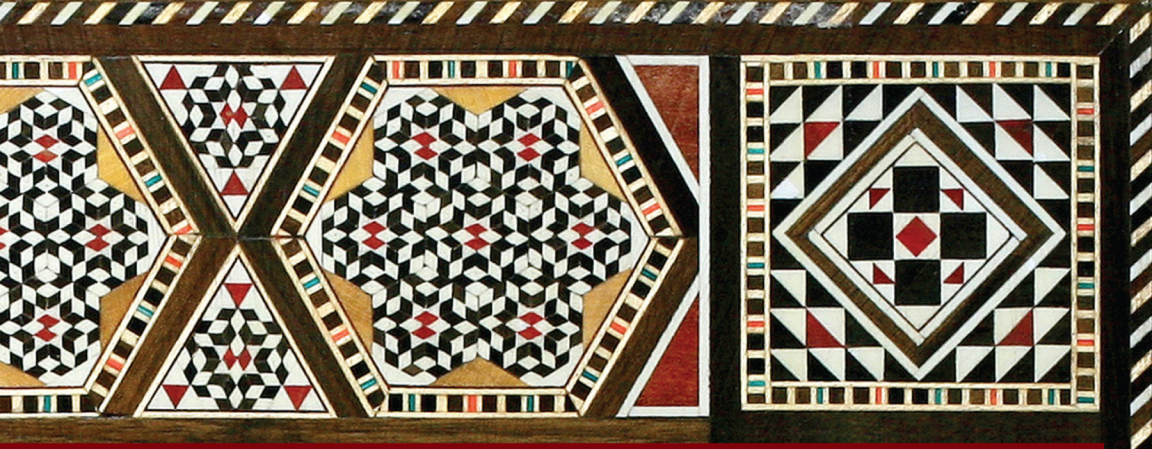

Arab Americans in Toledo

CULTURAL ASSIMILATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

EDITED BY
SAMIR ABU-ABSI

الامريكيون العرب في توليدو

إندماج في الحضارة و مشاركة في المجتمع

إعداد و تحرير
سمير ملحم ابو عبسي

Professor Samir Abu-Absi has performed a labor of love for the Arab Community of Toledo. This collection of essays demonstrates well the "memories and experiences" of these immigrants from the cradle of civilization, an area now known as the Middle East. The contributors to this collection of essays come from all walks of life and write on diverse subjects concerning the life and livelihood of the Arab-Americans. The essays record a living history of an important segment of this multicultural America.

William J. O'Neal, Professor and Chair of the Department of History at The University of Toledo

Arab Americans in Toledo *is an important, well-timed contribution to our growing understanding of the numerous, complex ties America has with the Middle East and the Arab world. It is a "must read" for those who wish to understand Toledo as well as one of its most influential populations.*

Dan Johnson, Provost and Chief Operating Officer, Zayed University, U.A.E. and President Emeritus, The University of Toledo

Dr. Abu-Absi's definitive work about the contributions of Toledo's Arab Americans is a must read.

Jack Shaheen, Internationally acclaimed author and media critic, and Professor emeritus, Southern Illinois University

A delightful work that touches on the many faces of Arab Americans in Toledo which will resonate with the other immigrant groups and their children. The rich contributions of Toledo's Arab Americans are memorialized in this book. It emotes nostalgia for times gone by and the many fine folks with whose paths we have crossed. Everyone can relate to their story.

Cherrefe Kadri, Past President, Islamic Center of Greater Toledo

This book about Arab Americans in Toledo will help you appreciate the cultural richness and tenacity of a people who immigrated to Toledo generations ago and have made it possible for their children and their children's children, to become part of the Great American Dream. For many years, Arab Americans have served in all walks of Toledo life. Their stories are significant and compelling. This book is must reading. It is an important contribution to the written history of Toledo.

Ron Royhab, Past Vice President and Executive Editor of The Blade

Dr. Abu-Absi brings his stellar academic experience and his gentle interpersonal skills to produce a portrait of the Arab Americans of Northwest Ohio. I am sure that his work will serve as an impetus for a national effort in this area and as a resource for academicians, social scientists and story tellers.

Mounir Elkhatib, M.D., Director and Founder of the Great Lakes Center for Integrative Medicine

ARAB AMERICANS IN TOLEDO

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الامريكيون العرب في توليدو

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إعداد و تحرير
سمير ملحم ابو عبسي

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Arab Americans in Toledo
Cultural Assimilation and Community Involvement

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DEDICATION

to the Abu-Absi grandchildren:
Isabel, Tom, Lina, David, Emily, Sam and Jonathan

and in memory of
Maryse and Ramzy Mikhail

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE
By Jack Zouhary

I have visited America the beautiful from "sea to shining sea" — the mountains, the plains, the coasts. But, as a first-generation American, my most emotional visit was to the New York City Harbor — Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

My father, then a teenager, arrived in the United States in 1924, after a long voyage aboard an Italian ship. He told me about his arrival through Ellis Island … the fear, the excitement, the confusion. His family came to this country, in part, for the freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly, where ideas can flourish — and for a chance to work hard, support a family, and make a better life for their children.

His first sight of America, his new home, was the Statue of Liberty. The museum on Ellis Island tells the story of how total strangers hugged and cried with each other when they first saw this lady with the torch. I had the opportunity to sit on the original benches where these immigrants sat — perhaps where my father and his family waited in line.

One question often asked of me is what do you like most about being a federal judge? The answer is easy — presiding over naturalization ceremonies, to meet and greet new Americans, to catch a glimpse of faces and places and hopes that remind me of my parents' family. I was inspired by this remarkable generation of immigrants who worked so hard and who sacrificed so much. My grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, and the extended church family all taught me numerous life lessons. With roots in the "old country," I watched them embrace the American culture while integrating ethnic values — and foods.

The following pages tell wonderful stories of Arab American immigrants, with themes of struggle, success, gratitude, patriotism, and community spirit. The narratives, the profiles and the interviews included in this book are typical of immigrants from other countries, each with a heritage which has added color and beauty to the American mosaic.

Jack Zouhary currently sits as a federal judge in Toledo. He was appointed to the federal bench in 2006.

INTRODUCTION

By Samir Abu-Absi

"And what is it to be a good citizen? … It is to be proud of being an American, but it is also to be proud that your fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid His gracious hand and raised His messengers."

"I Believe in You"
— Kahlil Gibran

A personal note

My first visit to Toledo was on Sunday, February 4, 1968. I had driven from Bloomington, Indiana, where I was completing my doctoral studies in linguistics at Indiana University. The purpose of my visit was to interview for a position in the Department of English Language and Literature at The University of Toledo. Dr. Michael Manheim, department chair at the time, had recommended that I check into the Ban-Rey Motel (which was located at the southwest corner of Bancroft Street and Reynolds Road) so I could begin the interview process the following morning. The only thing I knew about Toledo at the time was hearing the name mentioned on Danny Thomas' TV show *Make Room for Daddy*.

The interview with the chair and members of the English Department went very well. Actually, it went so well that Dr. Manheim handed me a letter with a job offer that I took back with me to Bloomington, where my fiancée, Lucy, was waiting for a report on my visit. I told her that I was impressed with the friendliness and collegiality of everyone I met at UT and that I saw a great potential for the development of a linguistics program within the department. Besides, I rationalized, Toledo's proximity to Bloomington was an important factor since it would allow me to be fairly close to my academic advisors and to library resources I needed to finish my doctoral dissertation. (This was before the Internet, e-mail, and cell phones were available, and going over type-written — or even hand-written — drafts of your work with your professors was the norm.) I accepted the offer, thinking that we could always relocate once my dissertation was completed.

Lucy and I were married in Chicago August 16, 1968, and on August 17, we drove our car, trailer in tow, to an apartment we had rented at a complex at 3414 Dorr St. that was known at the time as Villa Capri (now University Circle). The University of Toledo had just become a state institution the year before, and enthusiastic young faculty members were being recruited from all the major institutions of higher learning to fill newly created positions and develop new and innovative

programs. It did not take long for us to develop close friendships with several colleagues, as well with other members of the Toledo community. Our five children were born and raised in Toledo and all of them, including two of our daughters-in-law, have attended The University of Toledo. We have found Toledo to be an ideal place to live and raise a family, and we feel fortunate to have "accidentally" ended up in this friendly city.

