THE GREEK PEOPLE IN RHODE ISLAND

Three Communities, One Ethos, 1893-1993

By

REV. STEPHEN KYRIAKOU

and

VENETIA B. GEORAS, M. D.

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Cover photo: Patriotic exercises in Newport on Greek Independence Day, 1930.

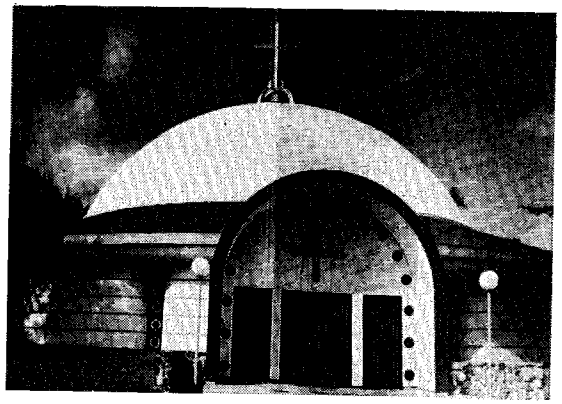
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

In 1975 and 1976, on the eve of the bicentennial observance, in my capacity as chairman of Rhode Island's celebration (ri76), I established eighteen ethnic heritage committees, consisting of recognized leaders of this state's major ethnocultural groups. One purpose of this move was to involve in bicentennial activities those ethnic communities whose contact with this country did not extend as far back as the Revolutionary era. I urged such groups to observe and commemorate the contributions they had made to the American and Rhode Island experience from the time of their arrival down to the bicentennial year. A much more important reason for establishing the ethnic heritage program, however, was to allow each group to present its unique contributions, customs, and folkways to its neighbors from other cultural backgrounds. Formulated under the premise that knowledge promotes understanding and understanding begets brotherhood, the program was designed to break down the ethnocentric barriers and antagonisms that hindered us from achieving that lofty motto and goal—*E pluribus unum*, one out of many.

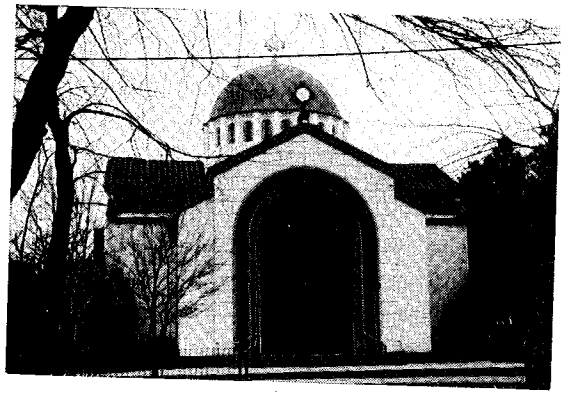
The one task assigned to each group upon its formation was to write a brief interpretive account of its Rhode Island experience—its motives for migration, areas of settlement, cultural survivals, and economic, political, and social activities—together with an assessment of its contribution to the development of our state. Though some efforts are more sociological, subjective, anecdotal, or selective than the neat, precise historical narrative that I envisioned, each of these pamphlets in its own way makes a valuable statement to all Rhode Islanders and provides a useful self-evaluation for the group that is the subject of analysis.

After the bicentennial's expiration, the concept of an ethnic heritage pamphlet series was kept alive by the Rhode Island Heritage Commission and its tireless chairman, Robert J. McKenna. Albert T. Klyberg of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Dr. Hilliard Beller of the Rhode Island Publications Society, and, especially, the authors of the various essays have also labored to bring this project to fruition as their contribution to the 350th anniversary of the founding of the state. No historical enterprise could be more appropriate for this 1986 celebration than a recounting of the toil and the triumph of our diverse peoples: From American Indians to Southeast Asians, we are Rhode Islanders all!

Patrick T. Conley



The Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, Cranston



The Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption, Pawtucket

St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church, Newport

PREFACE

As yet there has been no systematic study of the history of people of Greek descent in Rhode Island. Perhaps some day such a study will be made, for in many ways the Greek presence in the nation's smallest state is representative of the Greek experience elsewhere. Coming to the New World, Greeks first migrated to the coastal states, of which Rhode Island—the Ocean State—boasts the longest coastline in proportion to its size. These Greeks sought their initial employment as unskilled laborers in factories and mills, and Rhode Island offered an abundance of such opportunities in the production not only of textiles but of costume jewelry as well. Despite recent economic reversals in the latter industry, Providence is still known as "the Jewelry Capital of the World."

The present survey does not purport to be a systematic study; that is, it does not examine all aspects of the Greek presence in Rhode Island in a definitive way. Rather it represents a first step in that process, and it is therefore necessarily descriptive rather than analytical in scope. It is based in large part upon four sources: (1) the commemorative books issued by the three Rhode Island Greek communities, namely, the fiftieth and seventy-fifth anniversary albums of the Annunciation Parish and the fiftieth anniversary albums of the Assumption Parish and the St. Spyridon Parish; (2) other more recent publications of the three communities, as well as parish archives; (3) pertinent accounts in major local newspapers, including the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* and the *Newport Daily News;* and (4) interviews with some of the still-living founders of Rhode Island's Greek community, among them Peter Janaros and Gregory Vouros, both ninety-six years of age when the first draft of this essay was completed in 1978, Vasio Petropoulos, in her nineties and perhaps the first Greek woman to have attended an American university, and Sophia Karambelas, the first child of Greek parents known to have been born in Rhode Island. In addition, some light was shed on the early immigrants by Victor Angell, a Bulgarian by birth, now in his nineties, whose association with the Greeks dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Such interviews are admittedly a problematical source, especially insofar as reminiscences are often colored by the biases and memory of those reminiscing. An entire account, therefore, could not be based upon recollection alone. On the other hand, oral history has great

value when it is balanced by other sources; it can both verify or corroborate the written sources (which are not without their own biases) and supply important information when written sources are wanting. Furthermore, oral history is a reminder that the historical enterprise is fluid, in that the past is always subject to reinterpretation (and revision) by the future.

The present account is made possible by the Greek-American Heritage Subcommittee of the Rhode Island Heritage Commission and the Hellenic Cultural Society of Southeastern New England. It was the vision of the Hellenic Cultural Society to seek to gather into one place data from disparate sources that would tell the story of the Greeks who came to Rhode Island, and it is a primary concern of the society to encourage a continuing effort to record the ongoing story of the Greek presence there.

Rev. Stephen Kyriakou
May 1978

Because the story of the Greeks in Rhode Island is, indeed, ongoing, it has seemed desirable to update it from May 1978, when Father Kyriakou completed the original manuscript, to May 1993, when work on the pamphlet was concluded. For the valuable information they provided for this updating, I am indebted to Father Andrew George of the Cranston parish, Father Evanghelos Georgiades of the Pawtucket parish, and Father Thomas Chininis of the Newport parish. Thanks are due too to Drs. Patrick T. Conley and Hilliard Beller of the Rhode Island Publications Society, who edited the manuscript and helped bring this pamphlet into print.

Venetia B Georas, M.D.
May 1993

The Greeks in the New World

The Age of Exploration and Colonization

The distinction of being the first Greek to land in what became the United States goes to Don Teodoro, a crew member accompanying the Spanish explorer Panfilo de Navarez. In October 1528, in order to secure water rights at Pensacola, Florida, Navarez left Don Teodoro as a hostage with the Pensacola Indians. Whether Don Teodoro volunteered for this role is not recorded, nor is anything further known of him.

There is more ample information about the arrival of Greeks in America in the eighteenth century. In 1763, after the conclusion of the Great War for Empire, Florida became a British possession. Eager to dominate and populate the peninsula, Britain offered handsome land grants to its citizens who would settle there. Among those accepting the offer was Andrew Turnbull, a Scottish physician who had married Maria Rubini, the daughter of a Greek merchant who had come to London from Smyrna in Asia Minor. When Turnbull received some twenty thousand acres near St. Augustine, he named the estate Smyrna after his wife's birthplace. He then recruited four hundred Greeks, primarily from the southern Peloponnesus, sailed from the island of Minorca for the New Smyrna, and arrived in June 1768. But living conditions were poor, and in 1777 there was a rebellion led by an Elias Medici, a Greek from Corsica. The settlement was abandoned, and the surviving colonists moved north to St. Augustine.

With the relatively significant prosperity of the town's Hellenic settlers, the Greek presence in St. Augustine is well documented. Although the exact numbers of these Greeks is not known, there were enough for them to gather for prayer in a separate building

and to erect a chapel there, both to fulfill their religious obligations and to maintain their religious and ethnic identity. Known as the Averoff House, in 1965 this building was purchased by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America and refurbished with a permanent chapel and a museum. The edifice, now called the St. Photios Shrine, commemorates this early Greek presence in Florida.

The settlement at St. Augustine was by no means the earliest recorded presence of Greeks in America. In 1725, by act of Maryland's General Assembly, Michalis Youris became a citizen. Several decades later Ioannis Paradisos (John Paradise) was brought to Virginia by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. In 1787 Paradisos married into one of that state's most prominent families and became the country's first Greek-American scholar.

The first marriage between Greeks that is known to have taken place in the United States occurred in New Orleans in 1799, when Andreas Dimitriou, a native of Hydra, married Marianna Drakos, the daughter of a Greek merchant who had settled to New Orleans in 1766. Marianna is the first person of Greek parents known to have been born in the United States. This Greek-American "Virginia Dare" was born in her parents' adopted city on March 1, 1777.

While some documentation exists, evidence of the Greek presence in America prior to 1800 is nonetheless sketchy at best, as the preceding survey indicates. Immigration records for these centuries do not offer much information. For example, the Greeks who accompanied Turnbull were originally listed as Italians, because they were brought aboard in Minorca, a major gathering place of crew members for British ships sailing to the New World.

What is generally accepted is that there were only a few Greeks in America during the eighteenth century, and that most were male mariners who soon intermarried with non-Greek women and, with the exception of the colony at St. Augustine, did not establish an ethnic community. The total number of these Greek pioneers did not exceed three thousand, and there is no evidence that any Greeks came to Rhode Island during this period.

The Nineteenth Century

Two generations after the American Revolution, the Greeks waged their own War of Independence (1821-1827) against the Ottoman Turks, who had occupied Greece for four hundred years. The emotional attachment of the West to classical Greece helped

spark a wave of philhellenism in the United States, resulting in American support for the Greek cause and, in turn, a significant classical Greek revival that influenced architecture, literature, sculpture, and painting throughout the nation.

Both countries benefited. While sculptors chiseled Corinthian columns for state capitols and American children read Xenophon's *Anabasis,* various organizations raised funds and gathered materiel to help the Greeks win their independence. Such well-known Americans as Colonel Jonathan Miller, Lieutenant General George Jarvis, and Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe even participated directly by fighting alongside the Greeks.

As a result of this American involvement, numbers of Greek children, many of them orphaned as a result of the war, were brought to the United States. Some of these immigrants later distinguished themselves in service to government or the private sector. Evangelos Sophocles became a professor of Greek at Harvard University; John Zachos made his mark by teaching black Americans during and after the Civil War and championing equal educational opportunities for women; Lucas Miltiades Miller, the adopted son of Colonel Miller, became the first United States congressman of Greek descent in 1891 as a representative from Wisconsin; Photios Kavasales Fiske became a navy chaplain; George Marshall authored the navy's first gunnery manual; Captain George Kolvocoresses commanded the warship Saratoga during the Civil War; and Michael Anagnostos married Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe's daughter and eventually headed the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston.

Just prior to the Civil War, a small number of Greek merchants established import and export businesses in such American cities as Boston, New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans. By 1864 the number of Greeks in New Orleans had grown to several dozen families, and they established a church community that is now the oldest Greek community in the United States.

But it was not until the industrial expansion of the 1880s, which demanded cheap, unskilled labor, that Greeks began arriving in significant numbers. Most entered the country through legal means, though many seamen simply abandoned their ships when they reached American ports. Some of the newcomers found employment in oceanic port cities, while others settled in cities and towns around the Great Lakes or responded to the lure of the California rush and went west. The presence of Greeks in Colorado and other Rocky Mountain states dates from this period.

The Greek Migration

Even though mainland Greece achieved its independence from the Ottoman Turks by 1827, having first claimed that independence in 1821, the country as it is known today grew slowly throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by painstakingly annexing territory through treaties. Greece incorporated Thessaly in 1881, Crete in 1898, southern Epirus in 1913, most of the Aegean islands in 1914, and Western Thrace in 1919. With each annexation Greece confronted new economic and political problems, and these became root causes for the migration of the early twentieth century.

Among the reasons for Greece's economic and political malaise were its lack of industry and its paucity of natural resources, apart from the sea. Most Greeks lived in remote mountain villages, far from the relatively small but prosperous capital city of Athens. Their principal occupations were the tending of flocks and olive and grape farming. Successive wars ravaged the countryside, and the prosperity that was envisioned with each annexation did not materialize. Under these conditions America beckoned the Greeks as the land of opportunity, as it did many Europeans prior to the First World War. Between 1900 and 1915 alone, one out of every four Greek males between the ages of 15 and 45 left for America, bringing further economic devastation upon Greece and decimating its population. Some 168,000 Greeks migrated to the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century, and an additional 184,000 arrived between 1910 and the mid-1920s, when the discriminatory National Origins Quota Act severely curtailed the numbers who would enter the country in subsequent years.

These figures do not include ethnic Greeks who came from Egypt, the Balkans, Palestine, or Cyprus, or who came from Asia Minor, especially after 1908, when the Turks required Greeks and other minorities in their empire to serve in the Turkish army. Nor do the figures include the many thousands who left Asia Minor after the devastating defeat of the Greek armies who set out to liberate Constantinople, or the survivors of the sustained massacre of over one million Greeks and over two million Armenians in retaliation for that attempt.

The systematic effort by the Turks to eradicate the Greek presence from Asia Minor, after three millennia of Hellenic civilization on that subcontinent, has been referred to as the first genocidal holocaust of the twentieth century, and it has resulted in bitter relations between Turkey and Greece and between Turkey

and the Armenians. After their monumental losses, the Armenians have been denied a homeland or even an acknowledgment of their plight.

A word is in order here about the designation *Greek,* since many more Greeks lived outside of Greece proper than within it during this early period of migration to America. It should be borne in mind that the period known as the Hellenistic Era followed the conquests by Alexander the Great during the fourth century B.C. This period was marked by the establishment of strategically placed Greek-speaking colonies from Italy to the Indian subcontinent, as well as the establishment of such major cities as Alexandria in Egypt. These places flourished with things Greek, or Hellenic; hence the words *Hellenistic* and *Hellenism.* (The words *Greece* and *Greek* are derived from the Roman designation of the various city-states calling themselves Hellenes, the most prominent of which was Athens.)

