



## Johann Anton von Mikulicz-Radecki in Sibiu

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**Abstract:** Johann Anton von Mikulicz-Radecki (1850 Cernăuți/Chernivtsi - 1905 Breslau/Wroclaw) was one of the leading figures in surgery, a creator of modern surgery and the pioneer of upper gastrointestinal endoscopy. As a creative and skilled person, he invented surgical instruments and procedures. He was also an outstanding pianist. Johann Mikulicz was Theodor Billroth's assistant in Vienna and **was** Ernst Ferdinand Sauerbruch's teacher in Breslau (Wroclaw). This work provides an insight into his youth, emphasizing the time he lived in Sibiu (Hermannstadt). In 1867, Johann and his younger brother Valerian were sent to Sibiu to live with their uncle Lukas, a doctor of medicine, teacher and director of the midwifery school. It was then, influenced by his uncle's personality and advice, that the young Johann decided to study medicine rather than the Academy of Oriental Studies, as his father would have liked. We found the address of Lukas Mikulicz through some of the periodicals of that era available on the internet. This enabled us to find the house located in the center of Sibiu on the former street Sporegasse. In this house, that belonged to Lukas Mikulicz, the future great surgeon Johann Mikulicz spent one year of his youth. Here was the place where he took the important decision to become a physician. We will propose to the local city administration to mark the building with a commemorative plaque.

**Keywords:** Johann Mikulicz, Lukas Mikulicz, Sibiu, Sporegasse, history of surgery, commemorative plaque

### Introduction:

Johann Anton von Mikulicz-Radecki (1850 - 1905) professor of surgery at the universities of Krakau (now Kraków, Poland), Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russian Federation) and Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland) has established himself as a leading figure in surgery at the turn of the twentieth century. He is considered to be one of the creators of modern surgery and a pioneer of upper digestive endoscopy [1-4]. Mikulicz was also an exceptional pianist. Playing the piano led to the development of his impressive operative skill [5, 6] and helped him to build close friendships with Theodor Billroth and Johannes Brahms [2, 7]. Here is how von Eiselsberg describes Mikulicz's extraordinary surgical skill: " ... die Hände klein und zart, daß ihn manche

Dame darum beneiden konnte. Und diese Händchen, die abends zuvor mit Leichtigkeit das schwerste Klavierstück bemeistert hatten, machten aus der schwierigsten Operation einen ganz glatten Eingriff, so daß ein fremder Arzt einmal sagte, es wundere ihn, daß' bei Mikulicz keine komplizierten

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Operationen zu sehen seien.” (...his hands are so small and delicate that many ladies could envy him for them. And these hands, which the night before had easily mastered the most difficult piano piece, turned the most difficult operation into a very smooth operation, so that a foreign doctor once said that he was surprised to see never a complicated operation at Mikulicz) [6].

Johann Mikulicz attended several school years at the gymnasium in his hometown Czernowitz (Cernăuți, now Chernivtsi in Ukraine) between 1861 and 1869. The courses of the same gymnasium, in the same period of time, were attended also by our national poet, Mihai Eminescu, who was born in the same year as Johann Mikulicz. Johann passed the Matura (baccalaureate, secondary school exit exam) with distinction in Czernowitz, in 1869. In the commemorative volume published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the gymnasium [8] as well as in other annual reports [9], his name is listed next to that of Mihai Eminescu in the chapter dedicated to outstanding pupils of the gymnasium. Among other famous pupils of the k.k. I. Staatsgymnasium in Czernowitz is included also the renowned politician, historical and Romanian nationalist Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi and among the teachers we mention the renowned scholar, linguist, leader of the Romanian Revolution from 1848 in Transylvania, Aron Pumnul, who was teacher of Romanian language and literature at the gymnasium between 1849 and 1865[8, 9].

### **Purpose of the work:**

The aim of this paper was to study and learn details about a lesser-known period of Johann Mikulicz's youth, the period spent in Sibiu. We aimed to find out who hosted him and what was the address at which he lived in Sibiu. To find out details about this period we consulted various biographical works as well

as articles from the press and periodicals of the time, available in digital libraries. At the end we identified the house where he lived, on Sporergergasse (Pintenului Street). Our intention is to propose to the local authorities to mark the house with a commemorative plaque.

