

ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE ETHNIC HISTORY AND LIBRARY COMMITTEE  
OF THE MAHONING VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
1985-86

During the past year, the Ethnic History and Library Committee continued its research by gathering data relevant to its on-going exploration of the Mahoning Valley's diversified cultural heritage.

In November, 1985, Mrs. Schnuttgen visited St. Nicholas' Greek Orthodox Church, which she toured with Father Karabatsis, who also provided some historical background information. In January, 1986, Mrs. Schnuttgen visited the establishment of the Fransiscan Friars on South Belle Vista Road and, the following May, she interviewed Dr. Richard Murray, whose family has contributed significatly to the cultural well-being of the community.

Reports were submitted to the Society at respective quarterly meetings.

As for new members, Brian K. Brennan was named to the committee in June.

Respectfully submitted,

*Hildegard Schnuttgen*

Hildegard Schnuttgen  
Chairman

cc.

HS:bkb

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THERE ARE 12 GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN YOUNGSTOWN AND ITS SUBURBS.

A YEAR OR TWO AGO I REPORTED ABOUT ST. MICHAEL'S IN CAMPBELL.

RECENTLY, FR. KARABATSIS WAS KIND ENOUGH TO SHOW ME HIS CHURCH,

ST. NICHOLAS ON WALNUT. A MEMBER OF MY COMMITTEE, DR. GUS MAVRIGAN,

WHO IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, CAME ALONG TO SUPPLEMENT FATHER

KARABATSIS'S INFORMATION, SINCE FR. KARABATSIS JUST STARTED HIS

ASSIGNMENT EARLIER THIS YEAR.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ST. JOHN'S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH PRECEDED THAT OF

ST. NICHOLAS, WHOSE CONGREGATION WAS MADE UP OF FORMER MEMBERS OF

ST. JOHN'S THAT LIVED IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE CITY. IN 1919, THE

CONGREGATION PURCHASED THE FORMER WALNUT STREET WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH,

WHICH BECAME THE ORIGINAL ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH.

IN 1955, A MOVEMENT WAS UNDERWAY TO FORM A UNITED HELLENIC COMMUNITY.

AS ST. NICHOLAS PARISH HAD LOST 200 FAMILIES TO THE NEW PARISH IN

CAMPBELL. ST. NICHOLAS WAS A POOR COMMUNITY AT THAT, WHILE ST. JOHN'S

MEMBERS CAME CHIEFLY FROM THE SUBURBS AND WERE CONSIDERED BY OTHER

GREEKS AS THE "UPPER CLASS."

ST NICHOLAS'S MEMBERS DEMANDED THAT IF THERE WERE TO BE A UNION, A NEW

CHURCH MUST BE BUILT AT ONCE BY BOTH GROUPS. THE COUNCIL OF ST. JOHN'S

SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF BOTH CONGREGATIONS WERE ACCOMMODATED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH UNTIL PLANS FOR THE NEW CHURCH WERE MADE. AS THE ST. NICHOLAS CONGREGATION INSISTED UPON IMMEDIATE CONSTRUCTION, RESENTMENT EXISTED BETWEEN BOTH GROUPS AND THE PLANNED GREEK UNION NEVER MATERIALIZED.

DURING THE LATE 1950'S, THE ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH WAS IN DIRE NEED OF MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. PLANS WERE DRAWN UP FOR A NEW STRUCTURE TO BE BUILT ON THE OLD SITE. UNDER THE STRONG LEADERSHIP OF FR. GEORGE J. HADJIS AND THE DEDICATED EFFORTS OF SUCH DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS AS HARRY MESHEL AND GUS MAVRIGAN, A SUCCESSFUL BUILDING FUND WAS RAISED AND THINGS BEGAN TO TAKE FORM.

SOON THEREAFTER, ARCHITECTS BOUCHERLE, HANAHAN, AND STROLLO WERE COMMISSIONED TO BUILD THE NEW STRUCTURE, CONSTRUCTING FIRST THE SOCIAL HALL, THEN THE CHURCH PROPER.

