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Kežmarok Museum

Kežmarok Museum — its past and present

On 31st December 2018, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic issued the Register of Museums and Galleries of the Slovak Republic that features ninety-four museums [<https://www.snm.sk/swift...>]. Among them, there are 23 museums operated by a central state administration, 35 museums run by the region, 22 museums operated by a town or municipality and 14 museums set up by other legal entities. The Kežmarok Museum belongs to the last group. It is one of the eight museums situated in the Prešov self-governing region.

The efforts to establish the Kežmarok Museum date back to the second half of the 19th century. In 1873, the Hungarian Carpathian Association was established as an initiative of the Kežmarok burghers and nature lovers. One of the aims of this association was to set up its own museum [Cintulová 2001: 5]. It was decided that the castle, originally a Gothic building mentioned for the first time in 1463, was to become the future site of the museum. This unique monument is located in the center of Kežmarok. Its history began to be written by the owners of the castle: in the 15th — 17th century the castle was home to the Zápoľský family, the Lasky and Rueber families, followed by four generations of the Thórkóly family, which took care of the magnificent Renaissance reconstruction of the castle and the construction of a Baroque chapel. This family, especially Stephen II Thórkóly and his son Imrich, became well known as opponents of the absolutist regime who took part in anti-imperial uprisings. Unfortunately, the uprisings were suppressed and the rebels were severely punished. The emperor confiscated all their property. This sad fate affected also the inventory of the Kežmarok Castle, which was

transported to Vienna and Levoča. The castle thus became the property of the emperor [Baráthová 2004: 2].

With the departure of the last owners of the castle, the building became derelict and the remains of the original castle equipment were either stolen or destroyed. In 1702, the castle became the property of the town which used it for diverse purposes: within its confines situated were granaries, barracks, workshops, and a hospital [Baráthová 2004: 3]. Several sections of the castle burned down in the 18th century and have not been restored (such as the former library, guest halls, and knights hall). In the 19th century, several manufacturing workshops, companies, barracks, and a hospital operated within the castle premises, which resulted in further dilapidation of the building.

If the museum was to be located in the castle, it had to be repaired and adapted to suit the needs of this institution. However, the town of Kežmarok did not have enough money to carry out repairs and modify the castle, so local museums were set up in other places, such as Velká, Poprad and Levoča [Cintulová 2001: 5].

The situation was to the detriment of the town of Kežmarok, because museum collections existed here for a long time. The oldest predecessors of the contemporary museum collections were the collections of the Kežmarok Lyceum, which were commonly referred to in the documents of the lyceum archive as the „museum”. These have been gathered since the 16th century. The significance of these collections is testified by the fact that the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest considered transferring some of those rare exhibits to its own facility; however, the school directors did not give the approval. Those early collections of the lyceum were accessible to the general public and so, in a way, they fulfilled the role of the non-existing proper town museum.

Further efforts to establish the Kežmarok Museum and the Gallery of Spiš Artists took place before the First World War. The initiative came from the Main Inspectorate for Museums in Budapest and was taken over by the Kežmarok-born physician, Dr. Oskár Szelényi (however, it is possible that actually, he was the author of this initiative). The town museum and the Tatra gallery of regional artists—mainly Ferdinand Katona— were to be located in Kežmarok, and even the museum of the Hungarian Carpathian Association was to be moved from Poprad to Kežmarok because, allegedly, it did not prosper there [Cintulová 2001: 6].



Fot. 1. Castle after a fire in 1901 (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

In 1926, the Kežmarok weekly newspaper *Karpathen-Post* (47th volume, 1926) published several public calls for establishing a local museum here¹. This time, the town authorities decided to act, and on 28 December 1926, the town council approved the establishment of a town museum. In 1927, Karol Herzog became the first museum curator [Cintulová 2001:6).

While the inhabitants of Kežmarok and the surrounding towns were diligently donating to the museum old, rare items, the town's biggest problem was raising funds for the reconstruction of the castle. For example, at that time, the semicircular tower of the castle featured the original Renaissance sgraffito decoration but, unfortunately, it has not survived to this day.

The names of the donors were published regularly by the *Karpathen-Post*. The major part of the collected material illustrated the activities of local guilds, but there were also examples of crafts, archaeology, geology, numismatics,

¹ *Karpathen-Post* was a weekly journal of the Hungarian Carpathian Association, which was published in Kežmarok between 1880 and 1942. During 1887–1891 it was a publication of the Tatra section of the Hungarian Carpathian Association. It focused mainly on publishing reports from Spiš, the High Tatras and their surroundings, as well as the activities of the German minority. The newspaper was published in German but some articles, including advertisements, were written in Hungarian. Since 1909 it was the only German-language socio-economic weekly publication in Spiš. Before the end of World War II, it became the journal of the German National Council in Spiš. [https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpathen_Post].



Fot. 2. Castle from 1931, when the museum was founded (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

and numerous works of art. All these objects were acquired by the museum mostly at no expense.

