



The Hellenic Society Prometheas

Newsletter 62

February 2007

Prometheas Celebrated Greek Letters Day

On Friday, January 26, 2007, Prometheas celebrated the Greek Letters Day at the hall of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Bethesda, Maryland, in the presence of more than 160 participants.

There were two parts to the celebration: The first part included an appropriate welcoming offered by Father Dimitrios Antokas of St. George highlighting the religious significance of the celebration and the contribution of the Three Hierarchs to the promotion of the Greek Letters. The main speaker of the celebration, Mr. Yiorgos Chouliaras, the Director of the Press and Information Office of the Greek Embassy, delivered a lecture titled “The Significance of Modern Greek Studies in the USA”. Mr. Chouliaras, a writer and poet as well, presented very eloquently the breadth and evolution of Modern Greek Studies in the US, emphasized the ecumenical character of the Greek culture and expressed his thoughts as to the future and significance of these studies for Greece and USA.

The second part was a ceremony presenting the “Prometheas Hellenic Culture Awards” to students of the Greek Schools in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Awards were given to three students of the Hellenic School of Potomac (Anastasia Gerohristodoulos, Andrew Nicolaou and Constantinos Frantzis), while two more students (Kristina-Maria Paspalis of the St. Constantine and Helen School and Dimitrios Daskalakis of the St. Katherine’s School) who had received awards in the summer of 2006 and were present at the ceremony, were recognized in front of the audience. Five more awards were presented last summer to students of the other parochial schools in the area.

The celebration came to an end with the cutting of Prometheas’ vasilopitta and a reception.

Ethnikos Kirikas Newspaper, published an article on the Celebration of the Greek Letters Day (see attached: [Ο ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΑΣ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΖΕΙ ΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ](#))

Mark your Calendar

Upcoming Events

- **February 10, 2007: Prometheus' Annual Masquerade Dance** at Double Tree Hotel, Rockville, MD. Do not miss this traditional apokriatiko glendi! Buy your tickets early!!! For details see [brochure](#); Also included is a raffle valuable prizes; top price: a Cruise in the Greek Islands.
- **Greek Independence Day Celebration:** On Sunday, March 25, 2007, Prometheus, with the cooperation of all the organizations of the Washington Metropolitan Area, will celebrate the Greek Independence Day at St. George's Grand Hall at 5:30 pm. The keynote speaker this year will be Professor George Babiniotis specifically invited from Greece for this occasion. A detailed announcement of this celebration will follow.

Other Events

University of Pennsylvania: Excavations in Peloponnesus

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Mt. Lykaion Day: Saturday February 24, 2007, 9 am - 5 pm

Hellenes and Phil-Hellenes are invited to attend the University of Pennsylvania Museum's Mt. Lykaion Day on Saturday, February 24, from 9am to 5pm. Dr. David Gilman Romano, Senior Research Scientist of the Mediterranean Section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has dedicated many years to excavations in Greece, most recently in Corinth. His newest excavations are taking place on Mt. Lykaion, Arcadia, in the Peloponnesus, located between Olympia and Sparta, where there exists a Sanctuary of Zeus as well as a hippodrome and athletic stadium. Dr. Romano and his team of archaeologists are pursuing findings which would verify the belief that a cult of Zeus existed on Mt. Lykaion and that athletic contests took place at this site as well.

Speakers will include representatives of the Greek Archaeological Service, the village of Ano Karyes, Arcadia, and students and colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Arizona. Our project website is <http://lykaionexcavation.org>

More information will be forthcoming.

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

3260 South Street

Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-6324

For information they can contact me at the following:

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Misc news

Actor Nikos Kourkoulos

Noted Greek actor Nikos Kourkoulos, who starred as a leading man in numerous 1960s and early '70s big screen dramas in Greece, died on Tuesday (Jan 30, 2007) at the age of 73 from cancer-related complications. Since 1994 he served as artistic director of the Greek National Theatre in Athens. Kourkoulos was married twice and had four children.

Washington Metropolitan Area Hellenic Career Fair

The first ever Washington Metropolitan Area Hellenic Career Fair was held on January 6 at St Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church. It was organized by the AHEPA Chapter 438 and the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) and was supported by Prometheas. A number of our members participated and provided guidance to young Greek-Americans regarding career options and opportunities. More information is provided on the attached brochure.

Article published Jan 2, 2007

'Greek cowboys' dot state

By NICHOLAS GERANIOS
For the Great Falls Tribune of Montana

My father sometimes called himself the Greek cowboy. That's because he was a Greek immigrant to the United States who spent 40 years in Great Falls.

