

In the steps of Pierre de Coubertin in Lausanne



Brochure created by Jean-Loup Chappelet for the 150th birthday of Pierre de Coubertin (January 1, 1863 – September 2, 1937) who lived in Lausanne for a large part of his life.

The color photos were graciously provided by Lausanne Tourisme, © Régis Colombo, diapo.ch (not including the cover: bust of Coubertin by Jean Cardot © CIO).

Historical sources: Christian Gillieron, Norbert Müller and the family of Navacelle de Coubertin.

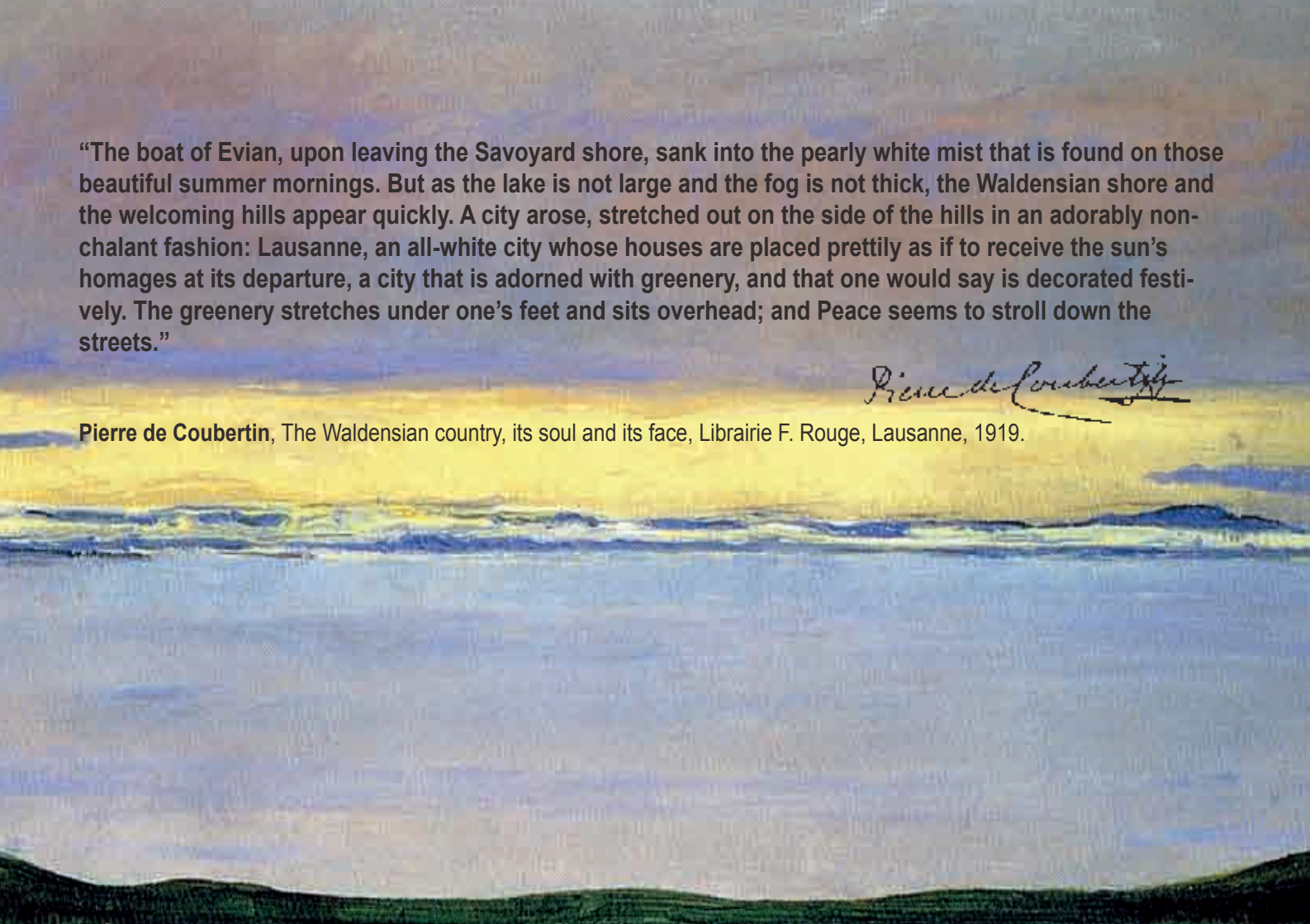
The numbers of each place relate back to the map of Lausanne on the back.

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Medal for the 150th birth date of Pierre de Coubertin by Karlheinz Oswald (Zurich).

“The boat of Evian, upon leaving the Savoyard shore, sank into the pearly white mist that is found on those beautiful summer mornings. But as the lake is not large and the fog is not thick, the Waldensian shore and the welcoming hills appear quickly. A city arose, stretched out on the side of the hills in an adorably non-chalant fashion: Lausanne, an all-white city whose houses are placed prettily as if to receive the sun’s homages at its departure, a city that is adorned with greenery, and that one would say is decorated festively. The greenery stretches under one’s feet and sits overhead; and Peace seems to stroll down the streets.”

