

File



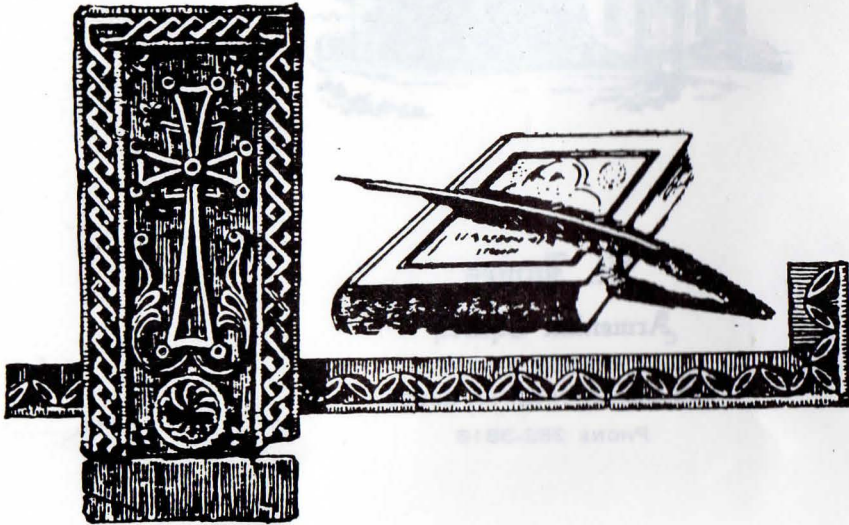
St. James
Armenian Church
834 PEPPER AVENUE
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23226
PHONE 282-3818

Church Consecration

Silver Anniversary

Commemorative Booklet

1956 - 1981



Church Connection

Silver Anniversary

Commemorative Booklet

1958-1981

C O N T E N T S

"But there are also many other things which Jesus did: were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that could be written." John 20:25

The realization of the St. James Armenian Church was the result of many years of both the vision and determination of the Richmond Armenian Community.

Today this monument is a living testimony of the spirit of our predecessors and those by whose resolute devotion it continues to serve its noble mission: God's eternal glory.

It is impossible to record all the countless sacrifices, both great and small, that have made this possible, but that which remains unseen to human eyes, finds its way into God's Book of Life. That written on the human heart has eternal value.

Reverend Arsen Barsamian

C O N T E N T S

PASTORAL NOTE.....

BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH
OF RICHMOND, VIRGINIA..... 1

THE FOUNDING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
ARMENIAN COMMUNITY IN RICHMOND, VA..... 4

AN OUTLINED HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH
IN AMERICA.....15
(Introduction and Story)
by Khoren Henry Magarian

ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

When did Armenians first settle in Virginia? Nobody really knows, but if historic records speak truthfully, there were Armenians, or an Armenian at least, among the first settlers who settled in Jamestown, Virginia in 1618. He is referred to as, "Martin, the Armenian." If he was not the first Armenian to migrate to the New World, he did have the distinction of being the first naturalized citizen on the American continent.*

The next two settlers came in 1653 as silk worm growers** but no settlement of any significance took hold until the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It is known that, there was a parish group in Richmond about the year 1912, and it is recorded that, eight members of the Armenian community attended Divine Liturgy service, at the historic St. Paul's Episcopal Church on May 16, 1915.

Religious life in the Richmond Armenian community has progressed continuously since then, until what was only a dream in the minds of many, became a reality in a little over 40 years. The community throughout the years has always been a stable one, its spirit never broken by wars nor depression. Having a church structure of its own has always been foremost in the minds of its people and this desire became more prevalent each time visiting priests or the Diocesan Primate journeyed to Richmond to celebrate the Divine Sacrament.

*See article in this booklet, "An outline History of the Armenian Church in America" in the part "The Pioneers."