Despite some adversity, the collections of the Kežmarok Museum were finally opened to the public in the entrance tower of the castle on 31 May 1931 [Book of visitors...]. Many exhibits were donated by private collectors. At the initiative of Kežmarok's chief notary, Ján Gotsch, town employees also took part in the collecting activities, searching for old objects that might have been owned by the citizens of Kežmarok. On the first floor there was a display of items illustrating guilds activities and home furnishings. On the second floor there were archaeological, ethnographic, numismatic and natural science collections. Quite unique was the exhibition of the Kežmarok Shooting Club. There were targets (the oldest from the 17th century), various rifles and decorations, but the prime exhibit was the club's flag dating back to 1510.²

As the collections were constantly expanding, it was necessary to adjust the other parts of the castle for the purpose of display. However, the town of Kežmarok did not have any money to conduct the repairs, although it repeatedly applied for financial assistance from the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment. Unfortunately, World War II undermined any

² This object was lost during World War II.

further efforts. In 1941, Karol Piovarcsy [Kronika Múzea...: 3] was appointed as the museum administrator. Despite the war raging all around, he tried to run the museum according to professional standards. After taking the office, he tried to reorganize the displayed collection, because „the old exhibition was crammed full and unsatisfactory”. He even requested for a restorer and conservator of objects to assist. During the war, the town archives were moved to the castle. However, further war events resulted in closing the gates of the museum. The last visit to the castle’s museum has been documented in the guest book on 7 October 1943 [Book of visitors...]. The castle became the seat of the German command. After the suppression of the SNP (the Slovak National Uprising), part of the ground floor of the north-eastern wing of the castle was transformed into a prison for partisans and civilians. Twenty of them were shot near the castle chapel.³

During the crossing of the front, the interior of the museum suffered some damage. A number of smaller objects were stolen, such as embroidered women’s costumes, pewter plates and guild jugs, ceramics, porcelain, silver, a collection of coins, and paintings by Katona, Mednyansky and others [Kronika Múzea...: 4]. The town archives were also taken away packed in 17 boxes, although at a later stage some of them were returned to Kežmarok.

Kežmarok was liberated on 27 January 1945. Despite various post-war problems, on the 2nd May 1945, the District People’s Committee in Kežmarok sent a call to all offices of local national committees regarding the registration of buildings that were under the legal protection of the state. The aim of the call was to assess the condition of historical buildings after the war and to register cultural and historical monuments in the mansions in the vicinity of Kežmarok [Cintulová 2001: 7]. On 23 June 1945, the Commission for Education and Awareness of Slovak National Council in Bratislava sent the Circuit Letter No. B7 / 1945 requesting further information for the elaboration of a report dealing with an unauthorized export of monuments from Slovakia to Hungary and Germany during the period between 1918 and 1945.

On 27 June 1945, the Local National Committee in Kežmarok entrusted Bedřich Kostránek with the supervision of the museum [Cintulová 2001: 7-8]. In a letter dated 22 October 1945, the Local National Committee in Kežmarok informed the Association of Slovak Museums in Turčiansky Sv. Martin,

³ Currently, there is a bronze sculpture „Thanks“ made by Korkoš and a monument with the names of the victims.

in response to their circular, about the condition of the museum building in Kežmarok:

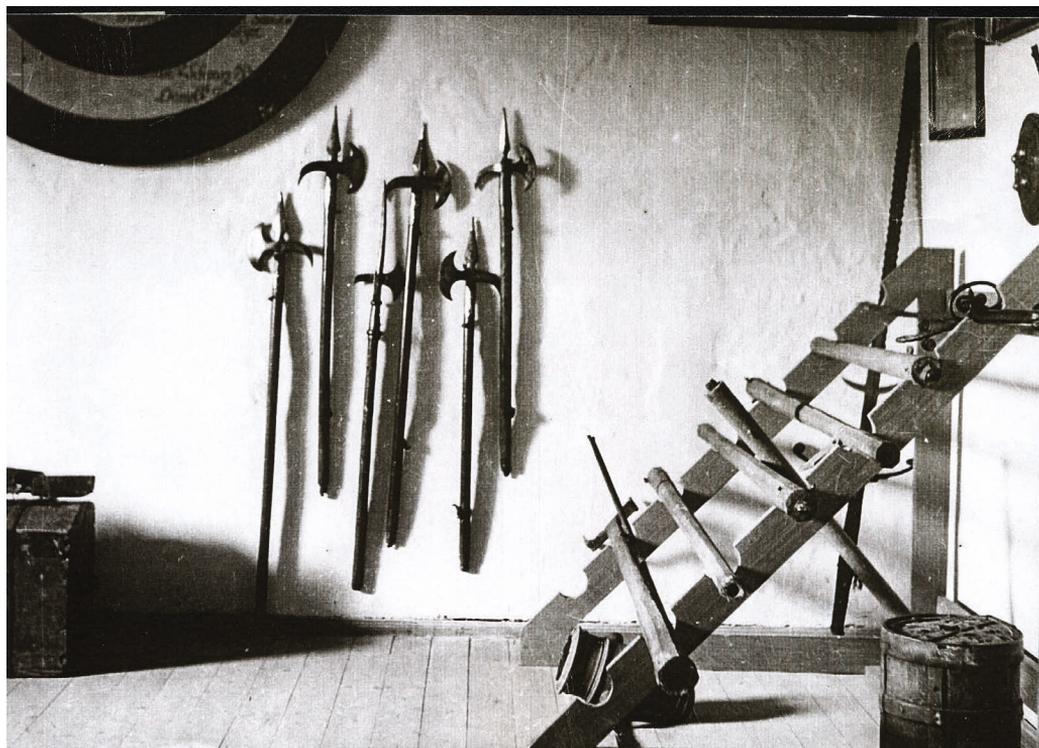
Considering the state of structures, the building of the museum is in good condition... There was the German army stationed at the castle, which had its camp here. All the smaller objects from the museum were lost, such as glass, tin, ceramics, porcelain, silver and embroidery items, smaller format paintings, engravings, old books, etc. The Reich's German authorities took away the entire historical archive of the town in 17 boxes, of which, so far, only five have been returned [Cintulová 2001: 8].

