

The Beginning...

The first Syrian immigrants touched the shores of North America in the late 1800's. This journey was not for the faint-hearted. Swindled by ticket agents, they thought their tickets to the new land were good for passenger ships, but discovered the tickets were for cargo ships. They were packed onto these ships by the thousands. They faced horrible food and sea sickness. Initially, over 5000 immigrants settled in the U.S., while many others made their homes in Canada, Australia and South America. (The family of Viola Ayers initially settled in Australia before coming to America and the family of Ellis Sajem (husband of Mabel Sajem) settled in Central America.) After one month of travel they finally arrived at Ellis Island. They were given a physical exam and, if they were healthy, they could disembark.

If they did not speak English or were not met by a friend they were "tagged". The tag included the name and destination of the immigrant and the name and destination of their sponsor. These "olive skinned people" were still a questionable race; they were not African, they were not Asian, and they were not considered Caucasian. They entered the U.S. as Arabs, Turks, Asiatic Turks, Greeks, and Armenians.

In the late 1800's Syria was ruled under the Ottoman Empire (Turkish Empire 1299-1919).

Even though the Syrians paid high taxes the government was still weak. The people had no security for their life or property. Villages located at the edge of the desert were prime targets for Bedouin raids. These villages eventually became part of the desert as people fled their home for lack of security.

The urban areas suffered from religious unrest and other sources of disharmony. Agriculture (the mainstay of the economy) and the textile industry were in a decline. The future looked bleak. Wanting a better life for their children many Syrians left their homeland for new opportunities across the globe.

Most of the immigrants who settled in the warm climate of Atlanta, GA. did so for health reasons.

There became a Syrian village in Atlanta - located in the southeast area of Atlanta today. Newer immigrants would stay at peoples houses until they got their feet on the ground.

These people became owners of restaurants, dry good stores, drugstores, grocery stores, and 5 & 10 stores. They bootlegged whiskey, sold wine, and were peddlers.



ATLANTA SYRIANS FIGHT FOR RIGHTS

**They Form League to Prove They
Are Caucasians and Entitled to
Be Admitted to American Citi-
zenship—Counsel Employed.**

The Syrians of Atlanta, about 800 in number, have formed a league and employed counsel to resist the efforts now afoot in many parts of the United States to deny their race the right of American citizenship on the basis that they are not Caucasians.

Owing to the fact that throughout the country are upon almost daily to pass up the Atlanta movement prove to come national in interest and

In Nebraska last week a federal judge denied a Syrian naturalization, holding that he was of the yellow race and not the white. The naturalization office at Washington has furthermore instructed the district attorney's office in Atlanta to oppose the naturalization sought by Costa George Najour, a local merchant.

Najour is superintendent of the Syrian society here. He was married eight years ago and is a professional man. His case will be heard by Newman Mohday.

Attorney Willis M. Everett, counsel for him, individually and for the league will go into the case armed with numerous authorities on ethnology, all of which prove, he says, that the Syrians are of Caucasian blood. The principal tests of racial identity, says the attorney, are the shape of the head, the formation of the nose and the language of a people. Judged by each of these tests, he declares, Najour and all other real Syrians are as truly Caucasian as an Englishman is.

The Syrians of Atlanta own property amounting to \$300,000 or more and are constantly increasing in number.

George Ayers, Essa Eassey, Joe and Mary Guthas, Mose Jamhoor, and Mike Najour were all owners of restaurants. Mike Domain, Deebe Napti (Poulos), Martha and Betrous Saade were peddlers. Costa Najour owned a dry goods store and later owned a dress shop - *Mabel's Dress Shop* - named after his daughter, Mabel Najour Sajem.

Charles Salem owned a grocery store named *A&J* after his sons, Abe and Joe. They were strong-willed. Their hearty makeup not only made them successful in their own businesses, but also in promoting and organizing their own religious convictions. They came to realize that the streets of America were not paved with gold, but, if you worked hard, this country promised untold opportunity to its people.

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the national in interest and importance.

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Citizenship was initially denied to these immigrants because they were not considered to be of the "white" race and only "white" men could become citizens. These Syrian immigrants had faced many obstacles and this was just one more obstacle to overcome. Tired of fighting bureaucracy and prejudice, Costa G. Najour hired an attorney. Together they researched and traced the Syrian heritage back to a branch of a Caucasian race that lived in northern Africa before the days of the pyramids. In December 1909, the courts finally ruled: Syrians were indeed Caucasian.

This case in Georgia brought by Costa G. Najour became the landmark case for all Syrian naturalization in the United States!

The story handed down through the generations contends that at the court hearing, Mr. Najour became so incensed with the government attorneys, that he stripped off his shirt and challenged them to prove that he was not a man, equal to them in every way.

NAJOUR IS NOW A REAL CITIZEN

Judge Newman Holds That Syrians Are of Pure Caucasian Strain and Can Be Uncle Sam's Subjects.

