

The Martinet district



The Martinet district is located on the left bank, at the foot of the hill, by the castle
©Vaucluse Departmental Archives, 7 Fi 139/26

An industrial estate at the foot of the old village

Martinet is French for “trip hammer”, a hammer powered by water, often used to beat metal. Such a tool was installed at a forge in this area in 1469, lending the district its name. This activity continued until 1522 when the forge was turned into a paper mill.

More paper mills followed, the Sorgue supplying water of the right quality for making cotton paper and enough force to power the mills. The growth of this industry here helped the village to repopulate after the population decline in the 14th century. Labourers and their families moved to this district to be close to their place of work, an area where a village had already emerged in the late 10th or early 11th century.

The paper industry

In the 18th century, Fontaine-de-Vaucluse was home to four paper mills. On the other side of the Sorgue, the mill on Chemin de la Fontaine was established in 1862 at a time when the town was the centre of the region’s paper industry. With the arrival of the railway and the opening of the Isle-Fontaine-de-Vaucluse train station in 1868, paper could be exported more easily. Small paper manufacturers were finding it hard to survive, however, with increased competition from bigger companies and technology. In 1924, company Valdor-Prioux bought the two factories in the Martinet district and the one on Chemin de la Fontaine. The first two were converted into a hydroelectricity plant that would power the third.

Today a garden

After the last paper mill closed in 1968, Vaucluse General Council bought the buildings and opened, on Chemin de la Fontaine, the Vallis Clausa Gallery and the Jean Garcin History Museum: 1939-1945 - The Call of Freedom.

Here, the factories were torn down to make way for a garden, next to the François Pétrarque museum and garden, founded in 1927 on the spot where the Tuscan poet is believed to have stayed in the 14th century. This house was once owned by Élisée Tacussel, who came from an old paper-mill owning family.



The village in a meander of the Sorgue, Napoleonic land registry, 1827-1830,
©Vaucluse Departmental Archives, 3 P 2 – 139/4



Portrait of Pétrarque
©Musée-bibliothèque François Pétrarque,
Département de Vaucluse