

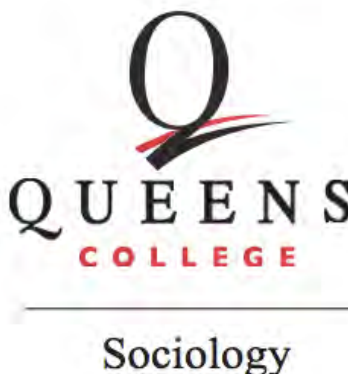
HELLENIC AMERICAN PROJECT

NEWSLETTER



Hellenic American Project
65-21 Main Street, RM: 015
Queens, NY 11365
☎ (718) 997-2811
www.hapsoc.org

Nicholas Alexiou
Department of Sociology
☎ (718) 997-2826
hapsoc@qc.cuny.edu



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1
JANUARY 2021

“ROMANIOTE JEWS IN THE UNITED STATES”

Greek American Studies has traditionally focused on the immigration of Greek Orthodox peoples to the US, especially on the nature of their local communities and on issues regarding their ethnic identity. Largely omitted have been members of other Christian denominations. Falling into this category are groups such as Greeks of the Jewish faith. In this respect the sociological analysis of the Hellenic immigration to the United States remains incomplete. The present sociological investigation of the Romaniote Jews in the United States is among the few of its kind. The immigrant experience of the Romaniotes, Greek-speaking Jews who trace their roots to Alexandrian and Roman times, is very similar to that of Greek Orthodox immigrants. Moreover, Romaniote Americans continue to identify themselves as Greek Jews. They maintain ties to the Greek homeland and with New York's Kehila Kedosha Janina, the only Romaniote synagogue in North America. Although Romaniotes comprise a small community, a study of their experiences provides information on a Greek American community that has so far been mostly ignored, and it identifies aspects of ethnic identity that are common to both Christian and Jewish Greeks.

Massive Greek immigration to the United States did not occur until the twentieth century. The first massive wave took place between 1900-1924 and a second smaller wave took place in 1965-1980. The first wave was part of the Great Migration from Europe that began in the 1880s and the second followed passage of the Hart-Cellar Act that removed ethnic quotas. Greeks were among the last of the Europeans to immigrate to America during the Great Migration, and their numbers are relatively small when compared to neighboring nations like Italy. Immigration and Naturalization Service data provides documentation that about 421,000 Greeks immigrated to the United States between 1890 and 1924. Although they formed enclaves on the West Coast, the vast majority settled on the East Coast (primarily Florida and New York) and the industrial Midwest (Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh). The anti-immigration laws of 1924 produced four decades of declining immigration. As a result only about 66,000 Greeks came to America between 1930 and 1960. These numbers reflect Greeks who came with Greek passports or otherwise identified themselves as Hellenic. Numerous other Greeks carried

Italian, British passports, or other passports so it is likely the total number of immigrants in the first forty years of the century is between 600,000 and a million.

The second wave of Greek mass migration occurred in the years between 1965 and 1980 and abated thereafter due to improving economic conditions in Greece that culminated with Greece's admission to the European Union. Although the numbers of the Second Wave did not reach the peak of the first immigration period, about 200,000 Greeks entered the United States between 1960 and 1980, showing a settlement pattern favoring large urban centers of the United States. Since the 1980s there has been no other waves of immigration from Greece. The number of immigrants has hovered at one to two thousand annually with almost an equal number returning to Greece.

In the census taken in 2000, a little over one million Americans claimed Greek heritage, a rather small fraction of a total population hovering near three hundred million. The current population of Greece is approximately eleven million, a figure that includes approximately one million Albanian immigrants. Thus, while Greek Americans are a small fraction of the American population, they comprise one of the largest Greek communities outside of Greece itself. The largest numbers of Greek Americans reside in New York (200,000) and Chicago (100,000). As a result of the Second Wave immigration, in the 1970s in New York City "the Astoria section of Queens with sixty to seventy thousand Greeks became the largest Hellenic settlement outside Greece or Cyprus."

