

CHÂTEAU DU SAILHANT - ANDELAT, FRANCE

Château fort du Xe siècle en pierres noires de basalte perché sur un haut rocher volcanique dominant un petit village.

Demeures & Châteaux, Mars-Avril 1997

INTRODUCTION

A six kilomètres au nord ouest de Saint-Flour se dresse bâti sur un promontoire basaltique et taillé à pic: le Château de Saillans; l'étroite bande de terrain contrefort extrême du vaste plateau de la Planèze le rend seul accessible du côté nord. Non loin du château se trouve la cascade du même nom.

Le Château de Saillans au Cours des Siècles

I looked for years for a project in western Europe that would utilize my professional background and could be used as a summer retreat. My criteria was that it had to be of an architectural period unavailable in America, have an unstudied architectural history, and be in need of conservation, in a remote location and affordable (although I had always followed the surely mad idea that you first bought a house and then figured out how to pay for it!). I had studied in depth European architecture during my education and had worked for clients on projects in Italy, France and Hungary. But, I itched to tackle a project in Europe for myself.

My fifteen-year house hunt was pure delight. It brought me to many remote locations and, through friends and persistence, I gained access to extraordinary houses, castles, palaces and ruins. And, like life itself, each had its own incredible story and entanglements. Although there had been many temptations, my demanding criteria ultimately resulted in each being rejected. But surely there's book on the experiences of warm hospitality, snarling mastiffs, sumptuous and ruinous interiors and incredible owners' stories (one château in France was so filled with tragedy and bad karma that the friend who was guiding me refused to join in the visit).

Finally, on the trek of one more candidate, I arrived in central France in mid-April of 1997. On a cold, gray, rainy day I drove through the mountains of the Auvergne and when I turned the last bend in the road, I knew in an instant that Château du Sailhant and I had found each other. My diary for that day says: "It loomed atop the rock like a great bird looking for prey. I shouted egerem, ("my mouse" in Hungarian) as if the great bird was looking at a small rodent."

I knew from my college studies that construction of walls of a medieval château can be dated by analyzing shooting slits, the openings through which arms were deployed. The shape of the openings changed as the type of arms evolved from bows to crossbows to pistols and finally, to cannons. As I approached the château I saw that the tower to the west of the entrance contained sixteenth-century shooting slits and that they had been added to the wall. It meant that the tower dated the sixteenth century. I knew in an instant that I would purchase Château du Sailhant!

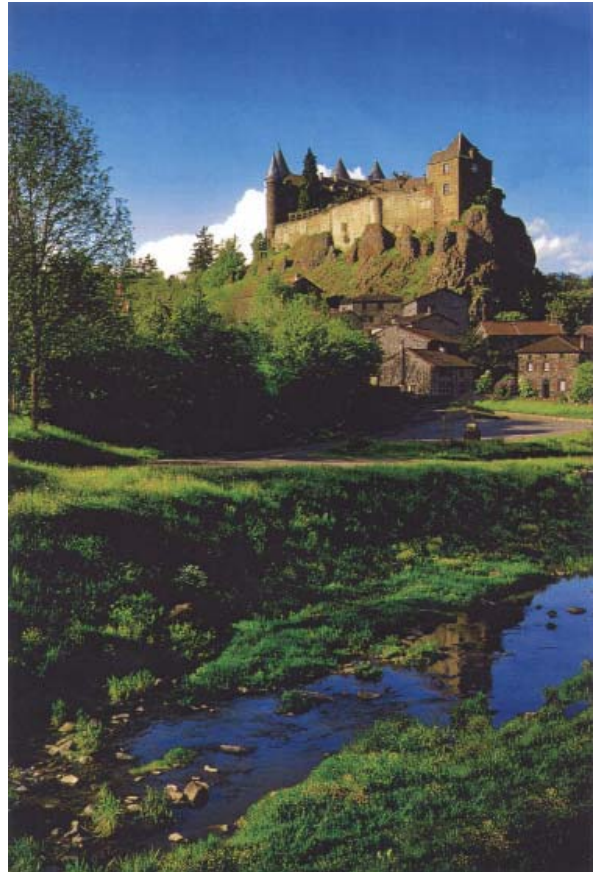


West entrance tower with shooting slits added in the 16th century
(Photograph by Author)

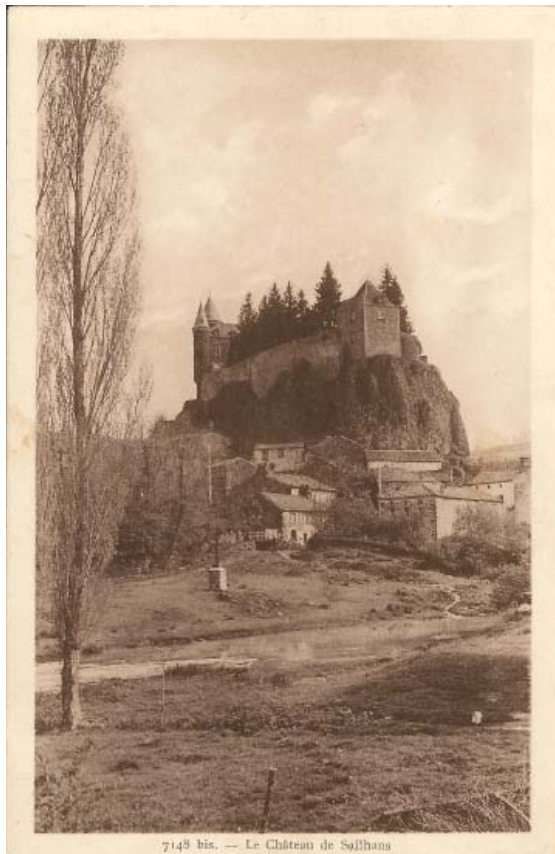
Château du Sailhant is a thousand-year-old château-fort, located in the mountainous Cantal department in the Auvergne region of central France. At an altitude of over three-thousand feet, it stands on a dramatic triangular volcanic spur with one-hundred-foot perpendicular cliffs on three sides overlooking a mystical sixty-foot waterfall that drops into a perfectly round prehistoric, volcanic crater lake.

The triangular promontory is formed by the valleys of two brooks converging at the point of a triangle. It is only accessible across a dry moat from the north side. Due to its almost impregnable topographical characteristics, the site of the château has probably been occupied from the most remote of times, ever since people started looking for secure places naturally easy to defend.

The walls of the château and its seven towers are constructed of blocks of black basalt, hardened lava from a volcano, and the roofs are stone slabs. The use of ancient dark-colored rough hewn stones creates a continuity between the works of man and the works of nature. Deborah Mitford, Duchess of Devonshire's description of Chatsworth in her book, *Wait for Me!* is an equally apt description for Sailhant:



From the southwest (Author's Collection)



Postcard view from the southwest (Author's Collection)

“The house looks permanent, as permanent as if it had been there not for a few hundred years, but for ever. It fits its landscape exactly. The stone from which the house is built comes out of the ground nearby, and so it is the proper colour, on the bird’s-nest theory of using building materials that are at hand and therefore right for the surroundings.”

During its long history, the château evolved under the ownership of prominent families of the Auvergne region including the members of the de Rochefort d’Aurouze, Dauphin, d’Amboise, Dubourg, and d’Estaing families. Its current state reflects its past involvement in battles and disputes and the social, economic and political changes that occurred throughout its existence. In the early medieval period it was a contested stronghold. During the Hundred Years’ War, it was at the edge of the battlefield in a continuing tug-of-war between the French and the English resulting in numerous sieges and an increase in its fortifications. During the Renaissance, the château was enhanced with classical details while made even more defensible. Used as a farmhouse towards the end of the seventeenth century, it became a distinguished residence for a bishop in the early eighteenth century, and,

after the French Revolution, was again used as a farmhouse.

In the late-nineteenth century a major renovation was commenced, but not quite completed, by an entrepreneur who had been born in the tiny village at the base of the château. In the twentieth century, it was used as a summer residence by a Parisian doctor whose family originated from a nearby town.

After complex negotiations and numerous trips back to the Auvergne to finalize the purchase, I finally closed title on a brilliant September day in Paris. My first step was to have a complete architectural history compiled and, based upon that history, to commence the conservation and restoration work.



Aerial view from the west (Author's Collection)

THE AUVERGNE REGION OF FRANCE

It seemed to me that Auvergne was a country far, far away where one saw strange things, and where one dared not go without making one's way under the protection of the Holy Mother.

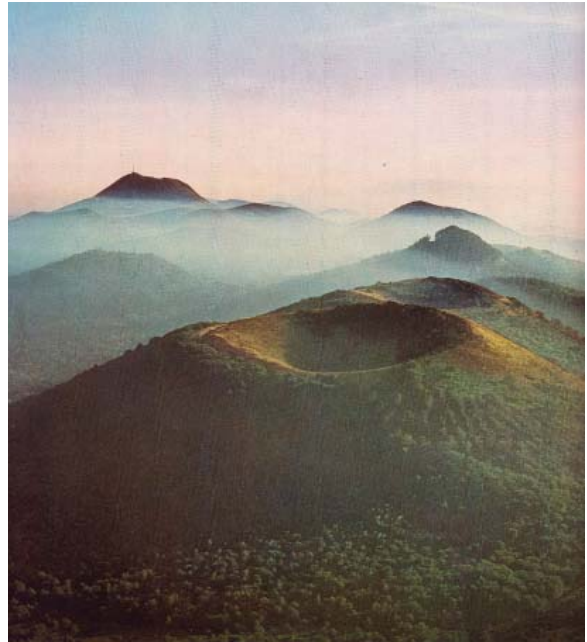
Chateaubriand

The Auvergne region is a wild, isolated and scenically exotic region in central France. Practically a country within a country, its landscape, history, customs, architecture, inhabitants, food and weather are all very different from the rest of France and the rest of the world.

Formed by enormous volcanic upheavals, it is a ruggedly beautiful land with unique cone-shaped mountains, crater lakes, enormous cave systems and peaks that remain snow capped until early summer.

Auvergne's tumultuous history of prehistoric inhabitation, Celtic invasion, Roman occupation, regional wars amongst local nobles, the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion produced heavily fortified châteaux. The countryside is populated with these château-forts which are coupled with France's most beautiful Romanesque churches and unspoiled villages with buildings built of basalt.

The Auvergnats are known for their resilience, self-reliance, superstition and belief in magic. The Auvergne has a deservedly worldwide reputation for its marvelous cheeses, charcuterie, specially prepared wild game, home-cured hams and raisin and nut breads. Château du Sailhant speaks of the region with its own rugged, sublime beauty perched at the top of a remote, volcanic promontory.



Mountains of Auvergne (Photograph by Loïc-Jahn)



Sailhant in the 10th Century (Created digitally)

THE DAWN OF TIME

The knob became known as Sailhant with the family in control of the knob known as the Sailhans, a word derived from the Latin salire meaning protruding.

Twenty million years ago, in the central region of what would become modern-day France, a group of volcanos began exploding spewing ash, molten rock and steam. The activity of the volcanos eventually blurred together to become a giant stratovolcano which erupted repeatedly. During several million years of activity, it became the largest stratovolcano on the continent rising 10,000 feet at the center and spreading lava out over 1,000 square miles.

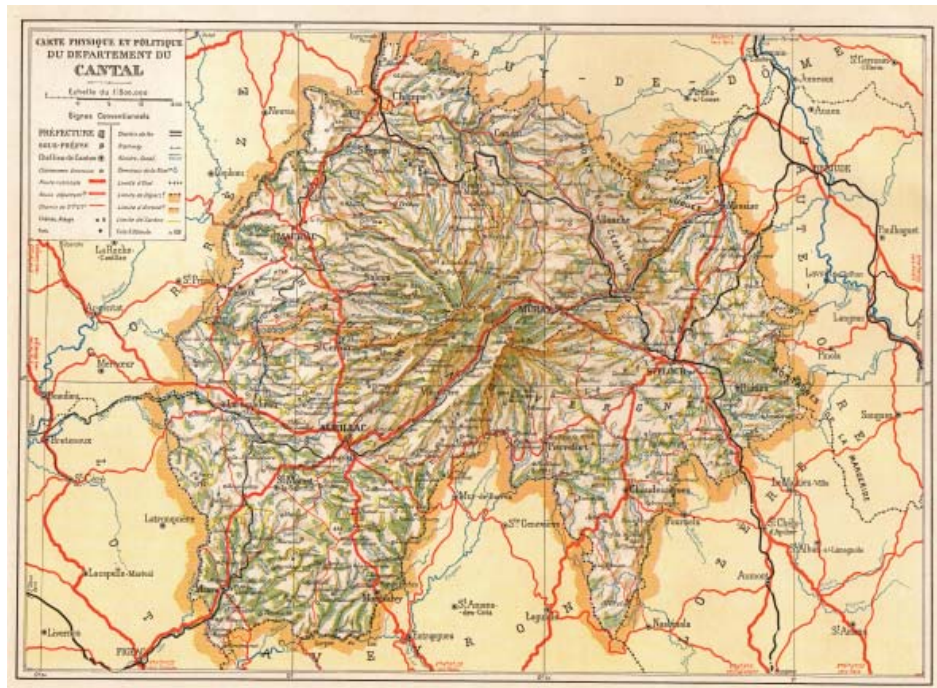
After millions of years, at the perimeter of this great circular lava flow, a final top layer cooled and solidified into a fingerlike spur with one-hundred-foot perpendicular cliffs on three sides. At the tip of the spur, a small knob stood isolated from the rest of the spur by a crevice, twenty feet wide and twenty feet deep.

One million years ago, between successive Ice Ages, the first hominids arrived from the African continent. Not anatomically modern humans, these early hunter-gathers used stone implements and moved about in packs pursuing their quarry from temporary camps selected for their ability to provide security.

During these most remote of times, the small knob at the tip of the spur was one of their most favored temporary camps. Protected on all four sides, it provided a perfect, naturally secure refuge. Twenty-five feet in diameter, the platform was sufficiently large to provide accommodation for the entire pack; at an altitude of over three-thousand feet, it was high enough to serve as excellent lookout. From its high craggy platform the occupants warded off beasts and other hunter-gathers. With a stockpile of food, water and throwing rocks, the knob successfully served its purpose.

One hundred thousand years ago Neanderthals began to roam the cold landscapes hunting mammoths, rhinoceros and other large beasts that congregated in herds on the tundra.

