



Alsace-Lorraine: Converting French Republican Calendar Dates

Germany “How to” Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

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August 2019

OBJECTIVE

This guide will teach you how to convert French Republican calendar dates to the current/Gregorian calendar.

ALSACE-LORRAINE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Alsace-Lorraine has a lengthy history of being alternately under German and French rule.

From around year AD 870 to 1648, the area was under German rule. With the Thirty Years' War of 1618–1648, the area changed hands and came under French rule until the France-Prussian War of 1870–1871 (known in France as the War of 1870), when Germany once again took over the region. The German Empire regained the area of Alsace-Lorraine, added to it the department of Moselle and a few arrondissements (subdivisions) of the department of Meurthe, and gave the region the German name Elsaß-Lothringen.

Within the following 75 years, Alsace-Lorraine changed hands four times. The area remained under German rule until the end of WWI, in 1918. At that point, the Treaty of Versailles returned Alsace-Lorraine to French rule, and it remained part of France until the beginning of WWII. France invaded Germany in 1939, and Germany retaliated by invading France in 1940 in the Battle of France. Germany took control of Alsace-Lorraine but had to surrender the region to France in 1944.

Alsace-Lorraine remains under French rule today, though the people living there are a mixture of German and French ethnicity because of the region's history of repeatedly changing hands.

This short historical overview is to explain why ancestors from the region of Alsace-Lorraine may be listed as being from France in some records and from Germany in other records. If U.S. censuses show this back-and-forth information, the likelihood of your ancestor being from Alsace-Lorraine is high.

Because Alsace-Lorraine has been back and forth between German and French rule, the language of the records switches between German, French, and Latin.

You may want to examine the following before continuing:

- Read the [German Script Tutorial](#) “How to” Guide to learn about and practice reading the old German script.
- Refer to the *FamilySearch* Wiki [French Genealogical Word List](#).
 - Familiarize yourself with how French numbers work, especially 70 and above.
 - 70–79 are written as an addition problem, as 60 plus something; for example, 71 = sixty-eleven (soixante-onze).
 - 80–99 are written as a multiplication and addition problem, as 4 times 20 plus something; for example, 81 = four-twenties-one (quatre-vingt-un) and 99 = four-twenties-nineteen (quatre-vingt-dix-neuf).
 - Many genealogical words are given in French, but the list is not comprehensive.
 - To search the page, hit CTRL+F on the keyboard and start typing in a word.
- Refer to the *FamilySearch* Wiki [German Genealogical Word List](#) and [Latin Genealogical Word List](#).
 - Genealogical word lists are available on *FamilySearch* for other languages too.

Republican Calendar (1793–1805)

The French Republic was founded on 22 September 1792. A year later, the Convention of the French Republic created a new calendar, which became known as the Republican calendar. The starting date for the calendar was set as the Republic’s founding day, **22 September 1792**.

The beginning of each year (“day 1” of each year) was set as the autumnal equinox, which varied between 22, 23, and 24 September during the years of the Republican calendar.

The calendar consisted of twelve months; however, the months were each 30 days long and, as such, do not correspond with the months of the Gregorian calendar (the calendar currently used in most of the world). The months were given names pertaining to the weather or nature—for example, Brumaire (from “fog” in French), Ventôse (from “windy” in Latin), and Germinal (from “bud” in Latin). A full list of the French Republican calendar month names are available on [Wikipedia](#).

Part of the intent of the new calendar was to disassociate the Republic from religion and focus on science by incorporating the decimal system. As such, each month contained three *décades*, or ten-day periods, and the days in each decade were given numerical names—for example, primidi (oneday), duodi (twoday), tridi (threeday).

[Each day of the year was also given a name](#), although in records you will more often see Republican calendar dates written in the following formats:

Die **premier** jour du mois de **Brumaire** an **dix** = day **first** of the month of **Brumaire** in year **ten**

You can find a Republican calendar to Gregorian calendar (and vice versa) calculator at napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/the-republican-calendar.

The French Republican calendar was used until the end of 1805, when Napoleon abolished it (in part due to his recognizing the impracticality of having a calendar begin on an equinox).

To convert French Republican calendar dates, do the following:

- Let's say the date in a record is listed as "**die premier jour du mois de Brumaire an dix.**" Next to the **Republican** button at the [Napoleon.org calculator for the Republican calendar](http://Napoleon.org/calculator-for-the-Republican-calendar), type **1** in the first box, select **brumaire** from the second box, and select **an X** [the tenth year of the Republican calendar] from the third box.
- To view the Gregorian calendar version of this date, now click on the **Gregorian** button. This will calculate the date as **23 October 1801**; this is the date you would put into your genealogical program or on your website as the record's date. Also include the French Republican calendar date and state that the date has been converted.

If you know what date your ancestor's event took place in the Gregorian (current) calendar, you can use the same [calculator](http://Napoleon.org/calculator-for-the-Republican-calendar) to determine how that date would have been written in the French Republican calendar.

- Say the date of the event you're looking for is "**27 December 1804.**" Next to the **Gregorian** button at the [Napoleon.org calculator for the Republican calendar](http://Napoleon.org/calculator-for-the-Republican-calendar), type **27** in the first box, select **December** from the second box, and type **1804** in the third box.
- To view the Republican calendar version of this date, now click on the **Republican** button. It will calculate the date as being **6 Nivôse an XIII**; this is the date you would be looking for in the original record of your ancestor's event.