The above population estimates pertain to immigrants of Greek origin in general, without specific distinction of religious background. There is no breakdown in regard to Greek Jews in America, for Sephardics or Romaniotes and other Jewish subdivisions. What is known is that the only Romaniotes synagogue in the United States, which is located in New York City, maintains a mailing list of approximately 3,000 families. This count, however, is not exhaustive since many Romaniotes are members of other social organizations and others are not members of any formal Romaniote

groups. A preliminary investigation of the community associated with the Romaniote synagogue indicates that most Romaniotes immigrated during the first wave of Greek mass immigration at the turn of the twentieth century. Their reasons for immigrating were economic, like that of Christian Greeks, or political, in the sense that the Epirus region was a combat zone in the struggle between Greece and the fading Ottoman Empire. The Romaniote were not fleeing pogroms or other anti-Semitic initiates. Another smaller group of Romaniotes arrived after the mid-1950s, when a series of catastrophic earthquakes devastated many areas of Greece. Today, Romaniotes are primarily concentrated in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, but they have also dispersed throughout the United States, mainly in the California, Texas and Florida.

The arrival of the first Jews in North America cannot be accurately determined, but in the territory that became the United States, Jewish immigration dates to at least the 1650s. Greek Jews, however, did not begin to immigrate to the United States until the early 1900s, basically following the pattern of their Greek Orthodox compatriots. In his celebrated study about the Greeks in America, Charles Moskos states that, "There are also a few Greek Jews in America, coming out of the post-Holocaust remnant of the large Sephardic communities in Thessalonica and Yannina." This is an overgeneralization in two regards. Yannina Jews were Romaniote not Sephardic. Moreover, the vast majority of Romaniote immigrants arrived in the early 1900s, not after the Holocaust. Consequently, their immigration experience needs to be considered as part of the overall Greek mass immigration of the first period. Furthermore, in a pattern similar to the Greek Orthodox who diversified Christianity in America, the Romaniote Jews contributed to the religious diversity of Jews in the United States. They established their first synagogue, Kehila Kedosha Janina, in 1927. They retained their linguistic differences not only from the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim from Eastern Europe but even from the Sephardic Jews who had been given refuge in Greece by the Ottomans in the late fifteenth and early sixteen century.

A Romaniote Case Study

I have been able to do extensive interviews with twenty Romaniote Jews living in New York. The respondents were almost equally divided between men and women who at the time of the interviews varied in age between 30 and 78. All but five were born in the United States. Two of the Greek-born were from Yannina, two from Athens and one from Volos. All the American-born respondents were children of parents born in Greece. What is distinctive about this sampling is that the Romaniotes all came from mainland Greece while other Greek Jews have more diverse migration patterns, some coming from Asia Minor, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt. This is similar to the multi-national pattern of Ashkenazi Jews from Europe, who migrated primarily from Russia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Austria. The Sephardic Jews of Greece often retained an affinity for the nations from which they had been expelled or with Turkey. These connections were sufficient for a modest number of Sephardim to obtain documents identifying them as Spanish, Italian, or Turkish national during World War II, a circumstance that protected them from deportation.

Some 95% of the respondents interviewed considered religion to very or fairly important in their lives. Almost as many felt a strong attachment to their synagogue. Overall, the respondents not only believed that religion was important in their lives, but they also showed a moderately strong attachment to the religious aspects of being Jewish. More than two-thirds of the respondents attended services at least monthly while only 20% said they attended services only on special occasions such as a wedding or on the high holidays.

The overwhelming majority (85%) felt a special attachment to Kehila Kedosha Janina. The name, of course, refers to the city of Yannina (also rendered as Janina and Ioannina) and the synagogue's design is Romaniote with benches facing each other. One of the respondents happily referred to the early days of the synagogue by noting, "We used to have three rabbis, and they were a wonderful, harmonious group. And when they used to chant, they chanted in unison and it was wonderful." The chants referred to are poems inserted throughout the religious services and are called *piyyutim*. The use of *piyyutim* "is one of the few things in the religious

service that is strictly Romaniote." Such distinct elements of Romaniote liturgy generated feelings of uniqueness and pride among the respondents regarding their religious and cultural heritage.

