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# From the Social Margins to the Center: Lebanese Families Who Arrived in South Carolina before 1950

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FROM THE SOCIAL MARGINS TO THE CENTER  
LEBANESE FAMILIES WHO ARRIVED  
IN SOUTH CAROLINA  
BEFORE 1950

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
History

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by  
Elizabeth Virginia Whitaker  
December 2006

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Accepted by:  
Megan Taylor Shockley, Committee Chair  
Alan Grubb  
J.R. Andrew

## ABSTRACT

The Lebanese families who arrived in South Carolina found themselves in a different environment than most had anticipated. Those who had spent time elsewhere in the U.S. found predominantly rural and predominantly Protestant South Carolina to be almost as alien as they or their parents had found the United States due partly to the religious differences and partly to the cultural differences between the Northeast, where most of them had lived for at least a few years after arriving in the United States, and the Southeast. Most of these new arrivals eventually found success and some degree of acceptance, but some returned to the North, some returned to the Middle East, and some decided to seek their fortunes elsewhere in the United States.

South Carolina history is usually presented in popular fora as being the history of two races, each of one of which consisted of one ethnic group, and both of which were and are entirely Protestant. This is not the case. South Carolina began with three races – American Indian, white, and African-American – and with multiple ethnic groups within each race. Most existing historical information is about the white component of South Carolina's population, and from this historical information, the English and Huguenot whites were joined

very early by Sephardic Jews, then by the Scots-Irish and the Germans, and later by the Irish, more Germans, Swedes, Chinese, Italians, Greeks – and Lebanese.

Greenville provides an excellent case study because it has a large Lebanese community and because it became both a transportation and an industrial center shortly before Lebanese immigrants began to arrive. Like Charleston, Greenville had a large immigrant community for South Carolina, but the majority of its non-immigrant population was born in the Carolinas or Georgia. Greenville, unlike Charleston and many other Southern cities was both slow to enact legal segregation and relaxed about enforcing it.

There is almost no published academic material on Lebanese Christians in the South. There is a 1940s article about the Lebanese community in an unnamed Southern town as well as an article about the Lebanese community in Birmingham, Alabama. The sole academic publication on Lebanese Christians in the Carolinas is a dissertation on the Greeks and Lebanese in the Carolinas, mainly Columbia, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina, between 1900 and 1940.

## DEDICATION



Figure 1.  
Left to Right: Gertrude Colerider, Marion Colerider,  
Sam Colerider, and Pearl Colerider. Gertrude  
was my mother's maternal grandmother.

This work is dedicated to my ancestors on both sides who lived as white through difficulties and ridicule, and sometimes at the risk of life and limb.

Marion Colerider, one of my mother's great uncles, lost this gamble on December 7, 1900, in his late teens, near Grafton, West Virginia. Marion's killer was never brought to trial; Marion's father liquidated his business and moved the family to North Carolina.

I do not have any 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century Middle Eastern ancestry, but I have spent much of my life contending with many of the obstacles faced by these immigrants and their children, especially since the Easter 25 years ago I was received into the Roman Catholic Church. I therefore understand and respect the experience of the Lebanese who came to South Carolina.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would not have been able to write this thesis without encouragement and assistance from Father Bartholomew Leon, O.S.B., Pastor of St. Rafka Maronite Mission in Greenville; from the members of St. Rafka Maronite Mission; from William Biediger, Business Manager of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Greenville, who furnished me with information as well as records access; from members of Greenville's Lebanese community who are members of St. Mary's, and, last but never least, my committee, Drs. Shockley, Grubb and Andrew.

I would also like to thank the librarians at the Cooper Library of Clemson University, the staff of Clemson University's Resource Sharing (Inter-Library Loan), the librarians of Clemson University's Special Collections, the South Carolina Room of the Greenville County Library System, and the Carolina Room of the Anderson County Library. I particularly appreciate the assistance of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in photocopying and mailing the Greenville County Aliens Book to me. Producer Steve Folks of South Carolina Educational Television lent me a copy of "A Better Life," a half-hour program on the Lebanese in South Carolina.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE IMMIGRANTS AND WHY THEY LEFT HOME

The Lebanese and their descendants who settled in South Carolina before 1950 founded and ran small businesses in the cities, towns and rural areas of the state. Almost all of these immigrants were Christian, and most were either Catholic or Orthodox. Most of their small businesses were stores and eating places, but a few were farms. Though these Lebanese immigrants as a group have been generally accepted as “white” due to their status as entrepreneurs and professionals, they faced discrimination because they were obviously not native-born South Carolina whites and because most were not Protestants. As a group, the Lebanese immigrants and their descendants inhabited a social limbo. In the eyes of some, they were not quite white because they did not “look American” and were not Protestant, but they definitely were not African-American. Adding to the pain of this limbo was the fact that the popular standard of female beauty in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century South was a blonde with a pink-and-white complexion: a woman’s proximity to this ideal was a measure of her whiteness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, “Beauty, Cult of,” 600-603. *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Charles Reagan Wilson & William Ferris, eds. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, 600-601.

Contrary to popular belief, the South as a whole has always been ethnically diverse. Before the Spanish began founding their settlements in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, numerous bands of American Indians lived in the South. At an unknown date, occasional castaways and runaways from European ships and European settlements began arriving in the back country. These people came from a variety of places. The English settlements, even from the beginning, were never completely English: early Virginia, for example, had inhabitants from central Europe and Protestant refugees from France (Huguenots), as well as the Africans. As a whole, before 1860, the South was more ethnically diverse than the North.<sup>2</sup>

In South Carolina, the Huguenots were a prominent element in the population of early Charleston. Large numbers of German-language speakers settled in central South Carolina (the “Dutch Fork”), the Orangeburgh District, and in what is now Jasper county (“Purrysburg”). In Colonial times, Charleston boasted the largest Jewish community in North America. After the Revolution, with the restrictions on Catholic settlement removed, Charleston and other

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis C. Rousey, “Aliens in the WASP Nest: Ethnocultural Diversity in the Antebellum Urban South,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (Jun. 1993), 152-164; Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, 49-62.

southern ports attracted large numbers of Irish immigrants to work in the ports, build the railroads, and do other heavy labor.<sup>3</sup>

After 1865, with the beginnings of the first African-American out-migration from the South, state governments in the South began to promote immigration to replace the departing ex-slaves, hoping to attract hard-working Protestant farmers from the indubitably “white” countries of northern and western Europe. Some of these bodies even published informational material, often in foreign languages, to interest and inform potential immigrants. Much to everyone’s surprise, the South attracted many immigrants – mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as Christians from the faltering Ottoman Empire.<sup>4</sup> Some of these immigrants came from the province of Syria in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Syria included the present nations of Lebanon and Syria, as well as contiguous portions of what are now Turkey, Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, 49-62; Ira Berlin, Herman G. Gutman, “Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 88, No. 5 (Dec. 1983), 1175-1200, 1187-1186.

<sup>4</sup> Archie V. Huff, Jr. *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995, 179-180; Yates Snowden, ed. *History of South Carolina Issued in Five Volumes*. Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1920. Vol. II. 984.

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Table 1  
Lebanese Immigrants in South Carolina Compared to  
the State's Total Population, 1900-1930.

Year	"Turkey in Asia"	"Turkey in Europe"	Syria	Total	Total Pop. SC
1900	76 (born in "Asia, except China, Japan, India")	----	----	76	1,340,316
1910	263	----	61 ("Asia not specified")	324	1,515,400
1920	10 (+17 "Other Asia")	5	396	428	1,683,724
1930	93 (+34 "Other Asia")	6	413	546	1,738,765

(Census figures from Statistical Atlas of the United States, 1905, 1915, 1925, 1935)

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Because most of the immigrants from Ottoman Syria to the United States in this time period were generally Christians from what is now Lebanon as well as major cities, such as Damascus and Aleppo, which border Lebanon, I will refer to all of them as "Lebanese" rather than as "Syrians."

Since there were different names used for what is now Lebanon when immigrants' places of origin were recorded, there is no accurate count of emigrants from this area to the U.S. Before 1899, immigrants were asked only what nation they came from, whether they came from a small nation such as Belgium, which was relatively homogeneous, or the gigantic multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Turkish Empire. Accordingly, in 1899, the Bureau of Immigration began listing immigrants from Syria separately, though for decades, immigrants continued to report their nation of origin to census takers as "Turkey in Asia." This was changed after the conclusion of World War I and the resulting political changes, such as the creation of Lebanon as a separate entity. The Bureau of the Census used a different system of recording national origins of immigrants, so there are differences between census statistics and immigration statistics.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the people who left Ottoman Syria for the West before 1941 were Christians, partly because these Christians believed they would be able to fit into any majority Christian society with relative ease, and partly because Christians, as a group, were more affluent than the Muslims. Muslims, on the other hand, had more rigid dietary and marriage requirements. Lebanese Christian immigrants might have to fast more often than their Catholic or Orthodox

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<sup>5</sup>Alix Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, 108-111; Philip M. Kayal and Joseph M. Kayal, *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation*, Boston: Twayne Publishers 1975, 73-74.

neighbors, but they were not required to marry only Lebanese immigrants or descendants of Lebanese immigrants. Muslims are not allowed to eat meat from animals not slaughtered according to ritual requirements (*halal*) and Muslim women may only marry Muslim men.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the Christians who left Lebanon in the late 1800s and early 1900s were people from the farms and small towns of the mountains of Lebanon. Many of these people, especially the women, had worked in Lebanon's silk industry, some solely in home-based workshops reeling silk and others in factories opened in Beirut by French entrepreneurs. The collapse of this industry, which provided cash that kept Lebanese on failing farms, impelled many to emigrate. Some of those who came to the U.S. often landed first in the Northeast and worked in the textile factories there for a while before leaving for Southern towns and cities such as Greenville. The silk industry was a booming business in the late 19th and early 20th century U.S., primarily in Rhode Island.<sup>7</sup>

The Lebanese quickly became known for being peddlers. Both men and women worked as peddlers. Peddling required little capital, no skills, and a minimal command of English. Not only was peddling a low-cost means of

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<sup>6</sup> Paula Maria Stathakis, "Almost White: Greek and Lebanese-Syrian Immigrants in North and South Carolina, 1900-1940" (Ph.D. diss. University of South Carolina, 1996). 95-98; Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States*, Westport [CT]: Praeger, 1997, 114-115.

<sup>7</sup> Stathakis, 95-98; Thaddeus S. Dayton, "The Story of Silk: Some Interesting Facts about 'The Gold of Textiles,'" D1 8 Sept 2006; HarpWeek Vol. 1869 Issue 11/13, Page Range 0731cd-0732a "Home and Foreign Gossip" first two items, both about the silk industry overseas and in the U.S.; Akram Fouad Khater, "'House' to 'Goddess of the House': Gender, Class and Silk in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Mount Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Aug. 1996), 325-348.

achieving the cultural ideal of entrepreneurship, it also offered opportunities for becoming fluent in English. A new immigrant, male or female, would enter upon some sort of contractual relationship with a merchant who would furnish him or her with a pack and some manufactured items to trade or sell. At first, these were religious items truly or allegedly from “the Holy Land.” Later, the pack items would consist largely of small necessities for the busy farm wife, such as sewing supplies and ornamental lace. The early peddlers walked their routes, overnighing with farm families when they couldn’t get back to their boarding houses. General stores run by native-born white men, especially in rural areas, were often unofficial men’s clubs: they could be hostile environments for women. This especially helped Lebanese women peddlers as few other women worked as peddlers. Cash was in short supply, so a farm wife would frequently trade for her purchases with eggs and other produce. This type of trading is often thought to be a major reason for Lebanese going into food-related businesses.<sup>8</sup>

The peddlers who stayed in this country usually saved up their money and opened small stores or eating places that were patronized by office workers and business people. They usually settled in growing towns and cities. Most

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<sup>8</sup> Nancy Faires Conklin and Nora Faires, “Colored” and Catholic: The Lebanese in Birmingham, Alabama,” pp. 69 – 84. *Crossing the Waters*, ed. Erick J. Hooglund, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987, p. 73; Anecdote from member of my audience at the March 2006 meeting of the Greenville Genealogy Society (March 2, 2006); Naff, 129-133; Sarah Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24:1 (2004) Project Muse, 67-78.

Lebanese immigrants in the U.S. had been members of local Catholic churches in their native country and joined Catholic churches when they settled in South Carolina. Until after 1940, most Lebanese living in Lebanon were Christian. Most of these were members of the Maronite Rite, which is one of the “Eastern Rite” churches of the Catholic Church. “Eastern Rite” churches are churches that recognize the authority of the Pope in Rome, but have traditional practices, including the use of a liturgical language traditionally associated with the area of origin, that are different than those used in the majority of Catholic churches (“Latin Rite”). There are a few Maronite churches in the U.S. that were founded before World War II, but almost all of these are in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York.<sup>9</sup> Almost all the practicing Catholic descendants of the immigrants belong to Roman Catholic parishes in South Carolina. At least half the regular attendees of the Maronite mission in Greenville are post-1950 arrivals from large Lebanese communities in the communities in the North or Midwest; recent immigrants from Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt, or converts to Catholicism from various Protestant churches.

Some Lebanese had been members of Orthodox churches in Lebanon and in the Northeast. In South Carolina, before local Greek Orthodox parishes were

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<sup>9</sup> Philip M. Kayal and Joseph M. Kayal, *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975, 30; Seely Beggiani, “Aspects of Maronite History/The Maronites in the United States: The Period Before World War I,” Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, <http://www.stmaron.org/marinusa.html>, dl 21 Aug 2005; George T. Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States*, Louaize: Notre Dame University of Louaize Press, 1993, 84-90; Conklin and Faires, 79-80.



founded, most of these Orthodox immigrants became Episcopalian. When a male Lebanese immigrant married a native-born woman from the rural South, he usually joined her church, which was often a Baptist church. One example of this practice was Abraham Najar's marrying a native of Oconee County and joining one of the Baptist churches in Greenville with her. The Saleeby family who settled in Dillon in 1910 is an example of a Lebanese family who had become Protestant (Presbyterian) before leaving for America.<sup>10</sup>

Lebanese in the U.S. also formed secular ethnic clubs. South Carolina had an active Syro-Lebanese American Club for decades, but it is long gone. One of its few memorials was an SCETV special broadcast in July 2004, a half-hour compilation of home movies of club meetings as well as other activities. There is a Southern Federation of Syrian-Lebanese Clubs: South Carolina is the only Southeastern state with no member club.<sup>11</sup>

The first surge of Lebanese emigration began following the settlement of what could be referred to as "The First Lebanese Civil War." It was purely accidental that it was nearly identical in time span with the U.S. Civil War. This

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<sup>10</sup> M. Arif Ghayur, "Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. (Mar. 1981), pp. 150-163. Vol. 454, America as a Multicultural Society. 152; Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 92; "Abraham H. Najar," *The Greenville News*, 1 Aug 1937, 8A; "Mrs. Willie Najar," *The Greenville News*, 21 Oct 1937, 6; (d. obituaries of Mrs. A.A. (Rebecca) Saleeby (April 27, 1933) and Abdalla Saleeby (September 14, 1933) in *The Dillon Herald*.

