

# Bonport Castle

## Bonport Castle

“La Grande Vigne” (“Great Vineyard”)

The seigneurie of “La Grande Vigne” depended on the castle of Le Bourget, thanks to rights ceded on 16 November 1575 by Duke Emmanuel-Philibert to his cousin Renée de Savoie, Marquise de Bagé, wife of Jacques Paillard d'Urfé.



## Bonport in 1582

In 1584, the king made a new exchange: he took back the county of Rivoli and ceded the jurisdiction of “La Grande Vigne”, which he made into a county. Their children sold “La Grande Vigne” in 1588 to the first president of the Senate of Savoy, Charles Veillet, who kept it for only two years and gave it to the noble Mgr Jean-François Berliet, first president of the Accounts Chamber, future bishop of Tarentaise.



Blazon berliet

<sup>1</sup> 28F69 Manuscrit Domenget 1642 – 1682.

In 1603 the duke approved a new transfer in favour of Louis Bonier, councillor and patrimonial lawyer, and made "La Grande Vigne" a seigneurie under the name of Bonport. Domenget, in his diary, reports the death of Louis Bonier on 7 December 1646 'in his house'.



From there, Bonport passed in 1674 to François Capré, whose motto is "Non indigna coelo". (Do not indignify coelo)



Blazon capré

### **The Capré lords of Megève**

Noble François Capré, lord of Megève and Bellecombe, new owner of Bonport in 1674, gave his recognition to the king on 19 February 1686. He had repairs made to the old residence and built a house, stables and other outbuildings in the courtyard. He created a garden and enclosure walls. The pastoral visit of 1729 indicates that there is a chapel in Bonport dedicated to the Virgin.

François Capré was a brilliant man: appointed president of the Accounts Chamber, he was also a historian. On 30 April 1680 he married his third wife, Marie-Angélique Pis, widow of Jean-François d'Avrieux. It was also in Tresserve that his daughter Marguerite married Adrien Louvat de Champollon on 18 October 1685.

He died in 1706. His son Hyacinthe, baptized in 1668, Count of Megève, knight of honour in the Senate, did not succeed him at Bonport until 28 July 1734. At that time, there was a terrace and a garden between the castle and the lake, a reservoir, several gardens, an avenue of hornbeam and chestnut trees, an orchard and vineyards. His son François-Hyacinthe, christened on 10 September 1726, known as "Knight of Bonport", colonel of the king's dragoons, was next in line. Having no children, he passed Bonport on to his brother Charles-Auguste-Joseph, an officer in the Savoy Regiment, who sold the estate on 20 July 1751 <sup>2</sup>.

## "...small solitary castle... nest ignored by men..."

Lamartine "Raphael", XXXVII

Louis François Bertier de Saint-Vincent, lord of Crempigny and Manecy, buys for 39,500 Savoy pounds "the land and seigneurie of Bonport formerly called the Great Vineyard with the high, medium and low jurisdiction, with the courtyards, men, tributes and other rights generally attached to the said jurisdiction, rural, castle, barn and buildings dependent on it with all the furniture dead and alive in estants.

The deed specifies that the kitchen utensils, linen and silverware are not included in the sale, nor the horses.

Was it the tragic drowning of Adèle in the Lac du Bourget that prompted the heirs, brothers and sister, of Louis-François Bertier de Crempigny to sell the château in 1806? They sold it to Joachim Mayan, director of customs in Parma <sup>3</sup>. He sold it in September 1809 for 42,000 francs to François Magnin, a wealthy landowner born and living in Aix. He set up an inn where he organised dinners and country parties for the Aix spa guests. The sparkling Duchess of Abrantès, lady-in-waiting of Princess Pauline Borghese, says in her "Memoirs": "It is to Bonport that go the lazy or unhealthy water-drinkers who nevertheless want to make what is called a party <sup>4</sup>

Laure d'Abrantès tells us in 1812: "On 10 August, the day of Saint Lawrence and my feast day... we embarked in admirable weather... the wind suddenly picked up and pushed us out to sea; the sky became overcast, and large drops of rain fell on the deck. In a following boat there were Piedmontese musicians... It was very remarkable to see, and especially to hear, these men bending over their harps, and trying to cover the roar of the wind with their chords: Sometimes, by passing between the still vibrating strings, the wind made a softer sound, made the harmony less savage... But the storm increased in force in a very short time, and they had to be silent... Then we saw... what at that moment many curious people in Europe would certainly have wanted to see... Talma went up on deck, and there, holding onto a small mast which was close to him, he recited the first scene of

<sup>2</sup>AD 5844. Acte du notaire Vulliod, à Chambéry.

<sup>3</sup> 2 sept 1806, acte de Me Barthelemy Blanchet, notaire à Chambéry.

<sup>4</sup> Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès, tome VIII, p540,541, 18311-1835

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*... With his deep, full, sonorous voice, he said sublime verses there, on the deck of a boat loaded with joyful people, which the slightest wind could capsize, and throw them to the bottom of these waters which were once so beautiful and clear, and now cloudy and almost muddy... At last we landed at Bonport, where dinner was waiting for us, which was very important; they made us a fire, because the little rain that had fallen and the waves with white foam had made us so wet that we needed it; then we dined, and dined well: There was kindness, cordiality; and then I don't know if I was wrong, but since then I've been thinking about the feeling that made us so cheerful, and I only found it in one thing, and that was the remoteness of this village that had become a court..."

Let us also listen to Jenny Bernard, an astonishing Savoyard poetess, in 1833: "The good Saïd, a negro brought back by his master after the Egyptian expedition, usually served as caretaker at Bonport Castle; his black presence added infinitely to the picturesque effect of this stay and when, with his head wrapped in a madras, his arms bare and his trousers in striped rags, he could be seen going up the tortuous paths traced on the elevation of this solitary dwelling, one would have thought of an American plantation on the shores of the North Sea..."<sup>5</sup>

In 1847, Countess Hélène Festetics de Tolna bought the estate for 82,500 pounds. She was the daughter of Count Ladislas Festetics de Tolna, widow of Count Alexandre Graf de Wurtemberg, born in Vienna, Austria, and living in Chambéry since her second marriage on 28 December 1845 to Baron Francisque, the late Clément Chollet du Bourget. The estate comprised a castle, courtyard, garden, terrace, stables, sheds, ice house, rustic buildings, fields, hutins, vineyards, meadows, marshes, and a promenade, i.e. 53 and a half days in one piece. At the same time, it acquires the livestock, the seed stock, the vats, presses, "vases vinaires" up to a limit of twelve barrels and all the furniture which furnishes the castle, with the exception of paintings, books, linen, silverware, crockery and kitchen utensils. The seller reserves all the harvest and all the wine<sup>6</sup>. The estate is extended by the purchase of several plots of land and houses from : Jenny Viviand, Countess Fanny de Buttet, Bernardin Petit and Chevalier Alexandre de Marclay. The whole estate now represents more than sixteen hectares.

## **"The castle of Bonport seems to want to hide its terraces and pavilions under the cover of a thick forest".**

Baron Achille Raverat, 1872

The Baron and Baroness of Bourget sold Bonport on 25 June 1870<sup>7</sup> to Joseph Charlton, son of the late Thomas Parr, a landlord living in Warrington, England. He took the waters at Aix-les-Bains. There is now a caretaker's lodge, a garden pavilion and a bathing room in the château. All the bottled wine, and two rooms, one of 780 litres, the other of 360 litres, are excluded from the sale which reaches 160,000 francs. The furniture was sold separately and the inventory that was drawn up allows us to imagine the décor: the ground floor has a vestibule, the blue and white living room with a copper telescope on a stand and two American rocking chairs, the dining room, the pantry, the kitchen and the cellar. On the first floor there are two bedrooms with cabinets in the turrets and five other bedrooms. Above this floor there are attics and a loft. The outbuildings contain the stable, the coach house, the attics and the laundry room.

<sup>5</sup> Jenny Bernard : « Le luth des Alpes », P 193-194 (1833)

