

THE HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF CLEVELAND

The first settler of Armenian descent arrived in Cleveland in 1895. Today, there are an estimated 1,500 Armenians in the Greater Cleveland area.

The community's religious life began with the formation of the first Parish Council in 1911 and the first Badarak was celebrated in 1912 by Bishop Mousheg Seropian. For the next decade the spiritual needs were met by visiting clergymen. For a brief period of several years, permanent clergymen were appointed. However, in 1957, the Diocesan Primate made arrangements for a regular visiting clergyman from our sister Parish in Detroit.

In April, 1958 the Cleveland Armenian Church community purchased the seven-acre parcel of land which included a twelve room house. In September, 1960 a formal Building Committee was established for the express purpose of the erection of an Armenian Church.

On June 21, 1960 a most memorable day in the Parish's history took place -- His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians visited Cleveland bestowing his blessing to the Armenians and its efforts.

Sunday, June 4, 1961 marked the first official Kick-off Banquet and the campaign, and ground was broken March 18, 1962. Construction began on August 20, 1962 while the Foundation and Cornerstone Blessing Ceremonies took place on December 2, 1962.

The date of April 12, 1964 will be remembered as the most important in the history of the Church community in Cleveland. On this day, St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church of Cleveland was consecrated by His Grace Archbishop Sion Manoogian. Dr. Kegham K. Goekjian became the Godfather of our Church. By August, 1965 the mortgage was paid off in full and a forty year dream was realized.

In the ensuing years, with a new spirit instilled in the people, many programs and projects through the assistance of the various church organizations which enabled us to make plans for the construction of a Cultural Hall began on November 11, 1968. Ground was broken on October 18, 1970. In February, 1971 a Cultural Hall Building Committee was formed -- and exactly eight years after the consecration of the church; on April 9, 1972, the St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church Cultural Hall was dedicated by His Grace Archbishop Torkom Manoogian. The Cultural Hall mortgage was burned (paid in full) on June 18, 1978 -- leaving the community debt-free.

PAROS (The Lighthouse), a monthly newsletter of St. Gregory of Narek was the first step in establishing a solid communications program. Publication began in 1954 and continues to meet the goals it was set up to accomplish.

The birth of two beautiful structures of authentic Armenian architecture, which stands adjacent to the original Parish House (which has since been renovated) is convincing evidence that with God's will and guidance, along with the generosity of our parishoners and friends, the supervision and support of our five religious leaders;

1961-64 Deacon Nersess Jebejian	1967-72 Very Rev. Fr. Arshag Khatchadourian
1964-67 Very Rev. Vasken Kebreslian	1972-85 Rev. Fr. Diran Papazian
	1985-87 Rev. Fr. Terenig Kondralian

it has been an inspiration for all of the Parish Councils, church-auxiliary organizations and various committees in their efforts to accomplish their tasks.

Throughout its history of the small, but vibrant Parish of St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church, it has enjoyed the reputation of a solid and active community life enhanced with its share of religious, cultural, social and fund-raising functions as a means to enrich their lives and insure the preservation of the Armenian Church, people and nation.

The first quarter of a century has indeed witnessed considerable growth for the St. Gregory of Narek Parish. We look forward to the blessing of the continual dedication and commitment of our people towards the Mother Church.