



Louis Appia  
1818 - 1898

## Bicentenary of the birth of Louis APPIA : 1818-2018 Memorandum

v.9

**From November 12th to 14th 2018 we will be commemorating the anniversary with major events in Geneva and Hanau; an exhibition, a symposium, the performance of a play, various publications, a memorial plaque, a guided historical walk, etc.**

### 1. Chronology of Louis Appia's life: 1818-1898

1818 Born 13th October in Hanau, Germany where his father Paul had been the pastor of the Walloon Church since 1811

1819 Moved to Frankfurt until 1849

1843 Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) at the University of Heidelberg

1849 Moved to Geneva

1859 Married Anna Lasserre: 4 children

1859 Italian campaign  
Visited military hospitals; published: *The Ambulance Surgeon*

1860 Citizen of Geneva

1863 Co-founder of the ICRC  
Attended all its international Conferences until 1892

1864 First delegate of the ICRC during the the war in Schleswig-Holstein:  
published *The Wounded in Schleswig during the 1864 war*, Geneva, Jules-Guillaume Fick, [June] 1864, 115 pages, 2 maps.

1867 Secretary of the ICRC

1871 Franco-German War: field surgeon  
Collaboration with Clara Barton

1872-1873 Journeys to Cairo

1882 Co-author with Gustave Moynier of *Charity on the Battlefields*

1898 Died March 1st at N°5 rue Calvin in Geneva.

## **2. The importance of Louis Appia**

It is not sufficiently known that Louis Appia's role was decisive in the founding and the development of the international Red Cross. Without wishing to underestimate the contribution of his colleagues, the following facts should be stressed:

### 2.1. Conceiving the humanitarian movement:

While Henry Dunant was « inventing the Red Cross » following his experiences in Castiglione, Louis Appia was visiting hospitals in Lombardy. In 1859, three years before *A Memory of Solferino*, he published *The Military Surgeon*.

### 2.2. The remarkably rapid launching of the institution:

With Charles M. van de Velde he was the first ICRC delegate in a war and his decisive report on this mission demonstrated the feasibility of the future Red Cross before the Diplomatic Conference in August 1864.

### 2.3. His medical expertise:

To be sure Théodore Maunoir was also one of the founders of the ICRC but Louis Appia was the the only specialist of field surgery. He was also the only doctor to try out the Red Cross approach on battlefields: in July 1866 during the battle of Bezzecca in Italian Trentino; in 1870-1871 during the Franco-German war. It is worth mentioning the family tradition which places him in Paris in 1848... He was also the advocate of first aid and the « *geste qui sauve* » (saving gesture). He also took the time to be part of juries in time-consuming medical examinations. He also took the trouble to be member of the jury in time-consuming medical examinations.

### 2.4. His role in running the institution:

After Henry Dunant resigned, Louis Appia replaced him as secretary from 1867 to 1870. He took part in all the international Red Cross conferences from 1863 to 1892, just as he took part in important gatherings concerning the question of military humanitarianism. He collaborated closely with Clara Barton. On the occasion of his second visit to Egypt he negotiated the viceroy Ismaïl's adherence to the *Geneva Convention*.

### 2.5. Publicizing its activities:

Louis Appia published numerous technical and also more accessible texts. He spared no effort in spreading recognition of the humanitarian movement, not only among the authorities but also in the general public.

## 2.6. In bearing witness:

Louis Appia was an active Christian and a member of the Evangelical Society of Geneva. An authentic prophet and advocate of the humanitarian cause he put his faith and convictions into practice in serving his fellow men in moral, spiritual or physical distress.

As a disciple of the Good Samaritan to the depths of his soul, he even disturbed his colleagues by not respecting the denominational and religious neutrality which the International Red Cross had laid down as one of its fundamental principles.

## **3. Getting to know or even discovering this giant of the of the growing humanitarian movement.**

### 3.1 Biography and bibliography to be renewed or created

In 1959 the only biography of Louis Appia to this day was published. Not only has our knowledge of the the man and the historical context been **considerably** enriched in the last half century but, more importantly, there has been a significant change in the way biographies are handled today. It is true that a few partial studies have appeared since then. However they were either simply paraphrases of what was already known or they appeared in publications with a restricted readership.

Furthermore, the list of his publications has never been systematically established. Similarly, an inventory of his drawings and sketches has never been made.

Lastly our most recent research has led to the exhumation of unpublished manuscripts which have never been used by historians. For instance the curriculum vitae handwritten by him, in Latin, is to be found at the university of Heidelberg.

