HOTEL POST
OF THE
SIEBENBÜRGISCHER
KARPATHENVEREIN
(CARPATHIAN SOCIETY OF TRANSYLVANIA)

HOHE RINNE AND BISTRA

BY

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FOREWORD

The issues of the Carpathian Society of Transylvania (Erdélyi Kárpátegyesület or in German: Siebenburgischer Karpathenverein) represent an important chapter in the discussion of the so-called Cinderella stamps. In spite of this, however, except a small handbook published in 1962 by the Williams brothers, in London and a few articles written by them about the same time in British stamp magazines, no literature is available on these issues. In fact, there is practically no literature on these issues in either Hungarian or Romanian.

This monograph has the aim to fill this gap. It was compiled by using various sources: the handbook of the Williams’ brothers* and their articles as well as private information from them; besides these, I also utilized various Hungarian philatelic material, and history books, furthermore my own collection.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Williams brothers for the information given to me in our correspondence.


L. S. ETTRE

* L. N. and M. Williams, "Hotel Posts of Hungary and Romania". Authors’ publication, 30 Dunstan Road, London NW11, 1962.
PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background: About the Society

The Carpathian Society of Transylvania (in Hungarian: Erdélyi Kárpátgyesület - in German: Siebenbürgischer Karpathenverein) was founded in 1880 with the aim to explore and propagate the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania. The center of the Society was in Nagy Szeben (in German: Hermannstadt - present Romanian name: Sibiu). Although the aim of the Society referred to the whole Carpathian Mountain Range in Transylvania, in fact, it was active only in the Southern part.

The Society was very active: opened and marked many trails in the mountains and forests and, by about 1894, it established 22 shelters and chalets in the mountains. The Society also published guides and other literature.

The official language of the Society was German. This Southern area of Transylvania, in the Szász Sebes - Nagy Szeben - Brassó (the German names of the three cities: Mühlbach - Hermannstadt - Kronstadt; the present Romanian names: Sebes - Sibiu - Brasov) region had an ancient German population; the settlers were brought in in the middle of the 12th century by the Hungarian king Géza II (1141-1162) from the Rhine-area and Flanders. In 1224, King András II (1205-1235) granted them special privileges, including a partial autonomy and the right to use German as their official language. The area was called the királyi főlőd (King's land) indicating that the inhabitants directly belonged to the King of Hungary.

Two of the shelters founded by the Society were soon transformed to cottage colonies, summer resorts. Season was usually between May-June and September. These two are Hohe Rinne and Bistra.

At the end of the First World War, Transylvania was first occupied by and then incorporated into Romania. We have no data about the future activities of the Society although it is safe to assume that it continued, at least for some time. As will be discussed later, Hohe Rinne continued to function while Bistra was either closed or maintained only as a shelter and not any more as a resort.
Maps Nos. 1 and 2. The Kingdom of Hungary prior to the end of the First World War (top) and the same area after the treaties of St. Germain (with Austria) and Trianon (with Hungary). Within historical Hungary the city names are given in Hungarian in the top map and in the language of the successor state in the lower map.
The Carpathian Society of Transylvania (using its German acronym: SKV) was not the only society in Transylvania with the aim of promoting tourism. The other society had its seat in Kolozsvár (in Romanian: Cluj) and its name was the Erdélyrészi Kárpát Egyesület (EKE: Carpathian Society of the Transylvanian Part - meaning the Transylvanian part of Hungary) and its president and founder was count Bálint Bethlen. The EKE functioned mainly in the areas inhabited by Hungarians or owned by Hungarian high nobility. We should note that the German inhabitants in their area were mostly businessmen, artisans, shopkeepers and like, and the SKV was their society.

Map No. 3. The area around Nagy Szeben involved in this discussion. Town names are given in Hungarian except the names of the two resorts.
Geography

Maps Nos. 1 and 2 show the so-called historical Hungary before and after the peace treaties following the First World War, and Map No. 3 shows the area of interest concerning our present discussion. This is a highly mountainous area, particularly south of the Szász Sebes - Nagyszeben line. The pass through which the Olt river is flowing is the only connection with the area south of the Carpathian range.

In Map No. 3 the Hungarian town names are used. Of course, it is a basic problem in any discussion of the postal history of the dissolution of the Kingdom of Hungary that town names used at the time of interest do not correspond to the present-day use. In Southern Transylvania the problem is compounded by the fact that prior to 1918 both Hungarian and German names were used and one cannot find any collection where the town names are listed in three languages (Hungarian, German and Romanian).

