

W. Kuc

STONE IN THE BUILDINGS OF WIELICZKA

Summary

Buildings are the evidence of a city's wealth. Wieliczka achieved its economic significance through the production of salt. The medieval village famous for its salt production grew in status as it received its civic rights in 1290, after commissioning the first mine shafts. Rock salt became a source of wealth and soon it was reflected in the image of the city.

Probably the first solid stone building was the seat of the emerging mine's manager and the surrounding wall. The rock material for the construction had been already well recognized. Geizes and the Lgota sandstones of lamellar structure had already been used over 200 years before on the Wawel Hill. Rocks were readily available in the nearby Biskupice. Similarly, professionals – stonemasons. Probably, the assortment of rock increased with the beginning of the fourteenth century when the construction of the western wing of „The House within the Saltworks” was started. Then Istebna sandstones from Dobrzyce in the form of hewn blocks and construction components got to Wieliczka.

The city further increased its importance at the reign of King Casimir the Great. This is reflected in the solid rock material which was brought for the expansion of the Saltworks Castle. The rocky and thick-bedded Upper Jurassic limestone from Krzemionki, near Kraków, was then applied on a large scale. "The beneficiary" of the building material imported to Wieliczka was also St. Clement's Church, rebuilt from the wooden construction. These rocks are probably in its foundations and, certainly, in its pedestal.

The presence of the above mentioned limestones is reflected in the tower, in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century portals, in the modern reconstruction of the walls and in the Saltworks Kitchen.

In subsequent alterations of the Castle these three types of rocks were constantly used. They are visible in the stonework of the Parish Church and the bell tower of the late seventeenth century.

For more fine-grained sandstone work the Carpathian and the Pińczów limestone were used; the latter could have been used in the decoration of the Morsztyn family chapel.

The church, which was rebuilt after being destroyed in the 1780s, lacks the former rich stone decorations. First of all, it is noted that there is only a small proportion of the Dębno marble, a rock which was very popular in churches in Małopolska Province. However, the floor was changed three times. Currently, it is made of marble and granite and sienites.

After 1772, the salt production facilities had a significant impact on the appearance of the city. Crushed limestone and porphyry were imported on a large scale. The same gravel and later porphyry cube from Miękinia and granite from the Sudety Mountains were imported for the roads. Also the Istebna sandstone pebbles ("Rabka" stones) were used. As the role of the quarry in Dobczyce diminished, more and more sandstone from Droginia and other areas of the Subcarpathian region is imported to the city. These rocks were used both in private buildings and in industrial facilities, now gradually eliminated from the panorama of the city.

Today, apart from imports from abroad, the most common rocks in the stonework of the city are: the Zalas porphyry, plate and rocky limestone probably from Nielepice, the Szydłowiec sandstone, the Pińczów limestone,

granite from the Sudety Mountains, "the Kielce marbles" in a fairly narrow range and a wide range of the Carpathian sandstone.