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# Cave's postcards from turn a century

## Abstract

The article treats the early history of cave postcards with particular accent given to Postojna, to Austrian and of course Hungarian caves appearing on postcards.

Collecting picture-postcards is regarded by many to be an unscholarly activity. They think, it is only a hobby giving a kind of aesthetic experience. Moreover, picture postcards preserve special information for the researchers of the past.

Postcards representing caves give knowledge not only about when and who published such kinds of cards, but they also help to reconstruct the original state of the caves, offer data on their speleophotographie development, and on the photographers of the caves. The number of the picture-cards available today is an evidence of the former frequentation of caves.

The publication date of the first cave-picture-postcard is not exactly known. The earliest card known to us originates from 1893 and represents the Blue-cave in Capri. It is in the possession of J. Irwin (England).

After sporadically occurring postcards, 1897 is the first year when several cards appeared about different caves issued by different publishers. The first cards are not photos, but they were made on the basis of drawings and they were mostly »Gruss aus« cards with different size and cutting giving several pictures. Beyond flower ornaments some strange figures, e.g. dwarf, were put beside the formations. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1

At the end of the last century the best-known and most popular caves of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were the Postojna cave and on the territory of Great Hungary the Dobsina ice-cave.

Different kinds of postcards of Postojna by different publishers prepared in 1897 are always mentioned in the literature. The first »Gruss aus« cards were followed by the one-picture blue, black and green cards prepared from photographs and published by Horowitz (Triest) (Fig. 2) and Carl Otto Hayd (Munich). At the turn of the century coloured pictures appeared published by M. Schäber and A. Bole (Postojna).

