

# The Greek Communal School and Cultural Survival in Pre-War Toronto

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THE GREEK COMMUNAL SCHOOL AND CULTURAL SURVIVAL  
IN PRE-WAR TORONTO

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*Eleoussa Polyzoi*

The Secret School

My little moon so shining bright  
My path before me please do light  
That I may walk to school at night  
That I may learn the words and rules  
Rules and studies by your light  
All which speak of God's great might.\*

- translated by the author

Upon immigration an individual brings with him a host of old world values, attitudes, and behaviours to the New World which are very much a part of him and cannot be readily cast off. Yet confronted with a new and often strange environment, he quickly feels the pressure to assimilate. He learns that to survive he must somehow adjust to the mores and ways of the receiving society. Often balancing off these pressures of assimilation generated by the receiving country is the concomitant desire by an immigrant group to maintain its cultural heritage; that is, to see its ethnic roots survive through succeeding generations. One manifestation of this sentiment was the establishment and growth of communal language schools.

With few exceptions, communal language schools have generally been overlooked by Canadian historians. Although some efforts have been made to examine the language maintenance efforts of the early Ukrainian, Mennonite, and Doukhobour immigrants of Western Canada, these have been either cursory or, at best, tangential to the main issues surrounding the assimilation of Canada's immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

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\*So sang the Greek children on their way to the secret Greek schools during Greece's 400 year Turkish captivity, 1453-1821.

<sup>1</sup>J. S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates (Winnipeg: Methodist Church, 1908); J.T.M. Anderson, The Education of the New Canadian: A

Even less attention has been accorded the historical development of the communal language schools in Canadian cities. Despite the historical importance of these schools in the large urban centres, virtually no concern has been shown about their role in the formation of urban immigrant communities or in the socialization of second generation Greek Canadians.

This paper attempts to trace the historical development of the Greek After-Four school in the city of Metropolitan Toronto. The examination specifically covers the time period before World War II and argues that despite the school's main function as a tool of ethnic survival, at the same time, it was a product of the North American urban context.

Any examination of the development of Greek communal schools must take account of the historical circumstances surrounding the process of Greek immigration and subsequent development of community institutions. Accordingly, a short history of Greek immigration to Toronto is presented along with a brief statement of reasons for immigration, a summary of the types of occupations entered by the Greek immigrants, and finally, a description of the development and growth of the pre-World War II Greek community. The paper then focuses on the establishment of the first Greek school in Toronto and on the social, political, and economic forces affecting its development up to World War II.

#### Early Greek Immigration to Toronto

The Greek presence in Toronto was the product of persuasive forces present in both the Old World and in Canada. Except for occasional refugees from the Greek-Turkish conflict of 1821-1829, few Greek immigrants came to North America until the turn of the twentieth

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Treatise on Canada's Greatest Educational Problem (Toronto: Dent, 1918); R. England, The Colonization of Western Canada: A Study of Contemporary Land Settlements (London: P. S. King, 1936). Conspicuous as an exception is the work of C. J. Jaenen. See the works listed in J. R. Mallea and L. Philip, "Canadian Cultural Pluralism and Education: A Selected Bibliography," Canadian Ethnic Studies, Vol. 8 (1976), pp. 81-88.

century.<sup>2</sup> Greeks at this time began emigrating in small but steady numbers, first from the Kingdom of Greece or "Greece proper," and then, from the so-called enslaved or "unredeemed" regions of Greece, chiefly Asia Minor.

The most important single factor in the migration from "Greece proper" was the desire to escape poverty resulting from failure of the currant crop,<sup>3</sup> Greece's principal agricultural export. But more than this, the hardships incurred through centuries of Moslem domination, the complex problems of rehabilitation: constitutional, social and economic, following the Greek War of Independence, primitive agricultural methods, absentee landownership, and generally intolerable living conditions took their toll in migration.<sup>4</sup> What resulted, in fact, was a two-part migration, one from rural areas to towns, and the other from Greece to England, Russia, Roumania, and, finally, the United States and Canada. Once the potential of North America became known, however, the emigrant traffic to other countries gradually ceased.<sup>5</sup>

In a second yet smaller influx of migration originating in "unredeemed Greece," political and religious grievances were significant stimuli. The grievances of those living in the Ottoman Empire were

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<sup>2</sup>G. Vlassis, The Greeks in Canada (Ottawa: Le Clerc Printers, 1942), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>H. P. Fairchild, "The Causes of Emigration from Greece," Yale Review, Vol. 18 (1909), pp. 176-196; T. Constant, "Greek Immigration and Its Causes," Athene, Vol. 8 (1947), pp. 21-24.