Forty thousand years ago when the first humans existed, a small volcano erupted to one side of the spur. This volcano was directly in line with a stream flowing from the distant stratovolcano which had now cooled. At first, the fiery emissions from the small volcano made the Sailhant knob temporarily uninhabitable. As the volcano cooled and the stream continued to flow, the emissions became a dramatic, but harmless, steam plume. The plume, five hundred feet from the knob and visible for miles, marked the site and gave it an extraordinary mystical quality. When the small volcano became completely dormant, the crater filled with



The volcanic heart of the Department of Cantal, France

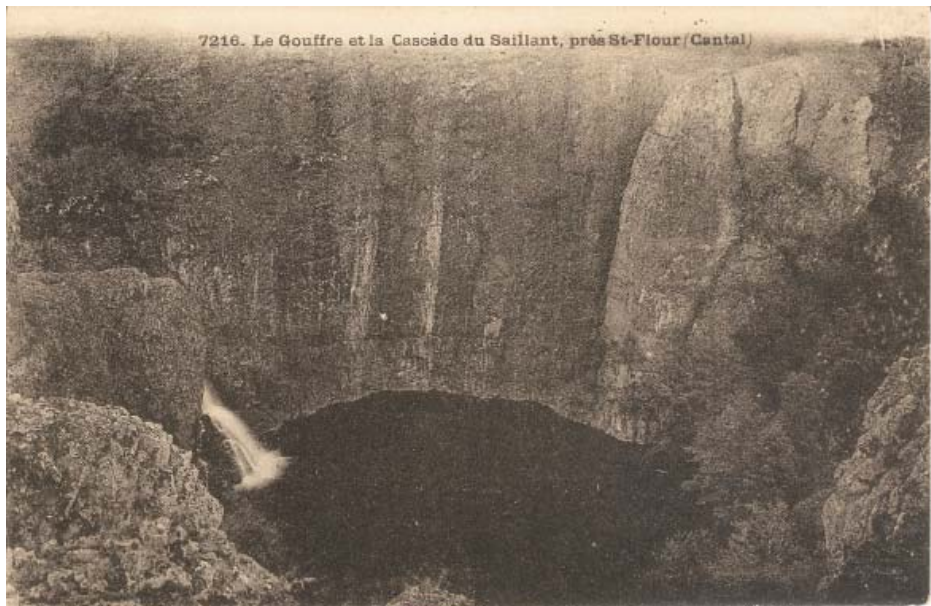
water from the stream, overflowing on one side.

Over many further thousands of years, the overflowing side slowly eroded resulting in the lowering of the water level in the extinct volcano. The stream then became a seventy-foot waterfall dropping into the now lowered crater. The crater remained as a perfectly round lake continuing to be filled by the waterfall and surrounded by the remaining portions of the original perpendicular inner walls of the crater.

Because of their sensational activity, the volcanic landscape had a sacred reputation. In the region of the knob, the reputation was favorable because the volcanic landscape provided abundant water and a constant food supply. As temperatures rose and the Ice Ages ended, great forests began to cover the land. The wandering herds disappeared, replaced by boar, deer, game birds, rabbits and other animals of the forest. Smaller volcanos continued to erupt; but the nomadic hunter-gathers were not greatly inconvenienced because of their mobility.

As the environment changed, the practices of the population changed dramatically. 7,500 years ago, a new pattern of life emerged -- the hunter-gather began to cultivate the land and domesticate animals. The volcanic eruptions ceased and the climate was warmer than today. Even though hunting and foraging would continue, it was supplemented, and then, after several thousand years, largely supplanted by farming done from a home base. Inherent in a permanent home is the need for security. While in the past one could flee from hostile people and beasts, now there was a need to protect one's shelter.

Five thousand years ago the Sailhant spur began to be used on a continual basis. It became a settlement for early farmers. In valleys on each side of the spur, streams from the distant snow-capped dormant volcanos irrigated the rich volcanic soil. The early farmers cleared the forests, cultivated the land in the valleys, and herded animals on the surrounding hills.



The Sailhant cascade -- 1910 postcard (Author's Collection)

For millions of years the small knob at the end of the spur had served as the temporary refuge for endless transient visitors to the region. A few volcanic rocks with a roof of branches had served to shelter the occasional visitors from the elements. At times of approach by hostile hunter packs and wandering tribes, the knob continued to serve its purpose as a refuge. Now, it was worthwhile making an investment into a more permanent shelter on the knob. A timber-framed structure with panels of wattle-and-daub* was erected. A palisade of wooden staves at the edge of the crevice completed the first true building on the site. A moveable wooden bridge spanned the steep, wide ravine, that separated the spur from the knob. At night and during times of trouble the bridge was pulled onto the knob.

In 2,203 BC an enormous comet filled the night sky. Ancient people would have been awed by its presence and, to some, it must have been interpreted as the omen of a special event. Four-thousand two-hundred years later, I would observe the next visit of this comet during my first trip to Sailhant. Now known as the Hale-Bopp Comet, I interpreted it as a good sign and it encouraged me to acquire Sailhant.

* An infill between timbers of interwoven staves and twigs with a finish of clay daub.

The Celts

*“There stood a grove
Which from the earliest time no hand of man
Had dared to violate; hidden from the sun
Its chill recesses; matted boughs entwined
Prisoned the air within. No sylvan nymphs
Here found a home, nor Pan, but savage rites
And barbarous worship, altars horrible
On massive stones upreared; sacred with blood
Of men was every tree.”*

The Pharsalia of Lucan Book III,
The Grove in Gaul, 50 BC
Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (39 AD - 65 AD)

Three-thousand five-hundred years ago the development of bronze followed by iron tools gave farmers the ability to further cultivate the land. But bronze and iron were also used for weapons. Around 800 BC the region was invaded by a Celtic tribe. The Celts were the first people of northwestern Europe to be recorded in history. The conquerors of Europe, in their time they dominated the ancient world from present-day Luxembourg, south to Geneva and from Turkey, west to Ireland. With their bravery, intimidation, ferocity and sophisticated weapons, they managed to sack Rome and invade Greece. The Celts were also the great artists of the ancient world. Their everyday objects were restlessly decorated for probable magical functions.

The particular Celtic tribe which invaded the region of the knob were called the Arverni, from whom the name of the region is derived.*

Nomads who lived by grazing cattle, the Arverni Celts were also fearsome warriors. Over a period of several hundred years they gained control of the area. The knob at the end of the spur became the Celtic chieftain's residence. Fortified, it still served as a place of refuge for the settlement in times of trouble. Several stories high, it also continued to serve as a watchtower.

Religion and mythology were very important to the Celts. They worshipped deities and made a cult of their ancestors. Guided by priest-like druids, they worshiped in sanctuaries practicing ritual sacrifice of humans and animals. The sanctuaries were typically natural features, such as springs, wells and caves, which were perceived to be on the fringe of another world. The cascade on one side of the spur, surrounded on three sides by perpendicular walls, was an extraordinary natural feature which the Arverni Celts construed as having mystical qualities. The spur, adjacent to a mystical sanctuary and containing a safe haven was an ideal location for the Celtic settlement.



The Sailhant cascade (Author's Collection)

*The immediate area surrounding the knob was called Cantal, a pre-Gallic word meaning rocky hill. Cantal is now the name of the French Department in which the knob occurs. It is one of the five Departments forming the Auvergne region.

The Romans

The Romans...were terrified by the fine order of the Celtic host, and the dreadful din, for there were innumerable horn-blowers and trumpeters, and... the whole army were shouting their war-cries... Very terrifying too were the appearance and the gestures of the naked warriors in front, all in the prime of life and finely built men, and all in the leading companies richly adorned with gold torcs and armlets.

The Histories

Polybius, c. 203 BC - 120 BC

By 300 BC, the Arverni were at their peak, extending beyond the boundaries of the region and making their own gold coins. But their control of the region was brief. The land inhabited by the Celts was called Gaul by the Romans from the Latin word Gallia, meaning barbarian. For hundreds of years, the Romans had fought with the Gauls. Finally, Julius Cesear led Roman forces that conquered Gaul in a series of battles. In 52 BC, fifty miles north of the Sailhant spur, Julius Cesear's armies won a decisive battle and gained control of the region. The Romans brought stability to the Auvergne region of Gaul, ending local disputes and tribal attacks. The Celtic descendents, now known as Gauls, continued to occupy the land. Free from internal disorder and tribal fighting, the Arverni region became a flourishing Roman province. It was during this period that the strength of the aristocracy increased. In exchange for protection, the common people placed themselves under obligation to their local land holder.

The Gauls continued to farm and raise cattle. The more level portions of the land surrounding the Sailhant spur was cleared of natural vegetation and was used for animal grazing and crops. The elevation of the land determined its use. At the base of the spur, cultivation and hay meadows occurred; pastures in the hills were for grazing.



Celtic Bronze Helmet c. 400 BC
(Collection Château du Sailhant)

The Barbarians

All the land between the Alps and the Pyrenees...has been devastated.

St Jerome 409 A.D.

The collapse of the Roman Empire (275 A.D.-400 A.D.) led to a period of great instability followed by invasions and settlement by Germanic barbarian tribes. A troubled period ensued. The kingdom of the Visigoths, centered in Toulouse, had the greatest influence on the Auvergne. The need for security and lookouts increased and was reflected in the strengthening of the fortifications on the Sailhant knob.

In the fifth century, the Germanic Franks expanded into Gaul. Under King Clovis, they defeated the Visigoths in 507 A.D. Clovis's descendents, the Merovingians, continued the expansion and eventually occupied most of Western Europe. The Merovingian dynasty ended with the rise of the Carolingians, a wealthy and powerful family from the northern Frankish territory. The Carolingian dynasty, under Charlemagne (747 A.D.-814 A.D.), extended Frankish authority over most of the Christian West, including Saxony and the Lombard kingdom of Italy.

Following the reign of Charlemagne, a final wave of barbarian invasions began. At the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries, Vikings, Saracens, Slavs and Magyers plundered the Carolingian empire. Their impact was substantial. In 843 A.D., faced with external threats and internal disputes amongst

Charlemagne's successors, the Carolingian empire was divided into three kingdoms. The Auvergne kingdom was ruled by Charles the Bald. Charles, struggling with economic problems brought on by the continuing raids, rewarded his followers by giving away his land, thereby transferring power to the local aristocracy.

Feudalism

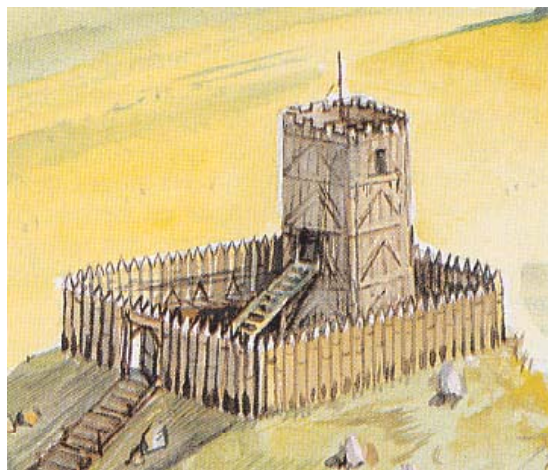
Il est malaisé de se figurer une époque plus troublée que les IXe et Xe siècles. Si l'on songe à la pénurie des moyens d'attaque au Xe siècle, où la poudre à canons était inconnue, on se rend compte facilement qu'une place pourvue de défenses naturelles aussi considérables que le château de Saillans, bien approvisionné et défendue par une garnison déterminée pouvait prolonger un siège presque indéfiniment.

Alfred Douët, Le Château de Saillans (1925)

As the ninth century drew to a close, central power continued to decline as whole regions of France were outside the control of the monarch. By the time Hugh Capet was crowned king in 987 A.D., France had been fragmented into a group of states. In the Auvergne, the lords were divided between their allegiance to the King of France and the semiautonomous Duke of Aquitaine. With mixed loyalties and feuding over their own ill-defined borders, the Auvergne lords failed to come to an agreement that would enable them to establish their own state.

The ninth and tenth centuries were extremely troubled times. Barbaric tribes were still threatening from all directions and families were fighting one another over border disputes. In this pre-gunpowder era, the wooden tower fort/residence, perched on the Sailhant knob and overlooking all access, offered the protection required by the times. With its natural defense and stock of supplies, determined defenders could keep a siege indefinitely. The land grants, which became known as fiefs, included the transference of judicial, fiscal, and police power from king to lord to lesser lord in exchange for military service. In turn, the fief was tenanted by vassals who were obligated to their lord for services and homage. The need of peasants for protection and the emergence of fiefs contributed to the rise of the feudal system.

At the end of the tenth century, Guignonis de Saillans was the inhabitant of the tower fort/residence on the Sailhant knob. His ownership and authority extended over a large domain. Guignonis was now known as the Lord of Sailhant. Guignonis's son, Etienne de Saillans, became a crusader. On his return from the Holy Land, he, along with other lords of the region, established a monastery in the nearby town of Indiciac.* That act, through a series of events, led to a long and extremely savage war, the War of Planeze. Etienne's overlord, who was victorious, distributed further land to him.



Early wooden Tower/Fort

*Later renamed Saint-Flour

THE MIDDLE AGES

What we do in life, echoes in eternity

Maximus, from the movie *Gladiator*

The de Saillans, Lords of Sailhant, 1000-1300

Architecture is the scientific art of making structures express ideas.

Frank Lloyd Wright

As the eleventh century began, the lords of Sailhant, living in their fortified, multi-storied residence/watchtower or “donjon”*, were the owners and overseers of a large fiefdom. From time immemorial, the natural remote features of the knob at the tip of the spur had provided sufficient security for temporary occupants. For the first permanent residents, a wattle-and-daub structure had provided the necessary further protection from arrows and spears. At the beginning of the second millennium, more sophisticated siege devices developed. Catapults were developed that could hurl large rocks sizeable distances to destroy wooden buildings with relative ease. The structure on the knob now had to become more defensive. The Sailhans replaced the obsolete wattle-and-daub buildings with a freestanding multi-storied stone tower. The tower was built of blocks of black basalt, the same hardened volcanic lava that forms the spur. The roof were made of lauzes, flat stone slabs. The natural stone at the base evolves into the rough-hewn stone of man. This substantial stone donjon stood prominently on the knob. Its striking silhouette demonstrated the rising power of the Sailhans. In fact, donjons served two purposes; they were a defensive refuge during times of attack and they were symbolic of the status, wealth and power of their owners.



Early stone donjon -- Château de la Clauze

Though more secure, the newly built donjon was not more comfortable. It consisted of a single twenty-foot square room on each level, accessible only by ladders through small openings in each floor. The openings also provided ventilation for a warming fire. The donjon continued to be separated from the spur by a ravine spanned by a removable bridge. Over time, the natural defensive features of the donjon ravine had been enhanced by digging it deeper and making its sides even more perpendicular so that it became a dry moat.

The donjon was not the first line of defense. The southern and northern parts of the spur were separated by another natural ravine. Like the donjon moat, the defensive features of this northern ravine had also been enhanced to become a dry moat. The people of the spur would first ward off attackers at the northern moat, retreating to the donjon and its moat only if they became overwhelmed. Over time, a wall had been constructed on the south side of the northern moat. Beginning around 1000 A.D. the wall rose higher, eventually becoming thirty feet high. Wooden ramparts were erected so the defenders of the spur had

* Donjon is a word derived from the Latin *dominatio*, which means “lordship”. The word donjon signifies that the building served as a domicile for a lord.

a platform immediately behind the top of the wall from which they could hurl objects and shoot arrows at their attackers.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century an interior stone building was constructed on the inside of this north front wall. Two-and-one-half stories high, its primary purpose was to provide a comfortable home for the Sailhants. In peaceful times, this seigniorial residence was regularly occupied. During a siege, the family would retreat back into the donjon. On the second floor of the seigniorial residence, an arrow slit had been built into the west wall to provide a shooting location to guard the main entrance.*

By the year 1250 A.D., the Sailhant château consisted of an inner court enclosed by high masonry walls with ramparts



Château du Sailhant Donjon from the southwest



Château du Sailhant - Grande Salle 13th century shooting slit I6).

following the outline of the rocky spur, a multi-storied stone donjon on the knob, and a seigniorial residence in the northeast corner of the enclosed court. There were secondary service buildings to the west of the seigniorial residence. At the main entrance to the château and in front of the donjon there were moveable bridges spanning dry moats (see floor plan - page

The high masonry walls gave the impression of a structure much larger than it actually was. This impression contributed to its architectural advertisement of the Sailhant's military strength as well as their social and political importance.