The Romans referred to the areas outside of Greece proper, especially the colonies in southern Italy, as Magna Graecia, or Greater Greece. One common characteristic of all these colonies and city-states, and one of the brilliant achievements of Alexander, is that these settlements all spoke a common tongue. That language was the main source of identity that helped maintain a common bond among a people occupying not only the country of Greece proper but most of the coastal cities of the eastern Mediterranean as well. These people had an ancient adage, *Pas os mi Ellin, Barbaros;* that is, "Everyone who is not a Greek (i.e., who does not speak Greek) is *barbar*" (i.e., speaks incomprehensibly, from which comes our word *barbarian*).

With the coming of the Christian Era, these Greek-speaking people were also united by their Orthodox Christian faith, which spread by means of the Greek language. Over the centuries this faith has continued to provide a cohesion among them as has nothing else. For the Greeks who came to America, the pursuit of material prosperity was not enough; they were motivated too by a powerful system of values, which included not only an attachment to their native customs and mores but a dedication to their religion as well. By 1986 the Orthodox Christian faith claimed five million adherents in the United States and ten thousand in Rhode Island. And yet that faith remains relatively misunderstood by the general populace, often being compared and contrasted with Roman Catholicism, with which it shares a common origin, and with the various Protestant denominations, with which it has nothing organically in common.

To understand the history of the Greeks immigrants, we should know something of the religious heritage that they brought with them.

The Orthodox Christian Faith

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Greek nation as a whole was sustained by the Orthodox faith. Constantinople had served as the capital of the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire since 330 A.D., and its fall to the Ottoman Turks dealt a severe psychological blow to the Greek people. Where they had constituted the majority in a homogeneous empire, they were now captives in their own lands, and they remained so for four hundred years.

The ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople was considered the "first among equals" in the Orthodox world since 1054, when the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western churches occurred. This status gave him enormous spiritual importance in the East, for he headed a church of some three hundred million people. The Turks named him ethnarch as well, making the patriarch responsible to them for the entire Greek nation. Therefore, when the Greeks declared their independence on March 25, 1821, the Turks hanged the ecumenical patriarch, Gregorios V, at the gate of the patriarchate in a vain effort to quell the revolution.

Throughout the centuries of Ottoman occupation, the Church served as the locus of the religious, social, and civil life of the Greeks. It dispensed the sacraments, especially those of baptism, the Eucharist, and marriage, and it educated the populace and maintained the Greek language, often conducting its teaching in the setting of a *krypho scholio,* or "underground" school. In addition, the Church espoused the ideals of loyalty to family, to tradition, to nation, and to God, as well as to the principles of honor and respect for parents. The notions of liberty and human freedom also loomed large in the Church's teaching, though these were seen not in the American context of civil liberties but rather as Biblical mandates inherent in Christianity itself. It was no coincidence that the beginning of the revolution of 1821 was proclaimed by a prelate, Metropolitan Germanos, bishop of the city of Patras, who raised the Greek flag and summoned the Greeks to war.

When the immigrant Greeks came to America, they brought with them their belief in their church as the guardian of the unbroken apostolic tradition from the time of Jesus Christ. Especially since the Great Schism, when the Eastern and Western churches separated,

the Orthodox Church has maintained that she alone holds to the decisions of the first seven ecumenical councils of the undivided Church, and that she alone therefore represents the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in its fullness. The Orthodox Church was not alone in its claims to being the true church; the Roman Catholic Church made the same claims as well, and relations between the two churches were sometimes hostile. Because of this rivalry the Rhode Island Greeks turned to the local Episcopal Church for assistance, since it represented a "sacramental" but less adversarial church.

The Establishment of the Rhode Island Communities

The First Settlers

The major Greek migration to Rhode Island began in the 1890s, and it is from then that the story of the Greeks in Rhode Island unfolds. Unlike the better-known history of Greek migration to the New World in general, the early history of migration to the Ocean State is somewhat obscure. Each of the three geographical pockets of Greek immigrants—which in a decade or two would become distinct communities of Greeks in Providence, Pawtucket, and Newport—has its own story to tell, and each community claims some of the earliest Greek settlers in the state.

According to extant records, Greek migration to Providence began in 1898. The period from 1898 to 1902 brought John Koufoudakis, Costas Costakos, Dr. Haralambie Cicma, Theodore Kanelos, and Dr. George Aloucos to the capital city, specifically to Smith Hill and Providence's southwestern section.

Newporters maintain that by 1896 four Greeks had arrived in the city, all from the island of Skiathos, which lies in the Aegean Sea just east of the city of Volos. Among the four was John Palmer, who settled in Newport in 1896. Drawn by the lure of the sea, these men saw that they could make a living in Newport's small but thriving fishing industry. In 1897 Antonios Axiotes became the fifth Greek to settle in Newport.

The distinction of being the state's first Greek settler, at least insofar as the records show, belongs to George A. Vaka, who (according to the *Providence Journal*) arrived in 1892 and made his home in Pawtucket. Nothing else is known of Vaka, whom no family claims as its ancestor. His name suggests that he might have

come from northern Greece, or even that he was a Vlach, a Romanian Greek.

Many Greeks soon followed these earliest Hellenic settlers to Rhode Island. The *New York Times* reported that by 1910 some 1,300 Greeks were living in Rhode Island, 600 of them in Providence, 400 in Pawtucket, and the remaining 300 mainly in Newport. Federal immigration records indicate that from 1898 through 1932, 4,201 Greek arrivals listed Rhode Island as their destination. A sizable number of these migrants later returned permanently to their homeland to fight in the Balkan Wars (1900-1914) and World War I.

Given their religious legacy and the relationship at the time between the Orthodox churches and other Christian bodies, it is not surprising that the Greek immigrants—all of them members of the Church—quickly sought to establish religious communities to serve their special religious needs and to provide a link with the mother country. What is unusual, however, is the manner in which these communities were founded: they were established not by missionaries or by the clergy but by lay people.

Church officials in Greece and elsewhere in the Greek diaspora did not give thought, initially, to the permanent establishment of Greek communities in the New World, despite the long history of emigration. Perhaps they shared the view of the immigrants themselves, who believed that they would remain in America only long enough to make a substantial amount of money and then return to Greece and "retire." Also, it would be necessary to determine the proper authority for the diaspora communities; would they be put under the aegis of the Church of Greece or under the Ecumenical Patriarchate (whose ability to govern was curtailed because it was located in Turkey)? Or would control over them be claimed by some other ecclesiastical center, perhaps the patriarchate of Alexandria? Without giving thought to these concerns, Rhode Island's Greek immigrants pressed on.

During the early days of settlement, the majority in each community hailed from a different part of Greece. Most of those who settled in Providence were from the Peloponnesus, the southernmost part of Greece, which in fact accounted for four out of every seven Greeks immigrants to America. In Pawtucket most came from Epirus and northern Greece. The early settlers in Newport were mainly from the island of Skiathos, though later they were outnumbered by Greeks from the island of Lesbos. The demographic makeup in all three communities changed within a decade, however,

Fishermen from the island of Skiathos, circa 1910. These men were among the earliest Greek settlers in Newport.

for despite the Greeks' regional differences and preference, they all identified with the Greek Orthodox community as a whole and took up residence where they found employment. Nonetheless, although the communities had much in common, each developed unique characteristics of its own.

The Providence Community

The earliest Greek immigrants in Providence established a church community in 1905. At first the group gathered for prayer at an inn operated by Costas Costakos, located on Pine Street. Occasionally the members brought itinerant priests from other cities to Providence to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, bless their marriages, and baptize their children. In 1906 these Greeks gathered in a meeting room on Exchange Place, where they would continue to meet until they purchased their own church building in 1911.

In 1908 the community elected Stylianos Stagopoulos its first president and engaged the services of Father Thomas Papageorgiou,

who was given room and board and the freewill offerings of the faithful but had to work during the week in a local restaurant for his principal income. The arrangement was agreeable both to the community, which had no assets of its own and no legal right as yet to raise funds, and to Papageorgiou, who had already visited some of the other fourteen parishes that had been established throughout the United States.

Although they had not yet incorporated, the Providence Greeks acted as a legal entity when they published their bylaws in November 1908. This document stated that the parish had been been "established" in 1905, at which time it had been given the name Evangelismos, or Annunciation, recalling the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to Mary that she would bear the Messiah. The bylaws declared that the members of the community would adhere to the teachings of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which was defined as the church that developed geographically in the eastern part of the Byzantine Empire. Further, the members placed themselves under the aegis of the Church of Greece, a logical and viable arrangement, both because Greece was a free Orthodox country and because most of the Providence immigrants had in fact come to Rhode Island from Greece proper.

According to the bylaws, the priests who would be engaged to serve the community would be graduates of recognized theological schools, such as that of Halki, which operated under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, or of schools of lesser standing, mostly in Greece. The parish would be governed by a *symvoulio,* or council, of ten members, with the customary officers elected among them. The highest legislative body, however, would be the parishioners themselves, who would meet in a parish assembly to determine church policy, the annual budget, and other matters. If the Greek ambassador to the United States happened to be in Providence, he would preside over the assembly as the representative of the king. The community was conceived as a religious and ethnic entity under both the spiritual jurisdiction of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece and the temporal jurisdiction of the king of Greece. At the outset this arrangement was more than symbolic.

To support the community financially, the bylaws provided for a contribution of six dollars a year from each member. However, foreseeing that in the future some might be able to contribute substantially more than that, they declared that the community would recognize those who gave one hundred to two hundred dollars as "contributors," those who gave two hundred to five hundred dollars

as "benefactors," and those who gave more than five hundred dollars as "great benefactors."

The bylaws also outlined a procedure for distributing food and money to indigent parishioners and for paying their hospital expenses, and they called on members to care for the elderly; in the absence of national or state assistance programs, the Greeks took it upon themselves to help their own. Anticipating a period of affluence, however, the bylaws specified that if there was a surplus of receipts over expenses, three-fourths of that surplus was to be used for the eventual acquisition of a church and cemetery and one-fourth was to be forwarded to the Greek embassy for the assistance either of Greeks elsewhere in the United States or of "free and yet to be liberated Hellenes," a reference primarily to the Greeks in Turkey and Cyprus. Curiously, the bylaws directed that if the parish was dissolved, the proceeds from the sale of its properties were to go to the University of Athens.

In 1910 the Providence Greeks embarked upon a major drive to raise money for acquiring a church. At that time they created a *chryse vivlo,* or founders' book (literally a "golden book"), to record significant events as well as the names and signatures of contributors. This document still survives, and together with a copy of the bylaws of 1908 it constitutes the earliest written records of the parish. It is indicative of the cordial relations that the Greeks enjoyed with other religious groups that the golden book includes the names of several non-Orthodox clergymen and laymen as contributors to the community's fund-raising effort.

With George Pournaras presiding as its president, the community now engaged the services of the Reverend Polycarpos Marinakis, who, like his predecessor, worked at a restaurant when he was not celebrating the liturgy or performing his other priestly duties. Marinakis also supplemented his income by teaching the Greek language to children in their homes.

After raising $2,400 in 1910 and an additional $2,500 the following year, in December 1911 the Providence Greeks purchased a small church, located at 333 Smith Street, from the Swedish community. The building had once been the home of Temple Beth El, and for a while it had also served as a Baptist church. Meanwhile, on April 11, 1911, the parish members had formally incorporated, calling themselves the Hellenic Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church Community and, placing themselves under the intercessory protection of the Mother of God, naming their church Annunciation of the Theotokos. (On November 21, 1956, the corporate name would be simplified to the Annunciation Greek Eastern Orthodox Church.)

The Pawtucket Community

By 1910 there were enough Greeks in Pawtucket to warrant organizing a parish, and the group rented a house on East Avenue and began holding its services there. The following year this industrious community raised $750 to purchase property on George Street to build a church. Soon afterwards a parish council was formed to begin the process of incorporation, and on February 22, 1912, the Pawtucket group received its religious corporation charter from the state.

The Pawtucket Greeks were the first of the three communities to erect, rather than purchase and refurbish, a church of their own. Shortly after receiving their charter, they collected enough funds from among the community's ninety-seven families to develop the George Street property. In November 1912 they laid the cornerstone of their new edifice, and on October 26, 1913, the church was completed and the Divine Liturgy celebrated by their new priest, the Reverend George Sakelarios. The final construction costs amounted to $7,500, which was considered a substantial sum for a group consisting mostly of mill workers. Three years later the Pawtucket community would expand its facilities at a cost of $14,000.

Curiously, the church was not at first named, for the name given at the time of incorporation was provisional. It was not until June 13 of the following year that Vasilios Papatheodorou (who had signed the articles of incorporation as Vasil Papatheodore), elected by the communicants as their first president, convened a parish assembly. That gathering adopted the eleven regulatory articles that later became the bylaws for the young community, and it also formally selected the name Koimisis for the church.

Literally translated as "Dormition," the name commemorates the death of Mary, the Theotokos. Since the large Roman Catholic population in the area uses the synonymous term "Assumption," that appellation has come to be the popular name of the Pawtucket church. Strictly speaking, the name refers to the bodily assumption of the Virgin following her death, a belief that is not technically a dogma in the Orthodox Church. However, it is a popular tradition that although Mary was buried in Gethsemane, her body was taken into heaven.

The Pawtucket Greeks acknowledged the Church of Greece as their ecclesiastical authority. As with their Providence counterparts, this selection was both necessary and logical. It was not until the establishment of an Archdiocese of North and South America in

1922 that the communities placed themselves under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which claimed authority over all the churches in the diaspora.

The Newport Community

In Newport the Greeks began gathering at the Friends' Meeting House (now the Community Center) in 1914. The following year they also held services at the United Baptist Church on Spring Street. With some of the community's younger children attending services and Sunday school at Trinity Church, the oldest Episcopal church in Rhode Island, a friendship between Greeks and Episcopalians ensued, and through the efforts of Stanley C. Hughes, the rector of Trinity, its Kay Chapel was made available to the Greeks and became their principal place of worship until they purchased a church of their own in 1924.

Meanwhile the Newport Greeks elected a parish council for the purpose of incorporation, and on September 14, 1915, the state granted them a charter empowering them, as the Hellenic Orthodox Community of Newport, to organize and maintain a church under the aegis of the Holy Synod of Greece. Anthony Spanudis, Apostolos B. Cascambas, Christos P. Petropoulos, Stamos Salonikios, Demetrios Damaskos, and Lambros Brown (Argites) elected Nicholas Mitchell as their first president and together signed the articles of incorporation.