An equally powerful Greek identity also was evident. A full 70% reported a strong or extremely strong attachment to Greece. All had visited Greece at least once and 75% visited Greece annually. Greek food was part of everyone's diet, and 75% reported they had Greek food for dinner as often as non-Greek food. In the area of language, 90% of the sample asserted that they could understand Greek quite well, 40% were able to speak the language confidently, and over a third reported they could read satisfactorily. Given that 75% of the respondents were American born, these percentages are quite high when compared to other Americans of Greek heritage. Writing was the only area of questionable competence. A full 60% said they either could not write well or at all. The 40% who could write are comparable and perhaps even a bit better than the percentages found in comparable Orthodox Greek communities, second generations descendants of immigrants of the Great Migration.

The dual cultural identity found in this group and its relatively strong language retention is quite remarkable, all the more so as the Romaniote Jews did not have the Second Wave immigration that was so important in revitalizing the cultural identity of the dominant Greek Orthodox community. If a wider sampling of the several thousand Romaniotes in the United States parallels the Kehila Kedosha Janina findings, we could conclude that although Romaniote Jews have achieved middle class status, unlike other "white" American religious groups, they do not show a significant decline in their ethnic attachment. Most sociological studies of Jews living in America argue that Jewish identity is often a matter of cultural choice that involves more than faith. Ethnic identity is a major indicator of the degree to which members and immediate descendants of an immigrant group remain culturally, socially, and/or psychologically integrated into their ethnic community. The Kehila Kedosha Janina study indicates that the Romaniote Jews, like their forbearers, have chosen to be Jewish, Greek, and American.

– N.A.

“ROMANIOTE MEMORIES, A JEWISH JOURNEY
FROM IOANNINA, GREECE TO MANHATTAN:
PHOTOGRAPHS BY VINCENT GIORDANO”



“ROMANIOTE MEMORIES, A JEWISH JOURNEY FROM IOANNINA, GREECE TO MANHATTAN: PHOTOGRAPHS BY VINCENT GIORDANO”

A word about the exhibition from the co-collaborators:

— Samuel Gruber, President, International Survey of Jewish Monuments

“I met Vincent Giordano about 20 years ago. He was an accomplished photographer who wandered into the Kehila Kedosha Janina synagogue on Broome Street on the Lower East Side and wanted to continue and expand his project to document the synagogue and community. ISJM agreed to take the project under our wing, to assemble an advisory committee, and to help raise funds for the work. The project grew over the years, and there were many presentations and exhibits, culminating at the Museum of Biblical art in Manhattan in 2008, after which Vincent won a Fulbright grant to return to Greece for even more work. Sadly, almost immediately after that successful trip Vincent was diagnosed with cancer and soon the work stopped, and Vincent died in 2010. A creative life cut short much too early. After a memorial for Vincent and a small exhibit at Kehila Kedosha Janina the project went on hold, and all the work into storage.

After several years, at the urging of Renee Pappas, I returned to the Vincent’s legacy. With the help of Vincent’s widow Hilda Giordano, Vincent’s multi-media archive was gathered up and donated to Queens College in 2019. Processing work on the archive had just begun when the pandemic began. Fortunately, we were able to mount physical exhibits at the Greek Consulate in New York and the Greek Embassy in Washington in the fall of 2019, and to collate all the scans of negatives made by Vincent before his illness, and to use these when Queens College closed. With these we decided to create this online exhibit to highlight different aspects of Vincent’s work — rather than wait for an unknown future time to mount another physical exhibition.

For this exhibit I have chosen photos from the previous shows, but more than half of the photos have never been seen and were never printed. I have tried to show a mix of Vincent’s approaches — the more formal large format architectural photos that were requested by ISJM, and the more spontaneous 35 mm rolls of community action and engagement. I know some of these photos were favorites of Vincent, but many I had never seen until reviewing all the photo folders. I hope he would be pleased with the selection.

Still, the one hundred or so photos in the exhibition are just a small fraction of Vincent’s work celebrating the Romaniote community. Most of his themes are shown here, but we have not included his large suite of portraits, or his video and audio recordings, and more. These are in the Queens College archive and will be processed in time, and all will be available to students, scholars, and community members.”

— Renee Pappas, Exhibition, Executive Director

“I met Vincent and Hilda Giordano in 2009 at a concert organized by Artemis Zenetou, Director of the Fulbright Foundation in Greece. They had just returned from Ioannina and Vincent was extremely excited about the videos and photographs he had shot. I offered to help on the project and the Giordanos returned to New York.

We kept in touch, with Vincent sending updates on the progress of the project. We were all devastated when Vincent passed away in 2010. In 2013 I moved back to the United States and Hilda Giordano put me in touch with Dr. Samuel Gruber. We joined forces to continue Vincent’s works, which has culminated in the marvelous exhibition we celebrate.”

— Annie Tummino, Queens College Head of Special Collections and Archives

“The Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library’s Special Collections and Archives is proud to partner with HAP to preserve Vincent Giordano’s documentation of the little known Greek Jewish community in Ioannina, Greece. The collection’s artistic and cultural merits make it an important asset for current and future generations, scholars, students, and community members, and we are honored to take part in its long-term care.”

— Arnold Franklin, Director, Queens College Center for Jewish and Jewish Studies Program

“For over four decades, the Queens College Center for Jewish Studies has served as a leading community resource, bringing the very best of Jewish intellectual and cultural creativity to audiences on and off campus. The Center prides itself on its close collaboration with other units on campus in offering a wide variety of events — lectures, symposia, film screenings and artistic performances — to the public.

The Center for Jewish Studies is especially pleased to be a cosponsor of “Romaniote Memories,” an exhibition that aligns closely with the Center’s strong commitment to fostering the study of Jewish communities in the Mediterranean. This mission, put on firm footing by the establishment of the Halebua Professorship in Sephardic Studies, has not only strengthened the Center’s connections to campus initiatives like the Hellenic American Project, it has also deepened its roots in the tremendous diversity of the larger Queens community.”

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

Kehila Kedosha Janina (the Holy Community of Janina) is the only Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. Romaniote Jews are a unique community of Jewish people whose history in Greece dates back over two thousand three hundred years to the time of Alexander the Great. The Romaniotes are historically distinct from the Sephardim, who settled in Greece after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

The congregation was first organized in New York in 1906 by Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews from the city of Ioannina in Northwestern Greece. The synagogue is a designated New York City landmark and continues to hold services every Shabbat as well as all Jewish holidays. In addition, it houses a museum about Greek Jewry. The museum serves as a repository for Romaniote and Sephardic Greek Jewish history, both in Greece and on the Lower East Side, and hosts many educational events including lectures, book signings, movie screenings, and concerts. For more information about Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum visit www.kkjsm.org.

THE ROMANIOTE JEWS OF IOANNINA THE ORPHAN CHILD OF HOLOCAUST STUDIES

by Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos

This article is part of a larger work.

Tucked away in the northwest corner of Epirus, Greece, near the Albanian border, at the foothills of the Pindus Mountain range, lies the city of Ioannina. Most tourists bypass this picturesque city with the remnants of an ancient Jewish presence of Romaniote Jews. Although the Romaniotes—Greek-speaking Jews—have the longest continuous Jewish presence in the European Diaspora, going back over 2300 years, most people do not know that they exist. Their presence, however, did not escape the notice of the Germans charged with implementing the “Final Solution” to the so-called “Jewish Question”: the destruction of the Jewish community everywhere in Europe. In March of 1944, nearly all of the small Jewish community of Ioannina—then numbering about 2,000—was rounded up and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only 110 would survive.

The story of the destruction of Greek Jewry has long been an orphan child of Holocaust studies. In recent years, researchers have begun the important work of focusing greater attention on the story of the Holocaust in Greece. For example, both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars—mostly within Greece and in the Sephardic Diaspora—have published important studies of the destruction of the large Sephardic Jewish community of Thessaloniki (Salonika), under German occupation in World War II. Of the total population of Greek Jews, about 87% were murdered in the Holocaust, making their losses among the highest percentages of losses in any officially occupied country. The Jews of Salonika suffered close to 97% losses and, in Ioannina, the losses were 91%. Many researchers attributed the large number of losses in Salonika to the fact that the Jews often stood out because of their accented Greek, many had Judeo-Espanyol (often called Ladino) as their mother tongue. This does not, however, explain the high number of losses of Jews from Ioannina, who spoke the same Greek as their non-Jewish neighbors.



*Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos, Museum Director, Kehila
Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum
Photo courtesy of Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos*

This essay addresses three questions. Why were so many Jews from Ioannina lost? What was different about them? Why is their story, their history and their existence still ignored?

First, we must ask why so many of the Jews of Ioannina died. One part of the answer is the ferocious intensity of the Nazi determination to carry out the complete elimination of European Jewry. The Nazi commitment to the Final Solution drove a massive research effort that was already underway at the Wannsee Conference on January 21, 1942, when Eichmann displayed a map indicating the estimated Jewish population of every country in Europe with a high degree of accuracy. Even neutral countries such as Ireland were accounted for on this map. The Germans had done their research before their Occupation of Greece. Before the Italian failure to conquer Greece swiftly, the Germans already knew the composition of each of the Jewish communities in Greece. They knew the strengths of these Greeks as well as their weaknesses. They knew exactly what to say and do to ensure minimum resistance. Intimidation was the main method of ensuring cooperation. The Jews were told that if any members of their family tried to escape, the whole family would be executed.

Knowing the pride of Romaniote Jews in their “Greekness,” the Germans played upon it. The Jews of Ioannina had already learned of the deportation of the Sephardic, Spanish-speaking Jews of Salonika. The Germans quelled their fears by telling them that the Salonikan Jews were not real Greeks, adding that the Jews of Ioannina would be treated like other “Greeks.” Moses Kofinas—the President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina—was not taken in by this deception. When the Germans arrested Kofinas they imprisoned him on the island in Lake Pamvotis. During one of his wife’s visits, he gave her a note for another leader of the community, Sabetai Kabelis, telling him to get the Jews of Ioannina out of the city and have them hide in the nearby mountain villages. Kabelis tore the letter up. He felt that the Kofinas was over-reacting. After all, he thought, little had happened. In fact, business was great. The Germans were good customers and the War was almost over. Dr. Michael Matsas discusses this story in his excellent book, *Illusion of Safety*.

In other Jewish communities in Greece, such as those in Thessaly (Volos, Larissa and Trikala) where the Jews heeded the warnings of their leadership and found safety outside the cities, the statistics were quite different. Rather than losing 91%, in most instances less than 50% perished.

Second, we must ask what was different about the Romaniote Jews of Ioannina. In comparison to other small Jewish communities in Greece, little. When we compare them to the large Jewish community of Salonika, we see many differences in addition to the numbers. The Jews of Salonika cut across all socio-economic lines. Some were multi-lingual, educated and engaged in international commerce. Many were craftsmen and small shop owners and others were working poor such as the porters (*hamales*) at the port. Ioannina did not have this level of diversity.

Erika Kounio Amariglio and Alberto Naar noted In *Eyewitness Accounts of the Holocaust in Thessaloniki* that Christian friends offered help to some Jews to escape the roundup and deportation in Salonika. It is surprising, then, that we do not have similar accounts in a smaller town such as Ioannina. Many thought that there were close relations with the Jews and Christians in the city. Stella Mioni Koen expressed this in an interview shortly before she died. She wanted to know where her neighbors were when the Jewish community was driven out of their homes and into the streets and why no one said anything. This is one of the most difficult unanswered questions.

Third, we must continue to ask why the story, the history, and the very existence of Romaniote Jews still remain ignored. This is the hardest question to answer. Certainly, it is not for lack of trying to preserve the memory of this community. Many, including myself, have spoken at international conferences, telling the story of Romaniote Jews. Papers have been published in academic journals. For some reason, however, this story is not well known in Holocaust education. With the expansion of social media, we hope this will change. We will keep trying. We suffer a double loss: a loss of life and a loss of memory.

It has been said that a measure of a people is how they remember their dead. We Greek Jews have so many to remember. This essay is written with love, love for a small community in northern Greece that is no more, a community that met its untimely demise during the Shoah, a community that we will never forget, and one that must be remembered for generations to come. May each of their individual names be inscribed for eternity.

Deportation in Ioannina
Photos courtesy of Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos



ARTS & CULTURE

As part of HAP's ongoing efforts to present the Greek American community, Arts & Culture features Greek American artists, writers, and poets.

