

FOCUS

THE TOWN HALL

SAINT-QUENTIN



VILLES
& PAYS
D'ART &
D'HISTOIRE

HERITAGE DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

Since 2006, when the city was given the label City of Art and History by the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the City of Saint-Quentin had been ensuring the daily protection, enhancement and influence of our heritage. Thus enabling us to share our story and reveal our treasures in France and abroad.

This heritage is rooted in the history of the city but also in our hearts. It unites all the inhabitants around a common past, a heritage that we use to build the future. It is, for us, a source of pride for all Saint-Quentin.

The Heritage Department of the City of Saint-Quentin has been involved for a number of years in publishing historical documents and technical/ books. In this way, it takes a role as a source of knowledge and research, and disseminates its work to all audiences, making the link between the past and the future.

This edition of the «Focus» Collection, the result of scientific work, will reveal the story of an emblematic monument of Saint-Quentin: the Town Hall.

A true symbol of our history, the Town Hall encapsulates the centuries-old history of Saint-Quentin, from the Middle Ages to the present day. Completed in 1509, it is the finest example of an edifice built in the flamboyant Gothic style topped by a bell tower which houses the 37 bells of the carillon that still punctuate the life of the city. The Town Hall is also a space where a variety of styles come together: a 16th century wedding hall and a municipal council hall, a veritable jewel of Art Deco made according to Louis Guindez's 1924 plans.

We invite you to travel through the centuries to rediscover our local history and heritage.

From yesterday to today, let's be proud of our heritage ... a heritage to live and build together!



Bernard DELAIRE
Councillor for Cultural
and Historical Heritage



Frédérique MACAREZ
Mayor of Saint-Quentin

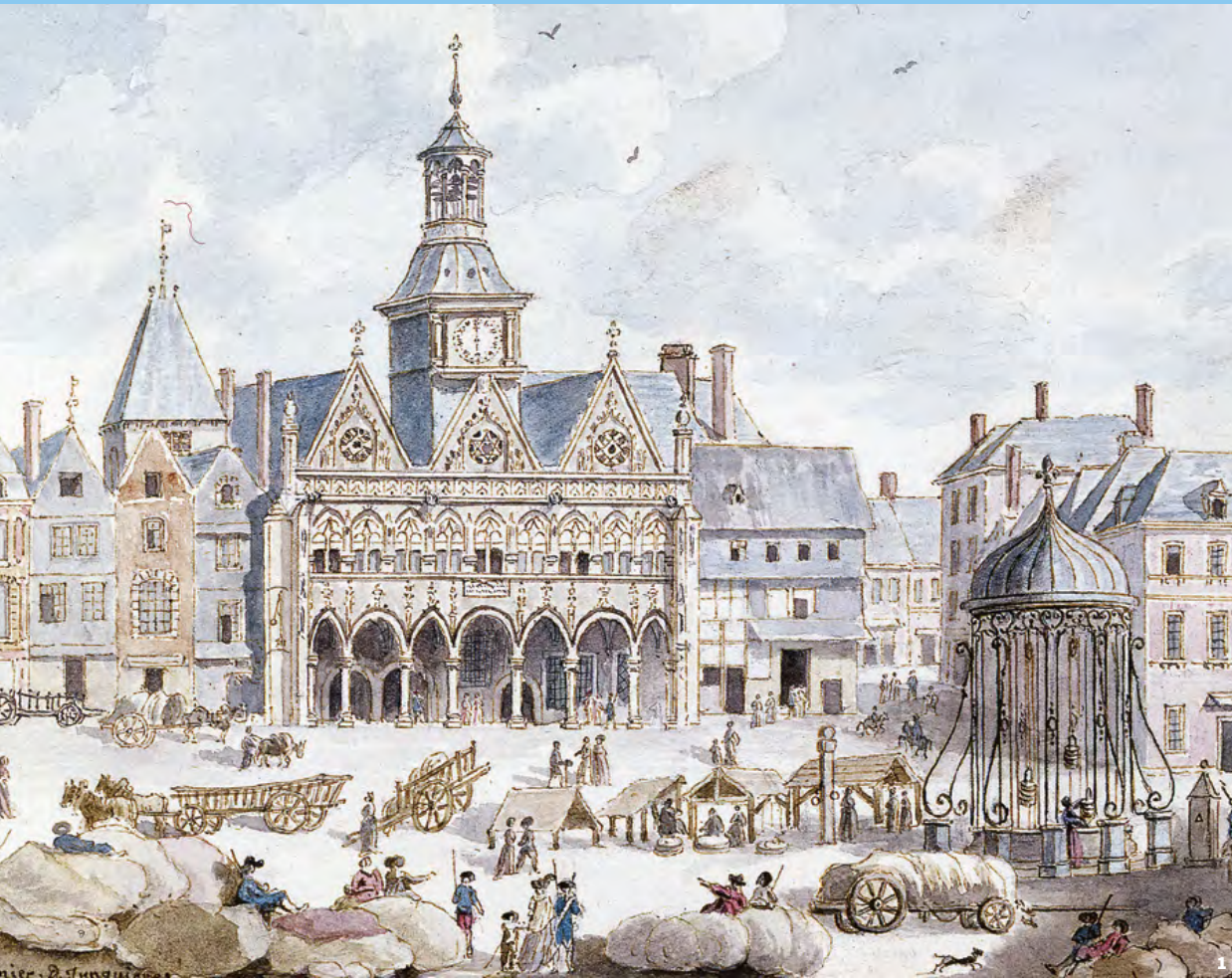
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d'après DES SIGNES
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AT THE ORIGIN OF THE TOWN HALL



