

B

Gary - There is a lot of work here - This is an accomplishment.

The custodian reporting has paid off to some extent. Considerable order & the narrative is satisfactory.

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

You do set out chronological development & the paper as a whole presents an

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY HISTORY

OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCHES

IN NEW BRITAIN, CONNECTICUT

Community - if a thin one

Is left wanting to know much more. You have not researched the situation

RESEARCH IN HISTORY 390

thoroughly enough. Who was the group

MAY 12, 1978
that held the 2nd mortgage? Did they get the original church building?

BY

GARY HOVHANESSIAN

What is their history - you have none of it. Why?

Note corrections in bibliography

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
CHAPTER 1 1 Origin and Existence in New Britain, 1900-1910. 1	1
CHAPTER 2 2 Searching For A Parish Pastor, 1911-1920. 2	7
CHAPTER 3 3 The Building of the First Armenian Church Edifice In Connecticut, 1921-1926. 3	16
CHAPTER 4 4 Schism and the Establishment of a Second Church Edifice, 1926-1941. 4	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	40

See Turchan



Learn out

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is an attempt to write a complete factual history of the Armenian Apostolic Churches in New Britain, Connecticut. The task was extremely intriguing and fascinating, and several times ~~more~~ difficult due to the lack of written information. As little opinion as possible is given in an attempt to keep the facts correct.

The largest and most important challenge was the translation from Armenian to English of several hundred pages of Armenian Church records. This challenge was accomplished at meetings, held almost every weekday, during May and June of 1977. The translation would not have been accomplished without the extreme knowledge and effort of Reverend Father Vartan DerAssadourian, pastor of the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection. His assistance was appreciated to the utmost.

Thanks can be given to several local Armenians who lent their time and knowledge to this project, namely:

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of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church

Mr. Gregory Abrahamian

Mr. Stephen DerMargosian

Mr. Sarkis Esoian

Mrs. Arshal Hoosigian

my parents, Mr. & Mrs. B.J. Hovhanessian

and, Miss Sarah Yagoobian

Thanks must also go to Dr. Edwin Dahill, professor of History at Central Connecticut State College, for giving me the necessary motivation to complete this project.

Gary Hovhanessian

~~CHAPTER~~ *ONE*
The Armenians Found a Church in New Britain
~~Chapter I~~ ~~Origin and Existence in New Britain, 1900-1910~~

~~Beginning~~ *I*n the last quarter of the 19th century, many "new immigrants" came to the United States from southern and eastern Europe. One group, the Armenian people, left their homeland due to oppressions caused by the Russo-Turkish War of 1876-77, and journeyed to the United States. Various statistics show that prior to this period the Armenian community in America did not exceed 100 and was formed mainly by students coming from Constantinople (Istanbul).¹

The location of Armenia, on the northeast boundry of Turkey, has caused her culture and history to contain an influencial mixture of Indo-European and Cantral and East Asian traits. Armenia's strategic location has also caused conflict and commercial rivalries between Armenia and neighboring lands.

Throughout history, Armenia and neighboring Turkey have engaged in numerous religious, economic, and political altercations. One of these occurred in 1876 after the enthronment of the Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II and the subsequent repressions of the Armenians in Turkey. This caused a considerable increase in Armenian migration to the United States for the next twenty years. Statistics show that around 700 entered the United States in 1880, 2,000 in 1890, and 5,000 in 1894.²

¹Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (A.C.Y.O.A.) Sports Weekend 1976 Bicentennial Booklet, (Lowell A.C.Y.O.A.: Lowell, Massachusetts, 1976).

²Ibid.

In 1894 the United States Bureau of the Census published a supplement to the 1890 Census of United States which indicated that there were six Armenian church organizations established. Of these, three were in Massachusetts, two in Rhode Island, and one in New York. The census also indicated that their membership totaled 335 people.

Throughout the 1880's and 90's, the increase of Armenian immigration and involvement in these church organizations was phenomenal. The supplementary United States Census of Churches, published in 1906, indicates that there were 73 such church organizations, including three church edifices. In response to a petition for clergymen, the Very Reverend Hovsep Sarajian was sent to the United States by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and the first Armenian Apostolic Church was built in 1889 in Worcester, Massachusetts.³

At the turn of the century, 56 of the 73 Armenian church organizations were located in the North Atlantic region of the United States. Massachusetts contained twenty-nine; New York contained ten; Rhode Island, Maine, and New Hampshire each contained four; and Connecticut contained three.

The three established organizations in Connecticut, (New Britain, Hartford, and New Haven-Bridgeport) had a total membership of 579 people, of whom more than 80% were male. New Britain was the largest, containing 300 Armenians within a

³ A.C.Y.O.A., Sports Weekend 1976 Bicentennial Booklet.

population of 26,000. Hartford, with a population of approximately 80,000, contained 210 Armenians. The New Haven-Bridgeport area, with a combined population of 178,000, contained the remaining 69 Armenians in Connecticut.⁴

The early history of the ~~Armenian~~ church community in New Britain contained fundamental problems that may appear to be meaningless but these were the main concerns of the organization during its inception. The odd assortment of events may appear unconnected in the subject matter. This is due to a scarcity of early historical records.

The first official church meeting held by Armenians in New Britain was on August 12, 1900.⁵ The meeting was presided over by the Very Reverend Khat Markarian, Diocesan Religious Pastor. Stressed at this initial meeting (and at almost all of the early meetings) was the collection of annual dues, the electing of a governing body of trustees—later referred to as the Parish Council—and the "religious, moral, and financial needs of the Parish." The meeting ended with the comments of Very Reverend Khat Markarian wishing... "strength, success, and wisdom..." to the newly formed parish.⁶

A meeting was held on the following day, August 13, 1900, to decide which offices would be held by the newly elected members of the Parish Council.

⁴Bureau of the Census Special Reports on Religious Bodies, 1906, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910).

⁵Church Record of the Armenian Church Committee, 1900, (The Armenian Church Committee: New Britain, Connecticut, 1900). p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

The officers were: Kaspar Hovhanessian, Chairman; Aram Shahmirian, Secretary; and Krikor Tateosian, Treasurer.