Just now Costa George Najour, Syrian by birth, sometime subject of Turkey's sultan, and at present Uncle Sam's latest and youngest nephew, is nappy.

case ... to the court of appeals.

WIDESPREAD ATTENTION.
The case of Costa George Najour has attracted widespread attention throughout the country, as it is unique in its issue, and hinges upon the question as to whether or not the Syrian race is of Caucasian or Mongolian strain. When Najour filed his application for naturalization as a citizen of the United States, the Immigration bureau at Washington raised the issue on the ground that the statute disallows the naturalization of white persons.

as always been

T. Newman, of the North: our has been the delights, results of the and he has

future hour the share that Najour is not as his ward bosses tell he has not the right to stand in the street cars, to money of the bacco and to other joys to Uncle

The Early Church...

The first meeting to officially organize the church was held on March 22, 1921 at the home of Costa G. Najour. Thirteen people attended this meeting. The initiative of the following people established the foundation of our church in Atlanta; St. Elias:

Costa Najour, Mike Najour, Joseph Guthas, P.E. Feckoury, William Feckoury, Mike George, Abraham George, E. Nasser, Moses Daher, Gus Ackel, Mike Abraham, George Daher, and Mike Nour.

The first officers were elected at a later meeting.

Arthur Guthas - President, Mary Jamhoo - Vice President, Costa Najour and Mrs. M. Isral - Secretary, and George Ayers - treasurer.

The above names appeared in the Atlanta Constitution article dated November 20, 1938, however, future articles of church history listed the following people as the original charter members in 1921.

Officers: Demetrios E. Nour - President, John D. Ackel, Vice President, Moses S. Da

her, Treasurer, Costa G. Najour, Secretary, and Gus D. Ackel - Asst. Secretary.

Trustees: Mike Abraham, Abraham George Azar, Joseph Guthas, George Daher, and Deeb Andrews.

Other Charter Members: Mike Najour, John Nasser, Charles Salem, Mike Domain, Nassif Azar, and Mike Nour.

Between 1921 and 1923, there were no religious leaders for the Syrian Orthodox; there was no priest and no permanent church. Sunday services were held at the homes of the faithful where the men in the community led the services. Sometimes they were served by visiting priests. On August 23,

1921 a church charter was granted by Judge George L. Bell. A campaign began by these faithful Orthodox to raise money for a place of worship.

Orthodox Syrians Planning to Build Church in Atlanta

A church in Atlanta where services will be conducted in their native tongue is the goal of local Syrians of the Greek Orthodox faith. Property at 256 East Hunter street has already been purchased as a site for the edifice, which, it is hoped, will be erected at an early date.

There are thirty families of Syrian Orthodox Christians living in Atlanta, who are interested in the building of this church, some of whom have resided here for twenty years without having an opportunity to enter a sacred edifice where they could worship in their mother tongue.

The estimated cost of building the church is \$10,000, and the Syrian Orthodox workers are making an appeal to their fellow citizens of Atlanta to assist them in raising this amount. Contributions can be mailed to the treasurer, Moses S. Daher, 82 Decatur street, or to the Atlanta National bank to the credit of Saint Elias Syrian Greek Orthodox society.

In 1923, St. Mary's Syrian Christian Greek Orthodox Church held services in a church building purchased from the Latter Day Saints (See article, next page). The first priest was Father Basilous Maufous. He was born in Syria and educated in Russia. He served during the years of 1923 and 1924.

Official Census Taken in 1924 Reflected the 41 Families Listed Below:

Mr. & Mrs. Demetrios E. Nour
 Mr. & Mrs. Abraham George Azar
 Mr. & Mrs. Eassey E. Eassey
 Mr. & Mrs. Ameem G. Daher
 Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Andrews
 Mr. & Mrs. Costa G. Najour
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Guthas
 Mr. & Mrs. Nassif Azar
 Mr. Gus D. Ackel
 Mr. & Mrs. Ackel E. Ackel
 Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Saade
 Mr. John A Nasser
 Mrs. Nassem Feckoury
 Mr. & Mrs. Rajie Saade
 Mrs. Moses Ayers
 Mr. & Mrs. Philip Feckoury
 Mrs. Michael Azar
 Mrs. Saab Azar
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Coury Thomas
 Mrs. Stephanos Zachem
 Mr. & Mrs. George S. Daher
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael E. Nour
 Mr. & Mrs. Assaf Azar
 Mr. & Mrs. Moses S. Daher
 Mr. & Mrs. Deeb Andrews
 Mrs. & Mrs. Michael Domain
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Salem
 Mrs. John Guthas
 Mr. John D. Ackel
 Mr. & Mrs. Demetrios E. Saliba
 Mrs. Deebe S. Npty
 Mrs. Martha Guthas
 Mr. & Mrs. George Zachem
 Mr. & Mrs. Betrus Saade

