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II. Rákóczi Ferenc – part I

Erika Papp Faber

315 years ago, II. Rákóczi Ferenc was elected Prince of Transylvania at Gyulafehérvár. This year has been declared Rákóczi Memorial Year, to last until September 2020, when the 315th anniversary of his election as Ruling Prince of all of Hungary will be observed. To understand the historical role of II. Rákóczi Ferenc, we have to look back a few generations before his time.

Following the death of King Mátyás, a king of the House of Jagiello, Wladislas II, came to the Hungarian throne. His successor, Louis II also of the House of Jagiello, was a weak king, and he drowned, fleeing the battlefield of Mohács in 1526. In that disaster, an overwhelming Turkish force killed the leading men of Hungary, and the country was left without leadership. The lower nobility elected Zápolya (aka Szapolyai) János, one of their number, to be king. He obtained Turkish support for his cause. But due to a stipulation in a previous Habsburg alliance, the Austrian Ferdinand was also crowned king, by the upper nobility, a year after Zápolya. The two rulers fought each other until the death of Zápolya in 1540.

Thus in the 16th century, Hungary became divided into three sections: the Turks ruled over the central part of the country (for over a century and a half); the Austrians over the northern and western region (for almost 400 years, until the Treaty of Trianon dethroned the Habsburgs in 1920); while Transylvania still remained – for the most part – in Hungarian hands for another century.

Although they claimed to help defend Hungary against the Turks, the Habsburg kings often retreated from the Turkish forces, and even gave huge monetary gifts to the sultan after they had defeated the Turks in battle. The Country was devastated by this double exploitation and the constant warfare, and was consequently demoralized.

A long poem, "*Jajszó, melyben édes hazánk romlását siratja egy poéta*"

(Lament for the ruin of our dear homeland) starts out this way:

*Zokogó sírással sírhatsz, magyar nemzet,
Mert szemed bekötve idegeny (sic!) nép vezet.*

(Hungarian nation, you can cry with sobbing,
Because a foreign people leads you, blindfolded.)



*Taken from Hungarian Heroes and Legends
by Joseph Domjan*

enthusiastically embraced the Reformation, in some cases perhaps out of zealous patriotism, since the oppressive Habsburg rulers were Catholic. The poem continues with a clear reference to the Turkish occupation:

*Te napod fényében minap hold öltözött,
Minden javaiddal torkáig töltözött.*

(The moon has clothed itself in your sun's light,
Filled itself to the gills with your goods.)

And pointing to the Habsburg emblem of the eagle:

*Az napnyugoti (sic!) sas körme közé kapta,
Te gyöngge testedet erősen marcangolja.*

(The western eagle caught it between its claws,
And is fiercely mauling your tender body.)

Consequently, many patriots became *bujdosók* – fugitives and outlaws, hiding in the forests and marshy areas, carrying on guerrilla warfare against the foreigners – the Austrians and the Turks.

In the mid-seventeenth century, Thököly Imre, who as a boy had been smuggled out of his father's fortress of Árva (located in the northern part of Upper Hungary), when the Austrians began to besiege it, became the leader of the *bujdosók*. He began to organize these loose bands of guerrillas into a fighting force, changing their name to *kurucok*, a new type of crusader. The supporters of the Austrians were derogatorily called *labancok*.

A number of songs have come down to us as "*kuruc dalok*", although few of them can actually be dated to those times. Among the ones that have been studied in depth is "*Csinom Palkó, Csinom Jankó*" which has been shown to be a recruiting song, probably originating in the Kárpátalja (Subcarpathia) section, in the times of Thököly. Its 39 stanzas are a call to join the *kuruc* troops who are depicted (in an early example of false advertising!) as wearing elegant attire, with "pearly silver footwear", crimson boots, golden sabers, and fast-running horses, while the *labanc* troops are made fun of, depicted as cowardly, ragged, hungry and overrun by lice.

