

Thesis

**History of the Pest County Archives and the judgement of
the county archives at the period of 1920–1947**

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**A Pest Megyei Levéltár története és a megyei levéltárak
megítélése a magyar levéltárügyben 1920 és 1947 között**

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Hypothesis of the dissertation

The topic actuality is the searching for the root of the recent relations between Hungarian county archives and the National Archives.

From the period of Dualism, the National Archives and the county archives were opened for researchers. The researcher studied archival documents and collecting data from them for scientific or other goals. Permanent historical documents were arranged in order to inform the researcher about archival collection.

The eternal statement of Győző Ember confirmed me to examine the history of the county archives. *„The archival works consist of protecting, storing, processing historical documents and making them available for researchers*

According to Iván Borsa, the emphasis had shifted between the two basic characters of archival work: while the scientific one was strengthened gradually, the administrative one was weakened, though not entirely neglected. From a purely administrative institution, the Archives became an administrative institution which was also active in scientific work, and then, a scientific institution was born which has administrative tasks as well.

I. The „judgement” of the county archives (1920–1947)

In 1922, Hungarian archives fell to pieces. The National Archives got under the authority of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education, moreover, county archives were provided with relatively appropriate repositories following the instructions of the Minister of Internal Affairs. County archives received storage places and equipments.

Although National Archives was considered as an administrative institution, the staff was intended to improve its scientific profile

Nevertheless, the tasks of county’s archivists were the multiplied: archival material was growing, and the research service received a lot of requests , mainly on the provement of nobility reached a number, which was experienced never before. And the result: archival work was pushed into the background.

In 1922, a double change occurred in the organization: firstly, Klebelsberg managed to place the National Archives under the supervision of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education (in the same year he became the head of the Ministry), and he pushed a bill through about the National Hungarian Collections to place the main national and public collections within a common municipal frame. This system involved museums and libraries and increased the influence and the scientific character of the Archives, but it also meant disadvantages. Klebelsberg intended to improve the scientific feature by publishing a periodical of the National Archives, the Archival Publications, which still exists today, too.

a) Staff of the county archives

In 1922, a shift happened between the two basic characters of archival work: the scientific one was strengthened gradually, the administrative one was weakened, though not entirely neglected. From being a purely administrative institution the Archives became first an administrative institution active also in scientific work, and then a scientific institution occupied with administrative tasks as well. This transformation was expressed and developed by the change in the supervisory body. The Archives was also attached to the National University of Collections, established in the same year. Subordinated to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education, but also endowed with a certain autonomy, this body united the national scientific public collections (museums, libraries and the Archives), and it was existed under the name Hungarian National Museum (from 1935) up to the end of 1949. In the bourgeois period of its history, the Archives not only opened its doors to research, in the first place for historians to work for scientific purpose, but it became the most significant research institution for Hungarian historical science outside the universities. Before the second world war the archivists were graduated in law, arts or they received their diploma in engineering. Archival job was regulated by act. In 1922 National Hungarian Collections organized the main national and public collections within a common municipal frame. This system the Archive was a „Scientific Instrument” to improve the scientific feature by publishing a periodical of the National Archives, the Archival Publications. The Ministry of Culture could organize further trainings.. The Act of 11 of 1929, which was the first one, declared the scope of activities and helped to prepare for archival works with a one year course in the National Archives. Agree with archives,

the National Archives' building was the most modern, it had got research room, customer offices, office of Nobility pros, workshop of microfilming and so on. The archival material had been thoroughly prepared, the document bundles were placed on modern shelves. Also their first measures were reorganized: research and loan services performed by the departments were placed under the scope of a newly established unit of research, and loan services. Due to the anti-Jewish laws, enormous burden fell on the Archives. It also affected to the research and information services and promoted the change of administrative orders.

