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The BNP Paribas Mile

An overview of BNP Paribas landmarks in Paris's historic financial quarter

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The French financial Group BNP Paribas was created in 2000 through a merger of BNP and Paribas. BNP Paribas and its predecessor banks trace their roots back almost 200 years, with a rich history of both innovative client-centric developments and responsible community commitments. As the 21st century started, the successive mergers or acquisitions consolidated a unique portfolio of eight office buildings located in the historic financial quarter of Paris, straddling mainly the 2nd arrondissement and the southern fringe of the neighboring 9th arrondissement. They line more or so the western stretch of the famous Grands Boulevards, from Boulevard Poissonnière to Boulevard des Capucines, with BNP's 14 rue Bergère and Paribas's 37 place du Marché Saint-Honoré delineating the utmost ends. Eastward of the Place de l'Opéra junction are the BNP buildings and westward are those of Paribas. Sandwiched in between is the Palais du Hanovre, an addition in 2006 made by BNP Paribas. These eight outstanding edifices represent the layers of both Paris's and BNP Paribas's history, closely interwoven with the social and financial emergence of the prominent area.

Crown financiers' quarter

The birth of the quarter dates back to the beginning of the 18th century when the old northern rampart was dismantled to provide the landscape of the Nouveau-Cours, a fashionable tree-lined promenade. The new urban area, a far cry from the left bank medieval Paris with its narrow and short winding streets, offered the wide open space the new set of Crown financiers were looking for so that they could erect mansions with huge gardens. This took place in the aftermath of property

speculations in which landowners benefitted greatly. Moreover, in 1719, John Law hosted the Royal Bank in the Hôtel de Nevers, at the corner of Rue de Richelieu and Rue Colbert. When it was liquidated shortly thereafter, the building was used by stockbrokers for the next sixty years, before becoming the Royal Library and nowadays the National Library.

Financial institutions under the Empire

After the French Revolution, the early years of the 19th century saw the Banque de France, the Central Bank of France, and the Bourse or Stock Exchange, being established in the area under the patronage of Emperor Napoleon I. Furthermore, some of the hôtels particuliers were sold to European merchant bankers, like Perregaux, Lafitte or Rothschild, so as to house their newly-launched Parisian banking businesses. At the same time, Paris was equipped with an Opera House, which remained in the precinct despite three successive relocations, thus initiating the entertainment and leisure tradition of the Grands Boulevards.

General banking forging ahead

In the aftermath of the 1848 upheavals, the French Second Republic decreed the foundation of deposit and lending banks in order to remedy the credit freeze. Subsequently, ordinary people gained access to general banking : as their dormant savings were recycled into the economy, securities were listed on the Stock Exchange. As banks began working face-to-face with their customers, they needed large premises with vast public hallways and secured vaults, conveniently near to the Central Bank and Stock Exchange buildings. Haussmann's urban works were the final stage in the development of the financial district.

Mesmerizing landmark portfolio

BNP Paribas national-calibre forerunners had settled their headquarters in the historic financial quarter. With the parent company changing its name seven times during the 20th century, they added to, rather than replaced, their earlier headquarters. The urban structure abled sprawls over their block and even extensions over adjacent streets. Moreover, they kept on enlarging the building for their central services, seizing opportunities when needed. Because banks compete for clients, they have always recognized the architectural image value to both retain and attract customers. Hence these headquarters were widely publicized at some critical moments such as WWI aftermath (14 Rue Bergère), acquisition (16 Boulevards des Italiens), or privatization (3 Rue d'Antin). Built on striking locations by famed architects using the latest techniques, they were also seen as a highly distinctive architectural expression that could show off the modernity of the bank. Nowadays they have shifted to focus on social awareness and environmental responsibility to rekindle the flame of the general public. The new age of the old bank buildings is marked by sustainable initiatives and socializing with local communities. This contributes towards staff well-being and towards reducing the bank's ecological footprint. Moreover, it allows for, open day events, history sharings and communications.

To paraphrase the famed crooner Yves Montand: let's stroll round the Grands Boulevards, there are so many things to see... Within a mile, BNP Paribas today still occupies eight landmarks even though numerous other banks' buildings underwent office conversion or creative adaptive re-use, ie a former bank turned into an Apple Store.



