

Small Pleasures and Great Delights

The attractions of the île d'Orléans, assessible thanks to the construction of a landing mid 19th century, led to development around the Sainte-Pétronille wharf.

From the Château Bel-Air to the Goéliche

The first inn, buit in 1880 but destroyed by fire in 1894, was the site the following year of a four-storey Victorian style building, surrounded on three sides by an imposing verandah and crowned by two turrets on its southwest side. Proudly overlooking the St. Lawrence, the **Château Bel-Air** was a popular destination in the summer, thanks to the ship traffic. Between 1920 and 1960, it enjoyed days of glory as it hosted a faithful clientele from the United States, among other places, for extended periods of stay.

After renovations, it enjoyed a revival in the 1990s as **La Goéliche**. It was, unfortunately, destroyed in the winter of 1996 by a speactacular fire in which one employee was killed. It had just celebrated its centenary. It rose again from its ashes in the spring of 1997.

"Nous irons jouer dans l'île..." (1)

The completion of the wharf in 1855 made discovery of the island possible for an increasing number of visitors from around Quebec City. On fine summery Sundays, considerable numbers of visitors could be seen coming ashore, attracted by the charms of the tip of the island: its rich vegetation, its stately residences, its glimpses of the River and the passing ships.

At the end of the 19th century, the area between the rue du Quai and the River provided visitors with walkways and tables, a carousel and swings, a small zoological garden and a covered bandstand and dance floor. However, as of 1935, with the decline in the wharf's marine activity came a decline and finally the abandonment of this popular recreation area.

(1) From the old French song *À Saint-Malo beau port de mer*