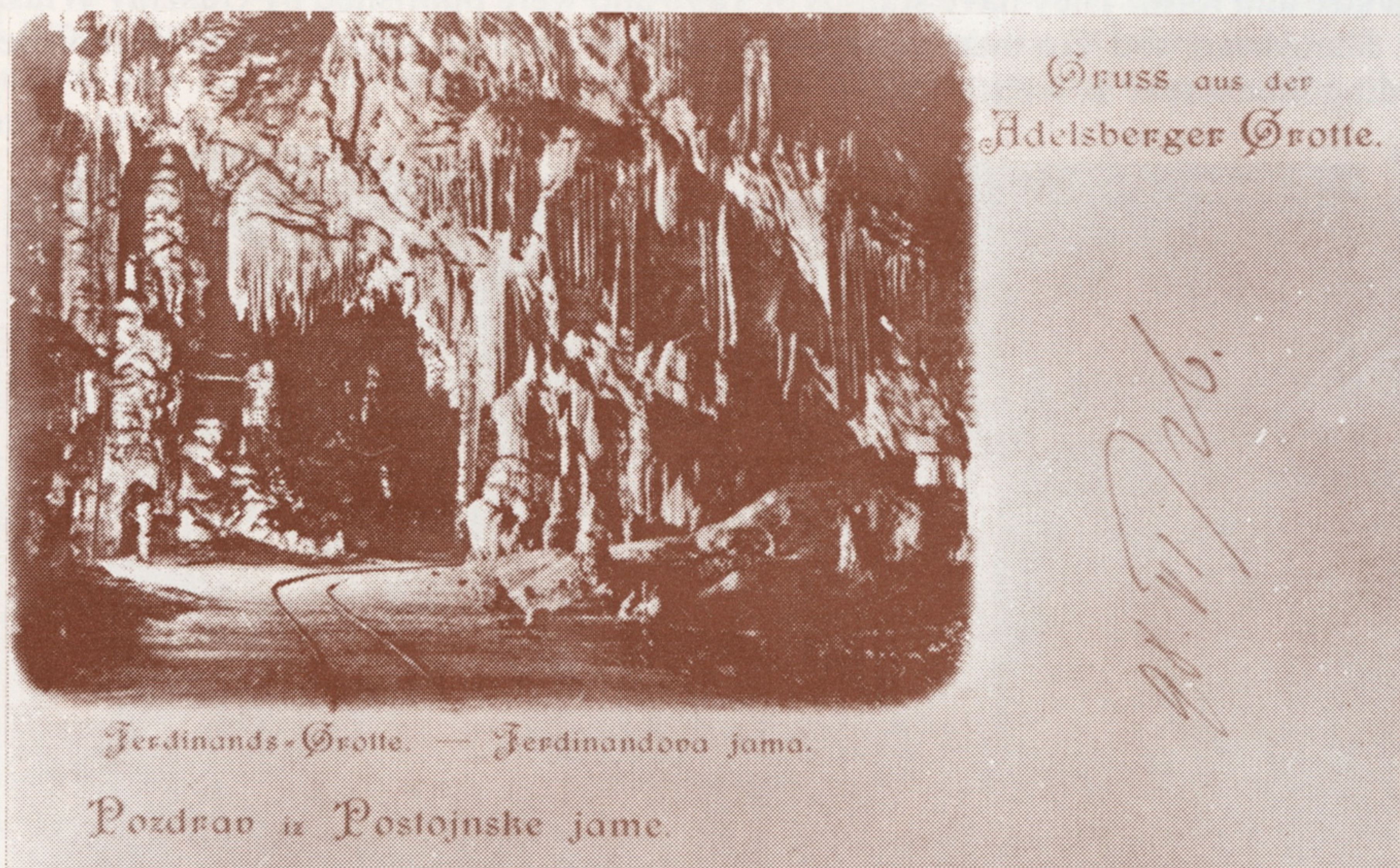


Fig. 2

I have several cards from this time without the name of the photographers and that of the publishers, as well.

As far as the popularity of the ice-cave of Dobsina and the number of postcards representing it are concerned, they surpass those of the Postojna-cave, and even the literature on



Fig. 3

cave-postcards never mention it. The cave was explored in 1870, built up in 1872, and the electricity was installed in 1887. The first postcard known to me is also from this year. The blue colour-print card was prepared on the basis of Mayerhat's(?) drawing (Fig. 3). It is decorated with edelweiss. The card - a fine »Gruss aus« with Hungarian inscription from 1897 - represents the great hall of the cave. »Gruss aus« coloured drawing-cards of the cave are of different size and form. They have stamps of 1898 and were published by Gusztáv Wlaszlovits (Stosz). Hungarian and German inscriptions are written on them and they represent the surrounding landscape, as well.



Fig. 4

A »Gruss aus« card from the workshop of Schwidernoch (Wien, post-stamp 1899) (Fig. 4), coloured, shows four scenes of the cave and the hotel - it is known in German and in Hungarian versions. The cave-pictures are rather similar to the engravings of Gusztáv Morelli

