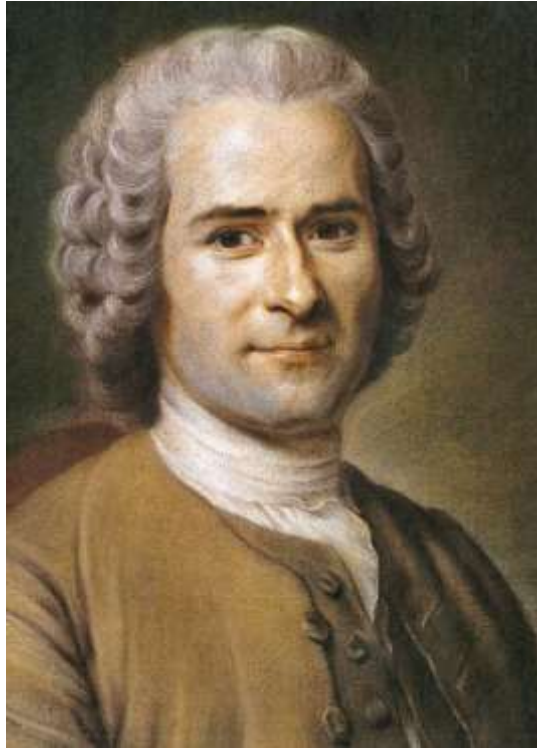
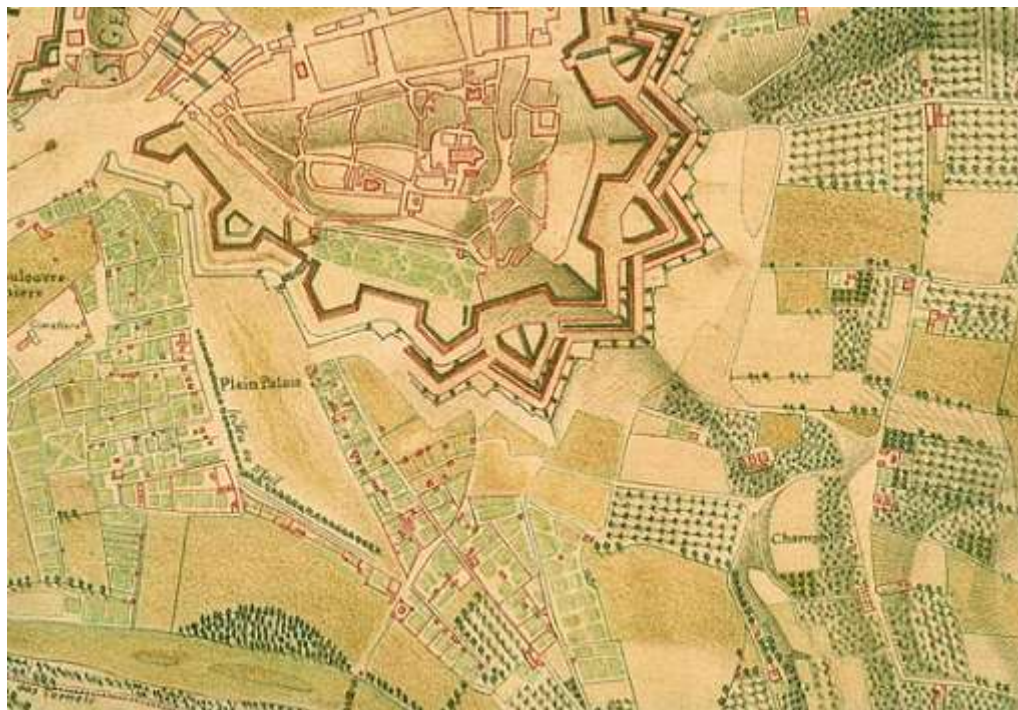


Jean-Jacques Rousseau & the game of mail



*Portrait of Jean-Jacques Rousseau by
Maurice Quentin de la Tour, 1753 –
Musée Antoine-Lécuyer, Quentin,
France*

Rousseau wrote about the accident on the mail course in his last unfinished work, written between 1776 and 1778. However, following the chronological order of the events, I start with the quarrel on the Plainpalais.

