

Moïse de Camondo and the Art of Living

Hobbies, Cars, Tourism and Gastronomy



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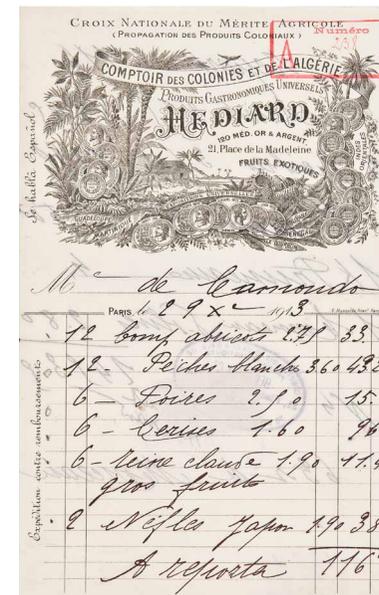


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MAD

MUSÉE NISSIM DE CAMONDO



7.

Delivered by the Maison Gerbout, seasonal fruits were consumed year-round in abundance at the rue de Monceau residence. The finest ones were chosen from Fauchon or Hédiard (Fig. 7). Compotes, jams and jars of fruit in syrup were purchased from Tanrade, Fouquet or Corcellet. Until 1935, the Maison Boisser regularly delivered petits fours and sweets, such as cherry *bonnons boules*, for which the master of the house had a particular weakness!

Moïse de Camondo proved himself to be an accomplished gourmet and a lover of French *haute cuisine* and *grands crus*, always remaining faithful to the products and refined culinary traditions of the Mediterranean, which he inherited from his family.

Sophie d'Aigneaux - Le Tarnec,
Conservation attachée
at the Musée Nissim de Camondo

— 7. Invoice from the Maison Hédiard
dated 29 October 1913

© MAD, Paris / Jean Tholance

Renowned Suppliers

The archives of the Musée Nissim de Camondo do not contain any documentation on the favourite dishes of the master of the house and his children. Only the count's correspondence and invoices marked "from the *maître d'hôtel*" offer a glimpse into some of their tastes. Moïse de Camondo ordered large quantities of *boutargue*⁷ from Martigues (Bouches-du-Rhône). Three to four times a year, he ordered top quality olive oil from Nice in ten-kilo bottles, which suggests almost daily consumption. When the occasion arose, he had olives, salted capers and small preserved lemons sent from Greece. In 1933, a relative sent date jam from Groppi, the supplier to the Egyptian royal family, from Cairo, most likely as a gift. Moïse de Camondo also particularly appreciated Italian gastronomy and purchased olives, anchovies, *ventresca* tuna⁸, parmesan and *panettone* from Ferrari several times a year.

5 - Vitaux, Jean, "L'évolution des menus et des plats", in Collectif, *Les 100 ans du Club des Cent*, Paris, Flammarion, 2011, p. 59.
6 - AMNC, P.M.6.
7 - *Boutargue*: a sort of caviar made from mullet roe that has been pressed, dried, salted and spiced.
8 - The most tender, abdominal part of the tuna.

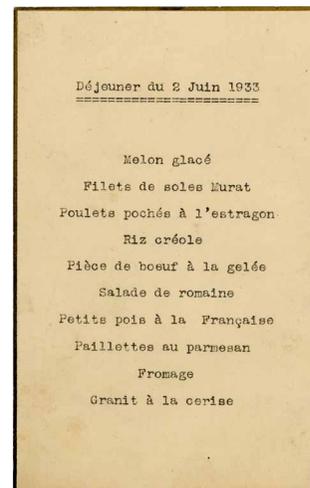
The "Louvre" and "Marsan" Luncheons

As vice-president of the Société des Amis du Louvre since 1920, a member of the Conseil des musées nationaux in 1922 and vice-president of the Union centrale des Arts décoratifs in 1930, Moïse de Camondo built a solid network within the museum world. As of 1930, every spring he would invite about twenty collectors and museum curators from the Louvre and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs to his so-called "Louvre" and "Marsan" luncheons. Guest lists and a few rare table plans and menus that have been preserved for the period 1930-1935 offer us insight into the service planning and the various dishes served (Fig. 5). In their composition, these luncheons recalled the meals of the Club des Cent, for which three main courses was always the rule : fish, poultry, and finally meat or game⁵.