There followed an eleven month period in which only one additional meeting was held and recorded. There are several possibilities as to "Why?" this occurred. It is possible that the organization gathered on a social basis and that a record was not kept of these gatherings. It may also indicate a struggle for survival of the organization.

A meeting took place in July of 1901, under the presidency of the Very Reverend Arsen Vehoony, Diocesan Spiritual Pastor, again stressing the need to collect dues. Twenty-Eight new members registered and an election of a new Parish Council was held. The results were: Vahe Krikorian, Chairman; Harootyoon Khadsigian, Vice-Chairman; Aram Shahmirian, Secretary; Sahag Kasparian, Vice-Secretary; and Krikor Tateosian, Treasurer. The new Parish Council had its first formal meeting on September 25, 1901, at which time it reviewed the Armenian Church Constitution of the United States and accepted it without any change.

In February of 1903 a new Parish Council was elected under the presidency of Very Reverend Arsen Vehoony. The results were: Harootyoon Khadsigian, Chairman; Aram Shahmirian, Secretary; Hagop Ochanian, Treasurer; Eli DerBagdassarian, Collector; and Seroup Sachaklian, Advisor. The group stressed the "need for a clergyman" as a nucleus of the church community. The Church was beginning to provide a variety

of services to its members as exemplified by ~~examples, such as,~~
a request by Markos Charanian, who needs ^{ed} a bachelor certificate
to go to Cyprus. A request for a marriage certificate was
made by George Kevorkian and also a request by Khatchadoor
Bedrossian for baptism services for his newly born son. The
Parish Council became an important advisory board to many of
the Armenians for several reasons. The young Armenian immigrants
had come to the United States "without parents or other senior
relatives" and others "were unable to speak English" and thus, ^{they}
relied on the Parish Council, which contained "older members"
and "some who could speak or who had learned to speak English,"
for advise in many domestic matters.⁷

In the summer of 1903 the Armenians made a request
to St. Mark's, Episcopalian Church for the use of ~~their~~ ^{the} chapel
for Sunday Church Services and meetings. The St. Mark's ~~use~~
chapel, was well as the chapel of the First Church of Christ
(Congregational) were used by many of the local Armenians.
throughout the following two decades. During this period, ~~as~~
many of the Armenians became members of these parishes and
some remained, possibly to avoid involvement in the severance
that occurred in the church community in the 1930's.

The church organization was struggling to form a
financial base. There was a request for dues and donations
at many of the early meetings. It was pointed out at an
October, 1903 meeting that a delegate could not be sent to

⁷ Interview with Mrs. Arshal Hoosigian and Miss
Sarah Yagoobian, New Britain, Connecticut, 2 May 1977.

the national Diocesan Convention in Providence because of a lack of money. The ^{next} following item on the agenda was a request to all members to pay their dues.

In 1908, there was an order sent from the Diocese to the Armenian Church community. The order stated that the worship services that were jointly being held by the Armenian Apostolic Church and the "Armenian Protestant Church" (First Church of Christ) should be done in separate places from now on. ~~The order may have been given because of distinct~~ theological differences between the two groups. There was no mention of a social separation of the two groups.

It appears that the Armenians in the New Britain community had many obstacles to overcome in their early history. Language barriers, leadership, organization, and the lack of substantial finances sometimes hampered the growth of the church organization. The group's establishment and influence with the national Diocese may have been the major factors that enabled the group to survive. Also, the people's desire to keep their own national and church identities may have influenced their gradual but persistent growth.

Chapter 2: Searching For A Parish Pastor, 1911-1920

As indicated in the first chapter, the Armenian church organization in New Britain had given guidance to many of the local Armenians and acted as a social and religious bond in the lives of these new immigrants. The group had grown in number and the need for clerical guidance and leadership had become an item of concern on the agenda of many meetings.

In March of 1911, the Executive Committee of the Parish Council decided to submit a request to the Diocese to have a priest sent to New Britain to conduct Church services. It was also deliberated whether it would be feasible to have a permanent pastor at this time. On May 29, 1911, a general public meeting was held at Lafayette Hall in New Britain that concerned the feasibility. All the members of the Armenian Church communities in Connecticut were urged to attend. The chairman of the New Britain Parish Council, Seroup Sachaklian, gave a report on the matters discussed at the recent Diocesan Convention, including the matter of New Britain attaining a permanent pastor. The report recommended that New Britain consult its sister parishes in Connecticut, namely the "Hartford, New Haven, and Thompsonville parishes."⁸ New Britain warned her sister parishes that it could pay the stipend of the priest without financial assistance. The sister parishes

⁸Thompsonville was a surprising addition to the list of Connecticut parishes. It appears that Thompsonville's existence as a parish was only shortlived. Church Record of the Armenian Church Committee, 1900, p. 22.

reported that they would give their full assistance in the matter. It was decided that each family should pay \$5.00 per year and that each single person pay \$2.00 per year in order to pay the stipend.

In August, another meeting was held concerning the hiring of a pastor. New Britain was chosen as the central parish and it was decided that the priest would reside there. Every Sunday the priest would have worship services in a different parish. Each parish promised to give its yearly monetary share: New Britain would give \$300.00, Hartford would give \$200.00, and New Haven would give \$60.00. Thompsonville was not mentioned at this time, possibly because their church organization was extremely shortlived. This assertion is made due to the fact that a "Thompsonville church community" was only mentioned during the May 29, 1911 meeting. The plans were specific and detailed but, due to financial difficulties, New Britain would still have to wait for a permanent priest.

At a Parish Council meeting, held in October of 1912, Parish Council elections were held. The newly elected Council consisted of Griagos Hagopian, Kevork S. Kevorkian, Toros Yagoobian, Seroup Sachaklian, and Garabed Minatsigian. It was proposed by the new Council to make a collection and begin a campaign to build a new church. Those present participated and there was "every hope that it would be continued."⁹

⁹Church Record, 1900, p. 31.