Shortly after moving to Toledo, we gradually came to meet people in the Arab American community and were invited to participate in various activities organized by the two Orthodox churches and the mosque. I was asked to develop a conversational Arabic course for the St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox parishioners and had the opportunity to meet and befriend many of the families who belonged to that church. I also met Bishop Michael Shaheen and became friends with many of St. George Orthodox Cathedral's parishioners. Some of my students belonged to the Islamic Center and, through them, I came to know Imam Adel Al-Aseer and several Muslim families who extended their hospitality and friendship to Lucy and me.

During several organizational sessions that preceded the establishment of the Greater Toledo Association of Arab Americans, I became acquainted with a number of activists and community leaders from all walks of life: business owners, teachers, physicians, clergy, lawyers, professors, judges, law enforcement officers, and politicians. One reason for my taking on the task of editing this book is to recognize the valuable contributions of Arab Americans in Toledo whose stories of struggle, success, and community involvement deserve to be told. Some of these stories are told in the pages of this book.

Another important personal reason has to do with the unfair and gratuitous stereotypical images that have been so prevalent in the Western media and popular culture. While I was familiar with the negative stereotypes attached to Arabs and Muslims, I had faith that the American people were sufficiently sophisticated and fair-minded enough to recognize the stereotype for what it is. Unfortunately, the 1991 Gulf War resulted in resurrecting some old stereotypes and embellishing them with some new twists. Even an Arabic sounding name or perceived "Middle Eastern" look resulted in unfounded accusations, harassment, and occasional mistreatment or discrimination.

The Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 (erroneously blamed on Middle Eastern terrorists at first) and the horrific events of 9/11/2001 gave additional ammunition to some individuals and groups to continue their vilification of anything Arab or Muslim. The work of scholars, such as Jack G. Shaheen who meticulously documented negative images of Arabs in movies and television programs, has brought to light a tremendous problem that needs to be addressed with vigilance

and persistence. Among Professor Shaheen's books that have challenged and inspired me to take on this project are *The TV Arab* (1984), *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001), and *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* (2008).

Through my participation in media appearances, educational forums, and various activities sponsored by interfaith and peace and justice groups, I came to know and develop close friendships with many outstanding people in the Arab American community in Toledo. These were generous, decent, hard-working, intelligent, professional people who defied the prevalent stereotype. Some were new immigrants; others were descendants of immigrants. But all of them were proud and loyal American citizens who continued to cherish all the good things that their Arabic history and culture have instilled in them. It is my hope that this book will contribute to dispelling some stereotypes and recognizing some of the many accomplishments of Toledo's Arab Americans.

Background

The inspiration for this book came from two volumes that were published by The University of Toledo Urban Affairs Center Press (UT-UACP): *Hungarian American Toledo*, edited by Thomas E. Barden and John Ahern (2002), and *The Irish in Toledo*, edited by Seamus Metress and Molly Schiever (2005). The encouragement for taking on the task of editing the present volume came from Tom Barden, my long-time friend and colleague in the Department of English Language and Literature, who is the general editor of the series that includes this book. Several friends and acquaintances who learned about the book project offered their support and readiness to help in various ways, and their efforts are recognized below.

Encouraged by a positive response to the idea of a book about Arab Americans in Toledo, I sent a letter on May 25, 2006, to several people in the community I thought would have an interest in the effort. The list included religious and community leaders, individuals and families with established roots in the Arab American community, and people from various walks of life I had come to know over four decades of living in Toledo. The initial list was expanded based on recommendations by several individuals with intimate knowledge of the community, and a notice was sent out for a general meeting to be held on July 5, 2006, at the Sanger branch of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library. This meeting was attended by Charles Abood, Lucy Abu-Absi, Samir Abu-Absi, Hanady Awada, Thomas Barden, Norman Bishara, Amira Gohara, Chafic Hatoum, Tarek Joseph, Linda Mansour, Nadeem Salem, Charles Sallah, Gaby Semaan, Yehia Shousher, and Mohammad Youssef. I presented a tentative outline consisting of the type of

material that could be included in the book, and Tom Barden responded to questions about the procedure for requesting approval from the UT-UACP editorial board to proceed with the project. A discussion followed that included a number of suggestions regarding what materials would be suitable for inclusion and recommendations for names of individuals who would be potential collaborators and contributors.

A second meeting, held on October 30, 2006, at the Reynolds Corners library branch, was attended by Anne Marie Abowd, Thomas Abowd, Lucy Abu-Absi, Samir Abu-Absi, Thomas Barden, Bill Darah, Mounir Elkhatib, Mary Girgis-Hanna, Saleh Jabarin, Wafa Ramadan, Gaby Semaan, James Shemas, Fatima Shousher, and Mary Srougi. This meeting continued the earlier discussion concerning the content of the book and people who might be able to lend their writing or editorial skills to the project. A consensus quickly developed regarding the inclusion of interviews with various individuals, particularly those who had grown up in the North End neighborhood of Toledo. Tom Barden shared his expertise with the group concerning the interview process and the kind of questions that are helpful and appropriate to ask.

Among those who could not attend either meeting, who nevertheless were supportive of the effort, were Alexander David, Jamie Farr, Joseph Geha, S. Amjad Hussain, Zac Isaac, Richard Joseph, Ron Royhab, Michael Sallah, Jihad Semaan, Parri Semaan, Fred Shaheen, Sally Shemas, Fatima Sugheir, and Jack Zouhary. Their encouragement and support made it possible for me to think that we were dealing with an achievable goal.

Based on my consultations with the many individuals who showed an interest in the project, on March 15, 2007 I submitted a proposal to the UT-UACP board that consisted of a rationale for the project and a preliminary table of contents. Upon receiving initial approval to proceed with the work, potential contributors were given the green light to begin the process of interviewing, writing, and collecting appropriate materials. I stressed the fact that this was not intended to be *my* book. I rather envisioned my role as a catalyst whose function was to bring together a group of talented and knowledgeable individuals who had the interest in telling some of the many magnificent stories of Arab Americans who chose to make Toledo their home.

Contents

This book is not a history of the Arab American community, although some important historical details are to be found in some of its chapters. Nor is it intended to cover all the significant events, landmarks, and accomplishments of the various groups and individuals who immigrated to Toledo from an Arabic-speaking region

or who are second or third-generation Toledoans. It is rather to be considered a modest attempt to preserve some of the memories and experiences of a group of immigrants who have had a continuous and influential presence in the Toledo area for over a century. My hope is that this effort will form the basis for a future, more extensive, more comprehensive work that would deal with the history of the community in a more methodical and systematic fashion than was envisioned for the present work.

Some of the materials in this book were included by design while others were voluntarily submitted for consideration. The reprinted materials consist of selections from a feature that appeared in The Blade, an interview with Danny Thomas, excerpts from Jamie Farr's autobiography, a creative piece by Joseph Geha, and a short article about the Tanber Family. The remaining materials are original contributions that include a historical background for an earlier period of immigration, profiles of some local personalities, interviews with people from different walks of life, and various topics that relate to the religious and cultural makeup of Toledo's Arab American community. The book consists of three parts, each of which contains a number of chapters that are, in one way or another, related by a general theme.

Note: Arabic words, including personal and place names, may appear with different English spellings. For instance, a popular parsley and bulgur salad may be spelled *tabooli*, *tabbouli*, *tabbulee*, *tabbula*, etc. Before acquiring his stage name, Danny Thomas' given name at birth sometime appears as *Muzyad Yakhoob* and other times as *Mizyid Ya'qub*; and his father's birthplace in Lebanon is spelled as *Bsharri*, *Bcherri*, *Becheri*, etc. This is a common phenomenon that occurs when words from a language that uses a certain writing system are transliterated into the spelling system of another language. A further complication occurs when speakers of various dialects of Arabic attempt to reflect their own pronunciation in transliterating words into English. In this book, the individual authors' preferences for certain spellings have been maintained. Linguists use single quotes when referring to a word's gloss, or translation. We have used that format here — for example, *KiTaaB* 'book' — and when using various terms such as 'Arab' and 'Middle Eastern.'

Part I. Heritage:

Hanady Awada's "Planting the Cedar Tree: The Syrian-Lebanese Community in Toledo, 1881-1960" deals with the experiences of the early immigrants who came mostly from a region of the Ottoman Empire known as Greater Syria. It tells the story of individuals and groups who struggled to maintain their ethnic and religious identities while at the same time aspiring to be "good" Americans. This

chapter, which is a brief summary of extensive research Hanady did for her master of arts degree in history at The University of Toledo, chronicles the experience of Arab American immigrants who resided mainly in the North End of Toledo and who lived through World Wars I and II before beginning to disperse into various neighborhoods in the Toledo metropolitan area. Due to the limited scope dictated by the nature of an academic thesis, Hanady chose to focus her research on an earlier period of immigration that ends with 1960. However, it is hoped that she or some other future scholar will explore the immigration patterns that took place in the past half century, which involved immigrants from many other parts of the Arabic-speaking world.

