

*While researching the life of our founder, Fr. George D. Maloof, I became intrigued with the early history of our parish. A friend sent me a fascinating newspaper report about a baptism Fr. George celebrated in 1904 and I located other equally wonderful stories. While searching thru the 1900 Census I came across dozens of Arabic immigrants living in the South End, some of whom I recognized, and I thought I'd share these 'vignettes' into our past with the readers of 'The Messenger'. Hope you enjoy them.*

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## ***"Calling to remembrance....."***

### **The First Boston Syrians**

On Wednesday morning June 20<sup>th</sup> 1900, John Francis O'Hara set out to canvass the Harvard and Albany Street neighborhood of Boston's South Cove. He worked Harvard St. from the corner of Tyler, crossed Hudson and continued to Albany. At Albany Street he turned down towards the railroad tracks and worked both sides of the street for a couple of blocks. It was a sunny clear day with a pleasant breeze; the temperature was in the low 70's. Mr. O'Hara stopped at every house and knocked on every door.



***George Abdalah [center] c1923***

John Francis O'Hara, a bookkeeper from Charlestown's Bunker Hill neighborhood was working temporarily for the U. S. Census Office as an enumerator of the twelfth Federal Census of the United States. His job was to visit every dwelling in an allocated section of Ward 7 and record the name, address, age, race, gender, marital status, birthplace, origin of parents, occupation, education level, whether a home owner or renter, immigration status and proficiency in English of every person that he met. The process of interviewing residents was challenging and time consuming. Arriving unannounced at a person's front door he would have to introduce himself and explain what the census was and then convince the person that their cooperation was important. Many of the people he met spoke little or no English. That day he recorded information for 99 people.

Nearly half the people Mr. O'Hara interviewed were from the Near East. To his Boston Irish ear, their accents and names must have seemed quite exotic. He met Fouria, Assad, Seliman, Tereda, Hassanee, Chickerea, Maharousi, Essif and Lalahibi. He listed them as being from 'Turkey/Assyria'. Since earlier census studies recorded very small numbers of immigrants from that part of the world, Arabic speaking people from the Near East were collectively identified as coming from 'Turkey in Asia', the Arabic speaking part of the Ottoman Empire. Up to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they could be identified as 'Turkos', Arabs, Assyrians, Syrians, Asiatic Turks, Armenians or even Greeks.

By the time of the Thirteenth Federal Census in 1910, the Census Office had settled on identifying these immigrants as 'Syrian' this being the Ottoman Province from which the vast majority had migrated. The designation 'Syrian' was applied to anyone from what is today the Republic of Syria, the Republic of Lebanon, all of Palestine including Gaza and Israel, a section of Jordan along the Jordan River and a part of Turkey around Antioch. All of the 'Turkish/Assyrians' Mr. O'Hara interviewed along Harvard and Albany Streets that day had arrived in Boston within the previous ten years, most were from the region of Mt. Lebanon and Damascus.

Most of the new immigrants were young single men, some were recently married, and a few had small children. All of them, men and women, had jobs, many were peddlers, and some worked in 'dry goods' and a few owned businesses. Gabriel Malouf was a peddler, Joseph Derany was a grocer, Abraham Matouk owned a restaurant, Abe Elias was a shoemaker, Najibi Jacobs made fine lace.

At 81 Albany Street Mr. O'Hara met George Abdalah. He was a lodger at a boarding house owned by Bridget Nagle. A single young man in his early twenty's, George arrived in 1892 as a teenager from his home village of Douma. Mr. O'Hara recorded that George could speak English and worked as a laborer.

George Abdalah of Douma was one of almost four hundred 'Syrians' living in Boston in 1900. Nearly half were Orthodox Christians and they were hoping to organize a church. A few Orthodox priests had passed thru town from time to time but none remained. In July of 1899, Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny of Damascus visited Boston for several days and met with the Orthodox 'Syrians'. He encouraged them in their efforts and promised to return in a year. In the meanwhile, a committee of twelve men was formed, including young George Abdalah, to petition Archbishop Gerasimos Yared of Zahle to appoint of a permanent priest. By the end of the year, Fr. George D. Maloof arrived in Boston from Zahle to minister to the growing 'Syrian' Orthodox faithful.

George soon married Nazirah Habosh and they had a large family. George took a job as a streetcar conductor and later as a dry goods salesman. He built his home at 35 Heron Street in West Roxbury, his son Fred still lives there. George was a founder and prominent member of St. George Orthodox Church of Boston. The parish library is named for his son William who followed in his father's footsteps and his grandson John is now the Bishop of the Diocese of Worcester and New England.

The bound ledger book that John Francis O'Hara carried with him in June of 1900 contains a record in time of the dozens of faithful immigrants who established our parish. In his distinctive and deliberate hand, he sounded out and recorded the names and circumstances of many of our ancestors. From time to time we will share their stories as we are *"Calling to Remembrance....."*

## ***"Calling to Remembrance..."***

### ***"A Christian Ending to our Lives.."***

#### ***Part One***

This year we commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *'Falling Asleep in the Lord'* of our beloved Saint Raphael of Brooklyn. A tireless missionary in service to the Arabic speaking Orthodox immigrant community in North America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, St. Raphael's legacy touched our parish personally. His frequent visits here and his close friendship with our priest and parishioners give us the rare experience of having a Saint among us. In this issue of the *'Messenger'* and in the next we will look at St. Raphael's last visit with us and the very moving spectacle of his funeral.

Early in July of 1914, Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny began what was to be his last mission tour of his diocese. Since his arrival in America in 1895, he had undertaken regular mission trips across the length and breadth of the continent seeking out and ministering to his fellow Arabic speaking Orthodox Christian immigrants. In just under twenty years he had supervised the creation of thirty parishes and recruited twenty eight qualified clergy to minister to the needs of nearly 27,000 souls. His diocese included eight schools and thirty seven charitable societies. This four month tour would take him first to New England then on to Montreal, Toronto, Michigan, Indiana, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois and Ohio before returning home to Brooklyn at the end of October. The summer of 1914 proved to be a tumultuous period in world history.

The assassination of an Austrian royal by a Serbian nationalist in the far away Balkans on the eve of Bishop Raphael's diocesan tour ignited the spark that quickly escalated into the Great War. In July the first shots were fired and by early August the European empires were at war with each other. The social and political upheaval caused by the conflict gave birth to the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Bolsheviks and Communism. The Russian Orthodox Church, of which Bishop Raphael was a hierarch, would soon be plunged into a state of chaos from which it would never fully recover. Fighting quickly spread to the European colonies in Africa and to the Ottoman Empire in the Near East. Orthodox Christians of the Greater Syria were soon caught up in the violence and a new wave of immigration to America began. The repercussions of the First World War would have a lasting effect on the history of Orthodoxy on this continent and on our own Antiochian Church in particular.



BISHOP RAPHAEL,  
Head of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Church in the United States.

On Friday evening, 17 July, Bishop Raphael arrived at Boston's South Station after first visiting the Syrian Orthodox community in Worcester. Over two hundred people were there to meet him. On Sunday morning he celebrated the Divine Liturgy along with Fr. George Maloof of St. George Church, Fr. Suleiman Fernini of St. John of Damascus Church and Archdeacon Emmanuel Abo-Hattab, the bishops

secretary. Bishop Raphael remained with the Boston community for one week before traveling on to Canada. While he was here he repeatedly exhorted the people to reunite as the one parish of St. George that they had originally founded in 1900. In 1909 a group of parishioners had left St. George and started St. John's. Ironically, both churches were located on the same block of Hudson Street. It was Bishop Raphael's hope that the two parishes would soon merge. His hope was not to be realized and in fact another group soon broke away from St. John's to form St. Mary's. These three remain as Boston's Antiochian Orthodox Churches to this day.

Bishop Raphael had a special fondness for the Boston community since he first visited here fifteen years earlier. In the summer of 1899, Archimandrite Raphael spent a week here meeting with leaders of the Syrian Orthodox immigrant community. Over two hundred attended what the Boston Globe described as the *'First Service of Orthodox Rite in Boston'* celebrated by a *'Syrian Priest'*. Fr. Raphael also blessed homes, heard confessions, sanctified marriages and baptized children during his stay. He told the Globe reporter that his mission was to *'the people of his country who had immigrated to America and were left without spiritual guidance'*. The reporter wrote that Fr. Raphael's *'work has been arduous'* and that in Boston he has been *'received with joy, and has been extended invitations to visit the suburban towns where there are small colonies of his countrymen.'* Fr. Raphael explained that as the *'Patriarch of Antioch could not see his way clear to pay the expenses of missionaries to this country, the Russian government was besought to help the Syrian members of the Greek Orthodox Church who had come here'*. *'The Russians'*, he said, *'accepted the burden of paying the expenses of the missionaries'*. Fr. Raphael also explained that here in America, he is a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church under the authority of the Russian Bishop Tikhon in New York.

The reporter described Fr. Raphael as being *'apparently about 38 years old, of medium stature and light build'*. He also said that, *'Archimandrite Raphael speaks English clearly, but with a distinctly foreign accent'*. The reporter must have spent quite some time with Fr. Raphael as he was able to draft two lengthy and informative articles for the Globe from his experience.

Among the people Fr. Raphael also spent time with were George Abdallah, the father of Fred Abdallah of our parish and the grandfather of our Bishop John Abdullah. Antoon Boulos, the grandfather of Janet Teebagy of our parish and the great-grandfather of Fr. John Teebagy of St. John's was another community leader with whom Fr. Raphael spent time. By the end of the week a petition was drafted, with Fr. Raphael's blessing, requesting Bishop Gerasimos [Yaared] of Zahle to allow Fr. George Dow Maloof, priest of the church at Deir Al Ghazaal, to come to Boston. Both Bishop Gerasimos and Fr. George were well known to many members of the Boston community. Antoon Boulos, a relative of Fr. George and successful merchant in Providence, offered to provide a home on Oxford Street to serve both as a residence for the priest and as a temporary home church for the community. Fr. George arrived a year later and St. George Syrian Orthodox Church of Boston was founded at 6 Oxford Street. It was the second parish of the Syrian Orthodox Mission founded in the United States. In 1900, Fr. George was one of less than a handful of Syrian priests working with Archimandrite Raphael.

Over the next fourteen years, Archimandrite and then Bishop Raphael made frequent visits to Boston encouraging the faithful and ministering to their needs. When he was consecrated as Bishop of Brooklyn in 1904, Fr. George let hundreds of parishioners to New York for the ceremony,

they included a children's choir and a marching band. More than 2,000 people gathered at St. Nicholas Church on Pacific St. in Brooklyn for the occasion, many more lined the street outside. The excitement was so great the newspaper reported that the crowd was *'uncontrollable'*. On his visit to Boston the following year, the new bishop officiated at the marriage of Rosa Arbily and Assad Kirshy at the home of the bride on Hudson Street. Assisted by Fr. George, Bishop Raphael served Liturgy that Sunday at the First Christian Church on the corner of Kneeland and Tyler Sts. The community had rented the church as there were now too many parishioners to be accommodated at their house church.

