WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
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W.P.A. FEDERAL PROJECT NO. 1
"THE AMERICAN GUIDE"

WEAKLY FIELD REPORT

Date for week ending ............. March 7, '36

Local Office: ..............

WICHITA

District assigned ........ in ...... County ......... State

If you are attached to a District, report on (form A).
If you are merely reporting progress, fill out (B).

A (Editorial copy attached)

Number of words ........ 800

Special topic assigned . .................. Racial Elements

Part of assigned district or county covered in this report . Racial Groups (Syrian)

(Township, village, town, quarter, or city, etc.)

Questionnaire categories incomplete or missing; list below with reasons for omission, i.e. whether material is still to be covered or whether the questions are not applicable to your territory.

B (Report of progress, no copy attached)

Part of assigned territory you are now investigating ...............

Special categories of Questionnaire you are working on (list below)

Are you reducing your field notes to a Field Continuity? ............

Date of last editorial copy transmitted to State Office ............

When do you expect to forward your next editorial copy? ............

Time needed to finish present topic ..................
If you are faced by any problems in cooperation, make suggestions here for advice and assistance from your State Supervisor.

If there are any special conditions worthy of note in your territory, affecting your work, state them.

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If you wish the State Office to enter into correspondence with any individuals or agencies in your territory, give names and reasons.

Signed

Bessie Walters
Local Field Worker

HUGH A. MICK
Supervisor
Yusof Awad Arbeely was born in 1828 in Damascus, on the street called Strait. His early life was much like that of other Syrian boys. He received a common school education and then entered an academy that corresponds to our present high school system. Later he became a teacher. Mohammedan massacres were frequent, and Arbeely and his family survived three of them. He became acquainted with workers in a party of English Quakers, engaged in building asylums near Beirut, and their stories of the world they left behind fired the young Syrian with ambition to venture across the sea. It was about this time that Mission work was established near Mt. Bhamala, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and the kindness of Sir and Lady Jones, who were founders of the Mission, further inspired the young Syrian to remove his family to America, the land of freedom and promise of an end to religious persecution.

Yusof Awad and his family left Syria for America and arrived in 1876. This was the first Syrian immigrant to come through American ports with the intention of making this country its home. They traveled westward to Maryville, Tennessee, where Yusof's children entered Presbyterian College.

Six sons were born to Yusof Awad Arbeely, all attaining standing in the business and professional world.

Maxheeb, a distinguished son of Arbeely, after his graduation from Tennessee College, was made a member of the faculty, and later was appointed by President Cleveland as Consul to Jerusalem. He returned to his native shore, but the Turkish government refused to recognize his credentials, and this act almost precipitated a breach of diplomatic relations between the two governments. Maxheeb forfeited his post rather than cause international difficulty, but straightway devoted his time and energies to encouraging his countrymen to come to America. To him, probably more than any other Syrian, is this country indebted for the influx of fine Syrian citizens.
Nasheeb was indirectly, if directly, responsible for the coming of such families as the Farhas, Ablaas, Gehinias, Ojiles and Bayouths to Wichita and to the Southwest.

The first Syrian to come to Wichita to establish a home was Hametallah F. Farha, who now resides at 615½ West Douglas Avenue. Mr. Farha came to Wichita in 1915. He was born in 1879, at Gedidet Merdiayoun, and lived about sixty miles west of Damascus, seven miles from the head of the River Jordan. He was married in 1906 and to this union were born seven girls and three boys. Mr. Farha, though virtually retired, still has some interest in real estate and occupies his time in looking after several properties of which he is the owner.

There are now estimated to be thirty Syrian families in Wichita, all coming from Gedidet Merdiayoun. Mr. Farha is the oldest, and 85% there is an estimated total Syrian population of eighty families, or about 450 individuals of Syrian descent in Wichita. These Syrians are engaged in such industries as dry goods, tobacco, grocery business, and many fields. About 80% of Syrian descent who live in Wichita are house-loving folk and have constantly invested in Real Estate, at least to the extent that they own their own homes. They came, for the most part, to America to build and maintain homes, with an intention of returning to their native land. They are aggressive, enterprising and peaceful in business relations.

A large number of this Syrian Population have their homes in West Wichita, while some are located in the East part of the city. About 80% of the Syrian population of Wichita is Wichita born. About 85% are home-owners.

The younger members of the Syrian Colony born in Wichita, attend Wichita schools and churches, and avail themselves of opportunities afforded other citizens of the city. They are interested in civic-problems and share in appreciation of the growth and progress of Wichita, while the older members of the Syrian group, who received their education in their native land, adapt themselves to American ways and methods and also share with their fellow-citizens interest and enthusiasm in building a better city of homes, churches, schools and business enterprises.
There are two Syrian Orthodox Churches in Wichita. The first church to be established is located at 216 South Handley Street and is called St. George's Syrian Greek Orthodox Church. This church was owned by the Episcopalian denomination and was sold to the Syrians in 1915. A new church is being erected at 1320 Maple Street and is called, St. Mary's American Syrian Orthodox Church.