In 1080 Herbert IV, earl of Vermandois, granted a communal charter to the city of Saint-Quentin, allowing a certain number of urban liberties to the city. It was governed at that time by a mayor assisted by aldermen and jurés, selected among the burghers of the city. The first magistrate and his councillors applied their legal and financial powers in a place, the Maison du Plaid or Maison de la Paix, acknowledged as such from 1252 in the location of the current Town Hall.

In the XIV century, the mayor, the jurés and the aldermen sat there publicly in two distinct sites : in the escame, located at the front and under the Maison du Plaid (probably already a covered ground floor gallery), and in the Banquet du Haut, a room located on the first floor.

At the rear rises a sandstoned square tower, called Tour de l'Echevinage (XVI century) or Archive Tower (XVII century). Its origins and specific functions are unknown. Attested in the XII century, the local council almost certainly used it to store precious documents, archives, nearby boxes deposited by some burghers of the city. It was destroyed at the start of the XIX century. A large garden rented by the local government to private individuals stretched at the foot of this tower. It was replaced in 1869-1871 by the small courtyard of the Town Hall and the Gaspard de Coligny Place.



1. The Town Hall Place at the end of the XVIIIth century
Water-colour drawing by Tavernier de Jonquières - BNF collection

2. View of the city during the siege of Saint-Quentin in 1557 (detail of the place)
The artist probably used a view prior to 1509 as the Town Hall was not yet unified behind a single façade.
Drawing - BNF collection

3. This view of the Town Hall Square comes from a picture (lost in 1914) painted around 1650 and modified in 1768 (addition of a canonniers-arquebusiers company and the bell tower)
Drawing after an oil-on-canvas, published in the report of the centenary of the Société Académique de Saint-Quentin, 1926





This sculpture on a butment of the Town Hall façade is interpreted as being a representation of the countess Éléonore de Vermandois who in 1195, with the agreement of king Philippe Auguste, confirmed the Charter of liberties dating from 1080.