Unlike the Providence Greeks, the Newport community promulgated its bylaws in conjunction with its incorporation. This document identified the locale of worship—namely, Kay Chapel at 27 High Street—and declared the purpose of establishing a religious community under the jurisdiction of the Church of Greece. (After the establishment of the Archdiocese of North and South America in 1922, the Newport Greeks would become the first of the three communities to receive recognition from the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.) Religious services would, of course, be held "exclusively in the Greek language by a priest appointed by the Holy Synod of Greece" after due consultation with the parish council. St. Spyridon would be the community's patron saint, and this fourth-century wonder-working hierarch would be commemorated annually on his feast day, December 12.

The first to sign the Newport document was the community's president, who signed the bylaws as Nikolaos Mintzelos and the articles of association as Nicholas Mitchell. His status as an

"established" Greek, with an Americanized name and some knowledge of English, no doubt weighed heavily in his selection as the community's first leader. It was at this time that the Newport Greeks also engaged their first priest, a cleric from Mytilene named Efstratios Rigellis, who remained in Newport until the community's acquisition of a permanent house of worship in April 1924. The documents pertaining to the purchase were signed by Basil Constant, the current president of St. Spyridon's council, and Dionysios Demessianos, the new priest. The Thames Street property remains the Newport Greeks' permanent home.

Life in the Early Years

New Neighborhoods, Old-World Cuisine

With few exceptions, most of Rhode Island's pioneer Greeks rented tenements. In Providence they settled along Pine Street, and with the purchase of the Smith Street property many rented flats in that area, especially along Battey Street. In Pawtucket they took up residence on and near George Street. In Newport they settled along Thames Street, the area closest to the harbor, and on the streets perpendicular to it.

It was not unusual for several families to rent an entire building, and while some of the women worked, others would care for the children. Unmarried men often shared living arrangements also. A half dozen unmarried men, usually from the same *horio,* or village, would rent an inexpensive flat and share the costs and responsibilities of maintaining the household, with one cooking, another tending to the laundry and the housecleaning.

Providence in particular was the home of many unmarried males who had come to America in order to earn money to send back to Greece. This money was to sustain their families and, more especially, to help their unwed sisters gather an acceptable *prika,* or dowry. Only after their sisters were married could they plan marriage for themselves. Many of these men hoped to save enough money so that they could return to Greece, either to retire or to marry and raise a family there. Between 1900 and 1910, Greek men outnumbered Greek women in Providence twenty to one.

The diet of Rhode Island's Greeks resembled that of the native villages in the homeland. Fish, greens, eggs, and potatoes were served routinely. Beer and wine were consumed on Sunday, when meals tended to be more elaborate. Since meat was more available in Rhode

Island than in Greece, there were many fine dishes that could be prepared with greater regularity. Moussaka and *pastichio,* which required ground meat—usually lamb or beef—were served frequently, as was *arni psito,* a roasted lamb.

For special gatherings, and especially on formal occasions such as baptisms and marriages, a whole lamb would be roasted on a spit. Sometimes rabbit would be available, and it would be prepared in a *stifadho,* a kind of stew with onions. *Spanakopeta,* a spinach and cheese pie, was also served, and olive oil, feta cheese, and kalamata olives were considered staples. Bread was always homemade, and it was usually served freshly baked. Salad was included with most meals.

For days of fasting or abstinence, observed in preparation for receiving Holy Communion or during Lent, *fasolada,* a bean soup, and *faki,* a lentil soup, were consumed, and meat and dairy products were omitted. In Newport the Greeks learned to eat lobsters (which they harvested and sold to local retailers), crabs, and various kinds of fish. With the roe they prepared *taramosalata,* a paste seasoned with oil and lemon, and they often topped their fish with *skordalia,* another kind of paste, made with garlic, bread or potatoes, and oil.

Greeks looked forward to dessert with due anticipation. Their tables would feature *kourambiedes,* a shortbread covered with powdered sugar; *finikia,* or *melomakarona,* a similar cookie dipped in honey and topped with ground walnuts; and *koulourakia,* a traditional cookie sprinkled with sesame seeds. More elaborate tables would also feature such delicacies as *ravani,* a cake made with semolina wheat and bathed in honey syrup. Greek *nikokires,* or homemakers, prided themselves on the sweet bread they would knead especially for Easter, Christmas, and St. Basil's Day (January 1). This bread would contain a gold coin that would fall by lot to one of the family members, who would be considered especially lucky for the duration of the year.

Name days, the observance of one's patron saint, were regarded as special occasions. Following the liturgy those observing their name days would host a kind of open house. Parishioners would go from home to home to congratulate all the Basils or Gregorys or Nicholases or Elenis and would invariably be given a sip of cognac, a cup of Greek coffee, and some of the elaborate pastries. This custom waned somewhat as the Greeks moved into the suburbs in later years, but it is still observed by some and continues to be characteristic of the Greek community.

Workers and Entrepreneurs

Sunday was a day of feasting, but the rest of the week was a time for work. Because none of the Greek settlers knew the English language initially, and not all could read and write even in their native language, local Greek-Americans tended to seek certain kinds of employment. Some worked in restaurants or coffee shops; others were hat or boot blockers; still others held jobs at and sometimes eventually owned variety stores. Some worked for fruit companies, and a few were employed at "candy kitchens" (ice cream parlors). In Newport many of the men worked as fishermen; in Pawtucket they found jobs in that city's textile mills; in Providence they labored in the jewelry factories as well as at the "gazicompania," the gas company, where they made mantles for gaslight fixtures.

A sense of independence, dating back to the days of the ancient Greek city-states, was strong among the settlers, and their habits of thrift, another distinguishing Greek characteristic, enabled many of them to establish businesses of their own. The most profitable of these, and one that they could embark upon with limited capital and little command of the English language, was the restaurant business. In Providence, Nicholas Stavrianakos opened a restaurant that he called the New York System, naming the Olneyville establishment after a sauce that had been devised in New York to flavor hot wieners. Though permitted in Rhode Island, this special sauce was prohibited in some states because of its high cereal content. The hot wieners were filling and inexpensive, and the idea caught on throughout the city. Constantine Pappas opened his own New York System restaurant on Smith Street, and within five years Providence had at least a dozen such establishments.

In Newport the Rozes brothers from Patras—Spiro, John, and George—opened the Satellite Restaurant, while James D. Dialegmenos (Lewis), who hailed from Thrace, operated a restaurant on Thames Street featuring more traditional American fare. Zacharias Vouras, another native of Patras, opened a coffee shop at the intersection of Thames Street and today's America's Cup Avenue. Because his name was difficult to pronounce, he and his restaurant became known simply as George. Christos P. Petropoulos, a charter member of the Newport community, owned real estate, Harilaos Koulouvardis managed a shoe repair business, and the Logothetes families operated candy kitchens. In Pawtucket, Michael Capos sold coffee and tea to the various restaurants, and as their business increased, so did his. His brand, Excellent Coffee, has earned a notable

reputation in the state. Nicholas Pappas operated a mom-and-pop store in Pawtucket offering his countrymen the Greek cheese, olives, spices, and other items that they could not otherwise find in the area.

Certain more prosperous Greeks embarked on ventures that were initially more ambitious. Anastasios Troulis acquired the Dreyfus Hotel in central Providence, and Costas Costakos and Peter Vican opened the Hellenic Baking Company on the city's North Main Street. Originally intended to supply Greek-owned restaurants with breads and rolls, the bakery eventually devolved to the Vican family and became the Homestead Baking Company. Meanwhile, Costakos entered the bottling business, in addition to operating an inn, and he was thereby able to provide both employment and housing to newly arrived immigrants.

The Early Growth of the Greek Community

The Balkan War of 1912 interrupted the community's otherwise serene life. Organizing a battalion of "sacred fighters," many of the unmarried men left for Greece to help their homeland retrieve the last of its occupied territory. According to one source, over a hundred men joined the fighting, inspired by visions of the defeat of the Turkish armies and the liberation of Constantinople. *Pali tha ginoun dika mas* ("Once again they [the lands] will be ours"), they reminded themselves. Leading the battalion was Konstantinos Metzites. Among those joining him were Panayiotes Jannaros and Gregory Vouros, both of whom later returned to Rhode Island and lived in retirement in Newport.

Others who went off to fight in the Balkans did not return. Yet, rather than decimating the community, the war in fact indirectly contributed to its growth, for those who came back to America did so with women they intended to marry. Over the next seven years there were sixty-three marriages celebrated in Providence alone, more than the total during the next two and a half decades.

Most of the children of the founding families were born after 1912. Sophia Costakos Karambelas, however, was an exception. Born in Providence in 1904, she had the distinction of being the first child of Greek parents to be born in the state. One of the few early Greeks who could read and write English, she was often called upon to translate immigration documents. Because of this expertise she was named to the board of the International Institute of Rhode Island, where she served for over fifty years until her death in 1992.

Another pioneer, Vasio Petropoulos, also had the advantage of being educated. Having moved to Newport from Lowell, Massachusetts, Petropoulos assisted in expediting immigration matters on Aquidneck Island. Before she became a teenager, she would appear in court, seated on a judge's lap, mediating and translating. Later she became the first Rhode Island woman of Greek birth to attend a university.

The growth of Providence's Greek community during the second decade of the twentieth century rendered the Smith Street church increasingly inadequate. On February 23, 1919, therefore, the membership decided to sell the old church and either purchase or build another one that would be more centrally located. The community accordingly sold its Smith Street property for $5,800, substantially less than the acquisition price, and purchased three lots on Pine Street at the corner of Foster. Two of the homes located on these lots were razed to make room for the new church, and a third was retained and rented out. The work of construction began on Sunday, August 22, 1920.

According to custom, the parishioners bid for the privilege of laying the cornerstone. While many of the more affluent male members pledged substantial amounts of money, the honor went to a woman, Elpinike Palamidas. A metal box containing a number of coins, the minutes of the historic 1919 assembly, and other memorabilia was cemented in place alongside the cornerstone. Thus began the construction of a building that would survive on the site until 1992.

On March 25, 1921, the feast day of the Annunciation and the one hundredth anniversary of Greek Independence, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the new church for the first time. March 25 became a special day in the life of the Providence community for many years to follow, for it was not only the date of those two observances but the community's name day and the anniversary of the completion of the church as well. It became the community's usual practice to celebrate the service of vespers on the eve of the feast and to invite the clergy and parishioners of the other two Rhode Island Greek parishes to participate.

It also became customary in all three communities for the various church organizations to sponsor annual joint programs of singing, speeches, and other festivities on March 25. In Providence the event was held at the Swedish Auditorium on Pine Street, while the Pawtucket and Newport communities staged their programs at their parish halls. The Pawtucket celebrations often highlighted Manolis

Sklavounos, who would orate at length in praise of the accomplishments of the classical age and the bravery of modern Greeks in vanquishing tyranny. Statewide, delegations of prominent community members and heads of the various organizations would seek a governor's proclamation for the March 25 observance. The commemoration became an annual statewide event, jointly sponsored by the three communities, in March 1931.

Governor J. Joseph Garrahy presents a proclamation on Greek Independence Day, March 25, 1977.

With the Greek Americans clearly here to stay, clergy and lay members now presided over the creation of various new community organizations, with special heed paid to the needs of growing numbers of American-born youth. It was during the 1920s that a second generation of the Greek presence began to emerge in Rhode Island. This was the premier decade for the physical establishment of the state's Greek community: churches were erected, community centers were built, and the Greeks themselves, industrious and frugal, settled into profitable businesses. Those were "roaring years" in many ways, and they in fact continued on into the Great Depression, which wreaked havoc upon so many other businesses throughout the state

from 1929 onward. Established as they were in occupations involving the sale and resale of food, the Greeks remained relatively unaffected by this national economic and social catastrophe.

The Establishment of Greek-Language Schools

The 1920s also marked a period of communal cohesion and educational advancement for Rhode Island's Greek Americans. As more and more of the community's children reached school age, the need for a Greek-language school was increasingly felt, and in 1921 such a school was finally established in Providence. Prior to 1921 those who could afford it engaged a private tutor to instruct their children in the Greek language, but now this aspect of their education became a community venture.

Every weekday afternoon, after their dismissal from public school, children traveled to the Pine Street church, where they stayed until seven o'clock in the evening, learning the language, mores, and faith of their parents. On Saturdays, from nine in the morning until noon, the children were taught the fundamentals of the Orthodox faith by the parish priest. Tuition was one dollar a month. In 1929 the school was officially named the Koraes School after Adamantios Koraes, the Greek philosopher and man of letters known as the Great Teacher of His Nation. Many hoped that the Koraes School would be expanded to a full day school, but that aim was never accomplished.

In 1921 the Reverend Peter Mihailides arrived in Providence to become the parish's first permanent priest. A married man (unlike his predecessors), Father Mihailides continued to serve the parish until his death thirty-five years later. When he arrived, the community consisted of 127 adult male members; when he died in 1956, the membership had more than tripled. The community managed to retain its Greek ethnic character throughout that time, and marriage outside the ethnic enclave was rare.

In 1925 the parish engaged Theodore Anagnostiades as teacher and cantor. After Anagnostiades left to study for the priesthood in 1927, teaching was carried on for a short time by William Georgeadys, John Mesarhakis, and George Papadopoulos until Savvas Savvides came to Providence in July 1928. A native of Cyprus, Savvides had been trained in theology and was a candidate for the priesthood before coming to Rhode Island. Apart from the priest, he was the community's first full-time employee, and he served as teacher and cantor, as well as church secretary, bursar, and founder of numerous parish organizations, until his retirement in 1959.

The class of the Greek-language school of the Annunciation Church, Providence, 1930. Seated in front of his students is the class's teacher, Savvas Savvides.

Irene Loukakos taught with Savvides in Providence until 1930, when she moved to Pawtucket and began a Greek school of her own, unaffiliated with the church there. The Providence parish tried to persuade her to close her school, claiming that the competition was threatening the existence of its own Greek-language program, but to no avail. With an enrollment of 125 youngsters at the Providence church school and half that many in her own, both schools flourished during the 1930s.

The Greeks in Pawtucket had become the first of the three communities to acquire a permanent priest when they engaged the Reverend Gregory Pantazonis in 1916. In 1918 they had also become the first to receive Bishop Alexandros of Rodostolon, thus sealing the relationship that they had established with the Greek Synod. The Greek ambassador to the United States, Lambros Koromelas, was present at this reception to convey the greetings of the Greek government.