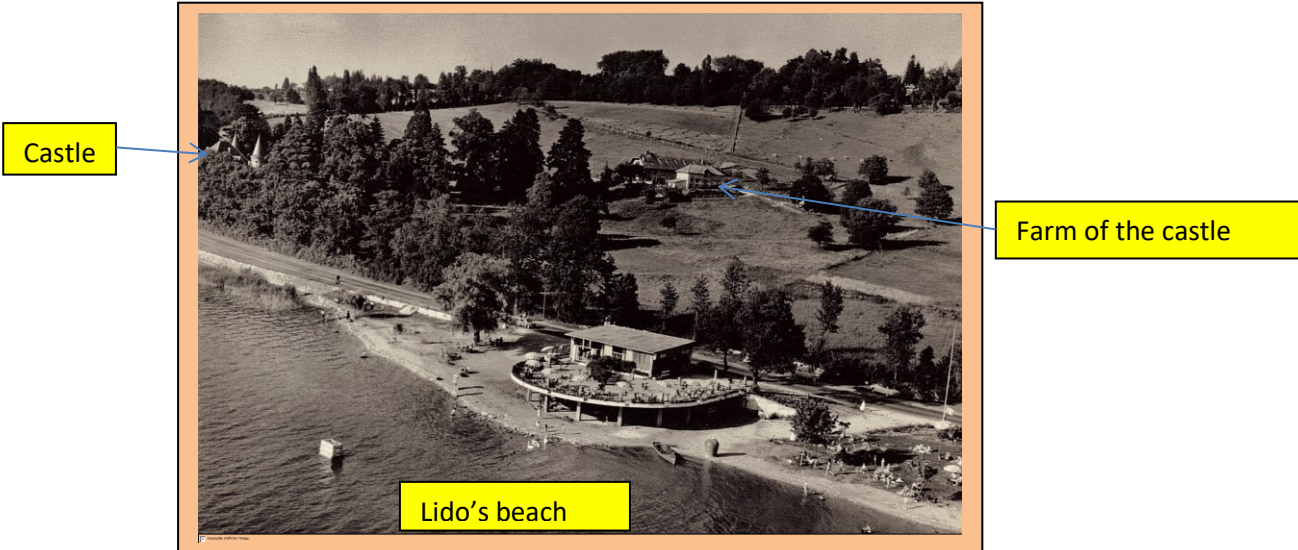
<sup>6</sup> AD 6<sup>E</sup>3383. 30/10/1847 (Notaire Burnier)

<sup>7</sup> AD 6<sup>E</sup>13564. Acte du 25 juin 1870 (Tiollier notaire)

Joseph Charlton Parr lived in the castle for many years, keeping it for almost 45 years. He enlarged it in 1872 and restored the interior in the taste of the time.

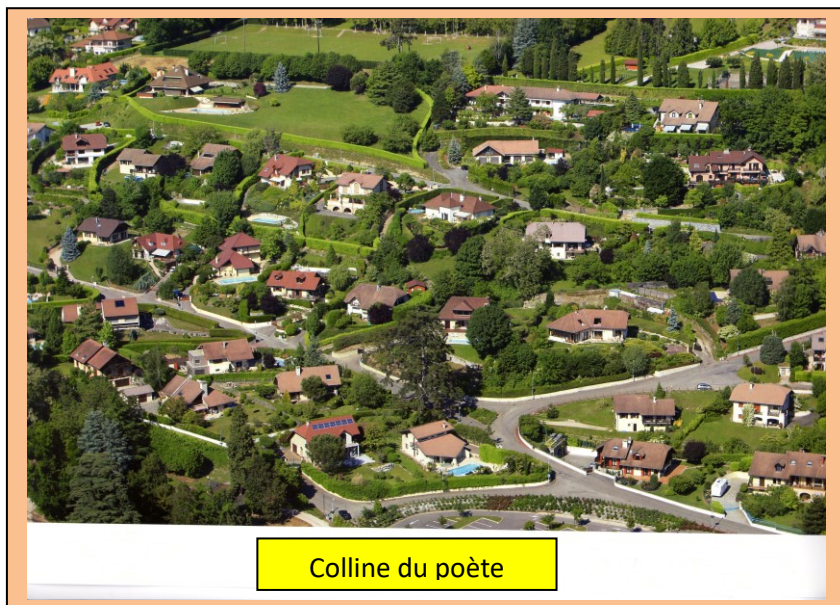


In the early years of the 20th century, Bonport witnessed a tragic event: Joseph Charlton Parr's granddaughter drowned in the pond. In 1914, he sold the estate to Henri Gauthier, an industrialist in Villeurbanne near Lyon. He bequeathed it to his daughter Henriette, wife of M. Dupoizat, then of Jean Rouhier. The family spent many holidays in this privileged setting, on the edge of the lake. The widening of the road and the tourist developments of the 1960s, in particular at the Lido, gradually transformed the environment of the château.



In 1970, Madame Dupoizat sold the estate (except for the caretaker's house on the chemin de Belledonne) to a Courchevel hotelier, Mr Joseph Alexandre Tournier. In 1974, he opened the discotheque "Le Club du Château". In 1984, it was given under management to a nightclub operator.

The farm was sold to a developer and the land was subdivided under the name "Colline du Poète".



Bonport burned down accidentally on 19 July 2008. In 2013 Nicolas Tournier, son of Joseph and hotelier in Courchevel, bought the castle of his childhood at auction and began reconstruction work in 2016. It became the "Château de Tresserve Bonport".

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**Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Tresserve**

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