<sup>4</sup>T. Saloutos, "The Greeks in the United States," South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. 44 (1945), pp. 69-81; T. Saloutos, The Greeks in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 21-43; V. Filias, "Emigration--Its Causes and Effects," in Migration Series #1: Essays on Greek Migration, by A. T. Angelopoulos, et. al (Athens: Social Sciences Centre, 1967), pp. 11-38; H. Drakopoulou, "Immigration and Assimilation: The Greeks of Lowell," reprint from the Greek Review of Social Research, Vols. 19-20 (1974), pp. 1-80.

<sup>5</sup>Saloutos, "Greeks in the United States," p. 70; Filias, "Emigration," p. 11; M. Goutos, "The Need for a 'Social Policy of Emigration'," in Migration Series #1: Essays on Greek Migration, pp. 55-59.

aggravated by the Young Revolution of 1908 which promised equality to the Greeks, but, as refugees attested, became a "camouflage" to "Turkify" the Greek element by assimilation.<sup>6</sup>

During the Catastrophe of Asia Minor in 1922, approximately one million Greek refugees were again forced to leave their homeland. They first turned to Greece for help, but, unable to absorb additional hundreds of thousands into an already poverty-stricken nation, Greece saw many refugees emigrating to the United States and some to Canada.<sup>7</sup>

At the turn of the century, Canada was in the midst of a massive international promotion campaign to attract farmers to settle and develop its Western frontier.<sup>8</sup> European-stationed advertising agents, steamship brokers, and labour agents, working for Canadian railways, shipping lines, and government offices, penetrated even some of the remote areas of Greece where they magnified the potential good-life in Canada and spurred destitute Greek peasants to leave for more promising shores.

According to the Canadian Census, by 1900 more than 250 Greek migrants had entered the country. By the outbreak of war in 1914, their numbers had risen to nearly 4,000, and, by the beginning of the Second World War, approximately 10,000 Greeks had entered Canada.<sup>9</sup> Most came by way of Ellis Island, New York on American-bound steamship lines.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Saloutos, "Greeks in the United States," p. 70.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 70; B. Filias, "Emigration," p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>H. Troper, Only Farmers Need Apply: Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigration from the United States, 1896-1911 (Toronto: Griffin House, 1972).

<sup>9</sup>Census of Canada, 1901-1941. Although the accuracy of Greek immigration figures is in question due to the "nationality issue," nevertheless, Canada Census provides a useful guide. For example, those Greeks who emigrated from "unredeemed" Greece (Greek Macedonia and Epirus before 1912, Thrace before 1920, Asia Minor before 1922 etc.), of necessity, entered Canada with Turkish passports thus further confusing statistics.

<sup>10</sup>It was not unusual for the very early immigrants to have resided several years in the United States before resettling in Canada, a

The majority who entered Canada directly came through Halifax or Montreal and then continued by rail to Toronto, Vancouver, or other smaller cities.

One of the most conspicuous features of early Greek migration was the preponderance of males over females. In 1911, for example, of the 3,594 Greeks listed in Canada, 3,064 were men and 530 were women. Of the 9,444 Greeks in 1931, 6,055 were men and 3,389 were women. By 1941, the number of males was still greater than females although the proportion was declining: 7,210 men to 4,482 women.<sup>11</sup>

Spurred by the need to better their economic position, these early migrants entered Canada in search of work. They were not, however, immigrants, at least not at first. Most hoped to return eventually to Greece once enough money was amassed to ensure security for their families and themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Despite their peasant background and wealth of agricultural skills,<sup>13</sup> the great majority of early arrivals flocked to Canada's urban

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phenomenon resulting in further complication of Canada Census immigration figures. See E. N. Papamanoli, Periliptiki Historia Tou Kanada Ke Hellino-Kanadikos Odiogos: A Short History of Canada and a Greek Canada Guide (Montreal: Canadian Greek Publishing Co., 1921-1922).

<sup>11</sup>Census of Canada, 1911, 1921, 1931. The great majority of early arrivals were in fact either boys or older males devoid of normal family relations, thus making their adjustment more difficult. This same male bias characterized the flow of Greek immigration to the United States as well. See G. Abbot, "A Study of the Greeks in Chicago," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 15 (1909), pp. 379-393; H. Balk, "Economic Contributions of the Greeks to the United States," Economic Geography, Vol. 30 (1943), pp. 270-275; Saloutos, Greeks in the United States, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup>See T. Saloutos, They Remember America: The Story of the Repatriated Greek-Americans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956).

