

PHILATELIC TESTIMONIALS OF MARAMUREȘ MINING (II): THE PEAK OF THE LOCAL PHILATELIC MOVEMENT

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Abstract: *We would like to think that Maramureș mining and thematic philately had a common destiny. The merging of the two areas of interest, although it started timidly, has continued to capture the public's interest more and more frequently in the period after 1988 and up to the present. Through the present work, we aimed to highlight the philatelic elements (postage stamps, first day of issue envelopes/FDCs, illustrated postcards, special and anniversary envelopes, maximum postcards, etc.) that appeared and promoted part of the activity of local mining, especially the one in Maramureș County. The identification, indexing, analysis, and description of the philatelic pieces were carried out starting from the existing material on several specialist websites with a philatelic profile and e-commerce platforms (Allnumis[®], Colnect[®], Delcampe[®], eBay[®], Jurnalul Filatelic, Romfilatelia, WOPA+[®], WorldStamps[®], etc), as well as that placed at the disposition of colleagues, philately enthusiasts and frantic collectors. The results of our current research have materialized in an impressive series of manifestations of the creation of Maramuresi philatelists, who have not forgotten for a moment that the basis of local development in the past was mining, through its economic, operational, and cultural contribution.*

Keywords: *mining activities, thematic philately, international promotion, dedicated scientific events*

1. Introduction

The industry and the technological processes of extraction and processing of useful minerals from the underground were (and still are in some areas) key factors in the production of materials necessary for the development of society and the economy. We live in a world based on minerals. Although they often remain unnoticed in everyday life, the products of mining are all around us [1]. From the buildings we inhabit to the infrastructures that supply them, from the machines that move us around to the energy networks that animate them - all are based to a large extent on materials that are extracted from the earth's thin outer crust [2].

In the region of interest for the current research, namely Maramureș County, the mining activity took place mainly in the vicinity of the localities/territorial administrative perimeters of Baia Borșa, Baia Mare, Baia Sprie, Băița, Băiuț, Căvnic, Ilba, Nistru, Poiana Botizei, Șuitor, Țibleș, Vișeu de Sus etc) [3]. For all these locations, a philatelic fund has been developed, which defines thematic philately from the perspective of mining activities.

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We'd like to think that Maramureş mining and thematic philately had a common destiny. A destiny that spanned the years and that will last from now on. The merging of the two areas of interest, although it started timidly [4], has continued to capture the public's interest more and more frequently in the period after 1988 and up to the present. It impressed both through the mining activity itself and through its promotion in the country and abroad, through the various philatelic materials produced by the associations and circles.

Through the present work, we have aimed to highlight the philatelic elements (e.g., *postage stamps, first-day covers/FDCs, illustrated postcards, special and anniversary envelopes, maximum postcards*, etc), that have emerged and promoted, over the years, part of the local mining activity. In this context, we are discussing the activity carried out throughout Maramureş County, both in surface mining and deep mining.

2. Material and methods

The initiative to identify materials with a philatelic character started from two articles published in a specialized blog in the field, namely "Jurnalul Philatelic"/Philatelic Journal [5, 6]. Starting from this, to identify the pieces in question, we turned to a series of sites, with philatelic specifics and e-commerce platforms, on the list of which we can find Allnumis[®], Colnect[®], Delcampe[®], eBay[®], Okazii[®], WOPA+[®], WorldStamps[®].

The indexing, analysis, and description of the identified pieces were carried out step by step, starting from the data provided by the Colnect[®] and Delcampe[®] sites, to which were added the data published by the postal administrations, as well as that provided by colleagues, philately enthusiasts, and frantic collectors.

Following the identification of the philatelic pieces in the topic addressed, due to the large number of results, we applied the following selection criteria, which can equally be criteria with a pedagogical effect:

- *thematic relevance*: the philatelic materials should properly address issues related to local mining activities, providing information or awareness about this aspect;
- *design quality*: the visual aspect of the philatelic issue must be attractive and highlight the visual impact of mining activities in the considered areas;
- *innovation, novelty, and originality of the exhibition*: the philatelic materials that bring innovative elements or original approaches to the theme will be considered to highlight the creativity and impact of the message;
- *educational content*: the philatelic materials should provide educational information on the effects of the local mining activities and potential solutions for this problem;
- *connection with other current events*: if the philatelic issue correlates with current events or awareness campaigns regarding mining activities' promotion, it can be evaluated positively;
- *representation of diversity*: the philatelic materials should reflect the diversity of mining activities and dedicated events;
- *the effectiveness of the message transmitted*: the philatelic materials must clearly and effectively communicate the message regarding the impact of mining activities in the considered areas;
- *availability of information*: the philatelic materials should be accompanied by additional data or descriptions that provide context and details about the current research theme;
- *quality of philatelic material*: the use of quality materials for philatelic issues (e.g., sustainable paper or other recyclable materials), can be an additional selection factor.

