

THE PHILATELIC TESTIMONIES OF THE MARAMURES MINING (I): THE BEGINNINGS OF THE LOCAL PHILATELIC MOVEMENT

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Abstract: *The philatelic movement in Maramures County, and especially in Baia Mare area, has an old tradition, following the example of the mining activity. In the following pages, we try, therefore, to pay our tribute to the forerunners by presenting pieces that we have managed to identify and which we have arranged chronologically. We are convinced that precisely there are other pieces (stamps, postcards, occasional envelopes, advertising or specials stamps) that have escaped us, having as a theme the promotion of the Maramures mining activity, however we are confident that the work will find its usefulness. for those who value the beauty of carto-philately, and for the nostalgic who want to remember the evolution of local mining.*

Key-words: *Maramures mining, postal traffic, the first philatelic testimonies.*

1. Introduction

The philatelic movement in Maramures County, and especially in Baia Mare area, has an old tradition. Since the beginning of the last century, the existence of groups of philatelists holding exchange meetings was recorded. Also in the same period appeared in Baia Mare and a philatelic magazine, considered a valuable directory for postage stamp collectors. After the reunification of Romania, and especially after the middle of the last century, the philately is experiencing a real development, gaining a mass character - a period that lasted until 1995, when the philatelic phenomenon of Maramures started to suffer a real decline.

But returning shortly, in 1956 the first philatelic circle is established in Baia Mare, under the patronage of the Club of Metallurgical Plants for Nonferrous Metals. In the immediate period, new philatelic circles were set up, both in Baia Mare and in Sighetu Marmaiei, Vișeu de Sus and Borșa. In 1970 the philatelic circles of Baia Sprie and Căvnic were established. Throughout this period philatelic youth circles and students are established in almost every educational institution. Unfortunately, after the Revolution of 1989 they gradually disappear, the interest for philately, especially, among the "free youngsters" being less and less.

The opening to the new and technology, in addition to the poor management of those who led the destinies of the Romanian philately (as well as the inflation that affected Romania for many years), by giving up the philatelic shops and counters in the

country, made the young ones to quickly move away from collecting postage stamps and philatelic effects. Only nostalgics and few of those who began to rediscover this passion after their teenage years remained.

The present work aims to make a foray into time and bring to light cracks from the old philatelic activity that existed in our county. We stopped, this time, after addressing the implications of philately in ecological education and promoting protected natural areas [1-3], respectively the implications of philately in relation to the ecological house, architecture and traditional crafts [4-7], and on the implications of philately in relation to mining activity - a well-trying topic on these lands, as a continuation, by others, of natural publications on mining activity [8-10], which have seen previously, and for a while, the light of the pattern.

Let us not forget that Maramures for several generations was a rich mining basin - a thing well exploited by the native philatelists. So we try to pay our tribute to the forerunners by presenting pieces (stamps, postcards, occasional envelopes, advertising stamps or specials) that we have managed to identify and which we have arranged chronologically.

We are confident that the work will find useful for those who value the beauty of carto-philately, and, equally, for nostalgic people who want to remember the evolution of local mining.

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2. The first philatelic testimony of mining in Maramures

During the period November 7-17, 1951 in Baia Mare, the first philatelic exhibition in the county, organized by "Miner's Day" was organized. On this occasion, an occasional envelope was published (see fig. 1) by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications through the P.T.T. Regional, Baia Mare [11, 12].



Fig. 1. Occasional envelope - "Philatelic exhibition", 7-17.11.1951, Baia Mare

For stamping, the stamps of the same issue were used (placed in the upper right corner) [13-15] to which was added the stamp with the nominal value of 2 lei from the "Five Year Plan" issue (LP #292) [16] representing the extraction of coal. The postage thus obtained was purely philatelic, the nominal value resulting not being in accordance with any of the postal tariffs in force at that date. The round stamp of the exhibition was applied in black ink, having as central graphic element, the chisel and the hammer - symbols of mining.

