

## The quarter Les grandes maisons (« the big houses »)

The earliest traces of the Opinel family date back to the 16th century. The family originates from this part of the village, called Les grandes maisons, and both Joseph, his father Daniel, and his grandfather Victor-Amédée Opinel were born in the family house. Over the course of time, the house has been adapted to the growing family.

Despite the early, industrial activity in the village, each family traditionally raised a small livestock and cultivated cereals and vegetables around their house. The Opinel family also had wooden apiaries which explains why Opinel long time produced different apicultural tools.

Traditionally, the families' farming activities were supplemented by the collective use of pastures, forests, and the village bread oven.



Gévoudaz in the end of the 19th century with small, cultivated parcels and the St. Grat chapel in the background.

### Did you know that....

... in 2016, Opinel installed 4 apiaries in front of the factory in Chambéry as a reminder of the family history and to protect the environment?

### The Saint Grat chapel

Religious buildings are very frequent in the region. These were constructed in order to protect the populations from epidemics, natural disasters, and bad harvests.

This explains the presence of a chapel in Gévoudaz, far from the county seat Albiez-Montrond. The oratory's construction date remains unknown, but a pastoral visit from 1592 describes the presence of a belltower.

An 8th century bishop from Aoste, Saint Grat was very revered in Savoy and many myths and legends are attributed to this religious figure.

The different symbols on the wall painting make references to these. Saint Grat is represented in a bishop's dress and carries the head of John the Baptist. According to the myth, he discovered this in a well in Jerusalem.

Saint Grat is also ascribed the power of directing hail towards wells thus protecting the wine yards, the seeds, and the harvests. The snakes symbolize his role as protector against all pests.

Le monogram "IHS" (an ancient Greek abbreviation of Jesus), that's placed above the door, has been forged by Jean-Claude Opinel.

### Village life: the «banal» bread oven

On the way here, you have passed the so-called «banal» bread oven. The name stems from a medieval tax called «a banality» which the farmers used to pay the lords. Nonetheless, it was the farmers themselves who maintained and used the bread oven.

The bread oven is an example of the communal life. The villagers helped each other out, the families took for example turns providing the firewood.

### Restorations

Both the chapel and the bread oven have been restored in recent years, respectively in 1993 and in 2005, with the participation from the commune of Albiez-Montrond, the inhabitants and the Opinel family.