

DEVELOPING THE FIRST PHARMACIES IN VOJVODINA – »PHARMACY ON THE STAIRS« VRŠAC

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INTRODUCTION

Organized pharmacies appeared relatively late in the history of Serbia, except from the pharmacy opened in Kotor in 1326 in the period of the Middle Ages. There are no evidences on the existence of public pharmacies in the period of pre-Otoman and Otoman Empire. If there was any the Otoman invasion destroyed all of them.

Untill the early 18th century, when Austrian Empire invaded the northern part of Serbia, in Vojvodina (the province of Serbia, incorporating Srem, Banat, and Bačka) started to develop pharmacies, organized according to the Austrian law. Owing to the economic situation and backwardness of health culture in Serbia, there were only few pharmacies opened, primarely in more developed towns: Bačka Palanka (1739), Novi Sad (1740), Zemun (1759), Petrovaradin (1764), Sombor (1766), Subotica (1780), Vršac and Zrenjanin (1784), Vukovar (1787), Pančevo (1795), Ruma and Bečej (1795). Until 1800, ten pharmacies were opened in Vojvodina. Also, Vojvodina had the most numerous pharmacies in the area of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes up to 1922. All the pharmacies were in private ownership prior to their socialization 1944-1949.

Figure 1 - »PHARMACY ON THE STAIRS« INTERIOR FROM XIX - 'OFICINA'



PHARMACY IN VRŠAC

The first pharmacy of Vršac town was founded back in February 16, 1784. The building was designed for the requirements of pharmacy setting and located in the old part of town. The founder and the owner was Mr Pelevan (a pharmacist) and the pharmacy was named »At the Saviour«. It has been one of the oldest and most representative buildings in the town of Vršac. Following its architectonic structure it belongs to a typical baroque construction being a type of ground-floor building with mezzanine, rooms in two wings with a step roof and arched pation facing courtyard. An interesting detail are the stairs leaning againsts western facade, due to the pharmacy was called »Pharmacy on the Stairs«.

During almost two centuries the pharmacy operated at the same location under different owners, changing in this sequence: Pelevan, Heleport, Schilder, Herzog, Kichler, Aleksandar Jovanović. In 1949, the pharmacy was nationalised and became the second national pharmacy of the town of Vršac. The pharmacy operated until 1971.

»The Pharmacy on the Stairs« kept operating uninterruptly for 177 years and in the first 37 years it was the only public pharmacy in the town.

NAME OF PHARMACY	FOUNDATION YEAR	FOUNDERS
»AT THE SAVIOUR«	1784	Pelevan
»AT THE HOLY TRINITY«	1821	Anton Schilder
»AT LORD'S EYES«	1878	Joszeff Herzog
»AT HUNGARIAN KING ST. STEPHEN«	1885	Sebastian Strach
»AT THE WHITE CROSS«	1920	Mihajlo Jovanović
»HYGEIA«	1933	Đura Herdec

Figure 2 - Important dates in the chronology of pharmacies in Vršac.



Figure 3 - WOODEN HANDMADE APOTHECARY JARS



Figure 4 - HAND SCALES



Figure 5 - ROMAN MEDIEVAL INSTRUMENTS FROM 2ND AND 3RD CENTURY FOUND ON THE TERRITORY OF VRŠAC MUNICIPALITY THAT REPRESENT THE VESTIGE OF ROMAN HEALTH CULTURE OF THIS REGION

Figure 5 - ROMAN MEDIEVAL INSTRUMENTS FROM 2ND AND 3RD CENTURY FOUND ON THE TERRITORY OF VRŠAC MUNICIPALITY THAT REPRESENT THE VESTIGE OF ROMAN HEALTH CULTURE OF THIS REGION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE »PHARMACY ON THE STAIRS«

For the history of apothecary activity the importance of the first pharmacy of Vršac town is enourmous, but for now it will be presented according to its significance as a museum of health culture. For its architectonic significance, the building was put under the state protection in 1970 so the pharmacy and the house of the owner was rearranged in a museum of health culture. Also, the existence of ample museum material has certainly been crucial for the National Museum Vršac to take an initiative for setting up a permanent exhibition. The first exibition »From the History of Health Culture of Southern Banat« was opened on May 20, 1977.

Pharmacy Museum is organized into three rooms to the permanent exhibition »History of Health Culture at Vršac«. The first room 'oficina' has preserved the furniture and the entire inventory (fittings) dating from the end of XIX century.

The next two rooms exhibit the development of health institutions from the XVIII century to the present days.

A collection of objects is also being exhibited. (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

Following the 1881 census, Vršac numbered 22,810 inhabitants, so that in 1885 there was one pharmacy per nearly 6,000 inhabitants (with four pharmacies operating in the town), and 2,700 inhabitants per one physician (with nine physicians practicing in the town).



Figure 6 - CERAMIC APOTHECARY JARS FOR MEDICINES

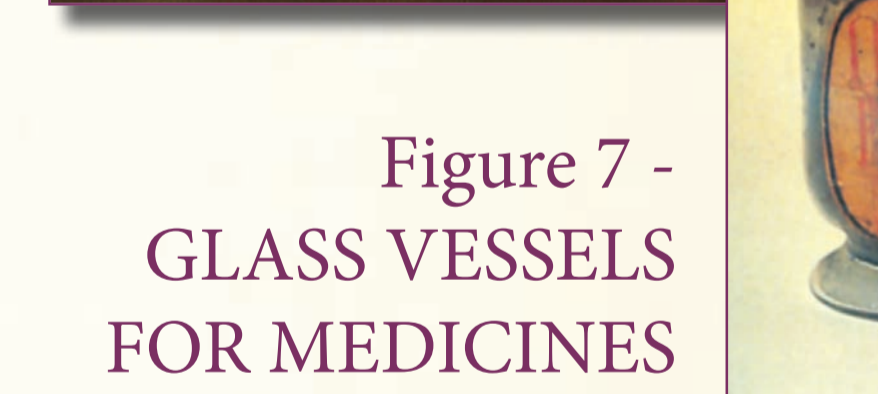


Figure 7 - GLASS VESSELS FOR MEDICINES



Figure 8 - TABLET PRESS (THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY)



Figure 9 - THE INVENTORY OF THE PHARMACY

Special part is taken by the library of owned by Stefan Geršić.

The second part of the building, the owner's apartment, was in private ownership. For several decades it was owned by the Vršac pharmacist, Aleksandar Jovanović, the brother of the recognized painter Paja Jovanović. The permanent exhibition »Homage to Paja Jovanović« was opened to visitors on June 16, 1977.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of »Pharmacy on the Stairs« as a public institution may be recognised due to its real hystoryographic approach to the development of health culture in Serbia.

Literature:

1. National Museum Vršac, »Pharmacy on the Stairs« (the catalog published to cover the following exibitions: »History of Health Culture at Vršac« and »Homage to Paja Jovanović«), GIP »Komercc« - Beograd, 1991