

Bourron-Marlotte – Its history in medallions

While strolling through the village streets, one only needs to look up to glimpse traces of history in some of our buildings. We will take three examples, the *Café de la Paix*, the former *Hôtel de la Renaissance*, and the façade of 162 rue du Général Leclerc.

The Café de la Paix

During the Second Empire, a modest inn and grocery store stood on the site of the current *Café de la Paix*. After a period of management, Lucien Poinard and his wife purchased the inn in 1889 and transformed it into the *Hôtel de la Paix*, with its present architecture. Lucien Poinard managed the hotel until his wife's death in 1919, at which point he leased it out. The establishment remained the property of the Poinard family until 1933 when it was sold to Louis Simon, owner of the former *Hôtel de la Gaieté*, which was adjacent to the *Hôtel de la Paix* on the Allée des Mathurins. It was Louis Simon who combined the two establishments, creating the building we know today. In the decades that followed, the *Hôtel de la Paix* suffered damage from the bombings of 1944 and subsequently changed hands several times among various managers and owners.¹

It is therefore notable that, despite this turbulent history, evidence of an important phase in the building's past has been preserved: the initials "LP" above the entrance. These, of course, allude to the role played by Lucien Poinard, and later his family, in maintaining the hotel tradition at this location for nearly 50 years.



The Renaissance Hotel

The historical evolution of this iconic Marlotte landmark has been extensively documented. We are all familiar with the famous Antony Inn, a major gathering spot for bohemian artists in the mid-19th century, immortalized by Renoir's painting. Following competition from a modest grocery-inn opened next door by the Mallet family around

¹ *Histoire de l'Hôtel de la Paix (Poinard)* by E. Daunay – Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte n°52, 2010

1860, and then from an ambitious real estate project by Baron Niedermeyer, the Antony Inn was demolished in 1881. Niedermeyer built his "castle," which was later purchased by the Mallet couple in 1905. This acquisition transformed the original Mallet establishment into a leading accommodation for the southern Fontainebleau forest, attracting large numbers of artists and tourists to Marlotte.²

Despite various alterations to the building over the past fifty years, its history has not been entirely erased, as evidenced by the circular medallion located on the Rue Murger façade. It depicts a man wearing a hat, emerging from a crown and brandishing a sword. This somewhat surprising representation, almost certainly dating from the construction of what was once the Niedermeyer castle, is none other than a depiction of part of the Niedermeyer family coat of arms, a formal description of which is reproduced below.³



- Nobility of the Holy Roman Empire in 1666; Baron September 23, 1734.
- Description of the arms of the Barons of Niedermeyer according to the diploma preserved at the Heraldic Academy of Munich:
 - Golden partitions 1 and 4, with a half-man, dressed blue and gold, wearing a hat of the same, brandishing a saber; partitions 2 and 3, parted silver and blue.
 - Red cross over the partition center.
 - Two crowned helmets with top decorations: left the half-man, mantled in gold and blue; right, two trunk-like horns; gold, blue and silver ribbons.

² *L'hôtel Mallet (1860-1924)* by N. Quénu – Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte n°65, 2023

³ Armorial Général de Rietstag – gouda 1887 – 2nd volume – Diploma archived at the Munich Heraldic Academy

Beneath the medallion, a frieze runs along the façade, featuring drawings of lyres, a likely allusion to the musical activities of this family, whether Louis Niedermeyer (1802-1861), composer, piano teacher, and founder of the Niedermeyer School of Music in Paris, or his son, Louis Alfred Niedermeyer (1838-1904), who served as its director. The latter was primarily a banker and the driving force behind the Niedermeyer castle, built on the site of the now-gone Antony inn.

Less visible, another medallion adorns the rear of the building, bearing the intertwined letters A and N, a memento of the original builder and owner, Alfred Niedermeyer. The plaque is signed E. Schopin, attesting to its origin in the earthenware workshop of Montigny-sur-Loing.



(Photography S. Péronnet)



An artist's home

At number 162 rue du Général Leclerc, look at the top of the side wall, above the gate, inside the property. Visible from the street, three medallions—actually enameled plates set into the plaster—remind us that a painter once lived in this house. He was was Abel Orry, the subject of an article a few years ago.⁴ This painter, a friend of Henry Murger, played an important role during Marlotte's bohemian period. He produced watercolors



⁴ Abel Orry - *Peintre généreux et affable, au cœur de la bohème de Marlotte* by D. Ricoult – Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte n°63, 2021

and oil paintings⁵ and decorated ceramic pieces in the workshop of E. Schopin in Montigny-sur-Loing, mentioned in the previous section. It is this latter skill that is illustrated by the medallions visible here. Those represent a floral arrangement and two portraits of women in profile, although their identity is not known with certainty.

During your next walk through the streets of Bourron-Marlotte, don't forget to look up to discover the remnants of the town's rich past... while indeed also watching where you're putting your feet!!

⁵ See collection of the Bourron-Marlotte city hall-museum.