Jánossy worked out a remarkable plan, which is still regarded as a unique in the history of the institution. According to it, he targeted the necessary steps of making arrangements, finding aids and publishing. He focused on the creation of a basic inventory and descriptive lists. Pál Teleki – unlike Bálint Hóman – regarded himself not as a historian, but as an archivist, and in accordance with it, he elaborated a plan of work for the purposeful repository, regrouping and rearrangement of the archival material, as well as for the preparing of a central catalogue. He intended to support it also by organizational measures: by establishment a separate Office of General by Herzog, the staff worked in this unit had to deal with the matters concerned, the others were acquitted. Since Herzog's time, the Archives has been intensively participating in the organization of Hungarian archives. From 1938, it was surveyed the conditions of the archives in the reannexed areas, then in the whole country, and started to work out the Archival Act at the end of 1939.

Miklós Schneider said behind administrative work they hadn't got any time arranging or sorting out so on practise Archival Act. They did the administration and the archives was on administrativ institution. The staff consists of one archivist. Except for Pest County archives it had got two or three staff members. Béla Szabó had thought I had got a lot of work in order Archiv. The first step of centralization was in 1945 when the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Educations asked reports from the condition of the archives. The report said that some archivists were prisoners of war from Győr-Moson, Tolna, Nógrád-Hont, and the county archives worked only in Veszprém, Komárom-Esztergom, Fejér, Baranya.

b) Archives of returned territories

The centralism could provide the professional storage of the archives and could help the researchers work, but, on the other hand material, which was collected at one site only, was taken the risk of total destruction

Many documents were destructed because they were sorted out without any plan. Béla Kossányi asked the archivists not to sort out any documents from 1918–1940 and preserve them like memory of a „hateful” age.

c) Sustain of archives

Most of the county halls, which were constructed at the 17th or 18th century, became too small for 1920's. It was typical that the county was proud of its archives which was located at the hall. . The safest and newest Town Houses were for example in Heves, Nógrád, Zala and Tolna Counties. But the government didn't aid for building because of the lack of budget. The exceptions were in Sopron, Somogy, Fejér County, where buildings were reconstructed into a ceremony hall in 1930–1940'ss and inaugurated as archives. The role of the Archives proved the autonomy of the county with its documents, however, it was decreased in the second part of the century. Although historical science has just revealed the Archives' role of preserving primary sources in the previous years, the county management sponsored the archives and they were considered the former „major treasure” as a professional office of the county management. The archives had to take over a huge amount of documents due to the increased county administration, but proper storing was still an unsolvable issue. These are the decades when the archives was located in the darkest, deepest, dampest places in the Town House, partly due to their increased size, and partly the increasing economic tasks, that resulted the use of former archive rooms as offices.

d) Arrangement of documents

The initiatives of the county archives to rescue the documents of County Public Administration Committee. It was a municipal organization of an independent authority. It took measures not only to ensure the undisturbed operation of public administration but also built roads and bridges maintained by the municipal authority, provided assistants in debates related to public works, inspected the work of the state architectural offices, supervised the children of compulsory school age whether to attend school.

The historical material was organized between 1920 and 1942. The first collective fond was the charters before 1526. The original root of the collection had increased with the old documents which were taken from families and with other inheritance cases.

e) Sorting out

During the interwar period it was not any Archive General Regulation. The document was shoving out sign in for example sheet of blank paper or duplicate. The very valuable part of the document got destroyed. It was a very long time when the responsible paper destruction riding ratify for the Ministry of Religion and Public Education and Minister of the Interior. The most documents sorted out without role of the Zala, Borsod, or Veszprém County Archives.