I tried to compile such a list of the towns indicated on Map No. 3. I could not find the German name of six towns or villages but these are not too important concerning this discussion.

**TABLE I**

TRILINGUAL LIST OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hungarian</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Romanian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alvincz</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Vinta de Jos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balázsfalva</td>
<td>Blasendorf</td>
<td>Blaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felek</td>
<td>Frek</td>
<td>Avrig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyulafehérvár</td>
<td>Karlsburg</td>
<td>Alba Iulia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kereszténysziget</td>
<td>Grossau</td>
<td>Cristian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiskapus</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Copsa Mica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medgyes</td>
<td>Mediasch</td>
<td>Medias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagydisznód</td>
<td>Heltau</td>
<td>Cisnadie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagy Szeben</td>
<td>Hermannstadt</td>
<td>Sibiu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pojána</td>
<td>Schüssburg</td>
<td>Poiana Sibiului</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segesvár</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Sighisoara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugag</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Sugag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szászsír</td>
<td>Mühlbach</td>
<td>Sasciori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szász Sebes</td>
<td>Stolzenburg</td>
<td>Sebes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szelindek</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Slimnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szelistei</td>
<td>Agnethlen</td>
<td>Selistei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szentágota</td>
<td>Reismarkt</td>
<td>Agnita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szerdahely</td>
<td>Leschkirch</td>
<td>Mircurea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujegyház</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Nocrich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zsinna</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jinna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I should also mention that there was no Hungarian name for "Hohe Rinne". The name one can find for Bistra is "Bisztratelep" or Bistra settlement. The present-day Romanian name for Hohe Rinne is Paltinis. Bistra doesn't exist anymore as the original settlement; however, one should note that "Bistra" in fact is a Romanian name.

A Little Grammar and Pronunciation Guide

For those who do not know the German and Hungarian languages, a few remarks are given here.

The gender of the German word "Rinne" is feminine; thus, it is Hohe Rinne. However, in conjugation, the ending is changed. Thus, "on the Hohe Rinne" is "auf der hohen Rinne" and this is the text on the stamps and on most of the cancellers.

Concerning the German spelling, in some words we can see either "c" or "k" used. The case in point is "Section" which is also spelled as "Sektion".

The Hungarian names of the towns of Nagy Szeben and Szász Sebes have been used in two different ways: written in two words or written as Nagyszeben and Szászsebes. "Nagy" and "Szász" are adjectives meaning "great" and "Saxon" respectively.

It is very difficult to pronounce Hungarian words because the sounds are so much different than those in English. In Hungarian we pronounce every letter except the double letters which have one sound. There are a number of such double letters in Hungarian (just like the th in English). One such is "sz" which sounds as s in his. One should not mix it with "zs", another double letter, the sound of which is like the j in journal (with somewhat less "d" in it). The letter "s" is pronounced as sh in shoe; thus one would not mix the "sz" with "s"! Another double letter is "cs" which sounds like ch in child. Then, we have a number of double letters having "yy" as the second letter; it serves as a softening character. For example, "ny" sounds like the Spanish "n" in manana. The "gy" is also a double letter; thus "nagy" should be pronounced as "nod'y" - using Webster's pronunciation signs - and not as nagi as qi in Gideon, a common error among Americans. The letter "ty" sounds like tth in Matthew while "ly" sounds like j in hallelujah.
In Hungarian vowels exist with and without accent (a, á, e, é, o, ó, ò, u, ú, û, ű). Here the accent does not define the stress (in Hungarian the first syllable always has the stress) but modifies the sound to a different one. For example, in Keresztényszigt the first two "e" sound like e in Emil while "é" sounds like the rain in Spain. In Pojána, the last "a" is like "o" in "top" (except that we say it a little longer) while the "á" is like "i" in memoir.

There has been one double letter which really represented an archaic spelling. This is "cz" used prior to about 1924 to spell the sound "c" as in "cent". After about 1924, this spelling was simplified by deleting the "z"; thus e.g. the present-day spelling of the town Alvincz would be Alvinc.

PART TWO: THE ISSUES OF "HOHE RINNE"

This cottage colony was established in 1894 by the Carpathian Society of Transylvania. "Hohe Rinne" is a German expression: in English, it means "high groove". The cottage colony comprised of a group of log buildings and they were at an elevation of 4600 ft (1403 méters): it is located about 20-25 km from the small town of Keresztényszigt (in German: Grossau – present Romanian name: Cristian). The founders of the resort were Dr. Carl Conradi and Robert Gutt.

