

**Original Article**

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## Architecture of commercial buildings at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in Paris – «Les grands magasins»<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The extensive transformation of 19th-century Paris significantly influenced the development of innovative architecture for large retail stores during that era. These structures were a response to the dynamic social, urban, and technological changes of the time. Buildings like Le Bon Marché, Le Printemps, La Samaritaine, and Galeries Lafayette became icons of retail trade, introducing a new approach to commerce and creating modern spaces to attract customers. Constructed with materials like steel, iron, and glass, these grand retail buildings featured spacious interiors without columns. Elements traditionally associated with public utility structures, such as domes, lanterns, and spires, became their distinctive features. This article aims to analyse the architecture of the department stores in Paris built between the 19th and 20th centuries. The author explores the impact of dynamic social, urban, and technological changes of that period on shaping the commercial spaces in the city. Tracing the history of buildings like Le Bon Marché, Le Printemps, La Samaritaine, and Galeries Lafayette allows for an understanding of the innovations in trade, architecture, and urban planning during this time.

**Keywords:** Haussmann, Les grands magasins, Paris

### 1. Introduction – challenges of European capitals in the 19th century

The urban landscape of the 19th century underwent a radical transformation in European capitals. Political, urban, sanitary, and social factors left a significant mark on the historical centres of these cities. The Industrial Revolution, the development of the railway system, and uncontrolled urban and demographic expansion determined a new approach to shaping urban spaces, both in terms of form and function [1]. Most European capitals grappled with the consequences of demographic waves leading to overpopulation in urban centres and the emergence of poverty-stricken districts often located in historical downtown areas. A major problem faced by these districts was the lack of essential infrastructure, including sewage

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<sup>1</sup> English – Department Stores.

systems and access to clean drinking water. Substandard sanitary conditions resulted in mass illnesses and numerous epidemics plaguing the poorest neighbourhoods and eventually entire cities. The unstable political and economic situation, along with attempts to minimise armed uprisings and social unrest, also found their reflection in the scale and manner of the actions taken. According to the urban planners of the 19th century, the newly developed urban projects were supposed to facilitate the movement of the masses in the city while simultaneously impeding political opponents with revolutionary tendencies [2]. The keyword of the era became *circulation*. This was confirmed by Pierre Pinon's observation: "The Haussmann era was a triumph of physical movement: air had to circulate, people had to circulate, capital had to circulate" [3]. The urban structure of cities, mostly consisting of medieval buildings and narrow streets, ceased to meet the necessary standards for the quality of life. High population density, lack of access to light, and green spaces became one of the main challenges faced by city leaders attempting to build modern urban centres. Consequently, it became necessary to reconstruct and modernise the inefficient underground infrastructure and impassable transportation networks [4].

The transformation of European capitals, such as Barcelona (1859), London (1858-1875), Vienna (1860-1890), and eventually Paris, became a reality in the 19th century, and the way it was carried out was influenced by the context and conditions of the time.

Among the modern spaces and newly erected structures in Paris, department stores hold a special place. Since the second half of the 19th century, these buildings have revolutionised the retail trade, introducing a previously unprecedented typology that became a model successfully transposed to other European countries. The concept of *les grands magasins* envisioned concentrating a diverse range of commercial offerings within a single, multi-storey building that occupies the entire plot. These monumental architectural structures became emblems of modernity in Haussmann's remodelled Paris [5].

On the map of Paris, extraordinary buildings began to emerge, such as Le Bon Marché (1852), Les Grands Magasins du Louvre (1855), Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville (1856), Le Printemps (1865), and La Samaritaine (1869). Except for Le Bon Marché, located on the left bank of the Seine, all Parisian department stores are concentrated on the right bank, close to the main attractions. In 1894, Les Galeries Lafayette Haussmann opened, thus becoming the last department store built in Paris in the 19th century [6].

## 2. Objective and methods of work

The aim of this study was to conduct an architectural analysis of the commercial buildings at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in Paris, known as *Les Grands Magasins*, as an example of the new large-scale architecture. The goal was to demonstrate its characteristic features, which incorporated ongoing urbanisation processes, the development of transportation, and mass production.

The research was conducted at two scales. The first was the scale of the city concerning the location of newly built department stores, their evolution and extensions. The second was the architectural scale including the focus on architecture, construction and the functional programme.

The methodology of the study was based on the analysis of bibliographic and archival sources. In the course of the research carried out, collections of archival such as architectural plans, sections and drawings of the *grands magasins* (Le Bon Marché (1820), Le Printemps (1865), La Samaritaine (1869), Les Galeries Lafayette (1894)) were analysed. These materials can be found in the collections of:

- Bibliothèque nationale de France,
- Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris.

