

# Collection fund of the Slovak Mining Museum

Jozef Labuda

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J. Labuda, The Slovak Mining Museum, Kammerhofská 1, Banská Štiavnica, 969 01, Slovakia (labuda@muzeumbss.sk).

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The Slovak Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica belongs to museums of Slovak field activity and includes several exhibition departments:

**Natural history** – collection of minerals and fossils in Berggericht building with 37,500 pieces.

**Historical** – collections and exhibitions linked to specific community developments of miners in the region: archeology, history, numismatics, ethnography, development of architecture, lapidary. Exhibitions in the Old and New Castles of 17,628 pieces.

**Gallery** – a collection of art-historical character from the region, modern fine art; for example sacral art, portraits of chamber earls, artists of the 20th century – the Gallery of Jozef Kollár of 3650 pieces.

**Technical** – a unique Slovak collection with majority of objects from Banská Štiavnica region – mining tools, lamps, models of mines, etc. 9651 pieces altogether.

**Open-air mining museum** – situated in the original place of Ondrej's shaft, the exhibition of ore extraction established 2 km far from the town in Bartolomej's shaft of 1600 m length; a presentation of technical buildings, a coal exhibition and presently not exhibited houses of miners from other regions.

The collections of the Slovak Mining Museum are of an unusual character. The majority of our collections originate from regional products, in no other museum you can find such a collection. The history of Banská Štiavnica has always been connected with mining. The town was not transformed into a business-market place because it was not situated on trade routes, nor was it essential for the town because rich sources of ore were sufficient. Invention and implementation of technical innovations for increasing production of ore or its more effective processing, brought improvements in production. Various artists and architects, who created monumental pieces, sculptures of The Holy Trinity church and technical innovations of mining devices, were invited to work and left excellent examples of their work for everyday use, such as the interior of the Kammerhof building with frescos and ceramic tile stoves, goldsmith products for churches and parishes, documents of book culture from the 16th to 18th centuries. The collection includes many of these items.

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### Beginning of collections

In 1900 the Town Museum was established in Banská Štiavnica in the Old Castle during the Mining and Forestry congress. Some new obtained items from specific families, churches, town hall or older collections of the Mining Academy were included in the museum collections. At the beginning of 1901 Banská Štiavnica exhibits were returned from the world exhibition in Paris. Silver goblets from the 16th century, an illustrated book of town attribution from the 16th century, gold-plated town insignias of hammer and gopher from 1536, a gilded Turkish dagger with bony handgrip, a flag with the town coat of arms from 1751, etc. belonged to the most precious collection items. Unfortunately, immediately after the break-up of the monarchy in 1918 a part of the collections was moved to the National Museum in Budapest. The Town Museum in the Old Castle was given a new goal under V. Baker, the collection curator (Fig. 1). Thanks to him the museum was transformed into the District Museum, and in 1935 14 rooms with 29,640 exhibits were opened to the public.

After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic several attempts to create a mining museum in Banská Štiavnica were made. Finally, the proposal was accepted that the museum should gather everything connected with mining – collections of minerals and ores, mining-technical, cultural and literature documents. Basis of the museum was to be the rich and scientifically precious collection of the state mining management with more than 20,000 samples of minerals and ores from all over Slovakia. On 22nd May 1927 the museum was officially opened in the Berggericht building in the Holy Trinity square at the 100th anniversary of Dionýz Štúr's birth. During the leadership of Dr. Fiala already existing collection became a part of the inventory and it



Fig. 1. Banská Štiavnica – The Old Castle, a view to the exhibition of the 1930s.

was further completed by collecting and purchasing. Curator Fiala worked out the conception of the open-air museum, although it was implemented only several decades later.

During World War II both museums faced difficult times. After the end of the war the museums were several times reorganized. New impulse into the progress of Štiavnica's museums came in 1964 when by unification of two museums the new special one was founded – the Mining Museum. On the 3rd of January it was renamed into the Slovak Mining Museum to highlight its main purpose (Herčko, 1993).

### **Character and structure of recent collections**

Presently the Slovak Mining Museum owns more than 80 thousand collection items, which are divided into six exhibition departments. Since the 1960s the exhibitions have been situated in the places according their historical development (for example anti-Turkish renaissance fortress from the second half of the 16th century by the Italian architect Francesco Ferrabosca served from 1971 onwards for exhibitions of military clashes of Turkish and Habsburg armies). Nowadays, the exhibits are logically situated into particular objects in the town, so any visitor can obtain a complex view on the precious metal sources, technical methods of mining, visitors are familiarized with the oldest beginnings of regional settlements and further historical development, variety of craft, professional art and folk art or visitors of open-air mining museum can enter almost 2 km long shaft. Our exhibitions form a "model book" on mining history which is widely used by schools all over the region (Labuda, 1994).

