

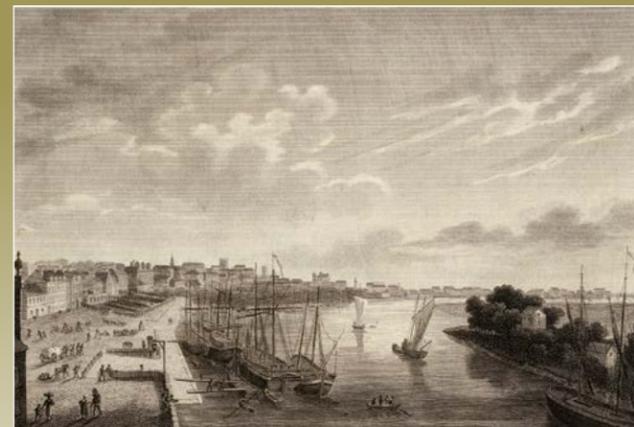
The terrace of the Jules Verne Museum offers an excellent view of the city of Nantes and the Loire. It's a panorama that would have been familiar to Jules Verne, who often stayed at the family's country home, which can still be seen not far from the museum in Chantenay, on the same hillside flanking the Loire. As Julien Gracq wrote in *La Forme d'une Ville (The Shape of a City)*, he *"must often have come up here to contemplate the river below, where it becomes the gateway to the open sea and the path to adventure"*. We invite you to travel back in time to discover this same panorama as it was when Jules Verne looked out on it, to share with him the impressions and emotions inspired by this landscape and gain a sense of the defining influence it had on his work as a writer.



The quai de la Fosse by Jules Noël, circa 1840

LA PRAIRIE-AU-DUC

Facing the port, the shipyards spread from the 1840s onwards. The hulls of boats tower over the slipways. In amongst the carpenters, caulkers, sailmakers, tailors and blacksmiths, there is the mechanic. Nantes prides itself on being at the forefront of industrial progress, and from the 1820s it began to fit out some of its fleet with steam engines, starting with its inland riverboats. On board one of these pyroscaaphes (or steamboats), a twelve-year-old Jules Verne is travelling the Loire downriver to the sea at Saint-Nazaire.



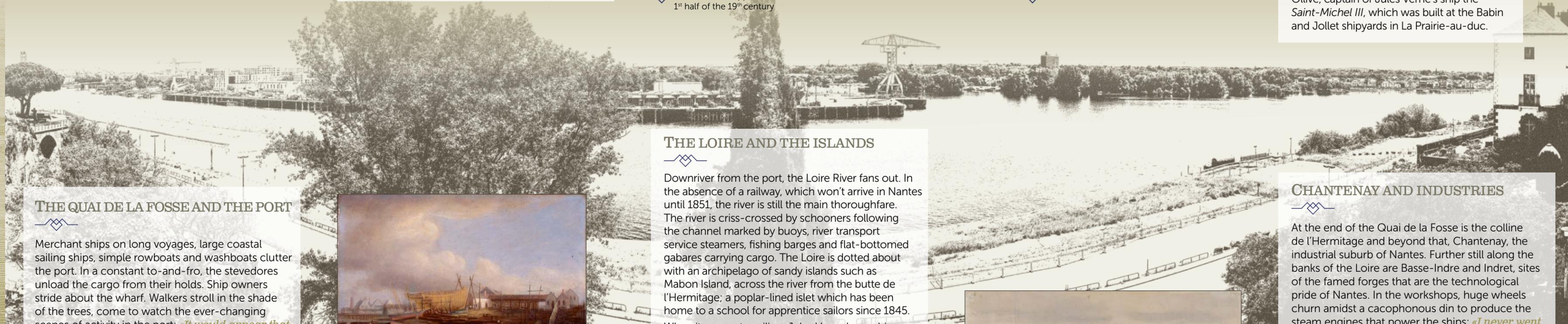
Mabon Island Opposite the Quai de la Fosse, 1st half of the 19th century