Next, a comparative analysis was conducted, crucial for the article, based on the examination of cartographic materials and studies carried out on the researched areas of Paris. The functional programme of department stores, their construction, and the applied solutions enabling their current use were also the subject of investigation. Tracking the development of buildings such as Le Bon Marché, Le Printemps, La Samaritaine, and Galeries Lafayette allowed for an understanding of innovations in trade, architecture, and urban planning during this period.

The above actions allowed for drawing conclusions and demonstrating similarities and differences in the architecture and construction of major department stores in Paris. Furthermore, the author emphasised the significance of these buildings as elements of cultural heritage that have survived to this day, constituting an integral part of the historical landscape of central Paris. Ultimately, the article aimed to illustrate how department stores revolutionised retail, influencing both the daily lives of Parisians and the development of its urban space.

### **3. The great reconstruction of Paris**

The reconstruction of Paris was initiated by Emperor Napoleon III, who, along with the city's chief urban planner Baron Haussmann, began the process of transformation. Napoleon was directly inspired by the reconstruction of the western districts of London carried out after the Great Fire of the British capital in 1666 [7]. When defining the key priorities of Paris's transformation, four criteria should be noted, according to Sigfried Giedion. These criteria included compositional actions involving the construction of forecourts for important historical and newly emerging buildings, political factors facilitating military intervention in case of uprisings (preventing the construction of barricades), sanitary factors involving the creation of new squares, parks, sewage infrastructure, and communication factors [8].

In the case of Paris, the reconstruction of the city, lasting sixteen years (1853-1869), led to the removal of approximately 28,000 buildings from the historical urban fabric and the construction of around 100,000 new ones [9]. This action was made possible by French laws that protected buildings and architectural complexes that had suffered particular damage during the French Revolution since the 1830s. Consequently, buildings considered as historical monuments included sacred objects, residential buildings demonstrating the ruler's prestige, and various military objects, which were no longer in use due to functional changes [10]. Drastic measures were taken, particularly concerning the Île de la Cité, where all medieval buildings, including two deconsecrated churches – Sainte-Marine and Saint-Barthélemy, were demolished. Only the Notre-Dame Cathedral remained on the island, to which a representative square was added, and new government buildings were erected (Tribunal de commerce, barracks, Hôtel Dieu in its new location, and Palais de Justice, which was not realised) [7].

The aforementioned passage highlights a significant issue faced by Paris of that time – transportation problems related to the lack of smooth movement within districts and across the city from north to south and from east to west. In his reconstruction plan for Paris, Napoleon strongly emphasised this problem, stating that "The new gates of Paris are the stations, and it is necessary to establish new direct connections between the stations and the centre of Paris" [11].

