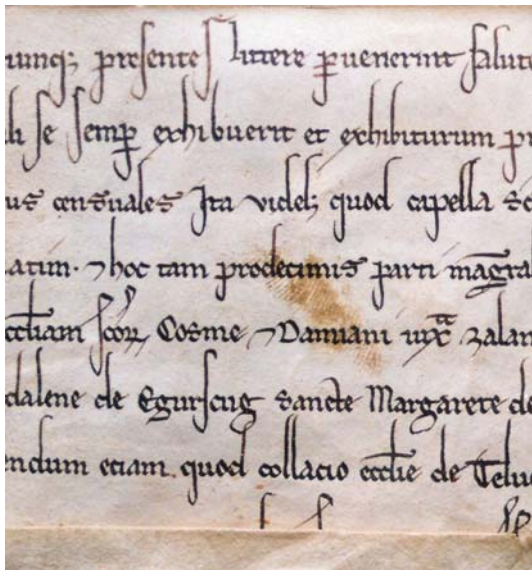


## THE HISTORY OF ZALAEGERSZEG

The first written record that mentions our city's name is from the year 1247. The name refers to a settlement, located in the **corner** (szeg) of **Zala** and Válicka, which was then a swampy territory, abounded with **alder** (eger) trees. The land, where people have already lived for thousands of years included water sources, which was needed for life, and was also full of protective trees that served as food sources. The land itself conserved fossils next to Lake Gébárti, Celtic weapons in Andrásida, roman candles in various points of the town, and graves from the early-Middle Ages near Zrínyi Miklós Gimnázium and the Ola part of the town.



The town in the 19th-20th centuries melted together 17 villages that were earlier separate ones, so their past also play a great role in making up the town's history: Gébárt, Andrásida, which was called Lovászi earlier, Ola, Pózva, Bekeháza, Vorhota, Csács, Bozsok, Besenyő, Ságod, Neszele, Ebergény, Bazita, Botfa, Kaszaháza, Apátfa, Erzsébethegy. Gébárt and Andrásida were first mentioned in 1211, while records of Ola remained from 1236. Architectural relics from these early times are churches in Zalabesenyő, Andrásida, and Csács.



The lords of the town changed several times: from the 15th century it was ruled by the bishop of Veszprém, and from 1777 the town was governed by the bishop of Szombathely. It was a middle-sized market town, and the role of the town in history became greater, when the residence of the bishop, located in the surroundings of Deák tér was built into a castle during the attacks of the Turkish army.

After Kanizsa had been conquered by the Turkish armada in 1600, the captain of the whole Dunántúl region moved his residence here in Zalaegerszeg. The surface remainings of the castle were long disappeared, but remainings of the castle's piles are still dug out nowadays during constructions.



Besides the fact that county meetings had been already held here earlier, the town became an official county residence only after 1732. That is when the County House was built. In the following decades they built the Mária Magdolna Parsonage Church, the Kálvária Chapel, the Chapel and Cemetery of Ola, the Parsonage and the Military Lodging House, which were extended in the 20th century. The latter one served as a residence for the "comitatus" after 1872, but today it is the home of different offices and the County's Archives.



In the "age of the reforms", the town, as the centre of the county deserved attention nationwide many times, both László Csány and Ferenc Deák started their public lives here, however the town improved slowly. The town was far away from the major trade routes, and because of the geographical location the railroad also kept off it until the end of the 19th century, when the Ukk-Csáktornya track touched the town, and this way Zalaegerszeg became connected to the Sopron-Nagykanizsa railroad line.

In 1885, the town was rewarded with a degree for Towns with Organized Councils, which was followed by spectacular improvements. The Grammar School, the present building of the Museum, the Hotel, the multi-storied houses in the Main Square (Főtér), the Baross grove are all memories of that era.



A Barrack for the Cavalrymen with a stable was also built. The first Electricity Plant generated electricity from 1905 in the place of today's Petőfi School. Although it has still remained as a town. In 1900 it was the home of altogether ten thousand people, and in 1920 thirteen thousand inhabitants lived here. No mentionable industry could have evolved, together with the fact that the town had not enough power to build a plumb system and sewerage. Until the beginning of World War 2 the population of the town barely increased, but with the new constructions the town became to look like a city. We can owe The Church of the Francis Order, the Monastery, the row of the villas on Kosztolányi street, the Rose grove, and the detached houses built between Arany János street and Dózsa György street to this era.

Soon the town survived the material destructions of World War 2, but the number of human casualties was significant. The number of people fallen at war, or as prisoners, the destroying of the Jewish community, which made up one-tenth of the population, and many survivors, who moved to somewhere else meant a huge disaster.



In the middle of the 20th century the building of the Clothing Factory, the Concern of the Milk Factory, the Oil Processing Plant, and later the firms and corporations of furniture industry, metalworking, and food industry increased the weight of Egerszeg in the country. By 1990, the population grew four times bigger. Public utilities were built from the 1960's: aqueduct and gas-main systems, and sewerage were constructed below the bitumenized surface roads, while after 1970 the expansion of community institutions gratified everyone, with the establishment of modern schools, libraries, community centres, and museums. First in our country, an Outdoor Ethnical Museum was opened here, which was later expanded with Finno-Ugric Ethnical Park, and also the first Museum of Oil Industry.

We have a permanent theatre from 1983, which goes by the name Hevesi Sándor. Higher education has also been established, as The College of Finance and Accountancy welcomed the first students, after that in 1990 students came to The College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, and nowadays the placement faculty of Budapest University of Technology and

Economics also welcomes the new students, and many of the town's sport teams (football, basketball, chess) managed to participate in the top leagues and championships.

Around 1990 a temporary stop caused some anxiety, as several factories were shut down and closed, the building of the homes and houses slowed down, and the population decreased a bit. After 1995 new industries settled here, and mostly electronics is the industry that gives people from the surrounding settlements jobs and opportunities, and after the year 2000 there was again a spectacular boom in house-building, traffic and infrastructure improved, and also reconstructions in the town took place.



In the past decades the number of housing project does not increase really much, but it is rather the old houses and blocks of flats that are renewed. The historical inner part of the town is starting to positively and beautifully improve, of course with keeping most of the old traditions.

New Commercial Institutions are beginning to show up, and in order to increase demand, new shopping centres and super markets, which are disputed by many people are starting to surround the town, while the conditions for sports are also improved by building a new football stadium, and also by finishing the Ice Stadium in Autumn, 2004.



The beach, the camping, the holiday resort, and also the Thermal Bath and the Aqua City, all located at Gébárti Leisure Centre were created most importantly for the relaxation, health, and happiness of the inhabitants, who live here, but nowadays people from far settlements came here just to live through this experience.

Not only the guests, who visit our town, but the people who live and work here are on the same opinion: Zalaegerszeg is a friendly and cosy little town, and it impulses a good feeling for people. That 60.000 inhabitants became a great community up to now, and those people do not really belong to this town because it is written on their ID card, but they all think from the bottom of their hearts that they do belong here, it is their home.