**Ibid.

Because the community was small in number, financing a church structure and maintaining a full time priest was an impossibility during the early years of existence. However, because of intense desire and stress placed upon the need of an edifice, constructive measures were taken. The Ladies Auxiliary was the first organized group to make the initial move. In 1940 this organization purchased a lot in the city with funds raised and accumulated over the years through worthwhile community projects and activities. Within the next few years the Parish Council was in a position to purchase the adjoining lot. Later with the consent of the community, the two lots were sold and with the funds, and additional contributions, a larger corner lot was purchased near the suburbs. Still a church edifice could not be realized because of lack of funds. Realizing the immediate need for a structure, necessary funds were obtained to purchase a two story brick building located near the center of the city. This structure at first appeared to be suitable for the local needs --the basement level being used as a social hall, with the thought in mind of eventually renovating the upper level to serve as a place of worship. After a period of one year, though, it was felt that this building was not suitable to serve the needs of expansion. The building was sold, and consequently, the Richmond community was again without a building of its own. With the funds realized from the sale of the building and additional money obtained from a fund raising drive, another lot, much larger than any of the previous ones, was purchased under the guidance of the Primate, Archbishop Mampre Calfayan. This lot proved to be the foundation of the present church edifice.

On Sunday, November 6, 1955, Father Levon Arakelian, the pastor of the West Philadelphia Armenian Church community, officiated over the ground breaking ceremonies. The following year the completed church was consecrated by the Primate, Archbishop Calfayan, assisted by Father Levon Arakelian and also Father Boghos Manoukian. This historic event, for the Armenian community in Richmond, took place on Saturday and Sunday, September 8,9, 1956.

Thereafter, Father Boghos Manoukian, who heretofore had served as a visiting priest, was designated as the permanent pastor. This took place in September of 1957.

Later property adjacent to the church lot was also purchased, doubling the area of the church grounds, and a two story house situated thereon has been remodeled and renovated to serve as the parish house with Church School and Armenian School.

In March of 1967, upon the retirement of Father Manoukian, Father Arsen Barsamian was designated as pastor of the church community by the Primate, Rt. Rev. Bishop Torkom Manoogian.

On Father's Day, Sunday, June 20, 1971, the ground-breaking ceremonies of the Armenian Educational Building were held following the morning church services with the pastor, Reverend Arsen Barsamian officiating.

Sunday, November 21, 1971, the Dedication ceremonies were held with His Grace, the Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian presiding, assisted by the Reverend Arsen Barsamian.

THE FOUNDING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARMENIAN
COMMUNITY IN RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

by KHOREN HENRY MAGARIAN

Prior to the dedication of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Richmond, Virginia, I was contacted by Mrs. Sophie Vranian on behalf of the Parish committee who requested that I write a history of the early Armenian community in Richmond which would be deposited in the cornerstone of the new church. I was chosen for this task because I am one of the few, if not the only person living, who knows in some detail the people, events, and circumstances responsible for the first permanent Armenian settlement in Richmond.

The majority of this narrative is based on stories told me by my maternal uncle, Manuel Vranian, who was one of the original party that arrived in Richmond in 1887 or 1888. Since I am writing from memory some names have escaped my mind and many of the early dates may be one or two years off. No doubt my uncle included dates in his stories, but at the time they did not seem important to a teenage boy. In the course of this narrative I may appear partial to the Vranian family. This is not due to special design but because I know more about them.

I do not feel competent, to carry this story in any detail beyond 1910. After this time the Armenian community in Richmond grew increasingly, and this growth was accomplished by certain social developments and political and cultural societies with which I am not too familiar. Following my discharge from the Army after World War I, I came north and only visited Richmond occasionally. So I leave to those who are closer to the scene and more familiar with it, the task of carrying on where I left off.

I would have liked to include some background on Haroutune Darhanian since he played the most important part in the establishment of the Armenian community. Unfortunately,

I know nothing about him prior to his arrival in this country. His son, Karnig, who moved west with his widowed mother, shortly after I came to Richmond in 1907, may still be alive, but the time is short and the means of contacting him are not available. The same is true for Katchig Mazmanian whose widow and two daughters went to California about 1912.