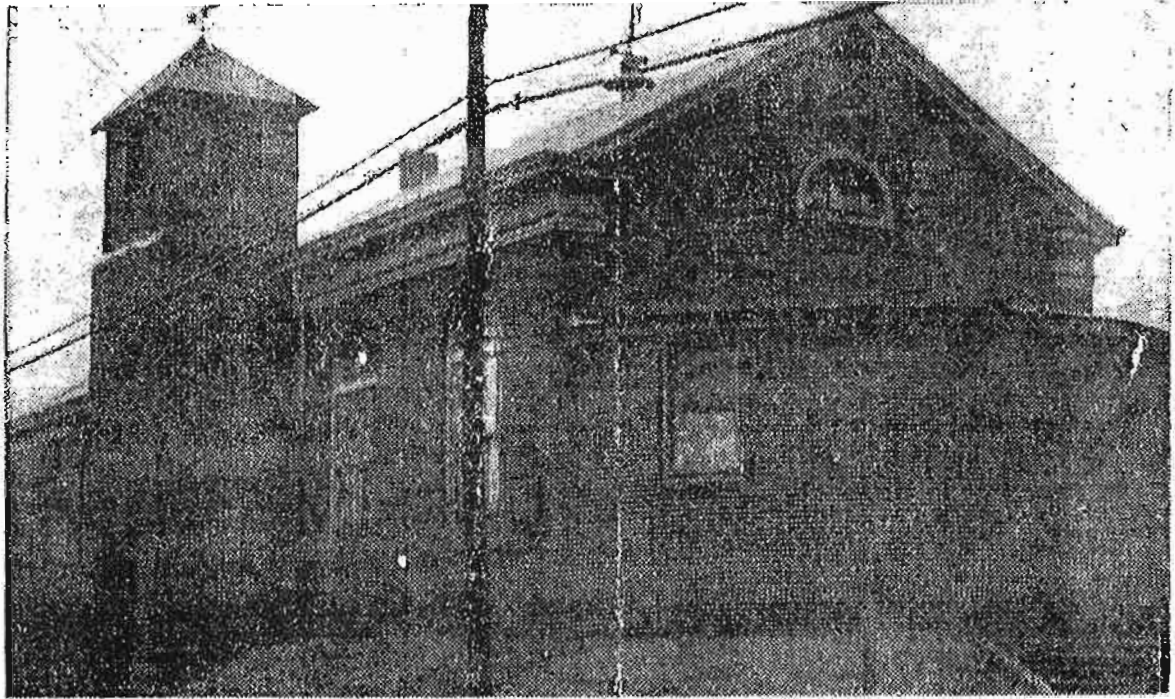
Mr. & Mrs. Betrus Saade
 Mrs. Marianna J. Jamhoor
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Abraham
 Mrs. Gabriel Thomas
 Mr. & Mrs. Wadeh Razzouk
 Mrs. George Najour
 Mrs. Abraham Azar
 Mr. and Mrs. George Saade

Fr. Maufous was followed by Fr. Constantine Rihbany, Fr. Elias Sawy, and Fr. Moses Koury.

Services were held for 16 years at the location on Woodward and Connally Streets. Andrew Andrews, Philip Feckoury, Mose Jamhoor, Costa & Mike Najour were our first chanters. The church was sold to the City of Atlanta and in 1939, a new lot was purchased at the corner of Woodward and Cherokee Avenues. A church building would cost \$30,000 (over \$275,000 in today's dollars) and the fledgling church of 41 families had only 1/3 on hand. Another obstacle - but this did not stop them. Charlie Azar and Costa Najour traveled to New York and the Southeastern United States to raise the necessary funds to build the new church. They succeeded. At the ground breaking ceremonies Governor River, and the Mayor of Atlanta, James L. Key were present. (Mayor Key is the grandfather of Patty Truslow, a current member of St. Elias) The Post Number 1 of the American Legion presented the church with the American flag.

Fr. Moses Koury left our parish in 1952. He was followed Fr. Dacy. Fr. Dacy resigned in 1954 and Rev. Fr. Louis Secabe took over the spiritual responsibilities. The parish home at 1513 Glenwood Ave. was sold in December of 1954 for \$5,000. Two collection trays were passed during the liturgy and in February, 1956 a pledge system was voted in with the passing of only 1 collection tray.

St. Mary Syrian Christian Greek Orthodox Church



St. Mary Christian Greek Orthodox church, standing at the corner of Woodward avenue and Connally street, has as its present pastor, Father Moses Koury.

By FRANK MARSH.

Atlanta being preponderantly native American, little is known of the religious activities of the foreign-born citizens in our midst. That we have a foreign colony in Atlanta is, of course, generally known, but when it is mentioned our minds almost automatically turn to thoughts of our European-born Jewish and Greek people, with perhaps a vague memory that we have a few Chinese scattered over the city.