The public figure who best embodies the distinctive Romaniote cultural tradition is the late Rae Dalven. She was born on April 25, 1904 in Preveza, Greece, to parents born and raised in Yannina. Dalven lived in the United States since 1909 and held degrees from Hunter College, New York University (NYU), and the Yale School of Drama. She was a professor of Modern Greek literature at NYU. Prior to her retirement she had been Professor of English Literature and department chair at Ladycliff College in Highland Falls, New York.

Dalven achieved national fame with the publication of her translation of *The Complete Poems of Cavafy* in 1961. Earlier, she had also translated a number of contemporary Greek poets in *Modern Greek Poetry* and the work of a Romaniote relative in *Poems of Joseph Eliyia. Athene*, the most important Greek American literary journal of its era, published part of her translations of *Judas* by Spiro Melas. Her *A Season in Hell*, a play based on the life of Rimbaud had an off-Broadway production. Among her other literary works were radio dramas such as *Hercules*. Dalven was active in numerous Hellenic initiatives, including an attempt to establish a Hellenic Museum in Manhattan. Dalven was equally active in the cultural organizations of the Romaniote in New York and frequently visited Yannina. This publication culminated in the publication of *The Jews of Ioannina*, a work that drew heavily on Hebrew, Greek, and English sources to offer a complete history of the Jews of Yannina with groundbreaking sections titled Religious Life and Social Life.

Rae Dalven died on July 27, 1992 in Manhattan. In her memory, the Rae Dalven Prize is given for Outstanding Undergraduate Work in Byzantine Modern Greek Studies at New York University.

Joseph Eliyia (1901-1931) was a lyric poet, a Jewish scholar, and an outstanding member of the Ioannina Jewish community. He was born in Ioannina on October 30, 1901 and attended the Boys' Alliance school where he studied Hebrew, French, and the Talmud. In 1920, Eliyia was drafted into the Greek army and yet managed to spend much of his time writing or studying. In 1921 Eliyia's father died and because he was his only son, Eliyia was released from the army. For the following four years he taught at the Boys' Alliance school, gave private lessons in Hebrew and French, pursued his own Talmudic studies, studied romantic writers such as Verlaine and Lamartine, and wrote poetry.

Eliyia moved to Athens in 1925 and taught Hebrew and French at the Hebrew School and also gave private lessons to supplement his income. He enjoyed the companionship of poets and writers of Demotic Greek and his poems were published in Athenian newspapers and periodicals. In 1930, Eliyia accepted an appointment to teach in a state school in Kilkis, a town in northern Greece. During the second half of the 1930-31 school year he became afflicted with typhoid. His request for sick leave was denied and so he waited until the school year was over to seek treatment at the Evangelismos Hospital in Athens. He died on July 29, 1931, three months before his thirtieth birthday.



Joseph Eliyia

Photo credit: Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina*, The Jewish Museum of Greece (Gift from the author)

REBECCA

How you dazzle my mind, panarchaic grandeur,
 Resplendence, visions in biblical magic!

The servant was resting at the edge of the well,
 And his laden camels were kneeling before him.
 The evening was magic, the evening was sweet,
 And slender Rebecca appeared with jug in hand,
 The golden gates of Paradise opened wide,
 "Daughter, pride of the house, tilt thy jug,
 tilt it and give me a drop of water to drink."
 And the daughter replied, "Stranger, God be with
 Drink and will water thy camels."

And the evening was magic, the evening was sweet.
 But sweeter yet was all-shy Rebecca of Bethouel,
 But sweeter yet, the sun-beauteous wife of Isaac.

Joseph Eliyia

PRAYER

*for Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos
 in memory of Hy Genee*

I tried to write a prayer
 on the broken graves of the loved ones
 in the ashes of the synagogues

Dead pigeons welcomed me
 in the invisible cities

Yannina Jerusalem
 New York Volos

This naked moment before shattering
 I touch a little drop
 on the wailing wall

Shall I ever find a solid sky to fish
 in my land of ruled lines?

