

PART II

EARLY GENERAL CHURCH HISTORY

In the late 1800's and early 1900's Hungarian Societies were the fore runners of the church organizations. In 1886 the Verhovay Sick and Death Benefit Foundation, a non-sectarian society was founded; followed in 1889 by the Rakoczi Aid Association. In 1899 a burial and sick benefit society, The Szent Imre Herczeg Egylet (Saint James Sick Benefit Society) was founded. Dues were collected and it also provided for social events. In 1903 Roman Catholics established Szuz Maria Betegsegelyzo (Virgin Mary Sick Benefit Society). In 1904 the Hungarian Reformed Church founded Reformatus Betegsegelyzo (Reformed Sick Benefit Society). In 1955 the first two societies, the Verhovay and Rakoczi merged into the William Penn Fraternal Association, now strictly an insurance firm with a membership of 4,000 in New Brunswick to date.

Protestant Hungarians before the first World War accounted for forty percent of the population of Hungary. The first Hungarian Protestant church in America had the lengthy title of The First Hungarian and Slovak Evangelical and Reformed Church in the United States. It did not last very long. Next the Reformed Church in the United States, led by a Scotch minister named Andrew Moody helped the Hungarian Americans to get competent ministers from the Old Country. The Presbyterian Church began to be interested in the Hungarian ministers. From this interest a misunderstanding developed which led to religious controversies.

Supervision was also offered by Hungary's Reformed Synod but when the first World War came the congregations of Hungarian Reformed Churches were shut off from their source of support and were simultaneously under suspicion of being Anti-American. In the Eastern Classis, seven congregations united with the Reformed Church in the United States, the remaining congregations became either Episcopalian or remained independent. This may explain why in Leslie Konnyu's book "Hungarians in