

“The Greeks of Los Angeles”

By
Dr. James F. Dimitriou

A Symposium for the Historical Societies of the
Metropolis of San Francisco

Holy Trinity Historical Society
May 5, 2007

Our Theme:
“What is past is prologue!”

The Greeks of Los Angeles is a story of Greek immigration similar in many ways to the story of the Greeks of San Francisco and more generally, the Greeks of the West. Unlike their more established compatriots on the East Coast, the Greeks of the West did not have the comfort of an established Greek Town or community to welcome them. Like all Greek immigrants, they first traveled on a long ocean voyage to go through the gates of Ellis Island. But this was only the first half of their new adventure for they also would have a long train trip across a strange, alien continent in search of opportunity and a dream.

These modern day Argonauts were willing to take the greatest of chances on a new life in a new territory far from their beloved Hellas. These immigrants would leave their villages in the Peloponnesus, the Ionian Islands, and even from Ottoman territories to seek fortune in a new land

and far from home. These Argonauts who left Hellas in search of a Golden Fleece, left a Greek homeland, dearly loved, but sadly impoverished. Some left the sun-dried hills of their beloved Kalavrita and Soudena after the collapse of the current crop and agriculture failures in the early 1900s. Many left the beautiful shores of the Ionian Islands of Cephalonia and Ithaca, much like Odysseus in search of adventure, trade and reward. They were leaving economically depressed lands in search of a dream.

Still others left behind their Byzantine legacy beyond the Dardanelles, from the ancient island of Preconessos, today's Marmara Island. Here the hardships of the Balkan Wars and the threat of being drafted into the Ottoman Turkish Army to fight against Hellas were just intolerable for the young Hellenes.

Much like San Francisco, few Greek immigrants would come to Los Angeles prior to the 1890s. Of those early Greeks, very little is known about them. The majority were single males, working with the railroads, mines and other labor-intensive work. Most either remained bachelors, married non-Greeks or returned back to Greece. With little communication, contact with compatriots or any semblance of a Greek community, little is known about the very early Greeks of Los Angeles. Of the early Greek pioneers, one of particular note, however, is an individual simply known to

history as “Greek George.” Originally known as “Haralambros,” he took the name “George Allen” when he became a citizen in 1867. “Greek George” was a character out of the Wild West. He tried to improve trade and commerce in the Southwest by running the first known camel caravan from El Paso, Texas to El Monte, California. Much of his history is intertwined with the lore of early Los Angeles, but he is said to have wantonly irritated the early German immigrants of Anaheim, California by running his camels through their Sunday picnic grounds with great regularity! Once living where today’s Hollywood Bowl is located, some still search for the so-called hidden treasure of “Greek George.” He died in 1913, in Whittier, CA.

The Greeks of Los Angeles first came to the area as railroad workers working long hours joining the railroad from East and West. Some worked the mines in Colorado and Utah before coming to Los Angeles. Still others came to Los Angeles as seaman and fisherman and worked in the port and other hard labor jobs that employed immigrants with the willingness to work with limited English proficiency.

The Los Angeles Gas and Electric Company was the first to hire many Greeks to work long hard hours, digging ditches and laying lines across the Los Angeles area. Soon, the Alexandria Hotel provided many entry-level jobs where one could learn to bus tables, polish silver or wash dishes. As

the young Greeks learned English, many went one to become waiters who would migrate to such distinctive employers as the Brown Derby, the Ambassador Hotel and famous Coconut Grove nightclub.

Some early Greeks worked very independently from the start, working arduous hours as independent businessmen as bootblacks or tray peddlers of vegetables, fruits, candies, nuts and flowers. Twelve-hour days, seven days a week were common. As they gathered small nest eggs, it allowed them to graduate from vegetable carts to many small grocery stores. Smaller pastry and flower shops multiplied. Some went outside the small urban area and started small farms and citrus groves in the valleys of San Fernando and San Gabriel. One early Argonaut started a goat and sheep herd in Palmdale and for years provided the Greek Community with Feta cheese. Like other areas, the “padrone” system came into being when some of the early pioneers would sponsor some of the compatriots to come to Los Angeles and later work off their cost of transportation. This was, however, limited to the most part to a small scale to the agricultural and farming trades.

