

# AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ON HISTORY OF CLUJ HOTELS

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## **Abstract:**

*Cluj-Napoca has a long and interesting history. The City of Cluj is considered the “capital of Transylvania” because it is an important academic, cultural and business center, an interesting tourist destination for various types of tourists. The present study makes an analysis regarding the hotels from Cluj during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The analysis is focusing on history of the hotels, their market evolution and the stories related to those hotels. This period was chosen for this research because represent the beginnings of the Cluj hotels market. For the investigations it was used exploratory research, obtaining secondary data through different types of sources: history books, published studies, web sites and old pictures. The present research has two main objectives: the first one is to explore the Cluj history in order to identify the hotels present on the market during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; the second one is to revile some stories related to the hotels, owners and buildings. There were identified 11 hotels from Cluj during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There were not included here the hotels build in the last part of the communist period. At present, the buildings in which were functioned the most important hotels, are on the list of historical monuments from Cluj County. It can be proposed some old pictures and interesting stories about the hotels, the buildings, the guests, in order to attract the tourists.*

**Key words:** Cluj hotels history, hotel market, tourism, accommodation, inn

**JEL classification:** L83

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **SHORT HISTORY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA**

The city of Cluj-Napoca has a long and interesting history. Since the Dacian period, in the territory of the actual city we could find one of the most important Dacian settlements named Napuca. For the first time the name Napuca appears in the Greek geographer Ptolemy writings ([http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/travel/articol/cluj-napoca-istorie-cultura-inima-transilvaniei](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/travel/articol/cluj-napoca-istorie-cultura-inima-transilvaniei), retrieved in 14.11.2014).

Originally a simple “vicus” (village), then a municipality, the settlement is subsequently raised to the status of the colony (Aurelia Napoca Colony), the privilege granted by the roman administration from Dacia (Bogosavlievici and Zmicală, 2014).

In the medieval period we can find this settlement under a new name Castrum Clus. The beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is the arrival time of numerous groups of Saxon settlers and the obtaining the free city status in 1405, but especially the modernization of the city, extending the city walls and raising the living standards (Bota, 2014). The two world wars together with the interwar period have reserved for Cluj a quite tumultuous destiny, owned successively by the Romanian Kingdom and the Hungarian crown. In 1947 became once again a part of Romania and the Communist regime changed its name in Cluj-Napoca.

### **INTRODUCTION TO CLUJ HOTEL MARKET CONTEXT**

The City of Cluj is considered the “capital of Transylvania” because it is an important academic, cultural and business center. Cultural and historical monuments, a diversified portfolio of accommodation establishments, restaurants, clubs, important events, interesting, young and hospitable people and an attractive natural-geographic space make from Cluj-Napoca an interesting tourist destination for various types of tourists (Cosma et al., 2007).

Before 1990, at the end of communist period, the number of hotels in Cluj-Napoca was 7. Between 1990 and 2000, the number doubled to 14. By the end of 2005 on the Cluj hotels' market were registered 29 hotels (Cosma, 2006). In 2013 in Cluj-Napoca and nearby are 55 hotels.

It can be said that the 19<sup>th</sup> century represents the beginnings of the Cluj hotels market. Starting from the Middle Ages until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the accommodation in Cluj was provided by the inns. The most important inns within the Cluj city during this period can be mentioned:

- In the Mathias Corvinus house, had functioned an inn belongs to Mehffi Jakab until the 1740. In the Middle Ages, the exact address of the inn was 258 Holy Spirit Street (Bogosavlievici and Zmicală, 2014);
- Quarta Inn where George Cosbuc lived for a long period of time (Bogosavlievici and Zmicală, 2014);
- Calul Balan / Feher Lo Inn, functioned between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the building called Reduta. The inn was opened in 1604 (Rahovan, 2012);
- The Szacsvey Inn bought by Biasini. The inn's location appears in documentary sources of the time, being mentioned that was located in front of the Gate Tower of Turzii Street;
- Another famous inn called La fagadaul lui Matei was placed outside the city walls (Bogosavlievici and Zmicală, 2014).

## 1. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present study makes an analysis regarding the hotels from Cluj during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The analysis is focusing on the history of the hotels, their market evolution and the stories related to those hotels. This period was chosen for this research because it represents the beginnings of the Cluj hotels market.

