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The Hôtel de *Roquelaure*

246, boulevard Saint-Germain - Paris 7^e



***t**he elegant façade of the Hôtel de Roquelaure stands at the bottom of the courtyard at 246 Boulevard Saint-Germain. Designed as a private house in the early 18th century it became government property in 1839.*

Thanks to its history it is one of the best preserved stately homes in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

On an enclosed estate, not visible from the street, the residence was built according to the traditional «between courtyard and gardens» layout.

The complex comprises the Grand Hôtel de Roquelaure (in the centre), and the smaller Hôtel de Lesdiguières (on the west), which is attached to it. On the east, the Hôtel de Lude, bought by the government and then destroyed in 1860, was replaced by a building constructed by the architect Eugène Godebœuf. The Hôtel Le Play, visible from the garden, is also part of the ministerial estate.



A bit of history...

The Hôtel de Roquelaure (1709-1740)

The old «Cabinet blanc» was turned into a games room by the Molé family.

Particular care was given to its decoration.

Here, a detail of the stucco cornice.

In 1709, Marshal Antoine Gaston de Roquelaure, Duke of Roquelaure, decided to move to the popular new district of Faubourg Saint-Germain and bought the Hôtel de Villetaneuse (17th century).

Although no great changes were made in the early years the Roquelaures increased the size of the grounds in 1711. It was only in 1724 that radical changes were made to the house to enlarge it and make it worthy of the duke's rank.

After Marshal Roquelaure's death, the house was sold in July 1740 to Mathieu-François Molé, First President of the Parliament of Paris.

In 1722 major refurbishment work was carried out under the direction of the architects Lassurance and Leroux. Celebrated artists and craftsmen, including the sculptor Philippe Cayeux and the painter Noël-Nicolas Coypel were called upon.

On the 14th July 1789, the young Louis-Mathieu Molé, aged 7 (future minister to Louis-Philippe), heard «rioters» saying that the Hôtel de Roquelaure should be burnt down.

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An enthusiast for precious marble, the Baron de Hoorn, a tenant of the house, had an eight-metre-high column of Languedoc marble erected in the garden, now removed.

The Hôtel Molé (1740-1807)

The house took its name from its new owner. President Molé, who had the reputation of being a rich, honest man and not much of a socialite, nevertheless appreciated having an interior conforming to the taste of the day and had some new woodwork and painting carried out in the house.

Until the French Revolution, various generations of the Molé family lived side by side in the property. Seized in 1793 on the arrest of its owner, Édouard-François Molé (guillotined in April 1794), the house was turned into a home for people with scabies and then returned to the family in 1795. The apartments were then rented to various people, including the Baron Van Hoorn Van Vlooswyck, until 1807.



This panel carved on a blue background was placed above a door in the former bedroom of Marshal Roquelaure, later turned into a library by Cambacérés.

Façade of the Hôtel de Roquelaure, garden side. In the foreground a three-hundred-year-old sycamore tree.

The Hôtel de Sully and its collections

This small house, today attached to the Hôtel de Roquelaure, was the property of the Duchess de Lesdiguières (1706-1747) before it was bought by the Duke de Sully. It was he who assembled three remarkable collections: antiquities (Egyptian, Indian, Gallic), natural history collections (shells and stones in particular) and prints. On his death the collections were dispersed and sadly the Hôtel de Sully has retained almost none of its decoration.



From Cambacérés to the present day...

Newly created Duke of Parma, Jean-Jacques-Régis Cambacérés bought the Hôtel Molé in 1808. He attached the Hôtel de Lesdiguières (later Sully) to it, finally joining the two properties together. The Archchancellor of the Empire lived there until his exile in 1816.

The house was sold the same year to the Duchess of Orléans. From 1816 to 1821, Louise-Marie-Adélaïde de Bourbon-Penthièvre kept the house as a large and richly decorated stately home. She certainly made it one of the finest houses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.



Cambacérés had the following inscription written in large gilt bronze letters on the front of the building: «Hôtel de Son Altesse Sérénissime le duc de Parme» (Home of His Serene Highness the Duke of Parma), removed on his departure.

In 1823, the Duke of Orléans made Louis XVIII an offer to swap the house for wood cutting areas in the Forêt de Bondy and to install the Garde-meuble de la Couronne (Royal Furniture Repository) there.

«L'enfant au poisson» was acquired in 1891 for the Ministry of Public Works. It decorates the garden fountain which was restored and highlighted in 2000.

Under the July Monarchy, the house became the home of the Conseil d'État (1831) and then of the Ministry of Public Works (order of 10 September 1839).

The Hôtel de Roquelaure is currently the home of the Ministry for Town and Country Planning and the Ministry for the Ecological Transition (ministerial offices). Administration itself was grouped in the La Défense district.

In 1852, Noël Lefebvre-Durufilé, Minister of Public works, gave a sumptuous party in the gardens of the Hôtel de Roquelaure. It made a lasting impression: «Never has the Parisian world been offered in one place, right in the heart of the capital, all the entertainment of a village fair: nature, art, society, all contributed to the charm of this highly original party».

Le Moniteur universel



Since 2010 the site has been the scene of a major redevelopment and modernisation project. Particular attention has been given to reducing energy needs and greenhouse gas emissions (insulation, installation of solar panels, etc.).

All the walls and roofs, as well as the gate, courtyard and gardens were listed as historic monuments on 29 April 1961.

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