The term was a touch sardonic because he was no cowboy at all. Constantinos Geranios was a city dweller who clung to the minor pretensions to cityhood Great Falls offered. He had another phrase to describe this: "I'm a town boy, not a cowboy." The contradiction was quite Greek.

There has been a small but persistent Greek community in Montana for about 100 years, even though the state is about as far away from Greece as one can get.

The fourth largest state, Montana is also one of the emptiest with fewer than a million people.

My father, a native of the village of Kalavryta, was quite at home in the mountains.

"God bless Montana," he used to declare in his later years, when contemplating the life he built in the West.

The major Greek migration to Montana occurred in the 1920s, when hundreds of men came over to work on the Great Northern Railroad. Many of those Greeks laid roots in towns like Great Falls, Missoula and Havre, and still live there.

Much of Montana was settled by German and Scandinavian immigrants, while mining camps like Butte drew large numbers of Eastern Europeans and Irish.

The state has always been remote from the rest of the United States. The dominant culture here is cowboy, with blue jeans, boots and hats the major fashion statement. My brother Jim has played in country bands since he was a teenager.

There was no bustling Greek Town in any of these towns, such as there is in Chicago. Those who didn't remain with the railroads opened restaurants, bars or other shops, bought apartment buildings or held service jobs. They pined for Greek companionship and, like so much of the diaspora, found it by founding Greek Orthodox churches.

The parish in Great Falls was called St. Constantine and Helen, and the small pink stucco building was built in the 1950s.

My extended family plays a prominent role in the history of Greeks in Montana. In many ways our story is representative of many of the families in the close-knit community.

Our proto-American ancestor was my father's uncle, George Geranios, a man he never met. Known as Big George, he moved to Montana in the 1920s to work the railroads. Over time he bought a downtown hotel, an apartment building, a billiard parlor and other property.

Big George never married, and when he died in 1959 he left his property to his five nephews — my father and his four brothers.

My father lived in Athens then, running small businesses. He already had married my mother, and was bumping against the limits of the Greek economy. He was consumed by the notion of making his fortune in America. An optimist by nature, he didn't see much downside to leaving his family and his homeland.

My father flew over in 1961, and brought my mother, myself and brother Jim a few months later.

We moved into the inherited building, the Pennsylvania Apartments, a red brick, four-story walk-up structure of perhaps 30 units next to Gibson Park.

Shortly after, my uncles Andy and Archie came over with their families to join my dad and his brother George. Uncle Ted followed a few years later.

Like many ethnic groups, the Greeks of Great Falls hung together and helped each other. There were Greek lawyers, a Greek doctor, a cop who helped everyone get driver's licenses. Those who worked for the government helped people navigate the bureaucracy.

Name days were celebrated at people's homes. There was a March 25 celebration at the church hall where we recited patriotic poems. We marked Oxi Day. Hard-to-find foods like feta cheese and kalamata olives were ordered in bulk and then divided.

At Easter we walked around the outside of the church carrying candles, a spectacle little seen otherwise in Montana.

My family spoke Greek at home, and we attended Greek-language school at church, taught by the priest. As a result, all five of the kids in my family were fluent in Greek.

Each summer the far-flung Greeks of Great Falls, Missoula and Havre got together at a state park in Lincoln for a community picnic. There were races for the kids and dancing for the adults.

Among the most interesting Greeks for me were bachelors who lived in isolated small towns or on farms and had little contact with other Greeks. My parents would sometimes drive out to visit with one on weekends.

Father Meletios Webber, who served as priest in both Great Falls and Missoula in the 1980s, said there was something different about Greeks in Montana.

"I have a feeling it has something to do with the frontier spirit of the place. The territory, the landscape, the climate and the huge distances involved were very demanding," he wrote in an e-mail.

"I think this spirit has more or less disappeared elsewhere in the United States (the major exception being Alaska)," he wrote.

"The Church was certainly the place where the Greeks (from different areas of that country) came together to love and to fight, to feud and to befriend, each trying to make sense of his or her own presence in the community," Father Mel wrote. "Since the major events of life are naturally celebrated in the Church, the focal point of ethnic, familial and personal interests was centered there, together with the more obvious (tho' not always congruent) religious and spiritual ones."

My dad and his brothers jointly ran a billiard parlor for a few years, then decided to convert it into an upscale supper club called Akropol. They featured big plates of Greek food and belly dancers on weekends. With relatively few ethnic options in the city of 60,000, Great Falls residents literally ate it up.

One of the funny things about growing up Greek in Montana was the way many of us reject and embrace our heritage.

I went through a period of ignoring my Greekness. I rarely visited the old country and very deliberately was not interested in a Greek wife.

"I want someone who knows how to use a telephone and a remote control," I smugly told my parents.