At that Liturgy, Bishop Raphael preached *'telling the people of the necessity of having a permanent place of worship and begging of them to cooperate with their pastor to that end. He also told them that Tzar Nicholas of Russia had given \$1,000 towards a new church'*. The community responded enthusiastically and a fund drive was started immediately. Bishop Raphael gave \$50 towards the project, Fr. George's brother Tannous Maloof and his family gave \$400, Hanna Abdullah gave \$200 and Khalil Laham gave \$50. By the end of the day nearly \$3,000 was raised for the new church. The building of a Syrian Orthodox Church in Boston was a project dear to the Bishop's heart. He called it *'the Great Project'* and he would return to Boston regularly to monitor its progress.

His visit in July of 1914 was to be his last. When he finally returned home on the last day of October he was completely exhausted and sick. He had previously been diagnosed as suffering from *myocarditis*, an inflammation of the heart muscle, and his doctors ordered him to bed for a complete rest. Bishop Raphael lived with his brother Salim and sister-in-law Marie and their four children and a niece. Since settling in Brooklyn in 1896 he had been part of their household. He helped manage the home and raise the children. Now he was confined to his room bedridden and seriously ill. Bishop Alexander, the recently appointed Bishop of the Russian American Diocese, requested that all the clergy of the Diocese offer prayers and services for Bishop Raphael. In his appeal, Bishop Alexander recognized Bishop Raphael as *'deeply respected and warmly loved by all'*. *'His kind smile'*, the bishop said was, *'just like a ray of sunshine that fills everything around with joy and warmth.'* He committed Bishop Raphael to the prayers of his clergy and people saying that *'Bishop Raphael is sick with exhaustion; he has given of himself wholly and for all. His physical strength has failed.'*

Bishop Raphael's condition worsened throughout the winter. For over two months he was confined to his bed unable to even get up. The *myocarditis* caused great pain and he suffered from congestive heart and kidney failure. *'Worn and gray'* he reportedly *'resembled a man of seventy'* instead of his fifty four years. Throughout the long ordeal, it is reported, he remained silent, calm and patient. Before dawn on Saturday 27 February 1915, with his family at his side, the saintly Bishop Raphael quietly passed from this temporal life and gently slipped into eternity. His funeral, which lasted over a week, was described as *'a wonderful service, picturesque in setting.'* Indeed, nothing like it had ever been experienced among the Orthodox in America up until that time.

Our parish is especially blessed by the close personal relationship our founders had with this honorable Saint of the Church. His genuine love for our community and the familiar link we have with St. Raphael of Brooklyn serves to inspire us as we struggle to honor his legacy and live up to

his expectations. In next month's '*Messenger*' we will continue this episode and explore the link our parish has with the funeral of Bishop Raphael.

***Blessings, Fr. + Timothy***

## ***“Calling to Remembrance...”*** [part ?? ]

### **مشروع جليل - The Great Project**



On Sunday morning, March 13, 1904, the third Sunday of Great Lent, Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny was consecrated bishop of Brooklyn for the Syrian Orthodox Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. Bishop Tikhon, the Russian Orthodox bishop of North America and Bishop Innocent, the Russian Orthodox bishop of Alaska served as consecrating bishops. This was the first consecration of an Orthodox bishop in North America. The press reported the event as *“the most important church ceremony ever held by the Orthodox Christians in the United States”*. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the country made their way to Brooklyn for the ceremony.

Fr. George Maloof and a large delegation from Boston took the train from South Station to attend the service. Over two thousand faithful crammed into the church that Sunday morning. The crush of the crowd was

so great that the assembled clergy and dignitaries were unable to make the customary procession through the church. The bishops and priests were virtually ‘trapped’ in the sanctuary throughout the entire service. Many people were taken from the building on the verge of fainting. Following the Liturgy, a grand banquet was held in the church hall which was quickly filled to overflowing forcing many faithful to retire to the streets with their food. It must have been quite the sight; we still experience hints of it from time to time, especially during Holy Week.

At the time of his consecration, Bishop Raphael could count only six parishes under his jurisdiction and a handful of clergy. The primary objective of his episcopate was to missionize the countless communities of Syrian Orthodox immigrants scattered throughout North America. To assist him in this monumental effort he called on the services of his devoted priest in Boston, Fr. George Maloof. Only four years earlier, Archimandrite Raphael had received Fr. George in New York as he himself describes, *“In October 1900 there came to New York, a priest by the name of Jerjes Aba Daw El-Ma’louf from the village of Der El-Gazal of Zahli, and he held a letter from the Antiochian Patriarch Malitios. His Eminence Bishop Tichon accepted him with pleasure and assigned him as priest for the people of Boston”*. Fr. George was one of only four Syrian priests in North America at that time.

One of his first official visitations as bishop was to his flock in Boston. Early in April, just before Easter, Bishop Raphael met with the faithful of the Boston community and reports that, *“While we were visiting our spiritual children in Boston we had the opportunity to convince them of a project whose destiny is to build their own Syrian Orthodox Church, and our words touched their*

*hearts, and within an hour's time all of them signed for it and donated \$775 and gave us the money in cash. God willing we will come back again in a week to continue with this مشروع جليل Great Project."*

In one week's time, Bishop Raphael returned again to Boston to meet with more of the community and convince them of the worthiness of the 'Great Project'. This time he collected over \$1,200 for the future church. He himself donated \$50. Tanyos Sliman Nader Ma'louf and his family, from Duma, donated \$400 – *a very respectable gift for that time representing approximately \$10,600 in today's economy*. Hanna Abu A'bdalla from Shlifa, gave \$200. Other donors included Khalil Jirias El'Laham from Daria, Syria and his family, Yousef El-Dirani from Daria, Tanios Badr from Duma, Elias Habib Ma'louf from Hadad Ba'lbak and Turkman and Jeries A'bd Alla Abu Feissal from Kufor Zabad.

Enthusiasm for the 'Great Project' quickly grew and the community rallied around this noble goal. Ongoing immigration had already increased the membership of the Syrian Orthodox community and Fr. George relocated the chapel of St. George from his Oxford Street residence to a larger facility one block away on Edenboro Street. The prospect of building a proper sized Orthodox Church in the traditional style soon became the dream of the growing Boston parish.

In July 1904, Bishop Raphael, unable to travel at the time, commissioned Fr. George to *"make the tour on my behalf for five whole months around the southern U.S.A. to check on the communities and to fulfill their religious needs."* The bishop also instructed Fr. George to solicit funds for the 'Great Project'. This would be one of several mission trips that Fr. George would take on behalf of Bishop Raphael over the next few years. During his absence, the Boston community was served by Fr. Malatius Karam, a newly arrived Archimandrite from Syria.

His first mission trip took him from Boston to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Montgomery, Alabama to New Orleans, Louisiana to Texas and to Wichita, Kansas and everywhere in between. Accompanied by his cousin and Deacon Ross Maloof of Boston, he covered the distance by train, wagon, horseback and steamship. While in New Orleans they sailed to Havana, Cuba to visit the Syrian Orthodox faithful there. They traveled the Mississippi River by stern wheeler and visited Vicksburg, Mississippi, Memphis, Tennessee and St. Louis, Missouri. They stayed in the homes of local Syrian immigrants and established lasting friendships with Orthodox faithful throughout the country.

Fr. George heard confessions, counseled and administered absolution. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in people's front parlors, dining rooms and in store fronts. He baptized their infants and young children. He married their sons and daughters. He buried their dead. He even received converts. While in Altoona, Pennsylvania he celebrated Divine Liturgy at the home of Elias J. Horaney and remained a few days to minister to the twenty or so Syrian Orthodox families in that town. During his stay, he instructed a local Moslem in the Faith and he was baptized at the next Sunday Liturgy.

In New Orleans Fr. George was invited to use a Catholic church on Dorgenois Street to offer the Divine Liturgy for the Syrian Orthodox faithful of that city, quite an ecumenical gesture for that



day and age. His solicitation of funds there for the 'Great Project' met with marked success as both local Orthodox and Catholics contributed to the new church in Boston.

In Wichita, Kansas Fr. George converted Mike Ayoub's store on West Douglas Avenue in the heart of the 'Assyrian Colony' into an 'Orthodox church' and served the Divine Liturgy for the newly transplanted Syrian Orthodox immigrants. In the afternoon, he baptized Mike's three children ranging in age from six months to four years. The account of the baptism by a local newspaper reporter is so fascinating that it deserves separate coverage in a future installment of *"Calling to Remembrance"* – watch for it in October, you'll love it.

By the end of November 1904, Fr. George and his cousin had traveled through sixteen states plus the Indian Territory [Oklahoma-not yet a state] as they visited over sixty communities of Syrian Orthodox faithful. For most of the people they met, it was their first visit from an Orthodox priest. His ministry as a mission priest was instrumental in encouraging several communities to establish themselves as parishes and petition the Bishop for a priest of their own. Within a couple years, six of the communities were fully fledged parishes with resident priests, including Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Vicksburg, Mississippi and Beaumont, Texas. Fr. George would make similar extended mission trips in 1906-1907 and again in 1909 visiting these and still other communities. His stamina is to be admired as he was in his sixties at this time.

In addition to the Liturgies he served and the countless Baptisms and Marriages he celebrated, Fr. George was able to raise nearly \$2,000 towards the 'Great Project'. Shortly after his return, the project received an additional boost when Bishop Raphael returned to Boston accompanied by the Russian Counsel General. On behalf of His Imperial Majesty, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, the Counsel General presented Fr. George and the Boston parish a gift of \$1,000 to be added to the *"fund for a suitable church"*. Tsar Nicholas also bestowed a large Icon of the Theotokos to the parish. The Icon, one of our prized possessions, resides in the Marida of our church behind the bengarhie.

The parish needed to rent the Protestant church at Tyler and Kneeland Streets in order to accommodate the number of faithful who attended the Hierarchical Liturgy and presentation. Once again Bishop Raphael reminded the people *"of the necessity of having a permanent place of worship, and begging them to cooperate with their pastor to that end."* At that visit an additional \$1,800 was pledged to the 'Great Project'.