At the beginning of the XVI century, the adjoining buildings that form the former Communal House were joined together behind a sole façade. Like Douai (1463-1474), Arras (1502-1506), Noyon (1485-1514), Compiègne (1505), Saint-Quentin rebuilt its Town Hall. This prestigious work was paradoxically carried out at a time when the local power was weakening in the face of the authority of the kingdom. The work was finished in 1509, a date revealed by a word game of Charles de Bovelles (1479-1569) engraved on a copper plate. The plate was taken away during the Spanish siege of 1557, reconstituted in 1853 and finally removed during the German occupation of 1914-1918. The construction work is traditionally attributed to Colard Noël who had been working on the construction of the collegiate church from 1477.

Apart from the addition of a bell tower in the XVII century, the building went through centuries without any noteworthy modification. Restored many times (1851-1852, 1865-1866, 1899-1903), the Town Hall survived the bombings of World War I. Restored and rearranged after the conflict, two lateral wings were added in 1926 by the architect Louis Guindez. One was extended towards rue Emile Zola in 1963.



The protection of a monument

The Town Hall, dominating the main square, was threatened by the town council because of the law requiring the lining up of the façades in 1831. The first inspector of historical monuments, Ludovic Vittet, objected to its destruction. In 1840, the building was subjected to the registration on the first list established by the commission of historical monuments. It would be protected again in 1909 and 1984.



4. The Town Hall after the First World War : The building nearby collapsed
From the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection, Paris

5. The construction of the Town Hall's lateral wings, 1926
From the Société Académique collection



THE FACADE OF THE TOWN HALL: A STONE BOOK

«Spiritual and picturesque» according to Ludovic Vittet, first inspector of historical monuments. The façade is in a flamboyant gothic style, the last evolution of a style that appeared in Saint-Quentin at the end of the XII century, in the choir of the collegiate church. This façade was influenced by the architecture of southern Netherlands.



1. Façade of the Town Hall before 1850

Water-colour lithograph, drawing and engraving by Rouarge Frères, from the Société Académique of Saint-Quentin collection

2. Under the Town Hall's gallery around 1850

Lithograph by Jules Monthelie, from the Museum Antoine Lécuyer collection

3. Tracing of the Town Hall façade by Eugène Lacroix before the restoration works of 1852

From the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection

4. Plan of the façade drawn on the occasion of the façade's restoration in 1899-1903

Plan by Eugène Danjoy (1902), from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection

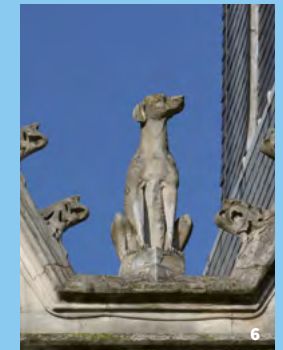
The ground floor is fronted by a gallery whose polygonal sandstone pillars support irregular arches, alternately tierce-point and lancet arches. The noble floor is lit by nine windows. Each of them is composed of two pointed or semi-circular arch lancets joined by an ogee arch or a trefoil. This discreet variation of the windows forms a transition with the attic floor composed of three large symmetrical gables. The architect then softened this rigour through an alternation of the oculi patterns.

In openwork like a lace, this façade is enriched with stone filigree. Each arch, window or oculi is covered with a sculpted pattern, an ogee archivolt. Capitals, abutments, spandrels, every space is an opportunity to represent politic symbols, the fantastic or domestic medieval bestiary, scenes of daily life, musical angels,... No text can do justice to these sculptures, more than 170, turning the façade into a real book of stone. On the other hand, the niches of the first floor do not appear to have ever received any sculpture.