<sup>13</sup>While the immigrants from the commercial parts of Asia Minor were believed to have been better educated and of middle class, the bulk of immigrants coming from the Kingdom of Greece were chiefly illiterate and of peasant stock. See Saloutos, "Greeks in the United States," p. 70.

centres rather than to farms.<sup>14</sup> Ever mindful of past hardships in eking out an existence from the soil, unfamiliar with the farming techniques and produce of a "flatter" and colder Canada, unwilling to accept the loneliness and isolation of living in Canada's rural areas, unprepared to make the long term commitment to Canada required of a farmer, and lacking in capital,<sup>15</sup> these Greeks preferred to live in the cities. There they found employment as factory hands, manual labourers, hotel workers, waiters, bootblacks and peddlars.<sup>16</sup> Single men, often transient, moved from city to city as job opportunities and economic changes made continued migration necessary.

Canada's cities offered these anxious new arrivals an opportunity for immediate employment and, equally important, a wage packet very soon after beginning work. In expanding centres like Toronto, business and industry were often ready to use the services of unskilled labour.

But many saving and commercial-minded Greeks did not long remain labourers. Those independent in spirit and venturesome of character, soon struck out into a small commercial enterprise of their own, a fruit or flower stand, an ice cream parlor, a shoe-shine shop, a confectionery store, a café or furrier establishment, and perhaps even a small hotel or restaurant.<sup>17</sup>

Once securely established in jobs or businesses and feeling assured that they had enough money to support a family, the idea of a quick return to Greece began to fade. Many sent for their wives and children. Although a large proportion of Greek migrants had, at the outset, no desire to settle permanently, and indeed, considered their

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<sup>14</sup>Early Greek immigrants were noted for securing entrance to Canada as "farmers" but quickly turning to more lucrative employment in the cities. Public Archives of Canada, Immigration Branch Records, RG 76, Vol. 645, File 998358, Part I, "Greek Immigration: 1908-1951."

<sup>15</sup>See Balk, "Economic Contributions of the Greeks," p. 273.

<sup>16</sup>See T. Burgess, Greeks in America (Boston: Sherman & Co., 1913).

<sup>17</sup>Papamanoli, Greek Canada Guide, pp. 345-374.

stay in Toronto as merely an interlude, many slowly became resolved to permanent residence. Immigration replaced migration. Relatives and neighbours in Greece, often hearing exaggerated stories of successes and eager to share in new-found fortunes, gradually began flowing into Canada. A system of chain migration was thus born that became itself a force for migration.<sup>18</sup>

By 1900<sup>19</sup> there was already a small yet ever increasing number of permanent Greek settlers in Toronto. The majority were men emigrating from the regions of Arcadia and Laconia of Pelloponesus.<sup>20</sup> Within a decade, their numbers reached nearly 200.<sup>21</sup> In 1909, after a general meeting at the local YMCA, the Greek Orthodox community of Toronto, the koinotis, was formed into a corporate body. As was the custom in a number of pioneer Greek urban settlements across North America, a council or symvoulio was then established to formally govern the affairs of the Greek settlement. A major priority was the establishment of a Greek Orthodox Church. This newly formed symvoulio petitioned the Holy Synod of Greece to assign them a priest. Reverend Amvrossios Parashakes, born and educated in the Old World and emersed in the customs and traditions of his new parishioners, was subsequently hired.<sup>22</sup>

In 1910, a warehouse at 170 Jarvis Street was purchased with donations from many of Toronto's increasingly affluent Greek businessmen.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Chain migration refers to a "process whereby one or two successful settlers in the New World bring out their relatives and friends; along with the 'migration chains' linking place of settlement with place of origin, there flows an ever-increasing number of persons joined to each other by ties of blood relationships and village friendship." C. A. Price, A Report on the Greek Community in Toronto (York University, 1958; microfilm available from York University, Toronto).

<sup>19</sup>By 1901, there were approximately 30 Greek immigrants in Toronto. Census of Canada, 1901.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Abbot, "Greeks in Chicago," p. 380.

<sup>21</sup>Vlassis, Greeks in Canada, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup>Papamanoli, Greek Canada Guide, p. 341.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 341.