Although very few Greeks came to Los Angeles prior to 1900, immigration grew considerably in the early 1900s. By the beginning of the First World War, it is estimated that nearly 1000 Greeks would make Los

Angeles their home (Thomas Burgess, The Greeks in America, 1913). Of these early pioneers, 95% were males. Following the waves of Greek immigration that came to the United States in record numbers, more Greeks would come to Los Angeles growing yearly until the mid 1920s.

This period of heavy immigration and settlement of the Greeks of Los Angeles roughly corresponds to the period in Greek history that began with the economic crisis in Greece in 1907, the two Balkan Wars, the liberation of Greek lands from Ottoman domination. The following entrance of Greece into the First World War on the side of the Allies with the Ottoman Turks on the side of the Central Powers complicated the lives of many Greeks. This period of domestic turmoil and international warfare saw an increased number of Greeks immigrating from both Greece and Turkish controlled areas. From the time of the first Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire no longer exempted Greeks from military service and severe pressures on the Greeks as the hostilities heightened between Turkey and Greece. With these events, an increased number of Greeks emigrated from areas of “unredeemed Greece.” (It should be noted here that the early census takers counted as Turks all the Greeks coming from “Turkey in Europe” and “Turkey in Asia” as Greeks from Turkish controlled areas of Smyrna, Thrace, Macedonia, Epirus, many Aegean islands and the areas in and around the

Sea of Marmara.) California Census data lists 10,457 “Greek people” in the State by 1930, of these, some 6488 resided in Los Angeles County.

Church membership, however, would list no more than 1500 during this same time period.

A civil conflict took place in Greece at this time with loyalties split between the Republicans of Prime Minister Venezelos, which favored entrance into the war with the Allies, and the Royalists supporting King Constantine I and neutrality in the Greek War (Kaiser Wilhelm was the King’s brother-in-law). The conflict itself both created more immigration and often brought the conflict to America. Immigration continued in greater numbers at the conclusion of the war and as the situation between Greece and the Ottoman Turks worsened and resulted in the Greco-Turkish War of 1921-1922 and the ultimate Catastrophe of Smyrna. The many homeless refugees and the League of Nations sponsored exchange of populations in 1923, found 1.5 million Greeks from Asia Minor exchanged for 750,000 Turks from Thrace and Crete. The many homeless refugees saw the last great number of immigrants coming to the area. As the political situation stabilized, the agricultural crop improved and American immigration restricted, few would come after 1924. An interesting side note to this

period was the visit of Eleftherios Venezelos to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara following his exile between terms in Greece.

The first church services were held in Los Angeles as early as 1906. The first small warehouse used as a church was located at 730 No. Broadway. Within two years, the services were moved to 240 Anderson Street. Services were conducted by visiting Orthodox clergy. The Los Angeles Greek Community formally incorporated on June 14, 1908. According to the Charter, the goals of the community would include:

“To build and maintain a church as a place of worship for Greek Orthodoxy to thrive; to establish a Greek language school program for coming generations to speak the mother tongue; To establish a Greek Orthodox cemetery and other community ventures that would continue to propagate the faith and perpetuate our Hellenic traditions.”

The Church Charter limited its membership to adult males of Greek birth or Greek parentage. “No atheists, anarchists, communist, or criminals” were permitted membership. Church dues were established at \$6.00 per year. All other revenue would be raised through contributions from the “thisko,” at services. A Board of Trustees was established with 15 members

to take charge of community affairs, maintain the parish and serve the goals and needs of its membership.

In the years that followed, the Greek community was to use various halls include a warehouse to hold services and invite visiting priests from San Francisco to make rounds and serve the special needs of the more distant Greeks.

Finally, through several years of hard work and fund-raising by a handful of pioneers, land was purchased and a church built. The “Evangelismos Tis Theotokos” (The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary) was opened in 1912 at 1216 San Julian Street. The Church was mostly known, however, as “San Julian.”

The Board’s first duty, after the Church had been built was to acquire a priest. Here, the story goes, a group of faithful resorted to something of a “kidnapping” when they greeted Papa Gerondeos Koutousis on a train in route to Florida. After some discussion and debate, he was whisked off the train by the parishioners and introduced to his new community! Papa Koutousis served this community faithfully. Not only did he maintain the new parish, but also as others who followed him, he traveled over much of the area around Los Angeles to serve the far-flung faithful in need of sacraments.

