

## “The Sound of Music”: Fact or Fiction Real Story of the von Trapp Family

### The History of the von Trapp Family

'The Sound of Music' is loved by millions across the world with its wonderful characters and interesting storyline, but have you ever wondered if that was what really happened? Was there a nun named Maria who married a Captain with 7 children and did they flee from Hitler? The short answer is yes! But what was it *really* like? Here you'll find out about the true story behind 'The Sound of Music'!



The family lost most of its wealth through the worldwide depression when their bank failed in the early 1930s. Maria tightened belts all around by dismissing most of the servants and taking in boarders. It was around this time that they began considering making the family hobby of singing into a profession. Georg was reluctant for the family to perform in public, "but accepted it as God's will that they sing for others," daughter Eleonore said in a 1978 *Washington Post* interview. "It almost hurt him to have his family onstage, not from a snobbish view, but more from a protective one." As depicted in *The Sound of Music*, the family won first place in the Salzburg Music Festival in 1936 and became successful, singing Renaissance and Baroque music, madrigals, and folk songs all across Europe.

Traveling with their musical conductor, Rev. Franz Wasner, and secretary, Martha Zochbauer, they went by train to Italy in June, later to London, and by September were on a ship to New York to begin a concert tour in Pennsylvania. Son Johannes was born in January 1939 in Philadelphia.



When their six months visitors' visas expired, they went on a short Scandinavian tour and returned to New York in

Leaving the family fortune behind, the Trapp family had to find a way to survive. In her book *Maria*, Maria von Trapp describes those early days. "Overnight we had become really poor; we had become refugees. A refugee not only has no country, he also has no rights. He is a displaced person. At times he feels like a parcel which has been mailed and is moved from place to place." But there were nine children and the tenth on the way. According to Maria, "The only thing we could do well together was sing, so we had to turn a hobby into a way of living."

October 1939. They were held at Ellis Island for investigation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, apparently because when asked by an official how long they intended to stay, instead of saying "six months," as specified on their visas, Maria exclaimed, "Oh, I am so glad to be here—I never want to leave again!" *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* notes that they were released after a few days and began their next tour.