

A Mátis Genealogy

by Vic Berecz

Preface

This preface provides some basic information required to understand certain approaches taken by the author. This "compiled genealogy" was formalized to meet the requirements for CG certification. The author does not hold himself out *for hire* as a genealogist, and his personal work is normally not so specific in focus. As required, this document begins with a couple -- MÁTIS Mihály and his wife SZALAI Éva -- and documents three generations of their descendants. The fourth generation, including the grandfather of the author, are identified and briefly discussed. The particular people and period were chosen for this exercise so that the task of assessing the work might also provide some interesting reading. You will witness radical changes in Hungary, as well as the extinction of this male line of the Mátis family.

Working in English and writing about Hungarians of the 18th and 19th century creates some logistical difficulties regarding names. The following conventions were adopted.

(1) Names of persons in Hungary are given in the normal Hungarian format -- surname followed by given name(s). The family name is usually capitalized to help preclude confusion for those unfamiliar with this Hungarian name format. For example: MÁTIS Mihály.

(2) For political reasons, records of this period in Hungary exist in three languages (Latin, German, and Hungarian) -- some individual entries actually being a mix of two or three languages. Also, standard spelling changes occurred in the 1780's and again in the second half of the 1800's. With these language and spelling differences, and the occasional use of short forms (i.e., nicknames and diminutives), it is not unusual to find five or six different spellings of the given name *for a single individual* in their record. Therefore, the standard Hungarian spelling of *given names* of the latter part of the 19th century is used throughout.

(3) Spelling changes in surnames were less common during the period, and family names were not normally subject to translation. But, sound shifts in the late 18th century caused some changes (the Latin birth record of 1767 reads *Michaelus Mátés*, but all later records spell his surname *Mátis*). An official simplification of spelling in the late-1800's altered the spelling of certain surnames for a time (for example: *Berec* rather than *Berecz* was used for a few years). Other surnames are spelled in two or more interchangeable ways which are pronounced identically, for example: *Pálfı* or *Páfi* or *Pálffy* or *Páffy*, *Horváth* or *Horvát*, and *Szalai* or *Szalay*. These spelling variations are not critical issues for this genealogy. In keeping with standard practice the names as spelled in Nagy's **Magyarország családai** (*Families of Hungary*) published 1857-65 are used -- so *Mátis*, *Berecz*, *Pálfı*, *Horváth*, and *Szalai* are the spellings you will find throughout.

Explanatory information is provided, where necessary, in on-page footnotes indicated by one or more asterisks. All formal citations of sources are referenced by numbered endnotes. The format of endnotes is an adaptation of those recommended by Lackey in **Cite Your Sources**. This author felt adaptation was necessary to permit translation of many foreign language titles, and to improve the very dated format specified by that book (which was obviously meant for typescript documents prepared before the flexibility of computer-based word processing and desktop publishing systems).

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Introduction.

An Overview of Hungarian History of the 18th and 19th Centuries.

Hungary was defeated by the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Mohács in 1526 and they proceeded to occupy much of the country. Gradually the Turks were pushed back, with Buda recaptured in 1686. In a final peace treaty at Karlóca in January 1699, the Turks gave up all claims to Hungary and Transylvania. By this time, "... one-third of the country was uninhabited wasteland, the haunt of packs of wolves and wild birds of prey. The population of the entire Carpathian basin had been reduced to less than half its former size ..." In place of Turkish destruction came Austrian despotism, with much recaptured land being distributed to wealthy foreigners who owed their allegiance to the Habsburgs.¹

An insurrection in the early years of the 18th century against the Habsburgs was led by Ferenc Rákóczi II, one of Hungary's wealthiest landowners. He led a peasant army of *jobbágy*s (bondsmen, the Hungarian equivalent of serfs) in a truly national movement. He was also supported by many of the national minorities of Hungary, including German, Slovaks, Ruthenians, and Romanians. When international conditions permitted the Habsburg ruler Joseph I to concentrate on the revolt in Hungary, he appointed a Hungarian aristocrat, Count John Pálffy, commander-in-chief. Rákóczi went to Poland to gain the support of the Russian czar. Failing in that attempt, in 1711 his commander in Hungary, Károlyi, concluded a peace with Pálffy. Rákóczi refused to accept the minor concessions of the treaty and remained in exile -- first in Poland and then in Turkey.²

With 1711's Treaty of Szatmar and the ascension of Charles III to the throne, a rather quiet period of national renewal began. Hungary began devoting its energy to rebuilding the country after centuries of warfare and devastation. One Habsburg concession involved the reallocation of lands. Many of Hungary's lower nobility were now allowed to regain some of their former land holdings in areas formerly occupied by the Turks. There was also Habsburg support for much-needed improvements in Hungarian agriculture and other economic areas.³ Of specific interest to this genealogy, was the fact that in 1716 Charles III closed most of the Protestant churches of Hungary including the evangelical church at Beled.

