

***The Chemin des Trembleaux* in Marlotte – Favorite motif for artists**

Any discovery of Bourron-Marlotte indeed includes the iconic *rue Murger*, but a modest side road equally attracts the eye of the visitor sensitive to artistic perspectives, in this case the *Chemin des Trembleaux*. This path, open between two historic estates of the village, has since time immemorial allowed people to penetrate into the forest and access the sandstone quarries in the area. The importance of this path was such that it was paved by the town hall and the Lachèze family. Today, in all seasons and at all times of the day, this furrow set between two old stone walls is adorned by natural lights and colors, ideal for photography.



Photo of current *Chemin des Trembleaux* - © DR

In fact, since the 19th century, painters passing through Bourron-Marlotte have regularly chosen the *Chemin des Trembleaux* as a motif for their paintings.

Painting catalogs refer to several artists having set up their easels in the *Trembleaux*, a forest area that is however larger than the village's stone path. These works may be the subject of future research, but here we will focus on the paved path mentioned above and some examples of its representation.

The beautiful pastel on the right is the work of a long-time resident of the village, who had chosen the nearby Rue Allongé for her home. She is Héléne Maréchal (1863-1944), friend of the painter Armand Charnay and of the architect Alphonse Léger, who represents here the path in early autumn, as we can still see it today. This painting constitutes a strong illustration of the protection of our heritage, in this case dating back to the paving carried out in 1843 and the installation of the side wheel guards.



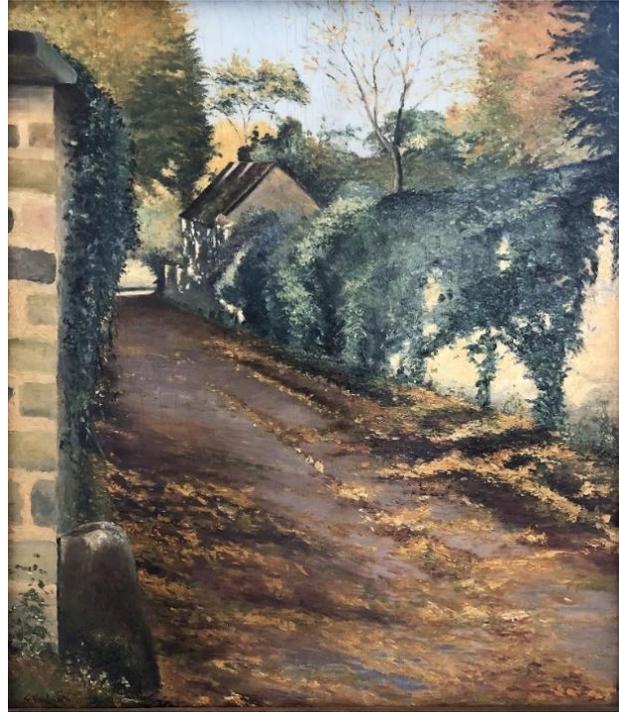
Chemin des Trembleaux, ND – pastel by Héléne Maréchal – Private collection

The second example is provided to us by Frederick Goldie (1870-1947), a New Zealand painter, who during a stay in Paris in 1894 made an excursion to Bourron-Marlotte, during which he immortalized some sites of the village, including the *Chemin des Trembleaux*. His painting is luminous and, although the architectural elements of the place are duly represented, Goldie chooses a much narrower and more recessed perspective than that of Héléne Maréchal. As we explained in another article, Goldie

returned to his homeland to become a famous painter of the tattooed faces of Maori chiefs who had become his friends.



Marlotte-Paris, 1894 – Oil on wood by Charles Frederik Goldie



Chemin des Trembleaux, ND – oil on canvas by Gabriel Vaillant-Saunier– Coll. Musée de la Mairie de Bourron-Marlotte

Gabriel Vaillant (1882-1945) was born into a family of house painters, but his interest in drawing quickly became evident, to the point where his father encouraged him to pursue formal training in this art form. Gabriel studied under J. Lefèvre and H. Harpignies and developed an admiration for Corot. He married Suzanne Saunier, herself a painter and musician, and daughter of the painter Octave Saunier. She is best known for her actions during the Second World War, facilitating the protection of Jewish children in our village. Several works by Gabriel Vaillant (who often signed his work G. Vaillant-Saunier) are on display at the Bourron-Marlotte town hall-museum. Unlike the previous examples, Vaillant-Saunier chose a downward perspective of the Chemin des Trembeaux, depicting his easel at the edge of the forest and facing the intersection with Rue Murger.

It is probably the sector of the path where Gabriel Vaillant-Saunier set up to paint that another painter chose for a painting recently donated to the Town Hall-Museum of Bourron-Marlotte. Here, the artist turns his back on the village and shows us the path which is about to turn and enter the forest. This artist is Marcel Peigné (1887-1963). Although he had no formal



The Chemin des Trembleaux à Marlotte, ND – pastel by Marcel Peigné – Coll. Musée de la Mairie de Bourron-Marlotte

artistic training, he rubbed shoulders with artists while he was the owner of *Bon Coin* in the 1930s, a defunct inn in Marlotte. This is how he became a friend of the painter Emile Aurèche, with whom he co-signed a large oil on canvas showing the *Mare-aux-Fées* and part of the collection of the Town Hall-Museum of Bourron-Marlotte.

We will end this short article by emphasizing that the *Chemin des Trembleaux* was not the only prerogative of painters and that it also attracted the desire of other artists, particularly in the cinematographic space. This is how Jean Renoir chose this emblematic location, right next to his Marlotte home, for a few scenes from his first feature film, *La fille de l'eau*.



Scene from *La fille de l'eau* by Jean Renoir, 1925

There is no doubt that the *Chemin des Trembleaux* will continue to arouse the interest of visitors sensitive to its unique setting, ever changing with the seasons...