Although the Pawtucket community established its own language school, it could not afford to engage a teacher, and so the responsibility for educating children in the Greek language was assumed by the priest. In Newport the same responsibility was initially entrusted to the new priest of that parish, the Reverend George Stefopoulos. Originally a carpenter by trade, Father Stefopoulos—who would construct his church's bishop's throne, altar table, and *proskynetari,* or reverence booth (on which the icon of the church's patron saint is placed)—would be the first priest to remain in the Newport community for more than five years.

Ecclesiastical Regrouping and Schism

When a feud erupted in Greece in the 1920s between King Constantine and Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, the episode produced what has been called "a civil war within the Church" in Rhode Island and throughout America generally. Most of Rhode Island's Greeks sided with the ambitious prime minister, but there was sufficient support for the royalist cause to bring about a division within the Providence and Pawtucket communities.

Whereas the Pawtucket and Newport communities had aligned themselves with the Church of Greece, the Providence group remained independent of any episcopal allegiance until 1926. The Providence Greeks do seem to have had an affinity for the Church of Greece—in 1908 the members had voted to recognize that authority, and in December 1918, before the erection of the Pine Street church, a letter signed by George Papadopoulos had been sent to Bishop Germanos of Monemvasia, Sparta (rather than to the synod itself) requesting a priest—but nonetheless there had been no formal affiliation.

In the royalist-Venizelist struggle, royalist sentiment initially prevailed in Providence, and the community chose to place itself under the aegis of the Church of Greece, then headed by a royalist. In September 1926 a majority of those attending a parish assembly voted to recognize the authority of the bishop sent by the Church of Greece's Holy Synod, even though the Ecumenical Patriarchate had founded the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America in 1922. The community then sent a letter to the local representative of the church, seeking to establish a formal relationship.

The arrangement between the community and the Church of Greece was short-lived, for loyalties changed in Providence, and the

Venizelists gained the ascendancy. At that point minority royalists established their own Church of the Archangels, which continued to operate for three years. A similar schism occurred in Pawtucket, where the royalist minority also established a church of their own and engaged Nikolaos Bobolas as their priest. In Newport, on the other hand, where the sides were equally divided, neither saw the need for a separate church.

In addition to supporting the king, the royalists rejected the Ecumenical Patriarchate's adoption of the "new [Gregorian] calendar." This calendar (adopted in Catholic Europe in 1582 and in England and America in 1752) was intended to replace the Julian calendar (proclaimed by Caesar in 46 B.C.) as the basis for the celebration of the various feast days, with the exception of Easter. Later a significant schism occurred within the Church of Greece when it too adopted the Gregorian calendar, but by then the royalist-Venizelist dispute was over.

The "monarchist" communities in Providence and Pawtucket were soon dissolved, and the members returned to their respective original churches. Although this schism was brief, ill feelings tended to divide members of the communities for some time to come. Those who espoused one cause would be seated in church opposite those who espoused the other. In 1935 Costas Papaphotiou, in his capacity as president of the Providence community, persuaded the rest of the parish council to consent to a *mnemosyno,* or memorial service, for both King Constantine and Eleftherios Venizelos. Two stands were placed before the altar for separate photographs of the prime minister and the king, but there was a single tray of *kollyva,* or memorial wheat, over which the prayers for the dead were read, and both leaders were eulogized. Similar reconciliation observances were held in the Pawtucket and Newport communities, signaling that the schism was, indeed, over.

In February 1933 the Providence parish came under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of New York and accepted the archdiocesan regulations. Archbishop Athenagoras (later Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I) accepted an invitation to come to Providence to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, thus formalizing the new relationship. The Newport and Pawtucket communities also placed themselves under the aegis of this archdiocese, and Athenagoras visited the Pawtucket church in 1935, at which time he dedicated and consecrated the cemetery that the community had acquired ten years earlier.

The Depression Decade

The Development of Community Organizations

Although the Great Depression took a severe toll on Rhode Islanders in general, its cost to the Greeks was fairly small. The growing number of Greek organizations served to promote communal cohesion. The churches became the centers for most of the social events of the Greek community; aside from their home life, Greeks looked to the churches as their single social outlet. They encouraged their children to become involved at all levels of religious and fraternal life, and while they valued the work of the public schools, they discouraged their children from participating in after-school events and organizations that were not church-related. The Greek language continued to be spoken at home, and marriages among Greeks remained the norm.

As the 1920s were marked by the erection of churches and the establishment of the Greek schools, the 1930s were characterized by the proliferation of fraternal, social, and religious organizations. The most enduring of these proved to be the American Hellenic Educational and Progressive Association, usually referred to as Ahepa. This fraternal organization was founded in 1922 in Atlanta, Georgia, with the aim of combating racism and anti-Greek bias. By 1930 it expanded to include a women's group, the Daughters of Penelope; an organization for boys, the Sons of Pericles; and a society for girls, the Maids of Athena. By 1929 the Providence chapter, known as the Sophocles Chapter, No. 106, claimed 150 members.

Unlike the churches, Ahepa used English, not Greek, as its official language, and it required that prospective members be or resolve to become American citizens. Membership was not restricted to ethnic Greeks and Greek Orthodox communicants. The Newport

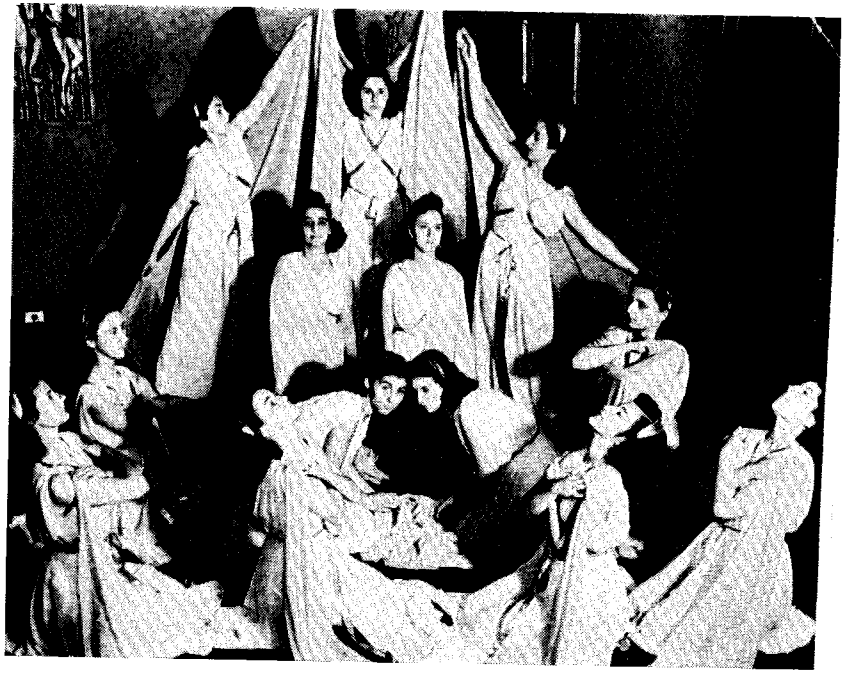
The Providence chapter of Ahepa, 1935

The Daughters of Penelope, Providence, circa 1955

chapter, No. 245, was named after Maud Howe Elliott, who resided in that city and who provided monetary and moral support for the chapter's establishment.

In 1930 a Kanaris chapter of the Greek American Progressive Association, or GAPA, was founded. Similar in purpose and structure to Ahepa, GAPA also established an Electra chapter for women as well as a section for young women. Unlike Ahepa, GAPA employed Greek as its official language and restricted its ranks to ethnic Greeks and Greek Orthodox church members. While the Ahepa chapters have thrived for over sixty years, the GAPA group gradually became extinct, essentially because it resisted the social changes that confronted the communities' ethnic structure, particularly after World War II.

Many other Greek organizations were founded during this time. In 1930 local Greeks established a committee to help the sick and indigent by visiting those who were hospitalized and giving assistance to victims of the Great Depression. The following year the Daughters of Aphrodite was created, principally to present plays and skits and to serve as a social organization for older teenage girls. An Association of Liberals (Venizelists), an Association of Loyalists, and a Greek-



The theater group of the Annunciation Church, circa 1935

American Citizens Society were formed, but these groups were short-lived. There was also the St. Demetrios Chapter of the Association of Sykeotes for those from the town of Sykea, an Association of Skiathites for Newporters from the island of Skiathos, and, briefly, a chapter of the Panarcadian Federation and associations for those who came from Mitylene and Epirus. Similar to local Italian societies, these parochial groups reflected the phenomenon of village transplantation from the Old World to the New.

Responding to the social and recreational needs of the young, each of the communities organized a chapter of the Greek Orthodox Youth of America (GOYA) in the late 1930s. These were the first parish organizations that accepted both males and females in their membership. The groups provided social and recreational activities as well as opportunities for fellowship. As many as four out of five Greek marriages that took place in Rhode Island during the 1930s and 1940s were the result of contacts made within GOYA.

Chapters of Philoptochos (meaning "friend of the poor") were founded in all three communities during the mid-1930s. These all-female groups were charged with the responsibility both of maintaining St. Basil's Academy, located in Garrison, New York, directly across the river from West Point, and of sponsoring local philanthropic and educational efforts. Katina Constant headed the chapter in Newport, and Pauline Pappas directed relief efforts in Providence.

Unlike the Ahepa-related organizations and others operating under their own articles of association, the Philoptochos groups were an adjunct of the Church, and in many ways they proved to be the financial backbone of their parishes. Members sought contributions both within their own church and from the community at large. In Newport the group sponsored annual "lobsterfests" that attracted large numbers of residents and vacationers. It was through similar efforts that the Pawtucket community was able to purchase additional property adjacent to the George Street church in 1935, and that the Providence and Newport Greeks were able to erect iconostases (screens separating the church nave from the sanctuary) and to adorn them with tiers of hand-painted icons.

Because of the rapid growth of these Philoptochos chapters, each with its own fund-raising programs, the parish councils proposed the creation of a United Greek Organizations Association, an umbrella group that would establish parish calendars to avoid scheduling conflicts within the parishes as well as among them. The proposal was short-lived, however. In a spirit reminiscent of the ancient Greek

city-states, each chapter sought to outdo the others both in membership and in fund-raising events. This healthy competition resulted in additional growth for the organizations and for the communities of which they were a part.

The annual bazaars staged by each of the Philoptochos chapters were especially popular. These events, at which craft items and Greek pastries were offered for sale, were held before the Christmas holidays, and they often raised funds amounting to as much as a third of the annual parish budget. Also popular were the community picnics sponsored by the parish councils. At first these were held in nearby picnic areas; later, when the Providence and Pawtucket parishes acquired additional grounds, those communities held their picnics there. Originally each family brought its own food to the picnics, where refreshments could also be bought. Within a few years, however, committees were appointed to do the cooking, and the meals became quite substantial. At the picnics that the Newport community held annually at the Kempenaar Clambake Club in Middletown, for instance, parishioners typically enjoyed a meal of lamb, lobster, corn on the cob, and pastry. These were festive occasions, and members of the three parishes commonly attended one another's picnics.

In 1931 the communities' Sunday schools came under the aegis of the Association of Catechetical Schools, a regulatory body founded by Archbishop Athenagoras. The Providence community's school was included in this arrangement even though the parish did not come under the archbishop's jurisdiction until 1933. Additional volunteers were engaged during the decade to assist in the teaching of Greek; in Newport the program was headed by Dorothea Gianakellis, Angelo Sklavounos, the Reverend Stephen Daglis, and Helen Decoulos, while their counterparts performed similar services in Pawtucket. Providence remained the only community with a full-time paid teacher.

Community Affairs in the 1930s

All three communities grew during the Depression years. A census taken in Providence between 1928 and 1932 showed that that community now had 1,175 members, including men, women, and children. In 1937 the figures showed 225 heads of households; in 1941 that figure reached 400, and by 1946 it had climbed to 600. Immigration accounted for very little of this increase, since migration from southern and eastern Europe had been restricted

by the discriminatory National Origins Quota Act of 1924. From 1898, when the federal government began to list arrivals by nationality, through 1932, when it temporarily discontinued this method of enumeration, 4,201 Greek immigrants settled in Rhode Island. During the 1930s, however, the immigration laws and the global depression severely curtailed the Greek influx.

During the 1930s the Providence Greeks were able to provide much-needed assistance to some of their Orthodox neighbors. The assassination of the Armenian primate in 1933 had caused a serious rift in the city's Armenian community, dividing its members between competing jurisdictions—one in Etchmiadzin, Russian Armenia, and the other in Beirut, Lebanon. With Providence's Russian-affiliated Armenians (Ramgavars) worshiping at St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church on Smith Hill, those who chose to affiliate with the anti-Russian Lebanese jurisdiction (Tashnigs) formed Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church and made an arrangement with the Providence Greeks whereby the Armenians would celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the Pine Street church until they could secure their own facilities (which they eventually did on Broadway).

Although relations remained bitter between the two major Rhode Island Armenian communities (there was also a smaller parish of Armenian Congregationalists), the Greeks maintained cordial relations with all the Armenians. Both nationalities had a common history of Turkish oppression, and each year Rhode Island Greeks participated in the commemoration of the Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1894 and 1915. As a result of their friendly contact, some intermarriage between the two groups was beginning to occur.

In 1936 the Providence parish purchased a large house adjacent to its church to serve both as an educational and social center and as the priest's residence. While the sexton and other families rented the top floor, Father Mihailides, *presbytera* (priest's wife) Kalliope, and their children, Helen, George, and Emmanuel, occupied the first floor. Despite the cost of purchasing the home, the community ended the year with a surplus of $848! That year was also notable for the community's involvement in the tricentennial celebration of the city of Providence: it was the first time that the Greeks had participated in the planning and execution of a civic event that was not Greek or Greek Orthodox in character.

When the archdiocese established Holy Cross Seminary in nearby Pomfret, Connecticut, in 1938, Rhode Island Greeks played an important role in that founding, contributing significant amounts of money as well as such necessary items as furniture, bed linens,

and food. The Philoptochos chapters were in the forefront of this effort, and Savvas Savvides, Peter Vican, Dr. Haralambie Cicma, Anastasios Papadopoulos, George Belegris, Nicholas Bouklakos, George Christelis, and Eugenia Gionis were among those providing early financial support. The various organizations would continue to raise money to sustain the school until its relocation to Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1952.