On the occasion of the Philatelic Exhibition in Baia Mare, which took place from October 6 to November 20, 1952, a maximum postcard was made [17, 18] (see Fig. 2). The illustration was stamped with the complete series of stamps "Miner's Day" (LP #328) [13, 19, 20], published on August 15, 1952, and obliterated with the special stamp of the philatelic event.

The supporting illustration, printed in sepia, represents the "Miner" statue displayed in front of the former building belonging to the Baia Mare Technical Middle School of Minerals. According to an article published by Cătălin Vischi in eMaramureș [21], on October 16, 2011, the statue, belonging to the Maramures sculptor Vida Gheza, had been unveiled on August 12, 1951 in Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej Square (hereafter referred to as Victoria Square, and today known as it is the Revolution Square).

It is worth mentioning that, after the exhibition in Constanta in July of the same year, the exhibition hosted in Baia Mare was the second philatelic exhibition in the country.

For the creation of this philatelic piece, the first one with this theme addressed in our county, was used the image used to make the "first day" (FDC) envelope of the "Day of the Miner" issue, which appeared on August 12, 1951. This time the color of the pattern was red, the legends being changed.

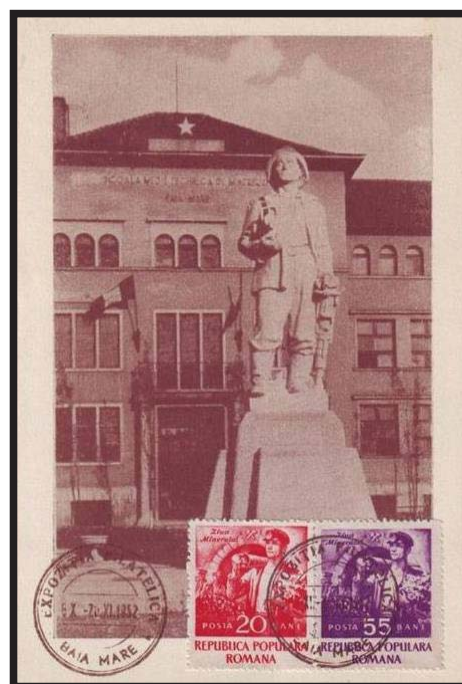


Fig. 2. Maximum postcard - "Philatelic Exhibition" Baia Mare - November 6-20, 1952

Seven years later it was replaced (August 9, 1958) with a similar work that exists today. Why the two statues were changed and what is the mystery around them, I invite you to find out by reading the article from the bibliography [21].

The postage is also a purely philatelic one - keeping the theme of the exhibition, the resulting nominal value not being in accordance with the postal rates in force at that date. The round stamp of the exhibition was applied in brown ink, without graphic elements, with the period of the exhibition mentioned centrally.

In trying to find more information about the "Maramureş philatelic exhibition (1944-1969)", we were able to identify only the two occasional envelopes presented in (Fig. 3) [22, 23].

In the semi-illustration of the envelopes we find a stylized graphic of an entrance to the mine (wagons), the scaffolding of an extraction well, and in the background "Stefan Tower" - the emblem of the city of Baia Mare. In the foreground is sketched the face of a Maramureş miner.



Fig. 3. Two occasional envelopes from the Maramures Philatelic Exhibition, 1969

The envelopes are obliterated with the stamps of the show "25th anniversary of the liberation of the homeland" (LP #707) published on August 23, 1969 - and this time the stamp is a purely philatelic one. The stamp of the exhibition was applied in two shades of ink (black and red). The envelopes were numbered and the print run was high (if we rely on the number of characters in the counter - probably somewhere around 10,000 copies).