The need for a complete biography of LA is clear, not to mention: a bibliography of his own publications, an anthology of his correspondence, the collection of his drawings or sketches, the translation into German of the report on *The Wounded in Schleswig during the 1864 war*.

### 3.2 The need to rediscover a towering figure of humanitarianism

Neither the biography nor the work of Louis Appia are sufficiently known and publicized in view of his contribution to the humanitarian movement. For understandable, strategic reasons it seems obvious that the main institutional heir to his work, the International Red Cross Committee, has not given priority to this type of historical approach.

The same may be said for the institutions in which he played an important role such as the Evangelical Society or the Geneva Medical Society. The commemoration of the bicentenary of his birth provides an opportunity to fill in these gaps

### 3.3 Audiences targeted

The world of medicine: Louis Appia's medical work ; the synergy between medicine and the aims and mission of the Red Cross

The humanitarian movement: not only the international institutions of the Red Cross but also the various national Societies: Germany (where he was born and educated, his missions in 1864 and 1870) ; Italy (the Appias are originally from Piedmont, Appia's journeys or missions during the wars in Italy against Austria in 1859 and 1866) ; Geneva and Switzerland (the country he adopted).

Political circles: the city of Hanau is happy to rediscover a citizen of world standing; Geneva the capital of humanitarianism is looking forward to giving rightful recognition to this illustrious adopted son.

The international level: like his colleagues of the ICRC – and perhaps even more than them – Louis Appia was a proponent of action at a planetary level, a citizen of the world, a man concerned by distress wherever it occurred.

Religious opinion: as a Christian involved in dynamic evangelism, Louis Appia brought permanent witness of his faith and his mission to all levels of society.

## **4. A commemoration in two parts**

### 4.1. The importance of Hanau and Germany

It must never be forgotten that this native of Hanau was a German citizen, well before becoming Genevan and Swiss. This essential dimension of the personality of our citizen of the world has too often been under-estimated.

It is not just a question of dates or years passed here and there. We are talking about his place of birth, the place where he was educated (Frankfurt), where he received his professional training (Heidelberg) and where he first practised medicine (Frankfurt). Probably also his first political experience the unsuccessful attempt to establish the Republic of Frankfurt in 1848.

### 4.2. The importance of Geneva and Switzerland

As his father Paul had studied theology in the city of Calvin, from an early age Louis Appia had historical links with Geneva. His godparents were natives of the city. He spent a year at the Academie des Belles-Lettres???

After settling in Geneva he married a native Genevan with whom he founded a fine family. Well accepted by his colleagues in the medical community he soon became the president of the venerable Medical Society. He also joined in the activities of the philanthropists of the *Société genevoise d'utilité publique* (Geneva Society of Public Utility). His naturalisation in 1860 was thus the official recognition of the life he had chosen.

### 4.3. An international commemoration

Given that the man and the major institution he served opened a new page in the history of humanitarianism, we can imagine symmetrical and complementary events organized by Geneva and Hanau, for example:

- Exhibitions and / or scientific conferences  
in Hanau, focusing on his youth and education  
in Geneva, relating to his contribution to humanitarian, social and religious affairs.
- Visits to historic sites or study trips: in Geneva;  
in Hanau, not forgetting Frankfurt and Heidelberg

In Italy: the Vaudois valleys in Piedmont, Castiglione and Solferino; Bezzacca, Storo Pieve di Buono in Trentino.

In Paris where Louis Appia obtained his doctorate of medicine at the age of 59 !

- Reaching the general public  
Publication of a brief biography  
Encouraging awareness in schools  
Issuing postage stamps  
Commemorative plaques : Hanau = the house where he was born ; Geneva = his last home or his residence when he co-founded the International Red Cross ;  
Paris = « Solferino » metro station.

## 5. Collaborations

5.1 Having decided to undertake this project, the *Louis Appia Society* hopes that the official authorities of Geneva and Hanau will be willing to support it.

- *Paroisse francophone de Francfort*
- *Société évangélique de Genève*
- *Société genevoise d'utilité publique*
- *Société médicale de Genève ; et son homologue à Hanau*

5.2 We also hope to be able to count on the participation of institutions which marked Louis Appia's career, whether he was trained or played a significant role in them:

5.3 Institutions whose heritage owes something to Louis Appia :

- the International Committee of the Red Cross
- the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum
- the Geneva Red Cross
- National Red Cross Societies: Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland.