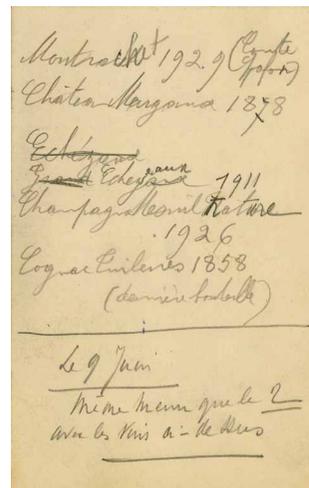
Moïse de Camondo's Wine Cellar

During his famous luncheons, Moïse de Camondo personally oversaw the wine pairings, which were selected from amongst the finest years of the Bordeaux and Burgundy *grands crus*. An excellent Mesnil Nature champagne and a very old cognac added the final touch to the meal (Fig. 6). His wine cellar was well stocked: besides the wines inherited from his father, Count Nissim, and those purchased in 1893 at the estate sale of his uncle, Count Abraham-Behor, Moïse de Camondo made the acquaintance of producers during tastings organised by the Club des Cent, in particular in Burgundy. From them he purchased *grands crus* such as the *Grands-Echezeaux 1924*, the *Montrachet 1929 (comte Lafon)* and the *Clos Vougeot 1928*. Through the Club des Cent, he also benefitted from exceptional orders of Salon champagne and recommendations to winemakers⁶.

— 5. & 6. Menu for the
"Louvre" luncheon
of 2 June 1933
(recto and verso)
© MAD, Paris



5.



6.

On the cover:
— 1. Moïse de Camondo
in his first Peugeot car,
equipped with a Daimler
motor manufactured by
Panhard Levassor
1895
© MAD, Paris



2.

— 2. Moïse de Camondo
fox-hunting
in the forest of Halatte
1910
© MAD, Paris

Moïse de Camondo's (1860-1935) passion for eighteenth-century decorative arts did not affect the lifestyle of this refined collector. A man of his time, he appreciated the comforts of modern living, as we can see by the amenities in the private spaces of his residence at 63, rue de Monceau. The space dedicated to the kitchen and its annexes also reveals another facet of his personality: that of the gourmet and lover of fine wines, which earned him admission into the Club des Cent. A great traveller, enamoured with speed and fascinated by technical and mechanical progress, his hobbies – revealed through the archives of the Musée Nissim de Camondo – included a passion for yachting and automobiles. There was one exception to this modernity: Moïse de Camondo, an enthusiastic sportsman, was also a skilled horse rider who went fox-hunting very regularly, thereby engaging in one of the most traditional of aristocratic leisure activities.

Fox-hunting

An excellent rider, Moïse de Camondo became a member of the company *Par Monts et Vallons* in 1887. The participants dressed in dark blue outfits with collars and pockets in sapphire blue velvet for their fox-hunting excursions in the forest of Halatte, near Senlis (Fig. 2). His children Nissim and Beatrice were initiated into the tradition in 1907. Both quickly became skilled and daring hunters. An intrepid amazon, Beatrice would continue fox-hunting until the eve of World War II¹.

Shooting

In 1904, Moïse de Camondo acquired the Château d'Aumont located in the municipality of the same name, near Senlis. From then on, he stayed there frequently with his children. From September until late spring, in addition to fox-hunting, shooting excursions were a regular feature in their hunting calendar. At the end of nearly every week, a dozen or so close friends were invited to come and hunt in the surrounding woods. As of 1912, the count rented a territory of over a thousand hectares, extending through the municipalities of Creil, Apremont, Aumont, Verneuil and Fleurines, to his neighbour, Baron Robert de Rothschild². The wardens raised game birds and hunted down poachers. This constant care and diligent surveillance bore fruit: the guests were convinced that it was the best hunting ground in France³!