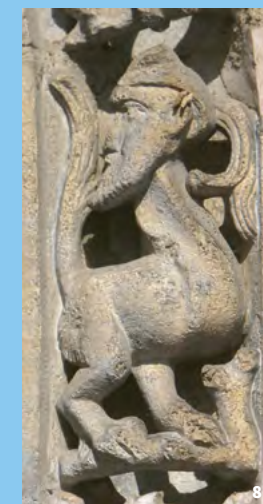


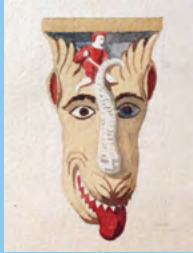
In the central arch of the gallery, under the marble slab with the Latine inscription of the poet Santeuil commemorating the siege of 1557, there are strange railings. These measuring rod railings were used before the Revolution to measure the length of linen cloth, a factor in the commercial wealth of the city. They were probably installed there before 1850 for ornamental purposes. Under the Ancien Régime, measuring and marking the clothes was done in the chambre de Baulieu, on the first floor of the Town Hall.

In 1852, the façade was completely restored by the Parisian architect Eugène Lacroix (1814-1873), assisted by the sculptors Deschamps, Savreux and Lemoyne. Though the architect rebuilt the three gables identically, he covered their summit with three sculptures : two angels and Saint-Quentin were installed in 1854. He also added a monkey and a dog at their base, inspired by the medieval bestiary. Only the two latter are still here. The restorations realised with cement in 1852 had to be reworked fifty years later. The architect Eugène Danjoy rebuilt three new gables. He changed their height, the alignment and also changed the oculi patterns and the balustrade's position.



- 5. The Town Hall façade
- 6. The sculpture of a dog dating back to 1854
- 7. 8. Fantastic animals
- 9. The treasurer





1



2

1. Wooden end pieces of king posts before the restoration of 1852

Drawing by the architect Eugène Lacroix from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection

2. The Wedding room

FROM THE COUNCIL CHAMBER TO THE WEDDING ROOM

Mentioned by Viollet-le-Duc for its roof framing, the Council Chamber housed the assembly composed of the mayor, jurés and aldermen from the XVth century until the Revolution. Then, until 1914, it housed the Town Council. At the end of World War I, the number of town councillors was brought up to around forty. The local council took advantage of the rearrangement work to transfer the Council to the room nearby, thus transferring the Wedding room there.



3



5

3. The Council Chamber around 1840-1850

Lithograph, Duthoit, Mathieu, Thierry frères, from the Museum Antoine Lécuyer collection

4. One of the sculpted hammer-beams : the mayor

5. Mythological tale of a carved corbel



4

The wood-paneled framework is made up of two pointed vaults, designed following the shape of a ship's hull, stemming from the gothic architecture. This kind of structure can be seen in some churches of the XVIth century in the Oise valley nearby and was abandoned at the same time in favour of visible and decorated ceilings in the Renaissance style. Painted with a starry sky, the roof is enhanced at its summit by monster heads and its base is occupied by sculpted human faces. Since the XIXth century, these characters have been identified as being, under the first vault, the mayor dressed in an ermine embroidered robe, the mayer d'enseigne - a district representative - (it could also be the military governor of the city with his body armour), the gaoler or executioner and the treasurer with a turban. The second vault would receive the jester with a two horned-hood and the architect of the building.

At both ends, the roof structure is constituted of tie-beams (horizontal) and king posts (vertical) which are sculpted to represent monster mouths called engoulant, fleur-de-lis and the monograms

of Francis I. The central beam is supported by two stone corbels of Renaissance style, carved with a Saint-Quentin's coat of arms and a mythological tale subject to different interpretations : the Judgement of Paris, a scene of the Aeneid or Poliphilo's dream.

Destroyed during the First World War, stained glass windows adorned the Council Chamber's windows : the town's coat of arms, blazons of the town's corporations, episodes of the Labours of Hercules and Saint Sebastian's martyrdom. A Louis XIV style door offered in 1719 by Etienne Fizeaux, one of the most important line cloth trader of the city, gives access to the former chapel built around 1515-1525. After the French Revolution, it housed the savings bank and then the city's archives. It became the wedding ante-chamber after 1925.



