

VON TRAPP FAMILY

Life in Salzburg, Austria

The Real Von Trapp Family



Franz Wasner

Georg von Trapp had seven children at the time of his first wife, Agathe Whitehead,^s death, and in 1927 he married Maria Kutschera, who was twenty-five years his junior, with

whom he had three more children. Both parts of the family were musical, and by 1935 the family was singing at the local church in Aigen, where they made the acquaintance of a young priest, Dr Franz

Wasner, who encouraged their musical progress and taught them sacred music to add to the folk songs, madrigals and ballads they were already singing.^[1] While singing at their Salzburg home they were also heard by the German concert singer Lotte Lehmann, who persuaded them to take part in the song competition at the 1936 Salzburg Festival, for which they won a prize; after this, accompanied by Dr Wasner, the family toured and performed in Vienna and Salzburg, and undertook a European tour that encompassed France, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Germany and England.

In the same year, the family performed in the United States for the first time before returning to Austria when their visas expired; however, in the same year, Adolf Hitler annexed Austria, and the family decided to leave, first for Italy (of which the Zadar-born Georg and thus the family were legally citizens). For some months in 1938, just after their flight, they lived in Warmond, near The Hague, Netherlands, as the guests of a Dutch banker, Ernest Menten. This episode is described by local historian Miep Smitsloo in her 2007 Dutch book 'Tussen Tol en Trekvaart' ('Between Toll and Canal') (https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2007/03/sound_of_music_in_warmond/). In her account of the flight, Maria von Trapp for an unknown reason does not mention this stay.

Captain von Trapp lost his fortune through bank failure long before he fled Austria. The family was forced to do their own chores, and eventually they had to sing for money, which didn't sit very well with Georg von Trapp. He thought work, and especially singing for money, was beneath his station in life. The Anschluss, or invasion of Austria by the Nazis, meant yet another change for the family. In a family discussion, it was decided that they should leave their country rather than bend to the Nazi regime. They arrived in America in 1938 with nine children...and one on the way.