The part of the spur outside this enclosure was a basse-cour, or forecourt enclosed by walls and trenched on its north side. The approach to the château was lined with stabling, barns, utilitarian buildings and housing for people working at the economical activities of the domain and the château. An aqueduct, conveying water from a source in the hill to the north, travelled through this court. During the winter the cattle were housed in the barns of the forecourt. The cattle and their shepherds spent the summer together in the high hills making cheese from the milk in *burons*, small stone huts in the hills with minimum facilities. Fodder was harvested from the lower fields, filling the large hay lofts of the barns for winter feeding of the cattle.



Château du Sailhant - Grande Salle 13th century shooting slit

* The shooting slit in the west wall of the seigniorial residence has a paired curved upper frame which can be dated to the first half of the thirteenth century. In an undisturbed wall construction, the shooting slit and the wall are contemporaneous.



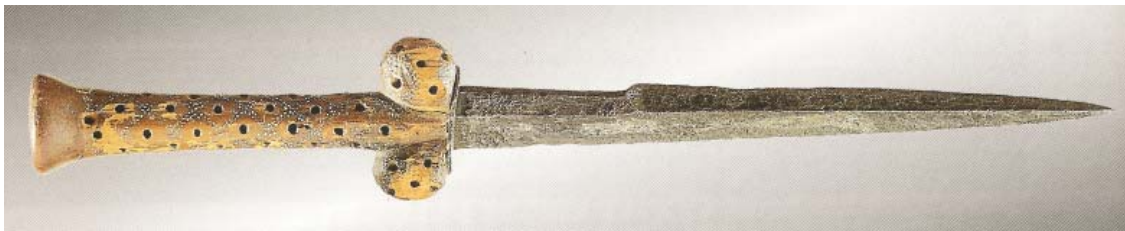
The de Rocheforts d'Aurouze, Lords of Sailhant, 1300-1383

La terre du Sailhant est apportée à la famille de Rochefort d'Aurouze par le mariage de 'la Damoiselle de Saillans'.
Alfred Douët, Le Château de Saillans, 1925

At the end of the thirteenth century, the Lord of Saillans was Béranger de Saillans. Through marriage, his daughter passed the Sailhant fief to Bertrand I de Rochefort d'Aurouze, head of a prominent Auvergnat family. A descendant of that family, Bernard I de Rochefort d'Aurouze, was present at Sailhant at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War.

The Hundred Years' War began in 1337 and lasted until 1453. This war, caused when England laid claim to the throne of France, had numerous repercussions for Château du Sailhant.

In the second quarter of the fourteenth century, Bernard I de Rochefort d'Aurouze reinforced Sailhant in preparation for war. As with much defensive work during the time of the Hundred Years' War, the work was hastily executed. In 1356, the English captured Sailhant for a short period. In 1380, English looters seized Sailhant again. The occupying captain demanded payment from the residents of Saint-Flour for their withdrawal. After many difficulties, negotiations, an unsuccessful siege in 1382 and the imprisonment of a Sanflorian in the Sailhant dungeon, a final payment for evacuation was made in June of 1384.



Burgundian kidney dagger circa 1450 (Collection Château du Sailhant)

Château du Sailhant, 1300-1383

L'Auvergne a été marquée par une progression très forte de la construction de résidences fortifiées pendant la Guerre de Cent Ans.

Jean Mesqui, Châteaux forts et fortifications en

France

In the 1350s the first Hundred Years' War usurpation had occurred. It was typical during this period of adversity that the local, though inexperienced, residents exchanged their efforts on the reinforcement of a château for the right to use it as a refuge. In its eon-old tradition, the natural and man-made features of the Sailhant spur and knob were once again being prepared to provide safety for the occupants.

Bernard I's effort consisted of layering a new wall in front of the existing north wall and the construction of two great north-side towers, one just to the west of the entrance; the other near the northeast corner.* The two towers were semicircular and did not rise above the adjacent building block enabling them to be covered with roofs which were continuous with the main block. The towers were probably topped with semi-dome roofs similarly to Romanesque church apses. Sufficient shooting slits for crossbows were built into the semicircular wall to cover attacks from all directions.

Two almost superimposed shooting slits were installed in the north wall near the northwest corner of the château (a33 - pg. 16). They may have been part of a square tower at the northwest corner.

A drawbridge was installed at the entrance to the château to span the deep, dry moat.

The other tower stands near the northeast corner of the château. The northeast tower was built at the same time as the second outer masonry north wall was added to defensively strengthen the seignorial residence. At its lowest level, there is a vaulted room with a latrine and two tiny, simple slits for ventilation. At its second level, a shooting slit was installed directed toward the northwest to protect the entrance.



Château Du Sailhant -- hand-held cannon shooting slit added to west entrance tower. (Photograph by Sélysette Somorjay)

*The other two north-side towers, one just to the east of the entrance and the other at the northwest corner, were built at the end of the nineteenth century.



The Dauphins de Saint-Ilpize, 1383-1436

*Unto the French the dreadful judgment day
So dreadful will not be as was his sight.*

King Henry V

While Sailhant was occupied by the English from 1382 to 1398, the château ownership passed through members of the de Rochefort d'Aurouze family.

In 1398, following the death of Françoise de Rochefort d'Aurouze Dauphin, her son, Béraud Dauphin I de Saint-Ilpize, became Lord of Sailhant. Béraud was a powerful man, being Lord of the châteaux of Saint-Ilpize, Combronde, Auroze, and Sailhant. An intrepid soldier and patriot, Béraud I took his two sons, Béraud II and Robert, to fight for their king at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. It was a tragic disaster for France and for the Dauphins. Henry V of England defeated the French nobility and all three Dauphins were killed.

The title of Lord of Sailhant then went to Béraud III, a child of four or five who had inherited several other fiefs and the name and arms of the Dauphins d'Auvergne. In 1436, he died at the age of about twenty-five.



Château du Sailhant - Northeast tower

The Dauphins de Saint-Ilpize de Lespinasse, 1436-1482

*...the Castilian Rodrigo de Villandrando and his 'ecorcheurs'
inflicted hideous devastation...*

Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years' War*

Upon the death of Béraud III, in 1436, the château went to his sister, Blanche Dauphine de Saint-Ilpize who transferred the main part of the her inheritance to the de Lespinasse family, the family of her husband. Blanche was the owner of a number of other châteaux and probably never resided at Sailhant since it was an uncomfortable fortress. Unoccupied by the châtelaine, it was not fully guarded and hence was susceptible to being taken by force.



Blazon of Villandrando

Indeed, Sailhant was occupied by the English from 1436 to 1439 and then seized, in 1439, by Rodrigue de Villandrando, a famous Spanish pillager. Villandrando, probably the most legendary knight-brigand to



Helmet "Bec de Passereau". Château du Sailhant Collection

occupy the château, was one of the great lords of Auvergne who, along with his famous brother-in-law Charles, duke of Bourbon and Auvergne, plotted against King Charles VII. In the autumn of 1437, the château was the object of another unsuccessful siege. Finally, in 1439, the town of Saint-Flour again paid for an evacuation.

The last of the Dauphins was the son of Blanche, Béraud Dauphin IV de Lespinasse, a wealthy lord who had married (second marriage) Antoinette de Polignac. He died in 1482 without a male heir.

Château du Sailhant, 1383-1482

...au fond de ladite cour est un pavillon avec une tour ronde, le tout séparé par un fossé où il y avait pareillement un pont-levis...
Archives Nationales à Paris (sans date)

Although subject to numerous sieges, conflicts and occupations, the château had managed to survive the Hundreds' Years War without major structural damage.

The seigniorial residence, a service west wing and the donjon enclosed in high walls with ramparts comprised the elements of the medieval château. It is traditional in France to have two *grande salles* "great rooms", one on top of the other.

At Sailhant, a *grande salle* occurred on the ground and second floor of the western portion (aII - pg. 16) of the seigniorial residence. Also in accordance with tradition, they had the



Sailhant from the north

same footprint, with the upper one having higher ceilings and richer details. The ground floor *grande salle* (*grande salle basse*) would have served as a general reception room and the second floor *grande salle* (*grande salle haute*) as a more important reception room for use by the seignior and his family. Both *grande salles* had monumental chimney mantles to heat the large spaces.

To the east of the second floor *grande salle* (a13 - pg. 16) was a square room with a window on the east wall overlooking the cascade and the cascade lake. It was most likely the private room of the seignior. The eastern portion of the ground floor also most likely served as a bedroom. There was a latrine in the lower level of the northeast tower with possibly another latrine in the upper level. There is no evidence that there was anything other than attic spaces in the top floor of the seigniorial residence.

To the west of the seigniorial residence was a structurally independent service/residential west wing, accessible through a door from the entry passageway (a21 - pg. 16) with a jamb with Gothic base moldings. Linked to the service/residential west wing was a vaulted stone chapel building.*

The walls of the square towered donjon at the southern tip of the promontory were probably rebuilt by Béraud Dauphin IV de Lespinasse, lord of Saillans between 1452 and 1482. After a long period of partial abandonment and military occupation, peace had returned. It seems possible that this lord found peace to be a good opportunity to give back to the château its dignity and to affix his mark by rebuilding the ancient square tower, a common practice of the time. Originally the donjon had served as a watchtower and the final family refuge during a siege. In addition, it was the



Sailhant donjon from the west



Château du Sailhant -- Donjon Seigniorial Justice Auditorium

*Demolished in 1830



Donjon with moat partially excavated

the east and west sides it is pierced with two shooting slits that are contemporaneous with the construction of the walls. These are *archères-cannonnières* “slits with a circular hole at their base for firing small cannons.” In the fifteenth century, due to the development of this type of firearm, they had become the most common form of shooting slit. This room is also equipped with an opening in the west wall above the shooting level. Its purpose was to provide light, visibility and to vent the toxic gas occurring from the cannons. The ceiling vault of this lowest level is pierced in its center with a nineteen-inch square opening used for lowering supplies into the space.

A single window with crossed stone mullions was installed in the west wall of the first



Donjon archères-Cannonnières and light/vent openings

ancient symbolic stronghold of the family. Early texts refer to it as containing an auditorium for seigniorial justice, probably the floor which is one level below grade, and a prison, logically in the lowest level, which still contains chains for prisoners. The square plan of the donjon had been based upon a very early architectural tradition in the Auvergne.

Before rebuilding the donjon had a total of six or seven levels and may have been topped by a battlement, as was common in the Auvergne at that time. With a height of approximately ninety feet and being topped by a defensive crown, it would have had a very imposing appearance. But the narrowness of the walls, its freestanding position at the far extremity of the spur and the heavy crown were not exceptionally strong -- thus the probable need for rebuilding in the fifteenth century. The addition of the spiral stair connecting the floors probably also occurred at this time.

At the lowest level, the vaulted prisoner’s chamber is described in accounts as an oubliette “dungeon.” On



Donjon east wall - latrine supports

floor room (one level below the grade level of the inner court).* The first floor room, probably the auditorium for seigniorial justice, had either a groined or a ribbed vaulted ceiling with a chimney.

At the second floor, the exterior entrance door was approximately at the level of the inner court. This door was the termination of a drawbridge.

At the top floor was a bedroom, its use confirmed by a cantilevered latrine.

* With undisturbed wall construction, the fifteenth century mullioned window and the wall are contemporaneous.

THE RENAISSANCE

The sun rarely shines on history what with the dust and confusion.
Thoreau



The d'Amboise Family, c. 1482-1540

Antoinette d'Amboise se désintéressa alors de la baronnie de Saillans qu'elle vendit, peu de temps après la mort de son mari à la famille du chancelier Dubourg pour 200 écus d'or et 30.000 livres tournois payables en vaisselle d'argent.

Déribier du Châtelet, Le Dictionnaire Statistique du Cantal (1850)

After the death of Béraud Dauphin IV de Lespinasse in 1482, the château passed to his granddaughter, Françoise Dauphin de Lespinasse. Françoise brought her inheritance to her husband, Guyon d'Amboise, a great lord and the youngest son of Charles I of Amboise. As the lord of many other châteaux, Guyon d'Amboise and his family did not reside at Sailliant and instead placed a captain-châtelain in charge of the property. The château then passed to Françoise's daughter, Antoinette d'Amboise, who married Antoine de la Rochefoucault. In approximately 1540, Antoinette d'Amboise de la Rochefoucault sold Château du Sailliant. For the first time in over 500 years the Château du Sailliant left the descendants of the ancient Saillans family.



The Dubourg Family, c. 1540-1618

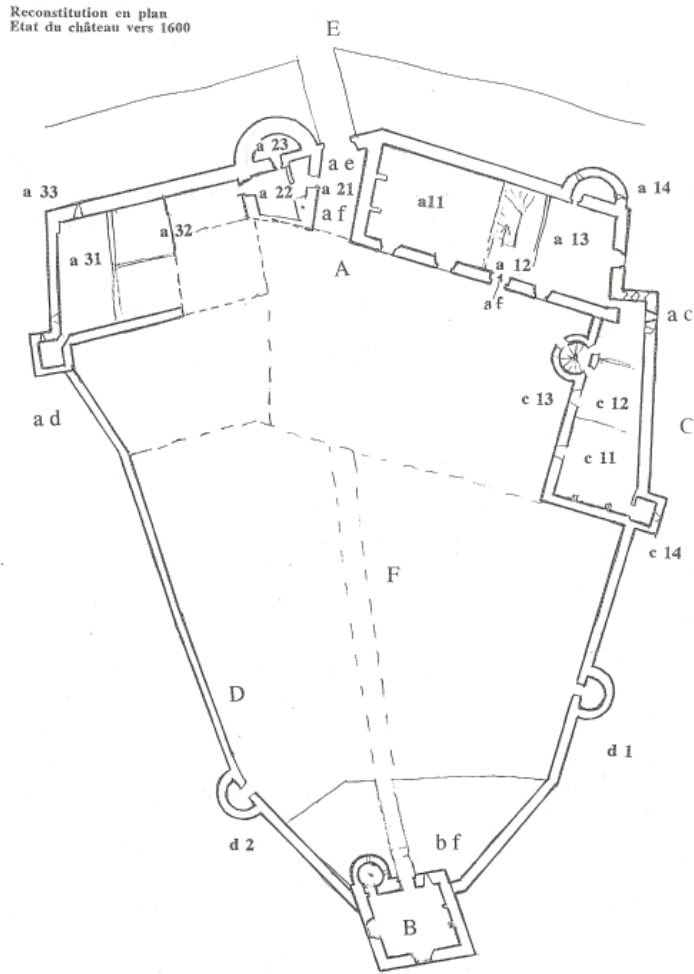
A la tête d'un poste, la femme de Dubourg, Nicole d'Andredieu avait bravement résisté aux catholiques; elle blessa même St-Hérem à la mai n.

Alfred Douët, Le Château de Saillans, 1925

Around 1540, Anne Hénard, the widow of Chancellor Antoine Dubourg, purchased Sailliant from Antoinette d'Amboise. Antoine Dubourg had been chancellor of France and president of the parliament of Paris and had died in an accident in 1538. The château became the main residence of the Dubourg family, accommodating three generations — the widow Anne Hénard, her son, Charles-Antoine, the baron of Saillans, his wife, Nicole and their two sons Louis and Charles.