A major issue in Charles' life was the lack of a male heir. With some hesitation, in 1723 the Hungarian parliament passed the "pragmatic sanction" declaring Hungary's "indivisible and inseparable union" with the hereditary Habsburg territories. Upon his death in 1740, his oldest daughter, Maria Theresia, assumed the throne. This set up a feeding frenzy in other European courts desiring a piece of the Austrian possessions, and led to the War of the Austrian Succession. Maria Theresia made a personal appeal for support to the Hungarian parliament which was accepted with typical Hungarian chivalry. Hungary thus saved Maria Theresia's throne and possessions when there was a clear opportunity to free itself, and by this act perhaps prolonging Habsburg rule in Hungary for almost two centuries.⁴ She is quoted as saying, "I am a good Hungarian woman whose heart is filled with gratitude toward this nation."⁵ 18th century Hungary did benefit in some ways from a grateful queen. In fact, she even took a Hungarian tutor for her sons, and made them learn Hungarian. She also invited many Hungarian nobles to her court and was most generous to them. In 1760, she founded the *Hungarian Noble Guard*, a personal bodyguard of young nobles led by György Bessenyei. Among other things, this guard initiated a revival of Hungarian literature and national consciousness at the court.⁶ From 1760 onward, a Berecz family member was always on duty with the Hungarian Noble Guard. The last was the son of a Mérges minister named Imre Berecz.*⁷

* Imre Berecz is the first cousin, three generations removed, of this author.

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A major down-side of Maria Theresia' reign was the Austrian focus of creating in Hungary a breadbasket for the Empire ...a virtual agricultural colony. Also, despite some concessions, Maria Theresia -- as a devout Roman Catholic -- left in place most of the constraints on Protestant worship in Hungary imposed by her father. She made it very difficult for Protestants to open or rebuild churches, and further curtailed Protestant participation in public life. This led to a great renewal of Catholicism in Hungary, and deep internal divisions between Catholics and the large Protestant minority.⁸

When her son, Joseph II, came to the throne in 1780, there was significant change. Joseph was obsessed with the concept of "enlightened absolutism." He was determined to bring happiness to his subjects in a rational way, whether they wanted it or not! His aim was a unified, homogenized Austrian monarchy. He had no intention of honoring the Hungarian constitution. In 1781, he issued a decree of complete religious tolerance. He also made German the official language of Hungary, replacing Latin which had become the established language when Hungarian was no longer tolerated by the Habsburgs. He introduced a new system of taxation based on a land tax that was to be levied on all landowners, including the traditionally exempt Hungarian nobility.* He also restored freedom of movement to the *jobbágy*s, absolved members of their families from personal service, and provided public attorneys to represent them in any litigation with their landlords.

Foreign wars and entanglements went badly for Joseph, and the empire was in increasingly desperate straits. On his deathbed in 1790, he retracted most of his Hungarian reforms except for religious tolerance and the status of *jobbágy*s.⁹ These two issues had a major effect on the subjects of this genealogy, since (1) it permitted our Mátis family to openly practice their religion and become professionals (teachers and pastors) in the service of their church; and (2) allowed our Pálfi family to move rapidly from serfdom to wealthy citizens of the community.

Leopold II inherited an empire in turmoil. However, he was much more flexible than his brother, and resolved most issues through a series of compromises. In March 1791, several important acts were passed which among other things (1) declared Hungary a free and independent state, not subject to any other nation; (2) vested legislative authority in the king and parliament jointly, and prohibited unilateral royal decrees; and (3) required that Parliament be called into session every three years. But, the progress was short-lived. Leopold was succeeded by his son, a conservative autocrat of very limited intelligence. During most of his reign, Hungary returned to conservatism. But, with progressive devaluation of the currency, taxation issues continued to be important. With the convening of Parliament in 1825, a new resurgence of national enthusiasm began, led by Count István Széchenyi.¹⁰

Much of that enthusiasm led directly to the revolution of 1848-9. Since that war, its great hero Lajos Kossuth, and subsequent events are a universally-known part of world history, no further detail will be recounted here. The revolution was put down, largely through the Russian czar' s support of the Habsburgs. Many Hungarian officers were executed, and an era of great repression for Hungary began. The nation was essentially incorporated into Austria as a province. Most things Hungarian were forbidden. Many Hungarian people reacted negatively, and were punished severely. Internationally, things went poorly for Austria in the 1860' s. Their humiliation by the Prussians at Königgratz in 1866 was the final straw. They needed the support of their largest minority -- the Hungarians -- to survive.

This led to the "Compromise of 1867" and the formation of the *Dual Monarchy* of Austria-Hungary. From this time until the end of World War I, Austria and Hungary had the unique

* This tax was a major driver in the history of the next half century, though it was never effectively collected. We shall hear more of it later.

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arrangement of being two separate, independent nations sharing a monarch and three ministries: finance, foreign affairs, and war. Over the decades, due to strong economic growth and other factors, Hungary' s influence on the dual monarchy grew rapidly. The highpoint of that ascendancy was the celebration of Hungary' s millennium in 1896- the 1000th anniversary of the entry of the Magyar tribes into the Carpathian basin.

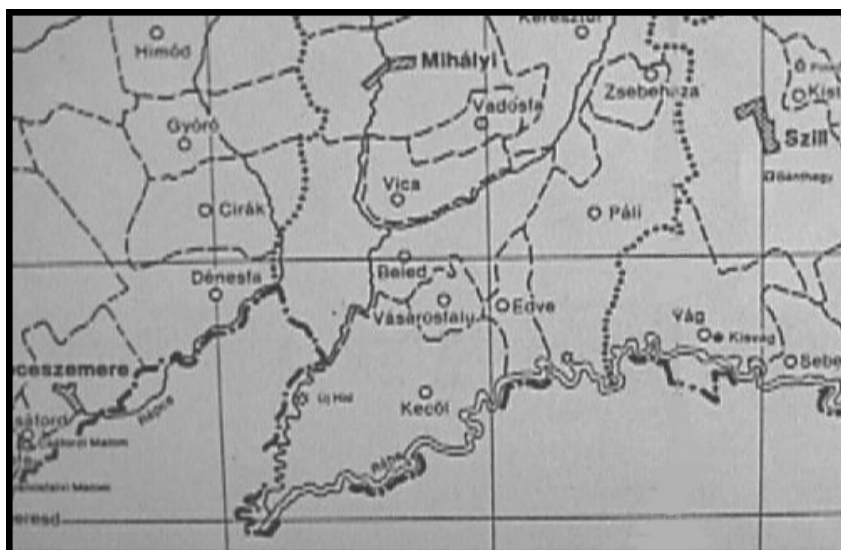
Below, for your reference, is a list of the Habsburg monarchs who ruled Hungary in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Leopold I	1657-1705
Joseph I	1705-1711
Charles III	1711-1740
Maria Theresa	1740-1780
Joseph II	1780-1790
Leopold II	1790-1792
Francis I	1792-1835
Ferdinand V	1835-1848
Francis Joseph I	1848-1916

The Town of Beled.

The Mátis family lived in the southern part of Sopron megye* in the town of Beled. (In the district along the upper Rába river -- "Rábaközi felső járás.") Sopron is the northwestern-most megye of present-day Hungary. A map of the Beled area of Sopron megye is provided below.¹¹

The population of Beled was largely of the evangelical (ie. Lutheran) faith, and so, in addition to the surrounding villages, the people of the area had close ties to the predominately evangelical villages of the adjacent northern part of Vas megye. In the genealogical data below, unless specified otherwise, the towns and villages mentioned are all in Sopron megye.



* The *megye* is the principal political subdivision of Hungary, roughly equivalent to a British *county*.

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The Life and Times of MÁTIS Mihály (born 1768).

The standard vital data on MÁTIS Mihály and his family are provided in the box below. Following that we address two topics: *The Earlier History of the Mátis Family*, and *The Three Major Social Groupings of 18th Century Hungary*

1. **MÁTIS Mihály** was christened on 11 Aug 1768 in Beled¹². He was the son of MÁTIS Ádam and BUTI Ilona. He was a small farmer and citizen (polgár) of Beled. He died before 1832.*

He was married to SZALAI Éva (daughter of SZALAI István and LETENYEI Zsuzsanna) on 17 Jan 1792**.¹³ The entry in the marriage register translates as:*** "On the 17th day of January of 1792 the young unmarried man Michael Matis, aged 25, and his betrothed maiden Eva Szalai of Dénesfa, aged 17, were married. Presiding were Michael Mátis and Stephan Buti of Beled." **SZALAI Éva** was christened on 02 Mar 1774 in Beled.¹⁴ She died on 5 Mar 1846 in Beled.¹⁵ MÁTIS Mihály and SZALAI Éva had the following children:

- 2 i. **MÁTIS János** was christened on 19 Oct 1794 in Beled.¹⁶ He died before 1811.
- +3 ii. **MÁTIS Éva.**
- 4 iii. **MÁTIS Zsuzsanna** was christened on 27 Oct 1800 in Beled.¹⁷ She died before 1804.
- 5 iv. **MÁTIS Zsuzsanna** was christened on 24 Aug 1804 in Beled.¹⁸ She died young.
- 6 v. **MÁTIS Mihály** was christened on 25 Jul 1808 in Beled.¹⁹ He died before 1813.
- 7 vi. **MÁTIS János** was christened on 5 Oct 1811 in Beled.²⁰ He died young.
- +8 vii. **MÁTIS Mihály.**

The Earlier History of the Mátis Family.

Mátis is an ancient Hungarian family name. [It is pronounced "ma-teach" with the accent on the first syllable, which is universal in Hungarian.] It was previously spelled Máté and Mátés. The Mátis family is thought to have originated in Transylvania, in Mátisfalva (now Matiseni, Romania) -- meaning literally the *village of the Mátis*.²¹ The Hungarians of Transylvania were largely Protestant, and included (in addition to the dominant Reformed followers of Calvin) many Evangelicals (i.e., Lutherans), and even Baptists and Unitarians. Most of the Mátis family were (and are to this day) adherents of the evangelical faith.

* I have been waiting six months for the death records of the Vadosfa church for the years 1790-1829. In their absence, I cannot provide a specific source for the deaths listed in this box. There is, though, persuasive evidence from other records that the deaths did occur in the periods indicated.

** While marriages of Beled residents were recorded in the church registers at Vadosfa until 1829, it is unlikely that most of those marriages actually took place in the church there. Rather, they probably took place in a Beled home. In the records of many of these marriages is the Latin term "Pronubis Existante" which means *come forth to preside at a marriage*. The man/men listed were probably the local deacons who fulfilled that role.

*** The original Latin text reads: "1792 -- Die 17 Jan Copulatus Juvenis Michael Mátis Anor 25 cum Sponsa sua Virgine Dénesfaen Eva Szalai Anor 17. Pronubis Michaele Mátis et Stephano Buti Beleden Existante."