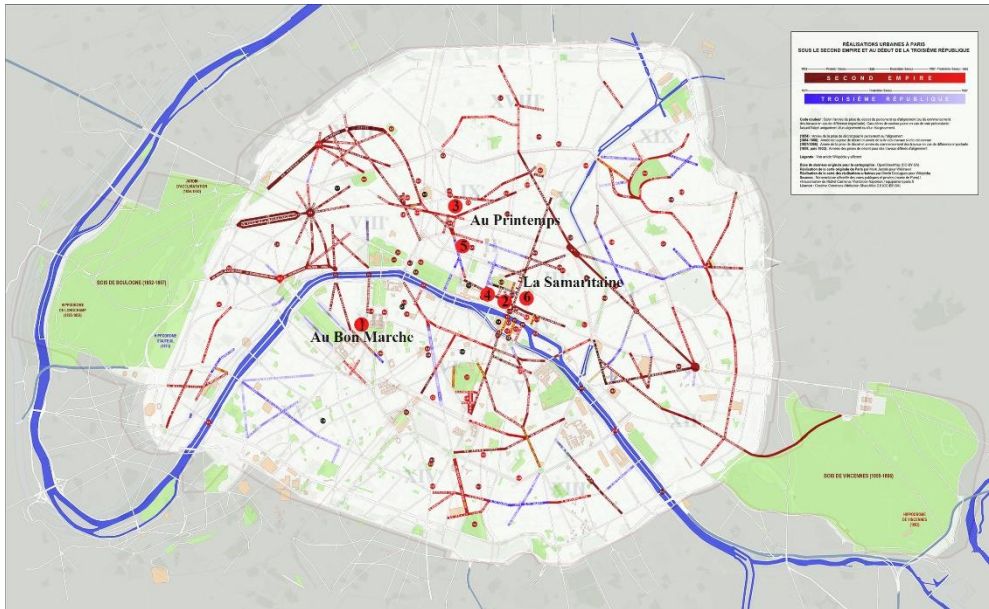


Fig. 1. Map of urban developments in Paris during the Second Empire. On an original map created by Mark Jaroski for Wikitravel, addition Kamila Boguszewska, Legend: 1 – department store Le Bon Marche, 2 – La Samaritaine, 3 – Au Printemps, 4 – Le Grand-Bazar de la rue de Rennes et Dufayel, 5 – Les Galeries Lafayette Haussmann 6 – Le Louvre, source: [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformations\\_de\\_Paris\\_sous\\_le\\_Second\\_Empire#/media/Fichier:R%C3%A9alisationsUrbaines2ndEmpire.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformations_de_Paris_sous_le_Second_Empire#/media/Fichier:R%C3%A9alisationsUrbaines2ndEmpire.jpg), access 12.2023

The city's communication network was therefore based on a scheme of three networks. The first network comprised communication within the medieval centre, where the communication was modified by cutting through historical buildings with new arteries and straightening the streets closest to the Seine. The second network was constructed by roads connecting the city centre with the peripheral districts, known as *Octroi*, and the third unified the city's exit roads and connected them with the second and first networks [2]. In the city, rectilinear arteries were delineated, with a width of 30 metres, representing boulevards along the Seine. At the intersections of these boulevards, representative squares were located, scaled according to the size of the arteries (Place du Châtelet, Place de l'Étoile, etc.). As a result of the reconstruction, new bridges, squares, and gardens were created. Public spaces were modernised, and several representative buildings were erected, such as the opera house (architect Garnier), railway stations, and the redevelopment of Les Halles (Fig. 1).

The city's sewage system was also revolutionised, based on two water supply networks. The diversification of society strongly marked the space in Paris. The shaping of architecture under the influence of the established July Monarchy was a turning point. This monarchy regarded horizontal architecture as its leading style, contrary to the vertical residential buildings of old Paris. Moreover, the new architecture was designed to preserve social order and emphasise the social hierarchy. According to Durand, a professor at L'École Polytechnique in the early 20th century, "The art of composing public and private buildings as a montage technique in accordance with moral and social criteria: family happiness, appropriateness, and social application." This possibility was afforded by the use of new construction technologies such as hydraulic cement, reinforced concrete, iron, and brick [12].

The prevailing style adopted was eclectic<sup>2</sup>, characterised by richness in detail, with the gradation of details aimed at emphasising. With the changes occurring in the industry during the Second Empire, French society underwent a profound transformation. In the space of Paris, large department stores were implemented with the aim of offering a wide range of goods in one place. As manufacturing methods developed and transportation systems improved, department stores became increasingly competitive. The demand among the growing middle class was rising. The department stores and their assortment were a response to these needs, and mass-produced goods at reduced prices became the driving force behind the economy. The development of mass production, technological progress, and the increasing demand of the middle class influenced the economy of industrialised society. Retail trade gained new principles and new monumental establishments in the form of *Les Grands Magasins*. As a result, the first department stores appeared in Paris, becoming significant elements of cultural heritage and influencing the development of the urban space in the capital of France [13] (Fig. 1).

### 3.1. La «rue-mur»<sup>3</sup>

In 1859, the principles of shaping the urban landscape were published. From that moment, Paris adhered to a housing development pattern (the model of Rue de Rivoli) where the architecture was required to follow the principles of uniformity and standardisation. Architecture was meant to be homogenous, and its main goal was to create a unified cityscape. Buildings lost their autonomy. According to Baron Haussmann's guidelines, residential buildings could not exceed a height of 20 metres, and they should have the same height. The maximum height of 20 metres could only be applied to communication arteries that were 20 metres wide. Roofs had a slope of 45 degrees. The balcony line and floors should create a continuous straight line between individual buildings. Facades facing the street had to be made of limestone, while those facing the courtyard had some flexibility. The minimum floor height was set at 2.60 metres, and the dimensions of internal courtyards were defined. Haussmann's architecture established building standards for the bourgeoisie, but it clashed with the old city buildings in poor technical condition. Often, Haussmann's refined facades concealed the functional layouts of old buildings [14].

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<sup>2</sup> The architecture of *Les Grands Magasins* exhibited a dominance of classical style that evolved towards Art Nouveau and Art Deco, depending on the period of construction. Initially, classical elements such as symmetry, column orders, and classical ornamentation characterised these monumental retail buildings. Over time, especially during the Art Nouveau era, more free-form and decorative elements emerged. In the Art Deco period of the 1920s and 1930s, the stores underwent another transformation, incorporating geometric patterns and modern materials. This architectural evolution reflected changing aesthetic trends and adaptation to dynamic social and commercial needs.

