

RESORT LIFE

Beach Resort life at Lake Balaton has undergone a major change since the 1860s. The development of Siófok was also brought about by tourism and the tourist interest in Lake Balaton. The year 1863 is generally considered to be the year of birth of Siófok as a spa town, when the modernization of the Sió sluice and the large railway station were completed. The predecessor of the present-day town structure was formed and several villa buildings that still stand today were also started to be built in this period. In 1866, Ignác Végh opened the first lake bath on Lake Balaton. At that time, Siófok already awaited its guests with a common bathhouse, inn and accommodation.



In 1891, Henrik Glatz founded the Siófok Balatonfűrdő Ltd. with the involvement of numerous capitalists and landowners, under the chairmanship of Count Géza Batthyány. They rented the bathing right from the Chapter for fifty years between Zamárdi and Balatonvilágos, and bought the coastal section from them in order to start filling it up. In 1892, Mór Than, Pál Vágó, Tivadar Feledi-Flesch, Artúr Tölgyessy and Gyula Aggházy already had villas here, but Mihály Zichy himself and his relatives also often lived here, and the list was completed by other dignitaries, church dignitaries, engineers and businessmen.

As a result of the developments, more and more wealthy guests chose Siófok as their summer travel destination. The new Balaton Bath opened its doors on June 18, 1893. The water of Lake Balaton was attributed with healing effects, and Siófok became the 11th spa in Hungary. Parks, gardens and promenades also appeared. In the English park, created by leveling thousands of carriages of sand, the trees (black pine, english oak, platanus etc.) which preferred sandy soil - planted by Lajos Flament, a french gardener - grew suprisingly fast.





Gonauer Gyula

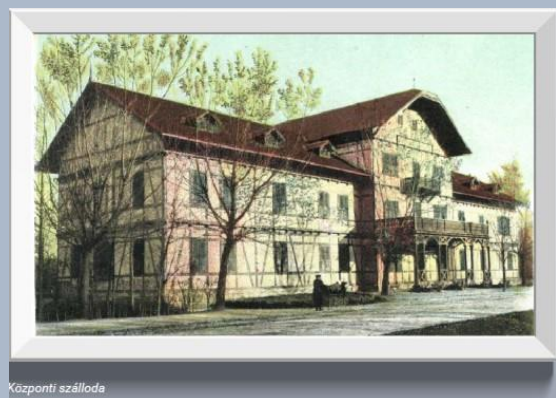
The landscaper arrived in Siófok in 1891 and created the park, which then covered eight hectares, almost from scratch to the best of his knowledge. For nearly three decades, he designed, built and maintained the parks of the spa resort. In addition to Lajos Flament, it is also worth mentioning Gyula Gonauer, who was the head gardener of the park and ornamental garden of the Siófok Gyógyfürdő R. T. (Siófok Spa Joint Stock Company), which covered eight cadastral acres. His name is associated with the design and creation of the Siófok Rose Garden (Rózsaliget).

The newspaper Balatonvidék already wrote the following in 1905: "Siófok is a beautiful work of nature. In just ten years, English shareholders have created a real fairy garden out of it. Today it is a famous beach resort with huge trees, a sea of ornamental plants, comfortable hotels and restaurants. Human hands have created everything there that bathers could wish for".



Sió és Hullám Szállók

The period after World War I brought the golden age of the Beach Resort, after the Ertl brothers from Baja (József, Jenő and István) took over the management of the joint-stock company in 1922. With significant investments and professional management, the three Ertl brothers developed Siófok into the most modern and increasingly popular catering establishment of the Balaton bathing culture, even for foreigners.



Központi szálló

"It is an open secret that the pace of Siófok's rapid development is dictated by the three directors of the spa management, the famous Ertl brothers. The Ertls are hospitable people with European culture, unparalleled diligence and excellent manners. The level of their restaurant rivals that of the Ritz and Gundel, their hotels are impeccable, and their dance-grill, with its tasteful decor and atmosphere, would hold its own in any world spa resort [...]."



The first generation of villa builders was no longer alive at this time, the holiday homes became studios, the villas became hotels and guesthouses. Thanks to the developments, the resort area took on a new look, with bars, casinos, theaters, cinemas, cabarets, horse racing, a golf course, numerous tennis courts and clay pigeon shooting ranges, a "plage"-style beach, a seaplane landing strip, an English park and a rose garden.



Ertl család és éttermük



Junkers hidroplán, 1930 | Kép forrása: Fortepan/ Szent-István Dezső

The "Kursalons" offered a variety of entertainment and cultural opportunities. Accordingly, a coffee house, a reading and piano room, and the so-called ladies' room were at the disposal of the guests.