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The Mátis family were early settlers in Sopron megye, in what is now northwestern Hungary. They likely came west to help fight the Turks, who were ousted from the general area by 1600. One MÁTIS Benedek was, already in 1648, a leading citizen of Beled and a pillar of the Evangelical church of that town. In 1716 -- upon orders of Charles III -- the Evangelical church and school in Beled were closed. During most of the 18th century, the evangelical community of Beled were forced to use the church in nearby Vadosfa for their religious observances. A few years after the edict of religious toleration of Joseph II, on 14 September 1787 CSÁKVÁRI Ferenc came to Beled as an evangelical teacher. On the following 29 January, the first evangelical public worship in Beled in more than 60 years was hosted by MÁTIS Mihály in his barn.²² The focus of this genealogy was this man' s nephew and namesake.

The Three Major Social Groupings of 18th Century Hungary.

The three major social groups in Hungary were the nobles (*nemes*), middle-class citizens (*polgár*) the bondsmen (*jobbágy*). Most of the people identified in this genealogy were middle-class citizens. While nationally this was the smallest of the three groups, it appears that in Beled this was the largest societal group. A few of the people mentioned were nobles, and a few (at least in the early period) were among the group of *jobbágy*s in bond to major landowners. None were a part of the extremely wealthy and very small group of "titled nobility" who controlled much of Hungary' s agricultural land in that era.

The question of nobility is not critical to this work. The Mátis family were not nobles during the period under study. But, they did marry into several noble families. Therefore, an understanding of Hungary' s peculiar concept of nobility is useful. According to Robertson in **Revolutions of 1848 - A Social History** on page 263: "All free men of Hungary were classed as *nobles*, even though some had enormous estates while some were scarcely better off than peasants. The theory of the Magyar state, from the days of the conquest was that every Hungarian was free and equal." The author goes on to say, "The so-called nobles were protected from arbitrary arrest and from corporal punishment, and they had a great tradition of free speech which went with their right to vote. And they had the extraordinary right of not paying taxes." In 1848, one in fourteen Hungarians was a noble, providing a surprisingly democratic tradition for that era (e.g., only one 1-in-24 Britons could vote at that time). Members of the nobility mentioned here are given the abbreviated title *Ns.* for "nemes" or noble.

The people we are focusing on were relatively prosperous middle-class citizens -- primarily farmers and professionals. The Mátis families of Beled produced several evangelical pastors, and many teachers for evangelical church schools. The religious toleration of Joseph II and the Hungarian national revival that took place during the long, somnolent rule of Francis I, permitted increased opportunity for the relatively small group of middle class citizens of Hungary, including the MÁTIS family. Overall, during the early 1800' s, the middle class population of Hungary grew rapidly. This was caused by a combination of many *jobbágy*s gaining independent land holdings as a result of the reforms of Joseph II, and the immigration of large numbers of Jewish merchants and tradesmen (primarily from Poland) to the towns.

After the Compromise of 1867, opportunities for non-land-owning nobles diminished in the professions (excluding church-related professions), due to the addition of many highly educated Jews to the population. The result was the migration of a large number of nobles to jobs in the government bureaucracy (which was not open to Jews). This resulted in the traditional Hungarian nobility taking on (in the eyes of some) the image of pompous buffoons, epitomized in Mikszáth' s popular novel **Gentry Wedding**.

The final, and largest group of Hungarians of the period were the *jobbágy*s, or bondsmen. At the time of King Stephen, all Hungarians were free -- i.e., nobles. [Originally, *nemes* simply meant a member of one of the Magyar tribes.]. Over the centuries conditions changed so that in large areas previously free men fell into bond to the large landowners. In some areas where tradition was more

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strongly embedded (such as Transylvania) this never occurred. Later there were numerous opportunities for former nobles to regain their status through service to the king. Basically, the numbers of *nemes* and *jobbágy* fluctuated over the years -- often with little difference between their economic circumstances.²³ It is notable that in the Beled area there were fewer jobbágys than citizens, even in the late 18th century.

With the reforms of Joseph II relating to serfdom, things changed rapidly. Children of jobbágys no longer were bound to serve their father's masters. Many took the opportunity to leave and either make their way in business in towns, or to purchase small farms. We will see more on this subject later. The bottom-line though was that throughout the first half of the 19th century serfdom gradually became less entrenched throughout Hungary.

One of the reforms of the 1848-9 revolution was the complete liberation of the jobbágys. After the failure of the revolt, that freedom remained, but the plan for compensation of the land-owners for their losses was never adequately addressed in the Austrian drive for complete domination and financial exploitation. In essence, in the 1850's many Hungarians were again equal ... they were equally poor. (Of course, with the exception of a few hugely wealthy Habsburg lackeys.) After the Compromise of 1867 though, the economic circumstances of nobles, citizens, and former serfs all rapidly advanced.

The Life and Times of MÁTIS Mihály (born 1813).

The standard vital data on this MÁTIS Mihály and his family are provided in the box below. Following that we address the topic of the *Makeup of the Beled Community*.

3. **MÁTIS Éva** was christened on 9 Jan 1798 in Beled.²⁴

She was married to DOMJAN Mihály on 9 Feb 1819.²⁵ **DOMJAN Mihály** was born about 1795 in Csánig, Vas megye -- where the couple settled. Information about their family, and the dates of their deaths, are presently unknown.