In order to understand the meaning and the importance of this episode in Johann Mikulicz's life, we have found it necessary to present his entire youth from 1850 to 1869 as we have reconstructed it from the works and documents we have studied.

Johann Mikulicz's youth until passing the Matura exam

Johann Anton von Mikulicz-Radecki was born in Czernowitz (Cernăuți, Chernivtsi), Duchy of Bukovina (Ducatul Bucovinei, Herzogtum Bukowina), part of the Habsburg Empire, on the 16th of May 1850[2, 6] from the second marriage of his father Andreas Mikulicz with Emilia von Damnitz (1813-1867). She was the daughter of a Prussian officer [10] and great-granddaughter of General Friedrich von Taudentzen[1] who fought alongside Frederick the Great in many of the king's great battles and distinguished himself during the defence of Breslau in 1760 during the Seven Years' War[11]. Of their children, five reached adulthood: Adalbert (1842-1920), Emilia Paulina (1845-1912), Karoline (1846-1866), Johannes (1850-1905) and Valerian (1855-1910). Apart from them, Andreas had children also from his first marriage.

Johann's mother tongue was German and his denomination Roman Catholic [11]. His forename was used in several different forms: Johannes, Johann or the Polish variant, Jan [12]. His surname is sometimes written Mikulitsch. The noble surname, von Radecki, has its origins in his parental grandfather's family. The title was acknowledged by Emperor Franz Josef I. on

the 14th of December 1897, as a result of Johann's brother actions, Valerian [13], who was general in the Austrian army. Like his father, young Johann Mikulicz was fluent in several languages: German, Yiddish, Ruthenian and Romanian [12]. It is not clear if he spoke also Polish. It is believed that even if he spoke Polish, he did it without much proficiency and he forgot it by adulthood. It is known that he learned Polish later in Vienna when preparing himself to take over his position of „Ordinarius für Chirurgie ” at the Jagellonian University in Krakow[13]. However, it was not unusual for people living in Czernowitz in those years to be fluent in more languages given the mixture of ethnic groups in Bukovina [12, 13]: Romanians, Ruthenians, Germans, Jews, Armenians, Poles, Gypsies and many others.

Andreas Mikulicz , the father of Johann, was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1804 in Krzywczce, Galicia and died on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1881 in Czernowitz, Austria-Hungary (now Ukraine). He became a prominent person in Czernowitz, the town where he settled permanently in 1836. He was the son of Franciszek Mikulicz-Radecki with origins in the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and Josepha Edle von Just, daughter of a Prussian civil servant. Before Andreas turned 16 his mother remained alone as his husband suddenly disappeared [10]. She took care of the family alone being responsible for the raise of the four children. The oldest son, Andreas had to work as a forest worker [10] in order to support his mother in raising the younger children. Later, after the family's financial status improved, he was able to continue his education. He learned geometry on his own so that he could study architecture and construction in Lemberg (Liov, now Lviv in Ukraine). In 1840 he was appointed architect of the city of Czernowitz [10]. A large number of important urban projects are linked to his name, including the construction

of the new town hall with its imposing 45-metre tower (1843-1847) [14], the design of the Central Square and of the Public Garden [15]. Andreas Mikulicz was one of the ten founding members as well as first secretary of the Bukovina Chamber of Commerce and Industry from its foundation in 1850 until his retirement in 1877[10]. In 1863 Andreas was elected member of the Bukovina Diet. For his merits he was decorated, and a central street in Czernowitz bore his name [10] until 1924 when it was changed to Titu Maiorescu[15]. Andreas was an intelligent, cultured and hard-working person who spoke several languages: Polish, German, Ruthenian, Russian, Romanian, Yiddish, English and French [10, 12]. Andreas placed great emphasis on the general and musical education of his children. As the educational possibilities in Chernivtsi were limited in relation to his high demands, Andreas chose to send his children to prestigious schools in Europe [10]. This entailed significant financial sacrifice which the family struggled to cope with.