The warehouse-turned-church thereafter served not only as a spiritual, social, and political centre for the small Greek community, it also was to serve as the initial quarters of Toronto's one room Greek communal school.<sup>24</sup>

The outbreak of the Balkan wars in 1912 precipitated the departure of Toronto's Father Parashakes. As a member of a twelve-man volunteer unit organized in Toronto and sent to join the official Greek army, Father Parashakes fell in battle. Father Sava Iosiphethene was then chosen to continue his work in the Toronto parish.<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after the First World War, political disharmony split Toronto's Greek community along the lines of the national disruption occurring in Greece. Two factions, a pro-Allied faction aligning themselves with Prime Minister Venezelos and a pro-German faction supporting King Constantine's neutrality policy in World War I, sprang up in Toronto. Defamation and slander were readily tossed about, arguments over the singing of the polichronion, the royal hymn in church, boiled over, and intra-group boycotts injured many businesses and shattered social and religious relationships.<sup>26</sup> As one informant observed, "The Community was divided, the church was divided, even coffee houses were divided."<sup>27</sup> By 1923, friction became so intolerable that the small church on Jarvis Street had to be temporarily shut down. By 1930, however, political squabbles in Greece, repeated here on a miniature scale, began to subside. The split slowly healed, however, as community interests once again made common ground.

Throughout the era of political infighting, the Greek population

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<sup>24</sup>The importance of the church in a number of Greek settlements across North America has been documented by a number of Greek-American historians. See, for example, T. Saloutos, "The Greek Orthodox Church and Assimilation," International Migration Review, Vol. 7 (1973), pp. 395-407.

<sup>25</sup>Papamanoli, Greek Canada Guide, p. 341.

<sup>26</sup>Politemi Janetakis, taped interview (Toronto), April 6, 1977.

<sup>27</sup>Peter Palmer, taped interview (Toronto), October 13, 1977.

in Toronto continued to grow. By 1920, the Greek business sector, concentrated along Yonge and Dundas Streets, was visibly expanding with new cafés, restaurants, confectionery shops, bowling alleys, billiards, and shoeshine parlors.<sup>28</sup>

With a permanent Greek population of approximately 850 in 1921,<sup>29</sup> a small yet noticeable Greek residential area was growing up around the St. George Greek Orthodox Church on Jarvis and Shuter Streets.<sup>30</sup>

The need to care for the Greek community's destitute immigrants, many of them transient labourers, prompted the founding, in 1921, of the Ladies Philanthropic Society, the Philoptoho.<sup>31</sup> It served to not only encourage community solidarity in the midst of a strange and often threatening anglo-conformist environment, but also helped minimize the harsh entry of Greek migrants into Canadian city life.

AHEPA (the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association), an already established and powerful American-based organization, by the 1920's began expanding into Canada, forming a number of chapters across the nation's major urban centres. In 1928, a Lord Byron chapter of the fraternal order was founded in Toronto.<sup>32</sup> In its search for respectability, AHEPA's aim was to Canadianize the Greek community even at the expense of Greek national feelings. This was evident in its credo which urged:

the promotion and encouragement of loyalty to Canada, allegiance to its flag, support to its constitution, obedience to its laws and reverence for its history and traditions . . .<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Papamanoli, Greek Canada Guide, pp. 341-374.

<sup>29</sup>Census of Canada, 1921.

<sup>30</sup>This was the general observation of a number of oral sources contacted. Mrs. Maria Letros, taped interview (Toronto), November 20, 1976; Politemis Janetakis interview; Peter Palmer interview; Sophie Maniates, taped interview (Toronto), August 15, 1977; and Smaro Pavlakis, taped interview (Toronto), August 24, 1977.

<sup>31</sup>Vlassis, Greeks in Canada, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>33</sup>AHEPA Yearbook, 1945, The Lord Byron Chapter (Toronto: Art Printing Co., 1945), p. 6.

AHEPA was seen by many in the local community, however, as too assimilationist. Its dogma proved unpalatable to the more tradition-bound early Greek immigrants who were anxious, even in the new urban context, to preserve their culture and particularly their language. Impervious to AHEPA's efforts, many Greek immigrants in Toronto tenaciously talked not of assimilation but of cultural survival. Reinforced by a history of 400 years of Turkish oppression, this drive was not to be easily suppressed even in the more open urban Canadian society.

Along with the founding of the first Greek church, the formation of the pioneer Philanthropic Society, the establishment of an AHEPA chapter in Toronto, and the appearance of familiar Greek business enterprises, the need to recreate yet another Greek institution was slowly emerging.

