



THE CHÂTEAU DE POURTALÈS & ITS FAMOUS GUESTS

COUNTESS SOPHIE MÉLANIE DE POURTALÈS

(26.03.1836 – 05.05.1914)

Our famous chatelaine is clearly the soul of this house.

Born into an influential Alsatian banking family, she married Count Edmond de Pourtalès and was the mother of five children. Introduced by Richard de Metternich to the court of Napoleon III, she became a close friend of his wife Eugénie. She was highly regarded by Parisian society and known for her acting talents and her parties, which were attended by many prominent figures from the worlds of politics, aristocracy, society, art, and culture.



COUNT EDMOND DE POURTALÈS

(06.04.1828 – 23.03.1895)



On June 30, 1857, he married Mélanie in the small church of Robertsau in Strasbourg. The youngest son of Count James-Alexandre de Pourtalès-Gorgier, he followed in his father's footsteps and made many business trips to Paris. Accompanied by Mélanie, he was always welcome at the court of Napoleon III. However, the couple felt most at home in their summer residence, the Château de Pourtalès, which they had enlarged and embellished. Count Edmond de Pourtalès was also a member of the Bas-Rhin General Council.

BARON ALFRED RENOUARD DE BUSSIÈRE (1804 – 1887)

Mélanie's father was a banker, industrialist, and one of the leading figures in Alsatian politics and economics of his time. He married Louise Mélanie de Coëhorn in 1825. He was Director of the Strasbourg Mint and then the Paris Mint, a member of the Protestant Consistory of Augsburg, and a departmental councilor for the Bas-Rhin. As the owner of the Graffenstaden mechanical factories, he played an important role in the construction of the first railway line from Strasbourg to Paris, which was inaugurated in 1852. Thanks to his initiative, the first railway bridge over the Rhine between Strasbourg and Kehl was built.





BARONESS LOUISE MÉLANIE DE COËHORN (1802 –1880)

Mélanie's mother and the daughter of the famous General de Coëhorn, Louise grew up in the Château d'Ittewiller, located about 29 km from Strasbourg. Alfred de Renouard Bussière fell deeply in love with her and would walk for kilometers to visit her on weekends, as his family didn't have enough horses for everyone. Since she was a minor, they had to wait two years before they could marry. They were married on June 15, 1825. Their marriage was a happy one, and they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary (a rare event at the time).

BARON JAMES-ALEXANDRE DE POURTALÈS-GORGIER (1776 – 1855)

He was a diplomat in Paris and Constantinople and chamberlain to the King of Prussia. Married to Anne Henriette de Falconnet Palézieux (1792–1836), he was the father of six children. His youngest son, Edmond de Renouard de Bussière Pourtalès, married Mélanie and became the owner of the Château de Pourtalès. James-Alexander was an important banker, diplomat, and art collector. He assembled one of the most important collections of antiques and paintings of his time. He owned works by Rembrandt, Ingres, and Bronzino, among others.



FRÉDÉRIQUE WILHELMINE DE FRANK (1777–1854)

Mélanie's grandmother. She hosted a salon in Strasbourg (Quai Saint-Nicolas) where she welcomed many prominent figures of her time.

Her salon was an essential stop for European dignitaries on their way to Paris.

This tradition, started by Frédérique's mother, was continued by Mélanie and then her daughter, Agnès, at the Château de Pourtalès.

PAUL-ATHANASE RENOUARD DE BUSSIÈRE (1776–1848)

Mélanie's grandfather. He was a banker and was appointed to the Strasbourg City Council in 1806. As part of his duties, he had the honor of welcoming the future Empress Marie-Louise of Austria during her stop in Strasbourg on her way to Paris to marry Napoleon I. In 1821, he helped finance the completion of the Rhine-Rhône canal. Five years later, in 1826, King Charles X recognized his contributions by granting him the title of Viscount.