In 1562, France began to be torn apart by the bloody Wars of Religion. As a result of the Reformation, many Protestants, called Huguenots, were living in France. The Catholic population grew more and more hostile to the reformed religion and murderous violence eventually erupted. The Dubourgs were a Protestant family and Charles-Antoine maintained a garrison in his château, which provoked the wrath of the Catholic authorities.

One night in 1569, the Count de Montmorin Saint-Hérem, governor of Auvergne and leader of the Catholic party arrived at Sailhant from Saint-Flour accompanied by his troops. Charles-Antoine Dubourg was sick in bed. Upon arrival, they knocked so hard at the door of the château that Charles-Antoine's wife, Nicole, answered the door herself. When told that they had come to install a garrison in the château, she replied that there was no need for a garrison and that her husband was unwilling to receive it. As she tried to close the door, Saint-Hérem pushed it so hard that she fell to the ground. Stepping inside in spite of her, Nicole began screaming. An arriving servant, seeing the châtelaine on the ground, fired a wounding shot at Saint-Hérem. With only five or six soldiers in residency at the château, Saint-Hérem's garrison took the château with little resistance. The troops searched the château until they found Charles-Antoine in bed, dragged him downstairs to the kitchen and forced him into a hot chamber where he died of asphyxiation. Nicole was jailed for the wounding of Saint-Hérem. The Catholics retained possession of Sailhant from 1569 until the Edict of Poitiers in 1576. Château du Sailhant was then returned to the Dubourgs.



Floor plan of Château du Sailhant circa 1600



Château du Sailhant -- Main entrance door

Louis Dubourg, who became lord of Sailhant, headed the Protestants of the area. A dauntless soldier, he fought against the Catholic leader of the Saint-Flour region, Jean de Lastic. Lastic seized Château du Sailhant and Louis Dubourg took the Château of Lastic. Curiously, around 1588, Louis Dubourg married Jeanne, the sister of Jean de Lastic.

On May 15, 1588, a regional peace treaty was concluded. Lastic and Dubourg agreed to return to their own châteaux and Catholics and Protestants swore never to take up arms against each other. But early in the year 1589, Louis Dubourg again battled against the Catholics. The memory of his father's murder no doubt haunted him. In 1591 the Duke of Nemours ordered Jean de Lastic to raze Sailhant. However, for an unknown reason the order was never carried out.

The Wars of Religion lasted until 1598, when the Edict of Nantes created an uncertain truce between Catholics and Protestants.

Louis Dubourg and Jeanne de Lastic had only one daughter, Catherine Dubourg, who married Jacques d'Estaing in 1616.

Château du Sailhant, c. 1482-1618

Les appartements du château ne manquaient pas de beauté. Ils avaient du être bien décorés suivant le temps, si l'on en juge par les traces existantes de peintures à fresque...

Déribier du Châtelet, Le Dictionnaire Statistique du Cantal, 1850

Unlike the Dauphins, great feudal lords who possessed several châteaux and would travel from one to another, the Dubourg family used Sailhant as their principal residence. The fortified aspects of the château became less important and its history as a country house began. The Dauphins caused numerous changes to be made to the château which had, up until now, been primarily a feudal fortress. They can be credited with the installation of the arched main entrance door, which probably replaced an earlier one of similar or slightly smaller dimensions.



West entrance tower with shooting slits added in the 16th century
(Photograph by Author)

On the ground level of the inner court facade of the seigniorial residence between the second and third bay from the east, are the remains of a large opening which would have been the primary opening to the seigniorial residence. It would have led to a hallway between the two ancient rooms on the ground level and to a stairway to the two oldest rooms on the second floor. According to Alfred Douet's *Le Château de Sailhant et ses Seigneurs*, "The apartments of the château did not lack beauty, they must have been well decorated judging by the remaining paintings and frescoes"*

Within this different construction there are four shooting slits of a type common to the sixteenth century. These four shooting slits are part of a later remodeling which responded to advances in weaponry at the time of the Wars of Religion. At the third level of the tower to the west of the entrance, the two fourteenth-century shooting slits remained. The mechanism and opening associated with the drawbridge was eliminated when the wall of the main entrance was replaced at the end of the sixteenth century.

At the most northerly portion, overlapping the east gable wall of the seigniorial residence, a small bay (ac - pg. 19) projected from the east gable wall of the seigniorial residence linking the seigniorial residence to the east ell wing.

*Sadly, the frescoes were eliminated in the 1890s renovation.



Inner court facade connection east ell wing

There is a band of basaltic stones on the tower to the west of the entrance which differ in size and shape from the stones



Inner court facade

The north face of the linking bay provided protection to the northeast side of the château through shooting slits oriented toward the north. The Dubourgs added the large ell wing (C - pg. 19) to the eastern side of the enclosure in the last third of the sixteenth century.*



Shooting slit north wall linking bay from inside

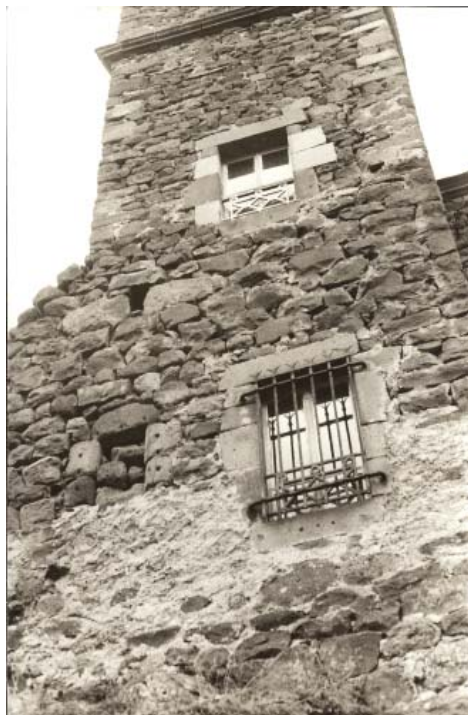
On the north side of the linking bay there are two juxtaposed rectangular shooting slits. One of the shooting slits, which is contemporaneous with the wall, was intended for late sixteenth or early seventeenth century fire tubes that were placed on the ground.

The other two openings occur higher on the north elevation. One is a small simple window slit, the other is smaller, with a slit and a hole for shooting at the bottom, of the type used for shoulder arms such as an arquebus, “musket”. It is very typical of the latter part of the sixteenth century at the time of the Wars of Religion, the period when the Dubourgs lived in the

château. It also is contemporaneous with the wall.

In addition to contributing to defensive capabilities, the east ell wing provided additional service areas and principal rooms with a handsome outlook to the cascade. The kitchen was on the ground floor above the cellar (c11 - pg. 19). It terminated at the south gable wall of the east ell wing and encompassed the small projecting square of the surrounding wall. The oven in which Dubourg suffocated was most likely in the kitchen in the east ell wing. The facade of the east ell wing on the inner court side contained, at a point fairly close to the facade of the seigniorial residence, a circular turret (c13 - pg. 19) with small windows and shutters, which enclosed a spiral staircase with stone steps leading to the upper level which included at least two rooms and a cabinet (“study or closet”). The east ell wing was roofed with lauzes similar to the seigniorial residence.

The service/residential wing on the west side of the château was also probably reconstructed by the Dubourg family.* This



East facade of linking bay

* It appears on the 1820 Cadastral Survey and was destroyed in 1830. Today only the cellar (below c11) and a portion of the north end (ac) wrapping the southeast angle of the seigniorial residence survive. The linking bay, partially preserved during the 1830s demolition, was converted into a slender square tower during the 1890s renovation.



Linking Bay from the north



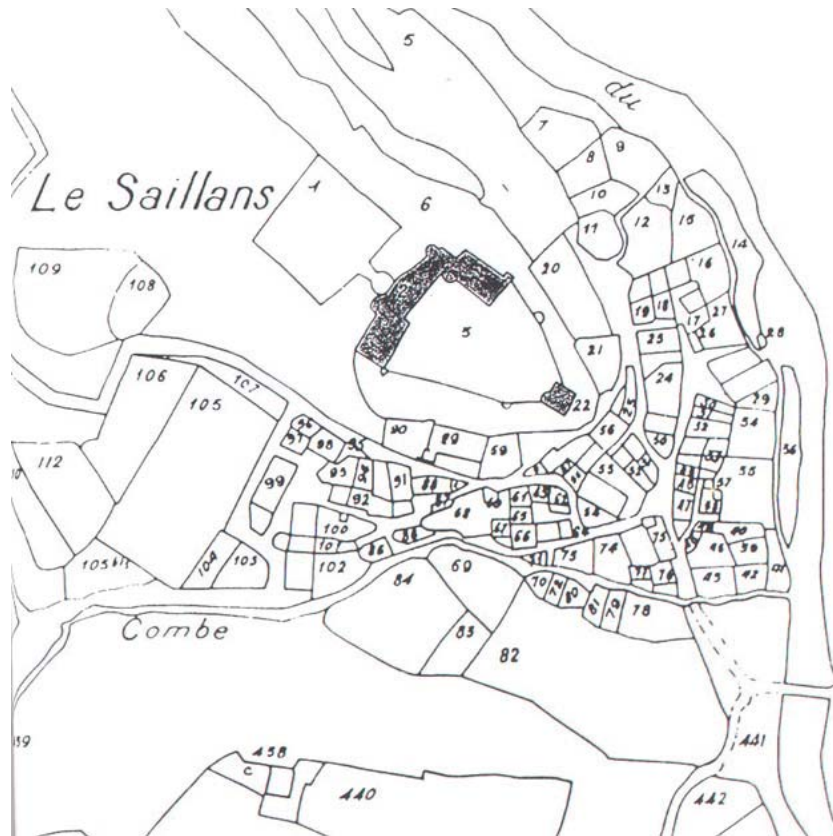
Shooting slit linking bay north wall

secondary building was somewhat larger than the seigniorial residence with a basement level at its far westerly bay.

There are monumental fireplace mantles inside the château which date from the 1560s. They were originally on the west wall of the grande salle on the first floor and the west wall of the grande salle on the second floor. With their flat hoods supported by classic columns, these fireplaces are typical of the period. Executed in the regional gray basalt stone, they were originally polychromed.**



16th-century Dining Room fireplace mantle in its 19th century location



1820 Napoleonic Cadastral Survey

** The chimney on the west wall of the first floor grande salle was restored to its original location in 2001. During the 1890s remodeling, the chimney from the west wall of the second floor grande salle was relocated to the first floor Salon, where it remains.

SEVENTEENTH & EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Nothing is dearer to me than to do all I can to preserve my nobles
Louis XIII (1610-1643)



The d'Estaing Family, c. 1618-1753

La mère de Jean d'Estaing, Catherine du Bourg, estant de présent en son château de Sailhans, baille le domaine à Michel Bouvlin, marchand bourgeois de Clermont. La dame promet lui bailler deux chambres, une cour et les greniers, une estable et fenils pour faire sa résidence tant qu'il demeurera audit Sailhans avec des meubles...

Archives Nationales à Paris

After the death of Louis Dubourg in 1618, his daughter, Catherine Dubourg, through her marriage to Jacques d'Estaing, returned the barony of Saillans and Château du Sailhant back to the descendants of the original Saillans family. Jacques d'Estaing was the great grandson of Antoinette d'Amboise de la Rochefoucault who had sold the barony of Saillans to the Dubourg family eighty-five years earlier. Jacques d'Estaing's father, Jean III, had great power, prestige and wealth. As one of the main leaders of the Catholic Saint League in Auvergne, he had submitted to Henri IV and maintained the King's troops in the fortress of Murol. Through this maneuver, he preserved his family from suspicions that provoked the demolition of châteaux which could have been used against the State during the time of Cardinal Richelieu.

The marriage of knight Jacques to the heiress of the prominent Protestant Dubourg family was characteristic of Henry IV's political policy of appeasement of religious passions. As a fifth son, Jacques did not inherit the large patrimony belonging to the family of d'Estaing. Although he had other domains, Sailhant was Jacques's fiefdom and his main family residence.

In 1654, Jean d'Estaing, a brigadier, succeeded to his father in the barony of Saillans. His patrimony was considerably increased in 1647 when he married Claude-Marie de Terrail, the daughter and only heiress of Jean de Combourcier, Lieutenant-General for the King in Basse Auvergne which brought him the seigniories of Ravel and Moissac in Auvergne and of Terrail in Dauphiné. The seignior and Château de Ravel, which previously belonged to the Amboise and Rochefoucault families, were then durably linked to the patrimony of the lords of Sailhant.

The Château of Ravel then became the main residence of Jean d'Estaing. Jean's mother, Catherine Dubourg became the dame de Sailhans, "Lady of Sailhans." A widow and still alive in 1665, she resided most of the time at Château du Sailhant. It is during this period that the first farming leases occurred on the domain of Sailhant. Under the lease, an over-tenant collected rent from the farmers and then paid the seignior a fixed amount of rent. The tenant was responsible for the maintenance of the château and the property. The leases included living quarters within the château.

When Jean d'Estaing died in 1675, his son Gaspard d'Estaing became Lord of Sailhant as well as succeeding to the seigniories of Ravel, Terrail, Saint-Maurice, Nouvialle, Moissac, Montegut, and Spirat. This powerful lord resided in Ravel, renting at various times the domain of Sailhant to farmers, bourgeois and merchants from Saint-Flour while never personally managing the seignior of Sailhant.

In the 1697 lease, Gaspard d'Estaing was represented by his brother, Joachim-Joseph d'Estaing, who had been bishop of Saint-Flour since January 1694.

The proximity of Château du Sailhant to Saint-Flour led Joachim-Joseph d'Estaing to use the château

as his country estate after he took possession of the diocese in 1694. He was obliged to reside full-time at the château during the 1709 grain shortage riots. In that episode, the outraged townspeople of Saint-Flour chased the bishop from his Episcopalian palace because grain stored in the Episcopal domain was used to feed the royal army instead of the local population.

The bishop of Saint-Flour lived in his Episcopal palace during the last years of his long life. Beginning in 1714, Gaspard d'Estaing was the signatory on the leases. He continued to use Ravel as his main residence. Charles-Francois d'Estaing succeeded his father Gaspard in 1731. He showed interest in his barony of Sailhant by increasing its size through the purchase of lands and the seigniorship of Valuejols seven kilometers away.

In 1744, Charles-Francois d'Estaing leased Sailhant to Antoine Bardol, bourgeois of Saint-Flour. When Charles-Francois d'Estaing died in 1746, Charles-Hector d'Estaing, a minor, was the heir. But, the succession was crippled by debts with the main creditor being the famous writer Francois-Marie Arouet de Voltaire.

The debts led to a sale by auction in 1753. The lands of both Sailhant and Valuejols were adjudged to Francois Jean Roger, squire, Lord of Colombelle, financial advisor and secretary to King Louis XV and notary of Chatelet in Paris.

After the auction, in front of the lessors, a shot was fired by the notary in the courtyard of the château in the name of the possession by Sir Roger of the domain and the seigniorship. The men and women from the village were summoned to acknowledge Sir Roger as the only lord of the land of Sailhant, seigniorship and marquisate.