8. **MÁTIS Mihály** was christened on 1 Mar 1813 in Beled.²⁶

He was married to HORVÁTH Katalin (daughter of HORVÁTH Ferenc and Ns. FARKAS Sára) on 31 Jan 1832 in Beled.²⁷ **HORVÁTH Katalin** was christened on 19 May 1812 in Beled.²⁸ Both were alive at the date of their son's wedding in 1853. After his execution, they seem to have left the area and the date and place of their deaths is unknown. MÁTIS Mihály and HORVÁTH Katalin had the following children:

+9 i. **MÁTIS László.**

10 ii. **MÁTIS Mihály** was born on 1 Apr 1837 in Beled.²⁹ He died on 27 Jan 1839 in Beled.³⁰

Makeup of the Beled Community.

At the end of the 18th century, Beled was the second largest of the 24 towns and villages in its district. But unlike Kapuvár, the largest, Beled was overwhelmingly Protestant. According to a statistical summary, it had 192 households, consisting of 331 family units and 1583 individuals.³¹ Of these 477 people were Roman Catholic and 55 were Jews.³² There were no 18th century "conscriptions of settlements" providing information about evangelical Lutheran parishioners, therefore the *Historical Gazetteer* only provides such information for a decade later.³³ The size of

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the evangelical community of Beled in 1812 was 1108 persons.³⁴ This number seems quite consistent with the figures provided above. Perhaps, the rationale for Charles III choosing to close Beled' s church and school- in favor of the much smaller town of Vadosfa with a population of only 390³⁵ -- was to deprive the evangelical community of the area its focal point, the church in Beled.

The land ownership in Beled at the end of the 18th century is categorized as follows: (1) small, individual farms (közirtokosság); (2) properties of Prince ESTERHÁZY Miklós; (3) church properties; (4) properties of Count ESTERHÁZY Imre; (5) properties of Count CZIRÁKY; and (6) fourth estate taxable properties (IV. osztályú vámhely) -- the town' s merchants and tradesmen.³⁶ This breakdown in the Beled area is somewhat different than most of the rest of northwest Hungary where the Esterházy land holdings were overwhelming.

A study of taxation of the period provides further evidence that the social structure of Beled was quite atypical. Prior to the reign of Joseph II, taxation of the jobbágys was extremely burdensome. Among Joseph' s reforms was to focus taxation on land holdings, presumably moving the burden of taxation to the nobility (especially the great landowners) and the middle-class citizens who owned property. Through the appointment of a royal commission, repeated attempts were made to actually collect these taxes from the nobility. But due to Hungary' s conservatism, historic privileges of the nobility, and relatively large group of nobles (nemes), collection of property-based taxes from the nobility was never really enforced.³⁷ So, in the early 1800' s, the burden of taxation fell largely on the middle-class -- excluding the feudal obligations of the serfs, which was largely "in kind."

In 1828, a census of taxable properties was made. Again, this included only those citizens who owned land and were not members of the nobility. In essence taxation still focused on the middle-class. These records for Beled and the nearby village of Vásárosfalu were analyzed.³⁸ There were 136 taxable properties in Beled. The total number of households in 1800 was 192. Even if we assume some significant population growth (which actually may not have occurred), it is clear from the statistics that the majority of Beled' s residents were middle-class citizens with taxable land holdings. A cursory examination of the evangelical church records for the 1830' s (when citizenship status was duly recorded with each entry) seems to confirm this. On the other hand in the out-lying village of Vásárosfalu, the opposite seems to be the case. There were only 17 taxable properties in 1828, with a total of 49 households in 1800.³⁹ So, in Vásárosfalu, well less than a majority of the households were occupied by middle-class citizens.

More specifically, a further look at that census shows that of Beled' s 136 taxed properties, seven were headed by a Mátis. Additionally, one of the 17 taxed properties in the nearby village of Vásárosfalú was a Mátis (a cousin of MÁTIS Mihály).⁴⁰ Some of these Mátis families owned livestock and employed servants. Our MÁTIS Mihály lived with his wife, two children, a brother, and one farm laborer. No major livestock (cattle, horses, or sheep) were recorded for their property.⁴¹ Pigs and poultry -- the staples of the small farmer -- were not included in the taxation census.

The Life and Times of MÁTIS László (born 1834).

The standard vital data on MÁTIS László and his family are provided in the box below. Following that we address the key topic of *The Continuing Rebellion* and the direct effect it had on the lives of the Mátis family. We will also learn how a family can go *From Serf to Nobleman in Four Generations*.

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9. **MÁTIS László** was born on 2 Mar 1834 in Beled.⁴² He was executed on 28 Dec 1861 in Beled.⁴³

He was married to PÁLFI Anna (daughter of PÁLFI Mihály and NAGY Julianna) on 20 Sep 1853 in Beled.⁴⁴ Witnesses at the wedding were Horváth László and Pálfi János, both citizens of Beled. **PÁLFI Anna** was born on 20 Apr 1837 in Beled.⁴⁵ Shortly after the death of László, she remarried.* **MÁTIS László** and **PÁLFI Anna** had the following children:

- 11 i. **MÁTIS Zsófia** was born on 9 Aug 1855 in Beled.⁴⁶ She died on 27 Aug 1855 in Beled.⁴⁷
- +12 ii. **MÁTIS Zsófia.**

The Continuing Rebellion.