The 'Great Project' was obviously very dear to Bishop Raphael's heart and he longed for the day when his Boston flock would have a church building suitable to their needs. It would be a few more years until the community undertook their building program on Tyler Street; unfortunately neither Bishop Raphael nor Fr. George lived long enough to see the fulfillment of their dream. Their dedication and extreme love for the Boston parish, however, motivated the parishioners to realize that all their worthy goals and dreams could be realized in the *"building up of the Holy Church of Almighty God."* We are the spiritual heirs of such hope.

***Blessings, Fr. + Timothy***

## *"Calling to Remembrance..."*

[part three]



Antonius Al Bishallany of Beirut is said to be the first 'Syrian' immigrant to America. They say he arrived in Boston in 1854. It seems that none of his countrymen followed him until 1869 when two 'Syrians' landed in New York. Between then and 1880, only 67 immigrants from 'Syria' are reported. The 'Syrians' really discovered America in the late 1880s and early 1890s. That's when they started arriving here in significant numbers.

In the ten years between 1888 and 1898, immigration went from a couple of hundred to a few thousand each year. Records indicate that 24,378 'Syrians' had arrived in the United States by 1899. They quickly spread out across the country and could be found in almost every state of the union. About 80% are estimated to have come from what is today Lebanon. Nearly 95% were Christian, and almost half were Greek [Antiochian] Orthodox. Nearly 70% were single young males. They came for economic, political, and religious reasons, and most hoped to return home after making their 'fortune'. By 1899 Boston had the second largest 'colony' of 'Syrians' in the country, second only to New York.

Although a few Orthodox priests and even a bishop had passed through Boston in the 1890s, there was no Orthodox parish for the newly arriving immigrants to call home. By the late 1890s, the Orthodox 'Syrians' in Boston were anxious to establish a church. Several had heard of a newly arrived priest from Damascus living in New York City and visiting 'Syrian' communities across the country. So they decided to invite him to visit Boston.

Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny was born in Damascus, educated in Constantinople and Russia, ordained priest in Kyiv and assigned as the Antiochian 'ambassador' in Moscow. Later he served as a professor of the Arabic language, Islamic literature, and Orthodox mission strategy at the Kazan Theological Academy. In 1895 the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church assigned Archimandrite Raphael to assist the Russian bishop in the United States as a missionary to the rapidly growing 'Syrian' Orthodox community. At the time, the Russian Orthodox Church had jurisdiction over all Orthodox Christians in North America. With the arrival of Archimandrite Raphael, the 'Syrian Orthodox Mission' of the Russian Orthodox Church in North America was created.

A large delegation greeted Archimandrite Raphael as he arrived at South Station on Saturday morning, July 15th 1899. His was the first official visit of an Orthodox priest to the 'Syrian' Orthodox community in Boston. He went to the nearby home of Jonas and Madeline Maloof and their six children at 107 Kneeland Street, where he was to be their guest during his visit. Jonas was a prominent businessman in the community who had built a successful dry goods business since immigrating to Boston in 1890. Jonas supplied the many Syrians who worked as 'peddlers' in the greater Boston area. That evening Fr. Raphael met with members of the community. He heard of their experience in America and of their desire to have a church.

The next day Fr. Raphael served the Divine Liturgy in the Maloof home. The front parlor and an adjoining bedroom were converted early in the morning into a chapel. A table was placed in front of the fireplace and draped in fine linen. The Gospel book, chalice, discos, and candle sticks were placed on the table now turned altar. Icons decorated the mantelpiece.

A reporter from the Boston Globe gives a beautifully detailed description of the service. He likened it to the worship of the earliest Christians. He records that; "There was a reminder of the first days of the Church to one acquainted with the scenes of early Christianity in the gathering of the Syrian congregation of the Orthodox rite at 107 Kneeland St. to attend the first service by one of their priests in this city. Like the early followers of Christ, they were 'gathered together in an upper chamber' because it was the only place available." Several chanters, including George Abdallah, assisted Fr. Raphael, "alternating with him in a monotone chant rendered in a particular nasal style intonation raising and lowering the tone." At the sermon, Fr. Raphael begged the people to remain faithful to their Orthodox religion and create a parish in Boston. Children nestled in their mother's arms were the first to receive Communion. Following the final blessing, the faithful approached the priest to venerate the cross and exchange greetings as they received the blessed bread.

Nearly one hundred people crammed into the front rooms of Mrs. Maloof's home that morning. We can imagine the great joy they experienced as they prayed according to their custom and tradition, in their language and with a priest who was their fellow countryman. That first Divine Liturgy celebrated in simple surroundings by the missionary

priest Fr. Raphael Hawaweeny gave birth to a dream that soon became St. George Syrian Orthodox Church of Boston.

In the afternoon, Fr. Raphael, accompanied by George Abdallah and the other chanters, travelled to the home of George and Wordia Maloof in East Dedham. Fr. Raphael baptized their son George and several children from the neighborhood. Following the service, the host family served a 'baptismal feast', and Fr. Raphael had the opportunity to meet more faithful from the immigrant community.

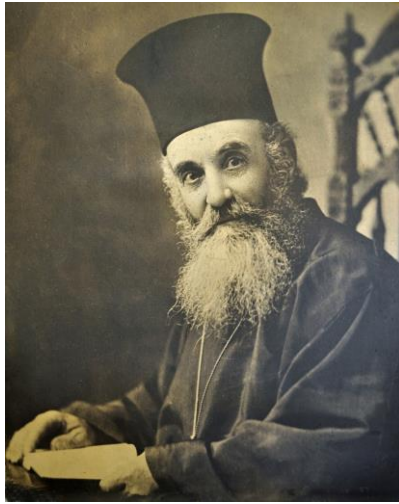
Fr. Raphael remained in Boston for several days, meeting with representatives of the 'Syrian Colony' and encouraging them in their effort to organize the community. Among the people he met were Meetry and Mauira Maloof, who operated a grocery store; Bishara and Sadie Abdallah and their children Khalil and Delia, he was a merchant of suspenders; George and Mary Ayoob and their infant daughter Victoria, he owned a fruit store and kept a pool hall; Saleem and Rosena Ayoub, he worked in the theater; Assad Hadge owned a Dry Goods Store; Antoun and Nelly Boulos and their six children, he had a Dry Goods Store and operated several rooming houses in the South End. Together they determined that over 200 'Syrian Orthodox' were living in the city.

Fr. Raphael promised to return in a year. They assured him of their commitment to establishing a 'Syrian Orthodox' church in Boston. At that time, St. Nicholas Church in New York was the only established 'Syrian Orthodox' church in the country, and there were only two priests. Fr. Raphael promised to assist his countrymen in finding a suitable priest for Boston. On Tuesday afternoon, he boarded a train for Springfield to visit the 'Syrian' families there. He then went on to Albany and west to Ohio as he searched for the scattered enclaves of 'Syrian Orthodox' immigrants. One year later, as promised, a priest from Syria arrived in Boston at the invitation of Fr. Raphael. St. George parish was born.

## ***“Calling to Remembrance...”*** [part four]

### **A Priest for Boston**

Following the historic visit of Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny to Boston in the summer of 1899, representatives from the ‘Syrian’ Orthodox community petitioned Archbishop +Garasimos [*Yared – 1888-1899*] of Zahly to send them a priest. They had in mind Abouna Jirjis Aba Daou Ma’alouf [Fr. George Maloof] who was well known and revered by many of the new immigrants. Abouna Jirjis



was, at that time, the priest of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in the village of Deir al’Ghazaal in the region of Zahly. A number of the Boston immigrants were from the Zahly area as well as from Douma, where Abouna Jirjis was born, and from the region of Baalbek where he had once served. This village priest from Mount Lebanon had acquired a reputation as *‘a loving, kind and gentle priest with a big heart’* and those who knew him believed he would be the perfect priest for Boston.

Among the petitioners were: George Abdalah, Thomas Nader Maloof and Bashara Abdalah of Douma; Assad Ayoub and Habeeb Bader of Zahle; George Shibli Maloof and John Abdalah along with Asa, Boulos and Assad Hadge all of Schiefa; Salim Ayoub of Damascus; Joseph Deraney and Nassar Homsy of Dariyeh and

Antoon Boulos of Zouk. On receiving the letter, Archbishop +Gerasimos discussed the request with Abouna Jirjis who agreed to make preparations to travel to America.

Abouna Jirjis was born Shibli Aba Daou Ma’alouf at Douma in the region of Mount Lebanon in 1846. He was the oldest son of Jirjus and Mary [nee *Ma’alouf*] Ma’alouf. Jirjus Ma’alouf, the only son of Ayoub Daou Ma’alouf, was a wealthy businessman of the town. Jirjus and Mary had three sons; Shibli [*Abouna Jirjis*], Sim’aan who died at Douma without children, and Tannous who with his two sons, Elias and Yoosef immigrated to America. They also had at least one daughter.

According to the historian and genealogist, Eesa Iskandar Ma’loof, author of *‘Dawani Al Qutoof’* [1907], this family is of the Daou Ma’alouf line that settled in Douma in the 1500’s. The area, rich in minerals, was inhabited from Roman times and several archaeological sites remain. The Ma’alouf’s rebuilt an abandoned village and named it Douma after their ancestral home *Daamma Al’Ulia*. They became patrons of the local Greek Orthodox Church and monastery of St. John the Baptist. Several members of the family were abbots of the monastery and the family provided clergy to the Church throughout several generations. The revered Icon of the Theotokos at the *Kaneesat As Sayyideh* Church is attributed to the Ma’alouf’s. Branches of the family include Shalhoub, Ayoub, Bashir and Fayoud. These families traded in silk, wool, olive oil, leather, grain and iron and the town became a thriving marketplace with nearly one thousand people and over 150 stores.

Shibli Ma’alouf married Shams Saad and they had two children, Tanios Jirjis [Thomas] born in 1884 and Thekla Nelli [Nelly] born in 1887. Shibli was ordained a Greek Orthodox priest by Archbishop

+Methodios [*Saliba* - 1854 – 1888] and took the name of his father, Jirjis. The Archbishop assigned Abouna Jirjis to serve the Church of St. George in the village of Jab'a.

Jab'a [*the hill*] is a small village of approximately 5 acres near Al Hadath in the Ba'albeck region. The area has been inhabited since Roman times and the ruins of a 1<sup>st</sup> century Temple of Apollo and several Roman monuments can be found nearby. A number of ancient cave tombs are located here as well as several olive oil presses and wells dating from the Byzantine era. The Al-Miyah Cave is next to the village. The population in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was less than 75 people.

Jab'a was founded by Elias Haashem Ma'alouf and his family. When Fr. George arrived there several of his cousins were still living in *Jab'a* including Nohseef Elias Ma'alouf and his sons Shibli and Shukrallah. Later, Nohseef made a 'vow' for the safety of his son's and returned to their ancestor's home in Douma to be near the Monastery of St. John.