Father Kallistos Pappageorgopoulos followed Father Koutousis. Father Kallistos's ministry in Los Angeles and his later elevation in 1926 to become the first Bishop of San Francisco, would add much prestige and recognition to the young life of the Greek Orthodox Church in the West. Later, Bishop Kallistos would become Bishop of Chicago, in a newly reorganized Church.

Los Angeles never had a true "Greek Town" such as you would find in Lowell, Astoria, Detroit, Chicago and other cities. The distances were too great. A small cadre of Greek business did cluster around 4th and Los Angeles Streets. The Acropolis Cafe and the Marathon Cafe opened their doors in 1904. The Acropolis Cafe was run opened by a former sea captain, "Capitaneos Rallis," who would help the young immigrants find a boarding house and a place work from 1904 to 1979. (Capitaneos Rallis, who was my grandfather, ran the Acropolis until his death in 1932). The Marathon would become the place where many would go for Sunday lunch after Church. The Marathon operated regularly until 1980. By the 1920s, the Kalamata Importing Company and the Majestic Bakery also would serve as gathering places for the far-flung Greeks. Other restaurants, coffee houses and business would fill out the hub of the old Greek Town, now gone but not forgotten.

The miniature Greek Town had its own barber shops, newspapers, bookstores and other businesses catering to the small Los Angeles Greek community. Although commercial “Greek Town” grew and thrived from 1904 to 1945, a corresponding residential neighborhood did not.

The Greeks of Los Angeles were enterprising and did not seek the protection of an all Greek neighborhood or ethnic ghetto. Instead, they settled where economic opportunity dictated, in small cluster groups. First of these was in Boyle Heights, living in an area with Syrians, Russians, Armenians and other immigrants as early as the 1890s. Later Greeks would move to the end of the Red Car line in Palomar (present day Watts) for small farms; Gardena and Highland Park had settlers begin dairy farms; others would move to the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys. The area of Redondo Beach, also reached by Red Car, would see the beginnings of a thriving flower growing business where many compatriots from Cephalonia would settle and grow flowers.

The Greeks from these early years came from Afthoni, Marmara Island (near Constantinople); Soudena (in the Peloponnesus); and Cephalonia in the Ionian Sea. Soon many from the Kalavrita, Tripoli, Crete and other immigrants would arrive from the mainland and island of Greece. The pattern of each new immigrant writing home eager to have friends and

relatives join him accounted for the concentration of these early groups. A particular problem resulted however, in that 95% of all the early immigrants were males. Marriages were resolved by trips back to Greece or in many instances, “mail order brides.” Inter-marriage was not prominent, but did take place to a small extent in this early period. Several early pioneers would remain life long bachelors.

The first organization formed in Los Angeles was the Greek Benevolent Society, formed in 1904. This was a most successful mutual aid society that claimed membership from nearly all the community. It would begin a tradition in 1905 of hosting an annual Easter Picnic on Elysian Park that would become the longest lasting tradition in Los Angeles, today held at the Rose Bowl and sponsored by St. Sophia Cathedral. The Society continued to operate for nearly 50 years, but its number began to fall following the Second World War and it was dissolved.

The Marmarion Benevolent Society of Afthoni was chartered on August 15, 1909. Founded by 283 heads of households from the island that originally only had a population of 1500! Committed to support the Ecumenical Patriarchate and their homeland until 1916, when the remainder of the islanders were exiled to Asia Minor and would later settle in” Neo Marmara,” in Chalkidiki. Most of the “Marmarini” would open small groceries

and restaurants in the LA area. By the mid-1920s, 39 groceries, 1 bakery, 1 bookstore, 2 dairies, 2 bookstores, 1 printer, 1 coffee house, and 42 restaurants, were operated by Marmarini. Their first contribution to the new community was to be its very first Library. Obtaining volumes of books from Greece, the Patriarchate and even a new edition of the Encyclopedia Britannia! The Marmarion Society listed its purposes for such a Library as:

The existence of the library, (a) will increase the number of the congregation of the local church, (b) will decrease idleness, (c) will, in an indirect way, regulate the life of the Greek laborer, (d) will decrease crime, (e) will eliminate petite despotism in the life of our community, (f) will furnish marvelous, intellectual food, (g) will prevent the disintegration of the Greek youth, as components of the nucleus of the community and, (h) will introduce us to the augustness of the soul of the Greek Civilization, thus observing and fulfilling our obligations and duties to the hospitable United States of America.” (1915)

The Marmarion Society would grow with chapters in Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington as well as both Athens and Neo Marmara.

