

Street facade of a Picardy house and barn, Bray les Mareuil.

The hall contains a wide fireplace with storing-places and a grate (*potager*) for cooking on hot cinders. The seats on either side of the fireplace make up the inglenook (*cantou*). In one of the long walls, a vaulted recess (*souillarde*), forming an outshot on the outside, houses a stone sink and stone ledges to hold pots.

A typical feature of the vine-grower's upper-floor house is its tower-like dovecot flanking one end of a sometimes monumentally-proportioned gallery. Its inmates provided a highly-prized fertilizer (*colombine*).

The upper-floor house is common everywhere, except for the limestone plateaux to the north of the river Dordogne where it rarely occurs, but with variations in its outside appearance (presence or absence of a tower-like dovecot, wooden posts or stone pillars supporting the veranda, and so on). It is widespread across the area of the former Cahors vineyard region. This particular type of house has been singled out as the typical Quercy house but such an assertion is contradicted by statistics. In 1862, the Lot Census (*Annuaire du Lot*) specifies that, out of an inventory of 70 186 rural houses, 31 862 have both a ground floor and an upper floor as opposed to 34 447 with only a ground floor.

One type of vernacular architecture commonly found across the Périgord and Quercy limestone plateaux consists of the dry stone huts called *chabanos* in the Dordogne *département*, and *cabanos* and *casèlos* in the Lot *département*. They are mostly land-clearers' cabins, vineyard toolsheds (*garitòs*), sheep shelters, hen-houses (*galinièros*), and the like, but were also, in some cases, dwellings for beggars or for temporary habitation prior to the erection of a permanent house.

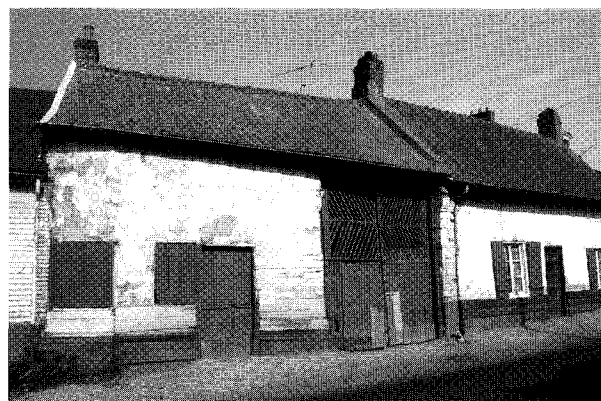
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2.III.5.0 Picardian (France, N)

Picardy is one of the regions of France which have been most affected by people passing through. Its position between Paris and Flanders made it likely to be the scene of innumerable military campaigns and successive political and administrative changes. It must be said that the rather flat countryside, lacking obvious natural frontiers, has always facilitated the movement of armies and men.

Corresponding today roughly to the *départements* of the Somme, the Pas-de-Calais and a part of the Aisne and the Oise, agricultural Picardy is traditionally an area of large cereal yields, thanks to the fertile presence of alluvial clay soil enriched with lime. Consequently the way in which housing is arranged favours the formation of villages, generally surrounded by a clump of trees serving as a wind-break and a reserve of wood for building. The villages observe a system whereby fields are divided into long strips with paths for moving between them, and the facades of the buildings present a continuous line to the road. These facades are traditionally windowless, the only openings being gateways into the yards or wicket gates for bringing the harvest in.

The defensive appearance of these continuous facades is very obvious, and lends the village streets of Picardy an air of austerity broken here and there by the use of bright colours (in the Artois and Ponthieu areas), or by pedestrian entrances



ornamented with wooden transoms, sometimes with very elaborate motifs. In several places, to protect themselves from the incursions of the soldiery, the villagers of Ponthieu and the Amiénois areas also fitted out underground galleries cut into the chalk. If they were invaded these secondary villages (*muches*) would shelter the people and their livestock.

Near the coastline, the Ponthieu and Boulonais areas have villages and woodland arranged in a more scattered manner. The same applies to the Pays de Bray, near Normandy, and Thiérache, adjoining Belgium. A common feature of these regions is their rather infertile, flinty clay soil, more suitable for rearing cattle than the intensive agriculture of every patch of ground. As a result, the presence of unenclosed farms arranged in a loose network along the communication roads has long been a feature here. The existence of a partially wooded landscape also gives these farms a more inviting appearance than that of the farms in the great plain of Picardy. The countryside of the Boulonais area is also notable for the existence of many old fortified manors, evidence of the existence of an old squirearchy which divided its time between military and farming activities.

The great plain of Picardy is traditionally short of stone for building. With the exception of some places where hard chalk is quarried, allowing the sporadic erection of architecture in bonded quarry stones, villages with houses built of wood and earthenware materials (the latter being *pisé* or bricks) predominate on the plateau.

The characteristic farm of the Picardy plateau has buildings grouped around a yard enclosed on all four sides, making up a very intimate whole. Access is from the road by way of a gateway in the broad side of the barn, called the 'great door'. This gateway is often closed outside normal times of traffic. The muck heap used to stand in the middle of the yard. Various agricultural and stockbreeding buildings enclose the sides of the yard while the dwelling house encloses its back, thus separating it from a kitchen garden and an orchard growing apples and pears. The house, laid out lengthways, is not very wide, hardly more than 6 m (20 ft), because of wood being in short supply. From the living-room, the occupant can see his yard on one side of the house and his kitchen garden on the other. Yard and kitchen garden are also joined by a covered passage. Until the 19th century the house was on a single floor, almost without foundations, resting on a base of brick or flint. Timber framing is very common, although in Picardy the external facade hides

See also
1.IX.3.e Cabane: dry stone

References
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