

Introduction: Fabos-Garai Documents Section

By Cecilia Linda Lee Fabos-Becker, 25 September, 2020

My late father was **Stephen John George Fabos** b. July 17, 1924, Toledo, Ohio, as shown by a birth certificate in the records, who died July 31, 2005 in Michigan, having had his last illness worsen while on a cross Canada trip and being taken to a U.S. hospital near his second wife's family. His last official residence was Saratoga, Florida. He died of pulmonary fibrosis.

In these documents, you will see a pedigree of my father's oldest brother, **Emery Stephen Fabos**, that I did for my cousins. The pedigree is the same for my father and his older brother.

My late mother was **Wilma Maie Sheila Wallace** b. July 10, 1922 in Los Angeles, California, and died November 17, 1987, in Santa Clara, California, residence in San Jose, California. She died of ovarian cancer.

My parents were married March 24, 1947 in San Francisco, California and had a small reception for them among friends at the famed, 'Top of the Mark' at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. They were married again in St. Stephen's Church in Toledo, Ohio in 1956, after the birth of my brother and during the day of his baptism.

Because they were both veterans of World War II, my parents are interred, side-by-side at the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, just south of San Francisco.

My father's line dies out with me and my only brother, except for grandchildren through an illegitimate child my father didn't know he had. That brief affair yielded a child, but the mother was already married and her husband's surname was given to the child. My father never knew there was another child, and the descendants do not carry the Fabos surname.

Fabos-Garai Family History

My father, **(Stephen) John George Fabos (1924-2005)**, known as John Fabos, **was a dual national Hungarian U.S. Citizen.** John's parents had not actually wanted to emigrate, but their rebellious younger son John was born here in the U.S. John decided his parents' country was not in his future and that he wanted to become "an ordinary American". John wanted his children to be "Americans." To that effect, he decided to look for and marry someone who he was pretty sure had roots that went back to the American Revolution or before.

For her own part, my late mother, **Wilma Maie Wallace (1922-1987)**, was also rejecting her family background and community, for her own reasons. At least eight of Wilma's ancestors had fought in the American Revolution. Only two were Tories. In one case the son fought his own brother as one of Francis Marion's men and later saw his own hated older brother hung as a Tory. In the other case, his first cousin was a general under George Washington and he himself had not been as obnoxious as the one who was hung.

But although she was of predominantly Scots, and Scots-Irish herself, Wilma did not fare well with husbands of primarily British descent.

Wilma had been the youngest child and third daughter of a mother who had not wanted more than one or two children, and NO daughters. Moreover, Jessie was a difficult, hard to satisfy woman otherwise, with a serious

“Electra complex’. Jessie had driven her husband to walk out on her, even though he also had to abandon his three youngest children, including my mother. Her first relationship after secondary school had not gone well either, and this was a man who had come from a similar background as herself, British and Protestant. He lied to her about his marital state and then left her, with the child. Jessie could expect no support from her own family, and there were few opportunities for single women with children for either marriage or careers. She gave up a child for adoption and joined the U.S. Navy in 1943.

In January, 1945, while she was in the Navy, Wilma had a brief failed marriage, very brief, as it lasted about two weeks or so. Again, the person had come from a similar background, and became a tyrant immediately after marriage. He was one of those who consider wives property and servants. By this time, Wilma was not tolerating Jekyll and Hyde personalities and physical abuse. The Navy had helped Wilma develop a better sense of self respect and was supportive. It had become family to her. The Navy helped with a prompt divorce and transfer to wherever else she wanted to be. By the end of January, 1945, Wilma was ready for a different location and an entirely different person to date and with whom to consider a long commitment, like marriage.