In compiling this material, I especially want to thank Mrs. Sophie Vranian and Mr. Harry Darhanian who have been extremely helpful in clarifying many names and dates, and my son, Donald, who assisted in putting the material into readable form.

Khoren Henry Magarian
Rochester, New York
June 16, 1956

There is no record of any Armenians having settled in Virginia prior to the 1880's, but it is possible that some passed through and may have remained for short periods. However, they left no lasting impression.

The first record of Armenians in the commonwealth dates back to colonial times, and although brief, it is significant. According to George F. Willison in his book "Behold Virginia" (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York 1951), the colonial governor imported three Armenian silk masters in the middle 1600's to help develop silk culture in Virginia. The project failed, and what happened to the Armenians is not recorded.

But these three, like those who followed more than two centuries later, were men with background and business training rather than unskilled peasants, and this was to be the basic factor in the growth and development of Richmond's Armenian community.

Protestant missionaries from New England were responsible for the first sizeable immigration of Armenians to the United States shortly after the Civil War. They were employed in textile and wire mills in the Worcester, Massachusetts, area. Since these Armenians were of the peasant class, used to working in the open, factory conditions that existed at the time were far from agreeable to them. Although some stayed others returned to their homeland, often broken in health, and gave harrowing accounts to life in the sweat shops. This retarded mass Armenian immigration to this country for some decades. Those who came in the 1880's and 90's were, for the most part, tradesmen with a business background. To this group belonged the first Armenians to permanently settle in Richmond.

In late summer or early fall of 1887 or 1888 Harutun Vranian and his son, Manuel, arrived in New York City from Alexandria, Egypt, where the elder Vranian had been in business for some years. Both were natives of Gurin, Armenia, and at the time of their arrival in New York Harutun was about 50 and his son close to 20 year of age.

At that time, headquarters for Armenians passing through New York was the grocery store of Astoor Agha on lower Washington Street. Astoor, whose last name is not known, had been established in New York for some time and helped newly arrived Armenians to find lodgings, jobs, obtain transportation, and the like. Since Astoor Agha was a businessman he undoubtedly conducted these affairs at some profit to himself for which he was somewhat unfairly criticized in later years.

But my recollection of Astoor Agha is of a pleasant nature. I met him in November, 1904, on my second day in this country when I went with my uncle while he renewed acquaintances with his friend in the Washington Street store. When the short, rotund man with the kindly face learned that I had just arrived in this country he reached into the showcase and gave me a special welcome gift, my first American candy bar. To a nine year old boy this was a rare treat.

Among the Armenians met by the Vranians at the store was Harutun Darhanian, about 30, who had been in the country a little more than a year. He was working as a handy man for Astoor Agha, receiving his keep in lieu of salary. They also met Khatchik Mazmanian, his Syrian wife whom he had married in Beirut, and their two daughters, both probably under 10 at the time. The Mazmanians had been in New York a short time. Like Astoor Agha, both Harutun Darhanian and Khatchik Mazmanian were natives of Agin, Armenia.

The Vranians and Mazmanians looked over the New York situation and found little that appealed to them. Since they were tradesmen, factory work was out of the question, and their meager capital did not permit them to go into business. About the only practical occupation open to them was pack peddling which was carried on extensively in the New York area by Near Eastern immigrants. They were discouraged, however, by the obvious fact that pack peddling in New York would have meant climbing up and down uncountable flights of tenement stairs daily. But the deciding factor to leave New York was the weather. They had come from warmer climates and winter was fast approaching, so they looked southward.

The burden of deciding where to go was placed on young Manuel Vranian who was the best schooled of the group. His elders set down certain requisites; they wanted a location south of New York with more temperate weather, but not too distant to make the cost of travel prohibitive. In later years Manuel Vranian explained it this way: "I took a map of the United States. There was a large area south of New York but the name "Virginia" appealed to me. So I chose Richmond since it was the capital and the largest city in the state."

