

NARRATIVE TEXTS

Hungarian Texans

Hungary in east-central Europe is a land of many peoples. Magyar, German, Slav, Romanian, Romany, and Slovak have mingled for a thousand years. The Hungarians, the Magyar, are themselves immigrants from farther east. This is a land of overlapping traditions and many languages—a troubled place.

Hungary, notably from 1848 to 1956, was a homeland its sons and daughters were forced to leave. The reasons were the usual: failed revolutionary efforts to break away from conquerors, international war, and overpopulation during peacetime.

Those who left, many for the Americas, unfailingly retained their language, customs, foods, and dress to a noticeable degree and their pride of origin absolutely. In new homelands, such as Texas, they continued a social change and adaptation that began in 10th century Europe.

The revolution of 1848–1849 directed against Austrian rule caused the exile of many soldiers and civil leaders, often the educated nobility from the highly stratified culture of Eastern Europe. People of the lower economic class had no means to leave; many of the rulers did.

Between 1880 and 1920, like so much of Europe, Hungary provided agricultural immigrants. Under Austrian domination but in relative peace many of the years from 1849 to World War I, the country felt the pressure of overpopulation. So farming families came to Texas.

Following World War I, Hungary, on the losing side, was literally dismembered. Three-quarters of its land and population was put under other rulers. In World War II, Hungary, joining Germany in an effort to regain territory, faced Russia—and lost.



Ludwig Varga's saddlery store, Cuero—Several generations of the Varga family owned or worked in saddlery shops in San Antonio and Cuero. Their saddles were in great demand because of their high quality.



Alois Goebel and his musical group, which played at the Menger Hotel, San Antonio, early 1900s—The three young women on the right are his daughters.

NARRATIVE TEXTS

In 1944 the Red Army advanced into Budapest, and many Hungarians left their homeland.

Under Communist rule few people were allowed to leave the shattered country. The subsequent Budapest uprising of 1956 resulted in another failure. Thousands fled west, and, just as a century before, many of the refugees were well educated and technically trained.

Today, a scattering of Hungarians, some native, most descended from earlier arrivals, live across Texas in urban areas. Individuals have entered the arts, investment and professional services, and politics.