Another Society that started in 1909 was the “Society of St. Gregory,” but it changed its name to the “Omonia Society Soudenioton.” Its 75 members represented the heads of households from the twin cities of St. Basilios and Theotokos in the Soudena, Greece. Its membership grew steadily through Second World War with membership broadened to include the general geographic area. Very committed to the new community, its members held regular picnics and events to support the Church and its activities. Many of its members opened shops, restaurants, and wholesale produce vendors. Some 17 wholesale fruit businesses, 24 restaurants, 11 confectionaries and candy makers, 1 coffee house and 2 bakeries were owned by Soudenai. And Both the Omonia Society and the Marmarinon Society would continue to this day! Both Societies continue to this day and are nearing their 100 Anniversary’s with members of the 4th and even 5th generations. Although the Cephalonians did not form a "somateo," they would continue to work and live in the Redondo Beach area for many years dominating the flower business of Los Angeles.

By the late 1920s, a few other organizations and “topika somatia” were formed. The "Society of Kalavritinon" and "Society of Arkadon" were the most popular. The Leonidas Post of the American Legion was created for veterans, and continues to this day. Later, the Pan Cretan, Pan-Icarian,

Pan-Macedonian, Constantinople Society and other somatia were added, each representing different regions from Greece. The first Greek Ladies Society was organized in 1919 by Mrs. Maria Doumakes.

In times of trouble and warfare, many Greeks were eager to help their homeland. Always sends money home and paying for siblings and parents to come and join them was a top priority for all Greek immigrants. When it appeared that Greece would be in need, before the United States entered the First World War, 150 Greeks bought their own uniforms and trained in Chinatown to come to Greece's aid. Many would return and fight for Greece. But when America did enter the war, over 25% of the Greeks enlisted in the US Army. Greeks would hold the record as an immigrant group enlisting in the US army to fulfill their military obligation and gain American citizenship! After the war, some returned to Greece only to be told that the exemption held only for men naturalized before January 15, 1914.

From letters written by relatives and compatriots, many more Greeks would come to Los Angeles. Letter like this one, would entice more to come:

“Here people work hard and regularly, and the rest only on Sundays, but we fare well. Today, the day I write is Sunday. I have taken my bath, I have my milk, and I will pass the day happily. When did I know life with such order in Greece? If you wish, Master, you will do well to come, I’ll send you the cost of passage.” (Salutos, They Remember America, 1956)

Yet, life was not as easy as related in the letters. Greeks worked long hours for small wages and often-faced difficulty in finding mutual acceptance in the new land. Sometimes facing criticism and hardships, the Greeks were often distrusted for their business striving. As early as 1920, USC Professor Emory S. Bogardus relates what more “established” Americans were saying of the new Greek store and restaurant keepers:

“Who do business on a mean scale, who give as little as possible and are disagreeable when complain is made, who come to this country to make a lot of money and to do as little as they can for it. Not only do they seem to be deceitful but overcharging and underweighting bothers them not a bit.” (Bogardus, Immigration and Race Attitudes, 1920)

Sometimes the new Greek shopkeepers were compared to the Golden Age of Greece and were lamented for not looking like a god or having the skill of a statesmen, as related here:

“We are shocked when we find that the polite and good-natured Greek who keeps a shoe-shine parlor or a fruit stand has neither the beauty of an Apollo nor the statesmanship of a Pedicles, and we lament the degeneration of the Greek race. An on such weak evidence as this, the present immigrants are sometimes condemned as “undesirable”—without moral, industrial or political possibilities.” (Abbott, Immigrant and the Community, 1917)

From these early hardships, however, the Greek Community of Los Angeles gained economic stability, strength and respectability. Initially most Greeks came as an adventure to earn their fortunes and to return home. Hearing tales from others, they came to try their luck. But once successful, the adventure became an enterprise, which was difficult to leave. As early as 1922, J.P. Xenides noted this, when he states:

“All Greeks come to America with the intension of returning. They want to make money and return as soon as they can manage it, but they soon get so entangled in business and prosper that they cannot leave America even if they wished.” (Xenides, The Greeks in America, 1922)

By the 1930s the Los Angeles Greek Community was truly stable and Established. With few bad memories, the American reared generation of the 1930s and 1940s were not plagued with a feeling of embarrassment or shame of other ethnic groups. It is believed that the early geographic decentralization, economic success and social integration of the LA Greeks enabled them to preserve and further their social-cultural identity in the communities they were to settle. Edward Alsworth Roth praised the Greeks for their hard work and business success:

“Once his foot is on the first rung, the saving and commercial minded Greek climbs. From curb to stand, from stand to store, from little store to big store, to the chain of stores, and to branch stores in other cities—such are the stages in his upward path. As the Greeks prosper, they do not venture out into untried lines, but scatter into smaller cities and towns in order to follow there the few businesses in which they have become expert.” (Roth, The Old World in the New, 1914)

In the late 1930s and 1940s the community started to evolve and grow. The old caffeneon would cater more to the old. Greek Town would be relegated to a stopover on the way home from Church to buy cheese, olives and bread. Family and community life was marked by a period of. The Church of the Annunciation was under the direction of the beloved Father George Mistakides until 1949, would continue to be a dominate influence in the LA community's life.

Without the sanctuary of an ethnic neighborhood, the Greeks of L.A. moved quickly toward a relatively early acceptance into American social and economic life without sacrificing their cultural identity and ethnic heritage. By the 1930s, the Greeks migrated in significant numbers to Long Beach, San Pedro, the San Gabriel Valley, the San Fernando Valley, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino and Bakersfield. Within another 10 years, each of these communities would form their own churches and communities.

While the old "Topeka somatia" continued to exist, they would lose much of their strength. New organizations were formed to represent Greeks from all areas, from all villages and islands! First initiated by Supreme President, V.I. Chimbethes, who would make a

“whistle stop” campaign to many communities to start the Order of AHEPA Chapters (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association) in 1928 and 1929. The AHEPA was the first organization to encourage American citizenship and representation in public forums. AHEPA would stress the need to preserve Greek cultural heritage within the context of American citizenship. In 1929, the “Hesperia” Chapter of Los Angeles was formed with over 60 charter members. Soon chapters were started in Hollywood, San Pedro, Long Beach, Santa Barbara, Bakersfield, Pasadena and San Bernardino. Within a short time some 12 chapters were created. Within two years of the beginning the AHEPA in Los Angeles, the “Alkandre” Chapter of the Daughters of Penelope was started. Instrumental in its beginnings was the Daughters from San Francisco. Its first president would become the second Grand President of the Daughters, Mrs. Josephine Englezos. By 1937, the Maids of Athena and Sons of Pedicles were established as well. Although three GAPA Chapters were started, their emphasis on Greek language over American citizenship, did not prove to be as popular as the AHEPA program. GAPA would never become successful in Los Angeles after the 1930s.

The proudest moment of an American Greek would come on the 28th of October 1941, when little Greece refused to yield to Italian fascist demands. With the cry of “Oxi,” little Greece stood up to and successfully withstood the Italian fascist onslaught. The Nazi war machine finally overcame the stubborn Greeks, but the blood shed in the defense of freedom gained world respect in the cause of freedom.

The newspapers of Los Angeles all proclaimed the heroic stand of the Greeks. The Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles Examiner and the Los Angeles Herald all carried headline stories and many political cartoons praising the heroism and courage of the Greeks during the onslaught.

This era produced much pride in the LA Greek Community. The Skouras Brothers used their influence in 20th Century Fox and the Hollywood movie industry and started the Greek War Relief Association. They would set a record when they raised 5 million dollars in five months. The Pantages movie house, the Fox Theaters, Greek restaurants and markets all joined the AHEPA War Bond Campaign as well. The Los Angeles Hesperia Chapter alone sold more than \$1.5 million dollars in the first year! AHEPA would go on to become one of the single largest War Bond sellers in the United States. The Greek

Ladies Society (the Ladies Philoptochos Society was created in 1944 upon the request of Archbishop Athenagoras in his visit to LA) initiated an effort to help the war effort through their volunteer work and created the “Greek Unit of the American Red Cross.” In honor of this, the American Red Cross would designate March 25th, 1943 as “Greek Day” a day of national observance in honor of the Greek heroism in the cause of freedom and Greek American volunteerism.

In this hour of need, the sons of Greek immigrants enlisted in the American Armed Forces with unquestioned patriotism fought and died for the land of their birth. In the LA Greek community of 1500 families, 650 of its young men and women fought in the U.S. Armed Forces. Pride in being an American citizen was strong, but also a renewal of their pride in their Greek heritage took place.