When Harutun Darhanian heard of the plans to go south he appealed to Harutun Vranian, as the eldest member of the group, to take him along. Although he had no funds he argued that he had been working for Astoor Agha for more than a year with no salary. He pleaded with Vranian to intercede for him and convince Astoor Agha that he was at least entitled to passage money and a small amount to get him started. Astoor Agha, not wanting to lose his handyman, countered that Darhanian was shiftless, lacking in ambition, and would be a burden to the others, but Vranian was insistent and finally won the storekeeper's reluctant consent.

Late in the year the party of seven left for Richmond on a boat of the Old Dominion Line and first set foot on Virginia soil at Old Point Comfort. From there they went by rail to Richmond, arriving at the Main Street Station.

They took lodgings on lower Main Street near the station and almost immediately made contact with the Syrian community which was already established in the city. The Syrians, who were pack peddling in the area and also operated a few fruit and confectionery store, were very helpful in getting the new arrivals started in business. It is possible that this contact with the Syrians was made easier by the fact that Mrs. Mazmanian was Syrian.

Since they didn't have sufficient funds to start out in business on any scale these first Richmond Armenians took to pack peddling. Although they had shunned this same business in New York it is probable that their new Syrian friends pointed out that it was not only profitable but also took only a small amount of money to start.

So they loaded a small general store on their backs and went into the rural areas selling the necessities and the not so necessary to the farmer and his family.

They found that coming to Richmond was a wise choice. It wasn't an easy life. It required long hours and at first the profits were small. They lived in cramped quarters and the language barrier made a city a strange and sometimes frightening place. But Richmond, unlike the large costal cities, had only a small immigrant population and accepted the Armenians with a friendly curiosity rather than antagonism.

Although Manuel Vranian can be credited with the decision to come to Richmond it was Harutun Darhanian who was to establish the community's permanency. Contrary to the dire predictions of Astoor Agha he made a success of his pack peddling and soon opened a fruit and confectionery store, the forerunner of many such establishments to be run by Armenians in Richmond. Unfortunately, the location of this first Armenian store is now unknown. He frugally saved his earnings and was soon able to help his cousin, Nishan Darhanian, join him.

Shortly after this the Vranians got the wanderlust and again headed south, this time to Texas where they continued pack peddling and ran fruit stores in Houston and San Antonio. When they returned to Richmond some seven years later they found that the Darhanian cousins had been busy bringing over their relatives and friends. The Armenian community had more than doubled in size. There were Harutun Darhanian's wife and son, Karnig; two of Nishan's nephews, Charles and Mardig Darhanian; two more Darhanian cousins, Kapriel and his younger brother; Dikran Bostanjian; Philip Karagulian; Avedis Zartarian; and Hampartzum Stepanian. Khatchik Mazmanian had died in the late '90s, but he had been able to bring over a nephew, Aram Mazmanian.

Harutan Darhanian could almost have been called a one man Chamber of Commerce for Richmond. His letters with glowing and somewhat exaggerated descriptions of the businesses he and the others were operating played no small part in including other Armenians to join him.

But there was at least one disillusioned voice, that of Vahan Kebedjian, a university graduate who had left a teaching job in Smyrna. He was often heard to complain that the big prosperous stores and counting houses pictured by "Artin" were in reality no more than small fruit stores. But the opportunities did exist for when Kebedjian and others returned to Armenia they took with them sizeable sums of money.

But the Vranians again planned to leave Richmond, this time for Gurin, with a two-fold purpose; to bring back the rest of the Vranian family and to find Manuel a wife. Both of these were accomplished, but Harutun Vranian never saw Richmond again, dying in Smyrna in 1903. So it was Manuel Vranian who arrived in Richmond in April of 1907, after three years in New York, with his mother, Margaret; his wife, Varteny; his young son, Joseph; his infant daughter, Ethel; his sister, Rachel; and his nephew, the author of this chronicle.