Wilma put in for a transfer--about as far away from southern California as she could get. The transfer request shows two places as first and second choice: Hawaii and Alaska. Wilma was assigned to Naval Intelligence Unit 14 in Hawaii, about the time my father was enduring the involuntary hospitality of the Japanese on Okinawa. John had been serving as a U.S. marine in the 5th amphibious division--by then combined with the 6th, construction battalions, in the signal corps as a radio and radar technician and specialist. This had included setting up and maintaining communications lines and equipment on front lines and in otherwise forward positions. On this particular occasion, local military intelligence had mistakenly thought an entire Japanese division had already moved south and it was alright to send an almost unprotected platoon out with large heavy spools of wire and other hefty equipment to expand the communications system. My father's unit, instead, ran right into the Japanese division that had not been sent south yet, after all. He escaped on the second attempt but not without damage. He was recovering physically and mentally in Hawaii where he then met my mother Wilma.

I had thought my parents' marriage was unique, and given the several years between my birth and my brother's birth, it was a wonder that it had survived. After World War II my father chose to go into construction and worked on several government projects in Okinawa, Kodiak, Adak, and then Labrador. My mother Wilma had grown up in Los Angeles. Winters and very tiny villages where the language was not commonly English, nor any European language were about as alien to her as the planet Mars. She insisted on raising a family in a civilized area, in or near cities. The long distance marriage in this case was not working well. John finally decided to find construction in the contiguous 48 states and eventually they made the marriage work. Being Hungarian and of an older culture, my father's family, was about as alien to her as winters and tiny villages. The marriage did a lot better when she insisted they leave Ohio where John's family lived, and settle in Northern California.

No one else I knew in my slightly more than immediate family had seemed to marry outside of their original ethnic and religious background, and there seemed to be very good reasons why this hadn't happened among the small circle of people I knew as a child.. It wasn't until I was in secondary school in California that I began to encounter a few families that were mixed East European and British-American in background. Then I started researching my mother's father's Wallace family and found two of my closer cousins who were most active doing exactly the same thing and more contemporary in age to my mother had done exactly as my mother had. Sue Thompson, and Ruth Lamar, both third cousins of my late mother, had both married East European descended Americans. Sue had married Col. Miklas of the U.S. Air Force, and Ruth had married Col. Edmund Petracek of the U.S. Army.

Since the 17th century, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians and others had been fleeing religious and political inequities and repression under the rather fanatic Catholic Habsburg emperors, who also were very classist. These emperors and the Austrian dominated parliament of an empire of many nations, rarely initiated or engaged in major land or any other economic reforms that might benefit the lower landless working classes without a revolution or civil war., A few who fled the Habsburg central-and southeast European empire, had even arrived in the British colonies that became the U.S.. Most, however, arrived with the industrial revolution in the 1800's which under the Habsburgs had left the manufacturing workers, miners and others, even further behind their counterparts in other European countries and the U.S. These were mostly little educated or had no education at all beyond the skills they had learned in mines and manufacturing companies, or as tenant farmers.

However, by the end of the 19th century, as Emperor Franz Josef was growing increasingly more reactionary and fearful of reforms, and more pro-German, the more educated persons left and not all voluntarily. Exile became a popular punishment for those who dared to be too confrontational or insistent upon reforms. In 1905, the emperor decided upon limited workers reforms and universal suffrage (voting rights) but only for Austrians, and no others. In many places there were riots, and many left afterward, either sent into exile or giving up on the emperor. My grandfather, **Stephen Michael Fabos (1876-1955)**, was sent into exile in 1906. When he was not recalled within a few years, my grandmother took an inheritance from her paternal grandfather and joined him in the U.S. and helped him buy land and a house there in Ohio.

My grandfather, as others, had first gone to the UK. In my grandfather's case, he had connections there, from his diplomatic career, his original community and if my DNA test is correct and I am my father's daughter, Stephen Michael Fabos also had a secret British ancestor, dating from around the time of the Congress of Vienna. He did not get the reception and assistance he sought and dejectedly traveled to the U.S. where he then had a moderately distant cousin already settled in Ohio and willing to help him.

My grandfather thought that he also had a friend or friends in very high places. He and his immediate family--and his wife's family, were all the closest aristocratic neighbors to a man named Count Tassilo Festetics, later made Prince, to honor his wife and his wife's family and friends. The Count's wife was Lady Mary Victoria Douglas-Hamilton, the sister of the 12th Duke of Hamilton, and the daughter of William the 11th Duke of Hamilton and his wife, Princess Marie Amelie of Baden. Lady Mary had first been the wife of the Prince of Monaco, but they did not get along. She had one son by him, the ancestor of the current Prince of Monaco, and then left and divorced. Lady Hamilton married Count Festetics in 1880, happily settled with him at his palace at Kezthely in Somogy County, Hungary, and together, they had four children there.

In the social standings in that rural area, the Festetics were not the senior most family. As a twig of the Szecsenyi/Szechenyi, that position was held by the Fabos family. The Fabos' were a black sheep branch that periodically lost a head, or two, to good causes, but old landed aristocrats, nonetheless, and even if our twig was a long way from being one of the wealthiest parts of the large old tree, and not as wealthy as Count Tassilo Festetics. Money wasn't always everything in old Austria-Hungary.

There was a tradition of an annual "Grand Hunt" at which the 'Master of the Hunt' was to be from one of the older families. My great-grandfather sometimes served as Master of the Hunt, and when his oldest son, my grandfather Stephen Michael Fabos, became an adult, sometimes succeeded him as Master of the Hunt.

The Duke of Hamilton frequently visited his sister in Hungary, and made long stays. He also brought with him friends from time to time, including one in particular. This friend's mother called him "Bertie.", and Bertie was the United Kingdom's Prince of Wales and it's future **King Edward VII**.

Southwest Hungary had long been anglophilic, and members of the Szecsenyi family, proper, and others had been traveling to and studying reforms and developments in the UK in agriculture, breeding livestock, and industry and transportation, as well as government by Parliament since the late 17th century, after the Turks had finally been ejected. In fact, in the 16th and early 17th centuries, the Austro-Hungarian empire had sought mercenaries from West Europe, even the UK to help fight the Turks and remove them. Captain John Smith of Jamestown fame had once been a mercenary fighting the Turks in Hungary. This interest in the UK greatly increased after the Congress of Vienna. The UK had turned into the mightiest military power in the world and yet its government was a limited monarchy with a strong parliament. To anyone who had been ruled by the Habsburgs, with a few exceptions to that family's general characteristics, the UK was VERY interesting.

Then, the Szecsenyi family decided Austria-Hungary should create a railway system like that the UK was developing. The Emperor, mercifully, agreed to the plan, so long as he and the Austrian government had to contribute little or nothing financially to the project. To achieve this, they first established the first international development investment bank in Hungary. The British became very large investors in the bank and its projects, which included modern grain mills, and manufacturing as well as the railroads. The British did well. The railroads, and additional bridges, such as what became known as the Szecsenyi bridge across the Danube River linking the twin cities of Buda and Pest, making them into one city, were a more ambitious project and the Hungarians did not have enough people with the skills that the UK had. Under the leadership of the Szecsenyi and their extended families, some 30,000 to 40,000 British railway, bridge and road building workers, and design engineers, mostly Scottish, Scots-Irish and Irish were brought into Hungary. Many stayed. The Hungarians also occasionally brought in French, as well. One of the most beautiful railway stations in Europe is in Budapest, designed by Gustave Eiffel.

My grandfather Stephen Emery Fabos and relatives of my grandmother were a part of this age, but were not its wealthiest members. In fact, when my grandfather was born, his father was still just the third son of his own father and had a relatively modest couple of pieces of property in Somogy county. One priest somewhat derisively referred to Stephen Emery Fabos as "an egg and chicken rancher." Never mind the fact he had a large enough holding to supply not only the growing town of Marczali with eggs, chickens and feathers for pillows and comforters, but a number of the beautiful spa-hotels along the popular southeastern shore of Lake Balaton. He also had enough land to raise livestock and grain for them and everything else his family needed and wanted. When his next older brother died without heirs, he inherited more land, became a second son, and moved up in social and economic status. Even in Austria he had the respect of his father's full rank and titles. He was able to send his oldest son to the elite Gymnasium at Esztergom, see him become a Huszar officer and attached to the Imperial Court where he entered the diplomatic corps, and arrange a marriage for him with a Garai heiress--my grandmother.