Yet, we have a sizable group of Syrians in Atlanta; men and women from a far-away land across the seas and immediately adjoining that in which Christ was born, and in which He and the disciples walked and preached; where The Light was brought to the world nearly two thousand years ago and where Christianity was born.

Not only do we have a Syrian colony, but one sufficiently large to form a congregation and support a church in their faith which is, as the name implies, Christian Greek Orthodox. Although comparatively small, there are few if any religious groups in Atlanta more devoted to their churches and the faith of their fathers than are these Syrians; but so quiet are they in matters pertaining to their church and its activities that little is known of them.

The St. Mary Christian Greek Orthodox church was organized in April, 1921, by a little band of the faithful who gathered together at the home of C. J. Najour, and under the direction of Rt. Rev. Athanasios, bishop of Brooklyn, N. Y., the mother church in America, perfected the organization plans. Those

present who entered into a compact to support the church were: C. J. Najour, Mike George, Moses Daher, George Daher, Joe Gulties, Abraham George, Gus Ackel, M. Nour, P. E. Feckoury, E. Nassar, Mike Abraham, Mike G. Najour and William Feckoury. Those constituted the original and charter membership. The officers later elected were: Arthur Gulties, president; Mrs. Mary Jamhour, vice president; two secretaries, N. G. Najour and Mrs. M. Isral, and George Ayers, treasurer.

From 1921 until early in 1923 the church had no regular minister and no permanent church home, but was served by visiting priests in the homes of the members of the congregation. In 1923 the present church building at Woodward avenue and Connolly street was purchased from the Church of Latter Day Saints, and it was formally dedicated in May, 1924. The first minister to serve the church regularly was Father Basilios Mahfous, Syrian-born, and educated for the priesthood in Russia, who served during the years 1923 and 1924. Father Mahfous has been followed in the pastorate by three others, Father Constantine Rihbany, Father Elfos Sawy and the incumbent, Father Moses Koury.

Practically the entire Syrian colony in Atlanta are members of St. Mary Syrian Christian church and the congregation is growing, slowly but none the less surely. The Syrians in our community are a quiet, law-abiding, unostentatious group of citizens with an inordinate love for their families, their homes and their church. There is no question that the church which they have organized is a large factor in the making of good and loyal citizens of them, and in time their children and their children's children will have become one among us through the processes of the so-called "American melting pot."

Faith, Hope and Love...

Syrians Aid Hospital Fund



FOREIGN RACE COLONY CONTRIBUTES \$50.
C. G. Najour, in behalf of the Syrian colony of Atlanta, presented a check for \$50 to Mayor Key Friday as the colony's contribution to National Hospital Day, the amount to be used at Grady Hospital. This picture, made in the Mayor's office, shows, from right, John B. Franklin, superintendent of Grady Hospital; Mayor Key and C. G. Najour. This is a Georgian picture.

Becoming citizens, bringing the Holy Orthodox Church to these shores, establishing businesses, building a house of worship, raising families with tireless, long hours of hard work, love and dedication...

Now, participation in the life of the community, by making a contribution to Grady Hospital as a gesture of appreciation for the treatment of our people at that facility.

SYRIAN COLONY AIDS FUND

A delegation from Atlanta's Syrian colony, comprised of C. J. Najour, T. S. Najjar and Mitchell Maloos, appeared before Mayor Key Friday morning and presented him with a check for \$50, as part of their contribution to Grady Hospital on National Hospital Day.

Explaining that this sum was a mere gesture, showing their appreciation for the treatment of members of their colony at Grady, they added that larger amounts would be forthcoming from individuals of their race.

The offering was made in the presence of John B. Franklin, superintendent of Grady Hospital, and Mayor Key took occasion to remark on the public spirit of the members of the Atlanta colony.

The Mayor said: "These people of a foreign race who live among us prize their citizenship highly. They pay their taxes and always vote. They not only look after their own people, but this gift is evidence that they do their part in caring for all people."

The Fire of '56



Staff Photo—Guy Hayes

MOKE ROLLS FROM BENEATH ROOF OF CHURCH
As Firemen Battle Flames at Woodward and Cherokee

Fire Virtually Destroys St. Elias Church Here

A two-alarm fire Sunday after-
noon virtually destroyed St. Elias
Orthodox Church at Woodward and
Cherokee avenues, SE.

Members of the church's Board
of Trustees were to meet Monday
night with Father Louis A. Secabe,
past-in-charge, to discuss plans
for rebuilding.

Father Secabe held a preliminary
meeting Sunday night with the
trustees, George C. Najour, 941

the board of trustees.

Damage to the edifice, which is
15 years old, was estimated to
be \$20,000. The loss
was partially covered by insur-
ance.

LT. R. L. PARKER, the depart-
ment investigator, said cause of
the blaze has not been determined.
The fire apparently originated in
a corner of the basement, Mr.
Parker said.