What with marriage and immigration there was a sizeable Armenian colony in Richmond in that April of 1907. Those who were there included:

DARHANIAN -

Widow of Artin and son, Karnig
Nishan and wife, Esther; son, Michael; daughter, Satenig.
Baghdassar and wife, Elizabeth; sons, Mardig, Charles, Harry; daughter, Arusiag; Elizabeth's brother, Paul
Ararat and his daughter.
Kapriel, his wife, their three children, and Kapriel's younger brother.

DERVISHIAN -

Garabed, his mother; his younger brother, Hagop; his sister and her husband, Mr. & Mrs. Panossian.

KAMBOURIAN

Manoog, his mother; his wife, one son, one daughter.

STEPANIAN

Hampartzoum; his wife; three sons, Paul, Leon, & Steven.

ZARTARIAN

Avedis, his father, his wife, three sons.

MAZMANIAN

Widow of Khatchik; her two daughters, his nephew, Aram.

KARAMANIAN

Husband, wife; son, Thomas; two daughters.

BOSTANJIAN

Dikran; his brother; his sister, Nazelie

KEBABJIAN

Vahan and his brother, Ohanes.

There were also these bachelors, the only members of their families to have settled in Richmond by 1907; Philip Karagulian, Hovig Hovigian, Sarkis Deratzuian, Dserun Dserunian, Simon Eukuszian, Baghdo Mangigian, Hiarabed Baghdasarian and Mr. Gorgodian.

There were also three brothers whose family name is not available. They were natives of Kharpert. Their names in age order were Harry, Charles and George. They operated a billiard parlor on West Broad Street. Charles was married to the younger daughter of Khatchik Mazmanian. Harry was the first Richmond Armenian to have a United States military record. He served in the Spanish-American War as a member of the National Guard. The whole family moved to California about 1912.

The first major social event after my arrival was the marriage of Nazely Bostanjian and Simon Euksuzian late in the summer of 1907. The entire Armenian community attended the reception which was held on the second floor of Dikran Bostanjian's store. It was a gala affair in the old world tradition, and the bride's brothers outdid themselves in providing appropriate food and beverage.

Harutun Darhanian died in 1906 and Nishan Darhanian was now the recognized leader of the Armenians in the city. His fruit store was located on the north side of East Main Street near 18th. From this location near the center of the market area he probably sold more bananas than any other retailer in the city, moving as many as

150 bunches on a Saturday, and was the uncrowned "Banana King" of Richmond. In the neighbourhood he was popularly known as "Charlie" while among the Armenians he earned the respected title of "Agha." This respect was sincere since most of the later arrivals got their start clerking for Nishan Agha before opening their own little stores. Before coming to Richmond he had lived for many years in Egypt and had served under Lord Kitchener in the Khartoum campaign in 1884. He died in 1919 survived by his wife, Esther; his daughter, Satenig and his sons, Michael and Harry.

Dikran Bostanjian's store was also on East Main Street near 14th while Philip Karagulian and Aram Mazmanian operated a confectionery on Brook Road near Broad Street. The Dervishian's store was on North 7th Street across from the Gray's Armory, the Stepanians were on the north side of Broad Street near 10th and Charles and Mardig Darhanian operated on a site on Broad Street near 8th, a few doors from the Bijou Theatre, a popular playhouse of the time.

Although there were many fruit and confectionery stores, every Armenian community has to have its rug merchant, and this position was filled by Manoog Kambourian whose store was on First Street, south of Broad. There were also two tailors, Martin Panosian on First Street next door to the Kebabjian brothers and Dserun Dserunian who worked for Miller & Rhoads.

Probably the most astute of these early Armenian businessmen was Garabed Dervishian. He was the first to realize the advantages of investing his profits in real estate. A heart attack in 1912 cut short what might well have been a promising business career.