The big fireplace of the former Council Chamber was made up of a Gothic mantel topped by a Renaissance hood and crowning. Defaced in 1793, it was restored and modified in 1855-1857. Thirty years later, the municipal architect Delmas-Azéma removed the additions and discovered marks of previous decorations : scattered fleur-de-lis, statuette folds, flames attributed to the salamander of Francis I. In 1903 Eugène Danjoy, architect of Historical Monuments, and the sculptor Anthime Chapot made a new decoration for the hood : twelve statuettes of the peers of France, three heads of which stolen in 1914-18, were reconstituted in 1983.

6. The timber work of the Wedding Room

7. The fireplace before the restoration (from 1857) was dismantled in 1887

Photograph from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection

8. View of the Council Chamber between 1903 and 1914

Photograph from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection





FROM THE AUDIENCE ROOM TO THE TOWN COUNCIL ROOM

From 1508 to the French Revolution, the royal officers had their audiences in this room, the Audience Room. It is the most important in the building which is the symbol of the municipal power. In 1792, the wedding room and administrative offices were set up there, and then the mayor's parlour in the middle of the XIXth century. From 1909, the local council planned to transfer the town council there, not having much space in the former Council Chamber. After the First World War, the unavoidable restoration work gave the opportunity to successfully complete these rearrangements. Ceilings that hid the gothic roof were then removed and in 1921 the future municipal

architect, Louis Guindez, suggested a reworking in a neogothic style. The Fine Arts administration in charge of Historical Monuments refused, preferring a modern decoration under the Gothic roof of the former Audience Room. In October 1924, Louis Guindez submitted a new project for the Council Room and the hall nearby in the Art Deco style.



1. 2. Views of the Town Council Room

3. Hammer-beam realized in 1925, representing the architect Louis Guindez

4. Hammer-beam realized in 1925, representing the mayor Romain Tricoteaux

The timberwork was restored : to the three original hammer-beams were added nine others, two of which represent the architect (angle close to the entrance) and the mayor of the Reconstruction, Romain Tricoteaux, on the right of Marianne. For the low part of the room and the gallery dedicated to journalists, Louis Guindez designed every detail of all the decorative elements. The forty-one wooden panels made of palissander and Hungarian oak are carved to represent symbols of various crafts (the cabinetmaker Emile Boussu). They are equal to the original number of the concillors' seats, forty, to which is added the mayor's chair. These panels are completed by a frieze glorifying anonymous workers of the city. The whole is topped by a surprising Marianne (the sculptor Alphonse Fivet). The wrought iron of the upper gallery is probably the art deco masterpiece realized by

Louis Guindez for this room, a fine balance between dynamism and softness, between stylization and abstraction (the craftsmen in iron Marcel Daled and Salvador Soriano). The lighting was designed by Louis Guindez : wall lamps, ceiling lights, concillors lamps, down to the detail of metal treatments and multiple glass surfaces (the locksmiths Carpentier brothers). Only the furniture was not made by craftsmen of Saint-Quentin (the Parisian workshop Jeanselme).



Louis Guindez extended his Art Deco project to the mayor's office (today disappeared) in 1927 and especially to the hall that opens on to the different rooms of the floor. Flanked by two strong wrought iron handrails, overlooked by a lantern with patterns similar to fine stalactites, the visitor is welcomed by two art deco candelabra which light up the uncluttered panelling of the walls and the Art Deco calligraphies carved above the doors. The glazed coffered ceiling formerly received natural zenithal lighting. It hides the original timber work, similar to that of the Council Room, and the bell tower's timber frame.



