

BEGINNINGS OF ŠUMAVA PHOTOGRAPHY

Painters, draughtsmen and romantic seekers of the Rousseau ideals of the beautiful unspoiled nature found in Šumava not only virgin natural islands, but also a world full of hard work. Besides that, they also discovered something that emanates from the works of Šumava writers that could be described as “wild and dreamy woodland mysteries”. In Šumava the transformation from a world of woodcutters and farmers, sawmills, water hammers and glassworks into the world of recreation and tourism was less marked than in Krkonoše, where skiing and tourism began to be a significant part of the mountain life already by the 1890s. Just like in Krkonoše, sets of Šumava paintings and engravings began to be propagated through photographic channels, continuing even thirty or forty years after the discovery of photography became public in 1839.

In the forties and less so in the fifties of the 19th century the photography trade was plied mainly by itinerant daguerreotypists. They were mainly looking for rich patronage and large towns, and so it is not very likely that on the Prachatice – Vimperk – Sušice line a wandering daguerreotypist was creating his mercurial portraits. Šumava daguerreotype or lithography with a reference to a daguerreotype copy is still unknown. Most likely, we could find a similar form of daguerreotype application used by amateurs interested in this new pictorial technique. One of the first interested amateurs who experimented with the oldest positive-negative technique (calotype) and who was close to the Šumava forests was Vojtěch Kramer, Austin convent prior in Domažlice and a former notary of the České Budějovice diocese.

To track down a particular, exactly dated, oldest picture of Šumava is difficult. In the Ingeborg Jordan book *Photographie im Böhmerwald 1880 – 1940* a shot from Volary after the great fire of 1863, whose reproduction

is deposited in Šumava Muzeum in Passau, was presented as the oldest exactly dated photograph from the Šumava region. A bit younger picture is a photo of a house where Adalbert Stifter was born, taken by Viennese photographer Jonathan Schneider and dated 1867. Besides the Šumava mountains themselves there is the oldest panoramic view of Sušice, picturing a wooden bridge destroyed in the spring of 1859.

The author of probably the first photographic collection from Šumava was Ingác Kranzfelder, originally a travelling photographer who later settled in Domažlice and Klatovy. His oldest shots related to building of the railway from Plzeň to Železná Ruda during 1874 – 77. Later he also engaged in photographing local houses and industrial firms. At about the same time Krenzfeld was interested in a tunnel under Špičák Mountain, František Fridrich from Prague travelled with a camera in tourist-oriented localities. Fridrich, who belonged to the most important publishers of photographs in the whole Austria-Hungarian empire, has been known mainly as an important photographer of Prague and the spa towns, and so finding his Šumava pictures is somewhat of a surprise. We can hypothesize that Šumava attracted Fridrich and he travelled there for recreation, for a number of pictures of a well-known Prokop pension photographed in some intervals seem to be a proof of that.

The advent of carte-de-visite and the stereo photograph era, significantly influenced by Fridrich and Kranzfelder, is an era of the first systematic interest by photographers in Šumava. This interest was significantly related to the beginnings of tourism, positively influenced by the development of the railway. Fridrich and Kranzfelder made not only carte-de-visites to insert into albums but also large formats, designed to be hung on a wall just like graphical lists. Related to Fridrich's special interest in the region is a somewhat unusual request addressed to the town council in Prachatice on the 8th of March, 1879, where he asks to be provided with lodging for

two photography assistants and expenses for transporting his camera. The city council thanked him for his offer but rejected it, since the good city fathers did not deem it necessary to take pictures of Prachatice at that time. This "official case" is kept in county archives in Prachatice and was pointed out by Václav Starý in his book *Old Šumava*. For all that, the fact remains that Fridrich's pictures of Prachatice exist...