<sup>3</sup> The architecture was shaped according to strict principles. The height of the designed and constructed buildings depended on the width of the streets. The functional solutions applied in Haussmannian development were a result of 19th-century approaches. On the ground floor, services were planned; the second floor was residential. The fifth floor was equipped with a balcony along the entire facade. The attic housed the service staff. The street-front buildings were referred to as "La rue mur". Available: <https://www.paris.fr/pages/haussmann-l-homme-qui-a-transforme-paris-23091>, [Accessed, 12 December 2023]

### **3.2. Parisian department stores – «Les grands magasins de Paris» – "The cathedrals of modern commerce"**

The department stores were a response to the emerging social class of the French bourgeoisie. The primary factors determining their implementation were the dynamically occurring urbanisation processes, the development of transportation, and mass production [15]. Commercial facilities emerged in all European countries and in the United States. In the Parisian landscape, they appeared in the second half of the 19th century. Their creation resulted from societal demand for luxury goods. Department stores were built to amaze crowds, enchanting Parisians with a variety of products and new trading principles for that time [16]. Aristide Boucicaut is considered the pioneer of these principles. He was the first to apply methods in Bon Marché, including the so-called "eight commandments," revolutionising the contemporary approach to customers:

1. free entry,
2. fixed prices of goods,
3. selling at small profits,
4. acceptance of returns,
5. expansion of the offer,
6. home delivery,
7. mail-order sales,
8. commercial facilities as places of entertainment [17].

These department stores were often located along newly constructed boulevards and Parisian arteries, in strategically visited places. According to the existing law in Paris, buildings were not allowed to exceed their height beyond the width of the street they faced. Consequently, architects designing large department stores were compelled to choose plots along exceptionally wide streets [15] (Fig. 2).

Built with modern technologies [15], usually using steel and glass, they covered vast areas, sometimes occupying entire city blocks, gradually incorporating adjacent residential buildings and small shops. An example of this is the oldest Parisian department store, "Le Bon Marché," founded in 1838 by Aristide Boucicaut. In 1880, it reached an area of 46,451 m<sup>2</sup>, making it the largest building of this kind in the world at that time [18]. According to O. Vayron, this situation was intriguing because, "In an agglomeration like Paris, where large spaces are usually reserved for public buildings, its surface is exceptional" [18]. The most famous department stores of 19th-century Paris included La Samaritaine (1900), Le Printemps (1874), Le Louvre, Le Grand-Bazar de la rue de Rennes et Dufayel, and Galeries Lafayette (1894) [16] (Tab. 1).

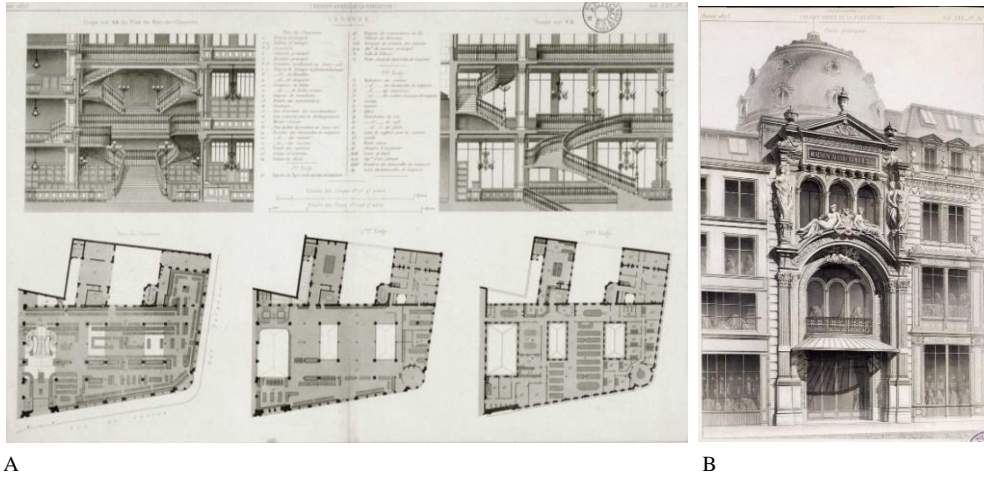


Fig. 2. A – Plans for the grand staircase at Le Bon Marché, Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris, 1873, Photo : Thierry Ollivier, source:

<https://passerelles.essentiels.bnf.fr/fr/image/a129a291-54e8-4389-a6f8-0b661a9ec18d-plans-grand-escalier-bon-marche>, accessed: 12.2023,