These criteria have decisively contributed to the selection and promotion of the identified philatelic issues, which successfully address the problem of mining activities, equally drawing attention to scenarios with possible negative impacts. The results of our current research have materialized in an impressive series of manifestations of the creation of Maramureş philatelists, who have not forgotten for a moment that the basis of local development in the past was mining, through its economic, operational and cultural contribution.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. "Miner's Day", 07.08.1988, Baia Mare

The holiday dedicated to the "Miner's Day" did not always have the same national celebration date. For example, in 1988, in Baia Mare, this holiday was to be celebrated on August 7. On this occasion, an anniversary stamp was created featuring a fragment of quartz and calcite, minerals constantly extracted from the Herja mine [7]. On the stamps applied at Cavnic, the star was a sample of tetrahedrite, and on the one from Băiuţ, a sample of stibin was modelled.



Fig.1. Maximum postcards associated with "Miner's Day", on which mineral samples appear, respectively "tetrahedrite - Cavnic" (a) [8], "quartz and calcite - Herja" (b) [9], and "stibina - Baiut" (c) [10], 07.08.1988, Maramureş County

All stamps have been approved by the A.F.R. Maramureş branch and 280 maximums (of each model) were made, using as support illustrated postcards, with mineral samples photographed by N. Terteleac, edited by A.F.R. Botoşani county branch (see Fig. 1) [8-10]. For the stamps having irregular shapes, we mention the maximum extremities of the prints: 50 x 33 mm (Baia Mare), 50 x 24 mm (Cavnic), and 50 x 29 mm (Băiut).

3.2. "Cavnic Mining - Hero of Socialist Labour", 07.08.1988, Cavnic

In 1988, the Cavnic Mining Company would be designated "Hero of Socialist Labour", as reported in the main article on page 3 of the Sunday, August 7 edition of the Maramureş county newspaper. This nomination came as a result of reaching the depth of 300 meters at the Roata shaft by the miners led by the heads of formations Nicolae Paşca and Ioan Borcea and at the depth of 400 meters of the blind shaft no. 2 from the Bolduţ sector, of the team led by Arpad Darolţi. These quotas were not expected to be reached until the end of the year. Once these horizons were reached it was expected that ore production would double.



Fig.2. Maximum postcard that maintains a thematic trio-concordance, where the plaster sample is found on both the support view, the postage stamp (RO#4382), and the occasional stamp layout [11]

A.F.R. Maramureş branch modelled for this anniversary an occasional stamp (an irregular shape with maximum extremities of 50 x 24 mm), homologated, which reproduces a gypsum sample extracted from the Cavnic mining basin (Fig. 2) [11]. 280 maximums were also made using an illustrated postcard as a support, with a gypsum sample from the Cavnic Mine, photographed by N. Terteleac, and edited by A.F.R. Botoşani.

3.3. "The first geological symposium from Baia Mare", 14.12.1990, Baia Mare

On December 14, 1990, in Baia Mare, the Geological Society of Romania hosted the first edition of the Geological Symposium. On the occasion of this event, a remarkable advertising stamp was created [7], used to obtain various philatelic pieces (Fig. 3) [12-15]. The stamp design features a stylized quartz crystal alongside the Geological Society logo.