As in any traditional mining town, in Cavnic there was an ancient mining band. In olden days, on holidays and Sundays, in the Lighet Park (where there are now blocks of flats - Independence Street) the band sang for those who went for a walk. The Miner's Day was celebrated with great honor on the band's agreements [24]. The event is marked on August 6, when the miners commemorate the ortaces killed during the Lupeni strike, from 1929 [25, 26]. This strike was the first major collective protest of the workers. The objectives of the protesters consisted in obtaining better working conditions, protective equipment, better pay and providing facilities to the families of underground workers, which would ensure their survival.

However, the strike has degenerated into numerous acts of violence, which resulted in the killing of over 20 workers and many others being injured. Since then, the day of August 6 has become officially the Day of the miner, according to Agerpres, having the meaning of commemorating the victims who sacrificed in the struggles to obtain

better working conditions and life. In the same context, the victims of the numerous accidents at work in mining and associated activities are also commemorated.

At the same time, Miner's Day promoted the preservation and perpetuation of the customs of the mining community. Today, however, the Miner's Day has become only once in the calendar [27]. Those who remember her stay a few moments in her thoughts, then with a bitter smile return to current affairs.

The first philatelic exhibition in Cavnic - "Miner's Day 1970", was organized by the newly established philatelic club in the locality, under the aegis of the Association of Philatelists of Romania (AFR), the county branch of Maramureş, between 3-15 August 1970.



Fig. 4. Occasional envelope - The First Philatelic Exhibition in Cavnic, "Miner's Day - 1970"

The anniversary envelope (see Fig. 4) [28-32], presents in semi-illustration a mining wagon loaded with ore coming out of a mine at the foot of the Gutâi mountains, next to a stylized portrait of the Maramureș miner. The envelope was stamped with the stamp of the show "Victoria on Fascism" (LP #727), published on May 9, 1970, and was obliterated by the stamp of the Cavnic Post Office on August 3, 1970. The stamp of the exhibition in which the miner's face appears in the illustration of the occasional envelope, it was applied in a complementary black ink, next to the AFR logo.



Fig. 5. Occasional envelope made at the Baia Sprie Philatelic Circle Exhibition, 1971

The exhibition was also celebrated by the anniversary of the semicentennial P.C.R. (hence the graphic elements used), when stamping the philatelic pieces made using the stamps of the show launched on May 8, 1971 (LP #764). The postage stamps were canceled with the stamp of the Post Office in Baia Sprie on 08.05.1971.

Interesting to mention is that at the time of launching the issue, stamps were already available to Maramureș philatelists. The stamp of the exhibition was complementarily applied, using red ink, in the central area of the envelope.

The philatelic activity in the municipality of Baia Mare had become a rich one at the beginning of the 70's, the Balaimarean philatelists occupying places on the podium at several competitions and exhibitions organized at national level. At the beginning of 1972, for example, the number of philatelists on the banks of the Domnițelor River had far exceeded the value of 700 active members. Therefore the philatelic activity of the Maramureș County Branch of A.F.R. it was successfully conducted in several circles, clubs and other well-organized associations.

One of these clubs, which was noted for its exceptional activity, was the one entitled "Săsar Club", its members, most of them miners at the Săsar mine and employed at the Mining Research Institute (hence the name), succeeding, to establish a true

philatelic school. The passion and devotion shown by the members paid off, with new memberships becoming more and more frequent.

The occasional envelope of Fig. 5 [33] presents in semi-illustration a convoy of ore wagons loaded at the mouth of the mine in the city of Baia Sprie, having above them a laurel wreath that fits the party flag (PCR), as well as the text "May 8, 1921-1971", using it is printed, for the first time in Maramureș (from what we noticed), no less than two colors.

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In 1972, on December 30th, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Republic's establishment (1947-1972), the club organizes the first edition of the exhibition "The Philatelic School of the Săsar Club".

The occasional envelope (see Fig. 6) [34, 35], printed in color (in three colors), has the legend "Anniversary of the Republic / 1947 / XXV / 1972", and in the graphic composition is the symbol of the two flags (the one the red of the party and the tricolor), the "Stefan" tower, a stamped corner in which the image of two young philatelists are reproduced, as well as the emblem with the chisel, the hammer and the candle of the miner (the reason why we selected this piece in the theme of our work).

In the central, upper part, the philatelic piece has the stamp, in black ink, with the mention "First exhibition / The philatelic school of the Săsar Club / 30.12.1972 / Baia Mare", having as a graphic element a stamp of rhomboidal form.

For stamping, the mark with the nominal value of 55 bani was used in the program "The XXV anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic" (LP #813) published on December 10, 1972, which was canceled with the stamp of the Baia Mare Post Office, on 30.12.1972.



Fig. 6. Occasional envelope made by the Săsar Philatelic Club from Baia Mare, 1972

Work and sport have been, not infrequently, long periods of time. Almost every company in the county had in its organizational scheme a sports club in which the employees could enjoy recreational activities. Even mining operations did not depart from this "rule", many mining teams occupying top positions in the rankings.

In 1980, between July 21-28, it would take place on the stadium "August 23" in Baia Mare "International Football Tournament - Miner Cup". On this occasion, the Balearic philatelists made an advertising stamp that was applied to the post office specially opened inside the stadium on July 28. Those who wished could send correspondence or

obtain or make philatelic pieces with the special stamp. In the following figures we reproduce some pieces we encountered. We chose to include this stamp in our theme because the word "MINER" appears in the stamp legend, and the chisel and hammer were used in the graphic element - symbols specific to the mining activity.

The image of the "August 23" Stadium in Baia Mare was used to create two special envelopes that bore the occasional stamp. The first variant (A) shows the stadium on a white background (see Fig. 7a) [36, 37], while variant (B) presents the semi-illustration on a yellow background (Fig. 7b) [38].



Fig. 7. Occasional envelope - Minerul Cup 1980: a) variant A; b) variant B

Version A was stamped with the nominal value of 1.20 lei with the coat of arms of the municipality of Baia Mare, a piece published in 1979 (LP # 994), while the variant B was stamped using the stamp with the 20-money denomination of the "10 years" issue of cosmonautics (LP #642), piece published on February 10, 1967. In Fig. 8 [39] the stamp was applied to an entire postcard (code 0119/1978), non-circulated, issued on the occasion of the World

Football Championship in Argentina. The envelope is part of a series of six pieces, with the fixed mark of 55 money representing the cup of the world football championship on a yellow background. The sale price of the entire post office was 1 lei.

The Maramureș philatelists celebrated, in 1980, the "Miner's Day" on several "working fronts". Thus the philatelic groups from Baia Mare, Căvnic and Băiuț (those identified by us) have made thematic

anniversary stamps that were applied to the post offices in the respective localities on August 10th. The philatelic group from Baia Mare made a stamp depicting the face of a miner wearing a helmet, and the text "NOROC BUN" is inscribed on its luminous beam. In the lower part appears the legend "10 AUGUST 1980 / MINING DAY - MARAMUREȘ".

In Fig. 9a [40] I rendered the image of an envelope "in white" which was stamped with the 10 bani stamp from the usual issue "Monuments" (LP #837) published on December 15th, 1973, and representing the infinity column from Târgu Jiu of the great Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși.

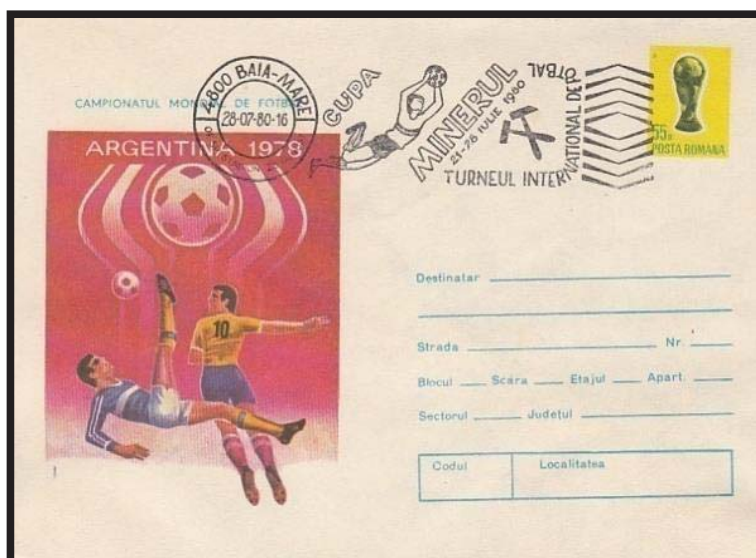


Fig. 8. Special stamp applied to the entire postcard of W.C. of football, Argentina 1978



Fig. 9. Philatelic products made by the Baia Mare group: a) envelope "in white"; b) maximum cover

Others, more daring, tried to achieve a maximum (Fig. 9b) [41] using as a support a black and white postcard, which, in the right-front plane, can be seen the statue "Miner" (rear view). As a postmark they used the stamp with the coat of arms of the municipality of Baia Mare, which presents as thematic elements the chisel and the hammer. Both pieces were obliterated with the stamp made by the Balearic philatelists.

At the Cavnic, the philatelic group in the locality, he designed a stamp in which an electrically operated mine train can be observed. The legend "DAY / MINER / MARAMUREȘ / 10 AUGUST / 1980" is aligned on the left side of the graphic box, it being bordered by the chiseled pair and the hammer arranged three times, vertically, on the right side.

The first piece identified (Fig. 10a) [42] by us bears the special stamp applied on the entire post code 0437/1976, a series of 12 semi-illustrated envelopes with samples from the Maramureș County Museum - Baia Mare. The present piece (with a fixed stamp with the name of 55 bani and the sale price 1 lei) presents a beautiful specimen of marcasite, a pseudomorphosis after baritone, extracted from the Dniester mine. The second piece identified (Fig. 10b) [43] bears the special stamp applied on the entire postal code 0443/1976, from the same series dedicated to the Maramureș County Museum - Baia Mare. The present piece presents a semi-illustration of a quartz sample, extracted from the Cavnic mine.

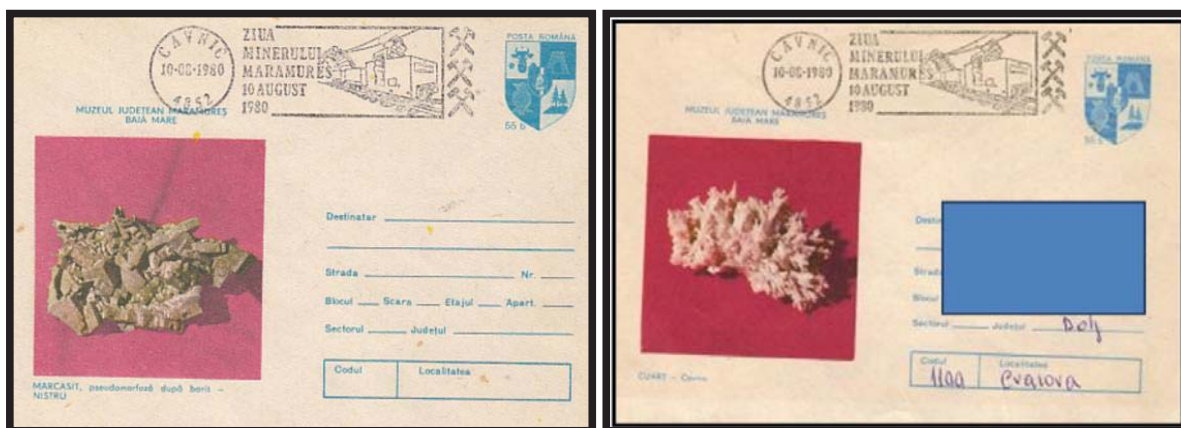


Fig. 10. The special stamp applied on an entire postcard published in 1976: a) variant A; b) variant b

In Fig. 11a [44] we have reproduced a letter circulated from Cavnic to Brad (Hunedoara County), in which the stamp of the event was used as a "day stamp" for postage stamps. The piece reached its destination on August 12 (after two days), as can be seen on the arrival stamp applied on the back of the envelope.