Around the middle of the 1870s, a set of photographs appeared from an as yet unknown photographer in a Friedrich Ehrlich bookshop at Malé náměstí Square in Prague, which was loosely related to the Vltava River (up to Hluboká area) and directly to Šumava. Maybe the making and distribution of the set was related to the already mentioned myth of the "sacred Czech river".

From 1881 – 2 comes an extensive series of Šumava pictures authored by Jindřich Eckert, taken to be the greatest Czech photographer of the 19th century. In this early photographic period, most other photographers pictured outdoors only historical and naturalistic landmarks. Basically as the first person in the Czech lands Eckert concentrated mainly on the landscape itself. He often photographed totally anonymous places, only because of their beauty. His two collections are called *Memories of Šumava* and are marked I and II in Roman numerals. Already the name itself indicates a certain photographer's relationship, his experience. At present Jindřich Eckert is taken to be the first photographer of the Czech landscape.

Already in Fridrich's times, other than photographers who came to Šumava as "photographer-tourists", "photographer-residents" also operated in the same area. They mainly practiced portrait photography, which for most of them became the basis of their livelihood after the ascent of carte-de-visite photos. It made for a secure order, while photographing monuments and natural landmarks depended on organizing sales and meant an uncertain business result. Therefore the local photographers – and this

goes for the whole of the Czech Kingdom – photographed exteriors only marginally. Only later did some photographers come to specialize in this field, mainly during the 1890s. František Fridrich was the only photographer that specialized directly on photography outside the atelier during the sixties to eighties of the 19th century.

The first photographer living and taking photographs in Šumava was perhaps one Franz Veits, who gained experience as a painter on glass, then studied on Prague's Art Academy painting and in 1864 married into a farming family in Volary. His first photographic portraits come from 1868. We can say that based on a combination of records with accessible pictures probably the first photographer in Prachatice (in a No. 68 in Školní Street) was Emil Wangemann, listed as a photographer in a census of Prachatice residents from 1866; this fact is pointed out by archivist Václav Starý in his book *Old Šumava*. Emil Wangemann practiced in Prachatice for at least four years, then his trace disappears. At the beginning of the 1870s one Ignác Josef Schächtl practiced as a photographer in Prachatice, where his wife Antonie died in the spring of 1874. On the 6th of November 1875 in Prachatice Schächtl married Kateřina Šťastná from Kojetice (a sister of a wife of Karel Němec, second-born son of Božena Němcová, a famous Czech writer). Schächtl also left Prachatice and later became a significant photographer of the Tábor district. It is certain that Schächtl photographed the Prachatice town; for example a carte-de-visite signed by him with a view of the Lower gate has been preserved. That is perhaps why Josef Schächtl became the first photographer of Prachatice.

The first significant photographers in Sušice are connected with the name of the artistic Quast family. The first one was Konrad Ferdinand Quast who opened a branch of the Písek family firm in Sušice around 1875. Gustav Adolf Quast operated an independent atelier in Sušice after his brother's tragic death in 1877; he pursued not only photography of the

town, but also of the nearby section of Šumava. We could of course find more names of the first portrait photographers in the Šumava and nearby regions, but their list could be filled in by a detailed research in archives, trade registers and local newspapers.

The closest larger towns played an important role in the beginnings of Šumava photography, but also centres further out: Český Krumlov and České Budějovice. In 1884 in the south Bohemian capital, Der Deutsche Böhmerwaldbund was founded, which apparently ordered a picture series of Šumava from Josef Woldan, a renown photographer from České Budějovice, distributed by local bookseller and publisher L. A. Hansen and apparently the author himself in three different formats, most often as cabinets. At the same time these pictures were exhibited at tourist clubs, where they served as a prompt for a visit to the mountains. In 1888 some of Woldan photos were used to illustrate the first large Šumava guide, published by the said Böhmerwaldbund. At the same time, M. Kopecký from Vimperk would rival Woldan in quantity and quality, advertising on his cabinets "own publishing house". Woldan and Kopecký both belong to the first great photographers of Šumava, because they systematically photographed the whole region and their legacy includes several hundreds of photographs.