The Greek Orthodox Church of St. George in Jab'a was destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today only one wall is left standing. All church records of the Diocese of Zahle were burnt during that war.

History and heritage are all too often the collateral damage of conflicts. Human loss and suffering are compounded by the destruction of monuments and the eradication of documents. Historical places and records serve to link us inextricably to our origins and provide us with an identity and familiarity. Every attempt should be made to reconstruct and represent the past in the wake of conflict and war. Failure to do so only compounds human suffering and tragedy by making our ancestors victims of the very violence we ourselves perpetrate.

After serving at Jab'a for about one year, Abouna Jirjis was sent to serve at the historic Church of St. George at the village of Deir al'Ghazaal. Deir al'Ghazaal [*Monastery of the Gazelle*] is an agrarian village built up around the 13<sup>th</sup> century monastery and church of St. George. Built along the Ghazaal River, a small stream running to the Litani River, Deir al'Ghazaal is located near Zahle in the El Mghara Valley between the villages of Ra'ait and Qousaya. Situated in a forested area nearly 3,400 feet above sea level, it covers approximately 2.5 square miles of small farms, fruit and olive orchards, a cluster of homes and shops.

Hand hewn rock caves dating to the Phoenicians are scattered throughout the valley. A Roman stone quarry is located next to the village as are Roman tombs and sarcophagi. Ruins of churches and homes from the Byzantine era are found nearby.

Abouna Jirjis and his family arrived at Deir al'Ghazaal in the late 1880's. At that time the village consisted of approximately 150 homes with a population of fewer than six hundred people. Nearly one third of the people were Greek Orthodox. His children, Tanios and Thecla grew up there. Tragically, his wife, Shams, died at Deir al'Ghazaal while giving birth to their third child, who also died. Following the death of his wife and child, Abouna Jirjis remained in Deir al'Ghazaal until the fall of 1900. The church of St. George remains active to this day although all parish records were destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War. Abouna Jirjis is still remembered in the region of Zahly as a '*saintly priest with a kind and loving heart*'.

His son, Tanios Jirjis Ma'alouf left Deir al'Ghazaal with several friends in 1899 and sailed for South America. Archbishop +Garasimos [Yared] died in 1899 and Abouna Jirjis, having committed to journey to America, went to Damascus to receive a blessing and official release from Patriarch +Meletius II [Doumani - 1899-1906]. In October of 1900, Abouna Jirjis and his daughter Thekla traveled to Beirut to board a ship and begin their long voyage to America. The first leg of their journey took them to Liverpool, England. In Liverpool, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, they boarded the *ss Lake Champlain* en route for Quebec City.

They arrived in Quebec City on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1900 and were admitted to the United States at St. Albans, Vermont. Abouna Jirjis had \$20 with him and listed his brother-in-law Antoon Boulos of Providence Rhode Island as his closest relative in America.

Abouna Jirjis and Thekla took a train to New York City to meet with Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny the administrator of the 'Syrian Orthodox Mission' of the Russian Orthodox Church in America. The primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, Bishop +Tikhon, accepted his letter from the Antiochian Patriarch and officially appointed Fr. Georges Aba Daou Maloof to serve as the priest in Boston. Bishop +Tikhon signed and presented his newest priest with an Antimins containing a relic of St. George and with necessary liturgical items. The sacred Antimins is preserved at the Prothesis table at St. George Church to this day.

Fr. George D. Maloof arrived in Boston at the end of November and was eagerly welcomed by his fellow countrymen including his brother-in-law Antoon Boulos and the entire 'Syrian' Orthodox community. His first home was at 6 Oxford Street in the South End where he established a chapel on the first floor and dedicated it to the patronage of St. George the Great Martyr. This was 'officially' the second parish of the 'Syrian' Orthodox mission in the United States. Fr. George was one of the first permanent 'Syrian' Orthodox priests in North America.

**Blessings, Fr. +Timothy**

**'Beautiful Sophie is Missing'**

It was the winter of 1900 and Fr. George had just arrived in Boston when the newly engaged Sophie and Joseph asked him to officiate at their wedding. They set the date for December 15<sup>th</sup>, just a few weeks away. Fr. George spent a busy couple of weeks meeting his new parishioners, including Sophie and Joseph's parents and relatives, enrolling his thirteen-year-old daughter Teckla in school and settling into his new home at 6 Oxford Street, one of several properties owned by his brother-in-law Antoun Boulos. Fr. George and several members of the community hastily converted the first floor into an Orthodox Chapel. The parishioners dedicated their new 'church' to the patronage of St. George. On Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> Fr. George officially blessed the modest 'church' at the first Divine Liturgy celebrated for his new parish. Appropriately enough, it was during the American Thanksgiving holiday.

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, in anticipation of her marriage the next afternoon, young Sophie visited several stores along Washington Street selecting items for her 'trousseau'. Her brother Thomas paid the bills that totaled \$275. She left her brother near Summer Street, promising to meet him later at home, and headed for a savings bank to withdraw another \$100 from her mother's account. Her intention was to purchase furniture for her new apartment and have lunch at the Syrian Café on Beach Street before returning home. Sophie withdrew the money, visited a few stores, had lunch, and ran some errands. She never returned home. According to the 'Boston Globe' headline the next day, young and beautiful 18-year-old Sophie had disappeared *"under strange and mysterious circumstances"*.



Sophie and her family emigrated from 'Syria' in 1889. They lived on Albany Street and her father was in the dry goods business and was quite successful and well known. Sophie, who was described as being *'quite accomplished'*, was educated at the Quincy School on Tyler Street. Trained in 'millinery', she worked at a hat store on Bedford Street and frugally saved her earnings for her wedding day. Joseph, her betrothed, was a cousin and his marriage to Sophie had been agreed upon by the two families since they were children. Described as a *'steady fellow of excellent reputation'*, Joseph was twenty-five and worked as a shoemaker. According to her brother, *"Sophie loved her cousin dearly and looked forward to today as the happiest of her life"*. Thomas feared that something terrible had happened to his sister and stated that *"She never was away from home a night in her life, and never was out evenings even. She was devoted to her home and her parents. She does not know what evil life or associations are"*. Detective Daniel W. Sullivan of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division was put on the case.

With the assistance of patrolmen from the LaGrange Street Station, Detective Sullivan made inquiries among the 'Syrians' in Boston hoping to find some information concerning the missing girl. The police were instructed to conduct a thorough investigation and to be vigilant in their search for clues that could lead to Sophie's whereabouts. The diligent detective retraced Sophie's steps from the previous day, visiting every store and speaking with every clerk. By the end of the day no trace of the girl was found. Sullivan put out a 'general alarm' and wired police departments in several cities asking them to assist with the search. He suspected someone knew that the girl was carrying a large amount of money and decided to rob her. He also feared that drugs may have been used to render her unconscious. He did not believe that Sophie ran away from home and found no evidence that she did not want to marry her cousin. He concluded that getting married to Joseph was *'the dream of her life'*. Detective Sullivan believed *'something foul has happened'*.

Fr. George visited Sophie's family and found her mother, attended by several women of the community, *'in a state of alarm, prostrate and confined to her bed'*. Together with her father and brother, Fr. George visited the Café where Sophie reportedly had lunch the day before. Located at 73 ½ Beach Street, just around the corner from Fr. George's residence, the Café was known as the local *'headquarters'* for the 'Syrian' colony. It was operated by Shakny Talyfal and Kallil Nassar whose wife Mahinie was related to Sophie. They discovered that the two women had left the Café together and visited several shops the day before.

Kallil and Mahinie were in New York on business, having traveled there by train the previous evening. Eager to speak with Mahinie and suspicious of her involvement, Thomas spoke with Detective Sullivan. He described his relative as being *'a beautiful young woman of about twenty-five years of a decidedly adventurous disposition who had appeared before the stage footlights'*. He believed that Mahinie had *'filled his sister's head with romantic stories of stage life and travel'* and induced her to run away to New York. Sullivan wired the New York police department to join the search. Fr. George contacted a priest in New York asking his assistance.

By *'persistent inquiry and careful watching'* Detective Sullivan followed up on a series of clues over the next several days. With the assistance of Fr. George and Thomas, Sullivan established that Sophie had left Boston by train in the company of Kallil and Mahinie along with a man named Jacob N. who was also identified as a cousin. They were traced to the 'Syrian' colony in New York where they managed to elude the police for a couple of days.

A priest in New York informed Fr. George that he had married Sophie and Jacob on Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup>. He claimed that, at first, he protested and refused to perform the marriage. He reluctantly relented after the couple threatened to run off to a Protestant minister to be married. The marriage took place at the 'Syrian' Church in New York witnessed by several members of the local community. Following their wedding, the newlyweds, aware of the search being conducted, went off to hide in Providence accompanied by Mahinie as her husband returned to Boston.

Detective Sullivan visited Kallil and convinced him of the serious nature of his most recent activities. Sullivan outlined the laws related to abduction and convinced Kallil to contact his wife and bring Jabour and Sophie safely back to Boston. The next morning, one week after her disappearance, Detective Sullivan and Fr. George witnessed Sophie being greeted at South Station by her brother. Thomas and Sophie were described as *"clasped in each other's arms"*. Thomas accompanied the newlyweds' home where they were received by Sophie's mother *"who had been confined to her bed"*. News that *"the lost had been found"* spread rapidly through the 'Syrian' colony and by noon dozens of countrymen were visiting the home on Albany Street. The family was left to *"forgive and forget"*. The cousin Joseph, who lost his bride, was reported to be *'in deep grief'* and nearly heartbroken.

In his first few days as pastor to the 'Syrian' colony, Fr. George was immersed in the emotional melodrama of an impressionable teenager caught up in the seductive allure of American society. As a single parent of a teenage daughter, he must have been particularly concerned that a young woman like Sophie, from a protective and traditional family, could succumb to such temptations. The experience, no doubt, served him well in what would go on to be his exemplary ministry to an immigrant 'colony' facing unprecedented social and cultural pressures.

His reputation from back home as a *'kind and gentle priest with a big heart'* was borne out as he ministered to a distraught mother, an anxiety ridden brother and a concerned community that came together around a perceived tragedy. He must have been impressed with the sincerity and diligence of Detective Sullivan and the precinct police officers as they investigated the case. Their genuine concern for the welfare of Sophie and their regard for the community must have stood in sharp contrast to any experience he had with policemen in the old country. Fr. George would quickly win the respect of the local police as a leader and spokesman for the immigrant community. The Sophie caper had introduced him to the local intrigues and intrusions of family and relatives as they sought to perpetuate cultural norms for arranged marriages in an alien society. Fr. George and Thomas remained unconvinced of the wisdom of Sophie's choice.

