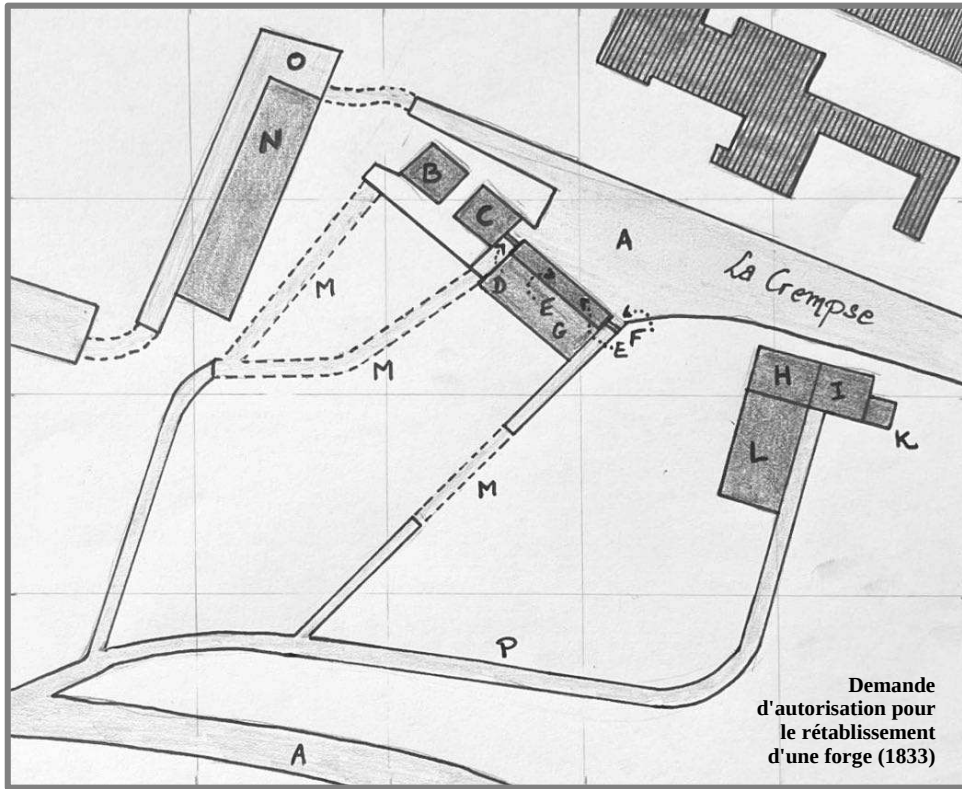




The 1833 plan also reveals the forge's prestigious specialty: its Cannon Boring Mill (N - Forerie des canons). Through a complex system of Covered Channels (M - Canaux couverts), the river's energy was diverted to drive massive drills that bored the interior of cannon barrels with surgical precision.

However, the ironworks was also a world unto itself, where heavy industry lived alongside the rhythms of rural life. The river's flow simultaneously powered a Walnut Oil Press (H - Pressoir à huile) and a Flour Mill (I - Moulin à bled), while daily life centered around the communal Bread Oven (K - Four) and the Miller's Quarters (L - Logement du Meunier).

Even the waste water served a purpose; the Great Exit Trench (P - Grand fossé) acted as an Ore Washer, cleaning the raw mineral before it ever reached the fire. Together, these elements formed a perfectly integrated cycle of energy, craft, and community.



Welcome to Château de la Forge

(April 2026)

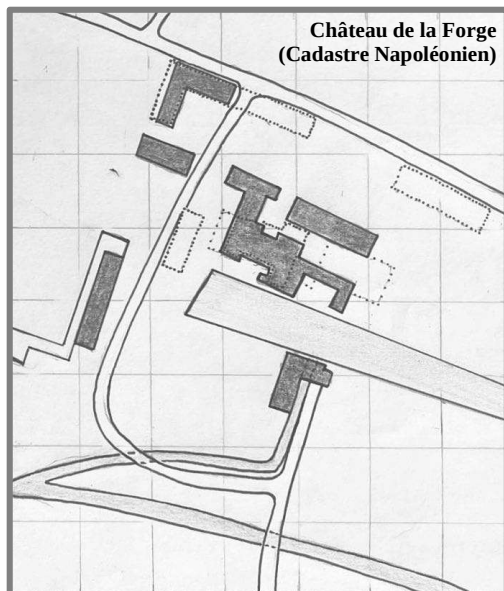


The Forge of Pont-St-Mamet: a Legacy of Iron and Nobility

The first records of an iron forge near Pont-St-Mamet date back to 1641. Built by the Lords of Barrière (of nearby Villamblard), the forge was likely established on the site of a pre-existing watermill on the banks of the river Crempse, repurposing the river's energy for heavy industry. By 1643, the site known as La Forge du Pont was managed by Jean Chiéze, a 'bourgeois' from Bergerac. His family's deep connection to this land is immortalized on the château walls: an ancient bell from 1690 bears a carved poem that explicitly names 'Monsieur Chiéze', calling the forge workers to "come, eat, and work well."