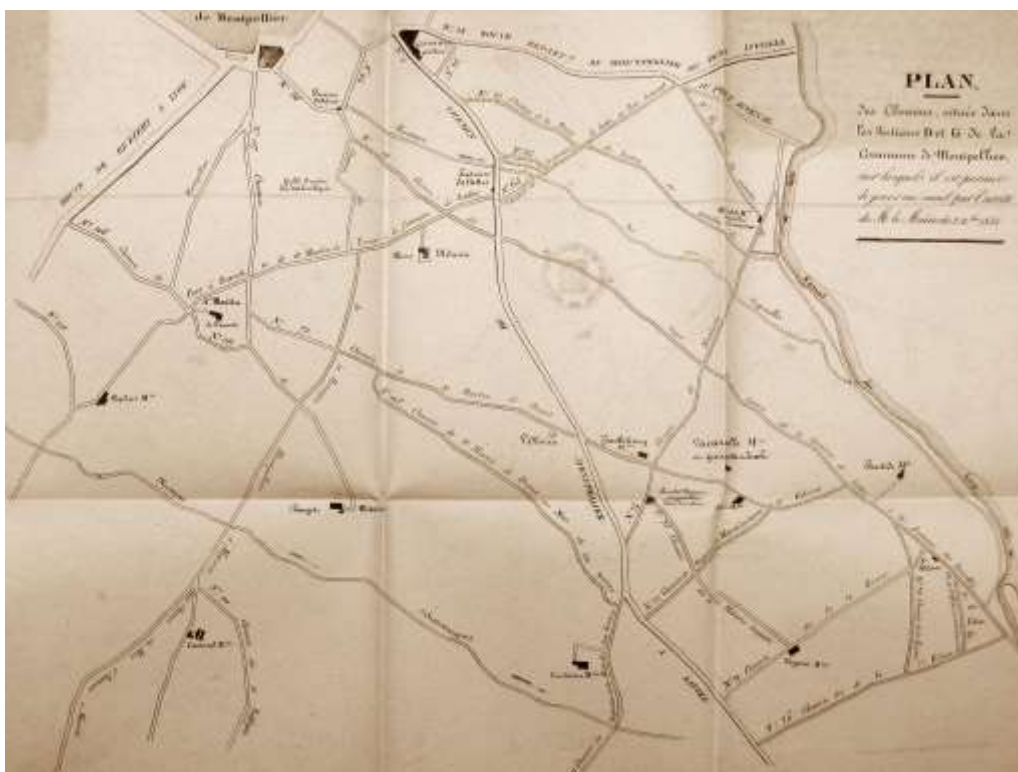


Map of Geneva (detail) with the Plainpalais and its mail course. – Jacques-Barthélemy Micheli du Crest, 1730 – <https://fr.wikipedia.org>

Rousseau was still a kid when he had his accident. He was playing on the Plainpalais with his mate Pleince. During play, they got a blazing row, and his mate hit him with the mail club on the head whilst fighting. Rousseau fell onto the ground, heavily bleeding. His friend thought that he had killed him, and sobbing, he took Rousseau into his arms, who also started to cry. Seeing that two handkerchiefs were not enough to stop the bleeding, Pleince took Rousseau to his mother, who, also shocked by the wound, bandaged his head.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau – Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire, quatrième promenade, 1778, page 50 – https://ebooks-bnr.com/ebooks/pdf4/rousseau_reveries_promeneur_solitaire.pdf

In 1737, Jean Jacques Rousseau spent some months in Montpellier to consult Doctor Fizes. He stayed with several students from the renowned medical faculty in the same boarding house. An essential part of his course of treatment was walking. Every day after 'diner', he walked with the medical students outside the town towards the bumpy roads full of stones, the 'chemins à la chicane' where the students started to play two or three 'parties' of mail. He himself didn't play, but he took a bet on the results of the parties and followed with much interest the performance of the players.
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques – 'Les Confessions', 1770, page 263 –
https://ebooks-bnr.com/ebooks/pdf4/rousseau_les_confessions.pdf



This map shows the tracks and paths south of Montpellier, on which everyone played the jeu de mail à la chicane game. Rousseau went here with the students of his boarding house not to play but to take bets on the results. – Archives municipales de Montpellier, Cote C297



In four volumes, Rousseau gives his ideas about children's education. Still today, it is one of the most read and popular works about the philosophy of education. –

<https://www.edition-originale.com>

Rousseau wondered why children were not offered the same games of skill as adults, of which he gave some examples: hand-tennis, mail, billiard, bow, ball and musical instruments. The answer to his question was that some of these games were not suitable for children's development.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau – 'Emile ou de l'éducation', Livres I et II, 1762, page 299 –

https://ebooks-bnr.com/ebooks/pdf5/rousseau_emile_ou_de_l_education_livres1et2-a5.pdf

As far as I know is this all there is about the game of mail in Rousseau's oeuvre.