

**BOX SET WITH LEAD SAMPLES FROM BRAÇAL MINES (1851)**

MUHNAC’s natural history collections were initiated centuries ago. In addition to regular purchases and exchanges with national and foreign institutions, these collections grew substantially with two donations of Royal collections.

The first donation occurred in 1858 and it encompassed the Royal Museum of the Palace of Ajuda (Lisbon), founded in 1768 for the education of Portuguese young princes. The Museum included thousands of specimens, mostly from Africa and South America, and a rich specialized library. It was first donated, in 1836, to the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon. However, after two decades in the Academy, King Pedro V (1837-1861) ordered its transfer to the Lisbon Polytechnic School by royal decree of 9 March 1858 - exactly 158 years ago. Then, in 1863, another Royal Museum was donated – the one located at the Palace of Necessidades (Lisbon), encompassing specimens gathered by Pedro V and his brother Luis (1838-1889). Both were particularly interested in natural history and they accumulated, since 1848, collections of thousands of ornithological, malacological and paleontological specimens. Some were well renowned in Europe and the Museum was regularly visited by prominent naturalists.

The box set on display this month comes from Necessidades. It includes lead samples from the Braçal Mines (Northern Portugal). The box was built for the 1851 London Universal Exhibition and was offered in 1852 to King Pedro V by Diederich Mathias Feuerheerd (1791-1874), the mines’ owner. Transferred in 1863 to the Polytechnic School, it survived a fire occurred in the 1978, and is part of the approximately 1,000 objects from the scientific collections of the former Portuguese Royal Household still preserved in MUHNAC. The ore consists essentially of Galena, a lead sulfide.

