

# Support Collectivism in New Preservation

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The National Herald Staff Writer

**CHICAGO-** How can those dedicated to preserving Greek American history at the local level get the job done? The answer is quite simple. We need to stop seeing every problem as solved by money alone. No Greek-owned business, fraternal organization, church or other social organization has ever relied exclusively on money to accomplish its goals. All over the United States individual Greeks and entire communities are all attempting to document and preserve the history of their local community. Several

years ago, I dubbed this grass-roots surge in historical concerns among Greek Americans the New Preservation Movement.

Unexpectedly, these individuals and small local groups are having a common array of problems: how do the small usually church-based groups best organize themselves, what do they collect, where does this material go, how do individual researchers go about their work, where should historical documents be placed, how do either the small groups or individuals best present what they have done to their home community and others? Rather than re-inventing the wheel one

person or one community at a time, we need to share information and expertise so that our collective efforts toward the same goals succeed.

This is not the first time Greek Americans have helped Greek Americans. In the 1960s, when Hellenic Festivals first became popular, Greek Americans who already worked on a successful festival went to other churches around the country showing how it was done. In the 1970s, I worked at several St. Nectarios festivals in Palatine, Illinois. I clearly recall how I was in a group who were shown how the newly installed electrical boxes (at

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the foot of parking lot light poles) were to be used to run the gyros spits, coolers and other machines. I am certain many others of you have very similar memories.

Obviously, my point here is that hard-won knowledge and specialized skills available to some Greeks must now not only be shared but actively made more widely known.

Lawyers know how to locate or draw up the legal documents necessary for a 501C non-profit corporation. We should have samples of these documents on the Internet available as a sample/example for

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# Support the Potential for Collectivism in

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any Greek American group wishing to set up their own historical organization to review. Or do it yourself (<http://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-501c3-Nonprofit-Organization>). Non-profit corporations can apply for local, state and federal funding and other kinds of assistance.

How can local Greek American historical societies effectively employ the Internet as a shared Commons for exchanging information? The Preservation of American Hellenic History website [www.pahh.com](http://www.pahh.com) is a sterling example of the kind of collective consortium needed. Looking at the [www.pahh.com](http://www.pahh.com) 26 sponsored linked sites is a good way to get grounded in how many of these organizations are forming each and every day all around the nation.



HULTON ARCHIVE

lated to the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Community were donated to the Local History Room Photograph Collection MS 023 (215 East Third Street, Dayton, OH 45402). A librarian by the name of Elli Bambakidis helped process this collection.

As the online description notes: "This photographic collection of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Community of Dayton, Ohio, covers the period from 1880 to present. The photographs were donated to the Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library by the Greek community. This important collection describes the development of the Greek Community in Dayton, illustrates their widespread activities through their community events, describes the industrious nature of the Greek immigrant, portrays an immigrant experience common to this country in the 20th century and describes the Greek contribution to the larger Dayton Community. This year (2001), the community celebrates their 80th anniversary."

The Modern Greek Studies Association hosts on its Internet site the collection descriptions already written by local librarians of 18 Greek American library and museum holdings around the country. In this way the MGSA created a useful reference tool without doing any other work ([www.mgsa.org](http://www.mgsa.org)).

Two retired individuals with a background in museum preservation and folklore are attempting to preserve the history and heritage of two different communities.

Katherine Pomonis, now retired, was for 15 years the Administrative Coordinator of Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico. There among her many duties and activities Pomonis curated three exhibits on Greeks in



From the Annunciation Greek Orthographic Material. Greek War Remarching on Ludlow Street Sunday, attired in the same skirts worn Greece's struggle for independence.

the Greek sponge industry in the New World.

### RESOURCES EXIST

I mean no disrespect to anyone by saying you don't actually need an expert to preserve your local history. Greek Americans often fail to appreciate that they are as American as they are ethnic Greeks. The public facilities of your community are as much at your disposal as to anyone else. You don't need to be or even know a librarian, archivist, or museum curator to deposit historical materials. There are many notable examples of individual efforts saving vast quantities of Greek American documents and historical information.

# Community's New Preservation Movement



DAYTON METRO LIBRARY

hodox Community Collection, Phoe-  
 ief Parade - 1940. Greek Americans  
 y, Dec. 29, 1940. These Daytonians,  
 by the famous Evzone troops of  
 e, were prominent in the parade.

go and plans to continue with his  
 donations now that retirement af-  
 fords him the necessary time  
 ([www.nationalhellenicmuseum.org](http://www.nationalhellenicmuseum.org)).

Recalling that Greeks now oper-  
 ate at all levels of American society  
 it is worth noting that many re-  
 viewers of state and federal grants  
 are Greek Americans. Why can we  
 not ask these individuals for advice  
 on how best to organize and struc-  
 ture grant applications. I do not  
 know the formalities of such posi-  
 tions but I would imagine if the in-  
 dividual(s) being asked comes  
 from one state and the inquiry from  
 another I cannot suspect that there  
 would be any improprieties in-

the Greek American historical past  
 but also the present. If you are in a  
 region of the country and need  
 preservation supplies why not  
 place large orders and get the over-  
 all discount?

Another aspect of collectivism is  
 in advertisements for church publi-  
 cations like the dinner dance books  
 and commemorative historical vol-  
 umes. Greek businessmen go out to  
 their suppliers and other colleagues  
 in the community and get adver-  
 tisements. Can we not ask Greek  
 businessmen and women around  
 the country to have their suppliers  
 and other work-related associates  
 sponsor advertisements on a na-  
 tional website of Greek American  
 historical societies?