<sup>11</sup> *A Better Life: Lebanese Americans in S.C. 1940-1949*, SCETV, Steve Folks prod. aired July 17, 2004; Southern Federation of Syrian Lebanese American Clubs <http://www.sflslac.org> dl 18 Sept 2006.

civil war began when simmering discontent in the Mount Lebanon area (mostly identical with the territory of the present nation of Lebanon) erupted into violence.<sup>12</sup>

The continuing contact between the Maronites, the French government, and the Papacy that began in the 16th century occasionally provoked the Ottoman government into action. Discontent on both sides flared into open rioting and civil war in 1860, when Ottoman government figures incited the Druse, heterodox Muslim neighbors of the Maronites, to violence against their Christian neighbors. This caused some world outcry, but the West was more interested in the unification of Italy as well as in the Civil War in the U.S., which began in 1861.<sup>13</sup> The violence in Lebanon was covered in the U.S. news partly because it did involve Christians and partly because many American and European missionaries were in the area, primarily teaching at missionary schools.<sup>14</sup>

Emigration began following the settlement of this conflict in 1865, mainly in response to growing economic and social instability. The family farms were

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<sup>12</sup> Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988, 51-63.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Issawi, "The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914," 13-31, Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds. *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1992, 19-21; Several items about the 1860 events in Lebanon show up in issues of Harper's Weekly dated from July 21, 1860, through September 29, 1860 (HarpWeek Database).

<sup>14</sup> Samir Khalaf, "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration to the United States before World War I," 17-35, Eric J. Hooglund, ed. *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States before 1940*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 29-31; Gregory Orfalea, 53-56; Naff, 28, 36-37.

being partitioned too far below any potential for viability as families were large and there was no primogeniture. What non-farm jobs existed were shrinking in number, especially after the crash of Lebanon's silk industry. In addition, more and more Muslims were moving into the Mount Lebanon region, which was the Maronite heartland. Maronites had been able to pay a fee to keep their sons out of the Ottoman army but, as the Ottoman Empire entered its last resurgence at the end of the 19th century, the Empire needed young men for its armies more than it needed cash.<sup>15</sup>

Though there is evidence of earlier migration from the Middle East to North America, the first documented cases of immigration from Lebanon to the U.S. occurred in the 1870s.<sup>16</sup> As reported in *The New York Times*, a physician who had been employed by the American Protestant College in Beirut received official permission to travel with his family to Alexandria in Egypt, and from there, the family made their way to Liverpool and then New York.<sup>17</sup> Large-scale emigration from Lebanon to the U.S. began a few years later, in 1885, and continued until 1924 and the passage of the National Origins Act.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Naff, 82-91.

<sup>16</sup> Elias T. Nigem, "Arab Americans: Migration, Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn 1986), 631; Sarah Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 68-69; Wayne Winkler, *Walking Toward the Sunset: The Melungeons of Appalachia*, Macon [GA]: Mercer University Press, 2004, 240.

<sup>17</sup> "Emigrants from Syria." *New York Times* (1857-Current file): Aug 23, 1878; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times* (1851-2001), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Nigem, 631; James Stuart Olson, *The Ethnic Dimension in American History*. Third Edition. St. James [NY]: Brandywine Press, 1999, 178.

Not all the Lebanese Christians who emigrated went to the United States. Journal articles have been written about Lebanese migration to various nations of Africa, to Brazil and to Canada. According to one author, Lebanese immigrants had a very hazy idea of the geography of the Americas, which was shaped by their native geography in which the distances between cities are minuscule by comparison. All most early emigrants cared about was getting to “America,” whether they landed in Rio de Janeiro or New York. Later emigrants who came to join friends or relatives cared very much where they landed as they had made arrangements to meet a specific person in a specific city.<sup>19</sup>

Many of the immigrants from various nations who responded to the avalanche of Southern states’ marketing campaigns left their original destinations in the South as soon as they could due to lack of opportunity, hostility from the locals, or being unaccustomed to living in a rural area. There was a national trend of growing hostility to immigrants and Catholics from about 1890 onward, which was partly caused by the hard times in the national economy and partly by alarm at the seemingly unceasing incoming tide of immigrants who were increasingly dark and non-Protestant. Many native-born Americans who were accustomed to living in a solely Protestant environment and to only hearing English spoken, felt threatened by the newcomers, most of

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<sup>19</sup> Oswaldo M.S. Truzzi, “The Right Place at the Right Time: Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil and the United States, A Comparative Approach,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Winter 1977, 1-15.

whom were dark and non-Protestant. They feared that these newcomers would be unwilling or unable to assimilate into the American mainstream. This tide of hostility culminated in the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915 and its becoming a major political force in many areas of the U.S. in the 1920s and 1930s. In South Carolina, as in many other states, the Ku Klux Klan and many Protestant churches informally allied themselves. The Klan was especially visible in Greenville, marching through downtown Greenville in daylight at least once.<sup>20</sup>

There were other movements in the U.S. at the same time that were, to some degree, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic. One of these was the “Sunday closing” or “blue law” movement which enjoyed a great deal of support from members of some Protestant churches: it could be viewed as anti-immigrant because so many Southern immigrants, especially the Lebanese, owned stores and eating places that could be kept open seven days a week with a minimum amount of overhead. The temperance movement, especially the mighty Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which has always been overwhelmingly Protestant in membership, viewed both alcohol consumption and alcohol consumers, especially Catholics, in non-compromising terms. Many non-

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<sup>20</sup> John Higham, “American Immigration Policy in Historical Perspective,” *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Immigration. (Spring 1950), 213-235; Mae M. Ngai, “Race, Nation, and Citizenship in Late Nineteenth-Century America, 1878-1900,” pp. 309-338, *The Columbia Documentary History of Race and Ethnicity in America*. Ronald H. Bayor ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, 311, 328-331; Edgar, 484.

Protestant immigrants, such as the Lebanese, were heavily involved in selling alcohol and in providing the recreation that accompanied sales of alcohol, such as pool halls. Another such movement was the settlement house movement, mostly represented in South Carolina by the YMCA and YWCA, a high priority objective of which was “Americanizing” immigrants, especially those who did not belong to Protestant churches, such as the Lebanese.<sup>21</sup>

As a group, the Christian immigrants who arrived in the U.S. from the Middle East before 1950 were insignificant in numbers in most areas of the U.S., compared to larger immigrant groups. This was also true in South Carolina. However, in South Carolina, they have had an impact on their communities far out of proportion to their numbers. The Sheheens, a family of Lebanese descent, have become a political dynasty in Kershaw county; the Saleebys, one of whom was a long-time state legislator from Darlington county, have become seemingly ubiquitous in public life in the Pee Dee; the Barkoots in Columbia are well known in certain areas of real estate, and the Baroodys of Florence have contributed several medical professionals to the Florence area. These are just a few examples of the Lebanese families who have remained and have contributed to South Carolina’s public life. The question addressed by this study is: How did the Lebanese get from the margins of South Carolina life to its center?

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<sup>21</sup> Edgar, 441,483-484; Khater, 85-86; Olson, 171-178.

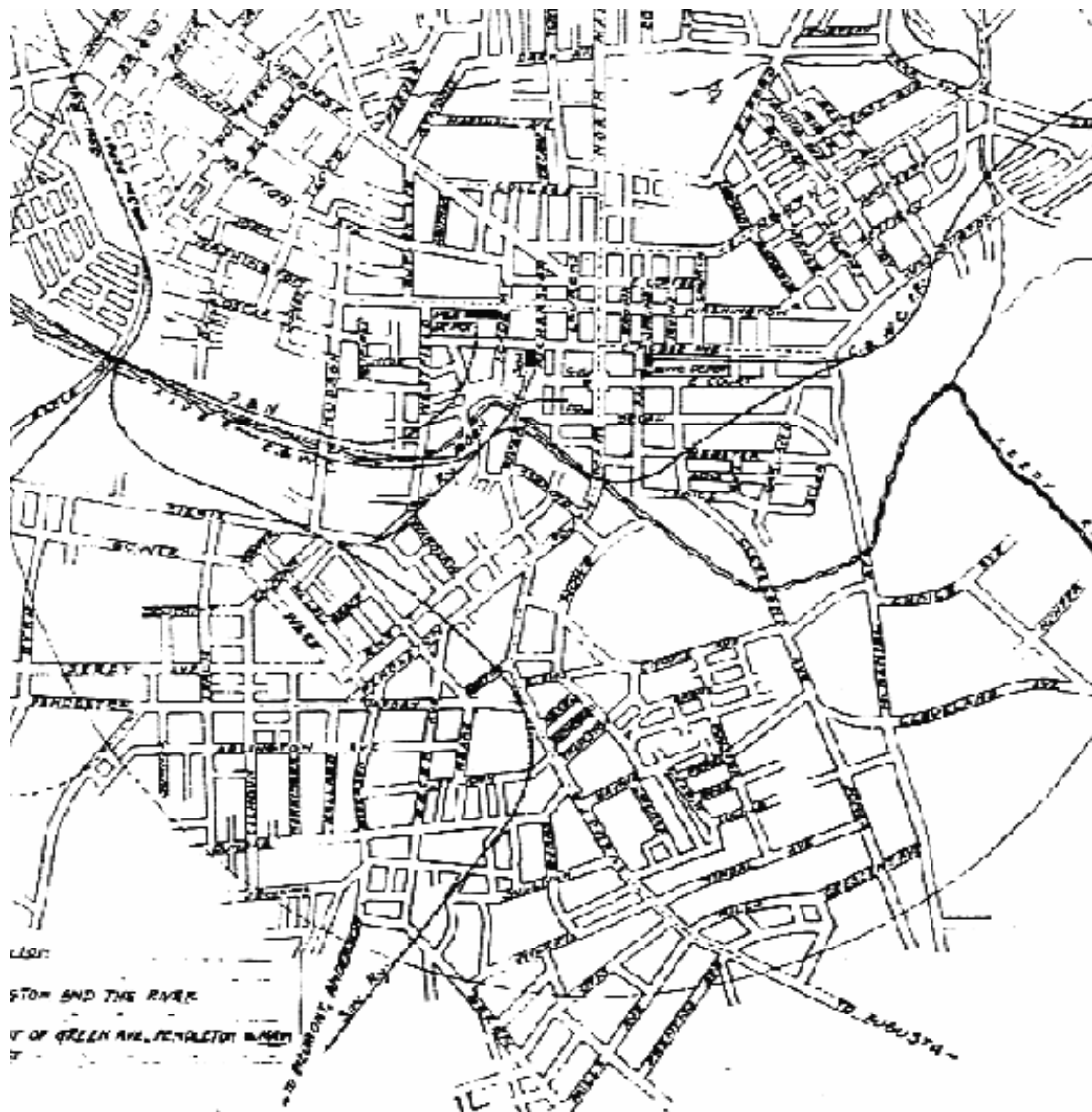


Figure. 2

Area of Greenville Discussed in This Thesis. From 1922 Map of Greenville.  
(Courtesy of The Greenville (SC) County Library System.)

## CHAPTER TWO

### GREENVILLE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

There were at least seven concentrations of Lebanese immigrants in early 20<sup>th</sup> century South Carolina.<sup>22</sup> One of the larger concentrations was located in Greenville. This community has provided both documentation and oral informants that provide a basis for discussing this community's struggle for acceptance in its journey from the margin of local society to its center.

In the early 1900s, Greenville was a trading and distribution center and the self-designated "Textile Capital of the South." The U.S.-born, Protestant, white elite ran the city and owned almost all the industry, most of which consisted of cotton mills. Almost all the U.S.-born, Protestant, white non-elite who lived in Greenville worked in the cotton mills. Much of Greenville's African-American population worked as domestics and manual laborers for the white population, but there was an African-American elite in Greenville made up of African-American teachers, clergymen, and businessmen.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> These would be the ones in Charleston, Clarendon county (now mostly dispersed), Columbia, Dillon (almost entirely dispersed), Florence, Greenville and Hartsville. I am defining a "concentration" as two or more extended families who resided in a town or city for at least three consecutive censuses.

<sup>23</sup> Huff, 253-266



Greenville's foreign-born white population grew rapidly in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Two of the larger immigrant groups were Jewish people from Central and Eastern Europe and Greeks. Some of the smaller groups were northern Europeans, many of whom were skilled craftsmen in Greenville's textile mills, as well as a few Lebanese, Latin Americans, and Chinese.<sup>24</sup>

The first Lebanese in Greenville arrived in time to be listed in the 1900 Census. Exactly who was the first and when he or she arrived is not known. Not only were almost all household lists in the 1890 census destroyed by fire before they could be released to the public, but Lebanese immigrants sometimes changed their last names to "American" if they chose not to use patronymics (e.g., Francis, Joseph, Thomas). According to one of my informants from the Greenville's Lebanese community, patronymics rather than surnames were used in Lebanon, and immigrants often Americanized these.<sup>25</sup> In Greenville before 1940, most immigrant families lived near what is now the Amtrak station or in what is now known as the "West End" because these were areas in which they

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<sup>24</sup> Huff, 266-267; Federal censuses of Greenville, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, as well as Greenville's aliens book (created in response to the Alien Registration Act of 1940), which is an untitled ledger book in the Greenville county records in South Carolina's Department of Archives and History in Columbia. I was not able to locate a microfilmed copy of this document: my copy is a set of photocopies of the book's pages.

<sup>25</sup>Naff, 107-117. Portions of the 1890 census survive. Most of the only surviving portion of the 1890 census listing persons in the Southern U.S. is the census of former Union soldiers and their widows in Southern states who were drawing pensions. (Loretto Dennis Szucs, "Research in Census Records," 101-146, *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*, Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, eds. Salt Lake City [UT]: Ancestry Incorporated, 1997, 116.) My informants from the Lebanese community in Greenville spoke to me on the condition of anonymity.

could operate stores, eating places, and boarding houses, and live on the premises.