AGNÈS MÉLANIE MARQUISE DE LOYS-CHANDIEU (1870 – 1930)

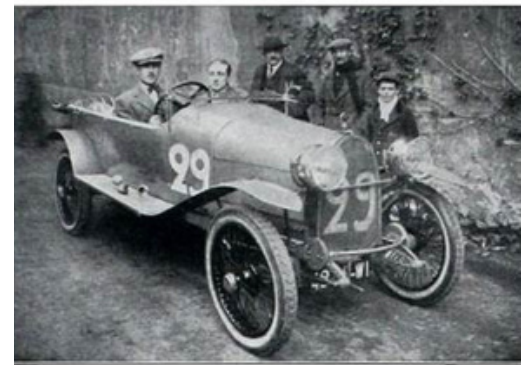


Youngest daughter of Mélanie and Edmond. She inherited Château de Pourtalès in 1914, upon Mélanie's death. In 1890, she married Henri, Marquis de Loys-Chandieu, in Paris. She lived mainly in Paris at the beginning of her marriage. Upon her mother's death, she felt it was her sacred duty to renovate the family château, which had been severely damaged during the World War I. She continued the family tradition of hosting salons, and the Château de Pourtalès remained a major meeting place in Europe, as well as a cultural center for the region. In July 1926, she organized the "Décade," a round table bringing together renowned French writers and philosophers.

MAX ARTHUR HUBERT DE POURTALÈS (1893 – 1935)

Grandson of Mélanie and Edmond.

A passionate motor racing enthusiast, he took part in the first 24 Hours of Le Mans race in May 1923 with his teammate Sosthènes de la Rochefoucauld. At the wheel of his Bugatti Brescia 16S, he won his category and came tenth overall. The teammates broke the 24-hour world record in the 1.5-liter category with an average speed of 76 km/h, covering 1,835 km. The Bugatti factory, based in Molsheim, was impressed by the feat and distributed a brochure featuring the Bugatti bearing the number 29 and its crew.



LE COMTE DE POURTALÈS ET LE
VICOMTE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD
BATTENT LE

RECORD DU MONDE DES 24 HEURES
sur **BUGATTI** (catégorie 1 litre 500)

à 76 kilomètres de moyenne
couvrant 1.835 kilomètres, voiture
rigoureusement de série, chargée à 4 personnes.

Usine à MOLSHEIM (Bas-Rhin)
Magasin : 116, Av. des Champs-Élysées, PARIS

THE DÉCADE OF WRITERS & PHILOSOPHERS (JULY 9TH TO 13TH 1926)



This extraordinary gathering of writers and philosophers was organized by Agnès, Mélanie's daughter, together with Countess Pauline de Pange. The focus of their discussions was to understand the distress Alsace had experienced during and after World War I, and how to alleviate it.

Participants : Constantin Photiades (writer), Jean de Pange (writer, Robert Schumann's friend), Daniel Halévy (historian et essayist), Camille Mayran (writer, translator Grand Prix Académie française), Emile Henriot (journalist, member of the Académie française), René Benjamin (journalist, writer, member of the Académie Goncourt), Charles de Bos (journalist, critic), Mario Meunier (hellenist, philosopher), Pierre Hepp (screenwriter, editor of the Revue de Paris), Jean-Louis Vaudoyer (art historian, writer, member of the Académie française), Gérard Bauer (writer, critic, journalist), Edmond Jaloux (novelist, critic, member of the Académie française), Guy de Pourtalès (journalist, writer), François Mauriac (writer, member of the Académie française, Nobel Prize in Literature 1952), François Legris et Simon Lévy.



PRINCESS PAULINE DE METTERNICH (1836 – 1921)

Born Countess Pauline Sandor de Szlavuicza, she was a close friend of Mélanie.

The Metternich and Pourtalès families often met either at Johannisberg, the Metternich family home, or at the Château de Pourtalès. Like Mélanie, Pauline was passionate about theater, and both loved organizing festivals and playing tricks on their guests.

They founded the “Loutons” circle of friends (a portmanteau of “wolf” and ‘sheep’) with the motto “Boredom is forbidden.” Both women often attempted to serve as diplomatic intermediaries between France and Germany during difficult times.



