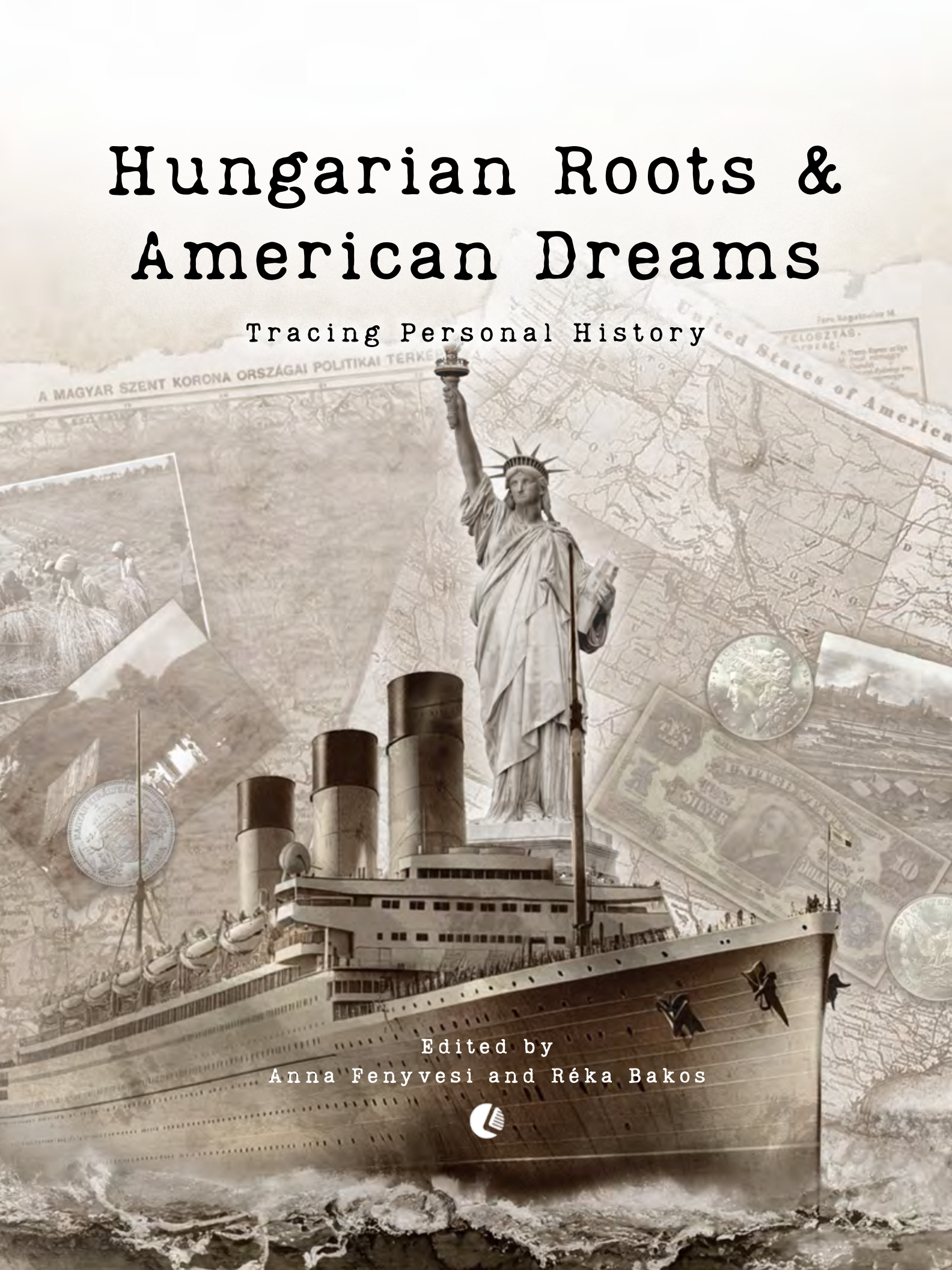
Hungarian Roots & American Dreams

Tracing Personal History



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Foreword

It all started with a post about a U.S.-bound Hungarian. Great-grandfather... emigration... America... returned to his family after a few years... the descendants living in Hungary... what?... The family stories Réka and János uncovered were very similar in many respects. Réka asked János a few questions, a conversation followed, and then a joint investigation that revealed that their great-grandfathers most likely attended the same church in Pittsburgh in the first decade of the 20th century. What were the chances?

Two weeks later, the discussion centered on how great it would be to create a group for the descendants of Hungarian immigrants to the U.S., regardless of which side of the Atlantic Ocean they live on now. Such a group would support a community where they could get answers to their questions and share stories, photos, and documents of their family members who tried their luck in America and build a worthy memorial to the hundreds of thousands of Hungarians who emigrated. This is how the "Hungarian Roots & American Dreams" Facebook group started, which was joined by 250 people on the first day: the American descendants of those who had settled in the New World and the Hungarian descendants of those who had returned to or were left behind in Hungary. People started posting photos, and beautiful stories started pouring in. Some heartbreaking, others tragic, yet others uplifting with happy endings. We could hardly believe our eyes. Anna came up with the idea for a book, so these stories could be accessible to a wider audience. After all, these are personal and family histories that encompass almost two centuries of Hungarian history: the Revolution and the War of Independence, the debts and other economic burdens of small landowners after the Compromise with Austria in 1867, the First World War, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, the revisionist efforts, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the deportations, and the collectivization and the restitution efforts after the regime change. They also provide insights into how the life of the generations following the emigrants have evolved in the "parallel worlds" on the two sides of the Atlantic, and how they keep the memory of their ancestors alive, trying to map blind spots and, in many cases, find relatives on the other continent with whom contact was severed after the death of their emigrating ancestors and the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Today, in the age of the internet, these family links can be traced with a little research: descendants of emigrants, or even of relatives in the old country, can be found through birth records, census sheets, and ship manifests. Before the digital age, it would not have been possible to write even a fraction of the stories in this volume, since children, grandchildren or even great-grandchildren knew only half of the story-- the one that played out on the continent on which they lived. American authors knew the U.S. half of the story, and Hungarian authors knew the Hungarian half. Most of them needed information from internet databases to get the full picture.

Almost all of the authors in this volume have done life-changing and often life-altering research on their families. In their stories, the joy and wonder of discovering relatives and their life journeys, and the excitement of piecing together a newly discovered past are present at every turn. The authors are, with few exceptions, people who do not write at length (scholarly prose or fiction) in their everyday lives; they are amateur writers in this sense, and not professionals. Their texts have been subjected by us editors to only minimal editing for clarity and to conform to spelling conventions. Our hope is that readers will experience the joy of how personal history comes to life when reading these stories just as much as the authors and editors did.

It all started with a post about a U.S.-bound Hungarian, but not really. It all started over 100 years ago when our ancestors bought their tickets to America to make better lives for themselves and their descendants. And their story does not end with us. It is our job to preserve and cherish their memory and pass their stories on to the generations that come after us.

This volume is intended to do just that. We hope that these stories will help the reader understand and appreciate the struggles and sacrifices of the Hungarian immigrant generations, without whose efforts many of us would not be where we are today, and who have contributed to the prosperity of the United States of America and Hungary through their work and efforts.

June 30, 2024
Réka Bakos, Tata,
Anna Fenyvesi, Szeged, and
János Szabon, Sajóvadna

Emigrants at the Gateway to the New World,
Ellis Island, 1912.
Source: Library of Congress[3]

Emigrants on the deck of an ocean liner, around 1906.
Source: Library of Congress[4]

Introduction

Hungarian emigration waves to America

According to the latest census, more than 1.5 million people in the United States identify themselves as (partly) Hungarians, although less than 10% of them speak Hungarian.[a] This introduction provides a brief overview of the main waves of emigration from Hungary to the United States, the social background of the immigrant groups and their motivations for immigration.

A small vanguard of Hungarian immigrants arrived in the United States in the early 1850s, after the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849. This group was followed by an enormous emigration wave at the turn of the 20th century from Southern and Eastern Europe, including Hungary. In the five decades preceding World War I, 25 million Europeans emigrated to America, including some two million people from multi-ethnic Hungary, of whom approximately 700,000 were of Hungarian nationality. They represented the first major wave of Hungarian immigration to America. The first Hungarians settled mainly in the American Midwest and on the East Coast.[b] The earliest places of their settlement, in the last two decades of the 19th century, were in the coal mining regions (primarily Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia), where they worked in the mines, isolated from the world. At the turn of the 20th century, 'little Hungary' districts were established in the big cities of the Midwest and Northeast, such as Burnside in Chicago, Delray in Detroit, Hazelwood in Pittsburgh and – the largest one – the Buckeye district in Cleveland. At the same time, Hungarian workers' colonies of several thousand people were established around the giant steel mills and factories of many smaller industrial cities (e.g. McKeesport, Johnstown and Uniontown in Pennsylvania, and Lorain, Youngstown and Akron, in Ohio).

a An essential feature of the U.S. census is that multiple ancestries can be declared. Everyone has the option to declare a total of four, equal to the number of grandparents. So, 1.5 million people today regard it as important to keep track of their Hungarian ancestry (too).

b In 1922, of the 474,000 Hungarians, 427,000 lived in the northeastern states of America, most of them in New York (95,400), Ohio (88,000) and Pennsylvania (86,000).

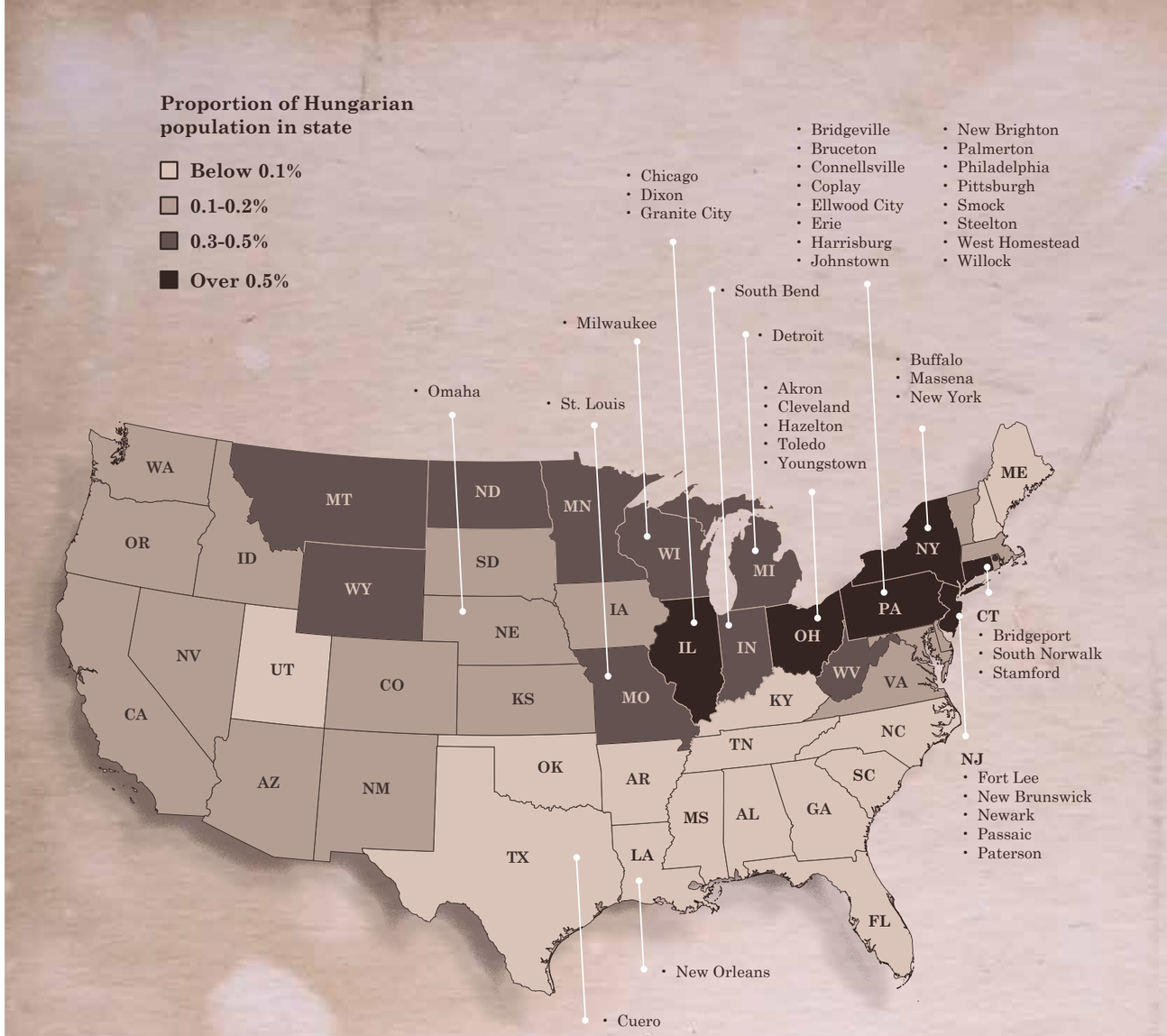
Members of the first wave of Hungarian emigrants had peasant roots. Most were landless peasants and small landowners who formed ethnic colonies in the New World, both in mining towns and in the urban industrial districts. Their everyday language use and social interactions were conducted in a relatively homogeneous Hungarian environment. (There was a Hungarian store in Cleveland's Buckeye neighborhood that posted "English spoken here!")

The second significant wave of emigration from Hungary to the United States was called “the DPs” (displaced persons) after World War II. These were people who left their homelands after the war, the vast majority for political reasons, including some 110,000 Hungarians. However, the DPs were far from a homogeneous group and each American host community distinguished between its different subgroups. There was antagonism between those who left Hungary in 1945 versus those who followed just two years later: Americans viewed the former as war criminals, while the latter were seen as people who had (more or less) undergone a process of democratization but left before the communist takeover in 1948. This kind of differentiation was particularly acute regarding politicians and diplomats: those who left in 1945 were more distrusted, while those who left in 1947 were more warmly welcomed. In the opinion of the former, 'all honest, decent Hungarians had fled from the Soviets.'

However, the DPs were generally characterized as intellectuals, civil servants, diplomats, gendarmes, military officers and aristocrats – people whose knowledge was particularly difficult to make useful in American society. A good number of them were middle-aged educated and family-oriented. These educated, intellectual immigrants found it difficult to integrate into earlier Hungarian immigrant communities made up of simple "old timers" of peasant origin. According to many recollections, they were viewed by the working-class Hungarian steelworkers and miners in America as "wow, these men in trousers came here after us, and they were the reason we left."

The third distinct wave of emigration was the ’56ers, who once again came to America from very different backgrounds and with different motivations than those who preceded them. The largest number of the 1956 Hungarian refugee stream, more than 40,000 of the 200,000 refugees, settled in the United States. Their appearance further divided and nuanced the already polarized American Hungarian community, which had previously been made up of several groups of the DPs and the second- and even third-generation descendants of the Old Timers. This 1956 wave of immigrants was made up of a minority of university- and high-school-educated intellectuals, many of them academics with science backgrounds, technicians, and a majority of skilled and unskilled industrial workers. The proportion of single (mainly male) young people among the refugees is perhaps somewhat exaggerated in the public mind – some estimates put it at over 80% – but it is undoubtedly true that most of them were single, which affected much of the integration process, from social mobility to marriage preferences. In addition to fleeing repression, a move to emigrate may have been motivated by a desire for an easier life, better living conditions and freer opportunities, fueled by a youthful sense of adventure. However, the recollections suggest that grievances and hardships experienced during the pre-revolutionary period in the 1950s may also have been a decisive factor in the mass exodus from Hungary.

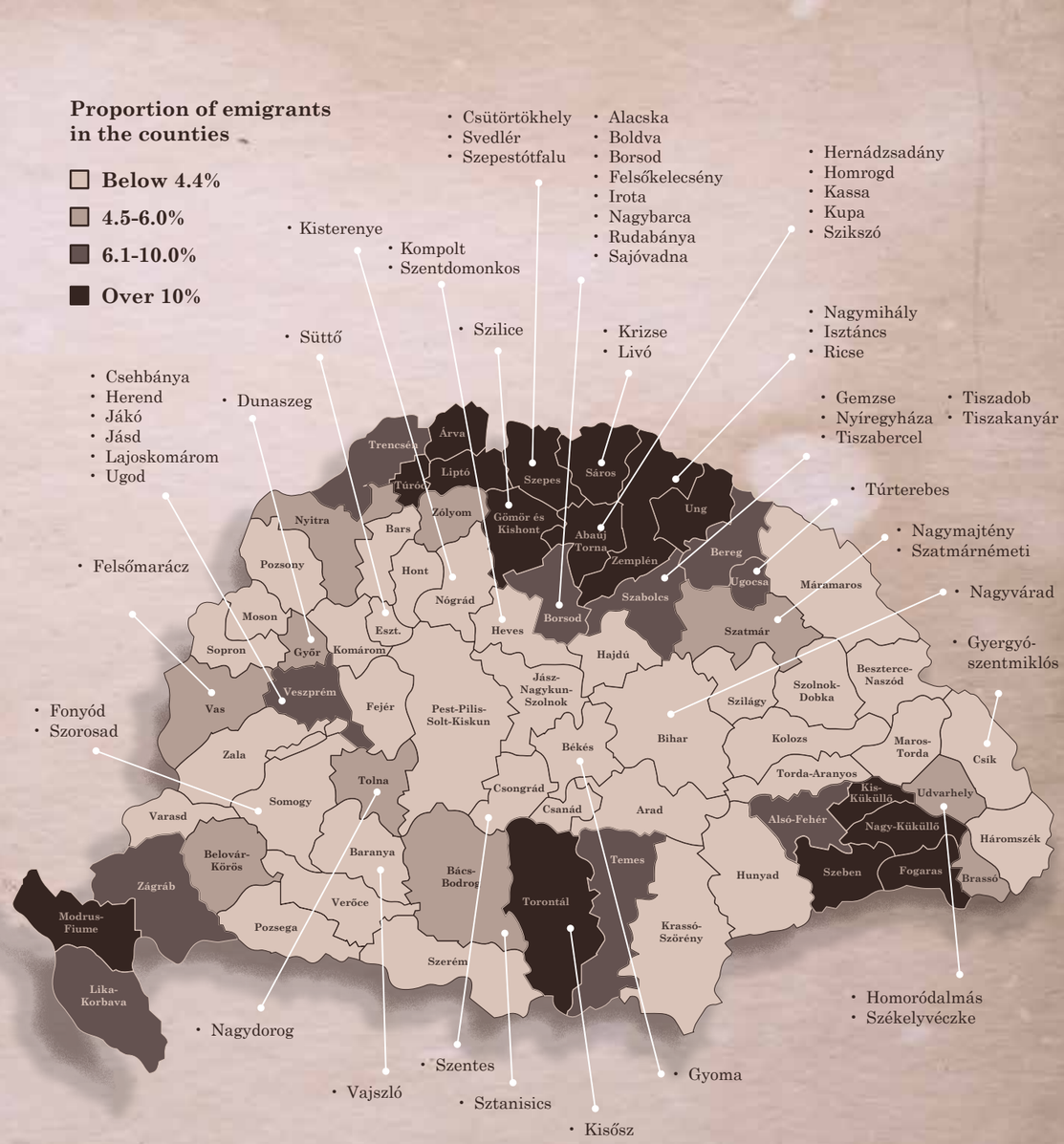
Those who arrived in each wave of immigration had (and continued to have) different images of the Old Country, as well as different backgrounds, values and attitudes.A classic example, often cited by Hungarian Americans, is that the first wave of emigrants left an emperor in the Monarchy and paid with a crown when they



Map of the Hungarian population of the United States of America

This map depicts the states of the United States of America, showing the proportion of the Hungarian population in each state based on 1910 census data.[c] It also identifies the cities that were destinations for the immigrants in our book. The map provides an overview of the distribution of Hungarian immigration to the United States at the peak of Hungarian immigration and the destinations of the emigrants featured in the book.

[c] Source: United States 1910 census, Country of birth of the foreign-born population. (https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-1/volume-1-p11.pdf Date of access: March 12, 2024.)



Map of the emigration from the Kingdom of Hungary

The map depicts the counties within the Kingdom of Hungary and shows the territorial intensity of overseas emigration between 1899 and 1913.[d] It also marks the towns and villages from which the emigrants introduced in our book originated. The map allows us to trace the geographical distribution of emigration and the places of origin of the Hungarian-Americans featured in this volume.

[d] The map is based on data from the following work:
Demeter, Gábor: Perifériák és fejlett régiók a történeti Magyarországon (1890–1910).[Peripheries and developed regions in historical Hungary, 1890–1910]. In: Demeter G., Szulovszky J. (eds.): Területi egyenlőtlenségek nyomában a történeti Magyarországon. Módszerek és megközelítések [Territorial inequalities in historical Hungary: Methods and approaches]. MTA BTK, DE Társadalomföldrajzi és Területfejlesztési Tanszék, Budapest, Debrecen, 145–194.

left. Those who left in the last days of the Horthy regime or during the Szálasi era left another kingdom, a counter-emperor, and paid in pengo. The refugees of the 1950s and the later "dissidents" left behind the chairman of the Council of Ministers of socialist Hungary, with a people's republic, and paid in forints.

Just as those who arrived in different waves of emigration came from "different Hungaries," America was also constantly changing, which determined the reception Hungarians received in their new homeland. The situation for the ’56ers was favorable because after the 1956 revolution it was good to be Hungarian in America for the first time. This positive attention was reinforced by the heightened Cold War atmosphere in the USA, which made the Hungarian refugees of the 1950s into real freedom fighters. It is not an exaggeration to say that they were backed by a veritable mass of sympathy in America. It is worth comparing this with the profound contempt with which the first wave to emigrate from agrarian destitution was held by the more affluent Anglo-Americans whose ancestors had emigrated earlier. They were derided as 'Hunkies,' along with the other immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe.

The Hungarian immigrants of the 1950s were the last great, forceful addition to the American Hungarian population as a whole. In the period since then, a number of Hungarians from Hungary and beyond its borders have, indeed, defected in the decades before the fall of communism and have also emigrated to America in the period since, but these new immigrants have arrived in America as more of a trickle than a wave.

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Budapest, July 2024
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Contents

"Day by day, the horns do sound,
From New York's docks all around:
"Hurray! Hurray! America!"
A thousand voices shout aloud.
The iron giant drops its anchor,
The Cunard Line ship of grandeur,
With joy and tears, the people descend,
From the vessel's towering end.
Then transported to the isle,
Where hopes and fears are reconciled,
Where joy or sorrow fills the air,
And every heart finds its share."

Source: English translation of an American-Hungarian song introduced in Nagy[5]

Ellis Island and harbor, New York, 1900s.
Source: Library of Congress[6]

Transformations: The journey of László Baróthy from the War of Independence to his return to Hungary

From the end of the 18th century, Hungarian immigrants arrived sporadically in the United States, but their numbers remained small for a long time. The first bigger wave of Hungarian immigration came from the exiles of the 1848-1849 War of Independence, a significant proportion of whom were officers fleeing execution and imprisonment. When Lajos Kossuth was speaking in New Orleans on March 31, 1852, during his American tour, he was surrounded by six Hungarian officers, including László Baróthy, armed with swords and revolvers to defend him against possible attacks. But who was László Baróthy, what was his path to American immigration, and when and how did he finally return to Hungary?

László Baróthy
1852

The lawyer of noble birth

The Baróthy family of Baróth and Csíkszenttamás received their nobility charter in 1673 and lived in Transylvania and Bihar County (in today's Romania). László Baróthy was born on June 20, 1820, in Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Romania), the son of János Baróti Szabó, a landowner, and Bora Gubernáth. He completed the first year of the Nagyvárad Law Academy in 1837–1838, and the second year in 1841–1842. Between the two dates he may have done military service.

On February 29, 1844, in Pozsony (also Pressburg, today Bratislava, Slovakia) he married Wilhelmina Krohe, daughter of Gyula Krohe, the city inspector. Their marriage must have been a forced and urgent one, as their first child, Géza, was baptized on July 6 of the same year in the same church. The newlyweds returned to Nagyvárad, where their second son was born in 1846, who was baptized Kálmán Károly. László Baróthy practiced as a lawyer in both Nagyvárad and Pozsony.

The military officer

The Hungarian government, led by Prime Minister Lajos Batthyány, appointed after the revolution of March 15, 1848, set up a permanent committee to replace the county assemblies and a national guard to maintain order. On March 22, 1848, László Baróthy was elected as a member of the permanent committee to maintain order in Bihar County. It was on his order that the two-headed eagle was removed from the cathedral of Nagyvárad.

In the summer of 1848, a Serbian uprising began in the southern counties of Hungary. Romanian nationalists were also causing unrest and a state of emergency was declared in several counties, including Bihar. After martial law was declared on June 20, Baróthy became a member of the county's summary judgment committee. On July 27, he marched to Nagyszalonta/Salonta with the mobilized battalion of the Bihar County National Guard, together with 500 soldiers carrying bayonets. Fighting in Banat continued from mid-August to mid-November. Following the reorganization of the National Guard, the county formed seven companies, with László Baróthy holding the rank of captain in the first Bihar National Guard battalion. His battalion arrived in Nagybecskerek (today Zrenjanin, Serbia) on August 21 and fought in three battles.
In the autumn of 1848, the National Guard troops were transformed into army battalions. The 55th Bihar Battalion was also organized at this time and fought throughout the campaign that ended with the liberation of Transylvania. Its commander was Maj. Dániel Ihász, and László Baróthy was a captain. Leading 200 men, Baróthy took part in the battle of Nagysebes/Valea Drăganului on December 7, where he distinguished himself by his enthusiasm despite the defeat. On April 24, 1849, Ihász was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and László Baróthy was promoted to major of the 55th Battalion. He commanded his unit in the brigade guarding the Vöröstorony/Turnu Roşu Pass. On July 20, Russian troops attacking from Nagyszeben/Sibiu pushed them into Wallachia, where they laid down their arms before Turkish troops.

Portrait of László Baróthy
Source: Gyula Kuné, Egy szabadságharcos emlékiratai [The memoir of a freedom fighter]. Chicago, 1913, p. 49.

The exiled Ottoman bey

After the Surrender at Világos on August 13, 1849, many Home Guard officers fled to the Ottoman Empire to avoid the heavy prison sentences or death sentences that would have awaited them if they had remained in Hungary. But even staying on Turkish soil did not offer them complete protection. The only way to escape possible deportation was to join the Ottoman army and convert to Islam. Ottoman authorities encouraged conversion since it would provide them with experienced soldiers. László Baróthy was sent to a refugee camp in Vidin, on the Ottoman side of the Danube. The 5,000 or 6,000 refugees gathered there were soon divided by the Porte's encouragement to convert to Islam. Gen. József Bem was willing to comply with the Ottomans' wishes, for which Lajos Kossuth later condemned him. Among the most famous converts were József Bem, Görgy Kmetty, and Richárd Guyon. Almost all the officers of the 55th Battalion converted on September 17, among them László Baróthy, who was given the name of Ottoman Bey.

Contemporary reminiscences mention his marriage in Vidin to Etelka Lévay, who fled to Turkey with her sister, following their father. "*Etelka, the older sister, entered into a love match with Major Baróti, while Anna did with Captain Thoult, which later ended in a solemn marriage. But what is most original in this matter is that Etelka already had a husband, who remained in Hungary, and despite not divorcing him, she gave her hand to Baroti.*"[7] Two decades later, Márton Hegyesi described László Baróthy's marriage as "*a mere fairy tale.*"[8]

The case of the Vidin camp inhabitants caused international tension between the Ottoman, Austrian, and Russian sides. The Istanbul Porte resisted extraditing the refugees. However, the Vidin camp was soon dismantled. More than 3,000 fugitives returned to Hungary after the Austrian government promised amnesty. The rest of the camp was moved to Sumla in what is now Bulgaria, under the orders of the Porte. At the further demand of the Austro–Russian side, the Ottoman Sultan exiled the emigrants, who were a threat to Austria, to Asia Minor. The Hungarian soldiers who converted to Islam, led by General Bem, were directed to Aleppo by the Ottoman authorities. József Bem was appointed to the highest rank in the Ottoman army at the time, that of a ferik (commander), but he died in fighting with the Druze on December 10, 1850.

Some of Bem's Hungarian followers wrote that he had become a "forced Muslim" and considered it unlikely that the converts had remained Muslim. This was the case with Baróthy, who emigrated to the United States with several others. They arrived in New Orleans in March 1852. According to the ship's manifest, they sailed from Marseille, their destination given as Iowa.[9]

Kossuth's bodyguard

Kossuth, interned in Kütahya in Asia Minor, was reluctantly released by the Ottomans, who feared an Austro–Russian retaliation. The Porte, after repeated requests, finally granted Lajos Kossuth and his companions permission to leave in September 1851, after the United States Congress invited Kossuth to the U.S. Kossuth arrived in the U.S. in early December 1851. His tour, which lasted more than seven months, was met with great interest and enthusiasm, and he made more than 500 speeches in some 70 cities. On March 26, he arrived in New Orleans, where he remained until April 1. In the southern states, however, he was received with far less enthusiasm. In Lafayette Square in front of New Orleans City Hall, Kossuth addressed a crowd of 8,000 people, according to contemporary newspapers, on the subject of freedom for all – a highly sensitive issue in the slave-holding city at the time.

"Thus came the day for which it was announced that Kossuth would address the people in the open air at 7 o'clock in the evening. Knowing the hatred of our enemies, we feared that the darkness of the evening would be used against Kossuth. It was time to leave. We and our compatriots and comrades who had been freed from Aleppo, namely, János Fiala, Anzelm Albert, László Árvai, Hugó Hollán, László Baróthy and Bódog Nemegyei, armed with swords and revolvers, determined to defend Kossuth if necessary, accompanied him to Lafayette Square and surrounded him on the scaffolding erected there; and the stand was surrounded by those of the civilian army who loved, admired, one might say worshiped Kossuth, fully armed, and, as we have heard, armed with live ammunition. Around the stand, in a light of lamps and turpentine urns, some 5,000 or 6,000 people crowded, eager to see and hear Kossuth. The stand was decorated with one worn Hungarian flag and several American flags. [...] Although the enemies of Kossuth [...] tried to obstruct the speech by shouting and howling, they were unsuccessful against the large crowd listening attentively. [...] There was no disorder, and we dispersed home in good order. The next day, Kossuth's speech could be read in several newspapers." [10]

Lajos Kossuth and his secretary, Ferenc Pulszky in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1852
Source: Fortepan/Mihály Szarvasy

Family man

László Baróthy settled in Iowa after his New Orleans detour. Here, he married Maria Möller[11], a German woman, on October 15, 1855. Three years later, it was announced in several newspapers in Hungary that "*by supreme decree, the following political refugees, László Baróthy and Károly Dulf, were allowed to return to Austria without consequences, having requested this through intercession in Hungary [...].*"[12] It is likely that László returned to Hungary to bring his sons, Géza and Kálmán, whom he had not seen for nearly 10 years, back with him to America. A report from the eighth-year school in Nagyvárad reported that "*Mr. László Baróthy donated: a piece of the cable that connects the electric telegraph between Europe and America under the sea.*"[13] He returned to New York in October 1858 with his sons and his wife, Wilhelmine[14], via Hamburg on the ship Bavaria.[15]

We do not know how Baróthy resolved his two marriages or when Wilhelmine returned to Hungary. In the 1860 census, Baróthy was already listed with his wife Maria, and in addition to Géza and Kálmán; Pál, born in 1858, was living in the same household with them. Their son Árpád was born in 1861, who died as a child. He was followed two years later by Júlia. László Baróthy and Mária Möller applied for a passport in January 1865, intending to return to Hungary with Pál, Árpád, and Júlia. In Nagyvárad, they had four more children: Örs in 1866, Árpád in 1870, Mária in 1872, and Erzsébet in 1875.

Farmer

In America, László Baróthy first obtained the right to farm two plots of 80 acres each in Iowa in December 1855. A year and a half later, he bought land in Omaha, Nebraska. From his early days in Iowa, he mechanized his farming, as he reported in a letter published in the Gazdasági Lapok (Economic Journal) in 1862. "*I, gentlemen, by a cruel stroke of good fortune, have been working with reaping and mowing machines for seven years, – I have owned one myself for four years, and I know the weaker and stronger sides of each [...] If anything deserves the attention of Hungarian farmers, it is the reaping and harvesting, printing and corn-milling machine. Without these machines, we here in Nebraska would starve. With these machines, we feed 30,000 gold miners in the stone mountains from our surplus.*"[16] He also offered his help in answering any questions about the machines and in obtaining further information from the factories.

He continued to use the knowledge he had acquired in the New World after his return to Hungary in 1865. "*On his return from America, László Baróthy brought three harvesting machines with him, and with one of them [...] he held a trial before a large number of landowners, which was a success, and Mr. Kálmán Tisza bought the machine. The other harvesting machine was raffled off in the evening in the courtyard of the casino at the suggestion of the assembled landowners.*"[17] And in 1870 he was already the local agent for a 10-year patent on a harvesting machine from an American factory. He was also an officer of the Nagyvárad Savings Bank, a member of the Bihar County Home Guard, and remained an American citizen until his death.

Good old Uncle Laci

László Baróthy died in Nagyvárad on November 24, 1885. His wife, Maria, lived another 25 years as a widow, and was laid to rest with her husband on June 23, 1910. The accounts of Baróthy's death in 1885 also mention his eventful life, naming him as a major in the 1848th Guards, aide-de-camp to Bem, an officer on the run with Kossuth, a citizen of North America, founder of the first Hungarian farm in America, a retired official of the Nagyvárad Savings Bank, a generally popular man of good character, and 'good old Uncle Laci'.

After his death, his three daughters lived in Hungary and his five sons in America. At the age of 16, Kálmán fought in the American Civil War and chased Indians with Buffalo Bill. It was a tragic American-style duel that landed Örs Baróthy on the front pages of American newspapers. And Árpád, in addition to being a successful doctor in Chicago, was president of the Hungarian American Association and founder of the American Revisionist League between the two world wars... but that's another story.

By Péter Homor and Réka Bakos
Győr, May 2024
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Baróthy László's obituary
Source: Familysearch.org[18]

1885. XI. 24.

Özvegy Baróthy Lászlóné, született Müller Mária saját és gyermekei: Géza, Kálmán, Pál, Julianna, Örs, Árpád, Mariska és Erzsike nevében fájdalomtelt szívvel tudatja szeretett férje és a gondos, gyengéd apa

BARÓTHY LÁSZLÓ

1848/49-ik évi honvédőrnagy, dezakamerikai polgár és a nagyváradi takarékpénztár nyugalmazott könyvvezetőjének

Nagyváradon, 1885. november 24-ik napján, délelőtt 10½ órakor, hosszas, súlyos betegség után, élete 66-ik s boldog házasságának 31-ik évében tudóhajban történt gyászos elhunytát.

A kőfaragó-utczai 824. sz. házból 1885. november hó 26-án, délutáni 3 órakor, a ref. egyház szertartása szerint tartandó végtisztességtételre a rokonok, barátok és a család bánatában résztvevők tisztelettel meghivatnak.

Nagyvárad, 1885. november 24.

Áldás és béke porai felett!

The Civil War, a duel, and the Treaty of Trianon: The adventurous lives of the Baróthy brothers in America

This is the story of three men who, although descended from the same father – the 1848 Hungarian Major Baróthy, also featured in this volume – had very different lives, each representing an interesting type of Hungarian who went to America.

The oldest brother of the three, Kálmán Baróthy, was born in 1846 in the Kingdom of Hungary and sent to the New World at the age of 10 after his freedom-fighting father's exile in Turkey and emigration to America. Later, Kálmán would become the oldest veteran among the Hungarians fighting in the American Civil War. The middle brother, Örs Baróthy, was born in Hungary in 1866, after their father's return. Sadly, his life in America ended in tragedy. Perhaps Kálmán and Örs's younger brother, Árpád, born in 1870, best exemplified the cherished Hungarian dream of emigration success. He became a successful doctor, world traveler, and prominent member of Hungarian public life in America, where he was an advocate of the post-Trianon revisionist movement in the New World. Their fates are recounted in this chapter.

Bushwhackers, Buffalo Bill and President Roosevelt: The Story of Kálmán Baróthy

László's second son, Kálmán, was born on September 15, 1846, probably in Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Romania). He was 18 months old when the revolution broke out. During his father's exile and early years in America, he probably lived with his mother and brother, Géza, with whom he boarded the ship Bavaria in Hamburg on October 31, 1858, to join his father in Nebraska. The 1860 U.S. census finds Géza and Kálmán in Omaha, where they were living with László's second wife, Maria Müller, and their half-brother, Pál, born in 1858.

After the outbreak of the American Civil War, Kálmán enlisted as a soldier with the First Nebraska Volunteers of the G Infantry Division in 1863. Even in old age, he vividly remembered that day. It was late at night when he and two other boys from Fontenelle walked into the recruiting office. He was only 16, but he was confident he would be recruited. He wrote the number 18 on a small piece of cardboard and put it in his shoe so that when the recruiting officer asked his age, he could honestly answer that he was close to 18.

Afterward, he went home for 10 days but returned to Omaha for his uniform, which was too big for him. He stayed in Omaha for the duration of his training. In March 1863, he was ordered to St. Louis, where he was assigned guard duty for several months. He fought against the Bushwhackers in Arkansas and Missouri. The 'bushwhackers' were fighters who operated mainly in Missouri and Kansas during the American Civil War. They often used guerrilla tactics, hiding in the woods and carrying out surprise raids. One day, Kálmán had his horse shot out from under him twice. He was once wounded in the leg. After the war, he was ordered to Fort Kearney to fight Indians in Nebraska. There, he met Buffalo Bill Cody but did not think much of Cody's talents as a soldier or scout. He later told how Buffalo Bill had tried to lead troops overland from the Platte River to the Missouri River but failed.

Kálmán left the army in July 1866. After his discharge, he was engaged in various business enterprises but lived most of his life in Omaha. He married twice, first to Estella Jane Wilson in 1874, with whom he had a daughter and twin sons; unfortunately, all three children died prematurely. After divorcing Estella, he married Marie Kunegunda Elsinger, with whom he lived until the end of his life.

Kálmán Baróthy and veterans singing
Source: Civil War Talk

On the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1938, the U.S. government invited veterans of the Northern and Southern armies to a meeting in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which Kálmán Baróthy attended. *"The surviving veterans, the youngest of whom is over 90 years old, turned out by the thousands for the unprecedented celebration, where, in the same place where President Lincoln had spoken, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed them. The appearance of groups of old people at each railroad station caused a sensation. Many people tried to take pictures of them, and one of the happy groups was captured at a Chicago station. The old warriors were huddled together, singing some old soldier's song in high spirits, when the picture was taken."*[19] Charles Kalman Barothy died in 1944 at the age of 99 at the Veterans Hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Kálmán Baróthy
1858

A black bullet, a black-edged envelope, and three pistol shots: The story of Örs Baróthy

Kálmán's younger brother, Örs, was born in Nagyvárad in 1866, after his parents had returned from America. At the age of 19, in September 1885, he challenged a military officer to a duel for libel. What was known in Hungary as an "American duel" was chosen, where the parties drew a white and a black ball, and whoever drew the black ball was to shoot himself after three years. Baróthy, the injured party, drew the black one.

Shortly after his father's death, he left Hungary to work as a mechanic in the Union Pacific workshop in Omaha. A few weeks before his death, he traveled to Chicago, where he also took a job at Ellithorpe Air Brake, a mechanic shop.

According to newspaper accounts of the time, Baróthy was depressed by the knowledge that his day of death was imminent, but he never said a word to anyone – not even his brothers – lest he be dissuaded from fulfilling his terrible obligation. He took a black-framed envelope and paper and wrote a letter to his brothers, his opponent, and aides on both sides, letting them know that he would make good on his word in the hours to come, which he did with three shots fired on the shores of Lake Michigan on September 12, 1888. In the letter to his brothers, he declared that he did not fear death, and did not wish his brothers to doubt him, for he died defending his honor and his word. The letter was written in clear script, in a firm hand. Örs also reported that he had bought a coffin and a full funeral suit, which he had paid for, and that he had made full arrangements for the funeral as far as he could. After news of the incident reached them, Kálmán and Árpád went to Chicago to take their brother's remains with them to rest in Fremont.

Mihály Károlyi, President Wilson, and the Lindbergh record: The story of Árpád Baróthy

Árpád Baróthy was born on February 14, 1870, in Nagyvárad. His mother, Maria Möller, was of German descent. His father, László, had married her in America. Árpád's name can be found in the yearbook of the Nagyvárad State High School of 1883–1885. After their father's death, Árpád moved to America in 1886, where he could join his brothers already living there. Five years later, he became an American citizen. He worked as a pharmacist in Fremont, Nebraska, and then studied medicine in Chicago, where he graduated in 1894.

Árpád first attracted media attention at the age of 21 when he decided to make a trip between Nebraska and Hungary by bicycle, excluding the sea voyage. Performance cycling was in vogue at the time so his venture was followed by the American press. In addition, he was often accompanied by members of local cycling clubs.

As a medical practitioner, he was known for using a kind of chemotherapy for hernia, struma and varicose veins. Alongside his practice, he established a health resort on the Pere Marquette River. In 1901, he married Francis Alice Nessling in Chicago. His wife was a graduate of the College of Fine Arts, active in the city as an art teacher and art organizer, and was also known as a painter. They had two children, Frederick Bela Baróthy (1903–?) and Victor Louis Baróthy (1907–1972).

One of the most important Hungarian advocacy and lobbying organizations in North America in the wake of the 19th and 20th century wave of Hungarian emigration was the American Hungarian Federation (AHF), founded in Cleveland in 1906. Generally speaking, the Hungarian American community was politically motivated by the independence movement of 1848. By the 1910s, most of them supported the Independence Party of Mihály Károlyi over the party of István Tisza. Soon after the United States officially entered World War I Hungarian Americans believed that Lajos Kossuth's goal of an independent Hungarian republic could only be achieved if America was on the winning side. Soon, a movement backing an independent Hungarian republic was launched in Chicago. Árpád Baróthy took an active part in Hungarian public life there, hosting Count Mihály Károlyi as a guest just two days before the assassination attempt on Franz Ferdinand. In 1914, he was elected president of the American Hungarian Federation.

Toward the end of World War I, a Hungarian delegation led by Árpád Baróthy was received by President Woodrow Wilson. According to an account of the meeting, *"Wilson received them most cordially, expressed his appreciation of the aims of the loyal league and promised the support of the American government for the Hungarian-American cause. Then a member of the delegation raised the subject of Romania's claim to Transylvania and asked Wilson what he thought of the matter. To the great delight of the Hungarians, Wilson said that 'he was far from being convinced that it was a salutary and just solution'."*[20] Baróthy, as the leader of the pro-democracy and pro-independence American Hungarian organization, had already declared his support for the preservation of the territorial unity of historic Hungary.

After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, divergent political views between the Horthy-era Hungarian political leadership and Hungarian Americans slowed the participation of American Hungarians in public life in Hungary. However, a broad consensus on territorial revision allowed cooperation to emerge toward the late 1920s. In 1927, Győző Drozdy, a former '48 Independence Party politician (and later, a small holders' party politician) arrived in the United States to champion the cause of revision. Drozdy started a newspaper called *Írás*, in which Árpád Baróthy regularly published articles.

On December 14, 1928, 58 American Hungarian organizations banded together to found the Midwest Revisionist League in Chicago, with Árpád Baróthy as its president. Their next major event, aimed at rallying American public opinion and the government to support peace treaty revision, took place at the American Hungarian National Convention in Buffalo in May 1929. Thousands of Hungarian participants tried to draw attention to the injustice of the Trianon Peace Treaty, and Árpád Baróthy was present at the event.

The officers of the Buffalo American Hungarian National Convention were noted as: Lipót Mosonyi, Roman Catholic parish priest, Buffalo; Árpád Baróthy, physician, Chicago; István Molnár, police captain and secretary of the American Hungarian Reformed Federation, president of the assembly, Toledo; Sándor Finta, sculptor, New York; János Ormay, Lutheran pastor, Buffalo; Hugó Varga, attorney, Cleveland; and Sándor Bellony, state military engineer, Washington.
Source: Képes Pesti Hírlap[21]

The Buffalo meeting was followed three months later by the First World Congress of Hungarians in Budapest. The controversial relationship between the participants and the political leadership of the day was reflected in the fact that the delegates were not received by any leading government politicians. After visiting parliament, the congress members gathered around Kossuth's statue. Árpád Baróthy later gave a speech at the statue of George Washington in Budapest.

In his speech, Árpád *"compared Washington, Lincoln and Kossuth as the three greatest fighters for freedom. He expressed the hope, amidst the enthusiastic applause of the assembled, that the great example of these three world greats would contribute to the achievement of bringing the Severed Hungary back to its feet."*[22] At a second meeting the World Federation of Hungarians was founded, of which the American Hungarian Association was also a member.

The next event of the Midwest Revisionist League inviting media attention was the "Justice for Hungary" car procession on April 13, 1930. The event was prompted by the arrival in Chicago of air force officer Sándor Magyar, who had emigrated to Canada. Sándor Magyar was raising funds for his venture to break Charles Lindbergh's 1927 record for cross-ocean flights, and to draw world attention to the injustice of Trianon. Hundreds of decorated automobiles with inscriptions and Hungarian and American flags took part in the parade. The demonstration was repeated a year later in Chicago. The successful cross-ocean flight set a new record in 1931. The plane, christened "Justice for Hungary," flew from Newfoundland to Hungary under the direction of pilot Károly Endresz and navigator Sándor Magyar.

The Hungarian organizing committee of the 1933–1934 Chicago World's Fair continued to promote the revisionist cause as well as Hungarian culture and economics. For Árpád Baróthy, the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 had been a defining experience, and so he took an active part in organizing the Hungarian part of this event, even though Hungary did not officially participate. He was elected chairman of the organizing committee.

The official title of the Chicago World's Fair, held on the centenary of the city's founding, was "Century of Progress." The contribution of Hungarian inventors to the development of mankind was linked to the theme of the World's Fair. The exhibition opened on May 27, 1933, and featured the torsion pendulum of Baron Loránd Eötvös and the life's work of Ignác Semmelweis.

The international book exhibition featured 50 Hungarian books. The first Hungarian canning factory of Manfréd Weisz, the Krausz Brothers, craftsmen and artisans, Széchenyi Export, and the Pannonia leather factory were among the companies exhibited. Cultural programs were held on an artificial island in Lake Michigan, where a Hungarian venue was erected. On August 12, 1934, a "Hungarian Day" was held and a tavern was set up to showcase Hungarian hospitality. A beauty contest was also held at the World's Fair, with Ilonka Péter being chosen Miss Hungaria.

Poster of the World Expo
Source: Library of Congress[23]

After the World's Fair, Árpád Baróthy's name appeared more sparsely in the press. The last major event of Hungarian relevance in his life was the Chicago Relief Mission at the end of World War II, which took place on April 8, 1945. A total of 58 Chicago nongovernmental organizations joined the Hungarian Aid Program, founded by Hungarian American organizations to support Hungary. Over five years, some $3 million in donations of money and goods (mainly food, medicine, clothing and agricultural machinery) were collected.

The Chicago conference was opened by Árpád Baróthy, who was later elected Honorary President. He spent his last years in serious illness at the Bethlen Home of the Hungarian Reformed Churches of America in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. He died on April 29, 1955, and was laid to rest in Chicago.

This Baróthy story is not only the account of the lives of three brothers, but also part of a larger picture. Their father, László, who came to America in 1852, arrived with the first wave of Hungarians. When Kálmán joined him six years later, there were still fewer than 4,000 Hungarians living in the New World. Even so, 800 of them had fought in the American Civil War. By the 1890s, when Örs and Árpád arrived in America, the number of Hungarian immigrants had risen to 60,000, and then to nearly half a million by 1910. The Hungarians who arrived in the United States formed communities and organizations to preserve their traditions and advocate for their rights. Árpád's role in this development was outstanding. The story of the Baróthy family is, thus, not only a personal history, but also a collective one: that of Hungarian immigrants who shaped the American dream with courage, perseverance and community-building. The resort founded by Árpád along the Pere Marquette still operates today under the name Barothy Lodge, continuing to attract those seeking relaxation and rest.

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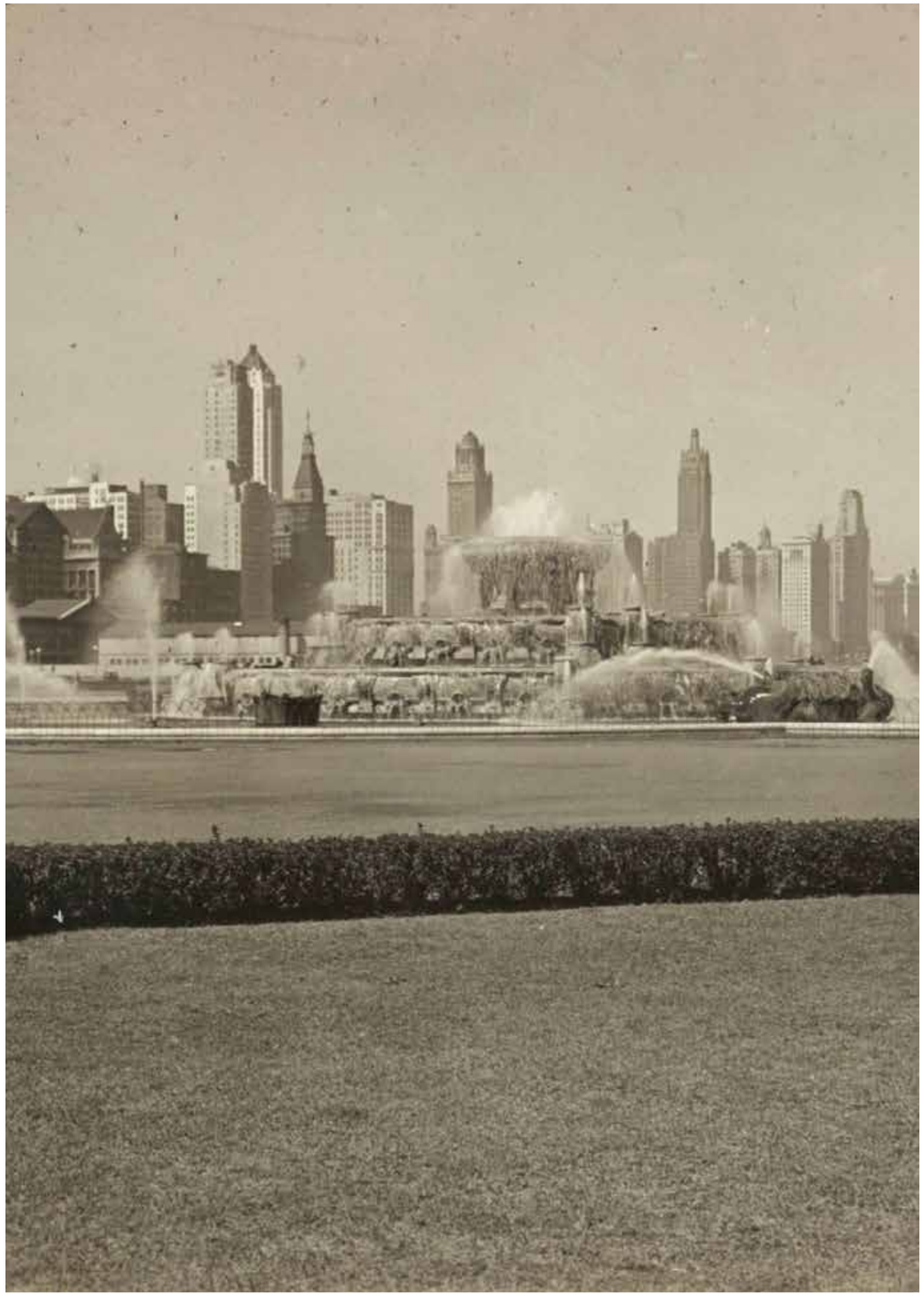

Chicago in the 1930s
Source: Library of Congress[24]

On the paths of generations: the story of the Patz family

"In every bloodline (family), a soul is born that chooses to bring healing to its ancestors. These are seekers born from the liberating paths of the family tree, members of the tree who do not conform to the rules and traditions of the family system, who from an early age constantly try to revolutionize the family belief system, defying tradition. Rescuers, who free the family tree from the frustrating, repetitive traumas that have been passed down through generations. And it is possible that this beautiful soul is you."
(Bert Hellinger)

I don't even know when it started. About 10 years ago, I felt that I had to build a family tree. I started it and entered the people I could. Then, with the help of my mother and a dear relative, I was able to expand my knowledge. Then I stopped for a long time, and then, on a sudden impulse, I started again, but much more consciously. I read literature, forums, joined groups on various social networking sites to find out how, where and what to look for. One day, when I felt a little tired of researching and writing this story, I was just aimlessly scrolling through one of the social media sites and came across the above quote. Then and now, I feel as if I am the soul in question. I have kept in touch with many family members – some I have known for ages, and others I have found during my research, but I have found none as dedicated, interested, or committed as I am. Which is too bad, because they might make my work easier – but I have to continue on this often difficult journey alone. I want the ancestors' stories to be remembered. It is because of them that I am here, writing these lines.. I wonder if those who worked on the land and in the coal mines, or sailed to a foreign continent in search of a better life, ever thought that in the future someone would be curious about them, remember and love them. I feel that it is my duty now to keep the memory of these people alive, to care for them and to cherish their story.

In the footsteps of ancestors: The roots of the Patz family

The story of one branch of my family, my maternal grandfather's, starts in a tiny village in the heart of Europe, Svedlér. This village is now part of Slovakia (its Slovak name is Švedlár), but at that time it was still part of Szepes County in Hungary. early in the 13th century, it was a German-speaking mining town with a significant Hungarian minority, including my ancestors. Families mainly left the area because of poor economic conditions and a desire to avoid compulsory military service.

Jakab Patz
1890

Svedlér at the turn of the 20th century
Source: Zemplén Museum

It was very difficult to find them: my great-great-grandfather must have been born out of wedlock, because the father was not listed in the birth certificate, so the boy was given his mother's surname. I was unable to learn anything about them for a long time, but eventually found my great-great-great-grandmother's birth certificate, which listed both of her parents' names. From then on, there was no stopping me. More names, places and dates were discovered. Of course, I double checked everything, often going astray. But to my great joy, I found 10 generations of ancestors on my mother's side. Johann Patz, my direct ancestor seven generations back, married Sara Kreis, and had Sára Patz and Jacob Patz as their children. It is Sára who gave birth out of wedlock to János Pacz, who is my great-great-grandfather. Sára's brother, Jacob, married Susanna Groh. Their children were Jacob, Susanna and Caspar Patz (later Potts).

János Pacz had already moved to Hungary, to Miskolc to be precise, and his last name became Pacz. Here he met Borbala Hamrák, who was born in Edelény. They married and the fruit of their love was born, who was also named János after his father – he is my great-grandfather. He married Julianna Papp, from among the daughters of a family in Miskolc, and they had a child, Pál Pacz, my grandfather, whom I unfortunately did not know for long, as he died before my second birthday in April 1985. My grandfather married a young woman from Transylvania, Rozália Bajkó, and they had two children, Ilona Pacz, my mother, and her brother, Pál, who is my godfather. Many of those who emigrated to America kept the Patz name, while others lived with the name Potts, passing on the family heritage and traditions. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to find out whether the name change was due to accidental misspellings or done on purpose. My mother told me that when she was a child, her name was often misspelled as Patz, and sometimes this still happens today.

It is interesting that the children of my great-great-great-grandmother's brother all tried their luck in America and probably succeeded, never returning to Hungary, and were buried there, far from their homeland.

A photo from the land of dreams: Jacob Potts and his family

For a long time, I just rummaged through dry records in registers, until I finally got a photo from a relative whom I found while doing research. Fearfully, I dared to open the attachment, then swallowed hard and looked at the unfamiliar yet familiar faces with teary eyes. A family. A mother and her nine children. The family of my great-great-great-grandmother's nephew. In great America. In the land of dreams. In Bridgeville, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, the husband, Jacob Potts was no longer alive when the picture was taken. Nevertheless, they smile, looking forward to an uncertain future. A mother, Julianna Bretschneider, with nine children, in a strange new world. She must have been scared and desperate, but she held on because she had to raise her children.

Julia (Bretschneider) Potts and her children in the American town of Scott, circa 1913
Source: Family photo album

In the late 19th century, Bridgeville was self-sufficient, with a thriving business district and expanding residential neighborhoods, and by 1900 was recorded as the largest unincorporated community in Allegheny County, with over 2,000 residents. It was likened to a melting pot, with significant Italian, Slovenian, German, African American, Lithuanian, Syrian and Hungarian communities. My research revealed that Julianna was from the same village as her future husband Jacob – from Svedlér. Then at the age of 21, in 1890, she boarded the SS Ems in Bremen and arrived at Ellis Island. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to find out whether Julianna and Jacob knew each other from back home or met in America, but they married a year later in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Based on the dates, it seems likely that their first children were a set of twins, Jacob and Marie Patz–true love children–born almost exactly nine months after the wedding. Sadly, only Marie survived. Jacob passed away the day he was born. The twins were followed two years later by Julie Patz, and then a long-awaited baby boy arrived, also named Jacob Potts after his father, of course (some of the children were named Patz, while others Potts). The following year, another child was born, John, followed by Frank Robert and Michael Anton. Sadly, Michael Anton also died in childhood, not yet in his second year. No more boys were born after this, but Hilda, Julia Ann, Susanna, Rose, Susann and Pauline joined the clan. Susanna died when she was 4-months old and Rose died at age 7. According to U.S. census data, only eight children reached adulthood and started families.

It is important to note here that it was common at the time for the name of a deceased sibling to be given to a later child, as I have seen in my research in Hungary, the United States, and in Transylvania: as many as two or three children were given the same name if the first or second sibling died as an infant or toddler. It is possible that this was done to ease the pain over a child lost earlier, but I do not know.

Also during this period and for the rest of her life, Julianna was a housewife, at home with the children, while her husband Jacob, like many Hungarians and other Svedlér compatriots at the time, worked in the coal mines. This is probably the cause of his death at the very young age of 45 from bronchial asthma, a chronic inflammation of the airways. The above picture was taken shortly after this unfortunate event. Over the years, they moved many times in Pennsylvania, first living in Scott Township in Allegheny County. It was a mortgaged house and the majority of the children were born there. It is an interesting fact that in the 1900 census the property was mortgaged, but in the 1910 census, Jacob is listed as the owner, with no mortgage. At that time, in 10 years a coal miner's wages were enough to pay off the mortgage and support eight children and two adults. Census records indicated that the female children did not go to school at the time, but they could read and write, probably taught at home by their mother. The male children went to school. It was a different world in those days. Children started working very early. John, 14, was already working as a delivery boy at the local glass factory. Jacob, 15, was a heating worker at the same factory.

Eight lives: The story of the Potts siblings

At 18, **Mary** was a servant with a wealthy family. By age 20, she had married Edward Samuel Oelschlager, 23, who had also come to the United States from Svedlér in the Old Country. They were already living in a separate house in Bridgeville with their two daughters, Helen and Elizabeth. Mary was also a homemaker, living in Bridgeville for 60 years. She moved to High Point, North Carolina, five years before her death in 1980. She died at High Point Memorial Hospital after five months of serious illness, most likely from cancer, as the family's obituary asks mourners to make donations to the American Cancer Society. Her resting place is next to her beloved husband at Melrose Cemetery in Bridgeville. She was a beloved and respected member of Zion Lutheran Church, which was founded in the late 1800s by one of her husband's ancestors, Dorothea Oelschlager. She had three grandchildren by her daughter Helen.

Jacob got a job as a steelworker and later worked as a fireman at a steel mill. By the 1930s, he was listed as a World War I veteran and had a home in Scott Township, Allegheny County. His wife was Naomi Ann Neff, the daughter of immigrants from England, with whom he had three children: Nancy, Naomi Jane, who died in infancy, and Jacob Leonard. Jacob's wife, Naomi, died nine years after his death in 1979, and they are buried at Chartiers Cemetery in Carnegie, PA. A member of St. John Lutheran Church, his funeral donations were used for church construction.

After working in the glass factory, **John** took a job as a machine operator in the iron works and lived in a rented house with his wife, Ann Medonis, whose parents were of Lithuanian descent.

John and Jacob lived on the same street as their family, on Montgomery Avenue in Scott, during the 1930s. At the time, Jacob's sisters Pauline, 18, and Susanne, 20, were also living with Jacob's family. John and Anne had two children, John Jacob and Elizabeth, as well as five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. John also fought in World War I. In 1983, he was buried next to his wife at Chartiers Cemetery. Like his brother, Jacob, he was a member of St. John Lutheran Church.

It is notable that the 1930 census sheets include a column asking whether the household had a radio. As of October 1, 1919, the World War I ban on civilian radio stations was lifted. Soon, stations proliferated, broadcasting information, sporting events and entertainment wirelessly, even in real time. Radios were the social media of the time, a revolutionary innovation. On September 29, 1920, an advertisement in the newspaper Pittsburgh Press said that Wireless World receivers – which could also be used to listen to a live concert – were available for $10 at Joseph Horne's department store, one of the oldest in the country. Interestingly, more families with two foreign-born parents owned radios than those whose families had lived in America for several generations or were African Americans.

Frank also worked in a steel mill as a heater and married Mary Elizabeth Taylor, also of English ancestry, and they lived in Bridgeville. They had three sons, Frank Markious, Rody Jacob and Raymond Howard. By the 1930s, he was working in a steel mill. By 1940, they were living in the town of Collier in a rented house on Aylesworth Avenue, the same street as his brother John's family. When they moved there, he was working as a machine operator. His three children added seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren to the family. Frank died in 1987 and is buried with his wife at Melrose Cemetery in Bridgeville.

Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, around 1911
Source: Bridgeville Area Historical Society

Frank's middle child, Rody Jacob, fought in World War II and was listed as a war veteran until his death in 1980. He is buried at Forest Lawn Memorial Gardens Cemetery in McMurray, Washington County, Pennsylvania.

There is a Military Banner Tribute Program in the United States, whereby banners are placed in memory of the brave men and women who served. The banners feature a photo, name and service status at a requested location. Rody has one such flag, indicating that he served in the 119th Infantry Regiment and 28th Infantry Division during World War II. He took part in the Battle of the Bulge on the border between Belgium and Germany, where his division suffered heavy casualties. As a member of the infantry regiment, he fought in the Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe campaigns. His brother, Raymond Howard, also received a banner for serving in World War II as a medical replacement officer in training and in the Air Force Training Corps, helping his country in wartime.

Hilda worked as a saleswoman in a dry goods store in the town of Scott at the age of 17 and later married Charles Elwarner, with whom she had three children: Dorothy Ella, Charles Christopher and William Arthur. In the 1950s, they moved to Crafton and Hilda became a homemaker. By their children, Hilda and Charles had eight grandchildren. They are both buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Scott Township.

Julia was a homemaker, as many mothers were in those days, and she and her husband, William Alvin Riles, lived inPeters Township in Washington County with their children, Gail Cecil, William Alvin and Louis Yovanne. In the 1940s, they moved to Crafton, where Julia's sister, Hilda, lived. They had five grandchildren. Julia died in 1988, and is buried alongside her husband at Chartiers Cemetery in Carnegie.

Susan, unlike her sister, attended school, although she had only completed seven grades. At the age of 20, she was living with her brother, Jacob, in Scott Township, where she worked as a sales clerk in a grocery store. She and her husband, Frank Jones, moved to Cross Creek, 24 miles away. They had three children and three grandchildren. She spent her last years in Steubenville, Ohio, and was buried there in 2001, at Union Cemetery. She was an avid and humble member of Grace Lutheran Church in Steubenville, active in the Lutheran Women's Guild (a churchwide group specifically for women to help women in spiritual development and community service) and taught Sunday School, where she helped children learn the teachings of Jesus Christ, family unity and self-knowledge.

As the last daughter born, **Pauline** barely knew her father, who passed away shortly before her first birthday. She was the only one in the family to have completed her primary schooling in full. At 18, she was living with her brother, Jacob, in Scott Township and later married Francesco Paolini, whose parents had emigrated from Italy. They lived in Scott Township and Pauline worked in a clothing store as a retail clerk. They had a daughter and two grandchildren. She was a member of St. John Lutheran Church in Carnegie and the Carnegie Senior Citizens Association until her death in 2000.

Jacob Potts' siblings in America:
The story of Susanna and Caspar

Jacob's sister, Susanna (who retained the name Patz), also emigrated to the United States and settled in Pennsylvania, where she became the wife of a "fellow countryman," Caspar Klein. They also settled in Scott Township. Their primary language was German, but they could also read and write English. Susanna was a homemaker and raised six children: Susan, John, Caspar, William, Elizabeth and William. Her husband, Caspar, worked in a paint factory and lateras a road builder. Caspar arrived in Baltimore in 1886 on the *S.S. Hermann*, a ship that sailed from Bremen, Germany. The ship's manifest shows that there were 1,135 passengers, including Hungarians, Russians, Austrians, Swedes, Danes and other nationalities, as well as many who had emigrated earlier and were now counted as American citizens, who were probably returning from a visit to their homelands. The descendants of their son, John, have changed their surname from Klein to Kline. Through their children, they had eight grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

Jacob and Susanna's other brother, Caspar, also decided to try his luck in America. His wife was Susanna Loy. They settled in Winchester, Wyoming and had three children, William John, Henrietta and John Casper, eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

I have had a lot of help from the City of Bridgeville, so I am infinitely grateful that life brought them my way, from a very kind volunteer lady at the Bridgeville Heritage Society, Leesa, and also from a church member, Susie, whose great-great-grandmother was a founder of the Zion Lutheran Church mentioned above.

Baltimore Bay
Source: Library of Congress[25]

Intertwining family trees:
From Svedlér, Hungary, to Budapest, USA

Since almost everyone on this branch of my family tree comes from a small village, the branches are often interconnected. In fact, there are five surnames that dominate this branch: Patz, Oelschlager, Bretschneider, Groh and Klein. Several names pop up, often in marriages among distant cousins, wherever I go on the tree. There is nothing surprising in this, as they moved from a smaller settlement to a community with a mixture of these families, their descendants and earlier arrivals who were already Americanized. Some chose a “stranger” for a partner, with no connection to these families, while others chose a partner who was somehow, even through another marriage, connected to the family tree.

Also part of my family tree is Michael Oelschlager. Among his ancestors are several Patzes who were first, second and third cousins of my direct ancestors. My family tree is very complicated and, at first glance, confusing, as the aforementioned few names make up the main Svedlér families. There are many crossings between marriage connections.

Michael was born in 1849 in Gölnicbánya, the son of Michael Oelschlager and Dorothea Theisz. On April 17, 1882, he set sail from the port of Hamburg, Germany, on the steamship Gemma, via London to New York. I found his grave soon afterward, with the help of the entry of a kind fellow researcher, in a settlement called Budapest in Haralson County, Georgia. He died in 1924. Budapest, in the New World, is a tiny little town, no longer marked on maps, its heyday gone. It is located on U.S. Route 78, about 53 miles from the Georgia state capital of Atlanta.

In the 1880s, real estate developer Ralph L. Spencer invited Hungarian families from the mines of Pennsylvania to establish vineyards and make fine wines on the hillsides of Haralson County. In return for their expertise, they were given land and the opportunity to work in a place and community that reminded them of home. By the turn of the 20th century, around 200 families were living there. The largest settlement was named Budapest, after the capital of their homeland. Two smaller towns were named Tokaj and Nyitra (the latter is today Nitra, Slovakia). The climate of this part of Georgia was perfectly suited to grapes, and soon wonderful vineyards and heavenly wines were produced under their industrious hands. Houses, shops, schools, a cemetery, a Catholic church and other community facilities were built, the people lived well, financially secure, doing the work of their ancestors, and the Georgia Vineyard Company sold luscious wines.

Unfortunately, there was a lot of prejudice against Hungarian farmers by the locals, who looked down on them, disliked their way of life and the fact that the Hungarians didn't speak English. The Prohibition Act of 1908 in Georgia ended the American-Hungarian grape dream. Most of the families were left without work and returned to the Pennsylvania mines, with only a few families remaining. The Georgia Historical Society has placed a marker near the settlement and cleaned up the cemetery, where you can still see some of the graves of those who lived in the surrounding region. The priest's house still stands today, and the marker explains that, traditionally, the inhabitants lay with their heads facing east toward their beloved homeland.

Unfortunately, I never knew any of the ancestors mentioned above. My mother (and probably my grandparents) didn't know anything about them, either, because they were never mentioned by anyone in the family. As time went on, they faded into oblivion – for what reason, unfortunately, I think we will never know. They probably never returned to Europe and so there was a break in contact with those family members who stayed at home–possibly even family feuds and jealousy. Even in today's world, there is often a disconnect between relatives and friends when there is a long distance, although it is much easier to keep in touch now. I am very happy that I managed to find them, and contact their descendants to learn their history. I can pass this information on to my mother, sibling and our children, but not, unfortunately, to my grandfather and the people of his generation who might recall these ancestors.

By Krisztina Héder, a Patz descendant
Miskolc, July 2024.
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Budapest Cemetery in Georgia
Source: To Die for Images

The master cartwright, the boiler-heater and the house-builder: Károly Wittmann's journey from the dog-trial of Süttő to the promised land

I was delighted to read that this book about families who emigrated to America is being published and I thought I would share my family's story. I live in Süttő, a village of 2,000 inhabitants in Komárom-Esztergom County, Hungary. My ancestors were 18th-century Swabian in-migrants on both of my parents' sides. My oldest identified settler ancestor was born in Kirchberg, Germany, in 1729, but he got married in Süttő in 1760. I am his descendant in the seventh generation.

My maternal great-grandmother, Ida Keller (fourth generation) had four daughters and two sons, the youngest being my grandfather, János Szám. Three of the four daughters emigrated to America, one after the other. The emigration was triggered by an event that my mother, Ida Szám, told me the story of many times. She heard it from her grandmother and passed it on to us. It was interesting, but also a little unbelievable until I read about the event in print with my own eyes.

Ida Keller and my mother, Ida Szám
Source: Family photo album

Károly Wittmann
1896

After I retired, I suddenly had time on my hands and started building my family tree, searching the internet and the Arcanum digital database to see what had been published about Süttő over the decades. In this database I read the attached article about Károly Wittmann, the husband of my great-grandmother's eldest daughter, Mária Szám.

THE DOG TRIAL IN SÜTTŐ

In Süttő, Esztergom County, a gentleman called Count László Stadiczky has been the commissioner of the Danube district for some time. If the magistracy were to rise in rank in such proportion, only the Roman emperor could afford the luxury of adding the dignity of village magistrate of Süttő to his titles. But Süttő is not so arrogant. The people would be at peace there, but it is the count who is the problem. He is a Polish refugee. He has made his home here in the Hungarian capital. [...] At one time he also kept horses and had beautiful big dogs. These cursed beasts caused the poor emigrant great trouble; they bit everyone, and finally they had to be sold. In Süttő, however, dogs have a freer life. The count had brought a whole pack of trained dogs with him to his office. This is the pack the Countess walks about with in the village, while her husband watches the Danube. One day not so long ago, the Countess went into the garden of one of the landowners, Károly Wittmann, and of course her dogs ran after her, and the trained pack kicked up the flower beds. The owner of the garden was furious and chased the Countess and the dogs out of the garden, and threw a few stones at them so that they wouldn't stand in the gate for too long. What happened next is a little unclear. The Countess charged Károly Wittmann with grievous bodily harm and defamation, and Károly Soki with grievous bodily harm. The Count accuses Wittmann of making a dangerous threat. Wittman charged the Countess with invasion of privacy and defamation of character, and the Count with invasion of privacy and threatening to endanger life. Károly Soki charged the Countess with defamation, and Ede Mann charged the Countess also with defamation. The Count and Countess are also prosecuting all those who chased the pack of dogs and helped to drive the Countess out of the garden, for defamation and grievous bodily harm. The multi-party trial will be so interesting that the Komárom tribunal and the district court in Esztergom have clashed over who will hear it. The Esztergom judges won the argument and the trial will now begin shortly. When it will end, God only knows. There are so many accusers, accused, and witnesses that the whole of Süttő is involved in this affair. Otherwise, the district court won't hesitate to try the case on the spot. It is better that way. It's impossible to run 50 or 60 trains with witnesses to Esztergom every day. The Count is sure of his case, because the chivalrous Hungarian nation will not make a mockery of the Polish magnate who fled here to avoid Siberia. If it does, he would have no choice but to flee to Siberia to escape Hungarian barbarism.

Pesti Napló, March 7, 1896, p. 9.

THE COUNT OF SÜTTŐ

A telegraph from Esztergom: the extensive court case initiated by László Stadniczky, a Polish refugee, and his wife, against Süttő residents Károly Wittmann and Károly Soki, sued for grievous bodily harm, threatening life and defamation, and for the complaint they have raised in return, was concluded by deputy district judge Dr. Ferenc Sárvári after several days of testimony and deliberation. He sentenced Károly Wittman to two months imprisonment and a fine of 40 frt, Károly Soki to 14 days imprisonment, and the Countess to a small fine.

Budapesti Hírlap, 1896. március 11., 7. old.

This was the story my mother told us, but in a little more nuanced way. Her spelling is not good, German was her mother tongue (she used it whenever she had the chance until her death). She only learned Hungarian at school, and she was 85 years old when she put her family story down.

"The first born child of Jozsef Szám and Ida Keller was Mária. Mária Szám's husband was Károly Wittman, a master cartwright. The two sisters lived in the same house, but separately. The cartwright made carts and carriages. He had an apprentice, Johan Mann. Cart making was good business. The yards were not fenced in then, there were no gates, the animals wandered away as far as the third neighbor, but if a hen had to lay an egg, she would run home to her owner. In those days, there were no arguments or quarrels. People lived their lives in peace. Once, a stranger came to the third neighbor with large traveling trunks, wicker suitcases, and a lot of dogs. These dogs ran back and forth, and the chickens were scared and flew up, but when they fell back down the dogs caught them and tore them apart. Their master didn't feed them well. So they were called but they didn't respond. Turns out they were counts fleeing from Russia. But the cartwright said, come here Johan, take the ax and come to the stump and I'll lure the dog here with this bacon skin and if he puts his tail on the stump and you hack it off, it won't come here again. Well Johan hacked off the dog's tail but the dog started howling and ran to his owner. And the dog owner denounced the cartwright for cruelty to animals. Soon the summons came from the Esztergom court. Well, a week in jail or a golden crown could buy a week's worth of jail. After that he was already determined not to go to jail or pay anyone a golden crown. They had a 1-year-old daughter who was my grandmother's first granddaughter. A blond baby with blue eyes and curly hair. He said to his wife, I'll go to Győr and send you the money; that shitty count won't stay here for long. He went to Vienna but he couldn't get a job for long. So he went to Germany and went to a pub and met a man who had been to America and asked him what a good world they had there. So he went straight to Hamburg and there he made a contract to work on the ship eight hours a day, shoveling coal into the boiler. For that he would get clean clothes and full board and a place to sleep on the ship, and he would have to go four times with the ship, and if he gets there a fourth time he gets $5 and can go to a small island and if he is not sick he is allowed to go to the U.S. He was full of plans and hope, and he was interested in everything. When the eight hours of work were up, he'd change and look around the engines, interested in everything. Then he would look around where the passengers were. When he saw the sailors playing cards, it really interested him. He walked around the table and looked at the cards of each one. But he was very careful not to disturb them. But the sailors also noticed that he was looking at them, so can you play cards? Yes I can, so come and play with us. But I ain't got no money. Where are you from? He said Hungary. And he started to tell them his story with this shitty count, the wife and how she has no money, and we had a nice little girl. So the sailors laughed, and they liked the fact that this guy left home to seek his fortune because of a shitty count. You know what, we'll all pitch in to collect your $5 and as soon as we get across you'll walk off with your money and you're a free man. And that's what happened.The contractors were waiting for the ship to come in so they could pick new workers to work with wood. He had work right away, tearing down old houses. Then he looked around and found three or four men who were good and decent workers. He told them to come work for him, that he also works on demolishing houses, but he would pay them more, that is how it started. Then he saw that you just have to cut out these wooden houses and put them together and that it was not a dirty job, so he put the new houses together. In a short time he had already sent the money for a ticket to his wife, who got on the ship with this cute little girl. But unfortunately this little girl got seasick and died. They let the poor thing go into the sea and threw in a wreath after her. The long-awaited reunion was sad.

Ocean liner around 1896
Source: Library of Congress[26]

But they started a new life and had four more children. They couldn't say enough thanks to God that He had led them to a good and beautiful country. They lived without a care and raised their children. They came home twice to visit. The last time they were home was in 1924. My uncle Károly took my grandmother's biggest barrel of wine and went back to Nuszkrom [a local hillside – the editors] and sat in front of the press house and waited for the workers from the Müller mine. Everybody could drink the new wine and he started to talk about America. What a good world there is. He was sorry for Müller because he had seen nothing of the world. Why doesn't he go and look around the big world. For he could easily have done so."

At the end of my mom's story, the Müller she mentions was the richest man in Süttő, he owned the stone processing plant (now called Renaissance Ltd.) and the mines that still exist today. Many public buildings in Budapest bear the marks of Süttő stonemasons. Mr. Müller was also a senior government adviser, so he would have had the money to travel.Károly Wittmann was the first to emigrate from Süttő to America in 1896, because he refused to go to prison and pay for the "frivolity of a useless count," as my mother used to say. His wife and her two sisters followed him to America later, and several others emigrated from the village after them. The three Szám girls who emigrated to America corresponded constantly with their mother, who died in 1942, and then with their youngest brother, my grandfather, and after his death with my mother. Unfortunately, the letters, with their mixed vocabulary of German (rather Swabian) and English, are almost illegible for me. The girls may have finished four years of elementary school in Süttő, and that was in German. They learnt to speak English in America, but only wrote it as they pronounced it. They sent pictures of their growing family, four children in all.
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Károly Wittmann with pipe in hand, surrounded by his family
Source: Family photo album

Károly Wittmann and his wife Mária Szám, their daughter Mary and grandson Ronald
Source: Family photo album

As a result of my family tree research, I was able to find the descendants. In 2016, I contacted them and we started corresponding in English. Every Christmas, the annual report comes, who was born, who started or finished their studies, who got married, what happened during the year.

This is the true story of Károly Wittmann's emigration.

By Cecília Czechner
Süttő, April 2024
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Meeting in the New World and returning to Hungary together: My great-great-grandparents' 10 years in America

My great-great-grandfather, István Molnár, was born on April 21, 1875, in Szikszó into the Roman Catholic family of János Molnár, born in Demecser, and Maria Madácsi, born in Aszaló. At the age of 23, István boarded a ship in February 1898 (I assume, in the hope of a better future) and sailed via Rotterdam and Ellis Island to New York City, where, according to the ship's manifest, his stepbrother was waiting for him.

My great-great-grandmother, Julianna Ragályi, was born on September 18, 1880, the first child of Lajos Ragályi and Julianna Angyal in Szilice (today Silica, Slovakia). The Ragályi family had noble ancestry (traceable back to the 1600s on the Imolai-Ragályi line) but was by no means living in luxury by Julianna's day. There is no trace of earlier estates or a family coat of arms.

Perhaps it was fate that Julianna Ragályi, then only 19, and her father, Lajos Ragályi, set their sights on America and left Szilice in May 1899, a year after my great-great-grandfather. Their journey took them by boat from Bremen via Ellis Island to New York City, where their uncle, István Jona, was waiting for them.

Unfortunately, the 1900 census does not provide information about my great-great-grandfather's whereabouts at the time, but it is certain that my great-great-grandmother was listed as an employee of the Burnham family at Windsor Locks in Hartford, Connecticut. She, two Russian companions and a Danish farm laborer, were servants in the household for Owen and Anna Burnham, their 11-year-old son, Charles, and their infant daughter, Lois.

My great-great-grandparents may have met here, as evidenced by a marriage record dated December 14, 1901. According to research so far, they had four children in the following chronological order: István in 1902 in Dayton, Ohio; János in 1904 in East Chicago, Indiana; and Ferenc in 1907 and Ilona in 1908 in Szikszó, back home in Hungary.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to figure out what prompted the young couple to embark on such a big journey again – this time at the ages of 30 and 31, together with two small children. They settled in Szikszó, Hungary, where Julianna died at age 38. She is buried in Szikszó. My great-great-grandfather outlived his wife by seven years. We believe he remarried, but know of no children from that union.

István Molnár
1898

István Molnár and Julianna Ragályi in the early 1900s
Source: Family photo album

In our family, my great-great-grandparents' trip to America was not a topic of conversation, I never heard about them as a child. As adults, family members started researching their ancestors, and we have Milán Szuhai to thank for this. And now we look forward to learning more about them.

By Róbert Molnár, great-great-grandson of István Molnár
Miskolc, April 2024
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The story of István Molnár and Julianna Ragályi was researched with the help of Zsófia Šindýlková, genealogist at Felmenőim.hu.

Tracing one family from three countries: Jan Lesňak's American years and heritage

In this short piece, the three of us will try to piece together the story of Jan Lesňak, from three countries. Márta and Ágnes have been working on family history for some time, but they have learned much less about their paternal, Lesznyák branch than about the maternal, so it was a great pleasure for them when Katarina, who turned out to be their relative, from Slovakia, contacted them on social media. In spring 2024, the three authors met in Lőcse/Levoča (Slovakia), the place from which this branch of the family originated. The visit held a big surprise for the Hungarian Lesznyáks, who had no idea that their great-grandfather had been to America. His story is told briefly now by the three of us – the great-grandchildren of Jan Lesňak.

The Lesňaks and Javorskys: Family ties and immigration

Jan Lesňak was born in 1876 in Csütörtökhely (now Spissky Stvrtok, Slovakia) into a large Slovak-speaking family in what was then northern Hungary. Very little is known about the family's living conditions. According to the 1869 census of Austria–Hungary, Jan's parents were farmers; they and nine other family members lived in a two-room house. They had a cellar, stables and horses, cows, sheep and pigs. As was the custom, they had many children, not all of whom lived to be adults. The fact that the same families lived in the village for decades (or centuries?) and married each other makes it difficult to keep track of family history because the same surnames repeat: Lesnak, Javorsky, Bajtos, Petrovics, Slavkovsky, Svirloch, Toporcer, and Oravec. Moreover, the first names are also the same again and again: Jan, Joseph, Michal, Martin, Stephan ... In these circumstances, it is difficult to determine which Jan on a certain document is which. Even personal recollection is made difficult by the repetition of names, and it is often hard to know which relatives appear in the stories. The main thread of Jan's story is clear but some of the other characters (for example, during other family members' journeys) are not so easy to identify.

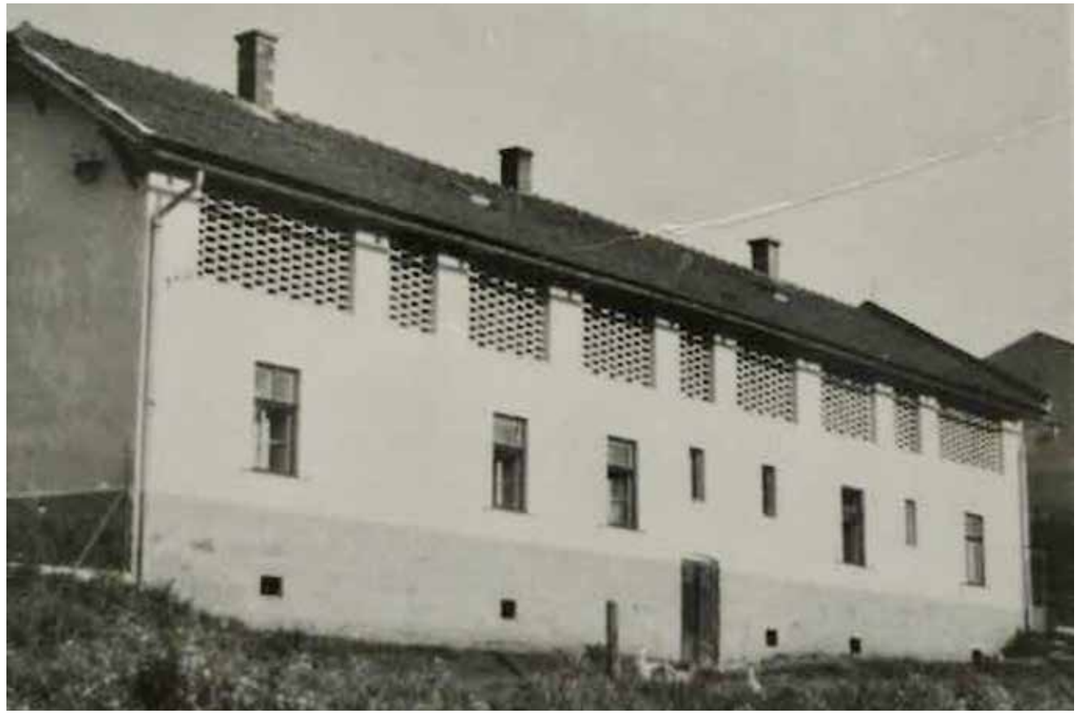
Jan likely left his home village in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn of the 20th century in the hope of a well-paid job, together with or following in the footsteps of some family members. According to our research, he crossed the ocean twice. First, in 1899, he sailed from Bremen to New York on board the *S.S. Königin Luise*, bound for Hazelton, Ohio. In 1901, he took the *S.S. Hannover* from Bremen to Baltimore, again destined for Hazelton. If our findings are correct, one of Jan's brothers and a cousin were already in the U.S. Family members of his wife (our great-grandmother, Maria Javorsky), including (presumably) one of her sisters, also emigrated to the USA, as the surprise results of a DNA test recently confirmed. The Javorskys settled in Youngstown, Ohio, but unfortunately nothing more is known about them.

Jan Lesňak
1899

Work in America and returning to Hungary: From a Pennsylvania mine to gold bars in Lőcse

According to family lore, Jan Lesňak worked in a mine somewhere in Pennsylvania for a few years and managed to accumulate enough money to buy the largest farm in Lőcse when he returned to the Old Country, making him the town's largest landowner and farmer. Jan is said to have returned home with a check so large that the bank in Lőcse could not convert it all into cash. He was given gold bars for the rest. Jan returned to Hungary, probably because of the family he had left behind, and continued his life at home.

Little is known about his personality, but an interesting anecdote has survived that may well describe his mentality. One day, when he was walking down the street with one of his young sons (Márta and Ágnes's grandfather), the boy asked him to buy ice cream. Jan replied that he hadn't worked in a mine for years to spend the money he had earned on ice cream. Although his reaction may seem harsh to today's eyes, his living grandchildren have praised his discipline, thrift, determination and modest lifestyle. Jan remained a hard-working farmer for the rest of his life after his years in the American mines, and after his return home he worked the land, kept animals, made dairy products and cooked jam. When he could, he bought more land for himself and his sons. Sadly, he saw the political upheavals of the 20th century destroy that hard-earned fortune.



One of the buildings on the farm in Lőcse, bought with money earned in America.
Source: Family photo album.

From landowner to class enemy: Losing the hard-earned wealth from America

Jan had seven children, the second of whom was József, Márta and Ágnes's grandfather. Although it has not yet been established beyond all doubt when Jan was in America and when he was in Hungary, he was mentioned in our grandfather's recollections relatively rarely, leading us to believe it more likely that our grandfather was raised by his mother and grandmother. It also seems an interesting contradiction that, although Jan became a wealthy man after his return from America, our grandfather's high school education was paid for by one of his maternal uncles, a Catholic priest. This is how our grandfather, who came from a pure Slovak family, attended Hungarian-language grammar schools in the 1910s and graduated from a Hungarian-language high school in Miskolc in 1922. The peace treaty after the First World War made it practically impossible for him to move back to his homeland so he (and, thus, our family) remained in the territory of present-day Hungary. Our grandfather eventually graduated as a forester in Sopron and Jan tried to support him financially during his university studies. However, the larger part of the family continued to live in Lőcse/Levoča as farmers. Little is known about the period between the world wars, but it seems that Jan's hard work in America did, indeed, provide financial security and the farm supported the family. The next trauma came after World War II when Jan was labeled a 'class enemy' and exploiter after the Communist takeover. The Czechoslovak state expropriated Jan's land and property. He was able to keep just one small room in his original house, where he lived with his youngest son, Ondrej, who needed nursing care because of polio. In 1951, they were evicted and placed in a social home, where Ondrej died within three weeks. Jan was taken in by his son, Michal, who provided for him for the rest of his life. Jan was not eligible for a pension and lived on the support of his sons. He was quite old by then and was broken by what happened. He died in 1962, aged 86.

Lőcse in the early 1900s
Source: Fortepan / Hungarian Geographical Museum / Mór Erdélyi Mór company.

Partial compensation, one-sided restitution

That was not the end of the story. After the communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia collapsed, the state paid compensation to the victims or their descendants. Becausean earlier law prohibited multiple ownership of landed estates sothe estate was deeded to Jan's eldest son (also Jan) sometime after the war. According to family legends, Jan Jr. led a troubled life, causing his father many headaches. After 1989, only Jan Jr. and his heirs received compensation, as it was they who were officially deprived of their property by the Czechoslovak state.

This is the story of Jan Lesňak, a poor man who, through hard work, made a fabulous fortune in the New World and then lost everything in his final years despite that hard work. Unfortunately, his story is a typical 20th century Eastern European story, repeated many times in many different variations in all branches of our family.

By Márta Lesznyák, Ágnes Lesznyák, and Katarina Stražikova (Lesňakova), great-granddaughters of Jan Lesňak
Szeged, Hungary; Trier, Germany; and Levoče, Slovakia, July 2024
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Jan Lesňak in his old age.
Source: Family photo album

From Fonyód to New York: The Sonnenschein siblings' migration to America

Political persecution, religious reasons, the hopelessness of unemployment, family ties, or a sense of adventure drove masses of people toward the East Coast of America; ship after ship carried them. From 1892 onward, the largest migration in modern history took place with the destination of Ellis Island, New York, where 12 million people, mostly Europeans, arrived hoping to become Americans. More than a third of today's population, 100 million people, claim that at least one of their ancestors first set foot on American soil on this small island. Located between the southern tip of Manhattan and New Jersey, Ellis Island is now a museum. From January 1, 1892, it was an emigration station, where 5,000 exhausted people a day were examined after a weeks-long voyage full of fear and uncertainty.

In the registration room, their vital data were recorded: 29 questions included basic personal details, how much money they had, their occupation, and whether anyone was waiting for them. A third of those who arrived stayed in New York, while the rest went elsewhere. The building burned down in 1897 and reopened in 1900. Between 1901 and 1910, an additional 8.8 million strangers arrived in America, 6 million via Ellis Island.

Fonyód is a town on the southern shore of Lake Balaton, Hungary. Before becoming an independent municipality in 1905, it was part of Lengyeltóti, 12 km to the south. Its inhabitants were predominantly Catholic farmers and fishermen, along with two or three Jewish families (their number was no more than 30 during World War II). In addition to the Rosenberger family, the Sonnenschein family settled in the 1870s outside of Fonyód, and mainly engaged in trading. Ignác Sonnenschein had a small shop in the village. At the turn of the 20th century, three of his children decided to try their luck in America.

Fonyód train station in 1905.
Source: Fortepan / Sándor Bejczy

Géza Sonnenschein
1899

Jewelers and seamstresses: The Sonnenscheins in New York

The first to leave Fonyód was Géza Sonnenschein, born around 1880, who set off on the great journey at the age of 19. He was followed two years later by his two sisters.

Lujza Sonnenschein, born in 1873, was listed as Basch in the Ellis Island immigration records. She arrived in the New World via Rotterdam in November 1901, aged 28. Her marital status is listed as "W" (for widow). At first it was unclear why the surname Sonnenschein was changed to Basch. Then the registers provided an answer to the question, as I found the birth of a child in the Szőlősgyörök register, whose father was Zsigmond Basch, a merchant's assistant born in 1875 in Nagytopolcsány, and whose mother was Lujza Sonnenschein, an ironmonger. They married in Budapest, in the 7th District. As Lujza was a widow and traveled with only her sister, it is likely that she had lost her child as well as her husband. Her occupation cannot be deciphered; she could read or write, and her destination was New York. The cost of the crossing was paid by her brother and she was joining him, Géza Sonnenschein, at 265 Avenue C, New York City. Also traveling with Lujza was her younger sister, Aranka Sonnenschein, five years younger, who was also joining their brother. Occupation listed: seamstress.

Géza Sonnenschein became Solomon at some point in time, as in the 1905 New York census Solomon Sonnenshein, Aranka, and Lujza Bash were living in the same household at 327 East 21st Street in Manhattan, and the two women were related to the head of the family as sisters. Solomon is 26, Aranka is 27 and Lujza is 31. Solomon's occupation is jeweler, while the two sisters are (outerwear) seamstresses.

In the 1910 census, Aranka is found married to a Sándor Sonnenschein, born in Nérasolymos. Solomon/Géza also lived with them. Sándor had come to New York in 1907. The couple traveled to Hungary in the period following the census and returned to the United States in November 1911. Documents show Sándor's occupation as a waiter, aided by his friend Adolf Weiss (1623 1st Avenue, New York City). He paid his own expenses for the crossing. He was 5 feet, 8 inches tall, with brown hair and gray eyes. He had no distinguishing marks. Aranka's boat fare was paid by her husband. Her height is noted as 5 feet, 3 inches, hair and eyes brown, no special identification.

The fourth Sonneschein sibling: The Huhnwald - Honemvold - Honei - Honay family

On the same page of the 1910 census, a family of five is also listed. Their identification required more investigation, as at first glance they did not appear to be related to the Sonnenscheins. Márton Honei crossed the ocean with his wife, Karolin, and their children, 3-year-old Margarith, 2-year-old Rosa and 3-month-old Gisha.

Their last place of residence is the village indexed as Tougad, instead of Fonyód, which also complicated the unraveling of threads. It was helpful that the name of the American contact, *Honemvold*, was spelled out, which provided a clue to uncover evidence of the migration to America of Móritz Huhnvald and Karolina Sonnenschein (married in Lengyeltóti in 1907) and their children Margit (1908), Jolán Róza (1909), and István (1911). They were all assisted by Adolf Weiss.

Gizella Sonnenschein from Fonyód kept in touch with the siblings who had emigrated to America, and corresponded until the mid-1970s with Lina, who was 88 years old and living on Long Island at the time. Three years after the emigration, a photograph of the family was sent home from New York, dated May 26, 1914.

Both sides of the photograph that was sent from America to Fonyód in 1914.

"As a keepsake to our beloved Mother, her loving children Lina, Móricz and her grandchildren Margaret, Rozsa and Pityi. New York 914 V./26".

Source: Originally a family collection, now the collection of István Varga

I tried many different ways of searching for descendants living in America without success for many years. Then, in the summer of 2016, I came into contact with a researcher specializing in Jewish families in Washington, D.C. With his help, I discovered the following.

The family used the name Honay in later official documents. In the 1920 U.S. census, Móric Huhnvald was no longer listed with the family. He and Lina either parted ways or he died at a date unknown to us. The records of January 3, 1920, show Lena C. Honay as the breadwinner, and children Margaret, Rozi, and Stephen. We find the same information in the 1925 census. Lena married Ferenc Bátkay, another Hungarian, on April 29, 1929. In 1930, she is listed as the wife of Ferenc (Frank) Bátkay. Living with them were her second husband's two children, Rudolf, 16, and Marguerite, 14, who were born in New York. Bátkay was born in Budapest in 1881 and immigrated to New York in 1905. He was 30 when he married for the first time, and he died in New York on April 14, 1956. Karolina Sonnenschein died as Lena Batkay in April 1975, aged 89.

Margit Huhnvald continued her life as Margaret Honay, married to Henry Wahlers, and they had three children. Margit died in New York in May 1974. Some details of Jolán Róza Huhnvald were found under the name Rose Honay. She married George Travers Cone on February 20, 1926, in Manhattan, and they had five children. Róza died on December 23, 1981. István Huhnvald (1911) later became Peter Honay. He served in World War II from March 19, 1942, to December 13, 1945. He died in New York on March 31, 1981.

Meeting the Sonnenschein descendants: Letters and plans

Lipót Sonnenschein (1885–1944) was the most notable of the family's siblings who remained in Hungary. He had several businesses; unfortunately, he and his wife became victims of the Holocaust in Auschwitz, but all five of their children survived. Their descendants live in Budapest, Kaposvár, and Fonyód. One of them, Eszter Jutasi, was interested in this part of family history, and, with the help of the data that had been uncovered, she contacted her distant relatives living in America.

It was the son of Karolina Sonnenschein's daughter Margaret, Hank Wahlers, who was the first to be found through social media. Hank was delighted to finally hear from someone from his mother's and grandmother's distant homeland. He had always been interested in where his ancestors came from but had never before found a thread that he could follow to find his distant relatives in Hungary. Hank Wahlers and Eszter exchanged several letters, introducing family members, children, and grandchildren, and also exchanged photographs. Hank Wahlers' brother, Chris Wahlers, also joined in the correspondence, introducing his children and grandchildren. Eszter eventually exchanged letters with Hank and Chris' sister, Harriette. Harriette married in 1951 but had no children. Beyond the initial enthusiastic correspondence, no further contact or meeting ensued, but it was clearly a great pleasure for the three siblings to hear about their ancestors and their descendants in Hungary and vice versa. Hank sadly passed away in 2020, but his second wife, Katherine Wahlers, continues to keep in touch with Eszter through social media. They greet each other on every holiday, sometimes writing a few lines about themselves, and Katherine is particularly fond of keeping this up. After Hank's death, Katherine has found a new partner and plans to travel to Europe, including Hungary and Lake Balaton, where her late beloved husband's ancestors came from.

The above story shows how research into the local history of even a small town can help to uncover a family's past, and the possibilities of gaining insight into the tangled web of family trees and possibly helping to reconnect broken links.

By István Varga
Fonyód, May 2024
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Coming to America: My Török and László Hungarian Grandparents

In 1945, my mother and father welcomed me into this world. I was the fourth of five boys. My mother always wanted a little girl – but it never happened. Growing up in the North Side neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was, I guess, pretty typical – school, playing with friends, hobbies, doing chores around the home and delivering newspapers. I remember reading about the Hungarian Revolution while delivering news along my paper route in 1956 and wondering, why are there Russian tanks on the streets? Later, I realized how fortunate I have been to not have lived under such oppression.

Unearthing Hungarian roots: A journey of discovery

My maternal Czech grandparents lived with us for many years in a working-class neighborhood. To my regret today, I never had conversations with them about their lives, especially in the old country.

And as to my paternal Hungarian side, they both had passed away before I was born, and I never questioned my father about his parents or about life growing up in a Hungarian household. There were just brief comments occasionally about his cousins living along the Ohio River south of Steubenville, Ohio. We would visit his brother and sister often, but again, I would just talk to my cousins.

It was after my mother passed away in 2004 that we discovered the many photos, letters, and documents she had saved. The majority were those of her parents, but a few did include my father's side, like the photo of the Török family – a real treasure that was saved. Thank you, Mom.

I began to sort and organize everything, and looking at the collection, especially the photos, I knew I had to research the lives of my grandparents. Of course, in 2004 the internet was in its early stages and research had to be done by mail and visiting libraries. Plus, with a busy demanding profession, research was put on hold until I retired. Then, in 2015 I did a DNA test with Ancestry and was totally immersed in finding out more.

In 2017, the CGSI (Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International) held their convention in Pittsburgh, which was a tremendous help in my research. In addition, internet advances, Family Search, MyHeritage and other sites, gave me access to more records so I could begin to understand the lives my grandparents lived. Which brings me to tell a brief story of my Magyar grandparents.

János Török
1900

Tracing the beginnings: Hungarian origins and emigration

My grandfather, János Török, was born in the Barca neighborhood of Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) on October 10, 1874. He was of the Reformed faith, son of poor János Török from the village of Kassamindszent/Všechsvätých, and Mária Juhásová. My grandmother was Katalin László, born February 7, 1876, in house 93 Hernádcsány / Čaňa. Her parents were András László and Mária Török. (I am still researching this line to determine if there is a connection to János's line.)
From research, I do know that he and Katalin were married on June 11, 1899, in the Reformed Church in Hernádcsány/ Čaňa. They had resided in the villages of Hernádcsány/Čaňa and Hernádzsadány/ Ždaňa to the south of Kassa/Košice.
Just a few months after marriage, János made a decision to leave his home in the Hungarian county of Abaúj-Torna and come to America. I have not been able to determine his reason for emigrating. From research, I know it could have been the lack of jobs, lack of land ownership, poverty or economic hardship, conscription, family issues, or others. Without talking to him, we will never know. And if we could talk to him, would he have been truthful?

Settling in America: Early years and challenges in West Homestead

He arrived in America on January 22, 1900, and settled in West Homestead, Pennsylvania, a town located approximately 8 miles (13 kilometers) southeast of Pittsburgh. The surrounding towns include Homestead, Braddock, McKeesport, and others that were steel manufacturing communities that attracted large numbers of laborers from the Eastern European region. Western Pennsylvania was very attractive to this group due to the many mines and steel producing companies located here.
There is nothing I have been able to find out about his first few years in Pittsburgh. However, given that records show he was "an assistant at special machines," he probably started at Mesta Machine Company. I do know he was employed there later. Mesta Machine Company was a leading industrial machinery manufacturer, founded in 1898 by George Mesta when he merged his machine shop with another. Their heavy machines can be found in factories throughout the world. Mesta closed its doors in 1983.
I would think life was a challenge for János in the new country. So many barriers: language, employment, housing, understanding the currency, being taken advantage of, and just trying to assimilate into a new world. Also, the unskilled Eastern European immigrant would have probably worked in a hot, dusty, dangerous mill or mine environment. But I would like to think he did have a network of fellow Hungarians to help navigate around these obstacles. I do know there were cousins living in the area to whom he could turn to gather strength and knowledge. He evidently was able to save money and send for Katalin.

A bittersweet journey: Life, love, and tragedy in the New World

Five years later, Katalin arrived on American soil and went to join her husband in West Homestead. Then the children started to arrive: Margit in 1906, my father, János, in 1910, András in 1913, and Anna in 1916.

With the assistance of the First Hungarian Reformed Church of Homestead, established in 1904, I have been able to find all the baptismal records of the children.

This would have been their first home together
Source: Photo by author

And later they moved into this home
Source: Photo by author

First Hungarian Reformed Church of Homestead
Source: Photo by author

Walnut Street Elementary School c. 1924
Source: Family photo album

It appears that my grandparents recognized the value of an education as you can see in the school photo. That is my father in the front row, third from the right, with glasses.

I'm sure that life was a struggle for Janos and Katalin. At some point during employment at Mesta, Janos lost his leg, which placed a further burden on the family to survive. I regret never talking with my father regarding his parents or his life growing up.

How did my father enjoy his young life with his siblings and parents? How were the holidays celebrated, were there any family gatherings, music, singing, meals? I just don't know. I would like to think it was a happy home life, up until 1921. Then tragedy struck.

In October, trying to feed the family on a limited income, boarders brought home mushrooms picked in the woods nearby. Katalin cooked and served them for a meal. Unfortunately, Katalin died from mushroom poisoning, according to the medical certificate of death. The children survived, as did the boarders.

A lasting legacy: Reflecting on family, values, and resilience

It is my belief that at that time, my Aunt Margaret would have had to give up her future dreams and assume the responsibility of the lady of the household. She would have been 15 and young Anna only 5. My father did tell me that he worked as a baker for a period of time – possibly after elementary school, to help with the family income. There was a bakery located across the street from their Victor Way home.

János lived 14 more years as a widower; he died May 2, 1935, in West Homestead. He and Katalin were both laid to rest in the First Hungarian Reformed Cemetery in Munhall, Pennsylvania. The Török name was at some point Americanized to Terrick. My dad, John Terrick, married my mom, Mary Rose Kranys two years later, in September 1937.

In closing, I feel very blessed with the values my loving parents instilled in me. And for those that still have living parents and grandparents: talk to them.

By Daniel A. Terrick, grandson of János Török
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 2024
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Török family c. 1913. János and Katalin 1913 with Margit and my father, János. Katalin appears to be pregnant with András. *Source: Family photo album.*

Grandpap Török, c. 1930. Walnut Street Elementary school over Grandpap's left shoulder
Source: Family photo album

Wedding of Mom and Dad
Source: Family photo album

A dream of the New World and the reality of the Old: One heart between two worlds

Iván Polgár was born on July 13, 1884, in the village of Ugod in Veszprém County, the son of Sándor Polgár and Mári Licsauer. He was my grandfather. His parents were poor: they lived in Sándor Polgár's parents' house, in a multigenerational home, as many families did at that time. My great-grandfather died in 1887, and life after that became even harder; my great-grandmother worked as a maid to support her only son. In the meantime, little Iván went to school and studied hard. After his school years, he worked in the village as a day laborer to help his mother.

Young rural emigrants: Traveling across Europe and to the Statue of Liberty

More and more people in the village became dissatisfied with their fates and decided to try their luck by emigrating to America, which was fashionable then. Some relatives had left earlier. My grandfather made the same decision, at the age of 16, a decision he often talked about. Somehow, with great difficulty, he collected the money for the journey and set off with two young women from Ugod – Janka Üveges and Teresa Kernács – who had a relative who had left for the New World two years earlier, in 1898. Elemér Üveges was Janka Üveges's brother. He was already in America, and then married Teréz Kernács in Barton, New York, in 1910.

We don't know how they planned their trip, but according to Grandpa's account, they went to France and then embarked in Southampton, England, and finally arrived in New York. In the French port, the young villager encountered something new, a water closet, and when he used it, he was very surprised at how much water came down, and so he was in a great hurry to get out of the toilet. The boat trip may not have been particularly interesting, there was not much to tell about it, but he mentioned several times that when he saw the Statue of Liberty it was a very special feeling. It was probably also due to the feeling of finally stepping on dry land and having their seasickness go away. Grandpa always said that all of this happened in 1900, but we could find no documentation of the voyage or of his stay there. It is certain that he was there, because Grandpa corresponded with friends who stayed in America for the rest of his life, and they often sent parcels, which was a great experience for us.

A great love in the New World: The mysterious "misiz"

Grandpa lived with a family in Cleveland, and here he also had a great love, whose name we unfortunately never learned, even though Grandpa told us that she was the love of his life. He told us that when the ship sailed back to the Old Country with him, the lady he loved fainted in the harbor, knowing they would never see each other again.

Iván Polgár
1900

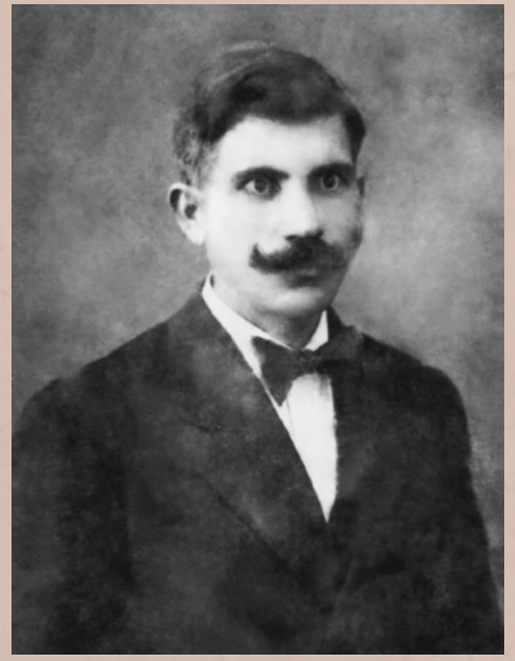
Cleveland Public Square c. 1910
Source: Library of Congress[27]

So Iván Polgár set foot on American soil, and it filled him with mixed emotions: anxiety (that he had left his mother at home) and hope (that they would have a good life when he returned). A relative in the U.S. helped him take his first steps. At first, he worked in a mine, a very difficult job, but he worked hard. He was given room and board with a Hungarian family, he said. In that house lived the young woman mentioned earlier, with whom he soon fell in love, perhaps for the first time in his life. Grandfather spoke fondly of her later in the family but did not mention her name, calling her "the misiz". Does this mean that he might have married her, or that she was married to someone else earlier? That remains a mystery.

Between two worlds: The American dream out of reach

In America, my grandfather received a new first name: he was called John, because he didn't like the name Iván, so he was called John Polgár in America. Later, when he could speak the language, he found an easier job: he worked in a gramophone factory in Lebanon, New York. Grandfather was saving his earnings and preparing for the big trip back to Hungary and was planning to go back to America with his mother. But even back then some plans did not always prove viable.

When he returned to Hungary, he found out that his mother had married a widower from the village. Grandpa could have foreseen that since his father had died in 1887 at the age of 30.



Iván Polgár in 1910.
Source: Family photo album

As the days and months passed and the war intervened, the possibility of the journey back to America seemed hopeless. Then came a letter from his love in America (or perhaps from friends originally from the village who were now living in America) saying that the young lady had found herself another man. I don't know how Grandpa took this, but he brought with him a very small part of his American life, a photograph of his love. On Sundays, when he was getting ready for mass, he would take his hat out of the wardrobe and get the photograph behind his stacked clothes. While he adjusted his hat on his head, he would look at the old picture, then put it back and go to church. Then all of a sudden, this Sunday ritual came to an end, because my mother, his daughter, who was grown up by then, tore up the photograph, as she thought it was unfair to her mother, who had by then given birth to and raised seven children.

The reality of home: Responsibilities and family joys

In February 1918, Grandfather married Ida Üveges (who was born in 1892 and was still a little girl when Grandfather emigrated), the sister of Janka Üveges and Elemér Üveges, from the village who were now living in America. Eight children were born of the marriage and seven children (four girls and three boys) lived to adulthood.

Grandfather was very conscientious about his duties at home; he worked honestly, as the head of a harvest team on the Esterházy estate for 13 years. With the money he had brought from America and had left over after the war bonds, he bought shares in a small quarry: he extracted limestone and sold it to lime burners. This was as hard as working in an American mine and brought in much less income. Nevertheless, in 1942 they moved into a new house, which was a big deal for the poorer classes at the time.

Janka Üveges and Teréz Kernács in 1955
Source: Family photo album

The quarry had its effect on the building of the house: Grandfather was too old to do this hard physical work. The male members of the family were conscripted into the army. Like many others, they were taken prisoner and there was no help to do the work. After the war, there was a land distribution. Grandpa got some and he farmed it. He had cows and poultry. Grandma died in 1949 after a long illness, aged 57.

Grandpa loved his grandchildren very much. I was the second grandchild and probably the favorite one at the beginning: as more grandchildren were born, they all became "favorites." Grandpa took me and one of my cousins to Budapest – a first for me. My aunt lived there with her family and it took us a week to see everything that a 10- and a 12-year-old would be interested in, and Grandpa got to see his daughter and her family in Budapest. We visited the amusement park, walked up Gellért Hill, went on hikes, and swam at the Tungsram public pool several times. Grandpa was well-read and informed. He died in 1966 at the age of 82.

He told us stories about his life in America, and it's a pity we don't remember more of these stories. One of my nieces researched Grandpa's American years and found relatives. I would love to have contact with family members in the U.S. My niece and I would be very happy if they got in touch.

By Ildikó Kőhalmi Németh,
granddaughter of Iván Polgár
Ajka, April 2024
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My great-grandfather's great American adventure: The never-ending story of our 114-year-old family nest

My great-grandfather, József S. Szabon, was born in 1873, the second son in his family, in the village of Sajóvadna in northern Borsod County (officially called Vadna since 1905). In February 1899, he married my great-grandmother, Erzsébet Gál (1880–1959), born in nearby Felsőkelecsény. My grandfather, Ferenc Szabon, was their first child, born soon after in January 1900.

It was then that my great-grandparents realized that the income from their tiny plot of land was very little to support themselves and build their home. So, leaving behind his young wife and my then 9-month-old grandfather, József bought a ticket for the steamship *S.S. Weimar* in October 1900 and sailed from Bremen to America. He was joined by his friend Pál Szabó, also from Vadna. Their destination was a place called Willock, south of Pittsburgh in Allegheny County, in the Pittsburgh Coal Mining District. My great-grandfather is listed in the ship manifest as a farm laborer. My great-grandmother took her son back to her parents' home in Felsőkelecsény, and then waited faithfully for her husband for many years. My great-grandfather returned the first time in 1904. In 1905, their second son was born, and in May 1905, he set sail for America again, this time from the port of Fiume on the ship *S.S. Ultonia*. In 1909, after his third return home, it was the steamship *S.S. Carpathia*, later known as the "Titanic rescue ship," that took him across the ocean again, this time to Pittsburgh.

My great-grandfather was fortunate enough to return home for good in 1910. He replaced the more common adobe house with a modern farmhouse, complete with a snow-white porch, in the middle of the village of Vadna. He excavated large carvable sandstones in the pasture on the hill. My godfather, who shared a house with him for 21 years, told me great-grandfather piled up so many stones in our yard that people would excitedly ask, "What are you building, a church?" The house still stands today, in 2024, at the time of this writing, and is now occupied by my sister and me, József Szabon's great-grandchildren. We use the old house with his great-great-grandchildren in the summers with great appreciation.

Erzsébet Gál and József S. Szabon in Vadna in 1935
Source: Family photo album

József S. Szabon
1900

The 'American' house of József S. Szabon, built in 1910 in Vadna with income earned in America.
Source: Family photo album

In 1914, World War I broke out and my great-grandfather fought his way through the Italian theaters of war, from which he returned home safely. After five sons, he finally had a daughter in 1921. World War II did not spare Vadna. In mid-December 1944, everyone fled the fighting to the cellars in the hillside. Risking his life as a former war veteran, he bravely stayed at home to look after the animals. During the fighting in our village, a Russian artillery shell blew the roof off the house above him, but he survived unhurt. He died in 1951.

Every two years, József's memory is cherished at Szabon reunions, at which many family members happily travel to Vadna to reminisce about his American adventure, so that his 43 great-great-great-grandchildren can learn about his overseas adventures and the history of our family nest.

By János Szabon, great-grandson of József S. Szabon
Vadna, June 2024
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Travelers and agents: A letter from the Hamburg Shipping Company to my grandfather

My grandfather, András Eckert, was born in Herend in 1879. He traveled to America several times, first to Newark in 1901, where he stayed with minor interruptions until 1905. In our family collection, we have a letter he probably received after his first return home, from the steamship company Louis Scharlach & Co. in Hamburg. This was one of the companies that organized and managed the transport of European immigrants to America. Unfortunately, the letter is undated, but it was most likely written in the early 1900s. It is a recommendation that the next time my grandfather traveled to America he should buy a ticket from this company, detailing the costs and the commission they would provide if he also bought tickets for others.

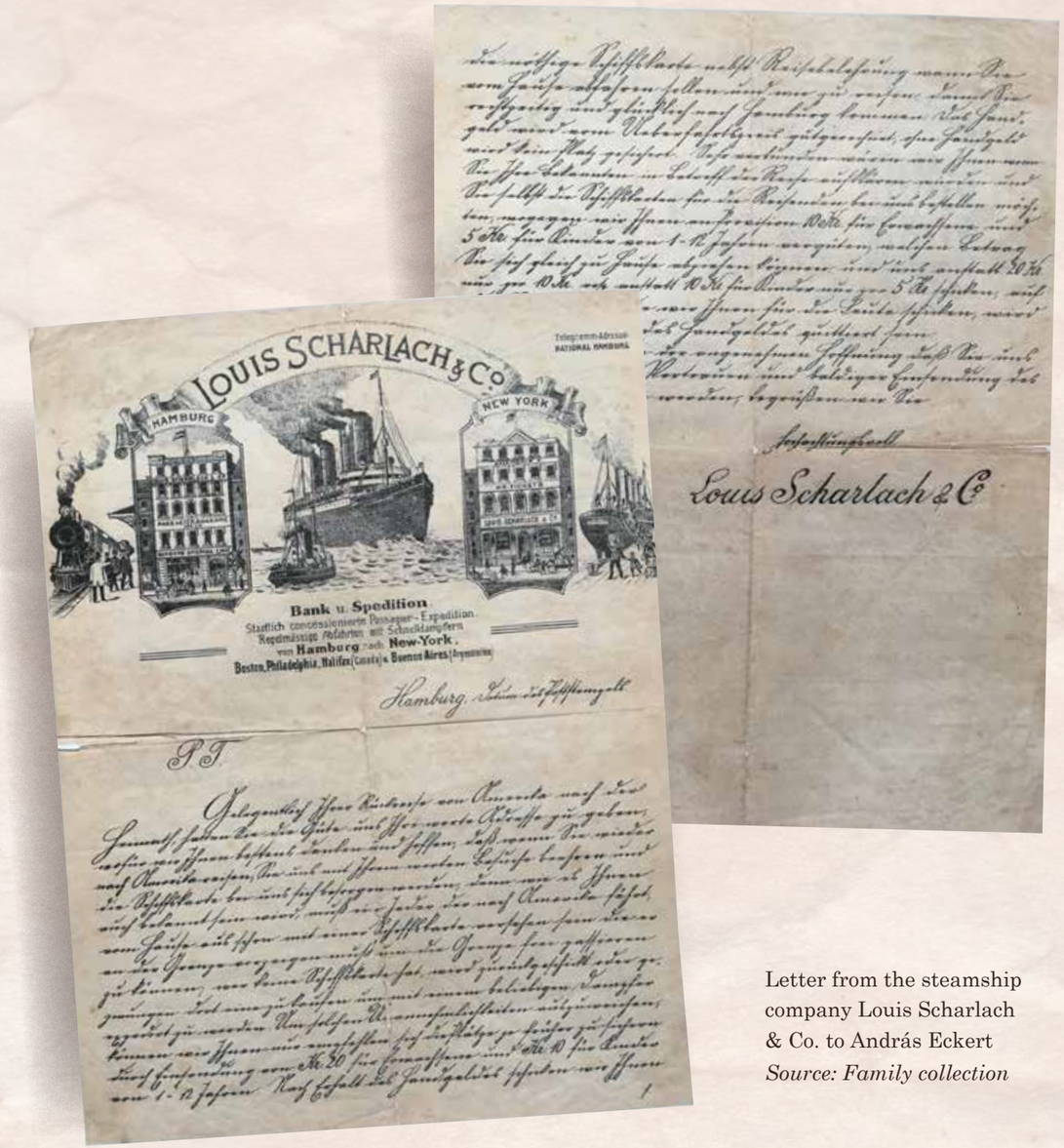
"On your return from America to your native land, you have kindly given us your valuable address, for which we thank you very much, and hope that when you return to America you will do us the honor of purchasing your steamboat tickets with us. As you will be aware, everyone who travels to America must already have a ticket for the crossing at home, which must be presented at the border in order to cross freely. Those who do not have a ticket are sent back or forced to buy one there in order to continue their journey with a steamboat.

To avoid such inconveniences, we can only recommend that you secure your seats as early as possible, sending 20 kroner for adults and 10 kroner for children aged 1-12. Once we have received your booking, we will send you the necessary steamboat ticket and travel information on when to leave home and how to travel to arrive safely and on time in Hamburg. The deposit will be credited as part of the price of the crossing, and we will not provide a seat without a deposit.

We would be very grateful if you could inform your friends about the trip and if you order your steamboat tickets for travelers with us, we will pay a commission of 10 kroner for adults and 5 kroner for children aged 1-12. You can deduct this amount immediately at home and send us only 10 kroner instead of 20 kroner or 5 kroner instead of 10 kroner.

The full amount of the deposit will be shown on the steamboat ticket, which will be sent to your address. In the hope that you will honor us with your trust and send us your deposit promptly, we greet you with our best regards. Louis Scharlach & Co."

András Eckert
1901



Letter from the steamship company Louis Scharlach & Co. to András Eckert
Source: Family collection

My grandfather returned in 1905, and in May 1906, he married my grandmother, a widow with three little girls. In the year after the wedding, Teréz was born, followed by György in 1908, and that year Grandpa went to America again. Grandma must have had a hard time at home, with five children, two of them very young. According to family lore, Grandpa worked in railway construction. Again, he stayed in Newark for about four years, which is when this studio picture of him was taken.

András Eckert in Newark, c. 1908
Source: Family photo album

Unfortunately, no letters survive from that time, but the family has preserved a composite image from over 110 years ago. Probably the year after Grandfather's departure, Grandmother had a photo taken of her and the children and sent the picture to Grandfather. The Schumachers, who ran a Hungarian-language photography studio in Newark, edited the two photos together and, thus, facilitated the family reunion.

We have no exact information about Grandfather's return journey, but he must have returned to his wife sometime in late 1911 or early 1912, because their third child was born in November 1912 and named András after his father. After my Grandfather returned, he bought land with the money he earned in America, part of which he used to marry off his daughters. He also sold some, and cultivated fields and forests until his death. Grandmother died in 1924, and after that the family had a hard time making ends meet, but the girls helped out a lot. Grandfather married a widow from the village in 1928, but they did not live together for long. They did not divorce but lived separately. Grandpa died in 1958. In the same year, the land was taken away right before the harvest, but 'fortunately' Grandfather did not live to see this. If he had, it would have killed him. His first child, Teréz, went to America in 1956 with her husband and child, and they lived in New Jersey until their deaths.

By István E., grandson of András Eckert
Herend, June 2024

András Eckert and his family reunited with contemporary "photoshop", c. 1909
Source: Family photo album

Making a home in the New World: Andrew Deak and Rose Mészáros's life in Pittsburgh

Andrew and Rose were my grandparents. I never met Andrew – he died six years before I was born. I first met my Grandma Rose in 1954, when I was 6 years old. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, I visited her often in Pittsburgh when I was a student at Pennsylvania State University, about two and a half hours (about 219 km) east of Pittsburgh.

Hungarian roots

András "Andrew" Deák was born on December 13, 1881, in Ricse, Hungary. In 1902, he joined the throngs of Hungarians immigrating to America. According to Ellis Island records, he arrived in New York on June 12, 1902, on the ship *Patricia* from Hamburg. Andrew made his way to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he found employment in the steel industry.

Rozellia "Rose" (Mészáros) Deák was born on September 8, 1888, in Kupa, Hungary. According to Ellis Island records, Rose arrived in New York from Hamburg on the ship *Arcadia* on June 13, 1904. Her first destination was the home of her cousin, Lajos Mészáros, in Palmerton, Pennsylvania, about 10 miles (16 km) north of Allentown-Bethlehem.

Crafting a life together in Pittsburgh

I don't know how Andrew and Rose met, but they were married in Pittsburgh in 1908. In the 1910 U.S. Census, they listed themselves as Andrew and Rose Deak, residing at 3504 Wakefield Street, Pittsburgh. Also listed at the same address are Andrew's brother, József, and his wife, Sofie. Both Andrew and József identified themselves as "Iron Workers" employed in the "Steel Manufacturing" industry.

I did not know about Andrew's brother, József, until 2022, when out of the blue, I was contacted by a genealogist from Hungary, Réka Bakos. Réka said she found me on a genealogy site and thinks we are related – her great-grandfather was the brother of my grandfather. She sent me an excellent photo taken at the wedding of her great-grandparents, József and Sofia, and my grandparents, Andrew and Rose, in Pittsburgh in 1910. It is the earliest photo of either Rose or Andrew that I have seen.