Amira Akl's "Complexities of the Term 'Arab' " addresses the stereotypical assumptions that many people have about Arabs by pointing out the great diversity that exists among Arabs and Arab Americans whose self identity may be based on national, religious, or cultural affiliations. Her two other contributions, "Middle Eastern Food: Foundation for Community Building" and "A Proverbial Peek at Toledo's Arab Culture," act as reminders of the place of food and proverbial sayings in the preservation of an ethnic cultural heritage. **Gaby Semaan's** "Arab American Cultural Identity in Toledo: A Unique Tile in the Glass City Mosaic" reports on the result of research showing that Arab Americans are well assimilated and integrated into the Toledo community. **Joseph Geha's** "Where I'm From – Originally" deals with the issue of identity among Arab immigrants who face the dilemma of having to reconcile their heritage with the demands of life in their adopted country.

Samir Abu-Absi's "The Arabic Language" concerns the structure of the language, its current and historical significance, its status as a world language, and its introduction as an academic subject at The University of Toledo. **Nihad Dukhan's** example of modern Arabic calligraphy and his "Artist Statement" testify to the enduring esthetic quality of the traditional calligraphic art, as well as to its ability to adapt to innovation and creative artistic sensibility.

Nadeem Salem's "Greater Toledo Association of Arab Americans" recalls some of the efforts that led to the establishment of the organization and the activities that it sponsored over the years. It is a personal account of a member, and former president, of the organization who devoted a great deal of time and effort to its success. **Chafic Hatoum's** "Pacesetters and Milestones" is, in the author's words, "a modest attempt at recognizing some of the accomplishments of individuals who have left a mark on their community." This is an excellent beginning and a valuable starting point for a project that deserves to be pursued further. **Betsy Hiel's** "The Sultan Club," reprinted with permission of The Blade, details the activities of one of the area's social clubs, founded by Toledoans from the Sultan Yacoub, a town in the western Bekaa region of Lebanon.

Religious institutions serving the spiritual needs of their congregations have had a special place in the lives and hearts of Arab American immigrants. The history and current status of three of these institutions are discussed in separate chapters by the following authors: **James Adray**, "The Islamic Center of Greater Toledo;" **Sabry Gohara**, "Toledo's Coptic Community," and **Abed Alo**, "Masjid Saad Foundation." Two well-established churches, St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church and St. George Orthodox Cathedral, are discussed in various chapters, including **Tarek Joseph's** "The Joseph Family," **Clifford David's** "Metropolitan Archbishop Samuel David," and **Fred Shaheen's** "Your Uncle, the Bishop: An Impressionist Portrait of Michael Shaheen."

Saleh Jabarin's "Imam Khattab Endowed Chair in Islamic Studies at The University of Toledo" describes a major educational effort pioneered by several individuals in the Toledo community for the purpose of introducing an important academic area of study that had not been adequately addressed at the collegiate level.

Part II. Profiles:

Tarek Joseph's "The Joseph Family" tells his family's story. However, the experience of the Josephs could easily apply to those of many immigrant families in the Toledo area. The same can be said of **George Tanber's** "The Way Home Leads through Ellis Island" that describes the arduous journey of his family as they sought a new life in America. **Joseph Geha's** "Your Father's Son" is a moving fictional account of an immigrant family as it tries to fit into a new society with unfamiliar norms and expectations. It is a vivid slice of life that depicts the struggles a young child goes through and the alienation he feels as he tries to adapt and conform.

Danny Thomas and Jamie Farr, Toledo's best-known native sons, are reintroduced to the readers with short profiles compiled by **Holly Layman**. Danny's voice is heard in an interview that was conducted by **Gregory Orfalea** for his book, *The Arab Americans: A History*. Selections from **Jamie Farr's** autobiography, *Just Farr Fun*, speak eloquently of his memories of growing up in Toledo and his attachment to the city of his birth.

Some of the religious figures and civic leaders (listed in alphabetical order according to their family name) who earned the love and respect of the community are profiled by people who knew them well. Archbishop Samuel David is memoralized by his nephew, **Clifford David**. Memories of Charles Hider are recalled by his grandson **Michael Sallah** and a tribute to Imam Abdul Moneim Khattab is offered by his close friend **S. Amjad Hussain**. The legacy of Maryse and Ramzy Mikhail is remembered by their son, **John Mikhail**, and their daughter-in-law, **Sarah Shohet**

Mikhail; Mitcheal Salem's story is related by his nephew **Robert Salem**; and an impressionist portrait of Bishop Michael Shaheen is presented through the eyes of his nephew, **Fred Shaheen**.

Finally, four stories by **Betsy Hiel**, which originally appeared in The Blade March 26-28, 2000, are reprinted with permission. Hiel profiles Najib Sallume, a soldier, diplomat, explorer, and one of the first Arab doctors in Toledo; Anthony Nassr, a pioneer aviator who was dubbed the "Daring Syrian"; Michael Damas, the first Arab American mayor of Toledo, and Charles Abood, who served ten years on Ohio's Sixth District Court of Appeals.

Part III. Interviews:

Several interviews were conducted for this book by volunteers who identified people from various walks of life who were willing to share their story. Some of the interviewees grew up in Toledo or nearby surroundings, while others chose to make Toledo their home. There are many other people with inspiring tales of struggle, determination, and success who could have been included in this section were it not for space limitations. It is hoped that the stories of many more individuals will be included in future publications. The following people (followed by the name of the interviewer) appear below in alphabetical order according to their family name: Amira Gohara (**Mary Girgis Hanna** and **Gaby Semaan**), Labib Hajjar (**Gaby Semaan**), George Isaac (**George Tanber**), Nasr Mansour (**Rita Mansour**), Wassef Mikhail (**Molly Schiever**), Sonia Najjar (**Holly Layman**), James Shemas (**Hanady Awada**), Sally Shemas (**Michelle Davidson**), Yehia Shousher (**Fatima Shousher Simon**), Milhem Swade (**Gaby Semaan**), and Josephine Zraik (**Joseph Geha**).

Acknowledgments

There are many people whose assistance, guidance, and support contributed to the success of this project. Without repeating their names, I offer my sincere thanks to all those who were recognized above in the "Background" part of my introduction. I also thank all those who agreed to be interviewed for this book, and the writers who conducted the interviews or contributed profiles and other materials; without them, this work would truly not have been possible. A debt of gratitude is owed to Jordie Henry, The Blade librarian, for the many hours she spent identifying and copying archival materials, and to my friends and colleagues, Molly Schiever, Tom Barden, and Joel Lipman for their editorial work and sound advice. Angie Jones' and Jessica Somos' fine production work and Bridget Behrmann's careful proofreading are gratefully acknowledged. Amanda Russell, who is responsible for the attractive design of the book, deserves special mention for lending her

artistic talents and expertise to the project. Gaby Semaan — former student, present colleague, and valued friend — has been an integral part of this project since its very inception and has been very generous with his time and talents at every step of the way. My heart-felt appreciation goes to my sons and daughters-in-law — Ramsey and Kate, Mike and Jamie, Nick and Susie, Dan and Sarah — and my daughter, Laura, for offering their encouragement and many helpful suggestions. My wife, Lucy, has been a driving force that kept this project alive with her love and patience, her encouragement and good counsel, and her commitment to ensuring that this effort bear fruit.

Last, but not least, I would like to recognize the generosity of those who have made financial contributions toward the cost of publishing this volume. Their names appear on the copyright page.

I. HERITAGE

PLANTING THE CEDAR TREE: THE SYRIAN-LEBANESE COMMUNITY IN TOLEDO, 1881-1960

By Hanady M. Awada

During the first eight decades in Toledo, the Toledo Arab community grew from a small Christian colony to a large and well-respected, religiously diverse community that successfully established families in the city of Toledo. They opened religious institutions and cultural associations to preserve their ethnic identities, while actively participating in Americanization efforts to ensure their future economic and social success. This chapter will look at this earlier period of the community's existence, from 1881-1960.