The new church proposal was only a "hope" and, at a time of financial difficulty, appears almost anachronistic. The struggle to gather funds is evident at a November, 1913 meeting where ~~was~~ it is decided that "each member pay his dues six months in advance."¹⁰ The financial struggle ~~also appears~~ ~~was also evident~~ at the ~~next~~ following election ~~meeting~~ on November 25, 1913, when the total profit of the previous year, \$21.60, was handed over to the new treasurer.¹¹ The election results were: Toros Yagoobian, Chairman; Hagop Palangian, Secretary; Bedros Simonian, Treasurer; Hovhaness Harotounian, Custodian; and Khatchadoor Boyajian, Advisor.

Early in 1914 the New Britain Parish Council acknowledged the election of the new Primate, Very Reverend Arsen Vehoony and also Archbishop Seroupian's acceptance of an invitation to come to New Britain.¹² Archbishop Seroupian performed Church services at St. Mark's Episcopal Church on February 8, 1914 and in the evening gave a one hour speech at Lafayette Hall before a large crowd. The speech was encouraging and "made a deep impression on those who were present."¹³

During the summer of the same year Right Reverend Shahe Kasparian came to New Britain to baptize three children and celebrated Church services in Bristol. In September of

¹⁰ Church Record, 1900, p. 33.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 34.

¹² Ibid., p. 35.

¹³ Ibid., p. 36.

1914, Very Reverend Arsen Vehoony, who had previously visited to assist the Armenian community, journeyed to New Britain as the newly elected Primate, to assist in organizing a Women's Guild. The Guild, at that time, assisted in caring for Armenian orphans and persons escaping the genocide of the Armenians in eastern Turkey.¹⁴ It was decided that, while Very Reverend Vehoony was in the area, a meeting would be held with the Hartford Parish Council to again discuss the matter of attaining a permanent priest. The stipend of \$600.00 per year was the predominant factor in deciding against one at that time. The importance of attaining a priest is signified by a cluster of three meetings in five days which were concerned with this matter. The meeting of September 24, 1914, was attended by the Parish Council and four local Armenian political groups. The Parish Council of the Armenian Church organization, along with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or Tashnag Party, the Hunchagan Party, the Vev-Ho Party, and the Armenian Democratic League promised to give their moral and financial assistance to attaining a priest for the church. The political organizations had been established in Armenia as an attempt to combat the oppressions of the Turkish government. At times, the different ideologies of the groups has caused conflict and incompatibility ^{within} amongst the Armenian community. The political organizations also supported the proposed ideas of an Armenian School, a local Armenian Citizens Club, and an Armenian interpreter to assist at the local courthouses.

¹⁴Church Record, 1900, pp. 38-40.

The outbreak of World War I in Europe "caused anxiety" within the local Armenian community. A message was sent from the Diocese stating that "all Armenians in America should defer their planned activities and act on them according to the dictate of the times."¹⁵

The Parish Council continued its role in assisting individuals in social and domestic matters. The Council found itself as the mediator of a misunderstanding between two gentlemen concerning a domestic problem. The Council advised that these "frivolous and nonsensical" misunderstandings should be avoided in the future. The Council also had to hear the story of two brothers who were not getting along. The Council ordered that the matter be taken care of. The Parish Council listened to the arguments of both brothers for a ten-month period. Finally, in November of 1915 the dispute was settled, guilt was admitted and a \$3.00 fine was paid. The prolonging of this dispute appears to have caused a local schism. The people involved in the dispute had taken sides and had used the political party groups as supportive backers. Another incident occurred the following month that also indicated divisions within the local community. The New Britain News reported, on December 20, 1915, that a "near riot" occurred when one party accused the other of "stuffing ballot boxes and defeating their candidate" for the local church committee.¹⁶

¹⁵Church Record, 1900, p. 42.

¹⁶New Britain News, 20 December 1915.

*Did you follow
up on this? There
is a suggestion
here of significant
history not in
your paper*

In 1916, the national Diocese was showing a strong effort to become much more organized. Bi-laws were rewritten and support was given to the local communities in any function that was initiated.

Between 1914 and 1916 the New Britain community became the central Armenian community of Connecticut. The actual dues ~~paid~~ ^{paying} membership was 135 people as compared to 25 in Hartford and 31 in the New Haven area.¹⁷

During this period the Parish Council struggled to form some sort of financial base. Dues, as previously stated, were always a matter of importance. Collections were made whenever a Church service or a meeting was held. In the earlier years "there always seemed to be a collection and everyone who was able was willing to give."¹⁸ At a Christmas service in 1913, a collection was made and \$29.00 was collected. When the church organization needed financial assistance to acquire cemetery property "all took part in the collection and \$55.00 was collected."¹⁹ The idea of an Armenian School was proposed on September 24, 1914. Following the acceptance of the proposal, the Parish Council and the four political groups who were present donated the sum of \$35.00.²⁰ The Diocese assisted by initiating projects, such as a sale of calenders, in March of 1915.

was the property purchased

Beginning in 1915, it was decided that a fee

¹⁷Church Record, 1900, p. 122.

¹⁸Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

¹⁹Church Record, 1900, p. 36.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 41,42.

of \$5.00 would be paid to the Church for funeral services.²¹
In January of 1917, the Parish Council asked that a fee be paid for baptisms, also. The fee was \$3.50 for dues paying members and \$4.50 for non-dues paying members.²²

The Council also collected or loaned money to individuals in the community. In 1918, the Council collected \$20.00 for a certain individual and his family because "he had become ill and had been unable to work." The Council has since ended the policy of loaning money due to the personal problems that it may have created. One specific example in this period occurred in 1919 when an individual was asked to pay back a "\$150.00 loan." Noting the struggling financial situation of the organization at that time shows the importance of that amount. To comparatively show the value of the loan, it can be noted that in 1920 the Council purchased an area of cemetery land for \$600.00. An initial payment of \$150.00 was made. More than a year later, the Council was discussing ways of paying off the \$300.00 balance.

Again in 1916, the New Britain Parish Council asked for a permanent pastor. The stipulations were that his salary would be \$15.00 per week and that he teach three days a week at the Armenian School. The Council requested the services of Reverend Seroupeh Neshabou but to no avail.

