



The collection of the Vienna World Exhibition 1873 - A historical stone database for monuments

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At the world exhibition 1873 in Vienna several countries showed collections of natural resources. The largest of those was the collection of dimension- and decorative stone from Austria. At this time Austria comprised the whole old Habsburg monarchy. Samples came from Poland, Hungary, Tschechien, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy (Southern Tyrol and the Trentino). The stones were collected by the Austrian Geological Survey which sent a prefabricated form to the producers and owners of quarries in the whole monarchy. The form had to be completed with data about technical properties, amount of production and examples of usage by the producers. Together with the form a cube with about 26 cm side length of any variety of the stones in the quarry was submitted to the geological survey. 540 cubes with data sheets arrived at the Geological Survey until 1873. The reason for this collecting was the immense need for stone in Austria at this time. The Ringstraße in Vienna with its famous monuments like the Museums of Natural History and Art History, the Hofburg, the Parliament and many other official buildings and private Palais were under construction. Several railways from and to Austria including the Südbahn to Trieste also needed large amounts of stone. Together with geological maps and some larger plates of decorative stones the cubes were presented at the World exhibition in Vienna.

The collection was kept at the Geological Survey of Austria until 1998. It was then transferred with a long term contract of loan from the Geological Survey to the Department of Building Restoration of the National Department of Cultural Heritage. The Collection is now stored and partly exhibited at the Kartause Mauerbach near Vienna. The collection is there an ideal tool in teaching restorers and craftsmen about the variability of historical, natural stone material. Parts are converted into a digital database.

The collection represents a time slice of the building materials used at the period of the “Historicism” (about 1850 to 1900). This makes it to a perfect reference tool for the restoration and conservation of monuments. It is also used for the training of restorers, architects and craftsmen. An other use is that as a reference tool for the selection of replacement material. Examples are showed especially from monuments in Vienna. Monuments constructed with stones in the collection are not only found in Austria. Buildings of in the former monarchy (Budapest, Prague, Laibach etc.) as well as stones exported to Central Europe are very common samples in the collection. This range of the samples should be contributed to a European wide dimension stone database and also to a database for historical quarries for restoration and heritage protection.