

The Abbé Henry collection

Historical Lichenological Collection

Museo Virtuale
Museo regionale di Scienze Naturali della Valle d'Aosta

Musée Virtuel
Musée Régional des Sciences Naturelles de la Vallée d'Aoste

The **first lichenological studies in the Aosta Valley** date back to the early 20th century, and knowledge in this sector is still only fragmentary today. One of the authors who have studied the natural history of the Aosta Valley territory most is **Abbé Joseph-Marie Henry** (1870-1947), the curate of Valpelline who had a **passion for alpinism, botanism and entomology**.

The combination of his passion for the mountains and for plants led to his fascination with lichenology. He conducted intense collection campaigns and referred to well-known lichenologists of the time to identify his finds, including the Italian A. Jatta and the French M. Bouly de Lasdain. The results were published in the “Bulletin de la Société de la Flore Valdôtaine”.



(Photo MRSN)

The **Henry collection** is now held at the Regional Natural History Museum, after being held first at the Société de la Flore Valdôtaine and later at the Scuola Militare Alpina d'Aosta, where it was seriously tampered with and lost important data, compromising its scientific validity.

The collection is composed of **156 samples** from 152 species, mainly foliose, fruticose or crostose lichens.

The samples are held in 45 cards of stiff brown cardboard, each with up to 11 specimens glued in place and labelled (an average of 4 or 5 per card).

(source: “Piervittori R., Pistarino A., Montacchini F., 1988. Studi lichenologici in Piemonte e Valle d’Aosta: I – La collezione dell’Abbé Henry. (Lichenological studies in Piedmont and Aosta Valley: the Abbé Henry collection) REV. VALDÔTAINE D’HIS. NATURELLE – 42: 79 (1988)”.