Subsequently, on the basis of these data, the Association of Slovak Museums in Turčiansky Sv. Martin's issued a decree, dated 17 November 1945, with the following measures: „If the rooms in which the collections were displayed are not suitable for this purpose, another building must be sought. The local national committee has the opportunity to repossess a suitable building for the museum left after the Germans”. Further on, the text states that the association requests information on whether the employee, Bedřich Kostřánek, has the expertise to organize and supplement the collections. Following the elections in May 1946, eleven commissions were established at the Local National Committee in Kežmarok, one of which was a museum commission [Cintulová 2001: 8].

In 1946, part of the castle was transformed into a temporary assembly camp for the German population waiting to be deported to Germany. Already during these years, Bruno Bene has initiated regular involvement of pupils and students to assist with the museum work.

At the end of 1946, the museum staff came up with the idea of establishing a new section of the museum dedicated to local agriculture and forestry. The Central Directorate of State Forests and the Directorate of the Slovak National Museum promised to help. However, for various reasons this initiative was not implemented. Nevertheless, the work on the existing museum's collections was successfully completed and on 3 August 1947, the museum once again was opened to visitors. In the first two weeks, entrance fees raised 1000 Krona [Kronika Múzea...: 4].

On 12 March 1948 the District National Committee in Kežmarok issued Resolution no. 15/48, which approved the fees for the visit to the town museum as followed: adults 5 CZK, excursion of more than 10 people 3 CZK per



Fot. 3. First exhibitions in the castle (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

person, children, students and soldiers 2 CZK. The revenues were paid to the town treasury.

At the General Assembly on 9 October 1948, the Association of Slovak Museums prepared guidelines for museums within the Five Year Plan (1949-1954), with instructions on how to look after buildings and collections. Among other things, in point 2, it proposed to divide the collections into the so-called „museum´s trash, items intended for exhibitions and unexhibited items”. This letter was followed by another one urging all museums to schedule its work so that it would be in full order and completed within five years. On 30 March 1949, following the Resolution No. 155, the town of Kežmarok became a full member of the Slovak Museum Society. In July 1949, the Local National Committee in Kežmarok received a letter from the Association of Slovak Museums calling on the town to allocate the necessary sum of money to maintain and expand the museum collections, so that they could be properly stored and neatly arranged [Cintulová 2001: 5].

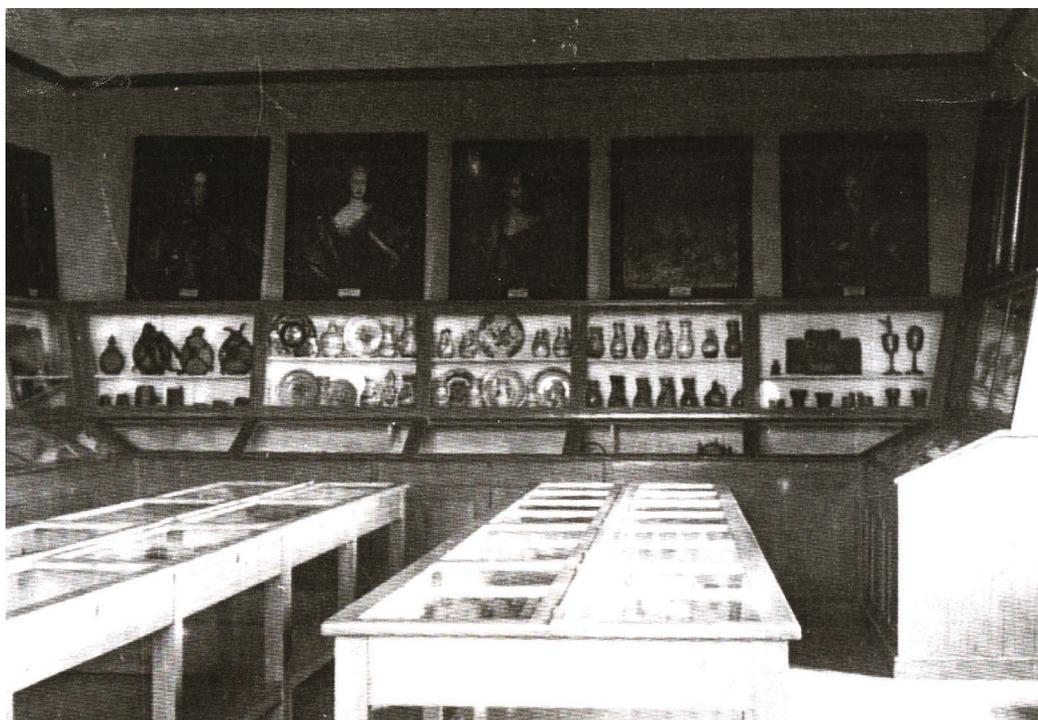
Despite various problems in the post-war period, the number of museum visitors was steadily rising. In 1947 the castle was visited by 617 persons,

