

Le palais des ducs de Bourgogne

Burgundian Ducal Palace

THE PALACE OF THE CAPETIAN DUKES

Remarkably enough, political power has stood within these walls since antiquity, beginning with the Roman walls of the third century A.D. The Burgundian Dukes made it their residence throughout the Middle Ages, though we know almost nothing concerning the building before the fourteenth century. The Sainte-Chapelle*, built to fulfil a vow of Duke Hugues III in 1171 was the only element of the Capetian palace to pass through the centuries intact until it was razed in 1802.



1

Bar Tower
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THE BAR TOWER

Upon his accession to the dukedom in 1363*, Philippe le Hardi (the Bold) had the New Tower built by Master-builder Belin of Comblanchien. It was a residential tower of several stories, its vast rooms all provided with fireplaces (*fig.1*). The ground floor served as chapter-house for the Sainte-Chapelle and still displays its carved key-stones (*fig.2*). The tower took its name of Bar Tower from the imprisonment there of King René of Anjou, Duc de Bar, from 1431 to 1437.



2

Chapter-house of the Sainte-Chapelle
on the ground floor of the Bar Tower
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THE KITCHENS

Credit for the construction of a veritable palace between 1433 and 1460 really goes to Philippe le Bon (the Good), who wanted to “retire there in his old age”. The ducal kitchens, rebuilt in 1433, occupy a single room twelve metres (36 feet) on each side. The central vault is borne by eight columns. Three of the sides are taken up by double chimneys (*fig.3*); the fourth side,



3

The Ducal Kitchens
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to the west, boasts two high ogival arches, which allow light to penetrate through four rectangular windows without mullions. At the centre, the pierced keystone opens into a high chimney. The kitchens originally were twice the size : a second similar building housed bread and pastry ovens, served by a small interior courtyard with a well. This second kitchen was demolished in 1853 in order to offer more light to one wing of the museum, but the well is still in place, surmounted by a corbel in the form of a lion supporting a pulley and bearing the arms of Philippe le Bon : flint and fire-steel.



5

The Guard Room
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THE GUARD ROOM

The great hall of the palace is on the north side, first floor. Of impressive dimensions (18 metres long, 9 metres wide and high : that is 54 feet long 27 wide and 27 high), this hall takes up two stories of the building on the south side. It was conceived for the lavish festivities of the Burgundian Court. Four high cross-ribbed windows light it. After a fire in 1503 the immense fireplace was rebuilt in the flamboyant gothic style and the ceiling replaced. The musicians' gallery to the east was rebuilt during the reign of Henri II, but follows the original plan, as we can see from the small staircase embedded in the masonry. The gothic doors still visible opened into the private apartments of the first floor and, to the west, into the passageway connecting these to the Bar Tower. On the second floor, next to the fireplace on the south wall, were windows that permitted those in the second floor rooms to watch the ceremonies below. The hall takes its present name from the fact that during the seventeenth century the Provincial Governor housed his guards there. The tombs of the Dukes of Burgundy*, originally in the Champmol Charter-house, were transferred here in 1827 (*fig. 5*).



4

THÉODORE DE JOLIMONT,
The Ducal Kitchens before the destruction of the bakery
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THE DUCAL DWELLING

The dwelling is in large part well preserved. It was built between 1450 and 1455 by Jean Poncelet, architect from Lyon. The façade, which faces north on the Place des Ducs, retains its medieval aspect thanks to careful restoration at the end of the nineteenth century : four grandiose windows light the Guard Room. The façade is crowned by a balustrade, itself surmounted by a high attic decorated with dormer windows. Inside, successive modifications have transformed Philippe le Bon's palace over the centuries. But the gothic palace remains everywhere visible beneath the classic overlay. The cellars and vaulted rooms of the ground floor are intact.

