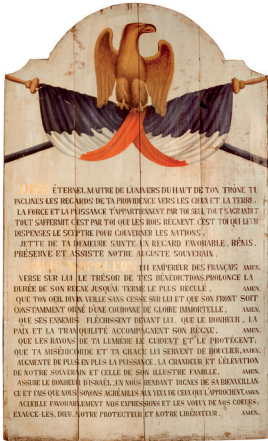


Religions



In Alsace, religion is an affair of state?

Being part of Germany at the time, Alsace and Moselle were not concerned by a French law of 1905 separating church and state. They continued

under the regime of the Concordat, a treaty signed by Napoleon with the Vatican in 1801. Under this system, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Jewish worship are recognized and regulated by local law. The celebrants of these churches are appointed and paid by the authorities. Muslim communities, as well as Protestant and Jewish communities not recognized by the Concordat, are responsible for paying the stipends of their officiants. The teaching of religion is compulsory in primary and secondary schools, but dispensations are granted on written request from parents. The universities in Strasbourg and Metz are the only French state universities to teach and give state diplomas in theology.

Costumes



In Alsace, women wear big bows on their heads?

The well-known bow headdress (*Schlupfkapp*) consisted of

a bonnet around which was tied a ribbon, fastened at the forehead. This was originally only an inch or two wide and the bow was a very simple one. In the four generations from 1800 to 1910, the ribbon became much wider and the bow became so large that it had to be supported by an iron frame.

This was only one among a large variety of headdresses existing in Alsace. They formed part of the costumes associated with different villages and with the religion of their wearers.

A reconstituted interior



In Alsace, people spend much of their time in the Stub?

The German word *Stub(e)* has the same etymology as the French

word *étuve* or the English stove. In Alsace it refers to a room for communal get-togethers in the home, in a restaurant or a brasserie, the latter being known in Alsace as the *Winstub* (wine room) or the *Bierstub* (beer room). In an Alsatian home, the *Stub* was an agreeable living room, heated by a large stove fuelled from the kitchen. It was at once a family dining room, a sitting room for long winter evenings and a bedroom for the parents and their last-born child.

The Curator's Choice



The experience of coming through the main door, arriving in the courtyard and finding oneself carried back in time. As well as being a collection, the Alsatian Museum is a tranquil world of secret treasures. To hear the wooden boards creak and to smell the odour of floor wax is to catch a whiff of the memories and myths of the past, something that we all share. This museum brings me a richly pleasurable experience, made up of delights and questions, reminiscences and discoveries, serious discussions and bursts of hilarity. I hope that you too will share this feeling of wellbeing.

Marie Pottecher
Curator of the Alsatian Museum

Other «**First Visit**» leaflets can be found on the museum website, www.musees.strasbourg.eu or on request directly at the other museums.

And you won't need maps or compasses!

My First Visit...

to the Alsatian Museum

23 quai Saint-Nicolas

For your first experience of Alsace, getting to know its everyday objects and places let's take a look at **9 Alsatian clichés**

Alsace is a piece of Germany in France?

The region is a crossroads at the heart of Europe situated in the upper Rhine valley, its language and culture having been Germanic since the 9th century. In the 17th century, the King of France conquered this mosaic of little political entities and unified it into a single region, Alsace. In the 18th and 19th centuries, at a time when many of the objects now preserved in the museum were being produced, Alsace was considered by France as being outside its customs borders. The Alsatian dialect and the German language were tolerated. From 1871, Alsace constantly changed hands between Germany (1871-1918, 1940-1944) and France (1918-1940 and from 1945 to the present day). Thus someone born there in 1869 and dying in 1945 would have gone through four changes of nationality! The Alsatian Museum was founded in 1902, at a time when European intellectuals were becoming interested in the rural world and its traditions. Their desire was to safeguard and increase the value of the smaller regional entities, and prevent them from being swallowed up in the larger national ones.

Housing



In Alsace, house fronts are brightly coloured?

As can be seen here, it was the custom to decorate

façades. Designs and inscriptions were placed on them to make known features of the owners' identity to the world at large. But the façades of timber-framed houses were not brightly coloured, as many of them are today. Colour pigments, bound with lime, a basic material, are in fact very expensive. The use of bright colours is very recent and can be attributed to the advent of modern paint.

Polychrome furniture



In Alsace, furniture is painted in various colours?

In other French provinces, quality furniture was made of superior wood, such as walnut or fruitwood, and this was left visible. In Alsace, pine or deal were more often used and these were stained to make them look like superior wood. If the owner was rich enough, he then had it painted in various designs. When a young woman was getting married, wardrobes, sideboards and chests were usually ordered from the village carpenter by her parents. This explains why the date of the event and the bride's name frequently appear on the furniture.

Pottery



In Alsace, housework is a serious matter?

Among the domestic objects preserved in the museum, the floor sprinkler

seen here is a good example of the importance given to household maintenance. It was used to sprinkle water on the floor to avoid raising dust during sweeping. This one was a gift to a young woman from her suitor and carries an inscription in verse revealing the qualities expected of a future housewife. «Lass, get up and cook the soup, Milk the cow and sweep the *Stub*. See how well she sweeps the *Stub*, Sweeps the nooks and sweeps the crannies, Then the dust away she carries.»

In Alsace, people eat sauerkraut?

Sauerkraut - in French, *choucroute* - is cabbage preserved in brine. Known in Alsace since the Middle Ages, it was a familiar dish accompanied by farm produce including beans, potatoes, fish



or, when desired, pork. Apparently it became *choucroute «royale»*, i.e. accompanied by charcuterie (sausages, ham, pork - cured, salted or smoked etc.) after 1870, when the fashion for Alsatian brasseries invaded Paris.

The ages of man

In Alsace, babies come with the stork?

Babies were long supposed by popular lore to come from wells (*Kindelsbrunne*). From the 1850s onwards, they were said to be brought by storks (which were supposed to have found the little boys among the cabbages and the little girls among the roses!) Where did this idea come from? Perhaps from Germanic mythology. In this, the stork was the messenger of the goddess Holda, the protectress of wetlands, where the souls of the dead were believed to reincarnate. Its task was to bring these new creatures to parents who wanted children.