*Az vitéz kurucnak
Van szabott dolmánya,
Sarkantyús csizmája,
Futó paripája...*

*Vitéz karja, lábaiban
Karmazsin csizmája,
Gyönggyel fűzött az bocskora,
Ezüstös kapcája.....*

*Ne bánkódjék senki köztünk,
Menjünk az Alföldre,
Megrontatik kezünk által
Az labanc ereje!...*

*Darulábú, szarkaorrú
Nyomorult nemzetség
Fut előttünk, retteg tőlünk,
Nyomorult nemzetség!...*

*Lapos guta megütötte
bornyúbőr iszákját,
Kebelében legelteti
Sok ezer marháját.*

*Mely marhának tetű neve,
Tartsa ő magának!
Nyúzza rendre, jó lesz bőre
Bornyúbőr iszáknak...*



II. Rákóczi Ferenc, portrait by
Mányoki Ádám

Thököly garnered much popular support, and was able to beat back the Austrians from Upper Hungary for a while. He conquered the cities of Kassa and Fülek, after which the Turkish pasha of Buda presented him with gifts from the sultan and appointment as king of Hungary. Thököly was smart enough not to accept the title, but subsequently became popularly known as "kuruckirály" – "king of the *kurucok*".

Thököly married Zrinyi Ilona, widow of I. Rákóczi Ferenc, who was an earlier freedom fighter involved in the anti-Habsburg Wesselényi conspiracy, but who was spared execution through the donation, by his mother, of 300,000 forints and numerous castles to the imperial Habsburg treasury. He died shortly after their son, II. Rákóczi Ferenc, was born.

But Thököly fell out of favor with the sultan when the Turks were beaten back from the walls of Vienna in 1683 by the international Christian force of the Holy League, and he was imprisoned for 7 years. This enraged his *kuruc* followers, who defected by droves to the *labanc* side.

The 3 year-long defense of Munkács fortress by his wife Ilona earned her the respect even of the Austrian besiegers, so that at the end, she was granted free withdrawal, could keep her estates, but had to surrender her children to the tutelage of the Austrian emperor. Thököly and Ilona were ordered into exile by the sultan, and Thököly died in Turkey in 1705.

(to be continued)

Balaton – No Longer Just a Big Lake

viola vonfi

For Hungarians, Balaton is the big fresh-water "sea" of Hungary, a summer vacation resort for natives and foreigners alike. But now the name is no longer confined to Hungary ...

Some 160 miles southwest of Minneapolis, Minnesota is a small city called – are you ready? – Balaton! Population estimates for 2018 place the number of inhabitants at 678. There is a lake on the north side of town – Lake Yankton, so the name is not quite inappropriate. But how did it receive its name?

No one seems to know for certain. There are several versions: One claims it was the name of a stock

holder and employee of the Dakota Central Railroad which laid its tracks there in 1879. Another is that the town was to be named for a Mr. Bell and therefore to be called Belltown, but a traveling salesman convinced the settlers to call it Balaton, the name of a big lake in Europe, since the name was unique. Still another claims that the name was to be put up for a vote, that people were to cast a "ballot on" the name ...

Whichever version is true, there it is, and it's the only one in the US!

Another "Balaton", though, refers not to a place but to a sour cherry! It seems a very popular strain of sour cherry is grown in Újfehértó, Hungary, north of Debrecen. It is called "újfehértói fürtös" – "bunched from Újfehértó". Unlike the most popular American variety, the Montmorency,

not only its skin, but even its flesh, is red.

Now, several years ago, Michigan State University's Research Station at Clarksville was looking for tart cherry cuttings for its breeding program, and found this Hungarian variety. Somehow, "újfehértói fürtös" does not roll readily off an American tongue. But in order not to lose its national roots, so to speak, the decision was made to call it the "Balaton" variety, which even an American can pronounce.