#### The First Greek Communal School

By 1920, not only were more Greek women and children arriving in Toronto,<sup>34</sup> but also a small Canadian-born Greek second generation was beginning to appear. The pressing need to form a Greek communal school to accommodate the young became an increasing priority. As in many Greek settlements across North America the church served as the backbone of both the Greek community and the Greek school. Church and school united as instruments of survival. Indeed, the first responsibility traditionally relegated to the church was the establishment of a school, and, in the early years, classes were often initiated under the guidance and tutelage of the priest himself.

Putting aside their political differences for the moment, the Greek community of Toronto in 1921 pooled their resources to establish a Greek school. That same year, the first Greek parochial school, perhaps patterned after that of Montreal's Greek community, was opened under the auspices of the St. George Greek Orthodox Church on Jarvis Street.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Substantiated by Census of Canada.

<sup>35</sup>Papamanoli, Greek Canada Guide, p. 342.

Approximately 50 Greek children, immigrant and Canadian-born, enrolled in the one-room school on the second floor of the church. Elementary classes began in both Greek and English. The church chantor taught Greek and Miss Douglas taught English.<sup>36</sup> Although fees were nominal and texts were free, the all-day parochial school was soon converted to an "After-Four" school where the language of instruction was confined to Greek only.<sup>37</sup> Although little is known about the actual operation of this pioneer school, it is known that within a few years it was closed.<sup>38</sup>

In 1926, Mrs. Smaro Pavlakis, a certified teacher educated in Constantinople, was hired by the Greek community to initiate and organize a new Greek afternoon school under the name and symbolic patronage of "Athena." A victim of the Catastrophe of Asia Minor and dissatisfied with the poor reception of the refugees in Greece, Mrs. Pavlakis immigrated to Canada as a "picture bride"<sup>39</sup> in 1925 and first set up a household in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. Within a year, she and her husband moved to Toronto where she took up a position as a teacher in the Greek Community's After-Four school. She was soon joined in 1930 by Miss Sophie Smara (later Maniates), also a refugee from Asia Minor and a recent graduate of a teacher's academy from the Greek island of Lesbos.<sup>40</sup>

A number of other Greek immigrants to Toronto were able to find

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 342. Because the reasons for such a conversion are difficult to ascertain, only speculation can be offered. Perhaps operative costs were prohibitive. Perhaps the Greek communal programme ran counter to the official Toronto Board of Education standards. Or, alternatively, perhaps the Greek parents' priority lay in the Canadian school system to teach their children English.

<sup>37</sup>Vlassis, Greeks in Canada, p. 44. See preceding footnote.

<sup>38</sup>Smaro Pavlakis interview.

<sup>39</sup>This was not an uncommon practice among early Greek immigrants to Canada.

<sup>40</sup>Sophie Maniates interview.



*After-Four Greek Class at 170 Jarvis Street, 1933.  
(Donated to the Multicultural History Society of Ontario  
by Mrs. S. Pavlakis).*

Front row: Mrs. Sophie Maniates (Greek Teacher, 1930-33; 1935-1944), Mrs. Maria Harakas (first president of the Ladies Philoptoho Society, 1921), Father Emmanouil Papastephanou, Mrs. Smaro Pavlakis (Greek teacher, 1926-1930; 1931-1948).

employment, sometimes temporarily, in the Greek afternoon school.<sup>41</sup> It was Mrs. Pavlakis and Mrs. Maniates, however, who succeeded in shaping the Greek school system of Toronto and perhaps in influencing the lives of Greek children in Toronto. Mrs. Pavlakis' career lasted for 21 years and Mrs. Maniates' for 12.<sup>42</sup>

The school conducted classes on the second floor of the church for over ten years, albeit with a minimum of furniture, curricular material<sup>43</sup> and, as one student reminisced, "primitive heating facilities that did not always work in the cold winters."<sup>44</sup> It moved in 1937 to a new location. In that year, the present Greek Orthodox Church at 115 Bond Street was purchased through the efforts of the then president of the Greek community, Chris Georgas, who travelled all over the province of Ontario to raise money for the project.<sup>45</sup>

Dedicated to teaching and paid very little in the inaugural years of the school's operation, Mrs. Pavlakis and Mrs. Maniates continued to believe in and work toward not only Greek cultural and linguistic perpetuation in the North American urban context, but also in instilling Canadian-born Greek children with an appreciation of their Greek heritage. As Mrs. Maniates maintained in an interview many years later,

The aim of the Greek afternoon communal school is to create in the hearts of the children, Greek ethnic conscience and to foster love towards the fatherland of their parents so that they will not feel ashamed of their heritage but rather proud of it.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Smaro Pavlakis interview. See Diagram 1, "Greek School Staff 1921-1948."