14 rue Bergère The CNEP headquarters. The main entrance façade establishes the image of the bank as a temple of finance. It boasts impressive statues by Aimé Millet and exquisite mosaics by Giandomenico Facchina. BNP Paribas Historical Archives © Vincent Fillon.

14 Rue Bergère

The CNEP rented the premises for eleven years until its purchase in 1862. As both operations and staff numbers increased swiftly, and to keep central services and general management headquartered under one roof, the CNEP hired French architect Edouard-Jules Corroyer to remodel the space into a neoclassical structure. Its façade established the image of the bank as a temple of finance. From 1878 to 1882, some of the best-known craftsmen and artists of the time worked on the superb decorative stoneworks and notable ornamentations: mosaicist Giandomenico Facchina, sculptor Aimé Millet, painter Charles Lameire. The huge public hall boasts Toscan columns and a polychrome glass ceiling. The great flying staircase is overtly Byzantine in inspiration and overlooks the directors' offices. But to attract customers, the architectural decor evokes wealth and integrity, endurance and confidence, qualities which are deeply rooted in the bank. For example, exquisite mosaics showcase the five continents where the pioneering CNEP had opened branches.

Furthermore cutting-edge innovation was to be found in every corner such as the



1 boulevard Haussmann / 16 boulevard des Italiens / 20 boulevard des Italiens BNP headquarters frontage by night. This stunning picture was used for the Annual Report of Year 1989. © BNP Paribas Heritage & Archives.

provision of electricity, the elevator, central heating and the internal pneumatic tube mail network. The expansive public hall, designed according to mass appeal, flaunted unusual amenities such as a weather station and clocks showing current local times in a selection of major cities around the world. Its ingenious glass slab floor increased the natural lighting to the vaults below.

Between 2007 and 2009, the 1991-listed building underwent a thorough renovation while necessary adaptations for today's banking activities were smoothly embedded into the architecture while reducing the ecological footprint. As a result, it is the first ever listed building to be awarded the HQE certification. Nowadays, it houses the Investment Partners subsidiary.

1 Boulevard Haussmann

This neoclassical triangular shape was designed by Parisian architects Julien & Dubayon and built between 1925 and 1927. It filled the wedged-shaped block located at the intersection of the fashionable Boulevard des Italiens and the newly-opened section of the Boulevard

Haussmann, bordering the Rue Le Peletier. The construction corresponded with the launch of the last stretch of the Boulevard Haussmann after works for the first one began eighty years ago. Where old houses dating back to the 1840s and the lively Passage de l'Opéra used to be, monumental hotels and financial head offices were erected. But against all expectations this prestigious lot was owned by a real estate investor, who ordered the construction of a rental edifice with shops and office spaces. Not long thereafter, its neighbour, the Banque Nationale de Crédit (BNC), a forerunner of the BNP, had outgrown its own new premises and started to rent offices. In the 1950s, the building was considered an extension of its headquarters when its successor, the Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (BNCI), implemented a foreign exchange office on the ground floor. Hence renovation works were undertaken to make the lower part of the façade look alike the 16 Boulevard des Italiens by undertaking the same wrought-iron workmanship as in the 1930s. A covered footbridge links the two buildings. Today, this building houses retail and corporate banking units.

16 Boulevard Des Italiens

The Boulevard des Italiens was one of the most bustling thoroughfares in the days of the Second Empire thanks to its cafés and the old opera house nearby. One of these cafés, the famous Café Riche, was established at 16 Boulevard des Italiens. But soon thereafter, in 1875, bad fortune was to befall it with the opening of a new opera house further away. Furthermore, as a place in which to do business Paris was finding increasing favor in the eyes of large international corporations, which wanted to establish showy head offices and branches. Thus, The New York Life Insurance Company bought the building but under the condition to keep Café Riche in the ground floor of the new monumental building. It was built in 1898.

