

\* **Joseph Reinach** was the editor of *La République Française*, a journal founded by Gambetta. It faithfully supported him and published a bibliography about him in 1884, which is still a reference work.

\* Head of the National Defence government in Tours in 1870, Gambetta was nicknamed the "dictator of Tours" because of his vigorous, autonomous policies. After the war, many of his political opponents claimed that he had become wealthy by embezzling funds.

## A modest building

"A poor little house, a gardener's shack that shakes whenever there is a storm and with damp everywhere" – it is in these unflattering terms that Les Jardies was described at the end of the 19th century by Joseph Reinach\*.

It is a **modest**, three-storey, former **wine-grower's house** with low ceilings and a small number of narrow, ill-lit rooms, and helped squash the legend according to which Gambetta had seized a château during the war of 1870\*. The only exception to this rule is the drawing room, which was added to the building in the 19th century and which is much larger and better lit.

It is revealing that Gambetta needed to have a summerhouse built on the ground sloping down from the house in order to house his library and study, for there was not enough space in this little building which he had initially bought as a country retreat. At the end of his life, Gambetta started negotiating with Balzac to buy his former home. The Maison des Jardies is charming despite its simplicity. The wine-red shutters and trellis on its facade lent it a **rustic appearance**, helping to make it a pleasant spot. As of 1880, Gambetta spent more and more time in Les Jardies. In a letter to Léonie he affectionately refers to it as 'my cottage', where he enjoyed meditating on things in silence.

A **major restoration campaign** was carried out between 1990 and 1996. The facades, interior, furniture, and garden were all restored, as was the terrace of the drawing room, which had been removed in 1939 and which was recreated during this campaign of works.

# Gambetta's monument

## A tenacious tribute

In 1889 Benedetta Lenis, Gambetta's sister, gave the State a piece of land next to the Maison des Jardies so that a monument could be built in memory of her brother, thanks to the Comité des Alsaciens-Lorrains. The necessary funds had been collected from the populations of the two regions annexed by Germany since 1871. The statue was designed by the Alsatian **Auguste Bartholdi**, and inaugurated with great pomp on 8 November 1891. It is primarily a **eulogy** to Gambetta's action in organising national defence, and a tribute to the fact that Gambetta never resigned himself to ceding Alsace and Lorraine to the victorious Prussians.

His decision to be the parliamentarian for Strasbourg when Alsace was occupied is the clearest proof of this. The monument is a powerful symbol and until 1920 its base contained the **heart of the great man**, which was then removed to the Panthéon at the same time

as the body of the Unknown Soldier in a ceremony symbolically reuniting the "saint" and "martyr" of the French Republic. Bartholdi's work is sober and powerful and illustrates Gambetta's determination, shown solemnly holding the flags of the two lost provinces against his heart. At his feet, Alsace and Lorraine await deliverance. The monument is particularly representative of official statuary of the 3rd Republic, being both grandiloquent and allegorical. It is one of the few late 19th-century monuments in honour of Gambetta to have withstood the wave of dismantling in the 1950s, and it was listed as a historic monument in 1995.

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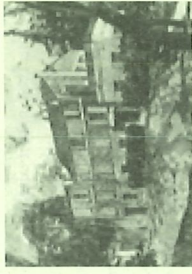
# CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX

English

# maison des Jardies

The retreat of the great and good The Maison des Jardies was built in the 17th century on the southern slopes of the Domaine de Saint-Cloud, and was originally a simple wine-grower's house. Its relaxing setting and ideal location near Paris attracted famous people who they left their mark on the site over the following centuries.

Balzac moved into a large property there in 1837 that he wished to develop, in a hamlet called Les Jardies. He housed his gardener Pierre Brouette in the wine-grower's house. This is the building



Léon Gambetta bought in 1878 for the modest sum of 40,000FF, furniture included, intending to find some rest there from his exhausting parliamentary life, with his mistress Léonie Léon. But he was not able to enjoy this haven of peace for long, as his health rapidly deteriorated after an accidental gun wound. He died of peritonitis at Les Jardies on 31 December 1882, at the age of 44.

