
AHEA Newsletter: April 2022

1 message

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April 2022 Newsletter

President's Corner

A former colleague carried around a mug with the words: "If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room." It's a familiar quote that has been attributed to a number of people; I wondered what the meaning of this saying was. Over time, my experiences of being in the "right room" led me to recognize its intentions: smart people make you smarter.

This poignant message was once again driven home to me during this year's AHEA Conference that occurred last week on April 7 - 9. There were 72 papers presented in three days. The papers were interdisciplinary (History and Political Science 29%; Language and Literature 21%; Music and Folklore 17%; Cultural Studies 15%; Education 11%; Science and Economics 7%), bilingual (81% in English) and international (scholars from five countries presented). There was so much to learn and absorb. Once again, participants engaged with the speakers and took the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. The session chairs were gracious hosts, and presentations were interesting and of high quality.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Emőke Szathmáry, was one of the highlights of the meeting. Her talk, "Cultural Lenses and Biological Filters on What Makes a Hungarian in the Present and in the Distant Past" was brilliant that interwove her perspectives growing up in a Hungarian family and described the influences that led her to pursue a career in physical anthropology. She brought her scholarly perspectives to the question of what is the essence of an individual and the groups to which one belongs? She shared glimpses of her professional journey that led her to serve for 12 years as the 10th President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manitoba in Canada. I received many comments following the presentation that it was one of AHEA's best keynotes.

We congratulated Dr. Susan Glanz for her many years of service to AHEA. She was honored as recipient of the Péter Basa Award given biennially to a longstanding member who has devoted time and talent to help advance the mission of AHEA. Susan served two terms as president, and each year, (for decades) she worked behind the scenes on the Conference Program to cluster the topics to arrange them in logical coherent order. She is known for her emotional intelligence, collegiality, her high level of professionalism, her quick, inquisitive mind, no-nonsense organizational skills and her team spirit. She serves as a role model to us all.

The evening programs informed and entertained. Each one was spectacular. There are too many people to name who contributed to making this conference successful. You know who you are! Our heartfelt thanks and sincere wishes for your continued success. We hope to see you at AHEA 2023 in Hamden, CT, USA on April 27-29.

Please be reminded that we our search for Editor-in-Chief of our eJournal, Hungarian Cultural Studies has recently been [re-posted](#). We invite you to check out the position description and nominate yourself or someone whom you think would capably fill this position. Don't hesitate to reach out to our Vice president, [Dr. Helga Lénart-Cheng](#) questions or would like additional information.

On behalf of the Board and Program Committee of AHEA many thanks and best wishes for your continued success. Please reach out if you have comments or suggestions on how AHEA might better support your scholarly achievements.

Klára Papp,
AHEA President
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Member Spotlight

AHEA is a scholarly organization connecting a diverse set of educators, researchers, professionals, independent scholars and academics who come from many walks of life. Each month we highlight the academic and professional career of a different AHEA member.



This month's featured member is **Briane Turley**

Please tell us a little bit about your career arc, especially how you came to work on the history of Hungarians in Appalachian coal country.

I think my career arc might better be described a "career pretzel" with too many

twists and turns to broach in this forum. I began my undergraduate career in an Applied Voice music at the Creative Arts Center at West Virginia University. I enjoyed singing in operas, but upon graduation, my interests shifted toward theology. During my years in a Divinity degree program in the Midwest, the Church Historian encouraged me to pursue advance graduate work while seeking Orders to the Episcopal Priesthood. After completing two Modern European and American Religious History degrees at the University of Virginia, I wound up back at West Virginia University teaching religious history courses in both the Religious Studies and History departments.

As the Internet opened up in the early 90s, I developed a keen interest in the use of Internet technologies and broader computer-assisted learning methods in the classroom. After delivering a paper on the topic at King's College in London, the keynote speaker for our conference, Kristóf Nyíri, and I shared an enjoyable lunch and, for me at least, a stimulating conversation. As we parted company, Kristóf looked at me and said, "Briane, you will come to Hungary someday." I didn't think much of it at the time, but three years later, he helped me secure my first Fulbright award, an American Religious History lectureship at the University of Szeged and at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

I have lectured and taught semester-abroad programs in several countries, but for my family and me, Hungary quickly became our second home. My wife, son Christopher, and I were blessed to develop deep friendships with several people. These folks are our friends for life, and after seventeen return trips to Hungary, they are now more like family. We fell in love with Hungary because of these unusual relationships. I may be Irish-American, but my godchildren are Hungarian, and my son is about to graduate with his Master's degree from the University of Szeged.

