

PLEASE HELP THE SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS DE VERSAILLES RESTORE THE DAUPHIN'S LIBRARY



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In 1755, Ange-Jacques Gabriel was tasked with transforming the private bureau of the Dauphin into a library. In February 1756, Etienne-Simon Martin provided the library with to imitate the brilliance and lustre of porcelain. To evoke the Dauphin's taste for music, the corniche was decorated with angelic musicians.

The fireplace, shutters and casement window jambs date from the creation of the Dauphin's private apartment in 1747. The mirrored panels on the east and west walls, the decorative lintel of the library and the cornice all date from the modifications of the room in 1755-1756.

The furniture gracing this library is both rare and precious. Among the furnishings we find a commode created for this room by Mathieu Criard, a bronze pendulum by Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain, and a flat desk delivered in 1756 by Simon Oeben and Roger Vandercruse (called Lacroix). Above the doors are seen four maritime paintings by Joseph Vernet.

On the ground floor of the Chateau, a succession of rooms with a view of the "Parterre de Midi" was only for the use of the royal family. These rooms offered a direct access to the Queen's private quarters directly above them. Their current distribution corresponds to the period when Louis Ferdinand was the heir to the throne, and his second wife, Marie Joseph de Saxe, resided in these rooms from 1747 to 1765.

THE LIBRARY OVER THE CENTURIES

With the Dauphine's private rooms on the east side of the library, the library occupies a place corresponding to the antechamber to the apartment of Philippe d'Orléans (1640-1701), the brother of Louis XIV. When Louis de France (1661-1711), heir to the Crown, decided to occupy the apartments on the ground floor, the antechamber of Monsieur became the room of the Grand Dauphin. The room was then successively occupied by his son, the Duke of Bourgogne, the Duchess of Berry, Philippe d'Orléans and the Duke of Bourbon (Prince of Condé).

It was only in 1736 that the apartment was returned to its function as living quarters for the future king, Louis Ferdinand de France. In 1747, Ange-Jacques Gabriel, the king's principal architect, supervised the division of the suite of rooms on the ground floor into two distinct apartments for the Dauphin and the Dauphine. The former room of the Grand Dauphin became the cabinet of the Dauphin, and then a library in 1755-1756.

After the death of the Dauphin in 1765, the apartment was successively occupied by the princess and prince of Conti, the dauphin Louis-Auguste (future King Louis XVI), the Count of Provence, Louis-Joseph, then by Madame de Polignac and Madame de Tourzel, the governesses of the children of France.

In 1794, the sculpted royal insignia that were in the décor were destroyed by the sculptor Boichard. In 1814, when the Bourbons regained the throne of France, Louis XVIII intended to return the Cour to Versailles. The former library of the Dauphin then became the bedroom of his nephew, the duc of Angoulême. During the reign of Louis-Philippe, it became room n°47 of the new museum of the History of France.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of restoring Versailles to its “Ancien Régime” aspect flourished in many knowledgeable circles. Thus began several campaigns of restoration of the library in line to its historical character.

THE RESTORATION

The restoration of the library will primarily focus on the panelling, which was unfortunately scoured early in the 20th century. A restoration in the 1960's exposed the original porcelain-like decoration but the polychromatic elements in the manner of Martin varnish had become quite yellowed with age. This pictorial treasures, exposed in the 1960's, will be restored to give the panelling its original “faux porcelain” lustre. The restoration will also give the reliefs their former clarity which was lost after many repairs.



The stucco cornice is in a very fragile condition and shall be reinforced and solidified. The parquet flooring will be repaired. The final touch will be the restoration of the rusty and tarnished hardware on the doors and windows.

The restoration budget is now estimated to be about 375,000 €. We ask that you too participate with us in financing this operation. Every donation counts. Thank you for your support!

Please help the Friends of Versailles restore the Dauphin's library!

Founded in 1907 to address the alarming deterioration of the Château of Versailles and the two Trianons, the Société des Amis de Versailles is a non-profit organization with more than 5000 members worldwide today. It works with passion for the preservation and the enhancement of the Palace of Versailles and its Estate. For several years, the Friends of Versailles have been working to inform its youngest members to the need for more efforts to save our heritage, and to encourage efforts to assure new generations of Friends and of adults who care for this precious inheritance.

How to make your donation?

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