#### 5.4 Without forgetting societies active in historical research

- *Société Henry Dunant,*
- *centre de recherches historiques sur la vocation humanitaire de Genève*
- *Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève*
- *Société genevoise de généalogie*
- *Institut national genevois*
- *La Table vaudoise de Torre Pellice*
- *Les sociétés savantes de Hanau, Francfort et Heidelberg*

### 6. Members of the family

6.1. Although he and his wife, Anna Lasserre, had 4 children, Paul, Hélène, Marie et Adolphe, two of whom married, Louis Appia has no direct descendants.

6.2. Fortunately the Appia family is still represented by the descendants of his brothers and sisters. Many of them are playing a very active part in the rediscovery of their great-great (and sometimes more distant) great uncle.

6.3. Their active participation has brought a contribution long hoped for by historians: the unearthing of family archives. The fact is that, apart from some 96 letters to Gustave Moynier, to our knowledge, no collection of Louis Appia's papers has been made though a considerable amount of his correspondence and drawings must have existed.

### 7. The Louis Appia Society

7.1. Founded at Chens sur Léman, on March 4th 2017, the Louis Appia Society brings together members of the Appia family and persons interested in the commemoration project destined to bring wider recognition of the life, work and impact of one of the main founders of Geneva as a centre of humanitarianism as well as a major figure in evangelical circles.

Anyone interested in joining the Society may apply to the Committee. Subscription: 50 Swiss francs (40 euros); students and people with no fixed income: 10 Swiss francs (8 euros); couples: 70 Swiss francs (60 euros). CCP 14-035132-9.

7.2. After meeting on 8 september 2016 the **Louis Appia co-founder of the Red Cross Committee** was formally constituted on 4 March 2018. It consists of members of the family and historians : Laurence Appia, Louis Appia, Valérie Appia, Roger Durand, Valérie Lathion, Bertrand Pictet and Olivier Pictet.

7.3. **The Scientific Council** consists at present of the following members : Gabriella Ballesio (Torre Pellice), Roger Durand (Geneva), Filippo Maria Giordano (Centro studi sul Federalismo, Turin), Valérie Lathion (University of Fribourg), Guy Le Comte (Geneva), Rainer Schlösser (University of Jena), Olivier Pictet (Geneva), Philipp Rieder (Geneva). It is assisted by correspondent members: Maria Grazia Baccolo and Paolo Vanni in Italy.

#### 7.4. Contact details

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+41 79 666 58 23 ; Internet site (webmaster Olivier Pictet) : [www.louis-appia.ch](http://www.louis-appia.ch)

#### 7.5. Main upcoming events

- Friday 26 January 2018, 12.00 guided visit of documents about or by Louis Appia in the Archives of the ICRC; enrolment required. In the afternoon the same visit at the Geneva Library.
- Friday 26 January 2018: Committee meeting at N°6 chemin des Tulipiers.
- Thursday 8 February 2018: Scientific Council meeting at the council's seat.
- 26-28 February 2018: delegation to Hanau, Hesse, Germany
- Saturday 9 June 2018: visit of the Gabriel and Cécile Bouthillier de Beaumont-Appia domain at Collonges-sous-Salève, France
- 24-26 August 2018: study trip to Solferino, Castiglione; then to the site of the battle of Bezzecca, Tiarno, Storo in Italian Trentino.
- 12-14 October 2018: official commemoration in Geneva.
- 2-6 November 2018: official commemoration in Hanau.

### 8. Available documentation

8.1 About the events and activities of the bicentenary – 12-14 October 2018 : *Official commemoration in Geneva*; see 14 January 2018 text.

8.2 About the conference: *Historical conference about Louis Appia, Saturday 13 October*: see 14 January 2018 text.

8.3 About the exhibition : *The life and work of Louis Appia in 21 kakémonos* ; see 30 October 2017 text.

8.4. About the play : *Facing the shadows / Dialogue between Louis Appia, his cousin Frédéric Ferrière and Clara Barton*; see 23 November 2017 text.

8.5. About the activities of the Louis Appia Society between today and the commemoration itself : *Programme 2018 – 2019* ; see 14 January 2018 text

8.6 Flyers are available in French, English, German and Italian.

8.7 All these documents (in French) can be accessed on our website [www.louis-appia.ch](http://www.louis-appia.ch) which also contains the *Statutes of the Louis Appia Society* (these documents may also be obtained from the members of the Committee. For the *2017-2018 Budget* please contact the treasurer or the president; see 14 January 2018 text.