The forge brought significant prosperity to the family. Hélié de Chiéze inherited and expanded the works from his father, Jean, accumulating a fortune that allowed him to join the nobility as Conseiller et Secrétaire du Roi. The date 1736, carved into the West façade of the château, marks this era of prestige, corresponding with the expansion of this maison noble by Hélié's son, Pierre de Chiéze, Squire.





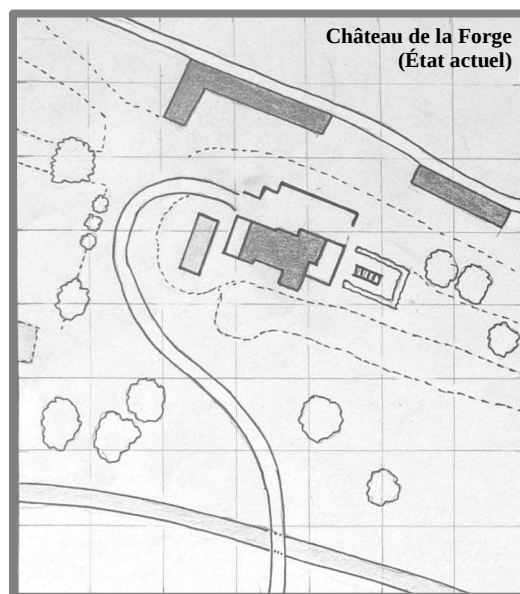
The 19th-century land survey (known as the Cadaastre Napoléonien and drawn between 1808 and 1850) provides our first clear view of the estate as it stood in the early 1800s, at a time when the château was changing hands from the de Chiéze family to the Saleneuve.

While the West façade of the current château (indicated by the dotted line on the plan) aligns with these maps, the historical footprint suggests a much larger residence than what survives today. The maps also reveal a busy industrial landscape: a smaller version of the familiar L-shaped farmhouse still standing today, several other outbuildings, and the now-dry canal – together, the silent remains of a golden age of Périgord industry.

By the time the revised cadastre was published in 1968, the château's footprint had reached its modern form. This was likely the result of a major renovation around 1900 (a date carved into the East façade), shortly before the marriage of Alain de Saleneuve and Beatrix de Cornulier in 1909.

The old forge buildings had vanished, replaced by the two familiar farms to the north, including the long barn used as a tobacco dryer (séchoir à tabac) in the late 19th century.

However, physical evidence of the industry remained in the form of several dry canals scarring the grounds of the estate here and there, and in the many mounds of "slag" (scories) mostly found in the small wooded area south of the former ironworks. These glass-like residues are the leftovers from the smelting process that produced Pig Iron (fonte) and the subsequent refining into Wrought Iron (fer forgé).



Interestingly, while the Beurrerie de la Crempse (the Crempse Creamery) appears on old postcards, it is missing from the later plans, confirming its lost location south of the château.



Today's terraces, gardens, and swimming pool are 21st-century additions—the latest chapter in the long history of this estate.

The Original Soul of the Estate: La Forge du Pont (as of 1833)

While no detailed records survive of the 17th-century forge, a plan produced by Mr. Saleneuve in 1833 to secure permission to rebuild La Forge du Pont provides significant insight into its revised scale and workings. Built on the banks of the Crempse (A - Ruisseau de la Crempse), the forge was far more than a simple workshop; it was a complete industrial ecosystem where the river was harnessed to transform raw earth and timber into iron and artillery.

The journey began at the Blast Furnaces (B & C - Hauts fourneaux), stone towers fueled by charcoal harvested from the surrounding forests. To melt the iron ore, a constant blast of oxygen was injected by heavy pistons driven by a dedicated Hydraulic Wheel (D - Vanne de la roue des pistons), acting as the mechanical lungs of the site. Once the molten metal was cast as Pig Iron, it moved to the Refining Forge (G - Forge à fer). Here, it was reheated and placed under the colossal "Martinet" trip-hammer, powered by its own Water Wheel (F - Vanne de la roue du marteau). This hammer struck the glowing metal with immense force to purge impurities, transforming it into the high-quality Wrought Iron required for heavy industry.