in 1948 by 1071 visitors, in 1949 by 1560 visitors and in 1950 by 2116 visitors. In the following years, the number of visitors had a further upward trend [Štatistické výkazy].

Margita Lebedová was employed as the museum guide. Her job description stated: „She performs daily and periodic cleaning work in the museum as well as guides visitors, whom she will also provide with an explanation. She sells tickets and accounts for it.” A more detailed description of the duties of a supervisor and guide in one person has been outlined in the archival documents of the Kežmarok Museum no. 15/1950 (as a curiosity, we quote this document literally, without corrections):

1 / You have to sweep, clean, ventilate, wipe the dust of the museum and chapel rooms daily and wipe the floors once a month. During the winter, the office should be heated. 2 / You lead the visitors to the museum and the chapel and you provide them with an explanation but only if they ask you. Then the inscriptions are used. 3 / You are responsible for ensuring that the museum's objects are not lost and that visitors do not handle the exhibited objects. You should report any such incident to the administrator. 4 / You are obliged to sell tickets to visitors in advance and bill them to the administrator. Tipping instead of admission is strictly forbidden; if such a case takes place, you will be fired. 5 / You have to sweep the park in front of the castle and take care to keep it clean. Make sure that children do not play near the pool in the park. Any disorder in the castle yard report immediately to the administrator. 6 / Excursions and students can visit the museum only in groups of 15 people. Students are to be admitted only with their teachers. 7 / The town archive should be ventilated daily and cleaned as required. The windows must be opened in the morning and closed in the evening. 8 / You are prohibited from getting involved in secondary employment that would prevent you from performing the obligations resulting from your museum service. 9 / You have to be prepared to serve the visitors as required, in the morning from 7-12 a.m. and afternoon from 1-7 p.m. In winter, however, only into the dark. 10 / In the winter season, you have to fulfill any extra request of the administrator. 11 / Otherwise, you are subject to the administrator's regulations in every respect and you must comply with all adjustments [Číslo agendového protokolu...].

From the description of those duties, we know that the guide in the museum had to perform very difficult and cumulative tasks at that time. In October 1949, the Association of Museums delegated Dr. Mariányi to arrange collections according to the guidelines issued. On 1st July 1950 the administrator



Fot. 4. First exhibitions in the castle (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

of the museum, Bruno Bene, sent a detailed report about the museum, the collections, plans and activities to the Local National Committee in Kežmarok. From the archival documents of the museum, we know there were three employees: Bruno Bene, Ladislav Kiefer and Mária Lebedová. Maria was the only one who had full pay. The social situation after the war was a reflection of contemporary political ideology. On 13 November 1950, the Association of Slovak Museums sent Circular Number 5, saying that in the near future the Commission of Education, Science and Arts would send a „flying commission” to each museum to check if there were exhibits in the museum „that [were] contrary to today’s socialist spirit” [Cintulová 2001: 12].

A closer description of these „adverse exhibits” wasn’t provided. There is no information on the response of the museum’s administrator to this circular.

In 1951 the archive was separated from the museum and in October the same year it was moved to another building. Dr. Mária Mariányiová helped the museum for five months as she professionally processed the collections. In that year the museum obtained a part of the collection from Dr. Greisiger from Spišská Belá, for 20,000 CZK. This collection contained mainly archaeo-



Fot. 5. First exhibitions in the castle (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

logical items, ceramic products dating to the 19th century, 17th-century weapons, pictures painted on glass and cloth, and minerals or fossils.

During 1952-1961 the Kežmarok Museum (District Museum) was placed under the administration of the Regional National Committee.

On 1st June 1952 Dr. Mária Mariányi became the new museum director. She was an experienced museologist, so she was able to introduce professional standards to the museum work. Following her appointment as a museum director, she was immediately appointed to the working group of the Monuments Institute. Her task was to compile an inventory of Category I monuments in the Košice region. In a letter of June 13, 1952, the new museum director requested the Slovak Museums Association to establish a branch of the District Museum in Kežmarok. It concerned the property at 46 Main Square. The owner was still alive, a resident of Kežmarok of aristocratic origins named Hedviga Mária Szirmay.

