

VISITOR'S GUIDE
INCLUDING TRANSLATIONS OF THE ALMANAC ENTRIES

FROM DAY TO DAY

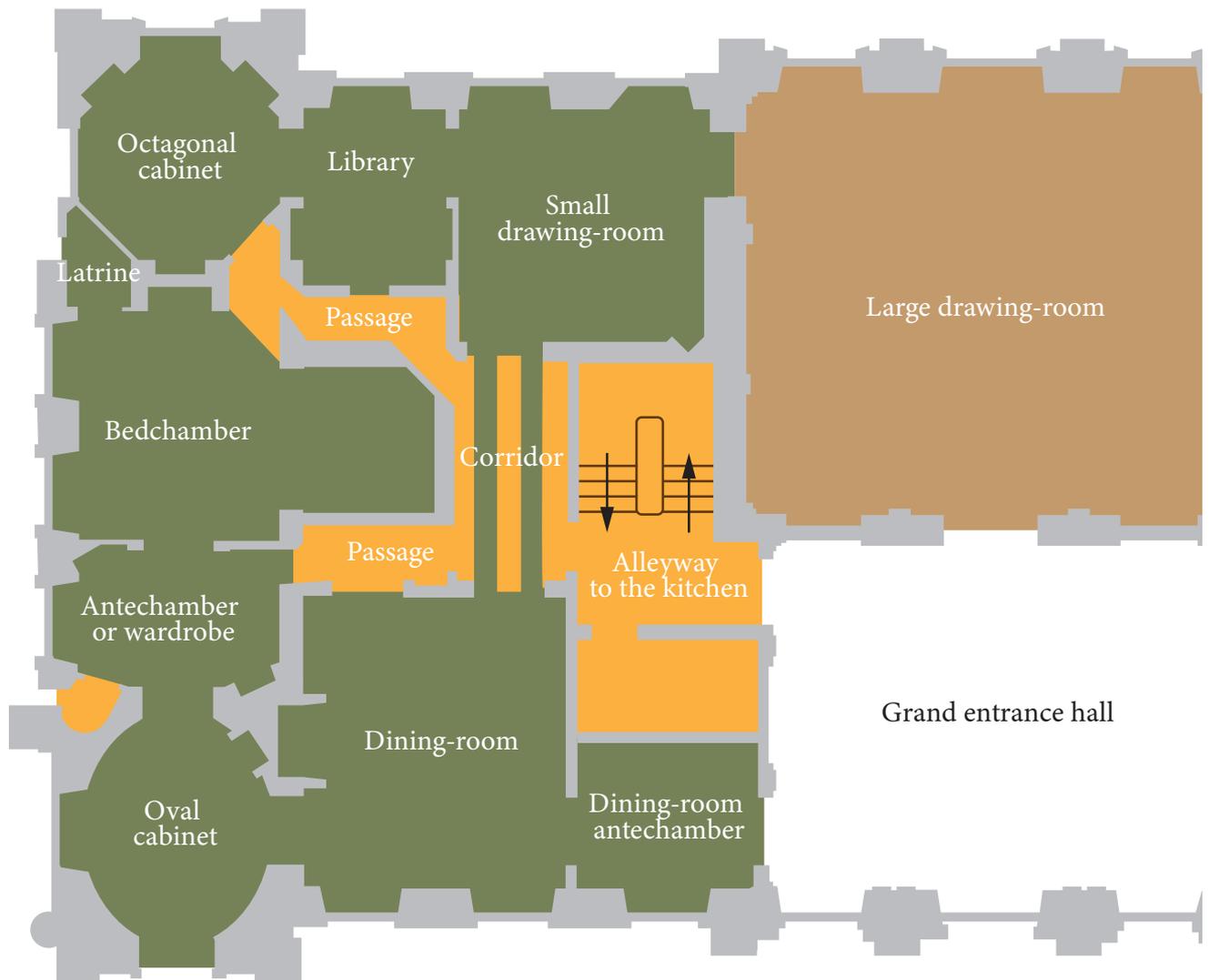
The eighteenth century

SENEFFE

**AN INDISCREET EXHIBITION
TAKING YOU BEHIND THE SCENES
OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

WELCOME TO THE SECRET LIFE OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