Between about 1880 and 1940, the elite of Greenville lived on North Main Street. They lived in Boyce Lawn, which is now better known as the historic district between US-29 (Church Street), I-385 and Laurens Road; in Heritage Green, the neighborhood behind the downtown (Hughes) library in Greenville; and in a small neighborhood on Hampton Street. Before World War II, the incorporated boundaries of Greenville enclosed a relatively small area that was nearly surrounded by “mill towns” owned by the big textile mills – Woodside, Monaghan, and others. Each of the mill towns was almost a self-contained community, and many of these, though long annexed into Greenville, retain some amount of their pre-annexation identity.<sup>26</sup>

Greenville had religious institutions that were not available in all South Carolina towns and cities. One of these was St. Mary’s Catholic Church, the founding of which in 1876 provoked the local nativists. Because having a Catholic church was seen by members of the local Greenville elite, such as Vardry McBee, Jr., who donated land to the church, as an asset that would attract hard-working immigrants, the objections by local anti-immigrants were silenced. There were also two Jewish synagogues, the Conservative and the Reformed,

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<sup>26</sup> Huff, 185-189, 194-195.

organized respectively in 1910 and 1911.<sup>27</sup> Lebanese individuals and families have been vital to the development of Catholicism in the Carolinas, and that certainly can be seen in the history of St. Mary's.<sup>28</sup>

St. Mary's Catholic Church in Summerton, South Carolina, which was built in 1914, was literally built by the local Lebanese Catholics, and was, until, quite recently, the only Catholic Church in Clarendon County. In Greenville, Jamile Francis, an entrepreneur now in his nineties, is the most conspicuous example of the Lebanese contribution to Catholicism in Greenville County. One of his most appreciated deeds was his buying the land on which the main campus of Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital is now located, and donating it, because a local landowners would not sell to a Catholic institution.<sup>29</sup>

Lebanese women are often listed on early 20<sup>th</sup> century censuses as not working because the Census Bureau instructed its census takers not to list people as "workers" if they were not "gainfully employed;" that is, if they worked within the family business and did not draw pay.<sup>30</sup> Lebanese daughters, when they worked outside the home, usually did so in some type of office work or in

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<sup>27</sup> Huff, 204-206, 266-267; Edgar, 421.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with William Biediger, June 2005; miscellaneous records (newspaper clippings, etc.) held by St. Mary's Catholic Church.

<sup>29</sup> Deidre C. Mays, "Our Lady of Hope church dedicated," *The Catholic Miscellany* 15 Dec 2005. Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston, [http://www.catholic-doc.org/miscellany/2005/december\\_15\\_dedication.html](http://www.catholic-doc.org/miscellany/2005/december_15_dedication.html); Jimmy Cornelison, "The drive to do good in the community keeps Greenville native active at age 87," *The Greenville News* 13 Dec 2000, 1C, 11C; Biediger interview.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph A. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations 1870-1920: A Study of Recent Trends in the Numbers, Occupational Distribution, and Family Relationship of Women Reported in the Census as Following a Gainful Occupation*, Census Monographs IX. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929, 1-2, 4-6.

skilled, presumably high-pay manufacturing, such as in cigar factories.

Greenville had a cigar factory. S.S. Crittenden, in his 1903 promotional book about Greenville, noted:

The Greenville branch of the American Cigar Company has just occupied its spacious building near the centre [sic] of the city and is already giving light and remunerative employment to 150, or more, girls and young women, while the capacity of the factory will require 900 or 1,000 employees.<sup>31</sup>

A privately-printed local history has a section summarizing local news from 1903 to 1918 and also notes the impact of the cigar factory. The one item about the cigar factory summarizes an item that appeared in March 1906: "Cigar factory a success; 400 girls employed at an average monthly wage of \$60.00 each."<sup>32</sup> This was excellent pay in 1903 Greenville.

The cigar factory closed in late 1930, after having employed a mostly-female work force for over 20 years.<sup>33</sup> At least one of its employees was a member of a Lebanese family: Rachel Thomas, a daughter of Charlie and Isabel Thomas, was listed on the 1920 census as a buncher at the cigar factory. Huff notes that some members of the local elite engaged in negotiations with

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<sup>31</sup> S.S. Crittenden, *The Greenville Century Book 1903 Comprising 100 Years History of Greenville, South Carolina, Greenville, 1903*. "Reprinted by permission, 1976, by the Greenville County Bicentennial Commission," 71.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Barnes, *The Greenville Story*, (privately printed 1956), 105.

<sup>33</sup> Huff, 334-335.

American Cigar which resulted in the company creating “a relief fund” for their former employees at the Greenville plant.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1907 and 1922, a woman who was a U.S. citizen lost her citizenship by marrying a foreign national. This caused some problems in every immigrant community in the U.S., especially in the Lebanese communities in the South as, in this time period, most of the marriageable women were U.S.-born daughters of Lebanese immigrants and many of the marriageable men were immigrants from Lebanon who had not yet begun the naturalization process. This was an aspect of the increase in anti-immigrant feeling in that time period that resulted in the very restrictive immigration act of 1924, as well as a development of the long-established legal principle that women lost their property rights through marriage. The Cable Act of 1922 did have three discriminatory provisions: the husband must be eligible for naturalization, the wife would lose her citizenship by going overseas to live for more than a year or so, and non-citizens who married male U.S. citizens would have to wait one year for naturalization instead of five. These discriminatory provisions were removed by amendments to the Cable Act in the early 1930s, which included changing the

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<sup>34</sup> Huff, 335; 1920 census.

spousal residency requirement to three years before naturalization from five years for male spouses and one year for female spouses of U.S. citizens.<sup>35</sup>

The George family of Piedmont is the one Lebanese family with any members of the household listed in any census as working on the factory floor of a mill in the Upstate. This family is also anomalous for other reasons. Salem George, the patriarch of this family, arrived in the U.S. in 1908 and was naturalized in 1916. Between 1908 and his death in 1973, Salem George held a variety of low-level jobs in the rural Upstate. He married a native-born local who predeceased him. One of his daughters is listed as a spinner in a local mill in 1920. Most of their several children fanned out across the Upstate, with one son serving in the Navy and posted to California at the time of his father's death, and one daughter living in Norfolk, Virginia, presumably with a connection to the Navy. Salem George was buried at Rehobeth [sic] Baptist Church in Piedmont, a small town in southwestern Greenville county.<sup>36</sup>

In the Lebanese ethnic press in the U.S., which published many newspapers and magazines, usually in Arabic, the role of Lebanese women within the Lebanese family and Lebanese community, as well as within society as a whole, was a topic of intense controversy that had many parallels with

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<sup>35</sup> 1930 census; Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934," 1440-1474, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 5 (Dec 1998), 1446, 1451-1471.

<sup>36</sup> "Salem George," *Greenville Piedmont*, Friday 7 Dec 1973, 16; SSDI; 1910, 1920, 1930 Federal censuses.

contemporary discussions in the English-language local and national press. Should she work outside the home? Should she work for money at all? Should she adopt American ways, including American childrearing practices? Should Lebanese men adopt American ways of dealing with their wives?<sup>37</sup> Some of these publications apparently circulated in South Carolina. The estate papers of Phillip Najar include the charges for placing announcements of his death in Arabic-language publications, presumably all published in the U.S. (The estate papers do not mention any of these publications by name.)<sup>38</sup>

The nativist movements that swept the U.S. after 1865 were caused by intellectual developments as well as the surge of immigration that began about 1870. The intellectual developments, which mostly took the form of human eugenics theories, were inspired by Darwin's writings. The surge of immigration caused fear in many who were threatened by differences: these people in all social classes were obsessed with "racial purity." Racial segregation laws were the earliest legal results of the "racial purity" obsession.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Khater, 93-105; John G. Moses, *Annotated Index to the Syrian World, 1926-1932*. Judith Rosenblatt, ed. St. Paul: Immigration History Research Center of the University of Minnesota, 1994. The *Syrian World* was the major periodical read by immigrants from Syria and Lebanon from 1926 until it ceased publication in 1936.

<sup>38</sup> Raouf J. Halaby, "Dr. Michael Shadid and the Debate over Identity in The Syrian World," 55-65, *Crossing the Waters*, 55-57; *Annotated Index to the Syrian World, 1926-1932*; Estate papers, Phillip Najar.

<sup>39</sup> Donna R. Gabaccia, "Race, Nation, Hyphen: Italian-Americans and American Multiculturalism in Comparative Perspective," 44-59, Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, eds. *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America*, New York: Routledge, 2003, 51-57.

Laws requiring racial segregation were a new fashion in the South of the late 1800s and 1900s. Segregation laws began in South Carolina with the introduction of a bill in the state legislature to segregate railroad passengers. The businessmen and other members of the elite in Greenville saw no reason to follow what was becoming a national trend until 1912, shortly after a prominent black businessman bought a highly visible corner in downtown Greenville with the intent of building a "hotel for blacks." The City Council promptly passed an ordinance, patterned upon one adopted earlier by Baltimore, Maryland, decreeing absolute racial segregation in most areas of life. The next year the City Council relented, however, softening it somewhat after it became obvious the original ordinance would be impossible to enforce.<sup>40</sup> Some of the Lebanese merchants lived in otherwise entirely African-American areas, or in areas that were almost evenly divided between white and African-American households. Before 1914, the Lebanese occupied a racial limbo in the United States. In most areas of daily life, they could function as white, but they were not guaranteed citizenship, no matter how long they lived in the U.S. or how badly they desired naturalization.

The ability of the Lebanese to obtain citizenship was sporadic before 1914. Before 1909, some Lebanese immigrants obtained naturalization through meeting

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<sup>40</sup> Huff, 232-233.



the standard requirements. Beginning in 1909 and ending after World War I, there were a series of court cases, one of which took place in Charleston, in which Lebanese immigrants took the Federal government to court for refusing them naturalization. Beginning in 1906, the newly-created Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization began applying new regulations based on the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that did not define which ethnic groups should be designated as “white.” Beginning in 1910, the Census Bureau “classified” immigrants from the Ottoman Empire as “Asiatics.”<sup>41</sup>

On the 1930 census for an area including an address near the junction of South Main and Pendleton, which was heavily ethnic, all the immigrants on this page, except for the Chinese neighbor who operated a laundry, have the original entry for their race crossed out – “Syr” for the Lebanese, for example – and “W” inserted. This may indicate that the census taker’s supervisor was doing his or her job by checking for incorrect entries. On the other hand, the strike throughs might indicate that the “mistakes” were not corrected at the local level. This happened elsewhere in South Carolina at the time, but is rarely so noticeable to the contemporary researcher.

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<sup>41</sup> Naff, 252-259; Sarah Gualtieri, “Becoming ‘White’: Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States,” 29-58, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 20 No. 4, 36-40.

One hundred years ago, Greenville was a prosperous, growing Southern town in the midst of a booming industrial area. The Lebanese immigrants who arrived in Greenville, originally to peddle and, later, to buy and run stores and eating places, found themselves in what would have been a culturally congenial environment if it were not for the growing nativism and increasing anti-Catholicism. Not only did the Lebanese physically differ from most of their native-born white neighbors and customers, they spoke English with an unfamiliar accent and most of them worshipped differently than their neighbors. Catholicism, especially the Latin Mass, as well as the accompanying physical artifacts of Catholic worship, from life-sized statues and crucifixes to smaller devotional items such as rosaries and crucifix necklaces was very alien to people accustomed to worship services that principally featured lengthy sermons, extemporaneous prayers and simple hymns. Some of the Lebanese immigrants chose to ease their path to acceptance by becoming Protestant and others became Protestant because they preferred joining a Protestant church to the only available alternative of becoming Roman Catholic. Therefore, most of the Lebanese found assimilation very attractive.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE EASIER WAY TO ACCEPTANCE

There were two easy ways for Lebanese immigrants to gain acceptance into local white society in South Carolina between 1880 and 1940. One of these ways was to join a socially-acceptable church. Another way was to own a business.

The progress of the Najjar-Cahaly-Faress-Nashawaty clan, a group of related Orthodox families, is an example of Lebanese immigrants arriving in South Carolina through chain migration, then gaining acceptance in South Carolina by joining a socially-acceptable church. The immigrants settled in Greenville between the mid-1890s and 1917. They all owned businesses, but the more important contributor to their achieving their goal of acceptance in the center of society was their church membership, namely their not being Catholic.

Because there was no Orthodox church in Greenville or the surrounding area until the 1930s, most of the families in this group became members of Christ Episcopal Church, Greenville's first Episcopal Church, which was and is a center for Greenville's elite. Orthodox Christians who relocate to a town or city with no Orthodox church often choose to attend an Episcopal church instead of a

Catholic church as it is more “compatible with their sense of ritual and beliefs” than either a Fundamentalist or a Catholic church.<sup>42</sup>

The first generation of immigrants was very frugal. Most of them became quite successful monetarily but, at first, many of them worked in the U.S. with the intention of returning to Lebanon permanently if they were not saving money to go into business or to send money to family members to enable them to emigrate from Lebanon to the U.S. There were also relatives back home in Lebanon to assist and good causes, such as Lebanese mutual aid societies, many of which were led by and composed of Lebanese women. Lebanese immigrants had no objections to saving money on housing by living with little privacy or in neighborhoods most native-born Southerners would not live in by choice.<sup>43</sup>

A business was a business no matter what it sold and no matter where it might be located: the important thing was to own the business and to make money operating it. Greenville was a growing city filled with neighborhoods full of people who had little opportunity to leave their neighborhoods – except on foot. There was public transportation, but in a time before the small electric motor was incorporated into most household equipment, most women literally worked from dawn to dusk keeping house and looking after young children, sick

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<sup>42</sup> Naff, 51, 294. There was a traditional social hierarchy of church membership along the East Coast south of New England: the Episcopal church was at the top; the Methodist, Lutheran and Presbyterian churches were second tier, and the Fundamentalists were third tier. Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians were outside the system (Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers*, 194-199, 202-204.)

<sup>43</sup> Naff, 201-212; Boosahda 140-153.

children and older relatives. Neighborhood grocery stores were close enough to send a child for a small, but necessary, item such as a loaf of bread while dinner was on the stove.<sup>44</sup>

Phillip H. Najar was the first of this group to arrive in Greenville. He was living and working in Greenville in the 1890s. A year or so later, Phillip's brother, Abraham, arrived. Philip and his brother, as was usual with newly-arrived Lebanese in the South at that time, began their lives in Greenville as peddlers. They boarded with a family who lived on Main Street, which was still partially residential. Boarding was what people did before there were apartment buildings or residential hotels: families in Greenville's elite sometimes took boarders in order to keep their expenses down and to make a little extra money.<sup>45</sup>

The Najars were from Damascus, which is a major city in the modern nation of Syria. An ambitious young Christian in late 1800s Ottoman Syria could either make his way to Beirut and board a ship for an overseas destination or he could go to Egypt. Phillip Najar's obituary hints that he may have had relatives living in Egypt. Abraham's obituary specifically mentions a brother living in Egypt.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Stathakis, 150-151; Harvey Green, *The Uncertainty of Everyday Life 1915-1945*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992, 60-69, 96-98; informants.

<sup>45</sup> 1900 Federal census; "P.H. NAJAR DIED MONDAY AFTERNON," *The Greenville Daily News* 12 Jan 1915, 8; "Abraham H. Najar," *The Greenville News* 31 Jul 1937, 6; Huff, 262; Green, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Khater, 46-47.