Many of the children of Greek families in Great Falls grew up together. We attended each other's birthday parties, starred in Christmas pageants in the church basement, learned Greek together.

But for some reason — perhaps it was just the smallness of the community — we didn't seek each other out as spouses. Of my generation of Greek youth, almost none married another Greek, or even another member of the Orthodox faith. Mostly we married Americans, be they Catholics, Protestants, Mormons or the unchurched.

A few of the weddings did occur at the tiny jewel that was St. Constantine and Helen, a gilded, icon-covered church in a sea of staid houses of worship.

Internal conflicts eventually drove my father and his brothers to sell their supper club and go their separate ways in business. Each opened their own smaller restaurant.

The Geranios brothers and their families were the last big wave of Greek immigrants to Great Falls. The community has seen many of its Greek members die in the past couple of decades, a trend that seems to be accelerating lately.

Great Falls can no longer afford a full-time priest and the church is closed.

My uncle George moved to Missoula, home of the University of Montana, and another center of Hellenism in Montana. The capital city of Helena, by the way, has very few Greeks.

Missoula is home of the Lambros family, among the most prominent Greeks in the state.

Peter Lambros, who moved from Greece to Montana right after the turn of the last century, is among the earliest known Greeks in the state. First he landed in the mining boom town of Butte, where he ran a peanut stand.

"I could not speak English when I started selling peanuts at the corner of Broadway and Main in Butte," he told The Daily Missoulian in an article in 1938.

He learned soon enough. He branched out to sell popcorn, and sent for his brother in Greece in 1902. Together they resisted their father who visited in 1906 and attempted to convince them to return to the old country.

Instead, they moved to Missoula, where they bought a hotel and pool hall and eventually built one of the largest real-estate empires in the state. He went back to Greece to find a wife.

In that 1938 article, Peter Lambros was described as the oldest Greek in Montana.

His sons, Dan and George, expanded the business dramatically and are among the most high-profile businessmen in the city. In 1952, Dan was named student-body president at the University of Montana, while George was student-body president at Missoula High School.

In noting that achievement, the Missoulian newspaper editorialized "that all the Greeks who have come to Missoula have done well."

"To paraphrase what an ancient poet said, we need not fear the Greeks, who are bringing us as gifts examples of ability, industry, thrift and adaptability, and not a single 'wooden horse,'" that article said.

The Lambros brothers stayed in the family business, and also took leadership positions in the larger community, serving on various boards and foundations.

"We're in both cultures," Dan Lambros said. "We do our Greek thing and do our community thing."

For all that vitality, the Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Missoula depends on converts to the faith to stay open, Dan Lambros said.

"The Greek community is sort of dying out," he said.

That gloomy assessment is shared by Pete Poulos of Missoula, whose father moved to the city in 1915 and owned a restaurant until he retired in 1957. His mother arrived in 1925.

He said Missoula had up to 25 Greek families in the 1940s, and he remembers when the community bought the former Mormon church in 1956 and converted it into the Orthodox church.

"Nobody is moving into Montana at all," Poulos said. "There is no Greek activity."

Poulos, 70, has long been working on a book about Greeks in Montana, and has made it his mission to log the deaths of every Greek person in Montana.

"All these people are dying younger than me," he said. "It scares me."



A poignant road to a new world

Maria Iliou's documentary 'The Journey: The Greek American Dream' has a companion exhibit

The Princess Irene, an ocean liner that took Greek immigrants to the United States in the early 20th century. (Photo courtesy of the US Library of Congress.)

By Alexandra Koroxenidis - Kathimerini English Edition

The crowds of Pakistanis waiting outside their embassy in Kolonaki has become a frequent scene in the neighborhood. As Greece has recently become a destination for thousands of immigrants, scenes like this have become routine.

But it was not that long ago - at least when considered in the far-reaching context of history - that Greece was not a country of immigrants but of emigrants. Poverty and the hope for a better future had sent thousands of Greeks abroad. The United States became a «land of promise» and from 1890-1920 more than 400,000 Greeks disembarked on Ellis Island after weeks-long difficult voyages on large ocean liners. Many had no money with them except for the \$25 minimum required for their official acceptance into the country.

From this first wave of emigrants to the years of the Great Depression to the promising 1950s, when the second big influx of Greek migrants came, the story of Greek emigration is a moving saga that involved hardship and nostalgia. It was an often confusing road for immigrants, who had to forge a new identity and struggle to find success and recognition in their new land.

It is a rich story wonderfully told and revealed by film director Maria Iliou in collaboration with historian Alexander Kitroeff in «The Journey: The Greek American Dream,» a just-completed documentary that recently made its debut at the Benaki Museum and the Hellenic American Union (HAU).