Dr. Mariányi stated in her letter that it was the most beautiful house on the Main Square, of outstanding architectural design and unique interior. The letter informs us that the owner would be prepared to lend this house to the

state as a museum as long as she could act as the guide of this property and its collections. The Association of Slovak Museums in October of the same year gave a negative response, stating that „the Association is not in a position to give the approval for the establishment of museums‘ branches”.

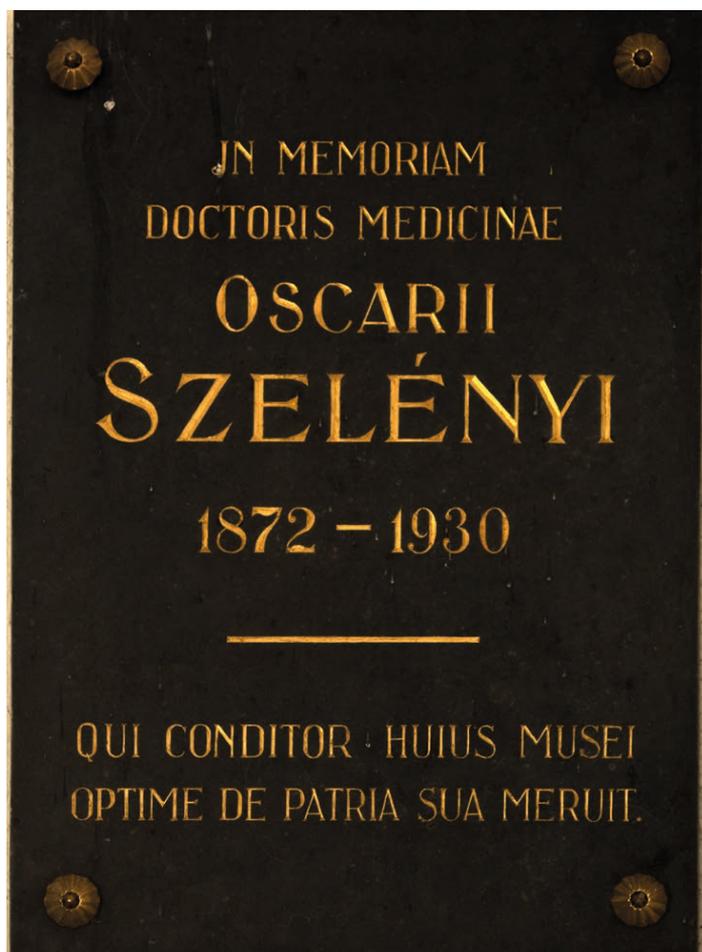
However, the examination of all information revealed that the Association did not recommend to set up a branch in the proposed way as the house would still remain personal property of the owner [Cintulová 2001: 13]. This decision proved unfortunate because following the death of H. M. Szirmay her estate was robbed and only a fraction of the belongings were transferred to the collection of the Kežmarok Museum.

Dr. Mariányi was the director of the museum just for one year. Following her departure on 1 September 1953 to take the new position at the State East Slovak Museum in Košice, the new director, Jozef Címer, was appointed. Previously he was the head of Kežmarok Gymnasium [Kronika Múzea...: 10]. Finally, on 27 July 1953, the museum received the status of the District Museum of National History.

The report of director Címer provides information about museum development during the years 1955–1960. At that time, the museum occupied 15 rooms in the castle (including offices). However, there was a need for substantial renovations to be conducted due to rotting floors, lack of electric lighting, unsatisfactory heating and leaking ceilings.

Finally, in late February and March 1954, electric lighting was installed in the exhibition rooms. It enabled to extend museum tours to the evening hours. In 1955, the number of visitors reached a record of 11,618. Admission income came to 5,564,40 CZK [Štatistické výkazy]. On December 1, 1957, arrived the new director of the Kežmarok District Museum of National History, Alexander Gally. Jozef Címer returned to school service.

Following a territorial reorganization in 1961, the administration of the museum was transferred to the Kežmarok Municipal National Committee. That year the staff situation of the museum was still inadequate, with only two people employed: the director and the guide/cleaner. An even more urgent problem was the building itself. Apart from the museum, the castle premises were occupied by several businesses. The roof leaked, damaging the objects. The courtyard was messy, with a lot of dirt. On the 8 April 1959, the ceiling suffered damage. This situation forced the parties involved to repair the castle. On the 10th of August 1959, the Department of Education and Culture of the Regional National Committee in Košice approved 4.5 million



Fot. 6. Memorial plaque of the museum's founder - Oscar Szelényi placed at the entrance to the castle (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

Crowns for the repair of the castle. The main investor were the Department of Education and Culture of the Regional National Committee in Košice, and the District National Committee in Kežmarok.

