Greek Immigration to Richmond, Virginia, and the Southern Variant Theory

Nicole Kappatos
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd

Part of the United States History Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/3483

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
Greek Immigration to Richmond, Virginia, and the Southern Variant Theory

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Nicole Kappatos
Bachelor of Arts, University of Mary Washington, 2011

Director: Dr. John T. Kneebone
Associate Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University Department of History

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2014
Acknowledgements

For my journey through graduate school and the time spent composing this thesis, I was never alone. I would like to thank all the individuals that helped me achieve my dream of earning a graduate degree in History...

• Dr. John Kneebone, thank you for your continued guidance, support, and mentorship. Your meticulous editing and advice throughout this process have been invaluable.

• Dr. Carolyn Eastman, your encouragement and excitement for my research kept me motivated.

• Dr. Krystyn Moon, thank you for becoming involved with my project, for your support and the Virginia Forum, and for traveling from afar to serve on my thesis committee.

• Thanks to all of the librarians and archivists who assisted me with my research. I would like to especially thank Ray Bonis at VCU Special Collections and Archives for his persistent guidance, enthusiasm, and advice regarding archival sources.

• The Greek community members of Richmond, Virginia, who let me into their lives by allowing me to interview them. Thank you also to Father Nicholas Bacalis of Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral for providing me with access to church records.

• To my significant other, Miles Dumville. You were the best peer motivator, editor, and cheerleader throughout this sometimes-stressful process. Thank you for always supporting my dreams.

• Thank you to my Mom and Dad for always supporting my aspirations. Thank you for teaching me about my Greek heritage, sending me to Greek school, and for taking me to Greece almost every summer growing up. Thank you for the countless dinners and comforting conversations throughout this process. Thank you Dad for your occasional service as my research assistant and translator. Thank you Mom for the constant comedic relief. This thesis is dedicated to the both of you.
# Table of Contents

Abstract.........................................................................................iv

Chapter One: Greek Immigration to the South and the Southern Variant.........................................................................1
  Part I: The First Wave....................................................................6
  Part II: The Second Wave.............................................................18

Chapter Two: The Southern Variant and First Wave Greek immigrants in Richmond, Virginia........................................23
  The U.S. Census...........................................................................24
  Newspapers..................................................................................32
  Church Records...........................................................................41

Chapter Three: The Second Wave of Greek Immigration and the Southern Variant in Richmond, Virginia..............................60
  The Transformation of the Greek Church in Richmond...................63
  Greek Women in Richmond............................................................94
  Second-Wave Greeks and Jobs in Richmond.................................100
  The Greek Restaurant in Richmond..............................................104

Conclusion......................................................................................107

Bibliography...................................................................................112
Abstract

GREEK IMMIGRATION TO RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, AND THE SOUTHERN VARIANT THEORY

By Nicole Kappatos, M.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014

Major Director: Dr. John T. Kneebone
Associate Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University Department of History

Greek immigration to the United States occurred in two distinctive waves: the first wave from the 1890s-1920s and the second wave from the 1960s-1980s. This thesis explores the regional diversity of the Greek immigrant experience in the Southern United States through the case study of the Greek community in Richmond, Virginia. The first chapter introduces the history of Greek immigration to the United States, discusses major scholars of Greek American studies, and explains the Southern Variant theory. Chapter two examines the experiences of the first wave of Greek immigrants in Richmond. The third chapter incorporates oral history to explain the experiences of second wave Greek immigrants in Richmond. Chapters two and three examine factors including language, church activity, intermarriage, and community involvement, in order to demonstrate a Southern Variation in the experiences of Greek immigrants in Richmond in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere in the United States.
CHAPTER ONE
Greek Immigration to the South and the Southern Variant

Few historians have studied the experiences of Greek immigrants to the American South. One reason for this might be the widely accepted opinions of well-known scholars of Greek American Studies such as sociologist Charles Moskos, who in his highly esteemed 1980 work, *Greek Americans: Struggles and Successes*, reasoned that the South played a minor role in Hellenic immigration because the region had “little industrial employment or commercial opportunity and [because it was a region] in which antiforeign sentiment was pronounced.”¹ Moskos’s early disposition of Greeks in the South influenced the work of scholars in Greek American studies for almost a decade. However, in 1989 for the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Moskos reexamined his earlier evaluation of the Greek immigrant experience in the South. In the article, “Ethnic Life - The Greeks,” he presented new findings, which showed that out of all the Greeks who immigrated to the United States before 1920, one in ten of them settled in southern states.² The recognition by an influential scholar that a small yet significant number of Greeks immigrated to the American South raised new questions. What were the experiences of Greek immigrants in the South and were they different from those of Greek immigrants in the North? Moskos addressed this question in his article with the development of a concept he called the “Southern Variant.” The Southern Variant hypothesis stated that “Greeks in the South achieved economic and residential upward mobility faster and in greater proportion than Greeks


elsewhere in the United States,” because of their close encounters with the Southern public through the establishment of small businesses. Furthermore, Moskos postulated that this first generation of Greek immigrants in the South adapted well to American society as small entrepreneurs and thus set the stage for future generations to have an environment where they could preserve selected features of their traditions, cultures, religion, and language. Moskos’s “Southern Variant” was based upon a theory developed by an earlier historian, Theodore Saloutos (often referred to as “the dean of Greek American studies”4), who in 1964 proposed that the entrepreneurial ventures of Greeks in the South, versus the large-scale factory labor of those living in the North, accelerated their process of Americanization because their work thrust Greek shop owners into closer contact with the Southern American public.

Because of his tremendous influence in the field of Greek American Studies, one would predict that Moskos’s reassessment of Greek immigration to the South provided motivation for the production of new scholarship. However, Moskos’s hypothesis did not receive in-depth scholarly attention for almost two decades. It was not until 2006 that historian ‘Lazar’ Larry Odzak published new research on Greek immigrants and their experiences in the American South. Odzak’s text, “Demetrios is Now Jimmy”: Greeks in the Southern United States, 1895-1965, was the first to put Moskos’s “Southern Variant” hypothesis to the test through “close historical scrutiny.”5 Through the meticulous study of archival sources, census records, and interviews, Odzak presented critical information about Greek communities with noticeably large

populations in the Southern cities of Atlanta, Savannah, Birmingham, Mobile, Jacksonville, and Tarpon Springs in order to demonstrate that Greek immigrants in the South were more likely than their counterparts in the North to be “self employed and relatively prosperous.” Odzak’s findings reinforced the arguments made by earlier scholars Saloutos and Moskos for the presence of a “Southern Variant” by showing that Greek immigrants in the twentieth-century South did in fact have different experiences. Odzak identified distinctions that suggested that Greek immigrants in the South adjusted more easily to American society through entrepreneurial ventures, that they were more independent and active in the American economy than other regions, and that they developed a distinctive ethnic identity and culture that incorporated both Greek and Southern tradition.

This study explores the regional diversity of Greek America through a case study of the Greek community of Richmond, Virginia. Oftentimes, the narrative of Greek immigration to the United States is focused on the urban centers of the North and mining towns of the West. While a relatively small number of Greeks immigrated to the South in the early twentieth century, their narrative deserves attention. Secondary literature regarding Greek immigration to Northern and Western hubs provides copious amounts of evidence that the Greek immigrant experience in the twentieth century was exclusive, to an extent, to that particular region. The recent work of Larry Odzak opened doors for the study of Greek immigration to the South by providing evidence that Greek communities in the region had equally notable experiences. Using primary research, secondary literature, and oral history interviews, this study tests the “Southern Variant” theory on the Greek immigrant community in Richmond, Virginia, to identify and compare similarities and differences in their experiences with those of immigrants in other regions. The Greek

---

immigrant experience is assessed based on several factors, some including: the group’s overall attitude (How do they identify themselves? How important is it to practice Greek traditions?), the role of the old and new generations, Greek immigrants and their families’ role in the national Hellenic community, the number of mixed marriages, the development of the Greek parish and fraternal organizations, the use of the Greek language in the home, church services, and the community.

The answers to these inquiries come from the close investigation of archival sources, secondary literature, and oral history interviews. Records from the Richmond parish, Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral, provided important information regarding the number of church members, the establishment of fraternal organizations and the Greek school, as well as marriage records. The change and/or continuity in church membership, fraternal organizations, and the Greek school program provides information regarding the level of support given to cultural and language preservation efforts among parish members over time. Further, the observation of marriage records contributes an approximation of how many marriages occurred between Greek church parishioners and individuals outside the Greek community—this was based on the assessment of surnames. Church members also produced their own community publication, which includes a brief history of the church (often updated every year), lists of active members, advertisements for local Greek businesses, and other news. The surveying of church records does not account for all Greeks and Greek Americans in Richmond, yet, the observation of the records allows for an assessment of the church’s influence on the community and its impact on daily behavior—giving rise to questions such as: what drew in some Greek immigrants? What factors may have pushed others away?
Furthermore, *The United States Censuses* and Richmond periodicals from the early twentieth century were vital for composing the narrative of the Greek immigrant experience in the city at the time. Because no compiled history of Greek immigration to Richmond during the early 1900s exists, local papers and census records together provided important information which demonstrated certain perspectives of public opinion regarding Greek immigrants in Richmond, evidence of Greek businesses and the other types of labor Greek immigrants found in the city, and finally where Greek immigrants lived in Richmond.

Finally, oral history interviews with Greek immigrants living in Richmond today (2013) were collected to provide a critical insider’s perspective to the Greek immigrant experience in Richmond in the mid to later twentieth century. The interviews conducted were “life story interviews” meaning that the narrator was questioned about their experiences from childhood to the present in a one-to-one encounter between the interviewer (myself) and the narrator. To ensure that the individual experiences could be aggregated to a social experience, a set of key questions were asked within each interview. They were as follows:

- When did you immigrate to the United States?
- What was your experience like immigrating to the United States? Did [a specific historical event] effect you?
- Did you have relatives here, or were you the first?
- What made you want to come to the United States? Did you originally plan to stay permanently?
- Why did you immigrate to Virginia/ or if they moved from another state: What drew you to Virginia?
- Did you have relatives in other parts of the United States? Were their experiences different from yours?
- Were you discriminated against?
- What were your greatest challenges as a new immigrant? How have things changed?
- If they are female: What were your experiences as a Greek woman in the United States? Were there any expectations you had to follow? How was the American culture different from the Greek?
- How did you meet other Greeks?
- Did you own a local business? Who were your customers?
-What traditions do you think are the most important to preserve? Did you feel like you were able to successfully preserve certain traditions in your community?
-How do you identify yourself?

Responses to the key questions were then examined in great detail to identify patterns as well as for the comparative analysis of gender, generation, cultural identity, and finally, to discern correlations with archival and secondary research. Additionally, a vital source for this study was a collection of oral history interviews with Greek immigrants in Richmond collected in the 1980s by historian Dr. Thelma Biddle. The “Greek Americans in Richmond” interviews were collected from 1980 to 1983 for the Richmond Oral History Association. The collection provided twenty invaluable interviews with Greek immigrants, members of Richmond’s church clergy, and non-Greek spouses of Greek immigrants. Together, Dr. Biddles’s interviews and my own provided a means of measuring change and/or continuity in the perspective of the Greek community over a thirty year period.

**Part I: The First Wave**

The story of Greek immigration to Richmond, Virginia, is part of the larger history of Greek immigration to the United States. It is thus critical to understand the position of this case study within the larger historical spectrum. Greek immigration to the United States occurred in two major waves. The first wave, or the “era of mass migration,” began in the 1890s and lasted into the mid 1920s. The era ended with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted the immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans (and other specific groups) to the United States. In the mid 1960s, new U.S. legislative action initiated the second largest arrival of Greek immigrants to the United States—this was the “second” or “new” wave. The 1965 Immigration Act ended the
national-quota system and gave preference to individuals hoping to be reunited with their relatives already in America.⁷

The first wave of Greek immigration to the United States was set in motion by a long period of political and economic turmoil in Greece. In *The Greek Americans*, sociologist and historian Alice Scourby observed that while, “Most of us think of Greece as one of the world’s oldest civilizations [we] forget that it is also a very young nation that gained its independence in 1832 after four centuries of Turkish domination.”⁸ The four centuries of Turkish occupation had a “paralyzing effect upon Greek people and their country.”⁹ According to Scourby, “Greece had undergone no Renaissance, no Reformation, no Age of Enlightenment…in 1879, almost 50 years after the War of Independence, about 82 percent of the Greek population lived in rural communities.”¹⁰ Historian Charles Moskos observed that the era of mass migration was characterized by, “the poor and uneducated, but energetic and resourceful immigrants…from the villages of rural Greece.”¹¹ He continued, “It is the saga of these immigrants that was to mold the Greek experience in America.”¹²

After four hundred years under foreign leadership, the formation of a new government system in Greece proved difficult to establish and more so, keep stable. In 1909, a reformist military group, looking to assist Greece into the modern era, empowered a Cretan liberal named Eleutherios Venizelos to head the government. However, Venizelos’s appointment was

---

unauthorized and thus sparked a bitter struggle with the newly crowned King, Constantine I. The conflict dominated Greece for a generation, and Moskos concluded that this political schism was “to be carried over with a vengeance into the Greek community of America.”

Concurrently, Greek leaders prioritized the task of regaining the Greece’s lost territories instead of looking for solutions for the extreme poverty. Leaders found some successes in the reclamation of lost territories including the Ionian Islands, Thessaly, Crete, Macedonia, the Aegean Islands, and Western Thrace. By the early 1920s, modern Greece had achieved immense territorial expansion, and nationalism among the people was heightened. Nevertheless, the leaders’ hunger to reconstruct the entire Byzantine Empire (or “The Great Idea”) was crushed in 1922 when Turkish forces inflicted a cataclysmic defeat on the Greek Army in Asia Minor. The loss not only left 1,300,000 refugees to be taken into the mainland population, but also made clear that “Greece was destined to remain a minor nation, a perpetual pawn of the major powers.”

The instability in Greece created overwhelming motives for Greek immigration to the United States. By the turn of the twentieth century, Greek citizens were preparing to leave a homeland where poverty had reached an all-time high and politics had become “highly personalistic and often turbulent.” The intent of the overwhelming majority of the early Greek immigrants was to return to Greece one day with economic stability to enjoy a comfortable life.

---

in their home villages, to insure the proper marriages for their daughters and sisters by providing dowries with their American earnings.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, in the early decades of the twentieth century, entire villages witnessed the exodus of their young and middle-aged males.\textsuperscript{19} The majority of married men did not return to the old country; while some received their wives, others never sent for their families to come to the United States. By the time young single male immigrants were ready to marry, they were looking to marry girls younger than the ones they left behind from their own generation.\textsuperscript{20} Moskos described the early era of mass migration as a “cruel piece of historical irony that precisely because so many men went to America to ensure their sisters’ marriages, many young women in Greece had to face the probability of remaining single or marrying old men.”\textsuperscript{21}

The large numbers of Greek immigrants arriving in the U.S. in a short period, as the name entails, characterized the era of mass migration. In the first two decades of the century alone, approximately one in every four Greek males between the ages of fifteen to forty-five immigrated to the United States; from 1901-1910, an estimated 167,000 Greeks came to American shores. Despite the interruption of World War I, over 180,000 Greeks immigrated to the U.S. from 1911-1920.\textsuperscript{22} While the figures only include Greeks born in Greece proper, the numbers remain astounding; all in all, well over three hundred thousand Greeks, mainly males, arrived in the U.S. between 1900 and 1920.

\textsuperscript{18} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{19} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 10.
\textsuperscript{22} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 11.
As the first group of immigrants settled in America, they wrote home to encourage relatives to join them. Greeks without relatives to assist them with immigration to the United States were often recruited by labor agents sweeping through the Greek backcountry, promising passage to America, money, and jobs working in factories, packing houses, mines, or railroad gangs.\textsuperscript{23} These agents were often Greek themselves, and had come from America spreading stories of “gold in the streets” and “the land of opportunity.”\textsuperscript{24} Alas, when the young men arrived in the United States some did not find the jobs they were promised and if there was work, the living conditions were often atrocious.

Regardless of the way they acquired their passage money, the immigrants’ discomforts began before they arrived in the United States. At the Greek ports of Pireaus or Patras, young Greek men were assembled into groups before embarkation. They then crossed the Atlantic in ships with unthinkably cramped conditions in a journey that could take three weeks or up to several months.\textsuperscript{25} Once they arrived on Ellis Island, new immigrants made way to their destinations: to the relatives who came before them, to the job promised to them by a labor agent, or to a place where some kinsmen might be found.\textsuperscript{26} Historians categorize the Greek immigrants who arrived in America before 1920 by the three major routes they took:

1. Greeks going to the Western states to work on railroad gangs in the mines;
2. Greeks going to New England mill towns to work in the textile and shoe factories;

\textsuperscript{23} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 12.
\textsuperscript{24} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 12.
\textsuperscript{26} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 13.
3. Greeks who went to large Northern cities, principally New York and Chicago, and worked in factories, or found employment as busboys, dishwashers, bootblacks, and peddlers.\textsuperscript{27}

Region played a significant role in the Greek immigrant experience as the circumstances in each location contributed to the development of the Greek community. The most familiar narrative of immigration to the United States begins in the “big cities:” New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Detroit. For Greek immigration, New York and Chicago, however, became the foremost cities for early settlement. In his 1911 work \textit{Greek Immigration}, sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild estimated that at least 20,000 Greeks were living in New York and in Chicago.\textsuperscript{28} The Greek community in Chicago was the most geographically concentrated of all.\textsuperscript{29} The city’s first Greektown formed as early as the 1890s at Clark and Kinzie Streets on Chicago’s north side. Yet at the turn of the century, Greeks in Chicago began settling in Chicago’s west side in an area known as the “Delta.” Shaped like a triangle, the “Delta” area, also known as the “Halsted Street Greek Town,” became one of America’s largest ethnic corridors.\textsuperscript{30} By the early twentieth century, Chicago’s ethnic enclave flourished, establishing schools, churches, businesses, newspapers, coffee houses and doctors, Greeks remained a viable community in Chicago. Additionally, the Greek town in Chicago benefited from its proximity to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 21.
\end{itemize}
Jane Addams’s famed settlement project, the Hull House. Addams’s interest in Greek culture, “did much to buttress the ethnic pride of the sorely tried Greek immigrants of Chicago.”

Like their compatriots in other big northern cities, many Greek immigrants in Chicago worked in meatpacking plants, steel mills, and factories. Others took the entrepreneurial route as bootblacks, busboys, or peddlers of candy, fruit, and flowers. Henry Fairchild took notice of the entrepreneurial spirit of Greek migrants in Chicago; he observed:

The average Greek immigrant does not bring enough money with him to establish himself in a fixed business. But he can buy a push cart, or even a small tray hung over his shoulder, on which he can place a small stock of candy or fruit, and, stationing himself on a street corner, begin doing business…Very soon he is able to rent a small store, with or without a sidewalk space in front, and it is only a matter of time and ability until he is operating a finely appointed store on one of the best streets of the city, or perhaps a chain of stores which ensures him the bulk of trade of the place.

The small Greek-run businesses in Chicago were similar to those in other cities and tended towards certain crafts: confectionaries or candy shops, restaurants, retail, wholesale produce, floral shops, dry cleaners, or shoeshine parlors. Greek-owned restaurants were particularly noticeable in big city landscapes--in 1913, Chicago was peppered with several hundred lunchrooms and restaurants owned by Greeks. The majority of Greek businesses in the big cities catered to the public and stores almost exclusively for Greek clientele remained separate in Greektowns.

---


Henry Fairchild, Greek Immigration to the United States (Yale University Press: 1911), 167.