The documentary is based on newly discovered visual material that Iliou gathered from archives throughout the United States during her three years of research. An exhibition which opened yesterday at the Benaki presents the 100 photographs that were used in the documentary. (Both the exhibition and the screening of the film have been organized in collaboration with HAU and Proteas - a non-profit, Athens-based organization that collects and studies material related to the story of Hellenism - which have collaborated with the Benaki for the exhibition and the screening of the documentary.)

Curated by Iliou and Kitroeff, the exhibition has a cinematic flow and is based on the documentary's chronological structure.

An unusual image showing a man dressed in the traditional fustanella costume, carrying a bundle and crossing the bridge of the Corinth Canal, marks the symbolic start of «The Journey.»

The images of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island are filled with hope but are also a foreboding of hardship. For Reverend Vassilios, whose disappointed-looking portrait is among the pictures, hope was shattered when he was denied entry because he did not have the minimum \$25 required for entry.

Those who made it through the checkpoint lived in poverty in Manhattan's Lower East Side and turned to the so-called padroni (agents) to find jobs. They gave the padroni a portion of their wages. They worked as shoeshiners (a vocation in demand at the time) or street vendors and dreamed of becoming store owners. They were employed in the cotton mills of New England or the mines of Utah and Colorado or they became sponge divers in Florida. Many of them went to Chicago, the city with the largest Greek-American population until World War II.

Unacceptable working conditions led to labor strikes. The Cretan Louis Tikas, a leader in one of the strikes, was shot in a riot.

These initial images of violence and suffering soon give way to pictures that suggest better living conditions. Having conquered the new land's basic obstacles, the Greek Americans turned to building a community and

consolidating a strong identity. The establishment of the Ku Klux Klan in 1922 made that concern a necessity. The Greeks responded by founding both the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) and the Greek American Progressive Association (GAPA).

Greek Americans also had their own heroes and leading members, who ranged from the champion wrestler Christoforos Theofilou to the renowned doctor and medical research Georgios Papanikolaou (who invented the Pap smear for early detection of cervical cancer). Both images, from the 1930s, are in the exhibit.

Yet it was not until the late 1940s that the first photograph that hints at a socially and economically successful Greek-American community appears. It is the photo of an annual dinner dance held at the Waldorf Astoria by the Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce.

The portraits of Archbishop Athinagoras and esteemed Greek-American personalities testify to a thriving community. Among those portrayed are John Brademas, the first Greek American to become a member of the House of Representatives in 1959, maestro Dimitris Mitropoulos (who conducted the New York Symphony Orchestra in the 1950s), the diva Maria Callas (who debuted at the New York Metropolitan Opera in 1956) and film director Elia Kazan.

The final picture of the exhibition looks very much like the exhibition's very first. It is an early 20th century portrait of a Greek boy dressed in the traditional fustanella, alluding to the Greek-American community's growing interest in studying their cultural past. It is the symbolic ending of a long journey that is an important part of the history of Greece and the awareness of what it means to be Greek. Maria Iliou's film is significant for reminding us of that journey, which is still a reality for so many other immigrants in the world.

«The Journey,» at the main building of the Benaki Museum (1 Koumbari, 210.367.1000-7) to Feb 25. Screening of the documentary at the museum's amphitheater Wed-Mon at 2 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. Additional hours for Thursdays (5.30, 7.00, 8.30 and 10.00 p.m. Some exceptions for particular dates apply). Sundays at 11 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. At the Hellenic American Union (22 Massalias) every Tuesday February 6-25 at 10 p.m.

Documentary mined a favorite theme

While browsing photo and film archives in New York City, where Iliou had traveled on Fulbright scholarship to do research on her film «A Friendship in Smyrna,» she came across undiscovered material on the history of Greek emigration and decided to make a documentary on the subject.

The story of the Greek diaspora has been a favorite theme in Iliou's work, evident in work such as the atmospheric «Alexandria,» Iliou's 2002 film.

For «Journey,» she collaborated with Alexander Kitroeff, a professor of history at Haverford College in Pennsylvania and a specialist in the history of the Greek diaspora.

Besides Kitroeff, other narrators who appear in the film include US Senator Paul Sarbanes, author George Pelecanos, poet Olga Broumas, Ellis Island archive director George Tselos, film critic Dan Georgakas, researcher Gus Chatzidimitriou, and professors Martha Klironomos and Artemis Leontis, who teach Modern Greek studies at universities in San Francisco and Ohio respectively.

Source:

http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/news/civ_3282015KathiLev&xml/&aspKath/civ.asp?fdate=24/01/2007