The documentation of the project was prepared by the Slovak Institute of Monuments and Nature Protection in Bratislava, the Department of Education and Culture of the Regional National Committee, as well as the Department of Construction of the Municipal National Committee in Kežmarok. On January 16 1962, the Council of the Municipal National Committee in Kežmarok convened a meeting with potential applicants for vacant storage space for the reconstruction of the town castle. This reconstruction was divided into two stages. The implementation of the second stage was conditional on freeing up of the premises in the castle which were still occupied by the

companies such as Textil Prešov — warehouse Kežmarok, and Zelenina Košice — warehouse Kežmarok

On 31 May 1962, in Bratislava, the agreement was reached to conduct the major repair work of the Thököly Palace in Kežmarok. The lead contractor was engineer architect Masný. The reconstruction of the castle was to take place in three stages. It was recommended that prior to the renovation of the courtyard a historical-archeological survey would be completed. This research was led by Dr. Belo Polla from the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava. It was completed on 31 October 1964 and the work revealed abundant ceramic material from the Hallstatt-Púchov culture. At the same time, the foundations of a sacral building from the Romanesque period were uncovered. The Tatar invasion in 1241 probably damaged this church, which was subsequently repaired by German colonists who dedicated it to their patron St. Elizabeth. Most probably, it was the church that was mentioned in the year 1190. Nearby there was a monastery. In the vicinity, a burial ground was discovered that belonged to the Church of St. Elizabeth.

Throughout the whole of 1964, the museum was in continuous operation despite difficult conditions due to the reconstruction work of the building. The renovation of the castle did not run according to schedule, so on 12 January 1967 the duty was given to a new contractor — Pamiatkostav Žilina.

On 13 June 1967, an agreement was signed between the owner of the wooden articular church in Kežmarok — the Kežmarok Evangelical Church Community — and its user, the Regional National Committee Department of Education and Culture in Poprad. It regarded the free use and administration of this church for an indefinite period. On 15 June 1967 the acceptance proceeded. The Kežmarok Evangelical Church Community and the Kežmarok Museum agreed to use this property for the tourism purpose. In 1968 the museum agreed to continue the reconstruction of this cultural monument.⁴

On 30 December 1968, an agreement was made between the Kežmarok Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession and the Kežmarok Museum regarding the long-term free use and maintenance of the Lyceum building. It was due to the fact that from 1966 onwards, each year the town organised celebrations of Literary Kežmaroks. Its aim was to honor people who, in the past, studied or taught in this building. On 14 March 1968, a meeting was

⁴ In 1991 under the restitution laws, the buildings of the lyceum and the wooden articular church (now the UNESCO World Heritage Site) were returned to the church congregation in Kežmarok. Following the new document signed on 21st of February 1991, the evangelic church and choir in Kežmarok cancelled the agreement of the 13th of June 1967.

held at MsNV in Kežmarok to establish a literature museum in the Lyceum building. It was because „...the literary traditions of this city date back to ancient times and they're so extensive that this fact in itself speaks for the urgent need to preserve, gradually enhance and promote this extremely valuable cultural heritage...” [Cintulová 2001: 22]. The rooms for the parish office and auditorium remained in the Lyceum.

In 1971 the renovation of the courtyard was completed and the outlines of the no longer existing castle sections and the church of St. Elizabeth were marked. Towards the end of the year, the north-eastern section was connected to electricity. The museum's most precious exhibit—the Lang's Renaissance prayer bench from 1544—was presented at two exhibitions of arts and crafts: in Munich and Prague. In Munich the bench received the highest prize, the golden medal. In 1972 this Renaissance bench was displayed at an exhibition of arts and crafts in Bulgaria. In the following years, it represented us in Austria, Hungary and Poland. On the 15 September 1972, the Kežmarok Museum took the responsibility of the care of another historic building, the bastion of the city's fortifications.

As an outcome of an in-depth survey of all museums, a new community of museums was developed, resulting from the conclusions and resolutions of the 5th plenary session of the East Slovak Regional National Committee, discussed at the Regional Museum Council and consulted with the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Socialist Republic in 1972. Thanks to this community of museums, it was determined that the Kežmarok Homeland Studies Museum was a center of homeland studies and museum work in the Poprad district. In order to understand the history of the castle, town and the nearby area, the museum collects and documents the periods of feudalism and capitalism and the construction of socialism. The museum remained under the control of the Regional National Committee in Poprad [Kronika Múzea...: 3].

In 1974 the museum acquired from private owners a Renaissance, two-storey terraced house featuring a courtyard wing and eleven rooms at 55 Soviet Army Square (now the Main Square). It was planned for the installation of an exhibition of living space. In December 1976 a burgher's house at 11 Duklianska Street (now Dr. Vojtech Alexander Street) was added to the museum's property. The property consisted of detached buildings and the rear wing was renovated. At the same time, the repairs of the castle continued. On 15 March 1977 another property was added to the museum's administration: the former castle riding hall, the already mentioned poorhouse (now



Fot. 7. Castle during reconstruction around 1975 (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

museum's offices), storage space and library. During this period, the museum owned and managed a total of seven buildings (a wooden articular church, a lyceum, a castle, a bastion of the city fortification, two burgher houses and a poorhouse). Although the wooden articular church was in operation and the attendance was relatively high (there were 50,979 visitors in 1977), the pleas by the museum as well as by the city for the accelerated renovation were not answered. It regarded mainly the need to repair the roof which was considered an urgent matter.