With about the same population of Greeks as Chicago, New York also had several Greek ethnic neighborhoods. Unlike Chicago however, New York was the home of the first Greek-American nationally circulated newspapers and became the headquarters for the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States.\(^\text{35}\) Greek-run businesses in New York grew rapidly in the early twentieth century. A 1909 survey of Greek-owned businesses in Manhattan alone reported: “151 bootblack parlors, 113 florists, 107 lunchrooms and restaurants, 70 confectioneries, 62 retail fruit stores, and 11 wholesale product dealers.”\(^\text{36}\)

A “uniquely Greek mainstay” in the early urban immigrant communities was the shoeshining or bootblack business. Across the North, there were hundreds of shoeshine parlors in every main city. “For the boy who had no better choices, there was always work to be found in the shoeshine parlor run by a fellow Greek…With the cheap labor of young boys, the owners of bootblack establishments could do quite well indeed.”\(^\text{37}\) However, certain disagreeable practices in the bootblack business, such as poor working conditions and the exploitation of young Greek men by fellow Greeks, created major conflict in urban immigrant communities. Yet in the North, unlike other regions in the U.S. this early on, the voice of Greek-American newspapers was powerful. The behavior of the “flesh peddlers” as they became known was blasted through the papers, and eventually some improvements did occur. Later, when the shoe shining business declined, bootblacks sought employment in other crafts. However, for many years, “bootblacks and Greeks were synonymous in our large urban centers.”\(^\text{38}\)


In the American West, Greek immigrants were often employed in mines or railroad gangs where they faced terrible working and living conditions. In certain towns in Colorado, Utah, and California, Greeks amounted to the largest ethnic group among such workers. Moskos explained that in California by 1910, “there were more Greeks proportionate to the total state population than anywhere else in America.”\(^\text{39}\) Unlike other other regions in the United States, vast numbers of Greeks in the West were utilized as strikebreakers. In 1903 Italian coalminers went on strike in eastern Utah and the strike was quickly broken using Greek immigrants. In other parts of the region, Greeks even went on strike against one another. Moskos noted that Greeks, “especially those from Crete, were quick to strike when they found others were making more money for the same work.”\(^\text{40}\) In 1914 a Greek-led strike for better working conditions broke out in the mining town of Ludlow, Colorado. The events of the strike gained national attention when a Cretan immigrant named Louis Tikas was killed while trying to help women and children evacuate safely. Tikas, who was wearing a safety flag (guaranteeing his safety and neutrality), was killed in the crossfire between strikers and guardsmen. After word spread of his death, hundreds of Greeks and other migrant workers walked out of their jobs to attend his funeral.

Historian Charles Moskos argued that Greeks in the early West faced “the most serious incidents.”\(^\text{41}\) In Utah for instance, Mormons were openly prejudiced against foreigners. According to Moskos, “The Greeks always believed their robed enemies were Mormons jealous of the newly successful Greek businesses.”\(^\text{42}\) A Utah newspaper with Mormon influence printed


\(^{41}\) Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 16.

\(^{42}\) Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 16.
prior to World War I described Greek migrants as “the scum of Europe,” “a vicious element unfit for citizenship,” and “ignorant, depraved, and brutal foreigners.”\textsuperscript{43} In the early 1920s, when the Ku Klux Klan began to organize in Utah, Greeks were singled out as targets.

By the late 1920s, many Greeks began to leave the mines and railroads to become business owners or to migrate to other parts of the United States. Those that remained often moved into the middle class early on, even before World War I (a significant move for early immigrants). In time, because Greek traditional culture forbade out-marriage, men brought women over from the homeland to start families and aspire for middle class lifestyles. This pattern was to be seen among Greek American populations all over the country.

While only a small number of Greeks settled in the South in the early twentieth century, their experience is critical for comprehending regional diversity of the Greek immigrant experience. While the work of historian Charles Moskos is one of the most prominent for studying the Greek immigrant experience in America, he declared too soon that “the South played a minor role in the early Greek experience in America.”\textsuperscript{44} Nonetheless, one of his conclusions deserves more attention: “Those Greeks who did live in the South, however, prospered; almost all ran their own small businesses…”\textsuperscript{45} Even while Moskos later initiated the “Southern Variant,” the more recent work of historian Larry Odzak represents the first comprehensive history of the Greek immigrant experience in the South. Odzak argues “it is true that in comparison to the northern urban areas, especially those with a heavy concentration of industries, fewer immigrants chose to move south.” Nevertheless, thousands did migrate there to

\textsuperscript{43} Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 16.

\textsuperscript{44} Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 25.

\textsuperscript{45} Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 25.
look for economic niches where their services were needed and welcomed. Based on this conclusion Odzak showed that Moskos’s “Southern Variant” was true for his findings regarding Greek communities in cities of Atlanta, Savannah, Birmingham, Mobile, Jacksonville, and Tarpon Springs--the Greek immigrant experience in the South was in fact different.

What drew Greeks to the turn-of-the-century “New South”? With little developed industry and a racially segregated society, the New South was much different than the rest of the country. In comparison to northern urban areas, fewer immigrants did chose to come South. Nevertheless, thousands did migrate to the region in search of opportunity in new economic niches, “where their services were needed and welcomed.” The development of Southern cities like Atlanta and Birmingham rapidly increased the urban population in the region, and new railroads created more momentum for the growth of inland and coastal cities, “In Florida alone, Henry Flagler’s railroad initiated growth that quadrupled the population of Jacksonville and led to the founding of Miami.” With the rapid development of these cities, residents needed services: markets, shoe-shines, restaurants, bars, cafes, and other provisions, “which the well-traveled Greek, Jewish, Syrian, and other newcomers were eager to furnish.” For these predominantly white immigrant groups, individuals did not have to encounter the conflicts of racial segregation, “nor were they instinctively confined to low-paying, unskilled jobs solely because of the color of their skin.”

46 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 18.
47 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 18.
48 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 18.
49 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 18.
50 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 18.
From 1900 to the eve of World War I, the state of Virginia’s growing economy drew in migrant workers. Historian J. Douglas Smith described the state, “From the coastal plains, rivers, and natural harbors of the Tidewater region in the east, across the extensive Piedmont, to the foothills of the Blue Ridge, into the soil-rich Shenandoah Valley, down through the mountains and valleys of Southwest Virginia, the Old Dominion possessed advantages not seen farther South.”\textsuperscript{51} As the manufacturing industry grew in Virginia, the state’s economy was becoming less reliant on agriculture. The manufacturing industries were not clustered in urban areas in Virginia, but rather scattered throughout small towns in the state.\textsuperscript{52} World War I accelerated Virginia’s economy; increasing Richmond’s population by 22 percent from 1910 to 1920.

Greek entrepreneurs in the New South were in daily contact with American customers, increasing the momentum of their adaptation. Through social adaptation and economic successes, Greek entrepreneurs in the South experienced “upward mobility decades earlier and in greater proportions than their immigrant compatriots in the Northeast and the Midwest.”\textsuperscript{53} The factors of the “Southern Variant” which will measured for the study of Richmond’s Greek community, are: an increased number of mixed marriages, a greater number of applications for citizenship, more English spoken in the home, and the Americanization of names and other cultural indications that signified the transformation of Greek immigrants into ethnic Americans. In his study of Greek immigrants in the South Lazar Odzak verified Charles Moskos’s belief that “Greeks in the South realized earlier than their compatriots in other parts of the United States


\textsuperscript{52} Smith, \textit{Managing White Supremacy}, 31.

\textsuperscript{53} Odzak, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Demetrios is now Jimmy,\textquoteright\textquoteright 30.
that America would become their permanent home.”

Based on this notion Odzak was in agreement with Moskos’s conclusion that “Greeks who settled in the South first made the transformation from immigrants to ethnic Americans.”

Yiorgos Anagnostou, Professor of Greek and American studies at Ohio State University, expanded upon Odzak’s findings with the discussion of white ethnicity and race as a means of Greek immigrant adaptation in the South. In his article, “Model Americans, Quintessential Greeks: Ethnic Success and Assimilation in Diaspora,” Anagnostou stated:

In the racially segregated American South…the remarkable rate of socio-economic mobility observed among early-twentieth-century Greek immigrants cannot be understood apart from the hierarchical system of racial privileges. In the presence of a large and heavily discriminated against African American population, immigrants from southeastern Europe were situated on a fault line in the “white-black” continuum, reaping the relative benefits of “honorary whiteness”. Within this system they were positioned to exploit wider economic niches than African Americans, catering their business to both whites and the “colored district.”

Part II: The Second Wave

In 1946 civil war broke out in Greece between the democratic Greek government and the Greek communist party. The turbulent war ended in 1949 with the victory of Greek democratic forces, yet the country was left in ruins with great economic distress and a polarized and unstable government system. Understandably, by the mid-twentieth century, again many Greeks planned to emigrate to escape extreme poverty and dangerous politics.

In 1965 U.S. legislation significantly changed the immigration situation for Greeks by terminating the national-quota system. The change in legislation along with the difficult situation

---

54 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 31.
55 Charles Moskos in “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 21.
in Greece initiated the second wave of Greeks to immigrate to the United States. From 1965 to 1975, 142,000 Greek immigrants rushed to America’s shores.\textsuperscript{57} This second wave however, was distinctly different. Unlike the young Greek men searching for unskilled temporary labor and for quick money to take back to their families, new immigrants tended to be more skilled and professionally educated and came with the intention of staying in the United States permanently. In the 1950s and early 60s, thousands of Greek students received their education in the United States, eventually acquiring permanent residency or American citizenship.\textsuperscript{58} These educated young migrants created an immigrant professional class of “physicians, academics, engineers, and others—which added a new dimension to the Greek-American community.”\textsuperscript{59}

The new immigrants were demographically different as well, “unlike the original immigrants who were mainly single men, [the second wave] was much more balanced, with almost as many women as men coming over.”\textsuperscript{60} The women often came married to blue-collar husbands with a few small children. Different from the stay-at-home wives of the earlier generation, married and single Greek women were often expected to work, “principally in light factory” jobs.\textsuperscript{61}

Second-wave immigrants had different experiences interacting with and adjusting to American society than their predecessors. This was because early Greeks had little room to move up in society as they were forced into low-paying jobs and discriminated against, oftentimes

\textsuperscript{57} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 156.
\textsuperscript{58} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 53.
\textsuperscript{59} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 53.
\textsuperscript{60} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 54.
\textsuperscript{61} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 55.
changing their names to hide their ethnic identity and avoid the hardships of American ethnic prejudice. However, the reshaping of American society in the 1960s, propelled by the Civil Rights Movement, provided a different environment for new Greek immigrants. For new migrants, America was a place for economic mobility, a chance to enter into the middle class, to get an education, and one where they could openly preserve their culture. Further, new ideas for social change brought on by the Civil Rights Movement meant there was less need to conform to American cultural ways; many second-wave Greek immigrants did not feel as pressured to hide their ethnic identities and kept their Greek names and customs, unlike their predecessors.62

Sociologist Alice Scourby said, “The decade of the 1960s culminated in collective protest against discriminatory public policy toward minority groups,” what became known as the “roots phenomenon,” “symbolized the move from the melding of all ethnic groups to a reshaping of ethnic groups.”63 This is not to say however that new Greek immigrants experienced no prejudice at all. While they may have not been as openly disparaged as their predecessors, many second-wave Greek migrants were still made to feel a sense of otherness.

The societal changes that occurred in the later twentieth century ultimately led to a significant transformation; what was once the “Greek immigrant colony” in America became the “Greek-American community.”64 In other words, Greek immigrants in the second wave were more reluctant to return home—permanent settlement in America and citizenship became the


ultimate goal. Although there were fewer arrivals in the second wave than the first, “the fresh wave of immigrants replenished Hellenism in America.”\textsuperscript{65} Churches and fraternal organizations received a boost in membership, travel to and from Greece increased, the use of the Greek language and Greek-circulated press expanded, and Greek food and other cultural items were marketed to the public.\textsuperscript{66} Nevertheless, the replenishment of Greek immigrants in the United States did not mean that the process of Americanization was being reversed, “throughout the United states, the Greek community was moving from one made up of Greeks with American citizenship to one consisting of Americans of Greek descent.”\textsuperscript{67}

Second-wave Greek immigrants in the South did not face the same pressures to establish themselves as the earlier group. For the first Greek immigrants in the South, “the lack of a large number of compatriots residing nearby, the exposure of Greek immigrants to daily contact with American customers and neighbors, and the pressure to succeed… hastened their adjustment to the new environment.”\textsuperscript{68} The rapid movements towards Americanization of the first wave eventually made their way into the Greek church, when the first immigrants began to consider the new generations. The second and third American-born generations of Greeks did not share the same ties to the old country as their parents and grandparents. For this reason, to keep new generations involved with the preservation of their ethnicity, first-wave immigrants accepted that inevitable changes needed to be made, especially within the Greek church. One of the main elements of this change was the use of English in the church liturgy, which was officially

\textsuperscript{65} Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 53.
\textsuperscript{66} Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 53.
\textsuperscript{67} Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 53.
\textsuperscript{68} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” Greek Immigration in the Southern United States, 1895-1965, 66.
permitted by the Archdiocese of America in New York in 1970, but utilized in parts of the South much sooner.\textsuperscript{69} When second-wave Greek immigrants arrived in Southern Greek communities like Richmond’s, they were confronted with the implications of the Southern Variant and oftentimes viewed the cultural adjustments as an attack on Hellenism. Therefore, one critical aspect of studying the Southern Variant in Richmond during the second half of the twentieth century involved measuring how Greek culture was adapted in the Greek church and how first and second-wave Greek immigrants interacted regarding these changes.

While there are several cultural differences between first and second wave Greek immigrants, there are also several important similarities. Though the economic advancement of the newcomers may have been more impressive than it was for their predecessors, “it is not fair to say that the vast majority of the recent arrivals [were] not just as hard working as the early immigrants.”\textsuperscript{70} Culturally, while new Greeks may exhibit more cultural conservatism than the first migrants, both groups share a “continuing basic conservatism on family,” and of religion. \textsuperscript{71} Finally, both the old and the new Greek immigrants shared an important common denominator: the strong desire to succeed in American society while retaining pride in their heritage and strength in their faith. These factors represent an important constant in the narrative of Greek immigration to all regions of the United States.

\textsuperscript{69} Scourby, \textit{The Greek Americans}, 63.
\textsuperscript{70} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 60.
\textsuperscript{71} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 61.
CHAPTER TWO
The Southern Variant and First Wave Greek immigrants in Richmond, Virginia

In the early twentieth century, Greek immigrants in the South realized sooner than their compatriots in other regions of the United States that America would be their permanent home. For this reason, these Greek migrants exhibited notable mobility towards Americanization in various ways: by intermarrying, applying for citizenship, and using English in the home, to name a few. Together, these initial motives for change were characteristic of the “Southern Variant.” In seeking to identify the “Southern Variant” among the first wave of Greek immigrants in Richmond, a number of variables were identified for analysis: the type of interaction with locals, type of profession, area of the city lived in, language, intermarriage, and church activity.

Because there are no personal accounts from the first group of Greek immigrants in Richmond, archival resources provided the sole means of evidence for understanding the experiences of Greek immigrants and the way they were perceived by the local society. The U.S. census served as an essential tool for measuring the number of Greeks in Richmond in 1910 and 1920. Further, census records from each decade provided some detailed information concerning the immigrants’ lifestyles; depending on government interests during census collection, the records provided a way to approximate how many Greek immigrants in Richmond spoke English, were married to non-Greeks, or owned their own businesses. Moreover, local newspapers from 1900 to 1920 provided an insight into the perspectives of the Richmond public, helping to shed some light on how (some) Richmond citizens felt about the recent influx of immigration to the U.S. at the time, and their interactions and responses to Greek immigrants and

---

72 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 31.
Greek-owned businesses in Richmond. Finally, church records were utilized to examine ways in which early Greek immigrants in Richmond participated in cultural preservation through religious services, fraternal organizations, and Greek schools. All together, the three sources provided valuable measurements for the variables necessary for identifying the presence of the “Southern Variant” in Richmond.

The U.S. Census:

The United States Federal Census record is an integral source for any scholarly study of immigration. The census not only provides important information regarding individual citizens and groups but also, an insight into what the federal government’s interests were regarding the population that year. The 1910 U.S. census for instance, was particularly inquisitive on ethnicity-related topics; surely a response to the massive influx of immigrants occurring nation-wide in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

According to the Statistical Census Record of the Thirteenth U.S. Census, approximately 99 Greek immigrants resided in Richmond in 1910. The detailed inspection of the census record revealed that 111 individuals of Greek descent lived in Richmond in 1910 (99 identified as “Greek” and 12 originating from Greek territories in Turkey and Germany). For 1910, census information was in agreement with how historians have described the “first wave” of Greek immigrants: most were young, single men, with limited educational backgrounds, who came to the U.S. with plans to stay only temporarily to earn money to send back home to their families. Of the 111 Greek immigrants accounted for in Richmond in 1910, all were male, mostly single, between the ages of 17 to 45—the majority in their early to mid-twenties. Many of them lived in short-term boarding houses with five or more compatriots, Americans, or immigrants of other
ethnicities. However, one aspect that differentiated these Greek immigrant men from their counterparts in other regions was their occupations.

In accordance with the “Southern Variant,” findings from the 1910 census revealed that the majority of Greek migrant men in Richmond worked in small businesses or as entrepreneurs, in contrast to their kinsmen in other regions that worked primarily in the industrial labor force. Historian Larry Odzak, in his analysis of census records of larger cities in the South, similarly identified that the majority of Greek immigrants in those areas were either running their own small businesses or were working in them. Even before Odzak, another distinguished historian of Greek American Studies, Charles Moskos, argued that Greek immigrants who lived in the South “prospered; [because] almost all ran their own small businesses—restaurants and lunchrooms, confectionaries, fruit stores, and shoe shine parlors.” Particularly, Greek restaurateurs in Richmond strategized methods to keep their American customers coming back. One approach was keeping prices low, décor modest, and cooking food that appealed to the American palate. Another was to develop a welcoming front-of-the-house personality, being friendly to customers in order to ensure their return. In 1987, Richmond publication Style Weekly featured a cover story titled, “A Greek Restaurant Odyssey; Making it in the family business.” The article, which provided interviews with a handful of Greek restaurateurs in Richmond, showed that in the early twentieth century, Greek immigrant restaurant owners used their customers as a “link to the outside world.” Moreover, “Making friends with the customers is not only something Greeks have done out of kindness. It is something they have done as businessmen. Happy customers

---


74 Moskos, Greek Americans: Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 25
who feel at home and have an emotional connection with a restaurant keep coming back.”

In other words, during the early twentieth century, Greek restaurant owners in Richmond used their interactions with customers as a means to Americanize themselves as well as a way to solidify their business.

In only a span of ten years, the 1920 census exhibited a far different Greek immigrant population in Richmond. First, the population had increased by two; the statistical census provided that there were 208 Greeks in Richmond at the time; 206 Greeks were tallied in my research. Greeks in this census also showed more signs of the intention of permanent residence in the United States. More immigrants were becoming citizens or in the process of filing papers, they brought wives and other family members over, many spoke English, and lived only with immediate family members instead of in boarding houses with several others. While the 1910 census did not provide information regarding citizenship, the 1920 census showed that 35 of the 206 Greek immigrants identified, approximately 17%, had become U.S. citizens or had their citizenship papers filed.

A larger group than ten years prior, the Greek immigrant community in the 1920 U.S. census was noticeably more gender-diverse. This diversity sprung from married men finally bringing their wives from Greece and starting families, or single men getting married, sometimes to non-Greek women. In accordance with Greek tradition that “by and large Greek immigrant women—married and unmarried—did not work outside the household,” none of the Greek wives and daughters accounted for in the 1920 had occupations. This fact followed the long-standing Greek belief that “If a man’s wife, daughters, or even sisters had to seek gainful employment, it was considered a poor reflection on his ability to provide. Indeed, many immigrant men never

married precisely because they knew they could not support a family…” Moskos stated that “In the West in the early years, moreover, many married women ran boarding houses for Greek laborers,” and in New England, “A large population, some say the majority, of the Greek immigrant women in mill towns were operatives in textile and shoe factories.”

By 1920 the overwhelming majority of Greek men living in Richmond had solidified professions as entrepreneurs or were working in a local businesses. Only five of the 173 adult Greek men in the city had industrial jobs as compared to ten years earlier when one third of them did. While the 1910 census did show that the largest portion of Greek migrant men were entrepreneurs, by 1920, there was a significant increase in these numbers. The large number of Greek businessmen in Richmond gave them the opportunity to be in daily contact with local American customers, where they were able more rapidly adapt to ways that improved both their economic and social condition. The majority of the entrepreneurs were owners of restaurants, luncheonettes, or groceries. A few took on more unique entrepreneurial ventures such as Antoine Crasseas, a single 25-year-old who immigrated in 1919 who was a translator for foreign laborers,

---


77 It is also possible that there was a lack of job opportunity for women in Richmond, but there is no way to evidence this.


or Costas Athos, a self-employed photographer. All of the Greek entrepreneurs accounted for in 1920 spoke English, unlike their earlier counterparts where only one third did. In fact, of the 206 Greeks identified, almost all told the census collectors they spoke English in the home, with the exception of only a handful of individuals who were either newly immigrated wives or elderly family members who had also recently immigrated to live with their son or daughter’s family (as was custom).

One of the most distinctive regional differences between the North and South was “the pervasive existence of African Americans in the South.” During the early twentieth century, Richmond remained strictly segregated. For white immigrants, racial segregation tended to “raise [them] to the next rung, thus easing their entry into the social and commercial circles of white society.” Odzak argued that Greek immigrants in the South used segregation to their advantage, not hesitating to open “quick lunch restaurants and other business in black areas,” because “Greek merchants found they could ply their trades both in white or black areas of town.”

Virginia Commonwealth University’s (VCU) Special Collections possesses an early photograph of a Greek-owned luncheonette the Busy Bee Lunch that was located on 1802 E. Franklin Street. Archivist Ray Bonis explained that, according to a former professor at VCU with expertise on Richmond’s history, in the 1960s the Busy Bee Lunch had two separate entrances, one for blacks and one for whites. While this is a later example of Greek interaction with African Americans, it demonstrates Odzak’s argument.

---

80 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 61.
81 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 61.
82 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 61.
Another way to examine early Greek immigrant interaction with African Americans in Richmond was by observing housing patterns and determining if Greeks in the city lived in predominantly black areas, or chose to avoid them in order to better assimilate into the city’s white society.

Unlike the young single men of 1910, who were living in boarding houses with several kinsmen or others, according to the 1920 census, more Greek men were married and tended to live with their immediate family members, mainly their wives and children. The 107 households acknowledged in the 1920 census were predominantly characterized as nuclear families with a husband, wife, and children. Sociologist Alice Scourby explained that the arrival of Greek women in America at this time “made it possible for the male immigrant to think of it as a permanent home” and “Greek women stabilized family life and made possible the growth of Greek communities.”83 The second largest type of household represented was single or married men living alone, likely with the intent of settling and in the process of bringing over wives or looking to marry and start a family. In comparison to 1910, very few households were constituted of several single young men living together. Differing from Greeks in larger northern cities that tended to live clustered in distinctive ethnic neighborhoods, the “Southern Variant” contends that Greeks in the South tended live spread out from one another. A result of this was that “the number of Greek migrants southwards never reached such proportions that they could form a ‘Greektown’ or even occupy contiguous blocks along a street.”84 Instead, Greeks in southern cities such as Richmond tended to disperse into various districts that often coincided

84 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 62.
with income, and were usually “well mixed with other white folks.” Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 62. “Greek immigrants were not familiar with segregation back home, and their daily contacts with African Americans as a whole remained friendly, [however] they learned very quickly the limitation that Jim Crow society imposed on their lives…[Therefore.] Greeks did not reside in black areas.” Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 61. In 1920, Greeks in Richmond lived spread throughout six different city wards: Monroe Ward, Clay Ward, Lee Ward, Jefferson Ward, and Madison Ward. Given how small the population of Greeks in Richmond was, their notable distribution throughout six different areas in the city complies with the “Southern Variant.”


Twenty-one Greek households were located in Lee Ward, part of the upper Fan district bounded by Grove Avenue to the South, Broad Street to the North, North Lombardy Street to the East, and Boulevard to the West. A city map of Richmond from the 1940 census depicting the “Location of Negro Areas” shows that Lee Ward was also predominantly white. Twenty-eight Greek households were identified in Jefferson Ward, an area bounded by North West 17th street, Potter Railroad tracks, Little Page Road, and Richmond city limits. According to the 1940 census map, this area did have a noticeable population of African Americans. Finally, three families
lived in Clay Ward, located in the southern section of Jackson Ward, a Richmond neighborhood with a very high concentration of African Americans. Nevertheless, census data provides that the majority of Greek households in Richmond, 76 of the 107, were located in principally white neighborhoods.

A final variable to examine for the presence of the “Southern Variant” among early Greek immigrants in Richmond, was the number of intermarriages or the marriage between a Greek immigrant and someone outside their ethnicity. Sociologist Alice Scourby argued, “Interruption is one of the most significant indices of assimilation.”

Interruption became common in the South for Greeks much earlier than the North due to the “greater exposure to the host culture, and middle class occupations that enhanced acceptance by women of the host society as well as the men’s desire to make a home in the New World…” in the South. In the 1920 census, twelve intermarriages were identified. Of the twelve, nine were between Greek men and American women and three were between Greek men and immigrant women from other countries. Church records did not account for any of these marriages prior to 1920. Because the Greek church in Richmond was only three years old by 1920 and had not yet hired a permanent minister it is possible that early marriage ceremonies were performed in the nearby parish in Hopewell, Virginia, as this was the case for other services such as baptisms. On the other hand, it is also possible that because these marriages were with individuals outside the Greek cultural sphere, they were either prohibited by early traditionalist parish members or performed elsewhere, like in the bride’s native church. Undeniably families in 1920 Richmond with an English-speaking mother and wife, adopted American customs much more quickly than those


89 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 62.
with a Greek-speaking mother.\textsuperscript{90} After 1928 church records showed a number intermarriages; at least one a year up until 1940, the most being six in 1937 and the number increasing significantly in later years.

\textbf{Newspapers:}

In November 1900, an article titled “Why Aliens Come To Our Shores,” by the U.S. Immigration Commissioner, Edward F. McSweeney, was featured in the \textit{Richmond Times}, a local newspaper. McSweeney’s concern with the large influx of immigration to the United States was focused on individuals coming from Southern and Eastern Europe. He said:

\begin{quote}
We know that the alien German, Swedish and Irish immigrants of the ‘60s and ‘70s came to the United States because they thought it was a better country than the land in which they lived. That they have improved themselves and the land to which they came is obvious. Having accepted all the burdens of citizenship in peace and war, they are entitled to its rewards. There is, however, a fear that some of the immigration which is coming to the United States now [referring to Southern and Eastern Europeans] is not the result of a spontaneous desire on the part of the alien, but of the speculative enterprises of others who desire to traffic in the labor of immigrants and profit from the price of their passage.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

McSweeny continued to describe his uncertainty with that type of immigrant because of their intentions to stay in the U.S. only temporarily, “without love for the country or desire to remain here, the[re] [is a] tendency to fall into crime…”\textsuperscript{92} McSweeny’s powerful position in the federal government supplied him with public authority on immigration issues, thus giving him the capability to influence many white Richmonders who read the article.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{90} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 63.


\textsuperscript{92} “Why Aliens Come to Our Shores” \textit{The Times}, Saturday, November 24, 1900.
\end{footnotesize}
In 1900, the Richmond Dispatch demonstrated further that concerns like McSweeny’s were ongoing, when the newspaper syndicated an article from the Rochester Post-Express. The article called, “Changes in Immigration: Interesting Comparison in Nationalities of the New Comers” conveyed hesitation about the growing number of Southern and Eastern Europeans arriving on America’s shores and the shrinking number of immigrants from England, Wales, and Ireland, predominantly white or Anglo-Saxon countries. The brief article concluded with the idea that Southern Europeans had many shortcomings compared to other immigrant groups, “the loss of the English, German and Scandinavian immigrants will hardly be made up by the immigrants from Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, and Finland.”

In 1902, a seemingly popular advice column in the Richmond Times dubbed, “For the Housewife,” provided several important insights regarding Greek immigrants in Richmond. The column gave local women an opportunity to write to the paper regarding inquiries they might have. In this particular post, a local woman, who identified herself as “J.G.,” wrote in regarding a term she heard used in the workplace. She wrote:

I work at candies for the retail fruit stores, and for the Greeks, as I suppose you know the majority are. They are very sensitive and a proud race, and everyone asks me if I know where the word “Dago” comes from, and why they are called that. I do not know and never heard, but think it is slang. I would like to know if you could explain why or where the word “Dago” came from and why the fruit venders are called that.

The responder was not completely sure of the word’s whereabouts either but made some conjectures. First the responder stated that “Dago” was normally used in reference to Italians.

---

93 “Why Aliens Come to Our Shores” The Times, Saturday, November 24, 1900.

Another explanation was “that in the Southwest and the far West dark-skinned dark-eyed people who are not mulattoes or Indians are presumed to be Spanish by birth or origin. ‘Diego’ is a name almost as common with Spaniards as ‘John’ with the English…”95 Thus, the writer believed that the name had been “perverted” as a “general way to swart foreigners.”96 He concluded, “I have never heard it applied to the Greeks.”97

The article reinforced evidence from Richmond’s Greek church history and census records that Greek immigrants in Richmond were known for their entrepreneurial ventures, mainly for “retail fruit stores,” (small food markets), confectionaries, and groceries. In the first sentence, J.G. acknowledges that Greeks owned candies and retail shops but that the editor (and the public) is most likely already aware of this since the “majority are.”98 The article also provides that Greek immigrants were concerned with how they were perceived by locals. Most likely J.G. was white woman. She was literate and identified as a “housewife,” seeking assistance from this specific editorial column. She sympathized with her employer but classified him within another race. Her Greek employer asked for J.G.’s expertise in the matter, identifying her as someone who understood local attitudes—J.G. was not a part of Richmond’s upper crust she was a working-class woman. Based on her letter, J.G. was empathetic towards her employer—she was concerned enough with the request that she took time to write into the paper for advice.

95 “For the Housewife,” The Times, Tuesday, November 11, 1902 Richmond, Virginia.
96 “For the Housewife,” The Times, Tuesday, November 11, 1902 Richmond, Virginia.
97 “For the Housewife,” The Times, Tuesday, November 11, 1902 Richmond, Virginia.
98 “For the Housewife,” The Times, Tuesday, November 11, 1902 Richmond, Virginia.
A 1905 article in the *Times-Dispatch* recounted a violent crime committed in Richmond against two Greek “candy store keepers.” The immigrant men were “attacked and badly beaten by a number of men…while wheeling their push carts back from the circus.” Because the site of their attack was a “dark spot,” the “two Greeks [were] uncertain of the identity of their assailants.” The criminals were not identified, and the city council funded public improvements in the city for a total of “two hundred thousand dollars.” The likely meaning of “public improvements,” was to install more streetlights or to hire patrol officers to lower the crime rate in the city at night. The local authority’s concern and plan to fund public improvements because of this crime against the Greek candy storekeepers exhibited to some extent an acceptance of immigrant individuals into the local populous.

In 1907 anti-Greek sentiment in Virginia made national headlines. On the night of July 13 a mob of Roanoke citizens “wrecked nine Greek restaurants, three Greek shoe shine parlors and two Syrian shops.” Virtually every Greek business in the town was vandalized, the paper reported, “the only two Greek places not wrecked were two large confection stores.” According to the report, the riot was triggered by a money dispute between a Greek employee in the


“Belmont Greek restaurant” and “an American who went there to buy a sandwich.”\textsuperscript{103} The Mayor of Roanoke recounted to the \textit{Times} that the riot occurred “soon after midnight…the city was in the semi-darkness…three officers nearest to the point of the attack were unable to cope with the crowd.”\textsuperscript{104} The report continued, “The Mayor and Chief of Police were summoned, but meantime the mob had increased to over 1,000. Following repeated efforts to disperse the mob, a fire hose was turned on them to scatter them…stones and bricks were thrown into the various places wrecked, scattered over several city blocks.”\textsuperscript{105}

In the end five men were arrested and jailed, none of them Greek. Authorities were unable to find the ringleaders of the mob but promised Greek citizens of Roanoke protection and “the proper reparation…for any damage sustained by those who have suffered at the hands of the mob.” According to the report, “there is no resentment against Greeks on the part of the city government or any of the law-abiding citizens of Roanoke.”\textsuperscript{106} The treatment of Greeks in the area was strikingly different than that of African Americans who during the same time period faced the threat of lynching. Historian Ann Field Alexander wrote that “By 1890 nearly a third of Roanoke’s population was African American, a fact one would never discover from reading the daily papers at the time.”\textsuperscript{107} Alexander explained, “During the 1890s white Roanokers, like

\textsuperscript{103} “Roanoke Greeks Appeal to Council,” \textit{The Times Dispatch}, Monday, July 15, 1907 Richmond, Virginia.

\textsuperscript{104} “Roanoke Greeks Appeal to Council,” \textit{The Times Dispatch}, Monday, July 15, 1907 Richmond, Virginia.

\textsuperscript{105} “Roanoke Greeks Appeal to Council,” \textit{The Times Dispatch}, Monday, July 15, 1907 Richmond, Virginia.


\textsuperscript{107} Alexander, “The Roanoke Riot of 1893 and the Lynching of Thomas Smith,” 179.
whites throughout the South often argued that lynchings were necessary to protect white women and children from assault and to preserve the purity of the race.” This white supremacist mentality resulted in the last reported lynching in the area of an African American man in 1893.

While the riot did not occur in Richmond, it made major headlines in the city’s papers for several weeks and received the attention of city authorities. Through the newspaper reports, Virginia politicians appeared to treat anti-Greek sentiment with a sense of shame and remorse. In the Mayor’s official statement he expressed regret and said the event “brought a blush of shame to every good citizen of Roanoke.” Violence towards Greek immigrants was not condoned and according to papers, authorities seemed to resolve the issue swiftly. Almost a month after the riot, the *Times* recounted a meeting of Greeks in Richmond “in the law office of Mr. P. Albert Smith, their counsel, Thursday night, resolutions of respect and gratification to the Mayor, police and people of Roanoke, and to Governor Swanson, for their action in regard to the recent rioting against the Greeks in Roanoke were adopted.” The article continued, “The Greeks expressed their sincere thanks for the energetic manner in which the Mayor of Roanoke and the police of the city acted during the rioting…and for the liberal appropriation which reimbursed the afflicted Greeks…Governor Swanson and the newspapers also came in for grateful appreciation for the part they played in the affair.”


Historian John G. Bitzes compared the riot in Roanoke, Virginia, to the anti-Greek riot of 1909 in South Omaha. According to Bitzes:

The *Time* and the *Evening News* of Roanoke, Virginia, probably reported the first anti-Greek violence in United States when they described a mob of hundreds attacking Greeks and their establishments in the city in July, 1907. Law and order was quickly restored however, and the lawlessness was not permitted to get out of hand as was the case in South Omaha, where there seemed to be reluctance on the part of the community leaders and law enforcement body to prevent or halt the violence…

The experience of Greek immigrants in South Omaha was much different from those in Richmond. Greek immigrants in South Omaha were mainly living in the commercial district, an area “largely sustained by the payrolls of the meat-packing industry and the railroads.”

According to Bitzes, Greeks in the area, along with Italians and Hungarians, were often “imported to work as strike breakers…when packers refused to meet labor’s demands.”

Hence, to the local working class of South Omaha, Greeks and other “foreigners” were perceived as threats to jobs. In South Omaha, much like the urban centers of the North, such as New York and Chicago, Greeks did not mingle with the local population instead “Greeks kept very much to themselves. They established their own grocery stores confectionaries, shoeshine parlors

---


and coffee houses…Few Greeks were interested in learning English…” Sociologist Alice Scourby said that violence broke out in Omaha when large numbers of Greeks arrived seeking employment during the winter months, a time when there was little work to be found on the railroads.

Greek resentment became particularly wide spread when Greeks were used as strike breakers, however, Scourby explained, “Equally as threatening were the ambitious, hard-working Greeks who operated small businesses.” In Great Falls, Montana, American locals feared competition from Greek business owners. Anti-Greek sentiment grew so strong in Great Falls as a result, that mass meetings were organized “for the sole purpose of riding the city…of its Greek population, its ‘undesirables, the ignorant, depraved, and brutal foreigners.’”

The Southern Variant hypothesis argues that the daily contact between Greek entrepreneurs and American customers in the South during the early twentieth century increased the momentum of their social adaptation and Americanization and eventually led to economic success. However, the story of the riot in Roanoke, Virginia, suggests a more complicated story, that Greeks in the South were not immune to harassment and prejudice. Historian George Georgakas provides an account from of a Greek restaurateur in Charlotte, North Carolina, to show that in the 1920s South, the Ku Klux Klan had developed specific tactics to aggravate Greek restaurant owners. The restaurateur stated that KKK members would “Go into Greek restaurants and order huge meals. When it came time to pay, they would insist they had given the cashier a ten-dollar bill, in actuality, they only handed over five dollars. To avoid confrontations,

116 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 34.
117 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 34.
the restaurant owner usually acquiesced to what amounted to a free meal.” The events in Roanoke, Virginia, and the Klan’s targeting of Greeks in nearby North Carolina, suggest that the rapid assimilation characteristic of the Southern variant was a necessary measure for Greeks to protect themselves in the region.

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, there was a widespread feeling of skepticism among white Americans about the rapid rise in immigration to the U.S. Nevertheless, newspaper evidence provides that locals in Richmond were not highly concerned about Greeks. Furthermore, the papers show that Greeks in Richmond experienced very few problems with locals and the conflicts that were reported were often resolved in a peaceful manner with noticeable consideration from local authorities. J.G.’s letter to the Times column revealed that there was some prejudice expressed from the locals towards Greek business owners; however, the lack of other reports on the matter suggests discrimination towards Greeks was not widespread/not vocalized in the city. By way of contrast, in northern cities there was more public prejudice towards Greeks. Odzak provided one example of an American restaurant owner’s window-sign in New York that advertised, “John’s Restaurant, Pure American. No Rats, No Greeks.” Due to their ability to “find relatively uncluttered economic niches,” Greek entrepreneurs in Richmond appeared to avoid friction with local businessmen. In contrast to the northern cities where Greeks were strong in number and often isolated into ethnic enclaves, Southern cities with small, spread out populations of Greeks, like Richmond, showed a much smoother transition for Greeks into the local society. Progression for Greek immigrants in Richmond was not without strife. The Southern Variant hypothesis provides that Greeks in the

119 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 64.
region more rapidly entered the middle class, but to do so, they had to rapidly assimilate themselves to survive in the Southern society. All in all, newspaper evidence confirms that in Richmond, Virginia, “except for some individual acts of discrimination, southerners accepted Greeks to a remarkable degree, as neighbors and as fellow businessmen.”

**Church Records:**

The Greek Church was an integral part of the Greek immigrant experience in the United States. As they adapted to lives in their new environment, Greeks in the South simultaneously resisted pressures of assimilation. This was represented the most in their communal activities through the church. The investigation of Saints Constantine and Helen’s records led to the discovery of a valuable source for recounting these early efforts to preserve the Hellenic culture and religion in what was a rapidly growing Greek community in Richmond by the late 1940s.

Beginning in 1934, a Greek migrant and church member in Richmond, Thanasi Tzani, took it upon himself to write a history of the Greek immigrant experience and Greek Church in the city in one of the parish’s general record books. Tzani’s motivation to compile the history can be understood from a quote he offered at the beginning of his account, “Things that are not written will disappear. It is the written words that survive.” Tzani’s commitment to the church and Greek community motivated him to add to the narrative for almost ten years. Although his exact sources are unclear, he suggests that he gathered some information through short interviews or word of mouth. His narrative was also written in an official book of records, which holds many important historical church documents, which he undoubtedly used as well. Tzani’s

---

120 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 65.

121 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 236.

122 This history was written in a church record book at Saints Constantine and Helen Church in Greek and was translated to English.
narrative for the most part follows all of the information provided in recent publications of the church’s history and in their anniversary book publications throughout the years. However, what made his narrative invaluable were his honest comments as a Greek citizen living in Richmond in the early to mid twentieth century. These insights, omitted from other church histories, reveal an important understanding of the way Greeks during Tzani’s time period and even earlier, perceived their place in the southern city—shedding light on the presence of the “Southern Variant” in Richmond.