Dervishian's younger brother, Hagop, was a mild mannered, polite, retiring young man. And at that time it would have been difficult for anyone to believe that his son, Ernest, would be a congressional Medal of Honor winner and Virginia's number one hero of World War II.

But not all of the Armenian emigrees in Richmond were happy in their new life. It was mainly the bachelor group that was discontented. They were lonely and the lack of marriageable young Armenian girls made it difficult for them to establish a family and home life, and thus the desire to see their

families was ever strong. Soon after a "reform" government took over in Turkey in 1908 some of them returned home, among them Vahan and Ohanes Kebabjian, Dikran Bostanjian, Philip Karagulian, and Aram Mazmanian. Some of them lost their lives in the massacre of 1915 and none of them ever returned to Richmond.

But some of Richmond's Armenians saw beyond the world of fruit, candy, soda, and rugs. In 1908 a group incorporated as the Lyric Movie House to show the new and fascinating motion picture. They rented a store next to Nishan Darhanian's on Main Street, renovated it to a type of theatre, and gave two showings a day for a nickle admission. Nishan Agha was president and treasurer of this pioneer venture while Manuel Vranian oversaw the management. Other stockholders were Dikran Bostanjian, Philip Karagulian, and Dserun Dserunian. But the venture, which was on shaky ground because of their lack of experience in the entertainment field, was ultimately doomed when two of the backers withdrew their money and returned to their homeland, and the Lyric Movie House closed its doors for the last time a little more than a year after they opened.

With the death of Manuel Vranian in 1921 the last of the original settlers was gone. But their names have not completely disappeared from the Richmond scene. Although Harutun Darhanian established the community his widow and son later went west as did the survivors of Khachik Mazmanian. However, Manuel Vranian's family remains in and around Richmond. There are his widow, Varteny; sons, Joseph, Henry, George, and Richard; and daughters, Ethel (Mrs. Reuben Vranian), Victoria (Mrs. Michael Metzger) and Virginia, (Mrs. Aram Missirlian.)

The growth of the Armenian community in Richmond in its first twenty years was rather slow. However, from 1910 to the outbreak of World War I it increased by leaps and bounds. This was a reflection of the tremendous immigration movement of the time. Another influx of Armenians came to Richmond between the close of World War I and the enactment of the restrictive immigration laws in the 1920's. A large percentage of this group were girls of marriageable age who are today the matronly Armenian housewives.

From these humble and difficult beginnings has grown a prosperous Armenian community which now numbers near 500. In its ranks are included successful business and professional men who have made important contributions to the growth of greater Richmond. Perhaps Harutun Darhanian, who has been dead these 50 years, was not exaggerating the opportunities offered by free American institutions.

AN OUTLINED HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

I

THE PIONEERS

Armenians were among the first settlers in America. Records indicate that "Martin, the Armenian" was a member of the Jamestown Colony as early as 1618. From the present available information, Martin is believed to have been one of Governor George Yeardley's servants. While in Virginia he acquired British citizenship which entitled him to the distinction of being the first naturalized person on the American continent.

The next two Armenians came to America in 1653. There was at that time a great desire to produce silk in Virginia. Edward Digges, a leading member of the colony, hearing that the Armenians were expert cultivators of silk worms, brought to America two Armenians at his own expense. The work of the two men proved successful and beneficial to the colony.

THE START OF THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY IN AMERICA

First to pioneer in Armenian Immigration individually was Khachador Osganian from Constantinople, Turkey. He arrived in New York in 1834 at the age of sixteen as a student. Following him, came a continual movement of students from Constantinople. The rate of immigration increased so that Armenians began coming to America in groups rather than individually. The Armenians in such groups planned to study in the American Universities and then return to their homeland. Upon arrival in America they entered the theological seminaries at the Universities of Princeton, New York, Yale and Andover.

