

Future Today

How the Eiffel Tower came to Paris

Philippe Nouvain entered his office on a cold Tuesday morning in January 1887. It was his second day in his new job. Along with him, many others had been recently hired. They were mainly Technicians, Engineers, Architects and Stress Analysts, one thing they all had in common was that they had experience in ironwork. Philippe was amongst the youngest of them. At only 22 years old he had already finished university where he had focussed on iron construction. Iron was a new material in the building industry and it was being seen in more and more of the newly constructed buildings so he considered himself perfectly prepared for the future.

The previous day, all of the newly hired building specialists had been given an introduction to the inventive building they were to construct in the months to come. It was very exciting – such a building had never been erected before. Some said, it would be impossible to build and it would be the greatest failure in French history. Of course it was a challenge for all of them and Philippe knew that he was part of something new, of something great, of something the world had never seen before. He wanted to do his very best to make this building – at this stage nothing more than a dream of a single man – become reality. It was a great chance for him, young as he was, and he felt that this project would boost his career and therefore shape his life.

On the same morning, the Comte de Frasnac sat by the large window in the dining room of his Palais in Paris, reading the newspaper. He became very angry when he read the news of a new tower that was to be erected for the Paris World Exhibition in 1889.

The more he read the more upset he became: the tower would be 312 metres high and built only as an iron skeleton.

He could think of nothing more ugly that could be constructed on the bank of the river Seine. It was quite the view he had from his dining room and the salons. The constructor was also given a 20 years exploitation right before the tower should be dismantled. That meant, he was doomed to always look at this construction! The next blow he felt when reading was that the City of Paris had signed to sponsor that tower for a sum of 1.5million Francs. “That’s where they spend my taxes” he thought. He read further that the man who was going to build the tower, a Monsieur Gustave Eiffel, would finance the difference of the overall building costs of 3.155million Francs from his own pocket. The Comte de Frasnac was really sure that this Monsieur Eiffel must be insane! He moaned as he discovered, that this man’s family had German roots and murmured “No wonder”. To the old Comte it was only another affront!

While the Comte de Frasnac was thinking about the news his son Henri entered the room. Like Philippe Nouvain he was 22 years old and in high spirits. The fierce old Comte asked his son for the reason for his good mood and Henri answered: “Didn’t you hear the news that the Eiffel Tower is to be built? I just got the information that a new corporation for the financing of this project will be established and quoted on the Paris stock exchange. Isn’t it fantastic that everyone can profit from this inventive building? I just called my broker and ordered as many shares as he can get for our family fund.” The old Comte was shocked! “Are you crazy?” he replied, “This tower is only a hoax. It can never be built. It is much too high, it must be completed in two years time as it has to be finished for the start of the World Exhibition and even if it could be built: it is ugly and can

never withstand the crosswinds. It is doomed to tumble down.

We will suffer a great loss with that investment! It is enough that this tower ruins the beautiful view from our windows to the river Seine. I am sure that the real estate value of our Palais will severely suffer!". Henri smiled and left the room. He had no intention of cancelling the order.

On 26th January 1887 whilst the construction of the Eiffel-Tower started with the digging for the groundworks, Philippe Nouvain sat in his office and was busy designing iron components. He got detailed specifications from the manager of his department. Every single part had to be carefully constructed to fit perfectly into the whole structure at the building site. Any mistake would cause a delay and - in worst case - could even cause the collapse of the whole construction. Therefore Philippe's designs were cross checked and - together with the plans of his colleagues - sent to the factory of the iron manufacturer, where the parts were fabricated and delivered straight to the building site for assembly. Altogether 18,038 iron parts with a total weight of more than 7,300 tons were used to build the Eiffel Tower, held in place by more than 2.5 million rivets.

Thanks to the hard and precise work of Philippe and his colleagues the Eiffel Tower was built within the expected time and, on 31st March 1889, the French flag, the tricolour, was hoisted on top of the tower. Thanks to its elaborate structure, the tower still stands today despite the original plans for it to be dismantled after a period of 20 years. The Eiffel Tower withstood

all storms and, despite the fact, that the overall costs exceeded the calculation by almost 2.5 times, the return on investment was achieved in just one year. Henri de Frasnac's investment in the shares of the Société de la Tour was one of his best ideas: against his father's expectations they turned out to be the most profitable shares in the history of the French stock exchange. And even the value of the Palais of the Frasnac-family was much higher than before just because it had a perfect view on the Eiffel Tower.

The German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said almost 200 years before:

When a well thought-out plan has been successfully carried out, all effort and discomfort to achieve it will be forgotten.

The Eiffel Tower is another lesson from history: A well designed structure could last for decades and can be extremely profitable. As it was then it is today. And when can we establish and maintain a structure for you?

The entire Carey team wishes you a refreshing and successful summer time.



Beat H. Haering

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