Most of the roof of the brick-
walled structure was destroyed.
The blaze attracted a large crowd
of spectators.

A fire department spokesman
said the first alarm at 4:07 p.m.,
was answered by companies 6 and
10. A help call at 4:22 p.m. brought
companies 5 and 9 to the scene.

Fireman Robert Warner Stokes,
34, of 370 Milledge Ave., SE, under
went treatment at Grady Hospital
for cuts of the left hand which he
received fighting the blaze.

On March 18, 1956
the church building was lost.

"Minutes" after the fire...

Mr. Salem stated we should build a bigger Church on a different location. There ^{was} discussion on ways to raise money to rebuild old Church or new Church.

Motion to solicit ^{money} from all Syrian Orthodox Churches in U.S. & Canada by letter.
Motion Carried.

Motion to ~~also~~ appoint a Committee to solicit business houses, members & friends.
Motion Carried.

Committee Appointed:

George Ayres, C. H. Nazari, Charlie Azar,
Moses Samhoun, Fred Azar, Blot Azar
Abe Salem Chairman.

Sam Azar wanted to know what material and equipment was salvage from the fire. He was told that the organ, pictures, chair and tables, piano, and other items was saved.

The president stated that everything in the altar burned but the Holy Bible.

"The president stated that everything in the altar burned but the Holy Bible."

Services were held at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church every Sunday at 12:30 PM until the burned out church basement could be repaired and usable for services.

In January, 1957 Fr. George Kazaka became our priest. In March, 1957 a general meeting was held to discuss the building of a new church. Thirty-one of the forty members present voted to build a church at a new location.

Failed Opposition by Druid Hills Community

In April, 1959 the homeowners in this Druid Hills subdivision opposed having a church built on this lot.

The opposition failed.

A beautiful Druid Hills home sat on this lot. This house became a temporary church and parish home. (See photo, next page.)

Church services were held in the open living area and Sunday School taught in the upstairs bedrooms and in a garage apartment behind the home.

In March, 1963 Archbishop Antony Bashir visited Atlanta. During his visit two important issues were discussed that impact us today. The first was that the church did not have a twelve member council. He appointed additional members to the council to make a total of twelve in order to represent the twelve disciples of Christ. The second Issue concerned women on the council. (See minutes, next page.)

LAW OFFICES
JAMES A. MACKAY
P.O. BOX 1000
DECATUR, GEORGIA
PHONE 925-1112

April 21, 1959

Mr. Marvin H. Russell
Attorney at Law
439 Hurt Building
Atlanta 3, Georgia

Re: St. Elias Orthodox Society

Dear Marvin:

I have made further investigation regarding the site for the proposed church, and I find a very discouraging picture. I know a number of the homeowners on the new street that has been cut in from Ponce de Leon and they are united in their opposition to any church locating on this particular site. After having looked at the site myself, it seems to me that it is a rather undesirable site for a church because of the horrible intersection and the general terrain.

In any event, I could not be associated in efforts to locate the church on this particular lot because, as I explained to you, I am serving as President of the Druid Hills Civic Association, and the sentiment in the community is so solid against any church being located on the site, I would not want to become involved.

Very truly yours,

James A. Mackay
James A. Mackay

JAM:y



THIS IS THE HOME THAT OCCUPIED THE SITE OF OUR PRESENT CHURCH.

The matter regarding women being on the board was raised by Mrs. Reese Guthrie. She stated that at the last general meeting she had made a suggestion that women be included on the Board and that she had been advised that His Eminence had written a letter saying that women would not be allowed on the board. His Eminence replied that he had, sometime in the past, in answer to a letter from St. Elias, made a recommendation to this effect. Miss Evelyn Peckoury expressed to His Eminence her opinion that a couple of women should be included on the Board. His Eminence answered that when it was time for re-election, women might then be added to the board.

WOMEN ON THE CHURCH COUNCIL

RELIGIOUS ROUNDUP

St. Elias to Hold Groundbreaking Rites

Groundbreaking, or, in less secular language, the blessing of the foundation, will be held for a new church for St. Elias Eastern Orthodox Church Sunday at 4 p.m.

The groundbreaking ceremony will be at 2045 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, where the new sanctuary will rise in front of the present church building, which will eventually be converted to an educational building.