At the wish of his father, Johann started elementary school only when he was 7 years old [10]. After he graduated the first class of primary school in Czernowitz, in 1858, Johann together with his siblings, accompanied by their mother, left for Prague. The journey was arduous and lasted three weeks, much to the children's delight [10]. In Prague, the children could go to schools where the standard was significantly above that of the educational facilities in Czernowitz. The desire to teach the children the literary, noble and pure German language, the so-called „Bühnendeutsch”, which was used in the artistic field in German-speaking countries, was one of the main reasons for sending the children to Prague. Johannes attended elementary school at the pianists (Piaristenvorschule) for three years [1]. At the same time, he studied piano

at the Music Academy (Musikbildungsanstalt) of the renowned pianist, teacher and composer Josef Proksch.

In 1861, due to material difficulties, mother and children had to return to



Chernivtsi. In the same year Johann's sisters demonstrated their musical talent by publishing some of their own compositions [16]. Johannes will attend the first two years of secondary school (gymnasium) in Czernowitz. In the autumn of 1863, the mother and the three younger children left for Vienna [10] to give Johann's talented sister Karoline the opportunity to become an opera singer [1]. In this year Johannes frequented the famous Theresianum as an extern. In the autumn of the following year (1864) the mother and the three children moved to Klagenfurt after Karoline entered into a contract with the local state theatre [1, 10]. Here Johann attended the classes of the Benedictine Gymnasium [10]. Given the family's difficult material situation, he had to earn some money by tutoring younger pupils in secondary school subjects. Based on his solid piano knowledge he self-teaches to play the organ at such a level that permits him to become the organist of the church of the

Benedictine Monastery [10]. It was a hard time for him but it shaped his character. He was at the same time pupil, teacher and organist [10]. Being much appreciated by the Benedictine monks he was tempted to stay in their community but he faced the firm opposition of his strong willing father [10]. Sadly, Karoline died of typhus in 1866 and



the family returned home to Czernowitz [1, 10].

The year 1866 was very difficult for the people of Czernowitz. A severe typhus and cholera epidemic broke out on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June on a background of extreme poverty and famine [14]. The pages of the daily newspaper Bukowina were filled with obituaries [14]. After spending a year in their home town as pupils at the local gymnasium, in 1867 Johann and his younger brother Valerian left for their uncle Lukas in Sibiu [10]. There they attended the classes of the Obergymnasium and Johann continued studying the piano [10]. At the end of 1867 Johann's mother died in Czernowitz [10, 12]. In 1868 they returned to Chernivtsi. Johann graduated from the last class of the gymnasium here, passing the high school exam with distinction on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August

1869[1, 2, 10]. In 1868 his father gets married for the third time [10].

Every biography of Johann Mikulicz would be incomplete without mentioning his much beloved and esteemed paternal grandmother, Josepha Edle von Just, even if it only addresses a part of his life. She remained without husband, when her older son, Andreas, was about 16[10]. With the help of her older children, Andreas and Fanny, she successfully managed to keep the family afloat [10, 17]. The moment she decided to become a midwife was of crucial importance for the family's destiny. After graduating from the midwifery school in Lemberg (Lvov), she practiced this profession very successfully in Czernowitz, becoming a well-known, respected and prosperous midwife. She eventually managed to send her younger sons, Lukas and Karl, to Lemberg to study medicine. Andreas also managed to continue his studies, becoming an architect, and Fanny became a piano teacher in Czernowitz [11, 17]. According to Kausch, Mikulicz allegedly stated that in his first conversation with Councilor Weigel in Krakau, this said to him: "Mikulicz? ... does that mean that your grandmother brought me to life 60 years ago?"[17]. It is also said that Johann Mikulicz held not only the portrait but also the remembrance of his grandmother at high esteem and was always happy to find out that he resembled her not only physically but also in character [10]. Both of Johann's uncles studied medicine and initially practiced it in the old Romania. Karl was an internist, consular doctor in Brăila where he settled and started a family [11]. Little is known about him. He had two sons [17]. One of them, named Viktor (1860-1891), a graduate of the Academy of Oriental Studies in Vienna, entered the consular service and met a tragic end in Buenos Aires as a result of serious financial problems in which he was involved [18]. Lukas settled in Hermannstadt

(Sibiu) and practiced obstetrics becoming the teacher and director of the local midwifery school [11, 17]. The stay of Johann and Valerian Mikulicz in Sibiu is due to him.