Several general characteristics of the Syrian-Lebanese people must be considered before examining the Toledo community. It is important to understand the differences and similarities between the terms 'Syrian' and 'Lebanese.' Until the end of World War I, the people of present-day Syria and Lebanon lived in one collective entity, Greater Syria, which included the present-day countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq. Greater Syria was controlled by the Ottoman Empire until the end of WWI.

Most immigrants who came to America at this time were from the cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and numerous villages in the Bekaa Valley region. The immigrants fluidly shifted between the terms 'Syrian,' 'Lebanese,' and even 'Turkish' through the 1950s. The children of the early immigrants shed the Syrian identity when 'Lebanese' became more fashionable and socially accepted by American society. Here the terms 'Syrian' and 'Syrian-Lebanese,' 'Lebanese,' and 'Lebanese-American' are used to describe the immigrants and their children. The terms 'Greater Syria,' 'Syria,' and 'Lebanon' are also used interchangeably to discuss geographic location and cultural customs, since they all refer to the same area.

Early Immigration

Syrian-Lebanese immigrants came to Toledo in two major waves, starting in the early 1880s. The first wave, between 1881 and 1914, included predominantly Christian men, who either came directly from Greater Syria or moved to Toledo after initially settling somewhere else in the United States. The second wave, from WWI to 1960, was a time of community growth and building, with an increase in Christian women and children immigrants, as well as a new Muslim community. World War I was also a watershed period in which many Syrian immigrants made

the decision to stay in the U.S. permanently. Hence, in the years after the Great War, they began a series of community-building and assimilative activities such as establishing religious institutions, forming ethnic clubs, and taking steps toward becoming good American citizens.

Most Syrian-Lebanese immigrants came for economic reasons, but other motives — religious persecution or avoiding military conscription — also influenced their move. Nevertheless, their decision to immigrate to a nation in the midst of an industrial and economic boom was evidence that they primarily came for economic reasons. They initially immigrated to make money, working in the U.S. for a short period and returning home financially secure. Toledoan Beatrice Shalhoub Rooney's father immigrated because "There's work, better conditions over here. They were tired over there. Their government was not for the people over there, and they had a lot of wars. So to get a job, everyone thought it would be wonderful here. And it was for them. They loved this country. It was a safe haven."

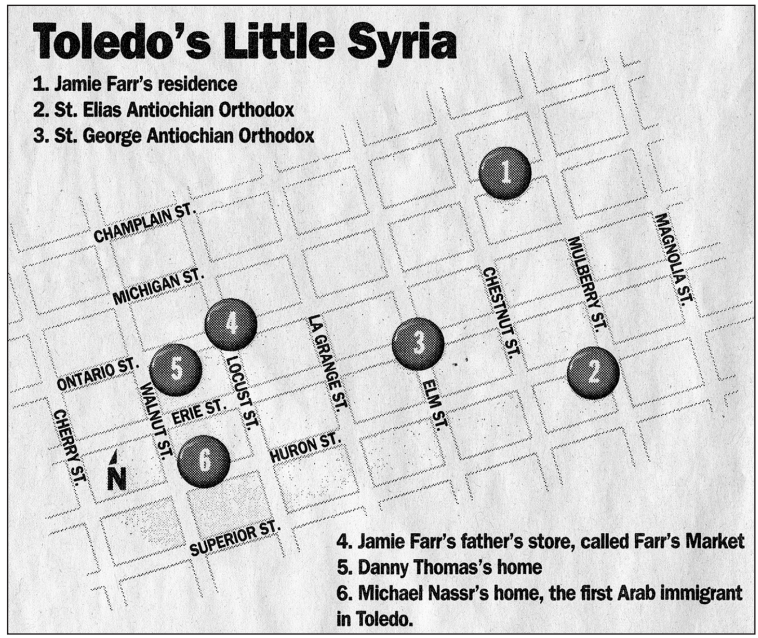
The journey to America was an eventful and emotional experience. Since it would be years before most immigrants could return — if they ever returned — to their homeland, the decision to leave village, family, and way of life was not made lightly. The journey was long and expensive, and a visit to Greater Syria would delay their initial goal of a quick return. In the early years, immigrants walked up to three days to get to ports in Beirut, Tripoli, Haifa, or Jaffa, for the ten-day journey to the United States. Saying farewell to loved ones was the most emotional part of the immigrant's journey. Charles Cassis' grandmother "was fourteen years old when she came over," he said. "And she never, except for her brother who lived here, saw anymore of her family ever again — her mother or her father or anybody."

After the immigrants entered, usually via Ellis Island or another East Coast port, few initially settled in Toledo. Some started in New York, while others went to Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Logan, West Virginia; Peoria, Illinois, or other industrial Ohio cities. By following relatives, Syrians tended to live together in ethnic neighborhoods affectionately nicknamed Little Syria.

It was not until in 1881, when Michael H. Nassr, the dean of Toledo Syrians and founder of the city's Syrian-Lebanese community, settled in Toledo that other Syrians came to the city. Nassr arrived in the late 1870s through the port of New Orleans with his wife, Dabla. Their first child, Anthony, was born in 1880 in Louisiana. Shortly thereafter, the family moved to Toledo where they had their second child, Mary, in 1882. In Toledo, he opened a dry goods store and produce stand on Cherry Street. According to Alixa Naff, Syrians sought economic opportunities in cities like Toledo, where there was potential to open a business, after they initially worked as peddlers (Naff 153).

Toledo's intricate railroad tracks, strategic geographical location, and growing industrial center combined to make it an ideal location for a new Syrian settlement. The city is situated between Cleveland and Fort Wayne, Indiana, both of which had large Syrian peddling communities, but no peddling supply center in between. Nassr probably realized the economic potential and established a store to restock Syrian peddlers with goods as they traveled through Toledo on their way to the next city. He quickly became a magnet, drawing in friends, relatives, and people from his village to Toledo, giving them shelter and assistance. Toledo native Ethel Zarick recalled, "When you first came to Toledo, you stayed with Michael Nassr. He didn't turn anybody away" (Hiel, "Toledo"). These new settlers also moved into homes near Nassr, because they found comfort being near people who spoke Arabic, enjoyed the same cultural activities, and, more importantly, could give them advice about living in America.

Once again, Naff explains, these Little Syrias, were "havens of continuity with the past which helped to ease the adjustment shock of the present" (Naff 202). In Toledo, that neighborhood was the North End, where businesses and places of worship were established along Bush, Cherry, Champlain, Chestnut, Elm, Erie, Lagrange, Locust, Magnolia, Michigan, Mulberry, Superior, and Walnut streets.



Toledo's North End, courtesy of The Blade

Situated near most of Toledo's factories and businesses, the neighborhood had affordable homes, making it an ideal location for the new community. By 1910, nearly three-fourths of the community lived in the North End, with the largest cluster on Summit Street.

Most early Syrians worked as peddlers before coming to Toledo, since it was a lucrative profession, with earnings of nearly $1,000 a year, compared to $382 as a factory laborer (Orfalea 89). Mike Shaheen recounted his father's experience as a pack peddler: "When he got to West Virginia, whoever was there met him and took care of him … [The] next day, they put a bunch of clothes on his back and he went in the mountains and started peddling the stuff." In time, the peddlers saved enough money to open dry goods or confectionery stores. Since financial success was the goal of the early Syrians, entrepreneurship afforded them opportunities, not factory labor. But by 1910, peddling was on the decline while entrepreneurship was on the rise. As peddlers invested their capital to open confectioneries, tailor and barber shops, dry goods, retail and fruit stores, it became less likely that they would return to Syria. Many others worked as policemen, tailors, barbers, and city watchmen. The variety of jobs is a testament to their resilience and creativity in finding employment.

Before World War I, the Syrian-Lebanese community in Toledo was exclusively Christian. They were divided between the Maronite and Melkite sects of the Eastern Rite Catholic Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church. Maronite followers, such as Michael Nassr, Danny Thomas' father, and Haseeb Manassa emigrated from secluded villages throughout Mount Lebanon, including Besharri, and from coastal towns such as Sour, while the Melkites predominantly emigrated from the city of Zahley. Early Orthodox families in Toledo included the Darah, Saba, Bassett, Haddad, Corey, Skaff, and Cassis families who came from villages, cities, and towns throughout Syria, including Aitha, Kfeir, Damascus, Zahley, Beirut, Latakia, Tripoli, and Kirby (Damas).