Six months later the Boston Globe ran an article entitled *"Married Again, Sophie Returned to First Love"*. The story relates that, Sophie's marriage to Jacob was annulled by both the state and the church on the grounds that her parents had not consented to the marriage, that she was underage and that her husband had misrepresented himself as her cousin. Sophie married her first love, Joseph. Reportedly, everyone *"seemed satisfied"*. We can only assume that they lived happily ever after.

*Blessings, Fr + Timothy*



***"Calling To Remembrance"***  
***Armistice Day; 11 November 1918***

According to records from the office of the Provost Marshal General, no fewer than 13,965 'Syrian' immigrants served in the United States Army during the First World War. They represented nearly 10% of the entire immigrant population from the Near East in 1917. Hundreds came from greater Boston. Several young men from St. George Church served in the U. S. Army during the Great War. One was Najeeb George Kennan, from the village of Taboura, El-Khoura, Syria [*now Lebanon*].



The oldest son of George and Zelpha [*nee Jabour/Dagher*], Najeeb was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1897. He arrived in Boston with his father in 1912. Together, they worked as peddlers to save enough money to bring the rest of the family to America. Najeeb and his father lived at 425 Shawmut Ave. and were members of St. George parish. When the United States entered the war, Najeeb enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the 68<sup>th</sup> Coastal Artillery.

The 68th Artillery, C. A. C., was organized for the Coast Defenses of Long Island Sound on the first of June 1918. The officers had been designated by the War Department to select qualified men for the Regiment. Only those men who expressed a sincere desire to serve at the front were accepted. From the beginning, the Regiment earned a reputation for its spirit, energy, and discipline, which brought them commendations from the War Department.

One of the new recruits was Pvt. Najeeb George Kennan known as 'James' from the Syrian Colony in Boston's South End. Najeeb was assigned to 'Battery E' at Fort H. G. Wright on the tip of Long Island. The Regiment was equipped with wheel-mounted 6-inch seacoast guns known as the "Six Inch Terror."

By mid-June the men were settled in their new organizations and work began in preparation to enter the fighting in Europe. For nearly two months, the Batteries worked hard at training, drills, and target practice. In early August, the USA Embarkation Office ordered the Regiment to sail for New London, Conn. There they boarded a troop train headed for Boston. At the Cunard Line docks, Najeeb and his fellow soldiers received sandwiches, coffee and cigarettes from the Red Cross and a complete physical inspection from the Medical Corps before boarding the British ship '*Leicestershire*', bound for England.

The men were led down into the hold. One soldier wrote: "*We thought we were going there to check our baggage and imagine our surprise when we were told that it was to be our home, sleeping quarters, and mess hall combined. Hammocks were slung from the ceiling at night, rolled up and stored away in the daytime. The men made the best of their lot and settled down for the voyage they had so long looked forward to. Most of the men preferred to sleep on deck in clear weather. Newspaper accounts of submarine activities off the New England Coast only a few days before had no effect other than to arouse curiosity. A perfect trip had to include subs, storms, icebergs, whales and about everything else*". Once the '*Leicestershire*' sailed out of Boston harbor, Najeeb and the others knew there was no return until it was "*over, over there.*"

The *'Leicestershire'* departed Boston in the company of six other ships, destroyers, sub-chasers, and a dirigible. On the fifth day at sea, they joined with a convoy of six transports and a British cruiser, which had sailed out from Halifax. After fifteen days in the North Atlantic, the ship was escorted up the River Thames and moored at the Tillsbury Docks, London. That night horns, whistles and sirens blew announcing an air-raid and the men ran up on deck to see what was happening. The sky was lit up immediately with the brilliant beams of searchlights. Nothing happened as the Germans had been turned back at the coast. In the morning the Americans went by train to a camp at Romsey, England. After four days they marched ten miles to Southampton where the British Red Cross gave them coffee and sandwiches before they boarded the steamer *'Narragansett'* and sailed across the English Channel to France.

At 4 a.m. on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1918, after eleven hours standing on the deck of the *'Narragansett'*, Najeeb and the others arrived at Le Havre, France. On the docks, they saw the enemy for the first time, German POW's working as dock hands. They also saw a long Red Cross Hospital train carrying wounded soldiers back from the front lines. The sight of bandaged arms, hands and heads in the windows brought the horrors of war closer to the fresh troops. The rumor was that they were all heavy artillerymen.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> they moved toward the front and were assigned to tents and trenches. They quickly learned to dodge the aerial bombs that the Germans fired at the camp with regularity. One of the officers, Lt. William Ferguson, was seriously wounded during one such artillery attack. The Regiment was split up and camped in different near-by towns, Najeeb and the men of his battery were billeted in old vacant stores, houses, barns, and sheds. The first few days were spent in intensive training that occupied the men with calisthenics, the manual of arms, infantry drill, and hikes.

Within a week, their guns arrived from back home. Now mounted on tractor trailers, their six-inch seacoast guns looked far more formidable than they did at the forts on Long Island. The men set about digging gun emplacements, maneuvering the cannons in and out of the pits, and gun drills. Gas attack drills, firing drills and hikes wearing gas masks were the daily routine.

Beginning September 16<sup>th</sup>, a heavy artillery course was conducted by American and French officers. The course continued until November 4<sup>th</sup>. It made the men realize how ill prepared they really were for the type of artillery warfare being conducted at the front. Classes in Anti-aircraft, Machine Gun, Gas Warfare, Mechanics, Master Gunners, Orientation, Radio, Aerial Observation and Engineering were also part of the new training cycle. Being fully trained for battle, the Regiment was ordered to move up to the front lines on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Periodic artillery attacks from the German guns continued and some of the shells carried the dread mustard and chlorine gas. In early November, Najeeb was among the casualties from these random attacks and was treated at the Regimental Field Hospital for exposure to poison gas.

Rumors of an 'Armistice' started circulating early in November and excitement ran high throughout the Regiment. On the afternoon of November 11<sup>th</sup> official word was received that the 'Armistice' had been signed. The 12<sup>th</sup> of November was given over to a fitting celebration of the occasion. A parade was held in each Battalion, which was reviewed the French Mayor and staff and the entire French population. The guns were transported to the coast to be parked and await shipment home. By November 24, a new commotion arose in Camp, as the Embarkation Office issued orders to prepare to return home on the "First Available" transport.

Thanksgiving was observed a few days ahead of time by the Regiment, in order not to miss the occasion for a *"big feed."* The countryside was scoured for turkeys, and many were found. The cooks put out a traditional Thanksgiving dinner with roast turkey and all the trimmings. The entire Regiment feasted into the night in anticipation of their pending voyage home.

The Regiments new home was the Bordeaux Embarkation Camp and the 68th was at the head of the list each day but no orders came down for their departure. Over the next month, a flu epidemic ravaged the countryside and five men of the Regiment died of complications. The delay of the embarkation at Bordeaux became so exasperating that the Regiments Colonel complained to the authorities that *"The men have no beds, no stoves, not enough blankets, are living from hand to mouth and getting sick because of it."* The official reported to his General and returned saying: *"Come down tomorrow."* The Regiment moved to the Bassens docks on January 23, 1919. Finally, on February 3, 1919, after nearly six months in France, the 68<sup>th</sup> C.A.C. Regiment boarded the *'ss Matsonia'* bound for New York.

On the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, they emerged from a heavy fog and spotted Cony Island. Sailing up the Narrows, they passed the Statue of Liberty and anchored at the Fiftieth Street Pier. The next morning, they were ferried to their Headquarters at Fort Wadsworth on Long Island. On February 21<sup>st</sup> 1919, the Regiment was officially demobilized. That evening the men held a dinner and final farewell, in the morning they drifted away gradually and by nightfall the 68<sup>th</sup> C.A.C. Regiment ceased to exist.

Pvt. Najeeb George Kennan and the men of 'Battery B' arrived in France just in time to deploy to the front where they were under bombardment from German guns on several occasions. Proficiency reports indicate that, given their training, expertise, and general excellence in the accomplishment of their duties, the Regiment achieved a commendable record in action.

Pvt. Najeeb George Kennan, returned to Boston to be reunited with his father, George. By that time, George had enough money to return to Taboura for his wife Zelpha and their other children. Najeeb remained in Boston with his uncle Hanna at 111 Tyler Street. George, Zelpha and their children arrived in Boston on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

As a result of his exposure to toxic gas, Najeeb suffered from lung infections and chronic nephritis.



In August 1921 he was admitted for treatment to St. Elizabeth's Hospital, but little could be done and he died there on August 28<sup>th</sup>. His funeral service was prayed at St. George Syrian Orthodox Church on Tyler Street and Najeeb was buried at Mt. Hope Cemetery on August 30<sup>th</sup>. In 1922 his body was reinterred in the newly dedicated section for deceased soldiers of the Great War.

This Armistice Day [now called Veterans Day] we remember Pvt. Najeeb George Kennan and the 300 other Veterans from St. George Church who served in the armed forces of our country in various wars. May the memory of those who have departed from us Be Eternal.

*Blessings, Fr. Timothy*

## ***“Calling to Remembrance...”***

**Armistice [Veterans] Day 2015.**

**‘for our Armed Forces everywhere..that He will aid them and grant them victory’**

Fifteen year old Peter Corey arrived in Boston in 1905 from his ancestral home of Damascus. His family sent him, his older brothers and cousins to America in order to avoid conscription into the Turkish Army. The Ottoman Empire had a notorious reputation for brutalizing Christian conscripts and many military age men fled the Near East to avoid this cruelty. In Boston, young Peter settled in the South End at 108 Tyler Street and worked as a peddler while attending the Quincy School at



night to learn English. Peter later took a job as a cutter in one of the neighborhood leather factories. Peter and his extended family, the Aowdy's were members of the St. George community. In 1910 he married and his wife, Miriam gave birth to a son, Adel. Tragically, in 1913 Miriam died during child birth along with their second child. Peter's relatives agreed to help raise his son.

In 1917 the United States entered the Great War that had erupted in Europe in 1914 and soon engulfed most of the Eastern Hemisphere. In May, Congress authorized the American Expeditionary Force to join our British and French Allies in fighting the Germans on the Western Front. Congress also instituted a draft to enlist eligible young men to serve in the Armed Forces. Peter Corey was drafted into the U.S. Army in March of 1918. On 2 May, while at basic training he was naturalized as an American Citizen and deployed to the battlefields in France.