Tzani began his narrative with the assertion that it was unknown exactly when the first Greek arrived in Richmond; however, by 1906, evidence showed that there were about 25 of them in the city. The 25 individuals organized an “omilos” or community to address Greek cultural interests in Richmond. With the small funds they had available, in 1907 they purchased a cemetery for the burial of kinsmen. By 1910, omilos membership had grown extensively enough that the group obtained membership in the national organization, the “Paneliniou Enoseos,” or the Pan-Hellenic Union. The Pan-Hellenic Union “can be characterized as direct and strong ties to the parochial origin and in that sense opposed to integration into America life…[this] associatio[n] promoted separateness and ethnic survival until the immigrants’ return to the Greek motherland.”123 For this organization a president was elected, Georgios Gianou, who was also a leader in the omilos. According to Tzani, the Pan-Hellenic Union in Richmond was active until 1912, when most of its members returned to Greece to join voluntary armies to assist in the Balkan War. Tzani noted that while the group activity ceased during this time, they left their funds with a local bank.

123 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 90.
After the Balkan War (1912-1913) some Greek men returned to Richmond, many of whom brought their families with them. Tzani stated, “Now that Greek families were created [in Richmond], it was only natural that the need for a church was addressed.”\textsuperscript{124} The U.S. Census confirms that by 1920, there were several Greek families in Richmond in comparison to virtually none recorded in 1910. Soon after their return to Richmond, Greeks actively reorganized and established a “kinotis” or fellowship, different from the prior omilos and “based on the broad, common ethno-religious heritage, Greeks formed these organized communities in American cities specifically to establish and maintain church parishes.”\textsuperscript{125} In contrast to northern cities that had multiple kinotis organizations per locality because of “clashing personalities and contending factions” southern cities such as Richmond tended to exhibit a mingling of Greeks “from several regions of the Mediterranean [who] proceeded directly to form church parishes, naming the kinotis the same name as the proposed church.”\textsuperscript{126} The establishment of a kinotis in Richmond before 1920 also demonstrated a component of the “Southern Variant”: that Greek immigrants in southern states tended to settle there earlier than their compatriots in the “northern and midwestern industrial areas, where they generally committed themselves to America a generation or two later, certainly no earlier than the 1920s.”\textsuperscript{127} The organization of a kinotis in Richmond so early on also exhibited a desire from Greeks to take permanent residence in the city.

\textsuperscript{124} Thanasi Tzani, “Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond,” In church record book, updated from December 15, 1934 to 1950, Richmond, Virginia, Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral.

\textsuperscript{125} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 90.

\textsuperscript{126} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 91.

\textsuperscript{127} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 91.
In 1916 a visiting priest from the kinotis of Norfolk, Virginia, gave a service for the Richmond kinotis the Sunday before Christmas in “the Hall of the R.R.Y.M.C.A.” after which it was concluded “that it was absolutely necessary” to establish a Greek church parish in Richmond. The kinotis of Richmond held a pivotal meeting on February 19, 1917, in a room at Robert E. Lee Hall on 412 W. Broad Street and decided for certain to initiate efforts for a church. The group created a fundraiser, which Tzani described as “very successful” and they also elected a temporary committee to assist with finding a church location and hiring a priest. After some time, the committee located and rented a church space at 309 N. Seventh Street. The kinotis voted to name the church after saints Constantine and Helen, elected their first priest, Constantine Licaopoulos, and on March 30, 1917, the new priest gave the first liturgy. In June of 1917 an unknown disagreement between kinotis leaders and Licaopoulos lead to his dismissal in August that year. His successor was an immigrant named Pavlos Papapavlos. According to the 1920 U.S. Census, Papapavlos immigrated to the United States in 1915 and had not yet become a citizen by 1920.\textsuperscript{128} He was a widower and living with his son Theodore (who owned a grocery) and his family.\textsuperscript{129}

In 1918, the kinotis made its first attempts at organizing a Greek School for the “new generations.”\textsuperscript{130} They rented a room in a home at 107 North Nineteenth Street to serve as a classroom. The first teacher was a man named “D.Gianakapilos.” Little else is known about the first few years of the school, however, according to Tzani in 1922, the kinotis established a committee of Greek men and women to raise funds to support the school. The funds allowed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{128} 1920 United States Federal Census on Ancestry.com, (accessed October 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{129} 1920 United States Federal Census on Ancestry.com, (accessed October 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{130} Tzani, Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.
\end{itemize}
them to hire and pay a teacher, and the first paid teacher was Athanasios Appelidon. The early efforts of the kinotis to establish a Greek School exemplify the “Southern Variant.” As early as 1918, Greek immigrants in Richmond sought to preserve their native tongue in a place where few compatriots lived. The origins of a language school so early on demonstrated that the immigrants felt unthreatened by their host environment but also resistant to some elements of Americanization. A society for local female parish members was also established in 1918; it later became a part of the Philoptochos Society, a national Greek-American organization for Greek Orthodox women. The early society’s mission (as it remains today) was to provide aid for poor families and raise funds for the needs of the church. The prompt organization of a women’s society also suggests Americanization because Greek women organizing went against the traditional female role that Greek women belonged solely in the home.

In 1919, the parish began to outgrow its church facility, and so the kinotis met in November of that year, under the leadership of George Chacos, to discuss purchasing a new building. According to the census, Chacos, who immigrated with his wife and first child in 1915, was working as a waiter in Richmond at the time of his leadership. By 1920, with Chacos’s guidance, the kinotis raised enough money to purchase a new building located on 615 North Sixth Street. The first service in the new church was held on Sunday, December 16, 1920.

Tzani noted a significant national ideological conflict among Greeks that impacted the Richmond Greek community in 1920. The conflict impacted Greek immigrants throughout the

131 Tzani, *Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.*

132 Tzani, *Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.*

133 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 72.
United States, fracturing communities because of differing loyalties for Greek political leaders. In 1914 King Constantine and his wife, who was the German Kaiser Wilhelm’s sister, intended to keep Greece out of World War I. King Constantine’s prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, leader of the Greek Liberals, “supported especially by the Greek populace…saw Greek destiny fulfilled by joining Greece’s traditional allies, England, France, Russia, and Serbia.”

Greek immigrants in the United States reacted to the political conflict in their home country: “Greeks throughout the diaspora supported their compatriots back home and fractured into two political factions: Venezelist and royalist.”

In Richmond, old world politics threatened the Greek community. For a short period of time, the political situation split the Greek community in two: The Venezelists retained possession of the Sixth Street Church and the Monarchists established another Church, Saint Paraskivi, at First and Broad Streets. Tzani described the schism as a “black page” in the history of the Greek church of Richmond. The conflicting groups existed for three years until the issue was abated and the community reunited once again as the Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church.

The political conflict impacted Greeks throughout the United States in different degrees. In larger Greek communities, the dispute took violent turns, Odzak argued, “the contest was most pronounced in the populous Greek communities in north-eastern and mid-western parts of the United States. The Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, and Lowell communities experienced...

134 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 132.
135 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 133.
136 Tzani, Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.
not only verbal but also physical clashes.”\textsuperscript{137} He continued, “At times, council members had to call local police to maintain order as parishioners entered and left church premises.”\textsuperscript{138}

Sociologist Alice Scourby indicated that the conflict led the Greek community in Chicago to divide into eleven different Greek parishes.\textsuperscript{139} Odzak explained a different reaction in the South:

In Greek Orthodox parishes from Virginia and the Carolinas to Florida, and across the deep South westerly to Louisiana…individuals and even groups of kinotis members may have been offended by the political opinions of fellow parishioners, but lack of larger numbers placed the disagreements on a person rather than institutional level. Southern parishes may have temporarily lost good members…but they were not caught up in the strife to the point of litigation or violence within the parish.\textsuperscript{140}

Similarly, Alice Scourby’s study of the Greek community of Spartanburg, South Carolina, depicted a group very similar to Richmond’s. Spartanburg was a small community comprised of twenty-five families in 1928 and then doubling to about fifty by 1948. Similar to Richmond, “proprietorship status” provided Greeks in Spartanburg, “with reasonable good living, so they were not conspicuously distinguished from the native-born…They were accepted both as businessmen and neighbors.”\textsuperscript{141} When political conflict broke out in Greece, Spartanburg Greeks kept a low profile and in comparison to other communities, did not become “embroiled with its conflicts.”\textsuperscript{142} Historian Lazar Odzak argues that because Greek communities in the South were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 134.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 134.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Scourby, The Greek Americans, 45.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 135-136.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Scourby, The Greek Americans, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Scourby, The Greek Americans, 52.
\end{itemize}
able to avoid detrimental internal conflicts, their host community more readily accepted them. Scourby concluded that because Spartanburg was able to keep a low profile regarding the political conflict, they remained a cohesive group, “They did not experience rejection by the host culture nor a sense of inferiority in relation to it.”143

Did this element of the Southern Variant apply to the Greek community in Richmond? While the group split in two because of the political conflict, they ultimately resolved the conflict amongst themselves peacefully. The fiftieth anniversary bulletin of Richmond’s church reported in regards to the early conflict that “Christian love healed the [church’s] wounds.” In 1973, reporter Stephen Fleming discussed the schism in an article titled “Local Greeks Overcame Split.” Fleming’s findings suggest that Odzak and Scourby’s arguments for southern variation are applicable—Richmond’s Greek community settled their conflict non-violently by splitting into two sects for some time, eventually resolving the issue. Furthermore, evidence from Fleming’s article shows there was no rejection from their host culture. Fifty years after the conflict, Fleming argued that regardless of the disagreement, Greeks in Richmond built “a strong affluent community,” “that transcended all its problems of duality long ago.” Fleming continued, “Whatever the reason, the Greek community here is entrenched enough so that differences of opinion about the politics of Greece do not threaten it. The Greeks of Richmond do not all agree on the rule of colonels in Greece. Anyways, they are more concerned with the politics of home—in the United States.” Comparably, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Greek community was deeply divided by the political conflict and it impacted their relationships with the surrounding community. Alice Scourby provided that the communal schism in Wisconsin, “was causing strong antiforeign feelings in Milwaukee, and the city’s priests appealed for a greater civic

143 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 52.
concern and participation in the affairs of the Milwaukee community as a way of providing their loyalty to their adopted country.”

After 1924, U.S. immigration quota laws led to a decline in the number of Greeks entering the country. However, despite the quota system, many Greeks managed to enter into the country because of a provision of the law that permitted American citizens to petition for certain relatives. For instance, from 1925 to 1929 the quota law allowed for only 737 Greeks to be admitted when actually a total of 10,883 entered, and this course continued well into the 1930s. However, from 1941 to 1950, the lowest number of Greeks entered the U.S. since the 1880s, only 2,308.

In 1926, the Greek immigrant community in Richmond established an AHEPA chapter. AHEPA, or the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, exemplified the Southern Variant. Historian Lazar Odzak described AHEPA as “the only organization designed to operate in an American setting, specifically in the American South.” The group was founded in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1922 as an exclusively male fraternal organization. One of the organization’s core objectives according to an excerpt from the Atlanta chapter’s mission statement was, “…with the purpose in view of advancing and promoting pure and undefiled Americanism among the Greeks of the United States…” Odzak described the organization saying, “At first, AHEPA acted as a virtual public relation champion for Greeks who made their

144 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 41.
145 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 61.
146 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 61.
148 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 85.
home in the United States and wanted to succeed here. During the 1920s and 1930s, its membership attracted men whose primary concern was to penetrate and find acceptance in the middle strata of American society.”149 Greek immigrant men in Atlanta, who were all entrepreneurs, established the organization as a safeguard to “check nativist prejudices expressed by the newly revived, fast-growing Ku Klux Klan, and specifically to break the link of prejudoice and discrimination against Greeks in the South.”150 More so, “AHEPA sought to facilitate acceptance of Greek immigrant entrepreneurs to their customers and neighbors.”151

Prior to 1920, such an organization was not as much of a necessity for Greeks in the South, since many of the earlier migrants returned home to Greece. By the 1920s, as more Greek immigrants planned to stay in the U.S. permanently, Greek entrepreneurs looked to establish small businesses in the South to supply much needed services to the growing region. As Ku Klux Klan influence increased, Greek business owners in Atlanta sought to avoid any more conflict. As a result, the group of Atlanta Greek entrepreneurs developed AHEPA initially as a strategy, to demonstrate to their white neighbors that “Greeks were good Americans and good for America, and therefore desirable business associates and beneficial citizens.”152

In the American South where there was a large population of heavily discriminated-against African Americans, southern European immigrants like Greeks were often positioned on the fault line in the white-black continuum. AHEPA was able to facilitate a way for Greeks in the South to develop a position in the region’s distinctive hierarchical system of racial privileges by

149 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 86.
150 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 93.
151 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 93.
152 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 94.
developing an “honorary whiteness.” For this reason, AHEPA’s first decade “was characterized by explosive growth” in membership in the South, “just three [chapters] were in cities north of the Mason-Dixon Line.”\(^{153}\) This was different from other parts of the United States like Utah, where Greeks “were thought to be lawless, dirty, lewd, and lazy, images that paralleled the current national stereotypes of African Americans in the South.” AHEPA on the other hand, “launched the project of institutionally legitimizing Greek Americans as the racial and cultural descendants of the Classical Greeks….In a host society positing the ideals of classical Greece as its cultural and political model, the immigrant claim was plain: as racial descendants and cultural heirs of classical Greece, Greek immigrants were…endowed with the potential to ‘Americanness.’”\(^{154}\)

Even though sources did not exhibit the presence of widespread prejudice against Greeks in Richmond, the creation of an AHEPA chapter demonstrated that the growing group of Greek business owners in the city were not only taking precautionary measures but also climbing the “proverbial ladder of success and committed to raising their families in America.”\(^{155}\) Census records and newspapers evidenced that by 1920, the majority of Greek immigrant men in Richmond were business owners. AHEPA was also designed with class-consciousness in mind. According to historian Theodore Saloutos, the organization was “middle-class in orientation.”


And, “It appealed to those who were climbing the social and economic ladder of success.”

Thus, the AHEPA chapter in Richmond also signified that Greek businessmen were making their way into the local middle class.

AHEPA was different from Greek immigrant organizations elsewhere in the U.S. that were often based on common origins in Greece or “topika somateia.” Unlike AHEPA, these groups brought together Greeks from particular regions in the homeland, “all devoted to helping each other, aiding those left behind, and collectively perpetuating the culture and kinship of the locality.” Historian Theodore Saloutos specified that there were approximately one hundred such organizations in the U.S. as early as 1907 and in New York alone, there were thirty. In contrast to these groups, AHEPA promoted a distancing from Old World ties. One such group was the Greek American Progressive Association or GAPA, which charged that AHEPAns were “opportunists” and “anti-Hellens.” Regarding the language question, AHEPA promoted English which they argued was the language of the country they had chosen to live. While AHEPA’s publications were in English, GAPA’s were in Greek. GAPA’s headquarters were in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where it was founded “amid a large Greek community.” By 1928 GAPA had fifty chapters “primarily in cities with large Greek populations.” GAPA however never achieved the long lasting success of AHEPA and eventually its influence faded.


157 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 86.


AHEPA’s success was in part due that it was able to adapt to the times. When KKK influence faded in the late 1920s, the organization updated its mission to focus on education, citizenship, philanthropy, and making real the American dream. Eventually it expanded to become a national organization with over ten thousand members. In 1973, Louis Junes, one of the early members of the congregation, told *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reporter Stephen Fleming that AHEPA was designed to “teach immigrants how to be Americans,” and “how to accept majority rule, something not common to Greece then.” Additionally, Richmond’s AHEPA chapter was responsible for developing local citizenship classes.

In 1932 an article in the *Richmond News Leader* titled “Greeks for State Democratic Club,” demonstrated that Greek men in Richmond were making significant efforts to encourage voting in their community. According to the article, the newly named Greek Democratic Club of Richmond began in 1924 and was originally known as the League of Richmond Voters of Greek Descent. The group was formed to encourage voting among Greek men throughout the state of Virginia and by 1932 had reached 165 members able to vote, “with an excellent prospectus of attaining their goal of 200 members qualified to vote in the November election.” The president of the organization, Greek immigrant John G. Bazacos told the reporter that “90 per cent of the members are merchants, and the majority own their own homes in Richmond.” Bazacos also stated that at the organization’s most recent meeting “a membership check revealed that all members were adherents of the Democratic party,” and thus, “by unanimous vote the name was

---

160 Odzak, “*Demetrios is now Jimmy,*” 103.

changed to the Greek Democratic Club.” Bazacos explained that the primary mission of the organization was to:

Promote the thorough Americanization of the native Greeks and their descendants now living in Virginia. With this end in view, we instruct and encourage members of our nationality to apply for citizenship as soon as eligible. As soon as they have obtained their final papers, we urge upon them the importance of qualifying themselves to vote and take an active interest in the social, civil and political affairs of the community and of our adopted country.162

In addition to the establishment of an AHEPA chapter, The Greek Democratic Club evidenced that Greek men in Richmond prioritized Americanization in their community. Furthermore, the 1932 article demonstrated that Greeks throughout the state of Virginia were taking interest in similar organizations; Bazacos explained that a partial survey provided that “we should be able to qualify as voters in Virginia, by means of these affiliated clubs, at least 5,000 members of Greek decent.”163

In the summer of 1930, the Richmond Times-Dispatch featured another story that demonstrated how Richmond’s Greek community had garnered more attention from locals. On August 28, 1930, the newspaper reported “Richmond is being considered as the site for the Greek educational and philanthropic center to cost $10,000,000, according to plans outlined yesterday at the eighth annual convention of the Order of Ahepa in Boston. An estate of 123 acres in the city has been offered by an anonymous Richmond donor….”164 The anonymous gift was believed to come from a parishioner of Richmond’s St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. St. Paul’s


164 “Greek Order may establish philanthropic center in city, Times Dispatch, August, 28, 1930, p. 1.
reverend at the time, Stamo S. Spathy, was an American member of the organization and it is likely the unknown donor of the estate was as well. The idea for the project originated in 1928 and by 1930, the National Order of AHEPA had narrowed down three possible locations for their planned Hellenic center—Boston, Washington D.C. and Richmond. According to the article, Richmond was the front-runner for the center because of its mild climate. The institution, which would include a high school, “a university of higher learning…..A dormitory, chapel, gymnasium,” and an “asylum for orphans of Greek decent and an old peoples’ home,” would serve the ultimate purpose of providing a “cultural center for Americans of Greek extractions.”

The National Order of AHEPA planned to raise the ten million dollar endowment fund within five years and then begin construction on whichever site was selected.

In the end, the Hellenic center was not built in Richmond. AHEPA situated their national headquarters in Washington D.C. where they “built a stronger, more visible profile.” For instance, in 1929, a group of AHEPAns marched in President Hoover’s inaugural parade, “a first for any Hellenic-American group.” In the coming years, seventy-five U.S. Senators and Congressman attended the Order of AHEPA’s first Congressional banquet. Later President Franklin D. Roosevelt “also enhanced the organization’s stature”—AHEPA had initiated him as a member back when he was the Governor of New York. Historian Theodore Saloutos wrote that

165 “Greek Order may establish philanthropic center in city, Times Dispatch, August, 28, 1930, p. 1.

“More than anything else, through the years [AHEPA] accomplished more in identifying Greek Americans with the greater American community than did all other organizations combined.”

While Greeks in Richmond prioritized participation in the local American community during the early twentieth century, Greeks elsewhere “inadvertently fed anti-Greek passions with their unwillingness to learn English or accept Americanization.” In Utah for instance, Greeks were in conflict with Mormons because “each group viewed the other as inferior and considered it arrogant in regarding itself as possessing the only true religion.” Historian Dan Georgakas explained that in Pocatello, Idaho, anti-Greek sentiment made locals restrict Greeks “to segregated seating in theaters and [Greeks] could not live in most neighborhoods.” Similarly, Americans in Utah in 1910 “justly asserted that the nomadic Greeks were much more interested in unredeemed Greece than in the United States,” because oftentimes Greeks were in America for only “a brief interlude during which they accumulated cash for prosperity in Greece.”

By the late 1920s the growing parish in Richmond was once again exceeding the bounds of its building. While this was the main reason provided for the church’s next move in all the church newsletter histories, Tzani’s narrative revealed another reason for the church’s third move: that “blacks were moving” into the neighborhood. Tzani’s honest insight also exhibits the “Southern Variant” in action. The Greek immigrant community in Richmond did not want its


169 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 38.


