

In Cazères sur Garonne (Haute-Garonne, France), as soon as the name of d'Espouy is pronounced, the important works of the architect who led the restoration of the church, the refurbishing of the market-hall and the construction of the war memorial are immediately associated with him.

However, very few people know the immense extent of his works in France, abroad, as well as those of his son Jean and a cousin Raymond.

This article, written with the help of Mr. Michel Lécussan, great-grandson of Hector d'Espouy, proposes to take the reader to the discovery of superb works as diverse as varied, in the architectural, decorative fields and even mountaineers.

As it is an heritage magazine, it was thought desirable to first, present the buildings, all of which are worthy of great interest, and then the works of the d'Espouys in these same buildings.

### **The origins of Despouy**

The ancestors of the Despouy arrived in Cazères, France, around 1810 when Henry, the grandfather of Hector established himself as a wood merchant, close to the church square.

One of Henri's four sons, Léon Despouy, occupied the magistracy of peace of Cazères for twenty-seven years and was the father of Hector.

The birth certificate of Hector Jean-Baptiste Marie Désiré Despouy states that he was born on May 8, 1854 at 4:00 am in Salles sur Adour, canton Tarbes (Hautes-Pyrénées) in the house of Marie Caroline de Carrère, born Meritens de Rozés, 57 years old, housewife.

Hector is the son of Bernard Léon Despouy, 38 years old, owner and Rose Marie Baptiste de Carrère, 23 years old, without profession, his wife and domiciled in Cazères (Haute-Garonne).

This family Despouy would have bought the land "noble" around 1776 to Jean de Bachos, who would have sold them to pay debts.

It should be noted that the register of civil status, noting the birth of Hector, first appears the name Despouy, but the following marginal entry was added:

"By judgment of the civil court of Tarbes, dated December four, eight hundred and seventy-two, registered, the act opposite has been rectified in the sense that the name of the father of the child whose birth is ascertained by this act must be written by d'Espouy instead of Despouy. For mention in accordance with the judgment ...".

The reader will understand that Hector's mother, who lived in Cazères with her husband, a judge of the peace, had returned a few days to her mother's house, for the birth of her first child, and that thereafter the family name would be written in French « d'Espouy ».

### **Hector d'Espouy (1854-1929)**

Hector d'Espouy spent his youth in Cazères. Like many artists, his talents as a painter and draftsman were revealed from an early age.

He is forced by his father to commit to a career of architect, more brilliant according to the paternal instinct.

During his secondary studies in the Jesuit schools of Montauban and Toulouse, then a resident, he was known for drawing constantly.

He took pleasure in copying old works of art where even the pictures of his parents' portraits. Thus, naturally, he was selected for the School of Fine Arts in Toulouse, then that of Paris in 1876.

He then attended the workshop of Honoré Daumet. At the time, Daumet assisted Louis Duc for the extension of the Paris Palace of Justice and the reconstruction of the famous Chantilly Castle for the Duke of Aumale.

Hector d'Espouy succeeds particularly well at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Fine-arts school) in Paris.

He remained, however, very attached to Cazerès.

In 1884 he drew the plans for the pulpit of the church (see Eglise de Cazères).

On August 2, 1884, he was awarded the first Grand Prix of Rome for a spa project. This led to his residence at Villa Medici in Rome, Italy, from 1885 to 1888.

He travels then Italy and all its historical sites. During this stay, he travels to Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece, drawing and sketching tirelessly.

He won medals of 3<sup>o</sup>, 2<sup>o</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> class at the Salons des Champs Elysée, Paris, in 1884, 1890 and 1892.

His drawing of the Basilica of Constantine in Rome earned him the medal of the Salon of 1890.

These ancient monuments, where they are left, impress him to the point that he wrote to his family:

*"These noble buildings still appear to me as the highest expression of common sense ... They are of perfection and incredible simplicity in every detail. The more I study them, the more I am lost in admiration ... "*

Back in Paris, although architect of training, it is towards painting and decoration that he will obtain many contracts for public places.

It was also during this period that he proposed to the municipality of Cazères plans for a renovation of the church and a profound modification of its exterior facade (see Eglise de Cazères).