On the 12th December 1980 the Department of Culture in Poprad gave its consent to the closure of the wooden articular church in Kežmarok for security reasons and due to its poor condition. The building was closed on 1 January 1981 when it became the property of the evangelical church. The evangelical church undertook the work on the complete reconstruction. 1985 was a very special year. On May 16-17, after 23 years of duration, the reconstruction of the castle was completed. However, the cost of the repair of the castle reached the sum of 22,241,341 CZK, so the work was almost halved. Several publications acknowledge the renovation of the Kežmarok



Fot. 8. Current view of the castle - the seat of the Museum in Kežmarok (Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok)

Castle as the construction of the century. This lengthy process of the reconstruction was due to an inconsistent approach to the construction work (at times the work was suspended or the workers were moved to other workplaces) or work was done in the wintertime. The inconsistency of the work regarding the reconstruction of the castle caused many problems which were remedied in the past fifteen years. These shortfalls should have been remedied as a part of the overhaul of the castle, but these works were not fully carried out earlier. The poor condition of the roof required its replacement over almost the entire castle building.

On 21 December 1985, the funds were allocated for the burgher house at 55 Soviet Army Square but with the same result as the castle. Thanks to the repairs of the castle plans were prepared for new exhibitions. As a result of the reorganization of the state administration and the demise of the Regional National Committee, on the 30th December 1990, the Kežmarok Museum ceased to be administered by the Regional National Committee—Department of Culture in Poprad and on the 1st January 1991 it went under the control of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

In June 1994, the exhibition of bourgeois culture in Spiš was opened in the house at 55 Main Square. The plan for this exposition was prepared by Dr. Viktor Jasaň. Today, in this building there are storage areas, carpentry and conservation workshops.

In 1996 there was another change in the management and economic security of the museum. With the establishment of the Podtatranské Regional Cultural Center in Poprad, the Kežmarok Museum became an organizational unit of this facility without individual legal standing. The new name of the museum was Podtatranské museum Kežmarok. On the 1st of April 1999, following the abolition of the Podtatranské Regional Cultural Center, the museum was given a new legal status. This gave the museum the status of a district museum called Kežmarok Museum. The administration body was the Higher Territorial Unit in Prešov, currently the Prešov self-governing region. On the basis of the Founding Charter of the Museum from April 1, 2002, its mission and activities have been defined in the following way:

The Museum is a regional collecting, scientific-research, cultural-educational institution in the field of museum activities. On the basis of research and scientific exploration, the main mission of the museum is to collect, protect, scientifically and professionally evaluate, professionally process and present to the public the material documents of the companies' development in the territorial district of Kežmarok [Rozhodnutie o zriadení Múzea...].

At the present, the museum is responsible for the operation of three buildings. In the castle there are displays presenting the prehistoric and medieval settlement of Kežmarok. Currently, they are in the process of redevelopment. Other displays present the local guilds and crafts and the Thököly family, the Townhall, historic guns and other weapons, Kežmarok Shooters Union, The Association of Spiš Doctors and Pharmacists, life and work of Doctor Vojtech Alexander, the jail, history of the Kežmarok city in 19th and 20th centuries, the chapel, the Gallery, lapidary and Kežmarok and the High Tatras. In the burgher house at 55 Main Square there is the already mentioned exhibition of the town housing culture in Spiš. The burgher house at 11 Dr. Vojtech Alexander Street is used all year-round for temporary exhibitions. Each year there are about 10 exhibitions. The storage areas of the museum have been located in the bastion of the city fortification, in the burgher house at 55 Main Square, in the castle and in the poorhouse. Currently, there are 18 employees, which is a low number considering the total number of build-

dings and other premises. For this reason, the museum staff has to perform multiple functions.

The museum employs four historians: an art historian, an archaeologist-ethnographer, a historian for recent history, and a historian for literary history and numismatics. Other employees include a conservator-photographer, an artist, a lecturer — cash keeper, a lecturer — librarian, a lecturer — cultural and educational worker, a lecturer. The administration and maintenance department of the facilities employ an administrator, an accountant, a payroll officer, a personnel officer, two cleaners, a painter, and two supervisors — lecturers. The museum historians, as part of their duties, concentrate on the regional history investigations. They publish the results of their research in the regional press and in the professional literature. Due to the fact that the museum has no adequate funding, the publishing activity is limited to small publications.

The museum has good results in the field of cultural and educational activities, such as lectures, discussions, creative workshops. We also work closely with primary and secondary schools. The staff of the museum prepared a detailed sheet for the lessons, which correspond to the curriculum of the schools and the thematic focus of the museum. The teaching is carried out by the museum staff in the display area of the museum or directly at schools. As a part of our methodological activities, we provide assistance and send materials to pupils and students who write theses at the secondary school professional activities, diploma theses, doctoral theses and in processing various professional topics within the Kežmarok district.