171 Tzani, Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.
church to be located in an African American neighborhood in fear of breaking the white American social code. They learned quickly the limitations of Jim Crow society. Greeks treated living situations similarly as previously shown by census records, “Greeks did not reside in black areas...[they] imitated the attitudes of other whites in accepting the racial codes of the dominant society.”

The kinotis gathered again in 1929 to plan the relocation. They sold the building on Sixth Street and rented a nearby building for worship services in the meantime. For some time the kinotis struggled to gather funds for a new building. Tzani explained that community members became “frustrated” because they feared they would be “stuck forever in the black neighborhood.”

On November 22, 1930, the kinotis signed the contract for a location, an old Episcopal Church building on Foushee and Main Streets. The kinotis’ hope for the new building was that it would serve as a permanent home for the Greek Orthodox community in Richmond. They allotted funds to renovate the building to adapt it to their needs: adding classrooms, a large kitchen, and altering the worship area to reflect Greek Orthodox tradition. The congregation celebrated their first liturgy in 1930 on Christmas morning given by a new parish priest, Athansios Kessaris.

In November 1931, Demetrios Sgouros was hired as priest and organized an “afternoon Greek School” and a Sunday school program. Almost three years later on October 14, 1934, the Greek Orthodox Church of Richmond was consecrated by the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America—an important recognition for the Greek parish in Richmond as it officiated them into the national Greek American religious community. Tzanis

---

172 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 62.

173 Tzani, Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.
also noted that the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of America visited Richmond twice in the mid 1920s, so they received the attention of national Greek American leaders early on.

In 1937 a new priest was elected by the “kinotis,” Theodosios Sideris, who remained with the community for seventeen years. Sideris promoted the need for church improvements and so the community fundraised and purchased authentic icons as well as improved the salary for the Greek school instructor. Tzanis made the distinction that many of the funds for these changes came from member donations.

In January of 1940 a small fire damaged part of the church building. Tzani expressed gratitude as he recounted, “fortunately, the heroic efforts of our firefighters kept the majority of the damages on the Southwest side of the church and saved our kinotis from total disaster.” In the end, most of the structural damage was concentrated to the priest’s office; yet, the greatest loss was that many of the early church records were destroyed.

Tzanis’s returned to his history of the church in 1950, “Notes written in July 1950,” to recount the impact of World War II on the Greek community in Richmond. Unlike the Greek men in the first kinotis, who returned home to fight for Greece in the Balkan Wars, the Greek men of the kinotis in 1950 were patriotic Americans. Several of the young Greek men in Richmond, whether immigrants or first or second generation Americans, fought on behalf of the United States in WWII. Here Tzanis records their names in English to further honor them as Americans, he said, “Because of our history, I place the veterans’ names with their rank in English.” Only one of the 76 (number of men listed by Tzanis) Greek servicemen from Richmond were killed in the war. A service was held for him that drew in “all members of the

---

174 Tzani, Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.
175 Tzani, Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.
kinotis as well as many Americans.”176 To honor the returning soldiers, the kinotis held a banquet at the John Marshall hotel on March 31, 1946.

176 Tzani, *Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.*
CHAPTER THREE

The Second Wave of Greek Immigration and the Southern Variant in Richmond, Virginia

On January 1, 1959, after the careful consideration of several sites, Richmond’s Greek parish agreed upon a suitable location to construct a larger facility for their rapidly growing congregation. The new site was located further west, outside of the bounds of Richmond’s downtown, in a growing middle class neighborhood at the intersection of Malvern and Grove avenues. Much like its congregation, the new building reflected the noticeable impact of Americanization that had occurred in the last five decades. In 1962, the parish’s 50th anniversary book described the recently erected church building as follows: “Of Byzantine design, the church structure also combined Colonial Virginia architecture.”177 In 1964, the structure received local attention from the Virginia Architects group and was featured in the Golden Anniversary Tour of Historic Garden Week in Richmond.178

By the early 1960s, Richmond’s Greek church congregation showed signs of tremendous socio-economic progress for Greek immigrants—the majority of parish was securely part of the middle class, and the local Richmond community was showing several public indications of their acceptance. For fifty years, regional elements influenced the rapid Americanization of first wave Greek immigrants, which by the second half of the twentieth century led to the development of a group culture that was a distinctive hybrid of Greek and American South. When U.S. legislation

177 Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 50th Anniversary Book, in Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records, Richmond, Virginia, 1962.

178 Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 50th Anniversary Book, in Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records, Richmond, Virginia, 1962.
ended the quota system in 1965, the second largest wave of Greek immigrants arrived on American soil. When these second-wave Greek immigrants arrived in Southern cities like Richmond, Virginia, many found the Americanizing Greek communities hard to embrace. This chapter seeks to explain how the new wave of Greek immigrants and the contemporaneous movement towards a hybrid Greek-American culture by their predecessors, created new elements of Southern variation in the Greek church community of Richmond—a place where these transitions were the most evident.

The 1965 Immigration Act was a critical turning point for this history of Greek immigration to the United States. The Act, which overturned the earlier national-origins act of 1924, reopened America’s doors for Greek immigrants for the first time in decades. In her work *The Greek Americans*, sociologist and historian Alice Scourby described just how significant the 1965 act was for Greek immigration, “From 1966 through 1971, a total of 86,344 Greeks entered the United States. This period ranks closely with those of the years immediately preceding World War I and after in the number of arrivals.” While the 1965 law reinitiated large-scale Greek immigration to the United States, an earlier law, the Refugee Act of 1953, admitted 17,000 Greeks into the U.S. and another 1,504 in 1957. Like the first wave of immigrants, second wave Greek migrants left their homeland because of the lack of economic opportunities and the general impoverishment of the country. Scourby accounted that from 1961 to 1965 Greek emigration “fluctuated between 3,002 and 4,825 annually.”

---


Unlike their early counterparts however, second-wave Greek immigrants tended to be more educated. One reason for this was that social changes since World War II influenced the importance of education by altering traditional expectations. Scourby said the “improved communications in the provinces, towns, and cities sensitized both men and women to alternative options.” In her study of the second-wave immigrants, Scourby used evidence from the reports of George Coutoumaris, a professor of political economy, to demonstrate the changing demographics. In Coutoumaris’s review of the international migration of highly educated Greeks, he calculated that “between 1957 and 1961 Greece lost over one-fifth of all her first degrees in engineering to the United States.” More specifically, according to a National Science Foundation study from 1962 to 1969, 1,066 people with professional degrees left Greece for the United States. “Of them 586 were engineers, 271 scientists, and 209 physicians and surgeons.” Nevertheless, in the end, Scourby’s examination of Coutoumaris’s study and other records concluded that while many Greek immigrants that came to the United States in the second wave were students and professionals, “the vast majority were still of peasant origin and of limited education.”

**Studying Second-wave Greek immigrants in Richmond:**

This study of second-wave Greek immigrants in Richmond was developed using secondary literature, archival records from Richmond’s Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral, newspaper sources and oral history sources. Oral history sources included a set of interviews I conducted interviews with a small group of second-wave Greek immigrants living in Richmond today (2012-2013). Second, I utilized an oral history study of Greeks in Richmond collected for

---


the Richmond Oral History Association in the 1980s by historian Dr. Thelma Biddle. This critical source included over twenty accounts of Greek immigrants living in Richmond thirty years ago. Together, the oral histories provided a valuable source unavailable in the previous chapter—the voice of the Greek immigrant. Dr. Biddle’s study specifically supplied perspectives from multiple positions within the Greek church community including not only second-wave Greek immigrants, but also first and second generation Greek Americans, members of the church’s clergy, and American spouses, who were all living in Richmond during a time of immense growth and transition for Greeks in America.

**The Transformation of the Greek church in Richmond:**

First-wave Greek immigrants set the stage for their successors in the early twentieth century by solidifying the Greek community in Richmond in two major ways. First through local business ownership they were able to establish a stable relationship with much of the local community as they steadily entered into the middle class. Second, the formation of a church parish provided them with important connections and acknowledgement from both their surrounding American community as well as the larger Greek population. For these reasons, when many second-wave Greek immigrants arrived in Richmond, they did not experience the same struggles of establishing themselves as their predecessors. Instead, the second-wave Greeks arrived to encounter a widespread cultural movement where the larger Greek immigrant community of the United States was beginning to become more similar; a group scholars termed “Greek America.” Historian Charles Moskos identified three distinguishing groups within Greek America:

An older immigrant cohort usually demarcated as those who came to this country before World War II or in the years following; a recent wave of immigrant who have arrived in this country since the reopening of the immigration doors in 1966; and the main body of
the Greek American community which consists of the children and grandchildren of the immigrants.\textsuperscript{184}

While all three groups of Greek America shared a common Hellenic heritage, each of them related to and participated in the Greek American community differently. Moskos continued to explain that Greek America was subject to regional differences; he argued, “Greek America can be likened to an archipelago, a scattering of communities—some larger, some smaller, some more Greek, some more American—across the continental expanse.”\textsuperscript{185}

In the urban North, densely settled Greektowns like Astoria, in New York, often isolated Greek immigrants from their American host environment. Equipping them with churches, shops, groceries and restaurants, which catered directly to traditional Greek custom, the existence of Greektowns in an area often slowed the rate of Americanization. According to the 1970 U.S. Census, approximately one in four of all Greek Americans resided in New York.\textsuperscript{186} In addition to several Greek communities, New York housed the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, which further influenced a strict system of language and cultural maintenance in the area. As a result, even in the late twentieth century, the majority of Greek immigrants and their descendants in New York tended to speak Greek.\textsuperscript{187} Richmond resident and second-wave Greek immigrant Mary Hlouverakis shared that in the two years she lived in New York after immigrating to the United States in 1975 there was no need for her to learn English.

\textsuperscript{184} Moskos, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 66.

\textsuperscript{185} Moskos, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 66.


Mary, who was a manicurist, shared that she learned the majority of her English in Richmond with the help of her American clients.\(^{188}\)

In contrast, numerically smaller Greek immigrant communities in the South never formed such tightly packed ethnic enclaves. Alternatively, as was exhibited in the previous chapter, early Greeks in Richmond (and much of the South), lived spread out from one another, interacted often with the local community, and thus Americanized more quickly. In doing so, they created a distinctive environment for the Greeks that came to the South later. On this ground, historian Lazar Odzak argued, “Greeks adapted to the Southern states in special ways….One could indeed maintain that Greek immigrants first began to transform into Greek Americans in the South.”\(^{189}\) Therefore, when second-wave Greek immigrants arrived in Southern cities like Richmond, Virginia, they benefited in many ways socio-economically due to regional differences but simultaneously struggled to adjust culturally to what had become a characteristically Americanized Greek society.

The results of this early transition towards a Greek American culture are most visible through the observation of a Greek community’s church. In his study of Greek churches in the South, Odzak observed:

> Although the first generation organized the incipient communities, formed a kinotis in many a city in the South, and built or bought and maintained the first churches, it was the second and third generation which exerted pressures to bring English into the liturgical services, to have the families sit together, and to have Orthodoxy recognized not as a Greek church in the United States, but as an American religious denomination which happens to be called Greek Orthodox.\(^{190}\)

---

\(^{188}\) Mary Hlouverakis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.

\(^{189}\) Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 71.

\(^{190}\) Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 236.
In 1955, Saints Constantine and Helen’s church bulletin showed that the Greek church in Richmond was moving quickly to adapt a Greek American identity. Scholars refer to the Greek community’s tendency towards a more national identity as the “new ethnicity.” The “new ethnicity” characterizing Greek immigrants (and second, third, and fourth generations) in the United States, who while rooted in old-world traditions, are also strongly influenced by the experiences of subsequent generations in the host country.\textsuperscript{191} By the mid 1950s, Richmond’s Greek church community was incorporating American traditions. Their 1955 church bulletin enthusiastically described the parish’s organization of a softball team, who competed against other churches in the area. Their first game, notably in the “Sports” section of the bulletin, was played against Richmond’s Westhampton Methodist church. The incorporation of athletics into church activities represented a purely American tradition. Five years later in 1960, Richmond’s chapter of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) also chartered Boy Scout Troop Number 715 to encourage Greek American children to embrace both cultures.

By the early 1960s sources showed that Richmond’s American community responded positively to the Greek church. On October 21, 1962, following the consecration of the church’s new building, a banquet was held at the popular Hotel John Marshall to celebrate. Attending the banquet was U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd Senior and Governor Albertis S. Harrison, both of whom addressed the Greek congregation “and hailed their untiring efforts and progress.”\textsuperscript{192} Following the ceremony, Senator Byrd wrote a letter to the pastor expressing his support for the Greek church community in Richmond. Byrd wrote, “My dear friend, It is a high privilege to

\textsuperscript{191} Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 70.

\textsuperscript{192} Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 70\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Book, in Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records, Richmond, Virginia, 1987.
participate in the commemoration of the consecration of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Richmond…The Pastor and the fine people of Saints Constantine and Helen Church, and your guests in this occasion, have my warm affection and best wishes.”¹⁹³ Similarly, Albertis Harrison sent a letter with warm remarks. Also writing to the pastor, “Your membership has contributed outstanding citizens of this Commonwealth of Virginia.”¹⁹⁴

The history of Byrd and Harrison’s political background in the state of Virginia are important for trying to decipher why they supported Richmond’s Greek community. Byrd’s political influence dominated early twentieth-century Virginia. When Byrd was elected governor of the state in 1925, he and his supporters “limited the expenditure of public funds on critical state services such as highways and education. Disfranchisement and segregation ensured that whatever resources were begrudgingly allocated to middle class whites.”¹⁹⁵ At the same time Byrd offered his support to Richmond’s Greek community, he was also opposed to racial desegregation and advocating a policy of massive resistance in schools. Albertis Harrison, governor of Virginia from 1962 to 1966, was part of Henry Byrd’s organization and a strong supporter of his massive resistance strategy. Byrd and Harrison’s visit with the Greek parish in Richmond in one aspect affirmed their “whiteness” to the surrounding public. On the other hand, it showed Richmond’s Greek community aligning themselves with some of the state’s most ardent segregationists.

The parish’s increasing interactions with the surrounding Richmond community were greatly encouraged by the church’s new priest, Pastor Constantine Dombalis, who was appointed

¹⁹⁵ Smith, Managing White Supremacy, 31.
in 1954. A second-generation Greek American and only twenty-eight years old when he became pastor, Dombalis went on to serve the church in Richmond for forty-two years. During his four decades of service, Dombalis’s endeavors brought attention to Richmond’s Greek Orthodox Church. Pastor Dombalis became well known throughout the state of Virginia for his work in racial, social, political, and religious “bridge-building.” In 1996, a Richmond Times-Dispatch article featured an interview with the pastor emeritus of Richmond’s Fourth Baptist Church, Pastor Robert L. Taylor, who described Pastor Dombalis as “a real leader in the community among blacks and whites…In the ‘50s and ‘60s there was a dearth of interracial activities. We could always count on Pastor Dombalis showing up and taking part.” In the 1980s, Pastor Dombalis’s efforts received national attention when he was appointed to serve on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council as well as ambassador representative to the United Nations. In 1983 he was appointed to the United States Civil Rights Commission. Pastor Dombalis’s titles and actions clash in many ways with the concurrent advocacy from Harry F. Byrd and Albertis Harrison. It is possible that the reason for this was that the Greek church community in Richmond accepted supporters from various perspectives as a means to protect their “honorary whiteness” during the 1960s, when race relations were in the forefront of American society and politics. However, because members of the parish never publically expressed opinions regarding the matters of race relations, the exact reason is difficult to pinpoint for Greeks in Richmond.


197 Jeremy Slayton, “Father Dombalis, longtime dean of Richmond’s Greek Orthodox cathedral, dies at 87.”
Pastor Dombalis’s undertaking to make civil rights relevant to the Greek church community demonstrated not only a significant transformation underway in Richmond, but also a movement among Greek parishes throughout the U.S. to become more involved in the American Civil Rights Movement. This was much different from the experience of the first-wave Greek immigrants in Richmond (and other parts of the South), who did their best to fit in with the surrounding white community during the early part of the twentieth by adapting in whatever means necessary—in Richmond, for instance, early Greek migrants avoided living in black neighborhoods.

The Southern-born AHEPA organization was one of the driving forces behind Greek involvement with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Historian Lazar Odzak described the Greek fraternal organization, as “the only organization designed to operate in the American setting, specifically in the American South.” Because AHEPA adapted with the times, the group went from being a way Greek entrepreneurs in the South (it originated in Atlanta, Georgia, when the Klan was active) could adapt to and protect themselves from whites to a group that sided with civil rights activists. In the fall of 1963, however, when the governor of Alabama, George Wallace, “dramatically stood in the doorway of a building of the University of Alabama to block enrollment of several black students,” AHEPA leaders announced their support for the “pending legislation designed to protect all minorities in the United States regardless of race, religion or national origin, to achieve for all groups of people full and complete equality in education, employment, and housing” the same year at their annual convention. In 1964 the

---

199 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 107.
“once very conservative” Greek Orthodox Church of the United States, under the leadership of Archbishop Iakovos, also firmly took the side of integration and reform. Archbishop Iakovos “traveled from New York to Selma” and even had his photograph taken with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which was later, featured on the front page of Life magazine. Nevertheless, some Greek communities in the South had fully embraced white racial codes and were more reluctant to change. In the spring of 1964, the Birmingham, Alabama, chapter of AHEPA made George Wallace an honorary member of their organization. Lazar Odzak said that for Greeks in the South who had become accustomed to southern culture, “One has no way to determine the actual numbers, but this unrestricted support for civil rights cause clearly infuriated more than a few parishioners in southern cities….with their neighbors, many considered the influx of civil rights activists from the North to be an unwanted and unnecessary intrusion into states’ right and segregated status quo.”

Evidence showed that this was not the case for Richmond’s Greek church in 1964, which appeared to be secured in Richmond’s white community. Father Dombalis’s efforts to support civil rights were fervently supported not only by Richmond’s AHEPA chapter but also by locals in the community; in 1976 Dombalis was elected by local clerics to serve as the first non-Protestant president of the Virginia Council of Churches, an organization that in the late 1950s was involved heavily in local civil rights; specifically aiding migrant workers, refugees, and minorities in Virginia through the development of educational and religious programs. All in

202 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 144.
all, Pastor Dombalis’s efforts symbolized all of the best things that came out of Greek involvement with the American Civil Rights Movement and reflected well on Richmond’s Greek community. Dombalis’s success in keeping the Richmond Greek church community in step with national positions of the Archdiocese of America was possible in part because of certain distinctions in Richmond’s Greek community—specifically that they never faced any detrimental internal conflict.

The majority of Richmond’s parish members, who were part of the first-wave of Greek immigration to the U.S., saw cultural adjustments within the church as realistic actions to take in light of the fact that a new generation of Greek Americans was emerging without complete knowledge of Greek language and tradition. These transitions towards a “new ethnicity” which were quickly accepted by first-wave immigrants proved more challenging to grasp for second-wave Greek immigrants who arrived in the American South where oftentimes, cultural adjustments in the Greek church occurred more frequently. Second-wave Greek immigrant and Richmond resident Frank Giannis explained in 2013 that the most difficult adjustment he encountered upon arriving in the United States in 1956 was the ability to accept an unfamiliar American culture, “It was very different and I tried to adjust as fast as possible. You know to make friends, my friends were Greek Americans mostly. And I wanted to be like them so I had to adjust it.” Giannis went on to explain that the hardest assimilation for him was the American mindset, “The main thing is their thinking…to be more liberal, we were very conservative in the old country.” Similarly, another second-wave immigrant, Kostas Kappatos, stated that while finding a job and learning the school curriculum seemed straightforward to him,

---

204 Frank Giannis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, personal interview, Richmond, Virginia, June 21, 2013.
“other things were a little bit more difficult…different customs, different attitudes, different form of government. There were a lot of things you had to get used to…that you didn’t know of earlier.”