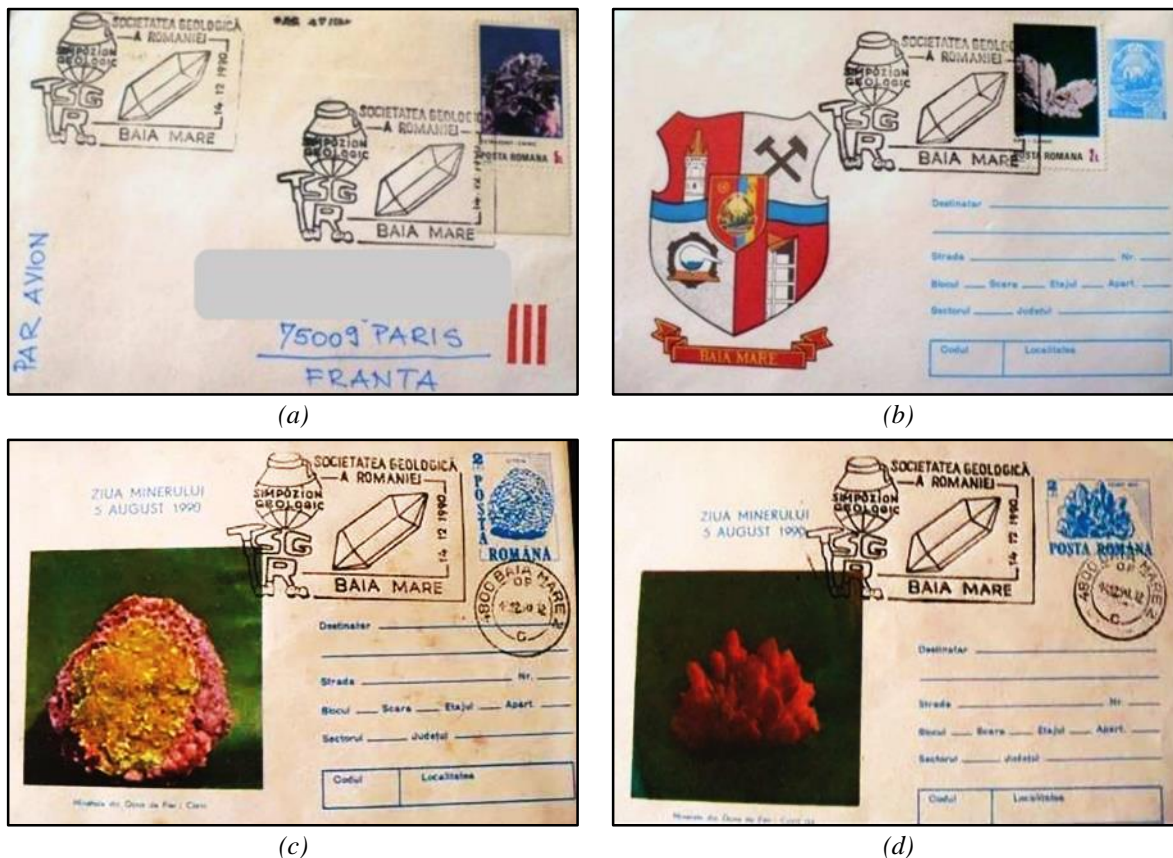


Fig.3. External letter, airmail, postmarked RO#4385 (a) [12], complete postal 0163/1980 postmarked RO#4382 (b) [13], the entire postal cover 054/1990 (c) [14] and 055/1990 (d) [15], on which, along with the stamp of the first edition of the symposium, the occasional stamp of P.O. no. 2 from Baia Mare was also applied

3.4. "The second geological symposium from Baia Mare", 10.04.1992, Baia Mare

On April 10, 1992, the second Geological Symposium organized by Maramureș Branch of the Geological Society of Romania took place in Baia Mare. In this context, an advertising stamp representing a quartz crystal was created [7], with models made by Ovidiu Morar and Ion Vârșescu (Fig. 4) [16, 17].



Fig.4. The entire postal 054/90, with a sample of citrine in the illustration, over which the symposium stamp is applied (a) [16], and the addressed envelope in which one of the symposium stamps obliterates the postmark RO#4849 (b) [17]

3.5. "International Geology Symposium", 21-23.10.1993, Baia Mare

In the autumn of 1993, Baia Mare hosted the "International Symposium of Geology", held between October 21 and 23. On this occasion, the Association of Philatelists from Maramureş created a special envelope (see Fig.5) [18, 19], presenting in a semi-illustration the logo of the symposium, and an advertising stamp depicting an erupting volcano, marked with the date of the first day of the event. The envelopes were stamped with postage stamps depicting minerals.