In 1917, the newly-founded BNC moved in after it had outgrown its original headquarters at 20 rue Le Peletier. Then the bank started to buy the houses contained in the block bordered by the Boulevard des Italiens, Rue Laffitte, Rue Le Peletier and the new stretch of the future Boulevard Haussmann. The Parisian architects Marrast and Letrosne were in charge of drafting the blueprints for the new and modern head office encompassing the New York Life building. Monumental sculptures were removed while the newly acquired old houses were demolished. The works, lasting from 1926 to 1932, generated many arguments such as the height of the neo-Egyptian and Art Deco building. But there it is, in the manner of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Palais du Trocadéro. The construction featured vanguard office layouts and outstanding vaults with safe rooms much appreciated by neighbouring auctioneers and gallerists. The front doors and ground level windows sport magnificent wrought-iron railings designed by Raymond Subes.

Today and according to its direct fore-runner tradition, BNP Paribas is headquartered at 16 Boulevard des Italiens. Following in the footsteps of the 14 Rue Bergère, the whole building will be completely rejuvenated in the next few years to come.

20 Boulevard Des Italiens

The Maison Dorée stands at 20 Boulevard des Italiens. Its history began with the construction of a townhouse for Army treasurer, Bouret. Later it became home to the Duke of Choiseul-Stainville and there the famous

Madame Tallien lived and launched the fashion of the Greek flimsy gowns worn by the eccentric Merveilleuses at the end of the 18th century during the Directoire era.

The first years of the 19th century saw the most expensive restaurant of Paris, Café Hardy, move into the premises. But in 1836, the Hamel brothers, the owners of the Grand Véfour at the Palais Royal, bought the block and asked the architect Léopold Kauffmann to design a trendy restaurant. Hence the nickname, Golden House, was bestowed on the neo-renaissance building adorned with exquisite sculptures and balconies. There, the Parisian smart set mingled with politicians, wealthy entrepreneurs, artists and novelists such as Balzac, Proust and Zola. The impressionists immortalized the scenic neighbourhood; like Manet with his painting named Tortoni. The chef Casimir Moisson created the renowned dish Tournedos Rossini for the composer Gioachino Rossini, a regular.

The BNP bought the building in 1970 to extend its nearby headquarters. The history of this block added pressure to the task of the bank's architect, Pierre Dufau, who finally integrated an entirely new interior into the historic façade. It currently houses parts of the Group's Corporate and Institutional Banking activities.

16 Rue De Hanovre

BNP Paribas acquired the building complex, dubbed Palais du Hanovre, with its offices, shops and cinemas in 2006 to reunite scattered central services. Architects Charles Lemaresquier and Victor Laloux erected the Art deco building on the site of an imposing mansion's garden landscaped for Crown financier Lacour-Deschiens. It overlooks Boulevard des Italiens as did the exquisite Pavillon de Hanovre, built in 1758, by French architect Jean-Michel Chevotet and commissioned by the Duke of Richelieu, a later owner. The splendid structure with its rotunda was conducive to memorable functions and festive gatherings. It was also the seat of first ever events when American-born Callender installed its Pansteorama, thus establishing a cinema tradition in the neighbourhood; Italian caterers Velloni & Tortoni hosted tea-tastings which were new to Paris; and French silversmith Christofle opened its show-room to showcase innovative modern design and electroplated manufacturing.



2 place de l'Opéra. As it faces the Opera House and stands at the corner of the bustling Avenue de l'Opéra and Rue du Quatre-Septembre, rotunda façade. © BNP Paribas Historical Archives.

Dismantled stone by stone in 1931 to make space for the office block, the garden pavilion was re-assembled in the park of the Château de Sceaux where it stands presently. Nowadays, the building houses the units of the Group Communications division as well as subsidiaries and parts of the Corporate and Institutional Banking activities.

2 Place De L'Opéra

Facing the new Opéra House, the distinctive building was designed by Paris architect Henri Blondel and built between 1868 and 1873. It was intended to serve as headquarters for the Société de Dépôts et de Comptes Courants, a bank founded in 1863 to bring in new retail banking methods from England. After the bank was liquidated in 1892, the CNEP took over the lease. The property became the Parisian flagship the bank was longing for and turned it into its main branch.