„There was a long tradition of hospitality and catering in this region. Before the First World War, guests who knew the Balaton knew well that the most delicious pike perch fillet was baked at Uncle Cserveny's in the restaurant of the Fogas Hotel, and that Nándor Sovánka's music was to be enjoyed there. The Viennese bone broth and chicken soup were the most velvety at Jankó Karpelesz's in the Balaton Hotel. On the waterfront, at the Várady's restaurant (the father-in-law of Gyula Krúdy), lovers of French food and roasts gathered. Imre Magyari even played music - gave concerts - at the famous innkeeper of the Roval Hotel.”

Every morning the sand was raked along the shore, and uniformed children collected paper waste and cigarette butts in the park. There was a boat rescue service on the beach, a slide with coconut mats on the ramps. They did everything they could to attract holiday and spa guests to Siófok.

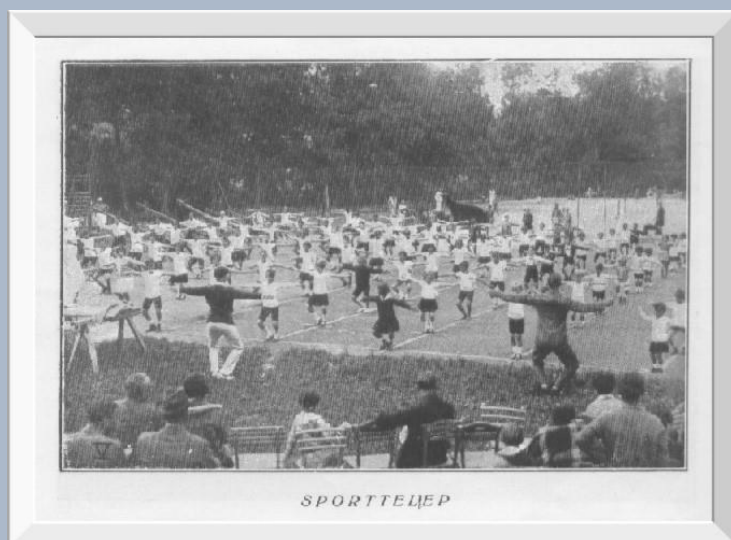


Fürdőzők, 1917

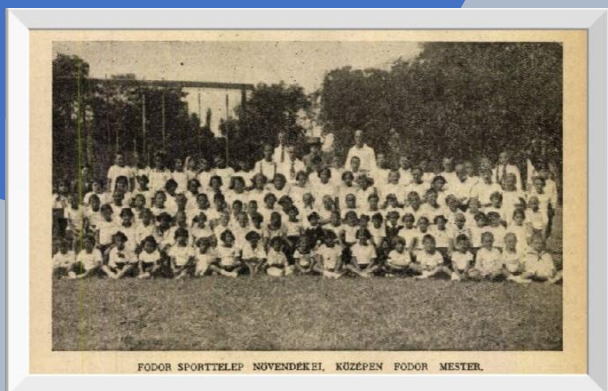


Fürdőzők, 1922 | Forrás: Fortepan/Jurányi Attila

The spa management attached particular importance to the physical education of children, so a separate sports complex was at their disposal, where Károly Fodor, a fencing master at the Technical University, gave instruction in gymnastics, various outdoor games, athletics, fencing, but he also taught swimming, rowing and even dancing.



SPORTTELEP



FODOR SPORTTELEP NOVENDEKEI, KÖZÉPEN FODOR MESTER.

Forrás: Színházi Élet, 1924



Motorcsónak, 1934 | Forrás: Fortepan / BAHART Archivum

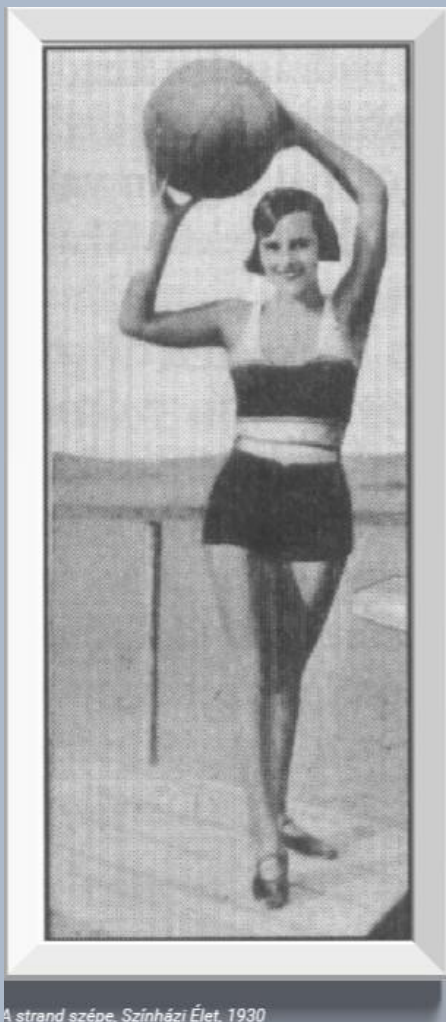


Sportthét, 1935 | Forrás: Fortepan / BAHART Archivum



Bár a strandon, 1912

The scientific and artistic world was just as well represented at the spa resort as the financial aristocracy. Hundreds of guests from the countries of the monarchy came to Siófok to relax and have fun, they got together, talked, played dominoes, chess, danced and held theatrical performances.



A strand szépe, Színházi Élet, 1930

Balaton in winter also attracted guests. In the bitter cold, skaters performed on the thick ice, ice sailors raced, pushed dog sleds, or simply enjoyed walking on the Hungarian Sea. In the hotels of the larger coastal settlements, parties, dances and sports competitions were organized.

Since the beginning of the consolidation (1922), Siófok tourism was mainly based on the citizens, it was also the favorite resort of the Hungarian and Austrian Jews. 80% of the holidaymakers were Jewish, so Siófok was not pejoratively called "Jewish". First of all, we should mention Endre Ady, who lived in the Sió Hotel; Gyula Krúdy - who was connected to Siófok through his wife, Zsuzsa Várady - and Mór Jókai, who spent the last summer of his life here, with his wife, Bella Nagy, in the Fekete villa (Black villa) at the corner of Batthyány and Mártírok streets. Next to them, we could list the other writers and artists: Frigyes Karinthy, Jenő Rejtő, János Horváth, Szefi Bohuniczky, whose writings were certainly influenced by the unique Siófok life. Famous painters owned villas in Siófok, writers and poets, as well as actors and composers rested here. "In the bars and cafes, the young György Faludy [...], Béla Salamon, Jenő Rejtő, Gyula Kabos spent their free days and weeks. Today's Lipótváros consists of four parts: Kossuth Lajos Street, Stock Exchange Palace, southern corso and Siófok" - thus Karinthy, a regular guest of the Hozbor (later Csárdás) restaurant, a returning resident of the Vitéz boarding house designed by Lajos Kozma at the end of the Bath Resort, where he also died in August 1938".

So in the period between the two world wars, development accelerated again. As a result of the rapid and expert developments, the following can be read about the contemporary Siófok, the Rose Garden, in the report of the inspection tour of the Balaton Supervisory Committee in 1932:

„The pier, the rose garden and the promenade were the places for beautiful summer evenings and walks that were like fashion shows. This was just as much a part of the holiday as sitting down on the terrace of a coffee shop, ordering a frothy coffee with a wafer, and listening to the playing of the famous violinist, sr. Imre Magyari.”

„Between 1920 and 1940, the number of villas near the shore quadrupled, and a large number of places offering varied entertainment were established in proportion to this, from card rooms to gaming rooms.

The geographical location of the Balaton settlement closest to the capital made it possible to expand in any direction, south, east and west, and the infrastructure satisfied any need.”