5. Restoration project in the Art Deco style, by Louis Guindez in 1924
Plan from the municipal archives of Saint-Quentin

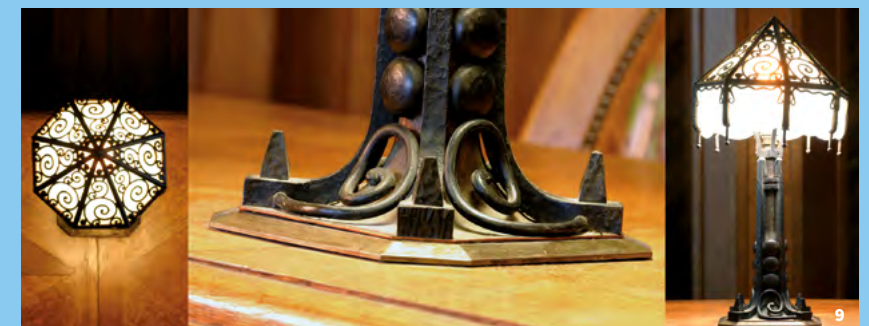
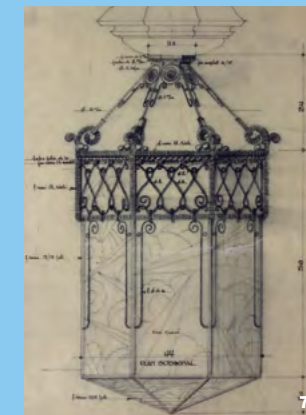


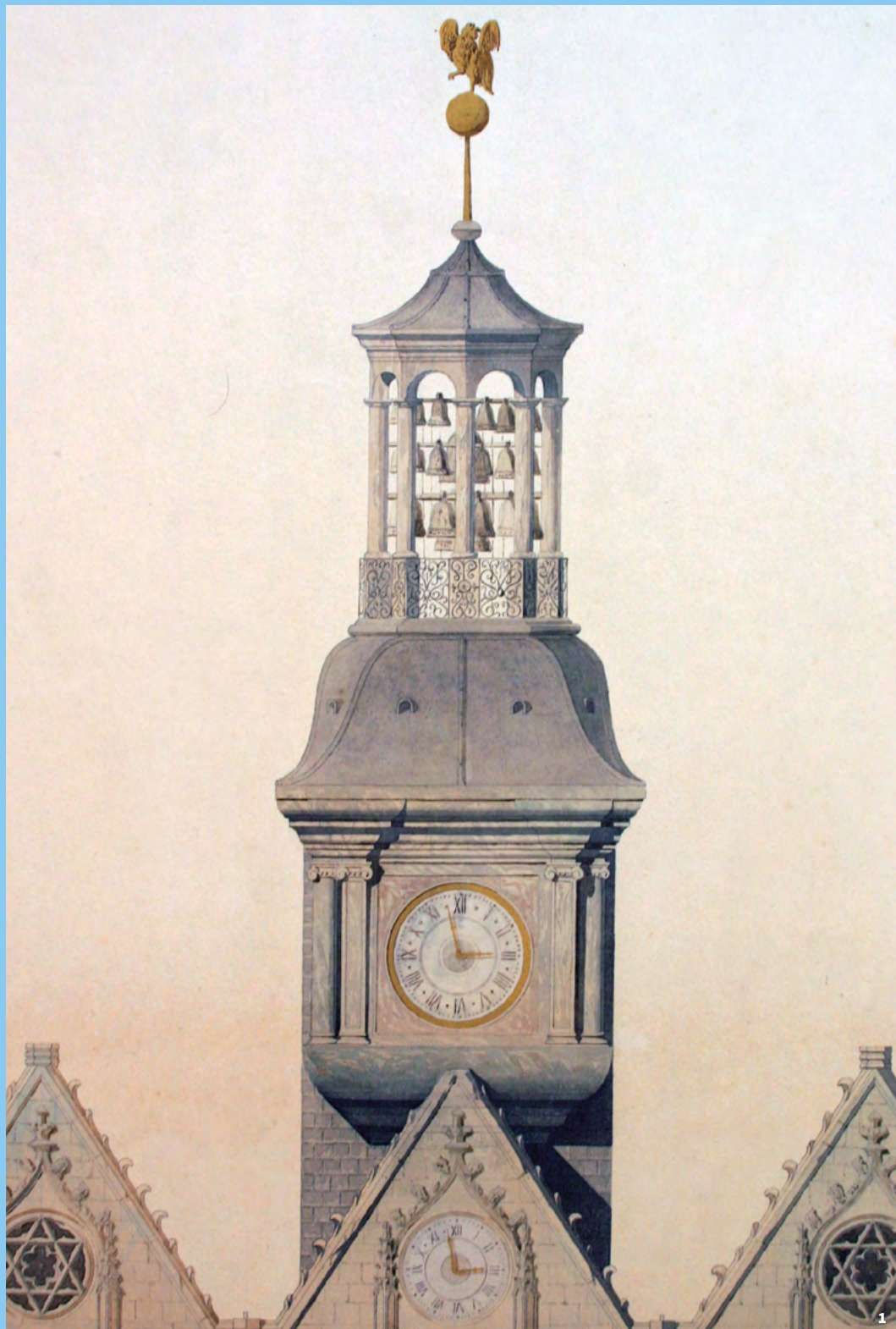
6. Wrought iron balustrade of the press box and the effigy of Marianne

