



Armenian Cultural Conservancy NEWSLETTER



ACC Board Meeting in Our New Conference Room (from left) Mike Kilijian, Jane Knar, Treasurer Allan Jendian, Chairman Van Der Muqrdechian, Secretary Mary Ekmalian, Membership Chair Patty Torosian.

Editor's Reflections

by Mary Mirigian Ekmalian

The year 2023 is a benchmark for the Armenian Cultural Conservancy as we begin leasing a modest four-room office/gallery space in an industrial complex near Clovis and Shields. We are currently acquiring (through donations and purchases) display cabinets, bookcases, and tables to start organizing and exhibiting items that reflect our Armenian experience.

We are now at the point where we need all our readers (1,300+) to become annual dues-paying members. Including rent, utilities, insurance, and Internet service, our monthly expenses hover around \$2,000. While our membership chair Patty Torosian is drafting a membership renewal letter (for 2024), please consider this newsletter as our request for a donation for 2023. A new category has been created (Sustainer Membership) for anyone wishing to sponsor a month's rent (\$2,000), and an addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience to contribute a gift of support (of any amount).

A presentation entitled "Genealogy 101" was offered by Michelle Paloutzian Maggi on May 24th at Woodward Park Regional Library. (In this issue, you may read her summary about the evening.) With Michelle's lead assistance, a room in our new space will be set up and dedicated to genealogy.

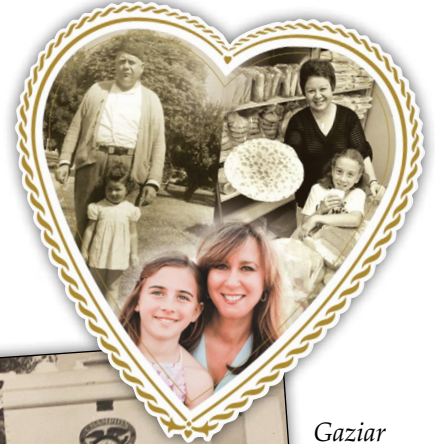
For Armenian Cultural Month (October), the ACC created a window exhibit at the
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Valley Lahvosh Baking Company

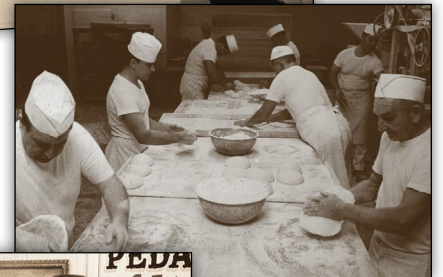
Four Generations of Delicious Cracker Bread

On Sunday afternoon, October 23, at the Fresno County Public Library-Woodward Park Branch, the Armenian Cultural Conservancy was pleased to host **Agnes Saghatelian**, President & Owner and granddaughter of the founder Gazair Saghatelian, who established the bakery in Downtown Fresno in 1922, after migrating from historic Armenia (Moush). As the company celebrates a century of accomplishments, Agnes described the evolution of the family business that she took over from her mother Janet Saghatelian in 1993 after graduating with a B.S. degree in Business-Management from Fresno State.

Introduced by Van Der Muqrdechian and Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian, Agnes described how the company's original name changed from California Baking Company to Valley Bakery in the 1940s and was rebranded in 1994 as Valley Lahvosh Baking Company. The company has expanded and grown throughout the decades to include food service, retail, and private label sales divisions. Its products are found at Houlihan's Restaurant and Bar,
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Gazair receiving a new mixer in the 1930s.



Above: In the mid 1940s Gazair passed away and Gazair's son, Sam Saghatelian took over the business. Sam changed the company name to Valley Bakery.



Left: Gazair's daughter and Agnes' mother, Janet Saghatelian

Valley Lahvosh

Continued from page 1

The Capital Grille, Yardhouse, Stockdale Country Club (Bakersfield), The Grapevine Restaurant (Arizona), M's Pub and Lazlo's Brewery & Grill (Omaha, Nebraska), DJ's Taphouse & Grill (Minnesota), The Hardware Store Restaurant (Washington), JB Hook's Restaurant (Montana), The Toasted Frog (North Dakota), and in Costco gift baskets.

The original retail store, on the corner of M & Santa Clara, is still open for sales on Fridays from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, and if you arrive when they open, you will smell the wonderful aroma of fresh-baked peda bread.



Originally known as California Baking Co. in Downtown Fresno, corner of M & Santa Clara.

Following a Q & A session, a poem, "Midnight Mix," written by Amy London, M.A. (2022) after participating in a 100th Anniversary tour, was read by Dr. Jendian.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/valleylahvoshbakingco>.

Editor's Reflections

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Woodward Park Library to feature the history of the *Valley Lahvosh Baking Company* while celebrating their 100th year anniversary. Bakery

owner and company president, Agnes Saghatelian, was our gracious guest presenter who shared her family history along with boxes of lahvosh crackers for all in attendance at our October 23rd meeting.



Valley Lahvosh Baking Company and the Saghatelian Legacy Display

The Conservancy has been teaming up with Heritage Fresno and Vintage Fresno to work with the City of Fresno and the developer of Armenian Town to save and find a home for the Vartanian House. On Tuesday, January 31st, more than sixty attendees were updated on the current status of "Historical Fresno" during presentations by all three

organizations at the Woodward Park Library. (Please see "Campaign to Save the Vartanian House" for an overview of Van's presentation.) Our plan is to settle into our new space and host an open house in the spring. We heartily invite and look forward to seeing more of our readers participating in and with our mission to benefit the community.

MIDNIGHT MIX

*by Amy London, M.A. * (2022)*

Dough.
Almost want to leave it here.
Delicious.
Continuing, though.
Details.
Peda or lahvosh.
You pick.
Or both.
Maybe a special naan?
Valley Lahvosh Baking Company.
Steps of formation.
Delightful.
Midnight mixing – a four-hour proof;
the incubation period.
Difficult...
...to wait.
The dough resting and rising like something being created and coming alive.
Imagine... mixing, racks, proofer, oven,
cool, sit, package, shelf.
8:30am ready for sale!
Back to the baking, though... and the dough.
Pulling of it, sticking to a finger, a perfect sweet and sour.
Fulminating all senses of a watering mouth.
An aroma of flour, water, sugar, oil, yeast
– all-ingredient – inhaled, heated,
harmonic perfection!
Decadence.
And some crunch.
Hearts, stars, trees, original round.
Is there any hummus to be found?
Or banir... hiding.
Dinner.
Because of Gazair.
In Old Armenian Town at Santa Clara
and M.
A family tradition began.
Since 1922, Valley Lahvosh shipping
shapes (and more) to over 40 states.
Famously furnishing Fresnoans with fresh,
handmade peda on Fridays.
Do not hesitate.
A human heart brushed cracker.
Wonderful women.
Janet to Agnes.
An intergenerational beautiful, booming
business.
Hoping beginning with dough happiness
continuously happens.
And onto...
...Danielle.
A Saghatelian
...Dynasty!
The Valley Lahvosh Baking Company
100th Year Anniversary.

• • • • •

Amy London, M.A. is a professor/writer/poet and mother of three children and three cats. She is employed as an adjunct professor of sociology at State Center Community College District, College of the Sequoias, and Bakersfield College and posts poetry periodically on social media.

Armenian Genealogy 101



by Michelle Paloutzian Maggi

On May 26th, 2022, I was invited to speak on the topic of Armenian Genealogy 101. I discussed how to start and listed some basic resources. This is a summary of my presentation.

Start with what you know. Whether you use pen and paper, computer software or a website, start with documenting yourself and your closest relatives. You, your parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins and so on. Write down full names at birth, birthdates and locations, occupations, wedding dates and locations, deaths, cemeteries and locations.

Then start searching for information to fill in anything you don't know. Collect and save documents or images of records and documents. Make note of where you found your information.

Websites: Ancestry.com, Family Search.org. You can make family trees and search for supporting documents. Family Search is free, and Ancestry requires a subscription to access some of the available content. Ancestry often makes select databases free on holidays, such as military records on Veterans' Day. **The Family Tree Maker** software syncs with **Ancestry.com**, so you can upload and download your work between the two.

Education and skills: The National Genealogical Society has lots of

free resources including charts that you can print off and fill in. www.ngsgenealogy.org/free-resources/charts.

Where else to find information:

Number one, talk to your relatives. Even if they say they don't know or can't remember, start asking questions and important bits and pieces will come out. Join **your local genealogical society**. Join societies of the places your ancestors lived. Pretty much every U.S. state and county has a genealogy group, and there are groups dedicated to specific ethnicities, countries and religions. **Search the internet** for genealogy websites, blogs, Facebook groups, cemeteries, etc. Use census records, state and county archives, probate records, historical societies, libraries and newspapers.

Newspapers contain obituaries, wedding and engagement announcements, society pages, business advertisements, sports articles, civic organizations, and election information.

Some excellent resources:

- Newspapers.com – Historic Newspaper archive
- Chronicling America (Library of Congress) newspapers 1880-1922 www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
- California Digital Newspapers Collection www.cdnc.ucr.edu
- Asbarez.com

- Hairienik Digital Archives www.hairienik.hisystems.net
- FindAGrave.com – cemetery lookup
- AraratArmenianCemetery.com (Fresno)
- **Armenian Immigration Project** (Mark Arslan) <http://markarslan.org/ArmenianImmigrants/shiplists.html>
- www.westernarmenia.weekly.com (George Aghjayan) maps, research, articles
- <https://www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island-immigrant-passenger-lists>
- <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/eidb> (Forms for searching Ellis Island database)
- My genealogy blog: www.michellepaloutzian.blogspot.com

I have been researching my own Armenian family in Fresno County and beyond for almost 40 years. My Armenian ancestors (my 4 Armenian great-grandparents and their families) immigrated to the United States between 1894 and 1906. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if I can help you with your research.

paloutzian@att.net
209-769-0609

Thank You to Our Donors

May 2022 – January 2023

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Specific Donations

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Other Donations:

Armenian Women's Archives
of Berkley
Shenora Adishian
Zar Der Mugrdechian
Gladys Melikian



Campaign to Save the Vartanian House Comes to Fruition

by Van Der Mugrdechian

One step closer! The Vartanian House and outbuildings have been gifted by the Fresno Mission to the Armenian Cultural Conservancy. This is one of the first steps involved in saving this 125-year-old gem of Fresno history and sharing it with the entire community. We are now working with City of Fresno officials and the developer of the Armenian Town project to secure and prepare the proposed relocation site located at the SE corner of Ventura and M streets in Fresno.

The Vartanian House and outbuildings are the cornerstone of our vision for the establishment of an Armenian American Heritage Center in Armenian Town. Concurrent with the efforts to relocate the House is the resurrection of a campaign to designate Old Armenian Town as an Historical District.

In the meantime, the ACC is moving forward with phase one of our proposed heritage center by opening an Armenian American Legacy Gallery in Fresno. Here, donated items depicting the over 140 years of Armenian American history in Fresno will be shared with the community. More details to follow. We are excited with the recent turn of events and look forward to working with Heritage Fresno to preserve and share the rich diverse cultural history of Fresno.

Thank you again for your support.

v.dermugrdechian@gmail.com or armenianconservancy@gmail.com

Yes! I want to become a member of the Armenian Cultural Conservancy

- | | | | | | |
|--|------|---|-------|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student membership | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Founding membership | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer membership | \$2000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual membership | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor membership | \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Fund | \$_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family membership | \$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservator membership | \$500 | | |

All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. PLEASE PRINT

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Please, make checks payable to Armenian Cultural Conservancy
mail to: 2037 West Bullard Avenue, PMB 106, Fresno, CA 93711-1200

You can help. Become a member. Spread the word. Host or assist with an event.

*"For when two of them meet anywhere in the world,
see if they will not create a New Armenia." – William Saroyan, 1936*

To collect, preserve and interpret the evidence of the Armenian experience in Central California in an enduring institution of learning.



Armenian Cultural Conservancy Logo

The six- and eight-pointed stars have a long history in pre-Christian Armenia and have been adopted in Church architecture and decorative arts. They are thought to have magical powers and are used extensively in astronomy and sacred art. The logo's wheel of eternity signifies life; the eight-pointed star represents the eight architectural pillars of the Armenian Church; the color purple represents the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide; the gold color is the richness of the Armenian culture.

This logo was created by Alain Ekmalian.