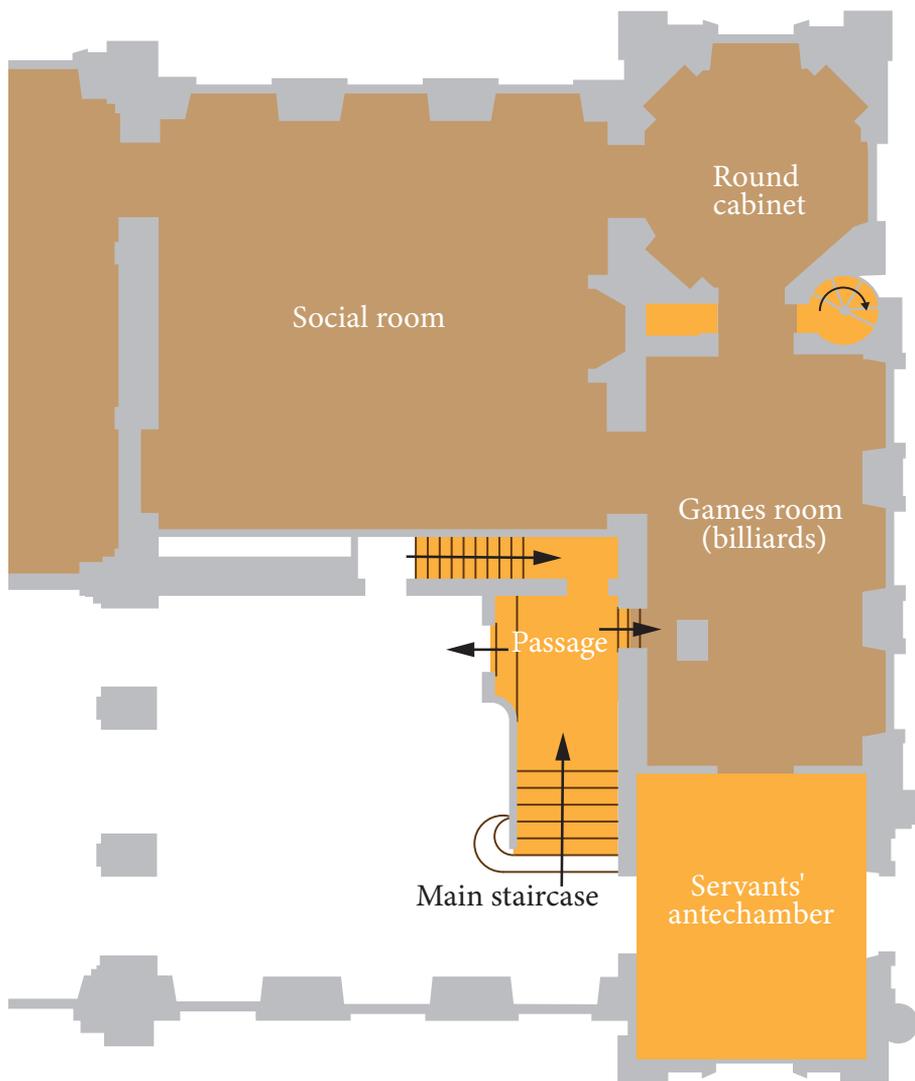
Keep your eyes wide open as you tour chambers, drawing-rooms, corridors and secret passages and experience the eighteenth century, day after day!



A LITTLE HISTORY...

It is due to the substantial fortune amassed by Julien Depestre, an 18th-century merchant, banker and businessman, and his wife Isabelle Cogels, who came from a family of financiers, that we today enjoy the magnificent Seneffe Estate, the main attraction of which is its elegant castle.

Laurent-Benoît Dewez, the castle's architect, stayed in Rome from 1754 to 1756. He frequented the circles of scholars and theorists who studied ancient buildings and developed the neo-classical style. At Seneffe, between 1763 and 1768, the leading architect of the Austrian Netherlands put into practice new lifestyle concepts focusing on comfort, intimacy and grandeur.