András Deák
1902

Loss, grief and birth on the Atlantic

Andrew and Rose had children in 1909 and 1910, both of whom died as infants from convulsions and/or infant cholera. In 1912, when Rose was pregnant with my father, she probably wanted to avoid the risk of another infant death. Maybe she thought the fresh air of rural Hungary would be healthier for her baby than the heavily polluted air that was common in Pittsburgh at the time.

In May 1912, pregnant with Francis, Rose headed for Hungary. She crossed the Atlantic on the Dutch ship *S.S. Ryndam*. My father, who was often an impatient man, did not wait to get to Hungary before being born. Francis Deak was born on May 24, 1912, on board the ocean liner *Ryndam* crossing the Atlantic Ocean, bound for Europe. The ship's captain signed Francis' birth certificate, identifying his place of birth as "Atlantic Ocean - 55.N.Lat, 32.W.Long". (A few weeks earlier, the ocean liner *Titanic* had struck an iceberg and sunk in the same North Atlantic waters on April 15, 1912, not far from my father's place of birth.)

József Deák and Zsófia Jesztrebi's wedding. Left to Right: Andrew & Rose Deak, József & Zsófia Deák, Mary Mészáros
Source: Family photo album

My father's place of birth, "Atlantic Ocean", was printed on his formal documents, including all of his passports through the years. Not many people are born on oceans. Most expectant mothers would avoid ocean travel when close to their due date. I think my dad was rather proud of his unique birthplace.

In 1966, my parents and siblings took a car trip to Niagara Falls. We lined up to cross the U.S.–Canada border. The Canadian border guards stopped about every 10th car, just making spot-checks. The guard stopped our car and asked my father a seemingly random question, "Where were you born?"

A smirk spread over my father's face as he replied, "Atlantic Ocean." The guard must have thought Dad was joking. He demanded to see all of our passports. We dug them out and handed them over. The guard inspected Dad's passport, and read "Birthplace—Atlantic Ocean…" Dad was still smirking as if to say, "See, I told you so." The guard just handed our passports back and said, "Have a good day."

Establishing a family, building a home

We do not know how the outbreak of World War I affected the family. In 1917, Andrew purchased war bonds worth 200 crowns. To ensure the continuous connection of emigrants to the old country, the Hungarian government issued so-called war loan bonds not only in Hungary but also in the United States, thereby gaining significant financial resources. The Deak family did not redeem the bonds after the war ended, and to this day, they adorn the walls of my home. Andrew was registered for military service in 1918 but did not have to enlist.


100 K

Betti Lit. B. Sz. Nr. 1.799.994

A MAGYAR KORONA ORSZÁGAI.

6%-KAL KAMATOZÓ

JÁRADÉKKÖLCSÖN.

KIBOCSÁTTATOTT AZ 1912. ÉVI LXIII. T.-CZIKK 17. §-a ALAPJÁN.

BEMUTATÓRA SZÓLÓ

ÁLLAMADÓSSÁGI KÖTVÉNY

100 KORONÁRÓL.

A magyar királyi pénzügyministerium elismeri, hogy ez az

EGYSZÁZ KORONÁRÓL

szóló államadóssági kötvény a magyar korona országai adómentes járadékadósságának egy részét alkotja. Az említett tőke után 6% évi kamat fizettetik minden év február 1-én és augusztus 1-én lejáró félévi részletekben. A kamatok a lejárt szelvény beszolgáltatása ellenében, szintugy a kötvénynek visszafizetése esetén annak tőkeértéke a kötvénynek és a felmondás határidejéig még le nem járt kamatszelvényeknek és szelvényutalványnak beszolgáltatása ellenében — a szelvény, illetve a kötvény birtokosának választása szerint — felvehetők Budapesten a m. kir. központi állampénztárnál és más, a szelvények hátlapjain megjelölt, valamint a magyar kormány által kellő időben közhirré teendő fizetési helyeken. Ez a kötcsön 1922. évi augusztus 1-jét megelőző időpontra nem fog visszafizetésre felmondatni. A kamatok, valamint — visszafizetés esetén — a járadékkötvények tőkeértéke minden fennálló és a jövőben behozandó magyarországi adó, bélyeg és illeték levonása nélkül fizettetnek ki. Ez a kötvény egy szelvényutalványnyal és tíz évre szóló szelvényekkel van ellátva, melyeknek lejártával a szelvényutalvány bemutatójának a szelvények egy uj sorozata és uj szelvényutalvány fog kiadatni.

Kelt Budapesten, 1917. évi november 15-én.

m. kir. pénzügyminiszter.

a m. kir. központi állampénztár igazgatója.

Ellenőrző aláírás.

a m. kir. pénzügyminiszter számvevőségi hivatalnoki csoportjának főnöke.

m. kir. számvevőségi főtanácsos.

100 K

100 K

M. kir. állami nyomda. Budapest, 1917.

The World War I war bonds purchased by Andrew
Source: Family collection

The 1920 U.S. Census lists the address of Andrew and Rose as 4339 Second Avenue, Pittsburgh. By that time, they had four children: Francis (7), Helen (5), Elsie (3), and William (6 mos.). It says that both Andrew and Rose became naturalized U.S. citizens in 1909. Andrew's occupation is listed as a "Labor Foreman" in the "Steel Furnace" industry.

The 1930 U.S. Census lists the address of Andrew and Rose as 223 Winston Street, Pittsburgh. Their three-story house, with full basement, became the Deak family homestead and meeting place for three generations. The census lists the house's value at $9,000. This was the last house they lived in. The 1930 census also names Andrew and Rose's youngest child, Rose Marie (or "Rosemary"). Andrew's occupation is listed as "Millwright" in the "Steel Mill" industry.

Rose Deak and children studio portrait, 1924. Back: Francis, Rose, Rosemary. Front: Elsie, Billy, Helen
Source: Family photo album

In 1995, we held a three-day Deak Family reunion in Pittsburgh. Many descendants of Rose and Andrew Deak attended. There was also a newsletter with genealogical information and memories about Grandma Rose and Grandpa Andrew, including stories that Aunt Rosemary shared about our grandparents.

Grandpa's job with Jones and Laughlin Steel Mill was to dynamite old blast furnaces. He worked on Second Avenue for a while and then was transferred to Aliquippa. He worked a 12-hour day most of his life. He would leave at 4 a.m. and come home around 6 or 7 p.m. He always wore a business suit to and from work. When Grandpa came home from the mill, he would come through the door and all the kids would hug him. He would swing the girls around and say "Come here, I give you rosy cheeks." Then he would rub his day-old whiskers against their cheeks. Every day, he would come home from work with a newspaper, Cuddy Pipe chewing tobacco, a Baby Ruth candy bar, and Wrigley's Juicy Fruit chewing gum. Then he would say "How many kids are there?" and cut the Baby Ruth bar into equal pieces. On the hottest days (and the coldest, too) Grandma would serve hot soup for dinner. Grandpa would cover the soup bowl with black pepper and the kids loved to watch his Adam's apple move when he had his soup. Grandpa loved Grandma's soup. After dinner, Grandpa would go up to Burgwin Park and watch the men play baseball. Uncle Bill was a waterboy for the team. After Aunt Rosemary was done with the dinner dishes, she would go up to the bleachers and sit with her dad. One Christmas, each kid presents received a delicious apple, an orange, and a sweater. (Try that one today!)

Last years together

In the 1940 U.S. Census, Andrew was 59 and Rose was 52. Francis had moved to Washington, D.C. Helen got married and may have moved out. Still living at 223 Winston Street with Andrew and Rose were Elsie (23), Elsie's husband, Leroy Fowler (23), William (20) and Rosemary (18). Andrew's occupation is listed as "Foreman" in the "Steel Mill" industry, for which he earned annual wages of $2,175.

Four months after the picture was taken, Grandpa Andrew died. Grandma Rose outlived her husband and three of her five children.

223 Winston Street backyard. Barbara (McGillis) Amantea Scott, Rose & Andrew Deak, Donna Lee (Fowler) Boegel Vogel, 1942
Source: Family photo album

Reuniting at Grandma's house

My dad, Francis Deak, studied engineering at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, and at George Washington University in Washington D.C., where he had found a job. His studies and work were interrupted when the U.S. mobilized its military for World War II. Francis joined the Army and became a cartographer in General Patton's 3rd Army. Following the war, he was part of the U.S. occupational forces in Germany. After leaving the Army, Francis worked in Wiesbaden, Germany, as a civil engineer for the U.S. Air Force. While there, he met and later married my mother, Lotti Bender. I was born in 1948. My brother, Robert, was born in 1954, and my sister, Doris, was born in 1957.

My first trip to the United States was in the summer of 1954. My mother was pregnant with my brother, Robert. My father and mother had married just six months earlier, when the U.S. military occupation regulations forbidding fraternization with German nationals was lifted. Besides meeting our American relatives for the first time, another purpose of the trip was for Mom to become a naturalized U.S. citizen.

We stayed in New York for about a week, then traveled to Pittsburgh. There we stayed with my Grandma Rose at 223 Winston Street and met many of our relatives. Grandma Rose had a beautiful yard, with many flowers, a raspberry bush and a small vegetable patch.

My mother got her U.S. citizenship and we went back home to Germany. We lived in three places in and around Wiesbaden. My brother, sister and I attended U.S. Dependent Schools there. I left to attend Penn State University in 1966. The rest of the family moved to State College, Pennsylvania, in 1970.

My cousins, Judy McGillis and Bernadette McGillis, my Aunt Helen (Deak) McGillis, me and my cousin, Donna Lee (Fowler) Boegel Vogel in Grandma Deak's back yard at 223 Winston Street
Source: Family photo album

Preserving memories, recipes and heritage

My father never spoke Hungarian to us. I picked up a few words here and there from Grandma Rose, but have forgotten most of them. To my knowledge, none of my relatives who grew up in Pittsburgh have much knowledge of the Hungarian language. During the 1995 Deak Family Reunion in Pittsburgh, we discussed and wrote down many of our memories of Andrew and (mostly) Rose Deak, including Hungarian cooking, gardening and funny stories about our grandparents. Although the Hungarian language was not passed along to us, the Hungarian customs, cooking and other stories were, and they were richly captured by our relatives who attended the reunion.

"When I think of Hazelwood and Winston Street, I remember it being sooty and the stinky smell from the steel mill. I also remember the nice windows in the second floor living room. When I think of the basement, I remember my mother made her own soap for laundry or scrubbing floors. She kept it in buckets."

(Rosemary Lupo, the youngest daughter of Andrew and Rose)

Hazelwood Skyline from 223 Winston St., with steel mills in the background
Source: Family photo album

"I remember the pretty tree-lined street and how angry Grandma was at the way the electric company chopped the trees. And a cute story, my dad saw my mom at a dance and decided to find out more about her. He followed her home, almost, he lost her going up the steps and couldn't tell which house she went in. Another thing I remember about the house is the interesting room Grandma Rose had under the front porch. She had various old things under there and I always wished that there was a door to it from the basement. I remember that Grandma used a comb made of real ivory to comb her hair, and that it was the same color as her hair. She kept it in the oval desk on the second floor."

(Marilyn Young, granddaughter, Rosemary's daughter)

"Going to Grandma's house… Looking up the steps from the front of 223 Winston Street was very exciting to me! If it was springtime, it meant that at the top of the stairs were Grandma's gorgeous Japanese cherry blossom trees. I couldn't wait to bounce my way up to the garden just to be near them. Grandma would love to have her picture taken smelling them and would pose and pose until someone got a camera out. I loved looking under the trees because beautiful little plants grew all over: purple violets, and lilies-of-the valley so healthy and lush that if you picked one stem, it would grow right back, and portulaca (woodland rose) were all over in the summertime. I used to love to just sit there and stare into the garden and let my imagination run. I also remember the wonderful soups that Grandma made and her chicken paprika with dumplings."

(Barbara Pelfanio, granddaughter, Helen's daughter)

"When I think of Hazelwood and Winston Street, I remember how pretty the trees and houses were on the street. I liked sitting on the front steps. When I think of the outside of Grandma's house, I remember her garden in the backyard, especially the gooseberry bush, which had long, tough, sharp thorns all along the top of the branches, and juicy, sweet, green gooseberries underneath. We would eat them with vanilla ice cream. Grandma's rose bushes were so beautiful and fragrant. When I stayed at Grandma's, she would allow me to cut bunches of them and distribute them in vases around the house. She never seemed to do that herself, so I was always amazed and thrilled that I was allowed to do it."

(Bernadette Coppola, granddaughter, Helen's daughter)

Grandma Rose and her boarder in front of the Winston street house
Source: Family photo album

"I didn't know Grandma like the rest of the cousins. But I must say that I was very proud of her and loved her very much. I felt very lucky and appreciated the little time I had with her. I'll never forget that it was Grandma who taught me the Lord's Prayer during the short time I spent with her and I still say it every night to this day. I remember Aunt Rosemary had a big birthday party for me when I turned 11. Lots of people came. And Grandma was there. I remember being so happy when I opened my birthday card from her and there was $5 in it. That was a lot of money in those days. Especially for a little 11-year-old kid. I think I still have that birthday card."

(Cora Deak, granddaughter, William's daughter)

"When I think of Hazelwood and 223 Winston Street, I remember Grandma Deak who taught me about God, life, love, happiness and beauty. "The inside of Grandma's house was a world of its own. The kitchen was bright and sunny. There were three very tall windows: two faced the back yard and alley, and the side one faced the far away hills and overlooked the neighbors' roofs. There were always lots of aprons hanging behind the door to the kitchen – Grandma always wore one and if you were going to help, you had to wear one, too.

Grandma Rose in apron in the kitchen of the Winston Street house
Source: Family photo album

"Grandma made homemade noodles every Saturday at the kitchen table, which was covered with a big wooden board. She got out a big metal bowl, filled it with flour, dropped in eggs in the center and then added water until it was "just right". Then she kneaded and rolled out the dough until it was paper thin and hung it over the banister in the hall to dry. I was always scared when she cut the noodles – she rolled or folded the dough depending on what shape she wanted and would use a big butcher knife to cut right in front of her fingers – but she did it so fast I was always afraid she would cut herself, but she never did.

"My mom learned to drive because my brother and I could only drive her to Grandma's on Sundays. She drove to Grandma's at least two days a week and took her everywhere; they had such great times together.

"When Mommy died, Grandma wanted my brother and me to teach her to drive so 'she could go places like Elsie took her.' Grandma was so lost after my mother died, so I began to drive over with my two boys every Wednesday. My neighbors always knew where I was off to because it was the only time I wore a skirt or dress (Grandma didn't like me in slacks or shorts). We slowly climbed those steps up to the porch and then up to the second floor where Grandma would be waiting, sitting in her chair at the top of the stairs. She always looked so lonely when we first came in the door but would brighten up quickly when Matt would run up the steps ahead of me calling to Grandma (my boys think of Grandma as their Grandma because they never knew my mother). We would always have to eat something and then go to the garden. Then we would pack a lunch and drive off to the cemeteries or Phipps Conservatory or the museum or a park somewhere. We always stopped to shop in Squirrel Hill and Hazelwood before going back to Grandma's, where she would send us off for home with flowers and food from the garden.

"My last memory of Grandma was of her sitting in her chair at the top of the stairs saying goodbye when we left that last Wednesday. She was too tired to go out that day so she watched the boys while I did her shopping. I made lunch, which was a first, as Grandma always did for others. And we talked about all the good old times we had together and how lucky we both were to have a loving family and so many happy memories. She told Matt and Jason stories about me as a child. She said goodbye to Matt and Jason with a big hug and kiss and told them to be good to their Mom. She gave me a kiss and said she would always remember me and loved me very much. Now that I think back, I know that she knew her days had come to an end and she seemed so sad to be leaving. She died two days later."

(Donna Vogel, granddaughter, Elsie's daughter)

Saying goodbye to the Deak family homestead of three generations

Grandma Rose died in 1973. I got married in 1973 and my wife, Cyndie, and I bought Grandma's house and rented it to my dad, Francis. Francis died in 1982. We lived in North Carolina and held on to the house for a decade before selling it.

"As a younger member of the Deak family, I remember the house, but not Grandma Deak. My parents owned the house all through my childhood (and a good time after that, as well). The house on Winston Street was unlike any other I'd ever seen. I remember climbing the steep stairs to the third floor, filled with bedrooms. And then the trek to the attic. Now that was a special treat. If you looked just right, at the right time, you could see the orange glow of the steel mills out the window at night.

"The backyard of the house, by the time my grandpa Francis got through with it, was the most cultivated patch of land in Pittsburgh. He had all kinds of plants in there. That house holds a lot of memories for me. But it was a headache for my parents, trying to manage the upkeep and the tenants from over 500 miles away. I was a little sad to see it go when my parents finally sold it, but now it's a home for some other family to make memories in."

(Leslie Deak, great-granddaughter, Francis' granddaughter)

Documented by Franklin Deak, grandson of Andrew Deak
Tampa, Florida, May 2024
frankdeak@yahoo.com

Hazelwood Skyline at night from 223 Winston St.
Source: Family photo album

Francis and Leslie Deak on the stairs of the Winston Street house
Source: Family photo album

Whispers of violins: Me and the story of my Hungarian heritage

My grandparents were all from Hungary. My paternal side was from Szepestótfalu and my maternal side was from Irota, Borsod, and Homrogd, Abaúj-Torna.

Smoky memories and melodies of violins: My paternal grandparents' family stories

My grandfather, John Kupcik Plucinsky, was born in 1867 to Maria Kuptsik. Six months after his birth, Maria married Jan Plucinsky. Anna Dzurnak, my grandmother, was born in 1872 to Michael Dzurnak and Katherine Pesta. John and Anna were married on January 13, 1892 in Tótfalu/Ves, Szepes County. My mom told me that they met at church.

John came to America in 1893 with his brother-in-law, John Dzurnak, and cousin, Andrew Marhevka. They came on the *S.S. Darmstadt* from Bremen and headed toward Connellsville, Pennsylvania, to work on the railroad. After a time, the three ended up heading for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Uncle John Dzurnak remained with the railroad, while my grandfather John and his cousin Andrew went to work for Jones & Laughlin Steel. John worked at the Eliza Furnace on Second Avenue. While Great-uncle John worked for the railroad, he also played violin in the orchestra at the Slovak Club in Pittsburgh.

In September 1897, Grandma Anna and Aunt Theresa arrived in Baltimore. They sailed on the *S.S. Roland*. They lived on Forward Ave, Irvine Street and, finally, on Acorn Street in the Greenfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

Several more children were born: Irene, Annabelle, Mary, Margaret, Eleanor, William and Edward. Edward was the youngest of the crew, born in 1914. My father was William. In November 1918, when Ed was 4 and my dad was 6, John Plucinsky responded to an emergency at the Eliza Furnace, just a few moments' walk from his house on Acorn Street. There had been a gas explosion, and John was able to help a couple of guys out of the area before he was overcome by gas. He was taken to Montefiore Hospital, where he died. My Uncle Ed's last memory of his dad was sitting on a barstool having a ginger ale with his dad, who had just bought him a brand new baseball the night before.

When I began researching my family history, I searched everywhere for headlines about the accident. Twenty-five men had died in that accident and I was amazed as I scanned the microfilms of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and The Pittsburgh Press. Surely ONE of them would have carried the story! Well, I eventually gave up. One day, I got a surprise email from a cousin in Pittsburgh, who worked at the Carnegie Library in Oakland. She spent many lunch hours combing the archives and she hit pay dirt! It was a really horrific story, but seeing how it was over a hundred years ago, it was true to form for that period.

András Pallai
1902

Oh, and the reason it wasn't the paper headline?? The Kaiser – Charles I of Austria – abdicated the throne that day, and that story stole the spotlight.

Grandma continued raising her children. Mary and Annabelle died young. Eleanor died in 1930 from sepsis. Theresa married George Yourick and had many children. She and her husband lived next door to Grandma on Acorn Street. Dad and Uncle Ed talked about how they would sneak out of their room, walk across the roof and sneak in their cousins' windows and play for much longer than they should have. Grandma probably knew…

In 1931, my father joined the Army and Uncle Ed joined the Marines. They both served in World War II. Dad landed on Utah Beach on D-Day and Uncle Ed served in the Pacific. They both married in uniform.

Grandma remarried a man named John Kmetovny in the late 1930s. They lived quietly until his death. Then she moved into my mom's house to stay with her while Dad and Ed were serving in the Korean War. She died peacefully at my parents' house in 1952.

My maternal grandparents' journey: From the Colorado coal mines to a Pittsburgh boarding house

Borsod and Abaúj-Torna counties are my next focus. My maternal grandfather was András Pallai, born in March 1874, in the village of Irota, about a two and a half hours' drive northeast of Miskolc. He was the first son of my great-grandfather's second marriage. His parents, György Pallai and Julianna Pálinkás, were married in 1872 in Felsővadász. György was a 35-year-old widower with three children at home. This was Julianna's first marriage and she was 20. The two of them lived at the Trucz Estate in Irota, where György worked as a shepherd and Julianna did the household's cooking and baking. Years later, Julianna was still remembered for her pastries by the older members of the village.

Júlia Hrubi, András'wife, was born in the village of Monaj, about seven miles (11 km) from Irota. She was born in November 1874. Her parents were István Hrubi and Mária Gáspár. They eventually moved to Homrogd, just across the border from Borsod County in Abaúj-Torna. András and Júlia married in Homrogd in 1899. In 1900, a daughter, Erzsébet, was born, but sadly passed away the same day. In late 1902, my Uncle András (Jr.) was born.

András Pallai Sr., András Pallai Jr., Julia Hrubi Pallai c. 1903 Homrogd
Source: Family photo album

Grandpa left for America on December 27, 1902. The family gathered after church to celebrate and bid him farewell. He and another young man he traveled with then walked to the train station. He said they both walked backwards till everyone was out of sight. The train took them to Fiume. He sailed on the *S.S. Graf Waldersee* and arrived on January 2, 1903. From New York, he traveled by train to Trinidad, Colorado, and worked in the coal mines. He returned to Hungary for a visit when his son was about 2.

In October 1907, Grandma Julia and Uncle Andy (as he came to be known) arrived in New York City on the *S.S. Ultonia.* They also traveled by train to Colorado to meet András Sr. and his brother, Louis Pallai. They settled in the small mining camp of Primero. There, in 1908, another son was born, named Louis for his uncle. In 1914, the elder Louis joined the Army. He was in the Cooks and Bakers School at Brooks Field in Texas.

Right before the Ludlow Massacre in 1914 (where over 20 people, including miners' wives and children, were killed by anti-striker militia), Grandpa Pallaye moved his family east. As they traveled, they stopped in Glen Carbon, Illinois, right across the river from St. Louis. My mom, Mary Elizabeth, was born there. By the time of the 1920 census, the family was living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They lived on Kansas Street down by the mill, where both Grandpa and Uncle Andy worked. Grandma raised her two younger children and also cooked for the three boarders they kept. I have no doubt she kept busy!

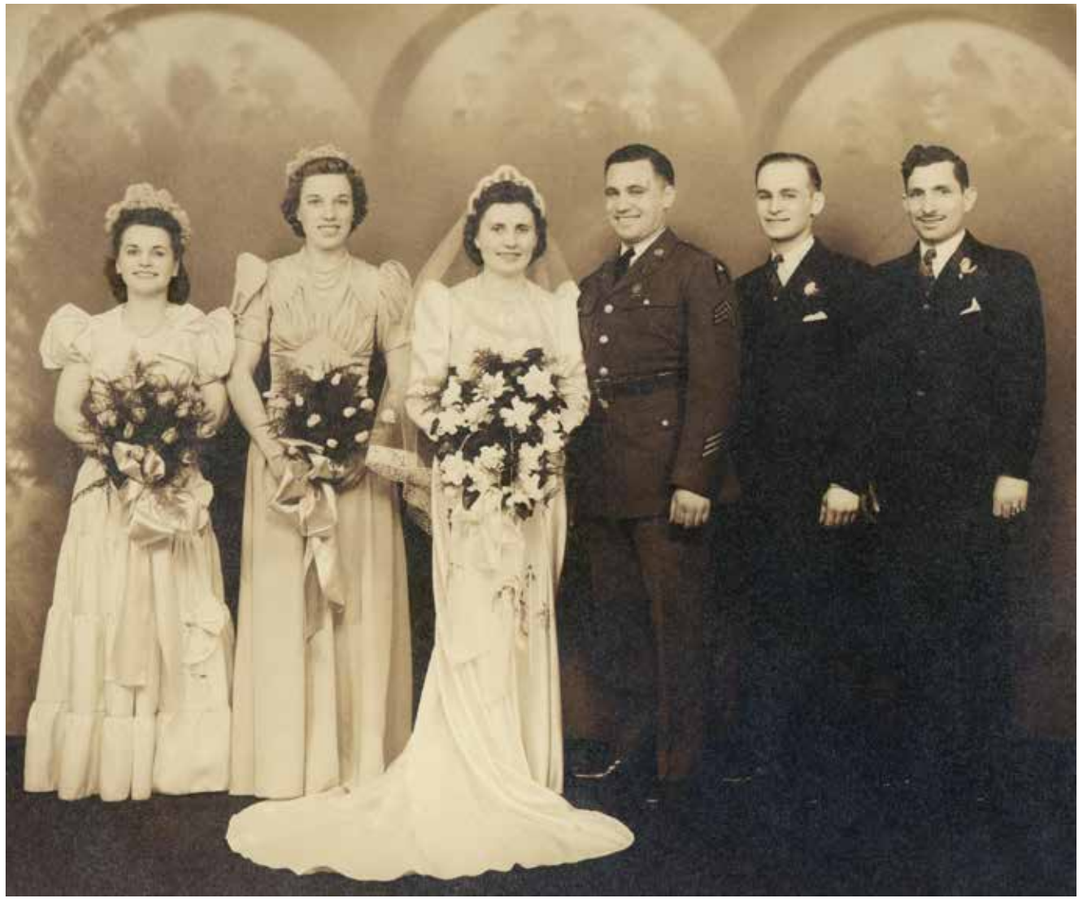
Their boarders, all Hungarians, were John Kopcso and Bela Perhacs, both of whom worked at the coke ovens at the steel mill, and Kalman Muhita, who worked in the blast furnace. At that time, Frank, a brother of Andrew Pallaye, was living there as well. He was in the polishing works at the same steel mill (Jones and Laughlin). Mom said that their favorite meal was good old fashioned stuffed cabbages. Julia would start preparing the food as soon as the men left for work. It cooked ALL DAY on the wood stove. Even after I was born, if Mom didn't start the stuffed cabbage by 7 a.m., we didn't have it that night. But it was just as yummy the next day!

Uncle Andy joined the Army during World War I, but saw no foreign combat. When Louis Jr. came of age, he began working for the railroad. Steel mills needed lots of trains! In the mid-1920s, Louis Jr. joined the Army Air Corps (the very early Army Air Corps). He studied Aerial Photography at Chanute Field in Illinois. From there, he decided to spread his wings and become a skydiver. At a special event for some officers over Thanksgiving weekend, Louis Jr. went up in the sky. His parachute failed to open and he was killed instantly. I wish I had known him. In photographs, he has such a smile and twinkle in his eye.

"Life is short; shorter for some than others" (Augustus McRae).

A multigenerational home:
A lifetime of love and service

My Mom and Dad met in Hazelwood. She was attending the University of Pittsburgh and majoring in Foreign Languages. She became a teacher and taught in Canton, Ohio, for a while, staying with her oldest brother, Andrew, and his wife, Dorothy Freeze. She taught until she and my father married. They were married at St. Anne's Reformed Hungarian church in Hazelwood on Chatsworth Street.



Mary Elizabeth Pallaye and
William Thomas Kupcik, 1942
Source: Family photo album

They made a home along with her parents and his mother in Baldwin Borough south of Pittsburgh. It was a big house so there was lots of room for everyone, especially with Dad in Europe during World War II and in Korea after that. My dad was a career army man and would rather have been in his uniform than anything else.

My grandfather and grandmother Pallaye celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in Pittsburgh. This picture of my grandfather always made us think of the Monopoly Man. All he needed was a top hat!

Grandpa Andrew was taken by throat cancer. He was in Montefiore Hospital at the same time as my mom, who was having her second child. She was able to visit him and show him his new granddaughter. He joked that she should leave the new baby at the hospital since she already had a daughter. At least that was a bit better than my dad's reaction when I showed up as the third girl!

Grandpa Andrew died in August 1950. He was followed by his wife two years later in May. They are buried together in Calvary Cemetery on a peaceful little hill overlooking the military section. Later, when my dad passed, Mom picked a plot close to the road so she could visit often. If you look up to the northeast above the military plot, you can see Grandpa and Grandma Pallaye's headstone. I like to think they are keeping an eye on their son-in-law!

Both sets of grandparents had many siblings over in the Old Country. Most of them came to the New World at one time or another. Grandpa Pallaye met with three of his brothers in Pittsburgh. One of those was Louis, with whom he worked in Colorado. Others were Frank, who returned to Hungary with his wife and daughter and lived in Aszaló; István, who traveled directly to Montreal, where he met Margaret Kollár from Budapest and settled in British Columbia, where the couple had an orchard; and József, who started out in Dayton, Ohio and later moved to Lorain County, Ohio, where his wife and daughter joined him from Irota. One of his sisters came with her husband as well, and was living on the other end of Kansas Street from my grandparents in Pittsburgh. Grandma Pallaye lived next door to her brother, Frank Ruby, but most of her family stayed in Hungary.

The Pallaye brothers in Pittsburgh PA, c. 1925. Left to right: Andrew, Louis, Stephen and Frank
Source: Family photo album

When working on my family history, I have often wondered how it was for the families when they were split up. Who was the braver? The ones who took off for a new life in a new country, or the ones who stayed behind, knowing that things were going to get tougher than they ever knew?

I think about those in Hungary. I know there are relatives still there and have attempted contact through letters, emails, and websites. While I am firmly footed here in the United States, I keep a whisper of violins in my heart for my Hungarian relatives.

By Sandi Kupcik Barber,
granddaughter of András Pallai
Duluth, Georgia, May 2024
sandra.barber@comcast.net

Sandi Kupcik Barber, 2024
Source: Family photo album

Wasted lives: The story of Kálmán Terbócs

I would like to share the story of my great-great-grandfather, Kálmán Terbócs. I've been researching him for eight years, but I can't get beyond a certain point. I don't know where and when he died, whether he lived alone or was married, whether his life ended somewhere in Hungary or in the USA, whether he has any living descendants or just us (i.e. four great-grandchildren, six great-great-grandchildren, and two great-great-great grandchildren). No one knew great-great-grandfather Kálmán, only through the narration of his daughter, my great-grandmother. Like a fairy-tale figure, he lives in us. I am one of his great-great-grandchildren, piecing together existing memories and researching the past. I'm looking for Kálmán.

The mystery of Grandpa Zoltán: Unknown links to the past

Growing up, my family lived with my maternal grandparents. Even as a child, I noticed that my mother's parents somehow didn't match. Not only in appearance, but also in their habits. My grandfather did not fit into the context we lived in. We live in Miskolc, the former "Steel City" of Hungary. In the 1970s, there was hardly anyone in Miskolc that did not have one or more family members working in the Lenin Metallurgical Works. My maternal grandparents worked there, my parents, and practically all my other relatives, too. We lived an absolutely working class life, but in the good sense of the word. My grandfather worked for the railways, and we lived in the apartment assigned to him as an employee, inside the factory grounds.

But somehow, Grandpa wasn't like the other working men. He was an educated, soft-spoken, fair-minded, very good man. My grandmother was a beautiful woman, but she was from a completely different world: a peasant family from Northern Hungary, a very good housewife, but she could not show her love. She was a religious, hard woman. Even when I was very young, I noticed that we rarely had people visiting, and then only my grandmother's relatives, and no one from grandfather's side. Sometimes, when they were arguing, they would mention "some" Vali, Olga, Irma, and papers ... When I went to school and became smarter, I realized that everyone had a common name like Jóska, Béla, Gyula and Juliska, Piroska, Bözsi. In contrast, my grandfather was called Zoltán and his friend was called Kamill! But the only thing my grandmother mentioned about Kamill the few times his name came up is that he was one of those who fled. One of those? Hmmm.

Kálmán Terbócs
1903

We moved into an apartment of our own in 1979. In 1980, Grandpa was watching a play on TV when he collapsed and died in hospital the next day. He was 55 years old and had a stroke.

Great-grandmother Aranka's glass pram: High class origins and more questions

I was 11 at the time and I didn't understand anything. Grandma didn't want to live alone in the house, so she moved in with us. That's when I started to understand a lot of things, because she started telling me the stories, one after another. Factually. "So, your grandfather was a high-class boy. His mother, my mother-in-law – God rest her soul – Aranka Terbócs used to have a glass stroller and a French governess. Her father, Kálmán Terbócs, came from nobility, they were rich, he married your great-great-grandmother, who was a music teacher, but she also came from a wealthy and educated family, and when my mother-in-law Aranka Terbócs was 5 years old, her father ran off to America with the maid. She may have been their cook, I can't remember. Shame on him! How could anyone do this to their family! Making everyone miserable, because he gambled away and embezzled (this was a word I didn't understand at the time) the dowry, the family fortune, the inheritance, even other people's fortunes! But I have the 'papers' in the right place! Your grandfather's friend, Kamill, he also left in '56! He wanted to take your grandfather with him, but I wouldn't let him, I was nine-months pregnant with little Zoli! Your grandfather said that he'd come back for us. But Kamill had the nerve to ride your grandfather's motorbike when he returned, saying he was an American! (Kamill came back to Hungary in the '70s, when I was in the third grade; I remember clearly that he came back and visited my grandfather. My grandfather didn't have a car. He had a motorcycle, a Pannonia P20 with a sidecar! I felt very cool when he took me to school in it. My grandfather and Kamill would unhitch the sidecar and ride the motorbike with Uncle Kamill in the back like good old friends. My grandfather was excited for days ..., much later my research revealed that Kamill was from a high-class family, too. The name is no coincidence, they were childhood friends.) But who are Olga and Irma, and especially who is Vali? And what papers are they talking about again? I didn't really understand, but I remembered every word. My grandfather had two sisters, Irma and Olga. The two girls died one after the other in their 40s, both of cancer. Irma had a family left, and her husband took care of the family. Olga had no husband and had a daughter relatively late, Vali. My grandparents were supposed to raise her, but my grandmother, as I mentioned, was a tough woman. She would not take on Vali, the child of the high-class sister-in-law, so Vali was put into state care. No comment... toward the end of her life, my grandmother talked a lot about how sorry she was, how we should find Vali, etc.

The destroyed evidence and the beginning of the investigation

I am now at the point in the story that I knew about when I started the genealogical research – specifically because of Kálmán Terbócs! So all I knew was that my mother's father was "different" because he came from a completely different world. But then how did he meet my grandmother? I also knew that when Kálmán Terbócs left for the U.S., my great-great-grandmother remained behind with my great-grandmother, who was 5 years old at the time. His abandoned wife taught music and French. I did not know with whom or how she lived after that. My grandmother and my mother told me that when Aranka Terbócs died in 1960, "some people" from Boldva came and said that they were a very rich family, that there was a big marble obelisk in the cemetery, their grave, and that we should go and see it. We had never been there before, not even my grandfather. So my grandparents went and looked and then they never went there again. I don't know what happened there, but they clammed up.

Time went by, and my grandmother died in 1991. While we were arranging the funeral, the apartment was broken into, robbed, documents thrown away, and everything destroyed. Pure vandalism. Everything, every keepsake, every piece of evidence was gone! My mother was tearing her hair out at how many times she asked my grandmother after grandfather's death to give her her "inheritance," – deeds, letters of nobility, birth certificates, photographs, evidence. Everything was there or likely was there, because we never really found out what documents she had. But they were destroyed. I remember a painting on the wall: a woman with a gentle look and her hair in a bun, wearing pearl earrings. She was my great-grandmother. That painting was also taken/thrown away with the other photos on the wall. Absolute vandalism. After that my mother rarely mentioned her missing grandfather. Then in 2000, at Aranka Terbócs's grave, I met a very pretty woman with two small children. She was Vali! I could go on for a long time about this memorable meeting, but from the perspective of the story, the crucial point is this: she told me literally the same things that my mother and grandmother had told me. We decided then and there that we should investigate, but no one did anything. And then came 2017. I know, a lot of time passed, we talked a lot about things, but somehow nobody did anything. Because what's the point ... but ... My mother died suddenly in 2017. She was in hospital, but we didn't expect her to die. She was delirious a lot the night before and day of her death. At one point, she told me to call up her father! He died in 1980 and this was 2017. She wanted to talk to her father. I didn't want to argue with her, so I said fine, I'll call him. Then she started smiling in a certain direction and when I asked who she was smiling at, she said, well, her grandmother and all the relatives from Boldva were right here! She was very happy. I stood stunned at her bedside. Half an hour later, she died.

Aranka Terbócs in Miskolc in 1950
Source: Family photo album

After my mother's death, I felt that I HAD to start looking for Kálmán Terbócs now, as I would have plenty of time and I owed it to my mother's memory. I wish I had started sooner!

In the footsteps of my great-great-grandfather Kálmán: The Terbócs of Gomilicza

I signed up for MyHeritage, started building a very basic family tree, and then began my research. Immediately, my great-great-grandfather's ship manifest came up from Ellis Island, then a year later, a manifest listing the maid, then a marriage record, and births. My God, everything Mom and Grandma told me was true. Everything! In the seven-plus years since then, I've unraveled the entire family tree, including side branches.

I have kept in touch with several distant relatives, some of whom also do genealogy, but beyond a certain point nothing can be found about my great-great-grandfather, even though my research shows that he was a key figure in the family. Who are Kálmán Terbócs and his family, and where am I in the research now? Research into the Terbócs family and my great-great-grandfather goes back about 110 years. Yes, people were looking for Kálmán and the money. The Terbócs family were not Hungarian originally, they were of Wend background. They were originally from Gomilicza (Lendvaszentjózsef), then part of the Kingdom of Hungary, in what is now Slovenia. This is also the origin of their noble name: Terbócs of Gomilicza. In 1637, they received nobility in Vas County. There are still Terbócs living in Vas and Zala counties today. The founder of our branch is István Terbóts, who was the founder of the Reformed Grammar School in Kisújszállás and then a Nagykun captain between 1734 and 1742. He was married to Zsuzsanna Szent-Imrey of Krasznikvajda (in Abaúj-Torna County then), and it is with or because of her that a Terbócs branch settled in Abaúj. All of us are their descendants. The Szent-Imrey family was also a very influential and wealthy noble family; their manor houses still stand today. István Terbóts, a former Nagykun captain, had many descendants over the years. One important thing was that they only married members of noble or sufficiently wealthy families. We are related to several other noble families, including the Windsors. That's right. ☺

Families had many children, according to the customs or norms of the time, and it was no different for the nobility. They kept the ancestral estate somewhat intact, since the first-born son usually stayed in the ancestral nest and inherited the noble title Gomiliczai. The others all tried to marry well. There were generations in which more than one son received the noble title, as was the case in my great-great-grandfather's generation.

The Terbócs coat of arms in the 120-year-old family tree
Source: Family collection

Kálmán's late marriage: The minister's orphaned daughter in the Boldva mansion

My great-great-grandfather, Kálmán Terbócs, was born on September 15, 1860, in Balajt (in Borsod County), the second child and second son in his family. His father was József Terbócs, and his mother was Borbála Aszalay, a member of the noble Aszalay family of landowners from Szendrő. The sons, including my great-great-grandfather, were students of the Helvetic Confession Reformed Lyceum in Miskolc, my great-great-grandfather between 1872 and 1878. From the surviving school records, year after year, it is clear that he was a bright but negligent student. He must have been a good-looking man, probably handsome, who was popular with women, and later, as he grew up, he did not despise their favors.He married relatively late, at the age of 37, in 1897. He didn't go very far. He married my great-great-grandmother Irma Tóth from nearby Boldva. Her family were not natives of Boldva. Her father, Béla Tóth, an Evangelical Reformed teacher, was born in Györke (near Kassa, now Košice, Slovakia). József Szathmáry Király offered him a minister's and teacher's job in Boldva in 1863. He also brought a wife from the area, Etelka Kórmány, daughter of the noble family of Mihály Kórmány and Klára Balpataki, whom he had married on April 12, 1871, in Gálszécs (today Secovce). Béla Tóth had a considerable private fortune himself, and his wife Etelka Kórmány also brought a nice dowry. They built a mansion in which to live instead of the minister's house. My great-great-grandmother, Irma Tóth, was born on January 17, 1872, in Boldva, followed by one brother, Béla Jr., born in 1873.My great-great-great-grandfather died suddenly in 1888 at the age of 46. Later in the same year, he was followed by his son, who was 15 years old at the time and a student at the Sárospatak Grammar School. Thus, mother and daughter remained alone in Boldva. They had no financial problems, as the land Etelka had received as a dowry earned them good money. The aim was to marry Irma off well, as two women could remain alone without male support. I have found several records indicating that my great-great-grandmother attended balls, strictly accompanied by her mother, of course. I believe that it was at such a ball that she met my great-great-grandfather.

Rural carnival.

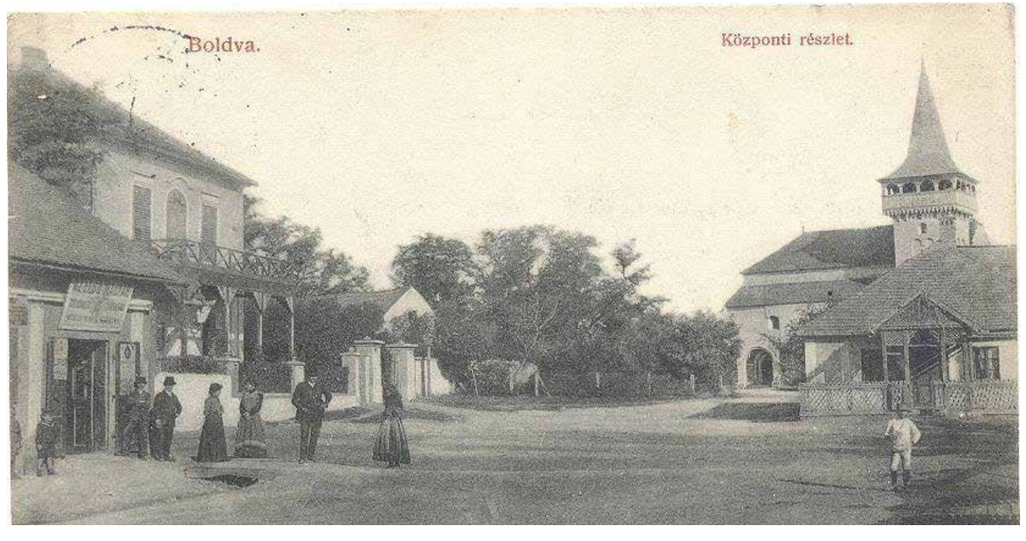
In the halls of Mrs. Pál Szathmáry Király in Boldva there was a dance unrivaled in its delicacy and gaiety, which, with few exceptions, drew together the intelligentsia of the countryside. In addition to the patronesses Mrs. Pál Szathmáry Király and Miss Ilona Kisszely, the dance was attended by: Miss Sára, Miss Adóra and Miss Jolán Szepessy, Miss Kata Bőnizs, Miss Lila Szalay, Miss Margit Hosszufalusi, Miss Ilon Lipcsey, Miss Boriska and Miss Irén Komjáthy, Miss Vilma Gyurkó, Miss Margit and Miss Olga Dianovszky, Miss Ilma Bene, Miss Máli Török, Miss Emilia Pontos, Miss Ilonka Vajda, Miss Anna Tomka, Miss Irma Tóth, Miss Mária Koren; Mrs. Gyula Sisáry, Mrs. Samu Rónis, Mrs. Ernő Kisszely, Mrs. Dezső Lovász, Mrs. András Szepessy,Mrs. Zsigmond Szepessy, Mrs. Gyula Marikovszky, Mrs. Gusztáv Zsory, Mrs. Barna Zsory, Mrs. Dr. Mór Stark, Mrs. László Máriássy, Mrs. Elek Szalay, Mrs. Ede Dianovszky, Mrs. Lipcsey, Mrs. Komjáthi, Mrs. Gyurkó, Mrs. Tomka, Mrs. Ferenc Török, Mrs. János Tóth etc. The dancing lasted until 8 o'clock in the morning and then the indefatigable ball audience visited the hospitable population of Boldva village.

Source: Fővárosi Lapok, February 24, 1887, issue 54, page 390.

By then, Kálmán Terbócs had already lost a good part of the property he had held by virtue of his rank and inheritance, but he still had some of his estates, and, due to circumstances that remain unclear, he was also the holder of the family's noble title Even so, the noblewomen in the region knew him well and no one would marry him. So it was almost out of necessity that he married my great-great-grandmother, the minister's orphaned daughter. He got wealth and recognition with her, for he became a family man. My great-great-grandmother and her mother must have been content in their own way, for Etelka had married off her only daughter, and her son-in-law was a nobleman. The wedding took place in Boldva on April 28, 1897, and the following year, on February 25, 1898, their only child, my great-grandmother, Aranka Terbócs, was born in Boldva.

Kálmán's escape: Missing fortunes and a missing maid

My great-grandmother was brought up by a French governess. They had several servants and lived a high-class life of the time. My great-great-grandfather also regained his reputation. He organized the landowners in the village and the surrounding area into a cooperative, set up a joint-stock company, and became its managing director. All seemed to be well, but my great-great-grandfather continued his idle, dissolute ways behind the scenes. Cards, booze, and women. Then one day, my great-great-grandmother woke up to find my great-great-grandfather gone. He ran away. And the maid was also nowhere to be found. As it turned out, nothing had been right for a long time.My great-great-grandfather had sold, mortgaged, and gambled away almost all of the cooperative's assets, their own assets, the mansion, and his wife's dowry. Everything. For years, he had been having an affair with the family cook, 20 years younger than him, who had also disappeared. The cooperative was recovered by the members to some extent, and they redeemed everything that was mortgaged, but whatever was squandered could not be recovered. So quite a few other families were left penniless in addition to his own.Three generations of women were left to fend for themselves and, once again with the kindness and intercession of the Szathmáry Király family, they were able to move into the empty minister's house. My great-great-grandmother started teaching in the local school and then later in Edelény. She mainly taught music, but also gave French lessons. They lived on this and on donations from the grandmother's brother until their deaths. My great-great-grandmother, Irma Tóth, Kálmán Terbócs's wife, died in 1918, aged only 46. My great-grandmother, then 20 years old, moved to Miskolc.

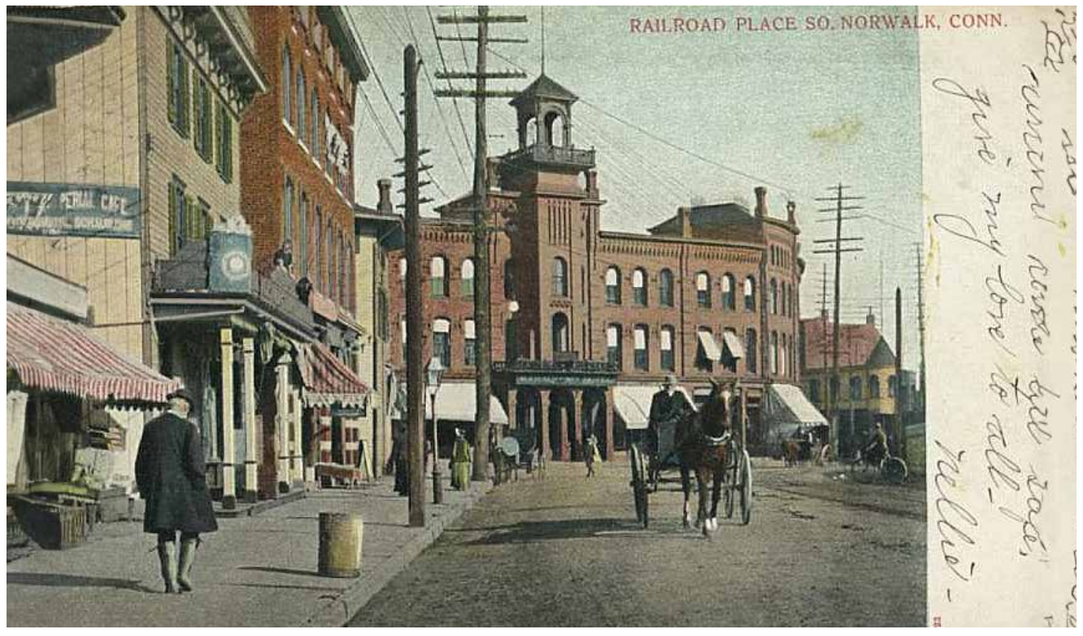


Boldva in the early 1900s
Source: Boldva Community Center and Library

After Kálmán's disappearance, a search for him was launched. We learned from his daughter, my great-grandmother, that all they knew was that Kálmán had run off to America and had taken the maid with him. They had no information about what happened next, so I suspect they really didn't know anything more. As a result of my research, I have found out the following, and it is a source of great sorrow for me that I can no longer tell anyone in the family...

Kálmán in America: Answers and new question marks

The noose around my great-great-grandfather's neck must have been tightening for some time. His escape, his emigration to the USA, could not have been a sudden impulse; it was well prepared, indeed. Kálmán Terbócs arrived in the USA at Ellis Island on March 13, 1903. He left Bremen on the ship *S.S. Barbarossa*. In the ship manifest, his age is given wrong (as 37, therefore indexed with the birth year 1866), place of birth correctly as Balajt, Hungary. Occupation landowner, marital status married. His friend, József Kisházi, was waiting for him there. József was a childhood friend, who had emigrated the previous year. Also, one of Kálmán's cousins was already living in the U.S., so I think these two men must have made the preparations for Kálmán's arrival. The maid, Zsuzsanna Bodnár, arrived in the USA a year later, on July 16, 1904, on the ship *Slavonia* from Fiume, I don't know where she was until then. Her occupation was given as servant, and she was met at the port by Kálmán Terbócs, who was given the entry "intended husband." Their address was given as in South Norwalk, CT, as was consistent with the emigration habits of the Abaúj people (as I read in Zoltán Fejős' book Hungarians in South Norwalk: More on the emigration from Abaúj. But I have not found any traces of them by studying this publication).This is all the family knew about them. The fact that Zsuzsanna Bodnár only followed him a year later was news to us.



South Norwalk in 1909
Source: Unknown photographer – eBay

Then I found three very thought-provoking registry entries. One is a 1906 entry in Borsod, now a part of Edelény, which says that Zsuzsanna Bodnár gave birth to a son named Károly. The father is Kálmán Terbócs, who claims the boy as his own. Two years after Zsuzsanna Bodnár's boat docks in the USA, a newborn is registered in Hungary. Are they back? Maybe. I have found no trace of it, but Kálmán Terbócs' signature is not in his own handwriting, but in the hand of the person who kept the register. Kálmán and my great-great-grandmother were still married at that time. Then I found an entry concerning the divorce, from 1908, stating that the marriage with my great-great-grandmother, from 1897, was dissolved in 1908 at the Miskolc Court of Justice under number 17257/P/1908. So another two years passed between the birth of the child to the servant girl and their divorce.

I have written to the Miskolc archives to ask for the decree of dissolution, but unfortunately, I have learned it is not available. It could have answered so many of my questions.

I also found a third interesting entry, which does not solve any mystery but provides some additional information about the character of my great-great-grandfather Kálmán Terbócs. Back home before anything erupted, in 1900, the maid, Zsuzsanna Bodnár, gave birth to an illegitimate son in Balajt, whose father is unrecorded and whose name was Sándor. I am absolutely certain that the relationship between my great-great-grandfather and the maid may have begun much earlier than we suspected, and that this male child was also his illegitimate child, but he was not yet in a position to acknowledge him.

This suggests they must have had at least two children together. My great-grandmother had no idea that she had any brothers or sisters by her father; to her knowledge, her father never returned. But I suspect that her mother, my great-great-grandmother, must have known everything, and the treasured papers that my grandmother kept and did not give us may have been the key to the secret. Only, as I wrote at the beginning, we never got them and they were destroyed in the burglary.

In my research, I found no trace of Kálmán Terbócs, Zsuzsanna Bodnár, or the two boys. Nor did I find anything about them in the Reformed registers of Balajt, Boldva, and the neighboring places. My theory is that perhaps Zsuzsanna Bodnár may have come back, and Kálmán Terbócs still had the influence to assume paternity of the child and is entered in the register in his absence. The child, or perhaps both children, may have been given up for adoption by the mother. And the divorce, I believe, must also have been initiated in his absence, by my great-great-grandmother and her family. I think my great-great-grandfather stayed in the USA and may have died there. Or maybe he changed his name, or it's so badly misspelled in records that I don't recognize it.

I don't know whether we will ever find out where and when my great-great-grandfather, Kálmán Terbócs, died, but I would so like to know the end of his story.

By Erika Eszes, great-great-granddaughter of Kálmán Terbócs
Miskolc, May 2024.
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Grocery and boarding house: The Horvath family's life in Erie

My grandfather, Peter Horvath, was a traveling merchant from Kisősz/Gottlob, Transylvania, Hungary (today in Romania), who made several trips to the United States. In 1904, he left Gottlob, joined by Marie Kirsch and her 10-year-old daughter, Amelia Loris, on board the *S.S. Kaiser Wilhelm II*, leaving from the port of Bremen. It is uncertain when they were married, but 1900 is a good guess based on his answer in the 1910 census that he had been married for 10 years. On the passage across the Atlantic Ocean, Peter and Marie's son, Charles, was born on July 1, 1904.

Amelia, who was my aunt, had a few recollections of the voyage. She remembered Charles being born. She also recalled playing on the deck. That was not allowed since they were steerage passengers. The children ran away from the crew and were finally caught and told to get back downstairs. She also had vivid memories of seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time; everyone aboard was crowded on the deck.

Immigrant children on the deck of an ocean liner
Source: Granger Historical Archive[28]

Péter Horváth
1904

After arriving at Ellis Island, the group traveled to a boarding house they knew of in Erie, Pennsylvania. The 1906 city directory lists their address as 907 East 11th Street and Peter is listed as a laborer. Peter spoke seven languages but did not pass that knowledge to his children. It was felt that they were in America now and should speak English. In 1911, they resided at 906 Parade Street and Peter is listed as a grocer. Family lore says that Peter was a generous person who gave people groceries for their written pledge to repay. Most customers were honest, but, of course, there were some who did not pay their debts. This kept the Horvath budget tight, especially with the birth of another son, my father, William C., in 1910. Hungarian cuisine was often served in the Horvath household. Some of the dishes that children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren enjoy today are paprikash soup, chicken paprikash and strudel.

It was decided that Marie would help other immigrants and supplement the family income by starting a boarding house. Boarders were well fed and supplied with lunches for work every day. Marie would also feed the homeless (hoboes) as she was able. My father often talked about his parents, remembering them as hard working and busy sunup to sundown.

The last grocery Peter owned was at 1329 West 20th Street in Erie, PA, near the St. Stephen of Hungary Catholic church. They began to attend church there. For many years, my dad, William, took his children there every Christmas Eve for midnight Mass. Peter died in 1936, and Marie in 1941. They are buried in Erie.

Amelia was employed for a time as a milliner and married F. W. Heck in 1911. Charles worked at the General Electric Corp. in Erie, and moved to Cleveland, Ohio, after the death of his first wife. He became active in the Hungarian community in Cleveland. Amelia had one daughter and Charles had a daughter and a son.

Having Hungarian roots to me means that I come from a country with a rich history. I enjoy and appreciate Hungarian dance and art. I love the rich colors! I read about the Hungarian countryside whenever I have a chance and have viewed a site that shows the streets of Nagyszentmiklós (today Sânnicolau Mare, Romania). My dream is to someday travel to Budapest!

By Mary Rita Horvath, granddaughter of Péter Horváth
Erie, Pennsylvania, July 2024
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Severed ties and a unifying legacy: Parallel lives an ocean apart

My great-grandfather, József Deák, was born on July 26, 1879, in Ricse, Zemplén County, the son of József Deák and Erzsébet Deák. It is no coincidence that his parents' last names were the same: in the 1700s, five families (Máté, Vécsy, Körmöndi, Deák, and Kocsi) were settled in the village, and most of the population still bears one of these names.

Family roots: Early losses and new beginnings

József had three siblings: his younger brother András was born in 1881, followed five years later by Erzsébet, and then Eszter in 1890. Their father died when József was 15, and their mother was a widow for almost 50 years, until the end of her days. My great-grandfather and his younger brother were very young when he died – his death may have been one of the reasons they went to the United States, to support the family. According to relatives' recollections, the family land was sold off bit by bit, and my grandfather said that József went to America to earn enough money to buy back his father's land.

András was the first of the brothers to set out, arriving at Ellis Island in 1902 via Hamburg. József was still completing his military service, which he had begun that year. He later married Julianna Körmöndi in 1904, but by the time of the birth of his son he was no longer at home. He followed András in March 1905. He also traveled via Hamburg, on board the Graf Waldersee. We don't know whether he had a passport – probably not, because as a reservist he needed special permission to leave. On arrival, József had $16 on him according to the Ellis Island registration documents, and he had paid for his own boat fare. He and Károlya Kocsi made their way to Pittsburgh to join András.

András worked for Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation until his death, and József earned his living as a steel mill worker, probably employed by the same company. For low wages, immigrants worked 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week; at the steel mills people worked 63-hour weeks. Their average annual income was around $400.[29] Joseph had already bought land on the outskirts of Ricse in November 1906 with the money he earned in America – the deed is still in the family's possession to this day.

József Deák
1905

A series of tragedies: Mourning and community

My great-grandfather was joined by his wife in the spring of 1907 and their young son, József, who had been left in the care of his maternal grandparents in Ricse, died of pneumonia six months later. In February 1908, their second son, János, was born in Pittsburgh, and mother and baby returned home to Ricse later that year. They both died there three days apart in early 1909, both of tuberculosis. In addition to the extremely dangerous work conditions at the steel mill, it was probably the death of his loved ones that prompted József to join the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America (HRFA), which provided death benefits and funeral expenses to families. József joined the Federation on April 4,1909, and the certificate of membership is still in the family's possession.

His membership was canceled in October 1914. By then, he had been fighting on the Eastern Front for two months, and it is possible that my great-grandmother could no longer afford to pay the monthly dues.

József Deák's HRFA certificate
Source: Family photo album

A new beginning: Marriage and a shared life in America

We do not know for sure, but it is likely that József traveled home to Ricse after the death of his wife and son, and that is probably when he met my great-grandmother, Zsófia Jesztrebi. Zsófia was born on September 30, 1891, in Ricse, the eldest child of Károly Jesztrebi and Zsófia Dobos. We have no information about how they met. Zsófia was the same age as József's sister Eszter, 18 years old in 1909. My great-grandmother boarded a ship in Fiume on November 25 of the same year and sailed for New York on board the Carmania. On her immigration record, József is listed as the person she was joining.
József and Zsófia were married on January 4, 1910, at the Hungarian Reformed Church in the Hazelwood neighborhood of Pittsburgh. András Deák and Károly Józsa are listed as witnesses in the church register, which still exists today. The couple standing next to them are András (Andrew) Deák and his wife Róza (Rose) Mészáros, who were married in 1908, also in Pittsburgh. According to the 1910 census, József and András and their wives were living together on Wakefield Street. The street is near the river, in the immediate vicinity of the steel mill, not far from Hazelwood, also known at the time as Little Hungary. In the early 20th century, there were only factories on both sides of the river for about 50 miles around Pittsburgh, the center of the world's steel production. *"You could barely see because of the soot sometimes, the walls of the houses were almost black with dirt. [...] At night, the red glow of the iron foundry was visible from far away. Fine metal shards covered everything, the windowsills, the street, even the leaves of the trees."* [30]

József Deák and Zsófia Jesztrebi's wedding picture
Source: Family photo album

A marriage torn apart: War and imprisonment

My grandfather told the family how his father, József, had been at home in Hungary when World War I broke out. He was unable to return to his wife, and according to the Hungarian World War I database he served as a platoon leader of the 2nd Company, 1st Field Battalion, 85th Regiment of the Imperial and Royal Infantry. The regiment was deployed to the Eastern Front, and baptized in the fighting at Komarów near Pawłowka (now Eastern Poland) on August 26, 1914. His regiment took part in several battles, and my great-grandfather was awarded the Silver Medal of Valour 2nd Class (probably for his performance in the battle of Manilowa or Gontowa).
József was taken prisoner of war by the Russians at the beginning of the Brusilov offensive in June 1916 in the village of Rudnia (probably at the Battle of Tarnawka on June 15).

József Deák's World War I army registration card
Source: Family photo album

His capture was not recorded in the official casualty lists published every few days until January 1917, and his family probably did not know what had happened to him for six months. Even then, the only information available was that he had been captured in Russia. Unfortunately, we could not find out which camp he was held in, so we do not know when he was released either..

A family growing at home: Children and grandchildren

What is certain is that by the time of the 1920 U.S. census, Zsófia was no longer in America, having returned to Hungary shortly after the war (which could not have been easy, as the defeat and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire made applying for a passport and the journey home very cumbersome). They settled in Ricse, and József used the money he earned in America to buy back his father's land and build the village's second stone house, which still stands in the center of the village today. Above the house was the hill of Kígyós, and the base of the wooden-beamed porch was reinforced with stone. He was so proud of his land that he made an itemized entry in the family prayer book about how much land he had reclaimed and from whom. In 1921, their first daughter, Erzsébet, was born, followed three years later by my grandmother Rebeka.

