

JEWISH AND JEWISH-ORIGIN FAMILIES IN HUNGARY

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From pages 87-8

The Dirsztay baron, the Dirsztay family, was previously called Fisch. Fischl Gutmann was a wholesale merchant in Budapest and received Hungarian nobility in 1884. His wife was Emma Schosberger (1834–1907). Their sons, László and Béla, changed their last name to Dirsztay in 1889.

László Dirsztay was a banker and honorary Turkish consul. In 1905, he was granted a baronial rank, which was simultaneously extended to his relative, Béla Dirsztay. His first wife was Etelka Steinfeld (from 1891, wife of Count Ernő Zichy), and his second was Georgina Plaur. His children were:

1. Baron Viktor Dirsztay,
2. Baron Ferenc Dirsztay,
3. Baron Andor Dirsztay, and
4. Baroness Sarolta Dirsztay, who married Baron Menasce. She became Imre's wife.

Béla Dirsztay, baron (1861-1921) was a collector who collected bronze and silver small items. He was involved in the cultural life of the Jewish community and, with his generosity, supported many artistic endeavors. His wife was Irén Brüll (b. 1867):

1. Baron Andor Dirsztay (b. 1887), finance ministry counselor, his wife (m. 1916) Baroness Vera Henriette Wolf (b. 1898). Their daughter: Baroness Denise Dirsztay (b. 1920).
2. Baron Gedeon Dirsztay (b. 1890), his wife (m. 1922), Baroness Lujza Kohner (b. 1898). Their children:
 - a) Baroness Emmy Dirsztay and
 - b) Baron Béla Dirsztay

From pages 106-8:

Ernő Létay (born 1878), a member of parliament, comes from a family from Szabolcs County. The family's earlier name was Fisch. Ernő Létay's father, Ignác Fisch, first managed his paternal estate in Nyirderzs and later, in 1870, lived in Bihar County, where he was a considerable landowner in Nagyiéta and Álmosd. Ignác Fisch's father, Lajos, was a landowner in Nyirderzs and Kántorjánosi in Szatmár County. He had childhood ties of friendship with Lajos Kossuth and his family.

He took part in the 1848–49 War of Independence and contributed to organizing the resistant national army with his activities. After the war, he was subjected to many years of persecution. He died in 1854. Lajos' father, Jakab, still lived in Nagykálló at the end of the 18th century, where he was a major tenant and a member of the leadership of the Jewish community. Allegedly, he also held the position of Jewish judge.

Around this time, the so-called Nagykálló blood libel was born, which kept the village and its surroundings in turmoil for a long time, and as a result, several innocent people almost lost their lives and languished in prison for an extended period. The basis of the blood libel was the circumstance that a goose-herding boy had fallen asleep on the pasture while his geese had scattered, although it is also possible that someone had deliberately driven them away. When the boy woke up and saw that the geese entrusted to his care were gone, he let out loud wailing, ran around hesitantly here and there, searching for the lost animals. When, even after a long search, he could not find any trace of them, he ran away from home in fear of the expected punishment.

Several local residents heard the boy's screaming, but they didn't know the reason. So the public belief sprang from the boy's disappearance, suggesting that, due to the upcoming Passover festival, the Jews had killed him. This suspicion gained more and more credibility because, indeed, the boy had vanished. Following a complaint, a criminal investigation was launched, during which several Jews from Nagykálló were arrested and interrogated. Those who couldn't prove their alibi were brought to court, which sentenced some to death and many others to twenty years in prison.

Jakab Fisch was not among the suspects, so he was not arrested. In fact, during the investigation, he intervened several times with the county authorities and tried to prove that the blood libel was baseless. After the severe verdict was announced, he went to visit Miklós Kállay, the then Lord Lieutenant of Szabolcs, whom he had known for a long time, and asked him to suspend the execution of the sentence for 8 days, undertaking that during this time he would find the boy and bring him before the court.

The lord-lieutenant granted the requested extension, upon which Jakab Fisch set off to search for the boy. He traveled the entire area by cart, and his efforts were successful, as on the fifth day he found the missing boy idly wandering in front of the market stalls in Nyírbátor. He immediately took him to Nagy Kálie's. The verdicts for the boy's

appearance were annulled, the accused were acquitted, and the suspicion of blood libel in this area also vanished, until nearly a hundred years later it flared up again even more intensely during the Tiszaeszlár trial.

Fisch Jakab's father, Móric, also lived in Nagykáli as a tenant farmer at the beginning of the 18th century, and he died there at the age of 105. He was married to his first wife for 88 years.

Ernő Létay fought through the world war as a captain of the honvéd hussars. He participated in numerous battles and received several honors. Since January 1916 — except for one term — he has represented the Biharnagybajom constituency. In both legislation and journalism, he mainly deals with issues related to public law, economics, finance, agriculture, and social welfare. Both he and his late brother, Lajos, changed their surname to Létay in 1915 with royal permission.