Trentemoult, 1832

THE PORT OF TRENTEMOULT

On the other side of the river, on the left bank, is the fishing and sailing village of Trentemoult. On board flat-bottomed barges, positioned across the Loire, the fishermen haul in their shad, lamprey and salmon nets. From the shore, long-distance captains, masters in coastal navigation, sailors and lowly ship's boys watch the three-masted ships go by while waiting to set sail once again. Many of the crews of the armed ships in Nantes are recruited there, such as Charles Ollive, captain of Jules Verne's ship the *Saint-Michel III*, which was built at the Babin and Jollet shipyards in La Prairie-au-duc.



THE QUAI DE LA FOSSE AND THE PORT

Merchant ships on long voyages, large coastal sailing ships, simple rowboats and washboats clutter the port. In a constant to-and-fro, the stevedores unload the cargo from their holds. Ship owners stride about the wharf. Walkers stroll in the shade of the trees, come to watch the ever-changing scenes of activity in the port: *"It would appear that the ship will move away from the dock, that her moorings will be cast off, her masts covered with canvas."* (Jules Verne, *Memories of Childhood and Youth*).



The Lefrançois Shipyard at la Prairie-au-duc by Charles Léon Leduc, circa 1880

THE LOIRE AND THE ISLANDS

Downriver from the port, the Loire River fans out. In the absence of a railway, which won't arrive in Nantes until 1851, the river is still the main thoroughfare. The river is criss-crossed by schooners following the channel marked by buoys, river transport service steamers, fishing barges and flat-bottomed gabares carrying cargo. The Loire is dotted about with an archipelago of sandy islands such as Mabon Island, across the river from the butte de l'Hermitage; a poplar-lined islet which has been home to a school for apprentice sailors since 1845. When it comes to sailing, Jules Verne learns his trade in complete freedom, and at his own risk: *"The skiff is sinking fast, and I have time only to throw myself on an islet of tall, bushy reeds."* (*Memories of Childhood and Youth*).



The Forges of Indret by Ignace-François Bonhommé, 1848

CHANTENAY AND INDUSTRIES

At the end of the Quai de la Fosse is the colline de l'Hermitage and beyond that, Chantenay, the industrial suburb of Nantes. Further still along the banks of the Loire are Basse-Indre and Indret, sites of the famed forges that are the technological pride of Nantes. In the workshops, huge wheels churn amidst a cacophonous din to produce the steam engines that power the ships: *"I never went to Chantenay without going into that factory and watching the machines run, standing there for hours."* (Jules Verne, Interview with Robert Sherard, 1893).



MUSEE
JULES
VERNE



Panorama to travel
to the time of Jules Verne



Illustration from the novel *L'École des Robinsons* (Godfrey Morgan - A Californian Mystery - 1880)

«The greatly widened bed of the Orinoco, gave an appearance that must have struck Jean de Kermor and Sergeant Martial as people of Nantes. Such that the latter could not help but remark:

“Hey! Nephew, just look where we are now...”

The young boy, leaving the deckhouse, set himself at the bow of the boat, its billowing sail rounded behind him. The air, clear as it was, gave a glimpse of the far-off lands of the llanos.

Then Sergeant Martial added:

“Have we, by some chance, come back to our beloved Brittany?”

“I can see what you mean» replied Jean. *“Here, the Orinoco river resembles the Loire...”*

“Yes, Jean, our Loire from above, as it appears below Nantes! See those yellow sandbanks! If there were half a dozen barges sailing between them with their big square sails, all in a line, I'd think we were about to arrive in Saint-Florent or Mauves!”

“You're right, my good Martial, and the resemblance is striking. And yet, these long plains that stretch out beyond both banks rather remind me of the meadows of the lower Loire, on the Pellerin or Paimboeuf side...”

“In truth you are quite right, my nephew, and I can almost see the Saint-Nazaire steamboat - the pyroscaphe as they call it there, a word that comes from Greek, it would seem, and one I have never been able to understand!”