B – The alliance of stone and new materials: Grand Department Store of Le Bon Marché, 35th year since the store's foundation, (Pl. 51), Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris, 1873, source: <https://passerelles.essentiels.bnf.fr/fr/image/1adbae87-67c5-452e-8603-0a6f8f2c757b-alliance-la-pierre-et-matériaux-nouveaux-1>, accessed:12.2023

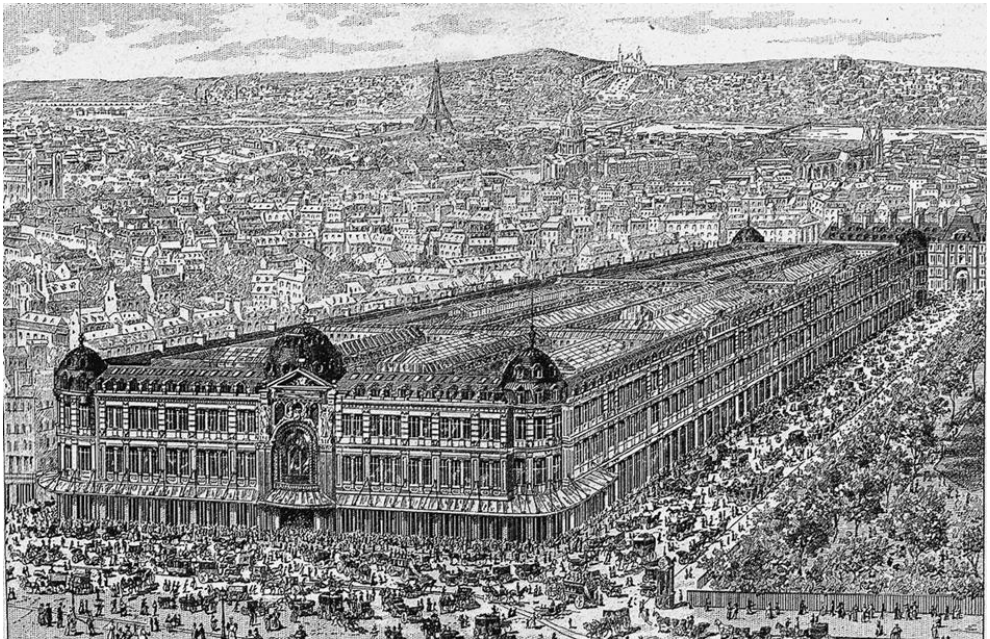


Fig. 3. Drawing of the department store *Au Bon Marché*, funded by the Boucicaut family and opened in 1887, Paris, rue de Sèvres, source: fonds Boucicaut, [online], accessed:12.2023

### 3.3. Architectural and functional form

The architectural form of these grand stores was meant to surprise, and the abundance of details was intended to captivate shoppers. The buildings of the grand department stores appeared much larger than they really were, thanks to the richness of decoration and refined composition [18]. Facades were adorned with numerous balconies and rooftop terraces with characteristic Art Nouveau ornaments [16]. Department stores were modern in terms of functional and structural solutions, yet their architectural designs had to align with the tastes of the Second Empire bourgeoisie. Consequently, *Bon Marché* embodies a restrained classicism of the Second Empire, *Printemps* reflects a progressive Venetian Renaissance, and *Samaritaine* showcases Art Nouveau, later expanded in a neoclassical Art Deco style [13].

According to P. Forthuny, "As long as architecture attracts the curious, catches the eye, and provides a suitable setting for the displayed goods, it will be ideal" [19].

This goal was achieved through various means, among the most spectacular were the domes placed above curved corners of the shops, previously reserved for public buildings. The dome became a distinctive feature of these types of structures built in late 19th-century Paris. Often, the domes were crowned with lanterns and spires and located above the main entrance to the store. Such actions significantly increased their visibility, attracting potential customers [18]. The corner towers, so commonly used in department stores, became a distinctive hallmark - an iconic element of the French style [15] (Fig. 2-5).

After its introduction in the architecture of *Bon Marché* in the 1870s, this motif recurred on the facades of other stores such as *Bazar de l'Hotel de Ville*, *Etablissements Dufayel*, *Printemps*, and *Samaritaine*. When space permitted, the rotunda was duplicated, creating two towers on the facade. This motif persisted over subsequent decades, modified by various architects like Leger, Gourdain, Mallet-Stevens, and Jourdain. It also extended beyond the borders of France, finding application in the German department store *Alte Poste* in Berlin, among others [13].