Vitéz-penzió

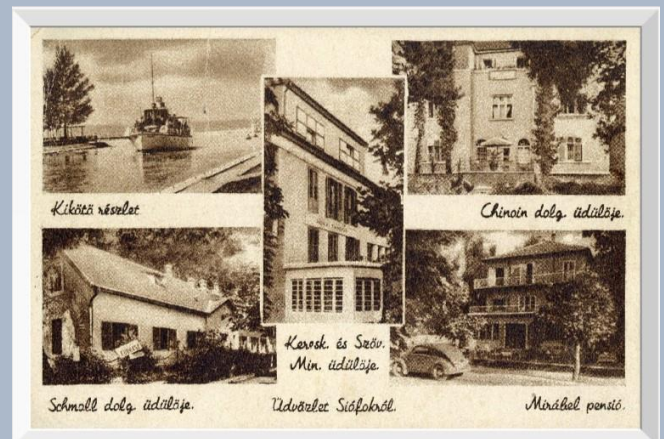


Fürdő Kaszinó táncsterme, 1932



The year 1968 brought great changes, as Siófok joined the ranks of the cities on December 29. The appearance of the settlement changed the fastest, the rural characteristics were already disappearing. Dr. János Halász, vice-president of the World Bank, spoke about bold plans and ideas: they are building a mini-island on concrete poles a little further from the shore for sailors and sunbathers. They wanted a new symbol for the city. Until then, the water tower built in 1912 symbolized the settlement. At the same time, a plan was already made in Budafok in a studio for the four-meter-high statue that greets those approaching the resort town from the water at the corner of the Rózsalyget. "The sculptor Tibor Vilt dreamed of a modern Venus, a female figure emerging from the foam. It symbolizes Siófok, which, finally emerging from its centuries-old provincialism, becomes a city for all four seasons, worthy of its summer rank." Finally, in 1974, Tibor Vilt's work entitled "Mermaid of Balaton" was completed, which represented the modern abstract trend of the 70s.

In 1987, the number of holiday accommodation in Siófok was 80,000. Of these, two thousand were hotels, 17 thousand were managed by SZOT (National Council of Trade Unions) and various companies. 20 thousand guests could be accommodated in private holiday homes and more than 30 thousand in the paid guest service. 7600 people could spend their holidays in the campsites. These numbers prove that Siófok has become the capital of Lake Balaton and holidays.



Füvészek 1937 | Forrás: Fortepan, Ötör Károly

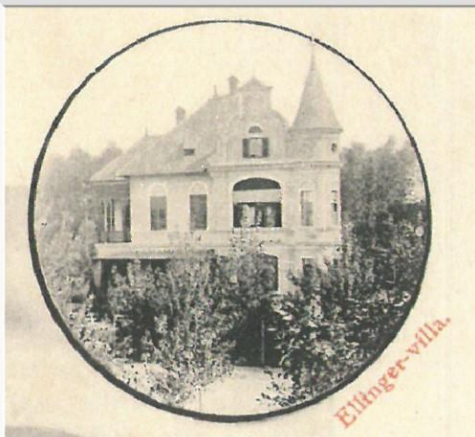
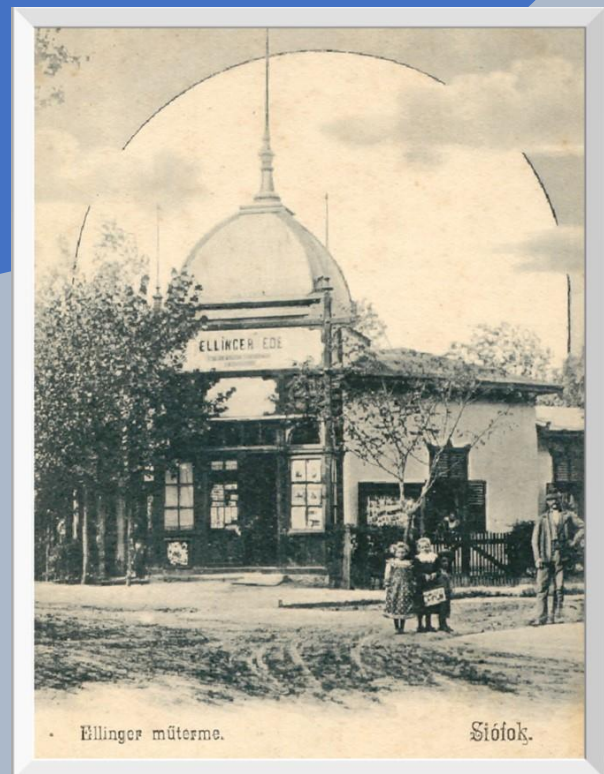


INTERESTING FACTS FROM THE LIFE OF THE BEACH

SUMMER CINEMA ON THE SITE OF THE REEDS

Ede Ellinger worked as an imperial and royal court photographer, and came to Siófok from Pest. He opened a studio here, the only one in the country, because he saw a good business opportunity in it. He photographed not only the holiday buildings, but also the wealthier citizens. Many families in Siófok keep Ellinger photographs. It was customary for locals and residents of the surrounding villages to visit the photographer at a certain age, for example at the age of 18, or on occasions such as weddings.

The studio was only open in the summer, but at that time the season was much longer than it is now; for example, there is a known photo taken in late autumn. Ede Ellinger also immortalized several famous personalities, including József Rippl-Rónai and Frigyes Karinthy, when they were vacationing in Siófok. For instance, Rippl-Rónai was photographed at the Vitéz boarding house, and both of them when they were on the jury of a beauty contest at the time. Later, the building was used by the Ertl family, as well as the ones next to it. The rooms were put at the service of tourism. At the time of nationalization, the house became the property of the Ministry of the Interior. Next to the photographed building is the so-called Ellinger boarding house, where Gyula Krúdy also rested. From here, the famous writer set off on his walks around Lake Balaton, which inspired him to write numerous classics.



