



L'hôtel de Lamoignon



First Hôtel d'Angoulême

The mansion which now houses the Historical Library of the City of Paris is one of the oldest mansions of the Marais district. The area took off in the sixteenth century and became a favourite location for aristocratic houses.

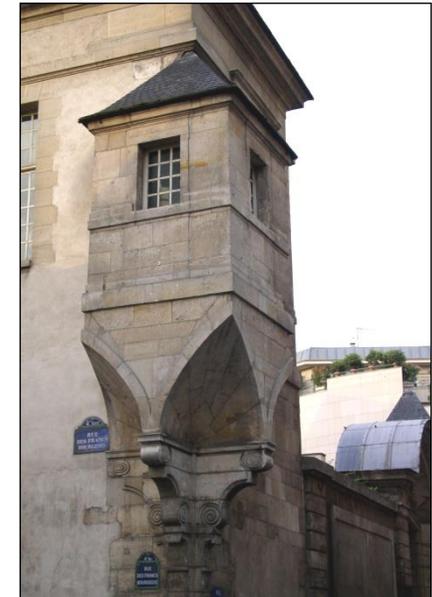


Diane de France the peacemaker

The abbot François de Pisseleu began to build this mansion in 1559. It was completed by the two following owners, a Jean Bodin, and from 1584 on, Diane (1538-1619), Duchess of Angoulême, a legitimated daughter of Henri II. The original plan was lately attributed to the great architect Philibert de L'Orme. The front building and two wings are set up between a courtyard and a garden. Attributes of Diana, the goddess of hunting, may be seen on the pediments : a dog and a deer's heads, a moon crescent, trophies and nymphs.

Charles de Valois the troublemaker

Charles de Valois (1573-1650), Duke of Angoulême, nephew of Diane, came into possession of the hôtel after her death. Himself a legitimated son of Charles IX and Marie Touchet, he eventually became a supporter of Henri IV during the difficult times of the *Ligue*, but was twice sent to the Bastille for conspiracy. He enlarged the hôtel with a north wing between 1624 and 1640. The watchtower, a corner tower with a purely decorative purpose, located at the corner of the streets Pavée and des Francs-Bourgeois, dates back to that period and is now one of the few remaining in the district.



Then Hôtel de Lamoignon

After the death of Charles de Valois, Guillaume de Lamoignon, First President of the Parliament of Paris, rented the mansion, He held there a literary salon frequented by Boileau and Madame de Sévigné.

In 1688, the hôtel was bought by his son Chrétien-François de Lamoignon, hence its current name. Major changes were done in the first half of the 18th century. The street archway was added in 1718 : its two children present the name of the mansion, one holding a mirror, a symbol of Truth, the other a snake, a symbol of Prudence. The garden front was changed, and the balconies of the high windows were decorated with ironwork presenting the emblem of the Lamoignon family, an ermine tip inscribed in a rhombus.



The Lamoignon family left the hôtel when Guillaume II, grand-son of the former, was called up to the Chancellery of France in 1750. Its next tenant, Antoine Moriau, a member of the City Board, collected there a large library dedicated to the history of Paris that he bequeathed to the City in 1759. During the Revolution it was partly transferred to the Institut de France.

The Historical Library

The mansion was sold in 1794 and divided in the nineteenth century into apartments, shops and workshops. The writer Alphonse Daudet lived there from 1867 to 1876.

In 1928, the City of Paris acquired it and planned its restoration. A modern wing (upstairs from the courtyard) was created and two underground levels were built to house the collections of the Historical Library, which was housed inadequately across the street sharing narrow quarters with the Musée Carnavalet in the Hôtel Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau. The library opened to the public in January 1969.

The effigies of the two Angoulême owners, dating back to the seventeenth century, were set up in a modern pavilion (right up the stairs). Until the Revolution, they were part of the funeral chapel of Angoulême in the now destroyed church of the *Minimes* convent, behind the Place des Vosges.



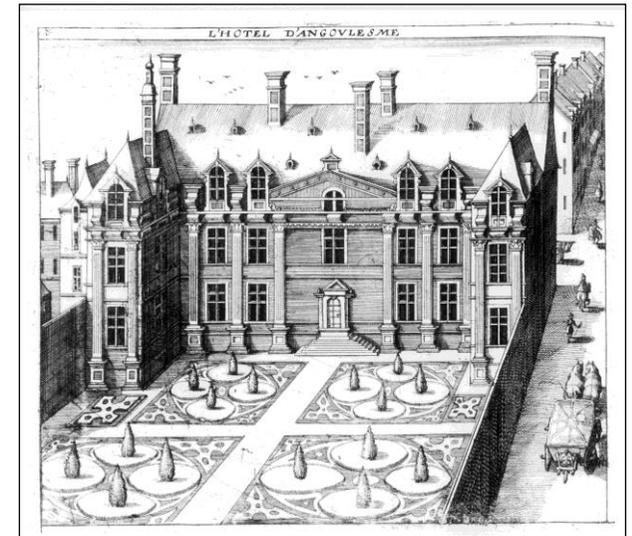
Funerary effigy of Diane de France

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The hôtel d'Angoulême from the garden.
Engraving by Claude Chastillon, ca. 1620.