Members of the state's Greek community visited the seminary often and offered their homes to seminarians who came to the churches on weekends to assist as chanters and teachers. Greek mothers were delighted to welcome the young men, hoping their eligible daughters would one day marry seminarians and thus become *presbyteres* when their husbands were ordained to the priesthood. One woman actually did: Julia Georgeadys of Providence married Stephen Papadoulias of Newport, who went on to serve as dean of St. George Cathedral in Springfield, Massachusetts, for many years. Athanasios Rizos and Carl Vouros from Newport became the first American-born priests to have attended the seminary, and James Kyriakakis and Theofanis Degaitas from Providence later studied there as well.

Another notable event of the 1930s was the organization of church choirs. Until then the cantors, or chanters, provided unaccompanied responses during the liturgy. Now, in a significant departure from Greek Orthodox liturgical tradition, but with the encouragement of Archbishop Athenagoras, organs were installed in all three churches. In Providence and Pawtucket these were small electronic organs, but in Newport the community acquired a used but magnificent hand-built Strack organ from St. George's Episcopal Church on Rhode Island Avenue in that city. The new choirs and organs encouraged greater participation during the liturgy, and untraditional as they were, they provoked little opposition.

Of the three communities, only the Providence Greeks were able to employ a full-time sexton. By February 1929 their church registered some 230 adult male members as well as 200 additional members who called themselves the *nea yenea* (literally, "younger generation"; i.e., those under twenty-one). By far the largest Greek community at this time, the Providence group was able to include in its eight-thousand-dollar annual budget a provision for a full-time person to clean its facilities. Fulfilling the charge that "the church be maintained in the same orderly manner as we maintain our homes," sexton Peter Gionis was succeeded by Thomas Antoniou, Neokles Marayis, James Vassilopoutos, and George Theodosiou.

Because of their separate incorporation and the relatively late formation of the archdiocese, the individual parishes remained somewhat independent administratively, raising their own monies to dispose of as they saw fit. Besides responding to the archdiocese's per capita assessments and subsequent special requests, the communities frequently funded local projects and educational and building programs. They also paid the priests' salaries, often giving the impression that it was the parishes, rather than the archdiocese or the diocesan bishops, who engaged the priests. On several occasions disputes over salaries or duties resulted in the dismissal of priests and, in turn, conflict with the archdiocese.

Signaling the growing stature of Rhode Island's Greek community, both among the larger ethnic group and in the state as a whole, the Providence Greeks were asked to host the Ahepa national convention during the summer of 1939. This was the only time that that annual event was held in Rhode Island. George Demopoulos, the state's first attorney of Greek extraction, was named the convention chairman. It was immediately evident that the Pine Street church would not be able to accommodate the many people who would attend, so the parish council set out to find another church that would permit a Greek liturgy to be celebrated in its sanctuary.

Because of the particular relationships among the various Christian churches at the time, a number of large churches could not be considered; but finally the officers of the Round Top Congregational Church on Weybosset Street offered their facilities. Among the many clergy who subsequently gathered for the celebration of the liturgy there were Father Mihailides, Archbishop Athenagoras, and Father George Stefopoulos, the "carpenter-priest" of Newport. The responses were sung by the choir from Boston's Annunciation Cathedral of New England.

World War II and the Postwar Years

The 1940s

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 preoccupied Rhode Island's Greek community with war relief efforts for the next six years. On October 28, 1940, General Metaxas responded *ohi* (no) to Mussolini's demand that Greece submit, prompting an Italian invasion that the Greeks repulsed. This initial success against the Axis resulted in a German campaign of conquest that overran Greece and captured Athens on April 27, 1941. Greek defiance had bought valuable time for the Allied cause, but it resulted in much suffering for the Greek people. The valor of the Greeks was widely recognized, however, and relief efforts on behalf of the occupied nation were well supported by the general Rhode Island populace.

In the forefront of this work were the women, young and old, who gathered and packed clothing earmarked for Greece. Thousands of dollars were also collected and sent to the Red Cross. To coordinate these efforts, a headquarters was established in Providence on Weybosset Street. But no local effort was more outstanding than the War Relief Bond drive, which was spearheaded by Anthony Spiratos. With the Providence and Pawtucket communities purchasing over $50,000 in War Relief Bonds, Spiratos raised more than $2.5 million from various sources, an achievement that earned him special recognition by the State Department and a personal visit by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953.

Over a hundred young men from the Rhode Island Greek communities served in the U.S. armed forces during the war, and the Greek Americans at home were fiercely proud of them. One of these servicemen, Charles Koulouvardis, recalls that wherever in the country they were sent, they were received most cordially

by other Greeks and were always well treated in Greek-owned restaurants. Locally, plaques bearing the names of Greek Rhode Islanders in the armed forces were placed on the walls of the churches, and services of supplication (*paraklesis*) were conducted for the safety of these young men and a speedy end to the war. For the duration of the conflict the Providence community displayed a banner with seventy stars, one for each of the local boys serving in the army. Nine were never to return: Michael J. Dounetos, James Paul Stappas, Demetrios Dracopoulos, Constantine Stephanopoulos, Constantine Tsintsakos, Peter L. Lekakis, James Paul Pappas, Chris P. Pappas, and Peter Sfikas were killed in action. The town of West Warwick honored Dounetos by naming a street after him, and Providence honored James Pappas by dedicating James Paul Pappas Memorial Square on October 28, 1946.

The Newport community received a new pastor, the Reverend Constantine Theodore, at the outbreak of the war. Though born in Greece, Theodore was reared in Boston and became the first priest of a Rhode Island Greek community to have graduated from the newly established Holy Cross Seminary. In a curious and not immediately evident way, his arrival marked a turning point in the development of the Greek community, a shift in orientation from the "Greek village" notions of the Church to more Americanized customs. The war and its aftermath would result in a relatively large number of "mixed marriages" in which one of the partners was neither ethnically Greek nor Greek Orthodox in religion. Such unions required a new kind of ethnic outlook, one that also regarded English as an acceptable spoken language.

Another emerging issue was women's rights. From the inception of the Providence parish in 1905, women did not attend parish assemblies and therefore took no part in the formation of parish policy. In the early years, in fact, women had sat on the left side of the church and men on the right, and a balcony, originally called the *gynekonites,* or women's quarters. was designed exclusively for women. The war had a generally liberating effect on American women, and this effect was felt in all the parishes, where chauvinistic traditions had flourished. Now women began enrolling in the parish communities as full-fledged members and were recognized in the assemblies as well. The notable activity and accomplishments of the communities during these years were due in no small part to the efforts of the women.

During the 1940s a choir was formed in Providence for children aged nine to fifteen. The director of this choir, Iphigenia Goluses,

was also named director of the adult choir in 1945, a post she held until Ethel Lafazanis succeeded her six years later. Helen Mihailides Pappas served as the church's organist until succeeded by her brother Emmanuel, who would continue in that capacity for nearly forty years. In Pawtucket the church choir was directed by Elizabeth Chrones, with various volunteers providing the accompaniment.

In December 1945 a major testimonial banquet, chaired by Apostolos Cascambas, was held at the Viking Hotel in Newport to honor both the pioneers of the Newport community and those who had served as parish council presidents. Attended by representatives of the city government and the Navy, numerous clergymen, and such prominent philhellenes as Maud Howe Elliott, this event proved to be an inspiration for parishioners to work at bringing about needed repairs and improvements in their house of worship.

The church building, a clapboard structure now nearly a hundred years old, was beginning to deteriorate, and it was clear that something had to be done if it was to survive. In 1946 Nicholas Spiratos devised a plan, which the community quickly adopted: a brick veneer was applied to the building's exterior, the entrance was moved from Brewer Street to Thames Street, and twin towers were added, making the church visible from every point in the nearby harbor. The work not only preserved the exterior of the church but also made possible the redecoration of the interior, where the iconostasis was expanded and additional pews and a large Austrian crystal chandelier were installed.

When Newport author and women's rights activist Maud Howe Elliott died in 1948, the Newport Greek community eulogized her as "a beloved benefactor of the Greek people," one who "gave fresh impetus in support of every humanitarian cause" and maintained "until her last days the same vigorous tradition of culture and benevolence, which were exemplified by her father, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, in the war for Greek independence in 1821."

The decade of the 1940s ended with Rhode Island's Greek Americans giving much thought to the community's future, and to the task of finding the best ways to ensure the local continuation of Greek culture and tradition. The following decade would prove to be a period of physical growth, cultural assimilation, and renewed immigration—a period that would see the emergence of a new professional class and the demand for the use of English not only for administrative purposes but in the liturgy as well.

A New Decade

By October 28, 1951, the eleventh anniversary of Ohi Day, the Providence parish had completed its mortgage obligations. The church, erected in 1920 at an initial cost of sixty thousand dollars, was now paid for. Needless to say, its members thronged to the services when, after the Divine Liturgy, the mortgage was burned. James Goltsos, the founder of the International Importing Company, headed the Mortgage Burning Committee, which made the final payments to the bank and organized the festivities that followed. The actual burning of the mortgage was performed by Constantine G. Papantoniou, a representative of the *nea yenea.*

There was general agreement among the parishioners, however, that their facilities, including the newly refurbished basement, were inadequate. Particular consideration was given to the erection of a new community center adjacent to the church, one that would provide much-needed classrooms, meeting rooms, and a large hall for social functions. The building fund initiated in 1946 was seen as the key vehicle for carrying out such plans.

One project of the Providence community that never came to fruition was the establishment of a cemetery. Emulating the Pawtucket community, which had purchased a cemetery at Walnut Hill in 1925, the Providence group had acquired the nineteen-acre Intervale Cemetery in the Lymansville section of North Providence in June 1946 at a cost of $52,000. Until that time most Providence Greeks had been buried in the city's historic North Burial Ground, a section of which had come to be known as the Greek section. But the community's hopes for a cemetery of its own never materialized, for an additional $15,000 was needed to clear the Intervale land and pave the various roadways, and other parish needs were more pressing. No action was taken on Intervale until 1963, when the parish sold the land for $27,000. The Greeks continued to bury most of their dead in the North Burial Ground, while some were interred in Swan Point Cemetery.

The Newport group utilized the smaller cemeteries on Farewell Street and the adjacent Island Cemetery. When lots became unavailable there, the community turned to the Island Annex and Middletown cemeteries. The possibility of acquiring a section in Trinity Cemetery in Portsmouth was sometimes discussed, but no action was taken on this idea. Although it would have been desirable for each group to have its own cemetery, the absence of any religious requirement that the Orthodox be buried in a cemetery of their

own gave such projects low priority in the planning of the communities.

The early 1950s saw the emergence of the language issue, especially among the young and those who had entered into mixed marriages. In Providence an organization was formed (with Emmanuel Mihailides as its first president) to strengthen the ties among the hundreds who had graduated from the Greek school and to encourage them to continue to speak the Greek language among themselves. But although the young people were fluent in Greek, they preferred English as their language, and they insisted that English be used in church services as well, especially for the benefit of the growing number of non-Greek spouses.

In the early 1950s the elderly Father Mihailides became the target of Providence parishioners who favored the use of English in the church. The other two communities had meanwhile engaged priests—the Reverend Gregory Carfopoulos in Pawtucket and the Reverend Spyridon Papademetriou in Newport—who were fluent in both English and Greek; but Mihailides, despite his popularity, resisted the demand for the increased use of English. The controversy over language continued throughout the period. When a committee under the leadership of attorney George Mihos was formed to revise the parish bylaws, a requirement was added that the annual report, until then published only in Greek, "be in the future printed in English as well." It was a harbinger of things to come.

Early in 1950 the Greek Orthodox community joined the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, an association of various Christian denominations throughout the state. The decision to seek this affiliation came about because parishioners felt the need to associate with churches belonging to traditions other than their own, and thereby to become more a part of the Rhode Island religious community. The growing use of English by the Greeks, particularly among the young, and the founding of the World Council of Churches by various Orthodox and Protestant churches in 1948, contributed to these new ecumenical attitudes.

In many ways it was clear that a new decade had begun. When Archbishop Athenagoras was elected ecumenical patriarch on November 1, 1948, he was succeeded as archbishop by Michael, who would lead the archdiocese until his death in 1958. At that time there would be some 250 Greek Orthodox parishes in the country, all within the archdiocese's jurisdiction.

Accepting English, Supporting Greece

As the 1950s progressed, the process of Americanization continued to make inroads on Greek customs and language. Early in the decade the communities yielded to the demand that Sunday school classes be conducted in English rather than Greek. Parent-teacher organizations in each parish gradually became the forum whereby the use of English was promulgated. These organizations attracted mostly American-born and convert mothers, who taught their children the Orthodox faith in English. The language of the liturgy, however, remained Greek for some time to come, as required by the archbishop's 1952 encyclical decree.

When Bishop Ezekiel (who later became archbishop of Australia) visited Providence in 1951, George Demopoulos expressed the common concern that the Church would lose its young unless English was included in the liturgy. Although the bishop declared that the language of the liturgy would remain the language in which it was written, he conceded that English could be used in an occasional sermon. While in Providence, Ezekiel ordained George H. Gallas to the diaconate, the first ordination known to have taken place in the Providence church.

In 1954 Bishop Demetrios of Olympos assigned Paul Cotsarides as a lay assistant in Providence. Cotsarides instituted a religious education class for adults, began a Bible study class, and preached Sunday sermons in English. By 1955 it was evident that English had to be included as a working language in the community and in the liturgy. At that time an assembly decided that the parish minutes, until then kept only in Greek, would in the future be kept in English as well. The same decision was also reached in Pawtucket and Newport. A temporary assistant priest, Demetrios Papalambros, who was fluent in English, was assigned to the Providence church until a new pastor could be found.

Meanwhile, in 1952, a testimonial was held honoring Bishop Athenagoras Cavvadas. Until recently archbishop of England, Cavvadas was the founder and the first dean of Holy Cross Seminary, which was now being moved from Pomfret to a hilly fifty-two-acre site in Brookline, Massachusetts, overlooking the city of Boston. When the cornerstone of the new theological school was laid, the three communities canceled services and transported hundreds of parishioners to visit the new campus for the inaugural ceremony.

In the early 1950s the Providence community turned its attention to providing an athletic program for its youth. Although Ahepa had offered such programs since the founding of that organization in the 1930s, it was not until 1951 that the community organized two parish basketball teams, with a total of eighteen players. These teams joined church leagues, first in Providence and later in Cranston.

The basketball team of the Annunciation Church, circa 1951

Despite the emphasis on basketball, Rhode Island's most notable Greek-American athlete was gridiron standout John Mellekas. A third-round draft choice from the University of Arizona, Mellekas became the first Greek Rhode Islander to play sports professionally when he was signed as a lineman by the Chicago Bears in 1956. Mellekas's career as a defensive tackle and center included five years in Chicago and shorter stays in San Francisco and Philadelphia. After his retirement John and his brother James opened the Odyssey Restaurant in Newport.