A significant issue related to the vast floor area was the question of proper illumination of the store interior. To address this, the extensive sections of large department stores utilized an architectural feature called atriums, in addition to electric lighting, to illuminate the interiors [15]. *Le Bon Marché* originally had several courtyards, but over time, architects of large department stores designed a unified and spacious court, similar to *Le Printemps*. By the end of the 19th century, the majority of department stores, such as *Au Louvre*, *Etablissements Dufayel*, *Samaritaine*, *Grand Bazar Rue de Rennes*, *Printemps*, *Galleries Lafayette* in Paris, adopted this spatial solution. Initially, courtyards had a practical purpose in illuminating interiors, but even after the introduction of electricity, they became central architectural focal points. Glass-covered courtyards and impressive staircases, despite the fire risk and use of retail space, evolved into attractive features. Electric glass-iron elevators, symbolizing modernity, further emphasized advanced technology. Courtyards sometimes took on round or oval forms, with colourful stained-glass domes, inspired by the grand exhibition halls of world expos [13].

The interiors of the shops were single-spaced and well-lit from above. The primary goal of their layout was to present the goods effectively and offer a wide range of visibility, encouraging purchases. A representative staircase was placed at the central point of the store. These structures were multidimensional and self-sufficient, serving not only as workplaces for their employees but also as living spaces (Fig. 4-6).



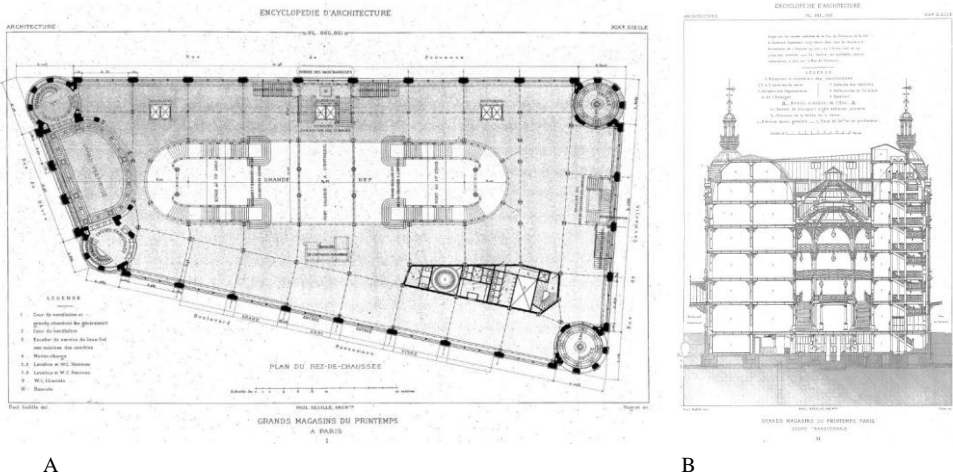
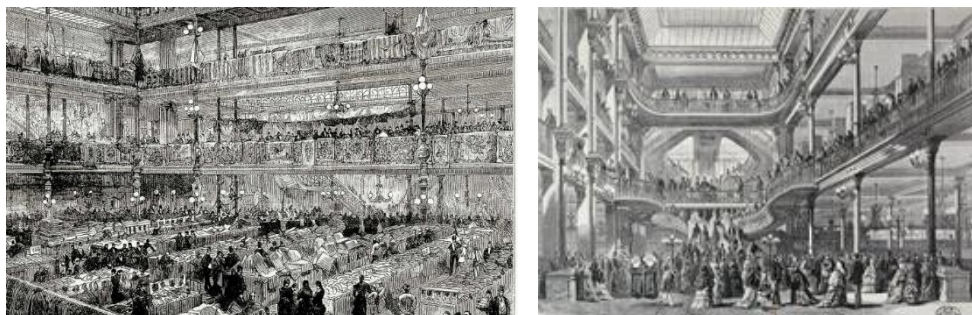


Fig. 4. A – Ground floor plan of Le Printemps department store in Paris *source*: <https://archimaps.tumblr.com/post/131895205807/floor-plan-of-the-grands-magasins-du-printemps?>, accessed 12.2023,  
 B – Cross-section through the Le Printemps department store building in Paris, *source*: Encyclopedie d'Architecture n°1 à 5 1885 – Grands magasins Printemps Haussmann Paris, Sedille, *source*: [https://en.wikiarquitectura.com/printemps\\_282529-2/](https://en.wikiarquitectura.com/printemps_282529-2/), accessed 12.2023



Fig. 5. Great department store – Le Printemps in Paris, postcard, early 20th century, *source*: <https://www.geneanet.org/cartes-postales/view/5911470#0>, accessed: 12.2023

In the 1860s, Parisian department stores revolutionised trade with novelties. This was influenced by various factors, including socio-economic conditions, but a significant aspect was the new approach to trade and its presentation by creating *'Le spectacle du commerce'*, employing techniques like attracting attention and "building to enchant".