Château du Sailhant -- Donjon



Château du Sailhant -- Donjon entrance door

Château du Sailhant, c. 1618-1753

Si l'aspect extérieur des murailles ne fut pas sensiblement modifié, en revanche toute la façade intérieure sur la cour fut refaite dans le style du XVIIIe siècle. L'écusson aux armes des d'Estaing qui fut placé au dessus de la grande porte d'entrée porte la date de ces restaurations: 1710.

Alfred Douët, Le Château de Saillans (1925)

In 1633, the upper levels of the donjon were removed and it was made into a pavilion. This was most likely the result of structural problems associated with lack of maintenance, the thinness of the tower walls and its precarious position at the point of the spur.

At this time the donjon was aesthetically enhanced. A new

entrance door frame in the classical style, used during the end of the reign of Henri IV, was installed. The installation of the chimney at the first floor (one level below grade), the windows with crossed mullions at the second floor (one level below grade), the two windows at the second floor (grade level) and the small shooting crenel can also be dated to this time. This work, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, corresponds to the transfer of the château from the Dubourg family to the d'Estaing family, through the marriage of Catherine Dubourg to Jacques d'Estaing.



Inner court facade vestiges of arched opening to granary

The transformation of the donjon into a debonair pavilion was an important step in the architectural domestication of the château. It probably occurred at the same time as the leveling of the surrounding walls (D - pg. 19), which further transformed the fortified château into a civil residence. The leveling partially sacrificed the martial appearance of the chateau's architecture as well as its defensive system.

The two long medieval east and west surrounding walls, each originally flanked by semicircular towers (d1 & d2 - pg. 19), were leveled to a height of less than three feet, leaving only a parapet. The courtyard (F - pg. 19) was leveled and the moat (bf - pg. 19) in front of the donjon was filled.

For forty years, between the death of Catherine Dubourg d'Estaing in the third quarter of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century renovation for Bishop Jacques-Joseph d'Estaing, the château was not inhabited by its seigniors. During this period, the château was superficially maintained by the lessors and its principal function was farming.



Curb stone in vestige of arched opening to granary

Under the d'Estaing farming leases at the end of the seventeenth century, the old seignior room on the east side of the second floor was used to store grain for animals kept directly under it on the east side of the ground floor. In the tradition of typical Auvergnat farms, there was a dirt ramp for carts leading to the second floor. The vestiges of a large, semicircular arched door can be seen on the exterior wall of the second floor. There are curb stones at the

base of each jamb to prevent wagon wheels from hitting the jambs. The two levels on the west side of the seignior residence probably remained as residential space.

Because a member of the d'Estaing family was to use the château, the residential portion was transformed through restoration, redecoration and furnishing into a comfortable dwelling. The 1710 date on a shield above the main entrance to the château memorializes the work.



Entrance door blazon

Sir Roger, 1753-1765

Je ne sais Monsieur, si vous connaissez, par tradition, la situation de votre château. Elle est très forte et peu belle pour ne pas dire laide. Il est entre deux montagnes perché sur un rocher d'une hauteur prodigieuse formant un précipice au levant, midi et couchant. L'entrée est du côté du nord.

Lettre de M. de Runes à M. Roger, datée de Sauges, le 20 Octobre 1753,
Archives Nationales à Paris

Although rarely present at the château, Sir Francois Jean Roger was nonetheless an active owner for twelve years, maintaining a close relationship with his lessor, Pierre Bardol, a merchant from Saint-Flour.

The good administration and the important restoration work done at the château by Sir Roger enabled his son, Pierre-Victor to sell the domain at Sailhant for a good price after only ten years.

On July 20, 1765, the land and seigniority of Sailhant was sold to Messire Etienne de Serre de Saint-Roman, described by the sales contract as a “knight, baron of Merveis and Combret, lord of Saint-Roman, Ville-Juif and other places, advisor and secretary of the king of House of France and his finances, ordinary master in his chambre des comptes, living in Paris.”

Château du Sailhant, c. 1753-1765

Monsieur Roger se proposant d'avoir au château deux chambres, deux gardes robes, un cabinet et une antichambre dans la grande pièce séparée par trois cloisons de bois. Et n'y trouvant que trois croisées, ce qui n'est pas suffisant pour remplir son objet, il demande si on peut aisément percer dans les murs de face ce qu'il lui faudra de plus de croisées; les murs ne sont-ils pas trop épais et trop difficiles à percer? En supposant qu'ils puissent se percer, cela ne causera-t-il pas de dommages au reste des murs dans lesquels ces croisées pourront être ouvertes?

Réponses de M. De Runes du mémoire à lui envoyé par M. Roger sur
la terre de Saillans, (non daté, début 1754) *Archives Nationales a Paris*

Immediately after his acquisition, Sir Roger had a condition survey performed followed by a repair estimate. The survey showed that the condition of the château had deteriorated in the forty years since it had been renovated. It mentions that the windows and doors were without enclosure and the donjon roof was in poor condition.

The principal transformation during the eighteenth century, substantially impacting the court side of the chateau, was the reconstitution of the facade of the seigniorial residence, the passageway bay and the bay to the west of the passageway. The quoins still remain in the portion of the facade that was grafted onto the angle of the seigniorial residence. The erection of the three-centered depressed arch of the entry passageway was part of the reconstruction campaign of the facade.

The reconstitution consisted of opening windows disposed into seven regular bays consisting of five bays in the seigniorial residence and two bays to the west of the seigniorial residence. The openings may have had a window surround installed at this time which was replaced in the nineteenth century.

There are distinguishing characteristics between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century work. The entire nineteenth-century renovation is characterized by exposed stone facades without a rendering coat*. In the seven bays from the eighteenth century, remains of rendering occurs over the relieving arches of the windows and over the passageway arcade, indicating that these elements were in place at the time of the eighteenth-century rendering installation. Since the surrounds of all eleven bays are the same, it is assumed that they are a nineteenth-century installation.

* Cement mortar covering the wall surface.

The insertion of windows was not accomplished by simply creating openings. A substantial portion of the facade wall was actually demolished and rebuilt. There are traces of heavy intervention on the inner court facade of the seigniorial residence. At each bay, large vertical breaches were cut from top to bottom. This process obliterated traces of most of the original openings.

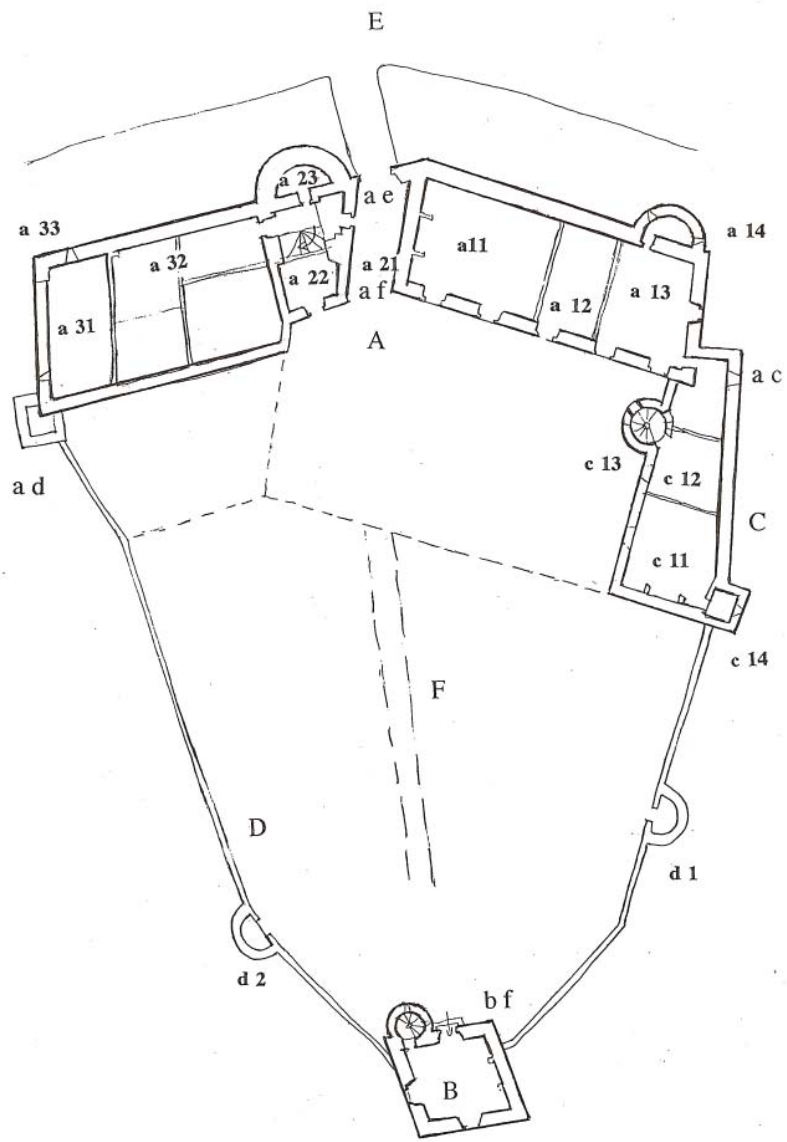
Sir Roger's work at Château du Sailhant between 1756 and 1758 also included obliquely cutting down the northeast semicircular tower to support a sloping roof as a continuation of the slope of the north side of the seigniorial residence. The semicircular tower to the west of the château entrance (a23 - pg. 19) was probably similarly lowered



Inner Court facade



Château du Sailhant -- Inner court



Floor plan of Château du SAILHANT circa 1765

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Started by the patricians, finished by the plebians

Chateaubriand (1768- 1848)



The de Serres de Saint-Roman, Last Lords of Sailhans, c. 1765-1793

“Art 6 - Le preneur aura la jouissance des greniers du château du Sailhans, de celui de l'écurie pour serrer les grains provenant du paiement des cens et redevances, et, en cas que ledits greniers ne seraient pas suffisants, le preneur pourra les serrer dans les appartements dudit château qui lui seront indiqués par ledit sieur de Saint Roman, à la charge de ne point surcharger les planchers, à peine de répondre en son nom propre et privé des dommages qui pourraient arriver aux poutres et soliveaux du plancher.”

Bail à ferme de la terre de Sailhant de Etienne de Serre de Saint-Roman en faveur de Pierre Bardol, par acte passé le 31 Mars 1772, Archives Nationale de Paris.

The possession of the land of Sailhant by Etienne de Serre de Saint-Roman was announced by a ceremonial visit to the château similar to the Sir Roger's visit of 1753. Etienne continued to renew the farming lease with Pierre Bardol, the tenant-farmer under Sir Roger. The lease of 1772 permitted the tenant to store the rent payments of grain both in the stable and in the château.

Letters of Etienne de Serre de Saint-Roman to Pierre Bardol show that Bardol was having increasing difficulties meeting the requirements of his lease because of problems with the taxpayers of the seignior.

In June of 1780, Etienne renounced the renewal of the Sailhant farming lease with Pierre Bardol. The Bardol family, who had kept the farming lease for more than forty years, lost their position at Sailhant because of French social evolution. In this period, immediately before the Revolution, the inhabitants of the seignior were becoming less willing to pay the dues and taxes being collected by the lessee of the domain. The new Sailhant farming lease went to Pierre Rongier, a bourgeois living in Saint-Flour along with Sir Taillandier.

After his father's death, Jacques-Philippe de Serre de Saint-Roman administered the domain of Sailhant. In 1788, he renewed the farming lease in favor of Jean Baptiste Rongier, son of the then deceased Pierre Rongier.

The domain then went from Jacques-Philippe to his brother-in-law Jacques Mathieu Augeard, a resident of Paris, a knight, advisor to the state, secretary of the Mandaments of the Queen, lord of Buzancy in Ardennes and the husband of Anne-Sophie de Serre de Saint Roman. Count Augeard migrated during the Revolution. In 1793, there was an inventory of his belongings and his patrimony was sequestered and sold.

Château du Sailhant, c. 1765-1793

“Je pourrais me dispenser de faire mettre des grilles de fer aux fenêtres dont vous me parlez puisqu'il n'y en avait pas lorsque nous avons passé le bail, mais je suis bien aise de contribuer à votre sûreté, aussy je vous prie d'y faire mettre de bons barreaux de fer que je payeray et à l'égard des volets, sy vous jugez à propos d'en mettre, nous les faisons à frais communs sy vous le voulez...”

Une lettre de Etienne de Serre de Saint-Roman à Pierre Bardol le 4 décembre 1777, Alfred Douët, Le Château de Saillans (1925).

Unlike the Roger family, the Saint-Roman family appear to have been less interested in increasing value by improving the condition of the château. In 1781, an inventory taken after the death of Etienne de Serre de Saint Roman, then known as the count of Fregeville and baron of Sailhans, showed that other than the chapel with its normal ornaments, the rooms were either empty or furnished with only a few used pieces of furniture. The furniture may have been some of the furniture left by the d'Estaing family after the sale of 1753. Since the lessors, Bardol and then Rongier, were using the château for only occasional use, they had probably added little in the way of furnishings. In this survey, irons for the feet and hands of prisoners were still in the château, probably in a room which was used as a cell. However no weapons remained.

A survey completed in 1781 states “that all the château windows have no glass or interior shutters with only exterior shutters. The château needs to be roughcast completely. All the beams in the château, the attics and in all the apartments need to be propped up.” These defects may have been caused by poor maintenance,- but they may also correspond to unfinished work left by Sir Roger.



Donjon

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"History - that excited and deceitful old woman!"

Guy de Maupassant

The Farmer Owners, c. 1793-1881

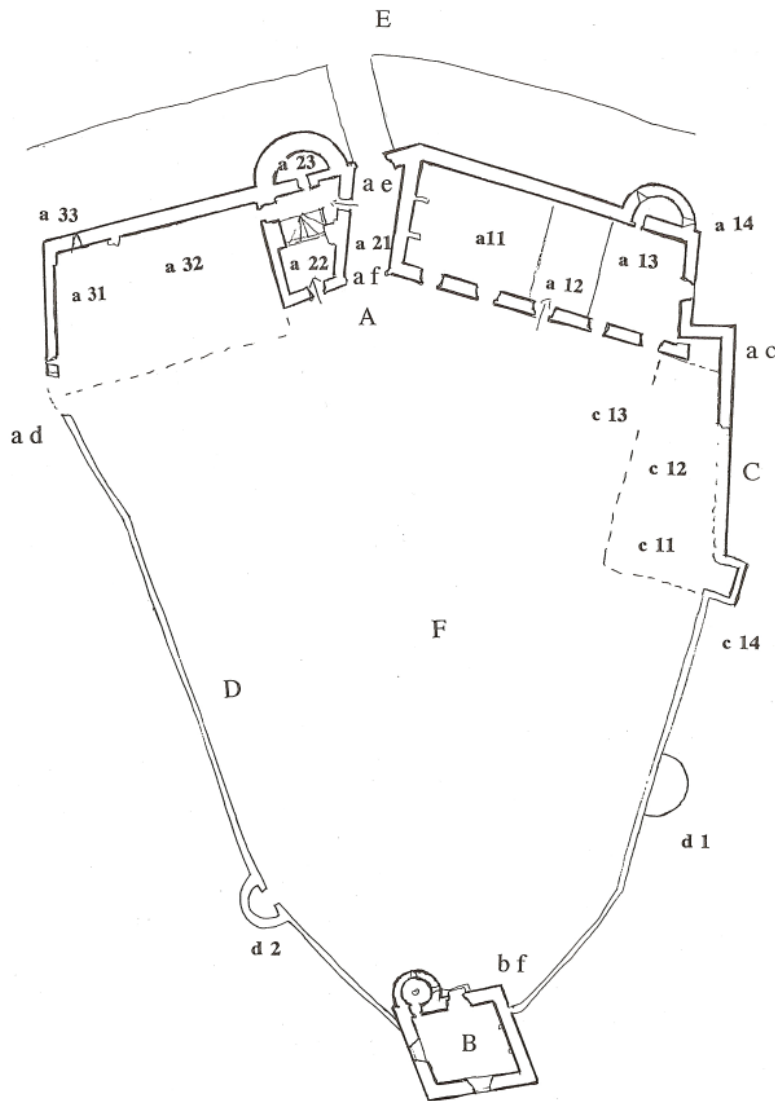
"Le château...fut racheté en 1793 avec une partie des terres par le fermier alors titulaire du bail, Jean-Baptiste Rongier..."