Phillip Najar is listed in the 1903-1904 Greenville city directory as operating a fruit and confectionery store at 310 South Main Street, where he also resided. Philip gained status by starting a business on Main Street, which was a good location. Philip took another step towards acceptance when he married Rosa, the older daughter of newly-arrived Faris and Effie Cahaly. By marrying, Philip moved further along on his quest for acceptance because marriage signified that he was serious about becoming a respected member of the local business community as well as aspiring to the elite.<sup>47</sup>

In the early 1900s, Lebanese immigrants in Greenville usually owned a fruit store or a confectionery. Fruit was a premium item in the South for those who did not have access to a fruit tree or an orchard. Large numbers of Southerners went through life crippled by dietary deficiencies caused by a diet mainly consisting of pork, starches and the occasional overcooked vegetable. Immigrant groups such as the Lebanese helped to conquer the dietary deficiencies by making fresh fruit available to city dwellers and townspeople.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1909 Greenville city directory, Phillip is listed as the partner of Faress M. Faress; their company, Najar & Faress Confectioners, was located at 313 South Main. Fred M. Faress, one of Faress M. Faress' sons, was one of their employees. The Faress family, according to the city directory, lived at the

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<sup>47</sup> 1900 and 1910 Federal census; "Mrs. Rosa Najar," *The Greenville News* 8 Dec 1938, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen J. Kunitz, "Hookworm and Pellagra: Exemplary Diseases in the New South," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 29, No. 2. Jun. 1988, 139-148, 143-146.

business' location. They were apparently new arrivals in Greenville. Phillip, his wife, and their two oldest children, Sallie, born in 1906, and George, born in 1907, lived in a house on a side street near the business. Abraham Najar is listed in that year's city directory as operating a general store at 642 Pendleton Street, and living with his wife, Willie, on Dunham Bridge Road. (Willie was a native of Oconee County whose family had moved to Greenville in the 1890s.)<sup>49</sup>

That Phillip had a business partner was an indication that he was rising in Greenville's business community. That Phillip, Rosa, and the children did not live in the same building as the business was also an indicator that their social status in the community was high. Because Abraham and Willie did not live nearby, they were obviously not close to Phillip and Rosa; the couples may already have become estranged, and Abraham may have already become a member of Welcome Baptist Church. At the time, and for decades thereafter, the Lebanese families in Greenville routinely lived within a fairly small area.

In the 1912 Greenville city directory, Fred Faress is listed as the owner of the shooting gallery at 307 South Main Street. Shooting galleries were popular amusements for men in early 20<sup>th</sup> century South Carolina cities. The City Pressing Club, a gym for weight lifters, and Costner & Waldrop's bowling alley shared the building with Faress' shooting gallery. Weightlifting and bowling

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<sup>49</sup> 1909 city directory; 1910 census; "Mrs. Willie Najar," *The Greenville News* 12 Oct 1937, 6. Dunham Bridge Road is now Old Dunham Bridge Road. It is south of US123, and west of US25, near the Anderson County line.

were two other popular male amusements of the time. This building was across the street from the Masonic Temple, which housed a tailor, an optical shop, a barber shop and four floors of offices, including those for Monaghan Mills and Parker Cotton Mills Company, two of Greenville's biggest companies at the time.

A few doors down, Faris Cahaly and Son Restaurant occupied Phillip's old location of 313 South Main Street. The Cahalys were also busily pursuing social acceptance, and had risen from selling fruit and cigars. Their restaurant was across Main Street from the local Post Office.<sup>50</sup>

The 1915-1916 city directory shows James Faress running a pool hall at 111 East Washington Street and living at 108 East Broad Street. James Faress' business career in Greenville differs from most of the others which I have tracked. Faress was a member of Christ Episcopal, at least after his marriage some years later to Rosa's younger sister, but he spent most of his business career owning pool halls. Pool halls have not generally been viewed as socially acceptable businesses in the South, but Faress may have gained social acceptance by being a business owner, as well as through both his marriage to Mary Cahaly and his membership in Christ Episcopal Church.

Phillip H. Najar died in January 1915, after being "in bad health for some time." His obituary continues with the information that he had been

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<sup>50</sup> 1912 city directory.



“contemplating removing to Egypt because of the dry climate there, when the war broke out and prevented his going.” Egypt was one of the first countries to which Lebanese had often emigrated, and several of Greenville’s early Lebanese immigrants had relatives there or had lived there for a time before coming to the U.S.<sup>51</sup>

Phillip Najar’s business stationery, which can be seen in his estate papers, was headed “P.H. Najar Jobber and Commission Merchant/ Foreign and Domestic Fruits and Produce/ Sicily Lemons/ Almiria[sic] Grapes/ Fire Works in the Season.” This is yet another illustration of these entrepreneurial immigrants to the South satisfying the demands of the residents of rapidly industrializing, rapidly-growing Southern urban areas for workers’ eating places and amusements, as well as for more retail establishments to serve the growing urban population. Rosa Najar and/or her brother, Charly Cahaly, used some of P.H. Najar’s business stationery in preparing some of the documents they were required to submit to Greenville county’s probate judge during the process of settling Najar’s estate.<sup>52</sup> These documents are of interest for what they tell us of Lebanese middle class life in Greenville at the time, as well as for what they tell us of Phillip’s business activities. Rosa and her family managed to survive, and to stay in business. That they had close family nearby, namely the Cahalys, to call

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<sup>51</sup> P.H. Najar obituary; Orfalea, 58.

<sup>52</sup> Stathakis, pp. 51, 100; Estate of Phillip H. Najar, Greenville Co. Probate Judge (GCLS)

upon in case of problems or emergencies, undoubtedly helped keep them going through the tough economic times of World War I and the Depression. This type of family closeness or networking, to give it a contemporary slant, is a behavior that enables modern immigrants to survive while they work towards acceptance at the center of society.

The probate process on Phillip Najar's estate ended in early 1916. Charly Cahaly was officially granted legal guardianship of Phillip's children, his nieces and nephew. Rosa Najar never remarried. She was a well-known local businesswoman when she died in 1938. She was buried from her church, Christ Episcopal Church, which has long known as the most socially eminent church in Greenville. Her pallbearers were members of the Upstate's Lebanese community, namely A.H. Howard, George Shaleuly, Philip Eassy, J.P. Green, Charlie Saad and John Rizk. Howard, Shaleuly, Eassy, Saad and Rizk were Catholic. Green's church affiliation is unknown, and is yet one more mystery about one of the first Lebanese immigrants to settle in Greenville.<sup>53</sup>

The year 1917 marked the beginning of the first universal military conscription in the U.S. Non-citizens who were natives of enemy countries (Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy and Turkey) were not required to register, but many did so, especially if they were in the process of seeking

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<sup>53</sup> "Mrs. Rosa Najar," *The Greenville News* 8 December 1938, p. 6; 1896 city directory.

citizenship.<sup>54</sup> Military service was an important part of a group's claim to citizenship. This was established during the U.S. involvement in World War I through the actions of Japanese, Lebanese, and other non-dominant groups. The Lebanese, like the other groups who emigrated from the Ottoman Empire, which was one of Germany's allies, also felt the need to prove their loyalty to their new country. Aliens could not serve, but even over-age Lebanese male immigrants registered for military service. That the question of whether the Lebanese were eligible for naturalization had been settled by the Dow decision in 1915 must have encouraged Lebanese registration for military service.<sup>55</sup> As bad as things could be in the U.S. for the Lebanese, they remembered, had heard of, or knew that things were much worse in the Ottoman Empire, especially after the radical "Young Turks" seized control and began mobilizing for war.<sup>56</sup>

There were three registrations under the Selective Draft Act of 1917. The first one was held on June 5, 1917, for men ages 21 to 31. The second one, held on June 5, 1918, and August 24, 1918, "included those who had become 21 years old since the first registration." The third registration held on September 12, 1918, registered men ages 18 to 45.<sup>57</sup> The draft cards are an important source of

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<sup>54</sup> "Interpretation 315.2 World War I conscription statutes," <http://www.uscis.gov> dl 8 Sept 2006. This interpretation references the original conscription act of 18 May 1917 (40 Stat. 76) as well as the related Acts of 9 July and 31 Aug. 1918.

<sup>55</sup> *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian Experience*, Franklin Odo, ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 197; Boosahda, 136-140; Naff, 256-259; Gualtieri, "Becoming 'White' . . .," 29-30.

<sup>56</sup> Naff, 31-32.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

information, some of which, such as place of birth, is simply not available in other public records. The information given by the men in these four families in Greenville who registered for the draft is summarized below.

Charly Cahaly registered in 1917. He gave his birth date as April 23, 1890, and his place of birth as Damascus. Cahaly described himself as a “Merchant Confectioner,” who was married and the father of a three-week-old infant. He indicated that he was a naturalized citizen.

James Mitchell Faress signed his draft card on June 5, 1917. He gave his place of birth as Saffad, Syria, which is apparently the town of Safed in what is now Israel. Faress operated a “billiard room,” was a single alien, and reported that he had a broken knee cap. His only close relative in the U.S. was his brother, Fred, who spent most of his life in Charleston. Another brother, Faress, had left Greenville years before to live in Egypt.<sup>58</sup> This Faress family is an example of Lebanese immigrant entrepreneurs who became amusement providers. Being an amusement provider was another economic niche in the growing towns and cities of the South of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Basil Nashawaty, who later shortened his last name to Nash, was a nephew of Faris Cahaly, being a son of Mary Cahaly Nashawaty. There are Nashawaty families elsewhere in the U.S., mainly in New England. Basil

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<sup>58</sup> draft card; <http://www.safed.co.il> ; “Jim Faress Learns Of Brother’s Death,” *The Greenville News* 15 Jan 1942, 5.

apparently immigrated with his brother, Tony, who later moved south to Greenville, and a sister, to Rhode Island. Basil described himself as a “lunch room keeper” on his draft card, which is dated June 5, 1917. Basil reported that he was born September 10, 1887, in Damascus; that he was an alien, and that he supported his father and a sister.<sup>59</sup> The 1933 *Census of American Business* (Bureau of the Census) includes a lengthy definition for “lunch counter.” The definition covers a wide area, but the most important points are that these places were sources of quick, inexpensive lunches, the ancestors of our fast food chains.<sup>60</sup> Providing lunches for workers was another example of Lebanese entrepreneurs filling an economic niche: Greenville was just big enough that office workers could not get home for lunch and return in a short period of time

In 1930, Abraham and Willie Najjar were still at 16 Burdette Street, but Abraham was now listed as an “agent” selling fruit. Given the hardships suffered by so many people in Greenville during the early years of the Depression, this may have been a face-saving way of indicating that he was peddling fruit. Many of the Lebanese in Greenville were hit hard by the Depression, as were a lot of other people there and elsewhere. Some of the Lebanese in Greenville left permanently or temporarily.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> draft card; censuses; Faris Cahaly (I) obituary

<sup>60</sup> 1933 Census of American Business. Washington: GPO, 1935, 4.

<sup>61</sup> 1930 census

The 1935 city directory lists James M. Faress as living at 408 Vardry with his wife and children. Faress is listed as the proprietor of Jim's Billiard Hall. Abraham and Willie (listed as Annette) were still at 16 Burdette Street. Rosa Najar and her three younger children were still at 402 Vardry: Queen, the youngest, is the only one listed as working in the family business at 106 Pendleton Street. Rosa, who would die in 1938, may have already been unable to work in a store.<sup>62</sup> Basil Nash and his brother, Tony, who had been living in New Jersey, were running an eating place. Basil and Tony, unlike their Najar, Cahaly and Faress relatives, remained Orthodox, partly because they had lived for a while in the large Lebanese community near the silk mills in New Jersey, and partly because Greenville's Greek Orthodox community organized in the 1930s and bought a house they used as a church until they could build a church.<sup>63</sup>

Abraham Najar died July 30, 1937. According to his obituary, Abraham was a member of Welcome Baptist Church in Greenville, which is now in the western part of the city. Abraham and Willie lived beyond the city limits of Greenville, near the Anderson County line. (Welcome Baptist Church was most likely the nearest Baptist church, and possibly the nearest church of any denomination.) Abraham had been in bad health for some time, according to his

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<sup>62</sup> Rosa Najar's obituary

<sup>63</sup> "Parish History," St. George Greek Orthodox Church, <http://www.stgeorgegreenville.org/topics/History.html>; "Basil N. Nash," *The Greenville News* 13 May 1959, 6; "Tony N. Nash," *The Greenville News* 16 Nov 1956, 6.

obituary. Dr. Charles Najar, a brother living in Egypt, was the only one of Abraham's blood relatives listed among his survivors. Abraham was buried in Springwood cemetery in downtown Greenville, where the Najars had a plot. Springwood is and was the cemetery of the Greenville elite. In the Greenville County Probate records, Abraham's estate is listed as having an administrator, which means that he died without a will. The administrator was not a member of Greenville's Lebanese community, but also may not have been one of Willie's relatives. It looks odd that Abraham's administrator was neither his wife nor one of Rosa's adult children.<sup>64</sup>

Willie Najar survived her husband by just a few months, dying before the end of 1937. She was also buried in Springwood cemetery, in the Najar plot. The only Lebanese name in her obituary is that of Abraham, who is mentioned in passing as her late husband. Most of her pallbearers were family members. She was also a member of Welcome Baptist Church and had been born in Oconee County. Abraham and Willie had no children. There is no mention in her obituary of any of the Najars, except for her being Abraham's widow.<sup>65</sup> The reasons for the estrangement between Abraham and Philip or between Rosa and Willie are unknown, as all the involved parties are long dead, but there are

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<sup>64</sup> obituary

<sup>65</sup> obituary

several possibilities, ranging from intercultural misunderstandings to long-standing religious arguments.

Effie Cahaly died in October 1938. She had been born in Damascus as well. Her parents are listed in her obituary as Elias and Sophia Shatila. Effie was survived by three sisters, all of whom lived in Egypt at the time of her death. She was buried in the Cahaly plot at Springwood cemetery. Six of her seven pallbearers were members of the Upstate's Lebanese Catholic community. The seventh pallbearer may have been a fellow Episcopalian originally from Lebanon.<sup>66</sup> That Lebanese Catholics were pallbearers at a Lebanese Orthodox funeral was likely to have had something to do with a local ethnic club. There was a South Carolina Syro-Lebanese Club, but it quietly disappeared sometime after about 1960.<sup>67</sup>

Rosa Najar survived her mother by several weeks, dying in early December 1938. The immediate cause of her death was a heart attack, but "she had been in ill health for a year." Of her six pallbearers, four were members of the Upstate's Lebanese Catholic community. She was buried from Christ Episcopal Church and interred in the family plot at Springwood Cemetery.<sup>68</sup> A

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<sup>66</sup> "Mrs. Effie S. Cahaly," *The Greenville News* 25 Oct 1938, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Southern Federation of Syro-Lebanese American Clubs. <http://www.sfslac.org>. I have so far been unsuccessful in locating the club's records, although there is a letter in the Byrnes Collection from Mitchell Tibshrany, a real estate developer in Columbia who was a 1950s president of the club, in which he invited James F. Byrnes to speak at one of the SCSLAC's meetings.

<sup>68</sup> obituary



big funeral with a good turnout is one way to display status to the community as a whole, from a well-written obituary to a big turnout at the church to a long procession following the hearse to the cemetery – especially if the cemetery is, like Springwood, locally prestigious.

The outbreak of World War II in Europe provoked anxiety in the U.S. Not only were there large pacifist and pro-belligerent movements, isolationism was alive and well, and the violent events in both Europe and Asia were well publicized in radio news broadcasts, newsmagazine photos, and newsreels at the local movie theatres. It seemed obvious that aliens would be the most likely threat to the nation's wellbeing. That feeling resulted in the passage of an act to require all aliens to register in their county of residence.