Much to the chagrin of the Austrian General Haynau, when the great Hungarian revolution of 1848-9 was seen as a lost cause, the Hungarian patriots surrendered to the Russian army rather than the Austrians. The revolutionary leader Lajos Kossuth went into exile. Then began a great retribution led by Haynau -- known as the "Hyena of Brescia" for the mass executions, flogging of women, and other cruelty that he had employed earlier in Italy.⁴⁸ First the Hungarian premier Louis Batthyány was executed in Budapest and thirteen Hungarian generals were executed at Arad. Included among them was Károly Leiningen, of whom we shall hear more. In their vengeance, according to an 1851 Austrian report, Habsburg courts tried 4,628 Hungarian rebels. About 500 were sentenced to death, but only 120 were actually executed. About 2000 were sentenced to prison, with terms varying from 10 to 20 years. A series of amnesties resulted in all those still alive being released before the end of the decade.⁴⁹

Haynau was relieved of his command in 1851. He was replaced by Baron Alexander Bach whose mission was to Germanize Hungary. Taxes were tripled. Transylvania and Croatia were separated from Hungary. Military border districts were established. German was declared the national language. Traditional county government was abolished. Many petty laws were imposed, for instance forbidding the wearing of clothes "of a revolutionary cut" or hats with crane feathers (such as the one worn by Kossuth) or speaking Hungarian in public. Even non-smoking was regarded as a sign of rebelliousness ... since Austria considered the tobacco tax an important source of income. And all this was enforced by a vast network of secret police, censorship, and the use of informers.⁵⁰

Passive resistance by many brought ridicule to these efforts, and produced a renewed Magyar spirit. These passive efforts were advocated by Ferenc Deák, who through the 1850' s gained ascendancy in Hungarian politics favoring a compromise with Austria. The resistance included non-payment of taxes, avoidance of military service, refusal to hold public office, pretending ignorance of German, etc.⁵¹

In certain respects, some good came out of this era, in addition to the resurgence of national feeling. The new capitalism that came to the economic sector under Bach resulted in

* See *From Serf to Nobleman in Four Generations* below.

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an influx of capital, agricultural productivity grew, railroads were constructed, and industrial development began. The abolition of serfdom made a large labor force of former *jobbágy*s available to industry. The trade volume of Budapest shipping increased to the levels of Antwerp and Bremen.⁵²

Kossuth maintained contact with the more forceful resistors within Hungary. Various conspiracies continued throughout the decade, with arrests, persecutions, imprisonments and executions of "rebels and conspirators."⁵³ Certainly the middle-class, evangelical population of Sopron and Vas megyes looked toward Kossuth as a potential savior from the decades of religious and taxation discrimination they had endured. The most rabid of these were the young men who had been too youthful to fight in 1848-9, but old enough to understand the issues. Among them was MÁTIS László.

By 1859, Austria was again in international difficulty. A failed policy and military weakness resulted in the loss of her Italian provinces of Lombardy and Venetia. Two very different approaches to the situation evolved in Hungary. Deák and his followers pressed for a compromise based on re-establishing the traditional Hungarian constitution. The more radical followers of Kossuth sought only complete independence. When negotiations were going badly in early 1861, Count Maurice Pálffy was appointed viceroy of Hungary, and he resumed police state tactics. But, the spirit of rebellion could not be suppressed. Conspiracies formed all over the country, due primarily to the influence of Kossuth. It seemed a general uprising was near.⁵⁴

One of these conspiracies -- in the area of Sopron and Vas megye along the Rába river -- was led by LEININGEN Eugen, the son of one of the generals executed at Arad in 1849. Somehow, MÁTIS László became involved. He was not a soldier, just a young evangelical school teacher. His role in the conspiracy was found out, probably through an informer. He was arrested, and given 24 hours to settle his affairs.⁵⁵ On 28 Dec 1861, he was executed on the rack. In the church register, the cause of death was listed as "agyonavdaltatás" -- literally *torn to pieces*.⁵⁶ Thus came to an end the male line of this branch of the Mátis family

So does this family have a hero and martyr to be proud of? Actually not. It wasn't long before Francis Joseph decided to buy into the compromise offered by Deák. With great celebration, on 08 June 1867 Francis Joseph was crowned king of Hungary at Buda. Differences were put aside. Capital poured into the country. Everyone seemed to prosper. For a while, those activists who continued Kossuth's rebellion for more than a decade were viewed as an aberration. Then they were simply forgotten ... as was MÁTIS László. The insurrections of 1861 are only a very minor footnote to history.

From Serf to Nobleman in Four Generations.

Behind the story of the Mátis family provided here is another remarkable family story. That is the story of the Pálfi line of which the wife of MÁTIS László was a part. I will briefly summarize the facts that show the transition from PÁLFI Mihály, a *jobbágy*, to his great-grandson, KIS Gyula, a nobleman.

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PÁLFI Mihály was born in Beled on 09 May 1756 to PÁLFI Péter and LÁSZLÓ Judit.⁵⁷ On 05 Feb 1782 he married FEKETE Judit, the daughter of NIGRINI* Péter and NÉMETH Rozina of Vadosfa.⁵⁸ They had ten children. The fact that he was a bondsman is plainly identified in the 27 Jun 1820 marriage record of his son Mihály and NAGY Julianna.⁵⁹ There the father of the groom is identified as a "jobbágy ember" -- a bondsman or serf. [This was during one of the several periods when every person' s "citizenship status" was recorded with each entry.]

