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## 200 years of actions for peace in Geneva



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The long history of peace movements in Geneva dates back to the first congress of the Société de la Paix, convened in 1830 by the Count Jean-Jacques de Sellon in one of his castles, Château d' Allaman, sometimes called the Peace Castle. It is interesting to note that peace activities started in Geneva even earlier, symbolized by three monuments erected by Count de Sellon, which could be called the "golden triangle" of peace. They mark Geneva as the birthplace of peace movements and activities. The first monument, the

"Peace Column," bearing the inscription "Blessed are the peacemakers," was only discovered in 2013, during reconstruction work on the Château. The column was literally "hidden" inside the walls, probably deliberately, in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II, in order to protect this marvel from potential danger. The second and third monuments, unveiled in Count de Sellon's other property – the villa la Fenêtre, which today belongs to UNOG, could be even more significant. Monument number two is a black marble obelisk, inaugurated in 1830-32 on the occasion of the first congress of the Société de la Paix. It was placed by Count de Sellon's family on his grave in the cemetery where he is buried. It can be visited, but practically nobody knows that in reality it is a monument standing for non-violence and peace, conceived and erected by Count de Sellon himself.

The third monument might have been erected much earlier; sources give 1820 as the date. Called the *Temple of Friendship and Peace*, it can be considered the real birthplace of peace movements in Geneva. This monument is not well known, although it is listed as historical heritage and is the earliest tangible sign of peace actions in Geneva. The monument was destroyed in 1946 and never re-built, a few rare photos of it remain in archives. If re-erected today, (and why not in the grounds of the Palais?) this monument would serve as a symbol of the birthplace of peace activities in Geneva, preceding the creation of the Society of Nations/League of Nations. It is as an important milestone which bears witness to almost two centuries of peace actions in Geneva, the world capital of dialogue, diplomacy, non-violence and peace. In addition, this Temple would carry the important message today of interfaith harmony and tolerance. Besides its historical and educational significance, it is also an architectural marvel, which is important to restore and safeguard for future generations!

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