For the investigations it was used exploratory research, obtaining secondary data through different types of sources: history books, published studies, web sites analysis and pictures observation. All kinds of media resources were used in order to find information about the investigated subject.

The present research has two main objectives:

- a) To explore the Cluj history in order to identify the hotels present on the market during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries;
- b) To revile some stories related to the hotels, owners and buildings.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present research started with the identification of the hotels located in Cluj during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the paper *Short history of Cluj – The development of the city*, we can find some references about the hotels from that period. Thus, we can find that the Biasini Hotel was opened in 1837; the Pannonia Hotel opened its doors in 1872, renovated and opened later in the years 1890/1891 as the Hotel Central. The construction of the New York Hotel started in 1894 ([http://www.istorielocala.ro/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=485:dezvoltarea-ora%C8%99ului-cluj-aspecte-urbanistice-%C8%99i-edilitare-1316-1987&Itemid=202](http://www.istorielocala.ro/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=485:dezvoltarea-ora%C8%99ului-cluj-aspecte-urbanistice-%C8%99i-edilitare-1316-1987&Itemid=202), retrieved in 14.11.2014). Another source is positioning the Pannonia Hotel opening in the year 1878 (Lukacs, 2009).

National Hotel was first mentioned in the sources and the newspapers from that period in 1865 as the second hotel of the city, the first institution of its kind being Biasini Hotel. (<http://referinte.transindex.ro/enciclopedie/monument.php?id=408>, retrieved in 14.11.2014).

In the Guide de la Roumanie written by Cicio-Pop Alexandru in 1939, we can find some references for the major hotels from Cluj. The author mentions: New-York Hotel, Central Hotel, Astoria Hotel and Parc Hotel (Rahovan, 2012).

## BIASINI HOTEL - THE FIRST HOTEL IN CLUJ

The construction and opening of the Biasini Hotel (figure no. 1) is part of the first modern institutions of the city in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century outside the city walls, after losing the defensive role (<http://enciclopediavirtuala.ro/monument.php?id=329>, retrieved in 14.11.2014).

The lack of entrepreneurs in the city of Cluj determined a lot of craftsmen to come from abroad. Thus, in 1818, at the call of his friend Count Bélydy, came to Cluj from Milan, Gaetano Biasini, fencing master, a sport very fashionable in that period of time. Biasini settled in Cluj in the same year and then in 1832 he got married to a young woman from Cluj.

Biasini started to set up a number of institutions necessary for the modernization of the city: the first carriages in Cluj, played an important role in organizing post-chaises which followed the itinerary Budapest-Cluj-Brasov-Bucarest (1832-1881) and established the first public gymnastics and fencing halls.

In 1837 Biasini bought the Szacsvey Inn, located in front of the Gate Tower of Turzii Street. Instead the inn he built a hotel and café, which accounted for many decades a major cultural center of the city.



**Figure no. 1. Biasini Hotel**

Source: [http://www.istorielocala.ro/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=524:%C8%99tia%C8%9Bi-c%C4%83?&Itemid=202](http://www.istorielocala.ro/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=524:%C8%99tia%C8%9Bi-c%C4%83?&Itemid=202)

In this hotel stayed in 1847 the composer Franz Liszt and the revolutionary poet Sándor Petőfi together with his wife, during their wedding trip. In July 1849 the revolutionaries George Baritiu and Nicolae Bălcescu and the writer Caesar Bolliac were clients of the hotel. Bolliac's visit was immortalized by a tin board, placed on the facade in the 1960s, which was removed in 1996 when a new board was settled.

In 1847 Biasini hotel had 31 rooms and a bowling alley. The opening of the hotels Pannónia and National (Nemzeti) in the 1860s and 1870s led to the first signs of decline for the Biasini Hotel, that could not face the competition.

At the end of the century, the opening of the hotels Central (Központi) and New York, built to the highest standards, where the most famous literary cafes in Cluj were, first led to frequent changes of customers, and then to the closure in 1926. In 1913 the hotel with 42 rooms was rented by József Varga, it became a small local theater which offered to the customers various shows or couplets. During the First World War the hotel ran as a popular brothel.