Both daughters gave József and Zsófia three grandchildren each. According to the grandchildren's recollections, they were loving grandparents, taking care of the children while the parents worked in the fields. Zsófia always wore black, working even in the summer heat in a long black skirt in the summer kitchen. József worked in the garden and around the house. At harvest time, in the big barn, while the women were tying the marrow, he wove ropes of straw and put a piece of wood in the end. He spent a lot of time in the garden by the Tisza River, where he had a small wicker hut and two rows of fruit trees. He sowed vegetables, and the Tisza heaped up mud over his vegetable garden. When the water level was down, the grandchildren would bring him lunch and clean clothes through the forest. He could swim back and forth across the Tisza.

József Deák with his grandchildren in the late 1950s. The older girl is my mother
Source: Family photo album

Farewell: Zsófia's funeral and József's last years

One of the first memories of my mother's life was Zsófia's funeral. It was the summer of 1955, and my great-grandmother was sitting in the chair with her 1-year-old grandson on her lap when she suddenly collapsed. A cart was brought and she was taken to a doctor in a neighboring village, but there was nothing anyone could do. She was probably diabetic, like many of her descendants, but they didn't know this at the time.

József lived for 10 years after his wife's death. The stone house built from American earnings was sold, and he alternated living with his daughters' families, keeping his belongings in a large soldier's chest.

He was active for a few more years, and then just existed for some more. He lived to see the land he bought with hard-earned dollars in America taken away – Ricse was one of the last villages to be literally forced into collectivization. He died in the spring of 1965, surrounded by his family. I was 10 when the family received compensation tickets for the land taken, after almost 30 years. I remember the family going to the Tiszakert, where József had spent so much time.

The legacy of the two brothers: Shared roots and new encounters

I have known that my great-grandparents had lived in America since I was very young: the American clock on my grandparents' bedroom wall was loudly striking the quarters, and to this day one of the appliances in my family's house is a Singer sewing machine that my grandmother bought after she returned home (second-hand, for a cow). I am sure American money was invested in it. What I didn't know was that József hadn't set off on his great journey all by himself. He followed his brother, who, unlike him, stayed and started a family in the U.S. He and his wife, Róza, had five children and lived in Pittsburgh for the rest of their lives. Relations between the Hungarian and American branches of the family were severed in the years following András's death in 1942, and we didn't know about each other until a year and a half ago, when during one of my visits to Ricse I asked relatives if they knew who Andrew Deák was, listed with József and his wife on the 1910 census sheet in Pittsburgh. From there, it was only a matter of days before I found Frank, Andrew's grandson, who fortunately is as keen a family history researcher as I am. If all goes well, we'll meet in Pittsburgh this coming October, and we'll tie up the threads that were severed more than 100 years ago when the two brothers said goodbye forever to live their lives separated by an ocean.

By Réka Bakos, József Deák's great-granddaughter
Tata, April 2024
reka.bakos@t-online.hu

Echoes of the Old Homeland: The story of Margaret and the Bokó family

One September afternoon in 2007, as my grandfather and I stood on the balcony looking out at the world, he started telling me about the family – "You know, the American family." I looked blankly at him. What American family? My mother never talked about it. I kept asking questions and slowly the picture began to form. As soon as I got home, I went straight to detective work. I explored various databases and genealogy sites. Five hours later, I sadly found that the people Grandpa had mentioned were no longer alive, but I had a U.S. phone number from the Whitepages site: Margaret Bokó in Bellingham, Washington State, born in 1915. By this time it was night in America, so I had to wait until morning to dial. I hoped that although she might be old, she would still be alive.

Margaret was a second-generation American Hungarian. She spoke excellent Hungarian and had a solid religious upbringing. Her Reformed grandparents, Maria Hankó and Gusztáv Bokó Sr., were married on April 16, 1879, in Berente, Borsod County, after which they moved to Sajószentpéter, where the noble Bokó/Bukó family originated. The nobility was somehow forgotten along the way. Margaret's father, Gusztáv Bokó, was born on January 7, 1891, in Rudabánya, the family's fifth child. Of the seven children, only he and his older brother, first-born Imre, reached adulthood. Gusztáv followed Imre to the New World.

Margaret Bokó
Source: Family photo album

Bokó Imre
1905

Rudabánya, Passaic, Bridgeport: The American travels of the family breadwinner, Imre Bokó

Imre was my great-great-grandfather, who was born on February 28, 1880, in Sajószentpéter, Borsod County. His religion was Reformed. He and his wife, Zsuzsanna Gregus, were married in Felsőnyárád in 1902, and they moved to nearby Rudabánya, where Imre worked as a miner. His father had died in 1895 at the age of 45 (of pneumonia), so it was Imre's job as eldest son to earn his living.

Imre set sail for America at the age of 24, arriving at Ellis Island on the ship *S.S. Kronprinz Wilhelm* on June 20, 1905. He left his widowed mother, his brother, Gusztáv, then 14, Zsuzsanna, and two children in the Old Country. He paid for his own ticket, and with $45 in his pocket, was headed to Passaic, New Jersey, to join Joseph Vecsi. According to the ship's manifest, Imre had been in Connecticut in May 1901 but I have found no other evidence of this. According to Margaret, Imre went back to Hungary in the autumn of 1905 to help with the harvest, and his 10-year-old sister, Maria, died at this time. They must have been poor, so he had no choice but to hit the road again. On January 30, 1906, he arrived once more at Ellis Island. This time, he was on his way to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where Gusztáv Bokó's family lived until World War II. They regularly attended the St. László Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, where the children also learned Hungarian.

Travel and settlement in Bridgeport: The American life of Gusztáv Bokó

Gusztáv arrived on the *S.S. Slavonia* on August 28, 1907, at the age of 16. He went to Bridgeport – but whether he joined his brother or had to cope on his own, I don't know. According to the 1910 U.S. census, he was 20 years old and living alone in a sublet and working as a manual laborer. His wife, Margit Dienes, came to America in 1912, aged 17, with her mother and two siblings (József and Anna) to live with a man called John Pavelko. There were many Hungarians living in the Hancock Avenue area of Bridgeport at the time, and Gusztáv and Margit may have known each other back home, as they both came from Borsod County. After a short engagement, they married on May 9, 1914, also in Bridgeport, and their first child, Margaret, was born on June 2, 1915, followed by Olga in 1917 and, finally, Robert Gusztav in 1931.

Gusztáv enlisted in 1917 and fought in World War I in Europe. According to his military registration, he was 5-feet, 5-inches tall and 134 pounds, with gray eyes and dark hair. Like the members of the Bokó family back home, he was short but muscular and sturdy. Margaret said he could not have been away for long since the war ended in November 1918.

According to the census sheet, Gustav was still a Hungarian citizen in 1920; he didn't apply for American citizenship until 1943, when he was 52 and working in a factory. According to the 1930 census, he was a work inspector in a factory. In the 1940 census, he appears as a hatter working in a hat factory, Margaret an office worker, Olga a secretary, and Robert was a minor at the time. In 1942, he was still a Hungarian citizen fighting in World War II, aged 51, and employed by Carpenter Product Corporation.

Gusztáv Bokó's naturalization certificate
Source: Family collection


THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ORIGINAL
TO BE GIVEN TO THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. 5606981

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

Petition No. 28684

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age 52 years, sex male, color white, complexion medium, color of eyes blue, color of hair brown-grey, height 5 feet 5 inches, weight 136 pounds, visible distinctive marks none, former nationality Hungary, Marital status married

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me

Gustav Boko
(Complete and true signature of holder)

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
COUNTY OF FAIRFIELD } ss.

Be it known that at a term of the Superior Court of Fairfield County held pursuant to law at Bridgeport, Connecticut on June 9, 1943 the Court having found that Gustav Boko then residing at 156 Osborne Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut intends to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the Naturalization Laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and she was admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 9th day of June in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-three and of our Independence the one hundred and sixty-seven

Gustav Boko

Seal

Asst. Clerk of the Superior Court
Donald J. Zielinski
By Deputy Clerk

It is a violation of the U. S. Code and punishable as such to copy, print, photograph, or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Gusztáv Bokó and his family
Source: Family photo album

After World War II, the family moved to Bellingham, Washington, to be closer to their daughter Olga, who had met her future husband, Boyd Cormier, there. He was an elementary school teacher. The couple had one child and in 1949 they moved into their own house, where they lived until their deaths. According to the 1950 census, Gusztáv worked in a tool factory, Olga was a secretary, and Robert a musician.

The Iron Curtain and the Red Cross: The broken brotherhood

Imre, the elder brother, returned to Hungary sometime after World War I. Imre and Gusztáv were in frequent contact until World War II. Letters and packages arrived regularly from America with toys, chocolate, canned goods, condensed milk and clothes for Imre's children and grandchildren. These gifts live on to this day, two generations later, in the memories of our parents, who are now in their 60s and 70s. Some clothes were worn for years and passed on to the youngest child in the family. The Colt toy pistol with an ivory handle was highly prized by all the male grandchildren – they were either robbers or cowboys. An American pair of white denim trousers was altered several times just to make sure everyone had a chance to wear them. The satin and lace dresses were worn for festive occasions and when family photographs were taken, which are still treasured today.

But the relationship between the two families was severed. After the war, the Iron Curtain closed everything off. No more letters came, and the fact that relatives were still living abroad had to be kept secret. I cannot imagine what it must have been like for the brothers not to know about each other. Later they each received news through the Red Cross that the other was still alive, but nothing else. By the time contact was re-established after 1989, both brothers had passed away. Imre Bokó and his wife died in Rudabánya, Hungary, and younger brother Gusztáv in 1971 and his wife Margaret Dienes in 1969 in Bellingham. Gusztáv (known to his wife as 'Gusty') lived a remarkably long life, according to one descendant, given that he suffered from emphysema for most of his life, which was traced back to his working years in the opencast coal mines of Hungary, from the age of 13.

Correspondence and phone calls: Descendants reconnect

Margaret was 92 when we first spoke on the phone. She mixed her rusty Hungarian with some English, her voice fragile but full of life. She knew immediately who I was and why I was calling. We first spoke in late September 2007 and then exchanged letters. She had spent a few days in the hospital just before my call and said, "If my sister Olga were alive, I would have better health care because she was a nurse and a very good one." At that time it wasn't so easy to phone America, and there was no iPhone to see her, so I thought I'd pay her a visit. It seemed like a crazy idea, but with Christmas coming up and work to do, I postponed the trip until February.

In the meantime, everyone at home got excited. I didn't know all of my great-great-grandfather Imre's descendants – many of us probably don't even know the names of our great-grandparents, so it took me a while to trace the family tree. I began to realize that my family was much larger than the one I had known. I wrote to strangers on Facebook to contact them and spread the word about Margaret and the American family. It turns out that other people had been looking for them years ago, but they had been unsuccessful. Old letters and photographs turned up.

My great-great-grandfather, Imre, after he returned from America, lived his life in Rudabánya. Here he had five children, all of whom lived to adulthood and had families of their own. They lived in Borsod County, in Szendrő, Szuhogy, Rudabánya, one or two villages away from each other. My grandfather's cousins and second cousins, in-laws, grandparents, with whom he had kept in close contact as a child, and then as a new generation was born, there were more and more family members, grown apart – but now they were all here, gathered together in one place due to genealogical research. Long-lost relatives kept arriving and old memories and stories were rekindled, people in their 60s, 70s and 80s embracing each other again. It was a fantastic experience. My grandfather cried. He felt young again. My grandfather's sister was called Margit (Margaret), and her son was called Róbert. Just like Gustav's children. A coincidence?

I wrote Margaret a letter with everyone's phone numbers, and at Christmas she called them one by one. Unfortunately, she couldn't reach many of them, but she was trying to make up for 50 years of not talking. My grandfather happily recounted the details of the conversation – he and Margaret discussed even the recipe for baking bread for Christmas. They said goodbye, and promised each other they would talk more from now on.

A hymn and the anthem: Margaret Boko's memory

Unfortunately, that was not to be. On January 5, I received a phone call saying Margaret was dying. By then, her breathing had already changed, and she only had a few hours left. I said goodbye to her on speakerphone. I know she heard me. Her breathing had calmed down, and the nurse said she closed her eyes with a sense of relief that she was Hungarian again at the very end of her life.

Margaret Boko, 92, passed from this life into eternity on Saturday January 5, 2008, at her home in Bellingham. She was born to Gustave and Margit D. Boko on June 2, 1915, in Bridgeport, Connecticut. She grew up there, graduated from Butler Business School, and worked for more than 50 years in various company offices in Bridgeport and Bellingham, including government work for the Ordnance Department, manufacturer of the Thompson machine gun during World War II. In 1947, she followed her sister, Olga, to Bellingham and went to work for Pacific American Fisheries, and in 1962, she took a job with Puget Sound Pulp and Timber (in the recently closed Georgia Pacific plant), retiring as a purchasing agent. In that capacity, she managed orders for everything from letterhead to loaded tanker trucks. Though small in stature, "Maggie" was an independent, proud Hungarian to the end, who endeared herself to her family, friends, caregivers and her cat, Miss Kitty. Margaret had an incredible memory and loved to tell stories of her life to those who were lucky enough to know her. She will be greatly missed. Margaret was preceded in death by her parents, as well as her sister Olga Cormier and brother Robert Boko.

For Margaret's funeral, she requested the Hungarian National Anthem and the Lutheran hymn *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, "but in Hungarian!" She made her nurse and old friend promise. Karen, who was always helpful in keeping in touch with us, was eager to keep her promise. Since she did not have this audio recording, she turned to me. Unfortunately, I'm not religious, so I didn't know what this hymn was. After several days of searching, I still failed. Hungarian Kossuth Radio was my only hope, but, unfortunately, they could not help me either.

Finally, the Ózd Lutheran Church sent me the mp3 file, which was converted with great difficulty to an American format and at Margaret's funeral the hymn was finally sung, in Hungarian:

Erős vár a mi Istenünk,
Jó fegyverünk és pajzsunk.
Ha ő velünk, ki ellenünk?
Az Úr a mi oltalmunk.
…
(A mighty Fortress is our God
A Bulwark never failing
Our Helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.)
...

"You have made my Aunt Margaret very happy to have renewed her ties with the Old Country. I am sad to inform you that Margaret died today in the 93rd year of her life. She had not been well for the last few years, had a few falls and broken bones, but kept her clear mind and happy spirit until her last week," wrote one descendant.

Down memory lane: The past and the present connect

Since contacting Margaret, the world has opened up and is much bigger than it was before. I am always on the move, having moved to London on my own at the age of 20, with no English, to find a better living as an au pair than was possible back in Hungary at the time. I didn't leave looking for adventure, and neither did my ancestors when they left their families behind and used their hard-earned money to buy a ticket to the unknown, across the ocean. With great courage and sacrifice, they sought a new homeland where they hoped for a better life. Did they find it? I think they did, but the first generation may have been left with a void. While Margaret remained forever Hungarian in her heart, the children and grandchildren of her generation are now Americans at heart. For them, family and native country is unquestionably there, in the country of their parents' choice. For the second and third generation, the Old Country is no longer important, and many know nothing of their ancestors' trials, doubts, and identity. After living in England, Italy and Switzerland, I can no longer think of myself as a child of one nation. Instead, I feel like a citizen of the world. But the knowledge that others in my family have felt the same way, having experienced similar things in much more difficult circumstances, always gives me the strength to be able to start again at any time. Unfortunately, I never met Margaret, but I always think of her with great affection. It has been 16 years since she passed away. The meaning of the word *family* for me now encompasses many more people than it once did, thanks to my family tree research. In June 2024, I visited America to pay my respects at the graves of Gustave, his wife, Margaret Dienes, Margaret Bokó and Olga. They are resting in Bellingham Cemetery after a long and meaningful life. More than 110 years after Imre and Gusztáv last met, the two families have 'met' again, which is a joy. Sadly, they were no longer alive to see it, but they must be smiling from above.

They are gone but never forgotten.

By Éva Bodnár, great-great-granddaughter of Imre Bokó
Zürich, Switzerland, June 2024
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Sisters at home and in the world: The lives of the Takács girls on two continents

In the 1880s, a wave of Hungarian emigration began, with the United States of America as the main destination. The peak was between 1905 and 1907. My story begins in Borsod County of Hungary, more precisely in the village of Borsod (now part of the town of Edelény), on September 25, 1889. That was the day when Erzsébet Takács was born, the second daughter of a family of Reformed (Calvinist) Christians. Her father, Dániel Takács, was a 27-year-old small landowner and farmer born in Borsod. Her mother was Zsófia Thóbiás, 26, a young housewife, also born in Borsod. They were my great-great-grandparents. From their marriage, four daughters were born. The first was Mária Takács in 1887. The second, about whom this story is told, was Erzsébet Takács in 1889, the third Eszter Takács in 1893, and the fourth daughter, my great-grandmother Piroska Takács in 1898.

The girls' childhood years were not easy, as the lack of male children in the family meant that everyone had to pitch in doing men's work. Their father did everything he could to provide an adequate financial background for his wife and daughters by cultivating his small fields. He bought land in Borsod and built a house for the family. It was perhaps not because of poor financial circumstances, but out of a sense of adventure and the hope of an even better life that Elizabeth decided to try a new life overseas. Much to the chagrin of her parents, she left for Germany in 1905 at the age of 16, in the company of several young people from Borsod. On arriving in the German city of Bremen, she bought a ticket and boarded the ship *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. The voyage itself was a long, crowded, and trying experience for a young girl. The destination was Ellis Island, New York City. After several hours on the island to check her details and assess her medical condition, Elizabeth, as an immigrant, made her way to Passaic, New Jersey, with the help of friends. Initially, she spent her days learning English and working odd jobs.

Dániel Takács and Zsófia Thóbiás with their children. Piroska is the younger daughter, Mária is the older one
Source: Family photo album

Erzsébet Takács
1905

Meanwhile, she met her future husband, Gyula Berzi. Gyula was also born in Borsod County, in the village of Nyomár, on May 15, 1888. His parents were Pál Berzi and Borbála Gyöngyösi. His mother lost her husband much too soon, and she decided to set sail for the United States with her son because of the difficult financial circumstances they were living in. In 1901, the widowed Borbála and 13-year-old Gyula set sail from the port of Hamburg in Germany on the Auguste Victoria, hoping for a better life overseas. Gyula and Erzsébet married in the local Reformed (Calvinist) church and had two children, Steven Berzi in 1913 and Helen Berzi in 1915.

Gyula Berzi and Erzsébet Takács's wedding
Source: Family photo album

Erzsébet Takács and Eszter Takács
Source: Family photo album

Erzsébet kept in touch with the family at home. Her older sister, Mária, soon married too, in Borsod, and the older one of her younger sisters, Eszter, also longed for a new life. She was soon on her way, and in 1907, at the invitation of her sister, she left the port of Fiume for the USA on the ship *Caronia*. Eszter spent much time with her beloved older sister and was present on the day of Erzsébet's marriage. However, homesickness and the absence of her family lured the young girl back to Hungary. She later settled in the village of Szalonna in Borsod County.

Erzsébet and Gyula, however, decided to settle for good in the New World. Gyula worked in textile mills first in Botany and then the New Jersey textile mills before joining the Passaic police force on December 1, 1924, at the age of 36. Several articles about his police activities appeared in the local newspaper. He was well over 50 when he decided to retire, as his right hand was plagued with rheumatism and his right leg with osteomyelitis, aggravated by the walking and standing required by his job. However, in order to qualify for a pension after 20 years of service, he, and later his wife, remained in service for another eight months. He died in 1947, and Erzsébet was awarded an annual widow's pension of $1,000. Erzsébet Takács lived for 40 more years and was laid to rest at the age of 98 in Passaic, New Jersey, next to her beloved husband.

Gyula Berzi as a policeman
Source: Family photo album

Piroska Takács and Sámuel Molnár's wedding photo
Source: Family photo album

My great-grandmother, Piroska Takács, married at the age of 21, on April 12, 1919, in the Reformed Church of Borsod, to Sámuel Harmaczi Molnár, a 27-year-old resident of Hernádkak (whose father had also been to America several times). They had three children: Erzsébet Molnár, who was named after Erzsébet Takács because of the sisterly bond, Piroska Molnár, and my grandfather, Dezső Molnár. My great-grandmother's relationship with her sister Erzsébet was quite good, and they kept in touch until my great-grandmother's death in 1963.

The house built by the Takács girls' father has been in the family for nearly 120 years. For us, it is not just a simple country house, but history itself. After the death of my great-great-grandparents, my great-grandparents lived there with their children, and subsequent generations also grew up in this house.

By Ákos Molnár, great-grandson of Piroska Takács
Kazincbarcika, April 2024
akos0521@gmail.com

The Takács family house in Borsod
Source: Family photo album

War and homecoming: The tragedy of a family torn apart

In 1905, fleeing poverty and unemployment in early 20th century Hungary and the increasing oppression of Austria–Hungary, 18-year-old József Hajdú, a native of Kompolt, arrived in Passaic, New Jersey, with new hopes. After his arrival, he worked several jobs, eventually finding employment in a steel mill as a core maker for the Commonwealth Steel Company in Granite City, Illinois. Core makers were crucially important in the steel industry at the time, their job being the making of the internal cores for the various molds, a precise and technically demanding job, as the accuracy of the cores determined the quality and functionality of the castings.
During his stay in Granite City, he was an active member of the Hungarian community. In 1912, he was a founder of the 187th chapter of the Verhovay Aid Association. The association was dedicated to the support of Hungarian immigrants, providing them with health and life insurance, as well as social and cultural assistance. József also served as secretary of the association and, in addition, was a member of several other organizations that helped Hungarian immigrants to the United States assimilate by teaching English and local culture.

József Hajdú c. 1918
Family collection, Saint Louis Yearbook

JÓZSEF HAJDU, born in Kompolt (Heves County) on April 7, 1887. Employed as a coremaker at the Commonwealth Co. for 3 years. His family is in the old country. He and his wife were born in 1887. He married Hermina Holló in 1910 in Passaic, N.J. His children are Paulina, 7, and József, 5. His family went to the old country in 1913 but could not return because of the outbreak of the war. József Hajdu came to America on February 22, 1905. He worked in various places until he finally started working in Granite City, where he still lives. He is a charter member of the Verhovay Aid Association, Chapter 187, of which he has been: secretary, clerk, president (for one term), vice president; and presently secretary. He is also a founding member of the Public Culture Circle, of which he is now Vice President. He is also a member of the International Molders Union, Division 155, of which he is Vice President. He is a good organizer in the association life, has established several reforms, and participated as a delegate in the Passaic convention of the Verhovay Aid Association. He is an agitator for our newspaper..

Born in Szalonna, Hermina Holló arrived in Passaic in 1906, at the age of 16. After her arrival, she took a job as a weaver in a cotton mill in Granite City. She and József Hajdú probably met in the U.S., and not before.

József and Hermina married in 1910 in Passaic. Their children were also born there, my great-grandmother Paulina in 1911, and József Jr., two years later.
Family life continued in Granite City. They kept in regular contact with relatives in Hungary, occasionally visiting them. This was the case around 1914, when Hermina and her two children left for the Old Country by boat. However, in the summer of 1914, World War I broke out, making it impossible for them to return to the USA.

The war exacerbated poverty and famine in Hungary. As a result, many people suffered and died of tuberculosis. Sadly, this disease also reached family members at home. Hermina tried to help her sick relatives, but contracted the disease and died some time between 1918 and 1920 in the Hungarian village of Szalonna. Her grave is believed to be in the Szalonna cemetery. (Unfortunately, during my latest search I did not find the exact location of the grave.)

József stayed in Granite City during the "Great War" and was only able to return to Hungary after the war ended in 1918. Unfortunately, by then Hermina was no longer alive. József did not return to America after that, settling in Kompolt. He later married two more times. The last two marriages resulted in three more children. He died in 1981, aged 94. His grave is in the Kápolna cemetery.

My great-grandmother, Paulina, was born of József's first marriage and raised seven children, four of whom are still living. Paulina died in 2003, aged 92. Her grave is in the Kompolt cemetery.

By Franciska Vízer, great-great-granddaughter of József Hajdú
Kompolt, April 2024
vizerfranciska@gmail.com

From Bruceton to Borsod: The return of an American-born young man

Although more than a million Hungarians went to America to start a new life, I was fortunate to know a great man who chose love and the Old Country rather than certain prosperity.

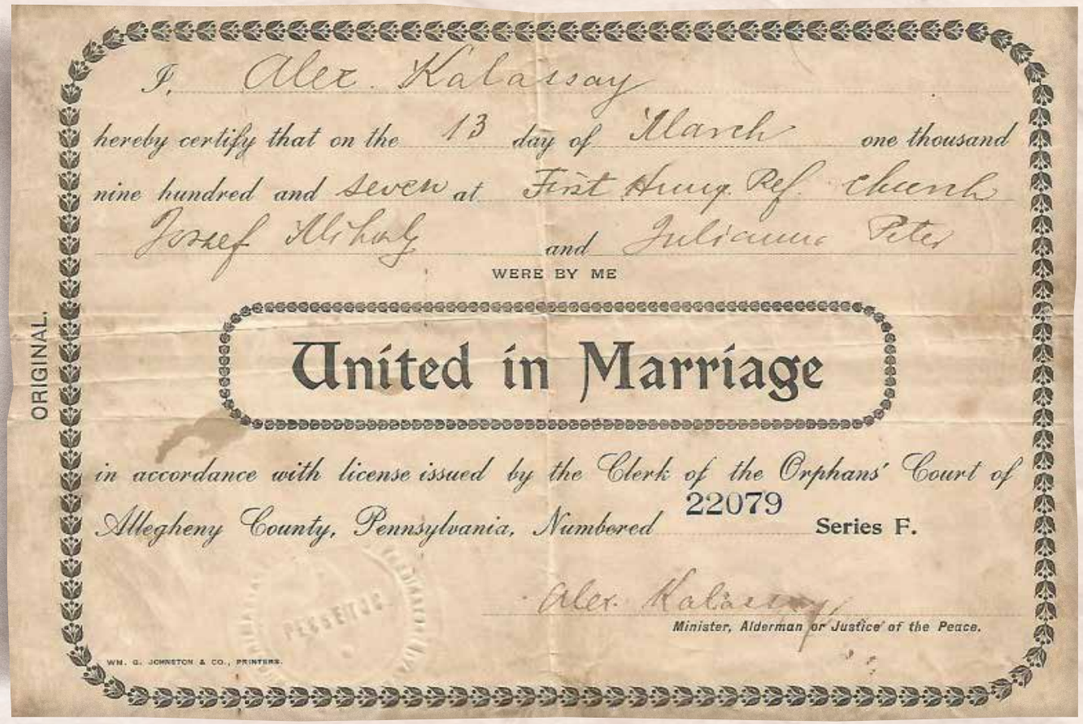
When I was a child, at the end of our garden was the cooperative where my mother worked. She often had to take me with her, and there was a warm-hearted old tractor driver who would take me up in his Caterpillar cab to press the mountain of green-cut corn stalks into a big concrete pit to make fermented feed for cows. From morning till night, we sat on the crawler back and forth a thousand times. My old friend's name was Uncle Laci Mihály, and all I knew about him was that he spoke English and had something to do with America.

Uncle Laci on the tractor
Source: Mihály family photo album

József Mihály
1905

I was very fond of English, which I later learned in high school, so in the late 1980s I wrote to the Hilton hotel chain for English-language brochures from all the continents. After 1989, Uncle Laci retired and started guarding the Vadna plant nursery fields from afternoon till morning. I used to call on him there in the evenings to ask for his help in translating the Hilton reply letters. In return, he would accept a packet of cigarettes. Those moments are still with me today: sitting in the sunset and heavy cigarette smoke, enthusiastically translating the brochures I received in the middle of the paprika fields. Uncle Laci's daughter was a teacher in our village and I want to commemorate both of them with this story. I contacted his grandchildren and relatives for photos… and succeeded.

Uncle Laci Mihály's father emigrated to America in 1905 and his mother came separately in 1906. They probably met in America. A year later, they were married in the Hungarian Reformed Church in Pittsburgh, where the editor of the Amerikai Magyar Reformátusok Lapja (American Hungarian Reformed Newspaper; today Calvin Synod Herald), Pastor Sándor Kalassay (Alex Kalassay), who was also a native of Zemplén, married them.



Uncle Laci's parents' marriage certificate from 1907
Source: Mihály family collection

Uncle Laci's parents in
the early 1910s
Source: Mihály family collection

Their first child was József Mihály Jr., and Uncle Laci was the second born in Bruceton, southwest of Pittsburgh, in 1915. As the brothers grew older, they dreamed about Hungary and how nice it would be to plant a vineyard in the Old Country. In the 1930s, they came to Hungary several times to Nagybarca near Vadna to visit relatives. It was here that Uncle Laci found love – in the person of Aunt Piroska, whom he soon married. In 1936, their daughter Katica was born, who later taught me to love reading and writing forever. In 1962, Katica got a job at the school in Vadna, so Uncle Laci and his daughter moved to Vadna.

Uncle Laci with his father
in America in the 1930s
Source: Mihály family collection

Aunt Piroska in Nagybarca
in the mid-1930s
Source: Mihály family collection

Uncle Laci fought as a Hungarian soldier in Berlin in the spring of 1945, toward the end of World War II. On one occasion, he visited an American unit and was greeted with a generous meal (bananas and chocolate, etc.). The soldiers told him to stay with them since he was an American citizen and risked ending up in a Soviet prison camp if he returned to his wife and daughter. He loved his family, so he returned and became a prisoner of war almost immediately. In Borsod, the Russians put him in a wagon and sent him to the Focsani prisoner of war camp near Bucharest.

Fortunately, he managed to escape and somehow walked home to northern Borsod, where he initially worked in the mines of Borsod. Later – as he had worked as a driver of a refrigerator truck in America – he was able to find a job as a tractor driver in the Vadna farmers' cooperative, which was founded in 1962. He died in 1993 in Vadna, where his wife and daughter later died, too. His parents lived in the USA until the end of their lives, resting now in American soil.

By János Szabon
Vadna, June 2024
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Uncle Laci's mother at
her husband's grave
Source: Mihály family collection

Giving birth at sea: Carolina's path to America and beyond

My interest in genealogy goes back to my childhood, and my Hungarian great-grandmother was a big part of that interest. Growing up, I knew three things about her: she immigrated to America as a young woman from Austria-Hungary, she gave birth to my grandfather on the boat and she was one of my most favorite people in the world. She figures in many of my earliest memories. Over the years, I picked up other information about her from my dad and aunts. A few years ago, I started researching my ancestors and learned more.

Carolina's courage: Crossing the ocean three times in three months

Carolina Catherine Schneider was born on November 4, 1884. I found a record in the Hungarian Catholic Church records that shows she was baptized on November 24, 1884 in Sztanisics, Bács-Bodrog, Hungary. Her parents were Joannes Schneider and Maria Grosits. Great-grandma had a half-sister, Catherine Ann Schneider, who was born on September 27, 1891 and baptized in October of that year in the same town. Her father was Ernest Schneider, a name that is also listed on her marriage license. Catherine and Carolina had the same mother. I always heard that Carolina had other siblings who were 'lost' in the war. I never found out whether they lost touch or had died. I did find two other baptism records from the same town with the same parents: Jacobus Schneider (December 22, 1881) and Joannes Schneider (December 2, 1882). Unless it's an incredible coincidence, it looks like Great-grandma had two older brothers. Unfortunately, these are the only records from Hungary I have found. I hope one day to find more and learn about the rest of the family.

In 1905, Carolina married Conrad Fricker Stumpf. Conrad was born March 23, 1883, a son of George Stumpf and Maria Munser. The young couple, along with Conrad's mother, decided to emigrate to America. I always thought Carolina must have been a very brave and strong woman to leave her family, home and everything she knew to board a ship for the long journey to an unknown land, especially since she was pregnant at the time. Nicholas Fabian Stumpf, who would be Conrad and Carolina's only child, was born at sea on December 21, 1905.

Carolina Schneider
1905

The main street of Sztanisics (later Őrszállás)
Source: The collection of Zemplén Museum, Szerencs.

I was told the family returned to Hungary to register the birth and then boarded another ship to America. They arrived in New York on February 27, 1906, on board the *S.S. Rotterdam*.

Maria's last known residence was reported as Fuerbitese or Fezerbitche. She had $5 when she arrived. I heard the family immigrated together but haven't found the others on the manifest. Some of it is difficult to read and perhaps names were misspelled. They were to meet Joseph Wog, who Maria Stumpf would marry in 1908. Joseph had immigrated in October 1904. Maria brought with her Joseph's 14-year-old son. She traveled under the surname Wog, claiming Joseph as her husband. Were she and Joseph previously married? Or did she use his name to avoid any potential questions that could arise from traveling with a minor who was not her child? I do not know. In any case, she and Joseph married in 1908 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where the family initially settled. On her marriage license, Maria identified herself as a widow. Her first husband, George Stumpf, had died in 1900. She named her parents as Jacob and Elizabeth Munser.

Harrisburg haven: Boarding house and family reunions

In the 1910 census, Carolina, her son, Nicholas, Maria, and Maria's stepson are living together in Harrisburg, where Maria owned a boarding house. There were eight boarders listed as living with the family. All were Hungarian immigrants. Two were butchers at a packing house, one worked at a shoe factory and the rest worked at a cigar factory. Their immigration dates ranged from 1906 to 1908.

Conrad and Joseph were not on the 1910 census and I believe I know why. I was told they traveled back to the 'Old Country' several times in those early years to bring family and friends to America. In 1910, Conrad's older half-brother, Joseph Long, immigrated with his wife and children. Conrad and Joseph Wog may have accompanied them. They, too, settled in Harrisburg before moving to Lebanon with the rest of the family later. According to Joseph Long's World War II draft registration, he was born in 1878 in Karlsdorf, Temes, Hungary (today Banatski Karlovac, Serbia). Perhaps Conrad was born there too. They were both Maria Stumpf's sons. Although Conrad was not on the census record, he was in the city directory for that year. His occupation was listed as laborer.

In 1912, Conrad brought Carolina's half sister, Catherine, to America. The two sisters were close and Carolina must have been happy to have her near. Eventually, Aunt Katie married another Hungarian immigrant and lived for several years in nearby Reading, Pennsylvania, before returning to Lebanon.

Lebanon's steel and soil: The Stumpf family's life in the Hungarian community

Conrad and Carolina bought a farm just outside of Lebanon in 1916. Conrad also found employment at a local steel mill. Lebanon had several industries and two large steel companies, which were the major employers of the county. Conrad worked as a fireman. The firemen tended the large furnaces at the mill. It was a hot and dirty job, but the mills paid well.

Maria (now Mary) Wog died in January 1925, of diabetes. She was 75 years old. According to her obituary, she was active in her church societies and survived by four sons, Conrad Stumpf, Joseph Long, and two sons in Austria. No names were given for those sons and until I found her obituary I did not know about them. Joseph Wog died in March 1925, of pneumonia, he was 78.

Conrad, Carolina and Nicholas were naturalized in the early 1920s. Nicholas joined the U.S. Army in the mid 1920s. He was stationed at Fort Eustis, Virginia, and was a member of the 183rd Infantry Band. Later, he would perform with a local orchestra. I don't know if my great-grandparents were musically inclined, but Grandpa certainly was. He could play most instruments and sang as well. He and Grandma raised 10 children and Grandpa taught each one to play a musical instrument. My Dad played the French horn and sang in the school choir, as did most of his siblings. He also sang in the church choir for many years. That musical legacy passed on through Dad's generation to mine, right down to my grandchildren.

Nicholas married Catharine Arnold in May 1928. In 1930, Nicholas and his wife and first child, my uncle, lived in town. Their home had a second unit, with a Hungarian immigrant living there. Nicholas was working at the Lebanon Steel Foundry. Conrad and Carolina lived next door. Their home also contained a rented apartment, where the Petrys – a mother and son from Hungary – resided. Joe Petry and my Grandpa were good friends; Joe was best man at my grandparents' wedding. At this time, Conrad was a fireman for the Keystone Macaroni plant. On the other side of Conrad and Carolina's house lived another Hungarian family. Scrolling through the records, I found quite a community of Hungarian immigrants, all within a few blocks of St. Gertrude's church.

Lebanon steel mills c. 1906
Source: Library of Congress[31]

Bethel and beyond: Building a new home for Carolina

Sometime between 1936 and 1940, Conrad and Carolina again bought a farm just north of Lebanon. Nicholas and Catharine and their growing family bought a farm further north in Bethel, just outside Lebanon County. Even though he was farming, Nicholas continued to work in the steel mill. In February 1948, Conrad died of cancer. He was 64 years old. Carolina sold their farm and moved in with her son and his family. Grandpa and my uncles built a house for Great-grandma next to theirs so she could have her own home. My dad was the fifth of 10 children and spent most of his childhood on that farm. From stories he told, they were all very close to their grandma.

Dad met my mom while stationed in the U.S. Air Force in California. They married in 1959 and I was born a year later. Growing up, Dad and his family spoke German or Pennsylvania Dutch around Great-grandma since she always struggled with English. When she realized Mom didn't understand German, Great-grandma insisted they speak English when Mom visited. She thought it was rude to leave Mom out of their conversation. As a child, I didn't pay much attention to the adults' conversations, but I knew Great-grandma usually spoke a different language. It didn't bother me though if she told me in English or German, I knew she loved me.

Lebanon life: Family togetherness and Carolina's final years

With their older children marrying and leaving home, my grandparents sold the farm in around 1960 and once again moved back to Lebanon with their youngest children and Great-grandma. My three aunts married and settled into homes within walking distance of my grandparents. The family was always close and visited together often. Visiting my grandparents usually meant visiting aunts, uncles and cousins as well.

Carolina died on December 23, 1966, of heart failure. She was 82 years old. She was survived by her son, 10 grandchildren, numerous great-grandchildren, and her half-sister, Catherine. A week shy of seven years old, I was heartbroken. She was a very loving and special woman. Carolina and Conrad are buried in St. Gertrude's Cemetery in Lebanon, beside Mary and Joseph Wog. Catherine and her husband are buried nearby. Aunt Katie had died in 1974. Dad visited her frequently after Great-grandma died.

Legacy of labor and love: Stumpf family heritage and impact

Nicholas eventually retired from the steel foundry. He worked at a building supply warehouse and retired again. Never able to sit still, he later worked other jobs. We often joked that Grandpa retired from everywhere. He stopped working for good when he was 82 and had a stroke soon after. In September 1995, he died of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease at 89. Grandma died in April 1997, at 93, of heart failure.

Lebanon in the late 1910s
Source: Library of Congress[32]

Researching my family's history reminded me of something I was told at my Grandpa's funeral. Many of the older people from my family's church attended the funeral. I was confused because my grandparents belonged to a different church in town. There were three main Catholic churches in Lebanon when I was young. St. Mary's was the 'old' church. Founded in the early 1800s by German and Swiss immigrants, it was my grandmother's family church. Sts. Cyril and Methodius was the Slovak church. And then there was my family's church, St. Gertrude's. Gertie's was founded, ironically, in 1906. The congregation was primarily recent immigrants from Hungary, Serbia and Germany. My aunt explained that the older people at Grandpa's funeral came to pay respects to the family because my great-grandparents and great-grandmother sponsored many of their families when they immigrated, helping them find jobs and a place to live. Looking around, I realized how many lives my great-grandparents touched. I knew some of these people for most of my life and never knew how their families connected to mine. It gave me a new sense of pride in my ancestors.

Much has changed since 1906. Lebanon has grown from a small, quiet town to a fair-sized city. The pockets of Hungarian immigrant communities no longer exist. The steel foundries where Conrad, Nicholas and many of those immigrants worked closed several years ago. Conrad and Carolina's farm is now a Christmas tree farm. My grandparents' farm still stands, but Great-grandma's house was moved down the road. St.Gertrude's church was merged with another and now has a different name. One tradition remains, however. For more than 40 years, St. Gertrude's has had an annual Fasnacht donut sale before Lent. They are made from a very old recipe that has not changed over the decades. Whether it's a Hungarian or German recipe – I've heard it called both – they are unique in the area and extremely popular. Many other groups claim to make *fasnachts* but none compare to Gertie's *fasnachts*. Generations of my family have been involved in this annual activity.

When I think of my ancestors, I think about what they have passed down to us. From my great-grandma and grandparents and parents, I inherited a strong belief in God, love of family, a sense of loyalty, a strong work ethic and pride in who I am and where I come from. I wish I'd had more time with Great-grandma – not just to be with her, but to ask her about her life and her roots in Hungary. I hope someday to find out more about her and the family she left behind.

By Faith Stumpf, great-granddaughter
of Carolina Catherine Schneider
Lebanon, Pennsylvania, June 2024
gearjammergirl@yahoo.com

Carolina, Nicholas and
the St. Gertrude's church
Source: Family photo album

From the fields of Szorosad to the rubber factory in Akron: Ádám Pretz's journeys to America

I first heard of my great-great-grandfather, Ádám Pretz, when my mother and I presented my father with his family tree for his birthday a few years ago. The two of us have traced many of our ancestors back through genealogical records available online. That's when we also came across Ádám Pretz, who we found out had traveled to America several times in the early 20th century.

My great-great-grandfather was born on March 9, 1880, in Szorosad, Somogy County, into an ethnic German (Swabian) family with several children. They were farmers who spoke almost exclusively the Swabian German dialect. His parents were Ádám Pretz and Julianna Pintér. He married Éva Réder on April 19, 1903. After the birth of their third child, my great-great-grandfather decided to try his luck in America in hopes of a better life.

Leaving his family behind, he set off for the New World for the first time in 1906 at the age of 26, together with three companions from Szorosad.

Immigration records show that they sailed on the *S.S. Slavonia*, leaving Fiume (today Rijeka) on January 14, 1906, and arriving in Ellis Island, New York harbor, where the Immigration Office was then located, on January 25, after 11 days at sea.

In the course of our research, we discovered that my great-great-grandfather's brother, Bálint Pretz, had emigrated to Steelton, Pennsylvania, earlier, in 1902. He had left from Hamburg on the ship *S.S. Graf Waldersee*. My great-great-grandfather traveled to join him, as is evidenced by the immigration record, in which he gave his brother's name as his contact in America and also listed the town of Steelton as his destination. It also states that he arrived as a laborer with roughly $17 in his pocket.

He returned to Hungary in the spring of 1908, and before the outbreak of World War I, at the age of 34, he set sail again for the New World. He spent the years 1914–1920 in America, so he did not take part in the fighting of the Great War. He was still listed in the United States census of January 1920, and returned home a few months later.

The city of Akron (Summit County, Ohio) was once considered the capital of rubber manufacturing. It was here that my great-great-grandfather worked as a rubber worker for the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, founded in 1900 and for 75 years the largest tire company in North America, along with Goodyear. A 1918 military registration record shows that he worked in the department that mixed the ingredients for automobile tires. The many chemicals and pollutants that the (mostly migrant) workers here were exposed to later caused many cancers among them, including my great-great-grandfather.

Ádám Pretz
1906

After his return home, by then as the father of eight children, he and the family moved from Szorosad to Babodpuszta (later Somogybabod), where they bought a house and land with the money he had earned in America. Two more children were born in 1922 and 1923. This house still stands in Somogybabod, but is no longer owned by descendants.

Ádám Pretz (sitting, in the front) with his wife and children in the late 1930s
Source: Family photo album

Ádám Pretz (with a pipe, in the back) with his family around 1942
Source: Family photo album

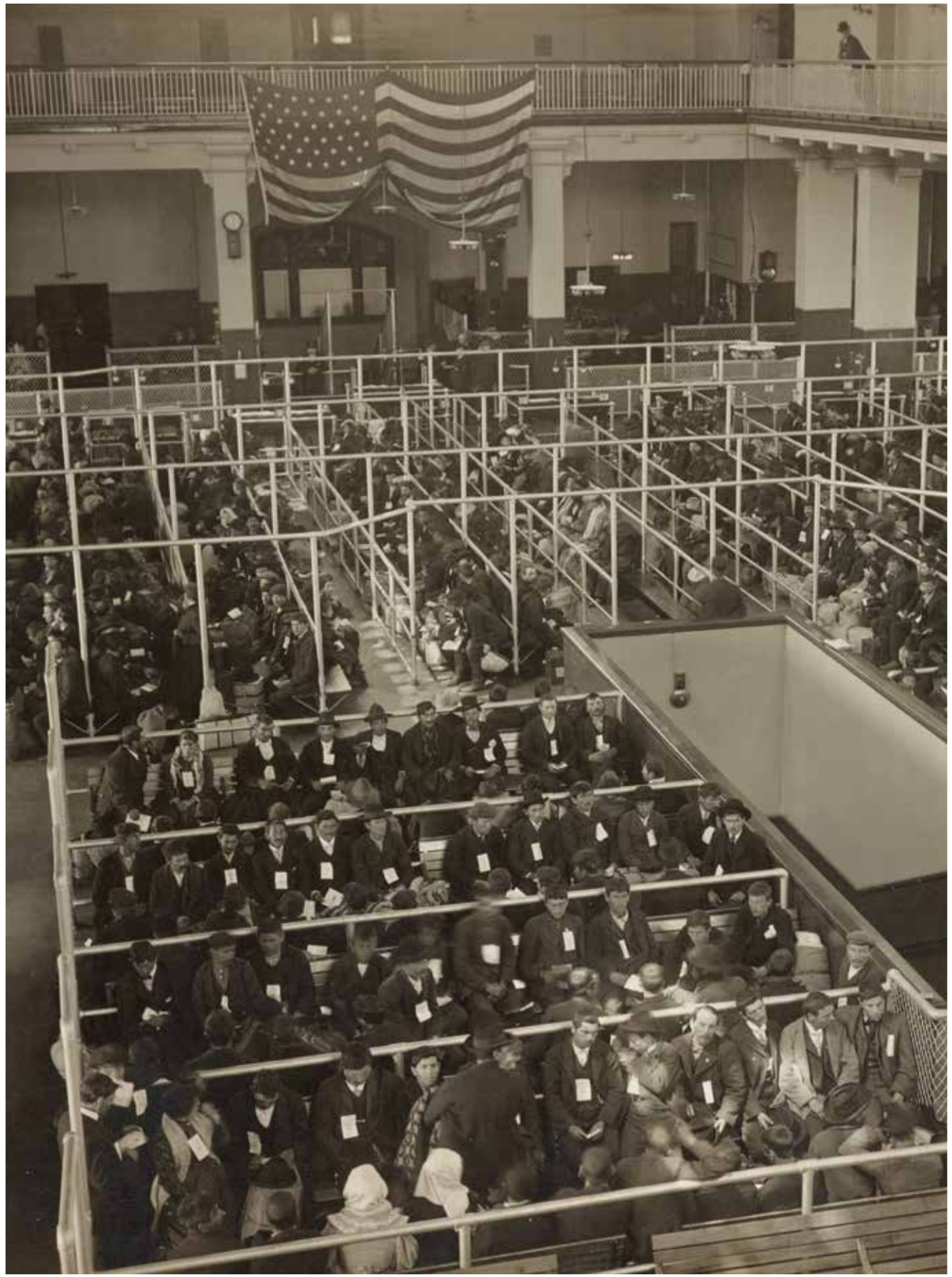
Another interesting and somewhat painful memory is that the Pretz family was not spared the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Hungary after World War II. However, the resourceful old folk jumped off the train near Sopron.By the time they walked home to Somogy in two or three weeks, the family house was occupied by other people. The neighbors took them in, and a few years later they managed to find a way to move back into the house that was bought with money earned in the U.S. Most of the land remained in the hands of the descendants.

According to older relatives, my great-great-grandfather was a stern man who kept to himself. He died of stomach cancer on May 27, 1951, aged 71. According to family legend, he was very ill in his last years, suffering a lot, and was taken to Balatonlelle to see a doctor to somehow relieve his pain. One of these times, on their way home, he died in the horse-drawn carriage between Lelle and Látrány. He was buried in Somogybabod; his grave is still there.

During our family history explorations, I read with fascination about the youth of my enterprising, brave and perhaps a little reckless great-great-grandfather. Especially since this branch of the family knew very little about the adventurous stories of the 'grand old men'; even Ádám's still living grandchildren have never heard of their grandfather's travels and life in America.

At the same time, in addition to the excitement, I feel a certain sweet sadness about it, as I myself visited the famous 'immigrants' island' of Ellis Island a few years ago – as a tourist, of course. In the island's immigration museum, it was a shocking and poignant experience for me to read, listen to, and learn about the life stories and fragments of memories of the immigrants of the early part of the 20th century. How, in circumstances we can no longer imagine, they waited for weeks and months, huddled together, often on top of each other, after a long sea voyage, to be registered, to undergo the necessary medical examinations and to finally leave the small archipelago where they first set foot on American soil. Whether their lives in the New World were a success is another question. So, I imagined my great-great-grandfather in these circumstances: he set off, did all this, worked off what he had gone to do, came home, and set off again ... It was not just a sense of adventure. There was a good deal of determination in him: he knew why he was going, just as he knew that his family was waiting for him at home; he was working for them, because of them, in the distant unknown.

By Lilla Pretz, great-great-granddaughter of Ádám Pretz
Látrány, June 2024
pretz.lilla@gmail.com



Ellis Island registry room, 1910s
Source: Library of Congress[33]

From Ventura to Vécke: Uncovering Hungarian roots in unexpected places

As a child in the 1960s, I enjoyed summer vacations visiting my Hungarian immigrant grandparents, Istvan G. Csiszer and Erzsebet Toth Papay, in New Castle, Pennsylvania. We would pile in our station wagon and my father, Joseph Csiszer, would drive us 2,600 miles from California to see them. I was fascinated by their Hungarian lifestyle and language. They had a root cellar and a coal furnace in their basement to heat their house. They cooked pigs in the ground and preserved meat in their attic during the cold winters. When I was 9 in 1970, my grandfather died of a heart attack while eating breakfast. He was 80 years old. My grandmother passed away at age 86 when I was 20. Over the next four decades, I searched for my Hungarian relatives.

Prayers and hope: End of a four-decade search

I searched social media and sent messages to anyone who had my maiden name, Csiszer/Csiszér. I went to the local Genealogy Library and spoke with a worker, Kathleen. I told her it was frustrating that I could not find my Hungarian relatives. She asked whether I prayed and asked God for His help. I shyly replied I had not. She said “no wonder you can’t find them.” So I went home and prayed.

A month later, I was contacted by Enikő and Lajos Birtalan. A girl named Andi went into the Birtalans’ local pub in the village of Székelyvécke (now Vețca, Romania). She told people that an American girl was searching for her relatives. Then the pub owners reached out to me. They told me that their grandmother, Rachel Csiszér’s brother, had emigrated to the U.S. and asked whether they could share some photos. The next thing I knew, I dropped to my knees in shock! Before my eyes was a photograph of my father as a teenager in his family Christmas photo with his brothers in their military uniform, and also a photo of my grandparents’ wedding. The long search was finally over. I was speechless. In 2019, I visited Hungary and Romania to meet many relatives and see my grandfather's birthplace. It was an emotional and fulfilling journey.

István G. Csiszér
1906

Laura Csiszer standing at the sign Vețca/Székelyvécke in 2019
Source: Family photo album

The Csiszer family lineage: From Hungary to America

My grandfather, István G. Csiszér was born May 23, 1889. He was the eldest son of István G. Csiszér, my great-grandfather who was born October 29, 1867, and baptized a day later in Véczke (Udvarhely County, Transylvania) and he died there in 1944. His wife, my great-grandmother Rakhel Bucsurka (Butyenka), was born in 1869 in Mezőgalambod (Maros-Torna County, Transylvania) and died in 1947, in Vețca, Romania. They were married in 1891, in Vécke.

My grandfather, István G. Csiszér had 10 siblings – eight sisters and two brothers – all born in Székelyvécke. The brothers were György (born in 1892) and Lajos (born in 1904), who married Irma Feleki and died April 30, 1945. Lajos was a prisoner of war who died in Russian captivity during World War II. He was among the approximately 600,000 Hungarian citizens captured by the Soviet army, about a third of whom perished in the Soviet camps. A huge marble cross in Budapest commemorates those who lost their lives. It was a very sad time when my grandfather lost his brother.

My great-grandfather István G. Csiszér on a horse during the war in 1917
Source: Family photo album

Three of István’s sisters, Rákhel (1896) and two named Veronika (1898 and 1902), died at a very young age. Maria (1893–1967) married Lajos Tóth; Julianna (Rákhel’s twin, 1896–) married Károly Balázs; Rozália (1900–1957) married János Demeter; Rákhel (1906–1993) married Ferenc Birtalan; and Veronika (1910–1975) married Dániel Csiszér.

At 17, my grandfather emigrated alone to the United States on November 23, 1906, from the port of Bremen. He carried a billfold with the name F. Missler Bremen on it for his travel documents. New York passenger lists also show him traveling from Fiume on the ship *Pannonia* to Ellis Island in New York, arriving on June 13, 1912. He had $30 cash, and the person in the U.S. he named as a contact was his cousin, András Lukacs. His destination was Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, a popular place for Hungarian immigrants to live.

In 1914, Istvan married his first wife, Edit Ambrus. The 1920 census records for Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, show that he rented a home on 107 1/2 Reynolds St., had six boarders, and worked as a laborer at the seamless steel tubing mill, an industry for which the town was well known. In 1923, at the age of 47, his first wife died from a heart problem; they didn't have any children. On December 6, 1923, my grandfather became a naturalized American citizen at age 34.

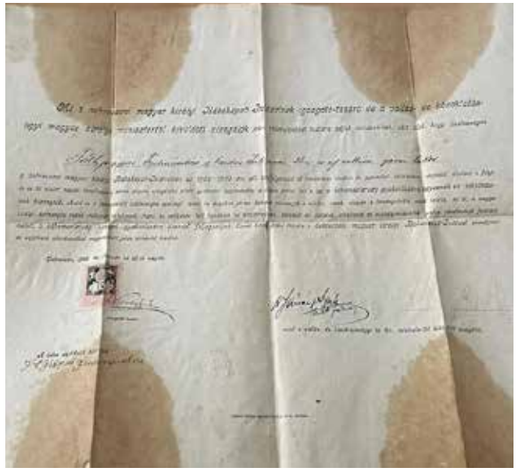
István G. Csiszér's billfold from 1906
Source: Family collection

From nobility to emigration:
The Tóth Pápai branch of the family

My grandmother, Erzsébet Tóth Pápay, also known as Erzsebet Tot Papai and Elizabeth Csiszer, was born on January 21, 1896, in Gáva, Szabolcs County, Hungary. Her mother was Julianna Várday or Várdai (1866–1950). Julianna's parents were Péter Várdai and Veronika Farkas. When Julianna was 16, she married Ferdinánd Tóth Pápai, my great-grandfather, born October 8, 1859, baptized two days later in Kenézlő, Szabolcs County. They had seven children: four sons and three daughters, all born in Gáva. Sándor, the first-born son (1883–1916) was a soldier who died at age 32 in Galicia in World War I. Veronika (1887–1893) died in a house fire. István (1889–1893) died the same year as Veronika. Károly (1892–) emigrated to the United States in 1921; Veronika (1893–1973) also emigrated to the U.S. in 1914; then Erzsébet, my grandmother (1896–1982), and Ferencz (1898), who died at the age of four months old. Their father, Ferdinánd, emigrated to the United States in 1898, departing from the port of Antwerp, Belgium on the ship *S.S. Friesland*.

My great-uncle Károly Tóth Pápay (my grandmother's brother who had returned to Hungary with his wife Erzsébet in 1929) wrote our family a letter in 1970. He lived in District VII, Dohány utca 39, Budapest, and told us the Tóth Pápai family were nobles. Lukács Tóth Pápai was a colonel in the Hungarian Army, Lajos Tóth Pápai was a judge in the high court, Mihály Tóth Pápai was a professor, Sámuel Tóth Pápai was a county judge and József was a bishop. József gave 10,000 in gold forint to fund the Sárospatak University in Hungary in 1825, securing free scholarships for the next 10 generations.

My grandmother, Erzsébet, lived in the town of Tiszabercel for 17 years before immigrating to the United States in 1921 at the age of 25. She traveled on the ship *Lapland* from Antwerp, departing on March 17, 1921, with her mother. Julianna, my great-grandmother, was a midwife who delivered my father and his siblings, all at home births. I have her midwife's official document from Hungary.



Julianna Tóth Pápay's midwife certification from 1903
Source: Family collection

My great-grandfather, Ferdinand, did not live with his wife in America. The 1930 census shows them married but lists my great-grandmother as widowed by 1940. I do not know any information about Ferdinand's death or residence. In 1942, on his daughter Veronika's marriage application, his name is given as Frank Toth.

The union of Istvan and Erzsebet: A new chapter

On March 15, 1924, in New Castle, Pennsylvania at the Hungarian Baptist Church, my grandfather married my grandmother, his second wife Erzsébet. They had five children: sons Stephen, Charles Louis, Alexander, and Joseph (my father), and a daughter, Elizabeth Julia. In 1930, Istvan owned a home on Agnew Street that was valued at $13,000. He worked for the tin mill as a laborer in the heating department. He did not own a radio, as stated on the census. My grandmother, Erzsebet Csiszer, was naturalized and received her U.S. citizenship on November 22, 1940. I am proud to have both of my grandparents' naturalization documents.

Istvan G. Csiszer and Erzsebet Toth Papay's wedding photo. Also in the photo are great-grandmother Julianna Varday, great uncle Karoly Toth Papay, and great aunt Veronika Toth Papay (Costea).
Source: Family photo album

Istvan G. Csiszer and Erzsebet Toth Papay's wedding photo
Source: Family photo album

In 1940, Istvan worked at Carnegie Steel Co. in the Heater Department as a laborer, renting his home on 101 Sharp St. for $18 a month. Despite any hardships, he loved God and attended Shenango Christian Church. In 1949, he had his first grandchild, David Csiszer. By 1950, Istvan owned his house at 608 S. Ray St. and worked as a laborer for the Manufacturing Radiator Co. He retired from the Crane Co. He had 21 grandchildren and was a wonderful son-in-law, caring for his mother-in-law, Julianna, who lived with him for 29 years.

Istvan G. Csiszer, Erzsebet, Joseph, Charles Louis, Stephen, Alexander and Elizabeth Julia in a family Christmas photo, 1940s
Source: Family photo album

My dad, Joseph, met my mom, Laura Ann Abramski, at a football game in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Dad proposed to mom in his baby blue 1952 convertible Ford (my mom's favorite color). They married in 1953 and moved to California two years later to enjoy the sunny weather. They had three daughters, Lynn, Kimberly and Laura. My dad was known for serving delicious Hungarian breakfast, bell peppers, onions and eggs. My mother was known as a prayer warrior. My parents were very involved in their local Christian church.

Joseph Csiszer and Laura Ann Abramski at their first Easter together in 1953, standing by their 1952 blue Ford convertible
Source: Family photo album

My grandparents' choices to immigrate to the U.S. provided many opportunities for our family. I cherish my Hungarian roots, culture and the deep connections I made during my visit. I am grateful for the heritage and values passed down from my ancestors.

Returning to the roots:
Recent connections and visit

On my trip to Hungary in 2019, I met many wonderful relatives. I cried when I put my feet on Hungarian soil. My dream came true, thanks to Andi's decision to visit her local pub and tell people there about my search for Hungarian relatives. My only sorrow is that my father was not with me to experience this beautiful country where his parents were born and lived. My daughter, Alison, joined me as part of our adventure and we rode the Ferris wheel in Budapest. We saw the Parliament building lit up at night. It was breathtaking to walk on the Chain Bridge and view the Danube beneath our feet.

It was especially exciting to meet our Hungarian relatives. My grandfather's village, Székelyvécke, has a rich history and is known for its beautifully carved Szekler gates. The carvings are not randomly chosen but meant to confer a measure of protection for the area. I visited key locations like my grandfather's birthplace and was stunned by the sight of its green rolling hills and beautiful Divine Mercy chapel on the hilltop. There were rows and rows of corn fields and green hills. I was told that in the Old Country, most surnames represented occupations. Not so with Csiszér. My relatives tell me that the Csiszér surname originates from the geographical location Csíki Szer in Transylvania, not from a profession.

Székelyvécke, Divine Mercy Chapel on a hilltop
Source: Family photo album

I met relatives like József and Magda Bíró, who shared Hungarian culture and hospitality with me and served me stuffed cabbage. They went out of their way to ensure I had the best time ever. They assisted in my train and plane travels, and I owe them so much gratitude. They tolerated my lack of communication skills. I met their mother, Irén Bíró, who made me poppyseed rolls. She collected peacock décor, just like I do! Their son, József Barna Bíró, and his wife, Melinda, were my translators and a huge help in connecting me to relatives. Cousin Ida Szakács took me sightseeing with her family and had goulash made in a cast iron pot, Hungarian style.

In Transylvania, Lajos and Enikő Birtalan opened their home to me and took me sightseeing with Zsolt, Emma, András, and Piroska. They prepared delicious Hungarian food for me and showed me their impressive garden. I even had poppyseed roll, usually a Christmas holiday dessert, several times while I was there, even though it was summer. Nóra Birtalan was the reason I made it to Hungary: she helped me with all my travel plans. I could not have done it without her.
I visited Márta Domahidi and family. Her radiant smile warmed my heart, as she resembled my grandfather. Cousins Margit and Emőke llyés served me delicious foods and showed me their hospitality. They have become dear friends and have taught me so many things about my relatives and their culture. Emőke found a local glass insulator for me in green to add to my collection. I visited Alíz and her grandmother, Margit, and family. Zsolt Czirjek was so kind to drive me all over and take me sightseeing and to meet 20 of our wonderful relatives, and we shared a delicious meal at a Hungarian restaurant and had my first family reunion. As an added surprise, some of our relatives who lived in New Jersey, Laura Szigethi and Zsombor Antal, made the trip with their daughters to Hungary and Romania to be there to translate and meet me. Ilonka and her siblings (Toth) provided me with so much family genealogy information. She built up our family tree, and I appreciate her so much. Mária-Magdolna Farnos (Tóth), a Csiszér descendant, has helped me with many long tireless hours of research building on our family tree. I now have eight generations thanks to her. I appreciate all her knowledge of the area. She can speak English and has been very helpful in my genealogy journey. She also blessed me with a beautiful hand-painted peacock she had made. Andrea Domokos made sure that I was cozy and had the best room at Hotel Tempo in Marosvásárhely/ Târgu Mureș. She and her daughters had me over, and I enjoyed stuffed peppers.