Because of his attraction to painting, he obtained several decorating orders for many public places: museums, theaters in France and even abroad.

In 1889, he obtained his diploma of architect DPLG (graduated by the government) obtained after 7 years of studies.

In 1893, he joined the Society of French Orientalist Painters, newly created by Léonce Bénédict. As such he will be selected to be part of the jury of the Villa Abd el tif (Algiers) from 1907. (See Villa Abd el tif).

In 1895, he was appointed Professor of Ornamental Painting at the National School of Fine Arts in Paris. One of his students will be Raymond d'Espouy, a cousin, future painter, cartographer and renowned pyrenist.

He also made models of tapestry for the manufacture of Gobelins.

Hector d'Espouy was the architect of many particular works such as the reconstruction of the paintings of the old staircase of the Ambassadors of the Palace of Versailles according to the old drawings and those of the grand staircase of the Castellane hotel, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, in Paris.

He published in 1897, Ancient Architectural Fragments, in 1905, Ancient Monuments, then in 1925, Fragments of Architecture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. (See Architecture Books ....)

He stays frequently in his hometown, Cazères, where he owns a mansion, place Jean Jaurès, beautifully decorated (See various works).

He won a gold medal at the 1900 Paris Universal Exhibition.

He was knighted by the Legion of Honor in 1901. This decoration was handed to him in Paris by M. Emile Maruéjouls on May 1st, 1901. Mr. Maruéjouls, officer of the Legion of Honor, had been Minister of Commerce, of industry, posts and telegraphs in the second ministry Brisson in 1898. He had been Deputy of Aveyron from 1889 to 1906.

Hector d'Espouy married on December 29, 1908 in Paris Francine Caroline Ansay (1859- ...) who had given him a son Jean (1891-1921) whom he recognized him at the wedding.

### **Key Achievements**

- 1884: making paneling of the pulpit of the church of Cazères. (see Eglise de Cazères)
- 1888: Renovation of the church of Cazères (See Eglise de Cazères)
- 1890: sketches for the Lobau Gallery of Paris City Hall (see Hôtel de ville Paris)
- 1891: fresco of the ceiling of the entrance to the Pantheon of Paris (See Panthéon Paris)
- 1893: frescoes of the thermal establishment of Mont-Dore (Puy de Dôme). (See Thermes du Mont-Dore)
- 1893: participation in the jury of the villa Abd el tif in Algiers (see villa Abd el tif)
- 1895: decoration of the foyer of the Royan Municipal Casino (see Royan Municipal Casino)
- 1897: interior decorations of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium) (see Tervuren Museum)
- 1900: decorations of the porticoes of the water tower of the world exhibition (see Exposition universelle)
- 1900: decoration of the sculpture room of the Nantes Museum of Fine Arts (see Museum des arts de Nantes)
- 1902: Stage curtain of the French comedy theater (See Comédie française)
- 1902: decorations of the Rose Palace in Paris (see Palais Rose)
- 1903: murals of James Burden's house in New York (see James Burden House, New York)
- 1904: market hall of Cazères sur Garonne (see Halle de Cazères)
- 1910: decorations of the paintings of the "blue" salon of the Palace of the Legion of Honor (See Hôtel de Salm)

- 1914: with his son Jean, decorations of the Credit du Nord in Tourcoing (North) (See Credit du Nord)
- 1914: decorations of the Chamber of Commerce of Lille (Nord) ended after the war (See Chambre de commerce et Opéra de Lille)
- 1914: decorations of the Grand Opera of Lille (North) ended after the war (idem)
- 1915: interior decorations of the presidential train (See Train présidentiel)
- 1916: decorations of the "Dutuit" library at the Petit Palais (See Petit Palais)
- 1917: paintings "corner paintings" of the National Library of France (See Bibliothèque de France)
- 1919: Painting: "To the dead of the Great War" (See Monument aux morts de Cazères)
- 1923: memorial of the dead of Cazères (idem)
- 1923 and 1926: repairs touching up paintings at the Palais du Luxembourg (See Palais du Luxembourg).