PRINCE RICHARD KLEMENZ DE METTERNICH (1829 – 1895)



Friend of Mélanie and husband of Pauline. His father, Klemenz von Metternich, was already a friend of the family and a guest at the salons of Mme de Franck (Mélanie's grandmother). Prince Richard von Metternich was therefore a regular guest at the Pourtalès family home in Strasbourg on his way to Paris. In 1860, Prince Richard von Metternich was appointed Austrian ambassador to Paris. At a ball at the Austrian embassy, he introduced Mélanie de Pourtalès to Empress Eugénie.

EMPEROR NAPOLEON III (1808-1873) & EMPRESS EUGENIE (1826-1920)

Napoleon III was first president, then emperor of France for 18 years, before being deposed following his capture during the Franco-Prussian War. His wife, Empress Eugénie, of Spanish origin, was a woman of strict faith who liked to surround herself with elegant ladies. Mélanie de Pourtalès, introduced to the court in 1860 by Prince Metternich, became one of her close friends. She actively participated in the festivities at the Tuileries and the theatrical evenings at Compiègne and Fontainebleau. A visionary, Mélanie attempted to play the role of mediator between Paris and Berlin to prevent the impending conflict, but her efforts were in vain.

Mélanie was only able to see Napoleon III and Eugénie again in exile in England, where the emperor expressed his gratitude to her in a moving letter. Throughout this troubled period, Mélanie remained loyal to the imperial couple.



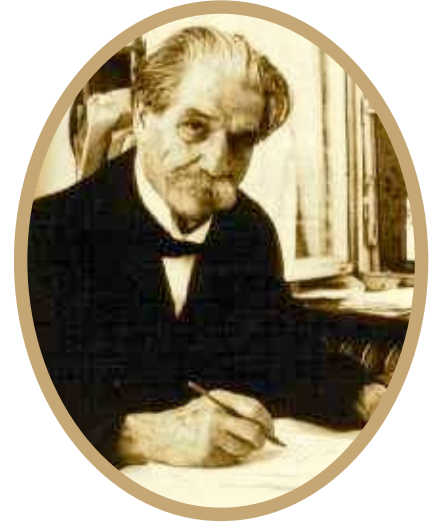


DR. ALBERT SCHWEITZER (1875 – 1965)

Albert Schweitzer was an Alsatian physician, philosopher, theologian, organist, and humanitarian, known for his medical work in Africa and his ethical commitment based on the principle of “Respect for Life.” Born in Kayzersberg, he first pursued a brilliant academic and musical career before turning to medicine and founding a hospital in Lambaréné, Gabon, in 1913.

During his years in Strasbourg, Schweitzer frequented the Château de Pourtalès. Schweitzer was invited there on several occasions. The château was not only a place for cultural gatherings: he also used it as a venue for organizing fundraisers to finance his hospital in Gabon, notably thanks to his talents as a pianist.

Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952, Schweitzer devoted the rest of his life to humanitarian work. He remains a major figure of the 20th century for his work in promoting human dignity and peace.



FRANZ LISZT (1811 – 1887)



Liszt was a Hungarian composer and virtuoso pianist. His prolific and diverse work inspired several major trends in modern music.

When Louis I of Bavaria, born in Strasbourg, returned to visit his hometown, a grand reception was held in the neighborhood Robertsau. On this occasion, Mélanie's mother introduced Franz Liszt, a 12-year-old prodigy. He performed a piece for four hands, accompanied by the hostess's nephew, Ferdinand de Turckheim, also aged 12.



**DR. WALTER LEIBRECHT
(1927 – 2007)**



Founder of Schiller International University and several other universities in Germany and Europe, he was an academic and also published books.

In 1972, he bought the castle, which was almost in ruins, following an appeal by schoolchildren in Robertsau to save the Château de Pourtalès.

Upon his death, his son Harald inherited the castle. Since 1972, the Leibrecht family has devoted themselves heart and soul to saving this building, then renovating and preserving it.

**OTHER FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO HAVE STAYED OR VISITED
CHÂTEAU DE POURTALÈS**

King Louis I. de Bavière

Maximilien Ier de Bavière

Grand Duchess Stéphanie de Bade

Duke Alfred d'Edimbourg

Marquis Philippe de Massa

Prince Victor Napoléon

Princess Clémentine de Belgique

Countess Stéphanie von Wedel

Princess Marie Thurn und Taxis

Baron Albert de Dietrich

Paul Doumer