

The façades of the Musée

Built in 1862, the house was probably constructed to Henri Barré's own plans, which are now kept in the museum.

It is likely that Henri Barré drew inspiration for his Gothic Revival house from some of Thouars' old buildings (Hôtel Tyndo, Hôtel des Trois Rois, Saint-Médard Church) and also those he had seen in Paris (Notre Dame, for example), where he had studied medicine.

Close inspection of the façades reveals a large number of references to the medieval period.



On the courtyard side, the central component of the façade is the stair turret. On the right hand side, the elaborate main entrance is topped with an ogee arch resting on corbels decorated with sculptures of mythological animals and characters (a griffin and a winged dog).

The façade features several mullioned windows. The bays, all decorated in 15th century style, are topped with ogee arches and, in most cases, are adorned with ornamental corbels featuring foliage, human figures and other motifs, such as animals playing musical instruments.

* Gothic Revival: a style of architecture which was highly popular in the 19th century and which drew its inspiration from medieval decoration and motifs.



The window on the first floor of the turret has a ledge decorated with scrolls and stylised leaves. The upper part is decorated with an ogee arch which supports two pinnacles and rests on corbels.


The bay window on the top floor forms part of decorative false machicolations and is topped with a pediment which was once flanked by pinnacles. The decoration on the window was crowned by a coat of arms on the façade, but this has not survived. The house is also adorned with other medieval elements such as a gargoyle and cabbage leaves.

On the garden side, the façade also features references to the Middle Ages. The ground floor consists of an entrance topped with an ogee arch which rests on corbels in the form of animals and which is crowned with a finial. It is flanked on either side by two windows which illuminate the lounge (on the left) and the dining room (on the right). They bear the same type of embellishments as the door. The three decoratively moulded mullioned windows on the first floor echo those of the 15th century. Beneath the eaves, the single bay window is also topped by an ogee arch resting on two corbels. It is decorated with a triangular pediment with two acroteria* on either side. It is finished with a branching finial.


* Acroterion: a sculpted ornament placed on the top or at the two angles of a pediment, or on a gable.


Musée Henri Barré


Henri Barré's house

 **musée de France**

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 **THOIRY**

 **Musée Henri Barré**



Doctor Henri Barré

Henri Barré was born into a family of merchants in the Place Saint-Médard in Thouars on 3 October 1824. He went to Paris to study medicine and was soon joined there by his brother Gustave. When he qualified, Henri Barré moved back to Thouars, whilst Gustave remained and worked in Paris. The two brothers were very close and shared a passion for art and collecting. They probably frequented Parisian artistic circles together. In 1858, Henri married Léopoldine Artus, who was also from Thouars. In 1862, he demolished the old Protestant church built in 1644 on the site of a Romanesque Church (Saint Pierre du Châtelet) which was mentioned in the 11th century. A talented draughtsman, he drew up the plans for a private mansion in the Gothic Revival style which was all the rage at the time. Henri Barré died without heirs on 12 June 1887. The house passed to his brother who allowed Léopoldine to live there during her life time. In his will, Gustave decided to bequeath the house and its collections to the town of Thouars. On Léopoldine's death in 1912, the town took ownership of the property, along with the Barré brothers' collections, and decided to use it as a new home for the town's museum, which had been housed in the town hall since 1893. The new museum was opened on 25 July 1920.



Portrait of Henri Barré painted by Gustave Barré, 19th century, Musée Henri Barré