PLAN

The colour scheme reflects the castle's three living areas: The reception apartments (appartements de société); the private apartments (appartements de commodité); and the service and servants' accommodation areas.

- Reception apartments
- Service areas
- Private apartments

A FEW POINTERS

The first room presents the Castle almanac which will accompany you throughout your visit.

A different 18th century theme is featured in each room, often showing signs of influence from ancient culture. Each theme covered is clearly identified on the different pages of the almanac.

The handwritten notes in the almanac describe little details or stories based on the traditions of the time. Some refer to local life.

Ancient culture was very fashionable in the 18th century, partly as a result of the recent archaeological excavations at Italian sites such as Pompeii. Aristocrats and intellectuals would explore this heritage during a journey lasting several months - the so-called Grand Tour.

For more information, scan this QR code:



SENEFFE ALMANAC, OR CALENDAR FOR THE YEAR 1768 EXCERPTED FROM HANDWRITTEN NOTES

1 JANUARY

Gifts in celebration of the first day of the year.

6 JANUARY

Epiphany - Festival of Light - Joyful and festive mood among masters and servants. Reception in the dining room / Three kings cake and hot chocolate. The bean baked into the cake is found by Joseph Grillet, a groom.

15 JANUARY

Very cold. Freezing rain.

21 JANUARY

Heavy snow - Ice house difficult to reach. Sledging in the park and ice skating on the large pool.

30 JANUARY

Nature comes back to life: the first snowdrops emerge from the ground (!).

If winter for its duty shows no care / In December and January, / Be sure that it no later will be there / Than the second of February.

FEBRUARY

2 FEBRUARY

Candlemas - All the candles in the castle were lit! Torchlight procession through the fields.

Kitchen: some twenty pancakes made with last year's flour.

3 FEBRUARY

Biting wind / Neapolitan crib scene taken down.

10 FEBRUARY

Seamstress: Much work finishing the costumes for the masquerade.

16 FEBRUARY

Shrove Tuesday: Grand Masked Ball at the castle (one hundred and twenty guests and some fifty coaches). The first crocuses appear.

17 FEBRUARY

Ash Wednesday (the branches from the previous year are burnt) / First day of Lent.

Kitchen: herrings for the fasting period delivered.

29 FEBRUARY

Cleaning of the silverware with whiting powder.

When Candlemas does show, the day by two hours grows.

MARCH

2 MARCH

Dry and cold.

8 MARCH

Othmar the rhino, who is to be exhibited at the Brussels fair, arrives in Antwerp.

13 MARCH

Laetare ('Rejoice') Sunday: The young count is betrothed to Mademoiselle Adélaïde de Tyberchamps. Kitchen: a rich mid-Lent meal.

21 MARCH

Welcome to spring, primroses and daisies.

24 MARCH

Repeated downpours. Conversation and reading of La Fontaine's fables in the small drawing-room ('The Crow and the Fox' and others). A merry gathering, with much laughter.

27 MARCH

Palm Sunday / Chapel: The priest blesses the cut boxwood branches on the terrace.

*One swallow does not make a spring,
nor does one fine day.*

APRIL

3 APRIL

*Easter (A rich meal is prepared in the kitchen):
First course: half-pigeons, truffles, chestnuts, small sausages
Second course: roast lamb with Pascaline sauce, salads
Third course: eggs surprise with cream.*

4 APRIL

Easter Monday (The servants have the day off). Chambermaids go on pilgrimage to the Chapel of Notre-Dame au Bois (Houdeng) to beseech Mary to send them husbands. Daffodil-picking in the woods.

13 APRIL

Parquet floors waxed.

21 APRIL

Sunny morning / Numerous wild violets in the woods.

28 APRIL

*Wedding of the young count
Reception at Tyberchamps Castle.*

30 APRIL

*A delivery is received of toiles peintes (printed wall fabrics), Indian fabrics, damasks and pigments + a few novels contrary to modesty (in particular Les bijoux indiscrets by M-sieur D. ***), which are kept in the chest of drawers in the bedroom!*

*Let my bridegroom come in time;
Our Lady of the Forest, will he still come?*

MAY

2 MAY

Family walk at the top end of the park to admire the carpet of bluebells in the beech grove.

