

NEWSLETTER

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PÉLI ÖRÖKSÉG
ALAPÍTVÁNY

OUR LATEST NEWS



We are delighted to welcome you in the New Year and extend our warmest wishes to you: a happy, fortunate, and successful New Year to all of you! The shared memories and collaborative work of the past year have been a great source of strength for us. We hope that in 2026 we will have the pleasure of meeting you often, as you are an indispensable part of our community.

The goals of our foundation can only be realized with your continued support. We thank you for standing by us so far, and we look forward to our future collaboration, so that together we can preserve our heritage and bring our plans to fruition.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We warmly welcome all our dear followers to our upcoming events:

- On January 16, you will have the opportunity to once again listen to the exemplary life story of Countess Széchényi Mária, which can inspire us all.
- On May 2, we will celebrate together the 200th anniversary of our Chapel's construction – a special occasion of historical significance.

16



2026. január 16., péntek, 17:00

sárvár-felsővidéki gr. Széchényi Mária élete és
munkássága

Szent István Gimnázium

HISTORY - IN SEARCH OF OUR HERITAGE

FAMILY

Countess Széchényi Mária Lujza Alojzia was born in Sopron on 5 January 1804.



Her mother, Countess Clam-Gallas Alojzia, was a talented opera singer, and her father was Count Széchényi Lajos, the son of the founder of the National Museum, Széchényi Ferenc. She shared a close and affectionate relationship with her uncle, "the Greatest Hungarian," István Széchenyi. In 1824, she married the kind-hearted and distinguished Count Zichy László, with whom she lived in a devoted and loving marriage.

Her life was fulfilled by the birth of her four children: Ferenc, Alajos, László, and Mária. However, the family was struck by profound losses. Her middle son, Alajos, died in childhood, and later her eldest son, Ferenc, fell in the War of Independence of 1848. These tragedies left a deep mark on Mária, making her even more quiet and reflective.

On the family estate in Alsópél, Mária took on a decisive leadership role. With her outstanding organisational skills and exceptional sense of responsibility toward the community, she created a thriving social centre and a close-knit community.

Her social commitment was also remarkable: she played a key role in establishing one of the country's first kindergartens, supporting the initiative both financially and morally.

Mária passed away on 27 November 1863, but her example lives on. In her lifetime she demonstrated that noble rank and womanhood are not merely ornamental roles—they entail true leadership, encompassing careful management of the estate, holding family and community together, and a deep sense of duty toward those in need. Her intellectual curiosity, her household pharmacy, and her passion for healing and teaching all point to the fact that her faith and humanity were the true driving forces of her life.

COATS OF ARMS

The Coat of Arms of the Széchényi Family

The Széchényi family has ancient roots in Nógrád County, deriving its name from the town of Szécsény. The family's distinguished status is reflected in the fact that they were granted the Hungarian title of count as early as 1697, which later passed to the main line's sole heir, Széchényi Ferenc.

The family motto, "If God is with us, who can be against us?", speaks to their faith and dedication.

The coat of arms is rich in symbolism and features a quartered shield:

- In two fields, on a red background, a silver double cross rises from a green triple mount.
- In the other two fields, on a blue background, a crowned black eagle looks toward a radiant golden sun in the upper corner.

At the center of the shield lies a golden inescutcheon, depicting a silver dove soaring from a crown, holding a green olive branch in its beak – a symbol of peace and spiritual heritage.

The coat of arms is crowned by an ornate count's coronet, which commemorates the family's historical significance and dignity.



ESTATES

The Széchényi Castle of Nagycenk



The name of the Széchényi family is inseparably linked to the Castle of Nagycenk, which has officially been a national memorial site since 2016. This place is not merely an impressive building; it is the living space of several generations of the family, the cradle of their ideas, and the guardian of their historical heritage.

The Castle's Path to Family Ownership

The estate came into the family's possession at the end of the 17th century. Nagycenk was acquired through a mortgage by György Széchényi, Archbishop of Kalocsa, who bequeathed it in his will to his brother Lőrinc and his children. Ownership ultimately passed to the branch descending from the Archbishop's nephew, György II. The last male heir, Széchényi Ferenc (the founder of the Hungarian National Museum), became the lord of the castle in 1783. He established a valuable library and art collection here, thereby founding the site's cultural role.

The Golden Age under Széchenyi István

The castle gained its greatest significance during the life of "the Greatest Hungarian," István Széchenyi. He spent his childhood here and later, after 1820, organized a model farm on the estate. The building acquired its present-day classical exterior during his time, between 1834 and 1840, based on plans by Ferdinand Hild. They installed bathrooms, water-flush toilets, and modern comfort features—transforming it into a highly modern residence for its era. The castle and its park served as the venue for valuable meetings and political and intellectual gatherings.

The Trials of the 20th Century and Revival

István Széchenyi's son, Béla, richly planted the park with rare tree species, but a difficult period followed in the 20th century. The building suffered a bombing raid in 1944, and in the summer of 1945 it was looted and set on fire. By the 1950s, only ruins remained. Extraordinary restoration work lasted for decades: the walls were roofed by 1961, the first major renovation was completed in 1973 when the István Széchenyi Memorial Museum opened, and the full restoration of the entire complex lasted until 1988 so that it could once again stand in its full splendour as the guardian of the nation's memory and the family's enduring legacy.

Today, the castle is not just a museum; it is a living witness to Hungarian history, the spirit of the Enlightenment, and the perseverance of a family.