

## SAINT BARBARA PARISH HISTORY

The parish history of Saint Barbara begins as most parishes do, with the earliest arrivals of Greek immigrants to Santa Barbara County at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From 1905 through 1914 a quarter of the 34 Greek men found in the county were working for the Southern Pacific Railroad in and around Lompoc, laying track and installing telegraph lines. Though a few men like James Angels, John Despotakis, Peter Kassimatis and John Mavromehalis owned restaurants in the 500 and 600 blocks of State Street, over half the Greek population during this decade (all of whom were men) were peanut and popcorn peddlers at the railroad depot and bootblacks near the restaurants on lower State Street. Some of these men listed in the city directories were: Petrochilos, Kalligoros, Esopos, Christou, Liugas, Kapsalis



Chianis Bros. Tobacco Shop

and Kostakis. By 1915 more Greek men arrived in Santa Barbara along with new opportunities for those arriving immigrants: cigar and tobacco shops, billiard rooms and candy stores.

Brothers John and Steve Chianis opened the Chianis Bros & Co. Cigar shop at 721 State Street; John Lafkas opened Portola Sweet Shop at 723

State with his brothers Peter and Paul working as clerks. Nick Dimas was the

proprietor of American Restaurant and Oyster Grotto at 613 State St.

The Greek population itself was becoming more clearly defined in its geographic makeup; half of the immigrants came from the Peloponnesos area of Greece, while a great many

emigrated from Asia Minor.

By the end of 1919 a definite pattern in Greek ownership was taking shape: the family restaurant. It was the restaurant business that supplied the largest source of employment for Greek men. Waiters, short-order cooks, and eventually proprietors of these cafes shaped the personality of the fledgling



Splendid Café at 623 State St. circa 1922

"Greek Colony", as it was so often referred to by the local newspaper.

Establishments such as Firfires & Apostolides, Liberty Café (Philip George), Goodfellows Grotto (Harry Kurtis and Gus Nick) and American Restaurant & Oyster Grotto (Nick Dimas) became the nucleus for the restaurant expansion in the 1920s and 30s. No less than 40 new and relocated restaurants, cafes and luncheonettes opened for business on State Street, concentrated mostly in the 500, 600 and 700 blocks. Familiar names in the Greek community such as Christ, Simitzi, Ellis, Poulos, Condos, Garonis, Compogiannis, Velliotes, and Chachakos, had at various times owned cafes known as Splendid Café, Blue Bird Café, The Orpheum Grill, Texas Lunch, Busy Bee Café, People's Lunch Room, Shorty's and Golden State Café. Not to be overlooked, confectionery shops like Olympia Candy (Kuches) and The Palm Sweets (Colores), and fruit and grocery stores such as Santa Barbara Fruit Co. (Bouth, Costas), Firos Fruits, Fresno Market (Cagoulides) and Palace Groceria (Gus Terry) flourished.



Maria and James Martin wed in Marseilles, 1927

Many of the eligible bachelors were now in a position to consider marriage and families. Unmarried sisters, nieces and female cousins were "introduced" to the local Greek men by way of photographs from home, and soon weddings were arranged, and many of the local Greek businessmen took a hiatus from work to travel back to their native villages to meet and marry their future wives.

Fraternal and philanthropic organizations were also established over the years in the community. In 1929 the local AHEPA Chapter #243 was formed with George Ellis as its president. In 1949 Daughters of Penelope Delos Chapter #103 was established, and the Philoptochos Society in 1951.



Daughters of Penelope, 1949



Santa Barbara AHEPA Chapter, 1929

## SAINT BARBARA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

In 1946 several Greek businessmen pooled their financial resources to purchase a parcel of land housing a vacant elementary school building at 1124 Castillo Street. The interior was transformed into an Orthodox sanctuary and a place of worship for the Greek community, which now included wives, mothers and children. Some of the families who settled in Santa Barbara



First building used as a Church sanctuary

after World War II were: Demourkas, Pertsulakes, Halkas, Frangos, Martin, Nicholin, Gekis and Kallas. Reverend Constantine Genis, a semi-retired priest who had occasionally made visits to Santa Barbara in the early 1940s to perform church services, moved to Santa Barbara in 1946 and became the first Greek Orthodox priest in the county. On March 4, 1947, the Articles

of Incorporation for Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church were filed with the Secretary of State in Sacramento.

