

A short history of the Domaine de Vincenti

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A family estate for over 4 centuries and 13 generations



The Domaine de Vincenti (the name was formerly spelled Vincinti or even Vincenty) is located near Crest, in the town of Divajeu, on the edge of the village of Chabrillan on which the estate has land. Formerly, the estate was named Rionier, a patois variation of Rif Noir (Rio Nigra, in Latin), the name of the creek that flows through the property. The name 'Vincenti' comes from our earliest ancestors, the Vincents, who purchased the land in the late 1500s. The Vincent family, originally from Largentière in the Vivarais region of Ardèche, had settled in Crest in the 1400s.

We can trace back the origins of Vincenti to Jean Vincent, probably born in the late 1500s, and his son, also Jean Vincent, married to Catherine Dupont. Their daughter, Catherine Vincent, married Sébastien Chion de Blétil, bringing the land into her dowry.

Their daughter, Marianne Chion de Blétil, married in 1691 Jean-Louis Sibeud (1643-1713), a notary from Crest. The property was passed down to their son, Jean-Louis Sibeud (1693-1768), a Parliament attorney and delegate to the Intendant of the Dauphiné region. Born from his first marriage to Catherine Rouveyre (who died in 1728), his son Paul Lucretius Sibeud (1728-1808), also a Parliament attorney, was mayor of Crest in 1790 and married Catherine Alléon in 1772.

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Paul Lucretius Sibeud (1728-1808)



Catherine Alléon (1732-1810)

In 1793, their daughter Françoise Lucrèce Sibeud brought the land of Vincenti as a dowry into her marriage to Jacques Pierre Etienne Bellier de Presles (1767-1835). Their daughter, Pauline (1798-xxxx), married Adrien François Girardon in 1820, bringing the land of Vincenti into the Girardon family.

The Girardon family was originally from Brignais, southwest of Lyon, where François Girardon and his son Jacques were 'butcher merchants' in the second half of the 1500s and early 1600s. After 1650, several generations worked in Lyon as master silk dyers. In 1754, Etienne Girardon (1721-1767) obtained the office of 'Advisor to the King, Receiver of the Lyon Bridges and Roads'. His son, Jean Baptiste Girardon (1747-1813) was 'Parliament Attorney and Receiver of the Saint Etienne Salt Granary'.

His son, Adrien François Girardon (1789-1855) married in 1820 Pauline Bellier (1798-xxxx), whose dowry included the land of Vincenti and a house, probably a modest traditional Drôme farmhouse, with its stables and inner courtyard protected from the northern winds. This original construction forms the basis for part of the current Grande Maison.

Adrien François and Pauline Girardon had a son, Gustave Girardon (1821-1887). He was a painter and was married twice, in 1848 to Sophie-Mina Blancard (1826-1852), then to Hélène Roubaud (1838-1917). Pierre Girardon was born from his first marriage and Marie, Adrien and Louis from the second.

Gustave and then Pierre Girardon performed very extensive construction work in Vincenti, which then became the 'Girardon family estate'. They can be credited with the current scale of the existing buildings: the original farmhouse was considerably enlarged and transformed, becoming the Grande Maison. This is where the artist had his painting studio, which still exists today. The Grande Maison was built around a rather dark and cluttered inner courtyard. In the 1870's, one added the Petite Maison, with its chapel (blessed in 1888), its orangery, a greenhouse, a few bedrooms and, originally, a granary and two potato cellars. In addition to these two houses, three farm buildings were built:

- The first, which now houses Le Bassin and Le Colombier, had a cow stable and a pig barn, replacing a former silkworm nursery.

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- The second, which now houses La Scie and La Forge, included a sheep barn and a large stable for oxen. A very high wall enclosed the farmyard with its stone-column shed. Terraced to the south of the building, a small house served as a forge for the property.
- The third, which now houses Le Four à Pain and Les Agnelles, was called the 'dryer'. It included a small building with a woodshop and a bread oven. A very high wall, of which the base remains today, enclosed the southern courtyard of this building.

At the death of his father Gustave in 1887, Pierre Girardon (1850-1930) took over the management of Vincenti. He had two doctorates, in Law and Literature. A magistrate then a lawyer, he devoted a lot of energy to the establishment of the first agricultural unions, the management of the property, his large family, and Christian works. From his marriage to Louise MonRoe (M'Roe) (1858-1942), he had eleven children: Guy, Henry, Louis, Jean, Lucie, Paul, Gustave, Marie, Catherine, Pierrette and Cecile. Pierre Girardon built the very large hangar north of the farm in 1900. In 1889, he planted the two Spanish pines in front of the Agnelles; in 1893, the two plane trees near the gate and the large red beech tree at the back of the park; in 1900 the tulip tree in front of the Grande Maison; and in 1902, the linden trees on the driveway and the two cedars south of the park. The 'great plane tree' to the west of the Grande Maison is much older and was planted in the late 1700s. The Laricio pine of Corsica, southwest of the park, dates back to 1867.

It was his eldest son, Guy Girardon, (1879-1953), a Naval Officer, Ship Captain, and Commander of the Legion of Honor, who took over the responsibility of Vincenti for the next generation. He married Madeleine Neyrand (1885-1969) and had seven children: Elizabeth, Marie-Antoinette, Pierre, Gustave, Louise, Marie-Thérèse and Cécile. The family lived for a very long time in Toulon, along the Mediterranean Coast and finally settled in Vincenti at Guy's retirement, shortly before the Second World War. Gustave died of tuberculosis in 1935 and Pierre, also a naval officer, lost his life in May 1942 in the battle of Diego Suarez.

