

The construction of the Open Air Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica

JURAJ KORBAČKA

Ethnographers and workers at the Slovak Institute for the Preservation of Monuments and Nature clearly require, in addition to the classical method of preservation of folk architecture in situ, the establishment of open air museums as an independent and progressive form of preservation of those buildings which do not have the necessary conditions for further existence and cannot be left on their original sites for the most varied reasons.

The question of building open air museums has proved topical also for the preservation of old relics of a technical character in the field of mining. In order to explain why it was just in Banská Štiavnica that suitable conditions for the building of the Open Air Mining Museum arose, we must take a look at history.

Banská Štiavnica — a free royal town, in the 18th century the third largest in the Hungarian Empire — made a lasting contribution to the world history of mining. Its wealth of precious metals, silver in particular, drew the attention of the rulers to the town, and during the mining boom they showed their favour to it. In the past the mining industry in the Banská Štiavnica district was one of the most progressive in Europe. Many of the inventions and constructions from the 18th century were introduced into mining in just the Banská Štiavnica region.

A large number of old mining works and other mining relics have remained from the famous mining past and many of them cannot be preserved on their original sites and are threatened with destruction.

The united endeavour of the workers at the Slovak Mining Museum, which since 1964 has catered for the whole of Slovakia, was and is to preserve these mining works for future generations and to give an integrated picture of the history of mining in Slovakia in the form of an outdoor museum.

For the building of the exhibition a site was chosen covering 17 hectares and only 1,5 km from the centre of the town, on which some of the original exhibits are to be found. These include a brick-built mining house from the 19th century and a powder-magazine from the 17th cen-

tury — a storehouse for the gunpowder — and the Ondrej shaft which leads to the underground part of the exhibition. The workers of the Slovak Mining Museum, together with other experts, worked out the general conception and the scenario, for which they suggested concrete objects from all over Slovakia and the final plan of the open air museum was decided by the results of a national competition in urban and architectural design in 1970. The first three places were won by the competition teams led by Ing. Otakar Maděra, Ing. arch. Imrich Puškár, CSc., and Ing. arch. Alexander Bélo. The great efforts of the Banská Štiavnica museum workers for the establishment of the Open Air Mining Museum were crowned by the success of the competition and the positive reaction of experts from the various institutions concerned, as well as of the Slovak Ministry of Culture. Basing itself on the results of the competition Interprojekt Brno, a projects design organization, worked out the project task which gives complex plans for the construction of the museum. The entire project plan and its accomplishment is being worked out stage by stage and the construction will take a long time, about 10 years.

The Open Air Mining Museum will consist of two parts — that on the surface and that underground. The core of the surface exhibition will be formed by original exhibits brought here from the main mining regions. Those which have not been preserved for the present age will be reconstructed in accordance with documents in the archives. Exhibits from the mining, dressing and smelting industries will be represented in the museum in their order of development.

The most noteworthy exhibits shown here will be a draught construction for vertical transportation driven by a treadwheel, dating from the 17th century, a draught machine driven by a waterwheel, a water-column draught machine from 1881 and a construction for vertical transportation, driven by horses. Pumping equipment from the 17th and 18th centuries is also of particular interest. Further, there will be equipment for depth reconnoitring and in the dressing section a device from the 18th century for crushing ore, sluices for washing it, and so on.

Monuments of folk architecture typical for mining districts will play a particular role in the Open Air Mining Museum. For this part of the museum two exhibits on their original sites have been chosen and the remainder will be gradually transferred here from mining districts throughout the whole of Slovakia and arranged on the site in such a way that with the arrangement of the environment and a layout similar to the original they will form a complete harmonious whole. The individual exhibits will be linked by suitably arranged communications. In this way there will arise within the bounds of the Open Air Mining Museum an exhibition of folk architecture which will document the culture and social standing of the miners in the past.

Visitors to the museum will find in this folk architecture not only



1. Miner's log cottage built from oak in the style of a Slovak house from Antol. It is about 200 years old and will be transferred to the Open Air Mining Museum.



2. Mining tower from the Žofia shaft in Banská Belá transferred to the Open Air Mining Museum



3. Mining tower with machine-room from the Mária shaft in Podsitnianská, transferred to the Open Air Mining Museum.

instruction, but also a moment of relaxation and their pleasant impressions will be increased by the interiors of the buildings exhibited. The miners' rooms and the remaining parts of the houses will be furnished so as to be typical of their period, and even the miners' tavern has not been forgotten.

In the planning of the part of the museum devoted to folk architecture we have the expert assistance of the workers of the Slovak Institute for the Preservation of Monuments and Nature in Bratislava and the Centre in Banská Bystrica, who worked out architectonic and ethnographical documentation for the objects chosen to be included in the museum.

In general, it is possible to state that the mining houses in Slovakia connected with the historical period of German mining colonization, dating from the 13th century, arose and developed on the basis of houses transferred from their original regions in Germany (Swabia, Bavaria, Saxony) in accordance with the established traditional forms of lay-out, architectural and building arrangements and functional needs, suiting the special conditions of the mining profession.

The basic regional types of folk architecture in the mining areas of Slovakia can be divided in principle into:

1. Slav houses — with the usual, so-called 'symmetrical' lay-out, with hall, pantry, black kitchen, living-room and, at a later stage of development, a stable.
2. Houses of the German colonization, to be found in three basic regional types:
 - a) Spiš miner's house
 - b) Central Slovakian miner's house of the stable type, ground floor only, common in the Central Slovakian region.
 - c) Wooden storeyed miner's house with a balcony, spread throughout the region of Kremnica and its surroundings.

The proposed selection of folk architecture from mining districts does not include the whole range of agricultural buildings, which after the dying out of mining in the various regions were rebuilt as a result of the change for agricultural purposes. These newer, complete building forms of mining settlements, such as those combining mining and farming or mining and craftsmanship, will be reconstructed in the Slovak National Museum of Folk Architecture near the Slovak National Museum in Martin.

The beauty of the varied terrain chosen as the site of the open air museum is that it makes it possible to build a viewing tower with a restaurant, which will be placed off-centre on the highest point of the site, which affords a view of the whole museum and the far-stretching surroundings of Banská Štiavnica. The softness of its appearance harmonizes with the appearance of the exhibits.

A special feature of the Open Air Mining Museum is its underground part. The exciting trip into the mine by way of the Ondrej shaft and the inspection of the old passages and construction works, where appara-

tus, aids and equipment used for extracting ore will be installed, will be extremely instructive and attractive for the visitors. Underground a total of 800 m of passageway are accessible to the public.

In the Ondrej shaft, which together with the underground part forms the first stage of the construction works and which we wish to open to the public in 1974, the largest part of the works underground will be carried out this year and at the surface the first exhibits have already been erected — the wooden mining towers, whose architecture differs according to the mining areas from which they came.

What is there to say in conclusion? The Open Air Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica will hold a unique position by European and even world standards, on account of its range, conception and aims. It will be a technical and architectural outdoor museum documenting the glorious history of mining in Slovakia in the past. It will be an instructive and cultural establishment, whose significance and value will be fully appreciated by those who come after us.

For this reason we must work together with the scientific and professional institutions and administrative bodies concerned to find a way of speeding up the realization of these construction works, so that we may hand over the Open Air Mining Museum for use to the experts and general public from home and abroad.

Photos 1.—3. Františka Rákayová, Slovak Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica.