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Lubovňa Museum — Stará Lubovňa Castle

(Retired Ethnographer)

## **Museum of Folk Architecture / Open-air Museum next to the Ľubovňa Castle**

The open-air ethnographic exposition in Stará Ľubovňa is located in a beautiful natural scenery next to the medieval Ľubovňa Castle. It is surrounded by a mountain macro climate extending from the Ľubovňa Highlands and Spiš Magura to Levoča Mountains and offers a panoramic view of the High Tatras. Like the castle, this open-air ethnographic exposition is managed by the Ľubovňa Museum — the Castle in Stará Ľubovňa (Langer 1997).

The exhibition consists of a set of buildings of folk architecture and other manifestations of the material and spiritual culture of the ethnically mixed region of north-eastern Spiš. For centuries a special environment was formed in this region, in which Slovak, German, Ruthenian, Goral, Jewish and Roma cultures intermingled. It is this multi-ethnic and multicultural environment that provides us with an extremely rich source of knowledge not only about different types of settlements and individual residential and farm buildings, but also the way of life in general (Šteis, Klaučová, Kňava 1975).

The idea of building an exhibition of folk architecture emerged in the early 1970s. At the request of the then ONV (National District Committee) in Stará Ľubovňa, the concept of the exhibition was prepared by the Department of Urbanism and Spatial Planning of the Faculty of Civil Engineering at Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, under the leadership of prof. Rudolf Steis. The investor of the construction of the exposition was the District Monument Administration in Stará Ľubovňa. Transfer of the selected

objects and their construction in the exhibition area was led by its employee Rudolf Kulka. The contractors came from the United Agricultural Cooperatives — building construction in Nová Lubovňa and Hniezdne. The first stage of works was completed in 1984 and the District Museum of National History in Stará Lubovňa opened to the public in 1985. At the beginning of the 1990s, the District Monument Administration was assigned to the Slovak Institute of State Monument Care in the Prešov Regional Center. The construction of the exposition was then taken over by the District Museum of National History in Stará Lubovňa.

Today, the exhibition features 28 original objects of folk architecture, which came from the Ruthenian, Slovak and Goral regions. Wooden houses from the beginning of the 20th century came from the villages of Veľký Lipník, Litmanová, Veľká Lesná, Údol, Jarabina, Jakubany, Kremná, Kamienka. Ten residential houses document various architectural types and floor plans as well as the standard of living of our ancestors.

Individual buildings house an ample selection of exhibits which correspond to the historical periods presented by the monuments of folk architecture. In addition to the families' objects of daily use, we can also find there tools associated with the trades (tinker, shoemaker, cooper and weaver), which were an important source of livelihood for the families. Living area in a house was closely linked to the type of the family. The original structure was an extended family, which consisted of parents and their sons' families. This type of family persisted in this region until World War II.

The interiors of some houses were used for other types of expositions — a village school from the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic (a house from Údol) and wandering tinker's workshop in Spiš (house from Jarabina). In the exhibition room (in the gamekeeper's lodge from 1890) we present exhibitions with ethnographic themes.

In addition to the traditional farm buildings (barn, granary) from Údol, Legnava, Kremná, the museum has also seasonal dwellings and farm buildings from Maidan area in Litmanová. The exposition also includes manufacturing constructions — a wood-fired forge from Torysa, a cylinder mill from Malý Sulín and a carpentry workshop from the settlement of Pilňovčik, administratively belonging to the village of Mníšek nad Popradom.

The dominant feature of the exhibition is a wooden Byzantine Rite church built in 1833 in Matysová. Its transfer to the exhibition was carried out in the years 1978-1979. It is a three-part building consisting of sanctuary,

nave and narthex. The interior of the church is in the style of a Byzantine rite, decorated with a baroque iconostasis from 1756. The original sacrificial altar, liturgy and processional icons from the 17th to the 19th century have also been preserved here. Icons from the middle of the 17th century (St. Michal Archangel, Crucifixion, Pantokrator, Deesis, Mandylion) are important iconographic examples of the so called Mušina school. After the rededication of the church (in 1992), the tradition of liturgical celebrations in Old Slavonic was established, especially on the feast days of St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Michal Archangel — the patron saint of the church, but also on the feast of the Three Kings.

An open-air amphitheatre in the exhibition area hosts events during the summer tourist season. Those events are dedicated to the presentation of traditional spiritual culture, customs and folklore by folklore ensembles and soloists. The most successful events include Honey Day and the Hubert Festival, the Castle and Open-Air Museum for Children and a Night at the Museum. All of the above have received a very good response from our visitors. Thanks to the cross-border cooperation with our partner Sąddecki Ethnographic Park in Nowy Sącz, we implement ethnographic exchange programs which demonstrate crafts, gastronomy and folklore performances by ensembles from Spiš and Sąddecko. The well-maintained exhibition area has become a popular spot for unassociated organizations from our region who organize here various events.

During the summer season we revive the exhibition area with sheep and poultry. This season breeding of traditional domestic animals will be expanded and located in a single farmyard. Flowers bloom in the windows of the houses, and vegetables and other traditional crops grow in the front gardens and fields.

Year 1990, same as in other open-air museums around Slovakia, started the long-term decline in the construction of this exhibitions due to financial reasons. Structural changes in the national economy resulted in a limited inflow of funds into the field of culture and cultural heritage. Therefore, in the 1990s, it was very difficult to financially secure even the maintenance of already existing buildings. There were no funds allocated to the purchases of the already planned objects, nor for their disposal in the landfill. The Ľubovňa Museum started to focus on tourism more intensively. Museum's valuable areas and its national cultural monuments were being actively promoted in Czechoslovakia by the Ľubovňa museologists. Various events were organized during the



Photo. 1. Exposition of folk architecture next to the castle (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)



Photo. 2. Icon The Crucifixion, mid-17<sup>th</sup> century tempera on wood, 94 x 94 cm, Ev. no. 10 141, author unknown (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)





Photo. 3. Performance of the folklore ensemble from Podegrodz in the open-air museum in Stará Lubovňa - program Visit of neighbors from Sądecki region, 2010 (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)



Photo. 4. Performance of the folklore ensemble from Podegrodz in the open-air museum in Stará Lubovňa - program Visit of neighbors from Sądecki region, 2010 (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)





Photo. 5. Production of paper decorative flowers from the surroundings of Nowy Sącz - presentation on the program Visit of neighbors from Sądecki region in the open-air museum in Stará Lubovňa, 2010 (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)



Photo. 6. Polish cuisine - in the open-air museum in Stará Lubovňa, 2010 (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)



Photo. 7. Miniature model with information about the object for the blind (Fot. Pavol Sás, LM archive)

summer season, and as a result, the museum was able to use the cash flow in its budget for the operation and maintenance of the castle and Museum of Folk Architecture. Thanks to the income from tourism, shingled roofs on all 26 buildings were replaced in recent years. The iconostasis and historical furniture of the wooden Byzantine rite church from 1833 have also been restored. The museum also received a significant help in the form of grants from the subsidy program of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic in the years 2006-2010, thanks to which the objects of folk architecture, exhibits and the entire open area have been secured by an electronic security system.

The opening of an open-air museum to the blind and partially blind was an exceptional and successful project, first among all open-air museums in Slovakia. It was implemented in the museum as a part of a thesis in cooperation with a student of the Constantine the Philosopher University, Department of Museology in Nitra in 2011 (Demian 2011). This project created a guide line for the movement of the visually impaired in a defined area of the exposition. The guide line is made of natural wooden material and looks like a simple traditional fence. It has a relief map of the area and labels with information

written in Braille, which help visitors to move around the museum.<sup>1</sup> Miniatures of selected objects of folk architecture, which are a part of the guide line, are placed directly in front of the real objects. An important element is a text guide printed in Braille, containing information about all the accessible objects in the museum. The guide can be borrowed at the box office. In addition to a tour of the exterior of the complex, the blind and partially blind have access to traditional objects in one of the residential buildings which they can touch. These are also marked with Braille labels. Improving the accessibility of the museum space is based on all of the above mentioned initiatives. The synthesis of the listed elements creates instructions on how to move safely around the area and how to obtain information about the exposition. We are currently working on the production of a virtual guide in sign language for the deaf and the modernization of a relief map mounted at the entrance to the Museum of Folk Architecture. Following the example of the open-air museum, Ľubovňa Castle became accessible to the blind and the deaf in 2013. For these accommodating steps towards the disabled, the museum was awarded the grand prize “Slovakia without Barriers 2010-2013”.

The construction of the exhibition has not yet been completed. The original construction concept was re-evaluated in 1997 in cooperation with experts and representatives of the institutor. The proposal for the further progress was prepared by Juraj Langer, PhD (Langer 1997). The main conceptual starting point is the reconstruction of the historic settlement and presentation of the culture of all ethnic groups living in the area of Upper Spiš in the past. The exposition should also include other manufacturing buildings, small architecture, cemeteries, etc. In the near future, the museum will build a traditional barn from Ruská Voľa, execute the transfer of house no. 100 from Veľký Lipník built in 1886 and build a copy of the Spiš chapel. The conceptual solution will be open which will secure an option to continually enrich the environment with other more detailed components. We believe that the state and regional government will create favourable economic and social conditions for further development of the exhibition, as open-air museums are important not only for the development of rural tourism in Slovakia, but also for preserving the cultural heritage of our ancestors for future generations.

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<sup>1</sup> Braille — A special tactile writing system used by people who are visually impaired.



## Archive of the Lubovňa Museum (Archív LM)

### Demian T.

2011: *Návrh debarierizácie Národopisnej expozície v múzeu v Starej Lubovni s akcentom na nevidiaceho a slabozrakého návštevníka*. Diplomová práca. FiF Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2011. 88 strán. Archív LM č. 13/2015.

### Langer Juraj

1997: *Koncepcia národopisnej expozície v prírode múzea v Starej Lubovni*, rkp. Archív LM ev.č. 448, pr.č. 9/2010

### Šteis Rudolf, Klaučová Magda, Kňava Karol

1975: *Urbanistická štúdia súboru ľudových stavieb Stará Lubovňa*, SVŠT Bratislava, rkp. Z archívu LM.

### Monika Pavelčíková

## Museum of Folk Architecture / Open-air Museum next to the Lubovňa Castle

The goal of the construction of the Museum of Folk Architecture in Stará Lubovňa was to document the material and spiritual culture of Slovaks, Spiš Germans, Ruthenians, Gorals, Jews and Roma who lived here side by side for centuries and created cultural values of this region. The dominant feature of the exhibition is a national cultural monument — the Byzantine Rite Catholic Church of Matysová from 1833. Houses from the period (1900-1935) with furnished interiors show the way of life, daily activities, celebrations of important annual and family holidays. Agricultural and industrial buildings showcase exhibits related to their original use. During the summer season the museum complex holds events presenting customs, traditional activities, crafts and folklore. Thanks to its location right next to the medieval Lubovňa Castle and unobstructed view of the High Tatras, the exposition presents a unique site in Slovakia.

**Key words:** Museum of Folk Architecture in Stará Lubovňa, material and spiritual culture of Slovaks, Lubovňa Castle, multiculturalism

