

<i>Travaux du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle</i> «Grigore Antipa»	Vol. XLVIII	pp. 585–591	© 30 Dec. 2005
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**CAROL WALSTEIN – THE FIRST CURATOR AND DIRECTOR  
OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
AND ANTIQUITIES FROM BUCHAREST  
(1837–1859)**

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Abstract. Carol Walstein (1795–1859), Austrian of Croatian origin, very much bound of the Romanian people by his activity, organized and managed the National Museum of Natural History and Antiquities from Bucharest during its very beginning, being the first curator and director of this institution (1837–1859).

Résumé. Carol Walstein (1795–1859), autrichien d'origine croate, très attaché au peuple roumain grâce à son activité, a organisé et conduit le Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle et Antiquités de Bucarest depuis le commencement, étant le premier conservateur et directeur de cet établissement (1837–1859).

Key words: Carol Walstein, organizer, curator, breaking new ground, museum.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1834 – Prince Alexandru Ghica signed the foundation document of the National Museum of Natural History and Antiquities from Bucharest.

Collections of the museum were preserved (since 1832) in a building from the enclosure of the „Sf. Sava” Monastery (Fig. 1).

On 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1837, Petrache Poenaru, director of the „Sf. Sava” National College and of the Council of Schools, appointed the first scientist of the museum, Carol Walstein, teacher of drawing and architecture (Fig. 2). He had to organize and manage the National Museum, and this appointment was not at random. His studies

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English translation by Mihaela Barcan Achim.

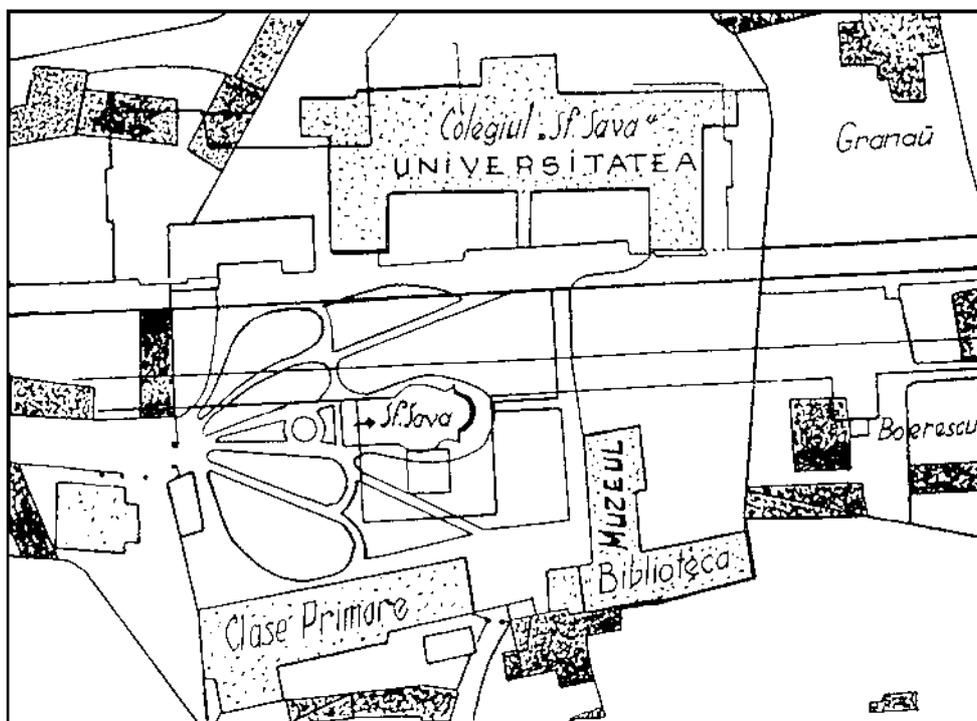


Fig. 1 – Scheme of the College from “Sf. Sava” Monastery. The Museum was placed near the Library (after Ionescu & Schnapp, 1961).

entitled him to be in such position. Petrache Poenaru was inspired when he chose Walstein for managing the institution (Vlad & Stancoveanu, 1967). Also, Carol Walstein was the curator of the museum.

The decision was published in the Journal of the Council of Schools, on 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1837. The curator’s obligations were: “to organize systematically all exhibits (...) to naturalized the animals (...) to teach the students this trade, to identify all the animals displayed in the museum” (Băcescu & Tazlăoanu, 1955). This is one of the first official documents regarding Carol Walstein as a naturalist (since 1829 we know him as an office worker within the Council of Schools, since 1832, as a teacher of drawing at „Sf. Sava” College, and as a painter for several years before).

