



# The Belle Époque Quarter

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Grand Domalne  
Bagnoles de l'Orne

# The « Belle-Époque »

The 19th century was a period of transformation in Europe. After centuries of economic stagnation, the invention of modern industry brought great change to all aspects of western society: cities were transformed, the bourgeoisie and the working class merged, the railway was invented and vacation resorts for the upper-classes seeking exotic, clean and quiet destinations were built.

The Spa in Bagnoles de l'Orne was frequented as early as the end of the 17th century but the destination's notoriety was only established at the end of the 19th century after the railway between La Ferté Macé and Couterne was extended in 1881.



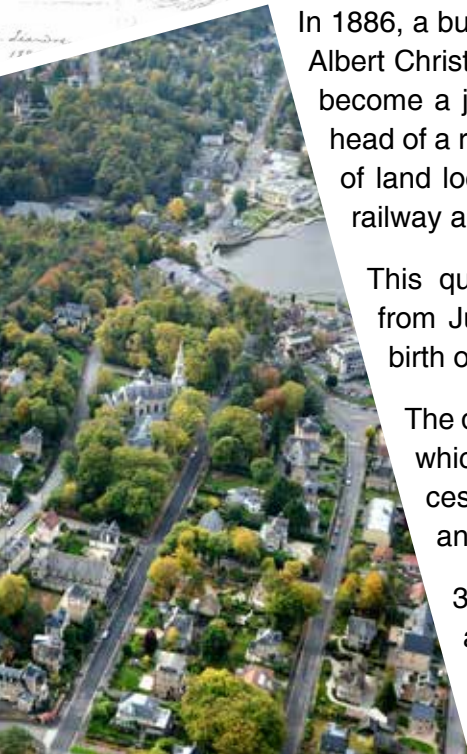
The construction of Bagnoles de l'Orne, which would be referred to as a 1st generation resort, began at the same time. It had the essential characteristics of a new vacation town: accommodation, a natural environment (sea-side, mountain or forest), a casino, the railway, a golf course, tennis courts, luxury stores, a café-theatre, etc.

In 1886, a building site was created under the influence of Albert Christophle (a local figure who would successively become a juror, a politician and a business man at the head of a real-estate company) on a parcel of 106 acres of land located in the Andaine Forest, in between the railway and the Spa.

This quarter was meant to accommodate tourists from June to September and eventually led to the birth of Bagnoles de l'Orne as a town, in 1913.

The quarter had to meet strict project requirements which fixed the terms and delivery times for access roads, constructible plots, property fencing and buildings.

3 parallel boulevards, 4 perpendicular streets and a central square were built through the quarter.





The real-estate company “La Fontcière” who owned the land had the quarter divided into parcels of 3000 to 5000 square meters meant to be sold for villas to be built on. The buildings were surrounded by a park: the forest scenery was preserved to strengthen the impression of a clean and exotic environment while the houses were set in the middle of their gardens to inspire a sense of ownership, wealth and peace.

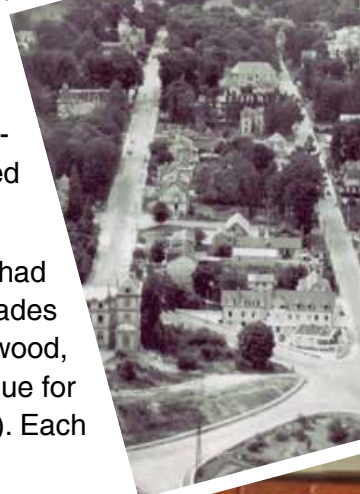
All the villas have in common their simple architecture using sandstone and bricks (mainly used to contrast with the austerity of stone and bring color), bow-windows, porch-roofs, balconies, marquees, multi-leveled roofs and enameled friezes on the facades.

This architectural style was created by architects who had to meet strict project requirements to build the facades of the houses by using local and natural materials (wood, stone, enamel, metal), volumes and specific colors (blue for water, yellow for air, green for nature and red for earth). Each facade was considered to be a genuine work of art.

The buildings could include many master bedrooms and house several families at once. The bedrooms which can be seen through the dormer windows were usually intended for servants. Annex constructions such as stables could not exceed a certain height in order not to spoil the beauty of the main construction.

At the time, Bagnoles de l'Orne was a resort where people came for the benefits of its spring water, to breathe the fresh air of the forest and enjoy the different sporting and cultural activities hosted by the casino or the tennis club. The various luxury stores and riverside cafes surrounding the lake also contributed the town's prestige.

