

PHD RESEARCH

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Fer-Fonte-Acier. Steel Industry in Walloon Brabant. History of the Clabecq steel foundries, 1781-1939 -

[Original Title : *Fer-Fonte-Acier. L'industrie sidérurgique en Brabant wallon. Histoire des Forges de Clabecq des origines à 1939*]

Université libre de Bruxelles, 2013. Supervisors : Jean-Jacques Heirwegh & Serge Jaumain.

steel producer and equipped itself with the complex infrastructure required : plant, forges, foundries, plate rolling mills, blast furnaces with cokes ovens, Thomas converters, a power plant etc.

The thesis deals with the history of the *Forges de Clabecq*, its workers, the families that founded and developed the company, and its managers. The foundry remained the property of three families until 1942. The steel foundries in question are all located in the Brabant province outside the three main industrial areas (Namur-Charleroi, Liège and Luxembourg). They were established along the canal linking Charleroi to Brussels, on the territories of Clabecq and Tubize, along the Senne river whose water it used.

On 8 November 1781, Marc Pierre Van Esschen (1754-1838) signed a lease contract for a piece of land of about 2,088.94 square metres for 20 years. The owner of the land was the last lord of Clabecq, viscount Antoine Otton de Flodorp (1711-1791). 107 years after the signature of the lease contract, the heirs of Josse Goffin created a public limited company entitled "Forges de Clabecq" for the exploitation the factories in Clabecq.

Initially, the factories' work focussed on the transformation of metals. They sourced raw materials from the region of Charleroi (pig iron, then large quantities of ingots and blooms) for the rolling mills. From 1909, the business activities of the company were centred on the production and transformation of steel. As a result, the company became a