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# Carolinum exhibition remembers Dean Aloys Klar's care for the blind

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The golden pen and hammer used by Emperor Franz Josef I in 1907 at the ceremonial start of building work on the new building of the Klar institute are amongst the exhibits on show at an exhibition being held to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the founder of care for the blind in Bohemia, Aloys Klar. The exhibition will be open until 31 May and entry is free.

The initial impulse to commemorate Aloys Klar came five years ago from the Society for the Renovation of Heritage Sites in the Ústěk Region. The current exhibition in the Carolinum documents, on more than thirty panels, the rise of the ethnic German native of the town of Ústěk who, through his single-mindedness and hard work, was able to raise himself up from the bottom to the top of society.

"Aloys Klar is a fascinating personality in academia and the arts. His life's goal was to change the status of the blind in society, an endeavour in which he was, without exaggeration, ahead of his time," said co-curator docent Michal Stehlík, Dean of the Faculty of Arts of CU, at the opening of the exhibition.

Klar had been the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the university in Prague since 1820 and not only put a lot of effort into promoting the integration of the blind, but also, as the publisher of the Libussa almanac, which brought together Czech, German and Jewish literature from Bohemia.

"If it wasn't for Aloys Klar, we might not know about Karel Hynek Mácha," noted the mayor of Litoměřice, Ladislav Chlupáč, at the opening of the exhibition, remembering Klar's role as a pedagogue and benefactor. The authors of the exhibition used *Tys mě vedl* ('You have led me'), part of Mácha's poem *City vděčnosti věnované Klarovi* ('Feelings of Gratitude towards Klar'), as the title of the exhibition.

Amongst the items on display are silver commemorative medallions, worth 200 crowns, designed by Slovakian artist Miroslav Hric, ArtD, and issued by the Czech National Bank on the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of Aloys Klar. "Nowadays, when we see only bad news at every turn, let us take our example from the story of Aloys Klar and let his industriousness and benefaction be an example to us," was the call to attendees from Tomáš Hlaváček from the Society for the Renovation of Heritage Sites in the Ústěk Region.

The panels and captions of the items displayed have been translated into Braille. The exhibition was prepared by the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague in cooperation with Society for the Renovation of Heritage Sites in the Ústěk Region, the Aloys Klar Secondary School and Nursery School and the Technical Museum in Brno. The exhibition takes place under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the Mayor of the City of Prague and the Mayor of the Town of Litoměřice.

## Aloys Klar

(25. 4. 1763 – 25. 3. 1833) worked as a professor at the secondary school in the town of Litoměřice and in 1806 was appointed Professor of Greek Philology and Classical Literature and the Royal and Imperial Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. In 1820 he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. In 1807, together with the *Freiherr* von Platzer, he helped found a private institute for the education and treatment of blind children in Hradčany, Prague (*Prager Blinden-Erziehungs-Anstalt*). In 1832 he founded the Institute for the Care and Employment of the Adult Blind in Bohemia (*Verein und eine Anstalt zur Versorgung und Beschäftigung erwachsener Blinder in Böhmen*), after the model of the institute in Vienna. He was able to acquire land from Emperor Franz Josef on which to construct a new building for the institute.