SAINT BARBARA HELLENIC CULTURAL MUSEUM

In the winter of 2007, our parish priest, Father Simon Thomas, inquired of a few parishioners when the earliest Greek immigrants came to Santa Barbara. His inquiry led to the formation of a parish history committee and ultimately the establishment of a history and cultural museum on the campus of Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox church. The initial goal was to open the museum on the 60th anniversary of Saint Barbara's incorporation as a parish in 1947, and to that end the doors of the museum opened on December 2nd, 2007, two days before the Feast of Saint Barbara on December 4th, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco who officiated at a service of Agiasmos.



Agiasmos service



Sampling of the exhibit by decades

The exhibit is arranged and displayed by decades, beginning with 1905-1919 through the 1960s and beyond. From 1905 through 1914 a quarter of the Greek men were working for the Southern Pacific Railroad in and around Lompoc, laying track and installing telegraph lines. Though a few men like James Angels, John Despotakis,Peter Kassimatis and John Mavromehalis owned restaurants in the 500 and 600 blocks of State Street, over half the Greek population during this decade (all of whom were men) were peanut and popcorn peddlers at the railroad depot and bootblacks near the restaurants on lower State Street. Some of these men listed in the city directories were: Petrochilos, Kalligoros, Esopos, Christou, Liugas, Kapsalis and Kostakis. By 1915 more Greek men arrived in Santa Barbara along with new opportunities for those arriving immigrants: cigar and tobacco shops, billiard rooms and candy stores. Brothers John and Steve Chianis opened the Chianis



Chianis Bros. Tobacco Shop

Bros & Co. Cigar shop at 721 State Street; John Lafkas opened Portola Sweet Shop at 723 State with his brothers Peter and Paul working as clerks. Nick Dimas was the proprietor of American Restaurant and Oyster Grotto at 613 State.

The Greek population itself was becoming more clearly defined in its geographic makeup; half of the immigrants came from the Peloponnesos area of Greece, while a great many emigrated from Asia Minor.

By the end of 1919 a definite pattern in Greek ownership was taking shape: the family restaurant. It was the restaurant business that supplied the largest source of employment for Greek men. Waiters, short-order cooks, and eventually proprietors of these cafes shaped the personality of the fledgling "Greek Colony", as it was so often referred to by the local newspaper. Establishments such as Firfires & Apostolides, Liberty Café (Philip George), Goodfellows Grotto (Harry Kurtis and Gus Nick) and American Restaurant & Oyster Grotto (Nick Dimas) became the nucleus for the restaurant expansion in the 1920s and 30s. No less than 40 new and relocated restaurants, cafes and luncheonettes opened for business on State Street, concentrated mostly in the 500, 600 and 700 blocks. Familiar names in the Greek community such as Christ, Simitzi, Ellis, Poulos, Condos, Garonis, Compogiannis,Velliotes, and Chachakos, had at various times owned cafes known as Splendid Café, Blue Bird Café, The Orpheum Grill, Texas Lunch, Busy Bee Café, People's Lunch Room, Shorty's and Golden State Café. Not to be overlooked, confectionery shops like Olympia Candy (Kuches) and The Palm Sweets (Colores), and fruit and grocery stores such as Santa Barbara Fruit Co. (Bouth, Costas), Firos Fruits, Fresno Market (Cagoulides) and Palace Groceria (Gus Terry) flourished.



Splendid Café at 623 State St. circa 1922



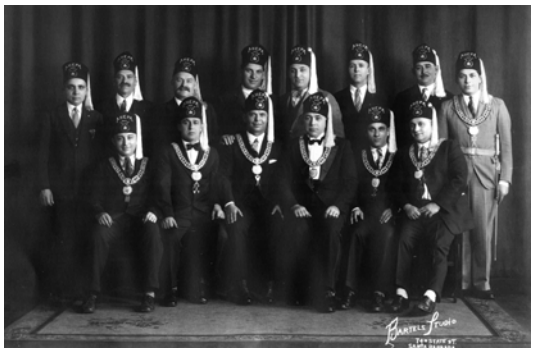
Maria and James Martin wed in Marseilles, 1927

Many of the eligible bachelors were now in a position to consider marriage and families. Unmarried sisters, nieces and female cousins were "introduced" to the local Greek men by way of photographs from home, and soon weddings were arranged, and many of

the local Greek businessmen took a hiatus from work to travel back to their native villages to meet and marry their future wives.
Fraternal and philanthropic organizations were also established over the years in the community. In 1929 the local AHEPA Chapter #243 was formed with George Ellis as president. In 1949 Daughters of Penelope Delos Chapter #103 was established, and the Philoptochos Society in 1951.



