

Parc Monceau

Paris
Art Studies – Parc Monceau and the Plaine Monceau

The
garden of the duc de Chartres

The duc de Chartres is a direct descendent of Louis XIV's younger brother Philippe d'Orléans. The heads of this junior branch of the Bourbons were always named Philippe and were given the titles of duc d'Orléans and their oldest sons duc de Chartres. Because they all bear the same name and inherit the same titles generation after generation they are difficult to distinguish from each other!

The late 18th century duc de Chartres (1747-1793, later duc d'Orléans) is one of the most famous since he joined the French Revolution, was re-named 'Philippe Egalité' and voted the condemnation of his cousin the King Louis XVI.

Many years before these events, in 1769, he bought a plot of land in the village of Monceau northwest of Paris where the architect Louis-Marie Colignon built him a small country house (pavillon) and a formal French garden. Between 1773 and 1780 the garden was greatly enlarged and replanted in the English fashion by a new architect Carmontelle. The new garden was filled with picturesque and eccentric 'folies', a watermill, a windmill, an Italian vineyard, a minaret, Turkish tents, a ruined classical temple, a pond for classical sea battles bordered by a ruined colonnade, an Egyptian tomb and a grotto with a fine copy by Bouchardon of the famous classical sculpture, the Barberini faun. In 1780 the duke hired the celebrated Scottish gardener Thomas Blaikie who continued adding to the garden until the duke's execution in 1793. On the north side, the garden was enclosed by the new Paris city wall (the mur des Fermiers généraux). The surviving neo-classical rotunda at the north garden gate was a custom keeper's house and office designed by the architect Nicolas Ledoux.

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After the death of the duke the property was confiscated by the French state becoming a 'bien national'. The house was demolished in 1802-06. After the fall of Napoleon

and the return of the Bourbons the garden again became the property of the Orléans family and restored by the new duke, the future king Louis-Philippe. Under Napoleon III (reigned 1851-1870) the Orléans were again expropriated and a large portion of the garden (18 hectares) bought by the city of Paris. Most of this area was resold to the banker Emile Pereire for real estate development and 8 hectares were reserved to become a public park which was planted by the great Second Empire garden designer Adolphe Alphand (creator of the bois de Boulogne and Vincennes and parcs de Buttes de Chaumont and Montsouris). The new park was inaugurated along with the new boulevard Malesherbes in 1861 by the emperor Napoleon III. A few of the original follies, the pond colonnade, the Egyptian tomb and some temple fragments survived. New winding paths, a hillock, a bridge and a grotto were built in the English style, Ledoux's rotunda received a new dome and magnificent gilded iron gates in a Louis XV style were designed by the architect Gabriel Davioud. Cafés, dance halls or music halls were strictly forbidden within the garden. Towards the turn of the century the park was gradually filled with monuments to cultural worthies: the writer Guy de Maupassant (1897), the musicians Charles Gounod (1903) and Frédéric Chopin (1906), the opera composer Ambroise Thomas (sculpture by Alexandre Falguière), the playwright Edouard Pailleron (1904).

The Plaine Monceau

The perimeter of the park was developed by the banker Emile Pereire along three radial avenues leading to the park gates, avenues Van Dyck, Ruysdaël and Velasquez, names that reflect the mid 19c predilection for Dutch and Spanish painting. The area, particularly the south side in the 8th arrondissement soon became fashionable attracting the new financiers and industrialists of the 19th century. Great hôtels particuliers with gardens backing onto the park were built:

63 rue de Monceau: The mansion (rebuilt 1911) of the banker Moise de Camondo housing one of the greatest collections of 18th century French furniture and art, now a museum named in honor of his son Nissim killed in WWI.

61 rue de Monceau: Hôtel Abraham de Camondo (1874), cousin of Moise, bought in 1892 by the chocolate manufacturer heir Gaston Menier.

52 rue de Monceau: Neo-Gothic mansion belonging at the turn of the century to Mme de La Ville de Roux.

45-49 rue de Monceau: Former site of the Adolphe de Rothschild mansion.

4 avenue Ruysdael: Original mansion of Gaston Menier.

3 avenue Ruysdael: Neo-classical mansion residence in 1910 of the marquise de Villahermosa.

1 avenue Rysdaël: Hôtel of financier Crosnier.

9 rue Murillo: Eclectic apartment building (1870) by

the architect Gustave Clause in a neo-Renaissance style.

20 rue Murillo: Hôtel of baron Reinach, a financier who committed suicide over the Panama canal scandal.

5, avenue Van Dyck: Hôtel of Emile-Justin Menier (1872-74) founder of the chocolate manufacture by architect Henri Parent and decorated by sculptor Aimé-Jules Dalou.

10, rue Alfred de Vigny: Hôtel of the banker and real estate developer Emile Pereire.

48 rue de Courcelles: Chinese "pagoda" (1926) by architect Fernand Bloch built for Chinese art dealer C. T. Loo.

5 avenue Velasquez: Hôtel of the founder of the Grands Magasins du Louvre and art collector Hippolyte-Alfred Chauchard.

7 avenue Velasquez: Hôtel of Milanese banker and great Asian art collector Henri Cernuschi built by architect Bouwens van der Boijen. It became an Asian art museum at his death in 1896.