The resort attracted guests mostly from Nagy Szeben (in German: Hermannstadt – present Romanian name: Sibiu) but some came from distant places of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It is natural for people on vacation that they want to write postal cards and receive mail; this was even more true in the period we are dealing with, when it was customary to send the wife and the children for the whole Summer to a resort. However, the nearest post office at Keresztényszigt was fairly far away (let us not forget that there were no superhighways at that time; narrow dirt roads existed only, carved in the sides of the mountains) and the Royal Hungarian Postal Service refused to deliver mail to the resort and pick up mail there.

In order to satisfy the guests' requirements the Society established a currier service between the resort and the post office of Keresztényszigt, using a two-wheeled horse cart, and charged 2 Kreuzer (Krajczár) for carrying letters or cards.
Sometime in 1895 — probably in June — a stamp was issued as an acknowledgment of prepayment of the fee. From this time on, various stamps were issued periodically and a kind of regular private mail service was established between the resort and the nearest post office. Until 1908, the mail was carried to Kereszténysziget post office; from 1908 on, the mail was sent directly to Nagy Szeben and handled there by Nagy Szeben No. 1 post office*.

At the beginning the rate for a card and a letter was the same, 2 Kreuzer. Sometime between 1896 and 1900, the rate for a card was reduced to 1 kr but no new stamp was issued: thus, cards with bisected stamps of the 1896 issue are known as payment for half of the value of the stamp.

In 1900, the currency in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was changed from Forint (Gulden) — Krajczár (Kreuzer) to Korona (Krone) — fillér (Heller)** and generally, one old forint was equivalent to two new Korona. On this occasion the local rates were also changed*** to 2 h for cards and 4 h for letters. In 1906 the rate for letters was changed to 5 h. In 1910, the rate for the post cards was changed to 3 h.

After the Romanian take-over in 1918, the currency changed to the Romanian currency, Leu — Bani. The exchange rate was one to ten, i.e., 3 fillér was now equivalent to 30 Bani and thus, the stamps were sold for 30 and 50 Bani but the numerals 3 and 5 remained unchanged. Finally, in the case of the 1924 issue, the value of the stamps was changed to 50 Bani and 1 Leu but the denomination is not given on the stamps.

* We have no data how this was done. Nagy Szeben is not close and a simple two-wheeled horse cart cannot easily travel there.

** In parenthesis the names in German.

*** As mentioned in the Introduction, German was the common language in this area; thus the German names and abbreviations ("h" for Heller) were used on the stamps.
The Hohe Rinne stamps were used to pay for the local service, i.e., for carrying the mail to Keresztényszigtet and from 1908 on to Nagy Szeben No. 1 post office. From the official post office, the mail was carried by the regular Hungarian postal service, even if the letter was addressed only to Keresztényszigtet or Nagy Szeben. Thus, the cards or letters also had to have the regular Hungarian (and then, from 1918 on, Romanian) postage stamps. The hotel post stamps were cancelled at the resort by the Society (see discussion below) while the Hungarian postal stamp was cancelled by the respective post office of Keresztényszigtet and later Nagy Szeben.

After the Romanian take-over, the Hungarian canceller of Nagy Szeben No. 1 post office remained in use for some time: the new Romanian canceller was introduced only on October 5, 1920.

Generally the two - hotel post and regular Hungarian - stamps should not have been affixed close to each other: on covers, the hotel post stamp was supposed to be affixed to the backside while the regular Hungarian stamp to the usual place on the front. The same regulation also existed for picture cards; at least, the hotel post stamp supposed to be affixed to the left top corner. However, in most of the cases, this regulation was not followed and the hotel post stamps were simply affixed next to the regular postage stamp. This is particularly true in the Romanian period.

The local postal service at the resort existed until sometime in 1926 when the Royal Romanian Postal Service established a regular office at the resort, now called Paltinis. However, cards dated in 1927 and still having the hotel post stamps are known.

Paltinis was then later further developed and even today, it is a popular resort.

Finally, two interesting questions should be raised:

1. Of course, the local hotel post had to be a two-way street, and it handled not only mail from the resort but also mail to the resort. I could, however, not find any data on the latter type of service while similar procedure is known in case of Bistra (see later). For example, did they affix a hotel post stamp on the incoming mail?
It is understandable that such mail is virtually nonexistent. After all, who kept mail obtained while on vacation and took it home with him? Still, the question is open and unanswered.

(2) It is known that after the Romanian occupation in late 1918, various overprinted series were issued in Transylvania and these were valid for a couple of years in the area. It is almost certain that such stamps were also in use at Hohe Rinne; however, there is no mentioning of the existence of any cover or post card with such franking.

