

The village of Gévoudaz (pronounced [Gevude])

You are standing in front of Joseph and Marie-Henriette Opinel's house in the heart of the village Gévoudaz in the county Albiez-Montrond.

In the 19th century, the county was predominantly agricultural, Gévoudaz being the only village to have entered into the industrial era. Prior to the construction of the road in 1892, the village was situated on the main route connecting the Maurienne-valley with Oisans. As a result, Gévoudaz was a meeting point for the nearby villagers.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the village housed 5 flour mills, 3 grindstones (dehulling barley and extracting alimentary oil from walnuts and cereals), a fulling mill for fabric production as well as a smithy. All these early industrial activities were made possible by the use of hydraulic power generated by the Arvan river.

The number of houses in the village reflects this industrial success: 6 in 1773 and 12 in 1858! The map below shows Gévoudaz in 1896, the circle indicates Joseph and Henriette's house.



Joseph's house

Joseph's house was built at the end of the 19th century and the family lived here until around 1916.

Its facade has an urban architecture with its wrought-iron balcony, metallic shutters, and painted walls. Both Joseph and his wife worked in cities (respectively in Thiers and Lyon) before constructing the house where they probably encountered this urban style.

The little villa has three rooms, a dining room and a kitchen. Marcel, Léon and Angeline Opinel were all born here and Maurice Opinel (1926-2016), Marcel's son, often spent his childhood vacations in the old family house.

A family picture on the terrace around 1944. Photo : © Opinel SAS



Rural architecture

The traditional, rural architecture is rustic and functional. Usually, the mountain farmhouses have a stone foundation with the upper parts in wood. They often housed both the household and their livestock. The warmth of the farm animals was much appreciated in the cold winter months. Until the end of the 19th century, the families often lived in the stable with their animals during the winters.

Get to know the family !

Marie-Henriette Opinel (1876-1972) was born into a family of poor farmers living in the village La Maison Blanche in the county Fontcouverte.

In 1893, 17 years old, she left the Maurienne-valley for Lyon, where a Protestant institution found her a job as a maid for the Ellsworth family.

The family treated her well and she was happy in Lyon. However, after three years