So when you say "Balaton" nowadays, you have to be more precise in your definition!

viola vonfi is our correspondent from Stamford, CT. She finds it amusing that one of her ancestors was knighted by Wallenstein during the Thirty Years' War.



Downtown San Antonio Revived

EPF

What does San Antonio have to do with Magyar News Online? Why should we be interested? Read on!

Fifty-one years ago, in 1968, San Antonio, Texas hosted a world's fair



HemisFair District

called HemisFair. After the fair closed, the 92-acre site slowly declined, and became a mostly vacant area that was falling apart and was visited only rarely by local residents.

Then in 2009, the mayor and other local politicians decided to revitalize the former fair grounds. The HemisFair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation was established. In 2011, Andres Andujar became CEO of the Corporation. And thereby hangs a tale.

Because Andres is a grandson of Juhász Zoltán, former co-owner of the erstwhile Gamma Works of Budapest (see the April 2012 issue of Magyar News Online). Zoltán had emigrated to Colombia after World War II, and harking back to an early 19th century ancestor, took back the family name of Andujar.

Andres (Andris) Andujar was born in Cali, Colombia, to Zoltán's son András and his bride, Gábori Veronika. Andris came to the US to study architectural engineering at the University of Texas in Austin. Once he graduated, he moved to San Antonio where he first worked for a concrete manufacturer. Eventually, he went into design and project management of local projects, such as the San Antonio Central Li-

brary, the Hotel Valencia and expansion of the Convention Center; and in Austin the renovation and expansion of the Texas State Capitol.

Plans for the current HemisFair revitalization include the construction of apartments, shops and parks, a hotel and an office building, all of which is expected to create a hub of growth. So far, the Yanaguana Garden children's park has been open since 2015 and the first residential mix-use project will open this Spring (2019).

In an interview given to a local paper a few years ago, Andujar said,

"...places are defined as much by their physical spaces as by their people... the built environment is the communal space where citizens define their cities... HemisFair presents us with an opportunity to do something on a large scale that can help manifest the pride that we have in our city..."

We can be proud of this "Texas Power Broker", as the San Antonio Express-News called him, because of his Hungarian roots. For he is proving once again that Hungarians will make their mark, even several generations after leaving the old country.

The Son of Gog and Magog

To commemorate the centennial of the death of Ady Endre (1877-1919), the most influential Hungarian literary figure of the 20th century, we present his autobiographical poem, „Góg és Magóg fia vagyok én” – The Son of Gog and Magog (translated by Erika Papp Faber, as found in A Sampler of Hungarian Poetry - Ízelítő a magyar költészetből).



Marosán Csaba, actor of Kolozsvár Magyar Színház visiting Ady Endre Memorial in Érindszent, Ady's birthplace.

The Son of Gog and Magog

Ady Endre

The son of Gog and Magog am I,
On city wall and gate I bang in vain;
And yet I've turned to you to ask:
May one cry under the Carpathian chain?

By the famous Verecke² road came I,
Still clamors in my ears old Magyar song.
At Dévény³ will you let me break through,
Bringing new songs of new times along?

Into my ears come pour your scalding lead.
Let me be a new, singing Vazul⁴,
That I may not hear the new songs of life.
Trample on me roughly and be cruel.

Till then, with suffering, tears, expecting nothing,
Song on new wings nevertheless will soar.
Though Pusztaszer⁵ curse it a hundredfold,
It still triumphs, it's still new and Magyar.

Góg és Magóg fia vagyok én

Ady Endre

Góg és Magóg fia vagyok én,
Hiába döngetek kaput, falat.
S mégis megkérdeztem tőletek:
Szabad-e sírni a Kárpátok alatt?

Verecke híres útján jöttem én,
Fülemben még ősmagyar dal rivall,
Szabad-e Dévénynél betörni
Új időknek új dalaival?