Recognizing the AHEPA’s contributions to the war effort, American’s new President, Harry S. Truman joined the Order of AHEPA after taking office. America’s position toward Greece would later manifest itself in the now historic Truman Doctrine. On November 1, 1948, Archbishop Athenagoras, head of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America was elected as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. This was the first time in history that an American was

elected to the Patriarchate. In an unprecedented move, President Truman allowed Archbishop Athenagoras to be flown to Constantinople aboard the Presidential plane, name the “Sacred Cow.”

After the war, a feeling of accomplishment and success came to the Greek community and with this a move to build a new Church. Under the leadership of Charles P. Skouras, over \$2 million was raised to build an awe-inspiring Byzantine cathedral for the Los Angeles community.

The Cathedral was exceptional in its design by a talented second-generation Greek architect, Gus Kalionzes. Its primary artist was the brilliant William Chavalas, who helped bring Byzantine art to Pico and Normandie streets. Although some were to lament the sale of their 40-year-old Annunciation Church, the majority of the Greek community shared in the pride and accomplishment of the dedication of the Cathedral in 1953. Church membership would reach 1000 families and the new GOYA would enroll 174 youth by 1955.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Greeks of LA would be moving in greater numbers to the greater suburban areas of LA. As new cluster groups began to form in the beach communities, valleys and deserts of the general basin, new church communities were formed.

The motivating influence in the establishment of these suburban churches was the overwhelming distances between the suburbs and Los Angeles. New churches were started in Long Beach, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, Pasadena, Northridge, Anaheim, Redondo Beach, Covina, Irvine and Downey. Many thought that the social mobility coming from their success in the business and professional world would find the Greeks literally melting into mainstream, homogenous America. This though was not the case. The suburban Greeks of LA refused to sever ties with their past and retained a cultural and social identity of their Hellenic heritage. Although intermarriage would gain prominence during this time, Church membership and growth would continue in the new suburban LA Greek community.

The early suburban community parishes found themselves in much the same situation as the early Greek pioneers. Priests found themselves delivering sermons from rented hall or even tents until enough money could be amassed to begin construction of a church and a community center. These community centers represented the focal point of broad suburban community activities. With no Greek neighborhood, the center would assume a greater importance in the

life of the Church and the community. The center provided a place for the youth to get together through social, athletic and dance events. Moreover, it housed the Greek school, Sunday school, and Dance schools for the youth. Family congregations, board meeting, festivals and dances were also held in these centers. The center thus assumed a multipurpose role in the community. These years were characterized by a unifying force or common denominator, that of building a church and establishing a new suburban community.

The idea of a Greek Festival first came to the LA area with the dedication of St. Katherine's in Redondo Beach in 1963. Through the efforts of Father Naoum and the Ladies Philoptochos Society, the festival became a reality! The proceeds of the festival contributed greatly to the building fund of the Church, its classrooms, halls and gym. The idea soon spread to all the some 20-parish communities in Southern California.

The festival, however, became to the Greeks of the suburbs, a means to express the best of our Hellenic traditions, "philoptimo" and special Greek hospitality! It is through the festival that our Greek community shares its very spirit with all that are willing to come and partake in our food, drink, dance and fun. For through this spirit the

traditions of Hellas come to everyone in an experience that find and proclaims the Greek in all of us!

Along with the move to the suburbs, many new organizations would evolve in the LA area. The Hellenic University Club, the Greek Heritage Society, the Greek Cultural Society, the American Hellenic Council are but some of the organization that continue along side with the AHEPA family and our older Greek somatia.

The journey of the Los Angeles Greeks has been long. It will never end this search for the Golden Fleece. Those early Argonauts of Los Angeles now realize that the Golden Fleece they sought is in part, the journey, the search. The trials, the tribulations, the failures, the accomplishments, the building, the family, the culture and the Orthodoxy are intertwined in that search. These pioneers suffered hardships beyond endurance, but they were always giving as the “paleo lathi” of yesterday in order that the “neo lea” would take the torch in search for the evasive Golden Fleece. What they have passed on the succeeding generation is a Golden Heritage. Perhaps that has been the Golden Fleece all along, a heritage to pass on through the heart and soul. It is a legacy to build generations. The modern day Argonauts have found the Golden Fleece and thanks to them, so have

we. As Odysseus felt when he returned to Ithaca, “to arrive where we started and to know the place for the first time.”