Csiszer family reunion with 20 relatives in 2019.
Source: Family photo album.

Zsolt's parents, Rozália and Árpád's family, had a barbecue picnic with all sorts of delicious foods in the village where my grandfather lived. I especially enjoyed walking the streets of Vécke with Ilonka, Lajos, and Enikő, singing and walking up to the Stations of the Cross and the beautiful small chapel on the hilltop with sheep grazing nearby. It felt like a fairy tale.

None of this would have been possible if my grandparents were not born in Hungary. I love my Hungarian roots and family. I treasure each one of you. I sip coffee from the peacock mug Jóska and Magda gifted me and pray for blessings for all my Hungarian relatives.

I have a blessed life with my husband, Pete, and our children, Alison, Michael and Andrew. We have many opportunities in America thanks to my grandfather and grandmother's decisions to immigrate to the United States. I wonder what my life would have been like had I been born in Hungary. I know for certain I would know how to speak the beautiful Hungarian language. I have inherited my Hungarian deep roots of strength, a generous heart, a love for God and people, the Hungarian culture and traditions. Thank you, *köszönöm*, Grandpa and Grandma Csiszer.

By Laura Sue Csiszer, granddaughter of István G. Csiszér
Ventura, California, July 2024
Larooshkasue@yahoo.com

Székelyvécke, Székely Calvary
Source: Photo by Szabolcs Molnár, terjhazavandor.ro

Echoes of home: Rediscovering our Hungarian legacy

I have always held the firm belief that if you do not know where you came from, you will not know where you are going. For a lot of Americans, their families came to this country and left their pieces of the old world at home. This is where we Hungarian-Americans differ from other Americans.

Great-great grandparents' in Hungary: Farming life and family growth

My great-great grandfather, János Bódis, was born on August 21, 1858, in Mecsekpölöske, a village outside of Pécs, in Baranya, Hungary. He was a son of Pál Bódis and Katalin Gergely. Unfortunately, I do not know much about his growing up except that he came from a long line of farmers, as my research dating back at least 100+ years in Mecsekpölöske and Hosszúhetény uncovered. My great-great grandmother, Julianna Sántosi, or Julia Bodisch, was born on February 18, 1867, in Kercseliget, on the border of Somogy, Baranya, and Tolna counties in Hungary. She was the oldest surviving child of József Sántosi and Terézia Mikolovics. Like in János's case, there is not much known about her upbringing. In a letter written by my great-grandfather, Bill, to his nephew Arpad, he had this to say about his family history: *"To begin with, me, the rest, and your dad, had only one uncle as far as I was ever told, on your grandpa's side. Your grandpa's name was John, and he had a brother who never came to the States, his name was Steve, further back than this, I know nothing… Now on your grandma's side, whose name was Julia, she had a sister, Mary, who never came to the States. I never did know if she was older or younger than Mom was. That's your grandma on your dad's side. She had a brother who was younger by some years, but I don't know how much. His name was Gabriel, and he did come to the States after he was married in Hungary." (Letter from Bill Bodisch to Arpad Bodisch, 1981)*

János and Julianna married on July 22, 1883, in Bükkösd, Baranya, Hungary, when she was 15 and he was 24. Their first residence is listed as Cserdi, a village outside of Bükkösd. They resided in Hungary for quite some time after marriage. János worked as a farmer. They started a family and moved around, living in Dombóvár, Kaposszekcső, Csanyoszró, Szentkatalin, and Vajszló, to name a few places. Over the span of 24 years, János and Julianna welcomed six children who survived into adulthood. János was born in 1886 in Szentkatalin; Vendel in 1892 in Dombóvár; István in 1894 in Dombóvár; Sándor in 1897 in Kaposszekcső; Júlia in 1899 in Kaposszekcső; and finally, Mária, in 1902 in Csanyoszró.

János Bódis
1907

Emigration in 1907: Stepping into a new family chapter in America

On May 29, 1907, the Bódis family reached the port of New York in the United States of America. They departed from Fiume. According to the Immigrant Alien Arrival Manifest, John, Julia, and all their kids were marked as heading to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to reside with a man named Joseph Vidalovics.

A few other immigrants who had previously resided in Vajszló listed Joseph as their point of contact in the United States. Could it have been that he was recruiting people to come from Hungary to the United States? Was there some kind of colony being started? The short answer is yes. Hungarians had moved to Milwaukee to work as laborers. It appears that Joseph was bringing people over from his village in the old homeland. Whether he was paid for it or not, or some kind of labor agreement was struck between the immigrants and Jozsef is unknown to me.

On August 17, 1907, in the courts of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, John submitted his first declaration of intention to become a U.S. citizen. He would continue to have this declaration renewed, although, to my knowledge, he never became an American citizen. He also may have lost his Hungarian citizenship due to laws before 1929. Whether he had renewed his passport or not is also unknown. The Hungarian Consulate General in Chicago opened in 1922, however, so there were options to do so during his lifetime.

Little Hungarian Colony: Cultural persistence on American soil

In 1908, the family purchased a tract of land from the Consolidated Farm Company outside of Marshfield, Wisconsin. This land was to become known as the "Little Hungarian Colony in Mannville" for the next two years, as many Hungarian laborers from Milwaukee came to Manville to join them on the farm.

The farm had its troubles with the locals. According to newspaper articles, the Hungarians on the farms were not keen on their American equipment and had ordered consignments of equipment from Hungary, as noted in the *Marshfield News & Wisconsin Hub* on May 13, 1909: "This might lead one to think our celebrated American implements must not look so very good to them."

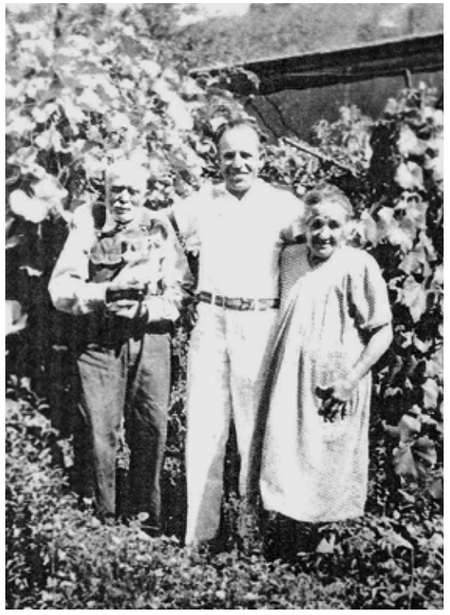
The Hungarians also made a positive impression in their new homeland, making a concerted effort to learn the English language. There was only a slight problem, specifically for my family: John and Julia could neither read nor write. They grew up in the Hungarian countryside and were very poor. According to census records, John learned to speak some English, but Julia did not. I know that my great-grandfather, Bill, spoke only Hungarian until he went to school and continued to speak it for the rest of his life. My mother says he would always talk to himself or with other relatives in Hungarian.

Roots and next generation around Dubuque: Continuing the family's farming legacy

My great-grandfather Bill was the first born in the United States. He was born on the farm on February 2, 1909. His father was just turning 50 years old and his mother was 40, nearing her 41st birthday. He would not be the last child born to John and Julia though, as they went on to have two more: a baby girl in 1910, who did not make it, and a son, Paul Emeric, who was born in 1911 in Dubuque, Iowa.

The Bódis family moved around a lot before 1925, living in Langlade County, Mauston, Necedah, and Gleason in Wisconsin before finally settling in Dubuque, Iowa.
I am still learning about my great-grandfather's life. There are bits and pieces sprinkled throughout all the paperwork and pictures I have received in the past few years. In 1931, he married my great-grandmother, Mamie Belk, in Algonquin, Illinois. Bill and Mamie went to school together when Bill had lived in Wisconsin as a child. He was living in Dubuque, Iowa, and she in Chicago, Illinois, at the time of their marriage. He was working as a laborer in the Carr, Ryder, and Adams Company, a Door and Sash manufacturer, alongside his aging father, John, who retired at the ripe age of 73 in 1931.

Mamie came to live with Bill in Dubuque, where a good part of the Bódis family were living, too. Mother and Father, John and Julia, remained in Dubuque until their deaths.
Bill had a decent 160 acres of land in the nearby village of Graf. Following in his forefathers' footsteps, Bill cultivated the land, grew livestock, and endured grueling labor. His family had escaped Hungary, "the old world", to pursue the "American Dream," but that final moment of lucidity before the deep sleep was a long way away.



John and Julia Bodish with their son Istvan, c. 1930
Source: Family photo album

Bill and Mamie Bodisch, c. 1930.
Source: Family photo album

The next generation arrives: A new chapter on the family farm

On May 31, 1943, after being married for over 10 years, Mamie and Bill welcomed their first and only child, Gerald. Having one child versus the 16 his mother had birthed was a drastic change from what Bill was used to. A month and a half after the birth of his son, Bill's mother passed away at 76, on July 17, 1943, in Dubuque.

Bill and Mamie would remain on their farm for almost 30 years. Their son, Gerald, left school and started working on the farm and as a carnival hand around the age of 15. In 1961, Gerald enlisted in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Fort Hood, Texas, where he would complete three years of service before being honorably discharged in 1964. Gerald moved to Rockford, Illinois, and started working at the Chrysler Assembly Plant in Belvidere. In 1967, Gerald married Shirley DeMoss, a former neighbor.

The land-locked farmer setting sails: Letting a lifelong dream go

Bill was an intelligent man and completely self-taught. Following his farming career, Bill had his sails set for larger adventures. It had been a dream of his to travel the world. An article describing his hopes stated the following: "Bodisch is Hungarian by ancestry. His father arrived here many years ago by boat. With the whole world waiting ahead, Bodisch hopes to visit his fatherland, but not before stopping at New Orleans, Miami, Panama, Venezuela, the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, Australia… the list is endless." (*The Muscatine Journal*, December 5, 1974)
In 1968, Bill converted those 30 years of farming, self-taught welding, craftsmanship, and funds to fulfill his dream of traveling. He began the construction of something unthinkable for a Hungarian American farmer living in land-locked, rural Iowa: a 58-foot-long yacht.

In 1968, Bill and Mamie welcomed their first grandchild, and the first child of Gerald and Shirley Bodisch: Cindy Marie. Cindy Marie's grandfather named his boat after her. Bill spent over six years building this boat. It cost approximately $25,000 USD (close to $223,000 USD today, or 81.5 million HUF) and was criticized by his more down-to-earth neighbors. The *Cindy-Marie* garnered national attention. *CBS Nightly News* Anchor Charles Kuralt, who was known for hosting light-hearted news segments featuring unique and interesting stories of people across the United States, caught wind of the *Cindy-Marie* and determined to meet her captain.

You can still go on the internet today and find clips of the *Cindy-Marie* in her glory, from "On the Road with Charles Kuralt." People praise the story of my great-grandfather doing the unthinkable and persevering to reach his goal.

Unfortunately for Bill and Mamie, the *Cindy-Marie* did not go far. Mamie had a terrible fear of boats following storms in the Caribbean and vowed to never get on one again. Bill ended up selling the boat and settling into his retirement.

Bill and the infamous *Cindy-Marie*
Source: Family photo album

For a while, Bill had lived in Florida with his cousin, Mary Shantoshee, the daughter of his Uncle Gabriel, who had married in Hungary and come to the United States. My mom remembers "any mail that was sent to my grandma and grandpa here in Illinois, we had to send it down to Mary, as they were staying with her in Miami."

This did not last long, as Bill still had an urge for adventure. He purchased an old van and converted it into a camper. He and Mamie set their sails for the highway and drove across country and into Canada. Following their many adventures throughout North America, Bill and Mamie settled in Rockford, Illinois, which was where my grandfather, grandmother, mother, and uncle were all living. They would spend the rest of their lives here, with Bill passing away on April 8, 1989, from cancer, and Mamie on January 25, 1995.

Returning to the Hungarian roots: Bridging generations and coming home

"Jerry" (Gerald) and Shirley went on to retire from their jobs after Mamie's death, and moved to Unionville, Missouri. This is where Jerry would live until his death in 2012. In October 1997, Cindy Marie (Bill's granddaughter and John and Julia's great-granddaughter) would be united in marriage with Chris Melville, who was of Scottish, Czech, and Norwegian ancestry. The couple went on to have two sons, Aaron and Ian, in 2002.

Bill and Mamie Bodisch with a cake in the shape of the *Cindy-Marie* c. 1980
Source: Family photo album

Gerald, Shirley, and Cindy Bodisch on a trip to Washington State c. 1981
Source: Family photo album

As a kid, I was very much aware of being Hungarian. This was not only something my mother told me, but my grandfather did, too. I cannot say he was necessarily boastful about it, but he was proud of it. It wasn't until after his passing in 2012 that I appreciated our culture more.

As I got older and started learning more things about the world, I had the opportunity to visit the Old Country that my great-grandfather did not have the chance to see, in 2019. I fell in love with Hungary. I am currently pursuing my naturalization in Hungary. It is a very long and grueling process, as I have to learn the Hungarian language, which is quite difficult!

But I am catching on. My mother has told me countless times: "My dad and grandfather would have been extremely proud of you." When I was in Hungary, they were the only people I could think about. I remember sitting in the bus, looking at the beautiful sunflower fields outside Vác, teary-eyed, thinking "I wish I could call my grandfather right now and tell him that I am home."

By Aaron Melville, great-great-grandson of János Bódis
Rockford, Illinois, April 2024
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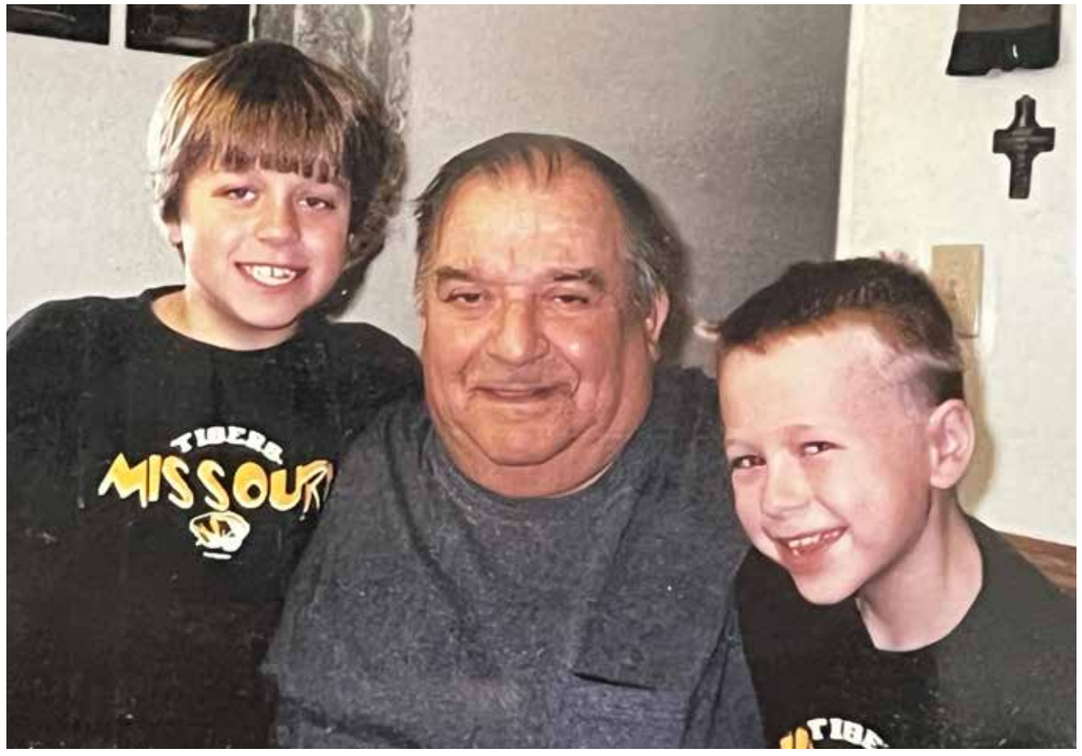


Aaron and Ian Melville with their grandfather, Gerald Bodisch c. 2011
Source: Family photo album

Sunday soup: Bridging parallel worlds across the ocean

I was born in 1970 and grew up in the United States, in Toledo, Ohio, in a small Hungarian community called Birmingham. It was Christmas day, 2015, and my dad, Richard Galatocky, and I were having a conversation after dinner about his grandfather, Sándor Galatóczki. It was the first time I heard this name, and I was forty-five years old. Sándor died of a gunshot wound to the chest on January 2, 1919, in Toledo, Ohio, after a scuttle in a bar involving a friend and the police on New Year's day. His son, Frank was only four and half years old at the time of his passing. My dad continued to tell me that he and his brother John tried to do some research into their grandfather but didn't find much and that Sándor's life, before coming to America, was a mystery. At that point, my mom piped up from the kitchen and said, *"MY grandfather, József Gál, is a mystery too."*

I was intrigued. I remember my dad saying, "Julie, you're good with computers, maybe you could find some information about them." Two days later, I created an account on MyHeritage. The first step of course was to build my family tree. This was easy in the beginning, especially with my parents' help. I called them often and soaked up every story they had to offer. After I got so far in building my family tree, I came to what is called a 'brick wall.' I had several brick walls but, in this story, I will only focus on the two mysteries mentioned earlier. Sándor Galatóczki and József Gál.

Tackling the first brick wall: The Galatóczki mystery

What does everyone do now when they are looking for something? Google it. My dad Googled the last name Galatóczki a few years before I started researching and was very surprised to find some! He reached out to a young man named István Galatóczki via email. István provided some family information and a basic ancestral tree that my dad gave to me. This information is what really helped to start filling in the missing pieces of my Galatocky line. István's great-grandfather was the same as mine, Sándor Galatóczki. His great-grandmother was Mária Kocsis. My great grandmother was Maria Csákán. What?

I had done my own Google search not long after I started building my family tree and found Rita Galatóczki. Rita was an English and Russian teacher. This was a huge relief to me. At the time, I was not familiar with Google translate. Rita was a first cousin to István and she shared a family story with me. Our great-grandfather, Sándor married Mária Kocsis July 9, 1900, in Szerencs, Borsod county, Hungary. They had two sons, Sándor in 1901 and József about 1907. Rita told me that Sándor had disappeared once and came back. Then he disappeared again and was never seen after.

Sándor Galatóczki
1907

A body was never found and, at some point, they presumed him dead. She said this was a great hardship on Mária Kocsis, a single mother with two young sons. She had to live with her sister, never married again, and they were very poor.

Through my research, I found that Sándor immigrated to the United States on June 8, 1908. His last residence was listed as Nagymihály, Hungary, now Michalovce, Slovakia. He went straight to Toledo, Ohio, and in less than a month, married my great-grandmother, Maria Csákán. This seemed odd to me because in those times, a couple had to publicly announce their intent to marry once a week for three weeks. My great-grandparents did this. Did they meet right away when he came to Toledo? Could they possibly have known each other prior to his arrival? Maria Csákán immigrated to Toledo in August 1907, from Kassa (now Košice, Slovakia) almost a year prior to Sándor. I suspect they did know each other in the Old Country, and they planned to start a new life in the United States.

Sándor Galatóczki
Source: Family photo album

Toledo, Ohio, in the early 1900s
Source: Library of Congress[34]

Piecing together an ancestor's past: The enigma of Sandor Galatóczki yet unveiled

Sándor Galatóczki was born in Monok, Zemplén, Hungary, on May 22, 1881, to mother Borbála Galatóczki, but Sándor led my research astray for many years. On his marriage record to Maria Csákán in Toledo, Ohio, he listed his parents as George Galatoczki and Maria Pacsuta. My newfound cousins in Hungary did not have information on Sándor's parents. This is when I discovered FamilySearch.org. FamilySearch is a nonprofit organization and website offering genealogical records, a treasure trove of information. It took a while to really learn how to dig deep, but it gave me access to church records from my ancestral villages. I can't express in words how exciting it was to see the Galatóczki name repeatedly in these church records. But I never found Sándor's baptismal record. It seemed like there were records from certain years that were missing. Through István and Rita, and the wonders of technology and Facebook, I met more Galatóczki family. Specifically, József Galatóczki, his daughter Mónika, and his niece Dr. Katalin Márton. I had a lot of the Galatóczki family tree built and József was a half first cousin to my father. His grandfather was also Sándor Galatóczki, and he was the last living grandchild in Hungary! Ironically, József and my father were just a year apart in age, and Mónika and I are just a year apart in age. I finally became more adept with Google translate and József, Mónika and Katalin shared my enthusiasm for finding the missing pieces.

József and Mónika traveled to the church in Monok to speak to the priest and search the records. There was no baptismal record for Sándor, and the priest said there were records that had perished in a fire. Katalin searched the internet and found something. It was a newspaper article from 1929. There was a József Galatóczki looking for Sandor Galatóczki, born May 22, 1881, to Borbála Galatóczki, and who was a

Police Officer in Kassa in the years before the war. I called my dad. He confirmed that Sándor, at one time, was a police officer. Interesting that his employment was in Kassa/Košice – where my great-grandmother traveled from. Regardless, we have his mother's name and his full birth date! At the time, I thought Borbála Galatóczki was her married name and Pacsuta was her maiden name. Later, I found an 1888 marriage record in the Monok church records for Borbála Galatóczki and András Hornyák. It listed Borbála's parents as Mihály Galatóczki and Mária Pacsuta. Borbála was also recorded as a single woman with an illegitimate child. What?! If Sándor was illegitimate and Galatóczki was his mother's family name, then what is the name of my true paternal line? Who is Sándor's father?

While I kept building my tree through MyHeritage, I was seeing advertisements about DNA tests. After learning that Sándor was illegitimate, DNA was probably the only way I was going to find answers to my questions. I ordered tests for myself, my parents, my sister, and my children. I knew nothing about DNA and how it worked, but I found out quickly that it would expand my family tree exponentially. Through the DNA learning curve, I realized that MyHeritage was not the largest DNA database. It was third to Ancestry and 23andMe, and if I had tested at one of the latter sites, I could have uploaded my raw DNA file to MyHeritage for free. Going forward, I only used tests from Ancestry and 23andMe. In early 2019, I sent three Ancestry DNA kits to Katalin in Nagykanizsa, Hungary, who sent two of them to József and Mónika in Szerencs.

I was so excited when the results came in. I uploaded the Raw DNA files to all available DNA databases, and I thought it would only take a few months to put the puzzle together and I would have answers. This did not happen. As of April 2024, I still do not know the identity of my great-great-grandfather. In my research, sometimes I take a break. Not away from genealogy, but away from certain lines of my family. It was time to focus on other 'brick walls.'

Tackling the second brick wall: What happened to József Gál?

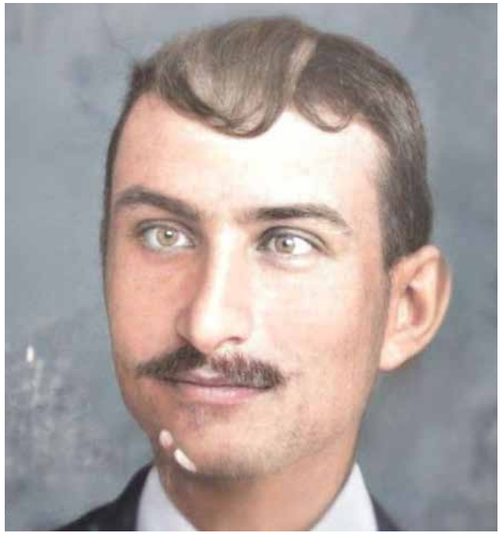
József Gál is my mother's grandfather on her paternal line. He was born March 18, 1876, in Felsőkelecsény, Borsod, Hungary, to Péter Gál and Zsófia Nagy. There are no questions about his parents. The question was, "Where did he go?" He first immigrated in 1897. He married Mária Molnár in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on January 31, 1903. They had their first daughter, Elizabeth in Connecticut, my grandfather Joseph was born in Miskolc, Hungary, while Mária was visiting family, while their second son, Steven, was born in Pennsylvania, and their last child together, Mary, was born in Toledo, Ohio. József Gál was listed in the 1910 Census in Toledo, Ohio, dated April 22. His daughter Mary would be born three weeks later. The next record that I have is József and Mária Molnár's divorce, May 13, 1911. I don't think József was ever found in order to obtain his signature on the divorce papers, but the divorce was granted to Mária. József's last known residence was Bridgeport, Connecticut. My mom told me stories about her own father, as a young man, riding trains illegally East to visit his father in Connecticut. I had a conversation with my Aunt Mary, my mom's oldest sister. I asked her if she ever heard why József Gál left Mária, his children, and Toledo, Ohio. She told me that her grandfather wanted to go back to Hungary, and he wanted Mária and the kids to go with him, but she refused. He left Toledo and was never seen again.

Sunday soup: A warm connection across generations

My mom's mother, Mary Gauthier, married Joe Gall, Jr. when she was only 16 years old. She was from German and French descent, but I didn't know this until I was much older. I always thought she was Hungarian because she cooked so much Hungarian food! I heard stories about my great-grandmother, Mária Molnár, who was a great cook and, as such, was one of several women who would cook for weddings and other large gatherings at the local Catholic Church, St. Stephen's. When her son, Joe Gall Jr., married my grandmother, it is said that he made his new wife learn how to cook all his favorite foods from his mother. All these Hungarian dishes were, in turn, taught to my mom and her siblings. Jowl bacon over a fire pit, chicken paprikash, fried cabbage, and onions with noodles, sour cream cucumbers, and, most importantly, Sunday soup. Well, that's what we called it. My mom said it could be 95 degrees and her father would still want his soup every Sunday. It wasn't an elaborate soup, just a meat and vegetable broth served over long thin noodles. After the first course of broth and noodles, we would eat the meat and vegetables. Once, while visiting my grandmother, she was making Sunday soup, and I was with her in the kitchen. I specifically remember her telling me the secret to having clear broth as opposed to cloudy broth, and that this was very important. To this day, I still make Sunday soup. The smell in the house and the taste, it transports me every time to my childhood and the family I always had around me. Wow, how did I get on a food tangent? Let me continue with how I found József Gál, or I should say, how József Gál found me.

Reconnecting with József: From digital discovery to real-life reunion

There are many platforms online to hold a family tree. Once I had my family tree established, I uploaded it to several platforms. I did this in the hope of finding distant relatives. Maybe they would see my tree and reach out. In January 2019, I received an email from a Hungarian man, János Szabon, who asked me why HIS great-grandfather was in MY family tree. I explained to János that I was looking for information about my missing great-grandfather, József Gál, who was born in Felsőkelecsény, Hungary, and that his great-grandfather was married to my great-grandfather's sister. We quickly realized we were third cousins! Janó and I communicated through Facebook Messenger almost daily, swapping family stories and our 'brick walls.' I don't remember the exact date – it may have been January or February, 2020, but I remember the moment like it was yesterday. I was sitting on the couch with my laptop open doing research. My son was sitting on a chair opposite me. Janó sent me a digital image with an explanation of how he found this picture in an attic at his mother's house. "My dear cousin Julie, I have a surprise for you." At first, I didn't know what I was looking at because Janó and I had shared many family photos. I could see the dots moving because he was typing more. He explained the digital picture he sent was of my great-grandfather, József Gál. There he was, looking straight back at me. I started shaking, tears rolled down my face, my heart was pounding, and I couldn't pull myself together. My son said, "Mom, what's wrong?!" I couldn't speak. I was paralyzed. Janó gave me the greatest gift and I was finally able to share that gift with my mother and her siblings… the first and only glimpse of their grandfather.



József Gál, Sr.
Source: Family photo album

It wasn't long after that Janó and his wife Andi invited me to visit them in Hungary. I never cared much for the idea of traveling, but I took them up on their offer. I left all the planning up to Janó and Andi. I just asked for a day or two to visit my relatives on the Galatocky side. Then, COVID hit. The trip was postponed until the summer of 2022, and I was able to take my son, Serkan with me. This gave us another year to plan. In the meantime, it seemed Janó was on a personal mission to find as much information as possible about József Gál. He traveled to different villages, found Gál relatives, and interviewed them. One relative was Zsuzsa Fábri, another third cousin to me. Her great-grandfather, Péter, was another sibling to József Gál. Zsuzsa knew more than anyone about József because her grandmother, Zsófia Gál, József's niece, was 'adopted' by József when she was a young woman, and she inherited József's property when he died

in 1956. Zsuzsa informed Janó that she knew where József Gál was buried but his grave was unmarked. When we were visiting Hungary, Janó introduced me to Zsuzsa and we traveled to Felsőkelecsény and the cemetery. Janó had a grave marker made and we placed it on József's grave, 66 years after his death. To say this was a moving experience is an understatement.

József Gál's grave
Source: Family photo album

Sunday Soup again: Connecting continents and families

Janó and Andi were the perfect hosts and travel guides. All our days were filled with travel, tours, conversation, and great food. Serkan and I had a rental car and took a few days away from our hosts to visit our Galatóczki cousins. In two and a half days we met Katalin in Nagykanizsa, József, his wife Erzsébet, and their daughter Mónika in Szerencs, another distant cousin in Szerencs, Valéria Paskó, whose mother was a Galatóczki, István and his family in Nyíregyháza, and finally, Rita, her brother Péter, and their parents, Sándor Galatóczki and wife Erzsébet in Szerencs. These days were a whirlwind and my time with them was not enough, but I appreciated every second I had. All of them were very welcoming. I remember at every stop we had a meal, sometimes two meals!

I would like to talk about ALL the food but for the sake of time I will only mention the food from one visit, and it was at our last stop to see Rita, Péter and their parents. Their parents did not speak English, but Rita was a great help. I don't think we were there for ten minutes when her mother wanted us to go to the dining room table. She served an appetizer of avocado with garlic on toast. Next was a bowl of broth with csiga noodles. I remember my head cocking slightly, wondering, could this be? I put a spoonful in my mouth and instantly, tears welled in my eyes. The taste was the same as the Sunday soup from my childhood. I was so emotional. It took this entire trip, until this exact moment, for it to really sink in, "This is where I come from." I looked up from the soup and Rita's mom was standing in the kitchen watching me. I picked up my phone, opened Google translate, typed in my request, and walked to her. She read my English to Hungarian translation, "I would like to compliment you on the clarity of your broth." Her eyes grew wide, she kissed both of my cheeks, and hugged me tight. She didn't need words to tell me how happy she was. Next was the meat and vegetables. She also served a French salad, breaded chicken, and a sweet garlic chicken with sesame seeds. I didn't want to disappoint her, so I tried everything. I was almost to the point of being miserable from eating too much when her son Péter said, "Leave some room for the stuffed cabbage!" I thought he was joking but an hour later I had two stuffed cabbages in front of me, some sauerkraut, and a ham hock. I was the only one at the table eating. I heard Rita say from across the room, "Poor Julika."

Every goodbye with my cousins was tearful. Tearful because I was so happy to meet them, and tearful because I may never see them again. I am so glad that I made the trip, and that my son was with me to experience it. I may never know the identity of Sándor Galatóczki's father and I'm okay with that now, but I will never give up. The discoveries in genealogy are exciting but what I enjoy the most through this hobby is meeting family. Whether it be close family or distant family, in the next town or in another country, there is a common thread that creates a special bond.

By Julie Galatocky, great-granddaughter of Sándor Galatóczki
Ohio, April 2024
jayulie17@gmail.com

Julie and Serkan in Felsőkelecsény
Source: Family photo album

From Szigetközi to Sigite: Two names, common roots, one family

At the beginning of our story, I should state that the family in question is my husband's – he's from the branch of the family in Hungary. Below, I will explain how the two families – the American Sigite and the Hungarian Szigetközi – have met on several occasions.

Beginnings and a lucky twist: Reconnecting family ties

The research started on the American side. The first meeting took place in 2014. For the previous five years, the oldest Sigite family member had been researching www.familysearch.com and discovered that there were relatives in Hungary. The research led him to the archives in Eger, where he was told that yes, there is a family called Szigetközi in Kápolna.

And that's where luck came in, as it usually does in fairy tales. One of the family members is a university professor who often traveled to Hungary to give talks. At one such event, he met the coordinator of an international exchange program, Dóra Szakonyi, and asked for her help to find his relatives in Kompolt. Dóra was unable to contact them due to time constraints. She asked me to help since I also once lived in Kápolna. Naturally, my first step was to ask my husband's family (my husband's sisters and brother) what they thought. They were delighted and, from there, things started to unfold.

Much to our chagrin, the American relatives did not speak Hungarian and we did not speak English. Family discussions led to the discovery of documents that enabled us to start down the path to find out about the relatives in Kompolt.

Common Roots: The seven Szigetközi siblings

The following details emerged from a book published by the Municipality of Kompolt. The children of immigrant János Szigetközi's (John Sigite's) father were born of two women. (We assume that his first wife died prematurely.) András Szigetközi and Mónika Horhauser had two children, Erzsébet in 1882 and Sándor in 1885. From his second wife, Erzsébet Jéger, he had five children, Mária in 1888, János two years later, then András, Mátyás, and finally Péter in 1895.

The oldest son, Sándor Szigetközi, married Róza Kovács, also of Kompolt, and from this marriage my husband's father János Szigetközi (1911–1993) was born. So, the immigrant János Szigetközi (John Sigite) was the half-brother of my husband's grandfather.

János Szigetközi
1907

Sándor Szigetközi and his wife in the 1930s
Source: Family photo album

From Szigetközi to Sigite: The life of an emigrant brother in the New World

In 1907, at the age of 17, János (John) bought his ticket for the ocean liner with the help of his father, received an extra $80 for his train ticket to St. Louis, and still had a little left over to live on. The story goes that 20 days after departure, the ship supposedly sprang a leak after a huge storm, but still managed to dock. (There is no documentation of this; the information comes from the family's account.) For a long time after this, John wouldn't eat fish and potatoes, because that's all he ate on the voyage. At first, he stayed with an immigrant family in Granite City, Illinois. He later settled there with his family at 2918 Denver Street.

He first worked as a water carrier, supplying pipe-laying workers at the River & Roxana oil refinery, and after he came of age, he worked for nearly 40 years at the Union Starch corn syrup plant. He lived in a close-knit community, with neighbors who were aware of each other's daily lives. When one of them passed away, that person was buried in a fitting manner, as described in a newspaper article.

The factory manager, who employed many Hungarians, hired Zsófia Práter to teach English to her immigrant compatriots. The venue was the local Hungarian House, where immigrants often met. In the meantime, John had met Klára Káldy, who was originally from Taljándörögd. They were married on November 15, 1913, in St. Joseph Catholic Church. (I tried to contact the parish of Taljándörögd to see if we could find any trace of her family, but unfortunately I was unsuccessful.) The wedding reception was also held in the Hungarian House.

John was a founding member of the Verhovay Aid Association's Chapter 187 and became its vice president in 1917.

The wedding of John Sigite and Klára Káldi
Source: Family photo album

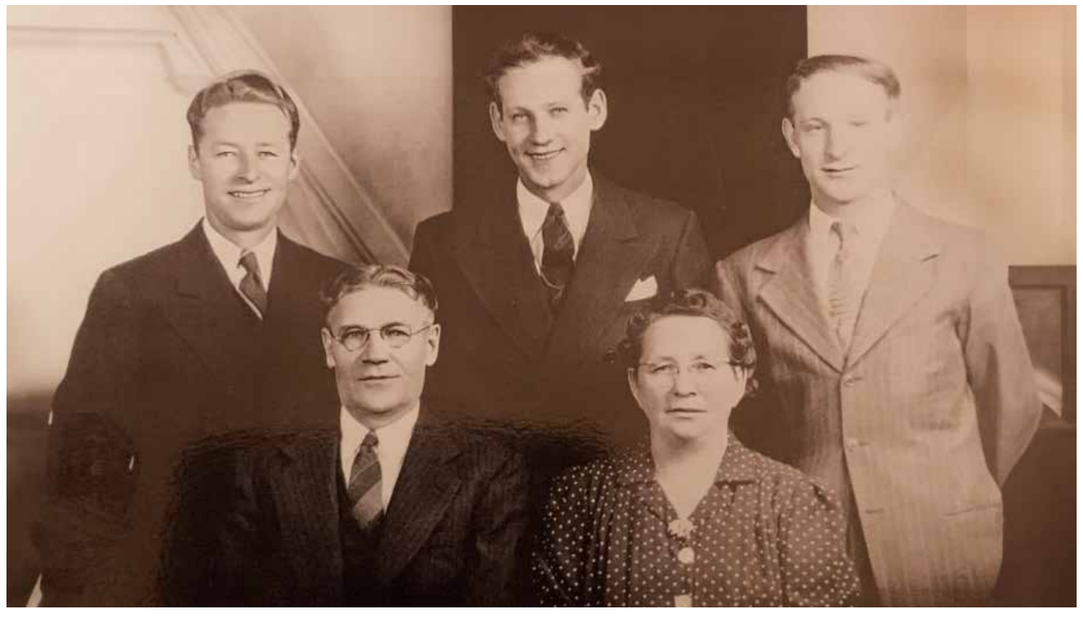
John Sigite's house
Source: Family photo album

They had three sons, András, János and Tivadar. In 1963, the local newspaper ran a photo article celebrating the couple's 50th wedding anniversary, and the celebration was held at the Lincoln Place Community Center. They also published photos: the 1913 wedding picture and another from 1963. John was 73 and Klára 69 at the time. They were married for 61 years, until Klára's death in 1974. John died in 1982, aged 92.


Golden Wedding Fete And Open House Set For Sunday

Newspaper article from 1963
Source: Family collection

Randall Sigite, who is the oldest member of the American branch of the family in our story (86 at the time of writing) is John the emigrant's grandson. According to Randall, he did not know he was born under a different name until he was 12, given that the name Szigetközi was hard to pronounce in America. So the family took the name Sigite. This is what we found out about our relative who emigrated from Kompolt.


John Sigite and his family
Source: Family photo album

Encounters in the Old Country:
Following the ancestors

And now I will tell the story of our encounters. For the first time, in the spring of 2014, the moment came for the two families to meet in person after long correspondence. As I mentioned before, they didn't speak Hungarian, and we didn't speak English, so we employed the help of the previously mentioned exchange coordinator, Dóra Szakonyi, who is still in our lives. We met our American family for the first time at the exit of the motorway at Kál. Randall and his two daughters, Susan and Jackie, and the aforementioned professor's wife, Laura were joined by Julianna Szigetközi, László and his son, my sister-in-law Anna, István and me, from our family.

Dóra translated for us, which took a while, because we were so moved we couldn't even speak. We greeted each other as if we had only been separated for a few years. It was an indescribable feeling. Even now, as I write this, I shudder. Of course, we treated them to Hungarian food and after a delicious lunch, we were on our way.

First, we visited Kompolt, the village of our origin. In the cemetery, we visited the graves of our deceased ancestors and our relatives paid their respects, shaken by the passing of time. After we returned home, we were bombarded with questions. Dóra could hardly keep track of who wanted to know what about each family. As time was running out, my husband gave Randall some soil from Kompolt in a bag with the colors of the Hungarian flag. Randall scattered the soil on the graves of John and Klára in America after he returned home.

The second reunion took place in the summer of 2016, when more members of our American family came for a longer stay. We celebrated Randall's 78th birthday. Before saying goodbye, they invited us to their home. We were happy to accept, and traveled to the U.S. a year later.


Second reunion
Source: Family photo album

Our welcome at
St. Louis airport
Source: Family photo album

Meeting in the New World: The Sigite family

Then, on April 29, 2017, the long-awaited day arrived, and my husband, Dóra, and Dóra's son, Máté, and I set off for America. We arrived in Chicago just after dark, in the pouring rain, and after another stopover, we reached our destination, St. Louis, late in the evening. They had said they would meet us at the airport, but we did not expect such a welcome! Bearing signs reading "Welcome Szigetközi Family," 10 family members greeted us. Strangers in the waiting area also cheered. It was an uplifting, unrepeatable moment.

The family gave us a small souvenir bucket that John made at work back in the day. There was no shortage of events this time either. Dóra was constantly translating between us. We visited the Hungarian House, which still stands, and paid homage to the memorial plaque of Zsófia Práter.

We were shown the house where John used to live. The most touching moment was when we paid our respects at the grave of John Sigite (János Szigetközi) and his wife Klára Káldy. We brought a bouquet of flowers from Hungary and placed it on the grave.

During the reunion, we toured beautiful places in Illinois and Missouri. We visited a real country pub and once had breakfast with about 20 American relatives. A journalist and photographer from the local newspaper were present for the occasion to report on this unique encounter with the family, which was published shortly after our return home.

And the experiences didn't end there: the biggest surprise was when my husband (who turned 66 while we were there) was given a real birthday party. Our relatives rented a pavilion in St. Jacob Township Park, where over 40 people were present to meet us. I should add that before our trip, Randall's daughter Susan posted on Facebook among her relatives that we would be coming and that all relatives were welcome to come and see us on May 6. They also had a pin made especially for the occasion for each of us, with a family photo of John Sigite, who had emigrated, and the words

Visiting John's grave
Source: Family photo album

"I AM A MAGYAR SIGITE/SZIGETKÖZI".
Much to our surprise, there were also American relatives who had not seen each other for nearly 30 years. It was with a heavy heart and teary eyes that we had to say goodbye after 10 days.

In June 2019, they visited us again, this time with an extended family. I was aware that the eldest couple of the American relatives had celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary shortly before (at the time of writing this story, they are a few days short of 65), and we wanted to give them something very memorable. And that's when I saw that it was possible to request a personalized Papal Blessing, bearing the Pope's signature and seal. I set to work immediately so that by the time they arrived, I would have received the coveted gift from the Vatican. And they arrived. Both the family and the gift arrived. Tearfully, they thanked us for commemorating this exceptional anniversary. And there the story ends.

We have not met in person since, but we have a standing invitation to visit again. We correspond, we know each other's joys, and we share each other's sorrows. We plan to visit them again, as time is short. The eldest relative is 86 years old and we would like to see him again. It was a great joy for us to get to know them, and it is a special pleasure for me to be able to give my husband this unique experience.

By Mónika Szigetközi, István Szigetközi's wife
Kál, April 2024
monika600706@gmail.com

History repeats itself: Tragedies on either side of the ocean

My great-great-grandfather, Ferenc Kiszlinger (listed as *Kislinger* in his birth register), was born on March 31, 1872, in Csehbánya, a small village in Veszprém County, to Pál Kiszlinger and Anna Kirchgesner. On July 10, 1898, in Városlőd, he married his first wife, Julianna Veiland, also originally from Csehbánya. Their son, my great-grandfather, was born on September 2, 1904, in Csehbánya, and left behind with his siblings when their father went to America in 1909. The children were left alone with their mother, who died in 1914 of consumption (unfortunately, her grave has not been found), so the children were probably placed with relatives.

Ferenc arrived in America from Bremen on January 28, 1909, on board the *S.S. König Albert*.

In 1911, in Akron, he was attacked by a dog, which bit his right leg between the knee and the ankle, and after the incident he was treated for rabies, and also filed a lawsuit against the dog's owners, claiming $1,000 in damages.

DAMAGES ASKED OF OWNERS OF CANINE

Two Persons Each Seek to Collect $1,000 of Joseph and Elizabeth Bauch. Alleging that Joseph and Elizabeth Bauch, who reside at 233 Fuller street, have been harboring a dangerous and vicious dog, two suits have been started in the Summit county court, each for $1,000 damages.

Frank Kesslinger was the first to enter suit. He alleges that while passing the Bauch home on August 12 that the dog was without a muzzle and rushed out and attacked him. The plaintiff says he was badly bitten on the right leg, between the knee and the ankle, and since that time has been forced to take the Pasteur treatment. He asks for $1,000 damages.

The other suit against Joseph and Elizabeth Bauch was filed by Catherine Spinner by her next friend, Jacob Spinner. The plaintiff asks for $1,000, damages, the petition setting forth that on August 12, when passing the Bauch home on Fuller street Catherine Spinner, who is but five years old, was ferociously attacked by the dog and bitten on the right leg. The plaintiff further alleges that it has been necessary in this case to administer the Pasteur treatment and the child is still suffering from the injuries received.

Akron Beacon Journal, page 4, August 26, 1911.
Source: newspapers.com

Ferenc Kiszlinger
1909

Akron, 1907
Source: Library of Congress[35]

On July 16, 1915, in Akron (Summit County, Ohio), he married Verona Oláh, also a Hungarian immigrant (born in Tamási). Unfortunately, I have little information about how they lived. Ferenc is listed as a laborer in the marriage record, presumably doing odd jobs or unskilled labor in factories and companies. On the 1930 census form, he is shown as married but without his wife at the same address. He lived as a tenant on Clover Street in Akron and worked in the local rubber factory. This was no accident, as Akron was known as the rubber capital of the world for a long time for its leadership in the industry. Six rubber companies were based in the town. Various toxic substances were released into the air during the manufacture of rubber products, exposing workers and residents alike.

Ferenc's death, however, was not caused by hard work in a toxic environment, but by an accident. He died at 7:55 PM on April 23, 1944, at the Akron City Hospital, because of a chest hemorrhage due to a fractured rib. His injuries were sustained in a traffic accident, when he was hit by a tram. Several articles about the accident were published in the local newspaper, including one that said that it happened in the rain when the vehicle turned from Howard onto Mill Street, and that the tram driver did not see him in time because the vehicle's windshield wipers were malfunctioning.

Ferenc Kiszlinger was buried May 2, 1944, at Glendale Cemetery in Akron.

STREETCAR KILLS AKRONITE IN RAIN

Failure Of Windshield Wiper
Blamed In Accident

Failure of street car windshield wiper was listed by police today as a contributing factor in the death of a pedestrian identified as Frank Keslinger, 65, of 60 N. Howard st., who was struck by the trolley at Mill and Howard sts. at 7 Sunday night. He died an hour later at City hospital.

His death was the county's 27th traffic fatality of the year compared to 18 at this date in 1943. The city's toll is 12 against 10 at this time last year.

W. H. Roberts of 419 Kenmore blvd., operator of the street car, was to be questioned by police today. He told investigating officers Sunday night that Mr. Keslinger evidently stepped in front of the car as it turned from Howard onto Mill st. It was raining at the time and he explained that his vision was hampered by failure of the windshield wiper to work.

Akron Beacon Journal, page 13, April 24, 1944.
Source: newspapers.com

My great-great-grandfather had a total of four children in Hungary, but only three of them lived to adulthood. A daughter, Anna, born in 1900, died of lung disease at the age of 5 months. Of the others, the eldest is Krisztina (1899–1962), and the middle one is Teréz (born in 1902).

My great-grandfather, the youngest of the three, was born Antal Kiszlinger in 1904. He and his wife, Vilma Ódor, had eight children, with whom they lived in very modest circumstances; according to family stories, sometimes my great-grandfather would bring home the bread he took to work with him so that the others could eat as well. In a strange twist of fate, his children had to live through very similar events as their father. Antal died in 1953, of emphysema/asthenia, and his widow emigrated to Canada sometime in the 1950s, leaving her children behind.

The eldest son, László, emigrated to Argentina around 1956, after a quarrel with the Hungarian secret police for refusing military service. József, the youngest, died of tetanus in 1958, and István was beaten by the secret police (for an unknown reason) so badly that the door of the wardrobe he was pushed against broke. My grandfather and his sister had to watch all this while hiding under the bed. My grandfather was sent to a children's home and his sister Zsuzsi was placed in foster care. I learned about my great-great-grandfather's story through my family history research, and about the lives of his descendants partly through my own research and partly through the stories of relatives.

By Ádám Kiszlinger, great-great-grandson of Ferenc Kiszlinger
Gárdony, April 2024
adamkiszlinger2004@gmail.com

Antal Kiszlinger and Vilma Ódor, with their children, 1951-1953
Source: Family photo album

Tracing two postcards: Aunt Erzsi's American parcels and her memory

My grandparents lived in Kisterenye's retirement colony of Kismaconka after my grandfather had worked as a railwayman all over Hungary. He began and ended his life as a railwayman in Kisterenye.We were a large and close-knit family. For name days and wedding anniversaries, everyone came together at the parental home: the four sons, their families and other relatives. We, the grandchildren, spent our summers there together, which we later independently recalled as Kismaconka being the "Center of the World." We would register a half-sentence while playing, "What's new with Erzsi? Did you get a letter? Or a parcel?" but we didn't really care. I remember that the answer to one of these questions was that she had written and sent us a photo, which was passed around, and later I found it in the photo album. Here it is – Erzsi to some, Böske to others – dressed in black.

Aunt Erzsi in America
Source: Family photo album

Erzsébet Pingitzer
1909

After our grandparents died, the "Center of the World" closed and the family scattered all over the country. We grandchildren grew up and started families of our own. We knew about each other, but there were no big gatherings anymore; the centrifugal force field was gone. Many years later, I was contacted by Réka, who was researching the family, and that's when our shared hobby brought us together, as I had also started to work on finding our ancestors after my retirement. Réka is the granddaughter of one of my cousins. We pooled our knowledge and our photo albums, and then Erzsi came up again, and the research began into when she went to America, and how she was connected to the family. Was it through grandfather or grandmother? Rummaging through an album, I pulled out a picture of a man and woman sitting, and to my great delight I discovered that I was actually holding a postcard that Erzsi had mailed to her mother from New York in 1911. This gave me the final push to find out more about Erzsi's life. Soon, we had accurate and crucial information. The two sisters' identification was made on the basis of their photographs and our research. My grandmother and Réka's great-great-grandmother, Anna and Erzsébet, respectively, were sisters, daughters of the wealthy blacksmith József. They lived in Kisterenye.

Erzsébet and Anna Pingitzer with their mother in the late 1890s
Source: Family photo album

Sisters Anna and Erzsébet Pingitzer
Source: Family photo album

Grandmother Anna was born in 1881 and married Miklós Mateidesz in 1901, after which the couple moved from station to station in the country. Erzsébet was born in 1883 and married József Hornyák in Kisterenye in 1908. A great wave of emigration began in the 1880s, with the United States of America being the main destination. Emigration costs were exceedingly steep; often, people would need to sell all their possessions to afford the trip. The voyage itself was trying, with newspaper reports of overcrowding, stench, inadequate food and long journeys of up to 17 days.

Erzsébet and her husband left just three weeks after the wedding to seek a better life. They had probably been planning the trip for a long time and had adjusted the date, and probably the wedding itself, to arrive in their new land as husband and wife. They traveled to Rijeka and boarded the Caronia, bound for New York. In New York harbor, they first passed by small Liberty Island, on which the Statue of Liberty stands, and then docked at the Ellis Island immigration inspection station that had opened on January 1, 1892. Erzsébet and József first settled in New York. At the time of the 1910 census, they lived in a rented apartment on East 64th Street in Manhattan, and József worked as a chauffeur. This is where the 1911 postcard with their photo came from.

Erzsébet Pingitzer and József Hornyák's postcard from New York, 1911
Source: Family collection.

At this point, another postcard from 1917, found in the photo box, made sense. It was written by Erzsébet to her nephew from New York, two weeks after the United States entered World War I.

Erzsébet Pingitzer's postcard from New York, 1917
Source: Family collection.

The year 1918 found the couple in Detroit, where József was entered in the military register in September, at which time he worked as a mechanic. With almost two months of the war left, he was not sent to the front. He applied for citizenship in 1919 and was naturalized in 1922. By 1930, they were living in a house they owned (worth $4,000). József was working as a mechanic and Erzsébet was employed as a nurse. Ten years later, they were still living in Detroit. József's annual salary at the time was $1,564. By the 1950 census, they were no longer in Detroit. We think they moved to Florida, but we need to investigate more to be sure.

According to the recollections of extended family, Aunt Erzsi was still sending packages in the 1950s. Some remember an "American" box that Grandpa kept for beekeeping supplies. Erzsi sent mainly clothes, but she also fulfilled "requests." Unfortunately, we do not remember the address where the last parcel came from and when.

In the census records, no other person was listed in the household of Erzsébet Pingitzer and József Hornyák in any decade; they probably had no children. This is also confirmed by the fact that, according to family memories, there was a very small inheritance in the 1950s and 1960s, which was received by relatives in the Old Country from America.

By Ágnes Mateidesz Himer
Budapest, April 2024
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Twice severed ties: The boy left in the Old World, his journey to the New World and his forced return

My paternal grandfather, István Polcsik, was born on August 6, 1905 – as a twin – in Jásd, Veszprém County. His brother died when they were four months old. According to the official passenger lists of the shipping companies, his father and his father's brother, like many hundreds of thousands of their compatriots, had been in America several times since the late 1890s, fleeing poverty and working as guest workers.

In November 1909, my great-grandparents (my grandfather's parents) and my great-grandfather's brother, Márton Polcsik, his wife, and their two-year-old son (also Márton) boarded the ship *Zeeland* in Antwerp and sailed for New York.

According to the ship's passenger list, they arrived at Ellis Island on November 17, 1909. They did not take my grandfather, then 4 years old, with them on the long voyage, leaving him in the care of relatives in Jásd. My grandfather told me many times during his life that he remembered the autumn afternoon when he was allowed to accompany his parents to the end of the village, where he had to be literally torn away from his mother. He was given a few small scones from their food basket, he could wave to them and that was that.

We don't know how they traveled or how long it took, but the family made it to Detroit and settled there, as later census records show. My great-grandparents had five more children in America, one of whom died at the age of 4, but the others lived to adulthood.

My great-grandparents, István Polcsik and Julianna Máhik. *Source: Family photo album*

István Polcsik
1909

We know from my grandfather's later account that he left when he was 16 to follow his parents. The quota laws of 1921 and 1924, which restricted immigration to America, radically reduced the number of immigrants. It is very likely that my grandfather tried to go during the first wave of these laws (1921-1922), but was denied a passport later because of this or because his parents were living in the U.S. According to his story, he used the papers of a dead villager to travel from Rijeka to Detroit, where he was able to meet his parents and four siblings in the spring of 1922.

He had been living and working in Detroit for about a year when someone alerted the authorities that he was in the country on false papers, and he was deported. He never saw his parents or siblings again.

He spoke English well until the end of his life. In the street where he lived, there resided an American pilot, Frankie, who remained there after World War II, and with whom he talked a lot.

My grandfather married in 1932, had six children, and died in 1991.

We are in contact with descendants of two of his American-born siblings. Thanks to the miracle of the internet, we found each other on a social networking site about 15 years ago. Thanks to them, we know when our great-grandparents died and where they are buried in Detroit (we have a photo of their grave). My great-grandfather István Polcsik died in 1944 and my great-grandmother Julianna Máhik died in 1947. Maybe one day we can go there and bring flowers to their graves.

By Szilvia Polcsik, granddaughter of István Polcsik
Nemesvámos, April 2024
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My grandfather, István Polcsik
Source: Family photo album

Those who embarked, those who stayed, and those who left: The history of the Sauerbrunn family

My father, Ernő Szegő, passed away in 1978, and all I knew then was that we had relatives living in America who supported my father's family, but nothing more. All he had in his estate about the family was his parents' marriage certificate from 1908, which had his father's name badly misspelled, as Esther. In 1999, I found the Jewishgen site, which is a fantastic database run by a non-governmental organization. I searched for relatives by our original name, Sauerbrunn (which my father changed in 1954 at my mother's request as it was difficult to spell). Because of that search, Hale R. found me in 2005. His grandmother was Fanny Sauerbrunn, but all he knew was that the family emigrated from Hungary before World War I. Hale commissioned an excellent genealogist, who began her research in Salt Lake City. I began my research in the Ellis Island database and then moved on to any other place I could find.

As it turned out, the name was badly misspelled. But finally, the RadixIndex site helped, and I found that Jenő Sauerbrun, my father's uncle, went to high school in Nyíregyháza in the early part of the 20th century. Starting from there, I found the ship manifest that listed the names of the family members who emigrated. We finally succeeded! It turned out that Hale was my second cousin. At that time, five of my father's first cousins were still alive, and I had 35 second cousins. I found out that my great-grandparents, Etner Nachum Sauerbrunn, Záli Weiszmann, and their seven children had emigrated to New York, leaving my grandfather behind in Hungary. The ever growing resources and the autobiography of my father's niece, Lucille Gold, have given me many details and stories. In the past 20 years, I have managed to find out even more about the family.

Those who embarked: The emigration of the great-grandparents and the seven children

My great-grandfather, Náchum Etner Sauerbrunn, was born in August 1847 in Wielky Oczy, a small town in Galicia, once part of the Habsburg Empire, now in Poland, near the Ukrainian border. For a long time, I could not understand how his first name could have been Etner, but recently I found his birth entry in the local Jewish register on the internet. His original name was Nachum, and his mother's surname was Etner, but in the birth register Etner was entered under his first name, so he mostly used that. The family later lived in Lubaczów, now part of Ukraine. His younger brother, Leib, was born there in the 1860s. My great-grandfather had a daughter Anna/Chaje in Lubaczów in 1871 (I found this a few years ago), and in 1875, as a divorced man, he married my great-grandmother Zali Weiszmann in Ramocsaháza (then Szabolcs County, Hungary), who was born there in 1854.

The couple lived in several places in Szabolcs County, as their children's birth records show. In total, they had nine children. One died

Náchum Etner Sauerbrunn
1909

Etner Sauerbrunn and Záli Weiszmann
Source: Family photo album

young, while three boys and five girls grew up to be adults. Records indicated that Etner was both a merchant and a teacher. Two advertisements in the newspaper Nyírvidék that I found indicated that he had a hosiery workshop in Nyíregyháza in the early 20th century. His eldest son, Benjamin, is mentioned among the participants of a local ball.

The family emigrated to America in several waves. Etner and Záli did in 1909, and the last family member, Benjamin, just before World War I, listed my grandfather Rudolf, who lived with his family in Debrecen (he had a hosiery repair workshop in the Bishop's Palace between the two world wars), as the closest relative in the old country.

Those who stayed: Losses and tragedies in Hungary

In my father's immediate family, my uncle József, born in 1909, became a merchant's assistant in later life and an ardent social democrat, so he was one of the first to be called up for forced labor in a penal battalion. He married in 1941. The following year, his beautiful daughter, Ágika, was born, whom he may never have seen. József disappeared in January 1943 in the Don River Battle.

My father was born in 1910, finished eight years of school, and was apprenticed as a tailor, since his American aunts had a tailor shop in Manhattan. He already had his boat ticket in 1929 when the great stock market crash happened and wiped out his American dreams ...

My grandparents, Rudolf and Regina, my aunt Margit, my uncle's wife and his little daughter were all murdered in the Holocaust. My father had been to the Don River Battle and survived with great luck, and later was taken to Austria for forced labor but escaped with some of his comrades, through the frontlines. I found in a Hungarian-American newspaper that he had sent a message to his aunts in the summer of 1945, saying that he was the only surviving member of the family. His American relatives supported him and wanted him to emigrate, and I don't know why he didn't. Unfortunately, they lost contact during the Rákosi era in the 1950s.

Those who left: Struggles and challenges in America

The American family (who can be followed for a long time in census records) lived in Manhattan at first. My great-grandfather was naturalized in 1912 but died just two years later, and my great-grandmother died in 1934. I recently found their graves; they rest side by side in a Jewish cemetery in New York City.

In the Hungaricana database, I found my great-grandfather's daughter from his first marriage, Anna, who had been involved in a jealousy fight. Anna was a fruit seller, first living on Rökk Szilárd Street, quite close to where I work now. She was only 4 feet, 9 inches tall. My grandfather was 5-foot-1 (he was not drafted because of this), but according to the naturalization document, my great-grandfather was only 5 feet, 1 inch tall also. Anna soon married Károly Bauer, who was a shopkeeper in Teleki Square, but I have not been able to find evidence of any children. The husband died 10 years later, and Anna emigrated to America in 1928 under the name of Anna Bauer. I have found no other trace of her.

New York City, 1910
Source: Fortepan / Hungarian Geographical Museum / Slide Collection

My grandfather's brother, Benjamin, who was the eldest, died prematurely, and his daughter Maria died in 1998 at the age of 90. His younger brother, John (John, or Joe Sawyer) fought in WWI, and I found a photo of him in my cousin Reed R.'s Flickr album. Joe Sawyer's children had the last name Snyder.

Three of my grandfather's younger sisters, Gizella (Gussie), Frida/Freida, and Dóra, never married and left Judaism after their emigration (their niece, Lucille Gold, recalled that they did so because of some anti-Semitic incident in Hungary).They had a tailor shop in Manhattan. Frida committed suicide in the 1930s, perhaps because of the Great Depression. Dora and Gizella (Gussie) died in the late 1960s.

Fanny, Hale's grandmother, married Max R., originally from Northern Hungary, in the early 1910s. The photo of the two of them is very amusing, with Max, who was as tall sitting as his small wife standing. They had four children. Fanny committed suicide after the birth of the youngest child, Raymond, in 1929. According to the memoirs of his eldest daughter, Lucille, the children grew up on the streets of Brooklyn. Max remarried and died at the age of 90.

