



FORGING A MUSEUM

THE DREAM OF A FERREIRO TAKES SHAPE



My father used to say, to introduce me to the trade, that the ferreiro (ironmonger) had to know what he was going to do with the iron before he took it to the fire. There was no point, once it was hot, in thinking about where it was going to be beaten into shape. One of his sayings was that, in case of a mistake, the ferreiro should measure short and the carpenter long. The ferreiro could stretch the iron and the carpenter could cut the excess wood. If this was not the case, the mistake of both was a bad one. And the ferreiro's even worse.

José María Xaveiras Escanlar

In 1979, José María Naveiras was already aware of the need to gather and organise the pieces, work systems, techniques and customs that he was collecting and to continue rescuing those that were disappearing very quickly, swept away by new socio-economic dynamics. This is how he put it to the then Regional Minister for Culture and Sports of the Asturian pre-autonomy, Atanasio Corte Zapico, during a visit to Grandas de Salime accompanied by Emilio Marcos Vallaura, a great connoisseur of western Asturias and a person who would play an important role in the creation of the Museum.

It took several years, the concurrence of timely partnerships, the unconditional involvement of people from inside and outside Grandas de Salime and overcoming many ups and downs, until the first assembly of what was already then called the Ethnographic Museum of Grandas de Salime opened on 2 June 1984.



Attendees at the official opening of the Museum

The initial exhibition took place in the ground floor of the council's Town Hall. In total, four rooms in which the ethnographic repertoire collected until then was installed, as well as a display of archaeological material gathered by Pepe. The available premises limited the possibilities of expansion and conditioned the development of the rhetoric, but the main lines of the argument that would later be more widely deployed were already present: the recreation of environments, the real use of the pieces, the integration of local artisans, both active and retired, in the project, and the involvement of neighbours and figures from all walks of life who would favour the creation of the Association of Friends of the Ethnographic Museum of Grandas de Salime.



Flax recovery project.

The first object installed in the Town Hall premises was a 19th century low-warp loom, which hadn't been used since 1958. Its exhibition exemplified the confluence of all the elements that would become the Museum's hallmark. The piece was a direct donation from its last owners to Pepe el Ferreiro, a procedure that was to be prevalent in the process of the growth of the collections.

The assembly of all its elements and its restitution was an arduous task that was successfully completed thanks to the participation of the weaver Remedios Robledo, who managed to give it a new life and became a collaborator of the Museum and teacher of new generations of weavers. In this way, a tool was recovered, but also a technique and a trade, making the communion between tangible and intangible heritage that Pepe was pursuing a reality, which would be successfully repeated in other traditional trades and activities.

The fledgling museum soon became a meeting place for locals and outsiders of all ages and backgrounds to experiment and exchange knowledge.



With the "tornerio" José María Muña.

