

The International GOYA Archive of the Greek Cultural Resources Center

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When searching for an internship for my undergraduate history program at Providence College, I wished to find something that aligned with my love for this unique history of the Greek-American community. I was beyond lucky when I discovered an opportunity to pursue my interest with Greek Cultural Resources. It was the perfect internship for me. Greek Cultural Resources aims to preserve and document the history of Greek-Americans, and this is exactly what I was tasked with doing. My role involved processing Greek-American records from a number of organizations. These included Greek-American publications stretching from 1952 to 2011, a plethora of records from the community of Lowell, MA, and most importantly, the records of the GOYA.

My work pertaining to the GOYA material was the most colorful aspect of my internship experience. The GOYA (Greek Orthodox Youth of America) was the young adult organization of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Not to be confused with the modern iteration of parish or Metropolis-level GOYA programs for teenagers under the age of 18, the GOYA of the period I analyzed was for young adults aged 18-35. This GOYA was an international organization, with chapters both in America and Canada. It was divided into regional diocesan and sub-diocesan districts. It had its own press wing, with a quarterly magazine known as "The GOYAn," a bimonthly publication called "The Bulletin," and then regional newsletters like the Northeast and Eastern Canada's "The Epistle." In my cataloging of this unique collection held by Greek Cultural Resources, I came to be deeply impressed with the organization. Its charitable work ranged from the building of the chapel at Hellenic College Holy Cross to providing hundreds of thousands of dollars for earthquake relief in Greece.

The international GOYA archives I was able to study hosted King Paul and Queen Frederica of Greece during their visit to America in 1953. It organized conferences in cities across the nation, even working alongside other Orthodox jurisdictions to bring together 13,000+ young adults for the CEOYLA (Council of Eastern Orthodox Youth Leaders of the Americas) Conference in Pittsburgh in 1963. The GOYA organized pilgrimages and cruises to Greece, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Holy Land. Its publications featured the happenings of chapters across the nation and even included detailed reports on Orthodoxy around the world, ranging from Uganda to the USSR. They also contained lively discussions on the use of the Greek language in parish life, the Vietnam War, and race relations occurred in the letters to the editor and official messages from Archbishop Michael and then Archbishop Iakovos. The various print records of the GOYA painted a vivid picture of the organization's history and its monumental impact that has unfortunately faded into relative obscurity. I was happy to present my findings on Grecian Echoes radio program in order to raise awareness of its existence.¹ I also shared my work via a digital presentation.² Ultimately, I hope that awareness of this history can inspire us to work towards better organization and cohesion as Greek-American young adults.

Unfortunately, these stories are being lost before they can be learned about by the general Greek-American population. As a community, we focus largely on the dates of 1453, 1821, and 1940 as key moments in our history. We commemorate them in poems and songs. We may throw in Alexander the Great, Pericles, and King Otto, but it never goes far beyond that. While obviously crucial to our self-understanding as Greeks, and must not be absent from our narrative, we often forget about the uniquely Greek-American aspect of our identity. For many of us, our ancestors arrived in this country generations ago, and have established a whole way of life and identity intertwined with the American experience. The networks of Greek Orthodox parishes, the Order of AHEPA, dance troupes, and more define our lives and preserve our Greek identity have served an important purpose. Even for those who may be more recent arrivals, these networks have served as beacons of Hellenism to find and connect us with fellow Greeks. A rich history can be found in the records, photos, stories, and artifacts of each of these institutions, yet this history remains untapped and untouched by our community, save for the occasional anniversary dinner. While an effort to understand this history is happening at grassroots levels with parish archival projects, including my own, or the work of academic or cultural institutions, we have a long way to go. We owe it to our forefathers who poured blood,

¹ "Radio Interview - Nicholas Lambros - Archiving GOYA history - 03-01-2023," YouTube video, 21:21, posted by YpogeioProductions, March 1, 2023, https://youtu.be/9_tV6vJxQts?si=jyGUeAbvKR7NAbsE.

² "Views from an archive: The Greek Orthodox Youth of America," YouTube video, 27:24, posted by YpogeioProductions, December 22, 2023, <https://youtu.be/KtI0oHDBoY8?si=ROWiSYtytIJPoEzr>.

sweat, and tears into building these institutions that we take for granted. If we hope to have strong, vibrant institutions for yet another century or more, we need to study and learn what worked in the past in order to plan for the future. We must step up and work as a community to support the efforts of organizations like Greek Cultural Resources who are fighting against the clock to save the stories of our past before they are forgotten and fade away before our eyes.

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