As WWI approached, the birth of young children encouraged the community to take steps to open ethnic churches, to pass religious and cultural traditions on to their children, and to satisfy their desire to worship as they did in the old country. By the end of the twentieth century's first decade, serious efforts were underway to establish both Catholic and Orthodox places of worship.

The early Orthodox community worshipped in Protestant churches or rented social halls, like Michael's Hall in the North End. For many years, Eastern Orthodox services were held only when a traveling priest visited Toledo. Then the community had to depend upon area Protestant churches or a rented meeting hall. Orthodox families from different Syrian villages formed a Men's Club in 1910 and the Ladies Benevolent Society in 1915, with the hope of opening their own ethnic

Orthodox church.

Toledo's Syrian Catholics were discouraged from establishing a church by the Irish-dominated diocese that wanted to "build a single, unified American Catholic church devoid of any ethnicity but their own" (Kayal 50). Instead, they were encouraged to attend services at local parishes, such as St. Francis and St. Joseph. The lack of a Syrian Catholic church where the liturgy would have been recited in Arabic and old country traditions would have been practiced deprived children of a place to develop and participate in regular cultural activities and to socialize with other Syrian Americans.

The Syrians' eagerness to be accepted by American society and attain financial success encouraged many to discard incompatible aspects of their culture. They enthusiastically adopted what they perceived as a better way of living, shedding ethnic traditions, which were incompatible with their new home. To them, Americanization was the embodiment of not only societal acceptance, but also of modernization.

World War I

As the war began in Europe, the Syrian community was becoming permanent. Several factors — the birth of more children in America, the decline in peddling and subsequent increase in proprietorship, early steps to establish an Orthodox church, increased rate of naturalization and speaking English, and the declining trend of returning to Syria to marry — illustrated their desire to remain in the United States. And the aftermath of WWI had made returning home undesirable. For the next fifty years, the Syrian-Lebanese community established religious and cultural institutions, encouraged chain migration of relatives still overseas, and participated in Americanization programs to recreate the villages they left behind, as well as secure their political, social, and economic future in America.

World War I marked two major changes in the Syrian-Lebanese community. The first was the migration of Abdullah Ganoom, the first Muslim settler, the beginning of Syrian-Muslim immigration to Toledo. The second change was the formation of long-term aspirations for community building and upward economic mobility. The establishment of St. George Orthodox Church in 1919 marked the community's first formal step in making the U.S. a permanent home. This was a major accomplishment not only for Toledo's community, but also for any Syrian community in the United States.

In 1917, when the United States joined the war on the Allied side — and against the Central Powers' Ottoman Empire that still controlled Greater Syria — Toledo's Syrians did not sit idle. During the first round of drafts on June 5, 1917, more than 150 men in Toledo registered. By the war's end, more than 210 had

registered. According to Jenny Brack, when her father was drafted as a medic, "He thought he could get out of it. He says, 'I don't speak English.' They [said], 'You could do it.' So they took him for two years." Joseph Prephan's father was drafted into the Army. For immigrants not yet naturalized, like Mr. Prephan, "The officers at the training camp in Virginia lined up all the immigrants, swore them in as citizens, and shipped them off to the trenches the next day" (Hiel "Toledo"). The community was fortunate, as no one was killed and only a few were injured. Overall, the Syrians' eagerness to fight alongside the United States and the sacrifices they made to ensure the country's victory illustrate their continued commitment to the country as they proceeded to become good American citizens.

The Syrian community grew slowly, but steadily, through the century's first decade. The post-WWI growth was different from the pioneer era. Christian-Syrian families continued to grow and new ones migrated to Toledo, but now, the first Muslims came to the city. Fear, skepticism, and uncertainty had restrained Muslims from immigrating in the same large numbers as Christians in the early years. The story of an elderly woman, whose father wanted to immigrate to the United States in the late 1880s, illustrated the attitude and feeling of many early Muslim immigrants.

"In 1885, my father planned to accompany some Christian friends to America. He bought the ticket and boarded the boat. Shortly before sailing he asked the captain whether America had mosques. Told that it had none, he feared America was *bilad kufr*, a land of unbelief. He immediately got off the boat" (Orfalea 104).

Nevertheless, continued success stories of Christian immigrants did provide the necessary incentive for Muslims to immigrate (Haddad 66). They came for the same reasons as the Christians and had similar experiences in the early years. Muslims initially came to large industrial cities, like Toledo and Detroit, for factory work. Abdullah Ganoom, also known as Albert, immigrated to New England in 1914 before moving to Toledo to open a grocery store. While Ganoom was the first Muslim in Toledo, the Simon family was the first family who came to the city "after eight years of wandering in the United States" (Elkholy 17). Munir Simon, the grandson of Abdo Simon, recalled his grandfather's house as "a kind of safe house for Muslims coming into Toledo. They were the first family, and they took in many immigrants — often for free, until they could find work and or places to live … They often found people jobs or helped them transition into the mainstream. This is a Simon tradition that continued with every generation — even today."

Within two decades, a flourishing Muslim population developed. In 1922, the Toledo News Bee reported that there were sixty-five "Mohammedans" scattered around the city. In an effort to educate readers about them, the newspaper described their religious practices, and assured the public of their kindness and

honor, stating:

"And because they came from the same land of the Arabic tongue as their Christian brothers, they may be expected to have those same desirable qualities of thrift and enterprise, respect for law, and obedience of established rules as these other Syrian neighbors who are moving forward with such great promise in the life of our city" (Palmer).

By 1920, there were 720 Syrians in Toledo. A decade later, the community more than doubled to 1,492 people, as settlers came to be near relatives and friends and for industrial jobs. The First World War, immigration restriction, and, later, the Great Depression, hampered Syrian growth; but by the 1920s, the community was a well-established and permanent, albeit a small, fixture in the city's ethnic mosaic.

North End streets overflowed with Syrian children, while women gossiped on the porch, as men played cards. In time, churches and clubs were established in the neighborhood to recreate the old village. Although not exclusively Syrian, those who moved into the neighborhood made Syrians a dominant group in the area. Lorice Burkett and her sister, Freda Hadeed, who grew up in the North End, recalled: "We were surrounded by Greeks and Syrians at the time." The North End was clearly the nucleus of the community, where Syrians rented their first homes and established shops. They lived within walking distance to the church, places of business, and friends' and relatives' homes. These houses were also affordable and large enough to house sizeable Syrian families and boarders. After World War I, rented houses became purchased homes. While the Christians continued to settle in the North End, the new Muslim population was scattered throughout the city.

After the war, the majority of Toledo's Syrians continued their traditional employment preference as business entrepreneurs. David Corey, a machine operator at the Electric Auto-Lite Company, and his brother, Albert, a carpenter during the war, pooled their money together and opened Corey Candy Company, employing many Toledo Syrians. After working as a tailor for LaSalle and Koch's department store in the early 1920s, Frank Shemas opened his own dry-cleaning and tailor shop on Cherry and Superior streets.

By the end of the decade, the world sank into a deep economic depression. In time, savings were depleted, homes were lost, and businesses were shuttered. Charles Cassis' grandparents were hit hard. His grandfather "used to have a meat market … He had $55,000 owed to him by restaurants. He never got a penny." While Syrians were deeply impacted by the Great Depression, few, if any, Toledo Syrians took government relief. Instead, they pooled resources to get through tough times. Even though Harry Haddad lost his grocery store and died shortly thereafter, his wife and children did not take government aid.

Some took government jobs created under the New Deal economic recovery

program. Federal work relief programs, such as the Works Progress Administration, provided funds for projects requiring many laborers and little money for supplies. Helen Rahal's father had a confectionery store until it could no longer support his large family. She recalled, "During the Depression, he was taking in $7 a day and he had all these kids and all this expense, so he went on WPA to work. He worked very hard … I think they built streets."

Community activities continued to take place in the North End, usually at neighbors' homes. Dorothy Saba recalled, "My dad used to have a card game and he used to have more Catholic men than anything. There would be about two tables of four … And Mama used to make Turkish coffee for them." When Syrians were not at relatives' homes, they could often be found dancing the traditional Syrian *dabke* over Hanf's Drugstore on Bush and Erie streets.