7. Project for a ceiling light by Louis Guindez, 1925
Plan from the municipal archives of Saint-Quentin

8. Panel made of palissander and Hungarian oak : the architect

9. Lighting





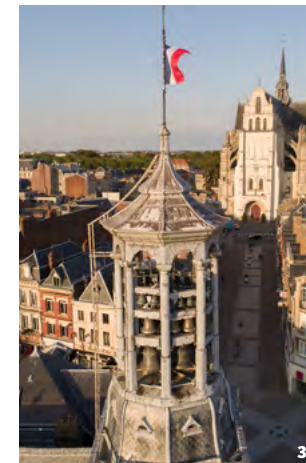
THE BELL TOWER

In 1663, twenty years after the purchase of a clock from Le Cateau in order to set the pace of the civil militia guard, the local government decided to erect a bell tower on the roofs of the Town Hall. It was made by the master carpenter of Saint-Quentin Jean Levent. But in 1759, because of its instability, it was entirely dismantled and put back together by Georges Neukome, contractor of the main constructions of the city (auditorium, performance halls,...). An order for twenty eight bells was placed with Jean-Baptiste Barbieux, a bell founder from Tournai. At the same time the master clockmaker Maximilien Dupont from Douai was in charge, together with a new chime, of the training of a young bell-ringer, Charles Dufrenay. Everything was completed in 1762.

In the days after the registration of the Town Hall on the first list drawn up by the Historical Monuments Commission in 1850, the removal of this bell tower was planned in order to give back the Town Hall its «original homogeneity» and «to clear out all the parts that were non original and «poor taste». But the attachment of the population to the chime of

bells that sets the pace of the city's daily life saved it from demolition. The decision was taken to strip it of its neoclassical decorations and to cover it with zinc plates formed in a neogothic style, better matched with the façade from 1509. The work was carried out in 1855 (Grados and Fugères, Paris). The bell tower, the keyboard and the clock were refurbished in 1880 (Gugumus brothers, Nancy).

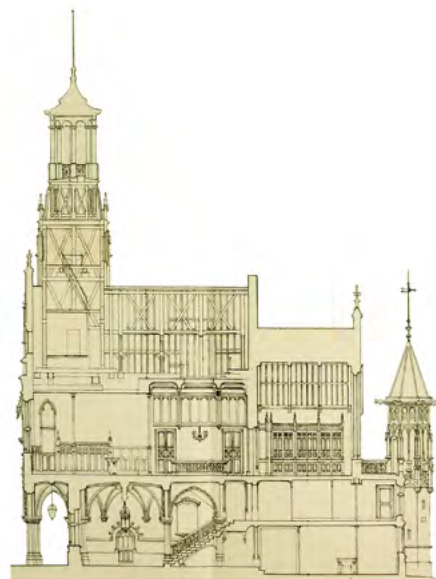
Following German requisitions in the First World War, the campanile was stripped of its zinc elements and its bells and mechanism were taken down. After the armistice, it was only covered with slates, while 37 bells from the bell founder workshop of Michaux in Louvain were hung in 1924. This was completed successfully thanks to the dedication of Gustave Cantelon, the bell-ringer at that time. Bells were partly replaced in 1985 and 2004 to improve the precision of the chime of bells.