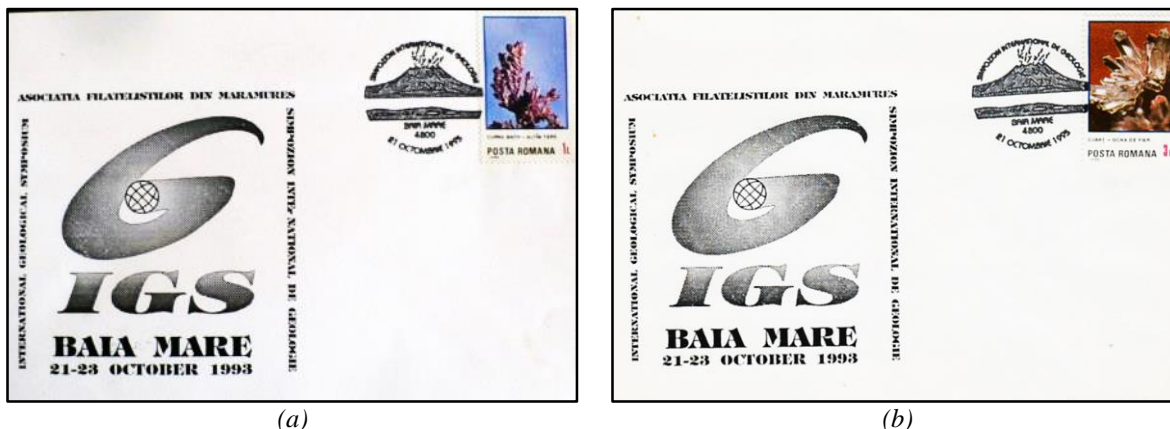


Fig.5. Special envelopes on the occasion of the “International Geology Symposium”, including the postmark RO#4381 (a) [18] and RO#4383 (b) [19], obliterated by the stamp of the symposium

3.6. International Conference “Mining and metallurgy in the Carpathian countries in the 20th century”, 25-26.08.1994, Baia Mare

Between August 25 and 26, 1994, Baia Mare University was chosen as the venue for the International Conference "Mining and Metallurgy from the Carpathian Countries in the 20th Century". The partner city in this scientific event was Miskolc from Hungary.



Fig.6. Special envelopes containing postmark RO#4849 (a) [20] and RO#4890 (b) [21], cancelled by the special stamp applied in the Baia Mare transit office dated 25.08.94, respectively 26.08.94.

To philately mark this event, a special envelope was created, with a yellowish background, and two advertising stamps with movable dates. The envelopes show in a semi-illustration the old coat of arms of Maramureş County, where in the lower part of the shield a miner is represented while working with a pickaxe (Fig. 6) [20, 21]. The envelopes bear in semi-illustration the old coat of arms of Maramureş County, where the lower part of the shield represents a miner, in front of work, using a pickaxe. They were stamped, on both sides, with stamps worth 30 lei (the rate at that time for sending a "loco" letter weighing up to 20 grams) and cancelled, alternatively, with the stamps of the exhibition.

3.7. "The 4th International Exhibition of Minerals, Fossils and Gems", 07-09.08.1998, Baia Mare

The 4th International Exhibition of Minerals, Fossils and Gems took place between 7 and 9 August 1998. Philatelists from Baia Mare created a postcard and two special circular stamps (one for the first day and one for the last day of the event representing Tetrahedrite and Vivianite crystals) for the occasion. These elements were used to produce several objects used as philatelic souvenirs (Fig. 7 and Fig. 8) [22-25].



Fig.7. Occasional postcards in which postal stamps RO#5496 (a) [22] and RO#3784 (b) [23] are obliterated by the special stamp with the mineral tetrahedrite (07.08.1998), respectively the one with the mineral vivianite (09.08.1998)



Fig.8. Philatelic stamped envelopes (from the Vasile Bocean collection) with four stamps - RO#4381, RO#4382, RO#4384 and RO#4385 from the 1985 "Flori de mina" series (front) and postage stamps RO#5168, RO#5088 and 2x RO#4925 (verso) obliterated with the stamp of August 7 (a) [24], respectively the one of August 9 (b) [25]

3.8. "The 7th Salon of Minerals, Fossils and Gems", 03.08.2001, Baia Mare

Baia Mare hosted the 7th Salon of Minerals, Fossils and Gems, held on August 3, 2001. On this occasion, the Phoenix Philatelic Club from the Maramureş Branch of A.F.R. created two occasional postage stamps, each 3 mm in diameter. The stamp impression, illustrating a marcasite mineral, was registered in the register of approved stamps of the Romanian Philatelic Federation at position 214. These stamps were applied to Post Office no. 1 (wolframite) and Post Office no. 2 (marked) from Baia Mare (Fig. 9) [26, 27].



Fig.9. Envelopes with the occasional stamp "marcasite" (a) [26] and "wolframite" (b) [27], obliterating postmark RO#5749

3.9. "The 10th Mineral, Fossil and Gem Fair", 07.10.2005, Baia Mare

Between October 7 and 9, 2005, Baia Mare hosted the 10th fair of minerals, fossils and gems. To mark this event, the Baia Mare Philatelic Circle produced a postcard and an occasional stamp (approved by the F.F.R. with no. 207) depicting a stibite mineral (see Fig. 10) [28, 29]. This stamp was affixed to mail sent from Post Office no. 2 from Baia Mare on the first day of the fair. The semi-illustrated postcards, produced in a limited edition (60 and 20 copies), present a sample of stibine from the Enyedi collection, photographed by C. Robescu.