Château du Sailhant, Monographie Historique et Architecturale, Étude Approfondie de Documentation et d'Analyse Historique et Archéologique, Christian Corvisier, 1999

After the 1793 Revolution, the incumbent tenant under the farming lease, Jean Baptiste Rongier, bought the château and part of the lands. The château was in disrepair, providing only very basic comforts, but it had not suffered any direct destruction during the Revolution. Rongier's home was in Saint-Flour, so it is unlikely that he made changes or improvements to the château in the nineteenth century. In fact, the château most likely continued to deteriorate.

Rongier died in 1816. In May, 1817, his heirs, including a daughter who had married a member of the Bardol family, sold the property for 1,400 francs to Pierre Laurier, a farmer living near Sailhant.

When his father died in 1857, Michel Laurier inherited the property. He continued to use the ancient château's attics for storage and the lower level as a barn. In 1874 he sold the property for 22,000 francs to his son-in-law Jacques Genestoux, a merchant living in Boulogne-sur-Seine with his wife Marguerite Laurier. On October 27, 1881, Genestoux sold the property to Hippolyte Mary Raynaud for 70,000 francs.



Floor plan of Château du Sailhant circa 1850

Château du Sailhant, c. 1793-1881

The Napoleonic Cadastral Survey of 1820 (pg. 22) shows the east ell wing and the service/residential west wing as complete and covered, but demolition of these two elements occurred shortly afterwards. The Survey does not show the stable in the outer court.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the château and its associated buildings had been diminished by both decay and an 1830 demolition campaign. Many elements had deteriorated entirely or had been removed. The large stable of the outer court had completely disappeared. The east ell wing (C - pg. 31) had been demolished except for a small portion of the eastern and northern wall preserved by a small sloping roof. The service/residential west wing had also been demolished with the exception of the old fourteenth-century curtain wall on the north side, a small portion of the west gable wall, and the two bays to the west of the seigniorial residence. The seigniorial residence (including the passageway bays and vestibule) were preserved in

the state it was after the work of Sir Roger. It was empty and in poor condition, though the ceiling between the ground and first floor were well preserved. The donjon was one of the few elements still in good condition.

There is a legend that the Dubourg family treasure is hidden beneath the lake of Cascade de Sailhant. In the nineteenth century, the cascade water was diverted and the lake drained. Unfortunately for the organizers, nothing was found. A photograph recorded this exciting exploratory event.



Marie Athalina Laurier, daughter of Michel Laurier



Cascade of Sailhant, c. 1870



Cascade of Sailhant, c. 1957



Château du Sailhant from the northeast, late-nineteenth century



Château du Sailhant from the southwest, late-nineteenth century

Hippolyte Mary Raynaud, c. 1881-1904

“Mary Raynaud était un enfant ou un jeune homme tout particulier...sa tournure, sa démarche étaient d’une distinction, je dirais d’une élégance telle qu’entre mille on le reconnaissait; ses goûts, ses manières étaient tout aristocratiques.”

Le Finance Illustrée, 31 Août 1889

“Après la guerre, M. Mary-Raynaud, né pour les chiffres...où il a débuté plébéien, il devient prince.”

Le Cantal, c. 1889

“...il se fait pour la cinquième fois arrêter en juin 1921, sous le nom de comte de Rockland.”

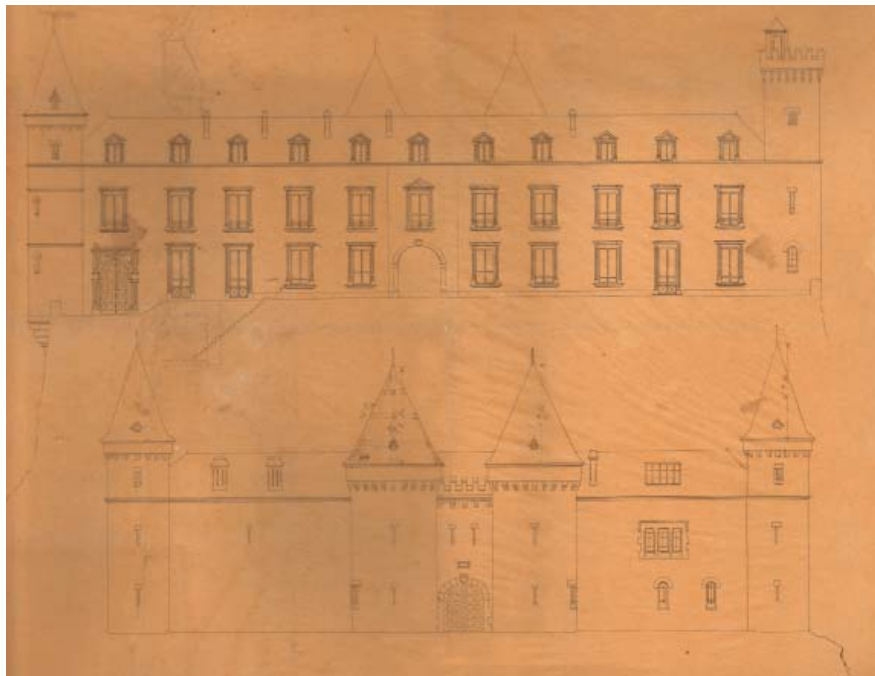
JOLLY (dir.), Dictionnaire des parlementaires français, Paris 1960-1977, notice biographique de Mary-Raynaud.



Mary Hippolyte Raynaud

Born to farmer parents in 1844 in Le Sailhant, the tiny hamlet at the foot of the château, Hippolyte Mary Raynaud was a fascinating character. An adventurer with grandiose ambitions, from daring financial setups to bankruptcies, he built a fortune with no future. After an initial failed business, in 1879 he established the Banque de la Bourse in Paris but had loses again during the Paris Bourse crash of 1882, the great French economic crisis of the nineteenth century. In 1886, he started a bank in Paris pompously named the Banque d’Etat, “Bank of the State.” Soon after he was living a grand life in his town house on the avenue de Bois de Boulogne married to Marie Nathalie Martine, an actress of the Royal Palace.

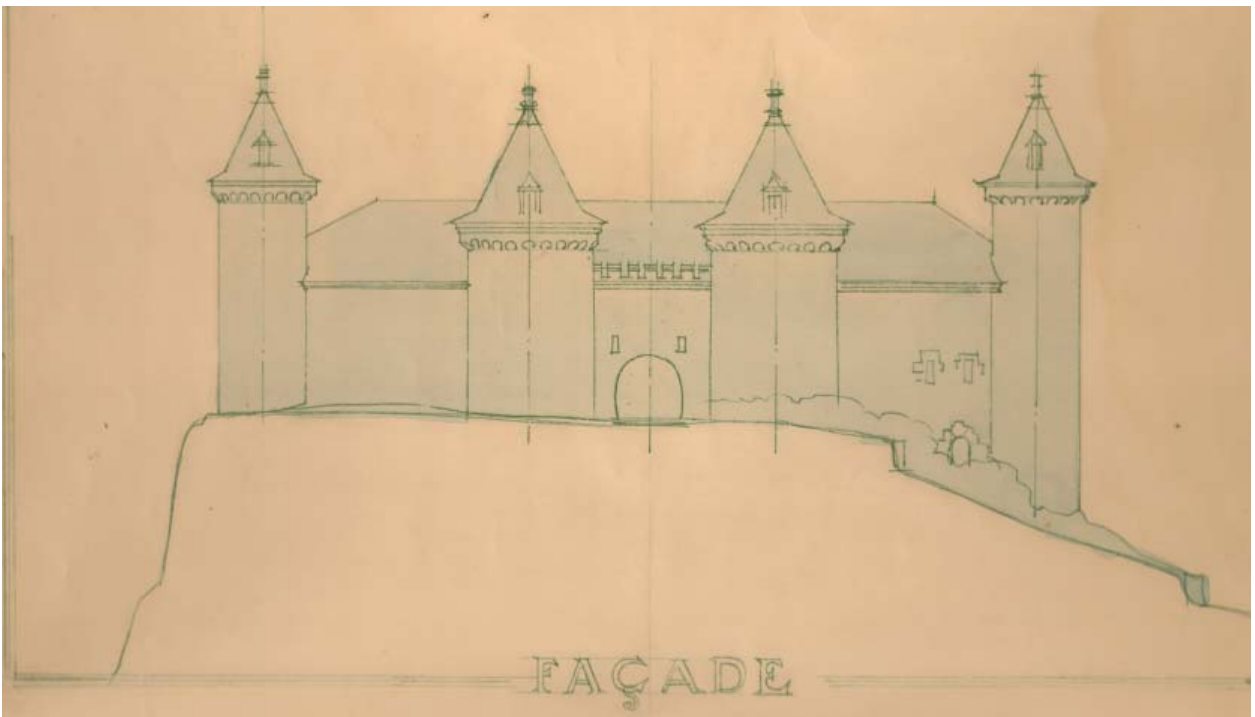
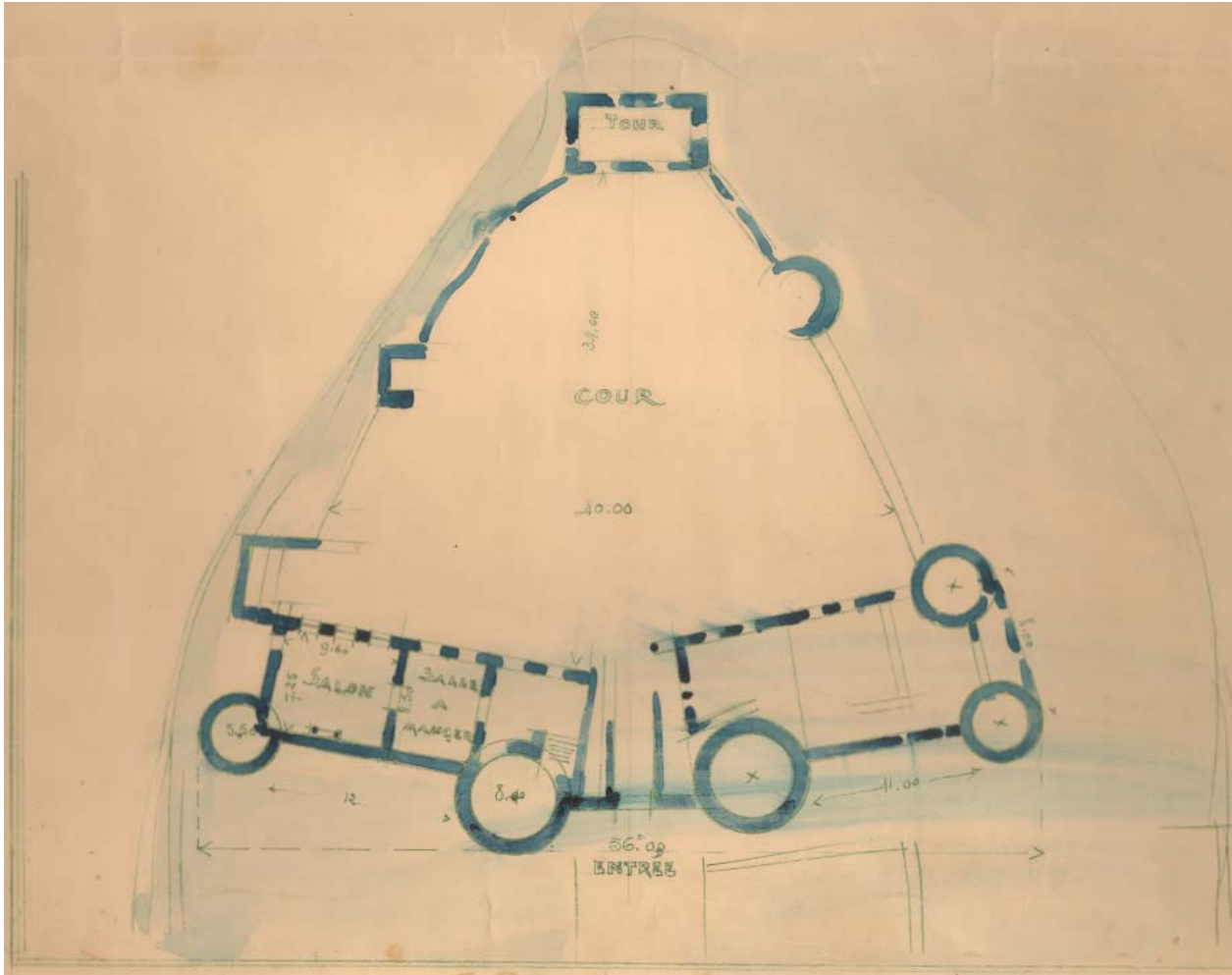
Probably nurturing a childhood dream of being the Châtelain du Sailhant “Lord of Sailhant,” he bought Château du Sailhant in 1881. At first he gave the château’s farming lease to his brother Jean Raynaud. The 1881 condition of the château is described “as half ruined and abandoned with the ground level used as the farming building of the property.”



1888 south façade drawing of Château du Sailhant

In 1888, Hippolyte Mary Raynaud began to take a more active role in the social and political life of the region, successfully running for local office.

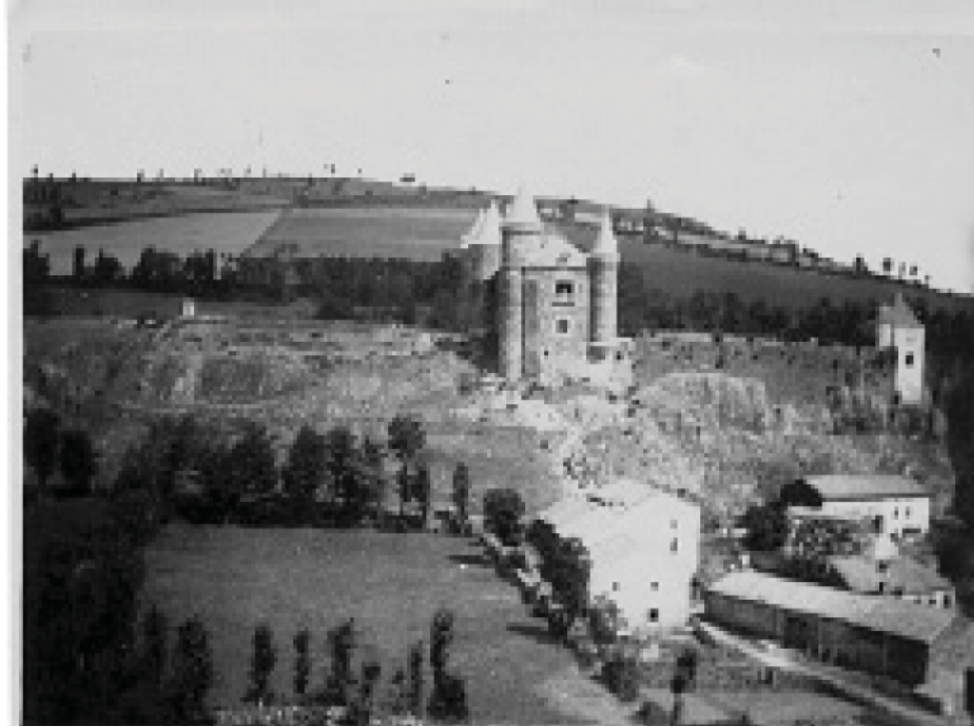
At this time, he took back the exclusive use of the château and began a spectacular restoration. But the wind changed at the end of 1890. A bankruptcy was disclosed and Raynaud was violently attacked by the press. On November 25, he left his Parisian townhouse taking a revolver, but without emptying his safe. He left without leaving a forwarding address. His debt was assessed



The design for Mary Raynaud's 19th century renovation

at 3 to 5 millions francs and the justice condemned him in his absence to a ten-year prison sentence.

