

# THE SURPRISE WE FOUND IN SZENTENDRE, HUNGARY

Robert W. Case

Szentendre (*named after St. Andrew*) is a small, quaint town in Baroque style, about 30 minutes by train from Budapest. This is a summer vacation resort area due to the ideal climate, the vast number of museums and art galleries, and the tradesmen who have established thriving businesses in the town. The population of the town is about 20,000, which quadruples in the summer season. The town traces its roots back to the Stone Age. The first known inhabitants were the Illyrians, followed by the Celts, Romans, Turks, Hungarians, Serbians, Greeks, and the Bosnians. The Hungarian population became prominent in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I attempted to find out when and where the Jewish people arrived, but no one could give me an answer.

We originally went to this town to purchase souvenirs, objects D'art, etc. Our guide stated that this was her favorite vacation resort. While meandering through the busy town, (Which was very crowded with tourists) my wife, Cele, spotted this sign on the corner of a building:



Our guide, who goes to this town every 2-3 weeks, did not know of the existence of this “Synagogue”!!

The Szanto family pays the caretaker, who is not Jewish, in perpetuity. There are NO JEWS in this town anymore, to her knowledge. She had prepared handouts to distribute About this “shul” . The following is an exact quote from the handout we received.

*(All misspellings, grammatical errors, etc. are original)*

## **SZANTO JEWISH MEMORIAL HOUSE AND TEMPLE**

*“ In June of 1944 from Szentendra and its surrounding, approx 250 Jewish citizens-men, women, and children were deported to different death camps. Maybe 35 survived the unsurvivable. Lajos Szanto and his wife were among the victims. Their son, Gyorgy Szanto , decided to erect a memorial place- in the court of his birthplace-in memory of his parents and other victims of Szentendre. Until 1977, only the first steps were made when unfortunately and suddenly he passed away. With the help of relatives, friends, and the support of the Hungarian Jewish Community, his son, Andras Szanto, realized the dream of his father. You are now standing in the Temple, the first that was ever built after WWII in Hungary, and probably the smallest one of the world. The Szanto Memorial House was dedicated on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1998 by Professor Jozsef Swweitzer, chief Rabbi of Hungary, who after placing the Torah in to the Aaron Ha Kodesh, lit the eternal light.”*

*On the left side wall, on the picture from the main square of Szentendre you can see a graphics showing the increasing number of Jewish citizens of the town, from the year 1828 to 1944.*

*The other picture, before the arch was taken from the bimah of the old Temple of Szentendre.*

*In the showcases are relics and local documents. Among them you see a picture taken in the spring of 1936-the excursion of the Jewish Elementary school to the Budapest Zoo. Only one of the little girls survived Auschwitz.....*

*In the court you find the exact copy of the Holocaust memorial with the list of the perished people that is in the Synagogue of Upjest, a district in Budapest.*

*(All misspellings, grammatical errors, etc are original)*

## SZANTO JEWISH MEMORIAL HOUSE

1



There are about 3,000 visitors to this Synagogue each year.



## THE INTERIOR OF THE SZANTO MEMORIAL HOUSE



In conclusion, I hope you enjoyed this little piece of Jewish history. I have been trying To find out more about the existence of this Jewish community before 1944, and at this time it must remain a mystery.

Robert W. Case

December, 2000

[bobcele@yahoo.com](mailto:bobcele@yahoo.com)