At the beginning of 1880, Gotthard Zimmer came to Volary as a wandering photographer, calling himself "a photographer from Vienna". After a short stay in Volary he left for Český Krumlov, where in the garden of No. 64 Linecká Street he set up a photography atelier. Besides portrait work he devoted himself to photographic views of Šumava.

In the second half of the 1880s a relatively abundant variety of photographic views was available to a Šumava admirer from several authors: Fridrich, Kranzfelder, Eckert, Woldan, Kopecký and Zimmer, and in formats ranging from a small carte-de-visite for an album, larger cabinets, stereo photographs for a viewer, up to large format views designed for interior

decoration in the same way as prints. Altogether there were about 400 different views. With such a quantity there had to be a demand for the pictures, and photographing or distribution of Šumava motives apparently already did not present a business risk. The interest in Šumava's natural beauties also motivated the creation of tourist guides, for example a German-written guide from professor Willkomm printed in 1878 by Prague publisher Karl Bellmann, or the *Řivnáč Guide* published five years later. However, these books were without photographs.

Zimmer's promising and ambitious journey ended with his death in Český Krumlov in 1886 (his 39th year). The photo atelier then managed his widow Karolin. In 1888 Josef Seidel began to lead the enterprise, therefore the names of both photographers can be found on some cabinets. After two years Seidel took over the whole atelier. Versatile and talented Josef Seidel achieved excellent results in photography and we can take him as the most important personality of Šumava photography ever.

Already in 1881 Josef Wolf joined Zimmer as an apprentice. After graduation he wandered around ateliers in Europe, but later came back to his hometown of Český Krumlov, where he opened a photographic establishment. Just like Josef Seidel Wolf worked in his atelier his whole life and just like the Seidel atelier, Wolf's studio also continued as a family business. It appears that Wolf was more sensitive to the artistic influences of art nouveau pictorialism, Seidel in turn to technical innovation in colour photography, whereby he joined pioneers of colour photography in this country. Seidel as one of the first photographers in the Czech lands published colour post cards in autochrome, the first colour photography technique in use, and seems to be the first one who took colour pictures in Šumava. Both photographers chose a large variety of subjects and an effort to capture life and beauty in Šumava played an important role in both, however it seems that Seidel markedly surpassed Wolf in the number of pictures

taken. It needs to be reminded that Josef Wolf possibly deserves a credit for the 1897 cinematographical recording of the well-known Hořice Passion plays. The film is regarded as the first one recorded in the Czech lands.

The 1880s injected a significant impulse into Šumava photography. It relates not only to the technical progress in photography but also to a general increase of interest in the photographic testimony from these mountains. If this interest had been missing, numerous sets of Šumava pictures would not have been published. To clearly photographic processes belongs a set of drawing reproductions with Šumava motives, distributed by a renowned Prague establishment of Karl Bellmann.

In summer of 1887 Waldverein from Passau invited photographer Bernhard Johannes from Meran to Šumava and in the same year published a series of large format heliotypes by Johannes. Late in the 1880s Alphons Adolph, who came from Zittau to Passau in 1889, entered into Šumava photography with collections of published pictures. His brother (?) Gustav Adolph owned an atelier in Schreiberhau (now Szklarska Poreba) and photographed Krkonoše; he is also known from several pictures of Šumava. Around 1900 Adolph became one of the influential publishers of Šumava postcards.