In February of 1949, construction of a church began on the acquired property directly in front of the original little building. The first liturgical service and celebration

of Greek Independence Day officially took place on March 25,

1950 with Father Ambrosios Mandelaris as parish priest and Father Genis as the Greek school teacher. The "Little Church on Castillo Street" as it was affectionately called, nurtured 35 years of growth to future generations of the Greek community. Though the building itself could not seat more than 90 souls, size and capacity did not deter the parish from coming together to celebrate 80 marriages, 245 baptisms and 125 funerals, as well as important liturgical events. Between 1943 and 1979 the following priests served at



Greek School celebrating March 25, 1950



1985 Parish photo in front of first church on Castillo Street

Saint Barbara: Fathers Genis, Mandelaris, Mitsopoulos, Palassis, Sipsas, Rellos, Vakalakis, Leon, Balam, Vlahopoulos, Hadjis, Tsompanas and Manousakis. In 1965, the parish received a generous gift from Gus Chavalas; the deed and small mortgage to a home on the Mesa to be used as the parish house for residing priests and their families.

## SANTA BARBARA GREEK FESTIVAL



Greek folk dancers in 1962 Greek Festival

What started by the members of AHEPA in Ventura in 1956 as a BBQ fundraiser for the church, soon moved to Santa Barbara in 1959 and the newly built Earl Warren Showgrounds Exhibit Hall where a fall event called the Greek Festival took place on a Saturday night, hosting a steak dinner, Greek pasta and baklava for dessert, and an evening of folk dancing. The proceeds from this

yearly event went into the building fund for the parish.

Within a few years, the menu quickly changed to homemade authentic Greek dishes and pastries. In 1973, Helen Stathis, then president of the Women's Guild, suggested the idea of holding a Fiesta BBQ to coincide with Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days celebration in August; the Saturday event to be held at Oak Park. In 1979, the festival was expanded to a two day weekend event held on the last weekend in July.

Decades later, the Annual Greek Festival is still held at Oak Park and is crowned as the oldest and repeatedly voted the best ethnic festival in the county. Thanks, Helen!



Festival Crowd at Oak Park



## PARISH EXPANSION

Saint Barbara parish expanded in size from 1950 to 1979; some of the families who moved into the area were:

1950s: Pahos, Baskous, Pappas, Poulis, Anthes, Anthimiades, Semer, Tsiligiri, as well as new brides, Eleni Christ Petronakis and Mary Frangos.

1960s: Goumas, Chtouros, Stathis, Stathopoulos, Pollalis, Futris, Haimanis, Hull, Karakitsos and Bekakos.

1970s: With the move of Delco Corp. to Santa Barbara, three Greek families joined the parish and immediately doubled the size of Sunday school: the Alexander, Dovas and Papador families. Others who moved to the area were Kolendrianios, Chlentzos, Gastouniotis, Tziouvaras, Ganakis, Andropoulos, Laspitis and McGillivray.



Left, Bishop Meletios, ctr. Fr. Manousakis

With the growth of the parish came the need for a larger church and more adequate facilities. In 1976 the General Assembly approved the acquisition of 2 + acres on San Antonio Creek Road. Sixty parishioners came forward to retire the debt on the property, and in 1978 His Grace Bishop Meletios and Father Manousakis blessed our hilltop acreage.

## PARISH FOLK DANCE GROUPS

The decade of the 80s witnessed several exciting and momentous events for our parish. On May 11, 1980 the Parish Council introduced a new priest, Rev. Constantine Zozos and Presbytera Mona. In the fall of 1981 renewed interest for a parish folk dance group gained strength with a new parishioner, San Diego native George Scarvelis, who had recently moved to



Santa Barbara to attend UCSB. George had been involved with his parish dance group at home and agreed to help form a group at Saint Barbara's. According to parishioner and group member Maria Pahos, the group had just 11 weeks to learn all the dances and make all the costumes for their first year of FDF (Folk Dance Festival) competition.

George chose the name 'Pnevma' for the group feeling that it most aptly described the very "Spirited" dancers.