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Sophie Maniates interview.

<sup>43</sup>School desks and other classroom furniture were originally furnished through the generosity of the Philoptoho Society. Smaro Pavlakis interview.

<sup>44</sup>Mary Manetas (née Fallis), taped interview (Toronto), December 4, 1977.

<sup>45</sup>Vlassis, Greeks in Canada, p. 43.

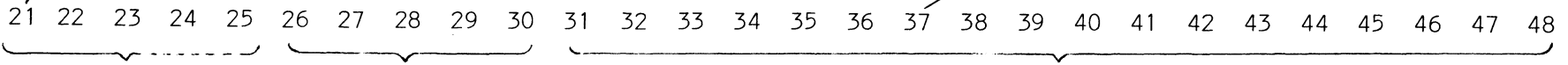
<sup>46</sup>Manuscript of a 1956 Greek Radio Programme in Toronto: Mrs. Sophie Maniates in conversation with Father Andrews concerning the role of the Greek Schools in Toronto, 1956.

DIAGRAM I. Greek School Staff 1921-1948

YEAR 19--

\* school conducted at 170 Jarvis St.

\* school transferred to 115 Bond St.



Mr. T. Papaioannou  
Miss Douglas (1921-25?)

Mrs. S. Pavlakis (1926-30)

Mrs. S. Pavlakis (1931-48)

also

(Mrs. M. Haraka)  
(Mrs. Kilismani)

Mrs. S. Maniates (1930-33)

Mrs. S. Maniates (1937-44)

Mrs. C. Zerva (1930-31)

Mr. G. Vlassis (1935-39)

Mrs. D. Mouhtari (1933-37)

One might, however, rightfully question the relevance of the school programme to a generation of Greek children growing up in Toronto. The curriculum had all the earmarks of a Greek national school preparing youth for Greek society. The Greek texts, principally published in New York with some imported from Greece, reflected a strong ethnocentric bias. Subjects taught included reading, writing, grammar, Greek geography, history, religious studies, and mythology. Ancient and modern Greek history extolled the past glories of Greece and the courage and patriotic spirit of the Greek heroes during the Greek War of Independence. Inclusion of catechism in the curriculum was given paramount importance; for Greeks, national identity and the Greek Orthodox religion were synonymous.<sup>47</sup>

From the Greek schools, religious studies must never be absent. Only in this way can we be assured of preserving our ethnicity.<sup>48</sup>

Proud of their succession to the name of Old Greece, the nationalistic and illiterate parents supported the Greek school in their goal of teaching the language that "gave light to the world." These injunctions were echoed and re-echoed by the Greek Archdiocese in New York,<sup>49</sup> the Greek press, the church, and the local community leadership in general.

But striving to instill an appreciation for the Greek language and culture did not always proceed smoothly. Although belatedly appreciative of the rudimentary knowledge of modern Greek, student informants readily recall the resentment they felt at attending a second school from five to seven in the afternoon while their non-Greek school mates were free to play or engage in extra-curricular activities. The