## NATIONAL HOTEL – NEW-YORK HOTEL – CONTINENTAL HOTEL

National Hotel, opened in the 60s of the 19th century was built in the city center, inside the old fortress of Cluj. National Hotel rooms were positioned on the second floor of the building, the ground floor hosting a restaurant and several shops. In the 1860s the most significant commercial space was intended antiquarian bookshop of the widow of Pál Burian, than in 1870, the space was taken over by the shop for toys and household items rented by Sándor Csapó. National Hotel was demolished in 1894 to provide the necessary space for a modern hotel (<http://referinte.transindex.ro/enciclopedie/monument.php?id=408>, retrieved in 14.11.2014).

Another hotel, symbol of Cluj was the New York Hotel (figure no. 2), built in the years 1894-1895 on the site of the former National Hotel (Nemzeti). It was located in Union Square, on the corner between University Street and Napoca Street (formerly Hay Street). It can be said for sure that it was one of the most luxurious hotels, the first building in Cluj illuminated by its own power plant.

In 1895 at its opening The New-York Hotel could provide an accommodation capacity of 110 beds. The rooms were grouped around an inner courtyard, their comfort level varies depending on the orientation - the street or the courtyard - the most luxurious being placed on the east and north sides of the building (Vais, 2009).

Already in 1912, the owner, József Feszli has provided to its guests luxurious conditions: central heating, bathrooms, telephone, bowling alley closed and heated and French cuisine. The first owner, the company Steier and Galosh who rented the hotel, brought from Budapest all the equipment and materials necessary for operating the hotel. Everything at this hotel had the monogram "NY". It seems that this was the reason for naming the hotel New-York.

At the ground floor functioned, more than half a century, a literary and press café where the literary and artistic elite of Cluj always were used to spend their free time. Here was created the literary journal "Gandirea".



**Figure no. 2. New-York Hotel**

Source: <http://www.clujtoday.ro/>

The café was called "editorial office", being the place of clubs, while having the role of reading room, entertainment and dance. The hotel has become in a short time the most famous hotel of the city due to the fame of the restaurant, the mobile roof of the court and central heating. Among the guests of the hotel it has been noted: Baron Albert Apponyi the president of the Hungarian Parliament, Ferenc Molnár a war correspondent, the famous Hungarian poet Endre Ady and the writer Mór Joka. During the Second World War the building was the headquarters of Gestapo (the Nazi secret police). After the war, in 1950, the hotel became a student hostel and the office of the Medical-Pharmaceutical Institute.

Since 1960 the building has gone to another luxury hotel under the name of Continental Hotel (figure no. 3). In the summer of 2005 the Continental Hotel has left the location because the building no longer met the hotel standards. Currently the building has no tenant or function except some cultural events taking place here. We can find the building on the list of Historical Monuments of Cluj County.



**Figure no. 3. Continental Hotel in 1988**

Source: <http://www.okazii.ro/carti-postale/romania-dupa-1918/cp183-05-cluj-napoca-hotel-continental-circulata-1988-a53330916>

### PANNONIA HOTEL – CENTRAL HOTEL – MELODY HOTEL

Opened in the 50's, Hotel Melody is known as the Cluj first jazz nightclub in the postwar period. Instead of the current hotel there were originally two buildings: the city fiscal's office, later the "Fiskus" pub and a hotel named Pannónia (figure no. 4). It is said that in the Fiskus pub were helped getting drunk young peasants who came to Cluj and they woke up soldiers in the Imperial (Austro-Hungarian) Army in which the military service lasted long time (between ten to twenty years depending to the situation).



**Figure no. 4 Pannonia Hotel in 1887**

Source: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/17451517276521827>

We can find an impression about the Pannonia Hotel from an article published in New-York Times in 1884: *the principal hotel of Kolozsvar is a queer old straggling house, so full of rambling stairs and mysterious passages that I never returned from a walk without a lively curiosity as to what part of the hotel I should ultimately reach and whose room I should enter instead of my own* (<http://www.cluj.travel/un-turist-american-la-cluj-in-1884/>, retrieved 16.11.2014).

In 1890, Gábor Nagy Antal has reconstructed the building after the plans of Endstrasser Oriold and Benedek, by bringing it into its current form. Reopened as Central Hotel (figure no.5), Központi Szállóda in Hungarian language, the building has received famous guests such as: the composers Brahms and Franz Liszt, the archbishop of Eger, József Samassa and many others.