However, except for the fine late 18th and 19th century palaces being built by the wealthiest of the nobles, no matter how much land was owned and how much it produced, and no matter how old and respected the Hungarian families were, to British eyes, they and their homes were regarded as inferior and even primitive. Hungarian minor gentry, the junior branches of the many counts, lived in modest manor homes that would have been familiar to visitors in 17th and early 18th century Ireland. Many had thatched roofs, not slate, regardless of size. Sometimes the first floor was packed earth that might be treated or dressed with linseed (flaxseed) oil, because of an ancient traditional belief achieving security and prosperity by keeping close to the earth. The families might have jewels and fine wines and tables of food that many British and French could only dream about, but packed earth first floors as well. Primitive! What's ironic is today, modern, progressive, low carbon footprint homes in the southwest U.S., are being made with thick adobe walls and also--packed earth floors dressed with linseed oil.

The British also did not believe that titles should pass on to any but the first son. In Hungary, however, the title of the father, passed to all his children regardless of sex or birth order. This was absolutely incomprehensible and appalling to the British, and in their eyes, it debased all the Hungarian nobility and their titles.

The British barely tolerated the German and Austrian nobility who were second sons and had rights to their fathers' titles. They had no comprehension of the wish of the Hungarian gentry, to not see any of their lines starve. Under Hungarian laws, at least the first two sons inherited land--and the oldest daughter or two inherited land also, the oldest a parcel equal in size to either brother. If she were to make a grand marriage, she could inherit a parcel as large as that of her oldest brother. The younger children were to have education and be set up as officers, or in business or a profession and the daughters to have a dowry. The lowest they ever wanted to see their children was as an upper servant to the wealthiest of local nobles or their own wealthiest cousins.

I'm sure the elite British visitors were very polite to all the neighbors of Countess Festetics, nee Hamilton, in Hungary, and enjoyed the hunting, wines, the spas at Lake Balaton, some of which were on lands owned by the Garai. However, I'm equally certain that an exiled aristocrat with whom they had been pleased to dine in Hungary, saw a quite different attitude and reception in London, or most anywhere else in the UK, particularly after 1905 when my grandfather came there. Given my grandfather had been exiled in part for telling Emperor Franz Josef he thought renewing the German alliance in 1905 was a poor idea and that the Emperor was better off redeveloping ties with the UK and France, my grandfather felt very unhappy when he left the UK for the U.S. with only about \$30 in his pockets, though fortunately more funds waiting for him with his distant cousin in Ohio, and rooms in a comfortable building that had indoor plumbing, something that had yet to be fully incorporated even in the Hofburg, the old imperial palace in Vienna.

The reception my grandfather received in the UK was not unique. Others of good families, even gentry, from throughout the empire would find similar receptions, and likewise end up in the U.S. Yet, many had wanted Austria-Hungary to look toward the west, particularly the UK. The English might have been pleased to crown a German duke who was a grandson of the Protestant Bohemian Queen who along with her husband was removed by the Austrian emperor, but they did not welcome many of that Queen's former subjects, who were instead slaughtered by the dozens by the Habsburgs. The Bohemian Queen had been a daughter of Charles I. Her subjects had no such connections.

So, the U.S. gained what the UK rejected and even betrayed in World War I, and even more, after the UK and France mucked up all of East and southeast Europe in its attempt to make all the new, deliberately littler nations competing economic colonies in the 1920's and 1930's.

After World War II, and after seeing the horrors of the most extreme racism, ethnocentrism, and genocide, in the U.S. broke down some of the attitudes and there began to be more marriages that looked less at surnames and more at what else people might have in common. The war tore the world into pieces, but also brought people more together that might not have been together before, especially among the urban, heavily industrialized winners that weren't ruled by monarchies...

In the U.S. at least, Scots and Scots Irish who want to know about clan ancestors who once at least were knights and might have owned castles, occasionally marry East Europeans who came from equally good families but whose homes might have had packed earth first floors--and were deadly to Turks and other very large powerful invaders.