Besides various publications (yearbooks, catalogues, newspapers) available in digital archives the most important source of information about Lukas Mikulicz was for us the work published by Klaus Kausch (1918-2010) in 1984 [17]. He is the grandson of Johann Mikulicz [13]. His mother, Maria von Mikulicz-Radecki (1883-1944), daughter of Johann, married in 1902 Walther Kausch (1867-1928), the newly appointed Oberarzt (senior consultant) in his father's clinic in Breslau [19]. He remained in history as the first surgeon to perform successfully a duodenopancreatectomy on a human in 1909[19]. Klaus Kausch used as sources of information the memoirs of his grandmother, Henriette von Mikulicz-Radecki, née Pacher (1853-1937) [12, 13], wife of Johann von Mikulicz, and the letters of Johann's sister Emilie Zborowska to father Andreas and brother Adalbert in Czernowitz [17].

Lukas was probably born in 1807[17]. Like his brother Karl, he practiced medicine for a while in old Romania after graduating university (probably around 1840). Later he settled in Sibiu [11]. Here he successfully practiced obstetrics earning a reputation that led to his appointment as professor and director of the midwifery school in 1850. He can be considered a reformer of this school as he donated to the school all the teaching material he had to buy from the widow of his predecessor. Not having its own premises, the school operated in two rooms of his house in the early years. From 1852 Lukas Mikulicz would receive a rent of 100 guilders per year for this space [17]. He would run this institution until his death in 1880. In addition to German (his mother tongue), Lukas was fluent in Polish, Romanian and probably had

some knowledge of Hungarian [17]. Regarding his ability to speak Romanian, we have some arguments in this favor: he had the opportunity to learn Romanian in childhood being part of a family that lived in Czernowitz, town where Romanians represented the majority; the first place where he practiced medicine was old Romania, much a same like his brother Karl; his press announcements for enrolling the Midwifery School, addressed to German and Romanian speaking female candidates. Lukas was married and had a son named Emil. Being a prosperous person, he could afford to send his son Emil to study in Vienna at the famous Theresianische Ritterakademie. In order to support his son's future career, Lukas started procedures to renew the family's Polish noble title and integrate it into the Habsburg monarchy [17]. Unfortunately, both his wife and son died in 1860 under circumstances unknown to us. Following these tragic events, he grew closer to his brother Andreas from Czernowitz. In the autumn of 1864, he falls seriously ill and Andreas, worried, visits him urgently in Sibiu. Lukas manages to overcome his illness and a year later, in September, to everyone's surprise, he marries the second time, to a much younger woman, Mathilde [17]. Johann and Valerian, Andreas' two younger sons, aged 17 and 12, will be hosted in Sibiu by their uncle Lukas and aunt Mathilde, from the autumn of 1867. From Johann's accounts their welcome was very warm and both were very well treated. The two youngsters will attend the state gymnasium in Sibiu. Johann will take also piano lessons, which he will appreciate very much for their high-quality level, the more so as these were the last piano lessons he ever took. While Johann was highly appreciated for his behavior and excellent school and piano results, Valerian, a totally different character, created lots of problems for his uncle's family [17].