Reverend Neshabou informed the parish that he had found employment in the community of West Hoboken, New Jersey. The

Council ²¹ requested the services of Rev. Seroupeh Neshabou. Church Record, 1900, p. 68.

²² Ibid., p. 132. His services were not considered feasible at that time.

The Council then requested the pastoral services of Very Reverend Drepoon but soon rejected his acceptance because it was not economically feasible at that time. The "permanent priest" question rose again in 1918 when Reverend Yeghyezar accepted the invitation to become New Britain's pastor. He was also denied due to financial difficulties.

In 1917 the Chairman of the Parish Council, Karekin Kevorkian, was asked by the Parish to see the principal of one of the local schools and request a classroom so that "the Armenian children could learn (to speak) Armenian." The chairman reported back to the Council that the principal had stated, "You are in America and you should learn English and not any other language. Other languages are prohibited." ~~Forwards~~ It was decided to ask a second time, giving more detail concerning the needs of the classroom and pointing out that America is a democratic republic and "never puts any restriction on any foreigners in learning their own language." The request ~~Forwards~~ was again denied.

It was decided that Armenian School classes would be held in the club of the Huchagan political party. The Armenian School classes officially began on March 28, 1918 with Miss Yeranian as the instructor. Classes were held twice a week for two hours.

Later in the same year, Reverend Yeghyezar was again requested to come to New Britain to meet with the parishes of New Britain and Hartford and discuss the feasibility of

attaining him as the pastor. A special meeting was called which very few attended. This possibly indicated that the majority of both communities felt at this time that the whole matter was a wasted effort. The Council declared, "our hopes vanished when nobody showed up."

The newly elected Parish Council of 1920 consisted of: Karekin Kevorkian, Chairman; Toros Yagoobian, Vice-Chairman; Khatchadoor Davidian, Treasurer; Khatchadoor Anspigian, Secretary; and Garabed Yessian, Keeper of the Official Seal. Aside from the usual order of business the main concerns of the 1920 Council were the diminishing cemetery area and the hiring of a permanent priest. The Council decided that, beginning in November of 1920 the permanent services of Reverend Mampré Paltigian would be confirmed.²³ His stipend would be \$25.00 per week.

This period ended a long and grueling search for a permanent priest. The attainment of Reverend Paltigian proved to be very beneficial to the Armenian community. Business could be run smoothly and more rapidly and the mere presence of a priest in the community gave the parishoners a new enthusiasm.

²³Due to incomplete records, Reverend Paltigian's actual acceptance and confirmation as pastor in November of 1920 was not realized until a meeting held on May 6, 1921. Church Record, 1900, pp. 211-213.

*Do you mean realized
or noted?*

Chapter 3: The Building of the First
Armenian Church Edifice In Connecticut , 1921-1926

The newly elected Parish Council of 1921 consisted of: Karekin Kevorkian, Chairman; Toros Yagoobian, Vice-Chairman; Giragos Hagopian, Secretary; Garabed Yessian, Treasurer; and Manuel Atashian, Seal Keeper. With Reverend Paltigian's permanent appointment as pastor of the New Britain parish, the organization appeared to be moving towards larger endeavours, namely the building of its own church. The parish also flourished in other ways during this period, namely the organization of a choir, and a drama group, and the growth of the Women's Guild and the Armenian School.

At a Parish Council meeting held on February 25, 1921, the Council stressed the importance of having their own meeting hall and worship facility. A special general meeting was held on March 4, 1921, where it was again stressed that a "building of some sort" was necessary. A committee was elected which consisted of: Kevork S. Kevorkian, Hovhaness Haroutounian, Alexan Edgarian, Dickran Sarkissian, Khatchadoor Boyajian, and Harootyoon Najarian. This new "Building Committee" met jointly with the Parish Council in March of 1921 to discuss future plans. The chairman of the Parish Council, Karekin Kevorkian, announced that a suitable place had been found on Summer Street in New Britain. The property was 80 feet wide and 100 feet deep. The price of the land was reported as \$3,500.00.

After lengthy deliberation the cost of the construction of a church and a hall was estimated at \$20,000.00. At a meeting held on March 16, 1921, the Council devised a plan that it believed could raise between \$4,000-\$5,000. The Council hoped that if 300 families could donate \$15.00 each that the amount of \$4,500.00 would be used as a down payment. The Council also decided to begin a campaign of parishoners from sister churches, with the authorization of the Diocese.

Within two weeks a new building committee was elected. This committee consisted of: Kevork S. Kevorkian, Alexan Edgarian, Melkon Shahanian, Khatchadoor Boyajian, and Tavit Bagdassarian. Their function would be to further the purchasing of a building and to canvass the parishoners for building funds. Karekin Kevorkian started the fund raising by giving his word for a \$500.00 donation. By the end of March, it was reported that \$2,400.00 had been collected. A lull occurred in April, 1921, when the Building Committee submitted its resignation. The Council was also faced with another dilemma, namely the lack of funds to pay the stipend of Reverend Paltigian. The situation took precedent at following meetings. A new building committee was elected on August 5, 1921 with the problem of the priest's stipend still unresolved. The new committee consisted of: Kaspar Kasparian, Alexan Edgarian, Khoren Bayramian, Setrag Boghosian, and Tavit Bagdassarian.

The parish was visited by the Primate, Archbishop

*Why no money building committee?
Indicate you don't know of what is
the case. But don't treat the
situation as normal.*

Dirayr Howhanessian in November. He performed Church services and then gave a "fiery" lecture at a general meeting of the Armenian community. He expressed that there was a need to "keep persisting to support the Church and Armenian School and to continue what our forefathers had begun." He also stressed the great importance of the Church, "especially to the Armenian people."²⁴ On the next evening, the Primate lectured at a general meeting. He reprimanded the parish for the treatment that they had given to Reverend Paltigian concerning his stipend and accomodations. It appears that this uncomfortable situation had caused Reverend Paltigian to submit a letter of resignation.²⁵

A meeting between the New Britain and Hartford Parish Councils was held on November 18, 1921. The Councils decided to select a committee to go to the Armenian families of each community and raise funds for the future building endeavours of the church organizations. Written records concerning fund raising are unavailable. Parishoners claim that "visiting clérghymen assisted committee members and visited each family, requesting whatever donation could be given."²⁶ One parishoner specifically remembers that "one time, all were asked to give \$25.00 and those who did not have it would borrow it from the bank and give it to the Church."²⁷ It was confirmed that "those who could give would give generously."²⁸

²⁴Church Record, 1900, pp. 245-247.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 255-256.