11 MAY

Ice Saint Day (St Mamertus)

12 MAY

Ice Saint Day (St Pancras) ≤ frost on the plains and bitter cold

13 MAY

Ice Saint Day (St Servatius)

15 MAY

The Versailles boxes (containing the castle's orange and pomegranate trees) are moved from the orangery to the courtyard.

19 MAY

The count and countess travel by coach to attend a performance of a comic opera by A.E.Gréty at the Grand Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels.

23 MAY

The countess departs to take the waters at Spa (accompanied by a chambermaid, a coachman and many trunks).

Health is better than wealth

JUNE

3 JUNE

The library is arranged by the children's tutor.

10 JUNE

A protective varnish is applied to the portrait of the countess prior to her return from the waters of Spa. Note that Madame was painted in a dressing gown!

17 JUNE

The children play leapfrog in the grounds before their geometry lesson.

23 JUNE

St John's Eve bonfire (attended by the servants). In keeping with tradition, the lovers jumped over the fire and the peasants collected the ashes to protect the crops against thunderstorms.

25 JUNE

Heavy rain.

The countess returns from taking the waters at Spa.

30 JUNE

Chamber music concert in the Little Theatre, to which neighbouring landowners are invited.

*When St Barnabas (11 June) is wet,
a fine oat crop you will get*

JULY

2 JULY

Procession of worshippers and riders to Notre-Dame des Affligés (the chapel near the castle).

6 JULY

Boating on the large pool and blind man's buff in the gardens.

12 JULY

Delivery of a Carrara marble bathtub (weighing more than two tons!) intended for the castle's bathing quarters (in the basement), which are currently under construction.

16 JULY

Country picnic for the gentlefolk at the Tyberchamps Estate. Sunny.

21 JULY

The fields are scythed.

27 JULY

Open-air theatre (Marivaux's Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard - near the romantic island). A tent is set up and cakes, lemonades and sorbets are prepared to refresh the guests.

Love, a pleasant folly; ambition, a serious stupidity

AUGUST

4 AUGUST

A swing is installed near the aviary.

8 AUGUST

The children are read to under a tree (Voyage de Sophie et D'Eulalie au palais de vrai bonheur).

15 AUGUST

Assumption Mass.

17 AUGUST

Fishing at the pond. A sudden and violent thunderstorm / Lightning strikes the church's belltower!

24 AUGUST

At dusk, shooting stars are observed by means of a telescope / Work starts on the artificial river in the picturesque area of the park.

31 AUGUST

Plums are picked and conserved in syrup. The jars are cleaned and stored in the castle cellars.

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow

SEPTEMBER

2 SEPTEMBER

Shadow portraits are made of all the servants

6 SEPTEMBER

The pears and apples are picked, then the pippins are put away in the larders until the season of Advent, which begins on 27 November.

14 SEPTEMBER

Liveries are made for use in the hunting season.

19 SEPTEMBER

A set of silver tableware is ordered from a master silversmith in Mons. A delivery arrives of two-handled cups, sent from London.

23 SEPTEMBER

Firewood is cut for the fireplaces. Falling temperatures and humidity.

27 SEPTEMBER

A notebook is kept by the count dedicated to his fascination with mountains and natural phenomena (thunderstorms, volcanic eruptions, floods, etc.).

August ripens, September harvests

OCTOBER

4 OCTOBER

The hunting trophies are dusted.

7 OCTOBER

Bottles of wine and champagne are laid in for the feasting of the coming weeks.

11 OCTOBER

Mushrooms and truffles are picked.

14 OCTOBER

Delivery of the Venetian gaming table purchased by Monsieur's son during his Grand Tour.

20 OCTOBER

Hunting meal / Warm and friendly atmosphere among the gathering of hunters (a few dishes by way of illustration): Soups / Steamed cabbage and potatoes / Mushroom timbales / Ham, wild boar and venison roasts / Hare and wild boar terrines / Pâtés en croûte and vegetable pies / Pears in wine/ Sponge cakes with cream.