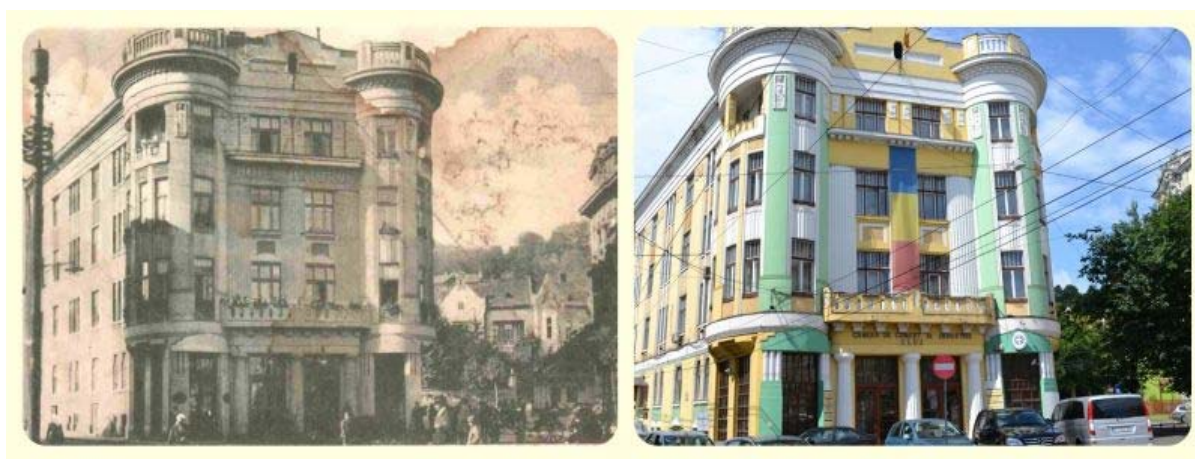
**Figure no.5. Central Hotel in 1914**

Source: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/17451517277783276/>

In the interwar period in the building has worked the Society Social Sisters ("Szociális Nővérek KFT"), on the second floor it was arranged a small chapel. The photos from the last century still preserved the inscription "Pro Deo" on the building, due to the frequent visits of Roman Catholic Bishop of Alba Iulia. After nationalization, in the building was a student hostel and later the "Pescăruș" restaurant.

## ASTORIA HOTEL

At the intersection between Horia Street and Dacia Street, in 1910 András Udvardi and the architect Géza Kappeter have built in secession style the Palace Urania, with a modern cinema with 400 seats, 10 shops and 17 apartments. It is considered to be the first "mall" from Cluj.



**Figure no. 6. Hotel Astoria**

Source: <http://actualdecluj.ro/clujul-vechi-si-nou-atunci-si-acum-cinci-instantanee-istorice-cu-orasul-de-pe-somes/>

Across from the Urania, also around 1900, it has been built Astoria (figure no. 6), one of the most famous hotels of the city. The hotel operated until 1990, when the building became the seat of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (<http://www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/clujm/Clujul-Multicultural-final.pdf>, retrieved in 17.11.2014).

## REGINA ANGLIEI HOTEL

Today's Transylvania Hotel from Cluj-Napoca has an interesting history. The hotel appears in the documents as Regina Angliei Hotel according to the historian Tudor Salagean (<http://www.monitorulcj.ro/actualitate/8226-ce-legatura-exista-intre-cluj-i-romanul-dracula-al-lui-bram-stoker#sthash.z4JZh6HP.dpbs>, retrieved in 17.11.2014) and Hungaria Hotel according to other authors (Bogosavlievici and Zmicală, 2014). The hotel has an interesting story related to the Bram Stoker's novel called "Dracula". It's supposed that Jonathan Harker, the main character, enjoyed the hospitality of the hotel during his overnight stay.

In Stoker's novel Jonathan Harker, spends his first night in Transylvania at Royale Hotel from Cluj (Klausenburgh). The historian Tudor Salagean suspects that perhaps the name of the hotel translated in English "Queen of England" impressed Stoker. In the novel the hotel is called Royale, and only approached to this name would be Queen. The Royale Hotel can not be found between Cluj hotels in 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it should be noted that, in that period the hotels often changed their names (<http://www.monitorulcj.ro/actualitate/8226-ce-legatura-exista-intre-cluj-i-romanul-dracula-al-lui-bram-stoker#sthash.z4JZh6HP.dpbs>, retrieved in 17.11.2014).