Fülemben forró ólmot öntsetek,
Legyek az Új, az énekes Vazul,
Ne halljam az élet új dalait,
Tiporjátok reám durván, gazul,

De addig is sírva, kínban, mit se várva,
Mégis csak száll új szárnyakon a dal
S ha elátkozza százszor Pusztaszer,
Mégis győztes, mégis új, és magyar.

[1] Gog and Magog were biblical figures mentioned in several books of the Bible, and were considered in medieval times to be the ancestors of the Hungarians.

[2] The Hungarian tribes entered the Carpathian Basin through Verecke Pass, from the East. Ady could trace his ancestry back to the time of Árpád, so this was not merely symbolism.

[3] Dévény is a pass in the western Carpathians, leading to Austria and the West.

[4] Vazul was a pagan Hungarian leader rebelling against the Christianizing efforts of King St. Stephen. He was not executed, but molten lead was poured into his ears as punishment. Ady recognizes his role as a revolutionary poet.

[5] After their conquest of the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century, the tribal leaders met at Pusztaszer to decide the division of the territory. Here, Ady refers to Pusztaszer as a symbol of the literary archconservatives, who do not recognize as valid any modern form of writing or foreign influence.

Farsang recipes

Farsang (Carnival) started the day of vízkereszt (Epiphany). It will last for 40 days, until hamvazószerda (Ash Wednesday). In 2019, it runs from January 6 to March 6. The word "Farsang" came from the Bavarian-Austrian word "Fasching", a combination of "fasten" – fasting – and "Schank" – sale of wine and spirits. Originally, the word was used for the day before Lent, the last day to consume alcohol. Farsang or Carnival is a time for celebrating,

dancing, eating and drinking. Here are some recipes to make and enjoy the time of Carnival.

Vőlegény leves/ Groom's soup

1 lb. leg of lamb
1/2 lb. white beans
3-4 slices of bacon
2 medium onions
2 carrots
1 celery stalk
2 cloves of garlic
3 medium potatoes
1-2 bay leaves
1 tsp vinegar
Pinch of sugar
1 bunch parsley

Soak beans overnight in cold water.

Cube meat. Cut up bacon, garlic and onions into small pieces. Cut carrots and celery into strips. Peel and cube potatoes. Chop parsley. Fry bacon and add onion and garlic. Simmer for a few minutes. Add meat, fry for 5 minutes, stirring so it won't burn. Add beans with liquid, carrots, celery, salt, and enough water to cover it. Cover and cook until meat and vegetables are almost done. Add potatoes and cook for 20 more minutes.

Before serving, flavor it with vinegar, sugar and parsley.

Pork tenderloin ala Eger

12 slices of pork tenderloin, about
1 ½ lb.
1 medium onion
Salt
Black pepper
Mustard
Ketchup
1 stick butter
Bunch of parsley green
2 oz cognac
¼ cup *egri bikavér* (Bull's Blood
wine of Eger)

Cut up onions and pars-
ley. Tenderize and salt pork. Melt
half the butter, add and fry pork half
way. Remove from heat, pour co-
gnac over meat and light it. Set
aside.

In another pan melt butter, add and
simmer onions. Add wine and sim-
mer another 2-3 minutes. Add
ketchup and mustard, mix and add
tenderloin. Simmer until pork is
done. Sprinkle with black pepper
and parsley.

Serve warm with rice or potato
wedges fried in oil.

Bishop Attila Miklósházy, SJ – R.I.P.

*Appointed in 1989 by Pope St. John
Paul II, Attila Miklósházy, SJ served
as Bishop of Hungarians Abroad
until his retirement, at age 75, in
2006. He passed away on
December 28th, 2018 in a Jesuit
senior residence near Toronto,
Canada.*

Born in Diósgyőr in 1931, he began
his high school studies there, but
because he gave an inspirational
speech on March 15th, 1948, the
Communist government expelled
and barred him from every high
school in the country. He finished
his junior year privately, and began
his senior year in a nationalized high
school. Refusal to participate in a

demonstration against Cardinal Jo-
seph Mindszenty caused his expul-
sion from there as well. He took his
final exams for graduation in secret,
before Jesuit teachers.

