

# The André Family

Edouard André, who built up the collection of artworks described in this guide, died in 1894, two years before his cousin, Alfred André. Since both died childless, with them was extinguished a lineage whose 300-year history was marked by great events.



Joseph Boze (1745-1826)  
Portrait of Joseph André (1736-1802)

The André family came from the Vivarais region in southern central France. The earliest trace of the family dates back to the first third of the fifteenth century. For five generations, the eldest sons were notaries both at Sanilhac, their birthplace, and at Largentière, the local capital, while the younger sons were established locally in prosperous families.

Although the advent of the silk industry passed them by, the André family, like the famous Olivier de Serres who promoted it, nevertheless rallied early to the Reformation. But the Edict of Nantes, designed to promote religious freedom and the reopening of Protestant churches fell largely on deaf ears in these distant "Marches", and the repression was as severe as the initial surge was powerful. From the end of the sixteenth century, people began returning to the fold of official religion in increasing numbers.

Perhaps it was for this reason, perhaps for reasons of individual entrepreneurship, that a younger André moved south to the city of Nîmes in 1600. The glorious ancient Roman city was at that time shaking off a bout of sleepiness that had lasted several centuries. The trade in skins and in wool was nurtured by the recent arrival of an abundant source of labour from the Cévennes mountains. David-André accordingly set himself up as a wool dyer and merchant, and like most of his peers, lent money at interest.

David André's three sons were the driving force behind the rise of the dynasty. In 1647, the eldest allied himself with the opulent Privat family in Geneva, while the second remained in Nîmes. The youngest, David II, founded a trading company in Genoa in partnership with the Boissier d'Anduze family. The time was 1667, and Genoa the Superb was a flourishing city state, opposing Louis XIV's Spanish policies by protecting French Protestants. When the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685, the André's were already at the head of one of the most important Genoese merchant houses and were able not only to welcome their brothers and sisters in religion, but also, because they had emigrated some time before, to enter and leave France at will.

At this time therefore, the house of André was three-headed, with bases in Nîmes, Genoa and Geneva. The Nîmes branch was in silk and, with a couple of other families, soon controlled the entire industry, from the manufacture of the skeins of silk in the Cévennes, to the manufacture and export of finished goods (especially stockings), as far afield as Peru. The Genoese establishment, which officially became a bank in 1728, continued to deal in luxury goods, but was above all active in maritime lending and changing money, and the acceptance and discounting of bills of exchange. Geneva served as a base for an activity that was swiftly becoming international. And although it was to Geneva that the André's generally retired at the end of their working lives,

they also contracted a number of matrimonial alliances there. With the Privat family, once again, and with the La Rives on several occasions, not forgetting the Necker circle: his brother, Necker de Germany, and then, on two occasions, with the Girardots, their allies. It was thus that the affiliates set up in London in 1748 and in Paris in 1775 became, quite naturally, correspondents or partners.

In the 1770s, Nîmes was the sixth or seventh most important city in the kingdom. Its prosperity was based on its Protestant middle class who, because civil and military careers were closed to them due to their religious persuasion, threw themselves into trade and money. The city was famous for its ancient monuments such as the Coliseum, the Maison Carrée, or the Pont du Gard aqueduct. Its *Académie* enjoyed great prestige because the membership of Jean-François Séguier, and his "universal culture" and outstanding collections attracted everybody who was anybody in Enlightenment Europe. A stop at Nîmes was *de rigueur* for anyone undertaking the Grand Tour.

Those members of the André family who had remained in Nîmes - four brothers - sold their house in the rue des Cardinaux, where they had lived since 1619, and settled in the rue Dorée. On the ground floor were the warehouses and the office of Jean, whose apartments were on the so-called "noble" floor. The urbane and refined David lived on the second floor, with Jean-Jacques, a member of the *Académie* and a friend of Séguier, in the rear wing, and Joseph the traveller in the garden apartments, when he was not in Genoa, Cadiz or Paris - where for want of time he had refused a position with the Neckers. The furniture was in the latest fashion, while Joseph's collection of paintings was unrivalled in the

whole of the Languedoc. When he moved to Paris in 1796, he took the finest with him, yet left behind in Nîmes a Titian, two Holbeins, a Correggio fresco, a Subleyras and around twenty other lesser works.

The André brothers were men of the Enlightenment, as witnessed by their library. They welcomed the French Revolution enthusiastically, while the *fêtes et académies* celebrations they threw in Genoa were rapidly transformed into a political club. An anonymous denunciation even went so far as to compare Joseph with the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau! Two years later, three of them were listed as belonging to the *Feuillants*. But they were moderates and supporters of a constitutional monarchy who were to be ruined by the Revolution. Jean, who had resigned from the Nîmes commercial court, went to the guillotine in 1794 for his Federalist beliefs. His possessions were confiscated and his establishment closed.

In Genoa in 1792, his son Dominique filled a contract to supply wheat worth more than 6 million *livres* for the French government. This was followed by two others, one for the Gard *Département*, the other for the French Army in Italy. But the young merchant had to advance enormous sums that the Directoire was unable to repay. In 1798 a ruined Dominique André sold up in Genoa and returned to Paris.