f) The first act of Archival in 1947

In 1922 the Archives was attached to the National University of Collections, which was also established in the same year. It was subordinated to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education, but was also endowed with a certain autonomy, this body united the national scientific public collections (museums, libraries and the Archives) existed under the name of Hungarian National Museum from 1935) until the end of 1949. In the bourgeois (interwar)

period the Archives opened its doors not only to scientific research, (at the first place to historians), but it became the most significant research institution for Hungarian historical science outside the universities. The period of the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and the integration of public collections (1922–1949), introduced the organization and the operation of the National Hungarian Collections (called the Hungarian National Museum, from 1934). It is also mentioned in the Act 19. of 1922, which was the first one to declare the scope of duties of the National Archives. The act obligated the main public authorities and offices to transfer their records, which were older than 32 years, to the Archives. Compared with earlier times, the Archives could work in much better circumstances in office. Moreover, the professional literature was provided the Archival Publications. International relations became institutionalized, and a special co-operation with Austria was realized, due to the former dual monarchy. The National Archives played a remarkable role in the professional organization of Hungarian archival science with the grandious work of István Szabó' „Aspects on preserving Hungarian archives”. Apart from Csánki's indisputable merits, we need to emphasize that the archival processing works could not be regarded totally purposeful in his period. He failed to elaborate this type of program. The Archives participated in the rescue operations of the endangered private archives, and promoted the elaboration of the first Hungarian archival act, which was also planned to establish the institution of regional state archives subordinated to the National Archives, on the basis of Civil Code. In fact, the act was not completed because the Soviet army occupied the country in 1945, the communists seized power and began the liquidation of constitutionality and democracy immediately. The local communist party organization and the group of trade-union were set up in the Archives, too. Soon after, the director-general and other leaders, who had been appointed during the old regime, were removed, whereas people, who were loyal to the new ideas and regime, were placed into their positions. Jánossy, who was also the head of the Hungarian National Museum, was arrested with unfounded accusations.

In 1945 the main tasks of the Archives were the renovation of the badly war-damaged building and the rescue of the damaged and endangered material. The essence of this development may be summarized as follows: the service of the ruling classes was supplanted by the service of the whole people in the archival sector. The Archives did not have to give certificates of nobility any more, which had occupied a considerable part of its capacity before 1945. Instead of research on the history of the ruling classes the exploration and the elaboration of the archival material on the past status and struggles of workers and peasants came to the fore.

The competence and collecting interest of the Archives have been enlarged regarding to the age and the composition of the material, too. In the bourgeois period the Archives were bound to take over the material of governmental bodies, which were older than 32 years. The large family archives, which played a significant role in the history of the country, were all taken over by the Archives. In 1947 a special repository was established for taking over. In the socialist period, the Archives devoted much greater care to the safe custody of its material than it had done in the bourgeois period. In that time it has established or developed further workshops for photographing, conserving and restoring, also for bookbinding. Then, a regular service of stack-room hygiene was introduced as well. The whole work of the Archives was done according to the plan in the socialist period. The actual tasks were defined by yearly and quinquennial plans, their fulfilments were written in detailed reports, which were published in the archival journals. The favourable results of planning were manifested in an increased activity of locating records, in the arrangement of the material and in the adding of various finding aids. They also published in the Archival Publications which developed the literary ability and the quantity of articles surpassed the publications of the bourgeois period. It was partly due to the quantitative increase of the material, partly due to the results of allocation, arrangement and producement of finding aids. Furthermore, the information service and archival references were greatly increased. The number of Hungarian and foreigner researchers were multiplied. A special research room was opened for those who used the microfilm material, which was made of the Hungarian and foreigner original documents. The development of the international connections was detectable partly in the increase of the number of foreign researchers and the quantity of information which was sent abroad, and partly in study trips and participation in international programmes, too. The Archives took a part in the society of archivists, initiated in 1949 by later Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest.. This instruction, unknown in the bourgeois period, developed in various forms. This schematic and incomplete summary shows that the work of the Archives is how richer, more varied and more effective than before. h.

g) Hungarian Society for Archivists

The protection of interests helped the member to meet each other in order to solve the problems together. The society arranged courses and researched the history of the Archives. For instance, they visited the workshop of microfilming. They discussed about the department of research, and loan services. Society built international connection, and the members travelled abroad, where they visited institutions, for example the Public Record Office.