The background of the image is a painting of a lake. The sky is a mix of yellow and orange, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The lake is a deep blue with some lighter blue and white highlights. In the distance, there are dark, silhouetted hills. The signature 'Pierre de Coubertin' is written in black ink in the upper right corner of the painting.

Pierre de Coubertin

Pierre de Coubertin, The Waldensian country, its soul and its face, Librairie F. Rouge, Lausanne, 1919.

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THE TRAIN STATION OF LAUSANNE

Our journey starts at the train station in Lausanne where Pierre de Coubertin arrived for the first time without a doubt in **1906**. It is in fact during this year that the tunnel of Simplon was opened, which greatly facilitates the movement from France to Italy, Coubertin's favorite destination since his youth. It is also through Lausanne that he discovers the Waldensian country, the land of his friend the Baron Godefroy deBlonay (see location 3) who invites him to his castles. It is during this period that Coubertin decrees in an article of the Olympic Review that Switzerland is the "queen of sports", that he starts to discover Romandie, and that he considers establishing a permanent headquarters there for the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The train station of Lausanne (which was completely reconstructed between 1911 and 1916) is still the arrival point of many visitors who visit the "Olympic Capital", the title given by the IOC to Lausanne in 1994. Today, the train station proudly wears the Olympic rings drawn by Coubertin in 1913.



The old train station of Lausanne at the beginning of the 20th century.



Project of a "modern Olympia" on the right shore of Léman (in Morges) in 1911 by the architects Monod and Laverrière.



Lausanne Capitale Olympique

In May 1913, Coubertin organizes in Lausanne a congress of athletic psychology and physiology first envisaged in 1911. This congress, preceded by an annual meeting of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), is recognized as the 5th Olympic Congress. It is organized at the Palace of Rumine, then the headquarters of the University of Lausanne, with whom Coubertin wanted to work closely. Through this meeting, he also wants to get better acquainted with the IOC in Lausanne, in the canton of Vaud and in Switzerland to prepare for future projects. Today, the Palace of Rumine houses the cantonal university library and many museums served by a monumental staircase. The aula of the university, where the opening ceremony of the congress takes place, is used today by the Grand Council (legislative) of the canton of Vaud.



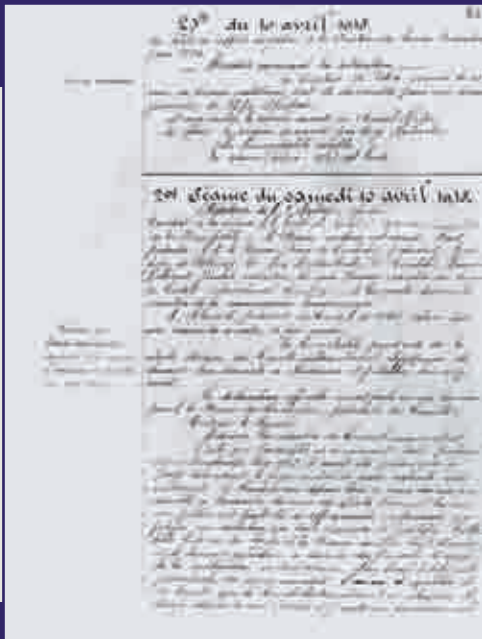
Opening of the Congress of Lausanne, May 8, 1913, in the aula of the Palace of Rumine. Coubertin is at the center of the platform. On the left one can see the plan for a “modern Olympia” then situated at Morges. (cf. location 1)



Coubertin with some participants in the congress about to embark to Ouchy for a meal proposed by the Waldensian Council of State at the Castle of Chillon.



At the beginning of the First World War, Coubertin decides himself to establish the official headquarters of the IOC at Lausanne. Before, the headquarters of the IOC was at Coubertin's residence in Paris. On April 10, **1915**, the mayor Paul Maillefer and the Municipality of Lausanne acknowledge this transfer during a small ceremony in the presence of Coubertin and de Blonay, as well as four members of the organizational committee of the congress of 1913 (cf. location 2). The minutes of the meeting note that the president of the Waldensian government Ernest Chaud apologized and that the president of the Confederation Giuseppe Motta sent a telegram of welcome. The room of the Municipality used at this time still exists today just like the rest of the building even if the municipal administration has greatly expanded.



Coubertin with his friend the Baron Godefroy de Blonay, member of the IOC in Switzerland from 1899 to 1937, who he would have liked to have had as his successor.

Minutes from the welcome session of the IOC by the Municipality of Lausanne, April 10, 1915.





As soon as the IOC is installed in Lausanne, Coubertin asks the Municipality to put the premises at his disposition for his project of the Olympic Institute that he envisions as the prototype of institutions to propagate sports and popular culture in the cities. The Municipality put at his disposition the premises of the Casino of Montbenon, which went bankrupt in 1912 and that they bought for meetings and events of the local societies. The first theoretical conferences and sport lessons took place in spring **1917** for French and Belgian military detainees. But this institute did not survive the end of the Great War. The Casino will continue to house the annual meeting of the IOC and the 7th Olympic Congress in May-June 1921 during which time the international athletic organizations organize themselves against the IOC. Today, the Casino houses a restaurant and a Swiss film library.