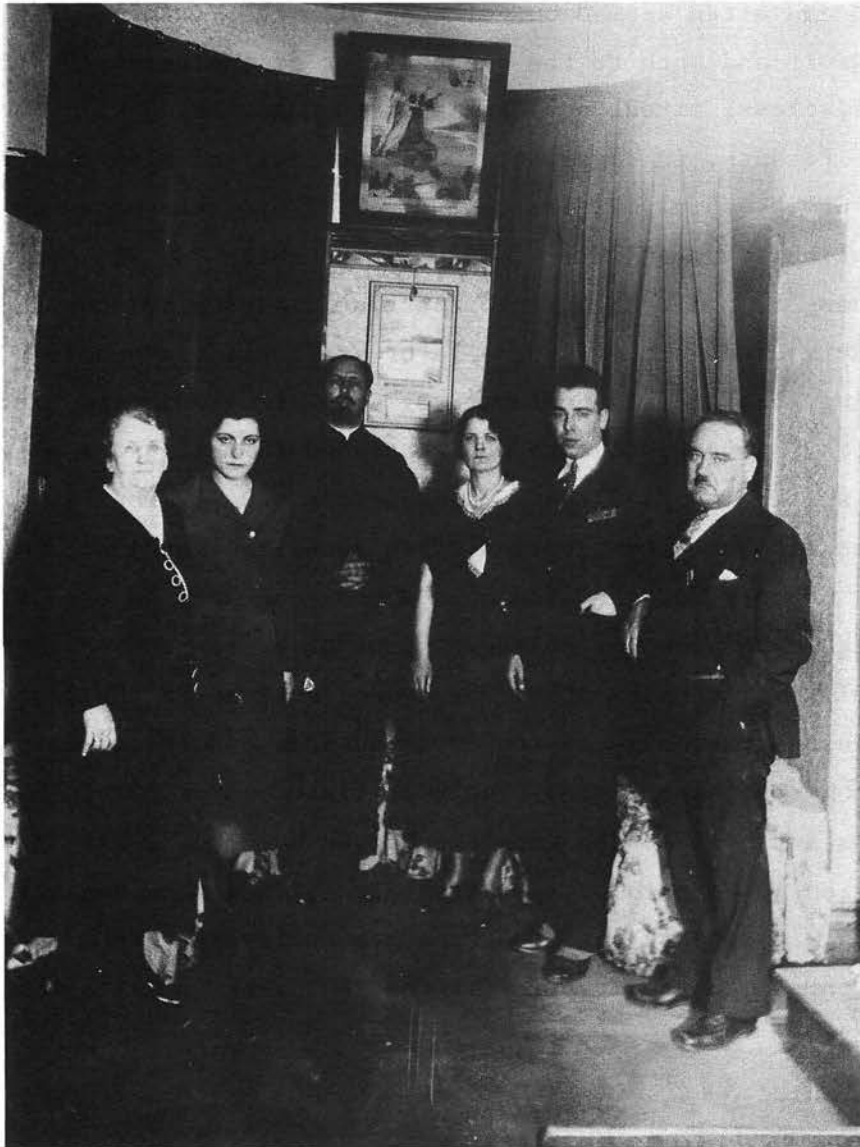
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<sup>47</sup>M. Mead, ed., Cultural Patterns and Technical Change (UNESCO, 1953), p. 102.

<sup>48</sup>See note #46, above.

<sup>49</sup>See Plate 1 and 2. Although the Greek communal schools were formally under the jurisdiction of the Greek Archdiocese of New York, they nevertheless enjoyed substantial freedom and independence.





*Greek School Staff at 170 Jarvis Street,  
1933. (Donated to the Multicultural  
History Society of Ontario  
by Mrs. S. Pavlakis).*

Left to right: Mrs. Maria Harakas, Miss Sophie Samara (later Maniates), Father E. Papastephanou, Mrs. Smaro Pavlakis, Mr. Peter Palmer (president of the Greek Community), a Greek reporter.

subject matter generally bore little relationship to their daily life in Toronto and often seemed out of step with the world outside the school. As a result and much to the exasperation of the teachers, students were often listless, tired, and difficult to motivate.<sup>50</sup>

Parents, in contrast, showed dutiful and almost fervent support of the Greek school. This support was always reinforced on Greek national holidays and Christmas and graduation day which provided occasions for the recitation of patriotic pieces by sons and daughters frequently clad in the fustanella or stoli tis vlahopoulos. Plays narrating heroic deeds performed by Greek revolutionary heroes were presented. Gifted students who succeeded in making the most stirring appeal which glorified the land of Greece usually won the greatest applause from an attentive and often awe-struck audience.<sup>51</sup>

Support for the afternoon school can also be seen from enrollment figures. Financed by the payment of one or two dollars per month per family, by supplementary weekly collections in the church, and by the generous patronage of the Greek business sector of Toronto,<sup>52</sup> the Greek communal school grew slowly at first. By 1930, it had 150 students and by 1945 the enrollment rose to 230.<sup>53</sup> With a Greek population in Toronto of approximately 1,200 at the beginning of World War II, it appears that the Greek community support of its school must have encompassed the majority of the 250 Greek families then living in the city.

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<sup>50</sup>This is what a number of former students expressed. Reta Harris, taped interview (Toronto), July 26, 1977; George Letros, taped interview (Toronto), November 20, 1976; Helen Janetakis, taped interview (Toronto), November 27, 1977; Mary Manetas interview.

<sup>51</sup>Saloutos, "Greeks in the United States," p. 77.