In 1983, His Grace Bishop Anthony of the Diocese

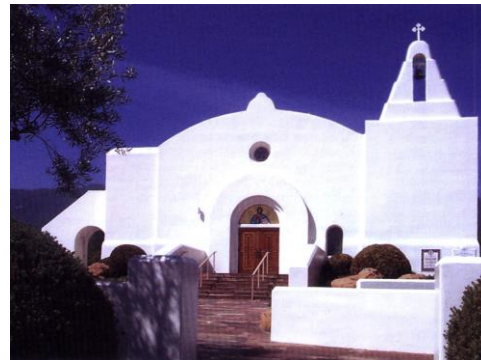


of San Francisco approached members of Pnevma at FDF about forming a young children's dance group at Saint Barbara's, and Maria Pahos volunteered. She chose the name 'Thavma', meaning miracle, from the dance called Mihanikos in which the girls in their Pnevma group would chant in the background, "Thavma, Thavma, Thavma" to the crippled man who is healed during the performance.



From the formative years of both Pnevma and Thavma, each decade has shown the maturity and competitive spirit instilled in the groups from their predecessors, winning acclaim at FDF and pride from their fellow parishioners.

Groundbreaking on San Antonio Creek Rd. for the construction of the church and fellowship hall took place on May 11, 1985, with completion in September of 1986. The doors officially opened on Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup> under a pristine and deeply blue sky. The parishioners assembled in the plaza, gazing at their beautiful Saint Barbara House of Worship and feeling such a sense of joy. His Grace Bishop Anthony conducted the Thyranoxia Service, the blessing and dedication of the Church and hall, the ceremony of Sanctification of the Waters, and the unveiling of the cornerstone.





The 1600-year-old bone fragment of St. Barbara, housed in its reliquary, now rests in the church of her namesake in California. Above, Bishop Anthony of San Francisco and Fr. Constantine Zozos, pastor of St. Barbara Church.

A most significant and meaningful occasion for the parishioners took place on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Feast Day of Saint Barbara on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> 1987, with the presentation of a tiny bone fragment of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr by Pope Paul II's emissary to His Grace Bishop Anthony of San Francisco.

The completion of the church was soon followed with 2 years of public hearings, negative letters to the local press and petitions filed by neighbors of Saint Barbara's. At issue was a conditional-use permit which stipulated certain restrictions attached to the property and the structures in this residential area. Though most of the line items were addressed and resolved, what finally remained was a 10:00 p.m. curfew. To address that restriction, a painful but necessary decision was made to file suit against the county.

Six months later, on March 3, 1989, the case was heard before Judge James

### **Regulation limiting church reversed by Superior Court**

Slater who promptly ruled in favor of our church and dismissed the curfew.

Santa Barbara News Press headline.

In the years since the parish acquired acreage for a new church and parish facilities, membership in the community nearly doubled in size. Some of the families who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s were:

Angelos, Apostolos, Arger, Argyropoulos, Athanassakis, Cosmides, Earl, Gardiner, Hillman, Hunt, Iorio, Jensen, Keramaris, Mamalakis, Markos, Marme, Papazacharioudakis, Pappas, Randopoulos, Redding, Scarvelis, Stamos, Trigonis, Tziouvaras and Zacharellis.



## THE 1990S

The 1990s brought great beauty and Orthodox tradition to our church interior with the addition of stained glass windows exquisitely designed, fabricated and personally installed by local artist and parishioner, Nadya Penoff. Six icons were commissioned to the Laurence Manos Studios and installed in March of 1992 in the six openings of the Iconostasion. Finally, 17 million pieces of mosaic glass were used by noted Byzantine mosaic master artist Bruno Salvatori to create icons of Virgin Mary and Christ Child above the altar, Archangels, and Hierarchs, and Martyrs in the apse.



On Dec. 6, 1992, to coincide with the Feast Day of Saint Barbara, the parish invited Bishop Anthony to celebrate the burning of the parish mortgage.

By 1994 it became apparent to the parish that there was a need for additional facilities to serve our various ministries. A building fund campaign was initiated in the summer of 1995 with a generous offer by Stephen and Angie Redding to match and double all contributions to acquire the adjacent property and home next to Saint Barbara's. The community met the challenge, made the financial commitment and raised close to one million dollars in 90 days to purchase the parcel. The doors opened in September of 1996, and on December 3<sup>rd</sup> the building was dedicated as the STEPHEN AND ANGIE REDDING ORTHODOX EDUCATION CENTER.