In 1891, the work on the château was suspended before its completion. The unpaid contractors entrusted their interests to an official and the château and its domain were seized, along with two other adjoining properties belonging to Raynaud, the mill of Blaud in Roffiac and a house in Andelat.



Château du Sailhant from the west, c. 1890

First the furniture was auctioned off and then, on April 13, 1892, the three properties, distributed into twenty-eight lots, were also put up for auction. The winning bidder for the château and its dependencies was Marie Nathalie Martine, the wife of Hippolyte Mary Raynaud, but her husband's creditors continued to pursue her. By 1896, Raynaud seemed to have overcome his difficulties and opened a new bank in Paris named the *Crédit International*. But, at the beginning of 1904 this establishment also declared bankruptcy. Information concerning Raynaud's final years are obscure, rumors say he died in England in 1924-5.

Sold again as twenty-one lots at auction in 1904 by the court of Saint-Flour, the winning bidder was Doctor Paul Delbet, a Parisian whose family originated from Joursac, near the neighboring town of Neussargues.

Château du Sailhant, c. 1881-1904

“Un front d'entrée à quatre tours couvertes de toits à poivrière sur faux machicoulis a été créé, d'une part, en surbaissant les deux tours médiévales existantes, d'autre part en construisant à neuf deux autres tours conçues pour faire pendant à celles qui existaient.”

Château du Sailhant, *Monographie Historique et Architecturale, Étude Approfondie de Documentation et d'Analyse Historique et Archéologique*, Christian Corvisier, 1999

Raynaud initiated a number of significant transformations to the somewhat ruinous château. A new tower to the east of the entrance was constructed to match the medieval tower (a23 - pg. 31) to the west of the entrance, giving the illusion of a great medieval entrance with two symmetrical towers. A tower, matching the far easterly end tower (a14 - pg. 31), was built at the far westerly end of the exterior wall. This westerly tower blocks the outside of two fourteenth-century shooting slits (a33 - pg. 31) that may have been part of an early square tower at this location. Raynaud raised the two existing north side medieval towers above the roof line so that all four towers became the same height. The two old and the two new towers were covered with slate pepper

pot roofs over simple machicoulis.*

All four north-side circular towers of the château were made to rise above the roof line. In order to extend upward the two medieval and the two new towers as a full circular tower above the roof of the main block, it was necessary to create a cantilevered support for the unsupported half of each tower.

On the second floor of the seigniorial residence, including the ancient second floor grande salle, all of the interior wall surfaces were stripped of their plaster thus

eliminating the early frescos. The second floor grande salle of the seigniorial residence had probably been subdivided into small rooms by d'Estaing in the eighteenth century. These subdivisions may have been removed for grain storage in the late-eighteenth century or during the nineteenth century. In any case, during Raynaud's time, this floor had subdivisions for bedrooms with lowered ceilings served by a hallway against the north wall. The most easterly bedroom in the seigniorial residence (above aI3 - pg. 3I) was planned to be Madame Raynaud's bedroom and a bathroom was installed for her in the adjoining northeast tower (aI4 - pg. 3I), appropriately the ancient latrine tower. The sixteenth-century bay (ac - pg. 3I) which linked the seigniorial residence and the disappeared east ell wing was closed on the south side by a wall aligned with the south facade. This element was raised to become a slender square tower crowned with a belvedere trimmed with battlements.



Chambre de la Châtelaine

were left uncovered, as they were originally. The monumental sixteenth-century fireplace mantle from the west wall of the second floor grande salle (above aII - pg. 3I) was relocated to the north wall of the new dining room (east portion of aII - pg. 3I) and the matching fireplace mantle from the west wall of the first floor grande salle (aII - pg. 3I) was relocated to the north wall of the new salon (aI3 - pg. 3I).

The old service/residential west wing (a3I/a32 - pg. 3I) was extended with four additional bays similar to the seven existing ones. A vertical line on the courtyard facade shows the location of this 1888 grafting. Basalt-framed dormer windows were installed at the attic level. This homogenized the south elevation and gives the interior court

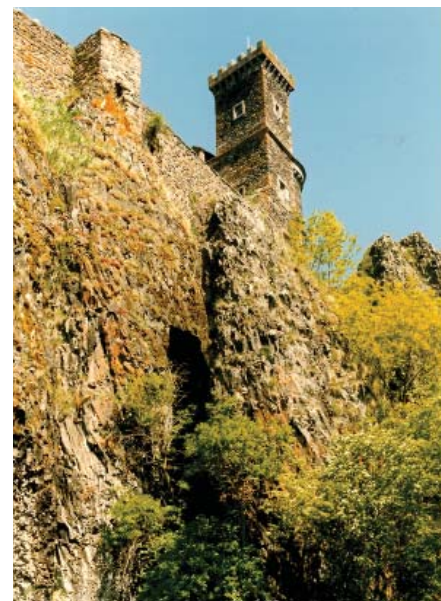
* a slight projection above the main tower shaft with openings through which missiles could be dropped on attackers



Château du Salliant from the southwest, early 20th century postcard

Château du Salliant from the southwest, early 20th century postcard

The ground floor of the seigniorial residence to the east of the passageway (a II - pg. 3I) was subdivided into an entrance hall with a stairway to the second floor, a dining room and a salon. Throughout, the eighteenth-century ceiling beams and joists



Square tower from the path to the Cascade.

elevation a certain unity that is characteristic of military and monastic French architecture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the ground level of the rebuilt service/residential west wing, a series of service rooms were installed including a kitchen and a servant's room with a stair to the second and top floors. A separate stair was installed linking the kitchen to the basement which contained a furnace room, laundry room and wine storage. A chapel was built within the block at the most western end of the ground floor. Taking advantage of the sloping land, the chapel is almost three feet lower than the ground floor allowing for a high ceiling. Stained glass windows depicting Joan of Arc and Charles VII were inserted in the west wall. Copying the habits of the old aristocratic families who were building new medieval style châteaux in the nineteenth century, a room to the east of the chapel was built to be used by a resident chaplain.

At the southwest corner, at the location of the old square tower that had been demolished between 1758 and 1830 (ad - pg. 31), a new round stair tower was constructed. This stair tower was designed to link the chapel to a large room on the western end of the second floor. Described in 1891 as the *chambre de la Châtelaine*, "room of the Lady" (a31 - pg. 31), it features a fifteenth-century fireplace, perhaps relocated from the donjon. A large leaded window with a narrow neo-Gothic balcony was installed on the west side of this room. The attic level was laid out to be extensive servant's rooms.

The restoration work of the château went quickly, and Raynaud was able to live there occasionally as early as 1889.

Newly installed small openings were given simple, chamfered, arched frames and a molded stringcourse on the towers that lined up with the cornice of the facades. These elements helped to unify the multiple campaigns of construction and alteration.



Doctor Jean-Paul Delbet and Germaine Comesasse, his first wife

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

"Work, Family and Fatherland"

Marechal Pétain (1856-1951)

The Delbet family, c. 1904-1997

At the 1904 auction of Château du Sailhant, Doctor M, Paul Delbet, son of a doctor, was the successful bidder. His first wife, Germaine Comesasse, the daughter of the Préfet de Police of Paris, had

died in Paris in 1914 without children. In 1918, he married his second wife, Antoinette Emilie Silhol with whom he had four children: Anne-Marie Augustine, born in 1919 and died at the age of 22 just one year after her marriage; Jeannine Marguerite, born in 1921 and living in Montpellier with her husband Jacques Lafont (the widower of Anne-Marie); Jean-Paul, born in 1922; and Pauline Antoinette, born in 1924 and living in Bagneux with her husband Jean Louis Gohin. Paul Delbet died on November 2, 1924 at the age of 57, just seven months after his last child was born. In 1931, his second wife married Comte Édouard Claret de Fleurieu, who died in 1945 at the age of 68. Antoinette died in 1961 at the age of 72.

Paul Delbet's only son, Jean-Paul, married Gabrielle Borel in 1962 with whom he had two children: Marie, born in 1964 and Marguerite, born in 1967. In 1984, Jean-Paul entered into an agreement with his sisters whereby their mother's estate was divided up in a manner that gave Jean-Paul ownership of the Château du Sailhant and other local property. Jean-Paul died in 1996.



Antoinette Emilie Silhol (Delbet)
19 years old

Château du Sailhant, 1904-1997

“Or, il semble que la reconstruction de 1880 ait été trop légère, que les tours n’aient pas la solidité suffisante, qu’entreprendre des travaux sur la charpente risque de faire apparaître des points faibles et des déformations.”

1960s letter from Jean-Paul Delbet to Monsieur Jantsen

The château that Doctor Paul Delbet bought in April of 1904 had been substantially renovated by Raynaud in 1888-1892. The auction notice of 1892 describes an almost finished renovation of the château that had been inhabited by Raynaud as early as 1889.

Delbet applied the finishing touches to the château, but some of Raynaud's proposed renovations were



Germaine Camecasse Delbet - first decade of the 20th century

never completed. The spiral stair in the southwest tower, which would have connected the chapel to the chambre de la châtelaine, “room of the Lady,” was never installed. The chimney cap for the chimney in this room remains to this day in the garden of a house in the village of Le Sailhant. Delbet used the chambre de la châtelaine as a library (above a31 - pg. 31) installing linen fold paneling on the walls and furnishing it with French neo-Gothic furniture. His efforts were focused primarily

on interior decoration. The fireplace mantles, millwork and hardware and the kitchen and the bathrooms had all been installed by Raynaud. It appears that Delbet carried out Raynaud's turn-of-the-century period-room style of interior decoration. Rooms were decorated in various French styles giving the impression of an ancient family château transformed by the tastes of succeeding generations. One room was decorated in the style of Louis XVI, another in the neo-Gothic style and a further room in the Art Nouveau style. Using wallpaper, paneling, fireplace mantles and furnishings, the Delbet family followed this popular practice.

During the twentieth century, Delbet replaced bathroom fixtures and kitchen appliances. The cast iron stove in the nineteenth century kitchen (a32 - pg. 31) was exchanged for a small propane one. In the ancient tower



Château du Sailhant, watercolor by Frank Boggs (1855-1926)

to the west of the entrance, a guest lavatory was installed on the ground floor and bathrooms were placed on the second and third floors.

With an apartment in Paris as their main residence, the Delbets used the Château du Sailhant almost exclusively as a summer house. Some of the surrounding land that had been bought at the auction was sold off.

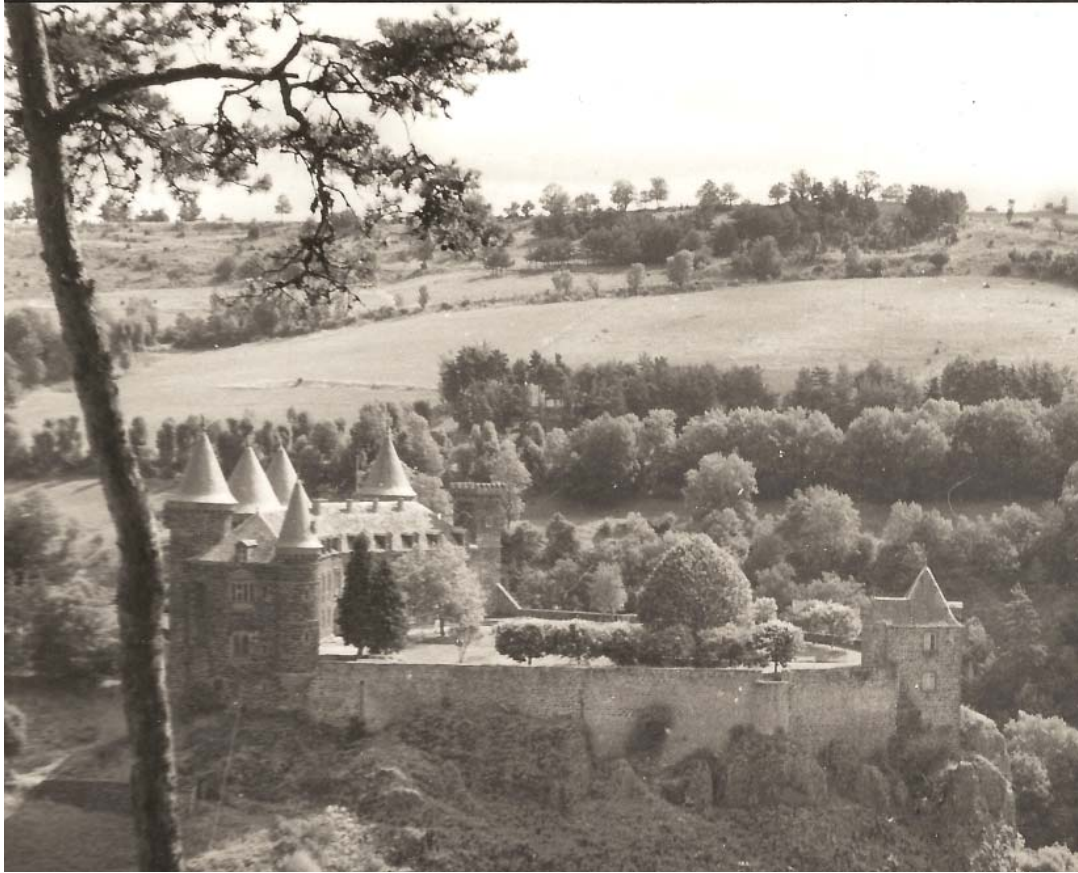
At the time of Jean-Paul Delbet's death in 1996, the château was in need of substantial maintenance work. Roof leaks in the main block had resulted in deterioration of the third floor plaster work and caused fungus rot to the second floor ceiling beams.

The roofs had areas without slate and there were large openings in the sheathing. On the north side, the two medieval towers and the two nineteenth-century towers had severe structural defects. Raynaud's work had resulted in four towers rising above the roof line as a full circle which rested only on a semicircular exterior wall. Three towers had their cantilevered semicircle portion supported by the wood floor beams and the fourth tower rested on a steel beam. Because the towers had shifted, the masonry work was unstable. The early twentieth-century electrical system had been upgraded in only a few areas and the plumbing was antiquated.