The Alien Registration Act of 1940 required each county to register its resident aliens. Required information included name, date of birth, place of birth, race, occupation, business address and home address.<sup>69</sup> If a county had a small number of resident aliens, no book was kept, but, in Greenville County's case, there were enough resident aliens in 1940 for the registrants to fill 20-some large ledger pages. It is a valuable and informative resource for any student of immigration in the South.

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<sup>69</sup> "Alien Registration Act of June 28, 1940, 54 Statutes-at-Large 670," 9 Jun 2003  
<http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/legishist/484.htm> 8 Sep 2006.

The draft for World War II began following the passage of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940.<sup>70</sup> In this group of families, the only one found to have enlisted in World War II was George Cahaly, who was one of Charly Cahaly's sons. George Cahaly had been living in the Philippines, which was in the process of transitioning from being a colony of the U.S. to independence during the 1930s and early 1940s. George enlisted on July 17, 1942, at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. According to his enlistment record, George had had two years of high school and was "single with dependents." George Cahaly died in Greenville in November 2004.<sup>71</sup>

*The Greenville News* published a short item on page five of its January 15, 1942 edition about James Faress learning of the death of his brother, Faress M. Faress, in Egypt. Faress M. Faress "had been in the mirror manufacturing business for 25 years." Survivors other than his brother, James, and his wife and children included Fred, the other brother, and his wife and children, who were living in Charleston, as well as the Faress brothers' mother and sister, who were living in Egypt.<sup>72</sup>

Mrs. Mary Cahaly Faress, wife of James Faress, died in January 1943.

Mary had also been born in Damascus. She died after "several months' illness."

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<sup>70</sup> Schubert, Frank N. *Mobilization: The U.S. Army in World War II, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*.  
<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/mobpam.htm>.

<sup>71</sup> enlistment record ; SSDI

<sup>72</sup> p. 5

Her husband, their children (Josephine, Joseph and Albert) and her brother, Charly, were listed as her survivors. Services were to “be held from the Mackey mortuary.”<sup>73</sup>

There was another obituary for Mrs. Faress. It was published in the same newspaper the next day. The two sons were “students at the University of South Carolina” and the pallbearers were listed by name. All the pallbearers except one were Lebanese Catholic; the exception, Philip Barton, might have been a friend of the family.<sup>74</sup> Being a student at South Carolina College in the 1940s was a marker of whiteness in South Carolina society.<sup>75</sup> Attending South Carolina College also marked one as a future member of South Carolina’s elite.

George P. Najar, Phillip’s son, died in October 1945. His obituary appeared in *The Greenville News* on October 14<sup>th</sup>, on page B11. His sister, Queen, survived him by slightly more than forty years. Before her death, she converted to Catholicism and became a member of St. Mary’s parish in Greenville.<sup>76</sup>

The 1946-47 city directory listed the brothers Faris and Charly Cahaly as the proprietors of Tasty Lunch at 106 Cateechee Road. Charly Cahaly and his wife, Margaret, lived at 410 Jones Avenue, under the same roof as George, who was working as a clerk at Tasty Lunch, as well as the younger children, Edward

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<sup>73</sup> “Mrs. Mary C. Faress,” *The Greenville News* 7 Jan 1943, p. A8.

<sup>74</sup> obituary

<sup>75</sup> The University of South Carolina admitted its first African-American student in 1963 (<http://president.sc.edu/history.html>).

<sup>76</sup> “Queen Najar,” *The Greenville News* 9 July 1986, 6A.

and Louise. Faris lived with his wife, Mary, and their young child at 106 Cateechee. Edward eventually became the Family Court Judge of the 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, and a resident of Anderson. He died in 1985, at the age of 53, the most eminent member of his family.<sup>77</sup> The South Carolina Bar strictly controls admission to authorized practice of law in South Carolina even today: in past decades, they would have been even stricter about admission to their ranks.<sup>78</sup>

These four related families, the Najars, the Cahalys, the Faresses, and the Nashes, found the opportunities they sought when they emigrated to America. They all owned businesses, though not all achieved respectability. They owned businesses and were not Catholic, which gave them two advantages in the journey from the margins of South Carolina life to its center. That some married native-born spouses helped them in their struggle to achieve whiteness, or at the least gave their children an “assist” from birth in comparison to their cousins of entirely Lebanese descent. The further one could be from “foreign-looking,” the more likely one was to achieve whiteness, especially if one attended an acceptable church, like Christ Episcopal, and spoke English at home. Evidence of their movement to the center of society includes their ownership of businesses, occasional conversion to Protestant, especially Baptist, churches, and their

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<sup>77</sup> “Judge Cahaly of Anderson dies at 53,” *The Greenville News*, 15 Nov 1985.

<sup>78</sup> “Admission to the Bar” <http://www.sccourts.org/bar/>

attendance at the University of South Carolina, usually a preserve of the state's white elite and upper middle class.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE HARD WAY

Catholicism has always been a minority religion in the traditionally English-speaking Southeastern states such as the Carolinas. Before 1940 and the beginning of the influx of non-textile industries into the Carolinas, the percentage of Catholics in the population as a whole was minuscule.<sup>79</sup> There were obvious differences between Catholic worship and Protestant worship as well as between Catholic religious practice and Protestant religious practice. In addition, there was no sustained effort by the Catholic Church in the Carolinas to explain anything about Catholicism to the Protestant majority.

Catholics worshipped in Latin, not English. Unlike most of the local Protestants, Catholics had to follow a prescribed, complex order of worship (liturgy) and had to listen to a only a short sermon, if any. Catholics sang hymns, often in English, but these were sometimes very different from the hymns the Protestants sang during their services. Catholic priests wore vestments, sometimes very ornate, during Mass. A Catholic family would have at least one crucifix, and often at least one religious statue. At least one Jewish writer has

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<sup>79</sup> Joseph A. Varacalli, *The Catholic Experience in America*, Westport [CT]: Greenwood Press, 2006, 91-92.

commented on the “strangeness” of Catholicism to non-Catholics in the South before the 1960s.<sup>80</sup>

Catholicism also faced two other difficulties in the South before the 1960s. It was associated in the popular mind with the cities. Catholicism was also associated with the lower class and the working class.<sup>81</sup> Before 1940, most Southerners would have only met an educated Catholic if they talked with the local priest or one of the Sisters at a Catholic hospital or parochial school.

St. Mary’s Church in Greenville was the first Catholic Church built in the Upstate. The original building was erected in 1876. Several members of Greenville’s elite thought that a Catholic church would be a good thing for Greenville, especially since a Catholic church would attract immigrants to a town which was rapidly transitioning from a sleepy resort with a courthouse to a bustling center of distribution and industry. One of the reasons South Carolina worked to attract immigrants was because Ben Tillman, as Governor and later, Senator, among others, wanted to replace as many African-Americans as possible with white immigrants – any white immigrants.<sup>82</sup> There was also an unofficial

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<sup>80</sup> Eli Evans, *The Provincials*, New York: Atheneum, 1973, 221-224.

<sup>81</sup> Hennesey, 175. My mother was born in 1936, at the Catholic hospital in Charlotte, NC. As my grandparents were staunchly Protestant, I believe they made this decision because they perceived any private hospital as better than the public hospital. This question never occurred to me while my maternal grandparents were alive.

<sup>82</sup> Edgar, 421; Huff, 204-206; “A Brief History of St. Mary’s Church,” St. Mary’s Catholic Church, <http://www.stmarysgvl.org> dl 18 Oct 2006; Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000, 303-304.

policy within the white elite to drive the African-American entrepreneurs away and to replace them with white entrepreneurs, either immigrant or native born.<sup>83</sup>

Anti-immigration and anti-Catholicism feelings periodically flared up across the U.S., beginning in the 1830s. The flood of Irish and German immigrants in the 1840s ignited such growth in both the anti-immigration and anti-Catholic movements that they coalesced into "Know-Nothingism," which became a significant factor in national politics. "Know-Nothingism" subsided in the late 1850s and into the early 1870s, when it flared up again as anti-Chinese hysteria, which spread to become a national phobia against "Orientals" that included everyone from the continent of Asia including immigrants from Ottoman Turkey, such as the Lebanese. Eugenics, which was a type of "scientific" racism that exalted the "Anglo-Saxon," was a respectable intellectual fashion and would remain so until the 1940s. Meanwhile, the Ku Klux Klan became a major factor in daily life in many places across the U.S. after its resurrection in 1915. In many places, such as Greenville, the Klan allied with local Protestant churches. All this resulted in immigration restrictions and culminated in the almost complete shutdown of immigration that lasted, with occasional exceptions due to wars and other emergencies, from 1924 to 1965.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> J.A. MacKnight, "Levantines Driving the Negro Out of Business in the Gulf States," *The New York Times* 8 Apr 1906, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, SM5.

<sup>84</sup> John Higham, "American Immigration in Historical Perspective," 213-255, *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 21 No. 2, 213-255; Patrick Gerster, "Religion and Mythology," 158-162, *Volume 4: Myth*,



Not only did the Lebanese Catholic immigrants have to contend with nativist hysteria, they also had to contend with the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S., whose administration primarily consisted of Irish immigrants and descendants of Irish immigrants. The Lebanese were not the first Catholic immigrants to experience difficulties in dealing with the Irish dominance in the U.S. Catholic hierarchy, but they had some problems not experienced by other non-Irish Catholic immigrants such as the Germans and the Poles. Some of the Irish clergy and bishops discriminated against the Lebanese immigrants because they believed them not to be white. The most flagrant example of such prejudice was the Bishop of Richmond's refusal to sell the local Lebanese community cemetery space because he did not consider them to be white.<sup>85</sup>

Almost all Catholics in Ottoman Syria belonged to parishes in which the Mass was celebrated in a Middle Eastern language and in which the clergy shared both their ethnicity and their native language. Almost all these churches belonged to the Maronite and the Melkite rites. The Maronite Rite has been closely identified with and has closely identified itself with Lebanese identity and Lebanese nationhood. Maronites trace their Rite's history and liturgy to Antioch, which was the site of the first church council, which is chronicled in the

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*Manners, & Memory*, Charles Reagan Wilson, volume editor, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2006, 161-162; Huff, 323-325; Varacalli, 151-154; Olson, 168-178.

<sup>85</sup> Varacalli, 35-36; Kayal and Kayal, 140-143.

New Testament Book of Acts. Maronites take a great deal of pride in their liturgy (order of worship) being older than the liturgy of Rome. Maronites also take a great deal of pride that their Rite, almost alone among the Eastern Churches, never separated from Rome. The oldest Maronite churches in the South are those in Richmond (1909), Atlanta (1911), Roanoke (1913), and Birmingham (1914).<sup>86</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in particular, the Eastern Catholics were discriminated against by many Roman Catholic priests and bishops because married men could be ordained to the priesthood in the Eastern Catholic churches and because Eastern Catholic clergy were perceived as competition for parishioner dollars.<sup>87</sup>

Most of the Lebanese families who settled in Greenville before 1950 were Catholic. The first Lebanese to arrive in Greenville did so in the 1890s. One of the earliest Lebanese Catholics to arrive was John Jabbour, who had first lived in New York. His wife, Mary, arrived in Greenville sometime later.<sup>88</sup> The Jabbours, as well as Joseph and Rachel Syracuse, another early Lebanese couple in South Carolina, are the ancestors of many of the members of the Lebanese community today in the Upstate. As has been the case with other Catholic ethnic groups, Lebanese Catholics tended to marry other Catholics when they did not marry an

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<sup>86</sup> The Most Reverend Pierre Dib (Maronite Bishop of Cairo), *History of the Maronite Church*, Very Reverend Seely Beggiani (Rector, Maronite Seminary, Washington [D.C.]), tr. Detroit: Maronite Apostolic Exarchate, n.d., 207; Labaki, 86-90, 197-198, 210, 195, 207. The Maronite mission in the Upstate, the only one in South Carolina, was created in 2000. See <http://www.strafka.net>.

<sup>87</sup> Varacalli, 127; James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, 193-194.

<sup>88</sup> "J.J. Jabbour," *The Greenville News* 19 Jul 1943, 2; "Mrs. Mary Jabbour," *The Greenville News* 11 Aug 1948, 13.

individual from their own ethnic group.<sup>89</sup> The Jabbours' daughter, Aurelia, who was often listed as "Mollie," is on the 1920 census as a widow with young children, living in Greenville. Amin Abraham, this daughter's first husband, is listed in the 1909 through 1919 Greenville city directories under slightly different first names, including "Amil" and "Abe." Abraham died sometime between the time data was collected for the 1919 city directory and the day the census taker took information for the 1920 census. Aurelia Jabbour Abraham remarried in the 1930s to one of Greenville's Lebanese Howards.<sup>90</sup> Howard is a very prominent surname in Greenville's Lebanese Catholic community. It is unclear how or if all the Lebanese Catholic Howard families in the Upstate are related to each other.

Molly, the other Jabbour daughter, married Herbert Syracuse, who was born in Tripoli, Lebanon. Herbert's family had settled in Charleston. Herbert's father, Joseph, arrived in the U.S. in 1885 and made a few trips between the U.S. and Lebanon before he sent for his wife and six children. Herbert arrived in Greenville in 1905 and lived in Charleston occasionally before he permanently moved back to Greenville, sometime between the World Wars. Herbert was involved "in the wholesale fruit and produce business for some years" before going into the grocery business; in 1959, Bi-Lo bought the grocery chain of which he was a partner. Thus, Herbert Syracuse achieved financial success that he

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<sup>89</sup> Naff, 236-241.

<sup>90</sup> 1920 census; city directories 1909-1919; "Abraham Howard," *The Greenville News* 7 Jun 1946, 23; informants.

might not have even dreamed of as a boy in Lebanon. He also achieved social success and acceptance, at least within Greenville's Catholic community.<sup>91</sup>

Herbert and Molly were related to or the immediate ancestors of many of Greenville's pre-1950 Lebanese Christian community. For example, one of their daughters married Jamile Francis, son and grandson of local Lebanese businessmen. Jamile Francis, who spent his working life as a successful entrepreneur in Greenville, succeeded his father, S.B., as Greenville's premier Catholic philanthropist. Mr. Francis, who is still alive, helped make Greenville's Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital what it is today, helped make Greenville's Poor Clare Monastery possible, and has helped out other good causes. Not only has Jamile Francis achieved acceptance at the center of society, he is highly respected by his fellow Catholics in Greenville.<sup>92</sup>

Because Catholics in Greenville existed outside the local social hierarchy, St. Mary's Catholic Church and its clubs were the social centers for local Catholics, especially the Lebanese.<sup>93</sup> One of these clubs was Circle No. 5 of St. Mary's Church. Three of the charter members were Mrs. Thomas Shaleuly, Mrs. K. Howard, and Mrs. Mack Joseph. Other members pictured in the Greenville

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<sup>91</sup> "Co-Founder of Grocery Chain Dies," *The Greenville News* 21 Sept 1966, 6; 1910 Federal census; World War I draft card; "Joseph Syracuse," *The Greenville News* 21 Dec 1928, 8.