The relatively small number of accomplished Greek-American schoolboy and professional athletes is at least partly explained by the strong work ethic among the Greeks. After-school hours that could have been spent perfecting sports skills were often devoted instead to jobs or academic pursuits. The rapid upward economic

mobility of members of the local Greek community and their strong presence in the professional class were achieved, in part, at the expense of athletic accomplishment.

Church Recognition and Crisis

On April 6, 1954, prompted by a desire for recognition on a state level, the communities wrote to the Orthodox vicar for New England, Archimandrite Iakovos Coucouzes (later Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the archdiocese), to inquire about the various steps to be taken to gain official recognition for the Orthodox Church as the state's fourth major faith (along with Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism). That recognition was achieved in March 1956, when the Rhode Island General Assembly passed a resolution proclaiming that "henceforth, whenever reference shall be made to the major faiths in the State of Rhode Island, such reference shall be deemed to include the Eastern Orthodox Church."

The recognition gained by Orthodoxy in Rhode Island coincided with the formation of the Council of Orthodox Churches, which included not only the three Greek parishes but all the other Orthodox parishes in the state as well, including St. Mary's Antiochian Church in Pawtucket, St. John's Ukrainian Parish in Providence, St. Michael's Ukrainian Parish in Pawtucket, St. Stephen's Ukrainian Church in Manvlle, St. Mary's Russian Church in Cumberland, and St. John's Romanian Church in Woonsocket. Attorney Harold Demopoulos was instrumental in the establishment of the council, as were Emmanuel Tomadjoglou and George Mihos. Demopoulos served as the group's first president.

The Council of Orthodox Churches held dinners, lectures, and common worship services. After all the state's Orthodox parishes opted for membership, a joint assembly was convened, consisting of representatives from each of the communities. In March 1955 the council sponsored the first annual Sunday of Orthodoxy vespers, held that year in Sayles Hall of Brown University.

In 1954 the Greek community in the Blackstone Valley suffered a turbulent crisis, one that resulted in a rift from which the Assumption Parish has fully recovered only recently. Father Gregory Carfopoulos, described by parishioners as a charismatic and strong cleric, had become embroiled in a dispute with the archdiocese over the administration of the parish. In the Orthodox tradition the bishop has canonical jurisdiction over the parishes, but since most American parishes were established by laymen rather than by clergy, it had

become the practice for church administration to be carried out by priests and laymen acting cooperatively. When Father Carfopoulos attempted to assert his authority over the parish council, a crisis arose, and the archdiocese intervened on behalf of the council. Archbishop Michael suspended Carfopoulos and temporarily placed the parishioners of the community under the pastoral care of Father Peter Mihailides.

Litigation ensued, and the courts ruled in favor of the archdiocese. When Carfopoulos was thereupon evicted from the Assumption Church, he took nearly half its parishioners with him. This group established an independent Greek Orthodox parish in Pawtucket. Initially the new parish flourished, but with the assignment of the Reverend Theodore Baglaneas as pastor of the Assumption Church the following year, a substantial number of former parishioners returned. Many of the returnees were influenced by the fact that the Greek government recognized the validity of marriages celebrated under the jurisdiction of the archdiocese but not those conducted by independent parishes.

A Rhode Island Greek Professional Class

Although several of the Greek community's founding fathers participated in civic affairs through the years, no Greek was elected to public office in the state until 1950, when Dean J. Lewis, a Republican, became mayor of Newport by a margin of 96 votes. He was reelected by a 2,879-vote margin in 1952, the last time a mayor was chosen by popular vote in that city. An attorney, Lewis was successful in sponsoring charter reform and a number of progressive projects, and his accomplishments resulted in his selection as the Republican candidate for governor in 1954. Though he was defeated by incumbent governor Dennis J. Roberts in that election, Lewis's notable career paved the way for such other Greeks in public office as George Panichas, who served in the General Assembly from 1970 to 1984.

By virtue of special immigrant refugee legislation passed by Congress in 1953 and 1954, Greeks were able to come to the United States in numbers beyond the quotas that had been established for them. Although fewer displaced persons came to America now than had come during the first two decades of the century, some seventy thousand Greeks entered the country from 1954 to the early 1960s. Many Greek students who came to Rhode Island to attend Brown University chose to remain in the state and became American citizens.

The influx of Greeks during these years led to the emergence of an immigrant professional class, one that included, among others, physicians, engineers, and academicians. These Greek professionals have contributed greatly both to the Rhode Island Greek community and to the state as a whole. A complete enumeration would be beyond the scope of this pamphlet, but a few names might be mentioned here.

Dr. Constantine S. Georas, a cardiologist, and Dr. Venetia B. Georas, a pediatrician, both of Athens, established themselves in Rhode Island in 1956. Dr. John Karkalas and Dr. Jacques Mioni, a native of Egypt, practice psychiatry. Dr. Mary Lekas of Worcester, Massachusetts, who studied medicine in Athens, is an otolaryngologist and the chief of the department at Rhode Island Hospital. Dr. Alexander Arvanitides, from Thessaloniki, is an internist, as is Dr. Angelos Farmakides. Dr. Helen Schinazi and Dr. William Tsiaras are ophthalmologists in Providence. Dr. Michael Vezerides is a professor of surgery at Brown University.

Constantine Mylonas is a professor emeritus of engineering at Brown, where Stavros Fallieros is a professor of physics, Paris Kanellakis is a professor of computer science, Anthony Molho is a professor of history, and Constantine Dafermos holds the Alumni/Alumnae Chair in applied mathematics. At the University of Rhode Island, Alexander Poularikas taught engineering, Gerassimos Ladas is a professor of mathematics, Spiros Constantinides is a professor of nutrition sciences, Constantine Touloudis is a professor of French literature, and Philip Datseris is a professor of mechanical engineering. Mary Tsagarakis, an engineer, heads her own consulting firm.

American-born professionals flourished at the same time as these pioneering immigrants. Constantine Demopoulos practiced gynecology in Pawtucket. Nicholas Pournaras became an anesthesiologist and also practiced general medicine, Peter Petropoulos became an internist, as did K. Nicholas Tsiongas, and Peter Erinakes served as chief of staff at Kent County Memorial Hospital. Peter Kanelos became a dentist, and he was joined in the practice by his son, Theodore. James Pescalidies and Elaine Pappas became podiatrists, and D. James Photopoulos is a prominent Pawtucket dentist. Nicholas T. Goluses founded Goluses and Company, a public accounting firm, and Eustace T. Pliakas, George Pliakas, George Mihos, Harry Hoopis, and Harold Demopoulos became successful attorneys. George Cicma is a banker with Rhode Island Hospital Trust. George N. Pappas of Pawtucket became a professor of fine arts at the Rhode Island School of Design, where Thomas Sgouros, a painter, chairs the Department of Illustration.

Greeks who immigrated to Rhode Island during this period became successful businessmen as well. Andrew Mitrelis established a number of restaurants in the Providence area and was later joined by his brothers, who also became successful restaurateurs. Eleftherios Baziotis and Chris Kazianis operated a landmark restaurant in Pawtucket, and William Stoukides opened a bakery in the same city. Chris Tsimikas and his family now operate successful family restaurants in Bristol and Warren. Greek-owned pizza parlors opened so quickly that the Greeks soon became the major ethnic group engaged in that business. In Newport, for example, no Greek was involved in the business until 1976, but within ten years Aquidneck Island had more than twenty-two Greek-owned pizza operations. The Greeks claim over a hundred such establishments statewide.

The elegant Sea Fare Inn of Portsmouth was the first successful culinary venture of George and Anna Karousos, and it has gained a nationwide reputation for excellence. Chef George and his wife, a former physician, have expanded their ventures to include three Newport hospitality establishments, including Fairlawn, an exclusive Bellevue Avenue inn housing the International Institute of Culinary Arts, an educational facility under the auspices of Salve Regina University.

American-born Greeks also rose to prominence in a number of fields. When Vasilios Haseotes and his wife, Aphrodite, found it difficult to support their large family on his earnings, they began selling the milk produced by their single cow to their neighbors and friends. Eventually they established the Cumberland Farms convenience stores, which they and their children turned into a veritable retailing empire of well over fifteen hundred stores from Maine to Florida. The prime mover behind that enterprise's continued success is the eldest son, Demetrios (Jim), who not only serves as the principal manager of the family-owned venture but also operates a fleet of oil tankers and a Canadian refinery producing gasoline for the Cumberland Farms stores. Jim easily ranks in the top echelon of Rhode Island's most successful entrepreneurs.

The other great "rags to riches" success story in the local community has been written by Gregory George Demetrakas, who founded and operated a major metal-recycling company (City Metal) in East Providence and Providence. But Demetrakas is significant more for how he uses his wealth than for how he made it, for he has distinguished himself both at the local and national level as a philanthropist and a passionate promoter of Hellenic causes. Among his many charitable projects are the Demetrakion Medical

Gregory Demetrakas

Center in his ancestral village of Mytilene, Greece, his continuous support of the Hellenic College, and his significant financial contributions to the community centers of the Cranston and Pawtucket Orthodox churches. His compassion and generosity have also extended to several social agencies of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence and to the needy of Cyprus and Armenia. As a promoter of Greek culture, Demetrakas served as the organizing chairman of the Greek-American Heritage Committee of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission and the Greek representative on the Providence Heritage Commission.

Three graduates of Bryant College also became very successful businessmen: Gregory T. Parkos operated a metal-plating company and eventually became president of the Whittaker Corporation, with corporate offices in Los Angeles; Nicholas Janikies began a career as an accountant, bought a Burger King ("the goose that laid the golden egg," as he described it), and ultimately acquired the franchises for this firm throughout Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts; and C. Dean Christelis entered the insurance business and eventually headed the firm of Kagan, Shawcross, and Christelis. George Stefopoulos, a nephew of Newport's "carpenter-priest,"

acquired Rhode Island's Burger Chef firms. William Kapos expanded the Excellent Coffee Company, and Steven and Louis Dostou brought the New England Tea and Coffee Company to the state. William Vican and his two sons, Peter and William, expanded the Hellenic Baking Company into the Homestead and Mrs. Kavanaugh's Baking companies.

Gregory Borodemos and James Georgiou established successful construction companies on Aquidneck Island. George Panichas, the first Greek elected to the Rhode Island House of Representatives, started a real estate business in Pawtucket. Dennis Psilopoulos and Nicholas Economos entered the construction business in the Providence area, and Psilopoulos later became president of the Downing Corporation. Angelos Maintanis founded the May Engineering Company, a restaurant supply firm. George Erinakes established the Kent, Greenwich, and Hilltop theaters in East Greenwich. Thomas Shanos became the state's first Greek pharmacist and established a business in Warwick.

In Providence, George Pakuris operated the legendary Parky's Restaurant and Kay Pappas ran the equally famous Kay's Donut Shoppe. John Kallias opened Johnny's House of Seafood in Newport. George Mihailides and James Kanelos operated New York System restaurants in East Providence, where Kanelos also served as chairman of the school board for many years. Spiros Karambelas's children followed their father and took over the Bell Bottling Company and the Kent Restaurant. Gregory Karambelas opened Murphy's Delicatessen in downtown Providence, and Connie Karambelas operated the Considine Distributing Company. Spiro Samaras, who held national office in Ahepa and whose name became synonymous with that organization, alternately owned restaurant and linen-service businesses.

In Newport, Chris Caragianis established the Newport Music Company. Charles H. Koulouvardis opened the C. H. Charles 5 & 10¢ stores and became a director of the then Old Colony-Newport National Bank. John Ruggieri, a convert to Greek Orthodoxy, founded CPI Controls, a valve-distributing company. Successful in business, many of these individuals also played a leading role in the building of new churches and centers in the state's three Greek communities.

Decades of Growth

Parishes on the Move

By the mid-1950s both the Providence and Pawtucket communities recognized that they needed more space, but neither had the funds to relocate. In November 1955 a proposal was put forward to build a single church somewhere along the Providence-Pawtucket city line to serve both communities. A committee was formed to explore this possibility, but it was soon dissolved and the idea of a unified church abandoned.

In 1956 the Pawtucket community purchased a parish house on Central Avenue for $12,000. That same year Bishop Athenagoras celebrated the Divine Liturgy there and blessed the new property. He also bestowed the rank of *sakellarios* on Father Baglaneas, who would be elevated to *oikonomos* two years later.

Still seeking additional space—by that time most of the parishioners had returned from the independent church and additional immigrants had joined the parish—in May 1959 the Pawtucket community acquired two new properties, one on East Avenue and the other on Cedar Street, at a cost of nearly $30,000. Following Bishop Athenagoras's visit the following year, when he celebrated the Divine Liturgy and advised the community on its future plans, the Pawtucket Greeks sold these two properties, as well as the house on Central Avenue.

Meanwhile the community acquired a large home and its adjacent property at 97 Walcott Street at a cost of $65,000. The home was adapted to serve as a priest's residence and parish offices, and a smaller building behind it was converted into a parish center. The remainder of the property was developed into a large parking facility, which later would become the site of parish picnics and, eventually,

a beautiful Byzantine-style church. In September 1962 the parish marked the fiftieth anniversary of its founding with an observance led by Archbishop Iakovos and a grand banquet, honoring the past presidents of the parish council and the members of Philoptochos, held at Providence's Biltmore Hotel.

The building fund committee of the Assumption Church, circa 1966

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Walcott Street church, presided over by Archbishop Iakovos (who had recently received honorary doctorates from Brown University and Salve Regina College for his ecumenical work), were held in May 1966. High-ranking churchmen and government officials were on hand to witness the event. Following the ceremonies a dinner was held at the Le Foyer banquet facility, at which pledges totaling $74,000 were made to the building fund. On November 13, 1966, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the George Street sanctuary for the last time. The old church was taken by Pawtucket for urban redevelopment, and the community was reimbursed $82,000.

The new Assumption Church was designed by the firm of Stephen Papadatos as a traditional Byzantine structure, with a dome over a cruciform base. It seats about two hundred people and has its sanctuary in a traditional apse. Icons, a baptismal font, altar

coverings, and various vessels were donated by parishioners; the altar table was given by the family of George Panichas and is inscribed accordingly. On November 10, 1968, twenty-two months after the signing of contracts with the Donatelli Building Company at a cost of $282,000, the Divine Liturgy was performed in the church for the first time.

Church relocation did not go as smoothly for the Providence community as it did for the community in Pawtucket. In 1955 the Reverend John Limberakis, who had been serving in Fresno, California, came to Providence to replace the ailing Father Mihailides as pastor of the Annunciation Church. During the next fifteen years the parish would purchase a residence for its priest and would decide, after long, agonizing, often stormy debate, to sell its property on Pine Street and erect another church and a community center at a new location.

