

PRIETENII MOCANITEI

# Sibiu - Agnita = narrow gauge railway =

The soul of Hârtibaciu valley



= 10 years of volunteering =  
for the restoration of the old railway

[www.sibiuagnitarailway.com](http://www.sibiuagnitarailway.com)





The first segment of the narrow gauge line was opened in 1898 between Sighișoara and Agnita. The extension of the line, towards Sibiu, together with a ramification towards Vurpăr, have been opened in 1910. Transilvania belonged to Hungary at that time, which is the reason why the 760mm gauge has been used, a standard in the danubian empire.

After the First World War, the region inside the carpathian arc, the railway with it, went to the possession of Romania. Besides transporting people, of importance was transporting lumber and agricultural goods. The mocăniță created the proverbial „far and wide“ world.

Because of the difficult route, traveling through villages and high gradient climbs, a decision was made to close the traffic in 1965 between Sighișoara and Agnita and dismounting the line from the land shortly after. Beside this, a new train station was constructed outside of Agnita. That station has seen trains from Sibiu for a lot more years, until autumn 2001, when CFR decided to close the line between Agnita and Sibiu as well – it was the last narrow gauge line operated by the state-owned company CFR.



Photo: Agnita Museum Archive





# REACTIVATION

A new force of volunteers has been formed after closing the line, which started fighting, having also international support, towards restoring the *mocăniță*. Railway excursions are in many areas a motor for local tourism: In Romania, the narrow gauge line in Vișeu, Maramureș county is a very good example.

Against many difficulties, the first signs of the restoration have appeared. The occasional trains have had a lot of success. The constant increase in the number of passengers underlines the importance of the *mocăniță* and the significance this project may have for the Hârtibaciu valley: The railway should become a solid part in the life inside the valley, but also an element of connection between urban and rural.







# IMPORTANCE

As an industrial historical monument, the mocăniță is a suitable addition to the numerous touristic attractions in the Sibiu region. Still, it's rather about the saving of a romantic railway: the valley, having been tremendously affected by the demographic changes, needs tourism to have a solid prospect of development. The local cultural and natural landscapes are already offering some ideas, which have also been recognized by the local authorities.

The narrow gauge railway is the ideal connection between the rich attractions in the Hârtibaciu valley and historical Sibiu, which had its share of lively development in the recent years.

A few figures from 2017: 79 workdays with over 2500 hours worked by volunteers, 2 kilometers of repaired railway, over 1000 passenger tourists, 100 nights spent in areas close to the railway, all as a result of the narrow gauge railway.