Daughters of Penelope, 1949



Santa Barbara AHEPA Chapter, 1929

In 1946 several Greek businessmen pooled their financial resources to purchase a parcel of land housing a vacant elementary school building at 1124 Castillo Street. The interior was transformed into an Orthodox sanctuary and a place of worship for the Greek community, which now included wives, mothers and children. Some of the families who settled in Santa Barbara after World War II were: Demourkas, Pertsulakes, Halkas, Frangos, Martin, Nicholin, Gekis and Kallas. Reverend Constantine Genis, a semi-retired priest who had occasionally made visits to Santa Barbara in the early 1940s to perform church services, moved to Santa Barbara in 1946 and became the first Greek Orthodox priest in the county. On March 4, 1947, the Articles of Incorporation for Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Parish were filed with the Secretary of State in Sacramento.



First building used as a Church sanctuary

In February of 1949, construction of a church began on the acquired property directly in front of the



Greek School celebrating March 25, 1950

original little building. The first liturgical service and celebration of Greek Independence Day officially took place on March 25, 1950 with Father Ambrosios Mandelaris as parish priest and Father Genis as the Greek school teacher.

The "Little Church on Castillo Street" as it was affectionately called, nurtured 35 years of growth in the future generations of the Greek community. Though the building itself could not seat more than 90 souls, size and capacity did not deter the parish from coming together to celebrate 80 marriages, 245 baptisms and 125 funerals, as well as important liturgical events. Between 1943 and 1979 the following priests served at Saint Barbara: Fathers Genis, Mandelaris, Mitsopoulos, Palassis, Sipsas, Rellos, Vakalakis, Leon, Balam, Vlahopoulos, Hadjis, Tsompanas and Manousakis. In 1965, the parish received a generous gift from Gus Chavalas; the deed and small mortgage to a home on the Mesa to be used as the parish house for residing priests and their families.



1985 Parish photo in front of first church on Castillo Street



Greek folk dancers in 1962 Greek Festival

What started by the members of AHEPA in Ventura in 1956 as a BBQ fundraiser for the church, soon moved to Santa Barbara and the newly built Earl Warren Showgrounds Exhibit Hall where a fall event called the Greek Festival took place on a Saturday night, hosting a steak dinner, homemade Greek desserts and an evening of folk dancing. The proceeds from this yearly event contributed substantially to the burning of the mortgages of the church and parish house. In 1973, Helen Stathis, then president of the Women's Guild, suggested the idea of holding a Fiesta BBQ to coincide with Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days celebration in August; the event to be held at Oak Park. More than three decades later, the Annual Greek Festival is still held at Oak

Park and is crowned as the oldest and repeatedly voted the best ethnic festival in the county. Thanks, Helen!
Saint Barbara parish expanded in size from 1950 to 1979; some of the families who moved into the area were:
1950s: Pahos, Baskous, Pappas, Poulis, Anthes, Anthimiades, Semer, Tsiligiri, as well as new brides, Eleni Christ Petronakis and Mary Frangos.
1960s: Goumas, Chtouros, Stathis, Stathopoulos, Pollalis, Futris, Haimanis, Hull, Mamalakis, Karakitsos and Bekakos.
1970s: With the move of Delco Corp. to Santa Barbara, three Greek families joined the parish and immediately doubled the size of Sunday school; the Alexander, Dovas and Papador. Others who moved to the area were Kolendrianios, Chlentzos, Gastouniotis, Tziouvaras, Ganakis, Andropoulos, Laspitis and McGillivray.



Left, Bishop Meletios, ctr. Fr.Manousakis

With the growth of the parish came the need for a larger church and more adequate facilities. In 1976 the General Assembly approved the acquisition of 2 + acres on San Antonio Creek Road. Sixty parishioners came forward to retire the debt on the property, and in 1978 His Grace Bishop Meletios and Father Manousakis blessed our hilltop acreage.

The decade of the 80s witnessed several exciting and momentous events for our parish. On May 11, 1980 the Parish Council introduced our new priest; Rev. Constantine Zozos and Presbytera Mona. In the fall of 1981 renewed interest for a parish folk dance group gained strength with a new parishioner, San Diego native George Scarvelis, who had recently moved to Santa Barbara to attend UCSB. George had been involved with his parish dance group at home and agreed to help form a group at Saint Barbara's. According to parishioner and group member Maria Pahos, the group had just 11 weeks to learn all the dances and make all their costumes for their first year of FDF (Folk Dance Festival) competition. George chose the



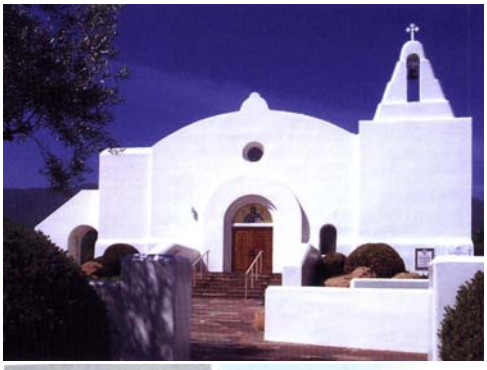
name 'Pnevma' for the group feeling that it most aptly described the very "Spirited" dancers.