In November 2018, my closest friend, Péter Török, responded to an invitation to deliver lectures at Bluefield College and at a couple of community events. During his visit, I mentioned that I had recently learned about Hungarian-language gravestones in our southern West Virginia county. We quickly found several stones in two graveyards near Gary, West Virginia. Peter became a bit emotional as he knelt by the graveside of two infant twin sisters who died at Thorpe in 1917. As we walked away from the grave, Peter looked at me and said, "This is a story we really must tell."

With generous support from the Corvinus Institute for Advanced Studies (CIAS), I began my research on the topic of the Appalachian Hungarians in the fall of 2019. Peter was diagnosed with an advanced sarcoma a few months later and died just after my last visit to his Dunakeszi home in February of this year. I have lost a brother and colleague, but thanks to the encouragement I have received from AHEA members, the work is gaining renewed momentum.

How did you find out about AHEA, and what led you to join?

A dear friend and mentor, Huba Bruckner, has encouraged my interests in the Appalachian-Hungarian story and has helped me focus on the research when, at times, personal difficulties our family was encountering made it difficult to imagine continuing. While I was serving a Fellowship at CIAS in 2019, it was Huba who urged me to become active in AHEA.

What impact has your involvement with AHEA made on your career and/or your work?

The COVID-19 epidemic had deep impact on both AHEA's Conference plans and my hopes of presenting my ongoing research, but after attending last year's virtual conference, I recognized that Huba had helped me identify the very best academic association in which to network and share ideas with other scholars. After delivering my first presentation on the Appalachian Hungarian coal miners at this year's on-line gathering, I received several excellent suggestions from AHEA members who know a great deal more about Hungarian migration to North America than do I. During the April Conference, I phoned Cathy Corbin who directs the Márton Himler home restoration project in Kentucky and urged her to join AHEA. I hope she presents on this important Appalachian Hungarian topic at next year's meeting. I will soon be in

contact with others who have yet to publish manuscripts on the Hungarian contribution to Appalachian culture about joining and presenting their work to the group as well.

Tell us, please, about your current project.

While most ethnic Hungarians who worked in Appalachia were transients who eventually left the region for higher-paying jobs in other parts of the US or who returned home to Hungary, thousands settled into their communities where they played a significant role in civic and religious life. I am fortunate to be in close touch with three second-generation Hungarians who remain in the region, two of whom are over 100 years old and still quite sharp. I am still collecting family photographs and literary remains mainly in the form of letters to and from Hungary just after the First World War.