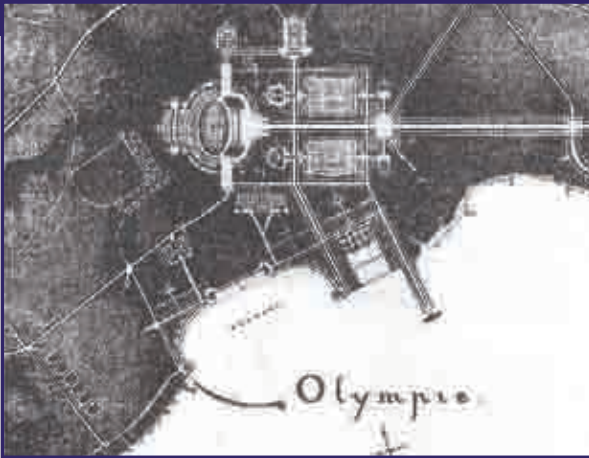
Coubertin with the participants of the 1917 session of the Olympic Institute of Lausanne on the terrace of the Casino of Montbenon.



Members of the IOC and of the congress meet at Lausanne in the Casino of Montbenon in June 1921. One can see Coubertin at the center surrounded by his two successors and, further to the right, Godefroy de Blonay.



Since 1906, Coubertin thought to establish a permanent site for the Olympic games on the banks of Léman. In 1911, he organizes to this effect an architectural competition, which is brought back by the architects Monod and Laverrière for a project situated at Morges (cf. location 2). They received the gold medal for the first Olympic artistic competitions organized at the Games in Stockholm in 1912. In 1918, a new project, inspired by the preceding one, is envisaged by Alphonse Laverrière for the agricultural domain of Dorigny. A public subscription for an “Olympic society” is launched but without success. The Olympic stadium is envisioned precisely at location of the building “Unithèque” (better known under the name “Banana”) at the University of Lausanne, moved to the site in 1970 from the Palace of Rumine. It was envisioned that a tramway would link Olympia to the city center, which is the case today. A more modest university athletic center stands at the edge of the lake, and the entire shore all the way to Vidy and Ouchy became a sport and relaxation zone.



Project of a modern Olympia from 1918 by the architect Laverrière at the site of Dorigny.



Boxing lessons organized at Vidy during the first session of the Olympic Institute of Lausanne (cf. location 4).



In **1922**, Coubertin leaves Paris permanently to move to Lausanne with his wife, daughter and son. The following year, the Municipality lends him an apartment on the third floor of the villa "My-Rest". The headquarters and the archives are also set up in the villa along with the first Olympic Museum, which will remain open until the 1960s. The Baroness of Coubertin will live in the villa until 1963 at more than one hundred years old. His children will die before. After his retirement from the presidency of the IOC in 1925, Coubertin dedicated himself to encouraging a candidature from Lausanne at the organization of the Summer Games and other projects. Today, the villa "My-Rest" houses the reception rooms of the city and on the second and third floor the offices of the Olympic Solidarity, the organization that redistributes the Games' revenue to the national Olympic committees.



One of the rooms in the Olympic Museum that was installed in the villa "My-Rest" until the 1960s in memory of Coubertin.



Coubertin with his daughter Renée in the library installed at the villa "My-Rest".



When he retires from the IOC, Coubertin founds the Universal Pedagogical Union. Its headquarters is in Lausanne. In September 1926, he organizes at the Castle of Ouchy the first conference on the pedagogical role of the modern Society, which proclaims that each citizen has the “right to sports” and the “right to access of general culture”. Despite Coubertin’s notoriety, this union is dissolved four years later. Other initiatives have hardly any success, and Coubertin does not get along with the new, “red” municipality, which, in spite of that, creates an impressive program of athletic installations. He resides in a boarding house in Geneva, but his office is still at villa “My-Rest”. Today the Castle of Ouchy, which dates back to the 19th century, is one of the fantastic hotels of Lausanne and is very close to the Olympic Museum, which was opened on the quay of Ouchy in 1993.



Coubertin rowing in front of the Castle of Ouchy at the age of 72.



Coubertin visits the Ovomaltine factory in Nyon.



Coubertin dies in Geneva on September 2, 1937 from a heart attack in the park La Grange. His funeral took place in the church Notre Dame de Valentin in Lausanne, and he is buried in the cemetery of the Woods-of-Vaux, which was designed by Alphonse Laverrière. In 1937, he becomes the tenth man of honor of Lausanne, but he didn't have the chance to receive this honor before his death. Coubertin's heart rests in Olympia. Today, Olympic visitors regularly decorate his grave with flowers, and the cemetery is a wonderfully tranquil yet little known park.



Two years before his death, Coubertin records his message on the philosophical foundations of the modern Olympics at Radio Lausanne.



Shortly before his death in 1937, Pierre de Coubertin is made man of honor in Lausanne.





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