

Landmarks of the Past: How Oregon's

By Steve Frangos
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Landmarks of Our Past: The First 75 Years of the Greek Orthodox Community of Oregon is the second volume in the trilogy of photography histories written by Tom Doulis on the Greeks of Oregon and Southwestern Washington (Portland: Gann Publishing Company, 1983.) This volume is part of the longest running community-based history project among Greeks in North America. A Surge to the Sea: The Greeks in Oregon: A Photographic History of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Community of Oregon and Southern Washington (Portland: Jackie Lockie and Associates, 1977) is the first of Doulis' photo-histories dealing with the Greeks of the Great Northwest. With the publication of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral's centennial volume A Centennial Celebration of Faith, History and Community 1907-2007, Doulis contributed the lead essay, Voices of the Past. That Doulis is only one of a host of writers in this last volume underscores not only the collectivism that has marked these volumes but the steady movement by its creators toward a new perspective. Clearly, many of the local Oregon Greeks have gradually come to recognize and respect their own individual historical voices. The public appearance of these authors, many of whom have spent the last 30 years involved with this project, in one form or another, should logically be the focus of intense study.

With the flurry of recent photo-histories on Greek-American communities, especially in the Arcadia Publisher's series such as: Greek-American Pioneer Women of Illinois (2000,) Growing Up Greek in St. Louis (2002,) Greeks in Phoenix (2008,) Stanton Island's Greek Community (2005,) Greeks in Chicago (2009,) and Greeks of Stark County (2009,) it is clear we must become more aware of how Greek-American historians first began to employ and integrate



Greek School at old church showed community's togetherness

photographs into their accounts. Landmarks of Our Past can stand alone as a historical account and as an assembly of historic photographs and documents.

PAST CONTENTS

The book saw publication only some five years after A Surge to the Sea. Given that 1983 marked the 75th Anniversary Committee of the Greek Orthodox Community of Oregon it is understandable then that the Holy Trinity Hellenic Festival Committee requested a new volume. Doulis, while not opposed to the new volume, wanted to expand upon the previous history book, as he makes clear by indicating that, "The duplication of material and photographs in the earlier volume is kept to a minimum. The reader is referred to the earlier volume for subjects not covered in this one..." In Landmarks, the narrative and corresponding images are divided into: The Introduction, The Community Emerges, Setting: Labor and Enterprise, The Great War, With Owner, Pride, The Arrival of the Women, The Community Develops, Educational Institutions, Social Events, Fraternal Organizations, A Gen-

eration Grows Up in Time for War, Construction of the New Church, Entry Into the Mainstream, A New Church is Built, The Consecration, People and Institutions, AHEC, The Festival—Bazaar, The Community Diversifies, Changes in the Social Composition, The Eugene Mission, Justice and Human Rights, Pan-Orthodox Functions, ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, The New Diocesan Organization, and Sponsors. All this within 92 pages and well over 130 photographs. Given that some pages feature photographic sequences of the parish priests, council presidents, Philoptochos presidents and the festival chairmen the overall number of photographs is in fact well over 200.

It is Doulis' insights into the historical past of Portland's (and Oregon's in general) Greeks that stands out. On the early society of men, he wrote that, "The society they lived in was totally masculine. They lived elbow to elbow in communal flats, each man taking turns cooking and shopping, each responsible for the cleanliness of his own area. They lived like serfs. With the brooding that became more pronounced as the months became years and stretched into decades, with the abruptness of the separation from their families and homeland, with the ever-present danger and

Contemplating The Object

only if there are objects
can there be a constant form of
the world

(the most beautiful
is the object that does not exist)

the constant
the extant and the object are one

(mark the point
where the object stood
and no longer is

It will be
genuine mourning
for the beautiful absence)

the object is the mutable
the constellation is the im-
mutable

(now you have empty space
more beautiful
than the object
more beautiful
than the forsaken place

a white paradise
of all possibilities)

the constellation of objects
generates the realm of things
(vertical lightning
furrows the barren horizon)
in the realm of things
the objects stand
facing each other
in a certain way
the way is the structure
of the realm of things

(the form is
the potentiality of the struc-
ture)

the structure of the event
consists of the structures
of the realms of things

(the entity of the realms
is the world)

the image is the event

(it is the uncreated world
that jostles at
the gates of your canvas)

abide by the intimations
of your inward eye

that which the image represents
is its essence
its truth lies in the concu-
rence
of its essence with reality

