it is no longer recommended. During the annual Wiesloch Christmas Market during Advent, it is opened for viewing and serves, in addition, for the sale of UNICEF Christmas greeting cards.

In honor of the 250 year company anniversary in 1985, past modernizing renovations that had been made on and in the building beginning in the 30s, necessary for the sale of ready-to-sell industrial pharmaceutical products, were changed back into their historical state. Due to the fact that pharmaceutical substances were no longer to be accessible by the lay public, and because the old containers on the shelves found less and less use, a pane of glass was fixed in front of the shelves, which truly destroyed the historical overall character of the room.



Johann Philipp Bronner and Winegrowing

In the year 1816 an on-the-road pharmacist, Johann Philipp Bronner, came to Wiesloch after his apprenticeship and wandering years and married into the "Stadt-Apotheke", run then by pharmacist Märklin.

He was born in Neckargemünd, where his father ran the pharmacy there. His widespread knowledge of nature and the environment and his studies in pharmacy enabled him to assist and guide the winegrowers in Wiesloch. He soon became well-known and famous for his journeys and studies in these fields outside of his hometown.

He was not only interested in working in the vineyards, but also in the geological and mineralogical climate and technical influences and their retroactivity on the already planted grape varieties. The wine cellar business interested him as well as the production of fizzy wine. ("What is possible in Champagne, must be possible here, too! Climate and ground are similar.")



He collected information on other's experiences, combined them with his own observations and published them in farmer's journals. This met the approval of the baronial landlords. The Margrave of Baden is said to have visited J. Ph. Bronner in Wiesloch.

We know little about his family life. Four children stemmed from each of his 2 marriages with G. Märklin and E. Heddäus. His first wife apparently died during childbirth.

His open-minded personality and extensive travel experiences certainly nourished a liberal way of thinking. Thus, it is not strange that his son, Eduard, had to flee because of involvement in the 1848 student revolts in Heidelberg. He became a renowned eye specialist in England and was very active serving the public and caring for others.

It is thought that Georg Philipp Bronner only owned the pharmacy for 10 years probably because of his involvement in these revolts, too. His brother, Carl, was also imprisoned for republican activities.

J. Ph. Bronner was also arrested under general suspicion of supporting the revolution and was sent to Kislau. Through the intercession measures of his daughter, Lina, before the Grand Duke of Baden, he was released. During the abolition of the revolts, Prussian troops occupied Wiesloch. Georg Philipp defended the Bronner wine cellar with the words, "You can drink all you want, but you are not permitted to enter the cellar!"

In 1858, when J. Ph. Bronner retired, he built the presently known, historical "Stadt-Apotheke" for his son, Georg Philipp. Before that it was located in the Bronner home across the street. (now the Dörner Book Store)

J. Ph. Bronner is considered to be the biggest pioneer among the German winegrowers in the first half of the 19th century in a time when the scientific principals of alcohol fermentation, ground fertilization, and pest management were basically unknown.

After J. Ph. Bronner's death in 1864, the winery school was continued by his son, Carl. In the year 1877 his "Classification of the Grape Varieties" was published after a request had been made by the international ampelographic commission.