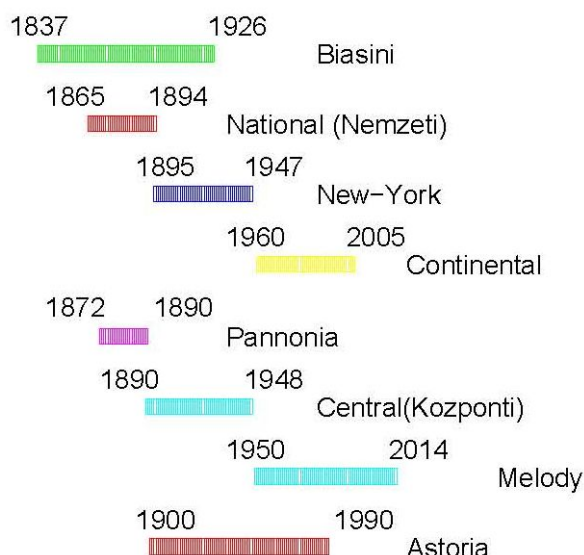
In the table below (table no. 1) we can find the old hotels from Cluj during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the table were not included hotels build in the last part of the communist period (Napoca, Sport, Transylvania/Belvedere and Victoria).

**Table no. 1. Cluj hotels during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries**

No.	The name of the hotel	Opening year	Closing year	Remarks
1	Biasini	1837	1926	Interesting stories Historical monument Old pictures
2	National / Nemzeti	1865	1894	Interesting stories
3	New-York	1895	1947/48 ?	Historical monument Interesting stories Old pictures
4	Continental	1960	2005	Historical monument Interesting stories Old pictures
5	Pannonia	1872	1890	Historical monument Interesting stories Old pictures
6	Central / Központi	1890/91	1848 ?	Historical monument Interesting stories Old pictures
7	Melody	1950/60	present	Historical monument Interesting stories
8	Astoria	1900/10	1990	Old pictures Interesting stories
9	Ferencz Jozsef	not available	not available	Old pictures
10	Regina Angliei	not available	not available	Historical monument Interesting stories
11	Parc	not available	not available	-

Source: produced by author

About the National Hotel we know that it was demolished for the New-York Hotel to be built. The closing year for the New-York and Central hotels is considered to be 1948, the nationalization year. Concerning the Ferencz Jozsef, Regina Angliei and Parc hotels, the opening and closing year for those hotels are not available. The Parc Hotel is mentioned in only one source that could be found (in the Guide de la Roumanie written by Cicio-Pop Alexandru in 1939). We found out about Ferencz Jozsef Hotel from old pictures. The building still exists and belongs to the Faculty of Business, Babeş-Bolyai University.



**Figure no. 7. The timeline for Cluj old hotels**

Source: produced by author

In the figure above (figure no. 7) it can be seen a timeline for Cluj old hotels from the 19th and 20th centuries. As we can see Biasini Hotel and Astoria Hotel remained on the market the longest period of time (approximately 90 years). The hotels were concentrated in four major buildings, presently representing tourist's attractions.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the present research concerning the hotels are:

- The Biasini Hotel is known as the first hotel from Cluj;
- Continental Hotel is considered to be the most famous hotel in the communist period;
- Astoria it seems to be the only hotel having the same name during the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- Melody Hotel is the only one from the old hotels still on the market;
- At present, the buildings in which were functioning the most important hotels, are on the list of historical monuments from Cluj County;
- The majority of the hotels were concentrated in four major buildings, presently being tourist's attractions;
- The closing motives are different for each hotel: competition, new hotels in the same building or at the same spot, the nationalization and the today's hotels standards;
- It can be proposed some interesting stories and old pictures about the hotels, the buildings, the guests, in order to attract the tourists.

The identification of all the hotels from Cluj during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries represents an objective difficult to accomplish due to the several factors:

- The long studied period (the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries);
- The poor electronic available resources;
- The languages in which the references can be found (Hungarian, Romanian, French);
- The difficulty to identify the buildings from old pictures and the year when the picture was taken
- The frequently change in the names of streets, companies, brands.



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