

L'Ecole d'Autrefois - A School from Bygone Days Gonzeville

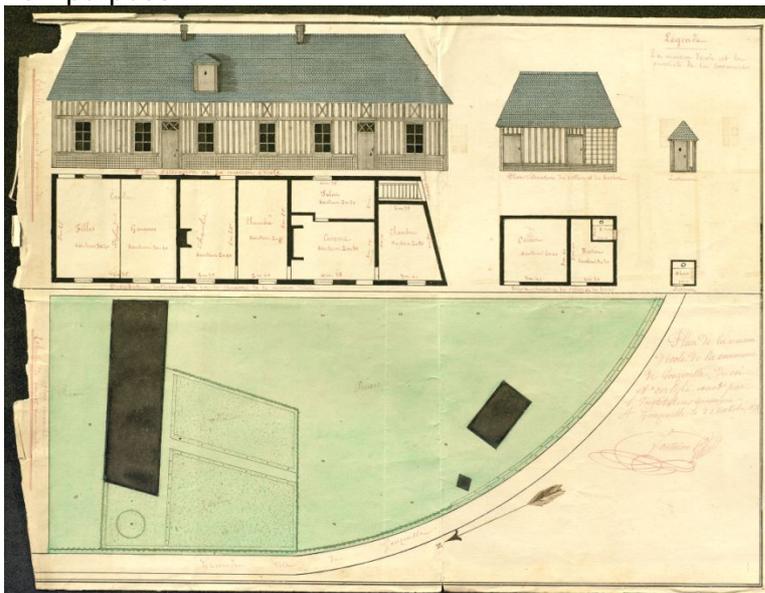


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A series of acts were passed during the 19th century requiring *communes* to have both a primary school and a town hall. Also, communes were required to pay for public education with primary education being compulsory since the Ferry Act of 1881.

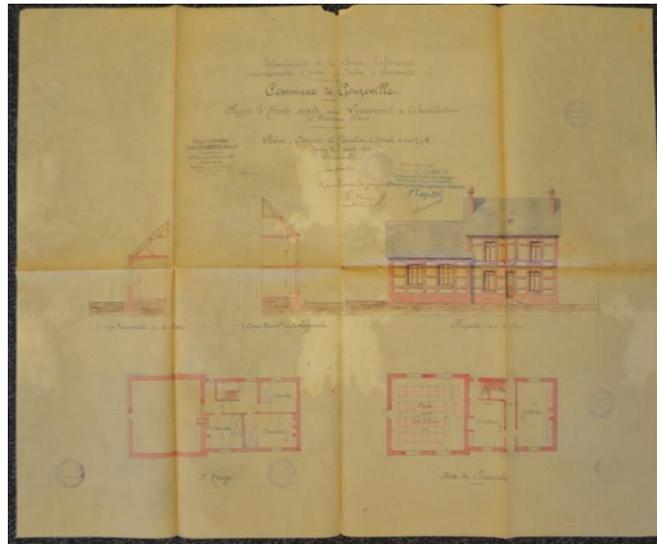
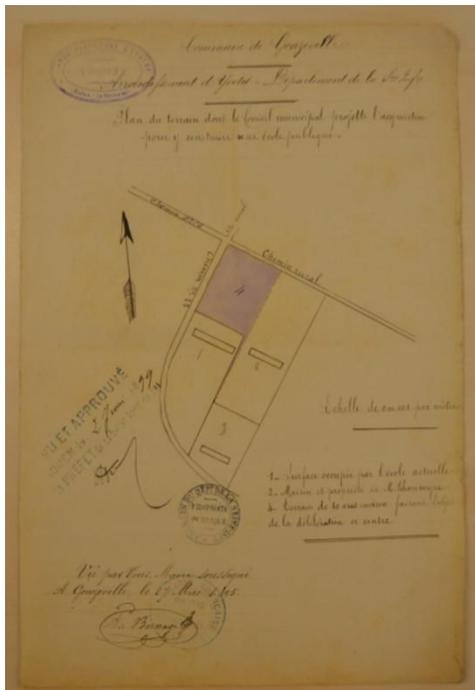
The commune of Gonzeville had a population of almost 400 in the mid-19th century. It had two schools, one in a presbytery and the other in a cob-walled, timber-framed building.

In 1854, it was decided to build a new "schoolhouse". A ministerial decree in 1857: "Authorises the commune to acquire from Mr Lieury for 1,300 francs a house with an outbuilding to be used as a school". The building required work to adapt the building to its new purpose.



Elevation and ground plan of the schoolhouse, 1875, ADSM 1 T 1361.

Forty years later, the commune bought another plot situated to the north-east of the schoolhouse from a Mr Thoumyre to build a mixed school with accommodation for the teacher. The 10-acre parcel of land was planted with fruit trees, and needed to be developed. In 1895, the architect René Martin (1854-1938) submitted a ground plan and elevations of the new school.



Purchase of land to the north-east of the schoolhouse, 1895, ADSM 2 O 1027
Plan of the new mixed school with the teacher's accommodation, by the architect René Martin, 1895, ADSM 2 O 1027

Shortly afterwards, the initial project was expanded to include a new town hall alongside the classroom. This was part of the national development of town halls and schools, both in towns and the countryside. These municipal buildings varied according to the size and resources of the commune but met the same needs: a town hall, a school (for girls and boys) and accommodation for the teacher (often the town hall clerk).

The new town hall school in Gonzeville met the requirements laid down in the ministerial regulations and was opened in 1901, after which the commune went on to purchase school supplies and furniture.

It was decided to transform part of the old premises, then used as a classroom and the teacher's house, into a covered playground for the girls, a laundry room and a storeroom.



The former schoolhouse converted into an open courtyard. ©Département de la Seine-Maritime

The courtyard still features several maps painted on the mud walls, illustrating its former purpose.

In addition to a map of Europe, of which only the title remains, and another barely legible map showing the waterways or the administrative division of France, there is a map of *Seine-Inférieure*. Each is framed by a coloured border and bears its title in a blue insert.



Map of the Seine-Inférieure with its upper title. © Département de la Seine-Maritime

The classroom remained in use until 1992, when, due to the decreasing number of pupils, the school was merged with that of Doudeville.

The school was recreated with the surviving furniture and equipment to provide a unique experience: going back in time to a classroom in the 1950s. L'École d'autrefois, in Gonzeville, was created.

Around the stove, pupils' desks with inkwells are arranged facing the teacher's desk on a platform. On the walls hang maps and natural history illustrations. The teaching materials are stored in cupboards at the back of the classroom.



*Pupils' desks around the stove and coal bucket.
Maps and charts on the walls.
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Some visitors are transported back to their own memories of schooling, particularly to the days of the primary school leaving certificate. They can also be put to the test with dictation or a mathematical problem, which must of course be solved with pen and paper and without a calculator!



The atmosphere of a 1950s classroom. © Département de la Seine-Maritime

A truly nostalgic experience!

The village has other heritage sites to discover: Saint-Samson church, manor houses and beautiful residences in natural surroundings...