Children of early immigrants, like James Shemas, Dorothy Saba, Josephine Geha Zraik, Evelyn Zoghaib, Elizabeth Sookey, and Helen Rahal, came of age during the Roaring Twenties. Their stories are filled with laughter and tears as they remembered growing up in the North End surrounded by Syrian friends and relatives. It "was the best time in the world. It was the best place to be," reminisced Mrs. Zoghaib. When the children were not running up and down the streets of the North End, they could be found at the Friendly Center, which was, affectionately called the Syrian Country Club. The first members, recruited by the center's leader, Miss Maude McKee, were all Syrian boys: John Addis, George Margy, Joe Francis, Dave DeWood, Jim Hanna, George Kallile, and Mose Haddad. The center provided a place to "have fun, make friends, and learn about life outside of the neighborhood. Their parents, hoping to give their children better chances in life than they had, encouraged them to go there" (Carr 11). Activities included putting on plays, attending a summer camp program at Camp Storer, and playing on the center's basketball team.

After thirty years in Toledo, the Syrian Orthodox community formed the religious associations necessary to establish a church. On August 4, 1913, Dr. Najib N. Sallume, Louis G. Darah, Mike Saba, William E. Farran, Mike Bassett, George Kerbawy, Samuel Dewood, Michael Nasser, and Sleman Baz officially established the Saint George Syrian-Greek Orthodox Church Association. In 1919, they purchased a double house on the corner of Elm and Erie streets and on May 9, 1920, the church was formally dedicated and consecrated. The location, in the heart of the North End, encouraged hundreds of Syrians to settle in the area. By creating an institution to gather for religious services, celebrations, and cultural activities, the church became the center of Orthodox life.

The Orthodox community in Toledo was large, vibrant, and united, until 1934, when a disagreement over the election of the church's next archbishop divided the

community throughout the United States. The elevation of Antony Bashir for the New York Archdiocese, with the passing over of Toledo's Rev. Samuel David, caused severe tension within the Orthodox community. Those who remained loyal to the New York Archdiocese and to Metropolitan Bashir remained at St. George, while those who supported Rev. David formed the St. Elias Men's Club and Ladies Society, and opened their own church on Mulberry and Huron in 1938.

Founding members of St. Elias included Michael Habib, William Haddad, Michael E. Haney, Elias Hanna, John McKenna, George Joseph, George Kerbawy, Sam M. Bassett, Tom Baz, George K. Darah, Alex Mickel, Moses Tanber, William Rayess, Louis G. Darah, George J. Ghiz, Albert H. Jamra, Sr., Henry Sabback, George Sadd, and Isaac Shamy. One year later, a fire destroyed the structure. The community completed a new church in 1940 that served the parish's religious needs for thirty-seven years. St. Elias became just as important as St. George for half of the Orthodox community in Toledo. As a youth, Jack Zouhary recalled, St. Elias had "not just a religious function, but also social and cultural functions, with activities and events centered around the family."

Tension between the two churches remained high for many years. Charles Cassis recalled, one woman "would walk down the street going grocery shopping from Joseph's, [when] she saw my grandmother on the porch, she would cross the street and walk down Erie this way and then come back to go to her home." According to Jamie Farr, "the parents were at war with each other, literally. It was the children who brought them together because we went to school with one another" (Hiel, "Muslim"). Although some members of the community began to reconcile over the years, the community officially remained divided for nearly four decades.

By 1920, the Orthodox and Catholics had been in Toledo long enough to establish a separate church or become members of an American one. Toledo's Muslims, on the other hand, with fewer than 100 people in Toledo, were not numerous enough to support a mosque, and their religious differences prohibited them from joining an American church. Similar to the pioneer Christians, Muslims worshipped in private homes or at the YMCA, relying on respected individuals from the community to lead them in prayer or calling on an imam from Detroit for special occasions.

By the 1930s, Toledo's Syrians formed social, geographical, religious and cultural clubs, to retain some traditions as they continued to Americanize. In addition to the Men's Club and the Ladies Benevolent Society, the Victor's men's club and Victorette's women's club were formed, according to James Shemas, "as a social club for the young people from St. George Cathedral — just young fellas. They would give dances and plays." Catholic men in the North End formed the social club Bozaks.

Other organizations were dedicated to assisting the community. The Syrian American Welfare Club was organized with the aid of the YWCA International Institute, to "promote civic and social activities among Syrian girls by emphasizing the spirit of Americanism" ("Syrian"). Daughters of Phoenicia, a sorority for young Syrian girls, met at the Friendly Center, where they learned to cook and sew and even put on a play. Other clubs were formed exclusively for members of certain Syrian villages. For example, Toledo's Syrian Zahley Society, formed in 1932, was a social organization for immigrants and their children from the town of Zahley. By 1936, it was reported that there were over 220 society members, including Joseph Tanber, George Haddad, George Ghiz, Abraham Fadell, Abraham Abood, and Shahady Abrass.

Three fraternities were established that were quite active through the 1950s, especially for residents on Mulberry and Superior streets. Sigma Sigma Phi, a nonsectarian social fraternity, was started by second-generation Syrian Americans. On November 5, 1938, they put on a play called *Going Abroad*, about two American-born Syrian brothers who are persuaded to return to Syria to find a wife by their father. The second fraternity, Sigma Alpha Phi, was for "the fellas that were older than us," recalled James Shemas, while Kappa Chi was for the youngest members of the second generation.

Although social and religious clubs were the highlight of Syrian activities before and after World War II, there were few Syrian political associations in the U.S. Nationally, most Syrians favored Republicans; but in Toledo they supported the Democratic Party for economic reasons. In the 1930s, the Lucas County Syrian American Democratic Club, a nonsectarian political association, used its influence to support President Franklin Roosevelt and again in the 1950s to support the city's first Syrian-Lebanese mayor, Michael Damas.

Between the two world wars, Syrian clubs were established and flourished but few lasted past the second generation. As Syrians left the North End in the early 1950s, the assimilation of the Syrian community became more pronounced. The third generation did not desire to distinguish themselves from American neighbors and friends. Although the Orthodox remained loyal to the Church, their interest in ethnic clubs and associations never reached the level of the previous generation.

With a new perspective on their status in Toledo, Syrians eagerly participated in various programs to adapt culturally. Syrian parents pushed children to speak English, so they could communicate with their future employers, coworkers, and middle-class neighbors. Toledo's Americanization Board and the Friendly Center were two organizations that worked to change foreigners' behavior. While children played at the Friendly Center, the staff worked with the predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Greek immigrants, teaching them the language, customs and

history of the U.S. and helping them to obtain citizenship. As early as 1919, the Americanization Institute began work with the city's immigrant population, "To create an intelligent and efficient citizenship among the foreign-born to interpret to them American ideals, laws, customs and traditions" ("Toledo"). While Syrians were a small Toledo ethnic group, their participation was disproportionately high, as they consistently ranked among the top groups to request the institute's service.

In the early 1920s, the Americanization Group of Toledo Social Agencies held a "Builders of America" pageant, in which sixteen ethnic groups presented skits highlighting their traditions. Scene 14 focused on the Syrians:

> The Syrians have turned back the pages of history for their selection of representation and have taken their invention of the alphabet, which was given to them by the Phoenicians. Many Syrians have attained notable positions in the business world, particularly in the importing line. They have developed the manufacture of the kimonos and have done much to promote popularity to hand-made laces in the United States. Joseph Yazbeck of New York invented the Eureka power machine. Before the World War, Anthony Nassr of Toledo originated an airplane. There are at present time over 200,000 Syrians throughout this country. ("The Pageant")

As the Great Depression subsided and World War II approached, the Syrian community had become a vibrant and permanent fixture in the city. In the post-WWII era, the dynamics of the community continued to develop. Christians moved out of the North End, leaving behind their Syrian identity for middle-class America. At the same time the first significant wave of Muslims migrated to Toledo and, in subsequent years, achieved the city's respect and established their own religious and cultural institutions.

World War II

Just as the Syrians in America enthusiastically participated in World War I, they prepared to assist their new country again during World War II. The pioneer immigrants fought alongside Americans in World War I; World War II called upon the American-raised Syrians to demonstrate their loyalty. By the end of WWII, more than 270 Syrian men in Toledo had registered. The stories of the draftees provide an insight into their devotion to the United States. Captain Eddie Haddad proudly served as an intelligence officer in North Africa under General

George Patton. As a young boy, Charles Cassis would beg his father, Charles, to tell him about his experience in the war. Hesitantly, his father told him about his encounters:

"He said when he came back … when they got on the ship, he threw everything overboard but an Army blanket that he had a German sniper's rifle wrapped in and the uniform on his back. He didn't want anything else. He was in the signal corps so they went in before everybody else to lay the phone lines down.