Another significant photographer, who entered Šumava forests in the late 1880s with a camera, was František Krátký. In his first period he created mainly stereo photographs, and in that field had no significant competition in this country in the 1890s. His Šumava stereo photos were included in an extensive cycle *Stereoscopic pictures from Bohemia* in the form of actual photographs at first, later on as printed stereo postcards. Some of them were also coloured. Pictures by František Krátký, who at the turn of the century was one of the most significant Bohemian postcard publishers, stand out by their variety of style and aesthetic value. Compared to most earlier photographers, which took mainly static motives without any trap-

pings, Krátký livened up his pictures intentionally by human figures. Even though the people on his pictures usually wait unmovingly, mostly his shots look very natural. In fact, František Krátký was first to capture Šumava residents in their everyday common situations. However, he did not want to photograph genre pictures, he just wanted to complete the characteristic of a scene he documented by human figures. In his publishing program, aimed at stereo photographs for home and school, he realised that foreign environments do not illustrate only a landscape and description of residences, but especially people who live and work there. Even though he had his home atelier in far off Kolín nad Labem, the exceptional quality of his pictorial testimony places him among the most important Šumava photographers of all times.

In the 1890s photographic ateliers opened also in other towns and it was a rule that the local photographers documented their town and surroundings. Wenzel Faber became a diligent documentarist of Prachatice, their houses, festivities and everyday life. Originally a brewer by trade, he initially opened an atelier in Dobřany in 1892, and moved into his hometown Prachatice in 1896 and operated there as the most important photographer. Before 1897 Rudolf Dürhammer, originally a druggist, became a photographer of Vimperk. Several of his pictures have been preserved. However, the most important Vimperk photographer was Felix Pohl, who took over a photo studio Helios in No. 62 after 1901. Pohl not only entered the annals of Vimperk interwar history as a photographer, but also became one of the photographers who came to be town Mayors (in 1923 – 30).

In addition, the development of photographic and printing reproduction techniques started to significantly change conditions for distribution of photography in the 1890s. After the turn of the century a greater part of pictures reached the people in a printed form, in magazines, books and postcards. Fashionable postcards increased the importance of printing, re-

produced by various techniques, mainly by lithography and heliotype at the beginning. It is characteristic that also the well-known Prague photographer Jan Nepomuk Langhans belonged to the first publishers of heliotype postcards of Šumava. Into what extent he participated in photograph creation himself (like in Krkonoše), or whether it was purely a publishing business initiative of Langhans' Plzeň branch, remains unanswered. Among authors of the early postcards appeared a number of names, photographers and publishers from the Czech and German side. Understandably, also the number of photographers increased with the increase in demand for photographs.

Šumava naturally became a part of wider book projects illustrated by photos with the development of quality printing techniques and the possibility to print photographs. Their beginning is connected with *Flying through the Czech world (Letem českým světem)* published in a booklet form during 1896–98. It is characteristic of the times that the book's set-out and format still had an oblong format of a photograph album and pictures were printed only on one side of a page. Under the Šumava pictures in this magnificent work we can find signatures of Jindřich Eckert, Josef Seidel, Josef Tauber (a photographer of Domažlice area) and Jan Příbramský from České Budějovice, who also gained Woldan's photographic legacy together with his atelier, and who himself intensively photographed Šumava surroundings. The Šumava magic contributed to the fact that in a set of five hundred pictures of "the Czech world" immediately after the picture of Prague Castle follows a view from Bílá strž (White gorge) in Šumava. The first volume in an extensive book project *Bohemia* was of course dedicated to Šumava. However, from a pictorial aspect a traditional inertia took over and there is not one photograph in the whole volume, only reproductions or paintings. A book project *Bohemian kingdom* contains in its volumes, devoted to Southern and Southwestern Bohemia, many photo-

graphs mainly from amateur photographers. (I counted 17 names altogether in regions of Planá, Vyšší Brod, Volary, Vimperk, Kašperské Hory, Harmanice a Nýrsko, among them also well known names from the Czech Amateur Club in Prague – František Mrkoš, Eduard Petrák and ing. Jan Plischke, who attracted attention especially by his winter views). In addition, a *Register of historical and artistic treasures in the Czech kingdom (Soupis památek historických a uměleckých v Království českém)* brings many photographs for the relevant regions.

