



HISTORIC
LEADERSHIP
TRAINING

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Stanley Sharkey's hat molds from the 1920's. A sample Greek kitchen with copper pots.



Christina Jacoby and Pat Padussis, committee members who helped with the exhibit.

YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE

AN UPLIFTING STORY OF IMMIGRATION

September 24 - October 8, 2016, in Westminster, MD City Hall

In the rural town of Westminster, Maryland, a new exhibit showcases the immigrant story of a dozen Greek families who settled there. Sponsored by the Historical Society of Carroll County, this exhibit was designed by the Greek families, themselves, who last year published a book tracing their ancestors' journeys from Greece to America.

Through historic photos and artifacts, this exhibit highlights the entrepreneurial spirit in building businesses—from candy-making to shoe shining to hat-making, and from an opera house to grocery stores, as well as the restaurants that Greeks are so famous for.

“To say that this exhibit is a community effort would be an understatement,” said Antigoni Lafferis Ladd, one of the organizers of the show. Most descendants of the original Westminster families do not live in town today, yet they worked via phone, Internet, and postal service to link up—from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Florida, North Carolina, New York, California, Arizona, Virginia, and Tennessee.

Starting in 2013, those children and grandchildren began meeting monthly to research their roots and understand why their families came to this town in Maryland. It took two years, but they put together their individual family histories and then found that there was a community story that was just as compelling. And that is the uplifting story highlighted by the exhibit.

The Greek families of Westminster had come from all parts of Greece and Turkey, from the islands to the mountains, yet they formed a bond with one another in this Maryland town. Through the Great Depression of 1930, they helped each others' business stay afloat; they found room in their homes for newly-arrived immigrants; they became business partners as well as godparents to each others' children. Wedding photos from the 1930s and 1940s vividly show the warm relationships, with wedding parties including children and adults from multiple families smiling for the camera that recorded their connections.

The exhibit offers insights into how they lived. One room, “Proud to be Greek” depicts a typical Greek household, with religious icons in the bedroom, copper pots in the kitchen, and children's Greek school books open to the endless copying of the Greek alphabet.

Across the hall, the “Proud to be American” room has an entire wall of military portraits from WWI and WWII, to Vietnam and Afghanistan. A book of naturalization petitions and certificates illustrates the Greeks' desires to make their new homes permanent. For anyone wondering how immigrants survived in tough times, this exhibit shares dozens of positive stories.

For more information on the exhibit (“Yearning to Breathe Free: Westminster's Greek Immigrants”) or the book (*Honoring Our Heritage: The Greek Families of Westminster, Maryland*), contact Antigoni Ladd, AntigoniLadd@TigrettCorp.com or (717) 334-9089 or Dr. Gainor Davis at the Historical Society of Carroll County, Gainor@HSCCmd.org or (410) 848-6494.



Greek Easter bread and eggs. Photos of Greek military veterans.