

## My father Avedis was there, every Sunday, and I am too : the apostolic church of Paris

Armenian Chapel of the 15 rue Jean Goujon, 75008 Paris, FRANCE engraving after Albert Gilbert, architect, 1906, 31 x 17 cm. al. Sarkis Boghossian, Paris

In 1902, a correspondent of the Armenian newspaper of Constantinople "Manzou-Meiosis Effniar" wrote: "When will we have our Holy Church in Paris?" This issue did not remain unanswered. A wealthy Armenian (his oil fields were stolen by Azerbaijan n.d.r.) businessman from Baku, named Alexander Mantachians (known as Mantacheff), discovered that the small Armenian community in Paris did not have its own church. Finding these circumstances unacceptable Mantachians along with the poet Siamanto, singer Arménag Shah-Mouradian and musicologist Komitas, decided they could not remain deaf to this call. Religious and deeply patriotic, Mantachians was touched by the request of the priest of Paris, he vowed to fund the construction of an Armenian Apostolic Church in Paris.

He acquired property near the Champs Elysees for the astronomical price of 450.000 F and hired architects to design a church. The young French architect Albert Désiré Guilbert was chosen for the task. The first stone was laid on October 5<sup>th</sup> 1902 and completed in 1904. The entire construction cost 1,540,000 F. The pediment of the church, 25 m long and 13 m wide, is symbolically engraved with the holy seventh letter of the Armenian alphabet "Է" ("to be", a reference to God). The church was named after St. John the Baptist.

Today, the Armenian community in Paris is one of the largest in the world and the church is its centerpiece.



source : Zareh Abadjian

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