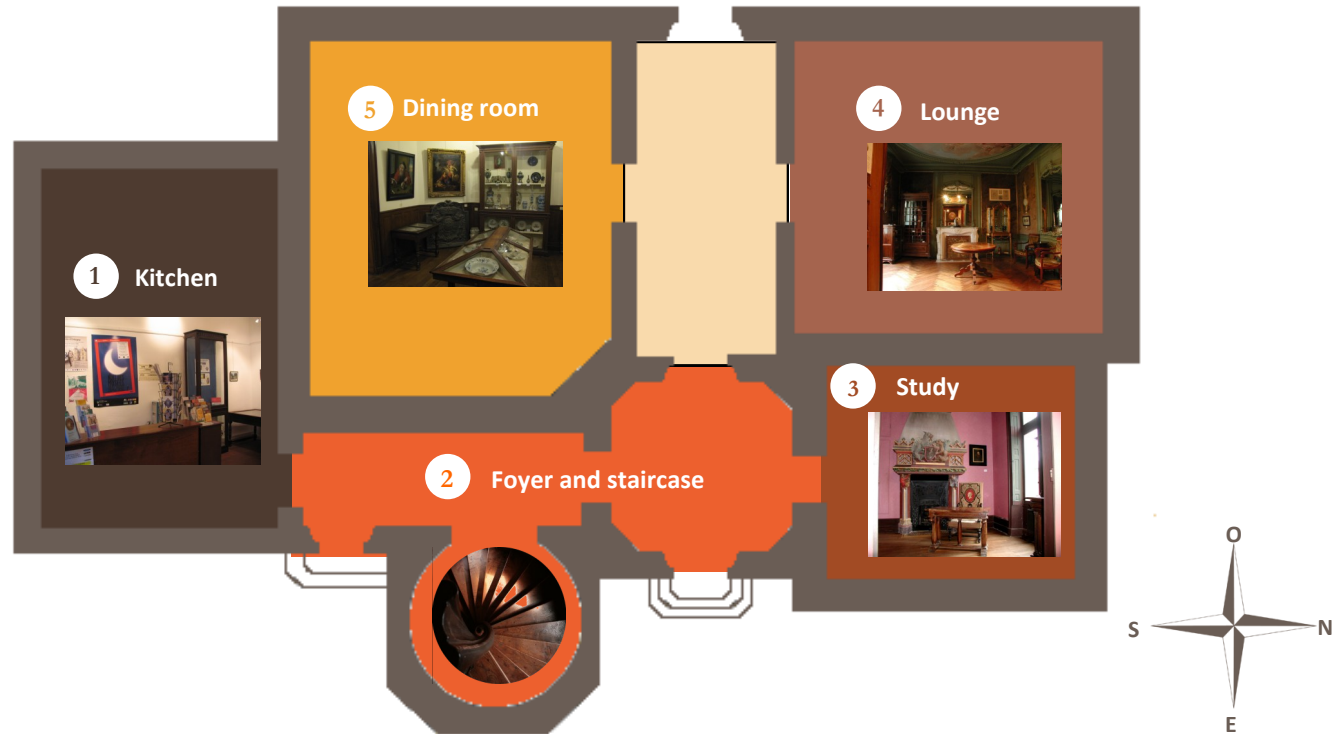


Portrait of Gustave Barré painted by Henri Barré, 19th century, Musée Henri Barré

The museum's interior and its many curiosities

The ground floor has retained much of its original layout.

Designed by Henri Barré himself, the ground floor plan expresses his desire to “dramatise” the house. It is arranged around two perpendicular axes which intersect in the foyer. The north-south axis, which runs parallel to the main façade, links Henri Barré's study with what was once the house's kitchen, and leads to the staircase. The decor is in keeping with the Gothic Revival façade. The east-west axis links the main entrance with the door to the garden and includes the lounge and the dining room.



1 What was once **the kitchen** now contains the reception area and museum shop.

2 **The foyer and staircase.** The staircase leads to the house's upper floors. The first floor, which contained the bedrooms and the library, is now used as temporary exhibition space. The top floor focuses on the history of the town of Thouars and includes its objects collected from different periods.

3 **The study** where Doctor Barré worked and saw his patients.

4 **5** **The lounge and dining room.** In the 19th century, the exterior of Gothic Revival houses may have conveyed a degree of importance akin to aristocratic power, but the interior had to be plush and comfortable, in keeping with the style of the time. These rooms house the doctor's collections along with exhibits from the old town museum in the town hall.