1 - Numerous photographs collected by Béatrice Reinach (1894-1945), née de Camondo, bear witness to this passion shared by the whole family (see photo album, Paris, MAD, Musée Nissim de Camondo, inv. CAM 1989.1.6).
2 - Archives of the Musée Nissim de Camondo (hereafter referred to as AMNC), L.AU.C6, lease and plan.
3 - AMNC, P.M.5, letter from the Count de Kersaint to Moïse de Camondo, 10 November 1924.
4 - Duroselle, Jean-Baptiste, Gerbet, Pierre, *Histoire 1848-1914*, Paris, Nathan, 1962, p. 48.

Yachting

Moïse de Camondo adopted this new hobby with great enthusiasm, undoubtedly under the aegis of his friend Eugène Pérignon (1832-1900), vice-president of the Yacht Club de France. From 1886 to 1891, he owned a fifteen-ton wooden steamship with two masts, measuring twenty-one metres long, named the *Rover* (Fig. 3). The captain, assisted by a crew of three sailors, took his passengers along the coast of the English Channel and cruising in the Atlantic.



3.

— 3. The yacht Rover
leaving the port
of Deauville
1888
© MAD, Paris

In 1895, Moïse and his father-in-law, Louis Cahen d'Anvers, purchased the *Géraldine*, a luxurious three-mast schooner with a propeller, measuring forty-three metres long. A crew of fifteen men was required to manoeuvre her. Two cooks and a cabin boy took care of stewardship onboard. A *maitre d'hôtel* accompanied them for cruises. Anchored in Le Havre, the schooner navigated along the coast of the English Channel and the North Sea during the summers of 1895 and 1896, and then dropped anchor in Marseille and travelled across the Mediterranean. In the spring of 1897, the *Géraldine* was sold to the King of Portugal. Moïse de Camondo's separation from his wife, Irène (née Cahen d'Anvers), was almost certainly the reason for the sale. Afterwards, the count was content to participate in leisure cruises organised by maritime companies.

Automobiles

Moïse de Camondo's taste for travel and touring naturally led to his interest in automobiles. As of 1895, he possessed a car built by "Les Fils de Peugeot-Frères" powered by a Daimler system petrol motor produced by MM. Panhard & Levasseur (Fig. 1). In 1900, when there were only eighteen hundred automobiles in France⁴, the count already owned two. The following year, in his Panhard, he took part in the Paris-Berlin race under the pseudonym Robin, the name of his mechanic. Unfortunately, he seems to have abandoned the adventure without finishing the first stage between Paris and Aix-la-Chapelle, but his passion for automobiles didn't suffer any as a result. A driver with high standards, Moïse had a preference for cars that combined an elegant body with a powerful motor. When he moved to the rue Monceau in 1914, five cars took up residence in the garage. Two mechanic-chauffeurs, housed on site, were employed full time to maintain and drive them. As of the 1920s, they generally busied themselves with three automobiles that Moïse de Camondo regularly exchanged for the latest models: thus, the Voisin torpedo, Talbot and Citroën coupés, and Bugatti cabriolet succeeded one another. A few months before his death in November 1935, the valiant Count de Camondo would visit the Brussels Universal Exposition in his Renault coupé *Vivastella 80*, driven by his faithful chauffeur Jules Guzzi. It would be his last trip.

— 4. Moïse de Camondo's
Panhard 35
in Aumont
1906
© MAD, Paris



4.

The Club des Cent

Founded in 1912 by the journalist Louis Forest (1872-1933), this famous circle of gastronomes shares the common purpose of developing fine French cuisine. Comprised exclusively of men, the number of members is limited to one hundred. As a refined gourmet and a lover of automobiles and travel, Count Moïse de Camondo was an ideal candidate. Warmly recommended by his sponsors, he was named an associate member in 1925 and a full member in 1928. From then on, he became a regular at the Club's luncheons and dinners, as well as at the travelling meals organised around short excursions. One of the principle missions of the Club des Cent was to publish an annual guide for its members, in which their observations about the cuisine, service and management of hotels and restaurants were recorded. Upon returning from his travels, Moïse de Camondo never failed to send in very precise reports to keep this booklet up to date. Between 1930 and 1933, he also held an annual luncheon at his rue de Monceau residence for the members of the Club and their wives.