



The intellectual legacy of Count István Széchenyi

A Unique Hungarian national value, part of the Collection of Hungaricum

István Széchenyi is the fifth child of, Ferenc Széchenyi (born in Vienna 1791, died in Döbling 1860), who was the founder of the National Széchenyi Library (1802).

Széchenyi was a soldier when he was young, he travelled in Europe, and he showed great interest towards new intellectual flows, new machinery and modern farming and technical solutions. He gained experience in several fields.

Although he did not attend university, his literacy is broader than the average : he read works from Franklin Benjamin through Byron to Dániel Berzsenyi and the outstanding personalities of Hungarian poetry. His thoughts and experiences were regularly recorded. He wrote a diary, 25 books, 129 articles for magazines and approximately three thousand letters. His recorded speeches fill two books. Most of his works are feasibility studies, as we would call them today with a modern term. For example: horse breeding, horse racing, making credits legal in Hungary, language purification, the academy of sciences, the National Theater, building a bridge on the Danube, steam-shipping on the Danube and the Balaton, regulation of the Danube and the Tisza River, setting up a National Pantheon, creating casinos, the modernization of the tax system in order to finance national tasks, the development of a transport concept, and the involvement of wealthy people in financing public services. In this context, the financial resources that are necessary for implementing the plans are important. In his books his arguments are extremely smart, often formulating the conclusions about what to do from the basic truths.

Studying Széchenyi's books is of particular importance since the contents of his books written with mere logical calculations can be compared daily with the psychological analysis of the Journal. We can see his plans and his feelings of the same day; with joys, emotions or sorrows.

As Count István Széchenyi's intellectual legacy we can primarily mention his written oeuvre. The original manuscripts - as sources - can be found in several public collections (mostly in the manuscript collection of the Library and Information Center of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTAK), the Hungarian National Archives, the National Széchenyi Library and the Danube Museum).

The intellectual legacy that is mainly available for the public is based on the printed books of his works and the digital database of "all written works of Count Széchenyi István" published by Logod Bt. This contains the full written Széchenyi oeuvre published before 2000 and the Széchenyi bibliography and the catalogue of the manuscripts.