1. The bell tower around 1850
Plan from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection
2. Photograph of the bell tower around 1900
Photograph (no date) from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection
3. The bell tower today

NEOGOTHIC RESTORATION WORKS IN THE XIX TH CENTURY

Under the Ancien Regime, the ground floor of the Town Hall housed the mayor's lieutenant, equivalent to the contemporary chief administrative officer (east half), as well as the caretaker's lodge (under the chapel) and the guard-house in charge of the night watching of the city (west half). At the beginning of the XIX th century arrived the local police. In 1866, the municipal architect Charles Pinguet-Védie transformed the space. He enlarged the Entrance Hall, following the style and some sculptures of the outside gallery. He transformed the staircase that led directly to the first floor by creating the mezzanine floor. The local police were moved into an adjoining house to make place for an auction room. From this point forward the chief administrative officer stayed outside of the Town Hall, giving up the place to the caretaker's lodge.



1. Cross section of the Town Hall in 1914
Plan from the municipal archives of Saint-Quentin

2. The Entrance Hall of Pinguet-Védie

1



During the restoration campaign in 1866, Charles Pinguet-Védie restored the rear façade of the Town Hall. He extended the ground floor in the axis of the former chapel and arranged a terrace. In the corner of the latter he built an elegant neogothic turret as a reminder of the former archive tower destroyed fifty years earlier. On this tower reserved to house the conveniences of the civil service employees on two floors, the architect placed his family crest on the ground floor and, on the first floor, a blazon adorned with... a pierced seat.



2



3. Condition of the rear façade of the town hall around 1850
Plan by the architect Eugène Lacroix
From the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection



4. The rear façade of the Town Hall before 1914
Photograph (no date) from the Médiathèque du Patrimoine collection

5. The pierced seat of the corner turret

« THIS FACADE, COMBINED WITH THE DOUBLE MERIT OF A HISTORICAL INTEREST AND AN OVERALL COMPOSITION THAT FEW GOTHIC MONUMENTS BOAST, THAT OF CONTAINING A MULTITUDE OF ORNAMENTS OF A GRACEFUL AND SPIRITUAL, AS WELL AS ORIGINAL, AND ALL OF A PERFECT EXECUTION IN ITS DETAILS ».

Louis-Nicolas LEMASLE, Inspector of Historic Monuments of Aisne, 1843

Saint-Quentin belongs to the national network of Cities and Countries of Art and History.

The Ministry of Culture and Communication, through its Directorate General of Heritage, awards the label 'City or Area of Art and History' to local authorities which implement activities to promote and enhance their architecture and heritage. supports these actionstechnically and financially. It guarantees the competence of the 'Animator of Architecture and Heritage', guides/speakers and the quality of their actions. And so, from prehistoric remains to 21st century architecture, Cities and Areas can show their heritage across its full diversity. Today, a network of 184 cities and countries show off their knowledge and know-how throughout France.

Nearby...

Amiens, Beauvais, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Cambrai, Chantilly, Laon, Lille, Noyon, Roubaix, Saint-Omer, Soissons benefit from the label City of Art and History. Lens-Liévin, Senlis, Ernemontville benefit from the name Area of Art and History.

The Heritage Department

This department coordinates all the actions of valorising and raising awareness of the heritage, in a wide context, of Saint-Quentin, City of Art and History: architecturally and historically important buildings (public and private), archaeological, written, natural, cultural, memorial and intangible. It offers year-round discovery tours, exhibitions, lectures and heritage workshops for all the public: Saint-Quentinois, tourists and young people, in and out of school time.

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