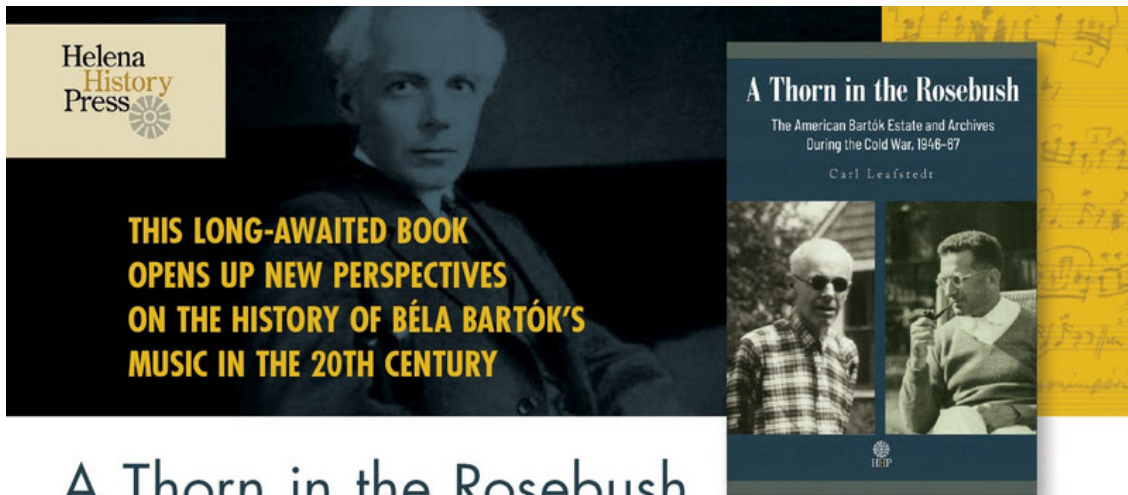
Not even the best regional labor historians have written much on the Hungarian miners in Appalachia, so the field is wide-open. The Hungarian miner families present me with an array of interesting research problems. For example, while most other ethnic groups participated in the miners' war, including the famous Battle of Blair Mountain, the Hungarians remained largely absent. The Hungarian absence from the mining wars shows up in the minutes of a US Senate investigation in 1921. I uncovered one major reason for their reluctance involving unforgivable criminal treatment a key leader in the movement gave one Hungarian family in Mingo County a decade earlier. Yet there are other factors, and I am interested in getting at this important aspect of the Hungarian labor experience in West Virginia.

I am working my way through other important sources, but I couldn't make much headway without the support and encouragement of several gifted colleagues. Working with Ilona Kovacs and Anna Fenyvesi (University of Szeged) I was fortunate to help organize a *Magyar Bányászlap* (Hitler's popular newspaper) digitization project. Indeed, Ilona and Anna saw how much I was struggling to get the project off the ground with the National Széchényi Library, they took over and found a way to make it happen.

My agreement with CIAS requires that I publish my first manuscript per their guidelines, and I am submitting my work for inclusion in a special edition of *Sustainability* that CIAS is currently organizing. I am especially interested at this point in the effects of the Americanization policies on second-generation Hungarians and current efforts to revitalize Hungarian identity in the US. I am anxious to receive recommendations from my new colleagues in the AHEA.

Member Publications

The listing of publications is for our members' information and does not signify endorsement by the AHEA.



A Thorn in the Rosebush

The American Bartók Estate and Archives During the Cold War, 1946–67

Carl Leafstedt

From the publisher:

"This book opens up new perspectives on the history of Béla Bartók's music in the 20th century. It joins a growing literature on music and the cultural Cold War. It draws inspiration from a trove of historic correspondence discovered in Massachusetts in 2010, written by Béla Bartók's executor and trustee, Victor Bator. Bator, an accomplished Hungarian-American businessman, had been personally appointed to this role by the composer. He fulfilled his charge honorably, using his court-backed authority to fend off challenges hurled against him by Hungarian government attorneys eager to wrest Bartók's legacy from New York City and return it to Budapest. Epic transcontinental legal battles dragged on for decades, locking the Bartók Estate in bitter conflict. Unpublished letters from Bator's desk form the starting point for the book, which weaves them into a larger story of one man's battle to keep the American Bartók Estate and Archives from falling into Communist hands during the Cold War."

Have a New or Upcoming Publication?

We would love to help share news of the impressive and diverse work that AHEA members are doing! If you have a recent book, article, or other scholarly/artistic work you would like your fellow members to know about, send a brief description/promotional blurb and a link to further information to ahenews@gmail.com. Requests will appear in the order in which they were received and may be edited for space.

Don't Let Your Membership Benefits Stop!

Renew your 2021 membership to ensure uninterrupted membership today to ensure access to an expanded network of scholars and academics working in multidisciplinary fields of Hungarian Studies.

AHEA's membership dues enable you to access "Members Only" section of the website, participate in the governance of AHEA through your vote on our newly revised Bylaws as well as officers and board members.

We are pleased to announce membership discounts as well as the option of a new **lifetime membership**. Visit <https://ahea.net/members/membership-information>.

Only members in good standing can vote in leadership elections. Please remember to renew yours! **Click here** to access our PayPal link, or to get information on paying by check or bank transfer.



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