

« *Le Manoir les Minimes – a hotel steeped in history* »

Le Manoir les Minimes owes its name to the Order of Minims, which founded the convent in Amboise at the end of the 15th century with the backing of Charles VIII, the son of Louis XI.

Once upon a time...

In 1483, at the personal request of Louis XI, Pope Sixtus IV ordered brother François d'Alessio, known as St Francis of Paola, the founder of the Order of Minims (etymologically, the smallest or the least) to leave his native Calabria and present himself to the king in Plessis-lès-Tours.



On the road to Plessis, he met the dauphin who was staying with his mother, Charlotte of Savoy, at the Château d'Amboise. The meeting took place below the chateau terraces, where the convent was later built, and was depicted in a painting now on display in Saint-Denis d'Amboise church.

Once he had arrived in Plessis, Francis of Paola moved into a country house near the chateau of Louis XI. When the king died, the hermit planned to return to Calabria, but the dauphin, who had since been crowned Charles VIII, had developed an attachment to Francis. He decided to found a convent in 1487 to house the man of God and his brothers. He chose to build it in the place he first encountered Francis of Paola, below the chateau terraces.

The Loire encompassed the northern side of the plot which had been granted to the brotherhood. To the south, their land extended to the hillock which dominates the chateau. The Chemin de Chargé, a small path which could not be removed, bisected the plot lengthwise. This became the Rue de Minimes, then the Rue de la Loi in 1793 and, in 1898, the Rue de la Concorde, the name it bears today. The convent was built where it would produce the greatest effect – on the northern section of the plot, by the river.



In 1493, after six years of waiting and interruptions to works, the hermits finally took over the premises, even though the convent was not finished.

Later, the church erected along the Chemin de Chargé was dedicated to Jesus and Mary. It was named Eglise de la Vierge Marie et de tous les Saints (Church of the Virgin Mary and all the Saints).



Francis of Paola then named his convent "Le couvent des Toussaints" (Allsaints Convent); the name stayed. Two chapels were added during the same period, one dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the other to Saint Francis of Paola.

After the revolution, the brotherhood struggled to attract a following and the convent was put up for sale. The convent buildings were used as shops and the church was destroyed.

Almost nothing remains of the convent built by Francis of Paola; what is believed to have been the *dormitoire* (sleeping quarters) is now known as "Le Manoir Les Minimes".

This *dormitoire* sleeping quarters, which extends north to south was, along with a second structure by the river, modified many times as a convent building between 1493 and the present day.

The refectory and kitchen could be found on the 1st floor of the *dormitoire*. The second floor comprised 3 rooms, including one with a chimney and an office facing west, and a further 4 rooms with a corridor extending east. The attic was on the 3rd floor.

Today, the building has been redeveloped into a 4-star hotel. One of the rooms near the church site has a 0.6 metre thick wall at its south-west angle – typical of structures from the Middle Ages. This may have been the oratory. It leads, down a narrow corridor, to a small room which is similar to one in the Jésus-Maria du Plessis convent where the oratory is found in the *dormitoire*.

Guests at Le Manoir Les Minimes in Amboise invariably find themselves drawn to its fascinating history. Welcome to a magnificent adventure through time at our classic French manor house.

Sources: Saint François de Paule à Amboise by Mgr FIOT and Les Couvents de l'Ordre des Minimes en Touraine by Aline Belmonte Pena (a dissertation for the Université François Rabelais)