The reforms of Joseph II, which came too late for the PÁLFI Mihály (born 1757), presented his son the opportunity to escape serfdom. Which he, like many others, did successfully. By the time of the 1828 taxation census, PÁLFI Mihály (born 1792) is already shown as a citizen and landowner -- though with only modest holdings.⁶⁰ At his death on 07 Jan 1873 in Beled, he was identified as a *gazda* -- a wealthy landowner.⁶¹

As we saw above, his daughter Anna married well -- though she was widowed at only 23 years of age due to politics. Not long thereafter, she remarried in Beled. On 05 April 1864, she married KIS Károly, a wealthy, noble landowner of Nemesmagasi, Vas megye.⁶² They had two children, Ida was born in Nemesmagasi on 14 Feb 1865,⁶³ and Gyula was born on 30 Mar 1869.⁶⁴

I believe it is interesting that the youngest, Gyula, was born a nobleman during the lifetime of his grandfather who had been born into a jobbágy' s cottage. Though the young boy' s great-grandfather lived most of his life as a jobbágy, by the year of Gyula' s birth much had changed in Hungary. Serfdom had already been abolished for twenty years ...and, being a member of the nobility had far less meaning than it had in years past. In any case, this story is a credit to the ambition and perseverance of PÁLFI Mihály and the potential for upward social mobility presented even in the repressive environment of 19th century Hungary.

The Life and Times of MÁTIS Zsófia (born 1857).

The standard vital data on MÁTIS Zsófia and her family are provided in the box below. Following that we bring this genealogy to a conclusion by summarizing *The Fourth Generation and Beyond*.

12. **MÁTIS Zsófia** was born on 13 May 1857 in Beled HUN.⁶⁵ She was baptized the day of her birth. Godparents were: Ns. Edvi Sándor, Talabér Sofia, Illyés Ferenc, Schmidelius Rozina, the widow of Kosári Mihály, and Horváth Anna. Following her mother' s remarriage, she was brought up in Beled by her father' s relatives. She died on 16 Nov 1937 in Beled.*

She was married to Ns. BEREZ Gábor (son of Ns. BEREZ József and SZALAI Etel) on 2 May 1876 in Beled.⁶⁶ They were married by FARKAS Sándor, the evangelical pastor of Beled. The groom was a teacher (and later headmaster) at the Evangelical School at Ostffyasszonyfa, Vas megye. Witnesses at the wedding were: MARTON Elek and VÖRÖS József both wealthy estate owners from Ostffyasszonyfa, and KOZMA János a citizen of Beled. **BEREZ Gábor** was born on 13 Apr 1853 in Alsóság, Vas megye.⁶⁷ He died on 24 Feb 1933 in Beled.* MÁTIS Zsófia and BEREZ Gábor had the following children, in addition to a stillborn girl born in 1879:

- 13 i. **BEREZ Gábor** born 18 Apr 1877 in Ostffyasszonyfa.*
- 14 ii. **BEREZ Izabela** born 21 Jun 1878 in Ostffyasszonyfa.*
- 15 iii. **BEREZ Gyözö** born 13 Aug 1881 in Ostffyasszonyfa.*

* This is the only instance I have seen of surnames being translated. *Fekete* and *Nigrini* both mean

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* Dates indicated with an asterisk in this box are recorded in manuscript notations in MÁTIS Zsófia' s *Keresztyén Énekeskönyv* (Christian Hymnal) now owned by this author.

The Fourth Generation and Beyond.

BERECZ Gábor became an evangelical minister and served in the town of Nemeskér. He died in 1963. He and his wife, KAKÁS Ilona, had two sons. Both became alcoholics, both are deceased, and neither had any children.

BERECZ Izabela became a teacher in her father' school in Ostfyassonyfa, and married the man who succeeded him as headmaster, NÉMETH Sándor. Her husband was captured during World War I, and spent many years in Russian POW camps. She died in 1968. They had one son, Endre, who after being somewhat disabled during World War II, was employed as a librarian in Beled. He died in 1995. His children and grandchildren now live in Beled and Budapest.

BERECZ Gyöző was trained as a land surveyor, and after completing his military obligation, he emigrated to America. There he adopted the given names **Victor Gy.** -- combining the English translation of his given name with its Hungarian abbreviation. After losses in the 1907-8 stock market crash, he returned to Hungary (where he continued to use his Americanized name). Shortly thereafter, he married NEMES Eszter, the daughter of a prosperous mill-owner, who he had met on the return trip. Following their marriage, the couple immediately returned to New York. Though he rarely worked at a regular job, he became a leader in the Hungarian-American community, published two books, and was for a time also the *mouthpiece* of New York City' *Building Superintendents Union*. He died in 1940. They had one son, Victor (still living), whose children ...including this author ... and grandchildren reside in the United States.

Sources

¹ Endrey, Anthony: **Hungarian History**; [Melbourne: The Hungarian Institute, 1982]; pp. 259-61.

² **Ibid.**; pp.263-270.

³ **Ibid.**; pp. 272-3.

⁴ **Ibid.**; pp. 277-279.

⁵ Sisa, Stephen: **The Spirit of Hungary**; [Toronto: The Wintario Project, 1983], p. 125.

⁶ Endrey: **Hungarian History**; p. 279.

