

Ecomuseum of the Crumière Felt Factory

Villar Pellice

The textile industry has had since the 19th century a prominent role amidst the economical activities in the Pellice valley: in 1833 the Mazzonis Manufacture in Pralafera was founded, followed by the Turati Bros Society in 1892 and the Vaciago Firm in Luserna San Giovanni, and, finally, the Crumière Felt Factory in 1904 in Villar Pellice. The latter was founded thanks to the commitment and hard work of Eugenio Crumière, French felt technician living in the Pellice valley since 1895. The Crumière Felt Factory became a joint-stock company in 1928, joining the international Dollfus & Noack group, which had been working in the field since 1880.

In 1986, the company broke up due to bankruptcy. The employees decided then to set up a Cooperative, and carried on producing felt for paper mills, conveyer belts for the food industry, woolen muffs and felt for industrial usage. Thanks to this courageous decision and investing its resources in a thriving niche market, the firm managed to avoid disappearing alongside the other textile factories in the Pellice valley. To this day it employs around forty workers and the production takes place by now almost exclusively inside the most recently constructed sheds.

In 1995 a cooperation between the Town of Villar Pellice, the Mountain Community of Villar Pellice and the New Crumière Cooperative started, with the aim to realize a project for the transformation of the existing building in an ecomuseum of felt and industrial archeology in the Pellice valley. The intervention enabled the full restoration of the historical part of the building, a stone structure built at the end of the 19th century, arranged on three storeys, previously used as a mill and then as a felt factory. The transformation of the old building into a museum saved it from gradual decay, restoring its typical 19th century-village architecture and enabling the recovery of the vintage textile machinery, along with the historical archive of the factory; the machinery and the archive faithfully reconstruct the socio-economic life of the ancient firm.

The Ecomuseum of the Crumière felt factory hosts today a permanent exhibition on the industrial activity of the felt factory and many events, among which educational work-shops and temporary art exhibitions. The New Crumière Cooperative actively participates in the events pertaining the Ecomuseum. Many volunteers help bringing the ecomuseum to life.