After 1870 groups of students came to America from the inlands of Turkey and Cilicia. These students came to study, in addition to theology, the scientific and medical fields. There were many young men in this second era of student immigration who were to become renowned personalities in their respective fields. One was Professor Alexan Berjian (Student

at Yale 1872-1874) and another was Asadoor Altoonian of Aleppo, who graduated from Columbia University Medical School in 1855.

*Malcom, Vartan M., The Armenians in America.

After 1850 another group of Armenians came to America. This group consisted of those who wanted to learn skilled trades and those who came in search of adventure.

Typical of the adventurers was Reuben Minassian of Yosgat, Turkey. He arrived in New York in 1867 and moved west until he reached Salt Lake City, Utah. There he served under the head of the Mormon Church. Later, Reuben tried to learn modern farming methods; however, in 1875 his venture had taken him to Idaho where he worked as a mailman. Again in search of adventure he left Idaho and became prospector. Prospecting brought him a wealth of \$18,000. With this money he bought property only to lose it all in a fire. Traveling to Nevada he became a cowboy capturing wild horses and buffalo. Leaving this, Reuben bought a silver mine and finally ended his adventurous career by marrying and opening a sugar factory.

During the Civil War Armenians served in the armed forces as soldiers and doctors.

After 1880 a new phase of immigration began. To escape starvation caused by the Russo-Turkish War and persecution under the Turkish Ruler Sultan Hamid, groups of Armenians fled to Constantinople and America.

As the Armenian population increased in America, small communities grew outside of New York. These were Providence, Boston, Worcester and Fresno, California. The majority of the people in these communities were from Dickranagerd and Kharpert. Most of them became laborers in factories doing some of the most burdensome and trying types of work. Added to their physical hardships many of these Armenians carried the heartaches of families left behind and the hopes of someday returning to their homeland.

By 1888 there were approximately twelve hundred Armenians in America and it would have been unbelievable at that time that their number would increase by two hundred times within the next sixty years; increase to become a permanent group in the United States.

II

THE CHURCH ORGANIZES - 1888 Pastorate Period 1889-1898

Through unusual circumstances the Armenian Church was organized in the United States. Since there was no Armenian Church available at the time, a group of Armenians in Worcester, Mass. attended a Protestant service to listen to an Armenian minister in order to satisfy their religious desires. One day during a sermon the minister untactfully referred to the Holy Articles used in the Armenian Badarak as idolatrous. Upon this accusation most of the Armenians ceased attending the Protestant service.

Shortly following the break with the minister (1888) Mugerdich Portukalian, the well known Armenian field worker and editor, visited Worcester and in a speech explained the vital need for an Armenian Church and school. His speech instilled among the people the desire to have their own church, and such enthusiasm was raised that the community invited a priest from their homeland. There was as yet no Armenian Church in Worcester; however, the people felt the need for a spiritual leader more urgent. Their invitation brought to America the first Armenian clergy, Hovsep Vartabed Sarajian, who had studied in the Armenian monastery at Jerusalem.

The first Armenian service with the celebration of Holy Mass by Hovsep Vartabed Sarajian was held in a rented hall in Worcester, Massachusetts, July 28, 1889.

Because Hovsep Vartabed was the only Armenian clergy in America at the time, he visited the various Armenian communities around Worcester. On January 18, 1891, Hovsep Vartabed

consecrated the first Armenian Church in America, St. Saviour's Armenian Church of Worcester. Twenty-five communities throughout the United States contributed toward the cost of that church.

After carrying on his work for four years, Hovsep Vartabed Sarajian resigned his duties in America and returned to Armenia. The Patriarchate of Constantinople under whose jurisdiction the Armenian Churches in America were at that time, then sent Maghakia Vartabed Deroonian to America. He arrived in Worcester in 1894; however, after two years of service he resigned and returned to Etchmiasin.

Due to the massacre of Armenians by the Turks in 1895, scores of Armenians immigrated to the United States. Among these many immigrants were also members of the clergy.