In 1980 Pastor Dombalis confirmed that some second-wave Greek immigrants initially expressed discontent with certain cultural adjustments made by the church. Nevertheless, the pastor explained with confidence that like the first wave of Greeks in Richmond, the second-wave migrants would adjust in due time. He said, “I am sure that in another twenty-five years these [Greek immigrants] will have the same attitude that we…have today.” Because the second-wave created a more distinctive gap in the rate of assimilation; Sociologist and historian Alice Scourby described Greek America as a continually fracturing Greek community. The arrival of the second wave in the late 1960s generated different rates of cultural adjustment because the new immigrants were becoming part of an immigrant cohort that had already been transitioning towards the conventions of their host country for decades. From a sociological standpoint, Scourby provided a similar explanation to that of Charles Moskos, who identified the three distinctive groups of Greek America. She explained the way many second-wave immigrants reacted to Greek American culture upon their arrival:

For the majority of the new immigrants, identification [was] rooted in their nationality and the church…It should not be surprising that the recent arrivals from Greece expected[ed] a Hellenized Church, thus repeating the pattern of earlier immigrants who sought continuity of experience and solidarity in the church. They view[ed] the introduction of English in the church as part of a conspiracy to ‘de-Hellenize’ it…In time, the children of the new immigrants may react against the ethnic church their parents hold on to so tenaciously, and if so, a new ethnic identity may take form to be determined, in part, by the structure of the larger society. 

205 Konstantine Kappatos, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, personal interview, Richmond, Virginia, November 11, 2012.

206 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 69.
For second-wave Greek immigrants in the South many of the aforementioned changes were apparent. Pastor Dombalis stated that several of the transformations in Richmond’s church were “attributed to the culture of the United States” and that they occurred in three distinctive areas: growth in involvement and membership, a rise in spirituality, and increased mental development.207 First, membership grew with the increase of Greeks in Richmond; the parish that was once 200 families when Dombalis began his service in 1954 had doubled to 425 families by 1980. Many of these families were members of the middle class; their position made evident by the church’s steady increase in minimum membership dues beginning in the late 1960s. In 1968 the “minimum obligation” was raised from $80 to $100 dollars a year; then again in 1969, the fee escalated to $110 per year; and finally to $120 per year after 1970.208

Second, Dombalis explained that the first Greek immigrants in Richmond possessed a “spirituality of simplicity,” or “one that had never been exposed to questions.” Pastor Dombalis believed the reason for this was that early spirituality had developed based on the belief that “this is what my parents believe…and I will keep my ties with Greece through my religion…and I don’t want anything to stir it.” However, when the American-born children of these immigrants were old enough to participate in church activities, they did not share the same connection to the old country as their parents and grandparents. Instead, the children of immigrants and subsequent

207 Dr. Reverend Constantine Dombalis, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, November 21, 1980, Richmond Oral History Association, Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University. Series XIII: Greek Americans in Richmond. Accession Number 8, #150 Box 18, January 1981.

208 Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 65th Anniversary Book, in Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records, Richmond, Virginia, 1982.
generations developed their own connection to their Greek heritage through the Greek Orthodox religion. In *The Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*, Charles Moskos examined the increased spirituality in second and third generations. Moskos stated that as a result, “It is remarkable not so much that religion of the Greek immigrants left an imprint on their children and grandchildren, but that the American generations are in many ways more Greek Orthodox than their contemporaries among middle-class youth in urban Greece.”

Lastly, the growing generation of American-born youth increased the church’s focus on educational programs. In his interview Dombalis explained, “Education has always been a part of the program…or of the culture of the Greeks. So when [my] dad came to America and we began to enroll in schools, we all went to college. And I think you will find that this is the goal of all immigrant parents—to give their kids an education…an education from which they were deprived.” In the 1950s, “a major transmission of Greek Orthodox commitment to the American born” lead to the founding of the Greek Orthodox Youth of America (GOYA).”

GOYA was a way for Greek American youth to combine both of their cultures. For instance, while clergy were in charge of providing GOYA members with religious guidance and activities, the Greek American youth also incorporated athletics into their programs; many GOYAns had basketball teams that competed against one another in the state. In 1967 Richmond’s GOYA had fifty-seven members. By 1980, membership had grown to 75 members. Pastor Dombalis shared that during his pastorate in Richmond, GOYA attendance was always in the “80 percent

---

210 Dr. Reverend Constantine Dombalis, Interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1980.
In 1966, the Greek church in Richmond approved plans to construct an addition to their building, part of which would house a full “American” gymnasium for GOYA soccer and basketball. GOYA athletics, Dombalis said, made it so the “Church [was] not only a place that they [the youth] go on Sundays.” Dombalis also described Sunday school as one of the most successful educational programs at Richmond’s Greek Orthodox Church. Sunday school, like GOYA, was also “unknown in Greece” but existed “in practically every church community” in the U.S.

The Greek church that early immigrants created in early twentieth-century America was “as much a replica as possible of what they knew in the old country.” Early Greek priests in America wore full beards, tall hats, and flowing robes, as was traditional in the old country. The church was segregated by gender—male congregants stood on the right and women stood on the left for services that were several hours long. However, with the arrival of new immigrants in the 1960s, transitions occurred at different rates throughout the U.S. Moreover, the changes demonstrated the assimilationist trend of the church itself, both structurally and culturally. Clergy began to dress in a Roman Catholic style and tended to be clean-shaven. In Greek America pews were introduced, “the custom of sexual segregation…vanished,” and “the

---

212 Dr. Reverend Constantine Dombalis, Interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1980
213 Dr. Reverend Constantine Dombalis, Interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1980
214 Dr. Reverend Constantine Dombalis, Interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1980
216 Moskos, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 70.
217 Scourby, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 73.
liturgy…streamlined down to about an hour and a half.”\textsuperscript{218} The Greek church in Richmond initiated all of these changes early on. When Pastor Dombalis began his service in 1954, the church services had shortened from two to three hours to one hour, English was used in sermons (different from the liturgy), and seating was not divided by gender. The church also encouraged English education in the late 1970s with the formation of a “pre-naturalization class” for immigrants who desired American citizenship. The twelve-week course, which was fully sponsored by Richmond’s Greek church, was open to Greek immigrants throughout the state of Virginia. In 1987 the Richmond’s parish newsletter reported, “Approximately 700 would-be aliens in the central Virginia area are now citizens of the United States through the efforts of the pre-naturalization classes.”\textsuperscript{219}

The quick rate of Americanization in Richmond’s Greek church created inevitable tension between newly arriving second-wave immigrants and first-wave immigrants. Historian Charles Moskos explained that this was a common occurrence:

The newcomers did not always meld easily into the existing Greek-American community….The new Greeks saw a Greek Orthodox Church and a Greek American community in which Hellenism had been diluted to an extent unrealized by the older immigrants. On their part, the older generation of immigrants was put off by what seemed to be an anti-American if not socialist tendency among some of the new Greeks. The old Greeks often described the new arrivals as being adverse to toiling long hours and unwilling to appreciate the privation which had led Greek Americans into the middle class…The old Greeks might say of the new that they expected too much for nothing, ‘they found the table all set.’\textsuperscript{220}

\textsuperscript{218} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 70.

\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Saints Constantine and Helen 70\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Book}, 1987.

\textsuperscript{220} Moskos, \textit{Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition}, 59.
In his interview with Dr. Biddle, Pastor Dombalis identified the cultural differences between the current members of the parish in 1980 (when the interview was conducted) and the second-wave newcomers. He attributed some of the apprehensiveness expressed by the second-wave immigrants to their insecurity of being in a “strange land” just like first wave immigrants once felt years before. Dombalis continued, “They don’t feel at ease with us because of the cultural gap. We have been exposed to the American culture and so our ways of recreation, our interest in social activities, athletic activities, our interest in cultural activities,” are different from those of the second-wave immigrants. Dombalis expressed his opinion about second-wave migrants, he said, “They tend to forget sometimes that we are all Greek Orthodox because they will emphasize Greek culture above the purpose of the Church. But they do this because of the insecurity they possess, they do this because they are in a strange land.” He concluded, “I am sure that in another twenty five years that these [second wave Greek immigrants]…will have the same attitude that we second and third generation Greeks have today.”

Dombalis’s opinion reflected a growing Greek American perspective at the time that the Greek Orthodox faith was something all members of the Greek community in America could share and was thus more of a priority to preserve than other cultural elements like language.

Of all the modifications made by the Greek church in Richmond to adapt to American society, the substitution of English into the liturgy was perhaps the hardest for second-wave immigrants to accept. Historian Charles Moskos asserted, “The language question has become one of the most divisive in the Greek church in America.” The first proposals for the use of English in the liturgy in Greek America arose in the 1940s. By the 1950s the inquiries became

---

221 Dr. Reverend Constantine Dombalis, Interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1980.
more serious, and thus the Archbishop of America authorized the use of English for sermons as well as declared English the official language of GOYA. Moskos argued, “The progression of English would have been inevitable and relatively smooth had it not been for the large influx of immigrants from Greece since 1966.” Oftentimes influenced by their location, Greek churches adapted to English-use at different rates across the United States. Moskos explained that region was most often the factor responsible for the varied momentum towards English-use:

Churches in the immigrant neighborhoods of the large cities in the North and East offered their services entirely in Greek. Churches in the metropolitan suburbs and in the West and South, those most likely to be attended by the American born, had services increasingly in English. In a manner of speaking, a kind of local option system was evolving.

At the 20th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress in New York in 1970, the Archdiocese of America addressed the inevitable language question head on by approving the substitution of English language in the liturgy. The Clergy Laity Congress believed the decision was the “only realistic action that could be taken in the light of the fact that a new generation of Greek Americans was emerging without competent knowledge of the Greek language. It was regarded as a genuine effort to reconcile Hellenism with demands of American society.” The Archdiocese however left the final decision to the individual church parishes and their priests to use English “as needed” in their services. Historian Lazar Odzak said that the English substitution resolution “simply confirmed the practice in use for years, especially in the southern churches…. The influx of some 86,000 Greeks between 1965 and 1971, made possible by the new 1965 Immigration Act did not retard the thrust towards English, probably because the newcomers were outnumbered by Greek Americans.”

---

224 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 144.
The decision, which was reached in June of 1970, was almost immediately enacted in Richmond’s Greek church by August that year. In 2013, second-wave Greek immigrant and parishioner of Richmond’s church, Frank Giannis, commented on English substitution in the liturgy, “I was born and raised with church in Greek. And it is a little more difficult for me to comprehend the English liturgy. But because of my children and grandchildren I have to accept it...But really and truly I like the liturgy in Greek and I don’t have a choice here in Richmond.” Another Richmond parish member and second-wave Greek immigrant, Mary Hlouverakis, was satisfied with Pastor Dombalis’s use of both English and Greek in the liturgy, however, she says since Dombalis’s tenure, a lot has changed. “Father Dombalis used some Greek, but now they do not use any. I cannot tell that I am in a Greek church.”

Comparatively, the verdict generated sharp backlash from dissidents in Greek communities, especially in New York where Greek was chiefly spoken. In The Greek Americans, Alice Scourby used letters written by New York Greeks to the Archdiocese’s newspaper the Orthodox Observer, to demonstrate the divided responses generated by the Clergy Laity’s decision for English-substitution. One parishioner expressed, “Until more English is included in our Liturgy and Holy Week serviced, we will remain a religiously static institution, a Byzantine Museum, a Greek social club, but not really a Christian church.” An opposing

227 Mary Hlouverakis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, personal interview, Richmond, Virginia, June 12, 2013.
228 Moskos, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 84.
congregate explained, “I am shocked to read from people born and raised in this country who are so naïve as to believe that by abolishing the Greek language will somehow miraculously fill our churches with youth.”

For first-wave Greek immigrants establishing church parishes in the U.S. at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Greek school was one of their most important conduits for transmitting Greek ethnic identity to their children. However, with each new generation of American-born children, Greek school attendance has ebbed and flowed. In many respects, the region largely impacted the decline in Greek language speaking. In fact, of the seven causes for the “decline in the ethnic language link” recorded by sociologist Alice Scourby, several elements from the list existed in Richmond. First, “Greek organizations were English speaking, particularly AHEPA with its large membership, thus discouraging functional maintenance of ethnic language.” Second, “the upward mobility of Greeks expedited language shift.” And finally, intermarriages often led to less or no Greek being spoken in the home.

While the Greek parish in Richmond had maintained an operative Greek school since its genesis in 1917, the effectiveness of the school appeared to decrease with each generation. In 1962 classes were held three days a week for children and once a week in the evenings for adults. American-born Richmond church member and husband to a first generation Greek woman, Dr. Clifford Ferguson explained, “it’s difficult to send a child to Greek school and expect them to converse in Greek.” Instead, Ferguson argued that more effective methods would be either to speak Greek in the home or to take a pilgrimage to Greece, “I think that’s the key as

---


far as speaking the language. We keep on exposing each generation of youngsters to Greek school, but maybe they will learn to read a little,” on the other hand a trip to Greece will provide exposure that “should give them an appreciation of the language at the same time it will be a strong reminder of what their heritage is…I think it would be nice if every youngster of Greek extraction went back to see where their relatives are from.” Long-time Richmond parish members Pat and John Coukos said their son’s and daughter’s proficiency in the Greek language owed to their efforts to speak Greek in the home. In 1982 Pat explained that this was the best method to pass on the Greek language because the Greek school in Richmond was ineffective, “The children coming from an American environment going to Greek school for one hour a week is not going to teach them Greek.” She continued, “If they went to Greek school every day like I did…five days a week for two hours a day, there would be a different outcome.” However, second and third generations of Greek Americans did not put the same emphasis on language preservation as their parents. While Pat said both of her adult children were very active in the church and spoke proficient Greek, she did not believe that her grandchildren would learn the language. She said, “I am afraid I don’t see much direction.”

---

233 Dr. Clifford Ferguson, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, May 24, 1983, Richmond Oral History Association Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Series XIII: Greek Americans in Richmond, Accession Number 8, #152 Box 19, January 1981.

234 Pat and John Coukos, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, September 23, 1982, Richmond Oral History Association Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Series XIII: Greek Americans in Richmond, Accession Number 8, #149 Box 18, January 1981.

235 Pat and John Coukos, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1982.

236 Pat and John Coukos, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1982.
Thirty years later in 2013, second-wave Greek immigrants shared similar viewpoints. Frank Giannis, a current member of Richmond’s parish agreed with Ferguson and Pat and John Coukos about the dissolving of the Greek language, “I think the language is disappearing slowly and I see it everyday.” Similarly, when asked what she believed was the most important Greek cultural element to preserve, Mary Hlouverakis passionately declared, “Our language, our language, our language!” She continued, “We came to a place where the language that is spoken foreign to us [English]. Our children must learn this language [Greek], it is their language. You cannot leave behind the Greek. If you do not know Greek, you cannot speak Greek, you will never be able to teach them [children] Greek. The children that are born with English, they will lose the Hellenism.”

Dr. Biddle’s interviews in the 1980s as well as the present-day interviews with Greek parish members in Richmond evidenced that the issue of language preservation among first and second wave Greek immigrants and their first generation children persisted. However, very little has been done in the Richmond Greek church in the last three decades to address the language issue. One reason for this lack of confrontation is best explained through the words of a Greek parish member from Mobile, Alabama. Historian Lazar Odzak utilized the account of Sophia Clikas to demonstrate the largest distinction between southern and other Greek parishes. Clikas said, “the biggest difference…was that the southern [parishes] do not have the ‘compound barricade’ mentality about their church, evident elsewhere.” Comparably, Frank Giannis, Richmond resident and Greek immigrant, said that while it was difficult at first he eventually

237 Frank Giannis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.
238 Mary Hlouverakis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.
accepted the adaptations of the Greek community in Richmond and of the church “because of my children and grandchildren” and the overall benefits of life in Richmond.\textsuperscript{240} Based on the personal accounts of many Greek immigrants in Richmond, the benefits of being Greek in Richmond prevailed over their discontent with certain cultural practices. Odzak argued that because Greek church communities in the South avoided large-scale ideological conflicts, they were able to benefit from “comfortable homes in middle class neighborhoods, the rapid inclusion of Greeks into the business, [and the] social and political life of the wider society.”

Notwithstanding, by 1987 Richmond’s church bulletin depicted a unified parish, bound by their faith and the appreciation for the struggle of their predecessors. The bulletin read, “Our parents came and struggled…they have come so that we may have Life and have it to the Full. May this torch be carried by those that follow.”\textsuperscript{241}

Comparatively, language preservation took priority over other cultural elements for several Greek church communities in the urban North.\textsuperscript{242} Because the Archdiocese of America was headquartered there, New York was central to the efforts for Greek language preservation. The Archdiocese created a parochial school system, which “developed out of the efforts of Greek immigrant parents to pass on the Greek heritage, especially the knowledge of Greek language, to their offspring.”\textsuperscript{243} By 1980, the Archdiocese had established twelve different day schools in New York with total enrollment of approximately 4,000 students.\textsuperscript{244} Twenty-two more schools

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{240} Frank Giannis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{241} Saints Constantine and Helen 70\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Book, 1987.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Sandis, “The Greek Population of New York City,” 84.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Sandis, “The Greek Population of New York City,” 85.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Sandis, “The Greek Population of New York City,” 85.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
offered language lessons in the afternoon. By October 1982, there were 21 Greek American day schools and 416 afternoon language schools in New York with approximately 38,771 students enrolled. Richmond resident Mary Hlouverakis, who immigrated to New York and lived there for two years in the late 1970s, confirmed that New York was much different than Richmond when it came to Greek language preservation. She explained “In New York it is so different. In New York they chase Hellenism. The kids learn Greek and they even have Greek in the schools.”

In Chicago, language preservation held such a high degree of importance that Greek communities proposed a bilingual education plan for secondary schools in 1972. The plan, however, created conflict. Historian Charles Moskos summarized the situation:

> On the one side, supporting the bilingual approach, were liberal educators who wanted the schools to recognize and accept a larger responsibility for non-English speakers, the Hellenic Council on Education (consisting largely of second generation Greek American teachers and school administrators), the Greek ethnic press, and many of the immigrant parents in the neighborhood. On the other side, opposing bilingual education were the large majority of the second generation Greek American residents, as well as some of the new immigrants in the neighborhood, the Budlong parents association, and the parish board of the local Greek Orthodox Church….

While Greek communities in New York and Chicago experienced internal conflict over English-language substitution, Richmond’s Greek church prioritized other matters and focused energies on interacting with the local community. In 1973, the Richmond Greek church hosted the Archbishop Iakovos, the leader of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. A banquet in his honor brought out several important individuals in attendance including: Senator Harry F.

---


246 Mary Hlouverakis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.

Byrd, Congressman David E. Satterfield, and R. E. Schoenenberger, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Services. Three years later in 1976 the Greek church in Richmond hosted its first cultural festival—another way the Greek church in Richmond gained support from the Richmond community. The Greek festival is one of the most familiar ways that Greek church communities in the U.S. have been able to show the compatibility of their culture with American national ideals. A product of the “new ethnicity,” the Greek festival is characteristically a two-to-three-day fair exhibiting Greek food, music, and history for the local public. Greek festivals did not begin in the South until the late 1960s. The first Greek festival in Richmond was held as a small-scale fundraising event for the Richmond Children’s Hospital. In and of itself, the festival’s philanthropic purpose represented another example of the parish’s involvement with the local community. The immensely positive response from the public in 1976 promoted the expansion of the festival from a few food booths inside the gymnasium to an inside-outside event with tours and lectures in the Cathedral, screenings of Greek films, an array of food booths, a shopping area, and musical entertainment. In 1982 over the course of four days, approximately forty thousand people attended the Greek festival in Richmond. In 1992, in an article entitled “Is the Greek Festival Out of Hand,” *Style Weekly* reporter Tim Bullis investigated how the rapid growth in attendance to the Greek festival, reported to be eighty thousand people at that point, had impacted neighborhoods in the area. Bullis interviewed a handful of residents who complained about parking difficulties, trash in their years and issues with alcohol leaving the premises of the festival. One resident told Bullis, “It’s a great festival atmosphere, but the event needs more than six police officers monitoring it, if there are going to

---

248 *Saints Constantine and Helen 65th Anniversary Book, 1987*
Father Dombalis responded to the complaints saying, “The church is concerned about the neighbors’ feelings…and we will seek to rectify problems [reported] from the following year.” Bullis reported that the church handled their neighborly issues quickly and argued the other side of the story that several residents in the area support the Greek festival. According to Bullis one resident told him, “The festival has never bothered me, even the parking problem or the noise level.” The assistant manager of a nearby apartment complex also commented, “The money goes towards a worthy cause, so people shouldn’t worry about four days worth of parking inconvenience.” Another neighbor told Bullis, “The Greeks put so much money into the community.” Because of the festival’s growth Bullis suggested “To help spur downtown’s economy, city officials want big events like the Greek Festival…to move to the Coliseum or Richmond Center.” However, other residents and church members argued “People are not going to go if it’s downtown. They come for the culture, not the food.”

