

VON TRAPP FAMILY

Life in Salzburg, Austria

Financial problems

While still a school teacher at Nonnberg Abbey, she was asked to teach one of the seven children of widowed naval commander Georg Ludwig von Trapp and his first wife, Agathe Whitehead von Trapp, who had died from scarlet fever. Maria and Georg were married on 26 November 1927^{[2][1]}. In 1935, Trapp lost his fortune,^[1] which had been safely invested in a bank in London. The Captain, to help a Mrs. Lammer – a friend in the banking business – had withdrawn the money from the English bank and deposited it in Mrs. Lammer's bank, which promptly failed. Austria had been experiencing economic difficulties as a result of German pressure and other factors.

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.

The family faced financial ruin in 1935. Georg had transferred his savings from a bank in London to an Austrian bank run by a friend named Frau Lammer. Austria was experiencing economic difficulties during a worldwide depression because of the Crash of 1929 and Lammer's bank failed.^[13] To survive, the Trapps discharged most of their servants, moved into the top floor of their home and rented out the other rooms. The archbishop sent Father Franz Wasner to stay with them as their chaplain and this began their singing career.

To survive, the Trapps sent away most of their servants, moved into the top floor of their home, and rented the empty rooms to students of the Catholic University. The Archbishop sent Father Franz Wasner to stay with them as their chaplain and the family began turning its love of music into a career. After performing at a festival in 1935, they became a popular touring act. Shortly before^[5] the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938, the family moved to Italy and then to the United States. The family's former home in Austria became the headquarters of Heinrich Himmler.

In 1938, Hitler entered Austria and the von Trapps decided to save their spiritual rather than their material wealth and left their large estate outside of Salzburg (/experience-salzburg/the-city-of-salzburg/)for the United States. As if going out for one of their usual family hikes with knapsacks on their backs and dressed in mountaineering clothes, they left their house and belongings behind. They took trains through the Austrian Alps, crossing the border to Italy and on through Switzerland, then France to London, and finally a boat to America.