⁷ Németh, Endre: **A Berecz Családi Története** (The History of the Berecz Family); [Beled: Short unpublished manuscript, 1985].

⁸ Endrey: **Hungarian History**, pp. 281-283.

⁹ **Ibid.**; pp. 285-286.

¹⁰ **Ibid.**; pp. 292-299.

¹¹ Csahók, Dr. István, Senior Editor: **Magyarország Történeti Helységnévtára** (Historical Gazetteer of Hungary); Volume 6 - Sopron Megye (1773-1808); [Budapest: Central Statistical Office for Library and Document Services, 1990]; enclosed map folder.

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- ¹² **Vadosfa Evangelical Church Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths for 1707-1889** as found in *Family History Library* microfilms 0632716-21; Vol 3; page 74. [n.b. the Evangelical church in the town of Vadosfa -- about 15 km NE of Beled -- maintained vital records for the evangelical community of Beled and surrounding villages until 1829. Volumes 1-5 contain only christening dates, not birthdates, though in that era christenings were often performed on the day of birth.]
- ¹³ **Ibid.**; Vol. 10, p. 8.
- ¹⁴ **Ibid.**; Vol. 3, p.99.
- ¹⁵ **Beled Evangelical Church Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths for 1829-1895** as found in *Family History Library* microfilm 0632530; Death register, Part 1, p. 58, entry #10.
- ¹⁶ **Vadosfa Church Registers**; Vol. 4; page 108.
- ¹⁷ **Ibid.**; Vol. 5; p. 32.
- ¹⁸ **Ibid.**; Vol. 5; p. 66; entry #98.
- ¹⁹ **Ibid.**; Vol. 5; p. 101; entry #85.
- ²⁰ **Ibid.**; Vol. 5; p. 132; entry #126.
- ²¹ Mátis, Rev. István: **A MÁTIS család rövid történelme** (A Short History of the MÁTIS Family); [Budapest: Unpublished monograph, 1981]; p. 1.
- ²² Payr, Sándor: **Dunántuli evangélikus egyház története** (History of the Transdanubian Evangelical Church), [as quoted in *Matis: Short History*, pp 1-2].
- ²³ Endrey: **Hungarian History**, pp. 80-82.
- ²⁴ **Vadosfa Church Registers**; Vol. 5; p. 3.
- ²⁵ **Ibid.**; Vol. 10; p. 68; entry #5.
- ²⁶ **Ibid.**; Vol. 5; p. 147; entry #24.
- ²⁷ **Beled Church Registers**; Marriage register; p. 4; entry #4.
- ²⁸ **Vadosfa Church Registers**; Vol. 5; p. 139; entry #63.
- ²⁹ **Beled Church Registers**; Birth register; Part 1; p. 36; entry #13.
- ³⁰ **Ibid.**; Death register; Part 1; p. 27; entry #6.
- ³¹ Csahók: **Historical Gazetteer**; p. 101.
- ³² **Ibid.**; p. 101.
- ³³ **Ibid.**; p. 183.
- ³⁴ **Ibid.**; p. 160.
- ³⁵ **Ibid.**; p. 105.
- ³⁶ **Ibid.**; p. 100.
- ³⁷ Endrey: **Hungarian History**; p. 286.
- ³⁸ **Archivum Palatinale Hungaria -- Landeskonskription 1828 -- Comitatus Soproniensis** (Archives of the Hungarian Palatinate -- Land Census of 1828 -- County of Sopron) as found in *Family History Library* microfilms (for *Possessio Beled* microfilm 0623111 beginning at p. 20; for *Possessio Vásárosfalú* microfilm 0623116 beginning at p. 219).
- ³⁹ Csahók: **Historical Gazetteer**; p. 105.
- ⁴⁰ **Archivum Palatinale**; Vásárosfalu pp. 220-221; household #10 headed by *Joan. Mátics*.
- ⁴¹ **Archivum Palatinale**; Beled pp. 28-29; household #65 headed by *Mich. Mátis*.
- ⁴² **Beled Church Registers**; Birth Register, Part 1, p. 23, entry #14.

- ⁴³ **Ibid.**; Death register; Part 1, p. 124; entry #40.
- ⁴⁴ **Ibid.**; Marriage register, p. 88, entry #17.
- ⁴⁵ **Ibid.**; Birth register; Part 1, p. 37; entry #16.
- ⁴⁶ **Ibid.**; Birth register; Part 1; p. 144; entry #36.
- ⁴⁷ **Ibid.**; Death register; Part 1; p. 101; entry #39.
- ⁴⁸ Sisa: **Spirit of Hungary**; pp. 163-167.
- ⁴⁹ **Ibid.**; p. 167.
- ⁵⁰ **Ibid.**; p. 167-168.
- ⁵¹ **Ibid.**; p. 167-168.
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- ⁵³ **Ibid.**; p. 168.
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- ⁶² **Ibid.**; Marriage register; p. 120; entry #7.
- ⁶³ **Nemesmagasi Evangelical Church Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths for 1783-1895** as found in *Family History Library* microfilm 0632584; Birth register; Vol. 3; p. 116; entry #3.
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- ⁶⁶ **Ibid.**; Marriage Register; p. 160; entry #10.
- ⁶⁷ Zsámboki, Lajos: **Berecz Családfa** (Berecz Family Tree); [Kunszentmiklós: Unpublished genealogical notes, 1930].