"He'd tell me how beautiful the French girls were and [about] stealing eggs and cheese. And he hates eggs and cheese because that's all they ate. And he'd tell me he and his buddy were putting the lines down and then there was some shooting and they both dove into the foxhole. When the shooting was done he nudged his buddy to see if he was okay, his buddy fell back [with] a bullet through his helmet. And that's all he told, which means my dad had to have shot the German sniper, which is how I have the German sniper's rifle. That's the only story he'd ever tell and I never asked anymore after that. And he was such a sweet, kind person, my dad. And you look at someone who goes to war and does all that and then comes back, and it gives you great respect for that person."

In Toledo, the Service Club, started by Job Darah, published a newspaper called SA-SO (Syrian-American Servicemen Organization) to be sent "periodically to all of our boys telling them of the news back home." The paper ran several stories regarding the achievements and experiences of the local Syrian military men. The October 1944 issue reported that Sergeant George Saba was stationed in Italy and Joe Keween in England, and that First Lieutenant Gilbert Koury, stationed in England, was awarded the Presidential Citation as well as the Air Medal and two Oak Leaf Clusters.

Men were not the only ones to serve during WWII. Anne Jacob, Catherine Haddad, and Elizabeth Geha also enlisted for service in the Women's Army Corps. SA-SO reported on Elizabeth's eighteen-day furlough in Toledo citing that she "looks very trim in her uniform … [and] is stationed at Kelly Field, Texas."

Most came home unscathed by their time in combat, but the death of one of their own affected the entire close-knit Syrian community. Paratrooper Carl Joseph was killed on D-Day in Normandy. Another Syrian, George Lutife, a staff sergeant in the Army and good friend of James Shemas, was killed on October 20, 1944. Mr. Shemas somberly remembered, "I used to write to him when he was in the service; he stepped on a mine and died."

Those who stayed behind quickly found employment in the factories that were awarded government contracts to build various military components by 1940. Sam Hadeed and Abraham Fadell worked at the Electric Auto-Lite Company; Abraham Moore and John Mussery were employed at Toledo Machine and Tool

Company, while Mike Nassar, Asa Nassar, and James Bassett worked at Willys-Overland. Syrian American women did not pass up these opportunities. Olga Haddad worked at Champion Spark Plug during the war where she "put the spark in the plug. She's an independent little redhead," recalled her son, Charles. Dorothy Saba worked at Rossford Ordnance Depot as an administrator supervising up to sixteen women; Helen Rahal worked the midnight shift at Electric Auto-Lite for two years during the war.

In May 1942, Toledo held the first of seven War Bond drives, nearly doubling its $4 million dollar goal. Syrians contributed considerably to this amount. As a child, Jamie Farr purchased bonds which he later used to buy a train ticket for Pasadena, California. A 1943 Toledo Blade article called Albert (Abdullah) Ganoom, awarded a certificate for his War Bond sales record, "An American citizen, a War Bond champion of Lucas County and 'a natural' democrat" (Ewing).

The number of Lebanese in Toledo had continued to grow in the late 1930s through the creation of new families, migration from other American cities, and from new immigrants. The second generation, who came of age during the Roaring Twenties and Great Depression, started families following WWII. The number of new Christian immigrants declined after the war, as those who wanted to immigrate had done so before the war. On the other hand, the Muslim community saw substantial growth with the influx of post-war immigrants. Prior to the war, the Muslim community was hardly large enough to call a community. After the war, they came from across America and overseas to join relatives and to partake in the city's postwar prosperity. After being discharged, Korean War veteran Mike Shaheen came to Toledo to see his sister and never left. "My sister told me that my brothers are coming, too. So I guess I stayed in Toledo and at the same time I fell in love with my wife." A few months later, his brothers, Rushdie and Harroun, also immigrated to Toledo.

Other Muslims came to participate in the city's lucrative liquor industry. According to author Abdo Elkholy, "It has become well known in and around Toledo that the city's liquor business is almost monopolized by the Muslims who had actually started this trend by chance, and continued it by profit-orientation, cohesive relationships, and natural jealousy among the relatives to imitate the successful members" (Elkholy 18). Muslims working at the Ford Motor Co. factory in Highland Park, Michigan, were especially drawn to Toledo as news of the city's entrepreneurial potential spread. By the 1960s, Muslims owned more than twenty-five percent of the bars in Toledo.

Dispersion and Assimilation

The North End continued to attract new immigrants and second-generation

Syrian families through the 1960s. This settlement was temporary because the neighborhood's crime rate was increasing, the early settlers had died, and their economic success and desire to move to middle-class neighborhoods prompted them to look elsewhere. Leaving the North End began immediately before WWII and picked up momentum after the war. Unlike early immigrants who craved Arabic-speaking neighbors and wanted to recreate Syrian village life, the second generation, accustomed to the United States through school, military service, and television, did not attempt to segregate themselves in the North End. They sought to surpass their parents' lower economic status and to find their place in the upwardly mobile American society. By the late 1960s, the once vibrant Little Syria had lost many of its inhabitants, ending more than eighty years of Syrian-Lebanese community building and growth. The implications of this dispersion on future generations of Syrian Americans would become evident years later, as many families assimilated into American society, becoming indistinguishable from their new non-Syrian neighbors.

While a handful of Muslims moved to the North End, they failed to recreate the old world lifestyle like the Christian pioneers did, and they, too, moved out within a few years and remained scattered throughout Toledo. A sizeable community had begun to form on the East Side where houses were inexpensive. Michael and Frieda Aossey initially rented an apartment on Broadway upon immigrating to Toledo. They later purchased a house in East Toledo because Frieda's sister "lived on Midvale on the East Side. So that's why we bought this lot here and had this house built."

Although the number of North End Syrian-Lebanese families declined through the late 1960s, the neighborhood continued to be the epicenter of the community's cultural life. Movies at the Paramount and Mystic Theater were favorite community activities. The community also rented the Ohio Theater to show Arabic movies several times a year. Furthermore, St. Elias and St. George churches drew the Orthodox to the area every Sunday and on religious occasions. Others had parents and relatives living in the North End whom they visited. Jack Zouhary recalled his visits to the North End, years after his parents relocated:

"Now we lived near Ottawa Park in West Toledo, part of the expansion away from the center of town. But every Sunday there would be church, and there was usually something going on after church, perhaps a dinner or youth group meeting, or a gathering at my grandparents' home or with another relative nearby, where we could interact with cousins or others of our age."

As families moved out of the North End, men continued to return to the area to work at Willys Overland or at their restaurants, bars, and grocery stores. Zouhary's Market, Corey Candy Company, Bismarck Café, and Geha Market also stayed in

the area long after their owners moved away.

After World War I, more second-generation Christians took professional occupations. Paul T. Fakehany became the city's first Syrian-Lebanese police officer in 1908. He was appointed superintendent of the Police Bureau of Identification in 1938. On October 6, 1938, the Lebanese-Syrian Business and Professional Men's Club held a banquet in recognition of his prestigious appointment where "A diamond-studded gold badge, significant of the rank now held by Mr. Fakehany, was presented to the Superintendent by Michael Nassr, first Syrian to settle in Toledo, who 20 years ago presented Mr. Fakehany a gold badge when he was named Assistant Superintendant of the Bureau" ("Syrians").

Charles Hider, the city's first Syrian-Lebanese attorney, became a role model for the younger generation, exemplifying that education and hard work can bring social and economic success in America. He "helped the newcomers obtain naturalization papers, and being well-versed in liquor laws and licensing regulations helped them in setting up businesses, restaurants, and bars. There was a time when you could not get a liquor license in Toledo without Charlie Hider's signature" (Hiel, "Syria Thrives"). American-born Michael J. Damas served as mayor of Toledo from 1959 to 1961. After returning from WWII, he was elected in 1948 to the Ohio House of Representatives. He served three, two-year terms, then won election to four terms on Toledo's City Council. In 1959, Damas was the first Arab American elected mayor of a large U.S. city.

Mitcheal Salem pointed out that after the repeal of Prohibition, Muslims "had businesses that they converted into bars. Or else they sold it and then went into the bar business just because it was profitable. That's the only reason. It was economics." They often purchased confectionary stores and other shops from Syrian-Christian businessmen, who had been in Toledo for "one or two generations longer, were climbing up the profit ladder, moving out of the bar business and into fine restaurants and the professions."