Pvt. Peter Corey was a rifleman in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division foiled enemy attempts in the period 1–4 June to secure a firm bridgehead across the River Marne at Château-Thierry. They successfully defended the road to Paris, and on 6 June successfully counterattacked the Germans at the Battle of Belleau Wood. In July they repelled another German offensive and succeeded in pushing the enemy back across the River Marne west of Château-Thierry. In August, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division joined seven other American Expeditionary Force divisions in spearheading the advance that would soon defeat the German Army. About 270,000 Americans took part in the battle which demonstrated superior offensive capabilities and helped to inspire new confidence in the war-weary Allied armies.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division went on to see combat in the Somme Offensive (8 August – 11 November), Oise-Aisne (18 August – 11 November), and Ypres-Lys (19 August – 11 November) Campaigns. They were part of the main body of A.E.F. troops in the St. Michel (12–16 September) and Meuse-Argonne (26 September – 11 November) Campaigns that successfully ended the Great War. For his service, Pvt. Peter Corey was promoted to the rank of Corporal.

Following the Armistice of 18 November 1918, Cpl. Peter Corey was transferred to the American Expeditionary Forces in Northern Russia and served at Archangel and Murmansk assisting the Russian White Army forces in their civil war against the Red Army.

Peter Corey was discharged from the Army in 1920 and returned to Boston before eventually settling in Maine where he worked in the ship yards of Portland. In 1918, Peter had joined dozens of other young Syrian immigrants in Boston who were enlisted into the Army to serve their newfound country. Among Peter's 'South End' friends and members of our community were; 18 year old Joseph Josephs of Hudson Street, 19 year old Nassif Hallow of Harrison Ave., 26 year old George Simon of Tyler Street was a Corporal in Co C, 51<sup>st</sup> Division, 27 year old Solomon Habib and 22 year old Abraham Hanna of Harrison Ave. also served in the 51<sup>st</sup>. Drafted in 1917, twenty-one year old George L. Hamaty of 103 Hudson Street, son of Michel and Labibe from Afdike, served in the famed 42<sup>nd</sup> 'Rainbow' Division. He returned home to Boston after 264 days of combat, took a job in a shoe factory and got married. Their only child, Michael died in 2002 and bequeathed the church a substantial sum in memory of his parents. Today the Michael Hamaty Scholarship Fund offers support for our college students.

There is a rare photograph [shown here] taken in the fall of 1919 showing Fr. George Maloof of St. George Church standing among the proud veterans of his community and Bishop Germanos of Zahle as they commemorate the first anniversary of the Armistice that ended the Great War.

Unfortunately, the Great War or World War of 1914-1918 was not the 'war to end all wars' as it so eagerly boasted. From 1941 to 1945, once again the community of St. George sent off scores of young men to fight another World War. Our memorial board in the church narthex contains the names of 300 men and women who we know of that served our country in this conflict. Among those listed are three brothers; Cpt. Abraham, PFC George and Sgt. John Abraham. They were the sons of Iser and Katherine [Shaheen] Abraham, immigrants from Tripoli, Lebanon. The brothers lived at 262 Shawmut Ave. with their brother Halim and sisters Sophie and Helen. All three graduated from the Boston English High School and enlisted in the Army as the United States entered WW II. Tragically, all three brothers died in service to their country.



THREE HEROES

*Left to right:* Lt. Abraham Abraham; PFC George Abraham; Sgt. John S. Abraham

Abraham, known as 'Brownie' was a Lieutenant in the 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and served in the Caroline and Philippine Islands. For his heroism in combat he was promoted to the rank of Captain and awarded several Bronze Stars. Cpt. Abraham died in Germany as a member of the occupation forces. His brother George was a rifleman in the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and participated in the capture of Metz from the Nazi Army in 1944. In December he was among the American troops besieged by the Nazi's at Bastogne. He died at the 'Battle of the Bulge' on 19 December 1944

and was buried at the U.S. Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg. Their brother, Sgt. John 'Sheffie' Abraham joined the Massachusetts National Guard and was called into active service with the 26<sup>th</sup> Division in 1941. Sgt. Abraham died a few months after entering active service.

In March 1949, the bodies of Cpt. Abraham 'Brownie' Abraham and his brother PFC George Abraham were returned to Boston from Europe. On St. Patrick's Day a double funeral service was served at St. George Orthodox Church of Boston by Fr. Stephan Upson and several local clergy. They were interred with military honors directed by the Nicholas Beram Veterans Association beside their brother John at Mt. Hope Cemetery.

In his obituary for the Abraham brothers, Fr. Upson states in part that *'Every member of St. George Parish and all who knew these three good and brave men, must always carry in their hearts the grateful memory of these heroes who are held in perpetual remembrance at the Altar of St. George Church and we pray God as well for comfort of their dear ones in whose bereavement we all share.'*

On 11 November we will pause to remember those men and women who served our country in the Armed Forces. Let us remember them in our prayers and thank them for their selfless service.

***Blessings, Fr. +Timothy***

## ***“Calling to Remembrance...”*** [part nine]

### **To Assist the Needy**

At the base of the Statue of Liberty, that majestic ‘unofficial greeter’ of immigrants, is inscribed the hauntingly famous words of the poet Emma Lazarus, *“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me; I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”* This ‘New Colossus’ christened the Mother of Exiles with her radiant torch towering high over the harbour bid welcome to so many of our spiritual ancestors as they arrived from the distant towns and villages of the Near East. Those ‘huddled masses’ crammed in steerage class, courageously endured the long arduous voyage from the harbor at Beirut to France or England and then across the treacherous North Atlantic. They certainly arrived ‘tired’. Many also arrived ‘poor’.

Their meager savings supplemented with loans from family and friends allowed them to purchase their \$40 or \$50 ticket to the New World. Back home, the average immigrant earned less than 20c a day and coming up with the price of a ticket to America was an arduous task. Besides the



cash for the ticket, the immigrant needed money to get to Beirut, pay for provisions on board ship and to get settled upon arriving in the United States. John Deraney came from Zahleh with his wife Sophie and three daughters; he had \$25 when he arrived in Boston after spending almost \$250 to get here. They settled at 35 Edinboro Street. Sixteen year old Ester Hamwey arrived in Boston from the Mount Lebanon with \$10. She lived with her uncle Tamar Homsy and his family on Oak Street. Fr. George and his daughter Thekla arrived from Deir Al Ghazaal with only \$20. The little they had would go quickly once they rented an apartment, bought furniture, food and clothing. As the community in the South End steadily grew the necessity of caring for the needy among them was quickly realized.

Within a year after his arrival, Fr. George convinced several members of the ‘Syrian Colony’ to organize a charitable society to assist the newcomers. He would frequently visit the Syrian bakeries, restaurants and grocery stores accepting donations and delivering bundles of food to the needy. Early in 1903 fifteen prominent members of the community met at the home of Hanna Maloof on Hudson Street to complete plans for a charitable organization to care for the poorer residents of the neighborhood. On the previous Sunday, the week before Lent, Fr. George had read the Gospel of the Last Judgment. In their little chapel on Oxford Street, in front of his parishioners, he solemnly chanted the words of Christ; *“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”* Known as a caring and sensitive priest, he surely exhorted his people to translate this Gospel and their prayers into action and conduct on behalf of the poor and thereby more perfectly serve Christ.

Besides Fr. George and Hanna Maloof, the organizers included Dr. Elias Sawabini, Ibrahim Maloof, Yousef Deraney, Salim Ayoub and Yousef Nakid. Dr. Sawabini was from Jerusalem and he



was one of the few professionals among the immigrants. He readily offered medical services to those in need without charge. He was chosen as president of the new 'Syrian Charitable Society'. Salim Ayoub of Damascus was a successful brass goods manufacturer. He became treasurer of the organization. Fr. George presided at his marriage to Anjoul Mousalli and on the same day celebrated the marriage of Salim's sister Shamsi to Abraham Dahban, a tailor from Damascus. They also assisted with the humanitarian effort.

The intention was to care for the sick, the children and the needy and to establish a community center in the vicinity of Beach and Hudson Streets where people could gather and the needs of the immigrants could be addressed. The original members went about drafting a list of prospective supporters. Within a few days, sixty people submitted their names and agreed to contribute \$1 each per month. Most of the members of Fr. George's growing parish assisted with the humanitarian effort as he actively encouraged them to join with their fellow countrymen in providing assistance to those in need. In time, the organization offered legal assistance, housing and job referrals, classes in English and homemaking and a wide range of social services.



The 'Syrian Charitable Society' was the first organization of its kind in Boston and served the community for many years. During those first critical years of increased immigration, Boston's Syrian community succeeded in caring for its own by offering not only assistance but also providing hope and dignity to newcomers struggling to assimilate. Thanks to their efforts, the promise of that majestic Lady Liberty and the initial emotion she evoked in the arriving immigrant would, in part, be fulfilled as they could now '*breathe free*'. A survey of state and city social welfare agencies of the time shows that no Syrians were among their clients. A spokesman for the YMCA noted that the Syrians were a "*proud and generous people who were self-supporting and prefer to take care of their own dependents.*"

For Fr. George, it was the Gospel that inspired him to serve his fellow countrymen in their need. His ministry among the immigrants was his way of imitating the life of his Lord and Saviour. By Easter 1903, he could see the fruit of his prayers as the community came together around a cadre of dedicated leaders to care for the welfare of the '*least of the brethren.*'

Blessings,

*Fr. + Timothy*



## ***Calling to Remembrance..." [part ten]***

### **"Laying down the Law"**

The intricacies of the American legal system occasionally proved challenging to the new immigrants from 'Syria' accustomed, as they were, to the harsh conditions of Turkish domination while at the same time exercising a certain 'freedom' in their own 'homes'. Readers will recall the amusing story of the kind hearted priest Fr. Constantinos who had to appear in court and was fined for marrying a couple, Joseph and Nadimy Anno, without first obtaining the required license or registering the event [Messenger July 2012].

There's also the touching story of the Draney boys, George and Sammy, who went off to gather firewood for their dear mother, Liddi. Realizing that collecting scraps of wood would save their mother from buying fuel for her kitchen stove, the boys would make the rounds of vacant lots with their home made wheelbarrow. As it turned out, one of the lots on Albany Street was owned by Jack McLaughlin, a well known local contractor. After confronting the boys and not being able to understand their reply, Jack had the beat cop, Officer O'Hanlon, arrest them for trespassing and theft.

Fr. George went to the precinct station on La Grange to plead for the boy's release, claiming they didn't know any better he explained that the boy's were not familiar with the concept of trespassing. For their part, the boys, through an interpreter, told the desk sergeant how they were only trying to save their mother money by using the discarded scrap wood in her stove. They told him how delicious her cooking was and that she was always in the kitchen preparing meals for the family and neighbors. The sergeant, who seems to have been a patient man, tried to explain the importance of private property to the boys. Sammy, the youngest boy, asked if you could tell if a branch fell from a tree on the private lot or from a tree on the other side of the fence. The sergeant explained that the land on the other side of the fence belonged to the railroad and that it too was private property. Perplexed, the boys admitted their responsibility and waited for the sergeant's decision.



