



Bertha Benz - 1st Long-Distance Automobile Journey

Thirty years after the establishment at the present location (1858), the "Stadt-Apotheke" became part of an epochal event once again. It was no longer in the Bronner hands, but belonged to the pharmacist Willy Ockel.

"It all took place during the first days of August 1888, the beginning of school holidays, when ..." This is how the story begins, describing this most amazing pioneer journey. The wife of the automobile inventor, Bertha Benz (39) and her two sons Richard (13) and Eugen (15), were on their way from Mannheim to Pforzheim to visit Bertha's mother during the vacation break. Without knowledge or permission of her husband Carl, she began the 70 mile drive with the 3-wheel Benz Patent Motorwagen "Model 3", rather than taking the train as usual. This was, without a doubt, a courageous act, considering the circumstances (unknown risks, responsibility for the family, forbidden by the police, socially unacceptable for women at those times). Her fortitude and strength of purpose is still worthy to be recognized today.

Naturally, not everything went smoothly along the way. The problems began in the morning just outside of Wiesloch, when the car ran out of fuel and she had to ask for Ligroin in the "Stadt-Apotheke". Unfortunately, this solvent (normally used to remove stains), wasn't available in the entire amount

needed, but there was enough to enable the vehicle to reach the next pharmacy, and to move the automobile out of an epoch. This event turned the Stadt-Apotheke into a famous landmark. Based on that remarkable customer demand, the "Stadt-Apotheke" in Wiesloch became known as the 1st filling station of the world, and pharmacist Willy Ockel became "The 1st Filling Station Attendant" accordingly.

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 of Bauschlott. Refilling the cooling water remained a recurring issue along the way, but it was easily solved. Bertha Benz confirmed later that this voyage was definitely worthy to be called "the 1st Long-Distance Drive", mainly because of the technical difficulties that needed to be overcome.



A sculpture designed by the artist Pit Elsasser (1991) dynamically captures this moment in time – the turn of an era – and is located directly in front of the pharmacy.

This location has become a regular place of pilgrimage for veteran cars. "The Bertha Benz Run" in 1988 marked the 100-year anniversary of that story – it is now a periodically celebrated event, that normally takes place on the 1st weekend in August. The route goes from Mannheim to Ladenburg – Heidelberg – Wiesloch – Bruchsal – Wilferdingen and on to Pforzheim. The return route goes over Bauschlott – Gondelsheim – Bruchsal – Forst and then back to Mannheim. Automobiles manufactured prior to the year 1930 can take part in this event.

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 in sight. That such a state would be reached in just 120 years was certainly not imaginable for those three run-away mavericks.

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The Town Pharmacy of Wiesloch

Stadt-Apotheke Wiesloch

The 1st Gas Station – a Landmark in Historie

In the year 1858, when this historical building was constructed, the "Stadt-Apotheke Wiesloch" had already been an established pharmacy for 123 years.

Read here about notable facts and the exciting history.

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The History of "The Stadt-Apotheke Wiesloch"

First mention of this pharmacy is found in the electoral privilege issued at the Mannheim Castle on June 21, 1735. It states that the pharmacy was privately owned by the pharmacist Chevallier. This was quite unusual for this period of time when tenure contracts were more common. Another pharmacy had



been in existence in Wiesloch prior to this pharmacy; however, it was neglected by its owner, Hoffmann, who had additional economic interests.

In the course of the 275 years of the pharmacy's history, its location has moved several times around the church square.

The building known today as the historical "Stadt-Apotheke", was built and furnished in 1858, by Johann Ph. Bronner (see below). The Stadt-Apotheke was in business for 108 years until 1966. After 1966, it moved directly next door, where a ground level access and a safer distance from the automobile traffic was advantageous. Today this move is considered to have been a real stroke of luck. It prevented the complete loss of the original furnishings, which would undoubtedly have taken place.

From the beginning to the present, all the pharmacists' names and serving time spans are documented. However, it is quite strange, that the Stadt-Apotheke was not passed on

from generation to generation (with a few but long lasting exceptions).

In the 1910s, when ready-to-sell industrially manufactured pharmaceutical products had increasingly entered the market, mandatory changes were made to the fixtures. By official order, glass was fixed in front of the open shelves to prevent access to the small packages. In 1985, in honour of the 250-year anniversary, the Stadt-Apotheke was restored back to its original, historical state and the glass was removed.

In its historical state, it could still be in use today. However, for practical and economical reasons, and for the preservation of original materials it is not recommended. During the annual Wiesloch Christmas Market it is opened for viewing, information, and special gifts.

Johann Philipp Bronner – The Wine Scientist



historical "Stadt-Apotheke" for his son, George Philipp. Before that, it was located in the Bronner home across the street (now Doerner's Book Store). In 1860, J. Ph. Bronner retired.

In 1816, Johann Philipp Bronner (1792–1864), a young pharmacist, came to Wiesloch after his apprenticeship and wandering years (gaining skills from different Masters) and married into the "Stadt-Apotheke", then run by pharmacist and scientist G. F. Maerklin. Little is known about Bronner's family life. He had eight children from his two marriages (T. Maerklin and E. Heddaeus). His first wife apparently died during childbirth. In 1858, J. Ph. Bronner built the presently known his-

J. Ph. Bronner was born in Neckargemünd, where his father ran a pharmacy. His acquired, extensive knowledge of the pharmacy, nature, and environmental topics enabled him to learn from and assist the winegrowers throughout Germany and Central Europe.



He was not only interested in the work in the vineyards, but also in the geological, mineralogical, climate and technical influences and their retroactivity on the already planted grape varieties. Bronner became intrigued with the business of wine making and the production of fizzy wine. ("What is possible in Champagne, should also be possible here! Climate and ground are quite similar.")

He soon became well-known and famous for his journeys and field studies outside of his hometown. He collected information from other's experiences, combined them with his own

observations, and published them in scientific journals. This met the approval of the baronial landlords. The Margrave of Baden had visited Johann Ph. Bronner several times in Wiesloch.

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 democratic activities of 1849 in Baden. Eduard became a renowned eye/ear specialist in England and was very active serving the public and caring for poor.

J. Ph. Bronner himself was also arrested under general suspicion of supporting the revolution and was sent to the jail in Kislau. Through the intercession measures of his daughter, Lina, before the Grand Duke of Baden, he was released.

The older sons - George Philipp, Carl and Ludwig - were also accused of treason because of their involvement in republican activities. During the abolition of the uprising, Prussian troops occupied Wiesloch. George Philipp defended the Bronner wine cellar with the words, "You can drink all you want, but you are not permitted to enter the cellar!"

J. Ph. Bronner was one of the most distinguished scientists among the German winegrowers in the first half of the 19th century, in a time when the scientific principles of alcoholic fermentation, ground fertilization, and pest management were basically still 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.