### **Mineralogical exhibition in the Berggericht building**

Despite above mentioned basis of our collections from the State Mining Management (mining geologist L. Cseh), other material was gathered from collections of professor J. Pettko and Dr. Fiala (by purchasing Botháry's collection). After the arrival of I. Herčko in 1966 the museum gained various exhibits from all parts of the world, they were completed with exhibits from Slovak sources. Since 1968 the permanent exhibition exists of an arrangement of minerals and rocks corresponding to student books of primary and secondary schools. The collection includes 37,500 pieces. An inevitable part of the exhibition is a 60 m long shaft with used spaces of cellars. In May 2003 the information center of geo-park was opened to the public in the Berggericht building in the Holy Trinity Square using its strategic position in the historical town center to inform tourists about the newly established Geo-park of the Štiavnica Mountains. On the ground floor of the museum visitors can find a souvenir shop focusing on minerals.

### **Technical exhibition "Mining in Slovakia" in the Kammerhof building**

The purpose of the exhibition is to present a collection which might help to form an image on result of ore processing so that it becomes a coin or a jewel. Visitors can see collections of ore processing, testing and metallurgy, everything is supported by the use of models. The exhibition contains a rich collection of mining lamps, mensuration, surveyorship, transport. In the entrance lounge visitors can see samples of



Fig. 2. Banská Štiavnica – The Kammerhof, a part of the building with exhibitions.

minerals and rocks mined in Slovakia or those ones which used to be mined in our territory. An archeological part of the exhibitions follows, where you can see findings from the Kammerhof research with a unique collection of technical ceramics for ore testing as well as a number of gothic figural tiles. The Kammerhof (Fig. 2) used to be a seat of main mine trustee, chancellors of the Mining Academy and because of this we show also furniture of interiors with fresco of the Emperor's family. That is why we placed the portraits of main chamber earls, mining overcoats of Maria Theresia's family members, mining insignias, etc.; we also display works of miners like models of mines in bottles, mine models, sculptures of miners, collection of mining uniforms, flags, etc. Subsequently, a technical part of the exhibition follows.

Two independent exhibition parts are promoted in the Kammerhof – Mining Education and the Exhibition of Book Culture. The first exhibition represents mining education since the beginning of the 17th century focusing on the Mining Academy (1762-1918), another one includes production of Štiavnica's book printers from the 18th to the 20th centuries. You can see rare prints of classical authors (Caesar, Cicero, Herodotus etc.) from the 16th century, French encyclopedia by Diderot, as well as works by Voltaire, Rousseau from the 18th century.

### **Open-air mining museum**

About 2 km from Banská Štiavnica you can visit the most attractive exhibition part of the Slovak Mining Museum – in the authentic surroundings of the Ondrej shaft from the 17th century (Fig. 3). Original technical sights from mining regions from all over Slovakia (extraction towers, mining devices, gauging room, smith's forge and



Fig. 3. The entrance to Bartolomej's shaft with visitors.

almost 2 km of an underground exhibition in the Bartolomej shaft) were places in the open-air museum in the 1960s. The underground part offers displays of ore extraction development from the 17th to the 20th centuries. Since 1999 the exhibition of coal mining has become an inevitable part of the open-air museum. In the near future, we are planning to open houses of mining architecture to the public in order to offer a complete picture of miners' lives and work (Kladivík & Ladziansky, 1988).

#### **The Old Castle, The New Castle – historical exhibitions**

The first museum exhibitions were established in the Old Castle. Nowadays, there are situated 7 independent exhibition parts named Miners arrive ... , Later Gothic Altar by Master M.S. from 1506, The Art of Smiths, Lapidary in the courtyard, Baroque sculptures, Shooting



Fig. 4. A view to the exhibition of shooting targets and weapons from the 18th and 19th centuries.





Fig. 5. A view to an interior part of gallery exhibitions.

Targets and Weapons (Fig. 4), Pipe Workshops. Recently, the object is under reconstruction and a new exhibition will be open to the public in the tower Himmelreich and in the entrance tower. The complex of historical exhibitions of the Old Castle is completed with historical part in the renaissance fortress of the New Castle from the 16th century. There are displayed items linked to military fights of the Habsburgs and Turkish armies. The fourth floor of the castle provides tourists with a beautiful view on historical center of the town and its wide surroundings (Labuda, 2001).

#### **The Gallery of Jozef Kollár – gallery exhibits**

The museums owns unique displays of art-historical character from the 13th to the 20th centuries. These displays are exhibited in three original burgher houses and today they are considered to be evidence of the building development of the town in the gothic and renaissance era (Fig. 5). The gallery exhibits also works of the most significant painters of the 20th century – Jozef Kollár (the gallery is named after him) and Edmund Gwerk. Particularly we can mention polychromatic sculptures of miners' patrons Saint Barbara and Saint Catharine by the Master M.S. from 1506, gothic board paintings, altar pictures, a baroque painting of Maria Theresia, Franz Joseph von Lothringen and several paintings of chamber earls.

### Discussion

Nowadays, the Slovak Mining Museum displays its collections at home as well as abroad in a structural form offering a complete picture of the mining town development. What is more, every year the museum arranges dozens of exhibitions, some of them are also exhibited in the neighboring countries of Germany. Since 1999 our exhibitions, publishing activities and special projects have been focused on the increase of environmental consciousness of our visitors, particularly at local schools with more than 3000 pupils and students altogether. Authentic surroundings of medieval architecture provides also space for various forms of entertainment – theatre, concerts, festivals. The collection items have also become a part of education or entertainment.

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