Excerpt from the novel *Le Superbe Orénoque* (The Mighty Orinoco - 1898)

REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES IN THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF NOVELS



THE QUAI DE LA FOSSE AND THE PORT

Jules Verne's attraction to navigation and fascination with far-off lands inspired the novel *A Fifteen-Year-Old Captain* (Dick Sand, A Captain at Fifteen - 1878).

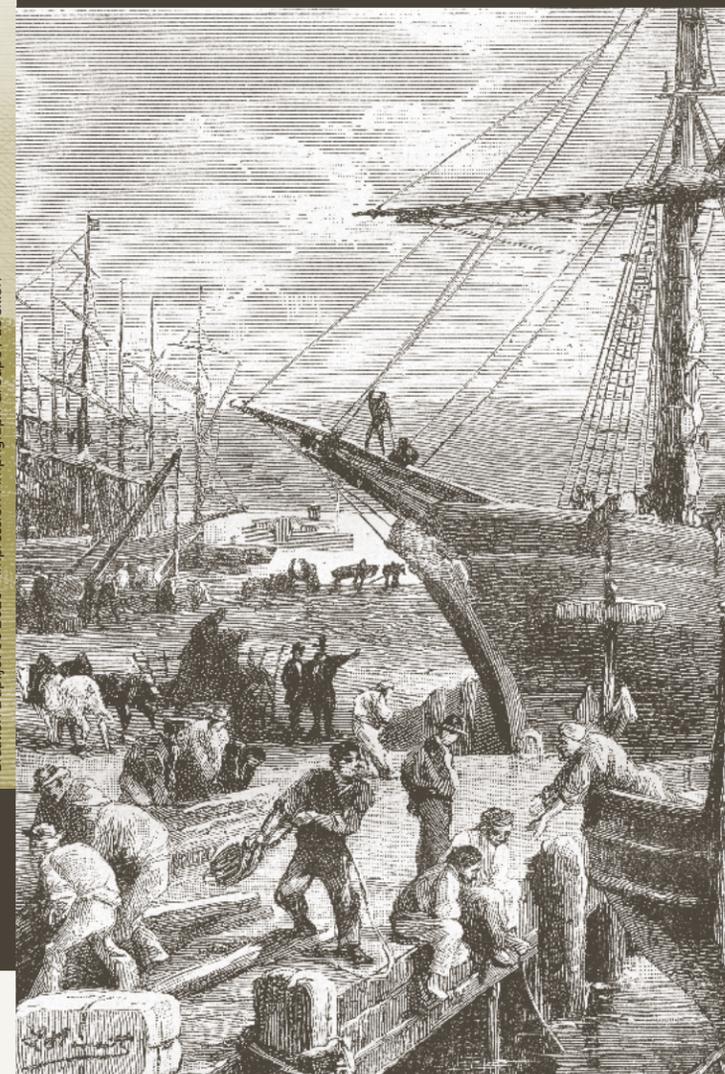


Illustration from the novel *L'École des Robinsons* (English title: Godfrey Morgan - A Californian Mystery) (1882)

LA PRAIRIE-AU-DUC

The novels *La Jangada* (Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon - 1881) and *Le Superbe Orénoque* (The Mighty Orinoco - 1898) are imbued with the memory of Jules Verne's first river journey from Nantes to Saint-Nazaire.

THE LOIRE AND THE ISLANDS

The young Jules Verne's taste for robinsonade castaway stories can be found in several novels such as *L'École des Robinsons* (Godfrey Morgan - A Californian Mystery - 1882).

CHANTENAY AND INDUSTRIES

Novels such as *La Maison à Vapeur* (The Steam House - 1880), an ancestor of the Great Elephant of the Machines de l'Île, are testament to Jules Verne's fascination with the mechanical world from an early age.



The *Saint-Michel III*, Jules Verne's ship at anchor in front of Mabon Island, by Donatien Roy, 1884

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