<sup>52</sup>Sophie Maniates interview; Smaro Pavlakis interview.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

# ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΝ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟΝ

## ΔΙΑΔΙΚΤΙΚΟΝ

ΑΡΙΘ. { Έλέγχου \_\_\_\_\_  
 Μαθητολογίου \_\_\_\_\_

Σχολικόν Έτος 195<sup>7</sup> - 195<sup>8</sup>

Ο μαθητής Οίμαροφοπούλου Ελπίδα  
 ἐτῶν 7 διακούσα τα μαθήματα τῆς Πρώτης  
 τάξεως τοῦ Σχολείου τούτου καὶ ἐν τέλει τοῦ Σχολικοῦ  
 ἔτους 195<sup>7</sup> - 195<sup>8</sup>. ἔξετασθεῖσα εἰς αὐτά, ἐκρίθη ἀξιολογία  
 τοῦ βαθμοῦ δέξια (10) ἀριστα  
 καὶ προάγεται εἰς τὴν δευτέραν τάξιν.

Ἡ διαγωγή τῆς ὑπῆρξε κοσμιωτάτη

Ἐν Παρόνται, τῆ 15<sup>ης</sup> Ἰουνίου 195<sup>8</sup>

ΔΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗΝ

Ἡ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΡΙΑ

Βασιλίσσα

ΙΕΡ. ΠΡΟΪΣΤΑΜΕΝΟΣ Πατρ. Κωνσ. Βασιλίσσα



*The cast for a play produced by the Greek community to support the After-Four Class  
at the Annual Independence Day Celebration, 25 March 1933.  
(Donated to Multicultural History Society of Ontario by Mrs. S. Pavlakis).*

FOR THE HAPPINESS OF ALL GREEK ORTHODOX FAMILIES

## MOTHERS!

1. Send your children to the Greek Orthodox Kindergartens and the Greek Orthodox Schools.
2. Only in the Greek School can your children, from a young age make close friendships with other Orthodox children.
3. Only in the Greek School will your children be protected from bad company that may lead to juvenile delinquency.
4. Only the Greek School can keep our children within the frame of Greek Orthodoxy, and lead them from the school desk to the Church Choir, to the Greek Orthodox Youth AND to the Community or the Ladies Philoptochos Society.
5. The Greek Language should be considered as a sacred cause. The Hellenic consciousness, the Greek Language and the Greek Orthodox Faith comprise an indivisible triad. Only the Greek School can give all three together to our children.
6. Large Communities were dissolved, when they stopped teaching the Greek Language to their children.
7. Thousands of American School children are taught a foreign language in thousands of American Public Schools. Why should not our children be taught Greek?
8. Only the Greek Schools can develop in our children love and admiration for Greece, which is loved and admired and respected generally by all Americans and all mankind.
9. ONLY GREEK LANGUAGE REMINDS YOUR CHILDREN THAT THEY BELONG TO THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH.

(DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION-GREEK ARCHDIOCESE)

*Persuasive message from the Archdiocese concerning  
the Greek School [translated version].  
(Courtesy of Mrs. D. Gonidou, Toronto).*

Yet if numbers underscore the degree of community support for the school, they fail to explain the reasons for that support. It would be facile to argue that parents saw the school as a solid buttress against the assimilation of their children. While this element was present, parents who had already given up the fact if not the dream of returning to Greece were themselves caught up in an endless series of adjustments necessary to "making it" in the New World. They could not deny that to their children. Rather, they saw the church and the school, which might pass their Greek heritage on to the next generation, as giving a particular tone and richness to their own urban North American experience. For parents, being Greek and living in a North American city were not mutually exclusive. The one gave meaning and expression to the other. This, too, should not be denied their children.

The school, however, could not escape the uneasy tension between two worlds. In its effort to capture the essence of Greece, the school was forced to deny an urban North American Greek experience which provided both its *raison d'être* and its student body. The Toronto Greek communal school was, in the final analysis, not a product of rural peasant Greece but of Toronto. The child who grew up in Toronto could not see the world through the eyes of his Greek-born parents, and accordingly, questioned the educational relevance of the Greek communal school. Nevertheless, while it is perhaps impossible to calibrate, the Greek After-Four school, for all its problems, helped create a degree of Greek self-identity in immigrant and Canadian-born children which in turn shaped their lives. As such the Greek communal school, which was a manifestation of the shift from migrant to immigrant status of Greeks in Canada, was also a basic element in the shift of the Greek community from immigrant group to ethnic group.