But, who was Carol Walstein? He was a well-known learned man of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, interested in several fields: teacher, painter, curator (museologist), hunter, and a good observer of nature, taxidermist, naturalist, architect, journalist and publicist. His great merit was that he broke new ground (Băcescu & Tazlăoanu, op. cit.).

He was born in 1795, at Gospici, near Zagreb (Croatia). He studied painting and natural sciences in Vienna, continuing the study of painting in Braşov. In 1817, when he was 22, he lived in Craiova, in his aunt’s house. He married in 1821 with Maria Stănescu–Slătineanu (from Slatina), afterwards moving in Bucharest (1822). After his wife’s death, he married again with Eva Dušek, of Czech origin. He died in 1859, being buried by the Prince Al. Ioan Cuza’s expenses. His death date is controversial: 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1859 (1858, 1860, 1863).



CAROL WALLENSTEIN DE VELLA  
 IN ETATE DE 48 ANI  
 DUPĂ UN PORTRET LUCRAT DE EL INSUȘI  
 IN AQUARELĂ

Fig. 2 – Carol Walstein, at 48 years old, after a self portrait in water colour (after Ionescu, Schnapp & Dumitrescu, 1960).

We occurred his name written in all possible ways: Carol, Karl, Charles, then Vahlstein (in the journal of the Council of Schools), Valștain, as he signed in the college roll and his first paper, “Deseniu” (The Drawing); Wahlsteiner, on a visiting card, Wallenstein de Wella in his biography, Walstein, in “Elements of ornithology” (Băcescu & Tazlăoanu, op. cit.).

His exact name seemed to be Toma Ioan Velea, Toma Carol Vella or Scarlat Velea, changed later in Wallenstein de Vella, after his step father, as it results from a legalization of his baptism document, made at Sighet, in 1851.

As regards his origin, some people assert that he was Croatian, others, Czech, so a foreigner settled in Romania. Ioan Vlad and Gheorghe Stancoveanu support the idea of Toma Ioan Velea’s Romanian origin. No matter his origin was, he was bound by Romanians by his intense activity.

Carol Walstein was a complex personality of his time.

He was the first curator of the National Museum, was the single museologist till in 1846.

On 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1846, the Council of Schools made a large report where the development stage of the museum was appreciated, a museum which sheltered that time “the largest part of the collection of indigenous ornithology” (Cristache-Panait & Panait, 1966). The report underlined the necessity of enriching this collection with birds, unrepresented yet, as well as the enriching of the museum with specimens which belong to the other groups of natural history. That is why, the Council was asking for Nicolae Zachi’s help, who was the hunter of a Cabinet of Natural History from Budapest. He would have been employed junior curator for travelling all over the country in searching and hunting different animals necessary to the museum. He had a salary of 100 lei, in 1848, the curator Walstein had 500 lei. Zachi’s activity within the museum was short. In 1856, old-aged Walstein required his son’s appointment as a junior curator, who already worked in the museum, for free, for two years (Marinescu & Ionescu, 1985). His request was approved, George Walstein being appointed junior curator, with a salary of 150 lei per month. In 1858, the position of laboratory assistant was created and Petrache Gheorghiu was appointed. He was remarked by the Council of Schools due to his talent in chiroplasty. Walstein was against superficial work within the staff of the museum. He always wanted to employ a young men, gifted and learned.

Carol Walstein’s activity as a director was multilateral.

In his report for 1846, he mentioned that he naturalized “30 new specimens and 6 renewed, from 27 bird species, 250 entomological paired pieces, that mean butterflies and beetles, 2 kinds of forest mice, 20 kinds of fish in 31 specimens” (Cristache-Panait & Panait, op. cit.).

As a result of his activity, in 1847, 324 bird specimens of 193 species were displayed in the museum.

The museum organized and supported field trips, in different counties of Romania and abroad, especially for the study of natural sciences. On this occasion, not only recent fauna was collected but also fossils (“for enriching the museum”). If during summer, the museologists surveyed Romanian counties, in autumn they went to the Danube Delta, where “numerous birds gathered for leaving later to warmer regions”, said Walstein. Because in these trips the cab driver do not go in the places where the naturalists need, Walstein hired a two-horse cab (Cristache-Panait & Panait, op. cit.).

The museum staff’s trips abroad were instructed and fruitful. After such a trip, made in 1841, Walstein reported to the Council of Schools on the interesting specimens acquired for the museum: 54 birds of 21 species, as well some wild animals.

In 1860, Petrache Gheorghiu went abroad to learn about the museum activity from western countries. Till the 6<sup>th</sup> of September he already visited the most important museum of Germany, famous museum from Piemont and Florence, and he asked for funds for continuing his travel.