Mr. McLaughlin, Fr. George and the desk sergeant talked things over. Obviously moved by the brother's story, McLaughlin refrained from pressing charges if the boys agreed to clean up his lot. The boys spent the next few days clearing out McLaughlin's property on Albany Street. Satisfied with the job, McLaughlin told the boys to take all the scraps of wood and lumber home for their mother's stove and then he made them responsible for watching over his property, promising to give them a weekly allowance. In gratitude, Mrs. Draney baked a tray of Syrian sweets for the old Irishman. In appreciation for the sweets, McLaughlin hired the boy's father as a laborer on his construction crew. Thankful that their father had a good job, the boy's agreed to watch over McLaughlin's lot free of charge. Impressed by the boy's sense of integrity, McLaughlin promised to give the brothers jobs when they got a little older.

Then there is the tragic story of John Said, a well liked member of the city's 'Syrian Colony' who was charged with carrying a loaded revolver and with theft. The incident sent shock waves through the Arab community. The story, as relayed at his trial, was described as, "one of the most interesting ones heard in court for a long time". It was also referred to as, "an interesting delineation of Syrian life in the Syrian colony in this city."

It seems that John Said discovered he could buy 'arak', that flavorful translucent libation so popular with the people of the Arab Levant, in the rear of a local shop. The owner of the shop, Anton Bejani, a fellow 'Syrian', distilled, bottled and sold his own spirits. His lucrative enterprise was highly illegal, to say the least. To make matters worse, he was selling the 'arak' on Sundays.

After several purchases, John and Bejani had words and a festering feud ensued. One Sunday, determined to get the best of his nemesis, John informed on him to the local beat cop, Patrolman Healy. John told Healy, "I bought two bottles over there and I can buy more". Healy replied, "O.K. go on and I'll wait for you here", gesturing to the store behind him. As John crossed the street, his antagonist came running into the store where Patrolman Healy was to report John Said for making violent threats against him. John, meanwhile, entered Bejani's shop and scooped up a case of 'arak' from the back room. Two women shoppers witnessed him take the goods and run out onto the street. He sat the case of illegal hooch at an astonished Patrolman Healy's feet saying, "There, now I've got him". The distiller quickly scooped up the case of coveted elixir and ran back to his shop with Patrolman Healy in hot pursuit. Once inside Bejani discovered that \$20 in bills was missing from his cash box. Running past Healy, he quickly exited the shop in search of John Said. Confronted in the next block the shop owner accused Said of robbery and insisted he be arrested on the spot. When Patrolman Healy, blowing his whistle, caught up with them the two

'Syrians' were into a real tussle. Bejani yelled out that Said had a gun. By this time another policeman was on the scene and he grabbed Said sliding his hand into his pocket. The officer pulled a loaded 38-caliber revolver from Johns' hip pocket. As Healy picked up and handed Said his coat from the sidewalk, he found a six inch folding knife in the inside pocket. John Said was taken to the precinct station and locked up charged with carrying a concealed weapon and larceny.

At his trial, John Said admitted to buying 'arak' on Sunday and stealing the case of liquor from Bejani's shop. He denied taking the money and claimed the revolver didn't belong to him and that he was just fixing it for a friend. Fr. George attended part of the proceedings to show support for one of his flock. Judge Holden spoke to Said of the laws against carrying weapons in public. He noted that, "If people are allowed to go around with dangerous weapons the officers of the law take their lives in their hands whenever they make an arrest." The law, the Judge insisted, was especially intended, "For the protection of the guardians of the peace". Referencing what he saw as an 'Ever-increasing habit of carrying dangerous weapons', Judge Holden said it was time to "Lay down the law". John Said was found guilty on both charges and sentenced to one year in the house of correction. At another hearing, Antoun Bejani was fined \$300 for the illegal distillation and sale of alcohol plus an additional \$150 for selling it on Sunday.

Immigration and assimilation into an alien society was an ongoing struggle for most of the 'Syrians' of the South End albeit one that they readily accepted. Their occasional brushes with the law could be attributed to unfamiliarity with the language and customs of their new homeland. Over all their offences were minor ones like not obtaining the required license or ignorance of a local ordinance. Through it all, the members of Boston's 'Syrian Colony' learnt, grew and prospered.

***Blessings, Fr. Timothy***

## *"Calling to Remembrance..." [part fifteen]*

### **The 'Mukhtar' of 'Little Syria'**

Late in April of 1901, a reporter from the 'Boston Herald' toured the city's 'Little Syria' neighborhood and published a full-page account of his experience, complete with exceptional illustrations. In a city whose immigrant experience was in large part limited to the Irish and Italian arrivals of the 1800's, the most recent influx of newcomers from the Near East offered an exotic and mysterious novelty. I'm always intrigued with accounts such as this as they offer a rare glimpse into the ordinary life and circumstance of our immigrant forbearers. Written in the rather Victorian style of the day, complete with its own self-centered perspective, the reporter takes his Boston reader on a sort of expedition into an exotic and foreign land that, in his own opinion, he alone has been uniquely privileged to enter. Despite his own biases, this reporter uses his keen regard for detail and personal inquisitiveness to relay a charming story of the day-to-day life of the city's first 'Syrian' immigrants.

The unnamed reporter begins his tour on Edgerly Place, which he describes as a *"very narrow alleyway directly in the rear of that part of Boston known as Chinatown"*. He then introduces us to the Arabs he encounters saying that *"there lives a colony of swarthy people who have brought all their traditional customs with them from their fatherland, and who live there in their own way, unconscious and unconcerned regarding the manners of the Americans, and who, in their peculiar style, live happily and naturally"*. *"They are"*, he reports, *"the Syrians, coming from Damascus, Mt. Lebanon, and other places in the Holy Land and Turkey"*. At the time there were perhaps as many as 1500 immigrants from the Ottoman Empire living in the surrounding neighborhood. Nearly all of them had arrived during the preceding few years. The newsman spent two days exploring the neighborhood and partaking of the everyday life of its residents. Milham Kadra, the 'Mayor of Little Syria', served as his official guide and interpreter.

A native of Douma, Mt. Lebanon, Milham arrived in Boston in 1887 as one of the very first 'Syrian' immigrants, he was only thirteen years old at the time. Now, with his wife Sadie [Karam] and their two children he lived at nearby Oliver Place. At first, he worked as a peddler of notions and sundries while studying and quickly becoming proficient in English.



THE MAYOR OF LITTLE SYRIA

He then worked as a court interpreter, assisting his fellow immigrants with the intricacies of the American legal system. After saving enough money, he opened his own dry goods store and supplied a cadre of peddlers. With his wife, he operated a profitable boardinghouse at their residence at 141 Oliver Place. Milham had a controlling interest in many of the Syrian owned businesses in the district. The reporter noted that, *"when a fellow countryman is in trouble 'Mayor' Kadra is the first from whom counsel is asked"*. Milham was among the early supporters of the newly founded St. George Syrian Orthodox Church of Boston. He also assisted in establishing the Syrian parish in Springfield. He eventually purchased a farm in Ashland and operated it until his death in 1946.

On those two spring days in 1901, the 'Mukhtar' saw to it that, for the Herald reporter, *"everything worth visiting was seen, everyone worth calling on was visited and everything eatable was eaten"*. The visitor goes on to say that he, *"still lives to tell the tale, a tale never before made public, for these people are very suspicious of newspaper men"*.

His first encounter is with a group of Syrian women carrying baskets and satchels and, *"dressed in their peculiar costumes of gaily colored creations."* *"Nearly everyone"*, he writes, *"has certainly come in contact with these women. They go from house to house laden with a huge bag or basket filled with combs, small mirrors and fancy goods"*. He admires their persistence noting that, *"if they cannot sell you anything they will convince you, especially if you are a woman, that you ought to have your fortune told, and the peddler succeeds in getting your quarter"*.

In a courtyard at the end of the street he enters what he describes as, *"one of the most picturesque places in Boston"*. It's Sunday afternoon and families have gathered in the out of doors coming from the surrounding streets and even from

nearby towns to enjoy one another's company on a present spring day. *"Surrounded with their many children", the reporter observes "who seem to be about the same age and size, sitting or standing in groups of all sizes, all talking at once with the men entertaining themselves, lounging around in their carefree, happy manner, smoking their cigarettes or nargilehs, the Turkish water pipe while some other fellow is passing the Arrack around and the whole atmosphere teems with Bohemian good feeling".* After being introduced to everyone he engaged in a *"quite animated"* conversation with several of the English speakers. Comfortable with the visitor, the men invited him to join them in a drink as one of them handed him a glass of Arrack. Never having sampled this exotic libation, the reporter accepted the glass with a cautious smile. Sensing his reluctance, the men assured him that, *"it was 'tyib', good. He drank it, and it was 'tyib'."*

On Oxford Street, 'Mayor' Kadra and his guest visited the home of Bolous and Sophie Hadge. The reporter relates that, *"After walking up a long flight of stairs he was ushered into the rooms, where he was greeted by a woman of about twenty years old. She had black, wavy hair, eyes of the richest hazel, and features slightly aquiline, but regular. Her complexion was of the most pronounced brunette, and she possessed a noble, spiritual expression, indicative of the highest character. Another young woman, whose age was said to be eighteen, was of a similar handsome type."* After being introduced to several men at the home, he was greeted, *"with most profuse exclamations of welcome"* and given the seat of honor in the family's parlor. He describes the Hadge home as being decorated with, *"broad cushioned divans lining the walls, while heavy and brilliantly colored rugs were strewn about the floor. In the center of the room several small handsomely carved tables were seen, wonderful examples of the hand carving of the Syrians. They were inlaid with pearl and were inscribed in Syrian. On the tables were large clusters of paper and real flowers, colored candlesticks, perfumery of gold and incense holders of silver and gold."*

One of the women prepared a nargilehi for their distinguished guest. He describes how she rolled the tobacco and prepared the charcoal before offering him the pipe. He remarked that, *"He had never smoked one of these machines before, and the operation was not a success. After being shown by the woman how to do it he again started very bravely, but before long a very peculiar dizzy feeling crept over him and soon the whole room was whirling around him, and he was gone."*

Obviously overcome by the hospitality he enjoyed at the Hadge home; his exuberance was soon outdone by what happened next. Describing it as a *"remarkable event"*, the reporter relates how he was privileged to witness a Syrian Orthodox wedding. Early in the evening, Fr. George Dow Maloof arrived at the Hadge home to celebrate the marriage of the eighteen-year-old Fahoom Hadge to Habib Ferrin. Marriage records for Boston show that 18-year-old Fahoom Hadge, daughter of Bolous and Sophie of 22 Oxford Street, a dressmaker married Habeeb Ferrin, son of George and Helena, a 25 year old actor from Syria on Sunday, 21 April 1901.