<sup>92</sup> "Co-Founder of Grocery Chain Dies"; Jimmy Cornelison, "The drive to do good in the community keeps Greenville native active at age 87," *The Greenville News* 13 Dec 2000, 1C, 11C.

<sup>93</sup> Stathakis, 209-211. It was common for immigrants such as the Lebanese to socialize among themselves in the Carolinas, due partly to the language barrier and partly due to cultural differences. They "lived where they could afford to" (Stathakis, 214).

*Piedmont* and *The Greenville News* articles about three of the Circle's Oriental Suppers, which were its annual fundraising events, were Mrs. Peter Sarkis, Mrs. Wade N. Howard, and Mrs. Sealany Eassy. The *Piedmont* article is about the Circle's 25<sup>th</sup> Oriental Supper. *The News* articles are about the Circle's 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Oriental Suppers: There is a lengthy article with recipes about the 15<sup>th</sup> Oriental Supper, while there is just one large photo with a caption in the coverage of the 27<sup>th</sup> Oriental Supper. The Circle is long gone, having, according to the surviving daughters of one of these ladies, fallen apart as the founding generation died off.<sup>94</sup> The founding members died off in the 1960s and 1970s, just before "The Great Ethnic Re-Awakening," as one author calls the movement, really began to take hold of the popular imagination in the mid-1970s. In the 1960s and 1970s, the second immigrant generation of Handlin's Law, which desired only to assimilate, was in control.<sup>95</sup>

From their early days in this country, Lebanese women banded together to form mutual aid societies. They founded and ran these societies in between running businesses and caring for children and older relatives.<sup>96</sup> There was no medical insurance or government relief. Neither were there insurance policies for

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<sup>94</sup> I found photocopies of these articles in the boxes of St. Mary's records made available to me by Bill Biediger, St. Mary's business manager, during my visit to the church offices to look at parish records in June 2005. No dates are visible on the original photocopies. Judging by the clothing, the hairstyles, and the eyeglasses, one article possibly dates from the 1950s. *The News* article might date from the late 1940s.

<sup>95</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, 2-3.

<sup>96</sup> Naff, 287-288.

renters. To raise funds, they solicited contributions from members of the club and members of the community, held sales, put on plays, and held suppers.<sup>97</sup> The Oriental Suppers were probably named that in order to get the most attention from both fellow parishioners and non-Catholic inhabitants of Greenville.

“Oriental” conveys strangeness and difference, but that would have attracted the most attendees, especially since these Suppers were held for at least 30 years.

Molly Shaleuly was one of the women pictured in *The Greenville News* article about the 25<sup>th</sup> Oriental Supper. Molly Shaleuly’s husband, Tom, was listed in the 1912 city directory as a confectioner at 704 Pendleton Street. The Shaleulys remained at this address for another decade or so, with the business changing occasionally to serve the changing needs of its immediate area. There were Shaleulys in Clarendon county, which had a large Lebanese community at the time: there was some sort of relationship as *The Greenville News* printed an obituary of a Shaleuly, a resident of Clarendon county, who died in Sumter in 1954, that mentioned the deceased had relatives in Greenville. They were not listed by name.<sup>98</sup>

The 1923 city directory listed Mollie as Tom’s widow and that she still lived at 704 Pendleton, but she was also listed at 426 Westfield Street, the location

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<sup>97</sup> Shakir, 59-64.

<sup>98</sup> 1912 city directory; 1919 city directory; 1920 Federal census; “Joseph Shaleuhy,” *The Greenville News* 26 Jan 1954, 13. I met one of the Clarendon county Shaleulys in early 1999, quite by chance. She was the last remaining member of that county’s once sizeable Lebanese community. She died a few years ago.

of her brother's grocery. Louis Shaleuly, relationship unknown, was listed as living at 704 Pendleton Street and operating a fruit store at that address. Richard, Mollie's brother, owned the grocery store at 426 Westfield Street, which was closer to St. Mary's, where he employed Mollie, Mamie (their mother), Annie (Emeline?), and George. Ruby is listed as living at this address as well, but was not listed as an employee.<sup>99</sup> When the unpredictable happens, one makes the best of things. Having family members nearby who could help out would have made things easier than they could have been. This is yet another demonstration of how close-knit immigrant families can survive adverse conditions.

By 1930, things were apparently going better for the Shaleuly family. On that census, Mollie was listed as owning 46 ½ Pendleton Street, where she lived and operated a fruit store. Living with her were her children, Emma (formerly Emeline), now 21; George, now 19; Jim, now 16, and Ruby, now 18. Emma and George worked as clerks for their mother<sup>100</sup>

In the 1935 city directory, George Shaleuly was listed as working for Herbert Syracuse at 23 West Coffee and James as working for Philip M. Coury at 236 Westfield. Richard Shaleuly lived and worked at 300 Manley. These three enterprises were groceries. Mollie's location in 1935 is unavailable in that year's city directory. However, she did register on July 10, 1940, in accordance with the

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<sup>99</sup> 1923 city directory.

<sup>100</sup> 1930 census. The entry for the Chinese neighbor's race is "Ch."

Alien Registration Act of 1940 and gave her address as 8 O'Neal Street in Greenville, and her date of birth as August 15, 1890. Mollie gave her occupation as "housekeeper," which was a standard answer for women who were not drawing a paycheck. The physical description, which was a required part of the alien registration process, listed her height as 5'6", her weight as 209, her hair as grey and her eyes as brown. She gave her race as "white," unlike many other immigrants.<sup>101</sup> Her height is interesting as that was far above average height for native-born women in the U.S. Being taller than average could have given her more authority than she might have otherwise had.

The 1948 city directory listed Mollie as living at 217 Grove Road, which would now be on or near the Greenville Hospital System's main campus. Her son, George, owned the Star Cash Grocery at 12 ½ Railroad Street in Richland Hill (possibly Fountain Inn) and lived at 1308 East North Street in Greenville with his wife, Grace, and their child. Her other son, James, worked at a grocery store at 201 Haynie and lived with his wife, Edith, and their two children at 132 Augusta Court, which was less than two miles away from the store. Richard, Mollie's brother, had a grocery store at 116 Sullivan and lived at 104 Tomassee Avenue with his wife, Mary, their three young children, and Della, who may have been their oldest. Della worked as a bookkeeper for Davis Auto Parts,

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<sup>101</sup> 1935 city directory; 1940 aliens book. Richard's wife, Marie Tanous Shaleuly, also registered as an alien. She was born in 1914.



which was located at 435 West Washington Street, across from St. Mary's Catholic Church.<sup>102</sup> This residential and occupational dispersal shows both the growth of Greenville County and the increase in prosperity which made automobiles much more affordable by the middle class. Christaller's Central Place Theory, which is a classic geographical theory, states that people tend to shop for groceries near where they live, and Greenvillians were obviously starting to desert the central city, perhaps partly due to "white flight."

In the 1953 city directory, Mollie was not listed, which was apparently an error, as she was listed in the 1955 city directory. The 1953 city directory does furnish some new information on members of her family: the mysterious Della in the 1948 city directory turned out to be Helen Shaleuly. She was still employed by Davis Auto Parts as a bookkeeper in 1953. Helen was not listed as a Shaleuly in the 1955 city directory. Joe Shaleuly, who was apparently Richard's son, was listed in the 1953 directory as a driver and as a clerk for Meyers-Arnold Department Store, a local downtown department store. Richard still had his grocery store at 116 Sullivan. All of the abovementioned were listed in the 1953 directory as living at 104 Tomassee Avenue. George and Grace Shaleuly still lived at 1308 East North in 1953 according to the city directory, and George still

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<sup>102</sup> 1948 city directory.

owned Start Cash Grocery at the same location listed in the 1948 city directory.<sup>103</sup>

The Lebanese frequently show up on records such as the census as living in multi-generation households, if not multi-sibling households. Traditionally, Lebanese immigrants spent little money on housing in order to accumulate savings to buy businesses and other investments.<sup>104</sup>

Mrs. K. Howard, another club member pictured in one of the newspaper articles, was Mrs. Kalil Howard. Her husband was commonly known as “Kay.” He arrived in the U.S. in 1916 and lived in Fall River, Massachusetts: many other members of Greenville’s Lebanese immigrant community had also worked in Fall River for a period of time before coming to Greenville. Kay Howard arrived in Greenville in 1919, according to his obituary; Rosa Hoyek (Howayeck?), his wife, arrived in the U.S. in 1920. They married in Lebanon just before he left for the U.S. Their first child, Alice, was born in 1924; their second child, Phillip, was born in 1927, and their third, Evelyn, was born in 1929. In 1930, they were living at 16 Hudson Street, where they operated a grocery store in the midst of an African-American neighborhood.<sup>105</sup> The Lebanese and other immigrants who lived and worked in the midst of African-American neighborhoods filled an

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<sup>103</sup> 1953 city directory; 1955 city directory

<sup>104</sup> Naff, 205-207.

<sup>105</sup> 1930 census; “Kalil Howard Dies At Home,” *The Greenville News* 4 Mar 1962, 8A. There is a Solomon Hayeck [sic] listed at 208 Mulberry Street in the 1901-1902 city directory. Other early members of Greenville’s Lebanese community, all of whom were as peddlers, lived here before and after 1901-1902: this was a handy location for a peddler to reside as it was walking distance from one of Greenville’s railroad station. What Solomon did for a living and how long he lived in Greenville are presently unknown.

economic need as few families owned cars and African-Americans would have had few other places to shop.

Kay Howard was listed in the 1923 city directory as operating a grocery store at 130 Hudson Street, which may have been the same location, as cities occasionally changed street numbers for various reasons. This address was at the intersection of Hudson and Oscar, not far from the location of the present main post office in Greenville, which is on West Washington Street, between Academy Street (US 123) and the Amtrak Station. Abraham Howard, who may have been one of Kay's relatives, was listed in the 1923 city directory as maintaining two adjacent stores, one for "meats" and the other for "soft drinks," approximately halfway down the next block. On the other end of the 200 block of Hudson, Sealany Eassy (Mrs. S.J. Eassy), operated a grocery store.<sup>106</sup> Hudson Street is also walking distance from St. Mary's.

Kay died in 1962. His survivors included Rosa; their oldest daughter; Alice, who has never married; their son, Philip, who was living in Greenville; three married daughters, "Mrs. Joseph G. Francis, Mrs. F.L. Moman, and Mrs. Harold J. Syracuse, all of Greenville," and several grandchildren.<sup>107</sup> Joseph G. Francis was a son of F.B. Francis, who was an uncle of Jamile Francis. Harold J. Syracuse was a son of Herbert J. Syracuse's brother, George, who had moved to

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<sup>106</sup> 1923 city directory

<sup>107</sup> "Kalil Howard Dies At Home"

Anderson county. This list of marriages shows second-generation Lebanese marrying within their ethnic group and outside it. All these marriages were apparently to fellow Catholics. The Francis and Syracuse families are prominent Lebanese and prominent Catholic families in the Upstate.

The 1920 census listed Mack and Mary Joseph as living at 301 Ware Street. They were listed with their three oldest children: James, age 8; Teffie (Taff/Taft), age 5, and Nagebia, age three. That one child out of three U.S.-born children had an “American” name was unusual in Greenville’s Lebanese community in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taff, who occasionally was recorded as “Taft,” had an Arabic name, as did Nagebia.<sup>108</sup> Nagebia is still alive, though in poor health. Her name occasionally appears in the list of St. Mary’s sick parishioners who have requested prayers. She is one of the oldest members of Greenville’s Lebanese community.

The location of the Joseph home and store on Ware Street was near the location of St. Anthony of Padua School, which is across Academy Street and some blocks towards downtown Greenville from Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital’s main location. In 1930, the census listed the Mack Joseph family as living at 211 Ware Street, where they had a grocery store. James, the oldest son was listed as a “salesman,” which meant that he worked for his father in some

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<sup>108</sup> 1920 census

capacity in the grocery store. James was now 18, Taft was 15, Nagebia 13, Isaac 8, Cecelia 5, Mary a toddler, and Evelyn a month old. Amina, who was apparently Mack's mother, and 75 to Mack's 44 and Mary's 34, lived with them. This was a neighborhood that was African-American except for the Joseph family.<sup>109</sup> St. Anthony of Padua Church was founded in 1939. It remains a predominantly African-American Catholic parish.<sup>110</sup>

There has been little media coverage of the Catholic Church or of Catholic events in Greenville, except when a connection with national or international events in Catholicism exists. In decades past, this state of affairs was possibly worse. Given the size and age of St. Mary's parish, especially when one observes its propinquity to the Central Business District, one can only interpret the relative silence as discrimination. At St. Mary's, there should be more carefully-preserved newspaper clippings about Catholic events in Greenville in decades.

One decades-past Catholic event in Greenville was the November 1937 meeting of the Junior Council of Catholic Women, which was held at the Eassy family home. That this meeting was reported in *The Greenville News* indicated that the Eassy family had some social standing. Selma and Rose Eassy and Lumia and Margaret Dumit, who were two members of another Greenville Lebanese family, were hostesses for this meeting. (Lumia Dumit later married one of the

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<sup>109</sup> 1930 census

<sup>110</sup> "A Brief History," St. Mary's Catholic Church, <http://stmarysgvl.org/ourparish/a-brief-history-of-st-marys-church>

Eassys' brothers.) The speaker was a foreign student at Greenville Women's College. Her name is not completely readable, but the item mentions that she was from Paris. She was "Miss Mecheniline How\_ns," and she may have been a relative of a member of Greenville's Lebanese community. <sup>111</sup>

The Junior Council of Catholic Women is defunct. Only individuals at the center of society are able to host club meetings in their homes and to get them into a large-circulation daily newspaper. The newspaper item about this meeting may also have been an unofficial social debut for the Eassys as well as for the Dumits. Catholic girls may not have been permitted to have debuts in Greenville in the 1930s, either by the Church or by any local organizations that might have sponsored debutante dances. The Eassys were apparently moderately prosperous, and the Dumits may have been less so.

In June 2005, I was allowed access to some of the records of St. Mary's Catholic Church. The records I was able to view consisted largely of color snapshots of gatherings and confirmation classes, newspaper articles, and programs for various events. One of the program booklets I saw was compiled for the "Twelfth Annual Conference/ Charleston Diocesan Council of the National Council of Catholic Women/ Dedicated to "Catholic Women in Defense"/ October 4, 5, and 6, 1941/ Cleveland Hotel/ Spartanburg, South

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<sup>111</sup> "Junior Council Met With The Misses Eassy," *The Greenville News* 9 Nov 1937, 7. St. Mary's Catholic Church has a chapter of the National Council of Catholic Women as its women's club. There is no club there specifically for younger women.