Regrettably of the debates over the Greek festival’s immense growth in 1992, the Richmond public showed overall appreciation and support for, and curiosity about the Greek community and its traditions, religion, culture, and food. In June of 1987, Style Weekly magazine featured a cover story, “Growing up Greek.” On the front of the issue, a photograph shows an older Greek woman sprinkling powdered sugar on a traditional Greek dessert. Reporter Sherrie Weiner began the article describing her observation of a “sisterhood” of Greek women cooking together in the kitchen, “There is so much sisterhood here, an outsider can’t help but ache a little to be part of it. In 15 years, anyone will understand the jokes. By then they’ll speak English.”


This idea of an assimilating Greek community was the premise of Weiner’s article. She proceeded:

The vestiges of an old Greek way of life here are giving way to the new. For in the 100 or so years that Greeks have populated the United States, the language and some of the customs have begun to die off as surely as the immigrants who brought them here. Thirty years ago, most every household spoke Greek at home. Today, some teenagers say they can hardly understand their own grandparents. Growing up Greek doesn’t mean what it did a generation or two ago.\(^\text{252}\)

Weiner argues however, that while noticeable changes were occurring in Richmond’s Greek community, what stood out to her about the group was its ability to preserve many of its traditions and rich heritage, “Today growing up Greek means more babies than not say their first words in English. It still means church on Sundays, and for some, at least occasional Greek school…It doesn’t mean that a rich heritage…is lost to the history books. But times sure have changed.”\(^\text{253}\) Weiner interviewed a handful of members from the Greek community to demonstrate what it was like to be Greek in Richmond to Style Weekly readers. First generation Greek American Gus Derdevanis, a retired computer analyst, who “grew up Greek in Richmond” explained that he lived a happy childhood and rarely experienced any prejudice about his ethnicity aside from “a few ignorant kids at school who used ethnic slurs.” Weiner continued that Derdevanis “hasn’t heard a cross word in decades, such is the acceptance and prosperity of the hard-working, well-educated Greek community.” Another member of the parish interviewed, Elaine Mandaleris, a researcher for the Federal Reserve Bank, said growing up Greek “was very much like growing up anything else.” A first generation Greek with two immigrant parents Mandaleris said that in grade school she “didn’t feel apart from the rest of the crowd…although


some school friends couldn’t quite grasp her faith.” Overall, Weiner’s article emphasized that Greek people in Richmond were an asset to the city. She concluded with an interview with Pastor Dombalis who she described as “full of warmth and praise for his congregation of 2,000 members who have swelled to capture leading positions in Richmond’s growth and development.”

On Sunday May 23, 1976, Saints Constantine and Helen was elevated from church to cathedral. The change in title designated the Greek church in Richmond as the central hub for all Greek churches in Virginia. The public announcement of this promotion was at a banquet organized by the Richmond parish to honor the Bicentennial Celebration of the United States. The affair was held at the Grand Ballroom of the John Marshall Hotel and its theme was “Yassou America” which translates to “a toast to the good health of America.” Once again, this event exhibited the not only the public’s support of Richmond’s Greek community, but also the Greek community’s acceptance of the Americanism. Among the guests were once again prominent American politicians, Senator Byrd, Governor Mills E. Godwin, Mayor Thomas Bliley as well as Greek Ambassador Emmanuel Alexandrakis. The following year in 1968, Pastor Dombalis was awarded the title of Archdiocesan Vicar of the Greek Orthodox Churches of Virginia, a high honor that further solidified the importance of Richmond’s Greek church to the Greek population in the state of Virginia.

By the second half of the 20th century the Richmond Greek community had successfully assimilated with their host community. Starting in the early 1960s the Greek church community received favorable support from the public figures like Senator Byrd. Later their cultural festival drew in locals by the thousands. While the second-wave immigrants initially struggled to adapt

to the rapidly assimilating Greek community in Richmond, their concerns with cultural losses were often outweighed by other benefits to assimilation. In stark comparison, in larger communities like New York, adjustment rates for recent second-wave arrivals were much lower. Evidence for this is shown from the efforts of AHEPA in New York in 1972, which formed a subgroup called the Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee (HANAC) to deal with problems of “deplorable housing, exploitation of new immigrants, [and] family fights,” to name a few. In 1978 HANAC had a paid staff of sixty members working in offices all over the city. “HANAC sponsored symposia on Greek American social needs, initiated English language structure for Greek adults, and worked for Greek English bilingual education in public schools.” HANAC’s mission was “geared toward the problems of recent arrivals from Greece.” Chicago also formed a similar organization in the later 1970s, the Hellenic Foundation of Chicago, to deal with similar issues. Charles Moskos says that “Greek youth gangs of a rudimentary sort [had] surfaced in both the New York and Chicago Greektowns, apparently in reaction to the incursions of Puerto Rican youths.”

The small-scale Greek communities in the South proved beneficial in some ways when compared to the large communities of the North and West. Because of their size, Southern communities of Greeks such as Richmond, tended to spread out and blend in with their host community. Historian Lazar Odzak argues that smaller Greek communities in the South were able to avoid large cultural divisions because they did not form cultural enclaves like other regions, “in northern and Midwestern urban industrial areas, densely settled Greektowns slowed acculturation and enable the formation of sub-groups…that produced cultural feuds…”

---


contrast, numerically smaller Greek immigrant communities in southern cities avoided the
formation of such limiting enclaves and accelerated the social adaptation of immigrants to an
altering and growing host society."\textsuperscript{257} The long-term result of increased assimilation in the 1970s
as more Greek immigrants arrived, was that groups of Greeks in the South were less likely to
face burdensome ideological conflicts like those that arose in New York and Chicago. The Greek
community of Houston, Texas, for instance shared several similarities with that of Richmond.
Like Richmond, they never formed a Greek town. In a study of Houston’s Greek community,
Alice Scourby presented similar findings to those presented here about Richmond. Scourby
reported, “The host culture has not shown prejudice or practiced discrimination against members
of the Greek community.”\textsuperscript{258} Scourby’s study of the community demonstrated decades’ worth of
rapid assimilation, thanks to their smaller numbers and their geographic dispersal around
Houston. The Americanization of Greek culture in Houston also created tension when second-
wave Greek immigrants arrived. Scourby observed that in 1970s Houston “an ideology of
differentness” was present when it came to cultural matters like language, but similar to
Richmond, English speaking had increased in Houston because the “Greek language [was]
becoming less important to recent generations of Greek Americans.”\textsuperscript{259}

The increasing rate of intermarriage represented another means of measuring the impact
of the Southern Variant in Richmond, Virginia. Moskos reported that “in the 1960s, mixed
couples accounted for three out of ten church marriages, and by the mid-1970s the figure was
about half.” While this trend was occurring in Greek communities nation-wide, intermarriage

\textsuperscript{257} Odzak, \textit{Demetrios is now Jimmy,}” 70.

\textsuperscript{258} Scourby, \textit{The Greek Americans}, 77.

\textsuperscript{259} Scourby, \textit{The Greek Americans}, 78.
was the most frequent “in communities of the West and South.” In the early 1960s, the Archdiocese of America, under the leadership of Archbishop Iakovos, changed their position on intermarriage “in the face of its frequency.” Alice Scourby uses data from the 1970s to show that the rate of intermarriage for Greeks in the United States was on the rise. Scourby provided figures from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America that show “from January 1 to December 31, 1978 there were a total of 4,740 weddings in the church. Of these couples, 2,295 were both Greek Orthodox and 2,445 were mixed marriages where only one individual was Greek Orthodox.” Scourby assessed that “in terms of the archdiocese’s figures, the number of mixed marriages performed within the church increased from slightly more than 28 percent of the total in 1963 to almost 50 percent in 1976 and probably more than 50 percent in 1978.”

The number of intermarriages in Richmond from 1978 to 1986 was tallied based on the analysis of names from the church’s marriage registry. For this reason, these numbers remain a relative estimate:

1978: 10 out of 24 total marriages were intermarriages
1979: 7 out of 14 total marriages were intermarriages
1980: 7 out of 16 total marriages were intermarriages
1981: 8 out of 17 total marriages were intermarriages
1982: 8 out of 17 total marriages were intermarriages
1983: 10 out of 23 total marriages were intermarriages

---


262 Scourby, *The Greek Americans*, 147.

1984: 8 out of 18 total marriages were intermarriages
1985: 14 out of 32 total marriages were intermarriages
1986: 18 out of 40 total marriages were intermarriages

The figures show that consistently, for almost ten years, intermarriages accounted for a significant number of the weddings performed in the church and were steadily rising as time progressed.

As the Greek church Americanized, the strict “old country” edict against intermarriage began to fade and was replaced by the new expectation that a Greek parishioner’s marriage to a non-Greek spouse was acceptable, as long as the ceremony took place in the Greek church. Nick Gamvus, assistant to Pastor Dombalis, told Dr. Biddle in 1980, that traditionally in the Greek Orthodox faith, baptism could occur at any age. Furthermore, if a non-Greek spouse was already Christian, a baptism ceremony would not be necessary—this individual could become a member of the church as long as they attended services. Gamvus expressed what was increasingly becoming the common view among Americanizing Greek churches: “Number one we are an Orthodox church and number two I think we think of ourselves as Greek Americans.”

In the United States with the increase in intermarriage, elevating the importance of faith over that of ethnic preservation was necessary for Greek churches to maintain membership in America—especially in the South where this transition began much earlier. In 1984, sociologist Alice ________________

264 Marriage Records, in Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral record, Richmond, Virginia.
265 Nick Gamvus, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, December 17, 1980, Richmond Oral History Association, Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University. Series XIII: Greek Americans in Richmond. Accession Number 8, #153 Box 19, January 1981.
Scourby predicted this inevitable transition, “Undoubtedly in the future, Americanization will facilitate the acceptance of Orthodoxy as a preference in mate selection rather than ethnicity.”266 She continued, “Even where ethnic feelings run high, it is difficult to sustain ethnic loyalty in the realm of marital choice in the United States where love is considered to be a matter of individual choice and personal happiness.”267

The account of Dr. Clinton Ferguson, an American married to a Greek woman in Richmond, demonstrates the way the church’s community regarded a non-Greek spouse. Dr. Ferguson described his transition to Greek Orthodoxy as undemanding. “At the time we were married I was Methodist….Father gave me some reading material on the Greek Orthodox theology and no problem at all.”268 When Dr. Ferguson and his wife had children, they practiced what was common for an intermarried couple in the Greek church, “whether it is the male or female who marries out (but has had an Orthodox ceremony), the children are likely to be baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church and to be raised according to Greek traditions…”269 Ferguson explained, “It was easier for me to become Greek Orthodox than my wife to become Methodist—and so our family has been Greek Orthodox ever since.”270 All three children attended Greek school and GOYA. When Dr. Ferguson was asked if he and his first-generation Greek wife had differing opinions about whether their children should marry in the Greek church he replied, “My wife has a particularly strong opinion on this issue, she is always wanting the

266 Scourby, *The Greek Americans*, 149.
268 Dr. Ferguson, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1983.
269 Scourby, *The Greek Americans*, 150.
270 Dr. Ferguson, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1983.
boys to marry nice Greek girls…all they do is smile…they at present time have non-Greek girlfriends…at this age they know what they want to do.”

In his 1982 interview with Dr. Biddle, second-wave Greek immigrant Nick Mouris exhibited a similar tie to old world custom regarding marriage. Mouris said that both of his sons were married to women of Greek descent in the Greek church and, “That’s the way I like it.”

While Ferguson identified himself as a Greek Orthodox Christian, he explained that as a non-Greek he would always feel some detachment from ethnic Greeks. “I have always felt, and still do to some degree, that I have a certain amount of catching up to do.” Alice Scourby identified a similar feeling among non-Greek spouses in the Houston, Texas, Greek community in the 1970s, who involved in the activities of the ethnic community, did not feel like “bona fide group members…an exclusion based upon the fact that they were not born Greek.”

Nevertheless, Dr. Ferguson expressed an overall feeling of acceptance from the Greek church community in Richmond, he explained, “[they] have received me so completely into the life of the church…I am very grateful….because they have made me feel at home…so whatever I can do to give back a little bit…for the church and the people here, I want to do.”

**Greek Women in Richmond:**

---

271 Dr. Ferguson, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1983.

272 Nick Mouris, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, 1982, Richmond Oral History Association Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Series XIII: Greek Americans in Richmond, Accession Number 8, #157 Box 19, January 1981.

273 Dr. Ferguson, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1983.

The second half of the twentieth century also marked a time of change for the role of Greek women in America. Of the group of Greek women accounted for in Richmond by the *U.S. Census* in 1910 and 1920, none had jobs. This was the result of a long-standing Greek tradition that women belonged in the home and men were the primary breadwinners. In other regions of the United States during the early twentieth century like New England, women tended to go against this tradition to work in factories because of the unfavorable economic conditions for Greek men. In Dr. Biddle’s interview with Dr. Clinton Ferguson, he recalled that his wife’s Greek immigrant mother worked in a textile mill in New Bedford, Massachusetts. However, by the mid twentieth century, the Americanization of Greek communities created much different circumstances for women. Sociologist and historian Alice Scourby stated, “While all immigrant women of sixty years ago were admonished to stay in the house, except under dire circumstances, outside employment for recent arrivals [became] a necessity.”

Many first-wave Greeks, who had Americanized by the later part of the twentieth century, let go of the belief that Greek women should not work. However, this was an adjustment for second-wave Greek immigrant women, many of whom still followed the traditional custom. In 1981, second-wave Greek immigrant, Mrs. Alexandra Brown, told Dr. Thelma Biddle that her restaurateur husband did not allow her to work, even when the restaurant needed help. Brown said, “A lot of time I told him let me come and let me work at the cash register. He said I’d rather close my store than let you work.”

Mary Hlouverakis, who immigrated to the United States in 1975, said she was

---

275 Scourby, *The Greek Americans*, 144.

276 Mrs. Alexander Brown, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, tape recording, Richmond, Virginia, September 25, 1981, Richmond Oral History Association Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Series XIII: Greek Americans in Richmond, Accession Number 8, #147 and 148 Box 19, January 1981.
impressed with the treatment of women in the United States in comparison to Greece. “The men are nice to their women. While not everyone is good, overall the men here [in the U.S.] are much better towards women than Greek men…the women in the U.S. were much more comfortable.”

Mary, who did not work in Greece because of her husband’s success as a cardiologist, became a manicurist in the United States to help her husband support the family. In her interview Mary shared that her eventual success and the friendships she developed with her devoted Richmond customers defined her as a person, an opportunity she insisted she would have not received had she stayed in Greece. “I love this place [Richmond]. I came without knowing the language with out anything, but we made something…I have no complaints of this place…my… customers they helped me and they elevated me…I will never forget them, they are in my heart because they stayed by me like relatives, not friends.”

The story of Richmond resident and Greek immigrant Lia Moudilos exemplifies how the opportunity to work was often empowering for second-wave Greek immigrant women, who were not used to having such independence. Lia, who came from a small village in Sparta, Greece, described her experience moving to Richmond in 1968 with her husband Nick in a 2013 interview. “Everything was different. It’s hard when you don’t speak the language, you don’t have any money, and you don’t know anybody, it was hard.” She continued, “I was lonely too, because Nick worked all day and all night.”

When the couple opened Nick’s Roman Terrace, a Greco-Italian eatery, it was the second restaurant Lia had encountered in her life. Her strict upbringing in a small Greek village kept her isolate and made American (and earlier Canadian) culture especially difficult to adjust to, “When we opened the restaurant, I was scared to work in

---

277 Mary Hlouverakis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.
278 Lia Moudilos, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, personal interview, Richmond, Virginia, March 28, 2013.
the front. I didn’t know the language and I was scared the Americans were going to jump me if they didn’t like the food…I was scared.”

Nevertheless, Lia found her American employees to be kind and helpful; she shadowed the waitresses everyday and watched them interact with customers to practice speaking. Within six months, Lia learned to speak English. Eventually, she overcame her fear to interact with customers and her “front of the house” personality became one of the alluring features of the restaurant. A 1989 Richmond Times-Dispatch review stated, “Lia Moudilos welcomes diners to Nick’s Roman Terrace at 8051-A W. Broad St. with the consistent friendliness and charm that have helped make the restaurant’s mix of Greek and Italian specialties a West End favorite.”

Lia was passionate about her job, “The restaurant was my life. Even the times that we closed, like on Saturday afternoon, I was at the restaurant making food and desserts. That’s how much I wanted the customers to like it and be happy.” She concluded, “People showed me so much love, for the first time in my life, I felt secure and so good about my job.”

The Archdiocese of America began incorporating American gender ideals as early as 1937 under the leadership of Archbishop Athenagoras, who ensured the organization of a Philoptocho Society (women’s philanthropic society) in nearly every Greek church community in the United States, “thus bringing women officially into the structure of the church.” The Archbishop was not able to make these changes without resistance and apprehension, however.

---

279 Lia Moudilos, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.


281 Lia Moudilos, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.

282 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 84.
His eventual acceptance by the Greek population in the U.S. came from several factors: the political climate in Greece becoming less turbulent, “the native-born Greeks [finding] the politics of the Old World irrelevant, their parents were beginning to view their adopted country as their permanent home, and their concern with the future of their own nuclear families created an atmosphere conducive to the archbishop’s reforms.”

The early efforts of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in the late 1930s to initiate more liberalized gender roles into church marked only the beginning of a long lasting dialogue about the matter. Sociologist Alice Scourby showed that forty years after Archbishop Athenagoras’s endeavors, “traditional role expectations [continued] to be the norm for the Greek male and female across generations.” Using data from the 1970 census, Scourby demonstrated that “82 percent of native-born males of Greek descent, twenty-five years and over had completed four years of college or more, whereas 20 percent of the females did.” Scourby further assessed her findings from the census by testing a sample of 75 students, male and female, from four colleges in the New York Metropolitan area to discover their attitudes towards the church, family, and ethnicity. What Scourby found was an array of views “which varied sometimes according to generation, sometimes according to sex, and other times, both were irrelevant.” Generally, she found that Greek women of all generations “were generally sympathetic to the goals of the women’s movement…they were all motivated to find employment after graduation, they also expected to marry, remain home during the child-rearing years, and eventually re-enter the work force.” Scourby discovered that men were more divided in their feelings towards the women’s movement, “The first-generation of men were overwhelmingly opposed to the goals of the [women’s] movement; the second—and the third-generation of males did not believe that

---

283 Scourby, *The Greek Americans*, 84.
premarital sex should stigmatize the female…Paradoxically…they were averse to removing the word *obey* from the marriage service.”