Armenian Cultural Conservancy

Mailing Address:
2037 W. Bullard Ave.
PMB 106
Fresno, CA 93711-1200

Office & Gallery:
5629 E Westover #A
Fresno, CA 93727
Email:
armenianconservancy@gmail.com

Office Hours: Fridays
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Community Calendar

MONTH OF FEBRUARY, Vartanian Home Window Display, Woodward Park Regional Library

Thursday, February 16, Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m., Vartanatz Day Commemoration, hosted by Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Vartanantz address by Dn. Van Der Mugrdchian, St. Gregory Armenian Church, 220 S. Third Street, Fowler, free and open to the public, refreshments

Friday, February 17, 7:00 p.m., "The Shadows of 1915" discussion and book-signing with Jerry Burger, Fresno State, University Business Center, Armenian Studies Program and Armenian Museum of Fresno

Sunday, February 19, 12:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Sunday School Carnival, Sunday School Gym, \$5 includes lunch, games, prizes

Sunday, February 19, 12:30 p.m., Banquet Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Gomidas Zohrabian and bestowing St. Nersess medals upon Richard Hagopian, Jane Kazarian, and Deacon Edward Nikssarian, St. Gregory Armenian Church, Fowler, catered by Pardini's, adults \$75, children \$25, RSVP by February 5

Thursday, February 23, 7:00 p.m., "Reflections on an Armenian-American Journey" by Dr. Dennis Papazian, Fresno State, University Business Center, Armenian Studies Program and Knights and Daughters of Vartan, free parking in Lot P6 with parking code

Thursday, March 2, 11:00 a.m., Christian Women of First Street Prayer Day, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church Dorcas Guild, 3673 N First Street, Lunch 11:45 a.m., gather to pray at 12:45 p.m., ringing of the bells of the churches at 1:00 p.m., \$15, RSVP to Kathleen Melikian at 559-840-5005 by February 23

Saturday, March 4, 11:30 a.m., International Women's Day Luncheon, Armenian Relief Society Fresno, Mayr Chapter, Holy Trinity Armenian Church Social Hall, Entertainment, Guest Speaker, Tablescape, Art Exhibit, Raffle, \$40 per person, RSVP by February 24, for more information call Jill at 559-281-9876

Saturday, March 11, 5:30 p.m., A Lebanon and Syria Relief Benefit, hosted by Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church and First Armenian Presbyterian Church, 3673 N. First Street, Fresno, Social Hall, Speaker Dr. Rafi Balabanian, Calvary Armenian Congregational Church, San Francisco, \$40 per person, RSVP by February 28, Ed Saliba (559) 907-8110

Sunday, March 12, 1:00 p.m., Michink (Lenten) Luncheon, Armenian Relief Society, Sophia Chapter, Garo and Alice Gureghian Armenian Cultural Center, 2348 Ventura Street, for more information call Vera at 559-930-3280

Sunday, March 12, 5:00 p.m., Armenian Dance Group of Fresno, Annual Dance Concert, Paul Shaghoian Memorial Concert Hall, 2770 E. International Avenue with The Andrew Hagopian Ensemble and Ashot Ghazaryan, tickets at fresnoarmeniandance.ticketleap.com/concert

Friday, March 17, 11:30 a.m., Armenian Home Guild Monthly Luncheon, to benefit the CAH, \$15, California Armenian Home, 6720 E Kings Canyon Road, AACL Hall, RSVP to Arpy, 559-977-2276

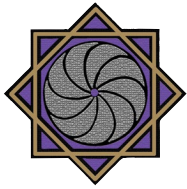
SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, March 25, 5:00 p.m., Armenian Studies Program Annual Banquet, Ft Washington Country Club

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, April 1, 3:00 p.m., Taline and Friends Concert, hosted by Hamazkayin Taniel Varoujan Fresno Chapter, \$25, Garo & Alice Gureghian Armenian Cultural Center, call Maggie at 559-765-6062

SAVE THE DATE: Monday, April 24, Armenian Genocide Commemoration, Fresno State Armenian Commemorative Monument

SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, April 30th, Fundraiser for the Armenian Medical Mission to Armenia and Lebanon, sponsored by the Knights of Vartan, Kings River Winery, Sanger, 1:00-5:00 p.m. Open to the public

A request to all Armenian Community Organizations - Please e-mail community events to armenianconservancy@gmail.com as soon as they are set in order to include them in ACC's Newsletter Community Calendar and on our website.



Armenian Cultural Conservancy

2037 W. Bullard Avenue, PMB 106
Fresno, CA 93711-1200

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This silk, gold thread embroidered robe and brass bowl were donated by Gloria Erganian. According to Gloria's mother, Ardemis Topalian, it was worn by Ardemis's mother-in-law to go to the Turkish bathhouses in the early 1900s. The Topalian family was from the Armenian village of Zela in the Sebastia province (currently called Zileh in Sivas, Turkey). The brass bowl or "t'as" was used to scoop water.