

## **Turda- architecture, monuments, statues**

Turda city is in Cluj County. Cluj County is at the heart of Transylvania. In the middle of this magical geographical region **we can find our place**. Even though its architectural structure doesn't really fit in with the European standards, there are some interesting and precious buildings for us which we would like to show you.

Our oldest architectural monuments are from the Roman antiquity. The memory of the middle ages can be recognized in the gothic churches and the Royal Palace from the Renaissance. There are also some baroque buildings. From an architectural point of view the city was modernized mostly in the dualistic era, when the economical development resulted in building many residential houses and community buildings.

The most specific architectural characteristic of our town is its diversity. We can discover almost every style's characteristics and their traces. The main reason of this diversity could be the facts that in our region, for a long time now, Romanians, Hungarians, Jewish and Germans live together.

### **B) Monumental buildings:**

The oldest architectural monument in our city is from the Roman period. The Romans recognized the strategic importance of this region; they valued the fertile land and the importance of the salt and quarry. They founded the Potaissa colonies.. The most important monument of the roman rule is the castrum, which was built after 168. The excavated villas, baths, tombs, the Roman's altars built for the Gods, are the remains which can still be seen in the castrum.

In the XIV-XV century significant historical buildings were built: the Gothic Reformed church from Old Turda, the Salt-chamber, which was later the Royal Palace, the fortified Church in New Turda, the Roman Catholic church, recommended to St. Nicholas where in 1568 in the Reform era, the freedom of religion was proclaimed for the first time in Europe.

Our city's oldest building is in our schools vicinity the Reformed church of Old Turda. The building and the time when it was built is still under discussion, many specialists formulated different opinion about it. The church was raised in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and it has not only Gothic characteristics but Middle European ones as well.

At the East side of the city center stands the Roman Catholic Parish church representing the late Gothic style in Transylvania. The church was offered in the middle ages to St. Nicholas, after its consecration in the new era it was offered to the Virgin Mary. The church was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the place of an old church.

In our school's vicinity we also can find a Renaissance building from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This building was from the beginning connected to the extraction of salt and its commerce in our town.

The above mentioned building will be presented in more detail later on.

If someone arrives from Cluj to our city, the first building which captures the visitor's attention is the fortified church of New Turda. This kind of church was very wide spread all over Transylvania. New Turda was an independent settlement from Turda until 1395. According to Orban Balazs the gothic church was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the time of Luxemburgi Zsigmond. This is suggested by its architectural structure. The inside of the church resembles the middle age's characteristics less. The nave looks like a vault. There is a gallery at the end of both the chancel and the nave. A monumental organ was built, on the gallery of the chancel, by Andreas Eitel in 1822. The pulpit was carved of marble.

The two baroque houses and the Unitarian church built at the end of the city center preserve the memory of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Unitarians from Turda got in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Roman Catholic Parish church however in 1721 the Unitarian community gave the church back to its rightful owners, the Catholics. The Unitarian community for 60 years was saving money in order that they could build their own church. They started the construction in 1791-1792 and finished it in 1797. The building was many times restored. Today we can see beautiful wood carvings and embroidery garnishing the church.

The Old Town Hall was built in the late 1700s. It was built by Követsi Janos, the town's famous architect. Nowadays the building is in ruins but for a long time it was used as the seat of the county and as a courthouse. The most interesting part of this building is the huge tower in which there is a small bell. This bell indicated in the past the start of the city's general meetings. The Austrians introduced military rule in the mid. 1800 s in Transylvania, during this time the bell remained silent thus it was declared a constitutional bell.

The modernization of the dualism resulted in changes in our city as well. Many buildings were constructed; beside the old churches the new County House was built in the 1800s. At

the beginning of the 1900s the Financial and Entertainment Palace was built together with other elegant bourgeois houses. With time the city's image took shape.

Turda County for a long time didn't have a seat. And in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they decided that they would build one. In February 1884 the construction started and it moved fast. They already finished in the same year as they started the construction. On the 4<sup>th</sup> October the building was ready and the inauguration ceremony was held. On the 15<sup>th</sup> November the following year the building was occupied by the officials of the County. It is still used for the administration of the city.

-at the beginning of the 1900s the Financial and the Entertainment Palace was built.

-in 1902 the public lighting was modernized

-the theatre was built in 1905

-the secondary school's impressive building was built in 1908 and 1909

-elegant town houses were built which helped in creating today's image

-the city hospital was built based on Hübner Eugene architect's plans

At this time the city's most beautiful street was the so called "Villasor", today it's named Traian street. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century beautiful houses were built by the bourgeois. Some of these magnificent villas can still be seen. In the Communist period these were nationalized and poor families were moved in. In one house there were living like 4 or 5 families and they did not care for the buildings. After 1989 some of the buildings were returned to their rightful owners. They modernized the houses and few kept the old style of the buildings intact. There are still some houses in very poor condition, waiting for someone to save them from decay.

The Mendel beer factory is considered an industrial heritage. The factory was built between 1796 and 1814 in stages, for Mendel Simons request. The factory's building was expanded and renewed in 1880; the main building was finished only in 1914 and gained his present form. The Mendel factory was famous for its good quality products and for long people held that here was the best beer made in Transylvania. At the beginning of 1940, Hermann Auslander bought the building. During the II World War the factory was closed and suffered a high degree of damage. In 1947 the beer factory was nationalized and in 1963 they started repairs on the building. In 2004 it was purchased, by the Ratiu Family led Development, Turda's private company. They recognized the building's historical significance and tried to restore its former glory. They established a Youth and Culture center here.

Since December 1918 Transylvania and Turda belong to Romania. From an architectural point, this era is not a significant one; there were no major construction projects.

It is interesting to mention that between 1921 and 1926 the town's new synagogue was built. In the 1920s Turda's Jewish community had 800 members. During the Second World War and the Communist period, this community was gradually liquidated. Since 1986 the synagogue has not been used. For us, the visit to the Jewish cemetery was a very interesting one, the last person was buried there in 2010.

Also at this time, on the main square, the Orthodox Church was built in neo-Byzantine style. The Romanians living in Torda, had a small church on the outskirts, and the community thought that it's time to get a church in the center as well. The Land was purchased by the city authorities from the Kimpel family; the money for the construction was donated by the community. The stone foundation was made in 1926, but the Church was consecrated only at the end of 1935.

During the Communist years, in the field at once called the Cross, were built the city's block districts.

And how did the 21st century enrich the city's image? Briefly with kitsch. For example the Roma Palace, Dracula's Castle, hotel, and the culprit well. There are not many statues in the city.

Dr Ioan Ratiu's statue is worth of mentioning, it stands in front of the mayor's office. He was the city's prominent political figure and the symbol for the Transylvanian Romanians' struggle for their rights. Members of his family have lived in England during the Communism, but they returned home and continued the family traditions, working for the good reputation of the city.

I hope that with this presentation I managed to capture your attention and we welcome everyone in September to Torda!

**HORVÁTH KINGA & BABOS TIMEA**

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