(draw away from the contempla-
tion
of the inward eye
the poem -
the object)

place in the empty space
(seek the reasons
a square thought
which you name
add to the concept of imagination
something beautiful
the concept of order
the peculiar grammar
of the word beautiful
will unconceal itself to you

this object surrounds you
inscribes you
contains you
describe it

for
and
now)

Haris Vlavianos (1957-)

worry, their life must have been a harsh, unpleasant one." On a unique local twist to the issue of dowries: "Because of Portland's great distance from the East Coast and Greece, a slightly new pattern can be discerned here. It made more sense for the men to bring their sisters to Portland than to send the money home to the village. We have photographic evidence that quite a few Portland Greeks did this in the scores of weddings that took place in Holy Trinity at 17th and Taggart ... at the cost of transportation, [the brothers' were] spared one or more dowries, had married a sister or two off to friends who lived in Portland, and had drawn the new couples into an intimate family environment that would last for the rest of his life. The alternative was not to see his sisters, as many other Greeks did not, for thirty or forty years."

Or his attention to the demographically shifts that transformed Greek America: "The men who were to be permanent bachelors must have stopped to look over the newly arrived girls, also. Who knows why they never married? Perhaps, they had too many dowries to provide for, perhaps they did not feel they were earning enough for a family, perhaps their habits had become too ingrained, perhaps they had hesitations and idiosyncrasies and demands that could not be met easily, perhaps they did not like women ... whatever the reasons, they were to form the core of a bachelor community that as to remain a fixture of the Greek society in Portland and other cities in America for the next six decades...with coffeehouses increasingly bereft of married men...with less and less bachelor

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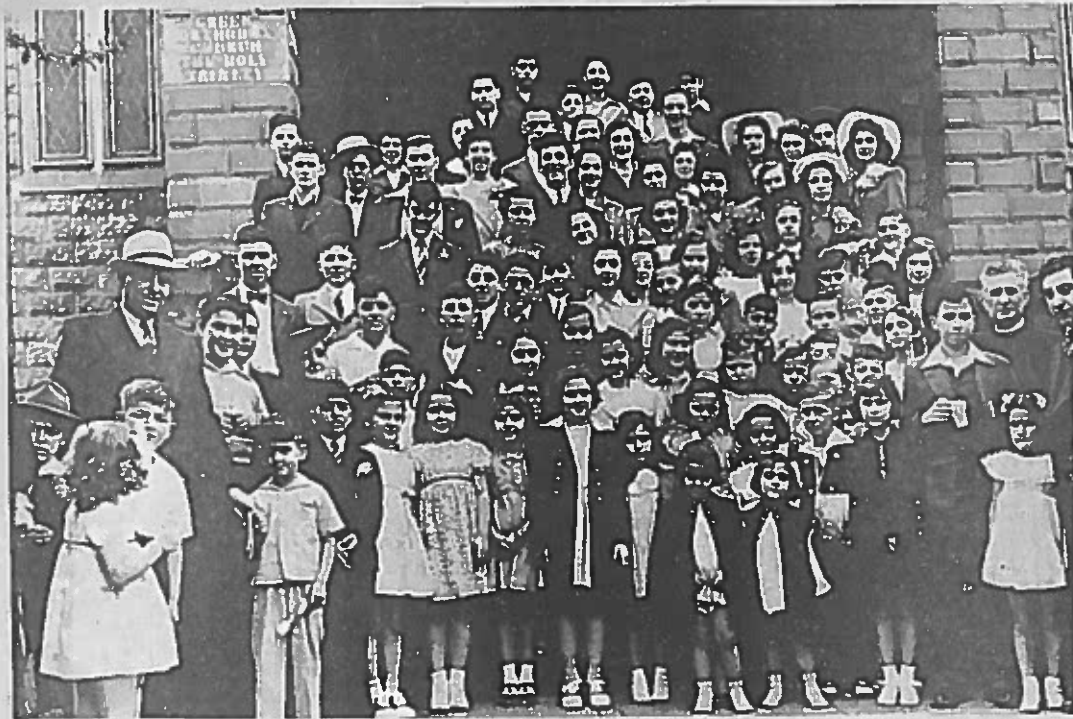
s Greek Community Was Shaped