Periodically works by the famous architect Cazérien Hector d'Espouy are now on the art market in the internationally renowned auction houses and on the specialized websites selling works of art online. It is a fact that the works of Hector d'Espouy are gaining more and more value.

For example, the watercolor "Bedouin" (Fig 2, Bedouin 1888, Christie's Catalog) was auctioned at Christie's on April 1, 2011 for the sum of 1,062 euros (one thousand sixty-two euros), excluding fees and taxes. It measures only 23 cm by 15 cm.

Two of his books "Fragments d'architecture" copies of which are at the Higher Institute of Arts of Toulouse, former School of Fine Arts, (ISDAT) were sold recently 2,000 euros (two thousand euros), excluding fees and taxes, on an online art sales site. One copy left for New York, another went to ABU DHABI.

These large, beautiful books contain detailed (heliogravure) records of Roman and Egyptian temples in the 1900s. (See livres d'Architecture).

Hector d'Espouy lived to the bottom of his passion for beautiful works and liked to share it.

In his book "Life and Books" Gaston Deschamps wrote in 1895:

*"Hector d'Espouy dreamed of happy times when architects, invested with supreme power, commissioned teams of painters and sculptors and invented ceilings and walls only to have them illuminated by Raphael or Titian ...".*

So caught up in his work, he has sometimes forgotten the time of important appointments.

Madame Claudine Billière d'Espouy, Hector's granddaughter, reported the following episode:

*"When he was in Paris in his studio, he used to paint very late. One evening, at work, he suddenly realized that he had forgotten the invitation to dinner of Mr. Raymond Poincaré, the President of the Republic.*

*He quickly put on a coat and rushed to the Elysee Palace. Arrived at the Palace, when the butler received his coat, he discovered that below he was wearing his work clothes smeared with marks of paint.*

*The President amused himself and it made the hot throats of the evening ...".*

Renowned artist, with works recognized and appreciated in the world, he had, in addition, the joy of working with his son.

He had a hard time recovering from his son's untimely death in 1921, only 30 years old.

Hector died on January 18, 1929 in Cazères. He is buried in a vault of the communal cemetery with his son.

A street in Cazères bears his name.

### **Jean d'Espouy (1891-1921)** (Text by Michel Lécussan)

Jean d'Espouy, son of Hector, was also a student in architecture class, the Beaux-Arts (Fine-arts) of Paris in the studio of Leon Jausseley (native from Toulouse, trained at the School of Fine Arts in Paris).

At the age of 20, Jean d'Espouy was awarded at the Salon des artistes français in 1911 and 1912 for his paintings.

Three of his watercolors entitled: The Salat Valley, October Evening and November Morning in Sainte-Croix-Volvestre are held at the National Museum of Modern Art (MNAM).

At the same time, he exhibited at the Salon a Pyrenean landscape, fresco currently located in the lobby of the Credit du Nord Tourcoing (North of France), a listed historical monument (See Crédit du Nord). He participates with his father in the decoration of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Lille (See Chambre de Commerce et Opéra de Lille).

In his childhood, he was the friend of Paul Vaillant-Couturier, with whom he did run the campaign on horseback and commits some antics in the balls around.

This youth is abruptly interrupted by the 1914-1918 war.

Volunteer at Saint-Gaudens (Haute-Garonne) in September 1914, he was initially incorporated into the 16th Squadron of the Transportation battalion, where he made portraits of soldiers and officers.

In November 1915, he was posted to the 9th Heavy Artillery Regiment and in January 1916 to the 84th Heavy Artillery Regiment. Since then, he has never stopped drawing in the heart of the fighting, to sketch on the spot, scenes that reflect the harsh reality of everyday life during the great battles of the Somme, Flanders, Ypres ...

According to his comrades, he often draws in moments of great danger and in the night, in the "*stinking cagna*", equipped with his little lamp, occupied long hours to compose subjects, to complete the sketches made outside.

Murdered by the years spent at the front, he returns, disgusted by the vanity of the massacres and devotes a deep hatred to this abomination. He is actively involved in the humanist movement for peace alongside Aragon, Gide, Courteline, Anatole France, Bernard Tristan, Barbusse, Vaillant-Couturier, R. Lefebvre ...