This period, called “La Belle Époque” (meaning beautiful era), ended with the beginning of the 1st World War.



# Remarkable villas

**1 - The Normand Chalet :** *Lake-front.* Neo-Normand style chalet built in 1893 for a rich Parisian owner named Gabrielle Schmer. It is reminiscent of certain villas in Deauville and Cabourg.

**2 - The Swedish Chalet :** *2 bd A. Christophle.* Presented under the Swedish banner at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889, it was bought by the Spa director, Georges Hartog and rebuilt piece by piece in 1890. Notice the many wooden decorations such as the stylized horse-heads, snowflakes and lacework underneath the roof.

**3 - Villa The Pine-Trees :** *4 et 6 bd Lemeunier de la Raillère.* Chalet style villa built at the beginning of the 20th century. Its facade is decorated with woodwork: porch-roof, balconies and bow-window.

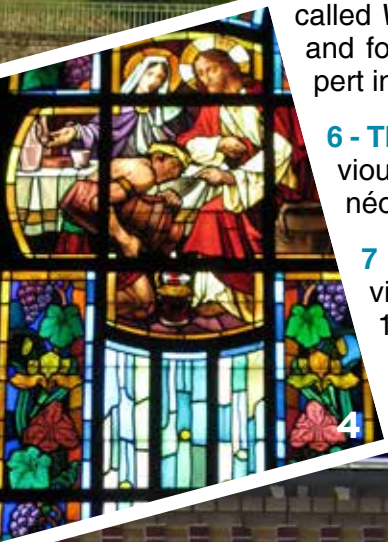
**4 - Sacred-Heart Church :** *bd A. Christophle.* This Art-deco style church was built by the architect Olivier Michelin. Influenced by Moresque art; it was inaugurated in 1934. Notice the water theme stained-glass windows created by Charles Lorin, the copper furniture and the capitals representing rose-buds in reference to Sainte Thérèse.

**5 - Villa The Perch :** *22 bd Lemeunier de la Raillère.* Previously called *Villa Unique*, it was built in the neo-Normand style by and for a businessman from Flers named Alphonse Apert in 1903.

**6 - The Firefighters' Museum :** *16 bd A. Christophle.* Previously called *Sacred-Heart Chapel*, it was built in the néo-Roman style in 1906.

**7 - Villa La Choltière :** *11 bd A. Christophle.* Previously called *Villa Carmen*, built at the end of the 19th century. Its façade is symmetrical and made of multi-colored bricks and ironwork. This design was replicated in the towns of Tessé la Madeleine and Neuilly le Vendin in 1900.

**8 - Villa Élisabeth :** *20 bd A. Christophle.* It was built at the end of the 19th century. The cladding on the outside walls is made of bricks and stones. Notice the friezes made of blue and yellow faïence, the window-sills and the balcony made of forged iron and the clam-shell above the last floor window.



**9 - Villa Marjolaine** : 22 bd A. *Christophle*. This villa built in 1903 is remarkable for its plates of “cabochons” (round and multi-colored decorations made of ceramic).

**10 - Villa Beautiful Stay** : 24 bd A. *Christophle*. Model house built in 1899 for Alphonse Appert. Notice the plates of enameled lava and the friezes made of red, blue, yellow and green glazed bricks. The bow-window is also decorated with a low relief. The villa originally had a square design with a turret in one corner. It was extended to be transformed into a hotel and is now a privately-owned house.

**11 - Villa The Source** : 1 place du Général De Gaulle. Previously called *Villa Happy*, it was built in 1895 and extended in 1955. Red brick was not used to decorate it. The Oak park on the backside of the villa still exists.

**12 - Général de Gaulle Square** : Previously called *Central Square*, it is surrounded by luxurious villas and was meant to become the city-center of Bagnoles which was finally built around the lake where the Casino, the Grand Hotel and the train station had been built.

**13 - Résidence Sylvabelle** : 30 bd Lemeunier de la Raillère. Previously called *Villas Dzaemma* and *The Wolf*, the two villas were combined to make a hotel which eventually became an apartment block.

**14 - Villa The Castle** : 26 bd A. *Christophle*. Model house built in 1903 by a businessman from Bagnoles de l'Orne named Léon Bénard. The variety of the materials used to decorate it (iron pieces, sandstone, enameled bricks ...) give it an eclectic style. It is considered as a decorative masterpiece. Notice the different sorts of windows, the chimneys made of red and yellow brick and the model annex on the backside of the villa.