²⁶Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

The Parish Council had also suggested many innovative methods of raising funds. Early in 1921, at a special general meeting, it was proposed to sponsor a "Khunjooyk" (a dance and social festivity). The Council suggested that the Women's Guild might consider sponsoring a Church Bazaar. These functions have become traditional in the Church's social affairs, as well as a method of obtaining funds.

The church records for the year 1922 are extremely sparse. It appeared³ that a lull may have occurred and no further building endeavours occurred until the following year with the election of an influential Parish Council. The 1923 Parish Council consisted of: Karekin Kevorkian, Chairman; Kapriel Khabaian, Vice-Chairman; Yervant Papazian, Secretary; Hovhaness Haroutounian, Vice-Secretary; and Tavit Bagdassarian, Treasurer. The newly elected Council decided to have a meeting and invite the Armenian "well-to-do" of the New Britain community and surrounding areas. The meeting was held on March 25, 1923 where it was decided to "have a church and a national home in the New Britain community."²⁹ A new building committee was elected. It consisted of: Harootyoon Najarian, Dickran Sarkissian, and Kevork S. Kevorkian.

The importance of this meeting is noted by the extensive and detailed ideas that were proposed. It was decided to name the Church, "The Armenian Apostolic Church of New Britain." The purposes of the Church would be:

- (1) To keep alive the religious and national aspirations of the Armenian people of New Britain.

²⁹ Church Record, 1900, pp. 273-274.

- (2) To gather all the parties and social activities around the center.
- (3) To continue the Armenian School.
- (4) To have a Church Hall used as a meeting place and also as a center of culture.
- (5) To have a few large rooms to serve as lounges.
- (6) To have special stations for meetings.
All this to be called the National Home.

It was also decided that a number of fund raising activities be held "within the immediate future" that would involve Armenian and non-Armenian participation. The committee suggested to ~~have~~^{having} a fair (bazaar) and raffles..

The "most suitable" location for a new church was found to be on Tremont Street in New Britain. The 1920 Census of the United States reveals a large number of New Britain's Armenian community to be living in this area— which was Ward 6. The Census showed that of the 153 Armenians in New Britain, 111 lived in Ward 6.³⁰ The lot was 100 feet by 120 feet. Karekin Kevorkian and Harootyoon Najarian were selected to consult the owner of the property. An estimated cost of \$20,000.00 was anticipated to complete the entire building venture. After consulting the property owner, it was reported that the land was available for \$3,000.00.

It was also decided to ask the Primate, Archbishop Dirayr Hovhanessian, to visit the parish and review all of the matters at hand. The Primate met with the Council on

³⁰ Department of Commerce-Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium of Connecticut, (Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1924.

May 30, 1923 and appointed a new committee to further the building endeavours. The committee consisted of: Karekin Kevorkian, Harootyoon Najarian, Alexan Edgarian, Dr. Moses Kaprelian, Dickran Sarkissian, Giragos Hagopian, Khatchadoor Boyajian, Yervant Papazian, Asadoor Yagoobian, Tavit Bagdassarian, and Hovhaness Shahanian. Four more members, Kevork S. Kevorkian, Kapriel Khabaian, Moosheg Pazaian, and Khoren (Amrah) Bayramian, were later added to the existing committee.

In 1924 another meeting was held to formulate definite plans for building an Armenian Church in the city of New Britain. The meeting was presided over by Archbishop Dirayr Hovhanessian. The meeting was attended by the following: Karekin Kevorkian, Avedis Atashian, Dickran Sarkissian, Dr. Moses Kaprelian, Yervant Papazian, Khoren Bayramian, and Bedros (Peter) Simonian. It was decided to hold a general meeting in early 1925 where the plans would be presented to the parishoners. Representatives from various Armenian organizations and the entire Armenian community of New Britain and the surrounding areas were invited. It was at this meeting that the plans for construction were finalized.³¹ The following men were selected as the Executive Board of the newly formed Building Committee: Avedis Atashian, Chairman; Karekin Kevorkian, Chairman of Fund Raising; Giragos Hagopian, Secretary; Dickran Sarkissian, Treasurer; and Khatchadoor Boyajian, Advisor.

³¹Fiftieth Anniversary-St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church of Hartford-New Britain, (St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church: New Britain, Connecticut, 1975), section entitled, "History of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church."

The other members of the committee were:

Tavit Bagdassarian	Kapriel Kabaian	Yervant Papazian
Khoren Bayramian	Garabed Kaprielian	Aharon Parparian
Alexan Edgarian	Kevork S. Kevorkian	Bedros Simonian
Takvor Harotian	Harootyoon Najarian	Toros Yagoobian

Dickran Sarkissian resigned from the treasurership some time later and was replaced by Kevork S. Sevorkian.

A large fund-raising campaign began immediately.

Little is known about the actual methods of fund-raising and the amounts given by individuals. Without mention of any new and innovative fund raising methods, it is possible that methods used in the past were still being used at this time. One method that outlasted was the use of local "Armenian" labor. Also, many who could not make monetary donations "parted with their artifacts of treasured books which were later auctioned off to raise money."³² This enabled construction to begin as early as October of 1925.

A parcel of land, sixty three by one hundred sixty feet, located on Tremont Street in New Britain was purchased from a Peter Duyla on September 6, 1924 by Karekin Kevorkian for approximately \$2,500.00 The church was built by one of most prominent contractors in New Britain, Antonio Squillicote.³³

Many Armenians were creative in the construction of many of the features of the church. The beautiful alter was designed and built by Mr. Minas Boyajian, an outstanding cabinet maker. An oil painting which occupies the center of the alter was painted by the local artist Krikor Gregor.³⁴

³²Fiftieth Anniversary-St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, "History" sec..