Fanny Sauerbrunn, Max R., Viviene, Lucille and Arthur, New York 1921
Source: Family photo album

Lucille went to work in a factory at the age of 16, where she met her future husband. She was a beautiful woman. They both became ardent Communists, joining the Communist Party USA, which they left 20 years later, after Khrushchev's famous speech at the 20th Congress. They were not harmed, they were not in the limelight. The husband did not fight in World War II, although he was a soldier, but after the war he served as a field gendarme in the liberated German concentration camps of Europe. This probably led him to develop post-traumatic stress, which was not recognized at the time, so although they had three children, his wife eventually divorced him. It was not easy to support three children on your own in the 1950s. Lucille was very lucky, as one of the universities advertised a scholarship for two people to study social work; thousands applied, and only two were accepted – she was one of them. From then on, her life changed, she worked as a social worker and later ran an institution. In addition to social work, she also worked as a therapist. All three of her children became educated, and one of them became a sculptor.

Fanny's youngest son, Raymond R., became the most successful in the family: he founded a property management and construction company, which is still thriving today. He had seven children. His sons worked in the family business, including Hale R., who contacted me in 2005. Hale has four children, including twin daughters.

Reed R. was Hale's brother, born in 1951, who sadly passed away in 2019, but his family photos and some videos remain on Flickr. It is fantastic to see how the relatives lived in the 20th century.

Sadly, I have lost touch with the R. family, but luckily I have close relatives in America who I grew up with. Iván, the eldest son of my favorite maternal uncle, moved his family to the U.S. 33 years ago, and although it wasn't easy to make a new life there, he managed to do well.

In two decades of research, I have found many living relatives and cousins, mostly abroad. There are family members in Israel, Australia, Sweden, Switzerland, and even Taiwan. As a family history researcher, I have helped many people find their ancestors and more than once living relatives as well.

By Dr. Ágnes Szegő, Náchum Etner Sauerbrunn's great-granddaughter
Budapest, May 2024
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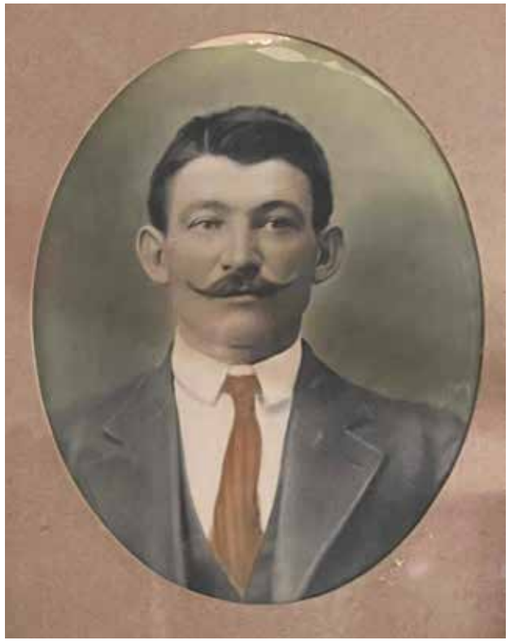
A Bible, a cabinet, and a broken American Dream: The story of my great-great-grandfather János Macher

My great-great-grandfather, János Macher, was born in 1874 in Pusztavám, Fejér County, the first child of a young family. His ancestors, along with many other Swabian families, probably emigrated to Hungary in the 1750s from the southwestern part of what is now Germany, from the territory of the Grand Duchy of Württemberg, from where many Transdanubian villages were also settled in this area.

Unfortunately, his father, József Macher, died of typhoid fever in 1878 at the age of 31. Since János was only 4 years old, he could not continue the lathe-turning trade that men in the family had practiced for generations. His mother, Erzsébet Horvát, was widowed at the age of 23, left with a small child, so, in keeping with the customs of the time, she remarried that same year to Mátyás Szapper, a farmer in Lajoskomárom. Marriages among the Swabian families of Pusztavám and Lajoskomárom were very common, despite the 90 km distance, since there were 23 Swabian families from Pusztavám among the first settled families of Lajoskomárom. János had three half-siblings soon after, the first one a boy, Mátyás, who died at the age of 6, Anna (1882–1960), and another Mátyás, born in 1885. I don't know much about János's life, or those of many other ancestors, except what I can find in the registers: some birth, marriage, and death dates.
He married Terézia Wieland in 1898 in Lajoskomárom, and they had three children: János in 1900, Anna (my future great-grandmother) in 1902, and Simon in 1904. Because of his emigration to America, my great-great-grandfather's life was a bit of a mystery, and I often asked my Great-Grandma to tell the story of the portrait of her father hanging on the wall. As a child, Great-Grandma suffered a lot from the absence of her father, who decided to try his luck in America in 1909

János Macher, c. 1910
Source: Family photo album

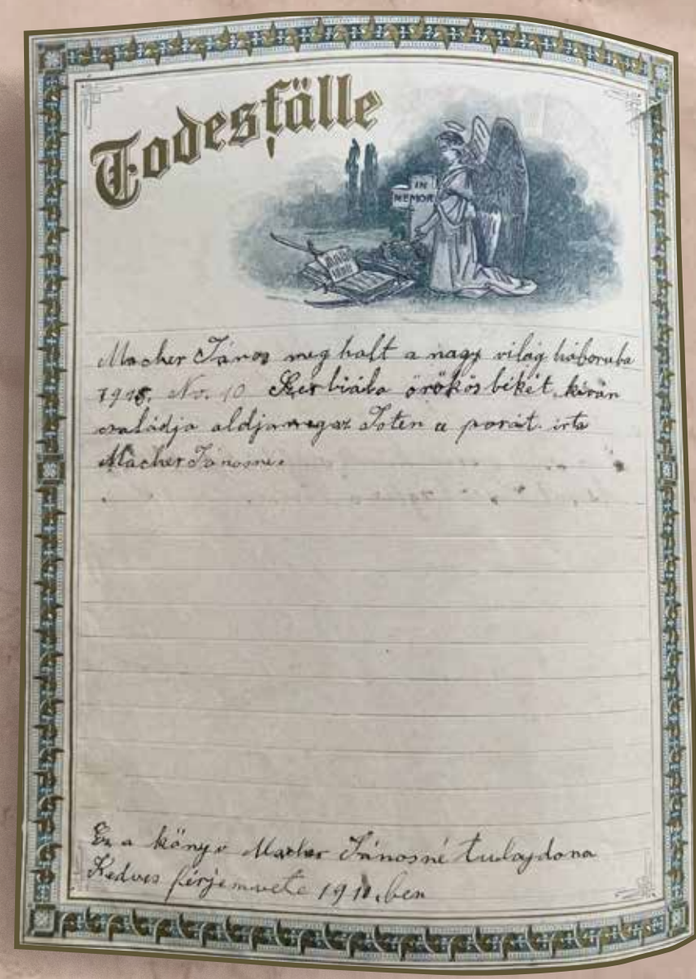


János Macher
1909

He left three small children and his wife in Lajoskomárom, and went probably to Akron, Ohio, together with several relatives and acquaintances from Lajoskomárom. They may have worked in the local rubber factory, but that's not certain; it's very difficult to trace American migrant workers, especially if they didn't start a family in the U.S. or have a newsworthy accident. But I'm not giving up, I have to find some more clues, since he lived in America for at least five or six years.

All we know about his return to Hungary is that he brought this large portrait and a thick German Gothic Bible printed in Gothic script, which he bought in 1910. Unfortunately, as soon as he came home, he was taken off to fight in World War I and was lost somewhere in a battle in Serbia, around 1915.

Entry in the family Bible about the death of János Macher in 1915
Source: Family collection



I have been leafing through and looking at this Bible a lot. The pictures and strange letters are beautiful, and it is nice to find a familiar story or word in it. I was always curious about my great-great-grandfather: if his mother tongue was German, how much Hungarian did he know? How did he fare in America? What kind of work did he do? Could he send money home to his family? Why are there no surviving letters? How did he live out there, did he have a job? Did he live well or was he miserable? Did he make friends with Swabians or Hungarians? Did he go back for visits several times or did he just return at the wrong time, for conscription?!?!?? A million questions without answers and a shattered American Dream.

This dream followed me: I was learning English and German, and I, too, wanted to see the world. So my little family and I wandered a lot, like my ancestors. We lived in many places, and recently settled near Pittsburgh, just a few hours from Akron. Here, I feel even more like I have to track down my great-great-grandfather somehow. But it's a good feeling that we might be close to the places he used to roam. I don't know why he's the one I'm so keen to get to know better among my ancestors, but maybe it's because of my Great-Grandma. I hope something else will turn up.

There is one more story related to my great-great-grandparents that I have to tell. I don't have many memories of the house in Lajoskomárom as a little girl, but I was a great admirer of the kitchen cupboard even then, at the age of 4 or 5. It was “great-great-grandma's cupboard.” Maybe we called it that because she had used it, but by then, she was long gone. I loved looking at its carved columns and porcelain handles. The bread was kept in the middle drawer, and there was a mirror behind the open shelves. My love of old furniture began here and continued at my grandmother's house a few villages away, in Ádánd. As a teenager, I was already consciously searching for treasures in attics, pantries and drawers, and I had acquired many things from my grandparents.

I opened “great-great grandma's kitchen cupboard” many times, trying to imagine what it must have been like without all the layers of paint and dust. My grandfather used it for tools, poisons and chemicals in the back pantry for 25 years or so. In the meantime, I found out that it must have been the first piece of furniture acquired by my great-great-grandparents, János Macher and Terézia Wieland, when they started a family in Lajoskomárom around 1898. Finally, in the early 2000s, the cupboard passed to us in our first home. I decided to have it restored and it became my favorite kitchen cupboard. In a lucky accident, we found a matching piece – a bookcase made from a cupboard with doors from Szeged. They are the same color and the carving pattern is the same.

There was no question that when we moved to America, both cupboards came with us, and they have been a treasured part of our dining room ever since. That's how the cupboards immigrated to America 15 years ago ... for my great-great-grandfather, too.

By Mónika Szilágyi, great-great-granddaughter of János Macher
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 2024
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The 125-year-old cupboard of the immigrant János Macher.
Source: Family photo album

A melting pot of heritage: The tapestry of my Hungarian roots

Like many, I am a product of the American Melting Pot — a fusion of DNA from Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and the British Isles. Only one of my eight great-grandparents was born in America. A generation later, the reverse was true. Only one of my four grandparents was born in Europe.

From village locksmith to steel mill worker: Grandpa Paul's journey

The immigrant grandparent, Pál (Paul) Dula, was born in March 1891 in a village called Isztáncs in what was then Austria–Hungary. Today, this place is known as Stanča and is in the Trebišov District, Košice Region, southeastern Slovakia. I found a record that indicates he was baptized on March 15 in Magyarizsép (today Nižný Žipov). He was the oldest son of József and Marja (Zeher) Dula's 12 children. I've just recently learned that József was employed by the railway.

At the age of 19, Paul came to America aboard the transatlantic liner *S.S. Graf Waldersee*, embarking from Hamburg, Germany, in February 1910. Passenger listing documents note his birthplace as Upor/Úpor, a village 2.2 km northeast of Isztáncs/Stanča. Both are small villages, even today. Upon arrival at Ellis Island, he had $5 and told officials that he was headed to Philadelphia. Paul's sister, Mária, older by five years, had come to America in 1899. She was married to another Hungarian immigrant, a butcher named András (Andrew) Szeman, and the two lived in Clymer, a borough in Indiana County, PA.

Two younger brothers followed Paul: Ferencz (Frank) in 1937, and András (Andrew). Ferencz and András remained in New York City. How András came to America is somewhat of a mystery. He worked for the railroad in Czechoslovakia and was smuggled out of the Soviet Union before I was born. Once here, he changed his surname to Aula to avoid KGB attention. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1958 in New York, where he was a doorman at the apartment building where playwright Arthur Miller lived with his wife, actress Marilyn Monroe. Ferencz, meanwhile, worked as a building superintendent and lived in Flushing in the borough of Queens. I recall meeting Uncle Frank only once at his home in New York. He died in 1981. Uncle Andy would visit Pennsylvania several times before he died in 1989, just days after the Berlin Wall had fallen. Frank's daughter told me that Uncle Andy smiled with joy when he heard the news. I have Grandpa Paul's employment record book, which lists his skills – among them, locksmith and machine fitter – and the names of former employers. New York City must have been quite a shock. I visited Ellis Island in summer 2023 and tried to imagine what it was like for him to be surrounded by so many people in a strange place.

My great-grandfather, József Dula in railway uniform. *Source: Family photo album*

József Dula and Marja (Zeher) Dula, and seven of their 12 children. Pál is standing at left, András is on the right and Ferencz is sitting on the floor, c. 1906
Source: Family photo album

Pál Dula
1910

Family lore has it that Paul entered a coal mine to work (probably in Indiana County where his sister lived) for precisely one day. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Johnstown, PA, where he found work as a machinist in what was then the Cambria Iron Co. He settled in the immigrant neighborhood of Cambria City, directly across the Stonycreek River from the steel mills. It was there that he met his future bride, Mary Chervenak.

Pál Dula's employment record book
Source: Family collection

Early days in Johnstown: Grandma Mary's ancestral story

Mary was also born in March 1891 — in fact, Paul was older than Mary by a day — but she was born in Johnstown. Her parents, John and Anna (Maczkanics) Chervenak, hadn't been in Pennsylvania for very long. John immigrated in 1889 and Anna in 1890. John was born in the village of Livó/Livov in the Bártfa District in 1864. Anna was born in nearby Krizse/Kríže in 1869. Anna was 21 years old and John was 26 when they married in November 1890, in Johnstown, PA. Since my grandmother was born just four months later, it's a safe bet that her parents had either been acquainted with one another back home in Austria–Hungary or had quite a whirlwind courtship.

Paul Dula and Mary Chervenak wedding photo, Johnstown, 1911
Source: Family photo album

After John was injured in the mill, he and Anna ran a boarding house for steelworkers. Injuries and deaths on the job were, sadly, all too frequent then. The mill gave John a pension of $8 a month in compensation, equivalent to about $240 a month today. Family boarding houses were common in the neighborhood. Householders could rent each room to three men who worked different shifts in the mills, which ran on a 24-hour schedule, 365 days a year. I don't know whether Paul was a boarder in the Chervenak home, though it's romantic to think so.

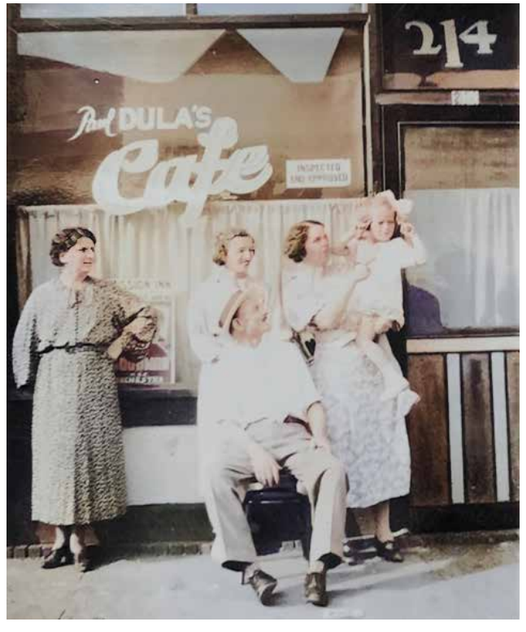
Paul Dula and his children: Emery, Joseph, Irene and Mary, second half of 1920s
Source: Family photo album

I have great-grandmother Anna's rosary, and we believe that the Chervenaks were ethnic Slovaks. Neither of my grandparents were churchgoers when I knew them. But my father told me that when Grandpa Dula did attend, he went to the Hungarian Reformed Church. The only time I saw Grandma Dula in church was at family weddings and during her funeral mass at the Immaculate Conception German Catholic Church a few blocks away from where she'd spent her life in Cambria City.

Cambria City chronicles: The story of the next generation

My father, Emery Dula, was born in Johnstown in 1915 and spent most of his early life in Cambria City. He was named for his father's younger brother, Imre, who had been killed fighting with the Hungarian army during World War I. Like his father, Emery was the oldest son in the family, with a sister three years older as well as a younger brother and sister. He graduated from high school in 1934 in the shadow of the Great Depression but got work in what by that time was known as the Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

Some time before my father graduated from high school, Grandpa Paul borrowed money from his in-laws and opened a bar/restaurant on the main street in Cambria City. I have a photograph of him, my grandmother, and one of my aunts in front of Paul Dula's Café. Sadly, the café didn't survive the Johnstown Flood of 1936.



Paul Dula's Café, Johnstown, 1934
Source: Family photo album

One of my paternal cousins showed me a copy of our great-grandmother Anna's will. She died in 1950. Her will noted a loan to Grandpa Paul and Grandma Mary of $1,500 (over $33,000 in 2024) to open a restaurant. They would get a share of her estate only if that money had been paid back in full. I don't know whether they paid the debt, but my cousin and I had a good chuckle at our hard-as-nails great-grandmother. Cambria City was still very much an immigrant neighborhood when my father and his siblings were growing up. There were newspapers in many languages—Hungarian, Greek, German, Slovak, and Polish. Dad's older sister, Irene, absorbed much of it and served as a U.S. Army translator in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Dad enlisted in the Navy and served in the Atlantic Theater. His younger brother, Joseph, served in the U.S. Air Force.

Linguistic legacy: Growing up in a multilingual household

Dad knew a few words of a handful of languages but couldn't converse in anything but English. He told me that Grandpa Paul insisted that the family speak English in the home because they were Americans. When I was very young, I heard my grandparents speak Hungarian and Slovak with each other but not with their children.

Interestingly, Grandpa Paul lost his spoken English except for "yeah" and "no" after he suffered a stroke. He could still understand English, however, and continued to speak Hungarian with no problem. Many years later, a neurologist told me that such an outcome after a stroke is quite common.

My most vivid food memory from my Dula grandparents' kitchen is of chicken soup. Grandma Mary made egg noodles from scratch – a process that fascinated me as a child. She would scoop a mound of flour onto a cutting board, make a well, add eggs, salt and some water, and knead the dough before rolling it out. She measured nothing, adding ingredients by eye alone. When the dough was ready, she folded it into many layers and cut the thinnest noodles with a large knife skimming so close to her fingertips that I couldn't understand how she didn't cut herself. When I asked, she admitted to cutting herself once, but her mother had been so angry that she made sure never to do it again.

The soup was delicious. Sometimes Grandpa Paul would sneak into the kitchen and add cayenne pepper to the pot. Grandma would berate him and he would look chastened… until the next time.

Grandpa Paul died when I was 11 years old. The family had a simple service at the funeral home, followed by a wake at a local bar/social hall. A few years later, I asked Grandma Mary to teach me some Hungarian. After about 30 minutes of me trying to master *"Hogy vagy? A nevem Marishka,"* she told me it was hopeless. I had been studying French in high school but that was no help!

From my reading[36] about what Cambria City was like early in the 20th century, immigrants and their children had to be tough to survive. Everyone in those first generations, and most if not all from the second, are now gone. But I am proud to be a third-generation Hungarian-Slovak-Swedish-English-American. And thanks to databases like Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org, I'm making connections all over the world.

By Michele Dula Baum,
granddaughter of Pál Dula
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 2024
mtcsbpgh@gmail.com

Michele and Emery Dula with Mary Chervenak Dula, seated, 1975, around the time she was trying to teach me Hungarian
Source: Family photo album

The fatal American Dream: The New World life and memory of Mihály Ráduly

My great-great-grandfather, Mihály Ráduly, was born in 1879, almost 100 years before I was born, in Homoródalmás, Szeklerland (now Mereşti, Romania), to a poor peasant family living mainly from animal herding. The social status of the family is also indicated by the fact that he was born into a family living in the part of the village called *Falumezeje* "village field," rather than the richer, larger part of the village with the main street, *Főutca*, which back then still indicated a social ranking left over from the 18th century.

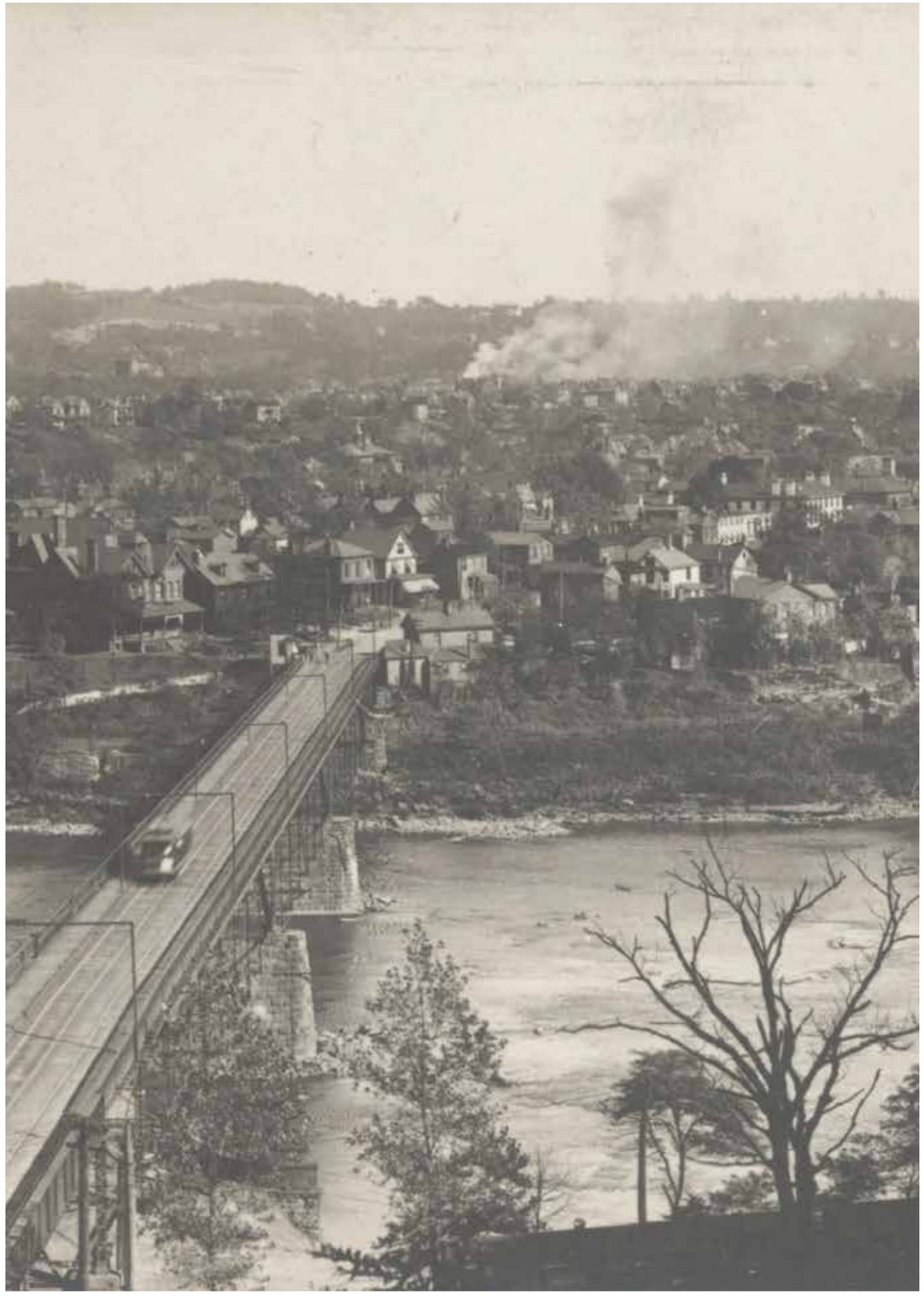
The price of heritage: From Homoródalmás to 'beyond the big water'

According to the family narrative, Mihály Ráduly was released from military service in 1899 because his father became an invalid, after which Mihály assumed the role of family breadwinner. In 1900, he was sent from Falumezeje to work as a servant on the farm of the wealthier Boér family on Főutca, where he met the family's youngest daughter, Lidi Boér (1878–1952). They married, and in 1904 their daughter, Jula Ráduly (1904–1970), was born. They lived in his wife's family house, but as his wife's siblings had to be paid out of the inheritance, and as they had to hand over their share of the land, which was the livelihood of every village family at the time, they were unable to support their family.

With no other way out of the situation, in December 1911, at the age of 33 (Jesus's age, as they used to say), my great-great-grandfather left the village to try his luck, leaving behind his 8-year-old daughter and his wife. I learned from the Ellis Island immigration office's digitized records that he set off with two of his fellow villagers, Ferenc Deák and András Ráduly, also 33, first to Bremen, from where they sailed across the Atlantic on the ship *Chemnitz*.

We don't know exactly how Mihály Ráduly kept in touch with his family, but it was probably one or two exchanges of letters, either by mail or through acquaintances. The only letter that survives in the family is one posted from the port of Bremen after their departure, dated January 12, 1912., Since Mihály Ráduly could not write well, the letter was written by his cousin, András Ráduly. In this letter, he mentions the relatives and friends who had stayed at home, and names the three friends traveling together, Mihály Ráduly, András Ráduly and Ferenc Deák, in the signature.

On arriving in America, they traveled to join János Tódor, who had emigrated from Homoródalmás in 1908, and who lived on Fifth Avenue in New Brighton near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was here that Mihály Ráduly began his American life.



New Brighton, 1907
Source: Library of Congress[37]

Mihály Ráduly
1911

The illusion of equality and the porcelain factory: The struggle of the men from Homoródalmás for a better life

RBetween 1905 and 1912, between 40 and 45 people from Homoródalmás traveled to America, also in the hope of a better livelihood and good earnings. According to accounts, it was very difficult to bring home the money they had earned. Manywere robbed and went home to their families with empty pockets. But there were some who managed to increase their property and land holdings, buy a house, or renovate an existing one.

According to the account of my great-great-grandfather, Mihály Ráduly, in the early days he worked in a porcelain factory in America, and his job was to polish the porcelain products. This was the best paid job, because of the hazardous porcelain dust produced during polishing. To protect their health, workers used a face mask with a filter, which was unknown at the time to the locals in the small village in Szeklerland, which is why this detail has been preserved. For both the inhabitants of his home village and his family, there was one more special thing about my great-great-grandfather's trip to America: he told me about America in the 1910s, when the workers went home from the factory, you could not tell by their clothes who was the factory manager and who was a worker, because they all had similar clothes and appearance. A skilled worker could wear the same kind of clothes as a factory manager in the street. My great-great-grandfather later sent a photograph of himself from America, as was the custom in those days. In the picture, he is sitting in a very smart suit with a watch chain dangling from his pocket.

The men from Homoródalmás in America, c. 1912
Source: Photo album of a Homoródalmás family, with their permission

The curse and blessing of the Great War: stuck in America and the porcelain factory

My great-great-grandfather planned to stay in America for maybe two or three years. Those who had left for America earlier would sometimes come home to visit or to take their families with them to America. My great-great-grandfather sent some money back home to his wife with such visitors, which she used to pay her siblings their share of the inheritance, and she also managed to buy some land, which the family still uses today. Then, just as he was about to return home to his family for good – or so the story goes – history intervened, World War I broke out and my great-great-grandfather and a good number of his compatriots were stranded in America. They could consider themselves lucky, because those people who were on visits home at the time were stuck in Szeklerland, which meant they had to go to the Great War.

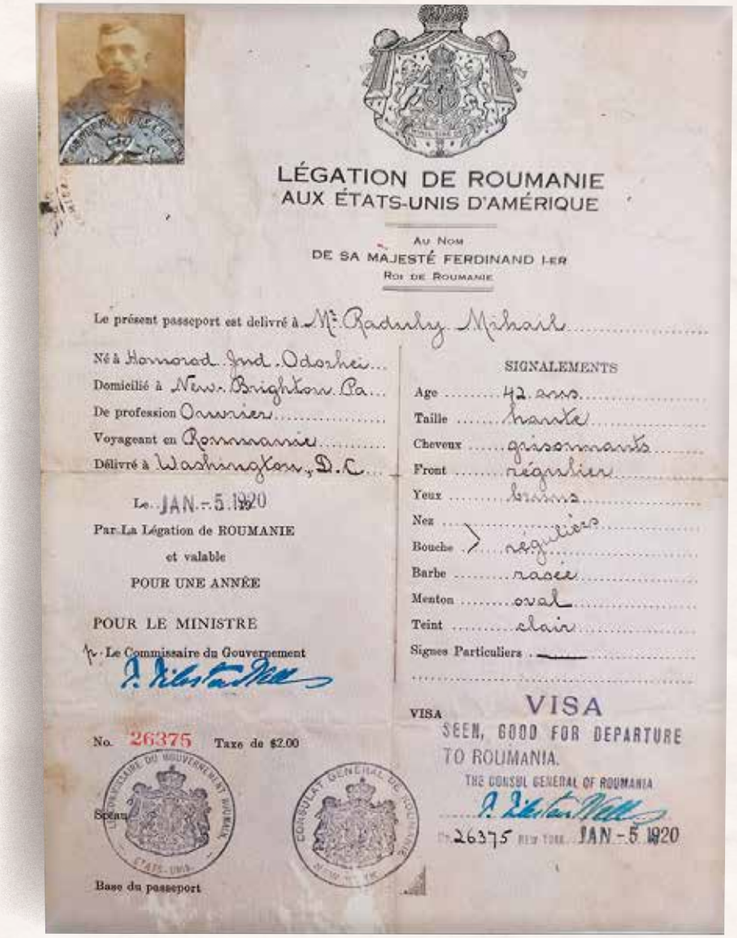
So, with no other option, he stayed in America and continued to work in the porcelain factory until he became ill from continuously inhaling harmful silica from porcelain polishing – he developed silicosis of the lungs. Medicine in the U.S. at the time was so advanced that doctors cured him of the disease, but he was told to stop working with porcelain. For a while, he worked in agriculture, but could no longer afford to send money home for the family. Eventually, he went back to the porcelain factory.

Mihály Ráduly in America, c. 1912
Source: Family photo album

Homecoming in the shadow of illness: The last months with the family

We don't know much about his time in America. What little free time he had after working was probably spent with his friends from the village. He managed to return home after the war, on February 5, 1920 By the time he returned, however, the geopolitical situation had changed considerably. World War I had ended, but Transylvania and Homoródalmás had become part of Romania.

He brought home a pocket watch, a leather shoulder bag, work gloves, and a belt with money pockets attached. Of these memorabilia, my grandfather begged his grandmother (who was Lídi, wife of the late Mihály Ráduly) to let him wear the pocket watch a little when he was a child. He managed to lose it, and it has been missing ever since. But the family still has the shoulder bag and the gloves.



LÉGATION DE ROUMANIE
AUX ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE

Au Nom
DE SA MAJESTÉ FERDINAND I-ER
Roi de Roumanie

Le présent passeport est délivré à Mr Radnly Mihail
Né à Homorod Jud. Odorhei
Domicilié à New Brighton Pa.
De profession Ouvrier
Voyageant en Roumanie
Délivré à Washington, D.C.
Le JAN. - 5 1920
Par La Légation de ROUMANIE
et valable
POUR UNE ANNÉE
POUR LE MINISTRE
Le Commissaire du Gouvernement

SIGNALEMENTS
Age 42 ans
Taille haute
Cheveux grisonnants
Front régulier
Yeux bruns
Nez
Bouche } réguliers
Barbe rasée
Menton ovale
Teint clair
Signes Particuliers —

VISA
VISA
SEEN, GOOD FOR DEPARTURE
TO ROUMANIA.
THE CONSUL GENERAL OF ROUMANIA

No. 26375 Taxe de $2.00
Sceau
26375 NEW YORK JAN - 5 1920
Base du passeport

Ráduly Mihály's passport on his way home, in 1920
Source: Family collection

When my great-great-grandfather returned home after eight years, in poor health, his little daughter, who had turned 16 in the meantime, didn't even recognize him. His illness could not be cured effectively by the doctors at home, although the doctor who treated him accepted a large dollar amount, probably knowing full well that he was incurable. He accepted a large sum of money on his last visit to the patient, half an hour after which my great-great-grandfather was dead. Mihály Ráduly died in October 1920, and his obituary survives. His wife, Lídi, was left a widow at the age of 42. She never remarried and wore black until her death.

My great-great-grandfather's memory is preserved with respect by the family, because we owe him a lot. He gave his life to create better living conditions for his family. His photo still adorns the kitchen wall, and his personal belongings from America have been preserved. Flowers and candles have been placed on his grave for years, and the tombstone with his name and that of his wife Lídi Ráduly (Boér) is still there. Next to him is the son of his only daughter, Julia Ráduly, Albert Sándor, my grandfather. His memory is preserved by Albert Sándor's son, Vilmos, my father, and his descendants. The person from whom I have learned a lot of information, most of all about the life of Mihály Ráduly and Lídi Boér, is their granddaughter-in-law, Ilona Sándor, wife of Albert Sándor, my grandmother.

Mihály Ráduly's wife, Lídi Ráduly (née Boér), with her grandson Albert Sándor, c. 1932
Source: Family photo album

By Ibolya Török-Sándor, great-great-granddaughter of Mihály Ráduly
Gyömrő, April 2024
sandoribi225@gmail.com

Three brothers in America: Life in the New World and then a return

The story begins in Nagydorog. The marriage of Mihály Hollósi and Éva Kovács produced 10 children – eight of whom reached adulthood, not a bad ratio at the time.

Grandfather in America: From mason to traveler

ATheir first born was a daughter, Julianna, in 1879, as was the 10th, Erzsébet, in 1897. Of the six daughters and four sons, one each died in infancy. What's interesting about the births is that the births of the first two daughters are recorded in the register of the Reformed (Calvinist) church – the family was Calvinist until then. I don't know what happened between 1880 and 1883, but my grandfather, István Hollósi, was registered at birth as a Nazarene on December 19, 1883, and from then on all the children became Nazarene. I was very shocked by the death entry of the deceased son, József Hollósi (1890-1891) in the Calvinist death register of Nagydorog: “put away without ceremony.”

So, at some point the family became Nazarene. After my grandfather, two more sons were born and reached adulthood: Sándor in 1885 and Mihály in 1888. By the time the last daughter was born in 1897, the first-born, Julianna, was already married. The boys' choice of profession was tailored to the needs of the Nazarene community. This is how my grandfather became a mason, which my father told me he did not like. Unfortunately, I never knew him because I was fewer than four months old when he died. But still, he and his two younger brothers are the main characters in my story. From family conversations, all we children knew was that Grandfather had been to America with his wife, and they had returned because she was ill. We have not yet been able to find out when the return journey took place, but the wife, Lídia Szigeti, died on November 26, 1924. After this, Grandpa remarried in 1926, and this is how our family came to be. No children were born in his first marriage.

István Hollósi
1912

Unraveling the American thread: Photos, letters, and ship manifests

The photographs taken in America resurfaced after my father's death in 1999. All we knew then was that the three brothers had gone to America, and my grandfather and his wife came back. I asked my father in the last months of his life what he knew about the American subject, but I only got tiny bits of information. All he knew was that both of the younger brothers were married, but only Mihály had children, two boys and a girl. Some of the relatives did not even know about the brothers who stayed in America. A second cousin of mine found a letter that Sándor wrote to his grandmother, Zsuzsanna Hollósi, in 1951. I copied that letter at the time, but I didn't really know what to do with it.

A few years ago, I started doing genealogical research. At that point, the American photos and the letter from America became important. According to the register, my grandfather and grandmother married on April 11, 1907, in Sárszentlőrinc. The groom was István Hollósi, born in 1883 in Nagydorog, a machinist(!), and the bride was Lídia Szigeti, born on January 6, 1885, also in Sárszentlőrinc. Here we can see that my grandfather, having given up the mason's trade, became a machinist. I also found the marriage details of his siblings. My grandfather's brother, Sándor Hollósi, a shoemaker, married Mári Julianna Németh, general servant, on August 9, 1910, in the 7th district of Budapest. And another brother, Mihály Hollósi, married Erzsébet Reizinger on April 18, 1912.

According to the ship manifest, Lydia Hollosy, 27, and István Hollosy, 28, arrived in New York on the ship *S.S. Cincinnati* on October 28, 1912, from Hamburg. And in 1923, the *S.S. Leviathan* sailed from Cherbourg, France, with Mrs. Mihály Hollosy, 30, Mihály Hollosy, 34, Mihály Hollosy, 6, and István Hollosy, 4.

István Hollósi and Lídia Szigeti in America
Source: Family photo album

The Hollósi brothers in America
Source: Family photo album

The Hollósi brothers' workplace in America
Source: Family photo album

Grandpa's life in the New World and his return home: The shattered American dream

So we can see that my Grandfather and Mihály did not go to America at the same time, and also that my grandparents were still in America in 1923, because one of the children has a relative living in America listed, István Hollósi, who is an uncle. Between the two dates, a death occurred: Mihály Hollósi, the father of my grandfather and his brothers, died of a stroke in 1920 at the age of 65. One of his sons was unable to attend the funeral, and the other left Hungary three years later with his family. The records also show that my grandparents returned sometime between October 1923 and November 1924.

Grandfather worked in a steel mill in America, and, having brought his earnings home, he bought a small house in Nagydorog, the first threshing machine in the village, a tractor, and a powerful crop- and paprika-grinder. He employed an average of 10 people in the business – hence his official categorization as an 'exploiter' after World War II. He hanged himself in 1952.

István Hollósi's second wife (my grandmother) and their children in Nagydorog. The seated person is Mrs. Mihály Hollósi (my great-grandmother)
Source: Family photo album

Mihály Hollósi in front
of his American home
Source: Family photo album

Brothers left in America: Further chapters of the family history

All I know about the brothers who remained in America is that Mihály died in 1942, in Akron, Ohio. His wife probably remarried, because she was buried in 1982 under the name Erzsébet Fodor – I found her tombstone.

I have not found records of Sándor's journey, but I have the letter from him, which says that he divorced his first wife, and that the second wife was an American woman, Gay Toy Headley, whom he married in 1943 in Reader, Wetzel County, West Virginia. He wrote in the letter that his wife was from a good family. Indeed! I found in the FamilySearch database a family tree about a meter long with roots going back to England. This branch needs further research. Sándor was the longest-lived; his death was recorded in 1975, as Alex Hollosy, aged 89. Census records for 1930 and 1940 also find Mihály's family in Akron, Ohio. In 1940, the residence is given as Akron City, Ward 9. Here there is a Mary, age 4, also listed, and the boys are 21 and 23 at this time.

I have also found Mihály Jr.'s marriage record: June 10, 1942, in Warwick, Rhode Island, Michael Hollosy, aged 25, married Helen Selick, aged 21. Michael died on March 28, 2009, aged 93, and his wife Helen died on July 22, 1999, aged 78. István Jr.probably never married. I found his death listed on August 25, 2003, at age 84. Unfortunately, I do not know whether Michael Jr. has any living descendants.

As I mentioned above, Grandfather was put on a kulak list in the 1950s due to his American wealth, and the stigma hit the whole family extremely hard. I was born in April 1952, and Grandpa hanged himself four months later. He couldn't cope with the fact that he had been put on the kulak list for something he had earned with his own two hands in America. After his death, Grandma was left alone in the house.

My father had paid the inheritance tax on the estate, but by then there was nothing left at the house. All the machinery had been taken to the local machine shop, where it was eaten by rust! Life was not easy for the family. The stigma remained forever, determining the further education and employment opportunities of even my generation for decades. The American connection was severed with Grandpa's death, so I actually learned all I know about this as an adult.

By Erzsébet Hollósi, Mrs. György Tihanyi,
granddaughter of István Hollósi
Paks, April 2024
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From the Mosoni-Duna branch to the Rock River: Erázsi tries his luck in America

I imagine that after the turn of the 20th century, adventurous young men in every pub in the Szigetköz villages told themselves that now was the time to try their luck in far-off America. In Dunaszeg, in the heart of the Szigetköz, they must have been whipping each other up for years. The two American crosses (one in the Memorial Park and one behind the church), donated by the emigrants to their home village, and the number of people who left for America at that time, are testimony to this. Decades later, Sámson's tavern still had a table set aside for grand old men who had traveled to the New World and come back, who spent their evenings smoking their long-stemmed pipes and telling anyone who would listen about their adventures.

The American Cross in Dunaszeg
Source: Photo by Éva Pozsgai Kozma

Two of my great-great-grandfathers were among them: András Nagy and Erázmus Vadász, who, although not related then, were eventually brought together by fate. What they all had in common was that they were all landless peasants – they had no wealth, no land, and no hope of making a better life for themselves. They did, however, have physical strength to sell to the local landlords, the big farmers, as their parents and forebears had done for who knows how many generations. But at this time a whole new and unknown avenue also opened up: they could sell their labor to the industries, factories, and mines of the New World. This offered the possibility of a real breakthrough. Newspaper advertisements appeared, traveling salesmen visited villages and taverns, and some who had previously left recruited others from their home villages.

It was this call that this stubborn, unbridled, loud-voiced man with sparkling blue eyes, Erázmus Vadász, heard in 1912. Erázsi was 38 years old at the time. He and his wife, the quiet, good-natured, hard-working Mili from the neighboring village, were raising three children. Their daughters Irén and Margit were 11 and 12 years old, but the youngest, their son Józsika, had been born just the year before. Erázsi's brother, Antal Vadász, and several of their fellow villagers, including András Nagy, had already set off for the voyage in 1910, and were encouraging Erázsi to join them. The handful of people from Dunaszeg stuck together. They all gave a man called József Pápai as their contact person – I think he must have been organizing people's emigration to America.

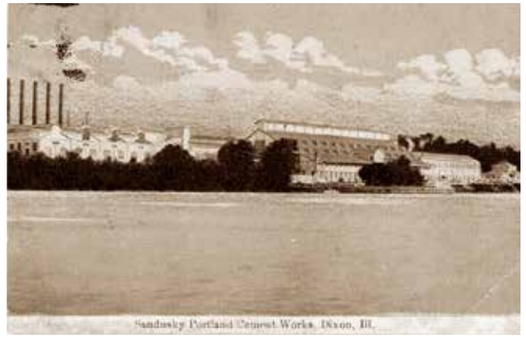
Erázsi's whole family would have emigrated with him, but for an unexpected turn of events. News of the Titanic tragedy in April 1912 had reached the villages, and Mili was stubborn: she would not board any unstable ocean liner with the children. No, never. She was adamant. But so was her husband, and he would do what he had planned, there was no stopping him. Their intransigence tore the family apart for a decade.

Erázmus Vadász in the U.S.
Source: Family photo album

Erázsi arrived at Ellis Island on November 5, 1912, on board the steamer *Pennsylvania* from Hamburg, with 2,700 other passengers. He gave his brother's Chicago address as a contact.

How they eventually reached Dixon (Lee, Illinois) is not recorded, but the 1920 census found them there. Dixon, located on the banks of the Rock River, is famous for being the childhood home of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who Erázsi might have seen around town. The Dunaszeg group continued to live together, András Nagy and Erázsi and many other Hungarians in the same boarding house, and they all worked at the Sandusky Portland Cement Works on the banks of the Rock River.

It was hard, sweaty, dusty work, almost nonstop drudgery, at the end of which they would collapse wearily onto the hard bunks of their rooms. What they did with their little free time, we do not know. I imagine that they smoked their pipes a lot and played cards. They certainly did not travel around America, but saved their dollars to bring back home and start a new life. In the end, it didn't work out exactly as they had planned.



The Dixon cement factory
Source: Family collection

Erázmus Vadász
1912

Meanwhile, the women who stayed at home held the fort. Many were left alone with four or five children. Mili struggled to support her two daughters and young son in trying circumstances. She worked practically day and night. She worked the land, did sharecropping on farms, cooked for the harvesters, raised the animals, and carried the surplus to the Győr market, eight miles away, on foot, with the goods on her head, to somehow stay afloat.

From an early age, her daughters worked as servants with wealthy farmers. There were years when the Moson-Danube flooded Dunaszeg, and once a great fire burned half the village down. The Great War swept across the country, taking the remaining men away. But all this was nothing compared to the uncertainty caused by news that not all the men had come home. There were some in far-off America who took other women and had other children. Some had simply disappeared. But Mili, like the other women, gritted her teeth and held on. Until she received a letter telling her that there had been an explosion ...

When Erázsi went to the U.S. to try his luck, he certainly didn't think that one day a huge misfortune would turn his life around. Or that the same misfortune would then lead him down a different path than the other villagers working with him there.

An explosion at the cement factory seriously injured Erázsi's leg, blinded his left eye, and left him hospitalized for a long time. As a result, he received a glass eye and more dollars in life insurance than he had ever seen in his life. Family lore had it that he could have bought the Gyulamajor farm on the outskirts of Dunaszeg, where he had previously worked as a day laborer. But he never bought it ...

He returned home in style. He invited everyone to a round at the Sámson tavern, had himself driven to Győr in a carriage every time he went to town to withdraw the interest from the bank, which he would live on for the next period, and he could not help chasing away the suitors who flocked to his daughters, attracted by Erázsi's 'fabulous' wealth. He thought highly of himself, for he had made his fortune after all – unlike András Nagy, who after a decade of American adventure remained as penniless as ever. Erázsi was displeased when his youngest daughter, Margit, found the man of her life in András Nagy's son, Mihály. But there was nothing he could do. Margit was just as determined as her father. Margit and Mihály, children of the two friends who had shared American adventures, later became my great-grandparents.

The "fortune" brought home by the men from America did not just attract potential suitors. According to contemporary articles, many people tried to extort it from them. At one point, Erázsi was approached by a Jewish traveling tradesman in Sámson's tavern who told him in confidence that if Erázsi withdrew his dollars from the bank and exchanged it for kroner with him, he would get a very handsome sum. Erazsi's eyes twinkled, as it really did seem a huge sum, and he was inclined to cash it in. Mili, on the other hand, was not at all happy about the plan. She insisted that "dollars are dollars."

"Long hair, short brain," said Erázsi, brushing aside her arguments. In the 1920s, he exchanged all his dollars for Hungarian kroner just months before the kroner was devalued. It was said in the family that by the time poor Erázsi realized this, he could barely buy a few boxes of matches. He lost his eyesight in vain, in the end he sank back to almost the same place he started from. But the thorn remained in all of them.

On his deathbed, he apologized to Mili for everything, and she told him she forgave him so that he could go in peace. But did she really forgive him? We will never know...

The generations that followed all tried to change their lives. Margit and Mihály moved to Moson from Dunaszeg and built a new life there. Mili lived the longest of the parents, becoming a tiny, thin old woman wearing black clothes and headscarves, who was full of love and had an infectious laugh. In 1954, the year of the great Szigetköz flood, she moved to Moson to live with her daughter's family, but survived the flood that razed her beloved village and house to the ground only by a few months.

Mili (Emilia Horváth, wife of Erázmus Vadász) and her daughter Margit
Source: Family photo album

In the history of our family, everyone who tried their luck in the New World in the past century eventually returned home. Their stories remain as stories of the elders of a bygone era. In 1956, the idea of emigration came up again, this time with my grandfather, Margit and Mihály's son. He was a newlywed when he and his wife tried to decide whether to stay or leave after the local events of 1956 (the Mosonmagyaróvár massacre). They lived 15 minutes from the open border, through which young people and a good part of their circle of friends were emigrating in large numbers. In the end, he said "For our family, America was never the promised land. Both of my grandfathers gave a decade of their lives to it, and they ended up poorer than before," so they stayed.

By Andrea Pingitzer, great-great-granddaughter of Erázmus Vadász
Budapest, April 2024
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The diary of an emigrant: The American life of Lajos Dobó of Igazfalva

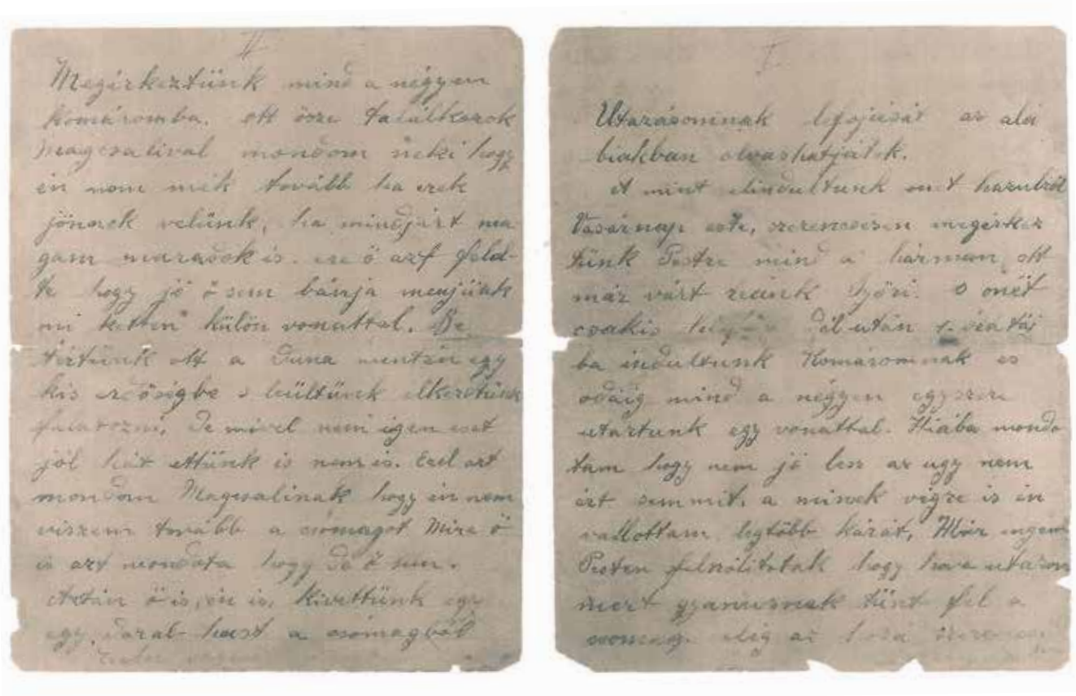
My great-grandfather, Lajos Dobó, was born in 1881, as recorded in the Reformed (Calvinist) register of Gyoma. His large family moved to Igazfalva (now Dumbrava, Romania) at the end of the century, together with many other families from Gyoma, Vésztő and Köröstarcsa. All we know about their lives there is that farming was difficult and logging was impossible because of a lack of tools. Great-Grandpa's military diary contains several records from the time (1902 to 1905) when he served as a soldier in several towns in the Empire and in Budva, in present-day Montenegro. This diary, written in beautiful handwriting, also contains much later American records as well. It is based on these records, the family oral tradition, and my research that I outline the American period of his life here.

A photo of Lajos Dobó
Source: Family photo album

An escape from poverty: The difficult journey to Hamburg

Lajos Dobó got married after his military service, and my great-grandmother, Mária Szőke, also lived in Igazfalva at the time but was originally from Köröstarcsa. Because of the great poverty and the difficulty of working the land in Igazfalva, my father and his new wife moved back to Gyoma soon after their wedding, together with several of his siblings. Their life in Gyoma was a life of poverty, so following many acquaintances (e.g. Lajos Wéger) from Gyoma and the neighboring villages, Lajos Dobó decided to emigrate to America in 1913. At that time, he was already the father of two children (one of them my grandfather), and together with his brother he was working a farm that he had bought on credit near Gyoma. His loan payment problems also encouraged him to try his luck. On November 6, 1913, he boarded a ship and left Hamburg, where (according to the letter he sent home) he had to make his way in secret, because at that time he could not get a passport, that is how the authorities tried to prevent

Lajos Dobó
1913



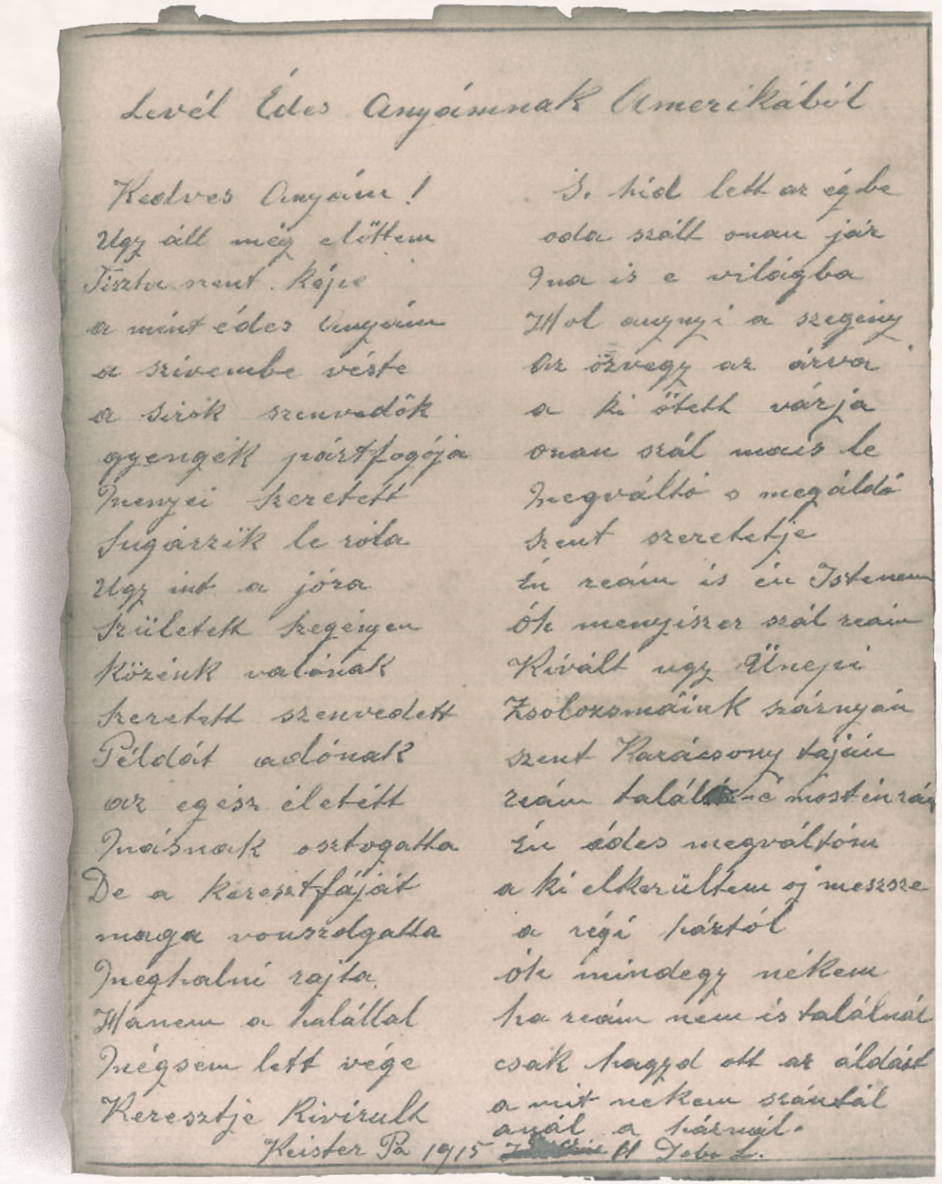
The letter Lajos Dobó sent from America | *Source: Family collection*

emigration, and trains were strictly controlled by Hungarian gendarmes. In his only surviving letter he writes, and I quote: "I was asked in Budapest where I was going because the luggage looked suspicious. ... I traveled alone all the way to Hamburg, which I did with great strength, one might say superhuman strength... during the whole time I was keeping myself alive by my chicory, rosehip and dogwood berries". According to the letter that was sent home and preserved, he and two others left Gyoma for Budapest by train in early November 1913, carrying large parcels with them. The letter mentions the accompanying persons by name, namely, men by the last names Győri and Magcsali/Makcsali. The name *Magcsali* still exists today in Gyoma and nearby villages, but I have not been able to find any other information about this particular case, except that a man named Magcsali from Gyoma left for America in 1914, followed by his wife and children. I found an address list from Cleveland with the name János (John) Makcsali from 1915... maybe that's him. The story is described by my great-grandfather such that the three of them traveled up to Budapest, and four spent the night at the same place, all facing the same long journey. This situation bothered my great-grandfather: he wrote, *"I told Magcsali that if these people travel with us, I'll turn around."* When they changed trains, in the woods just outside Komárom, he and Magcsali agreed to hide part of the luggage and continue the journey without the other passengers. Magcsali agreed to this. At Komárom station, while Great-Grandpa was buying his ticket, Magcsali disappeared and Great-Grandpa could not find him again on the train. So he traveled alone to Hamburg, and Magcsali's disappearance is described ambiguously in the letter. Based on a careful study of the letter, I assume the following, and this is in line with what the family believes happened.

Since at that time it was suspected that war was imminent, many young people fled by train to the port of Hamburg. The Hungarian authorities did not allow them to leave the country at that time but there were helpers to smooth the way for the emigrants. Magcsali was likely one of the local helpers, and it was no coincidence that he disappeared from the train, either because he had been told to do so or because he deliberately abandoned the emigrants. However, the text of the letter contains substantial information about the journey only as far as the Hungarian border. After the Hungarian border, the story of the trip to Hamburg is told in one sentence. This shows that he did not want to give details of the organized journey, nor did he want to name the helpers. Distrust of government and administration was present in Hungarian society at this time, too. Indeed, he gave minimal information in the letter about the arrival and the journey itself, and the days that passed. It is striking that the train journey to Budapest is detailed, while the days that followed are depicted as uneventful. Clearly, the journey to Hamburg and the whole procession was shrouded in great mystery.

A miner and steelworker:
Working years in Pennsylvania

According to the immigration record made at Ellis Island, dated November 26, 1913, he was headed to the coke mining village of Smock, Pennsylvania, and named the Lajos Wéger mentioned above as his contact. According to my findings, he first traveled by train to Pittsburgh to stay for a few days with István Tímár, a friend of his from his village in Hungary who ran a boarding house. From his diary, which he continued to keep in the U.S., I see that in 1915 he was already working in Keisterville, another mining town about 30 miles from Smock. More is known about the following years. According to his diary, the annually published city register, and his World War I military pre-registration, by 1916 he was living in Pittsburgh, specifically, in the Hungarian neighborhood of Hazelwood, on Roma Way, and working as a stoker at the local Jones and Laughlin metal works on the Monongahela River. He must have been a member of the First Hungarian Reformed Church, which is still in operation today, and was a few hundred yards from his home, since he came from a Calvinist family (as did most of the Hungarians there). The Reformed Church played an important role in preserving the language and traditions of the Hungarians in the U.S., since the Calvinists around were all Hungarians. Hungarian Reformed churches – and occasionally communities attached to them – still exist throughout America. Great-Grandpa can be found in the 1920 census in Pittsburgh-Hazelwood. The census sheet reveals many facts about him, as does the 1918 military pre-registration (with no photo attached). There are numerous data, photographs, accounts, studies, and short films available to help us find out about and understand the conditions of the immigrants at that time. Research on this subject began in the 1960s in Hungary and has resulted in descriptive monographs and studies ever since. Among the most interesting, for me, are Elemér Bakó's American Hungarian audio recordings, and the Hungarian films *Hunky Blues* and *Amerikai álom* (American Dream), which, fortunately for us (at 1 hour, 3 minutes, 8 seconds) starts showing the coke cauldron from the Pittsburgh steel mill and the Hazelwood district. The title of this section of the film is "A fektri" (*The factory*, in Hunglish). Great-Grandpa wrote poems during his years in America, such as the one he jotted down in his diary, addressed to his mother.

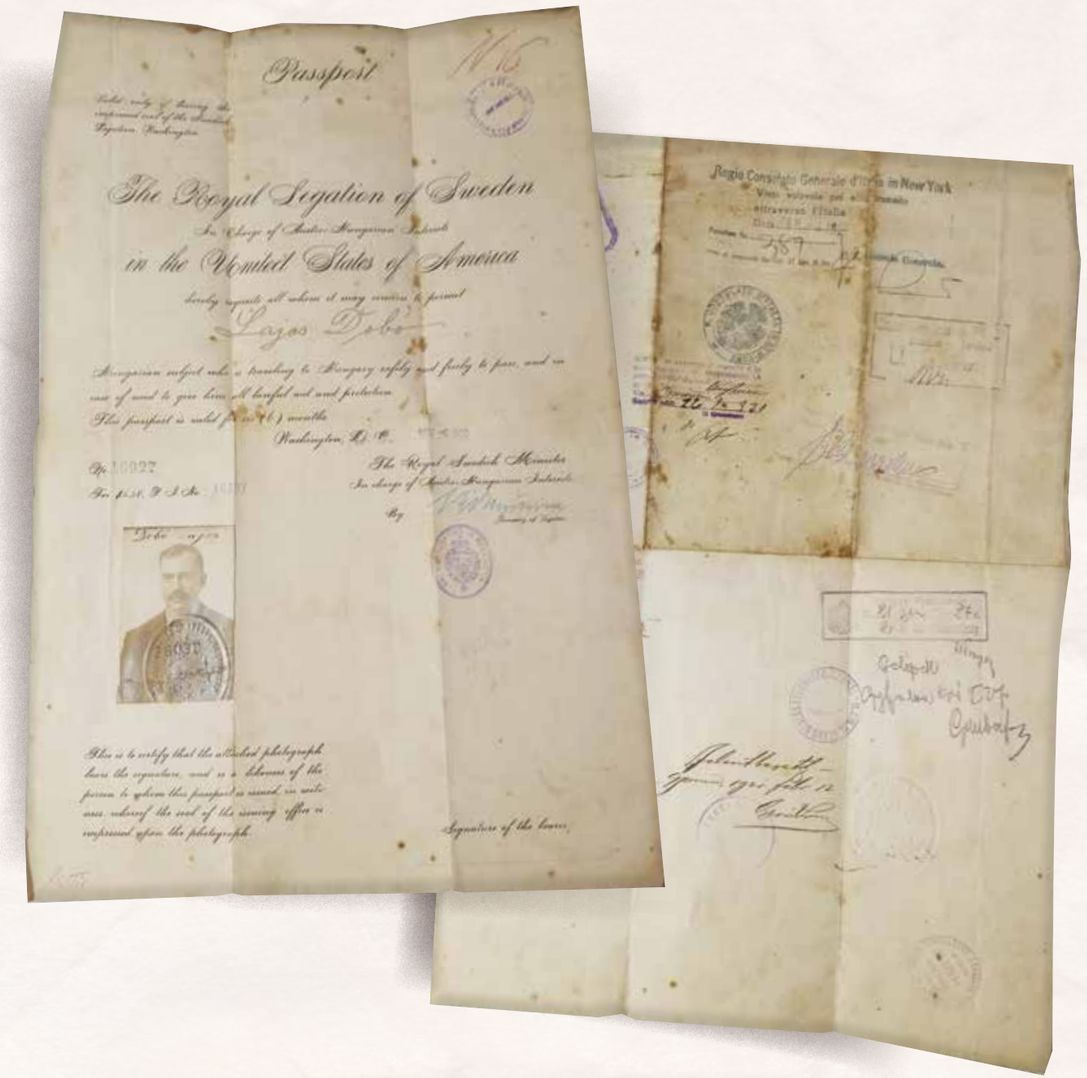

Levél Édes Anyámnak Amerikából

Kedves Anyám!
Egy áll még előttem
Utolsó ment. Kéje
a mint édes Anyám
a Szivembe véste
a sirok szenvedők
egyengeti pályáját
Nemzei szeretett
sugárzik le rola
Egy int a jóra
Születtek Kegyen
Körünk valóinak
szeretett szenvedett
Példát adónak
ők egész életét
Imáinak ostogatta
De a károsult fáját
maga vonszolgatta
Megtalál rajta.
Hanem a halállal
Megsem lett vége
Keresztje Kivirult

Jó hírül lett az égbe
oda szállt onnan jár
Ima is e világba
Mert anyagi a szegény
ők özvegy az árva
a ki ötét várja
onnan oráL mars le
Megváltó s megáldá
Szent szeretetje
Ez reám is ez Istenem
Ők menyisser oráL reám
Kivált egy Unoczi
Zsoltosonaink szárnyán
szent Karácsony tájáu
reám találta a Mostani ráj
Ez édes megváltóm
a ki elkerültem oj messze
a régi pásztól
ők mindegy nékem
ha reám nem is találnál
csak Magyol ott az áldását
a mit nekem szántál
anyál a Szárnyil.

