

### A family workshop

These ruins are what is left of the first Opinel workshop build around 1830 by Victor-Amédée Opinel (1799-1856), grandfather of Joseph Opinel.

Victor-Amédée bought the old family mill on the banks of the Arvan river. Here, he installed a smithy and a drop hammer to produce first nails and, later on, farming tools. His son Daniel Opinel (1840-1922) followed in his footsteps and continued the tool production with the help of his three sons: Joseph, Jean and Albert.

In those days, the access to the workshop was difficult, especially during the winter months. Moreover, the combination of the high humidity level and the strong heat from the forge made the working conditions hard.

A few workers came from the surrounding villages came to work here as day labours. Those living far away were given room and board by the Opinel family.

The photo below shows the workshop around 1910. Photo : © Opinel SAS



### Edge-tools production and cutlery

An edge-tool maker produces bladed tools for farming, forest work and household requirements, for example billhooks, axes and knives.

The Opinel-tools made by Victor-Amédée and Daniel Opinel quickly obtained a good reputation. Farmers from as far as the Massif de l'Oisans came to Gévoudaz to have their tools fixed or to buy new ones.

Joseph Opinel was however passionate about cutlery from a very young age. Despite his father's wishes, he spent a lot of time perfecting the shape of his folding pocketknife. Eventually, he convinced his father to let him use a part of the smithy after hours to make knives.

Thus, in 1890, in a corner of his father's workshop, the Opinel pocketknife was born! To make the wooden handle, Joseph initially used different local species such as ash, beech, cherry wood or other fruit trees from the close-by orchards.

Some of the earliest examples of Opinel tools. Photos : © Sara Würtz, Opinel Museum



### Get to know the family

Daniel Opinel (1840-1922) was born in the family house in Gévoudaz. After being wounded in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, Daniel decided to buyout his brothers and takeover the family smithy where he continued to make edge-tools. He passed on the art of tool making to his three sons, Joseph, Jean and Albert.



Daniel kept working in the workshop with his youngest son Albert until the latter's untimely death in 1905. Hereafter, he joined his son Jean in his atelier in Plan des Rois where he continued to work until the end of his life.

The 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1922, Daniel died 82 years old.

### The association Les Amis du Musée Opinel (Friends of the Opinel Museum)

This non-profit organisation of Opinel enthusiasts participates actively in the life of the museum and the organisation of Opinel theme days. Members meet once a year at the birthplace of the Opinel knife. For more information : [amismusee.opinel@orange.fr](mailto:amismusee.opinel@orange.fr)