II. History of the Pest County Archive

a) History of the Archive

The organization of the noblemen's county also resettled. They bought a Central House in Pest in 1697 and the county public administration started functioning in the same area since then. The new, classicistic, still functioning county hall, a which was an important historical building, was built in three periods by the inhabitants of the county between 1804 and 1841. After the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire, the safe keeping and handling of documents played a distinguished role in the county seat in Pest. The county had already organized its old documents prior to the central order 1717. Data can be uninterruptedly found in the reports of the 18th century concerning the management of the archives, and the regular usage of documents. In 1769 it was proudly reported to the Locotential Council that the County Archives is well-organized and accurate, and both of the older and of the current documents were cataloged, and had their own indexes. Pest-Pilis-Solt County among the first ones who carried out the orders of Joseph II in for the sake of the archival organization and protection. Gábor Balla registrator was the second in the country, who was entrusted in a resolution, in November 29, 1785 to manage the county's archives full time from that date. Gábor Balla was well-known in the whole country for his organizing and aid-creating job. The management of the county wrote about the „Letter Store-House of our County” as „the major treasure of our county” in 1811. It was typical that the county was proud of its archive which was located at the hall. The safest, Town House was built between 1838 and 1841, additionally, it also employed a vice archival manager, who was alone in the country. The valuable documents deserved this

distinguished handling. At the end of the 18th century, in connection with the national awakening and the outstanding role of Pest County, the „Chief County,” the documents were stored in the Archives. There were newer and newer tasks given to the Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County Archives. Employees had to handle the daily documents as well. Even though the county had excellent employees (Sándor Kőszeghy, Dezső Rexa), they could not stop to place the documents into the cellar or into the former prison. Later on, in the second half of the 1920's, the county provided it with relatively appropriate storing locations following the instructions of the Ministry of Interior only. The county archives used these storage places and equipment until 2000. The former prisoner chapel was reconstructed into a ceremony hall in 1941 and handed over to the archives. The majority of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County Archives remained in damp places, which were inappropriate for document storing.

b) The Public Office of the Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County

It is well-known that the municipal authority of Pest-Pilis-Solt County was one of the leading organizations which formulated the reform efforts and struggled for the establishment and development of the civil class at the beginning of the 19th century. It might be an useful to study the documents of county committees, offices and different collections besides the conventional documents for those who are deeply interested in the events which took place in Pest county between 1825 and 1848 at the county conventions and beyond.

First of all, the collection of the 124 charters created before 1526, before the defeat of Mohács Battle, the Ante Mohácsiam (1229–1525). The valuable documents deserved their distinguished handling. At the end of the 18th century, a national awakening started and in connection with the outstanding role of Pest County remained in the documents at the storage of the Archives. The role of the Archives proved the autonomy of the county less and less in the second half of the century. Although historical science revealed the Archive's role at the preservation of primary sources in 1940's , the county management sponsored the archives as a professional office of the county management. The archives had to take over a huge amount of documents due to the increased county administration but proper storage was an unsolvable issue. There were the decades when the archives was located in the darkest, deepest, dampest places in the Town House partly due to their increased size, and partly due to the increasing economic tasks, that resulted to use the former archival rooms for other purposes.

In 1924 the county auditor offices were reorganized due to a new decree and became subordinated to the Ministry of Interior. The county, town, and village budgets, budget keeping of the county and the accounts of foundations can be found in a separate unit within the fond. The initiatives of the county archives to conserve the documents of villages and districts was not completed with great results: despite the notice, the very valuable part of the documents could not be taken over, and most of them were destroyed during and after World War II. The role of the county archives significantly changed after World War II. Herewith the tasks of the Pest County Archives included not only the preservation of documents of the former county municipality but also the taking over the valuable historical documents of public authorities, public offices, public institutes, families and companies of Pest County, which were established in 1924.