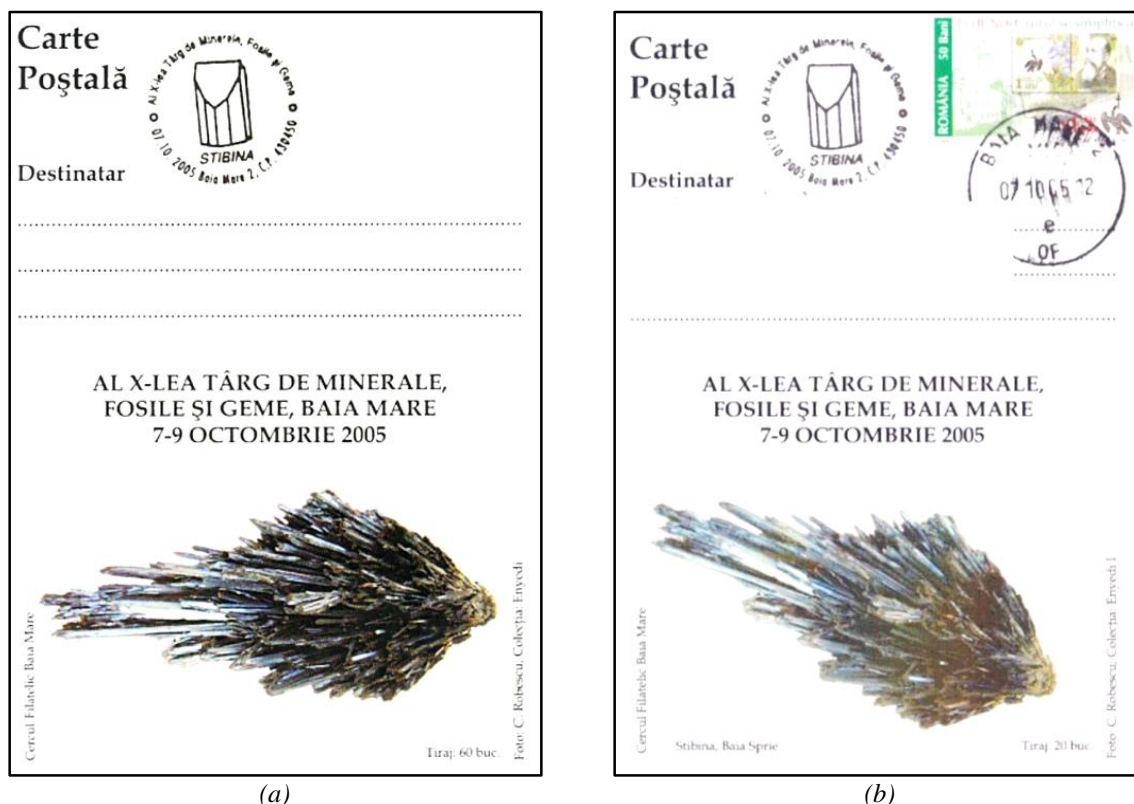


Fig.10. Uncirculated postcard (a) [28] and circulated (b) [29], with the occasional stamp representing a sample of stibine, associated with the "10th Fair of Minerals, Fossils and Gems, Baia Mare, October 7-9, 2005"

The local philatelic movement, especially that of the Association of Philatelists from Maramureș, experienced a peak of involvement in the promotion of mining activities (after 1988 and until now), mineral samples, and various scientific events. Under its imprint, a series of original materials have remained over time in terms of their form and content, which will ensure the documentation over time of the younger generations, when the actual mining activity will be forgotten or overlooked.

4. Conclusions

The mining activity in Maramureș County went through several stages that left their mark on the development of the area. To the same extent, the thematic philately made this aspect known. The philatelic material identified, indexed, analysed, and described in this work presents a small part of what local mining means. However, the period after 1988 until now (2023) can be considered the most far-reaching period that the Maramures Philatelic Association and the other working groups had.

Through the prism of the material produced (postage stamps, envelopes on the first day of issue, semi (illustrated) postcards, maximum postcards, blocks, and souvenir envelopes, etc.) until now, more or less known and accessible to us, the local philatelic movement has succeeded to keep alive the memory and mining history of the area. Even if today there are few traces of local mining, most of the entities belonging to the Mining Exploiters are in ruins or being closed and abandoned, the thematic philately does not let us forget the mining activity of our ancestors and the richness of the land of Maramureș.

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