

Albiez-Montrond, « the cradle of Opinel »

The Opinel family comes from the village Gévoudaz in the county of Albiez-Montrond, 11 km from Albiez-le-Vieux. Namesakes were also found in the village Cochette.

In the 19th century, the Opinel family and the other inhabitants from Gévoudaz made the trip to Albiez-le-Vieux on foot, overcoming a considerable altitude difference.

Today, Albiez-Montrond welcomes tourists all year around. Here they are invited to enjoy the family skiing resort, the water reservoir, its many hiking possibilities, and its rich natural heritage, most notably, the characteristic mountains called the Aiguilles d'Arves.

Get to know the family

The founder of the famous family lineage of blacksmiths, Victor-Amédée Opinel (1799-1856), was born in the village of Gévoudaz, oldest child of nine.

At only 13 years old, Victor-Amédée became head of the family when his father passed away and he took on the responsibility of provide for his family.

In 1817, after a particularly difficult period, he decided to become a pedlar and a travelling tinsmith in order to support his family. Victor-Amédée made the most of his roaming and learned the art of blacksmith and toolmaking.

Upon his return in his natal village, Victor-Amédée put these skills into practice. He had a smithy constructed by the Arvan-river and here he forged horse nails and different edge-tools.

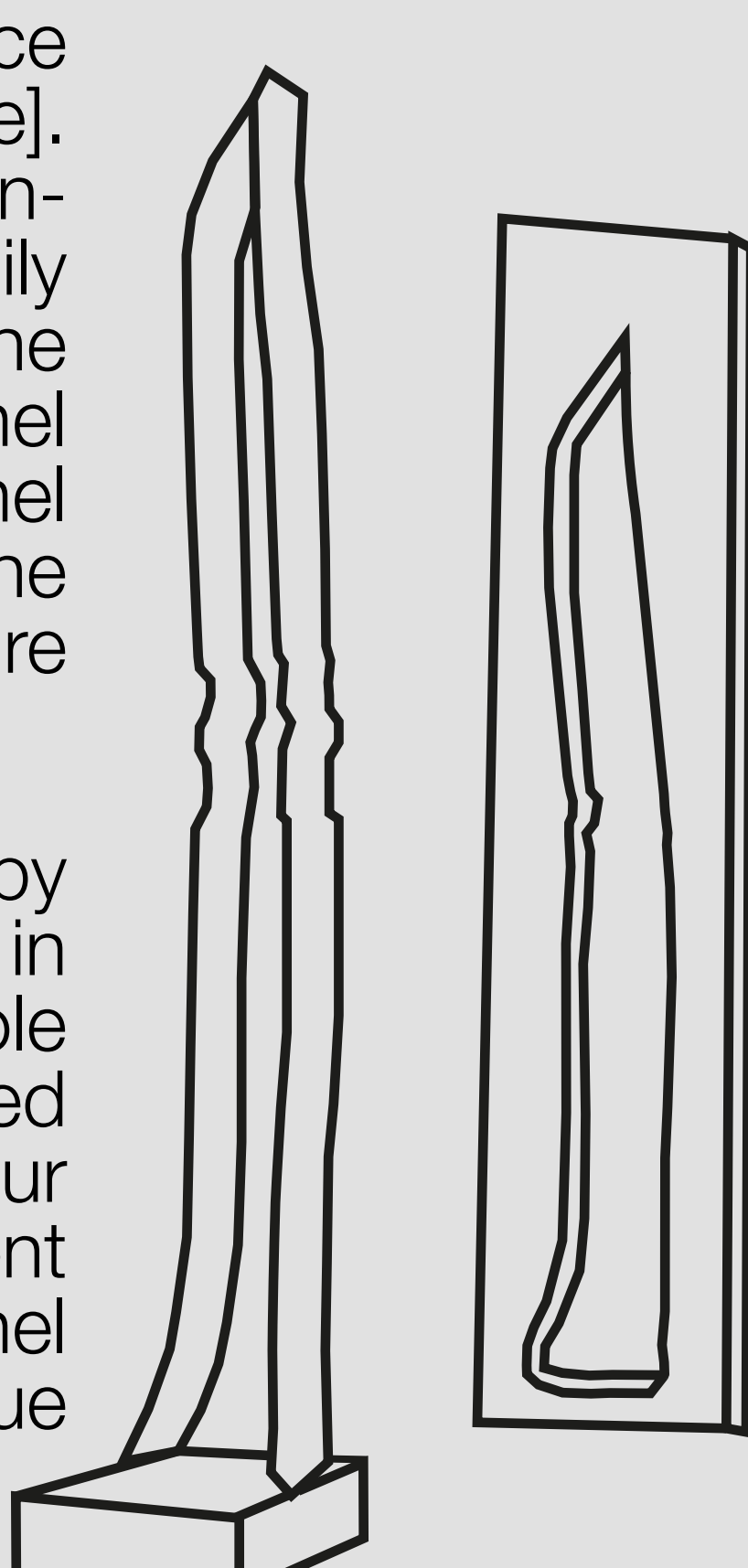
By initiating his sons to this craft, he created the foundation of the Opinel family adventure. It was his grandson, Joseph Opinel, who created the famous Opinel pocketknife in 1890!

Victor-Amédée died in 1856 and is buried in the churchyard of Albiez-Montrond. To see his last resting place, continue in the direction of the church.

The Opinel Square

In 2011 the central square has been named Place Opinel [the Opinel Square]. The mayor of Albiez-Montrond and many Opinel family members (for example the former president of Opinel SAS, Maurice Opinel (1927-2016)) attended the inauguration of the sculpture in August 2011.

The statue was designed by Jean-Claude Opinel (1942) in collaboration with Ecole Boulle, a renown Paris-based design school. The four metallic structures represent cut-out profiles of Opinel knives. In the night, a blue lighting symbolizes steel.



Pedlars and tinsmiths

The occupation of pedlar was a part of the winter emigrations that assured the survival of the rural habitants of the Alps in the 19th century. The pedlars would walk from village to village to sell different kind of merchandise.

The different items were transported in a “balle”, a wooden box carried on the back (for the less fortunate) or a muleback.

The inventor of the Opinel knife, Joseph Opinel, also used the services of these brave men and women in the earliest distribution of his knives in the end of the 19th century.

To be a travelling tinsmith is another of these old-fashioned occupations. The tinsmith placed a thin layer of tin par example on kitchen utensils. Tin being a neutral metal protected the food from entering in direct contact with the cobber pots.

Some pedlars like Victor-Amédée Opinel combined these occupations and travelled with their tinsmith workshops.