Maria Pahos with first group of Thavma

In 1983, His Grace Bishop Anthony of the San Francisco approached members of Pnevma at FDF about forming a young children's dance group at Saint Barbara's, and Maria Pahos volunteered. She chose the name 'Thavma', meaning miracle, from the dance called Mihanikos in which the girls in their Pnevma group would chant in the background, "Thavma, Thavma, Thavma" to the crippled man who is healed during the performance.

Groundbreaking on San Antonio Creek Rd. for the construction of the church and fellowship hall took place on May 11, 1985, with completion in September of 1986. The doors officially opened on Sunday, October 12th under a pristine and deeply blue sky. The parishioners assembled in the plaza, gazing at their beautiful Saint Barbara House of Worship and feeling such a sense of joy. His Grace Bishop Anthony conducted the Thyranoixia Service, the blessing and dedication of the Church and hall, the ceremony of Sanctification of the Waters, and the unveiling of the cornerstone.







The 1600-year-old bone fragment of St. Barbara, housed in its reliquary, now rests in the church of her namesake in California. Above, Bishop Anthony of San Francisco and Fr. Constantine Zozos, pastor of St. Barbara Church.

A most significant and meaningful occasion for the parishioners took place on the 40th anniversary and Feast Day of Saint Barbara on Dec. 4th 1987, with the presentation of a tiny bone fragment of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr by Pope Paul II's emissary to His Grace Bishop Anthony of San Francisco.

The completion of the church was soon followed with 2 years of public hearings, negative letters to the local press and petitions filed by neighbors of Saint Barbara's. At issue was a conditional-use permit which stipulated certain restrictions attached to the property and the structures in this residential area. Though most of the line items were addressed and resolved, what finally remained was a 10:00 p.m. curfew. To address that restriction, a painful but necessary decision was made to file suit against the county. Six months later, on March 3, 1989, the case was heard before Judge James Slater who promptly ruled in favor of our church and dismissed the curfew.



Santa Barbara News Press headline.

The 1990s brought great beauty and Orthodox tradition to our church interior with the addition of stained glass windows exquisitely designed by local artist and parishioner, Nadya Penoff. Six icons were commissioned to the Laurence Manos studios and were installed in March of 1992 at the six openings in the Iconostasion. Finally, 17 million pieces of mosaic glass were used by noted Byzantine mosaic master artist Bruno Salvatori (in the photo at right) to create icons of Virgin Mary and Christ Child above the altar, Archangels, and Hierarchs, and Martyrs in the apse.



By 1994 it became apparent to the parish that there was a need for additional facilities to serve our various ministries. A building fund campaign was initiated in the summer of 1995 with a generous offer by Stephen and Angie Redding to match and double all contributions to acquire the adjacent property and home next to Saint Barbara's. The community met the challenge and made the financial commitment, raising close to one million dollars in 90 days to purchase the parcel. The doors opened in September of 1996, and on December 3rd the building was dedicated as the STEPHEN AND ANGIE REDDING ORTHODOX EDUCATION CENTER.



From left, His Eminence Archbishop Spyridon, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Patriarch Bartholomew, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbit, and His Grace Bishop Anthony.

On Nov. 8, 1997 His All Holiness The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew traveled to Santa Barbara to speak at the Environmental Symposium at UCSB. His All Holiness celebrated an Ecumenical Prayer service for stewardship of our community and blessed the faithful on the 50th Anniversary of the Saint Barbara parish.



Archbishop Spyridon, Fr. Zozos

A very special tradition was celebrated by the parish in 1998: the Consecration of Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, a most ancient Eastern Orthodox celebration that included the requirements of preparation, the blessing and final vesting of the Holy Altar table. This very special event covered three days, from Oct. 2nd through the 4th. Friday evening began with an inspiring concert of Liturgical, Byzantine and Greek folk music performed by Saint Barbara's choir under the direction of Andriana Kolendrianos. On Saturday morning, 150 children gathered for the Breakfast of Champions held in the church plaza, followed by Great Vespers that evening. Sunday began with Orthros, followed by Divine Liturgy. Near the end of the service His Eminence Archbishop Spyridon entered the church to prepare for the final vesting of the Holy Altar table. Participants gathered from several Southern California parishes to witness this spiritual event.

Our museum would never have become a reality without the willing participation of our parishioners, both those who originally made the arduous trek from their villages and towns to America as well as their descendants who passed along the stories of their courageous parents and grandparents. The memorabilia, along with some extraordinary family photos, made it possible for us to properly chronicle the lives of these early Greek immigrants in our community, and we hope we have succeeded in portraying their journey accurately. We extend an open invitation to view in person the Saint Barbara Hellenic Cultural Museum and Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, and to contact us with your questions and/or additions to our exhibit.