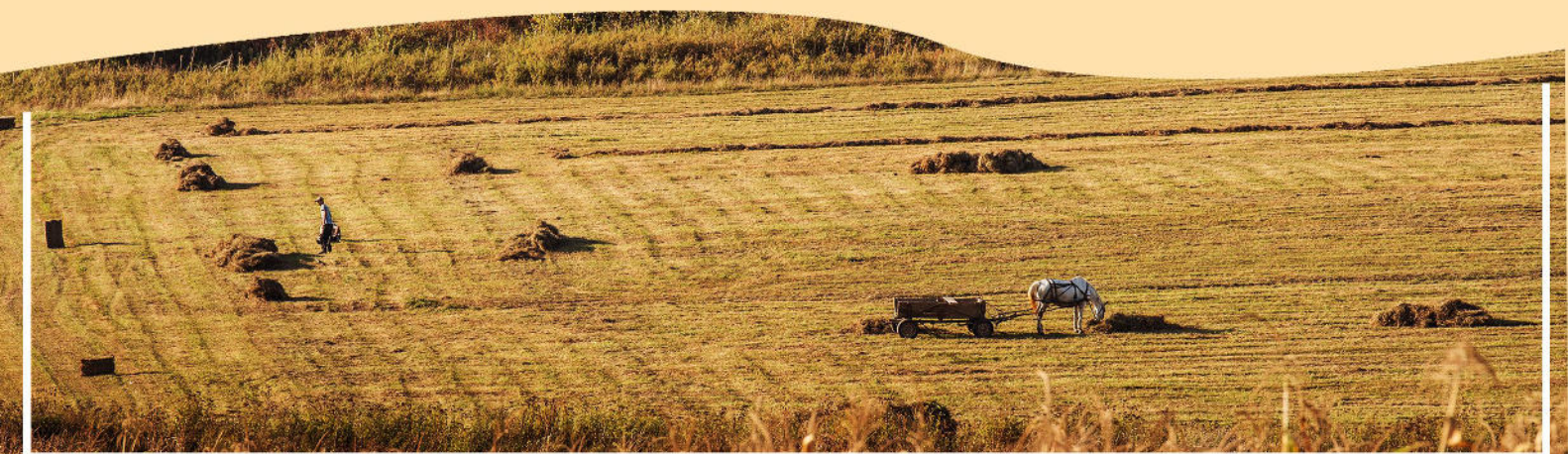




The railroad traverses the area used by the German-speaking “Saxon” settlers, who have nicknamed the line „Wusch“. The usual Romanian nickname for narrow gauge railways is “mocănița”. Many fortified churches along the railway are witness to the approximately 800 year old history of the German speakers in the region.

The hilly landscape inside the carpathian arc invites also the friends of nature for a visit: a „Natura 2000“ protected area has been created along the Hârtibaciu valley. The regions richness has been recognized by some local initiatives, which have assumed to retain the cultural landscape of the area and to promote the local products: the trademark „Din Hârtibaciu, cu drag“ („From Hârtibaciu, with love“) is a special project, its purpose being the long term development of the region.

Beyond the Hârtibaciu valley, the two medieval towns Sibiu and Sighișoara, once connected by this railway, are definitely worth visiting.







# Who is taking care of the railway?

The association “Prietenii Mocăniței” („Friends of the narrow gauge railway“) has been coordinating, since 2008, the activities to retain and keep the narrow gauge railway in place. The Association has a solid 8-10 active members and receive help from other volunteers, even from abroad as from England, Germany or Switzerland. Tracks, buildings and rolling stock have already been restored.

The association also organises touristic train events on the section from Cornățel to Hosman which has been made operational again during the last few years.







# ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the first Association's achievement was saving four of the old passenger carriages that ran on the line from being scraped at the depot in Sibiu. In 2010, one steam train was organised to celebrate 100 years since the railway's inauguration between Sibiu and Agnita.

Finally, after a long period, steam was back to Cornăţel station in 2015. The station site has been repaired during countless working hours. Since 2017, trains can run again on the rebuilt section between Cornăţel and Hosman. In 2019, a batch of wagons from Switzerland came to our "mocăniţa" in order to run on the narrow gauge railway soon.

We are proud that 7 km of railway tracks (including two bridges) have been restored by the substitution of 600 wooden sleepers, that Cornăţel's station building and water tower were restored, that two hangers for wagons were constructed, that donation were collected, that project promotion was made and, last but not least, the we already made trains run again on the narrow gauge line.





A steam locomotive pulling a green passenger car through a dense forest. The locomotive is emitting a large plume of white steam. Two people are visible in the open doorway of the passenger car.

# FUTURE PLANS

At the moment (2019), we are blocked by the authorities as we are not allowed to run trains on the railway: Mocănița needs a new permission and this takes time in Romania. Once the licence is authorised, we want to organise trains on the narrow gauge line on a regular basis. Mocănița shall become an important link for Hârtibaciu valley again.

Furthermore, we also need an own locomotive. So far we had to rent an engine when we organised train events on the narrow gauge line. In the medium- and the long-term, there are plans for a reactivation of the section from Cornățel to Mohu, bringing mocănița closer to Sibiu again.



Photos: Radu Tompa