Professional historians local Greek-Americans must write and publish these histories for themselves. While some of these community-generated volumes on occasion lament the fact that no professional was on hand for what was produced, this absence is what makes these volumes, films, archival holdings, websites etc. so fundamentally valuable. Professionals, in whatever field, are a part of collective whose beliefs and values they must not only adhere to but in fact emulate in their work' no matter the form be it written, visual, audio or whatever it assumes. Just because an historical account is written from the perspective of a particular theoretical school does not make it either fundamentally more accurate in its final interpretations than what is now being produced by the local communities nor does it make it—more readable. Un-

bor practices, delineations of property-ownership, itemizations of churches, the calendar cycle of local religious and other celebrations. When I pressed Dr. Hatzidimitriou and asked why the clergy predominately compiled and authored these accounts he replied that they were often the most educated, during this era, but that on occasion educated merchants were also known to generate chronologia. At a time when Greeks in the United States hold more advanced academic degrees than at any other time in our collective history it should not be surprising that these accomplished individuals would turn to recording the lives and experiences of their families, friends and community.

These Greek American community generated histories are growing in numbers. I have already noted that taken collec-



Groundbreaking, 1907, drew everyone for a photo.

participation in the church and the educational and patriotic organizations...as they began to reflect the needs and interests of women and children."

A KNOWABLE WORLD

Greek-Americans across the United States are engaging in the preservation, writing, and publishing of what is known as neo-

fortunately, what is now being offered by Greek-American academics (when it exists at all) are either in academic forums (so out of reach to the majority of Greeks living anywhere) or so unreadable in the sense of their commitment to theoretical jargon that it is fundamentally unintelligible to the average individual (and so I

tively these histories are part of a New Preservation Movement under way in Greek America. Personal biographies, collective histories, parish anniversary volumes, documentary (or commemorative) videos, new community-based archives and museums and a host of websites all collectively form elements

ple's history. This perspective takes the lives, experiences and viewpoints of average people as



Mult Falls and Men, 1910

its basis to understand history and society. Rather than historical accounts of famous (generals, presidents and the rest) men (note no women were historical important from this point of view) or events (wars, transformations in economics, technology but again exclusively from the perspective and actions of men) as the only basis for the standard 'great man' historical narratives. As these accounts reveal Greek Americans live in a knowable world. The histories they have produced so far reflect this fundamental orientation. They write what they, their families and their community experienced in the everyday world. Faced with the undeniable fact that their lives and collective history are totally ignored by pro-

would argue, in the final analysis worthless.) It is a depressing and frustrating recognition of current academically generated historical accounts that the very best we can often find on Greek Americans (when it exists at all)—when not besmirched by jargon - is so badly written in terms of standard American English as to be tedious or stiffly didactic.

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Theory in the social sciences is just collectively agreed upon assumptions. History is not a division of the physical sciences. No mathematics is involved in writing about the Greek American experience. Believing that it does says more about how the educational system in the United States has focused on authoritarian indoctrination that it does in the humanist core position of teaching the student to think for themselves. Let's face the undeniable truth, there is no physical law of the universe that mandates only a certain class of individuals can research and write history. There is, in the final analysis, no science in the social sciences.

Strangely enough, this is not the first time local Greeks have written authoritative historical or cultural accounts of their communities. In conversation with Dr. Constantine Hatzidimitriou, Byzantinist and Modern Greek Scholar, I learned of the chronologia, e.g. chronicles, which were the accounts, most often written by local clergy of Greek towns and regions throughout the Greek world, during both the Byzantine and Turkocratic periods. These chronologia are filled with the names of local individuals and family lineages, descriptions of climatic and growing conditions, discussions of trade goods and la-

within this broader organic social movement. Doulis, while the author of the historical narrative found in Landmarks of Our Past, is quick to credit the now long gone Delphi History Project of the 1960's-1970's among the Greeks of Portland. This group's files, oral histories and other documentation have led in one way or another to the creation of the truly spectacular Hellenic-American Cultural Center & Museum of Oregon and Southwest Washington. To understand Doulis' role in writing and stimulating others to collect and write their local history there is no doubt that many different people owe him a great debt.

Landmarks of Our Past is one of the earliest attempts by Greek-Americans to come to an understanding of their collective past. If we are to recover our collective past then we must be ready to review how our fellow Hellenes have assessed this common historical experience through the deliberate employment of photographs. There are some limitations to Landmarks of Our Past. First, available copies are not numerous so anyone wishing to order this volume must do so quickly. Next, the remaining copies do not have either paper or hard-backed covers. Landmarks of Our Past: the First 75 Years of the Greek Orthodox Community of Oregon can be ordered from the Ethos Greek Orthodox Bookstore 3131 N.E. Glisan Portland Oregon 97232. Hours are Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sunday after Divine Liturgy one hour, telephone 503.234.0468, ext 25.

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