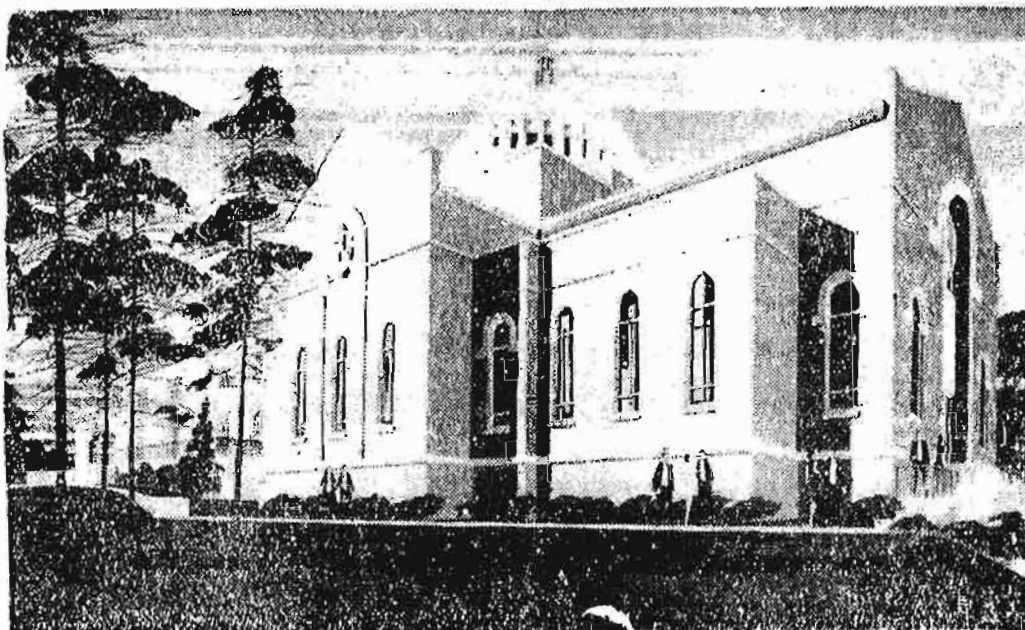
Rev. Harry Hatzopoulos of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption, and Rev. George Kazaka, pastor St. Elias, will lay the cornerstones.

* * *

A CROSS will be buried underneath each cornerstone.

"A CROSS will
be buried
underneath
each
cornerstone..."

In May, 1963 Fr. John Newcombe became our priest, followed by Fr. Anthony Malek in 1965. During this time, plans were being drawn for a new sanctuary. Unfortunately, these particular plans did not come to fruition.



ARTIST'S DRAWING OF NEW SANCTUARY ON PONCE DE LEON -
St. Elias Eastern Orthodox Church Structure Will Seat Several Hundred

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS PLAN NEW EDIFICE

Fr. Malek was followed by Fr. Eugene Brown, and then a temporary visiting priest, Fr. Mark Campbell.

In 1968, we were blessed by the arrival of Fr. George M. Corry who served as our priest until 1974.

Construction has begun on a new sanctuary for one of Atlanta's two Orthodox christian churches—St. Elias Eastern Orthodox Church on Ponce de Leon Ave.

Patterned after one of U.S. Orthodoxy's great churches, St. Sophia in California, the new domed church will be built in front of the remodeled house presently used as the church.

A downstairs auditorium will be completed some time this summer, which the congregation will use for worship services while the new sanctuary is being completed.

The present building will be used as a temporary educational building, with future plans calling for its removal and a new educational structure to be built.

The new sanctuary will seat several hundred persons. It will stand at the present St. Elias site, on Ponce de Leon at East Lake Road.

The current basement (church hall) was built and Liturgy was celebrated there. The faithful worshipped on concrete floors and sat in metal folding chairs. The altar was located on the current stage and the choir in the current kitchen area.

Fund raising dinners were prepared in the kitchen of the old home and served in the dining-living room areas. These dinners were very successful because all expenses for the dinners were usually donated and the money earned went toward the building fund for the new sanctuary.



Under the guidance of the Very Reverend Fr. George Corry, 1971 was a busy year for the St. Elias parish. In May, ground was broken for our present house of worship.

St. Elias was built on the current grounds in December, 1971... Fifty years from the original meeting of the church fathers. Many parishioners contributed funds which enabled us to sign the building contract and mortgage.

All icons were donated by our parishioners, as were the pews and all furnishings for the altar. The grapevine on the iconostas was hand sculpted and stained by one of our parishioners.

The Narthex in its entirety and the bell tower were donated by one of our families. Much love and hard work went into the building of our church. On September 10, 1972, *St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church of Atlanta, Georgia* was dedicated.

(Continued on next page.)

St. Mary's Ladies Society

St. Mary's Ladies Society was founded almost 60 years ago.