In 1920, fourteen of his drawings are published in the book : *XIII Danses macabres* by Paul Vaillant-Couturier published by Clarté.

The electronic work of Frédéric de Ravignan, Artefact 14-18: a sound evocation of the Great War, 2007 brings together the war drawings of Fernand Léger, Otto Dix and Jean d'Espouy, on the dedicated site.

While he painted the snowy landscapes of Cantal, near Chaudes Aigues, probably weakened by the years spent at the front, he is overwhelmed by pulmonary congestion, stopping a net career that looked promising.

He died in 1921 at the age of 30. Leaving behind him a widow and two girls.

He is buried in Cazères in the vault of the d'Espouy family.

During the eulogy pronounced on May 12, 1921 by the delegate of the classmates of the Atelier Léon Jaussely, one of his quotations was recalled:

*"Friends, an artist does not perish entirely if behind him, he leaves works, children of his mind."*

### **Raymond of Espouy (1892-1954)**

Raymond d'Espouy has the double peculiarity of having been a famous painter but also a great Pyrenean mountaineer who will earn him that a summit, the tip Cotiella, bears his name: Espouy peak.

Born in 1892 in Monléon-Magnoac (Hautes-Pyrénées) into a Gascon family, Raymond d'Espouy studied at the School of Fine Arts in Paris where he was a student of Hector d'Espouy, a relative enough distant, whom the family tie had called uncle.

Raymond was admitted to the society of mountain painters and exhibited regularly, leaving a considerable work devoted to the Pyrenees, drawings, watercolors, oils.

After the 1914-1918 war, he moved to Monléon-Magnoac as a farmer. Passionate about mountains and cartography, he acquired one of Franz Schrader's orographs, with which he practiced in the Pyrenean mountains. He developed the principle of the illuminated curve (see below) to improve the relief of maps. He also made a lot of drawings.

He made several orientation tables still visible. He drew all the plans and maps of the guide Soubiron (1920).

On October 25, 1916, he married Anne de Beupuy, niece of Henri Brulle. In 1949, he published the memories of this great Pyrenean, under the title *Ascensions*.

Member of the French Alpine Club (CAF) since the age of fifteen, he has been a collaborator of Jean Arlaud and his Youth Group.

Apostle of the Franco-Spanish friendship, he was a member of the Circus Catalan Circle (CEC), Montañeros de Aragón. With his many relations with the French and especially Spanish Pyrenees, he created the « Amitiés Montagnardes » (Mountaineer friendship), an association that gave rise to multiple meetings in his property in the tower of Mayrègne, in the valley of Oueil.

He studied in particular the massif of Cotiella. In 1954, with Pierre Billon (1917-2002), he made the first ascent of Pic Cotiella (2,825 m) which will bear his name: Espouy.

From 1949, he also began to practice caving, first in the massif of Posets, then in Aude and Ariège.

In 1951, he was elected French secretary of the French-Spanish commission of Pyrenism, as well as president of the youth group.

He died in 1954 under an avalanche in the valley of the Frèche during a winter ascent of the peak of Aneto on skis. His daughter Chantal d'Espouy is also a high-level pyrenean. She practiced all climbing disciplines. She is also author of collections of poetry and texts on the Pyrenees.

Guy Fournié, a talented director, produced a film, in period costume, entitled "*Raymond d'Espouy, Pyrenean gentleman*" with the participation of Chantal. Through the document, Guy Fournié presents a real documentary sum about the man, the mountaineer, the friend and the researcher.

In July 1932, Raymond d'ESPOUY wrote about the cartographic curve enlightened by Art:

*"... There might be a new field of action for our colleagues from the Society of Mountain Painters Yes, indeed, passionate about the same goal, do not we work each other to give our dear mountains an ever more true and ever more beautiful expression? "*

He added more technically:

*"The curve, an element of cartographic design that is currently perfect from the" geometric "point of view, became the best means of" artistic "expression (character of the terrain, relief effect, ease of reading) if we illuminate naturally and accurately, by any means whatsoever, hence the need to preserve it to the peaks of the rocky massifs".*