Carolina.” One page was devoted to a servicemen’s center, somewhat similar to a USO club, sponsored by The Spartanburg National Catholic Community Service, housed in a few rooms at the rear of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church. Sam J. Francis, a brother of Jamile Francis, was the club’s director. Spartanburg was the nearest city to Camp Croft,<sup>112</sup> At the time, Camp Croft was the only operating military installation close to either Greenville or Spartanburg. Donaldson Center, which began in the early 1940s as an air corps base, was not yet open.

St. Mary’s Catholic Church had a big celebration sometime in 1945 for the pastor, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his becoming a priest. There were multiple choirs, including a children’s choir, some of the members of which were children from the Lebanese families who were parishioners. These children were Teresa Francis, Catherine Howard, Helen Shaleuly, Michael Sijon, Joseph Syracuse, Rachel Syracuse and Lily Thomas. Sam J. Francis, Anthony Francis and Philip Howard belonged to St. Mary’s Men’s Choir. Victoria and Bertha Koury belonged to what was apparently the principal choir.

There were several committees: Jamile Francis was a member of the executive committee and Sam Francis was a member of the “Dramatics” committee. Mrs. Charles Dumit, Sealany Eassy, Richard Eassy, Mrs. S.B. Francis,

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<sup>112</sup> Huff, 383.

Alice Howard, Mrs. Mack Joseph, Victoria Khoury and Mollie Sarkis belonged to various committees for the celebration.<sup>113</sup>

Greenville was a growing town with a Catholic Church, which made it very different from most of the other towns in South Carolina. For before World War II, very few South Carolina towns had a Catholic church. Greenville was also different in that it was thriving even as most South Carolina towns had begun to lose population due to the economic changes in agriculture. People from all over South Carolina, from all over the South, from all over the United States, and from all over the world flocked to Greenville.

Greenville in this period had its problems, especially for outsiders and non-whites. There was crime, there was bigotry, there was poverty. The Ku Klux Klan, even in the years in which it controlled politics in many cities and towns across the U.S., was never as powerful in South Carolina, even in the Upstate, as it could have been. Though most publicity about the Klan focuses on its activities against African-Americans Catholics have always been very high, on the Ku Klux Klan hate list. The Ku Klux Klan's focus on enforcing "Sunday closing"

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<sup>113</sup> "Souvenir Program/ Golden Jubilee Celebration/ 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary/ of/ Rt. Rev. Andrew K. Gwynn, V.F./ May, Twenty-Third/ Nineteen Hundred Forty-Five/ Greenville, South Carolina." St. Mary's Catholic Church, Greenville.



laws was its major focus in South Carolina between the late 1920s and the 1960s: Catholic business owners would have been a major target of this Klan activity.<sup>114</sup>

But groups like the Lebanese managed to assimilate. For there were never enough of any one immigrant group for an immigrant group to populate an ethnic ghetto. Greenville did have neighborhoods that were largely immigrant for periods of time, but these neighborhoods were in fact mixtures of immigrants, and sometimes of immigrants, native-born whites and African-Americans. One of these neighborhoods was the “West End,” especially between about 1910 and 1930. Another was an area between St. Mary’s Catholic Church and the present Amtrak station on West Washington Street.

The Lebanese Catholics have been successful in assimilating into the mainstream of Greenville’s Catholic society, which is multi-ethnic. The Lebanese Catholic families have moved to the center of society because they have obtained educations, have built businesses or careers, and have met the criteria for “respectability” in South Carolina in most areas of life. Most South Carolinians look at practicing Catholics in much the same way they might look at practicing Jews – as representatives of the “other.” Many South Carolinians, especially in the Upstate, regard Catholics as non-Christians. Therefore, being a Catholic in

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<sup>114</sup> David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*. Third Edition. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987, 98-99; Huff, 323-325; Olson, 177.

South Carolina can mean that one must be satisfied with being a member of a shadow society.

Lebanese Catholics have been helped in their journey to the center in South Carolina by the long-standing Church support of anti-Communism; by popular admiration of such famous Catholics as Mother Teresa, and by the good reputation of Catholic schools and hospitals. Anti-Communism has been very popular in South Carolina since at least the 1930s. Mother Teresa might be the most well-known Catholic woman in South Carolina: her work among the poor received an impressive amount of publicity in the mainstream media. Catholic schools and hospitals have been conspicuous in the Carolinas since at least the 1930s: Catholic schools have a reputation for scholastic quality as well as for high conduct standards, and Catholic hospitals, which are the most numerous non-governmental hospitals in the state, have generally had a good word of mouth among the state's population as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

The main issue in the Lebanese quest for acceptance in South Carolina society has been “whiteness.” Whiteness is a concept that has changed over time and according to place. Religion, occupation, family life, food choices, physical attractiveness standards and place of origin all factor into whether an immigrant is judged white by the local native-born population.<sup>115</sup>

From Colonial days, there had been an established, though unofficial, hierarchy of religion in South Carolina. The Episcopalians occupied the top rung of the social ladder; Methodists, Lutherans and/or Presbyterians occupied the second rung, depending upon the area of South Carolina one lived in; Baptists occupied the third, and Pentecostals and Holiness occupied the lowest. Jews and Catholics were apart from the ladder, though they, like the members of the denominations on the ladder, had their own subgroups, which were based on such things as the date of subgroup’s arrival in South Carolina.<sup>116</sup>

The majority of the Lebanese immigrants who arrived in South Carolina before 1950 were Catholic. The next-largest group of Lebanese immigrants who arrived in South Carolina before 1950 were Orthodox, almost all of these became

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<sup>115</sup> David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*, New York: Basic Books, 2005, 50-51.

<sup>116</sup> Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *My Father’s People*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002, 9-10; Packard, 194-199, 202-204; personal experience. Rubin grew up in the eastern part of South Carolina.

Episcopalian because there were no Orthodox churches in South Carolina before the 1930s. This worked out well for those who became Episcopalian because being Episcopalian in South Carolina was an almost sure way of becoming a member of the local elite. There was a small group of these families in Greenville and a larger group in Columbia.<sup>117</sup>

A few Lebanese Catholic families found themselves far away from the nearest Catholic church, and thus converted. When there was a large group of Lebanese families in a rural area, they might get together to build a Catholic church and get the Diocese to send them a priest: this happened in Clarendon County, South Carolina. But in other places, such as Greenville, the Lebanese Catholic families made themselves indispensable to the growth and development of the parish and local Catholicism in general.<sup>118</sup>

Being active in one's church is an established way to gain status in the South, no matter what the church. However, this was not usually the case in the late 1800s and early 1900s for those in South Carolina who were not Protestant as those years were the heyday of anti-Catholicism and anti-immigration fanaticism. Because Catholicism and Orthodoxy were so strange in an era in

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<sup>117</sup> Stathakis, 202-203. There were subsets of the white elite in South Carolina. Across the state, as well as in the nation as a whole, to be Episcopalian was to be a member of the highest elite. Presbyterians and Methodists were almost always middle class and, in many areas of South Carolina, upper middle class, but those who gained wealth tended to move to the local Episcopal church, where those who aspired to become members but were not acceptable, were discreetly discouraged.

<sup>118</sup> Stathakis, 203; Deirdre C. Mays, "Our Lady of Hope Church dedicated," *The Catholic Miscellany* 15 Dec 2005, Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston, [http://www.catholic-doc.org/miscellany/2005/december\\_15\\_dedication.html](http://www.catholic-doc.org/miscellany/2005/december_15_dedication.html) dl 23 Oct 2006.

which there was no television and few movies, and much of the population was illiterate, it was easy to ignite religious hatred, especially when times were bad. This created problems for some and may have deterred immigrants.

The Lebanese who were Protestant when they came to South Carolina had a somewhat different experience, however. They were still “strange” and “foreign,” but they attended local, long-established churches. However, they tended to keep to themselves until World War II, when the immigrants’ children reached adulthood and had grown up going to school with the local native-born children. One example of this was the Lebanese community in Dillon, South Carolina, which is almost extinct. The most prominent example of this in the Lebanese community in Dillon was the Saleeby family, which achieved statewide prominence.

The first Lebanese in the then-new town of Dillon, South Carolina, was Charles Saleeby, who had come from North Carolina. He was soon joined by his parents, his siblings, and other relatives. According to his father’s obituary, this Saleeby family had become Presbyterian years before, while still in Lebanon.<sup>119</sup> The other two Lebanese families in the community were the Hobeikas, into which one of Abdullah Saleeby’s daughters-in-law married after her first

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<sup>119</sup> “Abdullah A. Saleeby Dies From Stroke,” *The Dillon Herald* 14 Sept 1933, 1; Durward T. Stokes, *The History of Dillon County South Carolina*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1978, 198.

husband died, and the Samahas, who were related to Abdullah Saleeby somehow.

Occupation was another yardstick people used to determine whiteness. Working in an occupation that induced sweat and made one dirty and smelly was a negative. Working in any type of factory before World War II was a negative. Working in any job that both required and resulted in clean clothes was a positive, especially if one owned the business. Both the Lebanese and the Upcountry whites came from cultures that prized individualism, but the Lebanese did better than whites with similar educational backgrounds because the Lebanese prized frugality and could draw upon their family networks for both financial help and experienced advice.<sup>120</sup>

The Lebanese, as well as their fellow entrepreneurial immigrants in South Carolina, were seen as useful by the establishment. The establishment for a time wanted to drive African-Americans out of business. They did this partly by making loans to immigrant businessmen and partly by making it harder for African-American businessmen to stay in business. The immigrant businessmen, such as the Lebanese, saw what was going on and, as they were always talented

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<sup>120</sup> Roediger, 51-52; Stathakis, 165-166; Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 21-22.

at picking up on their communities' feelings, adopted local customs about race as well as other aspects of daily life.<sup>121</sup>

Education was one way to gain whiteness as well as respect in South Carolina, especially if it enabled a person to pursue a respected occupation. Two members of the Lebanese community in Dillon were examples of this. The first was Dr. Mitchell Saleeby, a son of Abdullah Saleeby. Dr. Saleeby obtained his medical training in Philadelphia as well as Charleston. He began his practice in Dillon before 1920 and died in 1949 after a long career in which he was recognized for his professional expertise.<sup>122</sup> The second was John E. Hobeika, who published some works on Southern history, including a 1932 biography of Robert E. Lee.<sup>123</sup>

There were some complaints in print about the customs of the Lebanese and their habit of living in what were viewed as overly-crowded conditions. However, the Lebanese married, stayed married, and usually had many children, all of which were behaviors expected of any native-born American before 1950. They helped out family members in distress, whether those family members were in this country or back home in Lebanon. Many of them took younger

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<sup>121</sup> Stathakis, 163-164, 172.

<sup>122</sup> "Dr. M.A. Saleeby Claimed by Death," *The Dillon Herald* 6 Jan 1949, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Lee, *The Soul of Honor: An Appreciation by an Orientalist with Additional Facts*, Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1932 reviewed by Avery Craven in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2. (Sep 1932), 289-290. John E. Hobeika received a lot of publicity from *The Dillon Herald*, which was his local newspaper.

family members, such as nieces, nephews and cousins, into their homes to give them a start by employing them in their businesses. Except for the sending of money overseas, most Southerners would have viewed their family behavior favorably, which would lead to their acceptance of the Lebanese as “white.”<sup>124</sup>

The foods Lebanese customarily ate at home in Lebanon, even in their ethnic neighborhoods in the North, were almost completely unknown to their Southern neighbors before the 1980s. Lamb has never been a staple in the traditional diet. Beans were not eaten in paste form, such as in hummus: Southerners might boil them into tastelessness, but the beans were nonetheless identifiable as beans. Taboule, a salad of bulgur, mint leaves and spices, would also have been completely alien to most pre-1980s Southerners. Today, the traditional Lebanese diet, except for the desserts, is regarded as very healthy and chain grocery stores routinely carry several varieties of hummus and often carry at least one brand of taboule. But before the 1980s, Lebanese immigrant families in the South had to hunt for these foods if they didn’t have good recipes for them, or else they had to order from ethnic groceries in other parts of the U.S.<sup>125</sup>

“Whiteness” has depended to some extent also upon physical attractiveness. In the South of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ideal of female attractiveness was the diminutive blue-eyed blonde. Judging by the

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<sup>124</sup> Truzzi, 18-20; Ted Ownby, “Family,” 55-61, *Myth, Manners, & Memory*, 55-61; informants.

<sup>125</sup> Stathakis, 207-209; P.H. Najjar estate papers; Madelain Farah, *Lebanese Cuisine*, New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1985.



physical descriptions in the aliens book, Lebanese women spanned the full range of “normal” adult female height, from 5’0” to 5’6,” and a few of the immigrant generation had blue or grey eyes; however, most were brown-eyed brunettes, not blondes. The Lebanese in the South began marrying “out” in large numbers in the 1940s, due partly to their low numbers and partly due to societal changes. Following in the paths of other Catholic immigrant groups, the Lebanese Catholics often married fellow Catholics in other ethnic groups, such as Germans and Italians. Two and three generations later, few Lebanese Catholics in the South under the age of 50 therefore look much different from the general population of Southern whites.<sup>126</sup>

The Lebanese also took to the courts when their petitions for naturalization were denied, beginning in 1909. The law of 1906 that created the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (later the Immigration and Naturalization Service and now Immigration and Customs Enforcement) had made naturalization harder to obtain. Two of these naturalization denial cases took place in South Carolina. The more significant of the two was that brought in 1914 by George Dow, a Lebanese merchant living and working in Charleston. Dow’s case was backed by the Syrian American Association. It went to court multiple times and was finally settled by a Federal judge in 1915 who ruled on

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<sup>126</sup> Wilson, “Beauty, Cult of,” 17-20.

the basis of the negative argument that Syrians, as both Syrians and Lebanese were then known, were not African-American, nor South Asian and not East Asian. Dow and the Syrian American Association had unsuccessfully argued in earlier hearings of this case that he should be granted naturalization due to the “Syrians” being Christian, due to the Semitic contribution to Western history and tradition and due to the Lebanese community’s contribution to society in South Carolina as well as the United States as a whole.<sup>127</sup> The Dow case was perhaps the first civil rights case that mobilized an ethnic group across the United States.

It has been a long struggle, but the Lebanese have long been regarded as white in both the U.S. and the South. There have been occasional problems, mainly in connection with the “Arab” stereotype, especially during and after Arab-Israeli wars. Few Americans are aware that there are Christians in the Middle East who speak Arabic and fewer Americans are aware that there are many Christians here in the Southern U.S. whose ancestors were some of these Arab-speaking Christians. The descendants of these pre-1950 immigrants rarely speak Arabic or know much about their families’ backgrounds in the Middle East partly because both the first and second generations were anxious to be “American” and partly because, except in the large Lebanese ethnic communities of the North, there were few resources available to teach Arabic to members of

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<sup>127</sup> Sarah Gualtieri, “Becoming “White””: Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States,” 29-58, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Summer 2001, 40-46.

the second and third generations. Even without Arabic language skills, descendants of Lebanese immigrants who settled in the South before 1950 travel to Lebanon when they can and the home towns in Lebanon of these Lebanese Americans are so aware of this interest that many have posted web sites that are entirely or largely in English.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Naff, 324-327; Boosahda, 204-206; informants; personal experience.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix One Some Statistics from a Parish Directory

The most recent directory for the parish of St. Mary's Catholic Church was compiled in late 2002 and published in 2003. I compiled a list of presumed ethnicities by examining the 576 photographs of parishioners in the directory. Each photograph pictured one, two or several (i.e., family group) parishioners.