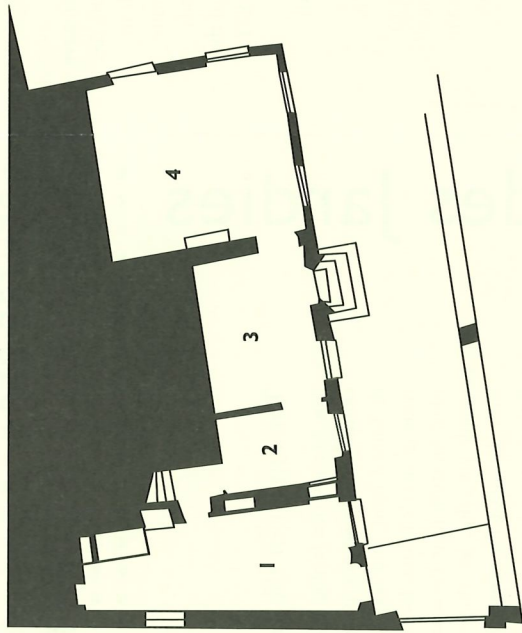
From then on, the house became a **place of pilgrimage** for politicians and Gambetta's many admirers. In 1887 the Gambetta family bequeathed Les Jardies to the State. The pavilion was neglected during the 1980s before restoration works began in 1990, and it was added to the supplementary list of national monuments in 1991. It is now open to the public who can admire some of the furniture and many **souvenirs of the great statesman** of the 3rd Republic.

# History

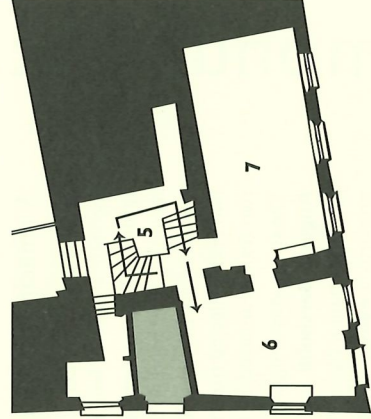
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# architecture





ground floor



first floor

The first room of the visit is the **kitchen - 1**, which also acts as the entrance hall. What is immediately striking is its simple, rustic style. One notable feature is a dresser whose top has been planned off since the ceiling is too low. It belonged to Balzac who is said to have hidden it in this room to stop it being seized by bailiffs. The cast iron stove at the far end of the kitchen also dates from this period. This room, which serves as both a passageway and work area, was once reserved for the domestic staff.

Moving on through the ground floor, you arrive in the **hall - 2**. This is the only room wholly devoted to the memory of Balzac, who never lived in this house which served as his gardener's lodgings, but in a vast chalet nearby. The display case in a doorway houses a monumental plaster head of Balzac by Rodin. The next room is the **dining room - 3**.

The door opening onto the garden used to be the main entrance for the people who lived here. This room now contains many commemorative objects.

Photographs of Gambetta's family members show how attached he was to his kin, thanks to whose help he was able to overcome the ordeals of his political life. There are also reminders of the events which helped make him famous at the beginning of his political career, such as the hot air balloon flight\*. The hat worn by this famous son of Cahors for the occasion is conserved religiously in the display case. Finally, the way the furniture is arranged in the **drawing room - 4**, a vast, well-lit room, has been left untouched since Gambetta's death. It is easy to imagine the atmosphere that reigned in Les Jardies over a century ago, in this calm spot on the forest's edge. Among various works depicting him at the height of his glory is a bust by Jean Carries which, without idealising him, captures the force of his personality and represents his features and air of determination.

\* During the siege of Paris by the Prussians in 1870\*, the National Defence government named Gambetta Minister for Home Affairs, and head of the Tours delegation in charge of co-ordinating military action. In order to leave Paris he had to take a hot air balloon from the butte Montmartre, where he was cheered off by the Parisian crowd.

Go back into the hall where the **staircase - 5** leading up to the first floor has a **landing** where pictures and medals evoke the key role played by Gambetta in the war of 1870. In particular he was energetically opposed to the German annexation of Alsace and part of Lorraine.

A reproduction of a highly symbolic painting "The Alsatian woman, offered to the Republican leader by the women of Alsace in 1871", suggests the gratitude and hope the hero of the National Defence inspired. The original painting is now housed in the Jean-Jacques Henner museum in Paris.

The former **bathroom - 6** leading off the bedroom on the first floor is a small room that now contains various representations of Gambetta, including caricatures and other illustrations. It provides a glimpse of how the politician was seen by his contemporaries, combining both admiration and irony. One of them is an anonymous caricature which appeared in the Italian edition of the journal *Le Perroquet*, showing Gambetta as a French cock puffing up his chest because he had placed "France first and foremost".

The layout of the furniture is unchanged in the **bedroom - 7** and, together with the multitude of funerary objects, everything here commemorates Gambetta's death in this room, as well as evoking the way he was assiduously worshipped up until the Second World War. It includes the bed where he died after having lain ill for twenty days, and the casket in which his heart was kept and which used to be housed in the base of the monument by Bartholdi.



To find out more:  
**LÉON GAMBETTA :**  
**UN SAINT POUR**  
**LA RÉPUBLIQUE ?**  
 Véronique  
 Magnol-Mallhache  
 Éditions Caisse nationale  
 des monuments  
 historiques et des sites  
 1996  
**GAMBETTA, HÉRAUT**  
**DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE**  
 Pierre Antonmattci  
 Éditions Michalon, 1999