The congregation of the church under construction observed the laying of the cornerstone service December 2, 1935. The two churches are under the jurisdiction of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Apostolic Church of Antioch. Rev. N.M. Yanney of Sioux City, Iowa, was in charge of the laying of the cornerstone. No regular minister has been selected.

Sources:

1. Wichita Beacon Clippings File - January 16, 1935 - City Library
2. Mr. N.F. Farsa, 615 S. West Douglas Avenue.
Yusef Anuad Arbeely was born in 1820 in Damascus on the street called Strait. His early life was much like that of other Syrian boys. He received a common school education and then entered an academy that corresponds to our present high school system. Later, he became a teacher.

Mohammedan meetings were frequent in those days and Arbeely and his family attended them. Some few years later he became acquainted with workers in a party of English Quakers, engaged in building asylums near Beersheba. They kept in touch and their stories of the world beyond fired the young Syrian with ambition to venture across the seas. It was about this time that a Friends' Mission was established near Mt. Phamala in the vicinity of Jerusalem and the kindness of Eli Lafayette Jones, who were founders of the Mission, further inspired the young Syrian to remove...
his family to America, the land of freedom and promise from persecution.

Accordingly Yusuf Awad Arbeely with his family set sail for America and arrived in 1878. This was the first Syrian family to come through American ports with the intention of making this country its home. They traveled eastward to Maryville, Tennessee, where Yusuf's children entered the Presbyterian College. His son was born there.

A son was born to Yusuf, his son was named Awad Arbeely after home, attained great heights in the business and professional world.

Najeel, a distinguished son of Awad, after his graduation from the Tennessee College was made a member of the faculty, and later was appointed by President Cleveland as Consul to Jerusalem. He returned to his native Shor, but the Turkish Government refused to recognize his credentials, and this act almost
precipitated a breach of diplomatic relations between the two governments. Nazkeeb, however, forfeited his foot rather than cause international difficulty, but straightway devoted his entire time and energies to encouraging his countrymen to migrate to America. To him, probably more than any other Syrian is this country indebted for the influx of first Syrian citizens. 

That Nazkeeb was indirectly, if not directly responsible for the coming of such families as the Farha's, Abdelhoda Shalma, Ogles, and Raythus to Wichita and the South West.

The first Syrian to come to Wichita to establish a home was
Nemmetallah F. Farha, who now resides at 515 1/2 West Douglas Avenue.

Mr. Farha came to Wichita in 1915 at the age of sixteen years. He was born in 1899 at Jedideh, and lived about sixty miles west of Damascus, which was seven miles from the head of the River Jordan.
He was married in 1906 and to this union were born seven girls and three boys. Mr. Fachas, though virtually retired, still has some interest in real estate and occupies his time in looking after several properties, of which he is the owner. There are approximately thirty Syrian families in Wichita, who came from Werdaiyoum, Egypt. Mr. Fachas raised them.

There is an estimated Syrian population of eight families or about 450 individuals of Syrian descent in Wichita.

The Syrians are engaged in such industries as, dry goods business, tobaccos, grocery and other vocations fields of labor.

These people of Syrian descent, who live in Wichita are home-loving folk and the majority of their members own their own homes.
They came, for the most part, to America to build and maintain homes, with no intention of returning to their native land. This fact accounts for the large number who own their own homes and co-operate in the business enterprises of the city.

They are aggressive, enterprising and proud of their business relations. A large number of this race have their homes in West Wichita, while a goodly number are located in the East part of the city and other parts of Wichita. About 80% of the Syrian population of Wichita are born here. About 85% of their number are home-owners.

The younger members of the Syrian nationality, who were born in Wichita, attend the Wichita schools and churches and avail themselves of all opportunities afforded other citizens of the City. They become interested in civic problems.
and shall in appreciation of the growth and progress of Wichita. While the older members of the Syrian group who received their education in the native land adapt themselves to American ways and methods and also share with their fellow citizens interest and enthusiasm in building a better city of homes, churches, schools, and business enterprises.

There are two Syrian Orthodox churches in Wichita, The first church to be established is located on the corner block on S. Walnut Street and is called St. George. This church was owned by the Episcopalian denomination and was sold to the Syrians in 1915. A new church is being erected at the corner of Maple and Martinson and is called St. Mary. The new church which is under construction observed the laying of the cornerstone Dec 8, 1935. The two churches are under the jurisdiction of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Apostolic Church of Antioch.
Rev. M. M. Yancey of Sioux City, Iowa, was in charge of the laying of the corner stone. No regular minister has yet been acquired.

Sources:
1. Information Wichita Eagle Clippings Dec. 35—City Library
2. Wichita Beacon Clippings Jan. 15, 1922
4. Wichita Eagle Clippings file Dec. 1935—City Library

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