The venerable Father Mihailides, Providence's priest and pastor emeritus, died after a long illness on August 8, 1956, and the parish entered a forty-day period of mourning. Father Mihailides's will named Holy Cross Theological School in Brookline, St. Basil's Academy in Garrison, New York, and the monastery of Panaghia Soumela in Thessaloniki, and the parish sent an additional donation to each of these institutions.

Three months after Mihailides's death Archbishop Michael bestowed the rank of *sakellarios* on Father Limberakis, who two years later would be elevated to *oikonomos* in further recognition of the growth of the parish under his leadership. Among the notable events of the next few months was the parish's celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 1957. Included in the festivities was a banquet, attended by the archbishop and presided over by Emmanuel Mihailides and Andrew Haveles, in the ballroom of the Biltmore Hotel.

In March 1959 over five hundred parishioners attended a testimonial banquet given in honor of Savvas Savvides for his thirty years of service to the Greek community. For that service the ecumenical patriarch named him an *archon* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, bestowing on him the honorary title of Megas Didaskalos tou Genous, or Great Teacher of the Nation. The first Rhode Islander to be honored as an *archon,* Savvides was also honored by the Greek government when the king of Greece inducted him into the Order of the Phoenix. Savvides would continue his teaching until September 1962.

Meanwhile the general decline of downtown Providence and the adjacent South Side, together with the need for more adequate

classroom space—more than 120 children were enrolled in the Sunday school program—persuaded the Providence community to consider moving from Pine Street. After the idea of building a joint Providence-Pawtucket church had been abandoned, the Providence Greeks began looking for a new site of their own.

On June 23, 1959, the parishioners voted to dispose of their Pine Street property and empowered the parish council to execute the sale of the church to the state of Rhode Island for $150,000. They also voted to give their large crystal chandelier, which had hung in the church for four decades, to St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church on Jefferson Street in Providence. Only one more decision was needed: the selection of a site for the new church. It would prove a difficult decision to make and execute.

In January 1961 Nicholas Economos became chairman of the site committee, and a special assembly was called to decide among the locations under consideration. The state had purchased the property on Pine Street and was eager for the community to relocate. After much discussion the choice was narrowed to two locations—on Chalkstone Avenue in Providence and on Oaklawn Avenue in Cranston. With the time for a final decision approaching, a group of parishioners united in favor of the Chalkstone Avenue site, hoping to keep the church in Providence. When the vote was taken, the Oaklawn Avenue location was chosen by a margin of more than three to one.

The Cranston property, approximately four acres located on the western side of Oaklawn Avenue between Cranston Street and Dean Parkway, was acquired for $35,000. Because of the purchase, several Providence residents transferred their membership to the Pawtucket community, an event that proved a real boon to that parish, for it facilitated the erection and appointment of its new Assumption Church. James Goltsos, for example, gave the Pawtucket church its bishop's throne and a number of other appointments.

With the Providence parish remaining deeply divided over the projected move, a meeting was held in April 1962 at St. Xavier's Academy, near the Pine Street church (which would have been too small to accommodate the hundreds of people expected to attend). Aware of the dissension, Archbishop Iakovos came to Providence, where he opened the parish meeting by pleading for unity. Then, after hearing advocates both for and against the move from Providence, and statistics indicating that over half the parishioners had already moved to Cranston, Warwick, and other towns south of the capital city, he delivered his response: "We do not build

monuments; we build communities. If the majority of our people have moved to Cranston, that is where we ought to relocate the church." With the meeting in turmoil and the community seemingly in disarray, the vote for the Oaklawn site seemed to be a Pyrrhic victory.

Mr. and Mrs. James Goltsos

In September 1962 an open-air liturgy was celebrated on the new site to give many people the opportunity of seeing the land for the first time, but several of those who had worked for the church in past years were conspicuously absent. Six months later Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos, the new bishop in Boston, visited Providence to try to help resolve the continuing dissension, as well as to ordain James Kyriakakis to the priesthood. Kyriakakis had been ordained to the diaconate a few weeks earlier; his ordination to the priesthood would be not only the first for a native son of the Providence community but also the first time that anyone had been ordained to the priesthood in the Pine Street church.

After many months of searching, the parish had engaged the services of the architectural firm of Robinson, Green, and Beretta to design the new church. Knight D. Robinson, the firm's senior partner, took a personal interest in the assignment because of his

deep interest in classical Greek and Byzantine art. In March 1966 the community approved plans submitted by the firm and signed a contract for the construction with Ayers, Hagen, and Boothe, general contractors, for $307,566. Ground for the church was broken on July 31, 1966, by Archbishop Iakovos, Governor John Chafee, Cranston mayor James DiPrete, and the bishops of the Roman Catholic and the Episcopal dioceses.

The new church also needed a community center and classrooms, but because there was only a limited amount of money available for further construction, the Cranston parishioners could erect only a fairly small building to house these facilities. (Some years later, when additional space became necessary, it was discovered that the original building could not be expanded, nor could a second story be added.) Named for the priest who had served the community for thirty-five years, the Reverend Peter G. Mihailides Center began functioning as the focus of activity for the Cranston community in November 1969.

Archbishop Iakovos opened the doors of the new Annunciation Church and celebrated the Divine Liturgy on its altar for the first time on March 24, 1968. On March 4, 1973, the church was consecrated, and a banquet followed at the Cranston Hilton Hotel. Attended by some six hundred parishioners, this affair honored philanthropist Gregory George Demetrakas as "godfather" of the parish. Two weeks later, at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City, Demetrakas was installed as *archon depoutatos* by Archbishop Iakovos.

The Newport Community's Fiftieth Anniversary

While the Pawtucket and Providence communities were busy formulating plans to move, the Newport Greeks marked their fiftieth year in 1965 with a program of observances chaired by Chris Caragianis. Toward the end of the sixties this community was thinking about relocating also, for its church was in an undesirable location. The Navy's presence in Newport was a mixed blessing. Brawls among inebriated sailors were not uncommon on upper Thames Street, where the church is located, but when it was decided in 1973 that the Navy would withdraw many thousands of its servicemen from Newport, the prospect loomed that the street would become deserted and thus potentially unsafe, especially for the community's young. Before any decision could be made about relocating, however, the city's downtown underwent a notable

revitalization, primarily through the efforts of the Newport Redevelopment Corporation and its chairman, Harold C. Petropoulos. Newport now began attracting tourists in even greater numbers than previously, and upper Thames Street, and the church, were in the midst of this bustling activity.

The Newport community had many things to rejoice about during its fiftieth anniversary observances. The sons of the immigrant founders were coming into their own. Dean Lewis's election to the mayoralty several years earlier was a source of great pride among the Greeks. Harold Petropoulos, the son of charter member Christy Petropoulos, had been elected to the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. Nicholas Logothetes, whose father, Stamos, had been president of the parish, served as Newport's director of secondary education and assistant superintendent of schools. Dean C. Brelis, a newspaper and magazine reporter, war correspondent, and NBC news commentator, had just completed his first book, *My New Found Land.* Chris W. Caragianis was the chairman of the Naval Affairs Council, the director of the Chamber of Commerce, the president of the Navy League, and the disaster chairman of the local chapter of the American Red Cross.

By the mid-1970s, however, the Newport church facilities had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. When the Reverend John Theodore arrived as St. Spyridon's new priest in 1976, Caragianis challenged his fellow parishioners to rise to the task of restoring and beautifying the church. His contribution of $50,000 was quickly matched by church organizations and individuals, and James Georgiou was contracted to perform the work. The first stage consisted of gutting and restoring the adjacent parish center and kitchen, which had served as the community's only classroom, and constructing offices and classrooms on the lower level, under the church. The second stage involved the refurbishing of the church's interior and the restoration of its appointments, including the altar screen icons, by the Tinneys of Belcourt Castle.

The Productive Seventies

For all three communities the 1970s were a time of material and organizational progress. Many of these advances involved fund-raising to help pay for physical improvements—building projects, in the case of Cranston and Pawtucket, and restoration and beautification in the case of Newport.

The Cranston parish held a number of "ice-breaker" socials to acquaint new parishioners with the facilities and to afford them an opportunity to meet one another. For those who had left the parish over the disputed move, the socials served as a quiet invitation to return to the parish. A kind of amnesty was extended: these parishioners would be reinstated by assuming their financial obligations as of 1970, with all prior indebtedness forgotten.

After fifteen years of service, Father Limberakis was reassigned by the archdiocese to the Annunciation Parish of Philadelphia. The Cranston community gathered in October 1970 to honor him at a testimonial banquet and to bid him farewell. As his replacement the archdiocese recommended Constantine Xanthakis, who was serving as the assistant priest at St. Spyridon's Church in the Washington Heights section of New York City.

When Father Baglaneas was transferred from the Assumption Church to the Church of Our Savior in Rye, New York, he was replaced by the Reverend John Floropoulos, who would remain in Pawtucket for three years. Father Papademetriou, who had served the Newport parish for some seventeen years, was reassigned to the St. Matthew Parish in Reading, Pennsylvania. Papademetriou's replacement, the Reverend Robert Athas, remained only a year and was succeeded by the Reverend John Theodore, who had been serving the St. Demetrios Parish in Jamaica, New York, as an assistant priest.

On November 21, 1971, Bishop Demetrios of Olympos visited the Cranston parish, and following the Divine Liturgy he installed Dr. Peter T. Kanelos as *archon depoutatos* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the highest honor bestowed on lay people by the mother church of Constantinople. On December 5 of the following year the bishop again visited the parish, and this time he installed George Pakuris, Sophia Karambelas, and George Mihos as *archontes depoutatoi.* A testimonial banquet was held later that evening to honor the new *archons.*

In the 1970s the Philoptochos chapters of the three communities began sponsoring annual Christmas bazaars every November at the church centers. Over the years the chapters have raised some $10,000 to $20,000 a year to help fund a variety of worthy projects. Meanwhile, all three communities maintained strong parent-teacher organizations, whose fund-raising efforts helped to underwrite the costs of operating the Sunday and Greek schools. The PTAs tended to attract

more younger members than Philoptochos did, and during the 1970s PTA membership remained more than twice that of the women's philanthropic group.

The Hellenic Cultural Society was founded in 1974. This event represented a major undertaking, since the society, not unlike Ahepa, was conceived of as an organization independent of the parishes, and one that would draw its membership from the Greek and non-Greek populations alike. The society's aims included the dissemination of information about Greece, its history, its language and customs, its Orthodox and Byzantine heritage, and its role as a strategically situated ally of the United States. The society would denounce what it perceived to be the unjust invasion of Cyprus by Turkey, using American-made arms, and it would support Greece's legacy and rights of sovereignty, as in the Aegean. Although it claimed not to be a lobbying organization, its members sought to make their views understood by visiting government leaders in Rhode Island and Washington.

Polydoros Petrou, John Lyssikatos, Gregory Demetrakas, Despina Mylonas, James Gatsoulas, Sotiris Mioni, Vivian Vanikiotis Defoulas, Dr. Venetia Georas, and Professors Alexander Poularikas, William Wyatt, and Peter Allen figured prominently in the Hellenic Cultural Society's founding. Of these, Petrou and Lyssikatos deserve special mention—Petrou because he has been the society's treasurer since its inception, and Lyssikatos because the society was largely his brainchild. Trained as a theologian in Thessaloniki, Lyssikatos chose not to be ordained, but rather to serve the cause of Hellenism through the new organization, over which he presided for a decade. After unsuccessfully attempting to affiliate the society with the Washington-based American Hellenic Institute, he founded a Rhode Island chapter of that group, and Mary Tsagarakis succeeded him as the society's president.

Thanks to the efforts of Providence restaurateur Arthur Petropoulos, "The Greek Radio Hour," which had made its debut in 1952, continued on the local airwaves. Because of Petropoulos's perseverance and determination, the program has withstood various difficulties over the years and continues to provide information and entertainment to the Greek people of southeastern New England. In another development of the 1970s, Brown University inaugurated a course in the modern Greek language following discussions between members of the local Greek community and Professors William Wyatt and Alan Boeghold of the university's Classics Department. Despina Mylonas served as the course's first instructor. Still another notable

event for the state's Greek Americans occurred in February 1978, when the International Institute of Rhode Island selected Dr. Venetia B. Georas as its outstanding citizen of the year, an honor she shared with her community.

In 1976 Father Xanthakis was reassigned from Cranston to the Holy Cross Parish in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, New York. A testimonial banquet was given in his honor by Ahepa two months later. As his replacement the archdiocese recommended the appointment of the Reverend Stephen H. Kyriakou, assistant priest of the Greek Archdiocesan Cathedral in New York City. Father Floropoulos was reassigned from Pawtucket to the London, Ontario, parish and was replaced by the Reverend Nick A. Milas. Kyriakou, Milas, and Theodore had been classmates at Holy Cross Seminary, and communicants of the three parishes expected that the ensuing years would be a period of closer cooperation among the communities.

In 1976, when the nation celebrated its bicentennial, the three communities participated in the festivities by cosponsoring a Greek Independence Day observance—with singing, a play, and poetry readings—at Rhode Island College, and by conducting their annual picnics with a bicentennial theme. The Greeks' most significant event of that year, however, was a three-day "Bicentennial Weekend" in October, a nonprofit venture sponsored by the Greek Heritage Subcommittee of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Ethnic Heritage Commission, a group created by Dr. Patrick T. Conley, chairman of the state's bicentennial celebration. After holding several meetings the subcommittee, chaired by Gregory Demetrakas, decided to stage a Greek night at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet on Friday, October 1, and an all-day festival at Warwick Mall on October 2, the latter event to feature handicrafts, food, books, jewelry, costumes, religious artifacts, a who's who of Greek Americans, a panoramic history of the Greek experience, and dancing. The festival attracted over forty thousand people. On the following day a hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Iakovos. Under Demetrakas's leadership all the parish organizations combined their efforts to make the Bicentennial Weekend a truly memorable occasion.

On the Feast of the Epiphany, 1977, Savvas Savvides died. In many ways his death marked the end of an era. In his will, the community's longtime teacher and cantor bequeathed his modest estate to GOYA, Philoptochos, and the parish council as trustees for the Cranston church. Shortly after the *saranda,* or forty-day period of mourning, at which Bishop Iakovos officiated, the parish council voted to perpetuate Savvides's memory by placing the bequest into

a savings account and distributing the interest in the form of a yearly Savvides Scholarship to a worthy youngster in college or professional school.