The organization of the National Museum from Bucharest (although poor) had an encouraging success abroad. The proof was the numerous foreign travellers who wanted to visit the museum when they were passing through Bucharest (Russian scientist Anatole Demidov) (Ionescu & Schnapp, 1961). The same happened with the material exchange with well-known museums of Europe. There were good relations with the Imperial Cabinet from Vienna. The Museum of Bucharest sent to it, many times, stuffed birds and other objects of natural history from Wallachia. The Imperial Cabinet gratefully sent to the Museum of Bucharest

an entomological and shell collection consisting in about 10,000 specimens, whose arrival to its destination was delayed because of 1848 events. It reached Bucharest in January 1850.

One of Walstein's main concern was the situation of the patrimony. Each object given to the museum was noted in an account book. Carefully, data on the origin and the evolution of the object was reported (e.g. Walstein's correspondence with the High-school Museum from Braşov). Unfortunately he was less concerned about the preservation of the pieces.

Carol Walstein published a series of specialized papers.

In order to help his students, dedicated to beauty study, he published „Elemente de deseniu și arhitectură” (“Elements of Drawing and Architecture”), the first text book of drawing and architecture in Romanian, in 1836-1837.

Walstein studied also foreign publications. He translated „Course of Natural History” by Hollard, a Swiss physician (1801) and professor of natural history and anatomy in Lausanne (Vlad & Stancoveanu, op. cit.).

Being a good observer of the bird life, he wrote „Elemente de ornitologie dupe proprii observații locale chiar în Țara Românească” (“Elements of Ornithology after local observations just in Wallachia”) (Fig. 3). The paper is written in a mixture of Latin and Cyrillic letters, characteristic to that time (Băcescu & Tăzlăoanu, op. cit.). The year 1853 is the year of the publishing of the first Romania ornithological scientific paper. Using the telescope he made very interesting observations on the cuckoo, on the relationship between the fox and *Tadorna tadorna* (shelduck). The book is made at the Metropolitan Church Printing House.

Finally, we can assert that Toma Ioan Velea or Carol Walstein was not a certain curator but a good taxidermist, hunter, expert in nature and animal life. He kept the scientific relations with numerous Romanian and foreign specialized institutions. He had a scientific activity concretized in the first ornithological papers of the Romanian scientific literature.

In the very beginning, National Museum of Natural History from Bucharest is Carol Walstein's work. Pioneer, organizer and guide for pupils and students, very fond of his work, Walstein made a real museum, a respected institution by Romanians and foreigners, from the simple collection existent before 1837.

CAROL WALSTEIN – PRIMUL CONSERVATOR ȘI DIRECTOR  
AL MUZEULUI NAȚIONAL DE ISTORIE NATURALĂ ȘI ANTICHITĂȚI  
DIN BUCUREȘTI (1837 – 1859)

REZUMAT

Carol Walstein (1795–1859), austriac de origine croată, cărturar de seamă al primei jumătăți a secolului al XIX-lea este legat de poporul român prin bogata sa activitate.

Este primul conservator și conducător științific al recent înființatului Muzeu Național de Istorie Naturală și Antichități (3 noiembrie 1834).

În perioada 1837–1859, organizează și îmbogățește colecțiile de științele naturii, realizând un muzeu în adevăratul sens al cuvântului.

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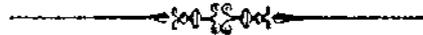
ELEMENTE  
DE  
**ORNITOLOGIE**

dъне пропрії обсервації локале кіар ін  
Цара Ромънеаскъ.

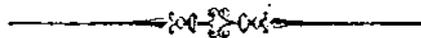
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**CAROL WALSTEIN,**

*Професор ши консерватор Музеумі Націонал.*



Ачест фрагмент с'а пблїкат нентр-ка съ се  
Факъ кшоокст тендїнга ши сїава ін каре есте експїс  
ачест звраціѣ ориѣинал, каре ва еши ін 4 секциї. —  
1 дзїз о мїкъ інтродукціе фісіолоѣкъ, ва зрїта  
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пїтоаре дїспне ши покътрне. — 2 Семїорїї. —  
3 каре тръескѣ пе дърмърїас апелор — ши 4 по-  
тїтоарете.



Б Д К Ж Р Е Ш І.

*Тїнографїа Сзтеї Мїтрополїї.*

Fig. 3 – Cover of Walstein's ornithology (after Ionescu, Schnapp & Dumitrescu, 1960)

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*Received: February 2, 2005*  
*Accepted: February 25, 2005*

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