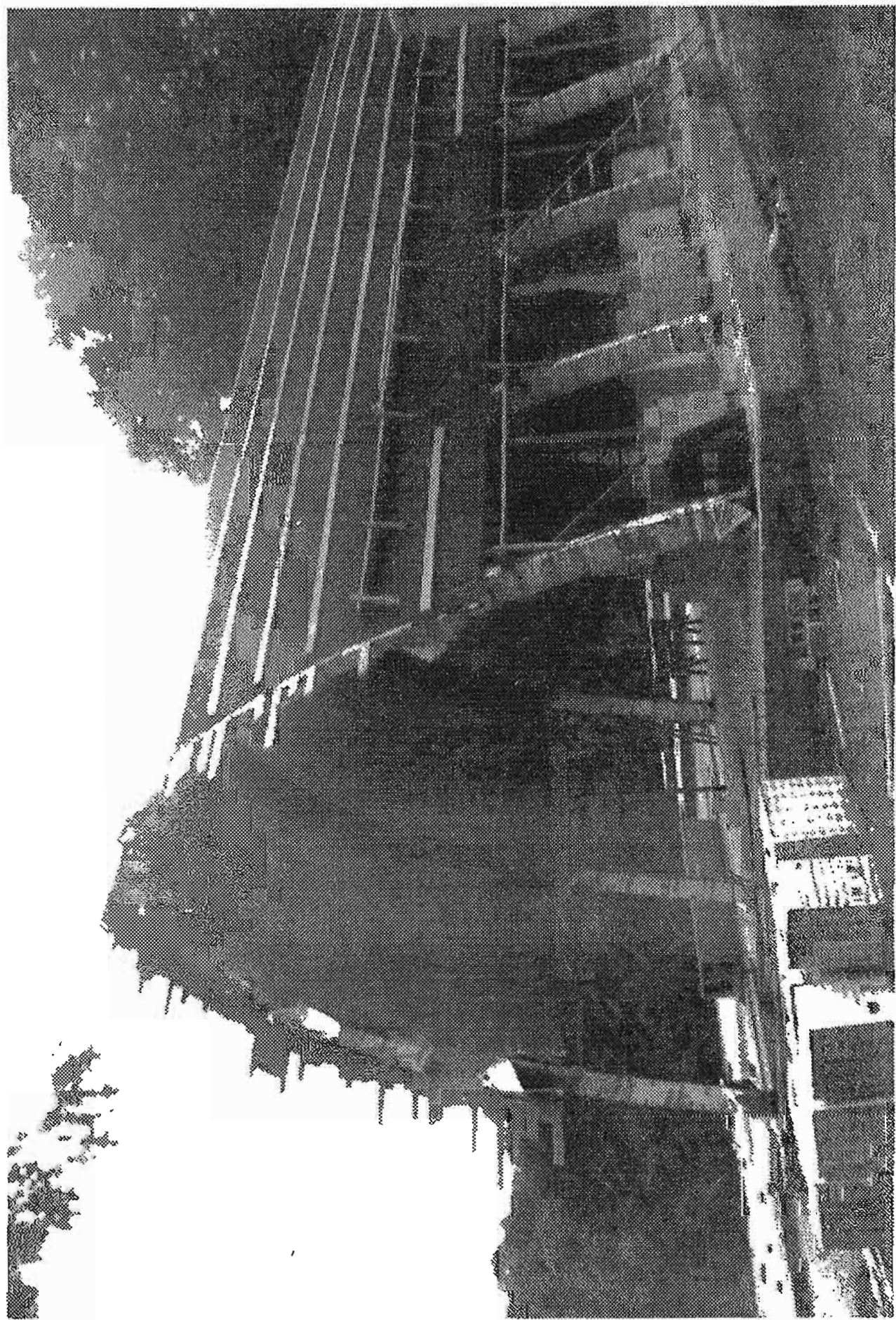
It started with twelve members and Rose Naddra was the first president.

Throughout the years, this organization has quietly been the provider of major funds for the growth of our parish through the annual Mid-east Festival and other sponsored events. But, it has also been a source of inspiration for us all through their love, dedication and unselfish service given to Christ and His Church.

The first festival was held in the Fall of 1968 and was chaired by Catherine Colletti.

Today, seventy-five years after the founding of the parish, children and grandchildren of the founders continue their work in the 29th Annual Festival.





St. Elias Church under construction.

In July, 1971 St. Elias hosted the Eastern Region SOYO Convention.

PAGE 8 THE HERITAGE, AUG. 14, 1971

Eastern Region SOYO 20th Annual Convention in Atlanta Large Success for 500 Members

By John R. Ameer.

ATLANTA - Underground and on-the-ground Atlanta, Georgia, made a big hit with Eastern Region SOYO members and friends attending the 20th annual convention at the Sheraton Hotel over the July 4th weekend. It was the first time for Atlanta's St. Elias Church as host for some 500 senior and teen members of the Syrian Orthodox Youth Organization and it turned out better than expected.

It turned out so well, in fact, that Rev. Father George Corry, pastor of St. Elias, predicted his parishioners may be bidding for the national Archdiocesan convention within a few years. Fr. Corry has been the driving force behind Atlanta's revival as a strong parish in the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. In a few more months, St. Elias will dedicate its new church in Atlanta with His Eminence, Metropolitan Archbishop Philip Saliba officiating.

New Officers elected for the coming year were announced during the awards banquet.