Keister Pa 1915

Lajos Dobó's letter, in verse, to his mother from America
Source: Family collection



Lajos Dobó's passport from the Royal Swedish Embassy from 1920
Source: Family collection

An adventurous return home after the war: A Swedish passport and an Italian visa

For me, the most fascinating of all is the study of his passport, which I treasure. Together with the diary, I keep this document as a relic, a document of contemporary history, not just an eloquent piece of our family history.

The passport for his return journey was issued to him by the Royal Swedish Embassy on November 6, 1920, for $5.48. At that time, in the U.S. the Kingdom of Sweden was representing Hungary – a war-torn country that had dwindled in size as the successor to the defunct Monarchy after the defeat in the war. This was a photographic document, valid only with a signature. In the text it is printed that, I quote: "on your journey home you will be safe and free; you will be entitled to lawful assistance and protection", i.e. this is a letter of protection from the Royal Swedish Embassy!

On the back of this (figuratively also) large-format document is the real surprise. Stamped on this document is his itinerary for his return home: a permit to enter New York City harbor, and a transit visa for Italy, which he received in New York.

He disembarked in Genoa and entered Austria by train in Trieste. Austria's border also changed after the war (and again later, after World War II) and he had to re-enter Italy on the railway line (he received an Italian stamp in Tarvisio, which still marked the border as a wartime front line) to continue his journey back to Austria on his way to newly redrawn Hungary.

He arrived in his home village, Gyanafalva, on January 21, 1921, and here the story breaks for a moment. Gyanafalva was still part of Hungary at the time, and only became part of Austria in late 1921. The document received the final stamp in Gyoma on February 12, 1921. According to family lore, he had sent a lot of money home and also brought a lot of money with him. Some say that the money was devalued, others say it was not, because he purchased houses, paid off the loan on the farm, and bought horses and tools. His parents lived in another country then, as this was already after Trianon. Although they had not left their village, Igazfalva had already become part of Romania.

Losses and memories: Lajos Dobó's legacy

In the years after his return home, he had two more daughters born and lived a happy life with his wife and children. Lajos Dobó of Igazfalva, as he called himself, died of stomach cancer in March 1939.

Hungary's 20th century history had a heavy impact on our family: my great-grandfather's son, my grandfather, was killed in the siege of Budapest in World War II in the autumn of 1944, aged 36. During the war, Gyoma was plundered first by the Germans and then by Soviet troops. After the 'liberation,' the family lost the land, some of the houses, and the farm during nationalization and collectivization. Great-Grandpa's property was partly lost, but his memory is proudly and faithfully preserved by us, his descendants.

By Dr. Katalin Dobó, great-granddaughter of Lajos Dobó
Gyomaendrőd, April 2024
dobokatalin29@gmail.com

Pride and promise: Upholding the Hungarian immigrant legacy

György Rákóczi (George Rakoce) Sr. was born on October 19, 1897, to László Rákóczi and Mária Petka in the quaint village of Túrterebes/Turulung. Nestled at the junction of three countries, its administration has changed hands many times throughout history. Most recently, the territory was given to Romania. George came from a Greek Catholic family and was most likely named in homage to the church's patron saint, St. George.

From Túrterebes to Massena: The sister's bridge for George

In 1881, George's father László, age 23, married his first wife, Anna Csonka, age 18, in the Greek Catholic Church. Three children were born from this marriage: Mária (1881), Erzsébet (1889) and Borbála (1892). Mária had 11 children, of whom nine survived to adulthood. The eldest three of these children made their way to Canada between 1928 and 1930. Mária and husband, János Révai, are buried in the village cemetery in Túrterebes. They died in 1946 and 1956, respectively.
The second of László and Anna's children was Erzsébet. Unfortunately, no known photos of Erzsébet have survived. Erzsébet and her husband, János Szelmenczi, had three children. Together, they lived their whole lives in Túrterebes and passed away in 1950 and 1955, respectively.
The last of László and Anna's kids was Borbála, who came over to the United States to marry János Medve. She arrived on May 29, 1912, aboard the *S.S. Carpathia*. She made her way to Massena, New York, and was married just 18 days later. Borbála was pivotal to her brother in his travels to the States and supported him throughout his early years here.

Borbala Rakoczi and Janos Medve in Massena, 1912
Source: Family photo album, provided by Enikő Geiger

György Rákóczi
1913

Crossing the ocean: George's journey from farming roots to the aluminum industry

George's mother, Mária Petka, had been married previously and she (most likely) had two children with a man by the surname Kóczán: László and Mihály. László and Mária were married on February 19, 1895, and were witnessed by József Geng and Mihály Kóczán. This marriage produced three children: György (1897), József (1901) and János (1904). Very little is known about József and János. As the miles grew between the brothers, their relationships withered. József supposedly married Maria Nezezon and passed away in 1967. János married Margit Révai, but nothing more is known of his affairs. No known children of these brothers have been found.

Family lore states that George grew up working in the fields out behind his house. I can only imagine the grueling days working the fields before child labor laws came into effect. My great-uncle told me that his father used to eat szalonna out in the fields. He grew up on *Újsor utca* in Túrterebes/Turulung, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He got out just a year before World War I broke out. The pull factor definitely seemed to be the prospect of the American dream and the security of having a family established in the United States.

On May 17, 1913, György Rákóczi boarded the *S.S. Saxonia* in the port of Fiume (now Rijeka, Croatia) to set sail for the United States. On the way from Trieste to Fiume, a fire broke out in the cargo hold. Luckily, the damage was minimal and the ship arrived on time. George was a steerage passenger with $25 to his name and a ticket to his final destination in hand. He was listed as 5'8" tall with blue eyes and blond hair. At just 15 years old, he was most likely a giant standing next to other kids his age.

György Rákóczi
Source: Family photo album

Upon disembarking at Ellis Island, George quickly made his way to the town of Massena, New York, to visit his sister at 15 Cedar St. His sister and brother-in-law had started a boarding house shortly after getting married. In 1915, George set about finding consistent work in the local aluminum refinery and manufacturing center called Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). George was first employed as a day laborer working in the potrooms and lived at his sister's boarding house with 13 other men. In 1917, having established himself in the United States, György is listed in a Hungarian wedding in Massena. He stayed in Massena throughout the war, having been registered there under the name George Roikoci in 1918. In 1920, he was still living in Massena with his sister and was under the employ of ALCOA in the potrooms.

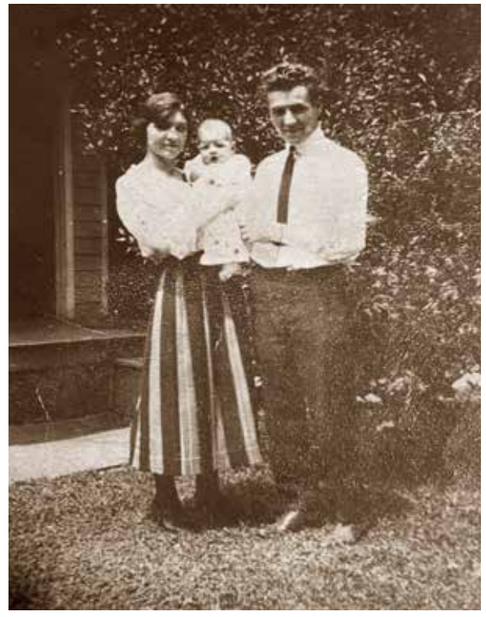
A new chapter: Growing family and citizenship

Between 1920 and 1922, he packed his bags and headed to Cleveland, Ohio, where he would meet his wife. On August 5, 1922, George Rakoce and Elizabeth Deak were married at the St. Emeric Hungarian Church in Cleveland. Attending the wedding were the parents of the bride as well as George's sister, Barbara (Borbála), and many of the friends that the couple had made in Cleveland.

George Rakoce in Massena in 1917,
in the 3rd row behind the bride
Source: Family photo album

Wedding of George Rakoce
and Elizabeth Deak
Source: Family photo album

The couple moved frequently while in Cleveland but spent the majority of their time at 3907 Whitman Avenue, where George was a baker and Elizabeth worked in the factories as a seamstress. In 1923, they had their first child, a boy they called George Laszlo Rakoce Jr.



Elizabeth Rakoce, George Rakoce Jr, and
George Rakoce in Cleveland c. 1923
Source: Family photo album


Policy No. 13561
Age 20.
Branch No. 62
Monthly dues $ 1.00

DEATH BENEFIT
$1000.00

The Rakoczi Hungarian Sick Benefit Society of Bridgeport, Conn.
Bridgeport, Conn.-i Rákóczi Magyar Betegsegélyző Egylet.
Organized April 13, 1888. — Alakult 1888 április hó 13-án.

TAGSÁGI IGAZOLVÁNY - MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE

Mi, alulirottak, a bridgeporti (Conn.) RÁKÓCZI MAGYAR BETEGSEGÉLYZŐ EGY-
By authority and in the name of THE RAKOCZI HUNGARIAN SICK BENEFIT
LET nevében bizonyitjuk, hogy
SOCIETY we hereby certify that RÁKÓCZI GYÖRGYNÉ
a Rákóczi Magyar Betegsegélyző Egylet kebelébe Bridgeport, Connecticutban felvétetett
was accepted as a member of The Rakoczi Hungarian Sick Benefit Society, Bridgeport,
Conn., on the 17 day of September 1923.

Ezennel igazoljuk, hogy a fentnevezett tag törvényes örökösének az alulirottakat ne-
We hereby certify that the duly designated beneficiary of the above member is as
vezte meg:
follows: Férje, Rákóczi György
Cleveland, Ohio.
lakosokat, kiknek joguk van az alapszabályokban megjelölt halálesetti illetékre,
who are entitled to the benefits in accordance with the by-laws.

Kelt
Dated at Bridgeport, Conn., this 17 day of September 1923

Központi titkár. — Secretary. Központi elnök. — President.

Ezen okmány az egylet alapszabályainak van alávetve és azok szerint van érvényben.
This Membership Certificate is subject to all the provisions of the by-laws.

Elizabeth's membership certificate from the Rakoczi Aid Association
Source: Family collection

In the fall of 1927, George and Elizabeth returned to Massena. They moved in with George's sister and lived there for the better part of a year and a half, until they bought a home in February 1929. This property remained in the family until 2023. In January 1931, a second son was born. His name was Elmer Frank Rakoce. Later that same year, the couple declared their intention to become naturalized U.S. citizens.

In the midst of the Great Depression, Massena was a sight for sore eyes. The consistent employment from the aluminum plant gave relief to the Massenans and helped make the Depression easier to manage. Following Elmer, a third child arrived in 1933. On March 15, 1935, George and Elizabeth became American citizens. They had been in America for 22 and 29 years, respectively.

Faith, community, and work: George and Elizabeth's later years

As their children grew older, the church became a more integral part of their life. In addition to church life, Elizabeth became a high ranking member of the local Rakoczi Aid Association.

George made his living working as a craneman in the ALCOA plant before retiring in 1959 after 30+ years of continuous service. Correspondence between the old country and the new home in America continued for some 60 years after emigration. The family repository is full of old photos of long lost Hungarian relatives and letters asking for aid during the socialist days of post-WWII Romania. George passed away in February 1979, at age 81, and was laid to rest in the local cemetery. He was joined by his wife, then 86, 11 years later.

The tale of the Hungarian immigrant is embedded in the fabric of my cultural upbringing and affects the way in which I navigate my everyday life. It is with honor and grace that I wish to shine a light on the humble stock from which I am a descendant. It is my solemn promise that the lives of these forebearers will live on with each successive generation after me. I wish to acknowledge the legacy and sacrifice of my great-grandparents with this short work.

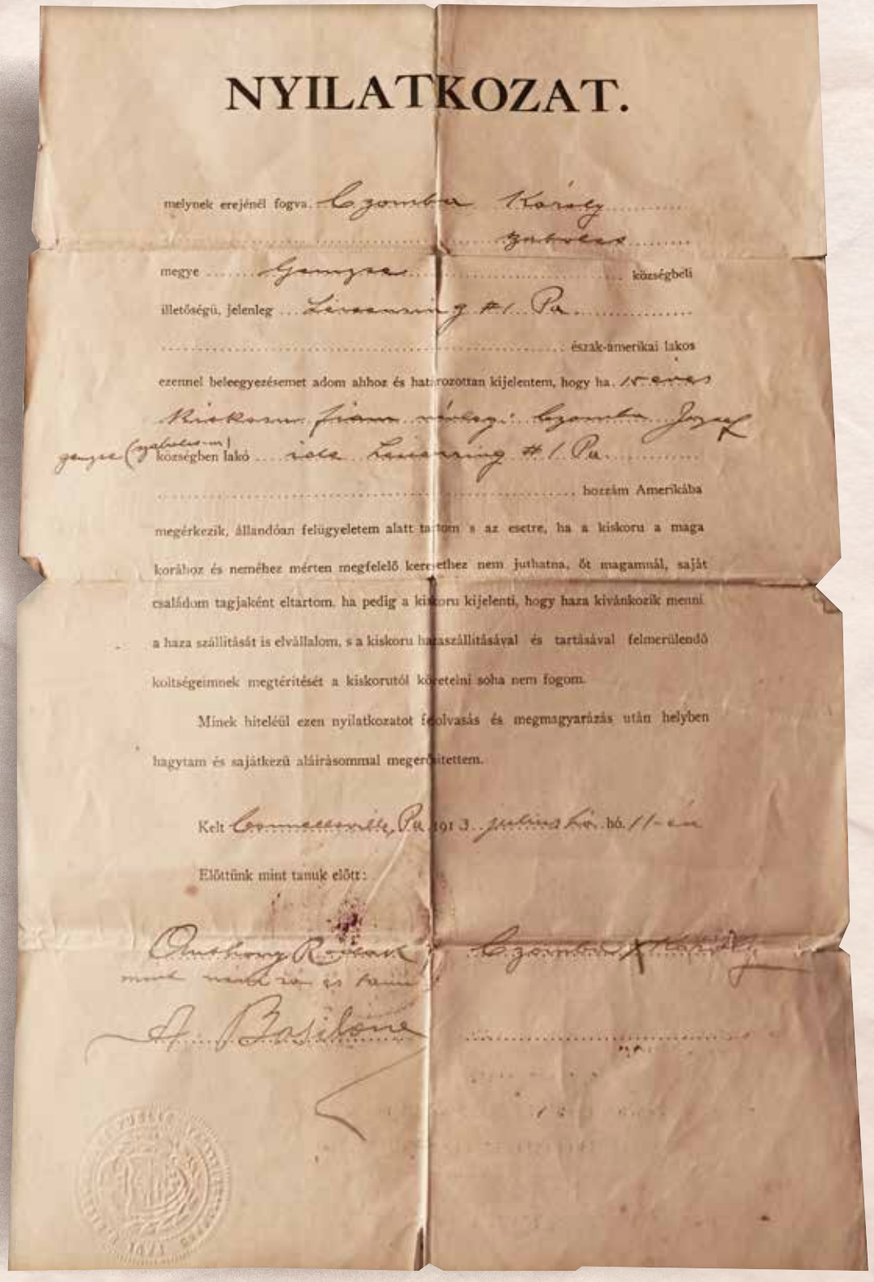
By Jack Santariello, great-grandson of György Rákóczi
Marcellus, New York, April 2024
jack.santariello@gmail.com

On the trail of a mystery invitation and passport: The story of my American-born grandmother

My grandmother, Katalin Czomba, was born in the U.S., in Leisenring, Pennsylvania, on March 16, 1921. That's all we knew, for many years. When my grandma and grandpa died in the same year, I had to go and deal with the house. Because my father, József Balázs, their only child, had passed away 25 years previously, it was sadly my job. While sorting through things, I found many interesting papers, including an invitation letter from America. I didn't know what to do with it for a long time, so I just kept it as a souvenir.

Years passed, until one day I found a group of Hungarian genealogists who helped me make some important discoveries. With this new information, the picture suddenly sharpened and details fell into place. It turned out that my grandmother's father, József Czomba, had received that invitation from his father, Károly Czomba. The document was written on July 11, 1913, in Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

My grandmother, Katalin Czomba
Source: Family photo album



NYILATKOZAT.

Károly

Gamgyar

Connellsville Pa

Connellsville Pa

Károly

Connellsville Pa

Károly Czomba's invitation letter to his son József to America, dated 1913
Source: Family collection

Károly Czomba
1913

With the help of genealogists, I have found both ships the two of them sailed on. Károly, who was my great-grandfather, arrived in America shortly before the invitation was sent. To be precise, he left on the *S.S. Franconia* from Fiume on February 11, 1913, arriving in New York at Ellis Island on March 2, 1913. Four months later, he invited his son, József Czomba. Soon after the letter arrived in March 1914, my great-grandfather was already on his way to follow his father on board the *S.S. Kronprinzessin Cecile*.

What I was able to find out later, from my great-grandfather's digitized death record, was that he had married Erzsébet Varga, then 19, in 1917 in Washington, Pennsylvania, the nearest bigger town to Connellsville and Leisenring.

Also among the documents I found in my grandparents' house was a passport issued by the Royal Hungarian Consulate, which the family used to return to Hungary. They had three children by then: my grandmother, Katalin Czomba, born in 1921, her brother, Károly, born two years before, and her sister, Erzsébet, one year younger.

The interesting thing about the passport is that it contains descriptions instead of photographs. It tells me that my great-grandfather – who worked as a miner in the U.S. – was a man of medium build with brown eyes, black hair, and a mustache. My great-grandmother was short and round-faced, with brown eyes and brown hair. The passport also tells us the exact date of their return home.The Royal Hungarian Consulate in Pittsburgh issued the passport to the family on March 4, 1924. The stamps show that they were allowed to leave on March 10 after the $2 visa fee was paid to the Austrian Consulate General.

Passport of the Czomba family returning to Hungary, 1924
Source: Family collection

They arrived in the port of Le Havre on March 19 and traveled to Hungary via Switzerland and Austria. The last stamp is that of the Central Investigation Office of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, confirming that they crossed the Hungarian border on March 22, 1924.

Whenever we asked grandma why they had come back, her answer was always “because of the land.” After returning home, the family settled in Gemzse, Szabolcs County, the same place where my great-grandfather had set off. Later, my grandmother moved to Ilk. She hardly ever spoke about their life in America, and we had very little information, which is why I was especially glad that with the help of the documents found in her house, I was able to piece together a few fragments of the puzzle.

Grandma and Grandpa in the yard of their home in Ilk in the early 1980s
Source: Family photo album

By Edit Balázs, granddaughter of Katalin Czomba
Budapest, August 2024
balazseditanita@gmail.com

The magnificent Merks: A story of fate, and finding love and fortune in America

My Aunt Mary and Uncle George Merk were two of my favorite people growing up. Most of my memories of them were from the house they moved to up in Northeastern Pennsylvania. They had a house custom built in the rural countryside surrounded by dairy farms. For almost 20 years, my family and I would visit them often (from Long Island, NY). Mary and George never had any biological children of their own, but throughout their lives they were surrounded by many, many children that they loved as if they were their own and always adorned them with affection, love and gifts.

Both George and Mary were from towns in Hungary that were only about 20 minutes apart from each other, if driven by car. However, they met in the United States in 1917. For over 20 years, they helped their lifelong friends, my hardworking grandparents, a great deal by caring for their two children, my mother, Rose Marie, and her older brother, Albert.

While I knew Aunt Mary my entire life until her passing, I was a little too young to fully appreciate their story. I am writing this so many years later to honor them both for all of the love and generosity they gave to so many. I learned so much from them. I will tell their story the best way I can.

Mary and George Merk
Source: Family photo album

Rose Marie and Albert
Source: Family photo album

György Merk
1913

From Nagymajtény to Manhattan: Capturing the life of George Merk

George (György) Merk was born in Nagymajtény, Szatmár County, Hungary (now Moftinu Mare, Romania) in 1897. He was the younger of the two sons of Johannes Merk and Juliana Kenczel. Uncle George was usually pretty quiet and a wonderful listener. He would soak in words and knowledge like a sponge draws in water. He never really discussed his young life before he met Aunt Mary or his humble beginnings. He had a very gentle side to him but was not afraid to speak his mind. When he was only four years old, his mother died in Hungary. His father soon remarried and had another son, Anton, in 1903. His Father and stepmother lived out their lives in Hungary. I do not believe they ever came to the U.S. I came across this c. 1913 portrait of George, young Anton, stepmother and older brother, John, that I believe was taken in Hungary just before George and John left for America in 1913. According to the U.S. census, the two older Merk brothers came to America in 1913.

The 1918 U.S. Draft has George living in the upper East Side of Manhattan, working as a toolmaker for Simon Quinn, a pocket books manufacturer, and John as living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is unknown when and why John went to Pennsylvania, but I believe it may have been related to the steel industry or possibly farming. In NYC, George developed a passion for taking photos, and because he did, we have so many amazing captures from his life which inspired me to write down my recollections and share their life story.

George and John Merk with their step-mother and Anton
Source: Family photo album

George Merk with his camera
Source: Family photo album

Love and friendship to last: George, Mary and their eternal bond with my family

In 1917, George met the love of his life, Mary Rusolan. Aunt Mary was born August 9, 1902, in Szatmárnémeti, Hungary (now Satu Mare, Romania). She was the second child of Endru Rusolan and Maria "Mary" Kreszan.

Only mother and daughter came to America in August 1914 according to Ellis Island records. It isn't clear when Endru Sr. joined them in the U.S., but he came before 1923. He may have been undocumented at the time.

Soon after their arrival, Maria Rusolan found work as a cook at a Hungarian restaurant on the upper East side of Manhattan. It was there that she met Roza, my great-grandmother. The two became friendly as they were both recent arrivals from Hungary with only their daughters. My grandmother, Erzsébet or "Elsie" and Mary became fast friends.

Neither Mary nor Elsie went to school. They loved dressing the same and would spend some of their money taking portraits in matching outfits and did that into adulthood. They both found work at a novelty company (at 13 and 16 years old) that made plastic toys and clothing buttons. My mother told me the Labor Department would raid their workplace, and the girls would have to hide deep under the workstations until the coast was clear. In 1918, they became friendly with a young American girl, Mary Zimmerman. "Mary Z." remained an important person throughout Mary and George's life, particularly in their older years. She was born in New Jersey in 1904.

Aunt Mary at 15 in 1917
Source: Family photo album

Portraits of Aunt Mary and grandma
Source: Family photo album

In May 1914, her parents took her overseas to visit family in Hungary and World War I broke out. They were unable to return until 1918, which is when she met Mary and Elsie. She was a little younger, and they took her under their wings and would stay friends for life.
In August 1921, Mary's brother, Endru and his wife, Irma joined their family in NYC. While they, too, would have no children of their own, they had many good friends and served as honorary Aunt and Uncle to many. By all accounts, they were very much in love and very happy. Sadly, Irma passed away at age 37.

Mary and George married on January 27, 1923. You will see by the photos that it was definitely a special day and the beginning of what would be a happy 66 years together.
In 1928, my mother, Rose Marie Zila, was born. Besides the mental notes I have been making most of my life, I inherited the amazing memory gene from her. She would often tell me about her loving Godparents and their adventures together.

Aunt Mary and Uncle George's wedding picture
Source: Family photo album

Cherishing life in America:
A house full of friends and family

In 1936, George's father died. Someone sent George a photo from the funeral procession. Neither George nor Mary ever went back to their homeland in (what was previously) Hungary like so many immigrants would go back or send money (or both). Their towns were now in a different country. Nothing was ever the same in their hometowns, and they loved the life they made in America.

By 1930, George and Mary had bought a large brick and Tudor style house in Flushing, Queens, NYC. It had three floors and they moved Mary's parents right in to the first floor. The main floor of the home was the 2nd floor, and that was where you entered in front and all the entertaining took place. Aunt Mary and Uncle George loved to entertain and in the 1940s through the 1960s, they would host dinners several times a week, and always invited everyone over for the big holidays. Anyone who didn't have other plans were guaranteed a seat at their giant dining room table where the champagne flowed (she always had ginger ale in champagne glasses for the kids) and the food and desserts were plentiful.

Sometime in the early to mid-1960s, Mary and George's lifelong friends, Mary Zimmerman and her husband, Paul Non, bought hundreds of acres of farmland, moving their entire family three hours up north from New Jersey to Pleasant Mount, Pennsylvania. When Mary and George would drive up and visit the Nons, they fell in love with the country's tranquility, fresh air and its landscape. When the Nons offered a wonderful flat lot to them, they gladly accepted. They found a contractor ready to build their dream home and, in the Fall of 1971, the Merks of Flushing Queens became the Merks of Pleasant Mount, PA. In 1973, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a big party at the firehouse.

They lived happily together for another 16 years until George's passing in 1989.

Mary and George
Source: Family photo album

The Merks in 1971
Source: Family photo album

While there are many photos of Mary with cars, she never learned to drive, so after a few years by herself (for the first time in her life) she decided to move to Long Island to live with her Goddaughter (my mother, Rose Marie) in 1992. I was fortunate enough to spend the next four years seeing and spending time with Aunt Mary. She enjoyed reminiscing and telling stories about the past, and I loved to listen. Mary Rusolan Merk died peacefully in her sleep in January 1996 after only being sick a day or two. She was 93.

In my mind, her passing was much like the final scene of the movie Titanic. George was there waiting for her, dressed up to the nines, extending his hand to lead her into heaven so that they could finally fulfill their destiny of being together forever.

At George's 90th birthday with my mom
Source: Family photo album

Aunt Mary and one of the cars
Source: Family photo album

Revisiting memories: A heartwarming reunion and tribute to Mary and George

In June 2024, I drove up to Pleasant Mount with my husband. We found a place to stay just down the street from their house which still looks very much the same. We were able to visit with the Non family, who lived down the road (their grandparents were Mary Z & Paul Non). I used to play with them during the years we would visit. I found them on Facebook and, after several years, finally went up for our friend reunion. We caught up after 40 years of not seeing each other, and it was like no time had gone by at all.

I gave each of their two girls a special piece of jewelry from Aunt Mary's collection. I sat with their now 85-year-old Mom in their family home, and she went through many, many photos that I brought up with me, and we reminisced for hours. When I lived with my mother or when I would visit, I would help Aunt Mary when I could: make her something to eat or just sit and chat. My mother tired quickly having someone else in the house that she had to tend to in her late 60s. Aunt Mary would say to me, "You are my angel. I will watch over you after I am gone, and you will know it is me." During my Pennsylvania visit, we were sitting outside by a campfire, talking about Aunt Mary and her raven black wigs. Suddenly, out of nowhere, an all black butterfly swept down and around the three of us, then flew away. I had never seen one before. I know it was you, Aunt Mary.

Today, as a 55-year-old adult, I now truly appreciate and respect all that they were, the challenges they faced and their "happily ever after." Even without physically having children, the imprint that they left on so many hearts and lives can still be felt so many years later: their photos, their stories and their beautiful life together. They both came here escaping the threat and horrors of World War I and were able to change their lives forever. They took their experience, their history and their love and used it all to create and live out beautiful lives that I am sure in their wildest dreams they could have never imagined as they sailed west over the Atlantic to New York, as teenagers in the early 1910s. But, because they did take that trip and so many chances for a better life, fate found them both in New York City at the same time and the same place. Over 100 years later, the story of their love remains.
Minden szeretetünk a tiétek, Mariska néni és György bácsi. Soha nem felejtünk benneteket.

By Elyse Craft, honorary granddaughter of Mary & George Merk
Smithtown, NY, July 2024
elysecraft711@gmail.com

Mary and George with my grandparents
Source: Family photo album

From Girincs to Hollywood, from Mikszáth to Breaking Bad

This story is a bit of an odd one out: it is not the story of an ancestor or relative of mine, but of a research project I undertook (about which I am writing here with the consent of the people involved).

Breaking Bad and Hungarian roots

It all started with my son nagging me for a long time to watch the *Breaking Bad* series: "it's really good, Mom, believe me" – he would try to convince me, for years. Finally, in the spring of 2019, I watched it – well, actually, I binge watched it, all five seasons in a few weeks, and I loved it. After I ran out of episodes, there was a big hole in my life, which I – as a woman of letters – tried to fill by reading up on the series and looking up the director and the actors on Wikipedia. It was then that I discovered that Dean Norris, the actor who plays the third most important male character in the series, Police Officer Hank Schrader, is of Hungarian descent (his mother was the daughter of a Hungarian immigrant) and was born and raised in South Bend, Indiana.

South Bend is a mythical place for a Hungarian linguist like myself who is interested in Hungarian-American language use and, more generally, in language contact: it was here that the first major linguistic work on Hungarian-Americans' language use was done (by Miklós Kontra, published in 1990), laying the foundations for Hungarian contact linguistics. Once, back in the 1990s when I was studying for my PhD in Pittsburgh, I even visited South Bend – but that's another story.

Well, I did a little research on Dean Norris' mother, found her name, and then even her parents' names, and the birth year of his Hungarian grandfather, József L. From there, it was easy to find the grandfather's birth record in the FamilySearch database. I quickly sent the downloaded birth record page with a little explanation (about what the document was, where it came from, who I am, etc.) to the email address I had also tracked down, namely, that of the performing arts center that Dean Norris and his wife founded in California. Two days later I received a reply, from him: he thanked me for the birth record, and said he should come to Hungary sometime, and that he had often thought about it.

The beginning of a special research project

The following year came COVID, and months of isolation at home, which I spent researching my family history online – in addition to teaching online. Then, much later, in May 2023, to my surprise, I found another email in my inbox one morning: Dean Norris wrote to thank me again for the record I had sent him and to say that he was coming to Hungary with his cousin and their three sons, planning to visit his grandfather's home village of Tiszadob. He also said that they would like to meet me if I was available. What can I say, I did my best to fit the meeting into my June calendar!

József L.
1914

We met late in the afternoon on the terrace of a downtown Budapest hotel, and then had dinner at a restaurant on the Danube, where I tried to behave as if I was talking to friends of American friends, whom I was seeing for the first time and who were visiting Hungary for the first time, and so I did my best to entertain them with cultural and historical tidbits and fun facts about Hungary. They showed me their great-grandparents' treasured marriage certificate and a photo of their grandfather as a young man in America. They also told me that they hadn't found much in the cemetery in Tiszadob, where they had been looking for the graves of their ancestors. At the end of an evening of pleasant conversation, I asked them if they would like me to do some research into their grandfather's family and to look for any living relatives. They replied with an enthusiastic yes.

Dean Norris in Budapest
Printed with his permission

Tracing the Girincs roots

And so it was that I spent about two weeks of my summer vacation researching the family history of Dean Norris's grandfather's side of the family. It is true that the grandfather and his four brothers were born in Tiszadob, and the great-grandparents had married there, but none of the latter were actually born there: the great-grandmother was born in Tiszapalkonya, and the great-grandfather in Girincs, Zemplén County, where, as it turned out, his ancestors had lived for almost two centuries. Since our patriarchal world emphasizes the paternal lineage passing down the family name, and since the unfortunately very common surname of the great-grandmother did not allow me to trace her ancestors back into a distant past, I had to limit myself to as deep as possible research of their ancestors in Girincs.

Girincs is a small village (with less than 900 inhabitants) in the present-day Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county of Hungary, not far from the point where this county meets the westernmost tip of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, in the southernmost tip of the Zemplén county of historical Hungary, on the left bank of the Sajó, close to where the Sajó flows into the Tisza. According to the sources, the village became Calvinist at the time of the Reformation and only in the early 18th century did it become Catholic again, due to the fact that its new landlords, the Dőry family, were fervent Catholics.

The Dőrys were a family of counts (whose descendants now live in many parts of the world), who in 1730 built a large, two-story manor with outbuildings and a large garden at the western end of the village, and made the village the seat of their estates, thus turning it into the administrative center of the southern tip of Zemplén county. (The manor was nationalized in 1945 and has been used as a children's home since 1960. Today the village is a typical small settlement in northern Hungary, its inhabitants belonging to the lower social strata but living in an exemplary well-kept place.)

Many local people worked at the Dőry family household and on its lands. The family and their manor became nationally known because of the unhappy marriage of one of the family's daughters, Countess Katalin Dőry (1774-1851), to Count János Buttler (1773-1845), a story which was elaborated in a highly embellished way in Kálmán Mikszáth's novel *The Strange Marriage*, set in Girincs (in the novel it's called Olaszröszke), and published in 1900. Mikszáth significantly changed the story of the couple, making it a sensation and giving it an anti-Catholic emphasis.

The actual story was also quite unusual, as Ferenc Dőry, a descendant of the family and later director of the National Archives, notes in his 1931 book (also summarised in a 2017 article by a professor of law at the University of Miskolc), comparing the real story reflected in the court documents he researched with Mikszáth's novel. According to the comparison, Katalin Dőry married Count János Buttler, after a brief courtship, in Girincs in 1792. The couple's marriage broke down after their two children were stillborn – each began to accuse the other of infidelity. Eventually Buttler sued his wife for breaking her marriage vows, but this lawsuit was only the first step in a series of legal twists and turns that would last the rest of the couple's lives. After the death of Katalin Dőry's father and then her only brother in 1822, the castle was leased to members of the Almássy family (a descendant of whom, László Almásy, was the person fictionalized in Michael Ondaatje's 1992 novel *The English Patient* and the 1996 film adaptation of the same title).

Dean Norris's grandfather's ancestors had thus lived in Girincs since, according to the registers, his earliest known ancestors, Mihály L. and Erzsébet F., married there in 1752. Mihály can be found on the list of serfs who received serf lands distributed after Maria Theresa's decree – his family was therefore among the wealthier peasants of the village society, at least having a plot of land.

The Dőry manor.
Source: Samu Borovszky, Magyarország vármegyéi és városai [Hungary's counties and towns], Arcanum Reference Library.

Without land in Tiszadob

The 18th-19th century family that carried on the family name was mostly descended from the eldest son of the couple, Mihály. The only information we have about any family member's occupation, however, comes not from the registry but another. Source (the Girincs registers are very scanty and do not provide any additional information, unfortunately): the 2017 article that reviewed the court documents of the Butler–Dőry trial refers to the testimony of János L., who is named in the documents as the Dőrys' cook and who was called as a witness to testify as to whether Buttler may have been forced against his will to marry Katalin Dőry (as he had stated in court). János L. told the court that in the weeks before the marriage, Buttler was often seen walking in the gardens of the castle with the Countess and exchanging kisses with her, in a rather involuntary manner – testimony supported by the Dőry's maids and the coachman. This János L. could only have been the second-born son of the first L. couple in Girincs, as there was no one else of that name living in the village at the time of Buttler's marriage in 1792, according to the Girincs registers.

The life of the descendants of the serf L. family was rather typical: their names, the main stages of their lives, and the lives of their children were documented only in the registers, similarly to millions of other Hungarian peasants. The plot of land was fragmented and inherited in the family: the miraculously preserved Girincs census sheets of the first modern census of 1870 in Hungary (their destruction is still to this day required by law after the statistical information is extracted from them) show three adjacent plots owned by the sons of the family and a contemporary map shows them to be long and thin plots.
By the time Dean Norris's great-grandfather was born, 12 years after the census, as the fourth son of his nuclear family, all of whom would reach adulthood, there was no longer any land to inherit: after his wedding he settled in his wife's village of Tiszadob, where his first five children were born (two of them, a boy and a girl, survived their own childhood).

Tiszadob details.
Source: The collection of Zemplén Museum, Szerencs

The journey to the New World

With these two children, the parents emigrated to America in the year the Great War broke out, where they had two more children a decade later.

The first son, born in the old country, married a Hungarian girl from Illinois, with whom they had three children, all born in South Bend, Indiana. Their middle child, Rosemary, married the youngest child of the Anglo-American Norris family, Jack, a popular musician: he was a singer, showman, and engine of local dance bands for decades, a born entertainer by all accounts. Their only son, Dean, performed in drama groups during his high school and college years, eventually becoming an actor, whose performance in the series *Breaking Bad* brought him international fame and a reconnection with his roots in Hungary.

By Anna Fenyvesi, a Breaking Bad *fan*
Szeged, March 2024
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Grandpa L. in America in the 1930s
Source: Norris family photo album

South Michigan Street, South Bend, Ind.

South Bend in the 1910s
Source: The Indiana Album, Indiana Landmarks Postcard Collection

Marriages, births, tragedies: The life of Anna Katona through the United States

When I was a child, I loved to ask my grandparents about family members, their stories, who lived where, where they went, and what they did. One of the most exciting and tragic stories was that of my grandfather's mother, my great-grandmother, Anna Katona. She was born on August 16, 1889, in Dombrád, Szabolcs County, the sixth and youngest child of Roman Catholic parents Mihály Katona, a farm laborer and servant, and Erzsébet Szemán. The family always went to stay wherever the head of the family found work, so they moved from Őrhegy in Zemplén County to Döge in Szabolcs County, from there back to Őrhegy and then to Dombrád. The first tragedy of Anna's life occurred when she was six months old, on February 24, 1890, when her 48-year-old father died. The family, already living in great poverty, was left without a wage earner.

One of Anna's brothers, György, married Erzsébet Kertész on November 30, 1909, in Tiszakanyár. Then the young couple emigrated to the United States together. Many of György's friends and childhood acquaintances emigrated from both Szabolcs and Zemplén counties in search of a better life. If they didn't stay there for the rest of their lives, then they would stay for at least a few years to support the family back home. György's sister, Anna Katona, arrived at Ellis Island in New York on May 12, 1914. She had to travel from Tiszakanyár to Bremen, where she boarded the ocean liner *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* for the United States. She went to join her brother in Youngstown, Ohio, 400 miles from Ellis Island. What he did for a living is not known. What is certain, however, is that Anna had to care for her pregnant sister-in-law and assist her in childbirth. On September 11, 1915, a son named László was born to the family, who sadly died the next day.

Anna Katona in 1924
Source: Family photo album

Anna Katona
1914

Anna had in the meantime married a certain Vojtovich, for whom she bore a daughter, Mária. Her husband died in a factory accident. Life went on and Anna married again: on November 24, 1919, she married John Hort. From this marriage, too, a daughter was born: Ilona. The second husband was born around 1884, the son of Anthony Hort and Rosie Gies, and he, too, sadly died in tragic circumstances on May 18, 1920. The mother of two became a widow twice over. Left with little choice, she married László Deák in Youngstown on June 14, 1921, after the mourning period had passed. Her third husband was born around 1887, a son of János Deák and Eszter Magyari. He immigrated to the United States in 1909 and worked as a laborer. Another child was born, and the family had another daughter, Anna. Her father also died in an accident, making her mother a widow three times over.

At this point, Anna Katona and her three daughters packed their bags and made the long journey back to Hungary. She had money from the life insurance policies she had received after the deaths of her husbands. The family arrived in Tiszakanyár in January 1924. Her children needed a father, so she married for the fourth time. She married István Kovács, 10 years younger than herself, son of József Kovács and Erzsébet Zsíros, born on September 25, 1899. With the dowry, they were able to buy a house and a threshing machine. From their marriage, they had two sons, Géza and István. After the birth of their sons, they were again blessed, but problems arose at the birth of their daughter, and both mother and daughter died around 1928. After Anna's death, her eldest daughter Mária Vojtovich was sent to Beszterce, Ilona Hort and Anna Deák to Dombrád, and her sons Géza and István remained and grew up in Tiszakanyár. Each of them carried the memory of their mother in their hearts and always remembered the life of this tragic woman who had traveled the world.

By Péter Kovács, great-grandson of Anna Katona
Balatonlelle, April 2024
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New World diary: Pestu and his struggles in America

My maternal grandfather, István Béres, was born into a family of landless peasants on March 22, 1888, in Alacska, Borsod County, as the third child of the family, as far as I know. According to family legend, he was the Count's gardener in Korompa, where he met my grandmother, Julianna Salkovics, who served there as a maid. They married on May 6, 1911, in Szendrő and settled there. My grandmother was pregnant with their first child when my grandfather left on his great journey.

My grandmother, her sister, and her first child
Source: Family photo album

István Béres
1914

Grandfather, who was known in the family as Pestu, believed that "if you have not seen America, you are not a man," and he kept saying this until he set off on the great voyage on April 1, 1914. He took the train from Kassa/Košice to Antwerp via Graz. On April 18, at 8 o'clock in the morning, they left on the ship *Vaderland* and sailed for 10 days to New York (the ship was operated by the Red Star Line between Antwerp and New York).

My mother had in her possession a notebook, which she called a diary, in which Grandfather's American adventure is described. As children, we didn't really know what to do with it; we couldn't read it and had difficulty figuring out the handwriting. My mother put it away, saying it was not a toy. And how right she was not to let us ruin it! So now we have an interesting and precious treasure to try to unravel the threads of the past.

In the meantime, we have discovered that Grandfather probably had kept a diary of some kind, which he copied neatly, and that this is what we have today. What makes me think that? For each day of the voyage it is recorded how far the ship sailed (Day 1, 377 English miles; Day 2, 381 miles; Day 3, 350 miles).

I don't remember, my Mother didn't tell me, who her father was joining in the U.S., but I know from her notebook that his sister – whom

István Béres in 1917
Source: Family photo album

he refers to as Néném, which could be Auntie or Big Sister – must have sent the invitation, and that the invitation was to Buffalo, NY. But streets were not paved with gold there, either, and immigrants were not treated gently. As he wrote: “here employers can squeeze the worker like a good vine grower squeezes the spelt.”

The outbreak of World War I also had an effect in America, and immigrants were very hard hit mentally. Letters were slow to arrive and everyone had relatives at home to worry about. Grandfather was out of work several times: sometimes he was collecting rags and scrap metal to avoid starvation, and sometimes he was collecting and selling coal, and the detectives took him in for that. On the third day, he was released in the morning, but not alone, and when he got home he said "I have brought so many good things, if I had so many dollars I would go to my real homeland, beautiful Hungary."

"I really can't imagine what will happen to me. There is no work, I can’t work, I have done everything to get a job. There is none. My summer earnings have run out, my clothes would have torn off long ago if I hadn't mended them. Spring is here, maybe something will change, to the right or to the left. But it can't get worse, it can only get better, but when, that's hard to tell. At last, after 26 weeks, I got a job in a stove and boiler factory", he wrote on May 16, 1915.

Here he had very hard work to do, but on April 1, 1916 – 15 days before the second anniversary of his arrival in America –he made an accounting: "the bank book says 234 dollars and 97 cents, I sent home 135 dollars ... which was worth 1,000 kroner; for the subsistence of my wife and child." In May 1916, he received news of the bank's bankruptcy and wanted to withdraw his money, but the bank gave him three months' notice. So he didn't get his money

until August, but luckily he got it all. He sent it straight home because he was desperate: he hadn't received a letter from home that year.

I don't know the specific date or time of his return. The last chapter of the booklet is entitled "The war is over."

“At half past one on Thursday, November 7, 1918, people seemed to be overwhelmed at this hour by a sea of joy, people leaping in joy.” A great celebration began. Everyone rejoiced, "for there is no family who has not had a relative or sibling in this world war, who is not celebrating now. At three o'clock we left the factory, because they could no longer hold the people. When I got home, the wife of the owner of the boarding house was belting the following piece with all her might":

"1. When we go to Buffalo to the ágent’s offis
I'll buy the boat ticket, go to the contri
The price is $36, not that expensive
An American Hungarian goes
home after five years.

2. Captain, please
start the boat from Nevijork.
Take a direct route to Bremen.
to see my wife, my only child,
for whom I have sacrificed my whole life.

3. The steamer has already docked in Bremen
with the national flag pinned to the top
and the ágent’s band is playing mournfully
An American Hungarian went
home after five years.

4. Good day, my wife, and good evening
I have arrived from abroad as an unexpected guest
I came home with joy, not sadness
I haven't seen you for five years,
fall on my shoulder"

(Borbála Natkó born in Vencsele, Szabolcs County)

My grandparents after my grandfather's return to Hungary
Source: Family photo album

After my grandfather's return home, in 1921, his second child, Károly was born (unfortunately he died at the age of 5 or 6, of diphtheria), followed by Sándor in 1922, and on July 7, 1931, Margit, who is my mother and who kept the diary for us, and finally, in 1936, Terézia. Sadly, they have all passed now, but they passed on to us the faith, the love, the appreciation of the work of our two hands.

I didn't know my grandfather; we didn't get to meet, unfortunately. After his return home, he worked as a mailman in Szendrő. He did not manage to accumulate any wealth, but he and his wife brought up honest, hard-working children, who are loving and modest. His health started failing, and it was, I think, 1940 when he died on Holy Saturday. My grandmother and I had such a real good, intimate, grandmother-granddaughter relationship. I spent some of my summers with her, and sometimes she would tell me about old times.

By Zsuzsanna Pocsai,
granddaughter of István Béres
Ózd, May 2024
pozsuka@gmail.com

With my beloved Grandma
Source: Family photo album

The story of a 20th century American peregrination and its tragic consequences

Hungarian intellectual history uses the term *peregrination* to describe a few-years-long but temporary trip abroad to study at a university. There has been a long tradition of peregrination in Europe, including in Hungary, from the Middle Ages onward. Hungarian students went to universities in Vienna, Krakow, Italy and, from the time of the Reformation, increasingly to Germany to study.

One of the main recent peregrination destinations has been the United States, which has been offering scholarships to talented young people from abroad, including Hungarians, both in earlier decades and more recently, since the change of regime in 1989. The present story also begins with a youthful peregrination to the U.S.: the years spent in Texas by József Rózsavölgyi, a young physician from Szentes, Hungary.

A worldly doctor's journey to Texas: The start of a nine-year American adventure

József Rózsavölgyi was born in 1889 in the village of Bihar (a few miles north of Nagyvárad – today Oradea, Romania) in a large landowning family. He was the eldest son of László Rózsavölgyi and Terézia Komlóssy. József went to school in Nagyvárad and Miskolc, then studied medicine in Budapest, Berlin, and Geneva, graduating from the Faculty of Medicine of the Budapest University of Sciences in 1913. From 1915, he served in military hospitals, including in Szentes, where he met Vilma Zsoldos, the daughter of the late Ferenc Zsoldos, the town's famous entrepreneur and mechanical engineer, whom he married (a few months after she came of age) in 1917. (Vilma's grandfather, also Ferenc Zsoldos, was the founder of industry in the town and a highly respected citizen of Szentes, whose name today is borne by a technical high school in town.) The marriage of József Rózsavölgyi and Vilma Zsoldos resulted in the birth of their son, Ferenc, in August 1918 and daughter, Éva, in February 1921. (József's parents remained in Bihar after the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and lived there for the rest of their lives, while his brothers, László and Imre, as well as sister, Irén, all lived in Hungary.)

A year and a half after the birth of his youngest child, on November 6, 1922, Dr. József Rózsavölgyi arrived in New York on the ship *Saxonia* from Hamburg: thus began the family's great American adventure, which lasted for nine years. His wife and children followed a year later. They sailed from Cherbourg aboard the *Aquitania*, arriving on November 22, 1923, bound for Meyersburg, Texas. This was following the passage of a law that drastically curbed immigration to the U.S. (cf. the Emergency Quota Act of 1921) but before the 1924 Immigration Act that solidified those limitations; even so, as a trained professional, Dr. Rózsavölgyi was probably given special treatment.
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József Rózsavölgyi
1922

Happy years in Cuero:
Medical career and citizenship

At the time of the census in January 1930, the Rózsavölgyis were living on West Broadway in Cuero, a small town of about 4,500 people located a few miles north of Meyersburg, TX, and about 100 miles north of Corpus Christi. Their children were aged 11 and 9 and all the family members were noted as speaking English, but they were not yet U.S. citizens. The head of the family appears on yet another ship's manifest, in the list of U.S. citizens aboard the *Olympic*, bound for New York, on August 19, 1930. The document also indicates that his citizenship was certified by the Cuero court; his destination was also Cuero. The Rózsavölgyis' citizenship must therefore have been granted sometime in the first half of 1930. Rózsavölgyi qualified as an ear, nose and throat specialist during his years in the USA. There is no precise record of this, but he probably worked at the Burns Hospital in Cuero, which was the largest medical center in the area. Founded in 1873, the hospital by then was functioning in a large four-story building (which must have been a remarkably big facility in this small town). Rózsavölgyi's name does not appear in the U.S. newspaper database, newspapers.com.

Rózsavölgyi's son, Ferenc, described his years in the U.S. as the happiest period of his childhood in a short article he published in May 1943 in the Budapest daily *Pesti Hírlap*, when he was already a trainee lawyer. In the article, he talked about how, as a schoolboy, he attended a trial in Texas, and mused about the law that was applied, and the verdict – this early experience may have played a formative role in him becoming a lawyer when he grew up.

Burns Hospital in Cuero, Texas
Forrás: Boston Public Library[38]

Return to Szentes: Public engagement and medical practice

It is not known why, but within two years of obtaining U.S. citizenship, the family moved back to Szentes. The gazette-like *Központi értesítő* announced in November 1932 that on February 23 of the same year, "Dr. József Rózsavölgyi was elected a member of the board of directors with the right to register companies" of the Zsoldos Steam Mill, Industrial and Commercial Joint Stock Company of Szentes. (He held this position until 1937.) In 1933, he was appointed chief physician of ENT at the city hospital in Szentes, where he worked until his retirement, alongside the legendary chief surgeon and director Dr. István Bugyi (whose name the hospital has borne since 1988). He took a prominent public role in the town: in February 1934, for example, he became a member of the Tourism Council in Szentes, the first of its kind established in the country.

In November of the same year, the Budapest daily *Az Est* wrote about him and his colleagues when the director of the British insurance company Lloyd's, Leslie Paul Cooper, who was visiting in Hungary, had an accident with his car on the outskirts of Szentes, and after he had begun to recover from life-threatening injuries in the city hospital, he was surprised to find that his doctors – Dr. István Bugyi, his wife Dr. Stefánia Weber, and Dr. József Rózsavölgyi – all conversed in excellent English with him at his bedside.

On June 15, 1939, the town newspaper, *Szentesi Napló*, reported that the construction of Dr. Rózsavölgyi's house at 18 Ady Endre Street, designed by architect Endre Antal, the chief engineer of Szentes, had begun "with a strong start." The modernity of the house (and perhaps the newsworthiness of its unconventional construction) was due to the reinforced concrete roof structure and inclusion of the first air-raid shelter cellar in the town. There is no trace in the news or other surviving public documents from the 1930s of the imprint that nearly a decade in the U.S. left on Rózsavölgyi's life, thinking or political views. This only becomes apparent in the years of World War II, including in connection with what clearly became the great tragedy of his life. Now, many decades after the war, the story can be pieced together, like a mosaic, from documents published in internet databases in the U.S. and in Hungary.

America comes to Szentes: The crash of the B-17 and the rescue of the pilots

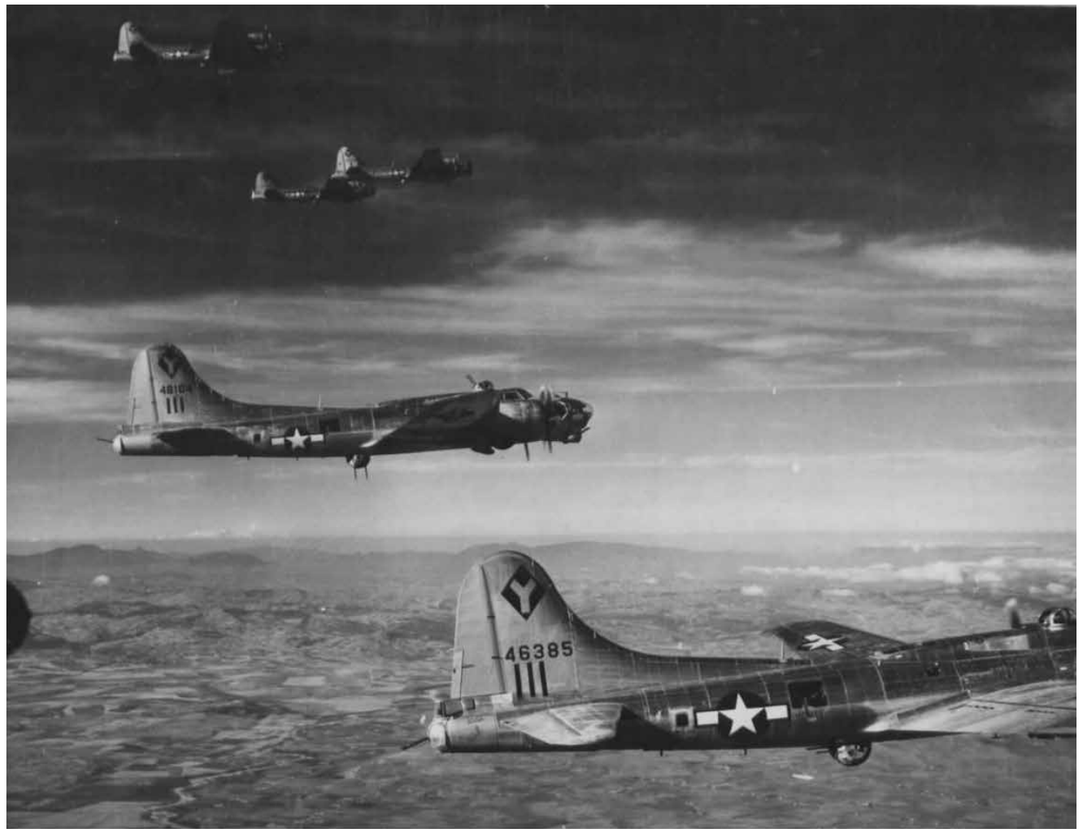
After leaving the U.S., the Rózsavölgyi family was destined not to return to America again, although it turned out that the U.S. would visit them in the last months of WWII.

The war eventually brought American soldiers to the continent and American fliers specifically to the skies over Hungary starting in the spring of 1944, when, along with the British, the Americans bombed strategic targets across the country, including railway lines and bridges throughout southern Hungary, where József Rózsavölgyi, his wife, and their daughter lived at the time. It was the crash of an American B-17 bomber ten miles north of Szentes in December 1944 which once again brought the family into contact with Americans. The downed pilots of the bomber, John B. Clark and Howard G. Theobald, were assisted by Rózsavölgyi in their efforts to return to their base in Bari, Italy.

This event would probably only still be remembered by the descendants of the families involved but for the records made by the U.S. government documenting the treatment of downed U.S. fliers in Europe during the war. Many thousands of U.S. bombers flew in the skies above Europe during the war, an exceptionally dangerous task leading to the deaths of nearly one-third of the crews, and large numbers of servicemen surviving crash landings in Europe or who parachuted from their doomed planes. It is the documentation of the lives of the downed fliers and their eventual escape back home which is contained in the files available in the U.S. archives. There one can find documents relating to the extensive network for returning the fliers to Allied territories, which were operated by civilians across Europe, who in many cases risked their lives to help these servicemen. Beginning in 1944, these records concerning Hungary also appear in the archives and have recently been declassified.

After the war, efforts were made to locate these people who assisted the airmen and to offer them some kind of compensation or a sign of gratitude, and through these documents the names and activities of those involved can be found. The documents relating to the Rózsavölgyi family can be found in the files labeled "Hungarian Helpers", which document some 23 cases of individuals who gave assistance to airmen who had ended up on Hungarian territory. In fact, the records show that there was an office set up in the "American Military Mission" in Budapest in March 1946, which was dedicated to locating and compensating these "helpers". This office was initially headed by a Captain Andrew P.

American B-17 planes flying over Hungary in 1944
Source: UK Forces War Records[39]



Szekely of the U.S. Army Signal Corps and used newspaper articles and radio broadcasts to encourage people to contact them with their stories of assisting airmen. Andrew P. Szekely – or András Péter Székely – a native of Budapest and son of one of the founders of the Budapest Telegraph Works (Telefongyár), Izidor (Imre) Székely, was a student at Penn State College in the early 1940s who enlisted in February 1942 and in 1946 worked, as an American serviceman, on the files of the "Hungarian Helpers". People who responded to the calls in newspapers and radio broadcasts were sent a questionnaire to fill out where they could document their activities. These questionnaires and letters exchanged between Szekely's office and the helpers form the bulk of the documents in the archives and provide an intriguing snapshot of people's lives at this critical and unstable point in Hungarian history from near the end of the war until 1947.

The allied bombing of Hungary did not begin until 1944 and was decreased as Soviet forces moved the front lines across southern Hungary up to Budapest, and it is at this historical moment when the American airmen's B-17 crashed on December 18, 1944, near Szentes. From the quite detailed "Missing air crew report", also found in the U.S. archives, we know that this particular bomber, flown by Clark and Theobald, and carrying a total crew of eight airmen, had been on a bombing mission to the Oderthal synthetic oil plant in Blechhammer, Greater German Reich (today Blachownia Śląska, Poland). Their airplane had been hit by flak over the target, injuring one airman and causing serious damage to the airplane. Even though their plane had been damaged, the pilots managed to begin the return trip to their base in Bari, Italy, a route which took them over Hungary. Over Győr the plane developed serious engine trouble and the pilots made the decision to head across the Soviet front lines in order to be in the safety of Allied-controlled territory. But, over Kecskemét, Soviet fighter planes mistakenly attacked the B-17, their own ally, leading to further damage and the decision to abandon the airplane. First, the eight crewmen parachuted from the plane near Kecskemét, and by the time the two pilots managed to abandon the airplane, it was near Szentes, crashing into a cornfield north of the town. The pilot Clark and co-pilot Theobald parachuted safely onto Hungarian territory, quite some distance from the rest of the crew. They were ultimately reunited back in Bari save for the one injured crewman, Harry Austin, who did not survive the parachute jump and was buried in the churchyard in Jakabszállás, near Kecskemét.

From this point, the questionnaire filled out by Rózsavölgyi, the letters exchanged with the Budapest office, and an official "Escape Report" pick up the story. The pilot and copilot, having safely parachuted to earth, were brought to the Soviet military headquarters (Szentes had been in Soviet occupied territory since October), and Rózsavölgyi was called in to act as an interpreter. The Americans were then allowed to go to the doctor's house. There they could benefit from Rózsavölgyi's medical expertise – they turned out to be uninjured – and also his connections with the U.S., speaking the English and knowing the people there. Rózsavölgyi put up the airmen for three days and developed a friendship with them (as he later stated). Then a flight to Bucharest was arranged, and they returned to Bari. The Rózsavölgyis' meeting with the pilots was brief, but they mention Rózsavölgyi by name in their official reports and note the kindness and consideration with which they were treated. In the "Escape Statement", the official summary of the flight, the crash, and the return of the airmen, it is noted that "Dr. Rozsavolgyi Jozsef, Kozkorhazi foorvos of Szentes was very helpful, fed sources and entertained them. Personnel of local Hungarian hospital also very helpful." In contacting the American Mission in Budapest about this event Rózsavölgyi provided the details of the events and noted that he wanted no material compensation, but "would appreciate a letter of thanks." The file ends with the note "Personally thanked. No further action taken."