A

B

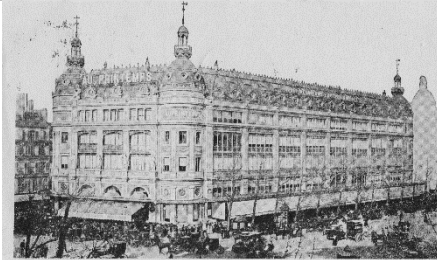
Fig. 6. The interior of the department store Bon Marche in Paris, A – *Les nouvelles galeries de la rue du Bac*, *L'illustration*, *Grand magasin du Bon Marché*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1880, source: BnF, Estampes et Photographie (Va 270 j folio) <https://passerelles.essentiels.bnf.fr/fr/image/0ee12e8f-95a7-49fd-b6e9-cd09577b6d6d-nouvelles-galerias-la-rue-bac>, B – Hubert Clerget: *Le Bon Marché*, Innenansicht, 1872, source: *Le Monde illustré*, 16. Jahrgang, Nummer 781, 30. März 1872, Seite 205., <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63745907/f1> access: 12.2023

Table 1. Selected department stores in Paris. source: own study based on bibliography [1-20], source of figures (access:12.2023): Galeries Lyfayette: ([https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galeries\\_Lafayette\\_Haussmann#/media/Fichier:Galerie\\_Lafayette\\_Haussmann\\_1900.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galeries_Lafayette_Haussmann#/media/Fichier:Galerie_Lafayette_Haussmann_1900.jpg)); Le Bon Marche: ([https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Le\\_Bon\\_March%C3%A9\\_%C3%A0\\_Paris\\_%282029.jpg](https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Le_Bon_March%C3%A9_%C3%A0_Paris_%282029.jpg)); Le Printemps: (<https://www.geneanet.org/cartes-postales/view/5911470#0>); La Samaritaine: (<https://www.cpa-bastille91.com/paris-la-samaritaine-carte-postale-accoupan-detachable/>)

DEPARTMENT STORE NAME	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	ARCHITECT
<p><b>LE BON MARCHÉ</b></p> 	<p><b>1838</b> by Aristide and Marguerite Boucicaut, renovated in 1875 by Louis Auguste Boileau and Gustave Eiffel, the construction was phased until 1887.</p>	<p>arch. Alexander Leplanche, arch. Auguste Boileau engineer/contractor Armand Moisan, Gustav Eiffel</p>
<p><b>ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/FEATURES</b> – The architecture of <i>Le Bon Marché</i> was inspired by the Paris Exhibition Palace erected in 1867. The department store was located on the left bank of the Seine. The entire building filled the plot at the intersection of the streets Sèvres, Velpeau, de Babylone, and du Buc. It was a five-storey structure consisting of a series of centrally placed courts - atriums, forming a harmonious sequence. The courts were illuminated by skylights supported by slender iron columns. Eiffel was responsible for the construction of the skylights, designing the internal structure of cast iron and glazed elements calculated to provide maximum illumination for the displayed goods. The atriums were connected by a continuous passage in the style of a Parisian arcade and staircases. Boileau was responsible for the design of the building, including its plans, facades, and roofing. The characteristic element was the applied ornamentation in the architecture of <i>Le Bon Marché</i>; the main entrance to the department store was inspired by an ancient temple. The</p>		

pediment was supported by caryatids and statues of gods. In addition to commercial floors, space was allocated for office functions, receiving goods, as well as packing and dispatching customer orders. The surface area of Le Bon Marché in 1887 was 52,800 square metres. Now, it is an exclusive department store; owned by the LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) group, one of the world's largest luxury conglomerates, since 1984.

### LE PRINTEMPS



**1865** founded by Jules Jaluzot, renovated by architect René Binet in 1904; subsequent modernizations and expansions followed

arch. Paul Sédille  
arch. René Binet

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/FEATURES** – The *Le Printemps* department store is located in the 9th district of Paris and is designed in the neoclassical style. The building is organised around a central nave covered by a glass roof, allowing natural light to illuminate the interior. During the construction of Le Printemps, an iron structure was employed, enabling the use of curtain facades, known as "*Façade Rideaux*." The rotunda is adorned with sculptures by Carrier-Belleuse, and Corinthian columns have also been incorporated into the design. The interior is vertically connected through elevators, stairs, and horizontal passages linking different floors.

The main headquarters covers an area of about 45,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Now, an exclusive department store; owned by the LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) group since 1987.

### LA SAMARITAINE



Established in **1869** by Ernest Cognacq, La Samaritaine department store boasts an original design by renowned French architect Franz Jourdain. Later, a new section was added by the architectural firm SANAA, expanding the store to approximately 27,000 square metres.