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

Thus, the first Armenian Apostolic Church edifice in Connecticut was completed in April, 1926. The church was officially named, Incorporated Armenian Apostolic Church of New Britain, Connecticut. In May of 1926, impressive consecration services were held by Archbishop Dirayr Hovhanessian assisted by the Reverend Harootyoon Hakimian. Karekin Kevorkian was the Godfather of the new church. The church was consecrated St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church after the first Christian martyr, in memory of Karekin Kevorkian's father and for his first son. Kevorkian's influence on the community during this period was evident by the endless times his name appeared on significant governing bodies and building committees. His leadership, along with the devotion of the local Armenian parishoners, enabled the "dream" of having a local church become reality.

Chapter 4: Schism and the Establishment of a
Second Church Edifice, 1926-1941

(1978)
If one takes notice of the present situation of the Armenian Apostolic Church community in New Britain an awkward severance ~~would be~~ ^{became} evident. Two church parishes ~~have been established~~ ^{which} professing similar theological beliefs but different ideologies. Although there are many different interpretations ~~of the events caused by the unfortunate schism~~ ^{as the cause of this schism}, one must contend that political influence was the foremost ~~cause~~ ^{determiner} of the split. Different Armenian political organizations have been evident since the initial years of Armenian life in New Britain, namely the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (also referred to as the "Tashnag" party), the Armenian Democratic League (also referred to as the "Romgavar" party), the Hunchagan Party, and the Vev-Ho Party.

A commemorative publication of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church observes that between 1926 and 1933 the Armenian community and the church flourished in a "harmonious atmosphere."³⁵ This observation has been contested. When questioned about a "harmonious atmosphere" during that period, members of the present Armenian community have stated that, "there were conflicts and arguments as far back as can be remembered."³⁶ Another contends that "at meetings, tempers would flare and fists were always flying back and forth."³⁷

³⁵ Fiftieth Anniversary-St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, "History" sec..

³⁶ Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

³⁷ Interview with Mr. Stephen DerMargosian, April 1978.

The arguments were almost always of a "political" nature. Most of the conflicts have not been recorded in the actual church records, but are remembered and have been brought out by interviews and informal conversations with persons in the community. However, a New Britain newspaper, published on December 20, 1915, contained the headlines reading, "Armenian Church Men In Near Riot."³⁸ The article indicates that the conflict arose between the "two factions" because one accused the other of attempting to "stuff the ballot box" during an election of local Armenian leaders. The article observed that the incident was not the first time that trouble had occurred. At a previous meeting held "some time ago" it was necessary for the police to assist in clearing out "the angry mob."

More needed on this

*There is a tendency to see the community and church flourished during this period, notably by the establishment of the Sunday School and a youth organization called the "Sons and Daughters of the Armenian Church."*³⁹ However, the "atmosphere" was, at best, one of incompatibility with evidence of some tolerance.

On Christmas Eve of 1933, a tragic event occurred in New York City that directly affected the Armenian community in New Britain. Archbishop Leon Tourian, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the United States, was assassinated while performing Church services. Police believed that the

³⁸ New Britain News, 20 December 1915.

³⁹ Diocese of the Armenian Church, History and Statistics of the Armenian Communities of the Diocese of the Armenian Church, prepared by Reverend Father Arten Ashjian, (Leylegian Printing Press: New York, New York, 1949), "New Britain" sec..

slaying "had been inspired by the differences in Armenian politics."⁴⁰ The article also observed that Archbishop Tourian had, at the time, an "armed bodyguard" due to previous disturbances. This "previous disturbance" referred to an incident at a Church picnic held the previous summer in Worcester, Massachusetts, where, the New York Times states, ~~that~~ the Archbishop was beaten during a disturbance caused after "members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation" had arrived from Massachusetts and Rhode Island.⁴¹

Four alleged assassins of the Archbishop (who were later found guilty) admitted to be "members of Tashnag, a revolutionary organization whose aim is the restoration of the old Republic of Armenia."⁴²

The assassination caused the atmosphere of New Britain to become one of complete severance. "Some friends would not associate and even relatives would refrain from speaking to each other if one was affiliated with the Tashnag Party."⁴³ There were tragic feelings of "sadness" and "embarrassment."

The ensuing five years were further marred by chaotic periods. The Armenian community was now divided into two predominant political factions. Some claim that the division was "the Tashnag faction against all the other factions."⁴⁴

⁴⁰New York Times, 25 December 1933.

⁴¹New York Times, 26 December 1933.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

⁴⁴Ibid.

The two predominant factions were the Armenian Democratic League, known as the A.D.L., and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, usually called the Tashnag or A.R.F. organization. Soon after the assassination, St. Stephen's Church became controlled by the members opposing the Tashnag faction.

The initial shock had subsided and activities in the Church began again. Only now, the community was deeply severed and the atmosphere had reflected the emotion of the sorrowful assassination. The Parish Council elected new officers on February 12, 1934. The officers were: Krikor Manoogian, Chairman; Ghevont DerMargosian, Vice-Chairman; Khazar Haroutounian, Secretary; Armenag DerHoosigian, Vice-Secretary; Hovhaness Shahanian, Treasurer; Setrag DerBoghossian, Shavash Yessian, Bagdassar Bagdigian, and Sahag Sarkissian, Advisors. A number of new names appeared in the election and many of the influential leaders of the past were ousted due to the severance.

During the following years, many unusual and confusing events take place. There are sometimes two or more interpretations of many of the events that caused conflict after the severance. *Do you hear the events next? - J. M. May 1934*
~~Factual information was the main reference to events, realizing that interpretations tend to contain some bias.~~

On March 4, 1934 the Parish Council decided to increase its financial status by conducting a membership drive and a fund raising campaign. Other methods of fund raising were attempted on April 3, 1934 when the Parish Council and the Women's Guild jointly decided to sponsor a "khunjooyk"

(social festivity). The price of the tickets was set at 25¢.⁴⁵ On July 10, 1934 the Council also decided to have a Church picnic in the summer and on August 17, 1934 decided to sponsor a raffle during autumn. Six thousand tickets were printed for the raffle.