He entered the Society of Jesus in
1949, beginning his seminary stud-
ies in Budapest, and continuing in
Szeged. Together with his class-
mates, he was taken to a detention
center, but managed to escape to
the central seminary in Buda-
pest. He took his first vows, in se-
cret, in 1952. Then he served two
years of mandated military service,
by which the authorities hoped to
deflect seminarians from their call-
ing. For him and for many thou-
sands of others considered "caste
aliens" (*osztály idegenek*), this
meant forced labor in construction
or coal mines. Because the religious
orders had been dissolved by the
Communist government, he then
worked as a surgeon's assistant
at Szent István Hospital in Buda-
pest.

He left Hungary by order of his su-
periors in December of 1956, and
completed his priestly studies in
Germany and Canada. Ordained in
Toronto on June 18th, 1961 by Cardi-
nal James Charles McGuigan, he
took his religious vows as a Jesuit in
Rome in 1966. He obtained a doc-
torate in Theology from the Grego-
rian University in Rome.
Subsequently he taught Theology at
Regis College, then at St. Michael
University, both in Toronto.

In 1984, Fr. Miklósházy was ap-
pointed Dean of the theological fac-
ulty at Toronto's St. Augustine Arch-
diocesan Seminary, where he also
taught Systematic Theology and
Liturgy.

Active in the post-Vatican II liturgi-
cal renewal, as well as in Anglican-
Roman Catholic ecumenical dia-
logue, he wrote a number of books
in English and Hungarian, and gave
retreats to priests and religious in
Canada and in Europe.

In 1989, Pope St. John Paul II
named him Titular Bishop of Castel-
lum Minus and Bishop of Hungarians
Abroad. In that capacity, he visited
Hungarian churches in the West
three times, as long as his health
permitted. Upon his mandatory re-
tirement in 2006, Bishop Cserháti
Ferenc, Auxiliary Bishop of Eszter-
gom-Budapest was named to suc-
ceed him.

Bishop Miklósházy was buried at St.
Augustine Seminary, Toronto. May
he rest in peace!



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Gold of the Huns

Olga Vállay Szokolay

*Some would dig for gold when and where they suspect any. Others find gold without realizing its value and happen to put unknown little villages such as **Nagyszéksós** on the map.*

Pre-Trianon Hungary had rich quarries of gold, such as *Körmöcbánya* (now Kremnica, Slovakia), a medieval town built above important gold mines that is the site of the oldest still-working mint in the world. Current-day Hungary, on the other hand, seems to be an ever-growing and ample, surprising provenance of silver and gold treasures discovered in different parts of the country, relics and evidence of ancient cultures on that land.

It was in the summer of 1926 when a five-year-old peasant boy, *Bálint József*, helped his mother plant flowers in their yard at Nagyszéksós, near Szeged. As he put the dahlia seeds in the soil, he found a gold torques (neck piece). His mother straightened it on the chopping board, so he could use it for a stick. It was pretty. He couldn't sleep all night, having such a fancy stick. He used it to drive pigs, until he lost it. A tractor-driver found it again in the soil at threshing time. He became suspicious and cut off a piece which another man, Börcsök Károly took to town on his motorcycle, to a jeweler. And that's when the whole discovery began.

The jeweler noticed something unusual and notified the Szeged Museum. At the time, the director of the museum was *Móra Ferenc*, the country's much-liked prolific writer, novelist, polemicist and poet. He went out to the premises and lived at the house of the Bálints for a while. By that time, Móra had heard about other objects, discovered there a generation earlier. The local kids, not realizing the pieces were

gold, were trading them for baked pumpkin and apples. Examining the surface, Móra found several golden objects. But he could not dig deeper, since Bálint Mátyás, the grandfather of József and owner of the property, would not allow anyone to disturb his vineyard. They were only allowed to use rakes, hoe and spade tips to free what was available near the surface. That lot was taken to the museum. Móra related the events in his story "A kincsásás halottai" (Victims of the Treasure Hunt).