Arch.: Frantz Jourdain, known for his association with the Art Nouveau movement.  
Arch.: Henri Sauvage. Both played a crucial role in designing and shaping the architectural character of La Samaritaine.

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/FEATURES** – The Samaritaine is situated on the right bank of the Seine, in close proximity to the Louvre. The main building of La Samaritaine represents an eclectic architectural style, combining elements of Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and modernism. Following renovations and modernisation, modern design elements were also added. It was inaugurated in 1910 and boasts a steel framework. The façade is adorned with quintessential Art Nouveau elements, featuring organic plant motifs and intricate ornaments. A notable feature includes the glass roof that illuminates the interior of the store. The inside spaces and various details showcase the Art Deco style, characterised by polychromy, mosaic flooring, frescoes, and enameled volcanic rock panels integrated into the facade. The grandiosity of the Samaritaine is captivating, highlighted by its monumental scale and ornate Art Nouveau details. Between 1926 and 1928, architect Henri Sauvage added another wing to the building, this time embracing the fashionable aesthetic of Art Deco. Exclusive department store.

**GALERIES LAFAYETTE**

Founded in 1894 by Théophile Bader and Alphonse Kahn.

Initial designs were by architect Ferdinand Chanut, but the building in its current form was designed by Georges Chedanne in 1912.

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/FEATURES** – Located in the centre of Paris, on Boulevard Haussmann, Galeries Lafayette was founded in 1893 by Théophile Bader and Alphonse Kahn. The current main building was constructed between 1906 and 1912, representing a classical architectural style with elements of Secession. The commercial house's facade adheres to the Belle Époque style. The structure is built with a steel framework, and a distinctive feature is the centrally positioned dome. Built in 1912, the dome follows the Art Nouveau style. Natural light illuminates the interior through large windows and the glass covering of the dome. The interior is adorned with details and ornaments reminiscent of the Belle Époque era. Galeries Lafayette is a privately-owned business belonging to the Moulin family. Currently led by Philippe Houzé. The main headquarters covers an area of approximately 70,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusions

The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was a significant period for Parisian architecture, especially in the creation of new commercial spaces. This period was marked by profound social and urban changes. The Industrial Revolution accelerated progress, giving rise to a burgeoning middle class. Simultaneously, ambitious urban projects by Baron Haussmann redefined Paris, providing fertile ground for the development of pioneering commercial spaces. This combination of social evolution and urban renewal paved the way for the construction of grand department stores, meeting the growing demand for luxury products.

Beyond their commercial significance, these historic retail spaces transcended their original purpose, becoming enduring elements of the historical heart of Paris. Even today, they are recognisable symbols, blending architectural excellence with cultural heritage. In this context, this study delves into the architectural works of Parisian department stores at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, analysing their innovative designs and lasting impact on both local trade dynamics and the broader global market.

The architecture and functional solutions of the large department stores in Paris were subject to a series of factors that significantly influenced the architects' decisions. A model large retail store was typically located along bustling thoroughfares or near a railway station. According to M. Clausen, this was crucial as it attracted buyers from outside Paris, necessitating excellent connectivity for the department store building. The design and functioning of these department store buildings were subordinated to the iron principles of supply and demand. Due to high rents, every square metre was utilised based on the location's suitability for a specific function [13].

The period of the Industrial Revolution and the associated intensified metallurgical production facilitated technological leaps and the construction of large-scale iron and glass structures. The grand department stores overwhelmed with their monumentalism, architectural composition, and applied technological solutions. Display windows, internal

courtyards covered with glass roofs, grand staircases later complemented by elevators, and above all, open-plan interiors were a complete novelty in shaping commercial architecture.

*Les Grands Magasins*, a new phenomenon, became a vital element in the urban landscape, serving commercial functions and proposing new architecture. By utilising the aforementioned materials, the risk of fires was minimised. These stores successfully incorporated glass in their facades and skylights, illuminating the interiors of vast buildings. The use of metal beams and columns minimised the need for additional supports, allowing the interior spaces of these grand department stores to be arranged flexibly. The adoption of Armand Moisant's double-glazed systems became popular, improving the buildings' thermal insulation, ensuring their integrity, and addressing condensation issues [20].

Self-sufficient grand department stores marked a transformative period for the evolving city. To realise them, a significant portion of medieval Paris was demolished. However, these changes were inevitable and irreversible. The consequences of Haussmann's interventions in the cityscape of Paris were also reflected in the described grand department stores, which then, as now, impress with their architectural grandeur and the innovative solutions implemented.

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