This degree significantly increased the tasks of the archival employees. They had to participate actively in the preparation for sorting and for takeover of documents. Due to the increase the Archives Management had to utilize more cellar storehouses. Another reorganization of the Hungarian archival system was done in 1947. That time the centralized state archives got under the supervision and management of county councils and the adjustment of the regional archive system to the administrative counties was established. The County Archives with its branches was authorized to take over all the archival documents of the offices and institutions of former and recent local governments, and also those of public administrations division managements, and administrations.

Internal division: the county was divided into four districts at the beginning of the 18th century. They were namely the Vác, the Solt, the Kecskemét and the Pilis districts. They were headed with their magistrates. In the end of World War II Pest County suffered from serious damages. The long siege of the capital city increased the losses. At the beginning of 1945 the National Committee of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County was established. The Public Body managed the accomplishment of the land reform and took the organization of reconstruction under control. The area of the county changed in the summer of 1945. Érd, Diósd, Tárnok, Sósút, Pusztazámor and Százhalombatta settlements from Fejér County, the Szob, Nógrádverőce and Penc districts notary from Nógrád County were attached to the Pest county. On the other hand, Érsekcsanád, Nemesnáudvar, Sükösd were attached to Bács-Kiskun County, while Boldog village to Heves County, and Tószeg, Ujszász and Zagyvarékas were joined to Jász-Nagykunszolnok County. There were 7 towns (Budafok, Csepel, Kispest, Pestszenterzsébet, Pestszentlőrinc, Rákospalota, Újpest) and 16 settlements (Albertfalva, Békásmegyér, Budatétény, Cinkota, Mátyásföld, Nagytétény, Pesthidegkút, Pestszentimre, Pestújhely,

Rákoscaba, Rákoshegy, Rákoskeresztúr, Rákosliget, Rákosszentmihály, Sashalom, Soroksár) annexed to the capital city from the county since January 1, 1950. The Administration Committee played an important role in the life of the county.

c) Pest County Archives as a service provider

In the examined period there were not any unified rules at the sector of the research service or loan service for instance. The essence of the development may be summarized as follows: the service of the ruling classes was supplanted by the service of the whole people in archival work. The Archives did not have to give certificates of nobility any more, which had occupied a considerable part of its capacity before 1945. Instead of research on the history of the ruling classes, the exploration and the elaboration of the archival material on the past status and struggles of workers and peasants came to the fore. However, from another, later point of view the socialist development of the archival work had other characteristics as well.

d) Educational and academic work in the Pest County Archives

Rexa Dezső liked history of Pest and he was fun of theatres. When he retired at the end of the period the archivist was a historian. His successor was József Fára archivist, who elaborated a plan for the purposeful repository in order to regrouping and rearrangement of the material as well as for the preparing of a central catalogue.

Summary

According to the law, county archivists were rather public officials than historians, scientists or archivists in its original meaning. This statement can be underlined by Béla Szabó archivist of Zala County: „Since 1943 I was everything but not archivist. Times were so hard that we were unable to care about the archives.”

Even Gyula Mérei had similar opinion about the issue: at the interwar period archivists were involved in the county administration to enclose the previous files. and because of their public experiences.

Apart from a few exceptions, counties usually cut the staff and material costs of the archives. They could do it because no special authority stood with the archives, so nobody cared about the professional coordination and esteem of them.

No doubt that this was a financial issue, too. However, counties might have been open to the issues of allocation, equipment and staff development. There were right examples to the stylistic furnishing the archives at Sopron or Somogy county. As a result of a higher government instruction, Pest County provided coverage for the reconstruction of its archives, too. Heves, Nógrád, Tolna and Zala also planned to expand the county hall, promised new premises and new equipment for the archives. In case of those examples, at least the understanding was there. However, during the budget review of local governments, the government did not support the expansion of the county halls because of the lack of coverage, so the extension of Nógrád one and Zala one was failed at the end of 1920's and at the beginning of 1940's.