In 1949, Marie-Thérèse Girardon (1922-2016), married Etienne de Valence (1910-2002). They are my parents. In 1955, Etienne returned from Vietnam where he ran a rubber plantation and settled in Vincenti as a farmer. He lived here until the end of his life in 2002.



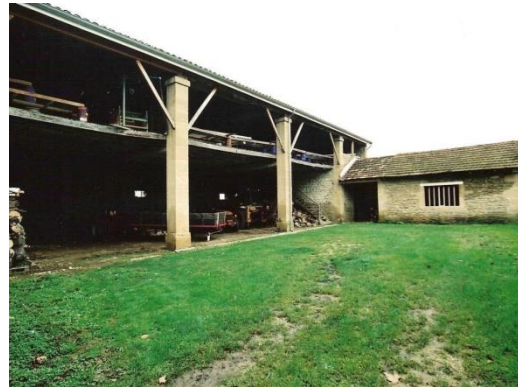
We can trace back the origins of the Valence family to 1440 when nobleman Jacques Valence, squire, Lord of Montis and other lands, lived in the Forez region near Roanne. The Valence family remained in Roanne, a city they administered as Bailiffs and Seneschals from the 1650s to the French Revolution. In 1658, Claude de Valence acquired the land and castle of Minardière, near Roanne, and the family's last name became 'de Valence de Minardière'. My grandfather, Bernard de Valence, passionate about agriculture and breeding, lived in Varanges, in the village of Cortambert near Cluny, in Saône et Loire. My father was born there in 1910 and as soon as he finished school, he joined my grandfather to work on the farm. In 1938, he embarked for Indochina (Vietnam) where

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he remained for 17 years, working on rubber tree plantations. His Resistance courage during the World War II events that shook South East Asia earned him a civilian Military Medal, the Croix de Guerre and the Legion d'Honneur. In 1947, he met Marie-Thérèse Girardon in Vincenti at the wedding of his brother Louis with Louise Girardon, my mother's sister.

Etienne and Marie-Thérèse de Valence had 7 children: Bernard, Magdeleine, Anne, Pierre, Marie-Sophie, Christophe † and Benoît. We all grew up here in Vincenti and keep in our hearts a deep attachment to the charm of the Drôme and the memory of the beautiful and hard labor of our parents' work as farmers. Between the 19th century, when the original farm had been considerably remodeled and enlarged, and the middle of the 20th century, agriculture had evolved and mechanized. My father made some very important changes in the use of the buildings, installing a chicken farm, a large sheep barn, garages for agricultural machinery and so on. When he retired, the farmland was leased to neighboring farmers, and little by little the farm buildings were no longer used.



Gradually, from the 1980s, Brigitte and I (Bernard de Valence), who had inherited part of the Grande Maison and 1/6th of the land, started to purchase the property shares of my siblings - one of my brothers Benoit, keeping and restoring, with his wife Isabelle, the charming farm of the Vigneraie south of Vincenti. Brigitte and I have 7 children: Elisabeth, Séverin, Claire, Marie, Sarra, Anne and Timothée. We lived for many years in the USA, then in Switzerland, two countries where the majority of our children and their families live today.

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In 1992, we had lived in the USA for 7 years when we started to restore La Petite Maison. When we returned to Europe in late 1993, it became our vacation home. My parents lived in the Grande Maison and we were happy to visit them often, with the ability to be very close without overwhelming them.

In 2005, 3 years after my father left us, we began the project of renovating the 3 large farm buildings to create the first 6 holiday villas of Vincenti: La Forge, La Scie, Le Colombier, Le Bassin, Le Four à Pain and Les Agnelles. We also built the pool and tennis court to the north of the property, rebuilt the roof of the Great Hangar and landscaped the park around these buildings. These renovations, done by local craftsmen, lasted for three years and ended in a complete remodel of the three buildings, which used to be stables, haylofts and so on.



In July 2008, we began renting these villas. Our goal, Brigitte's vision, was to open up Vincenti to the outside, to give meaning to the very important real estate heritage we were given, and turn it into a simple however quality asset to local life and our guests.

After my father passing away, my mother, Marie-Thérèse de Valence, lived alone in the Grande Maison, which remained a rallying point for her children. As a result of various health incidents, she moved to Lyon in 2007 and the house remained seldom occupied for several years.

In early 2013, after 18 months of planning, we started the restoration of the Grande Maison. It was a challenging project. We wanted to keep the character of the old family home while deeply modernizing it, bringing in light, making it much more energy-efficient and convenient to live in. We also needed to be able to accommodate my mother who was having increasing difficulties to get around. The construction, again entirely done by local craftsmen, continued for over 3 years.

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In January 2016, we left Switzerland where we had lived for a long time and we settled year-round in Vincenti. Sadly, my mother left us in July 2016.



Work in progress



After

Brigitte and I now live in La Grande Maison where we have also built two holiday residences, Le Fruitier and La Terrasse, as well as two apartments (La Scellerie and Le Pressoir) where our property caretakers live, Le Pressoir and La Scellerie. In 2017, we finally created the walk paths around the southern park and refreshed La Petite Maison to transform it into a holiday residence as well.



Today, the Domaine de Vincenti maintains its soul as a family property but is now largely open to the outside. Throughout the year, we receive visitors from all continents. Our goal is to offer them a quality welcome, with simplicity, openness, respect and warmth. We like to meet each and every visitor informally and personally. Their satisfaction is paramount to us. The very large park of the Grande Maison is open almost year-round and all of those who visit us have a private outdoor space to spend time together. Children run freely and safely on the property.

Our wish is to widely share our family estate, to allow our guests to taste the charm of our beautiful region of the Drôme with varied landscapes and scents of Provence, and for each and every visitor to feel peaceful, rested, restored... satisfied with a perfectly successful stay.

Bernard and Brigitte de Valence