Very few Muslim residents took factory jobs after WWII. As James Adray explained, "The reason they came here, to Toledo, was to get away from the factory, to get into private enterprise, to get into their part of the American dream. And remember that part of the American dream is owning your own business and not having to work for the slave master." Others became respected professionals. Jamel Ganoom became a lawyer and his brother, Richard, became a doctor. However, like early Christian immigrants, Muslim newcomers came to the U.S. to be businessmen, as did most residents in Toledo.

In the postwar era, entrepreneurship was no longer reserved for Toledo Syrian-Lebanese men. Ann Harp-Sharp owned a "grocery store, Sharp Variety, at the corner of Western and Langdon while her husband worked on the railroad" (Rafi 4).

Helen Rahal owned a confectionary store from 1948 to 1959 at 1602 Monroe St. After working at Sam Talb's restaurant for many years, Rahal decided to purchase the store next door, when her boss gave the business to his son.

Early Muslim immigrants dreamed of establishing a place of worship; it was the influx of WWII immigrants, however, that made this dream a reality. Members of the Muslim community realized that their children needed to identify with an Islamic institution or else they would turn to American churches to fill the void. According to Mitcheal Salem, although the community supported Americanization, "They wanted an identity … They wanted to be able to get together, worship, and have a place for the children to be there — to absorb the Arabic atmosphere, the Islam. And at the same time, we did not forget that we're in an American environment and we had the desire to assimilate."

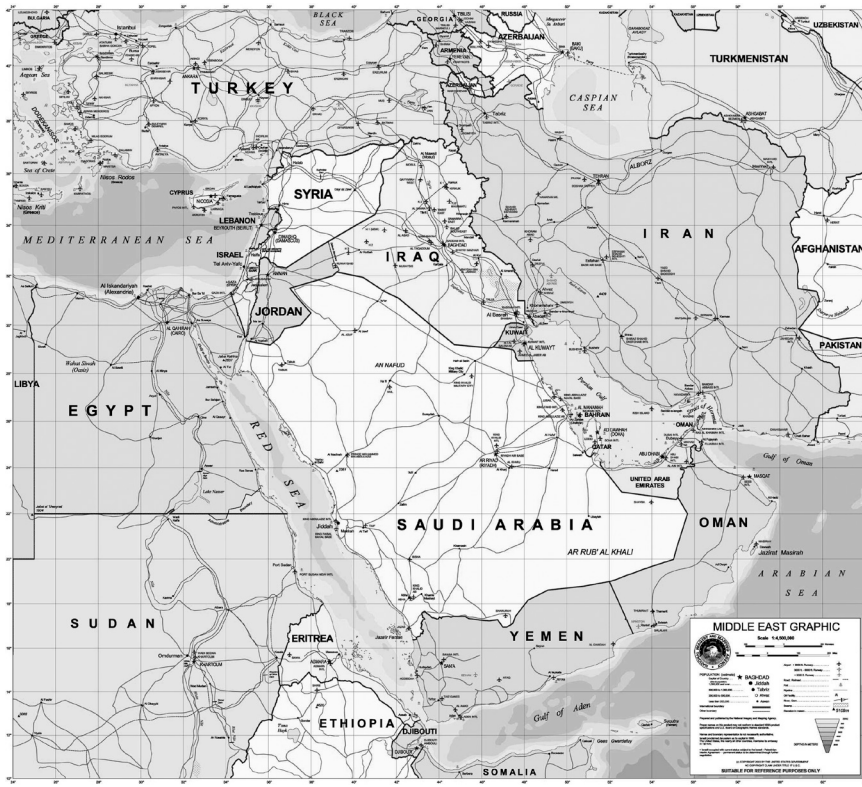
Early attempts to form a Muslim society in Toledo had failed. But by the 1950s, pressure from frustrated Muslim mothers, along with the influx of new settlers, provided the boost that the community needed to reorganize and form the Syrian American Moslem Society. Headed by Mohamad Omar, the society's main objective was to establish a "mosque to use for meetings rather than renting a hall each time it wanted to meet or practice religious duties or have social gatherings" (Naserdin 27). In October, 1953, they purchased a lot at 722 Bancroft St. to construct a mosque. On April 4, 1954, the building's first cornerstone was placed; and on May 29, 1955, it was officially dedicated as the first mosque in the state of Ohio.

Chairman of the dedication committee Mitcheal Salem recalled this historic day: "It was a great and highly emotional experience in my life. We had finally established a place to worship, educate our youth, and meet socially. It gave us the opportunity to acquaint others with Islam. I was thrilled to be a part of it." Mr. Salem opened the ceremony with a few brief words, followed by several prominent political and religious speakers, including then-Mayor Czelusta, "who praised and thanked the society for the invitation and its endeavor to build the new mosque" (Naserdin 34). The first religious leader, Mohamad Y. Abdoney, served the mosque for free for four years before ill health forced him to return to Lebanon.

After opening the mosque, the Young American Muslim Society was formed to provide an environment for Muslim youth to socialize without the watchful eyes of overprotective parents and to host annual conventions. According to Toledo native Cathy Hammoud, the society's convention was a highly anticipated event for her and other Muslim youths. "The youth convention was two nights. We got together Friday and it was casual, Saturday it was kind of dressy and then we came back on Sunday." As young women, Karen and Carolyn Aossey, Eva Hatoum, and Cathy Hammoud also recalled dances organized by the Young American Moslem Society held in the center's basement. For young Muslims, James Adray explained, "The

mosque was as much a religious center as it was a cultural and social center."

The residential dispersion that began after World War II continued through the late 1970s as crime increased in the North End and financial gains allowed families to purchase homes in better neighborhoods. Since few young Lebanese couples remained in the neighborhood where cultural traditions had thrived, the assimilation of subsequent generations quickly increased. Without the old neighborhood and an ethnic church, the Catholic community saw the most dramatic assimilation among Lebanese religious groups. Orthodox members continued to rely on the St. George and St. Elias churches to nurture the community's cultural traditions. Furthermore, the Muslim community was able to retain much of its cultural and religious traditions due to the continued immigration of new settlers. In the years following World War II, political upheaval in the Middle East set off a chain migration of relatives and friends of the first wave of



Middle East, 2003, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/middle_east_pol_2003.jpg

Muslim settlers as well as the immigration of young college students who came for educational and professional reasons.

By the 1970s, both Toledo's Christian and Muslim communities had become fully invested in the city as they established larger religious institutions and moved into middle class neighborhoods. These immigrants' early investment in an Orthodox cathedral paid off as the number of parishioners increased. St. Elias and St. George then built new churches in more centralized West Toledo locations. St. George Orthodox Cathedral was the first religious center to move its facility out of the North End. A groundbreaking celebration took place on April 23, 1972, at the new site on Woodley Road. On June 6, 1976, St. Elias followed suit and broke ground for a new church on Holland-Sylvania Ave and Harroun Road in Sylvania.

Just as St. George and St. Elias Orthodox churches enticed Orthodox settlers, Toledo's mosque established in 1954 created a new wave of Muslim migration that continued for several decades. Prior to WWII, the community had slowly grown to approximately seventy-five Muslim families. By 1965, however, more than 130 families were listed as members of the American Moslem Society in Toledo. According to Mr. Salem:

"[The community] wasn't growing fast. It was growing at a moderate rate. People were coming to Toledo, I would say at the rate of maybe a family or two every year for a few years, until Toledo became known as a very nice city to move to from other places and establish a business or get a job … So more people started migrating to Toledo from places like Detroit and Chicago and even Danbury, Connecticut, and Hartford and Cleveland and surrounding areas. They liked what they were hearing about Toledo and the atmosphere because the few families that were here were getting together quite often and talking about establishing a meeting place, or in future years building a mosque … After the mosque was built we acquired our reputation … which resulted in many families moving to Toledo from areas like Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, other places, surrounding area, because of the Muslim community and also the mosque."

With the rapid increase of new immigrants, the Muslim community decided to relocate to a larger facility in Perrysburg. On October 22, 1983, the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo was dedicated.

Conclusion

The Syrian-Lebanese immigrants successfully adapted themselves to American society. Children surpassed their parents' social and economic status, while at the same time developing religious and cultural institutions to preserve cherished aspects of their ethnic identity. By the 1960s, Toledo had two Orthodox churches, one mosque, several cultural clubs, and a religiously diverse and prosperous

community created by the hard work and determination of Syrian immigrants and their children who wanted to be successful and good American citizens. In fewer than 100 years, the Syrian-Lebanese community developed from a small Christian colony with one foot in America and one foot in the old country, to a multi-religious, prosperous, and well-respected community with permanent ties to Toledo.

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