- Lebanese or other Middle Eastern: 27
- French or French-Speaking Canadian 15
- Italian 34
- Scots or Irish 77
- Eastern European 40
- Greek 2
- Hispanic/Latino or South American 33
- East Asian (mainly Filipino) 8
- German 95
- English 228
- African-American 3

A tabulation of presumed ethnicities of the individuals in these photographs would produce quite different results due to the obviously great number of

ethnically-mixed marriages as well as due to foreign adoptions.

Comparatively few parishioners are members of families that have belonged to St. Mary's for more than three generations. The parish has grown tremendously over the years. According to literature from the parish, the total membership of the parish is six thousand households.

Many who have joined the parish since 2001 are converts, mainly from other varieties of Christianity. St. Mary's has received national publicity over the past few years for its strict adherence to Papal teaching as well as its involvement with the Catholic "new evangelization" movement.

Appendix Two  
Table Constructed from  
the Greenville County Aliens Book

Table 2. Countries of Origin Reported by Individuals  
Listed in the Greenville County Aliens Book

(Table Constructed from Greenville County Aliens Book)

Country of Origin	Number Listed	Notes
Lebanon	38	Lebanon was founded in 1920. The individuals I have listed as such designated place of origin as within Ottoman Syria. Lebanon was created in 1920 but did not become independent until the 1940s.
Greece	52	These individuals listed their place of origin as within the contemporary boundaries of Greece or as "Turkey" but have Greek surnames
Russia	10	As listed. Some may have come from what is now Poland, but Poland did not exist between the late 1700s and 1920. All of these individuals were apparently Jewish
Italy	3	
Cuba	2	Greenville had a cigar factory between 1903 and 1930, and this may be what brought the Cubans to Greenville.
Belgium	6	They were connected with the textile industry.
Brazil	1	This individual was born in Brazil but the name given is "Anglo." Brazil has a long history of multiculturalism.
Sweden	2	Possibly war related
France	1	Possibly war related
German	17	Likely refugees

England	16	Likely to be either war related or some connection to the textile industry
Canada	14	Textile related?
Azores	1	
Switzerland	2	Textile related?
Austria	7	War refugees
Denmark	1	Likely to be a war refugee
Ireland	4	
Venezuela	1	
Albania	1	A long-time resident alien: a grand-daughter lives in Pickens
Norway	1	Likely war refugee
Hungary	1	Likely war refugee
Australia	1	Possible connection with Donaldson Army Air Corps Base in Greenville County



Appendix Three  
Lebanese Women in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Greenville

Except for a few minor changes, this is the paper I presented on 10 March 2006 at the Women's Studies seminar on campus.

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Lebanese Women in Greenville 1900 – 1950:  
A Tradition of Working White Women

Greenville, in the early 1900s, was a trading and distribution center as well as the self-designated "Textile Capital of the South." The U.S.- born, Protestant, white elite ran the city and owned almost all the industry, most of which consisted of cotton mills. Almost all the U.S.-born, Protestant, white non-elite who lived in Greenville worked in the cotton mills. Much of Greenville's African-American population worked as domestics and manual laborers for the white population, but there was an African-American elite in Greenville: there were African-American teachers, clergymen, and businessmen.

Greenville's foreign-born white population grew rapidly in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Two of the larger immigrant groups were Jewish people from Central and Eastern Europe and Greeks. Some of the smaller groups were

northern Europeans, many of whom were skilled craftsmen in Greenville's textile mills, Syrians, Latin Americans, and Chinese.

The "Syrians" had come from the province of Syria in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Syria included the present nations of Lebanon, Syria, and areas now in contiguous parts of Turkey, Israel, the West Bank and Jordan. Because most of the immigrants from this area in this time period came from what is now Lebanon, I will refer to them as "Lebanese" rather than as "Syrians." [MAP OF LEBANON] The "Lebanese" emigrated both as individuals and in family groups: Lebanese women attracted attention because they would emigrate as individuals. Most of the people who left Ottoman Syria for the West before 1941 were Christians, largely because these Christians knew that they would be able to fit into any majority Christian society with relative ease. Most of the Lebanese Christians who left Lebanon in the late 1800s and early 1900s were people from the farms and small towns of the mountains of Lebanon. Those who came to the U.S. often landed first in the northeastern U.S. and worked in the textile factories there for a while before leaving for Southern towns and cities such as Greenville. The first Lebanese in Greenville were here in time for the 1900 Census: Lebanese immigration to the U.S. began around 1880.

The Lebanese, who have often been referred to as "Syrians," quickly became known for being peddlers. Both men and women worked as peddlers.

Peddling required little capital, no skills, and a minimal command of English: new immigrants would enter upon some sort of contractual relationship with a merchant who would furnish them with a pack and some manufactured items to trade or sell. In the beginning, these items were religious items truly or allegedly from “the Holy Land.” Later, the pack items would tend towards small necessities for the busy farmwife, such as sewing supplies and ornamental lace: the early peddlers walked their routes, overnighing with farm families when they couldn’t get back to their boarding houses. Cash was in short supply, so a farmwife would frequently trade for her purchases with eggs and other produce. This type of trading is often thought to be a major reason for Lebanese going into food-related businesses.

The peddlers who stayed in this country usually saved up their money and opened small stores or eating places that were patronized by office workers and business people. They usually settled in growing towns and cities. Most Lebanese had been members of local Catholic churches in their native country and joined Catholic churches when they settled down here in the U.S. Some Lebanese had been members of Orthodox churches in Lebanon and many of these joined Orthodox churches in the U.S. or Protestant churches that welcomed them. When a Lebanese immigrant married a native-born Protestant woman, he

might join her church, especially if he lived in an area with no local Catholic church.

In Greenville before 1940, most immigrant families lived in what is now known as the “West End” because that was an area in which they could operate stores, eating places, and boarding houses and live on the premises. The folks with money tended to live on North Main Street or in the neighborhood behind the main library in Greenville. (MAP OF GREENVILLE)

Lebanese women are often listed on early 20<sup>th</sup> century censuses as not working because the Census Bureau instructed its census takers not to list people as “workers” if they were not “gainfully employed;” that is, if they worked within the family business and did not draw pay. Lebanese daughters, when they worked outside the home, usually did so in some type of office work or in skilled, presumably high-pay manufacturing. There are very few wives and daughters in these families who show up in censuses as working in the mills. Working in dirty environments, particularly in heavy labor, meant a major loss of status as well as a potentially permanent loss of whiteness: the Lebanese concentration in retail and food industries in the South is the major reason Lebanese have had higher group status in the South than in the industrial North.

Greenville was late in implementing segregated neighborhoods: the first Greenville city ordinance regulating racial composition of neighborhoods was

enacted in 1912. Some of these Lebanese merchants lived either on the boundary line between a white area and an African-American area and some lived in an otherwise entirely African-American area.

Some of the Lebanese immigrants' descendants who have lived in Greenville all their lives indicate that they inhabited a social limbo: in the eyes of some, they were not quite white because they did not look "American" and were not Protestant, but they definitely were not African-American.

Here are some examples of Lebanese working women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Greenville:

1. Rachel Thomas was born in 1904 in South Carolina. She was a daughter of Charlie and Isabel Thomas. They owned a grocery store in Greenville for most of the forty years from 1910 through 1950. In 1930, Charlie is listed as a salesman of wholesale produce, which may mean that he was peddling.
  - a. On the 1920 census, Rachel was working as a buncher in Greenville's cigar factory, which was located just off Main Street.
  - b. On the 1930 census, Rachel is listed as a department store saleslady, but there is a notation that she was presently unemployed. Rachel was single and living with her parents, which was not uncommon among the children and grandchildren of Lebanese immigrants.

2. There is a large Lebanese family I will identify only as "E." Sealany, wife of a local grocer who also owned a local bottling company when he died in 1936, sometime in his fifties, was listed as an employee in her husband's grocery as early as the 1920 census, when she was in her late 20s, and the mother of several children. Solomon and Sealany had three daughters and several sons.
  - a. Selma was their oldest daughter. She was born in 1912 and was a clerk in the family grocery in her teens. She is listed in the 1949 Greenville city directory as owning a Café – and as working in the family grocery store. She owned her own grocery store from sometime in the 1950s until sometime before her death in 1978. She never married, and lived with her mom as well as with assorted brothers and sisters.
  - b. Rose and Anne are the other two daughters. They are retired now. Rose worked as a bookkeeper for a local company for several years and Anne held several office jobs.
  - c. These ladies as well as their sisters-in-law who stayed in Greenville are all over the clippings I found in my church's files. They belonged to church clubs and participated in many church

activities. Non-church-associated clubs for non-elite women did not exist in great numbers in Greenville before 1950.

Greenville has benefited enormously from the diversity of its population throughout its history, from its early inhabitants whose ancestors originated in Britain and many areas of Europe as well as in the Indian bands in the South to the internal migrants and immigrants of later years and the present.

THE END

Appendix Four  
Illustration of Immigrants Replacing African-American Business Owners

One reason the white elite in South Carolina encouraged immigration was to eliminate African-American businesses. Here is an illustration of white businesses, including immigrants' businesses, replacing African-American businesses in a small area of Pendleton Street in Greenville. I have bracketed nearby Lebanese immigrants' businesses. (My sources are city directory street indexes.)

1896

630	W.H. Ware	African-American
631	O. Wilson	African-American
632	Boling & Batson	
633	B.R. Tolbert	African-American
634	R.B. Dilworth	
636	Vacant	
638	W.J. Steel	
640	Miss E. Hunnicutt	
642	C.P.W. Sullivan	



1899-1900

630	W.H. Ware, barber	African-American
631	Mary Wilson, lunch	African-American
632	T.W. Moseley, grocer	African-American
633	S. Williams, shoemaker	African-American
634	R.B. Dilworth, grocer	
636	A. Stenhouse, meat market	African-American
638	R.N. Gallamore & Co., grocer	
639	C. Kilgo, blacksmith	African-American
640	W.H. Burns, grocer	
642	P.F. Cox, merchant	

1901-1902

630	J.R. Kennedy, barber	African-American
631	Vacant	
632	Lewis & Co., grocers	African-American
633	Vacant	
634	Gilreath & Balentine, butchers	
635	Vacant	
636	Vacant	

638 Walker & Hauser, fruits, confectionery and restaurant

640-642 W.H. Burns, groceries, millinery, etc.

1903-1904

630 J.R. Kennedy, barber African-American

631 J.A. Granger, boarding

632 Harriet Robinson, lunch room African-American

634 A. Stenhouse, meat market African-American

636 A.J. Robinson, grocer African-American

638 Gilreath & Boling, meat market

640-642 Phillips & Major Co., general merchandise

1909

[626 J.J. Jabbour, confectioner Lebanese]

630 J.R. Kennedy, barber African-American

631 J.E. Payne

632 Vacant

634 A.J. Robinson, grocer African-American

636 Foster Giles, barber African-American

638 T.L. Gilreath, butcher

642	A.H. Najar, general merchandise	Lebanese
<u>1912</u>		
630	J.R. Kennedy, barber	African-American
631	W.P. Garrett	
632	Susan Robinson, eating house	African-American
634	A.J. Robinson, grocer	African-American
636	Robert Robinson, pressing [clothing maintenance]	African-American
638	T.L. Gilreath, meats	
640	J.T. Jenkinson, meats	
642	A.H. Najar, grocer	Lebanese
[704	Thomas Shaleuly, confectioner	Lebanese]
<u>1919</u>		
[622	John Jabbour, confectioner	Lebanese]
630	J.R. Kennedy, barber	African-American
631	E.W. Wyatt	
632	Lula McMorris	African-American
634	A.J. Robinson, grocer	African-American
636	Harriet Robinson, lunches	African-American

- 638 Detroit Tire Repair Works
- 640 J.C. Gaines, shoemaker
- 642 W.T. Burns, watch repair
- [704 Tom Shaleuly, grocer Lebanese]
- [708 Mrs. Mollie Syracuse, fruits Lebanese]
- 1923
- [622 John Jabbour, fruits Lebanese]
- 630 J.R. Kennedy, barber African-American
- 631 E.W. Wyatt
- 632 American Steam Pressing Club [a type of gym for men]
- 636 L.W. Rogers Co., grocer
- 636 ½ Vacant
- 638 Detroit Tire Repair Works
- 640 Floyd & Hatcher, shoe repair
- 642 Y.J. Strawn Grocery Company
- [704 Louis Shaleuly, fruits Lebanese]

The above list illustrates that, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century began, the number of African-American business owners in Greenville began to decline. These

Lebanese businesspeople took the places that had been occupied by the African-American business owners or younger generations of African-American business owners. Businesses were also acquiring names: it was no longer standard for a business to be known by its owner's name.

Appendix Five  
Permission Correspondence

My request:

Date: Sun, 12 Nov 2006 00:43:03 -0500

To: asklibrarian@greenvillelibrary.org

From: Elizabeth Whitaker <whitake@clemson.edu>

Subject: For SC Room: Need Permission to Use 1922 Map in Thesis

I have written my thesis on the Lebanese families who arrived in South Carolina before 1950. Because I have concentrated on the Lebanese community in Greenville before 1950, I have made use of a 1922 map I photocopied in the SC Room. There is no copyright notice on it: it was printed in 1922 for the Chamber of Commerce. It would be a great help to both my readers and me if I could use it in my thesis.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Whitaker  
whitake@clemson.edu

The Library's reply:

Subject: RE: For SC Room: Need Permission to Use 1922 Map in Thesis  
Date: Mon, 13 Nov 2006 11:17:18 -0500  
Thread-Topic: For SC Room: Need Permission to Use 1922 Map in Thesis  
From: "Cori Dulmage" <cdulmage@greenvillelibrary.org>  
To: <whitake@CLEMSON.EDU>  
Cc: "Susan Boyd" <sboyd@greenvillelibrary.org>

Dear Elizabeth,

You're in luck -- anything published before 1923 without an explicit copyright notice is in the public domain, so you're free to use the image in any way you like. Of course, if you'd note that the original is in the collection of the South Carolina Room of the Greenville County Library System, we'd appreciate it, but you're under no obligation to do that.

Best of luck with your thesis, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need further assistance.

Cori Dulmage  
South Carolina Room  
Greenville County Library System  
cdulmage@greenvillelibrary.org  
(864) 242 5000 x2269

From: Ask Librarian  
Sent: Mon 11/13/2006 9:12 AM  
To: scroom  
Subject: FW: For SC Room: Need Permission to Use 1922 Map in Thesis

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In addition to being one of the leaders of Greenville's Greek community, Nick Theodore is a former Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina.

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