On Nov. 8, 1997 His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew traveled to Santa Barbara to speak at the Environmental Symposium at UCSB. His All Holiness celebrated an Ecumenical Prayer Service for stewardship of our community and blessed the faithful on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Saint Barbara parish.

A very special tradition was celebrated by the parish in 1998: the Consecration of Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, a most ancient Eastern Orthodox celebration that included the requirements of preparation, the blessing and final vesting of the Holy Altar table. This very special event covered three days, from Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 4<sup>th</sup>. Near the end of the service His Eminence Archbishop Spyridon entered the church to prepare for the final vesting of the Holy Altar table. Participants gathered from several Southern California parishes to witness this spiritual event.



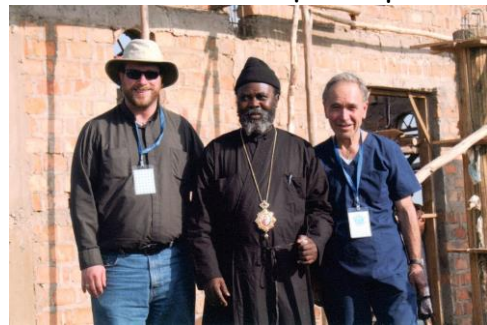
Archbishop Spyridon, Fr. Zozos

### **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

With the new century brought new and significant changes to Saint Barbara's parish. In December of 2001, Father Constantine Zozos tendered his resignation to the Parish Council, announcing his departure after Liturgy in March of the following year. The news saddened many who had known their parish priest since the first day he and his family arrived in Santa Barbara, 22 years ago. In the following month, Father James Adams, acting Chancellor for the San Francisco Metropolis, took over as Interim Pastor for the parish until a replacement was announced that summer. Father Paul Paris and family transferred from Saint Sophia Cathedral in Los Angeles where he served as assistant to Father Bakas for 7 years.

The 2004 Santa Barbara Greek Festival celebrated not only its 31<sup>st</sup> year, but also the Olympic spirit with the summer Games hosted in Greece. Olympian pole vaulter, Pete Chlentzos, a son of Greek immigrants who competed in the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles representing Greece, opened the festival on Saturday, July 31<sup>st</sup>. One of the highlights during Father Paris' tenure at Saint Barbara's was a co-sponsored event with Congregation B'nai B'rith Temple in 2005. Sue Schwartz, a member of Temple Sisterhood, spearheaded the idea of the two neighboring churches coming together to share their cultural and social traditions. She contacted Saint Barbara's Philoptochos Society to discuss this joint venture, and on May 26<sup>th</sup> 160 members from both congregations participated in what Sue entitled "Bagels and Baklava". Rabbi Steve Cohen and Fr. Paris each gave tours of their respective campuses, and at day's end a potluck dinner combining traditional Jewish and Greek dishes was served to the participants. Over the years, our parishioner Terry Keramaris has worked with Sue Schwartz to continue this very popular event.

The year 2006 brought another change to the parish, a transfer for Fr. Paris and family to Minnesota and a welcome to our present parish priest, Father Simon Thomas. Father Simon and Presbytera Stephanie arrived August 16<sup>th</sup> to Santa Barbara from St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine. Prior to St. Paul's, Father Simon was Lay-Assistant under Fr. Peter Salmas at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Belmont. Fr. Simon was ordained to the priesthood on March, 23, 2003 at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Modesto by Metropolitan Anthony of San Francisco. Of the many ministries active in the Saint Barbara parish, the fall 2009 trip to Tanzania and the village of Kazinga near Lake Victoria was quite special for Father Simon and especially for long time parishioner Alex Haimanis. Alex has worked tirelessly for over 30 years for Orthodox missions around the world, particularly for children. The parish in Kazinga received a very generous donation of \$50,000 from James and Rose Marie Towle for the mission



church. A "Concert for Tanzania" featuring soprano Jamie Chamberlin likewise raised funds for the Tanzania project. The adjacent picture is of Father Simon, Metropolitan Jeronimos of Mwanza and Alex Haimanis.