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World War One was a turning point in Hungarian-American history. Hungarian immigrants were considered enemies of the United States. Julianna Puskás refers to this period as “a crisis of loyalty”: Hungarian Americans found themselves standing between their original homeland and their new home that welcomed them and provided them with the opportunity to pursue their happiness. However, there is little to no research neither in the Hungarian, nor the American historiography into this very real historical problem.

Thanks to the groundbreaking work of István Kornél Vida, the role of Hungarian immigrant soldiers in the Civil War is quite well known. Hungarian participation in the Vietnam War also became more widely known due to Endre Szentkirályi's outstanding research. But the ‘Great War’ has not been studied in this regard thus far. I have been working on unfolding the history of Hungarian Americans in the US military in World War One for more than 6 years. At least 3000 Hungarian soldiers served in the American Expeditionary Forces between 1917 and 1919. My goal is to create a detailed database of these soldiers. I aim to employ a multidisciplinary approach, using methods of history, American studies, migration research, statistical analysis and the digital humanities. The research is based on a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, and includes several types of narrative and data resources such as personal correspondence, diaries, memoirs, official military and civil documents, draft registration cards, census data, obituaries and epitaphs, etc. A massive corpus of text from newspapers (both mainstream and local, in Hungarian, English, and some in German) is also being examined.

I have already conducted a serious part of this research, which I have concluded in my PhD-dissertation, defended in October 2023. In my dissertation, I published some of the most important discoveries of the research, including the fact that the first American artillery shot in World War One was fired by a Hungarian-American sergeant, Alexander Arch (or Ács Sándor, whom I mentioned in my presentation at AHEA's 2024 conference). This work involves the construction of an extensive prosopographical (collective biographical) database in Microsoft Access, which includes a wide range of biographical data of every single Hungarian-American soldier of WWI, making it possible to conduct a detailed career analysis about each subject, including their social networks during their lives. There is, however, a considerable amount of biographical data only available US in archives, libraries and cemeteries.

To be able to finish my book on this topic, the Helena History Press Scholarship would be of great help. The funds would be used to help me organize a research trip to visit archives and libraries, as well as to conduct oral history interviews with some descendants, and to do field trips, mostly to small town cemeteries especially in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

The clarification of the Hungarian participation in the American war effort against Germany would not only clear a grey area in historiography, but could also strengthen Hungarian-American relations by revealing a key part in the mutual history of our nations.