

Where do the names of the gardens in the Louvre and Tuileries National Estate come from?

The **Tuileries Garden** was named after the tile manufacturing workshops known to have existed on the site since the Middle Ages, when this land lay outside the city wall built to protect Paris. The alluvial soil deposited by the Seine at high water provided potters and tile-makers with their raw material. Archaeological excavations have unearthed kilns stacked with tiles.

Under the Ancien Régime, the word “Thuilleries” was usually spelt with an “h” and a double “l”. When Catherine de Médicis ordered a palace with a garden to be built, both were named after the site. But because the palace was destroyed (it was set on fire by the supporters of the Paris Commune in 1871, then razed to the ground in 1882-83), today the word “Tuileries” is used for the garden alone.

The **Carrousel Garden** commemorates a fabulous event organized by Louis XIV on 5-6 June 1662 to celebrate the birth of his first male heir. The king had the existing garden dug up in order to make room for a vast courtyard where it was to be held. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people had to be seated in the stands and tiers to admire the prowess of some 1,300 participants.

What exactly was a carousel, a word and activity of Italian origin? It was a sort of tournament, in which horsemen divided into groups, or quadrilles, competed. The rules were simple: in the “head” race, riders had to spear a “head” placed at a certain height and carry it away on the end of their lance; in the “ring” race, riders had to run their lance through a hoop hanging in the air. The advantage of a carousel was its inoffensive nature, unlike medieval tournaments that often had fatal consequences – Henry II of France died in 1559 after being wounded in the eye when jousting. In 1662, Louis XIV’s tournament was spectacular: riders and horses were clad in sumptuous costumes and trappings; the king rode at the head of the quadrille of “Romans”, while “Persians”, “Turks”, “Indians” and “Native Americans” made up the other quadrilles. The details of this celebratory event are known to us thanks to an extraordinary illustrated book, written at the time by the storyteller Charles Perrault.

Nowadays, the French word “carrousel” still denotes an equestrian show and, like the English word, is another term for a merry-go-round, on which children sitting astride wooden horses can sometimes try and spear a hoop with a wooden stick.

The **Oratory Garden** is named after the church across the street, located between 145, rue Saint-Honoré and 160, rue de Rivoli. The construction of this religious building began in 1621 and was completed in 1748. Several architects who worked on the Louvre, including Clément Métezeau and Jacques Lemercier, contributed to this church.

For a long time, the building was a royal “oratory” – a place of prayer. Used in turn by Roman Catholic and Protestant worshippers, it has been a Protestant church since 1844.

A statue of Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, by the sculptor Gustave Crauk, was erected on the street outside the apse in 1889, to commemorate the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of the Huguenots in 1572.

The **Infanta’s Garden** recalls Louis XV’s short-lived engagement to a Spanish Infanta, i.e. the daughter of the King of Spain.

In 1721, the young Mariana Victoria was betrothed to her cousin Louis XV of France, when she was only three years old and he was eleven. She was sent to Paris and arrived on 2 March 1722. Given her rank, she lived in the Louvre Palace in the Queen Mother’s apartments. A special garden was laid out for her so that she could admire it from her windows and play in it whenever she liked. Designed by the architect Robert de Cotte, it runs from west to east, is composed of embroidered parterres and adorned with a group of statues representing Diana’s nymphs, brought from the grounds of the Château de Marly. In June 1722, when the king moved to Versailles, his fiancée followed him. But in 1725, she was sent back to Spain, so that Louis XV could marry Marie Leszczyńska, the King of Poland’s daughter. All that remains of the Infanta’s brief stay at the court of France is the name of this garden, which has been altered several times.

Lastly, the name of the **Raffet Garden** pays tribute to the monuments of great painters that once adorned the eastern perimeter of the Louvre, a sort of “Pantheon of Master Artists” erected under the Third Republic.

During this period, the moat beneath the Perrault Colonnade was filled in and ornamental flowersbeds and lawns graced the foot of the building. Sculptures of Velázquez, Boucher and Meissonier were placed on these lawns. A monument to Auguste Raffet (1804-60), a Romantic painter famous for his illustrations of the Napoleonic era, overlooked the Seine. The sculptor Emmanuel Fremiet had placed the bust of the great man at the top of a Corinthian column; below him, a grenadier stood beating a drum, while, on the other side of the column, military trophies recalled the exploits of the imperial army.

The bronze soldier was later melted down by the Vichy regime to salvage non-ferrous metal for the Nazis; then the marble bust was removed on André Malraux’s orders in 1966. All that remains is the column. Numerous postcards attest to the popularity of this monument – hence the use of the name “Raffet” for the garden which is, in fact, a continuation of the Infanta’s Garden.