**15 - Villa Chên'Houx** : 28 bd A. *Christophle*. Previously called *Villa The Blueberries*, it was built in 1895. Red bricks and sandstone were used for the foundations while the façade was decorated with woodwork and glass.

**16 - Villa Malka** : 21 bd A. *Christophle*. Previously called *Villa Graziella*, built by Léon Bénard for himself. Notice the decorations on the doorstep.



**17 - Villa My Wish** : 30 bd A. *Christophle*. Built around 1925, it was inspired by the *Villa The Castle*. Pieces of rusted iron pasted in mortar were used to build it.

**18 - Résidence Trianon** : 32 bd A. *Christophle*. Built at the end of the 19th century, it was transformed into a hotel and eventually into an apartment block. Notice the many decorations and different volumes used on the façade: balconies, bow-windows, “cartouches” and faience “cabochons” under the roof.

**19 - Villa The Turret** : 50 et 52 bd *Lemeunier de la Raillère*. Previously called *Villa Simone*, it was built in 1903 and featured in an architecture magazine for the variety of the materials used, the many wooden balconies and the roof decorations.

**20 - Villa Printania** : 36 bd A. *Christophle*. Built in 1905, it has 150 square meters of living space per floor which makes it the biggest villa in the Belle Époque Quarter. Its design is simple and neat, with a main entrance on the side. Notice how the Art-nouveau style door is subtly decorated.

**21 - Villa Duguesclin** : 44 bd A. *Christophle*. Previously called *Villa Bouquerel*, it was built at the beginning of the 20th century in the style of a chalet.

**22 - Villa Matignon** : 58 bd *Lemeunier de la Raillère*. Previously called *Villa Les Palmes*, it was built with sandstone and without brick decorations. Notice the length of the roof's slopes and the hip-roof.

**23 - Villa Robinson** : 46 bd A. *Christophle*. Built in 1906 for an owner from Paris, it was meant to be rented during the spa season.

**24 - Old City Hall** : *rue L. Margeron*. Described as a classic Italian style construction at the time it was built. It was ordered by Albert Christophle to be a resting home for the employees of the *Crédit Foncier* (1887-88) and was alternately used as a villa, as the city hall and as a school.

**25 - Villas The Favorite, The Birds, The Birch Trees, Cinderella and The Little Room** : 26 à 40 bd P. *Chalvet*. Built at the beginning of the 20th century when the plots of land were split in half, these villas form a block of small houses, each proportional to the size of the plot.



**26 - Villa Le Nid-Bel** : 24 bis bd P. Chalvet. Previously called *Villas Denise* and *Mireille*, designed by an architect from Rouen named Dubouchet and a businessman from Bagnoles de l'Orne named Léon Bénard. The twin houses influenced by Art-nouveau were built for two sisters from Le Havre. Removable walls on the ground floor were used to divide the house into two separate parts when needed.

**27 - Résidence The Hermitage** : 24 bd P. Chalvet. Built in 1907 to accommodate Léon Bénard's employees, it was later transformed into a hotel and then into an apartment block.

**28 - Villa The Holly Trees** : 19 bd P. Chalvet. Built around 1897, notice the decorations on the turret.

**29 - Villa H** : 17 bd P. Chalvet. Built in 1899 for Amédée Hédin, his initial H, made of blue, green and yellow faïence is represented on the façade. Notice the plates of "cabochons" and the roof tiles. A local artist named Émile Mangenot once lived in this villa.

**30 - Villa The Hydrangea Bushes** : 14 bd P. Chalvet. Built by Léon Bénard for his family in 1898, the façade is decorated with painted bricks.

**31 - The Corrèzien Chalet** : 9 bd P. Chalvet. Built for a retired captain, its architecture is reminiscent of austere and mountainous scenery.

**32 - Villa The Oak Forest** : 10 bd P. Chalvet. Built with sandstone at the end of the 19th century, its decoration is subtle and mainly consists of the organic frieze made of blue and yellow faïence.

**33 - Villa Dawn** : 8 bd P. Chalvet. Built at the end of the 19th century, this chalet style villa is remarkable for its bow-windows and gate decorated with copper and forged iron.

**34 - Villa The Oak Trees** : 6 bd P. Chalvet. Chalet style villa built in 1897 for a former notary from La Flèche named Cordier de Potelle.

**35 - Hôtel Le Christol** : 4 bd P. Chalvet. Previously called *Villa Christol* it was built by Mr and Mrs. Christol and extended three times to be transformed into a hotel. Notice the sumptuous decorations made of faïence and glazed bricks.



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