The individual accounts of Mary Hloverakis, Lia Moudilos, and Dr. Ferguson’s insights about his wife, showed how individual Greek family units in Richmond adapted to changing gender ideals in America. Notwithstanding, Alice Scourby’s study exhibited that the rate of conformity on this matter varied throughout Greek America. Even in the rapidly Americanizing Greek church in Richmond, members struggled to reach a consensus on gender roles well into the 1970s. The congregation, which elected the first woman to their Church Council in 1962, was evidently moving away from old world views. However, in February 1977, two sermons given by Pastor Dombalis, which stressed the role of the Greek wife as a homemaker, brought to the surface an ideological division among parish members. In fact, the Pastor’s words created such tension amongst church members that the *Richmond Times Dispatch* carried a report on the issue in March. Disgruntled congregates stated that Pastor Dombalis, “stressed a classical role of a wife as a homemaker and comforter to her husband…he said that a housewife can think of a home as a chore or as a vocation of the highest significance,” a view many in the congregation no longer identified with.\(^{284}\) Pastor Dombalis defended his position “as being in the mainstream of the 3,000-year-old Greek culture.” He said, “There is no more significant role in life than that of a homemaker.”\(^{285}\)

The Richmond parish’s early election of a woman to their church council evidenced the group’s early transition towards American gender ideals and the conflict in 1977 with Pastor

---


Dombalis’s sermon indicated that members of the parish felt strongly enough about their assimilate views on gender to disagree with their pastor. Comparatively, churches in other regions with a higher concentration of Greeks held more strongly onto old worldviews. In the 1960s the parish of St. Markela in Astoria, New York, which was “attended by blue collar workers,” was referred to by the Archdiocese as a “rebel church,” because of their anti-assimilationist practices. 286 Their neighboring church St. Demetrios, with a population similar to Sts. Constantine and Helen in Richmond, “comprised largely of middle-class parishioners,” strongly aligned with the Greek Archdiocese of America, which was Americanizing their views on gender to keep up with the host society. 287 The two Astoria churches had several ideological conflicts between them regarding what constituted Greek ethnicity, but their core issue for dispute was gender roles in the church. Members of St. Markela believed St. Demetrios’s liberalized views of gender were “deleterious to ethnic survival.” 288 The first-hand account of an anonymous member of the St. Markela Church gave insight into the parish’s belief system: “The woman has some power, subtle power. The man has the major power.” In her study of the two churches, sociologist Alice Scourby explained that among the parishioners of St. Markela, “male children [were considered] more important than females.” Ideological conflicts such as this in the 1960s were especially common in areas with a large population of second-wave immigrants, many of whom at the time sustained a tie to the old-world system regarding gender roles.

286 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 142.
287 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 142.
288 Scourby, The Greek Americans, 142.
Second-wave Greeks and Jobs in Richmond:

Richmond, Virginia, was often the second or third destination for second-wave Greek immigrants. Oftentimes, these individuals first immigrated to large northern cities like New York or Chicago, or elsewhere if they already had family in the U.S. Although Richmond was not the first destination for the Greek immigrants it became the place where they chose to settle. The reasons for this comply with the Southern Variant. Together, the small population of Greeks in Richmond as well as the endeavors of the first immigrants, helped the Greek community to become well established in city beginning in the 1960s. Greeks had a reputable church which became the central hub for the state of Virginia. Starting in 1975, American locals became familiar with Greek culture and came in droves for the church’s ethnic festival each year, well known politicians continually praised and supported the Greek church and community, Greek businesses, especially restaurants were popular and successful, and the majority of Greek immigrants and their families that lived in Richmond were members of the middle class.

The Southern Variant, which argues Greeks in the American South found success through entrepreneurial ventures, sooner than Greek immigrants in other regions during the early twentieth century was true for the first Greek immigrants in Richmond. Repetitively, sources indicated that this aspect of the Southern Variant remained relevant to the experience of second-wave Greek immigrants in Richmond. Sources showed that by the second half of the twentieth century, the majority of the Greek community in Richmond was financially secure. In her 1983 interview with Dr. Clifford Ferguson, Dr. Thelma Biddle asked the professional economist, “I’ve never met a poor Greek here [in Richmond]…why is this?” Dr. Ferguson responded, “The Greeks with a great deal of hard work and a great deal of saving ways, really are not among our
A 1987 Style Weekly article entitled “Growing up Greek,” provided an insight into a Hellenic upbringing, and depicted an opinion from the Richmond public that Greeks in the city were highly respected by the larger community. Additionally, evidence from the almost thirty oral history interviews utilized and collected for this study, supplied accounts of Greeks in the 1980s and from present-day (2012 and 2013), where every individual claimed to be a member of the middle class. In their accounts, several of narrators expressed certainty that their good fortune was related to living in Richmond.

Dr. John Hlouverakis, a successful cardiologist in Kavala, Greece, immigrated to New York with his wife Mary in 1975 to be closer to family. Although Dr. Hlouverakis strove to learn English within six months of their arrival, he struggled with medical examinations in the U.S. Because they could not establish themselves economically, Dr. Hlouverakis and his wife decided to move back to Greece. Before they left however, Dr. Hlouverakis’s sister who lived in Richmond, begged him to come there first before giving up on the United States. He said, “So my sister from here [Richmond], she wrote me and she told me, ‘John, before you go to Greece again back, come here to Richmond, we have friends here, doctor friends, maybe they going to help you.’ And we came in Richmond and we found a nice job, hard job, but we were happy again, happy again.” In Richmond, Dr. Hlouverakis quickly found a hospital job and eventually, through the help and support of an American cardiologist, was made an assistant physician in Saint Mary’s Hospital cardiology department. While he was unable to have his cardiology degree fully recognized in the United States, Dr. Hlouverakis was happy he came to

---

289 Dr. Clifford Fergusen, interviewed by Dr. Thelma Biddle, 1983.


Richmond where he found success and was able to remain close to his family, “I was happy in Richmond because I had my sister here. And my brother was first in New York, but after, he came here. So I had my sister and my brother. So me and my wife were very happy in Richmond. And the people in Richmond, they loved us very much.”

Frank Giannis and Kostas Kappatos, second-wave Greek immigrants living in Richmond, both immigrated to the United States to escape turbulence in their hometowns and to pursue an education. In 1956, Giannis left his home in Istanbul, Turkey, because the territorial conflict between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus sparked several violent anti-Greek riots. Kappatos left Greece in 1969 to escape the unstable conditions created by the Greek Civil War. Giannis came to Richmond to attend graduate school at the University of Richmond. Kostas lived with his brother in Portsmouth, Virginia, and attended Old Dominion University, eventually transferring to Virginia Tech—followed by graduate study at George Washington University in Washington D.C. While earning his degree, Frank Giannis found a job working as a credit manager for People’s Furniture Store. He said “I did not have too much trouble” finding work in Richmond. After a year at the furniture store he found a job working for the state of Virginia as the auditor of public accounts. Giannis explained that what kept him in Richmond was the close-knit Greek community and economic success. After some years working for the state, he received an elevated position as the vice president of American Paper Company. Similarly, after receiving his graduate degree in electric engineering, Kostas Kappatos relocated to Richmond for an opportunity to serve as Vice President for a newly operating electric corporation, Old Dominion Electric Cooperatives.

---

292 Dr. John Hlouverakis, interviewed by Nicole Kappatos, 2013.
Nick Mouris immigrated to the United States in 1951 to work on a farm in Missouri. During his travels, he met a priest on his way to Richmond, Virginia, to start his pastorate at Sts. Constantine and Helen. The pastor told Mouris that if he did not find success in Missouri, he should come to Richmond. Less than a year later, Mouris left his farming job in Missouri to seek out entrepreneurial opportunities in Richmond. In 1980, he told Dr. Biddle that he came to Richmond “for a better life.” With the help of a welcoming Greek community, Mouris found work immediately in a bakery. In the early 1960s when he was able to afford his own business, Mouris opened Nick’s Produce and International Food Market. The market, originally located a few blocks from the Greek church at Main and Foushee, catered mostly to the local Greek community, selling products imported from Greece. In 1980 the store moved to Broad Street, a more central location in the city. After the Greek festival introduced Greek food to the Richmond public in the 1970s, Mouris’s customer base expanded to both Greeks and Americans.

Overall the survey of second-wave Greek immigrants in Richmond showed that much of the Greek community in Richmond continued to benefit from regional distinctiveness. The Greek community in Tarpon Springs, Florida, for instance, resembles Richmond in many respects. Specifically, like Greek immigrants in Richmond, Greeks in Tarpon Springs found an economic niche because they were a “middling level of immigrants who adapted and interacted to a considerable degree with their American fellow citizens. The interaction took place mostly at the commercial plane, but also overflowed into the social, civic, and political areas.” As a result, comparable to Richmond, Greeks in Tarpon Springs were able to accumulate property, own homes, travel, and educate their children.293 In her essay “The Greek Population of New York City,” sociologist Eva E. Sandis examined the Empire State’s Greek population in the

293 Odzak, “Demetrios is now Jimmy,” 215.
1970s. She explained that by 1970 (according to census statistics) “approximately one in four of all Greek Americans [resided there].” Sandis’s examination of occupational breakdowns of Greek immigrants who entered the U.S. in 1977 shed light on the ways New York’s community differed from Richmond’s community (and Tarpon Springs). Sandis provided that “nine out of ten (88.3 percent) entered on relative preferences, that is to say, without a job offer.” She continued, “Judging by their initial job opportunities in places like New York, some downward occupational mobility appears to be a characteristic experience for many Greek immigrants, at least initially, as they enter service or operative jobs.” Sandis reported that in New York especially, arrivals since the late sixties “are found as pizza parlor operators, taxicab drivers, and pushcart vendors.” Greek immigrants throughout the United States undoubtedly struggled to an extent when initially finding employment. However, Greek communities that were more likely to interact with their host community—which findings have shown was less likely in places like New York and Chicago—were to a greater extent able to achieve middle class status sooner.

The Greek Restaurant in Richmond:

Perhaps the most successful economic niche for early Greek immigrants in the United States was the restaurant business. Historian Charles Moskos argued that the Greek restaurant was not only economically beneficial but also the way in which “Greeks made their major [cultural] mark on the public mind of America.” The 1977 National Restaurant Association membership roster further illuminated the influence of early Greek restaurateurs: in that year

---

296 Moskos, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 123.
20% of the nation’s restaurants at the time were Greek-owned. In her astounding project “Restaurant-ing Through History,” consumer historian Jan Whitaker performed years of extensive research to construct the history of American restaurants. Whitaker said that the movement of Greeks to the “restaurant-starved South” in the early twentieth century proved beneficial for Greek migrants because of “the simplicity of American cuisine…it was said that two months spent shadowing an American cook was all it took for [a] Greek [to] pick up the necessary skills [for running their own restaurant].”

Greek immigrants owned restaurants in Richmond as early as 1907; however, Greek food as a cuisine was not introduced in Richmond until the Greek festival in 1975. The festival’s immediate popularity with the locals led to the establishment of fifteen Greek cuisine restaurants around the city in the next five years. In the fall of 1987 the Richmond public responded favorable—*Style Weekly* presented another cover story about the Greek community in the city, “A Greek Restaurant Odyssey: Making it in the Family Business.” Reporter Deona Houff elucidated, “Forgetting the national chains, a Richmonder asked to name ten local eateries is almost certain to mention one owned by a Greek.” Houff praised Greek restaurateurs and restaurateurs in Richmond for their success. She compared the tactics of Greek restaurateurs to what she perceived as the unsuccessful “American upstart method of restauranting, ” known for having “designer dining rooms and culinary institute kitchens.” Hough said, “Forget about owners who have law degrees ‘but always dreamed of owning a restaurant’…Remember the

---


more than 50 percent failure rate of restaurants during the first year.” Houff explained, Greek restaurant owners in Richmond “know it takes more than a gimmick to run a restaurant.” The children of these restaurateurs, “educated with the money their parents earned,” were becoming less likely to follow in their parent’s footsteps. Houff predicted, “In 20 years, if not sooner, there will almost certainly be fewer Greek-owned restaurants in Richmond…But for now, there is an abundance.” Charles Moskos’s study of Greek communities solidified Houff’s words. Moskos said, “Since not many of the children of restaurant owners are likely to want to take over the family business, most restaurant ownership continually passes over into the hands of newcomers from Greece.” Houff’s article provided that only one of the children of the handful of Greek restaurateur families she interviewed decided to go into the family business. Houff said this individual was “the exception.” In alignment with Houff’s examination of first- and second-generation Greek youth in Richmond in 1987, Pastor Dombalis estimated that by the early 1980s, “98% of our children [from Richmond’s Greek church community] attend college.”

---

CONCLUSION

This case study of the Greek community in Richmond, Virginia, indicates that region influenced the Greek immigrant experience, in agreement with some of the leading scholars of Greek American studies. Regional distinctions provided some advantages for the first wave of Greek immigrants living in the American South. According to scholars, a noticeable number of early Greek immigrants in the region experienced economic mobility much sooner than Greek immigrants elsewhere, in addition to more rapid social assimilation. Nevertheless, these advantages did not come to Greek immigrants in the South without a significant amount of struggle, and a struggle often driven by the fear of rejection from the white members of their host society.

Greek immigrants were drawn to the American South in the early twentieth century by the prospect of entrepreneurial opportunities in the region’s newly developing cities. The South was different from other regions in the United States during the early twentieth century because of the presence of a distinctive system of racial prejudice, especially towards the African American population. Because discrimination focused heavily on African Americans, Greek immigrants were situated on the borderline of the “white-black” continuum; they were often able to reap the benefits of “honorary whiteness.” Greeks immigrants in the South however, were not free from discrimination. In Atlanta, Georgia, and Charlotte, North Carolina, there were several reports showing that the Ku Klux Klan targeted Greek business owners. To protect themselves from such harm, Greek immigrant entrepreneurs established the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Organization (AHEPA) in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1922. The organization was developed to cater specifically to the problems faced by Greek businessmen in the South.
AHEPA’s objectives were to promote “pure and undefiled Americanism among the Greeks of the United States,” which would create a safeguard against “nativist prejudices expressed by the newly revived, fast growing Ku Klux Klan.”\(^{301}\) In the late 1920s when the influence of the KKK had subsided in the South, AHEPA adapted its mission to promoting Americanism among Greek immigrants through education and philanthropy.

In 1926, when Richmond’s Greek parish formed an AHEPA chapter, it demonstrated another assured step towards Americanization. Earlier signs also verified that Greek immigrant men in Richmond were taking action to encourage kinsmen to become involved in American politics. In 1924 Greek immigrant men organized to form the League of Richmond Voters of Greek Descent, later renamed the Greek Democratic Club of Richmond, in order to encourage voting and citizenship amongst Greek men. The Richmond group grew significantly, eventually expanding its efforts to cover the entire state of Virginia. Overall the formation of this group presented a clear-cut sign that Greeks in Richmond were making efforts to become more American and prepared to use the power of the ballot as citizens. It also represented another difference between the experiences of Greek immigrants and African Americans in Richmond at the time. An excerpt from *Black Laws of Virginia*, a text written in 1936 by June Purcell Guild, a lawyer, provides an understanding of the extent to which the State of Virginia went to enforce control over African Americans within its borders. In 1928, voting registration and a payment of $1.50 per resident became the requirements for voting. “The application to register, quite tricky for one who may have difficulty reading or writing, had to be in one’s own handwriting without

\[^{301}\] Odzak, “*Demetrios is now Jimmy*,” 85.
aid, stating name, age, occupations and so on…Thus, again, were many African American Virginians silenced and prohibited from voting.”

From 1934 to 1950, Thanasi Tzani, a parishioner of Richmond’s Greek Orthodox Church recorded and updated a history of the congregation. This vital source provided more evidence to show that for over two decades, the Greek community in Richmond continued to assimilate. For instance, one way Greek immigrants maintained their rising social and economic status in the early twentieth century South, was to replicate commonly practiced white racial codes. One way Greek immigrants did this in Richmond in the 1920s was by avoiding living in neighborhoods densely populated by African Americans. Census records were not the only source to support this claim. Additionally, Tzanis’s account provided that one of the main motives for the church’s move in 1929 was because “blacks were moving” into the neighborhood. By 1950, Tzanis’s account depicted a Greek community that had thoroughly assimilated into their host environment. The final entry, written in English as a sign of patriotism, listed the names of Greek servicemen who served for America in World War II.

In 1959, the Richmond Greek church community again relocated this time from the city’s downtown to a new location in an area west of city center in a growing middle class suburban neighborhood at the intersection of Malvern and Grove Avenues. The new church building, which featured both traditional Byzantium and Colonial Virginian architecture, was representative of the Greek community that worshipped inside it. By 1960, evidence showed that the Greek population in Richmond had assimilated into the surrounding non-Greek population.

---

When the 1965 Immigration Act reopened America’s doors to Greek immigration, a new, second-wave of Greek immigrants arrived. Different from their counterparts, second-wave Greeks were noticeably more educated. Oftentimes, when second-wave immigrants arrived in Greek communities in the U.S. South, they found an advantageous groundwork on which to succeed financially and socially set in place by their predecessors. The first Greek immigrants not only assimilated themselves to find socio-economic success, they also made changes to Greek culture so they could acclimate better. One of the main motivations behind the changes to Greek culture in the U.S. was that early Greek immigrants (more so in the South) believed it was necessary to adjust traditions for the new American-born generations. Because second and third generations did not share the same ties to the homeland as their parents and grandparents, alterations had to be made to preserve elements of Greek culture for them. One of the major and most controversial changes was English-substitution in the church liturgy.

By the mid twentieth-century, the Greek population in America started becoming more uniform, a group scholars call “Greek America.” Greek America is characterized by the development of a shared “new ethnicity” among Greek immigrants and their American-born children in the United States. For Greek Americans, the new ethnicity incorporated both American patriotism and ethnic pride. Arguably, because Americanization occurred in the South more rapidly than other regions, the origins of Greek America were in the South, too. In Southern Greek enclaves like Richmond, the presence of the new ethnicity also symbolized the Greek community’s sense of stability among their American neighbors. By the mid twentieth century, Greeks and their families in Richmond could openly embrace their Hellenic heritage without having their American patriotism questioned. The success of the Richmond Greek
festival beginning in 1975, for example, evidenced that Greeks succeeded in introducing their culture to their surrounding community.

In the 1960s, Pastor Dombalis’s efforts to involve the parish with the American Civil Rights Movement represented another way that the Greek community in Richmond had become secure with their surrounding community. While the entire parish may have not agreed with the pastor’s “liberal” ideas for expanding the involvement of the Greek community, such as his role in the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Greeks in Richmond never publically dissented. Furthermore, when Pastor Dombalis began his pastorate in Richmond, the Greek community had already come a long way with locals, providing him with an ideal platform for furthering a Greek American belief system. Overall, the local and national praise that Pastor Domablis earned for his efforts to promote civil rights activism symbolized the mutually beneficial relationship between the Greek and non-Greek community in Richmond.

By the 1980s, as the second wave of Greek immigration to the United States came to an end, the Greek church community in Richmond had largely embraced the Greek-American identity. In 1989, sociologist and historian Charles Moskos described the history of the Greek America as a continuously evolving one because it “consists of a declining cohort of old immigrants. It includes the adult children of older immigrants and their own children. It is the still evolving history of the new immigrants from Greece.” And between the groups that form Greek America there will always be some differences “in class position, loyalties to the old country, commitment to Greek Orthodoxy, language use, life style and politics.”

For this reason it is difficult to write a tidy history of this group because their social patterns constantly overlap, however, each stage has important qualities that make it stand out from the other. For

---

303 Moskos, Greek Americans Struggle and Success, Second Edition, 89.
Greek immigrants in Richmond, Virginia, cultural distinctions were evident between the first and the second wave. Because of the small size of the Richmond community, these differences were managed, and the group united under two shared beliefs: first, the importance of preserving the Greek Orthodox faith in the United States; and, second, the maintenance of ethnic pride in both Greek and American identities.

All in all, the rich material uncovered in this study of the Richmond, Virginia, Greek community reveals how much might still lie hidden in the stories of other Greek communities in the U.S. Oftentimes, today’s scholars tend to focus on the recent waves of Hispanic and Asian mass immigration to the South. However, this study sheds light on a much longer history of immigration to the region that historians have yet to unearth. Finally, this study raises the question: Is the Southern Variant Theory only applicable to Greek immigrants in the South? The region’s ability to assimilate newcomers likely impacted other groups of migrants as well.
Bibliography:

Primary Sources


XIII: “Greek Americans in Richmond.” Accession Number 8, #152 Box 19, January 1981.


“Greek Order may establish philanthropic center in city.” Times Dispatch, August, 28, 1930. Virginia Commonwealth University, Cabell Library. Microfilm.


Houff, Deona. “A Greek Restaurant Odyssey; Making it in the family business,” Style


Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 50th Anniversary Book, 1962. Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records, Richmond, Virginia.

Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 65th Anniversary Book, 1982. Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records Richmond, Virginia.

Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia 23221 70th Anniversary Book, 1987. Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral’s records, Richmond, Virginia.

Tzani, Thanasi. “Historical Notes on the Greek Community of Richmond.” In church record book. Updated from December 15, 1934 to 1950. Richmond, Virginia, Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral.


Secondary Sources


