

# *L'Aqueduc de Balouvière*

## **THE PROJECT**

On January 15, 1868, the project was presented to the municipal council. It includes the plans and specifications for two pipelines to capture drinking water from several sources and direct it to Laudun. The intention was to provide the 2,338 inhabitants with new water supply conditions for household needs as well as for animals. Eight public fountains, two troughs, and a washhouse are therefore planned. Three sources are proposed: those from the Gieu neighborhood and the Puget neighborhood. Each source has a sufficient flow rate, even during periods of severe drought (46 liters of water per minute). A large reservoir is planned in the village to supply the various points specified.

Despite the solidity of the project, on December 18, 1868, the road engineer (an official responsible for overseeing the maintenance and/or development of communication routes and local roads) Mr. Fabre presented a new study that significantly modified the original plan. Two sources were abandoned, and the source from the Combe de Roubaud, located to the north of the village at the foot of Caesar's camp, was proposed, with a pipeline connecting it to the Puget source to reach, a few kilometers later, the town of Laudun. To cross the small valley of "Vallouvière," a small two-level structure must be built. A single arch spans the stream, while five smaller arches mark the second level. The upper conduit is covered with large limestone slabs.

## **The Balouvière Aqueduc**

The Balouvière aqueduct is a stone and brick structure measuring 62 meters. It was used to transport water from several sources to supply the town of Laudun. It crosses the "vallat de Balouvière" stream, which is usually dry.

## **CONSTRUCTION**

The works were carried out by Joseph Coste, an entrepreneur from Laudun, tasked with the complete construction of the small aqueduct. Several years were needed to establish the conduit, capture the sources, build the various reservoirs and the aqueduct, and install the public fountains in the village. A general and final account dated August 19, 1872, reports the sum of 45,388 francs for the entirety of the successfully completed project. The new Balouvière aqueduct has not two but three levels, raised in height by the necessity of maintaining the slope and water flow. This third level resulted from the construction of a row of thirteen arches, giving the structure a strong resemblance to the Pont du Gard, which is located 25 km from Laudun.

## **COMMISSIONING**

A water conduit with a length of 2.855 km was then commissioned. The aqueduct thus became the only aerial part of this new network and, in a way, the architectural signature of its designer. The aqueduct seems to have functioned until the mid-20th century, but today most of the conduits are blocked upstream, preventing any water supply.

