

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
912-914 Kansas Avenue  
Topeka, Kansas

W.P.A. FEDERAL PROJECT NO. 1

"THE AMERICAN GUIDE"

WEEKLY FIELD REPORT

WICHITA

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

Local Office: .....

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

If you are attaching editorial copy to this report, fill out (A).

If you are merely reporting progress, fill out (B).

Material may not be placed in (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)**  
any other use.

(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 .....

*2 copy*

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**Racial Elements**  
**Racial Groups (Syrian)**

Special Memoranda

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.

**SINCE 1895**

**Bessie Walters**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Local Field Worker

HUGH AMICK

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor

RACIAL GROUPS, Syrian Colony  
by Bessie Walters.

Yusof Awad 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 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 seas. It was about this time that the British Mission 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 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 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.

Naxheeb, 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. Naxheeb 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.

Kasheeb was indirectly, if directly, responsible for the coming of such families as the Farhas, Ablaha, Cohnias, Ojiles and Bayouths to Wichita and to the Southwest.

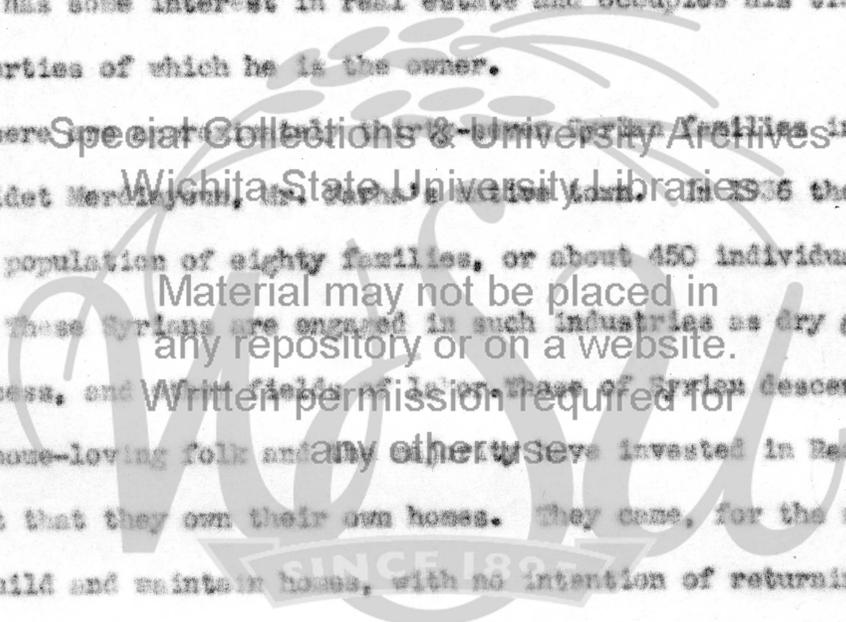
(1)

The first Syrian to come to Wichita to establish a home was Hamettallah F. Farha, who now resides at 515 1/2 West Douglas Avenue. Mr. Farha came to Wichita in 1915. He was born in 1879, at Gedidet Merdayoun, 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 about 80 Syrian families in Wichita, all coming from Gedidet Merdayoun, Mr. Farha's native town. In 1936 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 fruit fields. Many of these of Syrian descent who live in Wichita are home-loving folk and many of them have 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 no 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 90% of the Syrian population of Wichita is Wichita born. About 88% 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.



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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 1330 Maple Street and is called, St. Mary's American Syrian Orthodox Church. (2)

The Congregation of the church under construction observed the laying of the corner stone service December 8, 1935. The two churches are under the jurisdiction of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Apostolic Church of Antioch. Rev. W.M. Yarnsey of Sioux City, Iowa, was in charge of the laying of the corner stone. No regular minister has been selected. (3)

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Sources:

- (1) Wichita Beacon Clippings File - January 15, 1922 - City Library
- (2) Mr. M.F. Farha, 615 1/2 West Douglas Avenue.
- (3) Wichita Eagle Clippings file December, 1935 - City Library.

Walter

Syrians

Yusef Awad Arbelly 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 ~~massacres~~ were frequent in those days and Arbelly and his family ~~survived~~ <sup>escaped</sup> them. ~~Some few years~~

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Some few years later he became acquainted with workers in a party of English Quakers, engaged in building asylums near Beirut, and their stories of the world <sup>they left behind</sup> 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 ~~the~~ kindness of Eli and Sybil Jones, who were founders of the mission, further inspired the young Syrian to remove

his family to <sup>2</sup> America, the land of freedom and promise from persecution

Accordingly Yusof Awad Arbeeely 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 westward to Maryland Tennessee, where Yusof's children entered the ~~Presbyterian~~ <sup>Special Collections & University Archives</sup> ~~College~~. <sup>Wichita State University Libraries</sup> Six sons were born ~~to~~

<sup>Material may not be placed in any repository or on a website. Written permission required for any other use.</sup> Six Sons were born to Yusof Awad Arbeeely, all of whom attained great heights in <sup>business and</sup> professional world.

Nayheel, a distinguished son of Arbeeely, after his graduation from the Tennessee College was made a member of the faculty, and later ~~was~~ 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. Nazheeb, however forfeited his post 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.

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~~He~~ Nazheeb was indirectly, if not directly responsible for the coming of such families as the Farha, ~~Alahs~~, Pahlniae, Qzile and Bayouths to Wichita and the South West.

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Source of Information:  
Wichita Beacon Clippings - Jan 16 - 1922  
City Library

The first Syrian to come to Wichita to establish a home was Nemettallah H. Farha, who now resides at 615 1/2 West Douglas Avenue. Mr. Farha came to Wichita in 1915 at the age of sixteen years. He was born in 1879 at Gedidet <sup>merdiayoun</sup> 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. 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 approximately thirty-~~seven~~ families in Wichita, who came from Merdayoun, Mr. Farha's native town.

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

The Syrians are engaged in such industries as, dry goods business, tobacco, 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 number own their own homes.

They came for the most part, to America to build <sup>and</sup> maintain homes, with no intention of returning to their native land. This fact accounts for the goodly number who own their own homes and co-operate in the business enterprises of the city.

They are aggressive, enterprising and peaceful in their business relations.

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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.

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The younger members of the Syrian nationality, who were born in Wichita attend the Wichita schools <sup>and</sup> churches and avail themselves of all opportunities afforded other citizens of the city. They become 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 ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> native land  
adapt themselves to American ways  
and methods and also share with their  
fellow-citizens interest <sup>and</sup> enthusiasm  
in building a better city of homes,  
churches, schools <sup>and</sup> business enterprises.

(2) Source:  
Mrs. Toaska  
616 1/2 W. Harwood

There are two Syrian Orthodox Churches  
in Wichita.

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The first church to be established is  
located in the second 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. Marys  
The new church which is under construction  
observed the laying of the corner stone  
Dec 8, 1935. The two churches are under  
the jurisdiction of the Holy Eastern  
Orthodox Apostolic Church of Antioch

Rev. M. M. Yanney of Sioux City, Iowa was in charge of the laying of the corner stone. No regular minister has yet been acquired

(3) <sup>Information</sup> Source: Wichita Eagle Clippings Dec. 35

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Source:

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City Library

(2) Mr. N. F. Farka, 615 1/2 W. Douglas Ave.

(3) Wichita Eagle Clippings <sup>file</sup> Dec. 1935  
City Library