THE TOWER OF PHILIPPE LE BON

The building of the tower, which dominates the palace and stands for ducal authority over all of Burgundy, was completed about 1460 ; it was built over earlier constructions which gave it a trapezoidal shape, slightly curved on the northern side, marked on the west by an inward turning angle and at the top by two successive



Philippe le Bon's Tower
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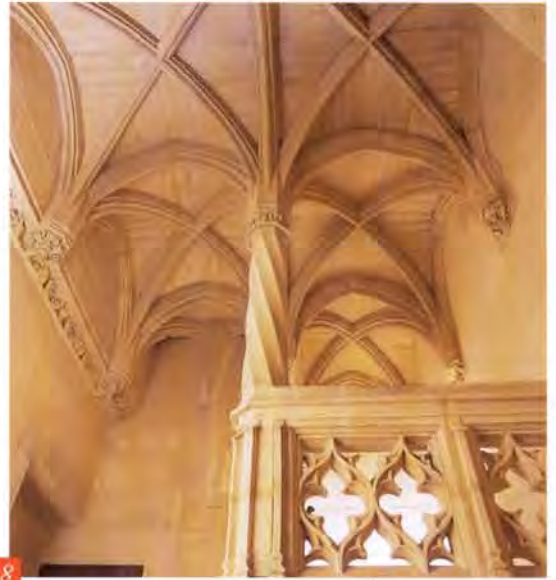
corbelled constructions (fig.6). The top floor room with monumental chimney is particularly ornate. The staircase becomes gradually more richly decorated as one ascends: plant motifs (vigorous grapevines with their bunches of grapes, delicate acanthus leaves), animal motifs (a curious bat with folded wings, Burgundy snails) and the sculptured portrait of the architect, compass in hand, with two workmen (fig.7), and frequently the flint and fire-steel, emblems of Philippe le Bon. The spiral staircase ends in an elegant four part ogival vault held up by a helicoidal column (fig 8).

THE VANISHED BUILDINGS

The buildings we see today were surrounded and extended by other buildings, which disappeared during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A wooden corridor keyed to the



Philippe le Bon's tower : The architect and the sculptors
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Philippe le Bon's Tower : The vault
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fortification wall joined the Bar Tower to the residence where the Bellegarde gallery now stands. A crenellated wall equipped with towers defended the palace on the south (fig.9). Towards the south a passageway connected the tower to a "yard" which grouped buildings for the children and servants of the Duke's household, laundry, tapestry storerooms, stables. To the north, Marguerite de Flandres created a garden on the site of the present garden of the Place des Ducs.



The palace in 1630 : sketch by the Prince of Condé
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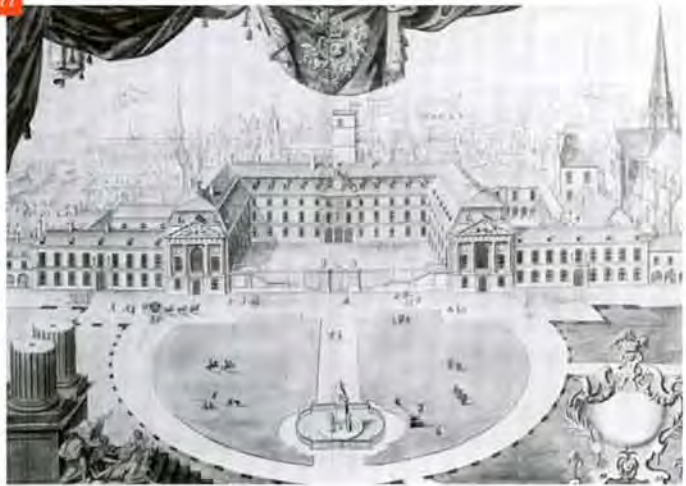


FROM DUCAL PALACE TO STATES-GENERAL PALACE*

When Burgundy was annexed to the royal domain, the Ducal Palace became the King's Palace. It served as the residence of the provincial governor, and from 1679 was the seat of the Burgundian States-General. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the buildings underwent many modifications, but the classical ordering of the palace under Jules Hardoin-Mansart (*figs. 10 and 11*) respected the structure of the principal gothic buildings.

Thus the Dijon palace is the only one of the residences of the Dukes of Burgundy to have come down to us in a decent state of preservation.

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JULES HARDOUIN-MANSART :
projects for the States-General Palace
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States-General Palace
seen from the place de la Libération
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* See information sheet which treats this subject.