

# The three lives of Hôtel Gaillard

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This historical landmark was originally built in 1882 by private banker Emile Gaillard to host his extraordinary collection of medieval and Renaissance artwork. In 1919, the building was bought by the Banque de France to become one of its branches in Paris. In 2006, the Banque de France closed that branch and soon launched the project of transforming it into Citéco, the Cité de l'économie et de la monnaie (City of economics and money), the first museum in France dedicated to economics.

The architectural complex, which is in the neo-Gothic, art déco and "eclectic" styles, is unique in Paris. It was classified as "Historic Monument" in 1999. Architects Victor-Jules Février (1842-1937) and Alphonse Defrasse (1860-1939) were responsible for its construction, the first for Émile Gaillard, the second for the Banque de France.

Émile Gaillard chose to build his private mansion in the middle of the Plaine Monceau, urbanised in the second half of the nineteenth century. Quite appropriately, given his client's artistic tastes, Victor-Jules Février was inspired by the architecture of the Loire Valley Châteaux, particularly by the Louis XIIIth wing of the Château of Blois and the Château of Gien. Emblematic of this style are the fixing of the staircases, the high roofs, the Gothic gable windows and the brick facing (photo 1). The building was formally inaugurated in 1885, at a costume ball attended by nearly two thousand guests, with Émile Gaillard dressed as Henri II (photo 2). Old photographs and the catalogue detailing the sale of Émile Gaillard's artworks (in 1904) illustrate the richness of the interiors and the works displayed in the mansion (photo 3). A great collector, Émile Gaillard brought back from his travels in France and Europe not only works of art and furniture but also fireplaces and wood panels that he incorporated into the decor and ornamentation of the ceremonial rooms. Preserved elements of Hôtel Gaillard show the freedom with which genuine features and copies



Photo 1: Hôtel Gaillard : The main façade in 1904. © Collection Banque de France.

were combined at this time. The presence in the building of several sculpture portraits of Émile Gaillard and his architect testify to their complicity and sense of humour.

After the financier's death in 1902, most of his collection was sold. Hôtel Gaillard was put on sale in 1904, but it was only in 1919 that it was bought by the Banque de France and converted into one of its branches by architect Alphonse Defrasse and interior decorator Jean-Henri Jansen. The new branch opened in 1923. The extensions carried out by the Banque de France consisted in constructing, in the inner courtyard of Émile Gaillard's mansion, a large hall for the Banque de France's customers and a highly secure safe room. While introducing the "Banque de France style" into the additions he made to the building, Alphonse Defrasse echoed the work of Février, notably in the treatment of the inner wall of the customers' hall and in the decor of the woodwork of the counter, known as "serviettes". The safe room is on two levels. It is protected by a moat, which to this day is filled with water,

and is accessed by a rolling bridge, making this secret place one of the most unusual in Paris (photo 4).

The branch's activities ceased in 2006, when France's central bank re-organized and streamlined its branch network in the country. It was soon decided that Hôtel Gaillard will be the home of Citéco, the Cité de l'Économie et de la Monnaie, a new museum dedicated to economic literacy in France. It will house educational, interactive and entertaining presentations on the economy, money and the links between money, finance and the economy. It will also display the Banque de France's rich collection of banknotes and coins as well as currency printing machines.

This third life of Hotel Gaillard will begin in 2018, the date scheduled for the opening of the new museum. At that time, in addition to educational tours about economics, Citéco will also propose visitors guided tours focusing on the architecture and history of this singular building, which will thus be accessible to the general public for the first time (photo 5).



Photo 2 : The Gaillard family in Renaissance attire in 1885. © Collection Banque de France.



Photo 3 : Hôtel Gaillard – Dining room in 1904. © Collection Banque de France.



Photo 4 : Hôtel Gaillard : Cross sectional view of the safe room and moat. © Collection Banque de France.



Photo 5 : Main entrance of the future Cité de l'économie, Virtual view . © Ateliers Lion & Banque de France.

However, the Cité de l'économie et de la monnaie already offers a wide range of educational and cultural services that give the public the opportunity of exploring economics in various manners – temporary exhibitions, conferences and debates, events, digital productions on the internet, social media –. It thus provides the general public, particularly youngsters, with insights and a pedagogical perspective on the questions raised in the news. More details on Citéco's activities and educational tools may be found on the Cité's website : [www.citeco.fr](http://www.citeco.fr).

It is noteworthy, especially from an *ebh* point of view, that Citéco emphasizes history as a way to better understand economics. Among its already published educational tools, the interactive timeline „10,000

years of economy“<sup>1</sup> presents 200 milestones in economic history in a global, multidisciplinary and highly illustrated fashion. In 2015, the most recent version of this timeline was selected as Website of the Day by the CSS Design Awards, a panel of international judges who reward sites for creativity, functionality and usability. The webdoc „Images of crises“<sup>2</sup> allows viewers to „relive“ five major economic and financial crises from 1923 onwards, using audiovisual archives. Finally, Citéco recently published the interactive multimedia tool „History of Economic Thought“<sup>3</sup> which focuses on the lives and work of 55 authors who, since Aristotle,

have had a major influence on economics.

As far as architectural history is concerned, Citéco's website already features several articles on Emile Gaillard, the 1885 costume ball, architects Victor-Jules Février and Alphonse Defrasse, the neo-gothic style, and last but not least, the team in charge of transforming the Hôtel for its third life : architect Yves Lion and museographer François Confino. The website also offers an online virtual tour<sup>4</sup> of the Hôtel before transformation. ●

1 <http://www.citeco.fr/10000-years-of-economy-New-version>.

2 <http://www.citeco.fr/Images-of-crises>.

3 <http://www.citeco.fr/>

The-history-of-economic-thought-in-an-interactive-multimedia.

4 [http://www.citeco.fr/visite-virtuelle/Facade\\_sRVB.html](http://www.citeco.fr/visite-virtuelle/Facade_sRVB.html).