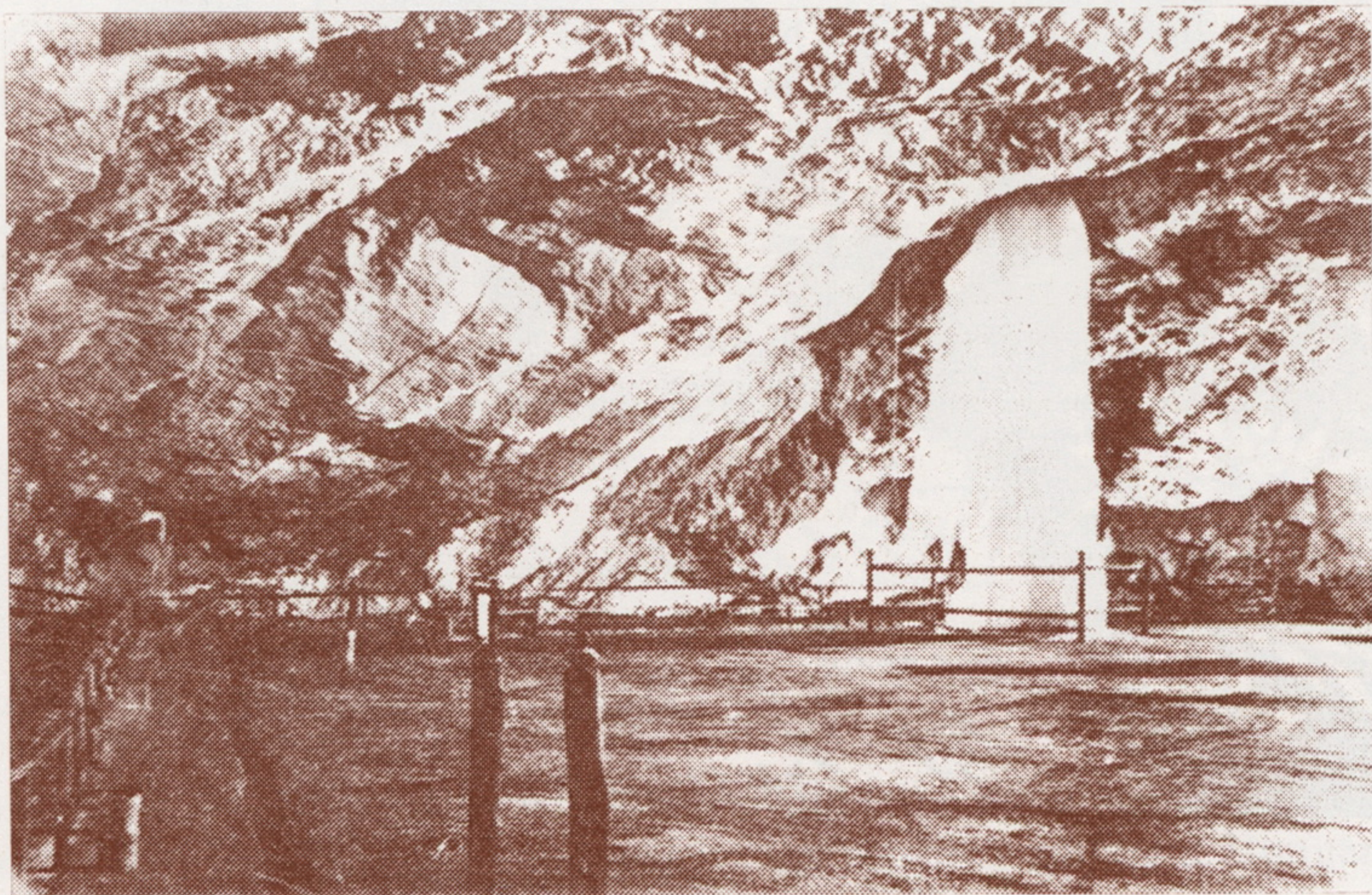


Fig. 5

from 1884. As early as 1899 postcards representing only one picture in blue or green colour-prints were prepared on the basis of photos and they were published by Gusztáv Wlaszlovits (Fig. 5). At the turn of the century J. G. Pohley (Liege/Kittl/Osrava) published one-picture card with German, Hungarian and frequently with French inscriptions. From the first years of the century postcards with black, brown, green and colourful prints are known published by Endre Fejér who kept the cave in operation (Fig. 6). These cards were republished several times through the years and on the basis of the presently existing postcards we can suppose that they had a very wide circulation. Sorrowfully enough, the names of the photographers are unknown.



Fig. 6

The Bélaï-cave enlarged significantly in 1881, was worked out in 1885 and supplied with electricity in 1886. Though the first photos of the cave were taken in 1887 (cf. Divald tableau) - the earliest one put into circulation is known from the turn of the century published by Stengli Co (Berlin, Dresden) (Fig. 7). The post-stamp on the card is of 1902, but, on the basis of the print the year of its issue must be much earlier. One of the cards, a green colour-print has Hungarian and German inscriptions on and beyond the picture large space is left for the greeting words. The same published issued some other cards that were published in the first years of our century - as stated on the basis of their print. The black colour-prints with only picture have inscriptions with letters of different size. It allows the supposition that there must have been several editions. In 1905 black colour-print cards with Hungarian and German inscriptions were published by Berta Blitz indicating not only the name of the publisher but that of the photographer, János Blitz, the explorer of the cave, as well (Fig. 8).

These cards have undivided back-side and beside the picture there is hardly any place for the greeting words - as it is usual today.

The development of tourism in Transylvania - rich in natural beauty - is well reflected by the great number of postcards.

The Meziáa-cave with its huge entrance was known from ancient times (Fig. 9). It was built up at the beginning of the century. The earliest postcard known by me originates from 1903 as indicated by the post-stamp. The picture-card of the Juseph archduke-cave was edited by the same publisher as stated in the basis of the print and the letter-type. Now, this nearly 2 km long cave is closed for tourism.