It appears that the Church had been without a permanent pastor for an extended period of time. A District Committee Meeting was held on May 27, 1934 concerning the matter. The following parishes were represented: New Britain, Hartford, New Haven, and Indian Orchard and Springfield, Massachusetts. A yearly budget was decided which would pay the stipend of the priest. New Britain would contribute \$525.00 annually, Hartford \$300.00, Springfield \$125.00, and Indian Orchard \$50.00. The total stipend was to be \$1,000.00. There was no record of the amount of New Haven's contribution.

Parish Council elections were held on January 28, 1935. The following were elected: Krikor Manoogian, Chairman; Ghevont DerMargosian, Vice-Chairman; Sarkis Azarigian, Secretary; Khazar Haroutounian, Vice-Secretary; Hovhaness Shahanian, Treasurer; Ardashes DerBagdassarian, Sahag Sarkissian, Kevork S. Kevorkian, and Bagdassar Bagdigian, Advisors.

At the following meeting, held on February 1, 1935, the newly elected Parish Council concerned itself with paying the debt of the Church. The Council decided that it would ask for funds from the prominent local Armenians. Other attempts to gather funds were to increase the yearly dues to \$6.00 and to sponsor a dance. The Council again attempted to ease the

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings, beg. 1934, (St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church: New Britain, Connecticut, 1934), pp. 8-9.

financial situation of the Church. On February 22, 1935 the Council decided to organize a Financial Committee. The committee members were: Lazar Manoogian, Harootyoon Najarian, Dickran Maghakian, Hovhaness Garabedian, Kh. Markarian, Sarah Yagoobian, and S. Aharonian. The Council decided to have another church picnic and to visit the homes of parishoners to seek pledges and ask if the parishoners favored the Council's idea of attaining a permanent pastor.⁴⁶ It appeared that the Council had proposed that when Archbishop Karekin Hovsepien visited the United States, the Council would recommend to him that Right Reverend Mampre Kalfayan become pastor of the New Britain parish.

On June 20, 1935 the Parish Council reported that a profit of \$100.00 was realized from the picnic. On September 10, 1935 the Parish Council, with the instructions from the Diocese, decided to celebrate the 1500th Anniversary of the Translation of the Bible into Armenian. The event took place on October 13, 1935 under the supervision of the future priest, Deacon Sisag Nalbandian. The Parish Council also decided to have a fund raising event to help the cost of the ordination of Deacon Sisag into the priesthood. The Parish Council decided to have a "khema" party. (an Armenian gourmet delicacy made with raw beef).⁴⁷ A meeting was held on December 15, 1935, which was presided over by the newly ordained priest, Reverend Khoren (Nalbandian) Mamigonian—formerly Deacon Sisag Nalbandian.

⁴⁶Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Reverend Khoren was to remain in New Britain as the permanent pastor. It was also noted that a certain Hovhaness Hovhanessian from Hartford had donated a sheep to the New Britain Parish Council which would be used to make "khorovadz" (popularly known as shish-kebab) at the next picnic.⁴⁸

An immediate problem, that arose at a January 26, 1936 meeting, was the matter of the stipend of the priest. The Council discussed how much money each parish, within the district, would pay. The Council decided that the largest community, New Britain, would pay \$675.00. The Council also noted that Reverend Khoren resided in New Britain. Hartford was to contribute \$250.00, Springfield, \$125.00, and Indian Orchard, \$50.00. The total annual stipend was \$1,100.00.

Elections of the 1936 Parish Council members was held on February 10, 1936. The results were: Lazar Manoogian, Chairman; Ghevont DerMargosian, Vice-Chairman; Sarkis Azarigian, Secretary; Bagdassar Bagdigian, Vice-Secretary; Ardashes (Der) Bagdassarian, Treasurer; Hovhaness Shahanian, Assistant Treasurer; Kevork S. Kevorkian, Harootyoon Hovsepien, and Mesrob Sarkissian, Advisors. In April of 1936, Bagdassar Bagdigian was moving away from New Britain and was replaced at his position by Setrag DerBoghossian. At a meeting held on May 22, 1936 the New Britain and Hartford Parish Council's decided to sponsor a joint picnic at Charter Oak Park in Hartford to raise funds for both communities.

⁴⁸Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, pp. 57-59.

Although the New Britain parish was attempting several techniques of raising finances, the Parish Council noted, at a meeting held on June 8, 1936 that the mortgage had "put them in an awkward situation."⁴⁹ The Council decided to call a general membership meeting to report the situation to the parish. It is unknown if any immediate decision was made concerning the mortgage because there is no mention of the situation until October 8, 1937, over a year later.

On January 3, 1937 a new Parish Council was elected. The results were: Yervant Simonian, Chairman; Ghevont DerMargosian, Vice-Chairman; Sarkis Azarigian, Secretary; Lazar Manoogian, Vice-Secretary; Haig Yessian, Treasurer; Hovhaness Shahanian, Assistant Treasurer; Abraham Torosian, Levon Azarigian, and Boghos Yagoobian, Advisors. At a January 12, 1937 meeting, the Council decided what the rental fees would be for the use of the Church. The Church would cost ~~May~~ \$12.00 for a wedding service. Day meetings would ^{be} cost \$5.00 and night meetings, \$6.00. Parties held during the day would cost \$7.00 and at night, \$8.00. At a meeting held on April 15, 1937 the Council decided to thank Miss Yeranoohi Kevorkian for the organ that she had donated to the Church.

At an October 8, 1937 meeting, the Parish Council decided that it would inform the Diocese of a "second mortgage" that was put on the Church and about the "awkward position" of the Council in regards to the payments of the initial mortgage.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

A reply from the Diocese was not made until May of the following year. In the interim a new Parish Council was elected. The members were: Armenag DerHoosigian, Haig Yessian, Antranig Bagdigian, Yagoob Yagoobian, Tavit Tavitian, Setrag DerBoghossian, and for the first time, three women, Arshaloos Hoosigian, Mariam Boghossian, and Eskoohi Simonian. Titles and positions ^{are} were not known due to a lack of information. The newly elected Council reported that a profit of only \$130.27 was made from the previous year. The auditing committee donated \$75.73 thus bringing the total up to \$206.00. The Council also decided to raise the wedding rental fee of the Church from \$12.00 to \$15.00. Rental fees increase and donations requests for donations indicated that the Parish Council may have been seeking more financial assistance in an attempt to pay off the mortgage of the Church.