This very location conducted the rotunda façade to take part in national events the financial institutions had to cope with. During the two world wars of the 20th century, the building survived while its corner front played a historic role, displaying a large canvas bearing in 1918 the exquisite Lorraine war loan poster Alsace Lorraine business being as usual, and from 1940 to 1944 the inscription Kommandant der Stadt Paris the premises being requisitioned by the occupying forces. Then, on 27 November 2015, two weeks after the Paris attacks, while a national tribute took place in Les Invalides, the French flag was digitally



3 rue d'Antin. Since 1869, BNP Paribas and its predecessor banks have carefully preserved the historic room where Napoléon Bonaparte wedded Joséphine on 9 March 1796. The magnificent boiseries by Nicolas Pineau and paintings by Sébastien II Le Clerc retain the unique atmosphere of the 18th century Hôtel de Mondragon. BNP Paribas Historical Archives © Vincent Fillon.



37 place du Marché Saint-Honoré. The 3 rue d'Antin operational headquarters stand at the far end of the Passage des Jacobins. BNP Paribas Historical Archives © Vincent Fillon.

displayed on both widescreen sides of the main entrance to pay homage to victims.

The circular public hall boasting a new translucent concrete glass roof was used to reflect the bank's modernism in a famous two-page advertisement in the Paris Match magazine in the 1960s. In 2010, BNP Paribas refurbished this branch into an outstanding retail banking model called Concept Store. This innovation laboratory offers clients a new approach to banking relationships and enhances the use of the newest technologies.

3 Rue D'Antin

The hôtel particulier was erected between 1720 and 1722 for Etienne Bourgeois de Boynes, the treasurer of the Royal Bank founded by John Law. Then the property passed on to several owners, the latter being the Marquis de Mondragon, until it was seized as national property by the French Revolution. After being turned into the town hall for the 2nd arrondissement, Napoléon Bonaparte wedded Joséphine de Beauharnais on 9 March 1796 in one of its splendid rooms decorated with boiseries by Nicolas Pineau and paintings by Sébastien II Le Clerc.

In 1869, the premises were acquired by the Banque de Paris from the Mondragon family and became the headquarters of the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas in 1872, and subsequently the operational headquarters of BNP Paribas in 2000.

Over the years, the banks, while respectful of the historic decors listed in 1926, had to enlarge the office areas. As early as 1880s, the courtyard was glass roofed and equipped with heavy mahogany counters to be used by the securities department, and the stables were turned into offices. During the 20th century, the 3 rue d'Antin encompassed the other houses of the block and was enlarged across adjacent streets. In the 1950s, a new central hall, called L'Orangerie, was designed on the first floor level by Jansen House. Lined with orange-trees in wooden boxes to revive the original courtyard, it leads to the general management's offices, the boardroom and the function rooms.

Determined to adapt the buildings to the bank's needs, the different historical town houses were joined together while digital facilities were carefully included as well as facilities dedicated to staff well-being and creativity. Since 2014, it houses the first ever Feng Shui meeting room built in the Group.

37 Place Du Marché Saint-Honoré

The sleek 37 MSH building was designed by Catalan architect Ricardo Bofill in the 1990s after Paribas joined in the urban renewal project undertaken by the City of Paris. A stone's throw away from the 3 Rue d'Antin headquarters, it gave Paribas the opportunity to simplify its offices, which were spread out in different locations. The purpose-built and eye-catching architecture challenges

successfully the reconciling of modern technology and cultural heritage in a neighbourhood with deep historical significance. The temple-shaped building with its slender columns and steel framework echoes its farthest counterpart 14 Rue Bergère but its floor to ceiling double glass façade gives the whole structure, seen from the outside, a look of glittering transparency and fluidity: No mere banking hall just to deposit money but a covered passageway in the great tradition of the Parisian passages couverts that flourished during the 19th century until they were destroyed by the Haussmann era street redevelopment. Dubbed Passage des Jacobins, an implied reference to both the Dominican Convent and the French Revolution Club, it invites passersby in the manner of a roofed social plaza, where people can shop, gather, have lunch and a conversation. Paribas was not long to celebrate the iconic setting when, in January 1999, it launched the Euro with a street show staging zany parades and gaudy balloons. More recently in October 2014, the BNP Paribas Foundation held its 30th anniversary at lunchtime, showcasing patronized modern dance performers, new circus exponents and jazz musicians. It currently houses units of the Corporate and Institutional Banking activities. ●