After the regime change, the building also served as a home for political parties. It is the workplace of members of parliament and the Balatoni Integrációs Kft (Balaton Integration Co.).

LUJZA BLAHA ALSO PLAYED ON ITS STAGE



Színház, 1912 | Kép forrása: Fortepan/Zichy-kúria, Zala

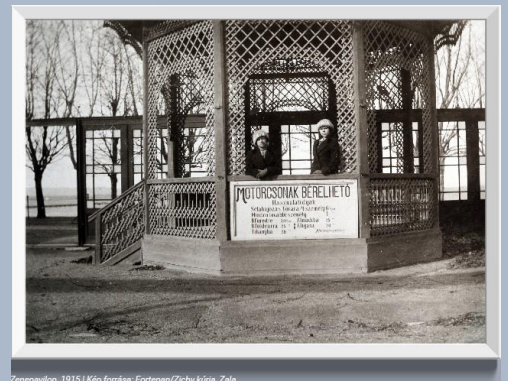
Siófok's first theater was founded by Lipót Karpelesz, and it stood on the site of today's Sörbár (Bier-bar). Imre Kálmán was born next door, who, as a small child, appeared uninvited at every rehearsal; there he was fascinated and captivated by the stage. Siófok's second theater stood in the present-day Jókai Park next to an artificial lake, in the middle of a small forest, behind the present-day Napfény Hotel (Sunshine Hotel). It was built in 1905 at a cost of 32,000 crowns from a state subsidy intended to help rural theaters.

The opening programme was performed by the company of Albert Kövesi, director of the Pécs-Kaposvár-Nagykanizsa theater. This theater fulfilled a significant cultural mission; it introduced the audience to the capital's plays and trained versatile actors. The style of the „Színkör” building was similar to the „Magyar Tenger” bathhouse, with the building facing away from Lake Balaton. Its walls were painted gold and before 1910 it was lit by acetylene lamps. Its auditorium could accommodate 440 people; there were twelve boxes, as well as a rooster's perch and a large stage where spectacular operettas were performed. For example, Imre Kálmán's „Tatárjárás” was performed, but also „Aranyember” by Mór Jókai. There were performances every day in the summer, even on Sunday afternoons. Combined with a holiday in Siófok, numerous famous actors performed here, including Lujza Blaha, Mari Jászai, Ede Újházy and Márton Rátkay. Within the walls of this theater, the Soli Deo Gloria Association of Reformed Students was founded in 1921. The facility was demolished in 1928; it became dilapidated and the wooden structures became a fire hazard.

JANCSI TOLL PLAYED IN THE MUSIC PAVILION

In Siófok, the restaurant and the café, which also had a music pavilion, were important facilities of the spa resort.

Up to three hundred guests could sit down at the same time in the restaurant. The terrace was protected from the strong sunshine and rain by an openable awning. On the side facing Lake Balaton was the beach bar, where guests could even enter in their swimsuits. From the very beginning, the music pavilion was an important venue for entertainment. The fire brigade band played, classical music concerts



Zene pavilon, 1915 | Kép forrása: Fortepan/Zichy-kúria, Zala

FROM THE PAST OF SIÓFOK HORSE RACES



Horse racing - just like sports sailing, betting or clubs - appeared in our country in the Reform Era as a progressive bourgeois phenomenon. In 1893, an enthusiastic report appeared in the *Pesti Napló* about Siófok. "On the large terrace of the inn, they drink coffee from golden cups, and boys in tailcoats rush around with the cognacs. Long-stockinged babes walk on the white roads with their governesses. In front of the swimming pool, colorful gentlemen waded in the sandy water and red-dressed women boldly cut through the rising waves. Young men with roses pinned on their lapels court on the plage. In the small red ladies' salon, tin soldiers race past at a roulette-like green table..." Since 1893, the Horsemen's Cooperative has held horse races in Siófok for three days in August. A special train transported the audience from Budapest. The Siófok races were not just local events, but national and international events. The parallel is extremely interesting: at that time there were regular horse races in Poprad and Siófok, so those interested, the riders had two options, either they went to the Tatras to race horses, or to Lake Balaton, to Siófok. Horse racing should undoubtedly be included among the hospitality functions of the resort. As a curiosity, it should be mentioned that 1500 guests arrived in Siófok in the year of the first event.



Kép forrása: Vasárnapi Újság, 1910 | Forrás: Múltidéző, Siófok, BRTK Könyvtár, 2013