At the time, he was 32 years old, ambitious and resolute. Better still, his credit was intact. He opened a new business in the rue de Cléry and shortly after settled in the former Hotel de Ligne, rue du Mont Blanc (now the Chaussée d'Antin), the financial district of the time. He sailed untroubled through the crisis of 1815, which almost engulfed the fledgling Bank of France. Earlier,



Portrait of Ernest André (1803-1864) by Franz-Xavier Winterhalter (1806-1873)



Portrait of Madame André, Edouard's mother, by Franz-Xavier Winterhalter (1806-1873)



Portrait of Edouard André as a child by Franz-Xavier Winterhalter (1806-1873)



Portrait of Alfred André (1827-1896),  
photographed by Nadar

in 1808, he had taken on one of his nephews, François Cottier, as a partner. Thanks to their close partnership and their complementary contributions, the house of André flourished when business returned to normal after the Restoration. It took part in all the major public and private financings: Government bond issues, the creation of the National Savings Bank, the big insurance companies, canal construction and property developments in the new Poissonnière and Saint Lazare districts of Paris among them.

Dominique André retired a millionaire in 1834. Two of his sons had earlier joined him in business : Jean, the eldest, and then Ernest, who married François Cottier's daughter. Their son was Edouard André, who thus inherited the bank's fortune on both sides of the family.

The bank continued to prosper during the July Monarchy and the Second Empire, headed by Ernest André and Adolphe Marcuard, a Swiss partner. Then came the turn of Alfred André and André de Neufville, respectively Jean André's son and son-in-law. Among other projects, they had a hand in the creation of the Paris-Orleans railway, they had business interests in the new Eldorado in the Far East, took part alongside other great merchant banks in setting up the Banque Impériale Ottomane and

in exploiting the Nile Delta, although they were not completely successful in this area.

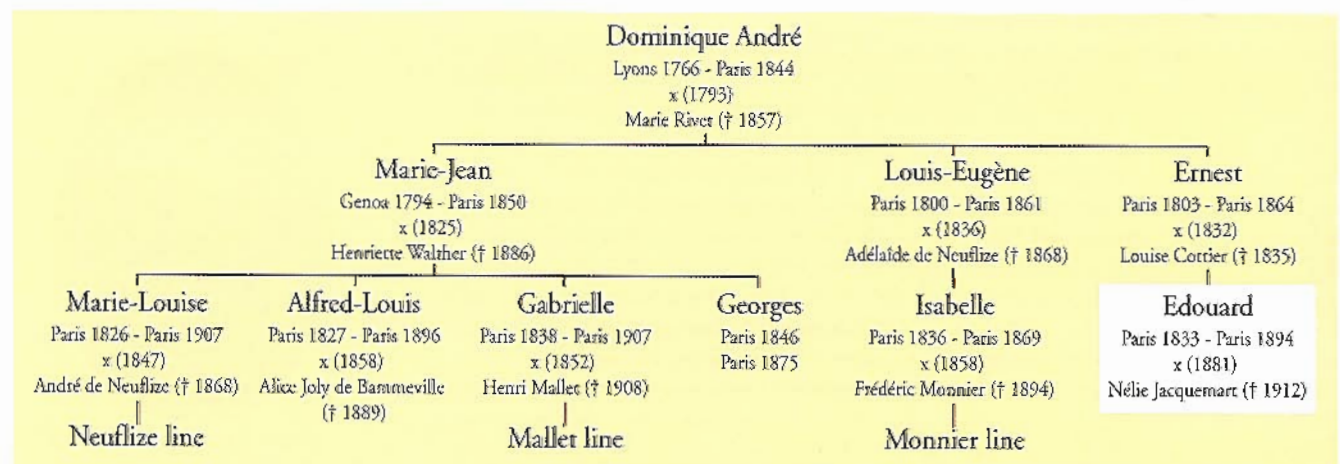
Defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 and the resulting collapse of the Second Empire brought further change. Edouard André retired from public life to devote himself to his collecting, to the *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* and the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. His cousin Alfred played an active role in the Administration of the City of Paris when the Prussian armies were besieging it, and in the negotiation and payment of the reparation demanded by Bismarck in return for his restricting the time of occupation to a single symbolic day.

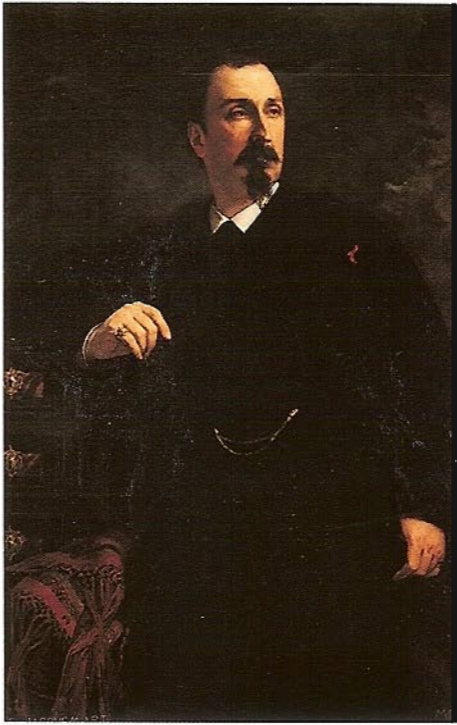
After briefly flirting with politics as a Deputy for Paris in the 1871 general election, Alfred then divided most of his time between his role as unchallenged head of the merchant bank and his tireless work for Protestant charities.

Thus, Edouard and Alfred each live on today in their own way, the former in the shape of the collection he bequeathed to the Institute and the latter through the families of nephews and associated friends who have kept alive the traditions which he himself did no more than pass on.

Virginie Monnier

Edouard André's Family Tree





Edouard André by Nélie Jacquemart



Selfportrait by Nélie Jacquemart



Henri Parent, elevation drawing of the Hotel André's street façade, 1868