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## HORSES IN THE SALT MINE SERVICE

### Summary

Horses supported miners' work throughout the period of the production operation of the Wieliczka and Bochnia salt mines. The only thing that changed was the nature and scope of this assistance. Initially it was limited to the maintenance tasks of saltworks farms, salt transport to warehouses by the Vistula River and the supply of wood for the protection of underground workings. From the middle of the fifteenth century, horses were incorporated directly in the process of salt production as traction force for horsemills installed over shafts. In the next century in Wieliczka and in the seventeenth century in Bochnia horses also started to work underground. Until the 1860s, they mainly served horsemills, and later, in the era of mechanized vertical transport, they served the underground horizontal transport. Most horses in both mining centers were working in the eighteenth century – about 60 in the Bochnia mine, and in Wieliczka usually more than 100. In the first one, the last horse finished its work in the 1970s, and in the second one only in 2002.

Horses were surrounded with due care by miners who actually cared about their nutrition, health, proper work and rest regimens. Employees of the mine and animals “employed” for a longer time developed a special bond.