After this general discussion let us now deal separately with the individual issues.

First Issue - June 1895

The design of the stamp consisted of the three-lined text "KURHAUS / auf der / HOHEN RINNE" in an ornamental frame (Figure 1).

The stamps were typeset by W. Krafft of Nagy Szeben by hand press (Tiegelpresse); the printing is black on yellow paper.

We do not know exactly the form how the stamps were printed: it was in a strip form but whether only one continuous roll was printed or a number of strips is not sure. The stamps were perforated (Perf. 11) between stamps so that the upper and lower edges of the stamps are imperforate, and usually rough. Naturally, a stamp from the end of the roll (or strip) would have perforation on only one side.

A maximum of 500 stamps was printed; from these maybe 20 have survived. Only single specimens are known.

One error print is know having the ornament at foot sideways.

The stamps were most likely issued in June 1895.

Second Issue - 1896

The month when the stamps were issued is not known. The design is somewhat similar to the first issue but lower case letters are used in different sizes, and the frame is more ornate. The stamps were typeset by W. Krafft; they are imperforate.
The stamps were printed in black on yellow paper. Two types exist differing in the distance between the three text lines and the shade of the color of the paper:

Type I: The middle line ("auf der") is closer to the top line ("Kurhaus") than to the lower line ("Hohen Rinne"); the paper is greyish-yellow.

Type II: The three lines are evenly spaced; the paper is pale yellow.

Figures 2/a-b show the two types of the second issue.

Probably Type II has never been used in actual mail but only cancelled by favor.

In the literature the number of stamps issued is given as 1000 of each type but it might be more.

Bisected stamps on postal cards are known. These are due to the fact discussed earlier that between 1896 and 1900 the rate for postal cards was reduced from 2 kr to 1 kr, while the value of the stamps was 2 kr.

**Third Issue - September 1900**

In September 1900, two stamps of a new design were issued. These stamps have a standing rectangular size, with the name of the resort (KURHAUS AUF DER HOHEN RINNE) and the denomination in an upright oval, enclosed in a rectangular frame with decoration in the four corners and in the oval. The printing was done by W. Krafft of Nagy Szeben, by lithography, in sheets of 12 (three stamps in each horizontal row). The color of the paper is rose for the 2-h stamp and yellow for the 4-h stamp; in the latter case, shades exist. The stamps were produced with Perf. 11 1/2 and also imperforate; the total number produced was 4800 (400 sheets) of the perforate and 192 (16 sheets) of the imperforate, of each value.

Figure 3 shows stamps of the third issue; Figure 4 shows a 4-h stamp together with a Hungarian stamp cancelled on July 7, 1903, at Kereszténysziget.

Bisected 4-h stamps are known on postcards, used in lieu of the 2-h stamp.

**Fourth Issue - July 5, 1903**

Since the guests at the resort evidently wrote more postal cards than letters, the supply of 2-h stamps exhausted
sooner than the supply of the 4-h stamps. Therefore, on July 5, 1903, a new issue of the 2-h stamp was introduced, in the same color and having the same design, except that the year was added to the design, just above the value. Figure 5 shows stamps of this issue.

Figure 1. The first issue.

(a) Type I (b) Type II

Figure 2. The two types of the second issue.

Figure 3. Stamps of the third issue.

Figure 4. The 4-h stamp of the third issue, with a Hungarian stamp cancelled at Kereszténysziget.
Figure 5.
Types of the fourth through sixth issues.

Again, the stamps were prepared by W. Krafft in Nagy Szeben, by lithography, but now in sheets of 110 stamps containing eleven horizontal rows of 10 stamps.* Figure 6 shows one horizontal strip of ten stamps from a sheet. The total number of stamps issued is listed as 10,000 perforated and 2,000 imperforated; however, these are rounded numbers and most likely, the total number of sheets was about 90 (9900 stamps) of the perforate and 18 (1980 stamps) of the imperforate. Some sheets were perforated only between the stamps, i.e. marginal stamps had their outside edge imperforated.

Fifth Issue – August 3, 1906

In 1906, the rate for a letter was raised from 4 h to 5 h. On this occasion, on August 3, a new issue of both stamps was prepared. The design is identical to the previous issue, except that now, the year 1906 is indicated, and the color of the paper is changed: it is deep red for the 2 h and light green for the 5 h stamp. Stamps of this issue are shown in Figure 5.

* In the original edition of the booklet of the Williams brothers, the sheet is given as containing 10 x 10 stamps and this was corrected by them in private correspondence.