

New Exhibit Celebrates the Greek Community of Lowell, Massachusetts



The Greek community of Lowell, Massachusetts, one of the first and largest in the United States, is being celebrated through an exhibit taking place at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

The exhibit, currently showing at the University Crossing building, is called "Acropolis of America: The Greek Community of Lowell 1874-2020." The fascinating display consists of stories and photographs provided by Nicholas Karas and the late UMass Lowell Psychology Professor Charles Nikitopoulos.

The entire exhibit is dedicated to the memory of the beloved professor.

It tells the fascinating story of Greeks migrating to Lowell at the end of the nineteenth century and building a vibrant community in their new homeland in New England.

In the beginning there were only a few dozen Greeks in the town, known for its many mills. But by the early twentieth century, Lowell was home to the third-

largest Greek population in America, after the huge urban communities of New York City and Chicago.

Like other Greeks who migrated to the United States, those who chose Lowell had fled a country which was torn by poverty and incessant wars and political struggles. In Lowell, they were able to build an entirely new life through hard work and persistence.

For this reason, Lowell has always had a great importance to the Greek-American community. Besides being home to one of the first “Greektowns,” it also has one of the very first Greek Orthodox churches in America.

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, with its iconic golden dome, has been listed as a National Historic Landmark since 1977, and was the first church built for Greek Orthodox worshippers in America (although the first congregation of Greek Orthodox believers was founded in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1864).

Lowell was also the first city in the northeastern U.S. to be home to a Greek consulate, as well as the first Greek Orthodox day school.

Greeks have been known as great businessmen since their very beginnings in America. In 1900, Greek-Americans already were the owners of nineteen businesses in Lowell.

By 1913, Lowell had a total of thirty different Greek grocery stores. One of them, owned by the Demoulas family, was founded in 1917 — and now the Demoulas’ “Market Basket” chain has 79 stores throughout New England.

By 1920, Greek-Americans owned an amazing 232 businesses, including 15 barber shops, 28 coffee shops, 26 fruit stores and 33 grocery stores, in the city.

Lowell Greeks also enjoyed many successes in the political realm. Paul Tsongas, who represented Lowell as a U.S. senator, became a candidate for President of the United States in 1992. His wife, Niki Tsongas, later served as a congresswoman as well.

Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, who also ran for President, was the son of a Greek migrant who settled in Lowell after he landed on American shores.

The first Greek mayor anywhere in the United States, George Eliades, was elected by voters in Lowell. Dr. Paul Panagiotakos, a well-regarded local physician, was elected to the Lowell School Committee in 1943.

This historical exhibit, currently on display on the second floor of UMass Lowell's University Crossing building at Pawtucket and Merrimack Streets, will run through mid-December 2019.

— Source: usa.greekreporter.com