City parks, statues, trails, and  
 other monuments dedicated to  
 Greek Americans are found from  
 sea to shining sea so why can we  
 not even find a listing of these pub-  
 lic sites let alone the process by  
 which more can be designated and  
 established? Many local efforts by  
 Greek Americans have focused on  
 establishing historical monuments  
 or at the very least historical status  
 for a specific building. The Cath-  
 edral in Detroit has a historic marker  
 in front of the parish. The St. John  
 the Baptist parish in Pueblo is on  
 the historical register. Various  
 Greek-owned businesses and build-  
 ings around the nation have such  
 state and federally recognized sta-  
 tus. Can we not make the process  
 by which a historical marker is ded-  
 icated, or the status of a historical  
 building known to Greek Ameri-  
 cans everywhere? As part of this  
 overall process why do we not have  
 a national map of such Greek  
 American monuments?

Many state officials and some-  
 times local academics are extreme-  
 ly interested in graveyards and

their cemeteries and their records?  
 Who can we ask? Can we not have  
 Greek American cemeteries listed  
 nationally with our churches and  
 other public monuments?

## THE MEDIA

Public television stations in Salt  
 Lake City, Chicago, Charlotte and  
 Tarpon Springs have all made doc-  
 umentary films on their local Greek  
 community. Why can't every Greek  
 American community know the  
 process and possibilities of such a  
 documentary? Why are these docu-  
 mentaries not also available for  
 viewing on the Internet?

Various Greek American jour-  
 nals such as the Journal of the Hel-  
 lenic Diaspora, the Journal of Mod-  
 ern Hellenism, and others are con-  
 stantly searching for articles about  
 the community. Why can't we get  
 our literally hundreds of Greek-  
 American academics, journalists  
 and writers to fill their pages with  
 material based on local communi-  
 ties around the country?

How can working together help  
 local Greek American groups pre-  
 serve their own historical docu-  
 ments? How can working on a na-  
 tional basis either through the In-  
 ternet or more traditional means  
 and methods serve these local ef-  
 forts? How can we best share indi-  
 vidual knowledge and experiences  
 to serve these varying ends and  
 goals? By citing the actions of an  
 array of individuals and local orga-  
 nizations around the nation I've of-  
 fered some suggestions for these  
 shared issues.

For the generation of Greek im-  
 migrants establishing a community  
 of churches, fraternal organiza-  
 tions, and Greeks schools was the  
 first order of business. For our gen-  
 eration locating and preserving  
 documents that report on that se-  
 quence of historical events is as im-

...young Greek American immi-  
grant on Ellis Island in New York  
harbor, late 19th-20th century.

Another case in point is the Society for Orthodox Christian History in America's website ([www.orthodoxhistory.org](http://www.orthodoxhistory.org)). One important aspect of this new (and quite sensational) historical venue is that it has established links to the Parish History sites of over 150 individual Orthodox Churches. The SOCHA site also features iPod broadcasts of many of its historical articles. Since this site offers historical photographs the only digital media feature missing is video and I suspect that is a feature the able organizers of this invaluable site are only waiting to introduce.

#### POOL TALENT

With more Greeks and Greek Americans teaching at grade schools, high schools, and universities why are we not pooling our talents more effectively? On one level this means that there are more Greek American librarians, archivists and museum specialists than at any other time in our collective history. How can this fact work on our behalf?

The Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library collection re-

...the United States. Pomonis is now researching the history of Greeks in Albuquerque New Mexico. Before the establishment of the St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Albuquerque was the location of AHEPA's tuberculosis sanitarium. Not only is Pomonis trying to unravel this odd mixture of the Greek presence in Albuquerque, given her work in two different city cemeteries (as well as other public record searching) she has learned that Greeks were already a part of the life and work of Albuquerque long before AHEPA's arrival. Interviewing life-time members of the St. George parish while simultaneously searching through local, regional and national public records Pomonis is slowly and systematically recreating a detailed and dynamic history of Hellenes in New Mexico ([k\\_pomonis@hotmail.com](mailto:k_pomonis@hotmail.com)).

Dr. Tina Bucuvalas recently retired as the state folklorist of Florida to become the curator of the Tarpon Springs Cultural Center ([tbucuvalas@ci.tarpon-springs.fl.us](mailto:tbucuvalas@ci.tarpon-springs.fl.us)). Not your average retiree Bucuvalas, author/co-author of many books devoted to Florida folklore and folk-life, is very much in the process of researching the definitive history on the arrival and establishment of

Once the St. John the Baptist community of Pueblo Colorado had finished its 100th Anniversary commemorative volume the extra photographs, photographic disks, and other materials were donated to the genealogical collection of the Robert Hoag Rawlings Public Library (100 E Abriendo Ave., 81004-4290, tel. 719-562-5600). While Pueblo is one of the demographically smallest Greek Orthodox congregations in the nation their collection is the largest in terms of photographic images and other documents in Colorado.

Various Greeks have deposited or even created collections all on their own. The late Leo Chimbdis took it upon himself, after conversations with his brother James, to begin searching all the local Mason City, Iowa newspapers for articles and advertisements related to the town's Greek community. A typed chronological listing from 1899 to 1960 is available for in-house use at the Lee P. Loomis Archives and Mason City Public Library Genealogy Collection (tel. 641-430-4159). Peter Poulos, a proud Hellene from Montana has already deposited various materials on Greeks from his home state at the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chica-

Greek American businesses have long practiced collective purchasing to keep overall prices lower than their competition. Sugar, floral, produce and grocery cooperatives on a national, regional, and local level are a feature not only of

centuries. Customary, and by their very nature, are often the only sources for otherwise missing documentation. Is funding available to help Greek churches and other organizations maintain

important as maintaining the community our ancestors first built. Preserving the history of Hellenism in America requires nothing less than our best and sustained collective efforts.

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