In 1934, Bálint Mátyás died and his son dug up the worthless vineyard and plum tree. As he turned out the roots, he found a silver-and-gold alloy chalice and a shallower small golden plate. He cut the latter into three pieces with a hoe, to divide it. Being familiar with the earlier events, he notified the jeweler who advised the museum. They borrowed a sieve from Móra's mother, to sift the sand. They invited relatives, friends and reliable acquaintances to help with the digging. They could make good money doing



it, but were fired if caught keeping anything. The Bálint family was paid the price of gold at the time, and they bought some land with it.

The digs produced over 200 pieces of various objects, including drinking vessels, daggers, knives, jewelry and horse harnesses. The gold and silver items had been unanimously

identified as originating from the 5th century, when the Huns inhabited the land. However, opinions vary about the exact time frame of the origin and purpose of the items. Some archeologists link them to the treasures of Attila, the well-known and feared Hun leader. Layers of mystery, including his funeral in 453, have surrounded his memory. According to the romantic legend that originated in the 19th century, his coffin, a triple casket of iron, silver and gold, was buried in the Tisza River. The burying squad, returning from the burial, was executed by arrows to keep the location a secret forever.

Other experts date the treasures to the first third of the fifth century. The most probable theory connects it to Attila's uncle, Uptar or Oktar who, as per written documents, led the Huns in a campaign against Burgundy before 430. Allegedly, he had eaten himself to death and might have been buried there, but the funeral feast could have been celebrated later in his homeland. The treasures could have been his sacrificial gifts.

Some of these Hun discoveries are said to have emerged in museums in Western Europe, where their provenance has not always been recognized. Those that, through Móra Ferenc's efforts, were housed in the Szeged Museum, have been afforded an unusual degree of protection.

Towards the end of World War II, when the Soviet armies entered Hungary, the new director of the Szeged Museum decided that his first duty was to protect the Hun gold from possible new predators. He therefore set out on foot northwards with a backpack in which he had placed the gold, the museum typewriter and a few personal possessions. In the course of his journey, the Soviet soldiers relieved him of the typewriter and his personal possessions, including his overcoat. But the Hun gold was concealed under some sandwiches that had become so moldy that they excited no interest.

The invaluable treasure thus was saved, and was first housed at the National Museum in Budapest, before being taken back to the Szeged Museum that now bears the name of Móra Ferenc. After careful restoration, the objects have been kept there in a vault, while their *copies* are exhibited to viewers. Should you ever visit the exhibit, remember: "All that glitters is not gold" ...

Olga Vállay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.

It's a Small World!

This story was related by Vass Ildikó, whom many of our readers in the Tri-State area know – of how she reconnected with acquaintances she had met 45 years later.

Vass Ildikó and István were married in Mátyás templom in Szeged in 1972. The following year, on April 6, 1973, they flew to Rome for a 14-day Italian tour. On the 12th day of the tour, having seen quite a bit of the country, they took their suitcases and reported to the nearest police station, requesting asylum.

They were put on a train for Trieste, where they were examined for a month and a half, to make sure they were not subversives. At the end of that time, they were sent to the refugee camp at Latina, where they were housed in a large building reserved for families. There they met a couple, Darányi Tibor and Ilona, with their sons István (probably 8-10 years old), and Tibor (perhaps 12-14 years old).

Ildikó and István arrived in the US on January 15th, 1974. They lived in various places before finally settling in Orange County, NY. For years they attended the Hungarian Mass at St. Margit Church in Yonkers, where they met Szklenska Piroska.