Have mercy on me

*I'm the little Jew
 who wrote the Bible.*

Nicos Alexiou, *ASTORIA* (2013)

AN AMERICAN PHILHELLENE: COL. JONATHAN P. MILLER

In commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Greek War of Independence (1821-2021), HAP is featuring American Philhellenes and their contributions.

Joanthan Peckham Miller was born in in Randolph, Vermont in 1797. He joined the US army in 1817 and attended college at the University of Vermont from 1821 to 1824, when the university suffered a terrible fire. Inspired by his classical education and his anti-slavery sentiments, in 1824, Miller answered the calls for assistance in the Greek War of Independence and arrived to Missolonghi with an introduction from the Greek Association of Boston. His bravery earned him the rank of Colonel and he came to be known as “The American Dare Devil”.

Miller returned to the United States and lectured across the country for the Greek cause, raising money and gathering relief supplies. In February 1827, he returned to Greece as a principal agent of the New York Greek Committee and with Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe oversaw the allocation of food and clothing to the Greeks. Miller returned to the United States in 1827 and settled in Montpelier, Vermont. He brought with him a Greek youth, Lucas Miltiades, whom he adopted and educated. Lucas Miltiades Miller was elected as a Democrat to the Fifty-second Congress (1891-1893), becoming the first American Congressman of Greek descent.

Upon his return, Miller married Sarah Arms, studied law, was admitted to the bar, and served in the Vermont legislature from 1831-1833. The Millers helped the “Underground Railroad” both financially and by using their house as a station. In 1833, Miller initiated the anti-slavery movement in the legislature and he attended the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840. At the convention, Miller advocated for women to be included as members of the American Anti-Slavery Society and that female delegates be allowed to participate in the convention. The following year, another Anti-Slavery Convention was held in New Hampshire and Miller was again one of the speakers. Thanks to these actions, Vermont was the first US state to abolish slavery (1777). It is evident that Miller’s involvement in the Greek War of Independence, fighting alongside the Greek people for their sovereignty and self-determination, influenced his determination to realize freedom and equality in the United States.

Known as an outspoken abolitionist, an advocate of women’s rights, and an American Philhellene, Miller died in Montpelier, Vermont in 1847. Col. Jonathan P. Miller had bought in Greece one of the swords of Lord Byron, which had been lost. His daughter, Sarah Miller Keith, traveled to Greece in 1853 and managed to locate the sword and returned with it to the United States. This sword is now in the Vermont Historical Society.

HAP NEWS

- ❖ A virtual opening reception for the exhibition “Romaniote Memories, a Jewish Journey from Ioannina, Greece, to Manhattan: Photographs by Vincent Giordano” featuring a conversation with the curator, organizers, distinguished guests, and friends, is scheduled for Thursday, February 11, at 5 pm (EST). Click [here](#) to register on Zoom for the reception.
- ❖ Dr. Evangelia N. Georgitsoyanni, University Paris I Pantheon - Sorbonne, Dep. Director, International MSc Programme in Sustainable Tourism Development & Professor in History of Art and Civilization, Harokopio University of Athens, recently donated a copy of her research paper “Greek diaspora in USA: the pioneers in confectionery business P. J. Columbus, George J. Giannios, Louis and John N. Pappas” published in the *American Research Journal of Humanities & Social Science* to the HAP Library.
- ❖ Recently, the Panchiaki Korais Society of New York donated a copy of the book *A Centennial Symposium 1912-2012 Milestones in History* to the HAP Library.
- ❖ Foti Papagermanos donated a photograph of Hell Gate Bridge, Astoria Park, from his portfolio to the HAP Museum.
- ❖ Dimitiri Diamantopoulos, featured in the Virtual Exhibition “Ode to the Greek Light and Landscape”, has donated seven of his paintings to the HAP Museum.
- ❖ HAP’s efforts to document the Greek American community are featured in the daily Greek newspaper *I Kathimerini*. Click [here](#) to read the article.
- ❖ HAP is conducting Oral History interviews during COVID-19. Click [here](#) to access the interviews.
- ❖ HAP is 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization located in Queens Hall, on the Queens College, CUNY campus. All donations are welcome and go towards ongoing interviews and digitization of materials to continue documenting the Greek American community. Click [here](#) to make your donation.