26 OCTOBER

Correspondence between the count and Antoine de la Samme, a young scientist fascinated by the experiments of Newton and Huygens.

28 OCTOBER

First frost. The Versailles boxes are returned to the orangery.

Too many dogs spoil the hunt

NOVEMBER

3 NOVEMBER

Feast of St Hubert: the horses and dogs are blessed in the square before the village church and the hunting horns are sounded.

7 NOVEMBER

A delivery of mahogany and blackwood is received for the restoration of the floors next spring.

11 NOVEMBER

St Martin's Day is celebrated with lanterns.

16 NOVEMBER

A lottery game is played in the gambling room. This new kind of amusement brought back from Italy attracts a curious and attentive gathering.

25 NOVEMBER

The estate steward (the bailiff) travels to St Catherine's fair, an agricultural market, at which cattle, clogs, clothes and tools for the year 1769 are bought and sold.

29 NOVEMBER

Italian poplars are planted along in the avenue leading to the castle / The chimneys are swept as winter approaches.

*Between All Saints' and Advent,
wind and rain you must expect.*

DECEMBER

2 DECEMBER

Announcement / Christmas visit from Monsieur's first cousin (who has been on pilgrimage for several months to Santiago de Compostela).

11 DECEMBER

Christmas carols are sung by the children of the neighbouring hamlet (in exchange for coins, bread or firewood).

13 DECEMBER

A Christmas tree is felled and set up in the small dining room / The Neapolitan crib scene is presented.

15 DECEMBER

Holly and mistletoe branches are cut to decorate the castle.

24 DECEMBER

Midnight mass in the estate chapel (the servants go to the village church). Christmas buffet: Alsatian foie gras terrine / Truffled pig's trotters / Black and white blood sausages / Ham slices / Winter salads / Meringues, pastries, compotes, jellies and candied fruit.

29 DECEMBER

An enterprising dealer calls in, and antiques, trinkets and other ornamental items are handed round and purchased.

Christmas on the balcony, Easter at the embers.

THE RECEPTION APARTMENTS

The various reception rooms are arranged in an enfilade or suite leading to the grand salon. Ideally situated on the right and to the rear of the house, they offer a view of the park. The main rooms have fairly high ceilings.

THE ALMANAC FOR THE YEAR 1768

SERVANTS' ANTECHAMBER

The antechamber was a room used to keep out visitors and servants who were not allowed to enter the reception apartments. The role of the bailiff, as steward of the estate, was crucial in this respect. He oversaw access, the running of the home and the keeping of the almanac.

THE VENETIAN GAMING TABLE

GAMES ROOM

(BILLIARDS)

NOVEMBER 1768

When a room is devoted to leisure, it is named after the main game played there (in the case of eighteenth-century Seneffe, billiards). Lottery games, which are also very popular with the count and countess, are presented here. During the long evenings of November 1768, the family enjoys sharing this passion.

PASSAGE

(BILLIARDS ROOM)

This passage, located in the reception area, allows servants to enter the Games Room from the basements via a service staircase. The latter also provides direct access to the grand entrance hall (*hall d'honneur*).

LIKE A RAINBOW

THE ROUND CABINET

SEPTEMBER 1768

The round cabinet is the place where the count writes his letters. It is here that he assembles objects related to his passions: science, natural phenomena and travel. September 1768 is a good month for meteorological variations and star-gazing.

THE HUNTING PARTY

SOCIAL ROOM

OCTOBER 1768

The social room (*salle de compagnie*), just before the grand salon, is devoted to social activities. The count and countess display their wealth here by organising prestigious receptions throughout the year. The highlight of October 1768 is a delightful hunt feast.

THE DELIVERY OF THE MARBLE BATHTUB

GRAND SALON

JULY 1768

The grand salon is the castle's main room. It is large, well proportioned and decorated according to antique taste. The gardens can be reached directly from it. Important visitors can also enter from the grand entrance hall. This month, numerous deliveries leave the grand salon in disarray and disrupt its main use.

PRIVATE APARTMENTS

The private apartments of the count and countess and their family are less ornate than the reception apartments but more comfortable. They conceal numerous corridors, passages and staircases leading to the basement or the entresols - mezzanines hidden at ceiling level.