After one year, in 1868, the two young men had to leave Sibiu and return to Czernowitz. One of the reasons why they interrupted their stay in Sibiu was the Magyarization of the state gymnasium in Hermannstadt [10]. Indeed, this process started in 1868 with the replacement of the German language of instruction by the Hungarian, after the Ministry of Public Education in Budapest issued order no. 16514/1868. The decision was justified by the fact that "since at the end of the 1867-68 school year, out of the 461 students of the school, 251 were Romanians, 66 Hungarians, 10 Slovaks and only 134 Germans, there is no longer any need to maintain the German as language of instruction, because it is not the mother tongue of the vast majority of pupils, and its use by them is a great hardship for all." In addition to Hungarian language, Romanian and German were allowed to be used as auxiliary languages in school. This rule was abolished in 1875 when the Hungarian remained the only language allowed. The name of the gymnasium was in the Hungarian period (1870-1918) The Superior State Gymnasium, (in Romanian Gimnaziul Superior de Stat din Sibiu, in German Hermannstädter Staatsobergymnasium, in Hungarian Nagyszebeni Állami Főgymnázium)[20]. This gymnasium is now identified with the Gheorghe Lazăr National College. Twenty-four pupils attended the seventh grade of the Staatsobergymnasium in the school year 1867-1868, the last year of the German period. Among them, 14 were Romanians, 7 were Germans, 7 were Hungarians and 1 was of another nationality [20]. One of those pupils was Johann Mikulicz.

Additional reasons for the return of the two boys to Czernowitz are revealed by Henriette Mikulicz. She points out in her memoirs that Lukas was under the total influence of his young wife who in June 1868

gave him a daughter, named Caroline. His wife's wish was to bring her mother and sister into the house. Probably under these circumstances the presence of the two youngsters, especially of Valerian, was no longer desirable. Interesting and relevant to the very good relationship between Johann and his uncle Lukas is the fact that Johann will be the godfather of the little girl's christening. The uncle's refusal to extend the nephews' stay in Sibiu created disappointment and indignation in Czernowitz. The relations between Lukas and Andreas cooled and will never be resumed. Nevertheless, uncle Lukas continued to financially support his nephews [17]. There was certainly always a good understanding between Lukas and Johann. All biographers of Johann Mikulicz agree that his uncle prompted and encouraged him to become a physician despite his father's firm opposition [2, 7, 10, 12]. This fact may also have contributed to the cooling of relations between the two brothers, Lukas and Andreas Mikulicz.

The online searching for documents and publications of the time, containing the name of Lukas Mikulicz revealed the first mention in an almanac (yearbook) of Sibiu entitled Benigni's Volkskalender, the edition of 1853 (Jahrgang 2.) on page 38. In the next year's edition (1854, Jahrgang 3.) he was mentioned again on page 46 as doctor of medicine living at Sporrergasse 360. In another yearbook, editions from 1859 and 1860, Lukas Mikulicz is mentioned with the title of professor and director of the school of midwifery in Sibiu. From 1861 onwards, in several editions (1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1876 and 1879) his name is mentioned alongside that of his assistant Katharina v. Stahlberg. I reproduce the advertisement from the 1873 edition: Hebammen-Lehrinstitut in Hermannstadt. Professor. Lucas Mikulics,

Dr. der Medicin, Magister der Geburtshilfe. Assistentin. Katharina v. Stahlberg. in Siebenbürgischer Volkskalender, 1873 (Jahrgang 22.). The teaching activity of Lukas Mikulicz at the midwifery school is also demonstrated by the advertisements published in a local periodical on the occasion of candidates enrolment: „Da der Lehrcurs für Hebammen an der f. geburtshilflichen Lehranstalt in Hermannstadt von 1. März l. J. eröffnet wird, so werden die Hebammen-Kandidatinnen der deutschen und rumänischen Nationalität hiemit aufgefordert, sich bei dem Gefertigten bis zum angedeuteten Termin zur Aufnahme zu melden. Hermannstadt, am 1. Februar 1879". Dr. Lukas Mikulicz, Professor der Geburtshilfe" advertisement in Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, 1880. Februar (Jahrgang 7, nr. 1861-1883)1880-02-04 / nr. 1862. We note that he accepts for schooling female candidates of German and Romanian ethnicity, which shows once again that Lukas Mikulicz was a Romanian speaker and that he was training midwives for the whole region of Sibiu, including the rural areas where most of Romanians lived. Lukas Mikulicz was one of the personalities of Sibiu. He was also involved in the social-administrative problems of the city, as shown by an advertisement in the Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, 1880. Oktober (Jahrgang 7, nr. 2063-2088)1880-10-21 / nr. 2080 under the title "For the salvation of the city park". The article states that a group of thirteen physicians, among them Dr Mikulicz, petitioned the city council to return the park to the city and to maintain it as a public garden for public health reasons. In doing so, they not only fulfilled a professional duty but also earned public recognition, the article states. Unfortunately, shortly after this moment, appears in the local press the obituary of Professor Lukas Mikulicz who died on October 30, 1880. The

