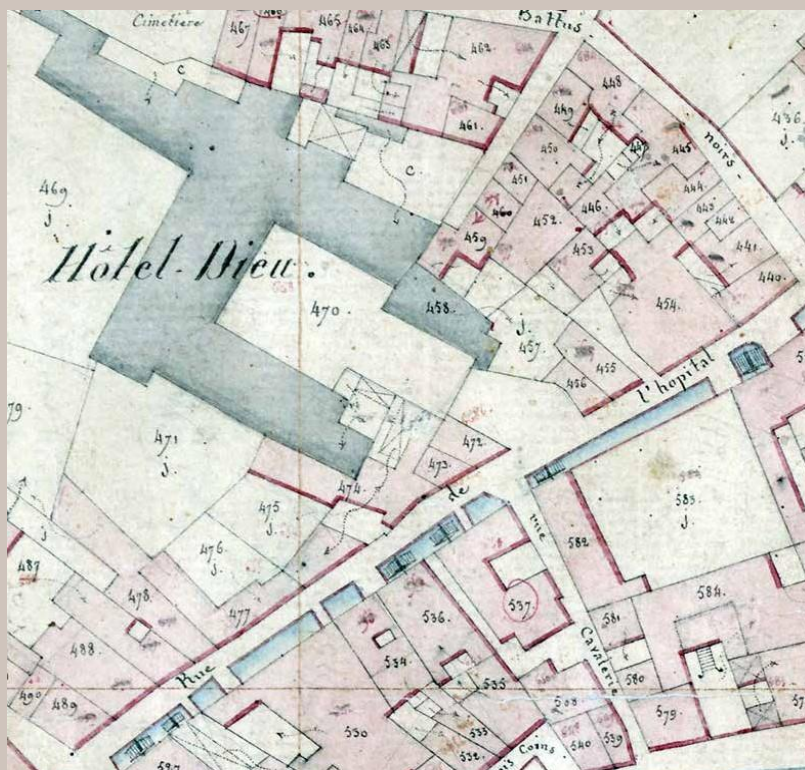


# Wheel street

Rue Théophile Jean and Rue du Docteur Roux, better known as ‘Rue des Roues’ (meaning ‘wheel street’), reveal L’Isle-sur-la-Sorgue’s hospital and industrial history.

‘Rue des Roues’ and the general hospital  
on the 1828 cadastral map

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# The general hospital



In medieval times, L’Isle had several hospitals spread around the city. These were all merged into the Hôpital Vieux or Hôpital des Franciscains in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. On the arrival of the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1685, it was decided that a new hospital complex should be built on the site of buildings and gardens bought from an aristocrat, Monsieur de Vaucluse, and from one of the hospital’s rectors, Laurent Autier. It was expanded in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Brun brothers, both architects, based on the plans by Jean-Baptiste Franque.

The general hospital extends over four wings in an h-shaped layout. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a north-western section completed the complex, which is now protected as a Historic Monument. It still boasts a superb vestibule with its monumental staircase, the old pharmacy and the 18<sup>th</sup>-century chapel, not to mention the garden with its nymphaeum.





# The Maison de la Charité



In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the city decided to offer refuge to beggars in a house bequeathed by the noble Jean de Favier. Thus was born the Maison de la Charité. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the nuns took over management of the establishment, but the anticlerical movement of the 1880s and competition from the Benoît shelter resulted in its being abandoned in 1910.