READING LA FONTAINE'S FABLES

SMALL DRAWING-ROOM

MARCH 1768

The small drawing-room (*petit salon*) is the room where small family gatherings take place. Reading and conversation are the most common activities on these occasions, before or after meals. Spring is greeted with the reading of fables this month.

CORRIDOR

The corridor is a space used by the count and his family to get from the small drawing-room to the dining-room and vice versa. Also used by the servants, it provides access to various useful passages leading to the kitchens, mezzanines, etc.

ARRANGING THE LIBRARY

LIBRARY

JUNE 1768

Just off the small drawing-room, the library is a place for study. Chronological tables are also kept there describing the stages in children's education. In the 18th century, parent-child relationships are largely based on highly codified social obligations. Nannies, housekeepers and tutors oversee their daily lives both inside and outside. June 1768 is a beautiful month, and the park has much to offer of educational value.

APPLYING THE VARNISH

OCTAGONAL CABINET

AUGUST 1768

Like her husband, the Countess has a place which she devotes to her paperwork and to the fine arts. The octagonal cabinet, like other corner cabinets, makes clever use of irregularities in the floor plan. The light in the studio this month provides ideal working conditions.

PASSAGE

(cabinet and chamber)

This passage gives servants a discreet route to the corner cabinet and chamber.

ONCE THE DOOR IS CLOSED

BEDCHAMBER

APRIL 1768

The bedchamber is for sleeping in; it has a bed in an alcove hidden by curtains. This space can be used for small meetings, whether practical (with the seamstress or wigmaker for example), social or commercial in nature. Libertinism is very much in evidence this month, and licentious books are proving a popular choice.

LATRINE

Usually set up near or in the bedchamber, the latrine was the place where nature's call was answered. At Seneffe, with its ultra-modern plumbing system, there was an English-style water-closet also known as the *lieu à soupape*.

PREPARING FOR MASQUERADES

ANTECHAMBER OR WARDROBE

FEBRUARY 1768

The wardrobe is a private room used for performing one's toilet and for storing clothes. This antechamber is mainly used by the servants. The season of masked balls is at its height this February. The wardrobes are full of costumes.

PASSAGE

(Antechamber)

The servants use this passage to move around noiselessly while going about their work and avoid meeting the owners of the house.

THE OPENING OF THE TRUNKS

OVAL CABINET

MAY 1768

The oval cabinet is a private room to which the family retires to escape from society. Numerous international business trips have been made this May, and this cabinet is used for the associated paperwork.

GALETTE DES ROIS (THREE KING CAKE)

DINING-ROOM

JANUARY / DECEMBER 1768

A dining-room became established as a permanent component of the private apartments in the second half of the eighteenth century. This perfectly symmetrical room is adorned with mirrors and stucco that match the patterns present on the original fireplace. The reception attended by the servants on 6 January 1768 underlines the special relationship between master and servant.

ASH WEDNESDAY

DINING-ROOM

ANTECHAMBER

FEBRUARY 1768

The dining-room is always preceded by an antechamber with an additional sideboard. The religious calendar, which is very much present in the daily life of the count and countess, stresses the importance of the period of Lent and of the tradition of fasting.

ALLEYWAY TO THE KITCHEN

This space enables the servants to get from the kitchens in the basement via a service staircase (in the area of the private apartments) to the different floors. The original space had to be partly enclosed to incorporate a lift in the building.

ABOUT THE COLLECTIONS

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This tour makes clear the importance of having a wide-ranging historical heritage, including silverware, paintings, sculptures, furniture, games, scientific instruments and archaeological finds. Most of the items on display (apart from the deposition by the National Lottery and items on loan from the Royal Museum of Mariemont, Mons Museum of Natural Sciences and ScienceEchoes) are silverware from the generous donation and bequest of Claude D'Allemagne and Juliette Rémy, belonging to the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

The Silverware Museum of the French Community of Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation has been open to the public since 1995.

Since then, donations, bequests, depositions and acquisitions have formed a collection of nearly 6,800 remarkable works.

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