Nowadays, Piroska sometimes attends the monthly Hungarian Mass celebrated by Fr. Csete Iván at Port Jervis, NY, where Ildikó and István organize the luncheon after the Mass.

Recently, Ildikó found out that Darányi Ilona was actually Piroska's sister! She learned that the Darányis had also come to New York, where they worked as superintendents in an apartment building. Ilona also sewed.

And so it was that, 45 years after their original encounter in Italy, they once again connected with the Darányis! Because ... (you know the refrain!) ... Kicsi a világ!



Did you know...

... that Rakonczay Gábor reached the South Pole on January 7, 2019, making him the first Hungarian ever to do so?

Starting off the coast of Antarctica, it took him 44 days and 4 hours to complete the 917 km distance. According to the rules, competitors are required to go in teams. His team consisted of three other persons, but he led the crew most of the way and pulled the heaviest sled (94 kg).

Antarctica is a huge lifeless continent, very clean and untouched. At the beginning of his trek it was -12° C, but the temperature fell below -20° C and sometimes went below -30° C. As a result Rakonczay suffered mild frostbite on his face and lost 10% of his starting weight during the adventure.

Zsuzsa Lengyel

... **that** ice skating goes back to pre-historic times? There is proof of that in the bone skates that archaeologists have found. Our ancestors tied bones to their feet. In the Keszthely Balaton Múzeum you can see a wooden skate with an iron blade from the Iron Age.

Ice skating became popular in Hungary in the 1700's, brought in by young Hungarians studying in the West.

For a short time, ice skating was prohibited by King József II, claiming that it was too dangerous.

In 1869, the "Pesti Korcsolya Egylet" was established. In 1871, the 1st Ice Skating competition, in 1939 the 1st World Ice Skating competition was conducted on the Városliget pond in Budapest.

Besides ice skating, ice hockey became popular, and many Hungarians

won awards in different competitions, even in Olympics.

Karolina Tima Szabo

... **that** the Rubik's Cube is the world best-selling toy, with over 350 million having been sold worldwide? A 3-D combination puzzle invented in 1974 by Hungarian Ernő Rubik, it has been entertaining us for over 40 years. The Cube has been marketed since its release, but sales have greatly increased in the early 2000s.

It really does not matter how old we are; for it is surely possible to have lots of fun, pleasure, learning and "working-out" our brains in order to figure out how to solve the Cube.

It reminds me how proud I was when first solving the puzzle many years ago. Nowadays we constantly see young children achieving the solution in a couple minutes or even in a few seconds - the world record for solving

the Cube is only 4.2 seconds!

István Arato

... **that** two concerts of the Greenwich (CT) Symphony Orchestra on February 23rd and 24th will feature works by two Hungarian composers to be played by one of the most significant present-day interpreters of Liszt? Internationally renowned Pianist Peter Toth, who has won prizes with his virtuosity around the world, will play Liszt's Hungarian Fantasy and Dohnányi's Variations on a Nursery Song.

The program will also include Levine's Overture for Orchestra and De Falla's El Amor Brujo ballet suite, sung by Mezzo-soprano Luzia Bradford.

The Saturday concert begins at 8PM, the Sunday one at 4PM, in the Greenwich High School Performing Arts Center.

EPF

The Wooden Churches of Máramaros in Northern Transylvania

Charles Bálintt Jr.

These unique architectural treasures must be seen to be appreciated!

The County of Maramureş (Máramaros megye in Hungarian) is in the north of Transylvania in today's Romania on the Ukrainian border. The western half of this border, with a slight divergence here and there, is the path of the Tisza River, until the Tisza takes a sharp turn toward the north. The total land area of the County is approximately 6,304 square kilometers (2,434 square miles). About 43% of this is covered by the Rodna range of the eastern section of the Carpathian Mountains. The tallest peak is called Pietrosul ("Nagy Pietrosz" in Hungarian), which reaches a height of 2,303 meters (7,556 feet). Also close to 80% of the land area is comprised of woodlands. No wonder they have so many wooden churches in this area.

