

FOREST OUTING NEAR BOURRON-MARLOTTE IN 1898

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We never hide our pleasure when it is occasionally possible for us to precisely locate the elements of an old artist's painting in the current context of Bourron-Marlotte, whether it is a particular assembly of roofs appearing in a 19th century painting or even details of a carriage entrance depicted in a watercolor from the same period. However, it is less common to engage in the same exercise in the natural immensity of the Fontainebleau Forest.

In this context, our access to an old photograph, dated 1898, and taken in the middle of visibly local rocks, aroused such curiosity. This photo, discovered as part of our research on the great pianist Berthe Marx¹² represents a group of well-identified individuals³. On the left and in the background, we can see Berthe Marx wearing a ribboned hat, and her husband Otto Goldschmidt (seated with a canotier hat), himself a pianist, friend and impresario of the great violinist Pablo de Sarasate. In front of them, Anna Goldschmidt (Otto's niece?) carries on her knees Berthe-Otilia, Berthe and Otto's young daughter, who later became



Bertilia, soprano singer of the Parisian Opéra-Comique. In the center, the young man sitting cross-legged is Juan Manén, a prodigy violinist, then aged 15. In fact, that year, 1898, Manén began a series of recitals across Europe, often in duets with such masters as Dvorak, Granados, Saint-Saëns, Casals... To complete this scene, the man wearing a bowler hat is none other than Isaac Marx, father of Berthe and first cellist at the Paris Opera.

There is no doubt that we are in a rocky passage of the forest of Fontainebleau and, given that the Goldschmidts' residence was *Les Fauvettes*, in the north-east corner of

¹ *Berthe Marx et Otto Goldschmidt - Artistes d'exception à Marlotte vers la fin du XIXe siècle*, by D. Ricoult (in French) – in Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte n°64, 2022

<https://amisdebouvronmarlotte.fr/publication/bulletin- n64/>

² *Berthe Marx et Otto Goldschmidt - Un couple de musiciens à Marlotte*, by D. Ricoult (in French) – in Revue d'Histoire de Fontainebleau et sa Région n°23, 2023

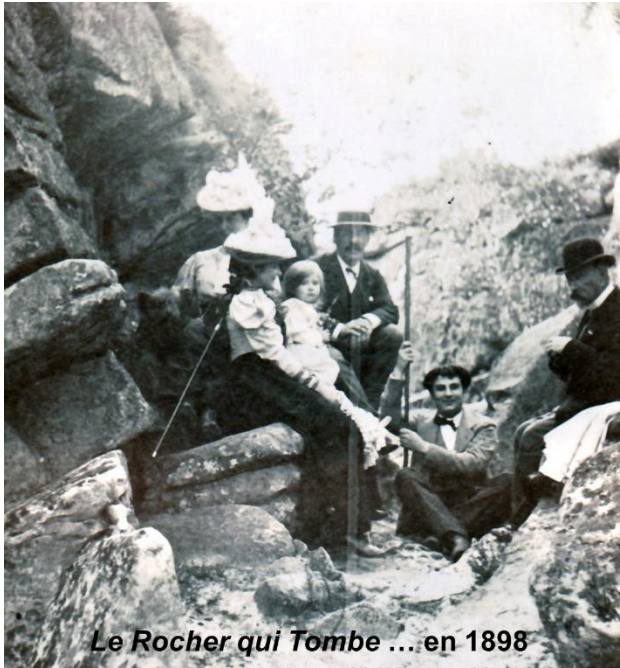
³ Photograph and identification transmitted by Jean-Claude Beiret Montagné, grandson of Berthe Marx and Otto Goldschmidt

the Marlotte of the time, it seemed likely to us that these rocks would be located in the southern part of the forest. But where exactly? This is the question we asked Gérard Bayle-Labouré, a forest enthusiast and specialist in locating sites appearing in old photographs or paintings.⁴ After highlighting the difficulty of being able to identify this type of rock, present in very large number in the forest of Fontainebleau, he was persistent and was eventually able to solve the problem we had presented to him: the musicians appearing in the old photograph posed in front of *Le Rocher qui Tombe*

⁴ See G. Bayle Labouré's website at <https://foret-fontainebleau.teria.fr>

(literally The Falling Rock)! This rock formation is located on the famous Denecourt trail n°11, in its *Restant du Long Rocher* section, and is marked with the letter C.

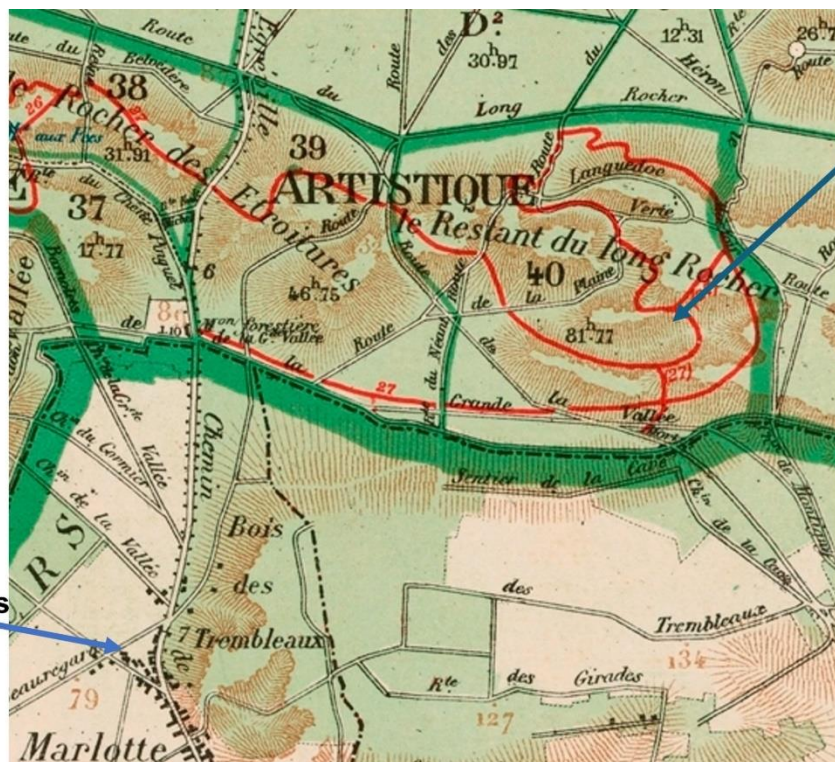
The above 1905 map, showing the southern part of the forest, tells us that the distance separating *Les Fauvettes* from the *Rocher qui Tombe* is of the order of three kilometers. If the first part of the route, the *Chemin aux Vaches* (current rue Renoult), then the *Route de la Grande Vallée*, is essentially flat, the same cannot be said for the approach to the photogenic rock! Indeed, from the *Route de la Grande Vallée*, one must climb



Le Rocher qui Tombe ... en 1898



aujourd'hui



Rocher C

Les Fauvettes

approximately fifty meters of vertical elevation through a tortuous chaos of rocks to reach the sandstone bar of the *Reste du Long Rocher*. Nowadays, it is surprising that

such a hike could have been carried out in long dresses and suits, not to mention the bulky photographic equipment probably carried along for the photo shoot! Although Nordic walking was not yet fashionable (!!), we nevertheless note the elegant cane brandished by Berthe Marx and the more robust stick held by Juan Manén! It is not impossible that the six walkers were transported by carriage from their house in Marlotte to the foot of the *Long Rocher*, leaving only the final ascent to be accomplished in "Sunday attire"!