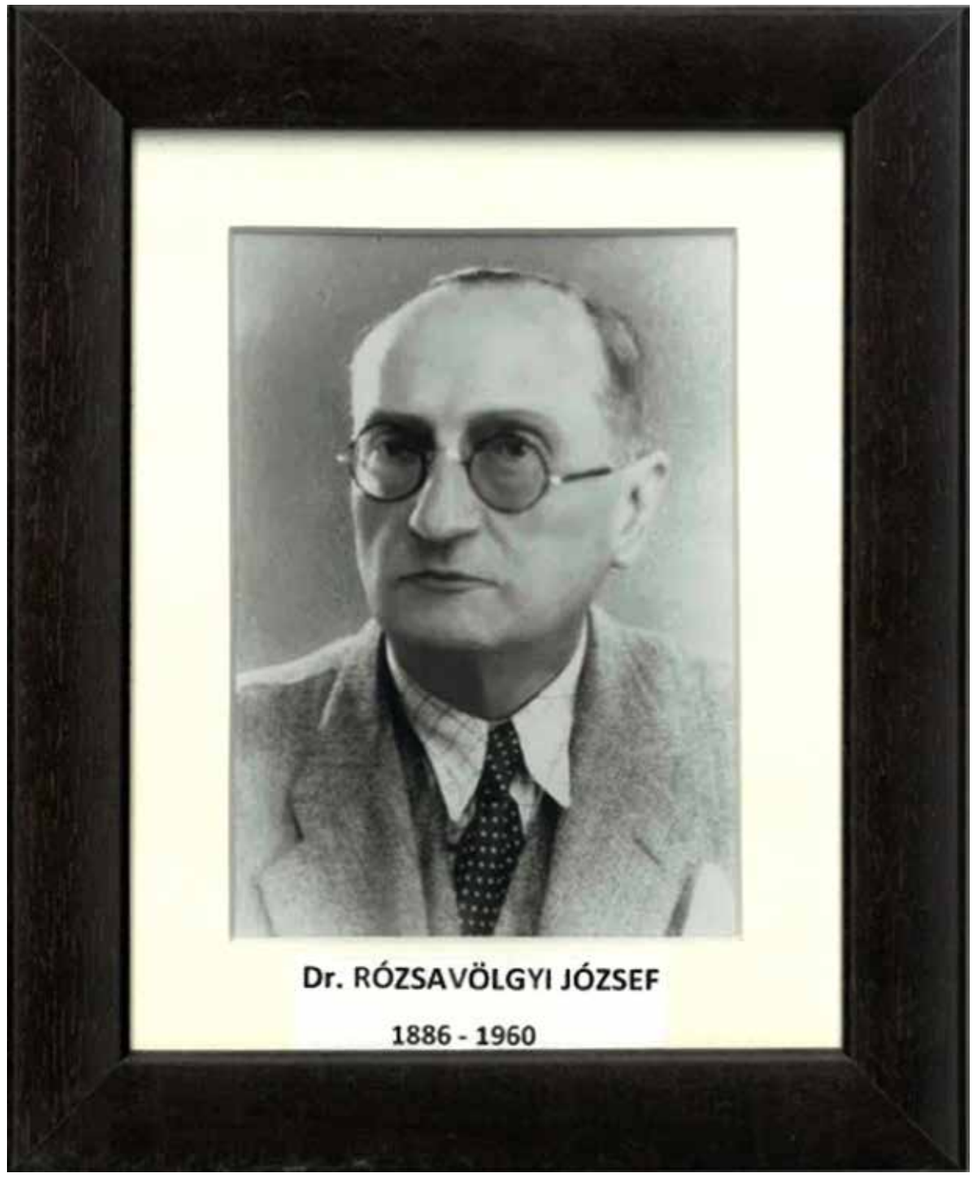
The impact of America:
Changed life paths and tragedies

Yet, there does appear to be more to the story. The questionnaire and letters exchanged provide more details concerning the Rózsavölgyi family and their experiences during the late stages of the war and the early post-war period in Hungary. These glimpses into these experiences and the details concerning their life in America shed light on why it is that they would be kind to these strangers that briefly dropped into their lives.

A month and a half before the American pilots landed near Szentes and were hosted for three days by Dr. Rózsavölgyi right before Christmas, Rózsavölgyi's son, Dr. Ferenc Rózsavölgyi, a trainee lawyer, died on November 2, 1944, at the age of 26 in the military hospital at 25 Gömbös Gyula út (now Alkotás utca) in Budapest. His parents were informed of his death only six months later, in mid-May 1945, and the death was registered on August 4, 1945, in Budapest's XII district. A university graduate, he had been registered into the Hungarian military with the rank of sergeant as of January 1, 1940. He was called into service at a later date. In July 1943, however, he was stripped of his rank as officer for "sympathizing with the Anglo-Americans" and "repeatedly stating that he did not want to fight on the side of the Nazis", as his father explained in his letter to Andrew P. Szekely in March 1946. As a common soldier, he was sent to the front and wounded, dying in the military hospital in Budapest. A son of a rural Hungarian doctor, he clearly entered a different path in life driven by his American experience – speaking up about his not wanting to fight for Nazi Germany and paying the ultimate price in the war.

Ferenc's sister, Éva also found an unconventional path for a young woman from small town Hungary in the mid-1940s: she worked for several months in 1945 as a secretary and interpreter for the U.S. military in occupied Bavaria. Her fiancé, Sándor Jablánczy, meanwhile, spent time as a Soviet POW: a Hungarian WWII database yields a petition filed by Éva in 1946 requesting his release. Sándor was also Ferenc's best friend, in fact the only friend who stuck by Ferenc after his demotion in the military (as we know from Dr. Rózsavölgyi's letter to Szekely) and a democrat of liberal views, as we know from Dr. Rózsavölgyi's statement vouching for his character, filed along with his daughter's petition. This latter statement also reveals that Dr. Rózsavölgyi himself had been blacklisted during the rule of the Arrow Cross, the Hungarian Fascist Party (between October 1944 and March 1945).

The American experience changed the Rózsavölgyis' trajectories in life, making them act in very different ways in the situations where fate placed them than would have been usual for Hungarians in their positions at this tumultuous time in history. America does this – it changes you.



A picture of Dr. József Rózsavölgyi in the Szentes hospital today
Source: Photograph by one of the authors

Epilogue

After the war ended, Éva Rózsavölgyi married Sándor Jablánczy, in 1947. They had a son and a daughter. Sándor died in 1999, at the age of 77, and Éva died in 2013, at 92. Dr. József Rózsavölgyi continued as Chief Physician of ENT at the Szentes hospital until his retirement. He died in June 1960, at the age of 71 in Szentes. His widow, Vilma Zsoldos committed suicide a few days short of the first anniversary of her husband's death. Of the two American servicemen who ended up in Szentes, 20-year-old co-pilot Howard G. Theobald was killed on his next mission, near Graz, Austria, in February 1945. His body was never recovered, and he is still listed as missing in action. The pilot, 22-year-old John B. Clark returned home to Westport, Connecticut, after the war, married his girlfriend Barbara, finished his studies at Amherst and Harvard, and then taught as a college professor. He died in 1967. The body of Harry W. Austin, the airman killed on the mission and then buried in Jakabszállás, was later reburied in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, near his hometown.

Andrew P. Szekely died at the age of 25 in Kaposvár, Hungary, having sustained grave injuries in a car crash when returning from Pécs, in southern Hungary, to Budapest in April 1946, less than a month after corresponding with Dr. Rózsavölgyi. He was buried in the American Military Cemetery in Budaörs, just outside of Budapest.

By Don Peckham and Anna Fenyvesi
Szeged, June 2024
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Love knows no boundaries: From the Őrség region to the New World and back

At Easter 2018, three months before our wedding, my future husband's family and mine had lunch together. It was then that my fiancé, Attila, decided to create a beautiful family tree for the wedding day. During that short time, he talked to everyone about family history, including my maternal grandmother, Margit Bakos, who told him a story that she had never told before – not even to her own daughter.

Family tree for the wedding: In search of the American family legend

According to my grandmother, one of the younger sisters of her maternal grandmother, Mária Szakasits, emigrated to the U.S. in the early 20th century. After their father died, their widowed mother followed her and lived for years in the New World. Sometime in the 1930s, she finally returned to the Old Country, to the small village of Marác in the Őrség region in western Hungary, to die in her homeland. My mother added that during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the two sisters were still alive, and the younger sister sent a parcel from the U.S. once it was certain that her sister and her family were staying in Hungary despite repeated calls to leave. She, herself, was 20 years old at the time, and a few weeks later she married my grandfather, László Horváth.

This was the extent of the information that my partner used as a starting point for his research, eventually managing to create a family tree of seven generations for our big day. He found out that my great-great-grandmother, Mária Szakasits, was born on September 20, 1881, in Hegyhát-Marácz (now called Felsőmarác) in Vas County, in a Roman Catholic family. Her father, Ferenc Szakasits, was a farmer, and her mother was Anna Kovács, who, according to family legend, had gone to America but returned to Hungary. Anna gave birth to nine children, according to birth records. In addition to Mária, she had four daughters and four sons: Rozália (1876), Anna (1878), Katalin (1884), Ferenc (1886), Kálmán (1889), Antal (1892), Erzsébet (1894), and János (1897). It is worth noting that in the late 1800s it was still a rarity for all the children in a family to reach adulthood, but all of Mária's siblings did.

Their father died on September 19, 1910, leaving Anna Kovács a widow at the age of 53. She, herself, eventually died on March 10, 1938, in the same village where she had been born 81 years earlier. It was certain that if she did go to America, she at some point returned. In 1904, Mária married my great-great-grandfather, Károly Holecz, a railwayman, with whom she finally settled in Dad, Komárom County. Rozália married in 1899, Anna in 1911 and Katalin in 1907. Only the youngest, Erzsébet Szakasits, did not have a marriage record to be found, which suggests that she was the emigrant sister of my great-great-grandmother. Unfortunately, five years of searching yielded no clues to help us find American relatives.

Anna Kovács
1922

Following the clues: The jigsaw pieces of the American journey fall into place

Finally, in early 2024, with the help of the local government, we were able to identify the burial place of Anna Kovács in the Felsőmarác cemetery. During a family trip with our children, Ádám and Flóra, my husband and I visited her final resting place. What then gave a new impetus to the search was a statue standing at the entrance to St. Elisabeth's Church, "in memory of the inhabitants of Felsőmarác who left for America in 1908." This statue restored our hope for eventual research success.

Next to the statue erected in memory of the residents of Felsőmarác who left for America, Flóra Berzsenyi, Ádám Berzsenyi and Krisztina Berzsenyi-Gál, February 2024
Source: Family photo album

A week later, we found a key immigration document showing that gray-haired, 66-year-old Anna Kovács arrived at Ellis Island on September 22, 1922. The ship's manifest said Mrs. Ferenc Szakasits, a widow. She sailed for nine days between Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and New York aboard the *S.S. Rotterdam* (a ship that Albert Einstein had sailed on a year earlier). On arrival, she gave the address of her son-in-law, János Pócza, in Coplay, Pennsylvania as her final destination, just 90 miles west of Ellis Island. The immigration officer's record shows that she arrived in the New World with $100 in her pocket, and at the time she stated that she had no plans to return to the Old Country.

Subsequent searches into birth records, census forms and later obituaries confirmed that János Pócza and the youngest Szakasits daughter, Erzsébet, were husband and wife. Indeed, it turned out that through Erzsébet, Anna Kovács had two granddaughters in the United States of America, and they were the primary reasons Anna made such a long journey in her old age.

The lure of the New World: Grandchildren and their parents across the ocean

Unfortunately, I don't know the exact circumstances of her daughter and son-in-law's meeting, but a few facts are known. János Pócza was born in Körmend, Vas County, on November 15, 1879. Later, his father, János Pócza Sr., moved his family to the village of Ivánc, next door to Felsőmarác.

Erzsébet Szakasits was 15 years old when she lost her father and left Austria–Hungary at the age of 19, a few months before the outbreak of World War I. She accompanied another girl from the village, 20-year-old Maria Tóth. On March 30, 1914, they sailed from the French port of Le Havre on board the French CGT ocean liner *Chicago*. The two young women arrived in New York on April 10, 1914. They were carrying $30 each and their destination was Northampton, Pennsylvania, where a cousin of Erzsébet's lived with her husband. It was noted that Erzsébet could read and write, was 5-feet, 4-inches tall, and had brown hair and brown eyes.

Events followed in quick succession, as a year and a half later she gave János Pócza a baby girl. Little Anna Pócza (Anne Catherine Pocza) was born on December 1, 1915, in Coplay. Perhaps it was the Great War that caused a sister to follow only five years later. Elizabeth Frances Pocza was born on November 21, 1920, in Northampton, also in Pennsylvania. In late 1922, my great-great-great-grandmother arrived at their home. It has not yet been established that Anna Kovács returned to the Kingdom of Hungary under Miklós Horthy in the 1930s, but it is thought-provoking that she was over 72 years old when the Great Depression of 1929 broke out.

Five generations of descendants: Re-establishing connections

Anna's youngest granddaughter, Elizabeth, became a hospital nurse, remained unmarried and devoted her whole life to her profession. She died in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1994 and is buried in Our Lady of Hungary Cemetery in Northampton.

Anna Pócza lived and worked as a hairdresser in New York, where she met her husband. On April 19, 1941, she married József Spinka, a New York native and machinist who was born in 1912, also a son of immigrants. After World War II, they had two daughters, the younger, Katherine Spinka, born in Manhattan in 1949. The family had a difficult time. In early 1950, János Pócza died, and Erzsébet Szakasits, left a widow, tried to help those who remained in Hungary from overseas: Katalin's family in Felsőmarác and Mária's family in Dad. Unfortunately, after the Soviet reprisals in 1956, the connection was broken, but it is my hope that after all these years the relatives will manage to find each other again.

On April 19, 1960, the day of their 19th wedding anniversary, József Spinka died. His widow, Anna, was only 44 years old when she remained alone with her 13- and 10-year-old daughters. She could count on her sister and mother to help her through the hardships, but in the summer of 1965, her mother passed away – the last of the family born in the Old Country. Anna worked for 30 years at the Vogue beauty salon in Queens, from which she retired in 1982. She died on May 31, 2000, at North Shore University Hospital in New York. She was mourned by her two daughters, four grandchildren and a great-grandson.

The grave of János Pócza and Erzsébet Szakasits
Source: findagrave.com

Her youngest daughter, Katherine Spinka, married Robert Ferretti, born in Queens in 1947, who was awarded the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts for his bravery in the Vietnam War. They had three sons. The family lived in Glen Rock, New Jersey, for more than 40 years. Katherine worked as a paralegal while also helping those in need as a member of St. Anthony Roman Catholic Parish in Hawthorne. She died on December 31, 2020, at the age of 71; her devoted husband followed three months later. Katherine was also laid to rest in the cemetery of Our Lady of the Hungarians in Northampton, as were her parents, aunt, and Hungarian-born grandparents before her.

Thanks to genealogical research, we have learned a lot about relatives in America, and we are now trying to revive links that were severed after 1956. We wrote on Facebook, sent messages to available email addresses and tried phone numbers; a few weeks ago, we sent postcards to addresses in Nevada and Arizona. We hope that after almost 70 years we will succeed and that Anna Kovács's descendants in the Old Country and in the New World will get to know each other. My grandmother, Margit Bakos, great-granddaughter of Anna Kovács, passed away on November 6, 2019, in Sopron. I dedicate this essay to her memory.

Krisztina Berzsenyi-Gál, great-great-great-granddaughter of Anna Kovács
Sopronkövesd, June 2024
berzsenyigal@gmail.com

What if? The story of a family torn apart by emigration and expulsion

Let me, Zsófia Šindýlková, tell you the story of my great-grandmother, born Erzsébet Leitner (1924–2008), who was the youngest of eight siblings and the only one in her family who remained in Hungary after her parents and all her siblings had gone to either the United States of America or Germany by choice or through deportation.

Let's start by getting to know the family. They came from Jákó (today Bakonyjákó), in Veszprém County. A German-speaking family, they had lived in this village since the 1700s. Their everyday life was mainly spent in farming, animal husbandry, and, as Roman Catholics, living the traditions connected to religion. My great-grandmother's father was János Leitner Sr., a family member working on the farm, and her mother was Mária Jáger, a family member helping out in the household. My great-grandmother's siblings in chronological order: Zsuzsa Jáger (my great-great-grandmother's illegitimate daughter), Ignác Leitner, János Leitner Jr., József Leitner, Ferenc Leitner, András Leitner, Mátyás Leitner. My great-grandmother, Erzsébet, was the youngest.

János Leitner, Sr., and his wife Mária Jáger, 1940s
Source: Family photo album

János Leitner
1930

Emigration: Destination Paterson, New Jersey

In the course of my research, I discovered that the first person in the family to leave for the USA was Ferenc Leitner (Frank in English), my great-grandmother's uncle, who had left in 1891 in the hope of a better life. The letters he sent home must have been encouraging, because after World War I, several of my great-grandmother's brothers tried their luck overseas. In 1922, at the age of 19, Ignác Leitner traveled with his brother, József, on the ship *Lapland* from the port of Antwerp to Ellis Island, New York. József returned to Hungary a few years later, but was traveling to America again in 1927, this time with his brother, János, Jr. They took the *Pennland* from Antwerp to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. In October 1930, my great-great-grandfather, János Leitner Sr., joined the family in America.

World War II broke out, and in early 1948, during the mass expulsion of Germans from Hungary, the rest of my great-grandmother's family had to leave their beloved village of Bakonyjákó. They settled in Radebeul, near Dresden. Of all the family members who were taken to Germany, only Zsuzsa Jáger and András Leitner remained with their families in Germany for the long term. My great-great-grandmother, Mária Jáger, and two of my great-grandmother's brothers, Ferenc and Mátyás Leitner, joined the others in America between 1948 and 1952. They all settled in a town called Paterson, New Jersey.

Expulsion: Alone in Bakonyjákó

My great-grandmother, Erzsébet Leitner, was the only member of the family who remained in Bakonyjákó. This was due to two things, as I learned from researching this period and from listening to family stories. My grandmother was born in 1943 with hip problems and had to undergo numerous operations and be in a cast for extended periods of her childhood. Her younger brother, József, was born in late December 1947, so in January 1948, when the Leitner family was deported, my great-grandmother was still in her postnatal period. For these two reasons, they were labeled a 'sickly' family and spared the long journey to Germany. So my great-grandmother, Erzsébet Leitner, was able to stay in Bakonyjákó with her husband and two children. But when her family was deported, she was still only 24 years old. I have often wondered how difficult all of this must have been for my great-grandmother as a young adult and mother of two small children.

After her family had emigrated to America, my great-grandmother met her brother, Mátyás, in person only once, and never met her other siblings or her parents ever again. Although she had an opportunity to visit relatives living in America in 1993, by then her immediate family had died. However, she was able to meet her siblings' children and grandchildren. I am now in my mid-20s and the mother of a little boy, and cannot personally imagine how difficult it would be if I could never meet my own brother or parents in the future, and we could only keep in touch by sending letters and photographs.

Still, I feel very fortunate because the photographs sent home by family members who emigrated are treasured by our family, and in almost all cases we have been able to identify the people in them. What an enormous value these photographs and the short letters written on the reverse sides of them have for me! I am infinitely grateful that my great-grandmother, despite all her hardships and trials, lived a long life. I had an opportunity to know her personally and to have many fond memories of her. Even though she lost her husband at the relatively young age of 64, we all remember her as a smiling, cheerful, family-oriented and vibrant great-grandmother. I was 10 years old when she died so, unfortunately, I was too young to ask her how she managed to overcome the difficulties in her life. Her vital, positive attitude has certainly been a life-changing influence in my own life.

Erzsébet Leitner's ID photo
Source: Family photo album

A new life overseas:
The Leitners in America

From newspaper articles and obituaries I found in a U.S. newspaper database, I learned a wealth of interesting information about the Leitners' life in America. Maintaining their Roman Catholic faith, they all attended Saint Boniface Roman Catholic Church in Paterson, where they had baptisms, weddings, and funeral masses. For many decades, this church specifically served German-speaking immigrants with German-language mass and numerous community events. There was also an elementary school next to the church, which some of my great-grandmother's American nieces and nephews attended.

A Leitner wedding at Saint Boniface Roman Catholic Church, Paterson, New Jersey
Source: Family photo album

Those who emigrated were all manual laborers, and little by little they acquired at least a minimal command of English. According to his obituary, János Leitner Sr. worked in a plastics factory, Ignác Leitner was employed as a rubber roll maker for 31 years at the Manhattan Rubber Company in Passaic, János Leitner was a textile mill worker at Hudson Finishing Corporation, and Mátyás Leitner was a machinist. They were also involved in community life, with József Leitner joining the Frohsinn Singing Society, and Ferenc Leitner active in the Paterson Aid Society.

According to family stories and memories, the family members who emigrated were in close contact, living only a few streets away from each other for long periods of time. When the family got together, they would sing, play cards, share meals, and tell jokes. Sadly, most of the first-generation relatives who emigrated died quite young: Ignác, Mátyás and János Leitner each at the age of 60, József at 47, and Ferenc at 42. My great-great-grandparents, however, lived long lives: János Leitner Sr., died at the age of 82, and his wife, Mária Jáger, at 81.

The shadow of the world war: A complicated return in the '50s

Not everyone had a smooth transition to America. Ferenc Leitner's story of struggle and hardship was published by the newspapers of the day, which thoroughly documented the efforts required for Ferenc to join the rest of his family. The newspaper articles I found were a great help in getting as detailed a picture as possible of the obstacles involved and the people who helped to resolve the situation.

Ferenc Leitner's wife, Anna Csánitz, and their two sons (József and Ferenc Jr.), who were born in Bakonyjákó, arrived by plane to the United States on March 12, 1950, along with their uncle, Mátyás Leitner. They had to leave Ferenc behind in Germany. Because he had fought in the German army during World War II, the U.S. refused him entry.

On Christmas Day 1944, Ferenc had been conscripted into the German Waffen SS to defend Budapest from the Red Army. His service lasted only seven weeks, as he successfully escaped the siege the following February and returned home to his family. Later, the whole family was captured by the Russians and forced to work in the mines before they escaped to Passau, Germany, to a displaced person (DP) camp. Although they had hoped that Ferenc would join his wife and sons just a few weeks later, the weeks stretched into months and eventually years.

It was not until March 15, 1952, that Ferenc finally arrived in America. During the interim, Anna worked hard to provide for her children, earn money, settle into a new society, and try to resolve her husband's situation. The family had to obtain a special document from Bakonyjákó, which proved that Ferenc had been involuntarily conscripted into the German army. Otto Durholz, an activist with the Committee for Christian Action in Central Europe, and his daughter, Nancy, traveled to Europe to help resolve the situation, and played a major role in solving his case. As a result of their work, the DP law was changed to allow the immigration to the United States of persons who had not willingly fought on the German side in World War II.

Unfortunately, Ferenc's life in America was short-lived, as he died tragically of a heart attack on January 15, 1954. It was also an unimaginable loss that his two sons, József and Ferenc Jr., both died of heart attacks as well. József died at the age of 38, leaving a wife, daughter and son, while Ferenc Jr., aged 27, left a wife and two daughters.

Ferenc Leitner and his wife, Anna Csánitz, with their sons József and Ferenc, 1940s, Bakonyjákó
Source: Family photo album

Descendants of the immigrants

After gathering so much information, I couldn't help wondering who the descendants of the family members who emigrated are today. Obituaries found in overseas newspapers were a great help in tracing living relatives, as most of them reported in obituaries with detailed accuracy who the bereaved family members were. After a lot of research, I was able to use social media to find living relatives. I found the wives of Ferenc Leitner's two sons, their children, the family of Mátyás Leitner's daughter, and the family of András Leitner's children, some of whom eventually left Germany and went to the U.S. The family members in the U.S. were a tremendous help in identifying the characters in the photographs that survive in my family, and in bringing more stories to life.

I had the privilege of traveling to New Jersey with my husband in 2022, where we met many of them in person. Our day together was filled with reminiscing, looking at photos, sharing personal memories, shedding tears, and laughing. It was one of the most memorable trips of my life. Together, we had the opportunity to visit the cemetery where the graves of Leitner ancestors are located. Also, my husband and I visited the Immigration Museum on Ellis Island, where we found a lot of interesting information about the circumstances of immigration and the various tests the Leitner family had to endure before being allowed into the country.

Large family reunion with the Leitner descendants, 2022, New Jersey
Source: Family photo album

My grandmother had a lot of discomfort because of her hip problems. Although she learned to live with the pain, I have often wondered what would have happened if she had been born without these health problems. What if her younger brother had not been born in late December 1947? What if my great-grandmother and her family had been deported?

The answer to these questions is relatively simple: if it had been otherwise, I would not be sitting here today, my father would not have been born – because my grandmother and grandfather would not have met, and they would all have had completely different lives, brought up in a different culture, in a different country. I am grateful that my family's story turned out this way and not the other way!

By Zsófia Šindýlková, great-great-granddaughter of János Leitner
Gönyű, May 2024
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Emigration and remembrance: Uncle Béla and the western treasures

We had relatives who emigrated to America on several branches of the family tree, including my maternal grandmother's line. I knew them personally and keep in touch with their descendants to this day, so it's true to say that their emigration had an impact on me and on the relatives still living today.
My great-great-grandmother, Karolina Portik, gave birth to her first-born son, Alajos, out of wedlock, and then married Ágoston Csergő. She had four more children with Ágoston, all daughters: my great-grandmother Anna, Erzsébet, Katalin and Matild. My great-grandmother Anna took her children and left Transylvania for Hungary during World War II, after her husband (my great-grandfather) had been taken to the front. They made the journey on foot, by horse and by cart, in the hope of a better life. Fortunately, my great-grandfather returned from the war, followed them, and they lived happily for many years in a small village in the picturesque Danube Bend, in Felsőgöd. My grandmother worked in Budapest, where she met my grandfather. Anna's half-brother, Alajos, and his wife, Rozália Rátkay, had three children: Irén, Béla and Géza, who stayed in Szeklerland. And here begins the story of Uncle Béla.

Almost 20 years in emigration:
From the refuge of Vienna to Milwaukee

Béla Portik was born in Gyergyószentmiklós/ Gheorgheni (Romania) on April 20, 1930. After finishing primary school in 1945, he moved to Budapest, where he studied to become a car mechanic. My grandmother and her parents helped Béla a lot during this time. In 1956, Béla delivered medicines from Vienna to the János Hospital in Gyergyószentmiklós with the help of a doctor, István Angi. Unfortunately, they were only able to make three trips. On their fourth attempt, the medicines were confiscated by Russian troops at the Romanian border. The Russianswere there to crush the Hungarian revolution. Béla was granted asylum in Vienna, waited in a hotel for two weeks, and then on November 21, 1956, flew to the United States – specifically, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in a MIFLY 12615 transport plane, together with many other Hungarian specialists. At the age of 26, he arrived in the "promised land," where he initially lived in a workers' hostel. He sent several letters to family members back in Hungary, but there was never a return address on the envelopes, only coded passwords. At age 32, he met Margit Kovács, a Hungarian, and married her in 1962. Margit had come to the United States on December 1, 1957, on a MIONA-H 12902 plane from Belgrade, aged 16, with her mother, Margareth Ziegenheim. Béla and Margit had four children: Erika in 1963, Andrea in 1964, Béla in 1966, and, finally, Victoria in 1970. Béla became a U.S. citizen in 1966.

Uncle Béla and his wife returned to Hungary for a visit in 1974, and in 1978 the whole family went to visit relatives who had remained in Transylvania. After that, he usually returned to his homeland, Szeklerland, every two or three years, and visited relatives in Hungary, including my grandmother and us, very often. Sometimes he traveled alone, sometimes with his wife, sometimes just with the children. Later, his children came to visit on their own. Béla and Margit have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild, whose birth they unfortunately did not live to see.

Béla Portik
1956

My great-grandmother Anna Csergő looking on as Béla Portik hugs my grandmother, Rozália Bajkó, ca. 1974
Source: Family photo album

Western wonders of the '70s:
Elegance, gifts and dollar stores

My mother told me that in the 1970s, Uncle Béla sent many wonderful postcards and photos for various occasions, as well as fashionable clothes not available in Hungary at the time, like blue jeans, a Wilkinson electric razor for my grandfather (his first), a Philips tape recorder, and dollars that my mother could spend at the two "dollar stores" in town that sold special foreign products. Miskolc, as a county seat, boasted two dollar stores, one on the main street of the town and the other in the now abandoned but then elite Juno Hotel frequented by foreigners, in Miskolc-Tapolca. In Kádár-era Hungary, more than 300 such diplomatic or dollar stores operated in Budapest and the county towns, as a repository of "rotten, immoral, capitalist" Western products. You were only allowed to enter the shop with

a passport or a special certificate permitting ownership of foreign currency. Inside, you would be greeted by a “Western Canaan” quite unlike the cheap, simple, barren atmosphere of the socialist shops. There was everything to please the eye here: name-brand perfumes, expensive whisky, cigarettes, Casio watches, Matchbox cars, Barbie dolls and Swiss chocolate. Many people spent the American dollars, German marks or Swiss francs they had received from relatives abroad or had left over after a rare trip. Some people shopped there to resell goods, as black marketeering was alive and well even back then.

It was out of reach for many people to shop there, so most people just looked longingly at the window and smoked cheap Hungarian cigarettes, dreaming that they were holding a Marlboro, like in the hand of the cowboy in the advertisement. Instead of Lego and Matchbox cars, children played with wooden building blocks and tin or plastic toy cars; it was not advisable for parents to walk past the shop with a small child without foreign currency in their pockets in those days. It was a real prestige to work there, too. The uniformed saleswomen had to learn to wrap presents perfectly, serve the nice foreign customers and always smile. Despite the fact that they didn’t hire just anyone off the street to work there, even the sales personnel were not allowed to buy anything in the store. In 1989, the dollar shops disappeared, because by then the average Hungarian could travel without any restrictions and could get everything they had not been able to get before.

When I was a child, if Uncle Béla was there when we went to visit my great-grandmother in the Danube Bend, we knew he would always have brought a little bit of America with him. At that time, socialism was beginning to disappear but there were still some leftovers of it around. The *Dallas* television series was shown starting in 1990, after the fall of communism, and became a cult hit in the history of Hungarian broadcasting. Back then, every man wanted to be J.R. and every woman wanted to be Pamela. The whole town was deserted when the series was on because everyone sat at home in front of the TV and lived the American dream. Fortunately, there were reruns in case anyone missed it. My mother told me that the reruns were watched at work at the then Lenin Metallurgical Works by all her colleagues who could spare the time from work. We dreamily watched the big house with the pool, the skyscrapers, the iconic J.R. Mercedes (later Uncle Béla had one exactly like that), and the car phone. In Hungary, it was still rare to see a western car among the many Trabant, Lada and Wartburg cars. My family bought the first western VW Golf car in Vienna, for which my parents had been buying up western currency for months, and our Lada was replaced by the little dark green VW Golf.

Also memorable are my mother's photos of Uncle Béla and Aunt Margit’s wedding, along with the many Cadillacs parked under the palm trees, which the relatives at first thought were boats because they were so big. They were huge compared to the tiny cars that ran on the roads in Hungary at the time. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find these photos yet.

New Year's Eve was also different back then, when we were in Felsőgöd and the relatives were there. Since there is an hour time difference between Romania and Hungary, we had midnight on New Year's Eve twice: once on "Szekler time", when we sang the Szekler anthem, and the second time on Hungary time, when we listened to and sang the Hungarian national anthem. Unfortunately, after the death of my great-grandmother, the family dispersed, and there no longer was a strong bond that would have held us together. Even so, most of us still keep in touch one way or another.

To me, Uncle Béla always appeared as if he had just stepped off the television screen, like J.R. Ewing. Well, not because he looked like him or wore a cowboy hat, but his whole being

A dollar shop in Budapest in 1986
Source: Fortepan/Zsolt Hegyi, photo by Demeter Balla

was elegance personified: a gentleman of the world with elegant shoes, trousers and a shirt unbuttoned to the chest to show the masculine symbol of the time, chest hair and a gold necklace, and the inevitable Ray Ban aviator sunglasses. It was strange for me as a child to see men in the 'great far away' America dressed like that, but in Hungary you could never see anything like this.

Béla Portik and his children, my mother and grandmother in Miskolc-Lillafüred in the 1980s
Source: Family photo album

The color photographs, too, were amazing. In Hungary, only black and white photos were available. When I grew up, you could get color photos developed after waiting several days, but Uncle Béla and his family brought a Polaroid camera with them, which printed photos after only a few minutes. It was unbelievable that such a thing existed. The way Uncle Béla spoke was also strange. He spoke Hungarian, but he had an American accent. His children, then young adults, came to visit us a lot. They used to scare the hell out of my grandmother and great-grandmother when the grandmas would make strong espresso in the morning. The American cousins would get a small cup of it, but they were used to American drip coffee, which was weaker. At first, they would want to drink espresso by the liter. But then they realized you couldn't do that with espresso. Another example is that they really enjoyed it when they could go out in Hungary with my mom and the other relatives, drinking alcohol, even though they weren't 21 yet. It was unthinkable in America then, and it still is today. It's very interesting that young people can't legally buy alcohol until they are 21, but they can be sent to war, and sometimes they don't even reach adulthood because they die on the front.

Going back and forth and then returning: The legacy and memory of Uncle Béla

The family lived in several places in America, including Greenfield, Waukesha, Muskego and Milwaukee. Uncle Béla and Aunt Margit's marriage fell apart and they divorced in 2010. Uncle Béla moved back to Gyergyószentmiklós in Szeklerland in 1990. He went back and forth regularly between America and Gyergyószentmiklós, as he had loved ones in both places. He found a new partner in Gyergyószentmiklós and lived with her until his death on October 24, 2017. He rests in his beloved homeland. Aunt Margit lived her life in the United States and was laid to rest in 2020 at Prairie Home Cemetery in Waukesha. I loved Uncle Béla very much, miss him to this day, and we often talk about him in family conversations.

His four children were all born in the United States and still live there. Nevertheless, they speak Hungarian very well. This is because their parents considered it important that they should know not only English but also Hungarian, as it is their mother tongue, and they also spent many years in Hungary. Several of them had first spouses who were Hungarian, but after unfortunate divorces they all found American partners. Their friends are American. Despite this, we understand each other when we speak, and they have not forgotten Hungarian, even though they use it very rarely.

Uncle Béla's younger brother, Uncle Géza, has two children, Zoltán and Erika, both living in the United States. Zoltán and his lovely wife, Betti, have three children. Erika and her husband, Gary, have two, and they live in Florida. Uncle Béla's sister, Aunt Piroska, has one son now deceased, but his wife, children and grandchildren still live in Gyergyószentmiklós, and his other son lives in the United States, where he was able to emigrate with Uncle Béla's help.

The third-generation descendants living in America, however, can only speak a word or a few phrases in Hungarian, so I communicate with them in English. Their children will no longer speak Hungarian at all, because none of their parents will be Hungarian, and their only memory will be that they actually come from a tiny country in the middle of Europe. Instead of singing the Hungarian national anthem, they will sing "Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light," and instead of *szeretlek* they will say *I love you* to their partners and children. Hungarianness will only flicker in their memories, a people on a distant continent, and instead of saying *viszontlátásra*, they will say *good-bye*!

In writing my story, I received a lot of help: first of all, from my mother, Ilona Pacz, and from Uncle Béla's sister; Aunt Piroska, who is 96 years old and in very good health; from Aunt Piroska's daughter-in-law, Aunt Marika; and from my great-grandmother's niece, Aunt Pircsike, who sadly passed away on June 29, 2024, at the age of 86. It is incredible to think that just a few weeks ago she was sending me information and now she is gone, her loving heart having stopped beating. It is incomprehensible. It is with a grateful heart that I think of them, that they are still with us and can pass on knowledge and stories that would otherwise be forgotten.

By Krisztina Héder
Miskolc, July 2024
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Community and heritage: The Csoman family story

My dad, Endre Csoman, was certainly a big personality in our lives. In fact, my husband gave him the nickname Nagy. Actually, the family came to use the nickname Nagyi for the past 20 years, which I always found amusing as it is the diminutive form of the word “big” in Hungarian.

Endre passed away due to congestive heart failure on August 22, 2022, after a brief illness. His decline began in May. He slowly stopped doing the many activities he loved, like gardening, visiting the small cabin he had built and tending another garden there, and visiting his wife’s grave. Arlene Kovacs Csoman passed away in 2018 after a 10-year battle with breast cancer. Both Arlene and Endre spent their last moments in their home, surrounded by their family.

When our father died my siblings and I not only became orphans; we lost a connection with our Hungarian ancestry and the daily interactions with its culture and language that defined our lives.

Stories from Szentdomonkos: A glimpse into Endre's youth

Born April 17, 1938 in Szentdomonkos, Heves County, Hungary, Endre was the son of the late Lajos Csomány and Júlia Kovács. Actually, the full family name was Csomány Maksi. The second part, I came to learn later, is a *ragadványnév*, a “cognomen”; one of possibly several nicknames that can identify branches of a large family who have the same last name and live in the same settlement.

My father shared many stories of his youth in Szentdomonkos, a village in northeast Hungary in Heves Megye, through which one main road passes. The way he described his life in the small, rural village was characterized by school, an extended family in adjoining villages, including aunts, uncles, and cousins, and friends. As he grew into his teenage years, Endre had a good bit of raucous adventure, with some drinking, going to dances, and regularly neglecting his household chores. Despite his mischievous young teen years, Endre was able to return to Szentdomonkos for its *millennium* celebration in 2000, for which he was recognized as an esteemed guest. In his late teens, Endre joined a technical training program in Ózd in neighboring Borsod County, where he learned welding and other skills to work in the steel industry.

The path to America: Endre's 1956 journey from his homeland

Endre was 17 in late October 1956, when he, his cousins Andre Spagina and József Fábri and a few other childhood friends decided to flee the impending Soviet army invasion. In many villages, there was opposition to the communist intervention in Hungary, which was fueled by nightly gatherings in community centers where people listened to broadcasts of Radio Free Europe. There were many stories of their journey that included traveling by foot through the woods and mountainous areas and then by bus and train to the Austrian border at the Rába River. Endre, Andre, and Joe needed to convince Hungarian border authorities to allow them to walk across a bridge into Austria where they were vetted and kindly accepted by the Austrians. They were taken to a camp in eastern Austria that was used as a concentration camp during World War II. The camps were visited by representatives of various foreign governments like Australia, Canada, and the United States, to interview and convince the refugees to settle in their countries. After some time, the group was transferred to an American military base in Germany. Endre, Andre and Joe decided to emigrate to the United States. On December 31, 1956, they boarded a boat in Bremerhaven. Endre remembered being interviewed by Voice of America on that New Year’s Eve. From Germany, the three men were taken to Camp Kilmer in New Brunswick, N.J., a former army camp that became a resettlement camp for some 30,000 refugees following the Hungarian Revolution. From Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, the refugees were sponsored by Hungarian churches and communities in other regions of the United States.

Endre Csoman
1956

'56 refugees at Camp Kilmer, 1956-57. *Source: National Archives and Records Administration, USA. From the collection of Blinken Open Society Archive*[40]

Arrival in Pittsburgh:
Hazelwood's Hungarian welcome

Endre, Andre and Joe were sent to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, because of their vocational training to work in the steel industry. The busload of refugees arrived at the First Hungarian Reformed Church on Johnston Avenue in the Hazelwood neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Hazelwood had a large population of Hungarians, with three Hungarian churches – Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic – and a Hungarian Social Club, Magyar Home.

According to Endre, the first person to greet the bus was a leader in the church and the Hungarian Hazelwood community, "Sanyi bácsi." Sanyi bácsi gave the young men $5 for a haircut and some oranges. Sanyi bácsi was Sándor Kovacs, also known as "Shine" for his shining dark skin and white glistening smile. He was a first-generation immigrant, whose mother, Ida Sakach, came as a young woman in her late teenage years from Transylvania to marry Sándor's father, also named Sándor Kovacs. Sanyi bácsi remained in contact with the new refugees, who were moved to apartments and homes around the city. The young men quickly tapped into the Hungarian community and social scene in the Pittsburgh neighborhoods where the Hungarian communities were located.

Arlene and Endre: A love story
born at the Hungarian Club

Arlene Kovacs and Endre first met at a harvest dance at a Hungarian Club in Coraopolis in the spring of 1957. Arlene was fairly proficient in Hungarian, having grown up with her grandmother, Rachael Kanyari (later Egri and then Matyko) in Duquesne, and with whom she only spoke Hungarian.

Endre and Arlene would meet at the Hungarian social club for dances. At the Hazelwood Club one evening, Endre was excited to introduce Arlene to the charismatic Sanyi bácsi who had been so welcoming to new immigrants. It turned out that Arlene knew Sanyi bácsi quite well. He was her father. Arlene and Endre dated for four years through Arlene's remaining high school education and her first professional position at the William Penn Association (WPA), a Hungarian fraternal benefits society. Founded by 13 Hungarian coal miners in 1886, the WPA began as the Verhovay Aid Association to provide a social support network for Hungarian immigrants working in the mines and industrial settings.

Endre and Arlene were married on June 3, 1961, at the First Hungarian Reformed Church on Johnston Avenue, after which they had a large, festive reception at the Hungarian Club in Hazelwood.

Endre and Arlene Csoman on the day of Arlene's senior prom, in 1959 or 1960
Source: Family photo album

Roots in Beaver Falls:
Work and family life

After their marriage, Endre and Arlene moved to Beaver Falls, just north of Pittsburgh. Endre and Joe Fabri secured positions at the Mayer China Company. They and their young families shared an up-and-down duplex where their first children, Julia and Endre (Butch) Csoman and Julia Fabri were brought home.

Just down Third Avenue from the Mayer China factory was a former Methodist church purchased in 1908 by a group of Hungarian immigrants. It became the first Reformed congregation for the community in Beaver Falls. In 1962, Endre and Arlene joined the church and they were active members of what became the Third Avenue Calvin Reformed Church for many years. Arlene loved children and organized Sunday School activities and Christmas nativity pageants as well as other outreach activities to engage young people in the church. Endre and Arlene also served as chief elders. In 2008, Endre was recognized as an Exemplary Church Worker by the Calvin Synod Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Endre and Arlene then bought their first home, also in Beaver Falls, where Kati, Joseph, and Louis joined the family. In 1975, the family moved up the hill into what Endre and Arlene would describe as their dream home in Patterson Township. The yellow brick house had four bedrooms, three bathrooms, a walk-out basement and a large front porch. It was soon a place where many groups of friends would gather. In the 1980s, Endre installed a full second kitchen in the basement where he would spend many early mornings and weekends cooking Hungarian dishes and canning produce from one of his three gardens.

Endre was proud of his vocational training and eventually took a position at the Babcock & Wilcox (B & W) Steel Mill along with Joe Fabri, where they worked as mechanics through the decline of the steel industry in the late 1980s. After they became technically unemployed, Endre, Andre, and Joe set up their own house painting and small-scale remodeling business to sustain their families through a difficult period of regional economic decline.

Hungarian heritage and community:
The Csoman family's contributions

Endre and Arlene were actively involved in the Hungarian-American community, and in the 1970s became part-time insurance agents with the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America (HRFA). They traveled around the Pittsburgh area and broader region collecting insurance premium payments and visiting with members of the Hungarian-American community.

Endre was elected to the HRFA board of directors. After many years of such work, he was elected vice president of the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America at the home office in Washington, D.C., where he worked for eight years. Following that, he served as vice president fraternal at the William Penn Association in Pittsburgh, where Arlene had worked early in their relationship. At both the HRFA and the WPA, Endre started a tradition of Hungarian picnics, first in Ligonier and then at Penn Scenic View in Youngwood. In the final years of the picnics organized by Endre, attendance was estimated to be over 1,000 guests who enjoyed traditional food such as lángos, gulyás, lecsó and paprika kenyér from the szalonnasütés. Many friends and colleagues would gather for days beforehand to assist with the preparations. Endre also served as an unofficial historian, once being interviewed on Hungarian television.

Endre Csoman making preparations for a picnic, around 2000
Source: Family photo album

Through his work, Endre and Arlene had the great joy to travel to Hungary many times together and share their love of the culture and language with many friends on heritage trips. Endre was recognized in 2006 as the Fraternalist of the Year by the Pennsylvania Fraternal Congress. One of his proudest achievements was when he was honored by the Government of Hungary for a lifetime of dedication to the Hungarian Community in the United States with a special ceremony at the Budapest Parliament on March 13, 2012.

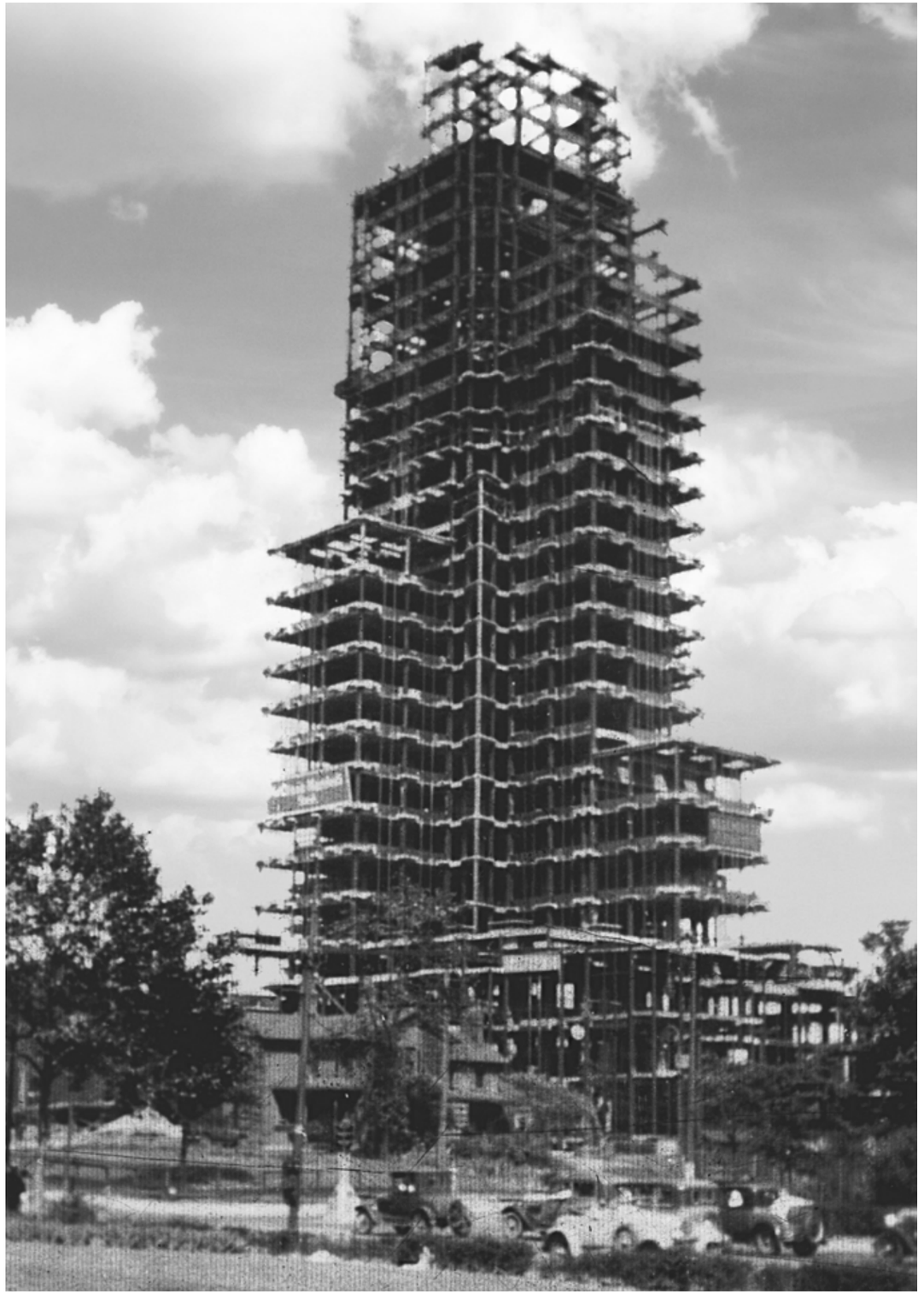
Endre and Arlene had five children, five grandchildren, three step-grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. They loved their family and especially enjoyed hosting holiday gatherings, many of which would feature traditional Hungarian foods.

Returning to Szentdomonkos: A path shaped by heritage

Although all of us children and grandchildren were impacted by our Hungarian roots, I was fortunate to have a deeper connection. As a first-generation college student and with the encouragement of a tremendous mentor, Dr. Robert Donnorummo at the University of Pittsburgh, I was able to travel to Hungary in the late 1980s to begin a study of the Hungarian language and to meet my relatives there for the first time.

I became close with my father's first cousin, Margit Varga (sister of Andre Spagina). I would ride a bicycle down the one main road of Szentdomonkos that summer to visit with other relatives and to go shopping at the small store in the next village. As I would pass by the houses, some of the older women would shout, "Csomány Kati, hova mész?" or "Kati Csoman, where are you going?" This wonderful summer adventure of exploring my father's village, meeting many new-to-me family members and studying Hungarian language and culture was made possible by the support of a scholarship through the University's Hungarian Room Committee of the Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs (NRIEP).

The NRIEP began as a concept in the late 1920s as the iconic Cathedral of Learning was built and when the University of Pittsburgh reached out to local ethnic communities to invite them to fundraise and design rooms to represent their cultural backgrounds.



The Cathedral of Learning under construction, late 1920s
Source: Photograph by Mary Elizabeth Pallaye Kupcik

There are currently 30 Nationality and Heritage Rooms that are designed to depict the heritage and culture of those groups that supported their construction. The Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs (NRIEP) also represent the University's ongoing engagement with the regional community through the Nationality and Heritage Room Committees. The committees provide financial support to Pitt students to undertake global learning experiences in the summer and offer intercultural programming on campus.

I returned to the University of Pittsburgh to study the Hungarian language and focus on Eastern Europe, and, in particular, Hungary, as my academic area of research. Following graduation, I worked at the American Embassy in Budapest. It was during that time that I could travel back regularly to Szentdomonkos and the neighboring villages in Heves Megye on the weekends. Working at the embassy, attending official events, and going to the opera and theater was in stark contrast to my time in the village and helping my Margit néni with the cooking and baking, or curling up together under the feather blanket she had made by hand to watch television.

From student to leader: A lifelong passion in intercultural learning

After completing my assignment at the embassy, I returned to the University of Pittsburgh for graduate school. It was during that time that I was able to connect with other graduate students, including Anna Fenyvesi, the co-editor of this volume, to establish a Hungarian student group. We had fun getting together to enjoy food, speak Hungarian and, once, traveling to the Ellwood City Hungarian Club for a harvest dance. Another graduate student whom I had only known for a few weeks was tasked with loading a bunch of other students in his long station wagon to make the trek to the dance. That graduate student was Emil Nagengast, who later became my husband. Following my graduate studies, I worked in international education for nearly 30 years, facilitating international exchange and intercultural learning.

I am back at the University of Pittsburgh again serving as the director of the Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs. The program's mission is *sharing stories of regional ethnic communities past and present through inspirational spaces and intercultural experiences*. I am grateful for the opportunity to facilitate this work at an interesting local and global nexus that has such deep personal meaning because of the courage my father had when he decided to emigrate to the United States.

My love and appreciation of my Hungarian heritage is complex. I treasure my memories and traditions as a child of an immigrant family. And I had the amazing opportunity to experience the culture and language firsthand at a significant time in my life. I am proud to know a language that is not commonly spoken and that has a rich tradition of literature and music. So much of my understanding of my culture is inextricably linked to food and its ability to connect us with one another and across generations. My identity is deeply rooted in values of hard work and determination. I believe this to be true of all immigrants, but I am especially proud that my father, Endre, instilled these values deep within me.

By Kati Csoman, Endre Csoman's daughter
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, June 2024
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The Cathedral of Learning and the Hungarian Nationality Room inside the building
Source: Hungarian Nationality Room

Refugees: The descendants of Ferenc Vidovich

We would probably never have become interested in family history if it hadn't been for a very special grandmother who was born in 1914 and lived through nearly the entire 20th century history of Hungary. Since she died in 2016 at the age of 102, she had plenty of opportunity to tell us about it all. In her stories, the war invalid "Uncle Feri," his beautiful wife "Aunt Lenke," and their two cheerful sons "Tibi and Öcsi," often appeared. The boys were our grandmother's cousins and Uncle Feri was her father's brother. These stories usually ended with "they fled at the end of the war and are somewhere in America." Looking through photo albums after our grandmother's passing inspired us to find out what happened to Ferenc Vidovich and his family. After a long search, we found Tibor Vidovich's younger daughter on social media, contacted her and, to our delight, she replied. The following story is compiled from our grandmother's personal recollections along with those of Tibor Vidovich's daughter. Some precise dates were found in documents available in online archives.

War and life in Hungary

The Vidovich family were among the gentry of Eastern Hungary, whose members participated in public life in the 19th century, held various offices and then, in the early 20th century, due to lack of means, pursued various studies (in medicine, law and the military), sometimes even completing them. The family was not typical of those who emigrated, either because of its financial situation or its mentality, but fate brought one branch of the family to the United States in 1959 after a long period of hardship following World War II. The story begins with Ferenc Vidovich, who was born on January 23, 1892, in Mándok. As a young man, he served in World War I, and by December 1914 had already distinguished himself by the courage and wit he displayed at the Battle of Turovice–valorous conduct for which he later was honored. We do not know when Ferenc met his wife, Lenke Bittner, but a 1915 family photo shows them together when they were engaged. Later, Ferenc went back to the Eastern Front and toward the end of the war he was badly wounded. According to family lore, 42 pieces of mortar shrapnel were removed from his body and he lost half of a lung. He spent months in the hospital in Lemberg (today Lviv, Ukraine) and, although he recovered, he suffered pain and limited mobility for the remainder of his life.

Tibor Vidovich
1959

After returning to Hungary, he married Lenke Bittner and they had two sons, Tibor in 1919 and Ferenc in 1921. The family lived for a time in the Csillaghegy neighborhood of Budapest, where Ferenc Vidovich organized community sports events. Soon enough, they returned to the family home in Nyíregyháza, in northeastern Hungary, where Ferenc set up a modern chicken farm and became involved in the arts, making his own fire-engraved objects. Ferenc and Lenke's son, Tibor, graduated from the University of Debrecen with a law degree. Ferenc Jr., meanwhile, completed studies at Ludovika Academy, Hungary's officer cadet training institute.

Fleeing Hungary, adversities in Europe and South America

We have little information about the family during World War II. Tibor held some insignificant office as a young lawyer and Ferenc was stationed in Kecskemét with his unit. As far as we know, neither of them saw combat. In the autumn of 1944, however, when the Soviet army was closing in on Nyíregyháza, the family took a decisive step. One might think that the gentry family was fleeing from the impending communist regime, and there may be some truth in this. However, from individual recollections, it seems that the elder Ferenc Vidovich's terror that his sons would suffer the same fate as he did was a much stronger motivation. Therefore, in the autumn of 1944, the family, like so many others, fled to Austria. Interestingly, although our grandparents stayed in Hungary, our great-grandfather György Vidovich left together with his brother and his brother's family. In October 1944, our grandmother saw her father, uncle and cousins for the last time at a petrol station in Buda.

The Vidovich family in front of the main building of the University of Debrecen, after Tibor Vidovich's doctorate in law (Tibor Vidovich, Lenke Bittner, Ferenc Vidovich Sr., and Ferenc Vidovich Jr.
Source: Family photo album

We can reconstruct very little about the circumstances of their escape, because no one of that generation to remember it is still alive today. From birth certificates, we know that Ferenc Vidovich Jr. married Mária Kopniczky while still in Kőszeg, Hungary, in 1944. Tibor Vidovich met a young woman born in Bratislava, Gertrúd (Trudi) Biza, in Austria, and married her in Austria, presumably in 1945. Many years later, Trudi repeatedly told her daughters that during the flight they lost all their belongings, including valuable paintings. On one occasion, they had to swim in a river to escape their pursuers, but for so long that Trudi's leg was bleeding (probably due to an injury). The Biza family, along with Tibor and his wife, waited near Salzburg for the war to end and for the political situation to normalize. Again, we know from personal recollections that the family, like everyone else at the time, was trying to make a living partly by bartering with Soviet soldiers, and hiding the goods they wanted to exchange in the mountains.

According to the archives, Ferenc Vidovich Sr. went on to Bavaria with his wife, Lenke, son, Ferenc Jr., and the younger Ferenc's wife and mother-in-law, and found temporary shelter in Bad Kötzting. The family suffered its first loss there on March 5, 1946: Ferenc Vidovich Sr. died of a heart attack – and was unable to see the birth of his grandchildren, although Ferenc Jr. and Tibor both had daughters in the same year (in October and December 1946, respectively).

Between 1945 and 1949, the family, together with Lenke Bittner's siblings, lived in Austria, Germany and France (in Paris), trying to obtain immigration permits from countries they considered safe. One of Lenke's brothers had tried his luck in several South American countries in the 1920s and was a shop owner living in Luxembourg until the German occupation, when the Germans expropriated his shop. With this family background, it is understandable that the Vidoviches and the Bittners finally left Bordeaux for Rio on September 23, 1949, on board *SS Kergeulen* to start a new life on the South American continent.

According to the ship's passenger manifest, the family traveled together. However, Tibor Vidovich's daughter later recalled that Aunt Lenke and Ferenc Jr.'s family emigrated to Brazil first, while Tibor, his wife and their daughter followed some time later. Indeed, there are documents that suggest Tibor Vidovich and his family did not leave Europe for good until 1950. It must have been a very difficult decision because the Biza grandparents stayed in Austria, effectively separating from their daughter for good. The family must have had very strong ties with Austria anyway, and Tibor and Trudi's daughters remember Salzburg and their grandparents' house, which they visited several times, as an idyllic place. So it seems that the grandparents acted as a bridge between the Old and New worlds.

Tibi and Trudi shortly after they met, probably in 1945
Source: Family photo album

The family tried to make a living in Brazil, where both young Vidovich men did manual work, although their children do not remember exactly what their jobs were. Tibor's immigration card says "construction worker" and Ferenc's “mechanic.” In 1953, the family expanded further with the birth of Tibor and Trudi's second child. But tragedy continued to strike, and in 1958, Ferenc's wife, Maria, died of cancer at the young age of 32.

Making a home in the USA

We don't know how well the family adapted to the Brazilian way of life, but after 10 years Tibor and his wife decided to leave South America and move on to the United States. Tibor's daughter recalls that her father didn't like the climate or his job so, with the help of a cousin, Zoltán, they moved to Stamford, Connecticut. Without Zoltán, who supported the family financially and provided accommodation in Stamford, the American dream would not have been realized. Unfortunately, no one remembers Zoltán's surname or his exact family connection, even though the two families lived together in a relatively small apartment, at first, which sometimes led to conflicts.

Although Tibor’s wife encouraged him to study and to try to use his legal skills, Tibor took a job as a machine operator at Pitney Bowes to solve the more immediate problem of supporting the family. Trudi worked as a salesperson at the department stores Gimbels and J.C. Penney.

Tibor and Trudi's daughters remember their parents and their childhood with great fondness. Despite the ups and downs, they grew up in a loving atmosphere. Tibor organized activities not only for his daughters but also for their friends, and they spent a lot of time together skating, swimming and going on trips.

The parents spoke Hungarian at home, although Trudi's Austrian statistical card lists Slovak as her first language, and Tibor is registered as Hungarian-German bilingual. According to their children's recollections, they both spoke German well and learned French, Portuguese and, eventually, English. The parents also kept in touch with other family members and with Hungarians in their neighborhood, and their children can recall many gatherings attended by Hungarians. Both of Tibor's daughters learned Hungarian, but the younger daughter married an American man, so her language skills are somewhat diminished. Her son does not speak Hungarian. The older daughter has married twice, and both times she has married Hungarian men, with whom she had three children, all of whom speak Hungarian. There is also a young man from the latter generation who has a Hungarian wife, so they can pass on the language on to the fourth generation. Tibor's daughters and grandchildren are scattered all over the United States.

Ferenc Vidovich Jr. remarried after the loss of his first wife, and he, too, moved to the United States, where he lived next-door to his brother in Stamford. His mother, Aunt Lenke, remained in Rio with her brothers and their families. Probably because of her age, she was no longer able to undertake another resettlement. Ironically, after overcoming so much adversity, she died in an unfortunate accident: in her 80s, she actually slipped on a banana peel in the street, hit her head on the pavement and died shortly afterward. Ferenc’s daughter, Marianne, also in Rio, has three children, one of whom is also now living in the United States.

Tibor Vidovich and his family around 1957
Source: Family photo album

The story of the Vidovich family is not a classic immigration story, as America was not seen as a land of wonderful opportunities by these refugees. They may not have even been heading to America when they had left Hungary. They simply wanted to find somewhere to live their lives, and the United States is where they finally got the chance.

By Márta Lesznyák, great-granddaughter of Ferenc Vidovich's brother, and Agnes Modugno (Vidovich), granddaughter of Ferenc Vidovich.
Szeged and Stamford, Connecticut, August 2024
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Closing

It all started with a post about American Hungarians ... and although the resulting book ends here, this is really just the beginning. The stories presented here do not end, but continue as descendants uncover new pieces of information and clues that add to or shed new light on previously known facts and events. Family ties are re-established, long separated relatives find each other, correspond, meet up and together preserve the memory and legacy of their immigrant ancestors.

But this book is not just about remembering the past. It is also about enabling future generations to learn about the stories of their forebears, who sacrificed so much to make it possible for us to be here today. They were the ones who set out into the unknown to make a better life for themselves and their families. It is through their courage, perseverance and sacrifice that many of the dreams that were born on the journey from the Old Country to the New World (and often back) have come true.

We hope that our readers will respond to the struggles and successes of the emigrating generations and look back with appreciation on the ancestors who built bridges between two worlds. Let us not forget that the men and women portrayed here are but a tiny slice of the hundreds of thousands of American Hungarians whose stories have yet to be told.

Two immigrants on the pier at Ellis Island
Source: Library of Congress[41]

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Step into the pages of "Hungarian Roots & American Dreams: Tracing Personal History," and embark on a journey of discovery. Follow the paths of Hungarian immigrants who ventured to America in search of a better life. Through heartfelt narratives and photographs from family photo albums, this book captures stories of their journeys, the challenges they faced, and the lives they built for themselves and their families. Discover how these dedicated people maintained their cultural heritage and left an indelible mark on their descendants, creating a tapestry of history that connects past and present on both sides of the ocean.

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