Senior SOYO named George Khoury of Philadelphia as president; Maha Shakhshiri, Washington, vice-president; Al Kabbash, Paterson, N.J., treasurer, and Audrey Zralck, Brooklyn, recording secretary.

Teen SOYO elected Wayne Hale as president; Jackie Shéhade, vice-president; Debbie Brown, secretary, and Larry Najour, treasurer.

Convention city chosen for next year.

and the plight of Jerusalem.

Metropolitan Philip presented various awards for essay, art and scrapbook contests and made several appointments. His Eminence presented Betty Esper, outgoing president of SOYO, with the Certificate of Meritorious Service from the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. Miss Esper of Pittsburgh sparked the Region's activity during the past two years.

Atlanta won the award as most active chapter. Oratorical contest winners were from Pittsburgh and Johnstown, Pa. Spiritual advisor for Senior SOYO is Rev. Fr. Louis Mahshie of Washington, D.C., with Teen SOYO advisor, Rev. Fr. George Corry of Atlanta.

Speakers and guests at the convention also included Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Anton Khoury, assistant to Metropolitan Philip; Very Rev. Fr. Michael Simon of Paterson; Rev. Frs. Louis Mahshie, Washington; Alex Curry, Johnstown, and George Corey, Pittsburgh.

Welcoming address was by Amella Karafotias, host SOYO president; Evelyn Jamhoor, convention chairman, Jou Courey, vice-president of North American Council SOYO; Betty Esper and Wayne Hale. Fr. George Corry of the host parish was master-of-ceremonies for the banquet.

* * *

During breaks in the convention schedule, Ruth Najour took some of the guests on sightseeing to Underground

and restaurant and an excellent view of the city.

The Cyclorama mural of the Battle of Atlanta, Stone Mountain and Martin Luther King memorial were other tourist attractions.

Brooklyn's formal and informal delegation to the SOYO convention in Atlanta, Ga., included Gary Ganim, James Kando, Dianne Kirshy, Mary Samen, Richard Dabbas, Ray Takla, Lorraine Jennaway, Bob Rashid, John Ameer, Stephanie Samaha and her friends. The 9:30 p.m. flight from Kennedy Airport was delayed by thunderstorms until about 1 a.m., arriving at Atlanta's airport 3 a.m., and at the Sheraton Hotel 4 a.m. The thunderstorm, however, didn't drown out the noise of the SOYO party on the Eastern Airlines flight, especially since liquid refreshments were served free to the delayed passengers. The daring Gary Ganim almost missed the flight when he ran out of the plane at Kennedy to get some food for the starving passengers.

In Atlanta, everyone cooled off in the Sheraton's swimming pool. Father Michael Simon had fun in the pool with his Paterson, N.J., delegation, which included Mrs. Simon; his daughter, Elaine; George Nassor and Nick Gorab, both SOYO veterans of some 20 years.

The Washington, D.C., choir was outstanding as usual, directed by a man with a great voice, George Amouri. Another SOYO stalwart, Nicholas Hazzan was

In 1974, Fr. John Townsend became our priest, followed by Fathers Paul Doyle, Paul Nemr, John Chromiak, Andrew Zbeeb, temporary priest Michael Keiser, and currently, Fr. Peter Shportun.

In 1989, we hosted the Eastern Region Parish Life Conference and in 1990 we celebrated the burning of the mortgage on our sanctuary.

We were hosts for the 1995 Archdiocese Convention where we celebrated 100 years of the Antiochian Archdiocese in North America.

The traditions of St. Elias continue with this year marking the 29th Anniversary of the Fall Mid-East Festival. The festival, sponsored by St. Mary's Ladies Society has evolved into the largest money-making event for our church.

This two day festival now features food from the middle-east, Arabic music and dancing, crafts, and tours of our beautiful sanctuary.

The parish of St. Elias, today is vibrant and growing, with a current census of 230 families. St. Mary's Ladies Society, St. Elias Men's Organization (SEMO), Teen SOYO, the Church School, and Adult Education Class are a few of the our current organizations. While many parishioners are from the middle-east, or have middle-east ancestry, many have converted to Orthodoxy from various other religions, in search of the true faith.

. The parishioners are active in the community with many participating in the 1996 Olympics and Paralympics.

The Ladies Society sponsors a vignette at the **Festival of Trees** with proceeds going to **Egleston Children's Hospital**.

Donations are collected to benefit **Our House**, a shelter for families, and to three children living in Lebanon who are victims of war.

These are but a few of the charitable causes supported by the organizations of St. Elias.

When our ancestors came to the shores of North America for a better way of life, they could not have realized that they were opening the doors for future generations of Americans to taste the "faith of the apostles".

In celebration of our 75th year as a parish, we pray that the light of Christ will continue to shine on St. Elias, to strengthen us as we grow, and to guide us as we live the "faith of the Orthodox".