Fig. 7

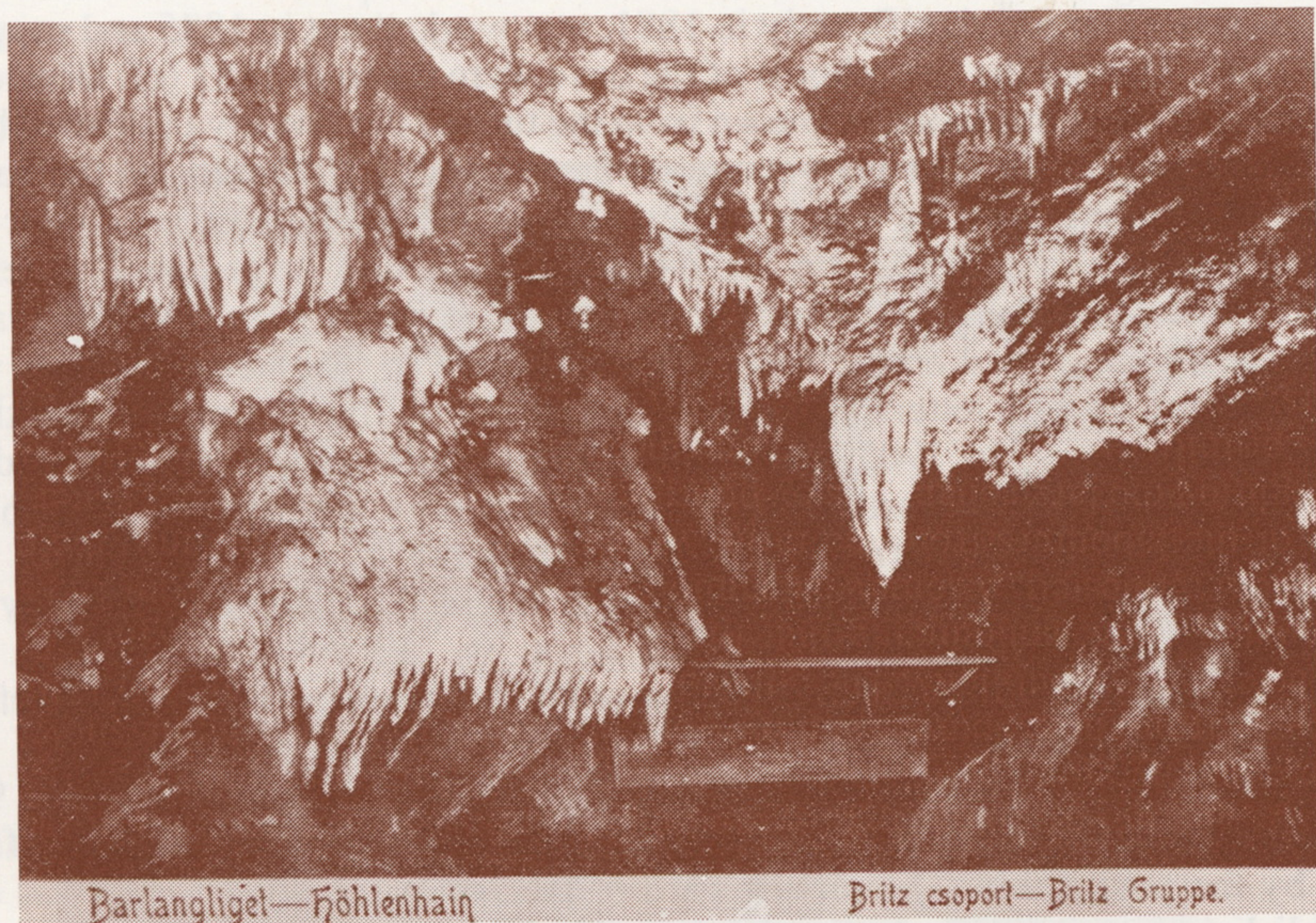


Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

The water-cave of Rév was discovered in 1903 and it was opened for the visitors in 1905 (Fig. 10). Several postcards are known from this very year. It is interesting, that the cards give different names, and one of the postcards represents the dropstones with heads downwards. These black colour-prints are of the same type, they represent the characteristic formations of the cave giving no data (of the year, of issue, the name of the publisher). Their publication date is uncertain.

Beyond the postcards of the picturesque, well-known public caves a lot of cards representing the entrance of caves were issued by local publishers (AD-ler, Szászváros; Herz and Grausam, Petrozsény; Dunky Brothers, Kolozsvár; Braun, Arad, (Fig. 11) Divald, Eperjes).

It is strange, that till now I could not find any postcard about the caves of Jászó, Deményfalva (today in Czechoslovakia) and Abaliget, that were well known caves already in the last century and are frequented by tourists even today.

## References

- Irvin D. J. (1984): Picture Postcards of Caves and Caving - The Journal of Spelean History, Januar-March Vol. 20. n.l.  
 Irvin D. J. (1988): Picture postcards - Caves and Caving, No. 41.