The reporter describes how the home was suddenly transformed into a church as *"all their countrymen came to do them honour."* He identifies the attendants as Nazeera El Kazin and Hanny Saleh. He describes that a, *"respectful silence reigns through the house as the bride is escorted to stand beside her bridesmaid. The bridegroom, dressed in a splendid robe is positioned next to his bride and the priest proceeds to place a floral crown first on the head of the groom and then on the head of the bride. The priest then places rings on the couple's fingers while offering blessings and prayers. He then ties a piece of ribbon around the neck of the groom, which remains there until the following day when he returns to take it off. The priest then congratulates the couple and, after drinking to their health, departs."*

## *part two*

In last month's 'Messenger' we accompanied a reporter from the Boston Herald as he toured Boston's 'Syrian Colony' in April 1901. Accompanied by Milham Kadra, the 'Mayor of Little Syria', who served as his guide and interpreter, the reporter described the daily lives of the immigrants whom he met. On Sunday evening he met Fr. George D. Maloof, the founder of St. George Church, and joined him at the home of Bolos and Sophie Hadge on Oxford Street for the wedding of their daughter Fahoom. In describing the wedding ceremony, he relates a curious detail which must have been a local cultural custom. He relates that, at the conclusion of the wedding service, Fr. George took a length of white ribbon and tied it around the neck of Habeeb Ferrin the groom. The next day, Fr. George returned to the home and removed the ribbon signaling that the wedding reception could officially begin.

Elias F. Alkazian hosted the party at his 'Turkish Café' around the corner on Beach Street. Alkazian's café was the unofficial 'headquarters' for the Syrian community in Boston during the height of the immigration. Elias and his

brother, Mehsan, arrived in Boston from Beirut in 1894. A successful merchant in Syria, he opened his restaurant on Beach Street and enjoyed immediate popularity with his fellow countrymen. Elias operated the 'Turkish Café' until 1908 when he married Nazira [Abiselah] and settled in Old Orchard, Maine.



For the reception, the café had been "fitted up in a sumptuous manner. Everything was red, beautiful draperies covered the walls; rich rugs were strewn about the floor and around the walls were divans which were covered with a deep crimson plush. On these divans were many gold-embroidered pillows." The whole atmosphere was enlivened by musicians, singers, and dancers. The fifty some guests quickly joined in the singing. He recounts that from time to time "they would let out a general zilareet, or yell, that sounded like a lot of Indians on the warpath." It was explained, however, that this shrill vibratory cry that sounded like "Heel, li li li li" was a traditional expression of great joy. The reporter noted that the women "are graceful dancers, and their efforts are treats, such as an outsider seldom sees." The celebration extends throughout the

evening and into the night as arrack, wine and cordials are passed around the room. The center of the café was decorated with a large table overflowing with "sweet meats, fruits, coffee and other dainties."

The reporter was given a seat of honor next to 'La Bella Rosa', a renowned 'Turkish' folk dancer. She was actually Mrs. Rosa Saleh of the community and she had gained a favorable reputation as a folk dancer throughout the region. Throughout the evening she led the dancing as the bride and other women joined in. The full-page story of the weekend's events that ran in the Herald features an artist's sketch of 'La Bella Rosa' and the musicians entertaining the wedding guests. Based on his three days experience visiting the 'Syrian Colony', the reporter comments that "dancing, singing and having a general good time is one of the principal features in the life of the Syrians."

This endearing account featured in the Boston Herald one hundred and thirteen years ago provides a rare glimpse into the daily lives of our forebearers. The accompanying illustrations show a community enjoying life and celebrating the blessings of their newest wedded couple. We can be thankful for their enduring spirit and the gift of joy that they so graciously passed down.

*Blessings,*

*Fr. + Timothy*

## ***“Calling to Remembrance...”*** [part-eighteen]

### **“The South End Riots”**



The wave of ‘Syrian’ immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century brought with it the creation of an Arabic-language publishing industry. Arabic newspapers and periodicals were the only way for the newly arrived immigrants, with their limited knowledge of English, to keep up with current events. Their proliferation testifies to the immigrants thirst for news about both their native country and their new homeland. Over a twenty year period from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century 102 Arabic-language

newspapers, periodicals and scholarly journals rolled off a dozen or so Arabic printing presses. Many did not last more than a few issues but several survived for decades.

In those early days, ten Arabic daily newspapers and five magazines were published in New York City alone. Two Arabic dailies were published in Boston and another two in Lawrence with an additional weekly and monthly publication between them. An Arabic-language daily and a semiweekly were published in Detroit and another daily paper was published in Chicago. These publications enjoyed a wide readership throughout the far scattered Arabic speaking immigrant communities. Among the earliest publications were *Al-Muhajer* [The Emigrant], *Al- Jamia* [The League] and *Al-Funoon* [The Arts].

The most popular publications were associated with one or another of the several Syrian religious organizations. The Syrian Greek Orthodox published *Kawkab Amrika* [Planet America] the first Arabic-language newspaper published in the United States in 1892. It had some 30,000 copies per issue, distributed in both the US and the Ottoman Empire. The news represented the views of Orthodox Lebanese Christians. Other Orthodox publications were *Miraat Al-Gharb* [The Mirror of the West] and *Al-Kalimah* [The Word]. The Lebanese Maronites published *Al-Hoda* [The Guidance]. The Druze community printed *Al-Bayan* [The Explanation]. Often these publications perpetuated religious, regional and tribal conflicts carried over from the old country that more properly belonged to the past.

In 1905, the newly consecrated head of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Mission in North America, Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny became the target of repeated editorial attacks by Noaum Mokarzel of the Maronite *Al-Hoda*. Accused of being pro Russian and not sufficiently Arab or Syrian, Bishop Raphael withstood numerous personal insults in Mokarzel’s press. The bishop was accused of advocating violence, blessing weapons, inciting a riot and putting out a contract on a Maronite opponent. He was actually arrested and booked on a bogus charge of attempted murder.

Najeeb Diab of the Orthodox publication *Mirat Al-Ghab* took up the bishop's defense and eventually his name was cleared and his reputation preserved.

The 'war of printed words' between Mokarzel and Diab escalated throughout the summer of 1905 and soon spilled over into the streets as rival Syrian factions squared off in front of each other. A riot in the Manhattan Syrian Colony was covered by the *New York Times* with the headline "*Factional War Is Waged Between Syrians of New York*" the by-line read "*Cutting and Shooting. Brother against Brother, Villagers against Villagers, Old Time Friends are Parted. Voices of Women Heard.*" The story offers this vivid account, "*Wild-eyed Syrians battled fiercely in the lower west side last night. The dim light from barroom and café windows showed the glint of steel in two hundred swarthy hands. Reserves from three police precincts were rushed to the battleground.*" The riot lasted for days and resulted in one death and countless injuries including several stabbings.

Boston's 'Little Syria' was quickly caught-up in the sectarian feuding. Tempers, fueled by the caustic newspaper attacks, were running high that summer. A heat wave had enveloped the city sending the temperature into the 90's. The hot humid weather, the cramped and overcrowded living quarters, the uncomfortable working conditions in the local factories and the dredging up of old-world religious animosities proved too much for the 'Colony' to bear. The fuse was lit and it was a short one.

On Sunday afternoon, July 9<sup>th</sup> two children of the Deeban family of Hudson Street, who were Orthodox, were walking past #73 Harvard Street when a certain Mrs. Zebub, who was Maronite, threw a bucket of water over the kids. Under normal circumstances, it may have been a welcome relief from the 98 degree heat but circumstances were anything but normal that summer and the Deeban's and their neighbors were quickly drawn into a feud. Within minutes fighting broke out on Harvard Street and escalated throughout the afternoon, spilling over into Albany and Hudson Streets. The '*Boston Post*' reported that the rioting held the neighborhood in a '*state of terror*'. Besides the '*Boston Post*', the report was carried in the '*Boston Globe*', the '*Boston Herald*' and in papers across the country.

By early evening over 250 men and women of the 'Syrian Colony' were in the streets armed with sticks and clubs going at each other. Most carried clubs the size of a policeman's night stick. Stuck up under their shirts or coats, they were quickly retrieved, used and then concealed. One of the Orthodox, named Fhenoni had his forehead split opened at the beginning of the fighting and was taken to City Hospital. He later returned bandaged and with a red bandanna tied around his head. Armed with a club, Fhenoni took up the charge once again. Some rioters were reported to have pistols and there was fear that they may use them.

One Orthodox youth was seized by a gang of rivals and was being clubbed when a squad of Police arrived. Led by Sergeant O'Brian, Patrolman from Police Division 4 and the LaGrange Street Precinct along with reserves fought throughout the evening to restore order. That night they patrolled the neighborhood dispersing crowds and arresting the belligerents. By morning, fighting broke out again.

The fresh round of mayhem brought out nearly 200 rioters and lasted throughout the morning with sporadic attacks on almost every street of the 'Colony'. By afternoon a reinforced Police squad was finally able to restore order. The South End Riot lasted twenty-four hours and sent 25 people to the hospital with serious injuries. Dozens were arrested and spent days in jail. Thankfully, no one was killed.

Throughout the day and night of the riot, Fr. George Maloof of St. George Church accompanied Sgt. O'Brien and officers Joe Hughes, Patrick Mahoney and Alphonsus Butler exhorting his parishioners to *'stop fighting, be peaceful and forgive their neighbors.'* The by-line in the newspapers referred to Fr. George Maloof as the *'Peacemaker'* in the *'Syrian Colony'*. Indeed he stayed out all night visiting his parishioners and persuading them not to take up arms again. In the afternoon, after the riot had subsided, the papers report that Fr. George compelled *'his faction to apologize to the other'*. He lined them up and had them go from block to block asking forgiveness. It's reported that the Police were stunned at such a spectacle. He then went to the Precinct and asked that the jailed rioters of both factions be released on his recognizance, several were.

Although it took years for tensions between the two rival religious factions to die down there never was another riot in the South End. Thanks, in large part, to the peacemaking efforts and pacifying nature of Fr. George Maloof, the Orthodox Syrians of the *'Colony'* discovered ways to coexist with their neighbors without letting village feuds from the old-world distract them from their task of making a bright future for themselves and their families in a new homeland. His example as a loving father and peacemaker is our lasting heritage here at St. George. We pray that Fr. George continues to inspire, guide and protect his community and we ask his intercession as we continue to build on his expert example.

*Blessings, Fr. + Timothy*