

Hannvassy, Imre

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# Austrian Peer, Concert Pianist, Church Founder—Tyler Honors Him

## Emir Hamvasy's Memory Lauded as 64th Anni- versary Is Observed

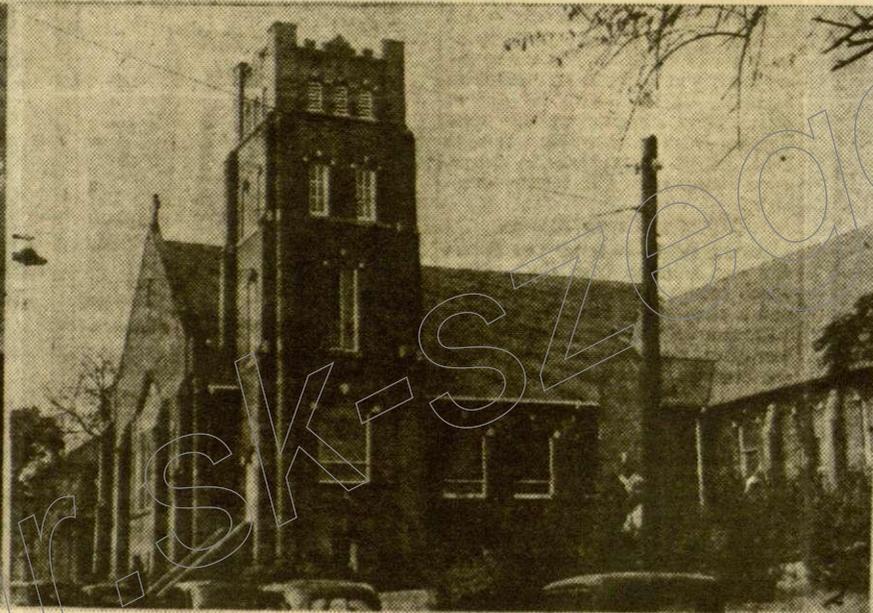
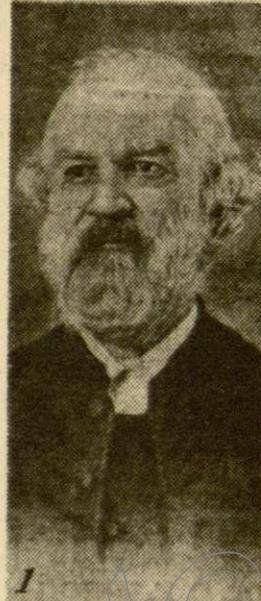
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From the East Texas Bureau of The News. TYLER, Texas, Oct. 31.—The spectacular career of the Rev. Emir Hamvasy, one of the most colorful figures the Episcopal ministry ever has known, was recalled by the recent observance of Christ's Church's sixty-fourth anniversary. Mr. Hamvasy, an exiled Austrian nobleman, political leader and concert pianist, organized Christ Church in the fall of 1872 and served as its first rector. The baptism of his child, Emir Hamvasy Jr., is the first on the records of the Tyler church.

Mr. Hamvasy served only four years in Tyler but is given credit for laying the foundation for the success the church was to attain in later years. He was a close personal friend of the late United States Senator Horace Chilton, whose wife was a communicant. Senator Chilton often referred to the rector as one of the ablest preachers he ever heard. The present rector of Christ Church is the Rev. DuBose Murphy, whose "History of the Episcopal Church in Texas" is accepted as an authoritative work.

Mr. Hamvasy, whose full name was Emir Bela Gyeila Carois Hamvasy, was born in Hungary in 1820 and began the study of music at the age of 5. At 16 he played in a concert with Franz Liszt. But he did not pursue his study of music at the expense of other branches of learning.

### Joins Rebel Army.

When he was only 16 he received his degree as doctor of law and at 21



Left, the Rev. Emir Hamvasy, first rector of Christ Church, Tyler, whose resemblance to Robert E. Lee was so striking he often was mistaken for the Southern General. Center, Christ Church today. Right, the Rev. DuBose Murphy, present rector.

he was elected to Parliament. He once served as Minister of Finance. A few years later he became Mayor of Budapest and was serving in that capacity when the revolution began in 1848 under the leadership of Kossuth. Hamvasy was one of the first to enlist with the rebels. He signed up as a private but soon was advanced to the rank of Major General. When the rebel forces capitulated Kossuth fled and Hamvasy drew up terms of surrender. It was agreed the rebels would be allowed to leave the coun-

try. Later the Emperor revoked the terms of the agreement and Hamvasy, while walking through the streets of the fortress of Comorn was suddenly confronted with a poster offering a reward for his capture.

A friendly officer helped the rebel leader escape to safety. After a stormy ocean voyage he arrived in New York in February, 1850. There Hamvasy and a fellow refugee opened a cigar store. But the business was not to his liking so Hamvasy disposed

of his share to his partner for a supply of food.

### Starts Music Classes.

After his cigar store venture Hamvasy was reduced to dire poverty and at times found it necessary to sleep in the parks. But despite his financial difficulties, he always was an aristocrat and was welcomed in the homes of the city's social leaders.

One evening he called at the home of a nephew of the famous Irish patriot, Robert Emmett, and it was there that his musical talent was revealed—

a turning point in his life in the new world. Through the influence of his friends, he started classes in music and soon his income had reached \$7,000 a year. Next he became professor of astronomy in the University of Troy, but wishing to transfer his activities to a warmer climate he gave up this post and with a partner established a boarding school for young women in Kentucky. Later he taught music in Louisiana and at one time toured North and Central America with an opera troupe.

## Exile Who Once Slept on Park Bench, Launched Episcopal Group in '72

After the Civil War, during which his savings of \$30,000 were swept away, he tried grape raising in Smith County and sheep raising on the Brazos River, finally settling at Austin where he made between \$2,000 and \$3,000 teaching music and selling pianos.

### Studies for Ministry.

At Austin Hamvasy boarded with an Episcopal minister and it was through the influence of the churchman that he decided to study for the ministry. At that time Hamvasy was about 50. It was his original plan to return as a missionary to his native country, but on his ordination in 1872 he felt Texas offered a better field for his work. In compliance with the wishes of Bishop Alexander Gregg, Hamvasy went to Tyler. Services had been conducted by Bishop Gregg at Tyler as early as 1866 in the old Methodist church, but it was not until Hamvasy's arrival that plans were launched for the erection of a church. Though the existing records are incomplete, the fall of 1872 is generally fixed as the date of the organization of Christ Church.

Some of the most prominent families in Tyler have been communicants of Christ Church. One of the most active workers is Mrs. E. N. Shuford, daughter of Mr. Hamvasy, who still lives in the old Hamvasy home just south of Tyler. Emil Hamvasy Jr., son of the rector, lives at Longview.

Dallas, Tex. paper (news)