THE CHURCH, A VERY SIMPLE BUT BEAUTIFUL EDIFICE, IS A CHURCH COMMUNITY PROJECT. ALTHOUGH THE LITURGY IS SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE CATHOLIC, A SCHISM IN 1054 SEPARATED THE GREEKS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHURCH. THUS, THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE SANCTUARY IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT. THERE IS THE ICON WALL, THE SO-CALLED ROYAL GATE, WITH ITS VARIOUS ICONS AND ITS WOODWORK, DONE IN GREECE.

THE SIX COLORFUL AND HANDSOME WINDOWS, CREATED BY A LOCAL MAN, A WILLIAM YANKUSCH, DEPICT BIBLE SCENES. THE VESTMENTS ARE ALSO OF HELLENIC ORIGIN.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE NUMBER OF PARISHONERS IS SLOWLY DIMINISHING, SINCE PEOPLE ARE MOVING AWAY FROM THE DOWNTOWN AREA. RECENTLY, THE NEW CHURCH CELEBRATED ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY, WHILE THE PARISH ITSELF HAS EXISTED FOR 60 YEARS. THE CONGREGATION PRESENTLY CONSISTS OF ABOUT 100 FAMILIES, WITH A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF 225. I'M TOLD THAT OUR STATE SENATOR, THE HONORABLE HARRY MESHEL, SUCCEEDED IN OFFICIALLY NAMING THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH THE 4TH MAJOR FAITH IN THE STATE OF OHIO. A YSU GRADUATE, MICHAEL DIACANDREAOU, IS NOW A BISHOP OF THE CHURCH. A FORMER PASTOR OF ST. JOHN'S GREEK CHURCH IN YOUNGSTOWN IS NEXT IN LINE TO BECOME A BISHOP. THUS, THE GREEK ORTHODOX FAITH CONTINUES STRONGLY IN YOUNGSTOWN AND ITS ENVIRONS. THANK YOU.

--HILDEGARD SCHNUTTGEN

Mahoning Valley Historical Society  
Ethnic History and Library Committee

Over the past year, the Ethnic History and Library Committee of the Mahoning Valley Historical Society has done much to enhance the accumulation of local historical knowledge. Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Hildegard Schnuttgen, a trustee of the MVHS and Head Reference Librarian for Youngstown State University, the Committee has gathered significant information with regard to our community's cultural heritage.

The Committee's major area of interest this past year has been the study of Mahoning Valley "ethnic churches." The Reverend Carl Forgash of the Holy Rosary Church in Lowellville and the Reverend Sue Ann Elencovf of the United Methodist Church in Poland were interviewed recently. Though both churches have lost much of their "ethnicity" over the years, they still remain important parts of local society. The 120-year old congregation of Holy Rosary started as a mission and was served by French and Irish priests. The Italians, now the dominant ethnic group, arrived in 1890, while working for the railroads and the steel industry. The new building, built in 1967 with the help of an "ethnic committee" (which hauled the stones from the quarry) is a stunning example of modern church architecture which greatly adds to the beauty of the town. As for the Methodist congregation in Poland, it has raised money for Children's Hospital and, during the aftermath of the recent tornado, members of the church went to assist in the recovery effort at Coalburg, travelling twice weekly for a month in vans provided by the owners of Wittenauer's Pharmacy and McCrone Furniture.

Other church-related projects have included reports on the history of the Christ Mission (now Goodwill Industries) in Youngstown and the Mahoning Baptist Association, with the kind assistance of Dr. Agnes Smith, YSU History Professor Emerita, as well as research on Henry Kurtz, a local leader of the Church of the Brethren (the "Dunkers") and publisher of the influential Brethren periodical, the Gospel Visitor between 1851 and 1874. The Society has also acquired a taped service at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, narrated by State Senator Harry Meshel, through the good offices of Dr. James Kiriazis, Chairman of the Sociology Department at YSU.

In her position with the MVHS, Mrs. Schnuttgen addressed the Society's Annual Meeting on September 10, 1984 and spoke on the DeBartolos. The Committee has gained the services of Dr. Ron Tabak of the YSU Physics Department and Mrs. Schnuttgen has gained a wealth of information on the background of the Arms Families through an interview with Mr. Charles B. Schaff, currently the president of Altronic, Inc., and a descendent of that family group. Furthermore, the Committee Chairman conducted an interview with Dr. William D. Jenkins of the YSU History Department on the subject of his research on the influence of the Ku Klux Klan in Youngstown during the 1920's.

August 28, 1985

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