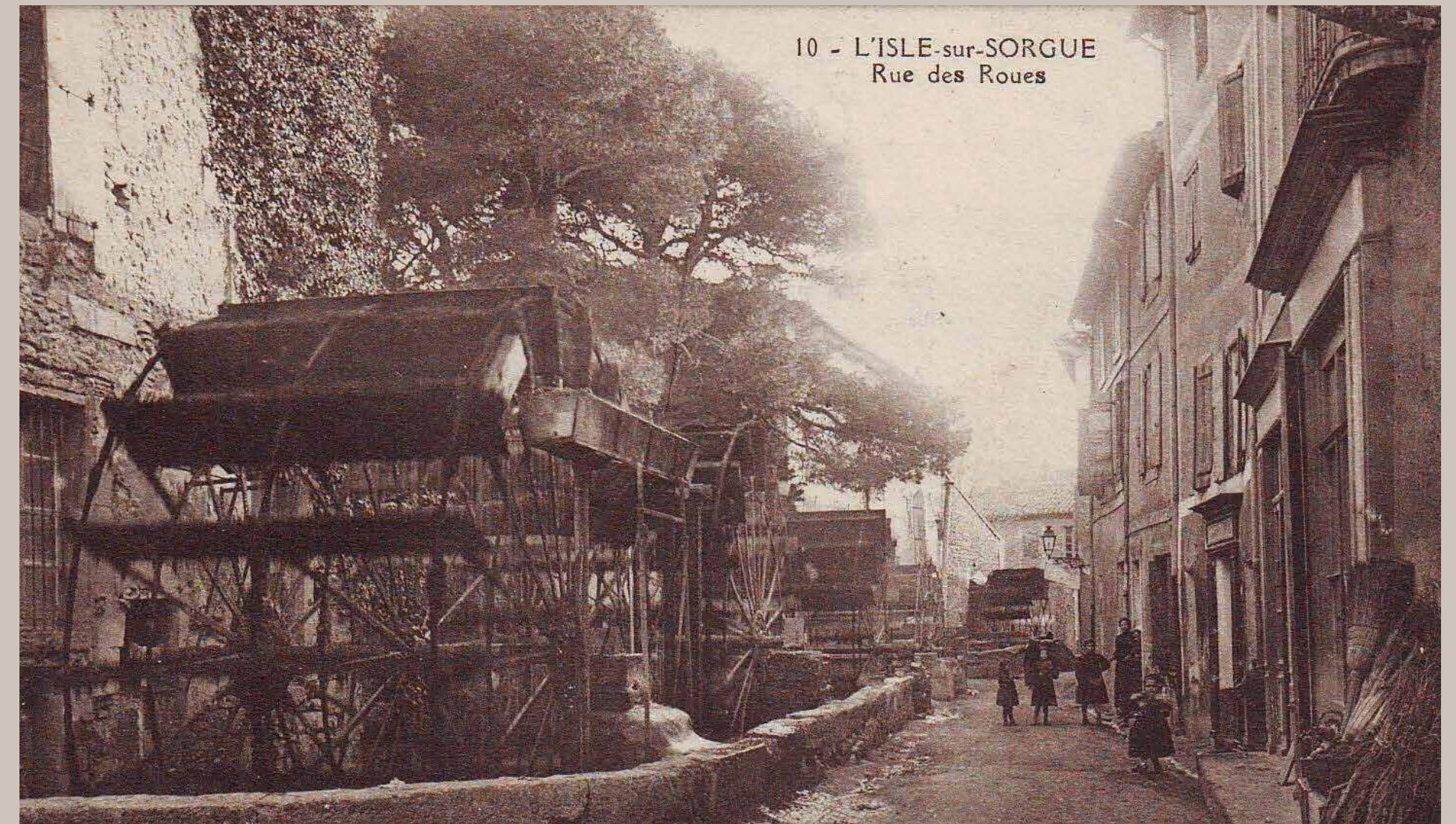
A preliminary plan for the Maison de la Charité was drawn up in 1683 by an architect from Avignon, Pierre Mignard, who had a wing constructed. The current composition is the work of Jean-Ange Brun in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A Neo-Romanesque chapel, designed by departmental architect Joffroy, was added on to the building around 1850.

# Water wheels and the textile industry

Hydraulic power is most likely behind the development of L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was a major textile-manufacturing city, whose products were exported to markets and via the port of Marseille. The wheels powered the fulling mills, which would beat the woollen cloth to soften it and remove the oils. In the late Middle Ages, grain mills and paper mills also existed.

The first mention of a water wheel being established on the Canal de l'Arquet was in 1453. The only branch of the Sorgue that crosses the city, this canal was built when the agglomeration was first becoming established to meet the daily needs of the population and soon industry too. Such wheels experienced a boom in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and no fewer than 17 of them contributed to the hydraulic power generated by the canal's water flow. The city once boasted thirty or so textile factories, one of which is still in business today: Brun de Vian-Tiran.

The wheels – which still stand today – are testaments to the city's industrial history and contribute to its picturesque charm.



'Wheel Street' circa 1900, from the corner with Rue Danton