The Delbets can be credited with having kept the château without compromising in any way its historical features.



Antoinette Emilie Delbet de Fleurier, Ann-Marie Augustine, Comte Édouard Claret de Fleurier, Jeannine Marguerite, Pauline Anioinette & Jean Paul 1935 Collection of Marie Delbet



Château du Sailhant from the west, c.1970s



Library - 1997



Library - 1997



Salon, c. 1997

Joseph Pell Lombardi, c. 1997-2012

"We fail far more often by timidity than by over-daring.
David Grayson, *The Friendly Road*

Sailhant is a great, joyous project, but surely there were dozens of reasons for not buying another house in the Spring of 1997. Nonetheless, I never hesitated. From the moment I saw Sailhant, I knew I could bring much to this house and that it, in turn, would grant me great happiness. The complexity, the age, and the remoteness all appealed to me. I plunged in. A tutor was needed to upgrade my high school French so that I could tackle the French medieval architectural texts. I needed to visit the forty open-to-the-public Auvergne châteaux to determine precedents. I had to read and learn everything possible about French furnishings from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries (I was able, for the most part, to skip the eighteenth century when Sailhant was unoccupied by its seigniors). Like an intense love affair, for four years my thoughts were on Sailhant.

There is a Chinese saying: "May you live in interesting times." Surely all times are interesting and challenging, and any lifetime contains a wealth of events beyond one's control. At Sailhant, wars, revolutions, religious disputes, bankruptcy and death have all had their impacts. In 2001, the list of events that impacted Sailhant expanded to include a terrorist attack on New York City.

On September 11, 2001, much was to change in my life and the progress on my houses came to a halt. Sailhant was most affected because it was where I was doing the greatest concentration of work. The Attack



Entry Tower 1997



of September 11th would be both a financial and an emotional setback. For several months afterwards I was unable to concentrate on this remote house that seemed so distant in my mind. I found it impossible to read the weekly progress reports that had given me such pleasure in the past. The ongoing work -- analysis of historical paint colors, selection of bathroom hardware, installation of light fixtures, etc. -- all seemed irrelevant after September 11th. How could any of these things matter?

For the first few weeks, as the economic world spun out of control and my working capital became depleted, even the loss of ownership of Sailhant seemed to be a possibility. Was it history repeating itself? There were the occupations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries during the Hundred Years' War, the confiscation from the Dubourgs in the sixteenth century during the War of Religions, the mid-eighteenth century sale by auction of the d'Estaing ownership, the late-eighteenth sequestration forced by the Revolution, the Raynaud bankruptcies in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and the Delbet sale at the end of the twentieth century. Letting go of one's home is never happy and often tragic. Fortunately by mid-2002, New York City and, therefore, my financial affairs had stabilized and the work continued on Sailhant.

Chateau du Sailhant, c. 1997-Present

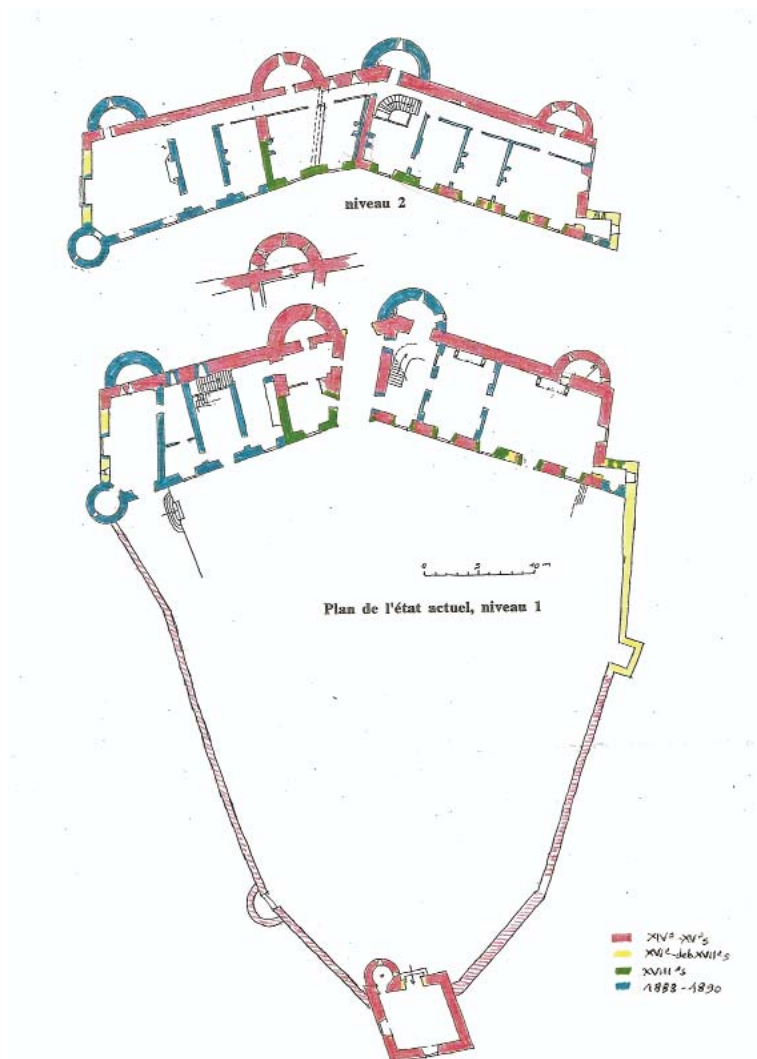
"Understanding a thing clearly is half doing it"

Lord Chesterfield

My first activity was to assemble all available material which concerned Sailhant. Alfred Douet's 1925 book, *Le Château du Sailhant et ses seigneurs* was an excellent start. It located primary sources and identified the proprietors and their genealogy in the context of historical events, but it contained frustratingly little architectural information and the construction campaigns. Most books on French châteaux-forts and châteaux of the Auvergne have photographs and basic information about Château du Sailhant and there are numerous early-twentieth century postcards. An original copy of a pre-Raynaud nineteenth-century photograph exists at the château (pg. 33).

I commissioned France Brunon, a local genealogist and researcher, to search the archives of Aurillac, the principal city of the department of Cantal, Saint-Flour and Paris. At the same time, I commissioned Christian Corvisier, an architectural historian and Doctor of Medieval Archeology, to investigate the château, review Madame Brunon's findings and prepare a monograph.

The conservation directive to



Château du Sailhant -- Construction Campaigns

myself was to understand the construction chronology, conserve and leave intact the existing Raynaud exterior composition, to install new heating, plumbing and electrical systems and to conserve the interior with the exception of investigating the possibility of re-configuring the second floor of the seigniorial residence to the ancient second floor grande salle.

Before any conservation work could start, a very serious structural problem had to be addressed: the stabilization of the four north towers. By 1996, two of the towers were critically unstable and the other two were relying on an identical failed system.

In consultation with structural engineers, I considered various support systems, but eventually decided to replace the large wood ceiling beams that were immediately below the towers with steel beams covered in wood.



Château du Sailhant -- Roofs

Château du Sailhant, c. 2000-2012

"...the tragic and mortal thing that is the building itself, the physical object that has journeyed across time, and whose roster of scars and alterations represents the most fragile aspect of a historic artifact: the sense of congealed time."

--Michael J. Lewis, Chairman of the Art Department at Williams

Collegian an article in the New York Times, June 23, 2002 entitled "Preservation."

With the difficult structural problems complete, I could begin the conservation work. The second floor grande salle had been subdivided into three rooms in the eighteenth century, reopened after the Revolution for grain storage and then redivided, with the addition of a hallway and lowered ceilings at the turn of the twentieth century. In the sixteenth century, the mantle in the present first floor dining room had been located on the west wall of the second floor grande salle and its location was confirmed by the soot under the removed plaster. But in the Spring of 2000, a shooting slit from the time of Phillippe-Auguste in the thirteenth century was most unexpectedly discovered in a location that would have been blocked by the sixteenth century chimney. The discovery confirmed that this wall (between a2I & a1I - pg. 3I) was the original termination of the seigniorial residence and that at some time prior to the sixteenth century the chimney of the second floor grande salle had been located elsewhere.



Restoration of the tower roofs

It appears that the ancient grande salles of Château du Sailhant originally followed the tradition of having the chimney placed on the long, windowless north wall. The location of a large Gothic fireplace mantle in local basalt stone of a size suitable for the north wall finalized the chimney location. The reopening of the second floor grande salle eliminated three turn of the twentieth-century bedrooms in a house with eight servant's bedrooms, none of which I needed.

As was traditional in France in the Middle Ages, there had originally been two grande salles, one above the other. The

entrance hall on the first floor of the seigniorial residence had originally been part of the lower level reception grande salle. This large room had also been divided into three spaces, probably by the tenant farmers. They had been fitted out as a vestibule, dining room and salon with wood floors in the eighteenth century and paneling in the nineteenth century. I gave no consideration to changing this historical configuration.

In the vestibule (a II - pg. 31) was an awkwardly placed nineteenth-century stair leading to the subdivided second floor grande salle. From the sixteen to the eighteenth century, a stair had been in the middle of the seigniorial residence. An inner court door (af - pg. 31) had led to the lower level reception grande salle (aII - pg. 31) and a stair (aIe - pg. 31) rose to the upper grande salle (upper a II - pg. 31) and the seigniorial room (upper aI3 - pg. 31). Reconfiguration would have resulted in compromising the dining room and the salon. In order to remove the interruption to the upper salle haute and create an open one-bay vestibule on the lower level, I decided to place the stair in the nineteenth-century east entrance tower. This tower had been used simply as a storage room on each floor. Placing the stairway in the tower also allowed for the reinstallation of the Renaissance mantle on the west wall of the reception room.

I adhere to the preservation principle that the facsimile is always worse than the ruin. In a conservation project of the complexity of Sailhant, I had to return again and again to this maxim. The kitchen, informal dining room, library, main dining room, salon, chapel, bedrooms and bathrooms were all retained in their nineteenth-century locations. Their decoration, which had evolved over the centuries, was likewise maintained.

Finishing details were a pleasure. Quarries were still producing, as they had for thousands of years, the thick, large basalt paving stones for ground floors. France has a seemingly endless supply of nineteenth-century bath fixtures and it still produces beautiful faucets and fittings. There are serious stoves manufactured by two-hundred-year-old firms and fine electrical switches and outlets in brass and nickel are available. A dedicated and capable local carpenter, plumber and electrician made further high-level finishing possible.

On Memorial Day weekend in 2000 I met with Jean-Pierre Esbrat, a young man who had grown up in Le Sailhant, the small village at the base of the château. He had approached me through the researcher, Madame Brunon, claiming to know the location of the château's water source and to have an unknown nineteenth-century photograph of the château. He led us through the woods of the hill to the north of the château to an extraordinary, probably prehistoric, man-made reservoir fed by a cascade with a shaft hewn into the solid rock. Partially natural and partially man-made, the source is a mysterious wonder. The magnitude of the work makes it difficult to comprehend when and how it was built and who constructed it. The photograph was equally exciting. For three years I had studied the known nineteenth-century view from the northeast, wishing that the photographer had taken views from other directions. Esbrat, with great flourish (he knew the importance of his treasure), revealed a large copy of a pre-Raynaud view from the southwest. It confirmed the hypotheses in Christian Corvisier's monograph.

With the conservation and restoration work complete, the seigniorial residence of the château now has its second floor grande salle (upper aII - pg. 31) and seigniorial room (upper aI3 pg. 31) in their thirteenth-century locations on the second floor.

The ground floor of the seigniorial residence has a vestibule with its chimney still in its sixteenth century location. The salon and dining room created in the nineteenth century remain as they were when they were built. The ground floor service wing is still accessible through the I4th century door from the entry passage (a2I - pg. 31). The ground floor of the service wing contains, as it did in the nineteenth century, the chapel (a3I - pg. 31), caretaker's rooms, informal dining room, kitchen and the château office (a22 - pg. 31). The second floor of the service wing contains the nineteenth-century library (upper a3I - pg. 31) and two bedrooms and a sitting room in the I6th century portion (upper a32, a22 & a2I - pg. 31).

The top floor contains the servants rooms used as guest bedrooms. The fourteenth century tower to the west of the entrance (a23 - pg. 31) and the fourteenth century tower at the east corner (aI4 - pg. 31) contain bathrooms/toilet rooms as they did in the fourteenth to twentieth centuries. The ancient latrine in the ground

floor of the east corner tower has been left undisturbed. The main stair is in the nineteenth century tower to the east of the entrance and the nineteenth-century service stair remains.

On the entrance side, the fourteenth-century windowless wall with four towers remains undisturbed. The inner court facade continues to have its seven bays of eighteenth-century openings and four bays of nineteenth-century openings. The re-configured sixteenth-century linking bay tower (ac - pg. 31) and the re-configured early tower on the west end of the inner court facade (ad - pg. 31) also remain undisturbed.

The ancient lower level and fifteenth century upper level donjon (B - pg. 31) has been conserved without changes. The twenty-five-foot square tower presently has four levels. The first floor room has an ancient chimney flue with a later, seventeenth-century, mantel. This room, probably the auditorium for seigniorial justice, had either a groin or a rib-vaulted ceiling. The vault had been substantially removed, but segments are still visible underneath the existing flooring.

At the second floor, the exterior entrance door is approximately at the level of the inner court. It can be supposed that before the classical door frame was installed, this door was the termination of a drawbridge. The top floor is the cut down portion of the next upper floor. On the exterior of the east wall, the bases of a cantilevered latrine confirm the original use of this floor as a bedroom.

Further chapters will discuss the wallpaper selection from nineteenth-century patterns by the French company, Zuber, and the significant discovery of striped painted arch over Salon window imitating fabric in 2002.

In 1888 Raynaud created a chapel and a room for a resident chaplain at Sailhant. The chapel was built into the ancient rampart walls which contain IVth century shooting slits. He installed a leaded glass window with painted images of Jeanne d'Arc, national heroine of France, and of Charles VII, whose coronation she made possible. After the Raynaud sale of Sailhant in 1904, the chapel fell into disuse. In 2006, the chapel was re-established as it had been at the time of Raynaud.

The floors are volcanic stone, the walls are covered in lime plaster and the ceiling has exposed painted beams. Placed on the altar is a XIth century Romanesque Madonna and Child. The Madonna is clothed, following Byzantine tradition, as if she were a priestess, with cloaks and veils that swathe her head and shoulders. Her shoes are distinctly dateable and there are remnants of early paint. Known as a Virgin in Majesty Statue, it is of the Auvergne. Severe in pose, solemn in spirit, archaic in style, the Madonna is enhanced and softened by rhythmical folds and rounded modeling. The likeness between Mother and Child is unmistakable.

The early XIVth century Apostle Candelabra is most likely from South Germany. It is tin plated iron with small remnants of early paint.

The chairs are XIXth century individually crafted Auvergnat Prie-Dieus, which reverse for kneeling.

Slowly, but with the greatest of excitement, the 500,000 piece, one thousand year old jigsaw puzzle was coming together.





Master Bedroom, 2006



Château du Sailhant -- Sitting Room Bath



Sailhant Virgin in Majesty - Auvergne
XIth century



Chemin de Croix
Christ on one side and the Virgin in Majesty on the other
Basalt
Saint-Flour, Cantal
XVth century



Stations of the Cross - Paris
XIXth century



Holy Water Font
Auvergne



19th c. Stained glass windows -- chapel.