The stamp used to stamp the correspondence is the one that reproduces the coat of arms of the county of Maramureş from the usual program "The coat of

arms of the counties from R.S. Romania" (LP #942) published on September 5, 1977. And this stamp is in the specifics of the mining theme because in the upper right corner an entrance to the mine is illustrated. And in Băiut there were organized events on this occasion. The stamp applied here presents as a graphic element in the layout a mine lamp framed by the legend "MINER'S DAY / MARAMUREŞ / 10-AUGUST-1980" and bordered, on the right, by the symbol of the chisel and the hammer.



Fig. 11. Envelopes circulated, with the occasional stamp, on the relation: a) Cavnic - Brad; b) Băiut - Brad

In Fig. 11b [45] we find a letter circulated from Băiut to Brad bearing the special stamp of the event. And this letter also reached its destination in two days. For those who were curious to follow the cited sources, they could observe that the last two reproductions circulated have the same Dobra Ioan - a Balaimian philatelist of the time. Perhaps readers who do not know the Maramures area very well will wonder how this person managed to be in two locations at the same time. During summer time between the two localities there is a 23 km road open to traffic (DJ 109F) over the Rotunda pass. A difficult road, with many curves, unfortunately not properly maintained, but with a wonderful landscape. But, under the conditions it offers, this

road allows you to travel the distance between the two localities in about 42 minutes (unless you are "lucky" to break your car there), avoiding a close bypass. 96 km via Baia Mare - Târgu Lăpuş (where it runs normally in winter, when DJ 109F is closed to traffic).

The second piece found bearing the stamp of the stamp presented here, I found on the whole postcard (code 0418/1979) reproduced in Fig. 12a [46]. The envelope is part of a series of six values, with the fixed mark of 55 bani and the sale price of 1 lei, realized on the occasion of the anniversary of "2000 years of documentary-archaeological attestation of the mining operations in the Barza - Brad area".



Fig. 12. The special stamp applied to an entire postcard: a) published in 1979; b) published in 1976

In Fig. 12b [47] we find the special stamp applied to the entire postcard (code 0447/1976) dedicated to the Maramureș County Museum, Baia Mare. The semi-illustration shows a quartz sample, extracted from the Cavnic mine. Not every year

"Miner's Day" would be celebrated on the same date. For example, in 1982 it was to be celebrated at Cavnic on August 8. This time the stamp (see Fig. 13) [48] was to bear the artistic signs of an artist passionate about the abstract.



Fig. 13. Occasional envelope with the stamp "Miner's Day Maramureș 1982", August 8, 1982, Cavnic

The connection between the stylization of the mineral and the legend of the stamp "Cavnic / August 08, 1982 / Day / Miner / Maramureș" was made in interlocking boxes, the circle with the date and the place of shipment being located on the right, with the role of forgetting the stamp with which it was equipped. philatelic piece.

Because on the anniversary date a letter "other localities" up to 20 grams was charged with 2 lei, the Maramureș philatelists chose to use the postmark from the usual issue (LP #662) that reproduces the image of a postal truck. The envelope shown above bears, on the left side, the day stamp of the Cavnic post office.

3. Conclusions

We are aware that the ones presented in this paper represent only a small part of the work that the Maramureș philatelists have done in this topic of our philately. Even though we were able to identify a number of other pieces, the time did not allow us to classify them or for most of them we did not find bibliographic information in order to be able to associate them with any major event to support it. However, we are asking a request from the readers: if there is among you anyone who knows or has more information about this beautiful branch of Maramureș philatelic history and who wants to share his knowledge with us, we invite him, with great love, to collaboration.

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