In 1977 the three parishes revived the Council of Orthodox Churches. This time the group consisted of those Rhode Island parishes whose hierarchs maintained membership in the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. The council was accepted as the seventh faith group in the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, and in 1978 Annunciation's pastor became the first Orthodox chairman of that body's Faith and Order Department.

In November 1978 twenty-three members of the Cranston and Pawtucket communities made a pilgrimage to Israel to worship at the holy places, most of which are in the custody of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate there, and to be received by the patriarch of Jerusalem. The Rhode Islanders concluded their pilgrimage by visiting Constantinople, where they were received by the ecumenical patriarch, Demetrios I. This was the first Rhode Island group to visit both the Holy Land and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The members received the blessings of both patriarchs and made gifts, representing funds raised by Philoptochos, the Daughters of Penelope, and the pilgrims themselves, to each patriarchate for local philanthropic needs.

The Cyprus Question

In 1953 Archbishop Michael had urged all Greek Orthodox parishes to write to President Eisenhower to seek his support for Greece's annexation of Cyprus. Most of the citizens of that British island colony, 82 percent of whom were Greek, wanted to be united with Greece, but the ethnic Turks, making up some 17 percent of Cyprus's population, were encouraged to oppose this desire for *enosis,* or union. Greek Americans rallied to the cause of their compatriots on Cyprus, lending their monetary and moral support to the Greek cause, but their dream of *enosis* never materialized.

The Cypriot coup d'etat and subsequent Turkish invasion of the island in July and August 1974 were events of great significance for the Rhode Island Greek community. A group of Greek-American Rhode Islanders came together almost immediately, initially under church auspices, to raise money, collect clothing and food for Greek Cypriot refugees, and urge the American government to help resolve the crisis. Assisted by many of the state's Armenians, the Greeks

staged protest rallies, and the cities of Providence, Pawtucket, Cranston, Warwick, and Newport drafted resolutions condemning the Turkish invasion. Rhode Island congressman Edward Beard even visited Cyprus with Gregory Demetrakas in the wake of the invasion, and on his return to the U.S. House of Representatives he reported how they had almost been killed by Turkish troops.

The Greeks of Rhode Island raised nearly $100,000 and sent many tons of food, clothing, and medicine to the Cypriot refugees. Nationally the archdiocese collected several million dollars in its relief efforts. As a result of the invasion, Rhode Island's Greek communities came together as they had rarely done before. It was during this time that the Hellenic Cultural Society was founded, including in its membership many people who had not been involved in parish activities or who were indifferent to the Greek Orthodox faith, but who were nevertheless interested in the Greek cause.

Meeting the Challenges of the 1980s and Beyond

The Cranston Community

The Cranston parish celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1981, a year after the ordination to the priesthood of its own Theofanis Degaitas. The Most Reverend Louis E. Gelineau, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, attended not only the vespers but the anniversary banquet as well, along with many political dignitaries. George Mihos served as toastmaster at the banquet.

In 1983, when the priests of all three churches left their communities, Father Kyriakou became chancellor of the Boston diocese and was succeeded in Cranston by the Reverend Andrew George. Under the spiritual guidance of Father George, and with the old divisions healed, the Cranston community has progressed spiritually, socially, and materially in an unprecedented fashion.

In 1983 Pauline Ruggieri became the first woman to be elected president of the Annunciation parish council; though deeply traditional, the community was responding to the changing times. In 1984 Dr. K. Nicholas Tsiongas, a Providence physician of Greek birth, was elected to the state's House of Representatives, and George Panichas of Pawtucket retired from that body after fourteen years of distinguished service.

The activities of all the church-affiliated organizations continued with vigor and enthusiasm. Both the Greek-language school and the Sunday school increased their enrollments, so that by 1993 the former, with eighteen teachers, had over a hundred students, and the latter, with the dedicated Koula Rougas in charge, about eighty. An adult religious education program has been ongoing. Described

The class of the Greek-language school of the Annunciation Church, Cranston, 1992. Its teacher, Koula Rougas, is fourth from the right in the front row.

as "the Jewel of the Diocese," the Young Adult League (YAL), for those eighteen to thirty-five years of age, has been an active organization since its establishment in 1984. The younger teenagers' group, GOYA, has also thrived, especially after its meetings were changed from weekdays to Saturdays.

In 1985, after considerable planning and with contributions by all the parishioners, the parish bought the adjacent Cardi property, an expansion that not only furnished additional parking space but also provided a site on which the community could enlarge and expand what had been its annual one-day picnic. That event has now grown to a three-day festival giving parishioners the opportunity to work and play together and, at the same time, to project their heritage and their religion. Held every September, the festival has in fact become an event not merely for the parish but for the entire state.

The need to expand the church's community center became apparent early in the 1980s, and with the discharge of the mortgage the parish turned its attention to fulfilling this need. The research and planning began by 1987. The design called for twelve classrooms,

a library, offices, a hall spacious enough to accommodate four hundred people, and a kitchen four times larger than the old one. A dedicated group of parishioners—Eustace Pliakas, Arthur Kazianis, Constantine Perdikakis, and Andreas Andreopoulos—worked diligently on the project, inspiring others who supported and worked with them. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place in 1990, and in September 1991 the beautiful new community center was dedicated, with four hundred people participating in the festivities.

The Pawtucket Community

In 1981 Charlotte Stamatakos Boudreau was elected president of Pawtucket's parish council, becoming the first Orthodox woman to serve as a parish council president in Rhode Island. She was followed in office by Elaine Bassis, who was elected in 1985.

In 1983 Father Milas left the parish for personal reasons and became a full-time teacher of special education. His successor, the Reverend Vasilios Flionis, served as Assumption's pastor until 1989, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Evanghelos Georgiades. Under Father Georgiades's spiritual guidance the church has continued to flourish, serving parishioners not only in Pawtucket but in the Blackstone Valley and North and South Attleboro as well. Pauline Vastis now heads the Greek school, which has an enrollment of thirty-five students, and the community's annual August 15 festival continues to be a highly successful event.

George Panichas, whose family has historical ties with the Assumption Church and the Pawtucket community, has recently completed an important project: with his initiative and financial support, a memorial in honor of the Greek Americans who died during the two World Wars has been erected at the state Veterans Cemetery in Exeter. In another notable effort, the Pawtucket community, under the leadership of parish council president John Ruggieri, conducted a successful fund-raising drive to finance the much-needed expansion of the church's community center. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on March 28, 1993.

The Newport Community

Through the devotion and generosity of St. Spyridon's parishioners, important restoration projects were carried out at the Newport church during the early 1980s. These included work on the church's interior and the parish hall.

In 1983 the community initiated its annual three-day Hellenic Fest, a major event that has since become the church's biggest fund-raiser. Elaine Parkos-Holder served as chairperson of this festival during its first six years. In 1985 she also became the first woman to be elected president of Newport's parish council, a position she held for five years.

After eight years of service in Newport, Father Theodore was transferred to St. Catherine's Church in West Palm Beach, Florida, in 1983. The following year Father Kyriakou, the Cranston community's former pastor, arrived from Boston as his replacement. Kyriakou remained in Newport until March 1987, when he was reassigned to the Cathedral of the Annunciation in San Francisco, where he is now dean. His successor, the Reverend Thomas Chininis, came to St. Spyridon after serving for four years as assistant pastor at the Holy Trinity Church in Dallas, Texas.

Activity continued unabated in the Newport community from the mid-1980s into the next decade. In October 1984 some thirty-five parishioners made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. In 1990 the parish marked its seventy-fifth anniversary with a festive banquet and the publication of a commemorative book. Presently the community is working toward the renovation of the exterior of its church building.

Promoting Greek Language and Culture

Through the efforts of Professor William Wyatt, Dr. Venetia Georas, and Greek-educated graduate students, the teaching of the modern Greek language continues at Brown University, both at the undergraduate level and in the university's Brown Learning Community. Proposals for instituting a modern Greek studies program at Brown are gaining momentum, thanks to the generosity of the late Mrs. James Goltsos and the efforts of George Cicma and Harold Demopoulos.

The Hellenic Cultural Society has continued to offer lectures and annual musical events. In 1993, under the leadership of John Lyssikatos, the society sought to promote the study of the Greek language at the Rhode Island churches with a contest among students. On March 25, 1993, the society, teachers of Greek, and newly elected state representative Leonidas Raptakis of Coventry organized a Greek heritage celebration at the Rhode Island State House.

Women in the Greek-American Communities

Since 1981 all three Rhode Island communities have elected women to serve as parish council presidents and officers. Other Greek-American women have distinguished themselves in academic, business, and professional life. The backbone of the communities, however, has been the women's organizations—the Philoptochos Society and the Daughters of Penelope—whose members have worked and continue to work indefatigably to provide financial support not only to their respective communities but to national Hellenic causes as well.

The Philoptochos Society, Newport, circa 1990

Postscript

Materially successful, the Greeks of Rhode Island must now confront a new set of challenges while simultaneously maintaining their unique identity and heritage. With immigration to the United States at its lowest level since 1949, they must find ways to perpetuate their sense of social cohesion, both ethnic and religious, and to disseminate their Hellenic ideals in a land that is receptive to pluralism but occasionally indifferent to ethnic survival. May the Greek Americans' history convince them that their identity is well worth preserving.

Suggested Reading and Reference

The most authoritative historian of the Greek-American experience is Theodore Saloutos. His major work is *The Greeks in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964). Also useful is Saloutos's *They Remember America: The Story of the Repatriated Greek-Americans* (Berkeley, Calif., 1956) and *The Greeks in America: A Student's Guide to Localized History* (New York, 1967). A more recent and concise analysis by Saloutos is his essay "Greeks," in Stephan Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 430-440.

The earliest scholarly account, Henry Pratt Fairchild's *Greek Immigration to the United States* (New Haven, Conn., 1911), is excellent on the economic causes of the Greek migration, and it was influential in academic circles, but unfortunately the work is marred by the author's prejudice against immigrants of Mediterranean stock. Other pioneering studies include Thomas Burgess, *Greeks in America: An Account of Their Coming, Progress, Customs, Living, and Aspirations* (Boston, 1913; reprint, New York, 1975), a corrective to Fairchild that is most informative about religious and fraternal organizations; J. P. Xenides, *The Greeks in America* (New York, 1922; reprint, San Francisco, 1972), which is excellent on the religious aspect of the Greek-American experience; Vasileos Valaoras, *Hellenism of the United States* (Athens, 1937), an account written in Greek, which is strong on cultural aspects of Greek-American life; and Louis Adamic, "Greece and Greek Americans," in *Two Way Passage* (New York, 1941), and "Americans from Greece," in *A Nation of Nations* (New York, 1945). See also Melvin Hecker and Fenton Heike, *The Greeks in America, 1528-1977* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., 1978); Epaminondas Panagopoulos, *New Smyrna: An Eighteenth Century Greek Odyssey* (Brookline, Mass., 1978); Alice Scourby and Harry Psomiades, *The Greek American Community in Transition* (New York, 1982); Alice Scourby, *The Greek Americans* (Boston, 1984); Charles C. Moskos, *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success,* rev.

and enl. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1989); and Gary Kunkelman, *The Religion of Ethnicity: Belief and Belonging in a Greek American Community* (New York, 1990).

Because of the strong religious orientation of the Greek people, their history would be incomplete without an examination of their church. Valuable studies of the Orthodox faith include Demetrios J. Constantelos, *The Greek Orthodox Church: Faith, History, and Practice* (New York, 1967); Demetrios Constantelos, ed., *Encyclicals and Documents of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America . . . 1922-1972* (Salonika, 1976); Alexander Doumouras, "The Origins of the Greek Orthodox Church in America," (B.D. thesis, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1964); Peter T. Kourides, *The Evolution of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and Its Present Problems* (New York, 1959); Alice Scourby, "Third Generation Greek Americans: A Study of Religious Attitudes" (doctoral dissertation, New School for Social Research, 1967); Walter F. Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches* (New York, 1908); and George Papaioannou, *From Mars to Manhattan: The Greek Orthodox Church in America under Patriarch Athenagoras* (Minneapolis, 1976). Local aspects of the Greek-American religious experience are described in two histories of Holy Cross Seminary: Bishop Athenagoras, "Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School: Twenty Years of Progress, 1937-1957," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review,* 3 (1957), 15-22, and George J. Tsoumas, "Founding Years of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School (1937-1942)," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review,* 12 (1967), 241-282.

Important special studies of Greek-American life and culture are Robert James Theodoratos, "The Influence of the Homeland on the Social Organization of a Greek Community in America" (doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1961); Nicholas Tavuchis, *Family and Mobility among Greek Americans* (Athens, 1972); and George J. Leber, *The History of the Order of Ahepa, 1922-1972* (Washington, D.C., 1972).

Indispensable for the history of Rhode Island's Greek Americans are the anniversary booklets prepared by the parishioners of the three Greek communities: *Church of the Annunciation: 75th Anniversary Celebration* (Providence, 1981); *Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, 1912-1972* (1972); *Hellenic Church of the Assumption, 75th Anniversary, 1987* (1987); Theodore Constantine, *The History of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church and Community, Newport, Rhode Island, 1915-1956* (1956); and *St. Spyridon's Greek Orthodox Church, Newport, Rhode Island: Fiftieth Anniversary, 1915-1965* (1965).

In *Eleni* (New York, 1983) and *A Place for Us: Eleni's Children in America* (New York, 1989), Nicholas Gage has written a moving saga of his family's transplantation in the late 1940s from a war-torn Greece

to America. Revealing but fictionalized accounts of Greek-American culture can be found in some of the novels of Elia Kazan and Harry Mark Petrakis. See also *Where the Tree Sings* (New York, 1979), a novel by Stratis Haviaras; Robert Georges, *Greek American Folk Beliefs and Narratives* (New York, 1980); Alexander Karanikas, *Hellenes and Hellions: Modern Greek Characters in American Literature* (Urbana, Ill., 1981); and Helen Zeese Papanikolas, *Small Bird, Tell Me: Stories of Greek Immigrants in Utah* (Athens, Ohio, 1993).

A more detailed and comprehensive listing of works pertaining to the Greek-American experience can be found in Michael N. Cutsumbis, comp., *A Bibliographic Guide to Materials on Greeks in the United States, 1890-1968* (Staten Island, New York, 1970), and Evangelos C. Vlachos, *An Annotated Bibliography of Greek Migration* (Athens, 1966).

The original (and more detailed) version of this essay, entitled "Rhode Island: The Greek Presence," has been deposited at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library along with another useful typescript—George F. Anttio, "The Greek Community of Rhode Island: A Survey of Its Origin and Development" (master's seminar paper, Providence College, 1974).