Transylvania has some of the most beautiful scenery in any part of the world that I have seen. The Maramureş region is no exception. So it is no surprise that the Magyars crossing the Carpathians in 895 decided to begin settling in Transylvania on their journey westward. The once large Hungarian population of Maramureş has steadily decreased over the years, as is the case in many parts of Transylvania. The total population of Maramureş has also decreased from a high of 538,534 in 1992 to 461,290 in 2011. Out of this number there are 82.4% Romanians, 7.5% Hungarians, 6.8% Ukrainians, 2.7% Gypsies and 0.3% Germans.

There seem to have been two reasons for the construction of wooden churches in this region: One was because of the plentiful wood available throughout the County, and the other was the ban on building stone churches, enforced by the Catholic Austro-Hungarian authorities against





Top: The Church of the Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple in Bârsana (Barcánflava); The church in Șurdești (Dióshalom), center: The church in Plopiș (Nyárfás); The Merry Cemetery of Săpânța (Szaplónca); bottom: wooden church of Rogoz; church entrance, Maramures (Máramaros).

Christian Orthodox denominations. These churches were mostly Eastern Orthodox with a few Greek Catholic ones as well. The wooden churches that we see today were built between the 17th and 19th centuries. This was well after the Protestant Reformation and the split of Western and Eastern Christianity, but tensions between the various Christian faiths were still high.

The main type of wood used is oak, which seems to have stood the test of time quite well. The most distinguishing features of most of these churches are the lofty narrow tower and the immense roof, which seems to overshadow the rest of the structure. The architectural style is Gothic. They are very interesting structures indeed, often with carvings on the exterior and murals painted on the interior walls by local artisans. The expertise in carpentry to create such edifices was passed down from generation to generation.

The churches in the following eight towns were registered as World Heritage Sites in 1999 by UNESCO: Bârsana (Barcánflava in Hungarian), Budești (*Budfalva*), Desești (*Desze*), Leud (Jód), Plopiș (Nyárfás), Poienile Izei (*Sajómező*), Rogoz (*Rogoz*) and Șurdești (*Dióshalom*). So they have been recognized by the world for their religious, architectural and historic significance. At the same time, they are still functioning churches that are filled with the faithful every Sunday.

The area also has some interesting museums. For example in the town of Sighetu Marmăției (Máramarossziget) you will find the Museum of Maramureș; the Elie Wiesel Memorial House, probably due to the fact that the County has a sizeable Jewish population; and the Victims of Communism Memorial, also appropriately known as the "Museum of Arrested Thought".

In addition to the church constructions, a lot of wood is used in the Maramureș region for other buildings as well. There are also the intricately carved gates in front of many of the homes in this area. Wood has likewise been used for the colorful headstones at the "Merry Cemetery" in the town of Săpânța (Szaplónca), Romania. Here the people believe in a wonderful afterlife and celebrate death as something special that delivers the person to this much better life. They don't share in the ideas of most of the rest of the Christian world, where death is treated as a very solemn occasion and the epitaphs are almost always very respectful. Here the good as well as the bad is written about each person's life. Some are also quite humorous. One example, was written by a woman's son in law (Translation found on Wikipedia):

*Under this heavy cross
Lies my poor mother in-law
Three more days should she have lived
I would lie, and she would read (this cross).
You, who here are passing by
Not to wake her up please try
Cause' if she comes back home
She'll criticize me more.
But I will surely behave
So she'll not return from the grave.
Stay here, my dear mother in-law!*

This region, as so many other areas of Transylvania, would be quite well worth the visit. I know that now I will also put it on my list, the next time I am fortunate enough to find myself back there again in that beautiful section of the world and the home of my ancestors.

Charles Bálintt Jr. is a working Customs Broker in Lawrence, NY and a member of the Magyar News Online Editorial Board.





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