New possibilities for photographic work excited an interest in photography that became a hobby, and at the same time increased the importance of an organized photographic movement. Let's remind ourselves that a second Czech amateur photo club was founded in Plzeň in 1894. The technology of the day allowed taking pictures from the hand, without the use of a tripod that used to be a necessity. The awakening and increasing interest in Šumava photographs was also connected with contemporary changes in lifestyle, where sport and recreation started to gain its place. Further development of photography began to significantly influence amateur photographers. Professional photographers kept their atelier work, official news, documentation for manufacturing establishments and a part of Šumava postcard production. For a number of amateur photographers their work with a camera was not only a matter of aesthetics, but frequently offered some sort of a happy game allowing them to capture the world around them. The spontaneous amateur shots themselves became the most valuable documentary testimony about changes of lifestyle and the everyday life of people. It is at the same time indicative that some amateur photographers did not capture only the lives of their family, but concentrated also on documentary work and life in general. A director of a large farmstead in Kouty near Domažlice, E. Strouhal, was a noteworthy figure in this way; he systematically captured work of woodcutters with his

camera during the 1890s. His twelve pictures accompanied a book by J. F. Hruška *Among the Chod woodcutters (Mezi chodskými dřevorubci, Plzeň 1935)*, whose text was originally written for Světozor magazine in 1897, and it also mentions Strouhal's documentaristic work. Strouhal is mainly concerned with Chodsko region, but he became an example that was not unique. The area of hobby amateur photography in Šumava is not explored very well and I am also afraid that many photographs were destroyed already. Let's remind ourselves that for example also Josef Váchal photographed in Šumava as an amateur.

With the development of amateur photography, general growth of tourism and accessibility of railway travel Šumava enticed increasingly more people to photographic expeditions. Sets of pictures were created in this way, which told some kind of story, and became a totally new type of photography, which in the next decades became the key for the symbiosis of photograph and print. An example of such early pictorial material from Šumava is a number of pictures named *At Vltava's source*, which began a scheme to "describe by word and picture the Czech world". It was a series of pictures from the source of Vltava to the "proud heights of Mělník" (*Czech world/Český svět*, volume I, No. 3 from 24. 11. 1904 and No. 6 from 13. 1. 1905). Pictures' author was one "director Kadlec". Lets remind ourselves that in the 1st volume were two pictures from Šumava by Jan Langhans subtitled "An example of photographic art from Langans's establishment". Almost as a news report looked a set of pictures entitled "*Making clogs in Šumava*" made by the then most significant "news photographer" Rudolf Bruner-Dvořák (*Czech World* No. 18, 22. 2. 1907).

The strange sombre mood of Šumava forests became an inspiration for amateur photographers' experiments with pigment processes, which instead of a description emphasized a mood and feeling, an emotional experience. To these beautiful pictures belongs the work of Karel Němec, a teacher from Horažďovice, who was led to use these pigment processes by his friend, a well known pictorialist and also a native of Horažďovice, Karel Novák, the author of a few oil prints from the Šumava area. The work of Němec symbolically closes the C. K. photography era, which was followed by a new age with a different system and opinions, reflecting the First World War experience and the beginning of an independent republic.

Post-war times brought further expansion of amateur photography. Pre-war photographic firms stabilised and the number of new professional firms even increased a bit. For the sake of accuracy, let's mention that after the death of Josef Seidel in 1935 his son František inherited his archive and the photographic firm, and continued in his father's footsteps. After the death of Josef Wolf his three sons took over the establishment: Walter (* 1895), Josef (* 1900) and Franz (* 1907).

Closing down or replacement of private photographic firms with communal ones and the destruction of a number of photographic estates meant a disruption of the natural continuous development, apparent in all areas of the Šumava region, whose life stopped after centuries of development. A number of villages disappeared from the map – this is how Šumava looked after 1948. Testimony of art photographers, who are paying homage to Šumava from the 1960s, is on altogether different chapter of the development of photography and the whole region.