On 31 December 2019, the Museum registered a total of 30,336 objects in the collections that comprise archeology, art history, ethnography, numismatics, literary history and general history. Since the establishment of the museum a reference library has been gradually developed, primarily for the internal needs of the museum's staff but also for the general public, with a focus on history. The number of library units on 31 December 2019 was 9,100 volumes with the old prints, issued prior to the year 1918, numbering 1160 items.

More than 60,000 visitors visited all of the museum's facilities last year. Our aim is to attract visitors to the castle for more attractive and richer exhibitions. We have achieved extraordinary success in organizing well-known theater performances and cultural events in the castle courtyard. Very popular proved to be the theater performances staged inside the castle. These are fairy tales that we regularly organize during International

Children's Day. During three days, children as well as adults can enjoy the fairytale atmosphere of the castle in a different way than the standard tour. For these purposes, the rooms have to be modified and actors perform in historic costumes.

The performance features professional actors from the ExTeatro from the village of Ľubica. The scenery is prepared by the museum staff in cooperation with ExTeatro. All songs for each performance are composed by R. Mankovecký. Following the fairy tales, visitors move around the castle with fairy-tale creatures and the basic historical facts about Kežmarok and the castle are captured in an easy way in the scenes. The groups of 40 people enter the castle every 20 minutes and the whole show lasts about 80 minutes. The overall atmosphere of the individual rooms of the castle, the beautiful scenes, scenery and the performances of actors and singers attract to the museum increasing numbers of visitors. Statistics and suggestions from the public showed us further direction of developing programs in a visitor-oriented museum. There is an extraordinary interest in those fairy tales, which are different each year. We repeat the fairy tales during the international festival of European Folk Craft, which is organized every year in Kežmarok on the 2nd weekend of July and lasts for three days. During this period, in the evenings, for the adult spectators we prepared performances called Bloody History. Last year they were staged for the seventeenth time in a row. These are theatrical performances taking place in the redesigned exhibitions of the castle with a focus on a dramatic story related to certain historic events or personalities from the past related to Kežmarok city or Kežmarok Castle. The theatrical performance of Bloody History was seen by more than 6,000 people over four evenings. Due to the capacity limits, we are faced with the problem that we cannot satisfy all visitors. The space of the castle chapel has been deconsecrated and it is used for concerts, smaller theatre performances and civil weddings.⁵

The museum in Kežmarok cooperates with all museums in Spiš and outside the region. The museum is also a member of the Slovakia Association of Museums. It also has very good cooperation with partner museums in the Polish cities of Bochnia, Zakopane, Nowy Targ, Czestochowa and Li-

⁵ At the beginning of the 18th century, after the suppression of anti-imperial uprisings, imperial troops came to the castle, looted the castle, entered the tomb in the chapel where Imrich Thóköly's mother Mária Gyulaffy was buried, they threw the tin container with the remains into the courtyard and smashed it. During World War II, prisoners were shot in the chapel.

manowa. We have also established cooperation with the Hungarian Museum in Hajdúszoboszló.

Thanks to the foreign project activities, we managed to conduct several very successful projects, such as the renovation of the castle courtyard and the publication of promotional materials. It also included the repair and replacement of the roof covering for the entire castle grounds, the construction of new storage in the attic of the castle, the launch of new exhibitions — the Thőkóly Family, Automobile and Motorcycle Veterans, Sacral Art. Gradually, due to our financial improvements and increased staff numbers, we were able to make some new installations. Since 2016, building modifications have been successfully carried out to the entire castle grounds—the reconstruction of the castle together with the drainage system. The total cost of the construction and restoration work came to almost 2 million Euro and it is financed from the budget of our administrative body, the Prešov self-governing region, with the exception of 250,000 Euro which was provided to us by the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic. In 2019, the Slovak Chamber of Architects awarded the author of this project, engineer architect Miloslav Neuman with the main prize ‘The Facade of the Year’ in the field of Sanitized Historic Monument.

The recapitulation of previous years was intertwined with many rebirths and shortfalls, but also successes that strengthened and enriched the museum. By changing its legal status as well as by changing its administrative body, the museum remains a regional institution but its impact extends far beyond the region. As regards the future, we believe that in the next decade the Kežmarok Museum will be inscribed in the public consciousness as an institution that enriches the cultural experience of visitors and helps to preserve the cultural richness of our ancestors. We hope that the cultural richness of this nation will be preserved and mediated through various interesting activities of this museum.

Archive of the Museum in Kežmarok

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Kežmarok Museum — its past and present

The article History of the Kežmarok Museum captures the development of this institution since the second half of the 19th century, when the first efforts to establish a museum were initiated. The museum is housed in a castle building which dates back to the year of 1463. After initial problems with finding the building to locate the museum, the castle was finally designated as its seat. The museum was officially opened on May 31, 1931. Since that time, this institution has undergone many changes in respect of its profile, the specialization and creation of a collection fund, administrative governance and staffing. The conclusion of the paper provides the summary of the museum's current activities, cross-border cooperation, collection development as well as cultural and educational activities.

Key words: Kežmarok Museum, History of Kežmarok, cross-border cooperation