burial service took place on the 1st of November, 1880, 3 p.m. at the Evangelical cemetery after a Roman Catholic ceremony. This cemetery was disused in 1917. The new building of the County Hospital of Sibiu (around mid-1970's) and the Victor Papilian Faculty of Medicine were built on the site. A few days later (on the 4th of November) his wife Mathilde and his daughter Karoline, express their gratitude to those who accompanied the professor on his last journey, *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, 1880. November (Jahrgang 7, nr. 2089-2114)1880-11-04 / nr. 2092.

The next step of our work was to identify the house of Lukas Mikulicz. We knew from the mentioned yearbooks that his address, Sporergasse 360 became after 1872 Sporergasse 24. The house numbers and street names have been changed several times over the years in Sibiu. Such an important administrative reform took place in 1872 being mentioned by Emil Sigerius in his *Chronicle of Sibiu 1100-1929*. The reform concluded with a new numbering of the houses. The correspondence between old and new numbers is listed in the "Gassen- und Häuser-Verzeichniss der Stadt Hermannstadt" published in 1873. On page 28 of this work, it is shown that the old number 360 in Sporergasse becomes number 24 and the owner of the building is Lukas Mikulicz. From this publication all the buildings on Sporergasse after 1872, can be identified by numbers (new and old) and owners. Currently no less than 25 buildings on this street have been declared historical monuments.

Currently no street from Sibiu is called Sporergasse. The names of the streets were changed along the history. The easiest way to find out the correspondence between present and old streetnames is to access the site that deals with the cultural heritage of Sibiu: <https://patrimoniul.sibiu.ro/strazi>. The

actual name of Sporergasse according to the afore mentioned site is General Magheru street. The street had various names over the years: it was called Sporergasse (spur street) between 1507 and 1929 (422 years!). Since 1970 the street took its present name. The next step was to precisely identify the house where Lukas Mikulicz lived. Fortunately, on General Magheru Street there are 25 buildings with the status of historical monument. A short history is published for each of them, but the name Lukas Mikulicz is not mentioned in connection with any of these buildings. The next attempt was to identify Lukas Mikulicz's neighbors in the yearbooks of the time. These were: at number 26 Borger Viktor and at numbers 20-22 the Hanenheim family. We found that both Viktor Borger's house and the two houses of the Hanenheim family appear on the list of historical monuments under the current numbers 18 and 14. The building at number 14 was built in 1909 on the site of two old houses (numbers 20-22, former property of Hanenheim) and was initially, between 1909 and 1921, the headquarters of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, after which it became the property of the National Bank of Romania and is currently the headquarters of the Sibiu County Council. In this way we have accurately identified the house at 16 General Magheru Street as the former house of Lukas Mikulicz, uncle of the great surgeon Johann von Mikulicz Radecki. The future professor of surgery Johann Anton von Mikulicz-Radecki lived in this house for a year at the invitation of his uncle, together with his brother Valerian, both of whom were students at the state gymnasium in Sibiu in the school year 1867-1868 (last year of the German period of the gymnasium).

In our opinion the house has to be marked with a commemorative plaque both in memory of the great Professor of Surgery Johann Anton von Mikulicz Radecki and in



memory of his uncle who led an institution of vital importance to Sibiu, in an extremely difficult period for obstetrics, period that started a decade before Semmelweis published his brilliant work. Certainly, many of today's inhabitants of Sibiu owe their existence to Lukas Mikulicz.

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