In March of 1938, the Council selected two members, Haig Yessian and Mariam Boghossian, to go to the Savings Bank of New Britain and discuss the mortgage situation. The situation with the bank was unusual. The bank claimed that a "second mortgage" had been put on the Church, but the bank would not inform the Council members as to ~~who's~~ name appeared on the second mortgage. ⁵¹ The Council believed "that a local Armenian of the Tashnag faction held the second mortgage." ⁵² The bank supposedly informed the Parish Council representatives that because it was presently occupying the building that it would have "first choice" to buy the Church if the bank assumed ownership. ⁵¹

⁵¹ Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

The Tashnag affiliated Armenians "who had been excluded from the Church since the schism in 1933," called an emergency meeting after learning that "non Armenian groups" were interested in purchasing the Church. At this meeting sufficient funds were raised to pay the outstanding debt and assume the mortgage of the Church.⁵²

At a Parish Council meeting held on May 4, 1938 a letter was read that had been received from the Diocese that stated, "the situation that was taking place at the (New Britain) Church should not be put in the newspapers." It was also decided by the Council to stop the collection of dues "until the position of the Church was clear."⁵³

Parish Council members claimed that a Haig Samsarian "was on his way to New Britain with a monetary sum in the form of a check that would complete payment of the outstanding debt and also the mortgage payments that the Church owed to the bank."⁵⁴

On June 29, 1938 the Savings Bank of New Britain transferred the Church property to Harry (Karekin) Kevorkian, Amrah Bayramian, Harry Parparian, and Avedis Atashian.⁵⁵ These four members had been excluded from church matters since the schism in 1933.

With the abrupt change of hands, some members of the ousted parish felt that the situation with the bank had

⁵²Fiftieth Anniversary-St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, "History" sec..

⁵³Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, pp. 141-142.

⁵⁴Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

⁵⁵Fiftieth Anniversary-St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, "History" sec..

been unjust and inevitably caused the Church to be "stolen" from the grasp of the Parish Council.

In February of 1939, the Parish Council met under the chairmanship of Armenag DerHoosigian. The ousted Church group, still in a state of shock and animosity, immediately formed a financial record for a new Building Committee, which was to be separated from the finances of the Parish Council. Apparently, the ousted parishoners had sought the use of St. Mark's Episcopal Church because it was decided to pay \$5.00 to St. Mark's for the use of their Church. The Council also ~~decided~~ ^{named} Armenag DerHoosigian and Eskoohi Simonian, as representatives of the Parish Council, to a meeting of the Armenian Democratic League, which they had been invited to. It is a possibility that the A.D.L. was financially willing to assist the Parish Council in its future building endeavours.

At a meeting held on April 27, 1939 the Parish Council discussed the matters concerning the articles that had been removed from the church edifice. It was noted that "a local authority" had enabled the ousted parishoners to enter the Church and remove "all that belonged to them."⁵⁶ ~~It was also~~ claimed that "all furnishings, including pews, chandeliers, and all church records were missing. Only the alter remained."⁵⁷ The Council decided that "the articles should be moved from their places and brought to one place under the supervision and control of the Parish Council."⁵⁸ Also decided by the

⁵⁶ Interview with Mrs. A. Hoosigian and Miss S. Yagoobian, 2 May 1978.

⁵⁷ Fiftieth Anniversary-St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, "History" sec..

⁵⁸ Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, pp. 160-161.

Are you not going to complete your assignment of the division & explain it more carefully?

-35-
The sponsorship of

Council, at the April 27, 1939 meeting, was to sponsor a picnic at the Bagdigian farm (formerly near Batterson Park in Farmington, Connecticut). The picnic was to be held on June 25, 1939.

What group is this now? - A new one? System or - are they the old one without a church?

On January 10, 1940 the Parish Council had an election with the following results: Krikor Manoogian, Chariman; Hovhaness Shahanian, Vice-Chairman; Garabed Hovsepien, Secretary; Lazar Manoogian, Vice-Secretary; Mariam Boghosian, Treasurer; Ardassess DerBagdassarian, Book Keeper; Yagoob Yagoobian, Hovhaness Boghosian, and Eskoohi Simonian, Advisors.

At a Parish Council meeting held on May 7, 1940 Very Reverend Mesrob (Aperah) Semerjian had accepted an invitation and was elected as pastor of the parish. Under the leadership of Father Semerjian the immediate necessities of the parish were the first items that were discussed, namely having regular church services and also having a joint meeting between the Parish Council and the Women's Guild. The joint meeting may have been an attempt to encourage the Women's Guild to continue working with the Parish Council and also to assist in lending financial aid to the future endeavours of the parish. At the joint meeting, which was held on May 9, 1940, the discussion involved having "a smooth running Parish Council and church community." It was decided at the meeting that each working member pay \$10.00 yearly dues.⁵⁹

It appears that the Council, under its new clerical leadership, was persuing swift ventures to establish another

⁵⁹Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, p. 181.

Armenian Apostolic Church edifice in New Britain. At an August 28, 1940 meeting, the Parish Council reported that it had found a suitable building for sale on Erwin Place in New Britain that was a Ukrainian Hall. The building and land was purchased shortly after for \$6,500.00. The building was eighty feet by forty feet.⁶⁰ Different people were looking into the matter of renovating the hall to enable it to be converted into a church. Mariam Boghosian reported that the architect with whom she consulted gave the figure of \$1,160.00 for immediate constructions that would have to be done. In November of 1940, the Council reported that a second architect, a Mr. Gazo, would repair the building for \$660.00. This price was found to be much more suitable and he was hired to repair the building.

The Council met on November 20, 1940 and the chairman stated, "there is much work to be done." Many finances and physical work involved in the conversion of the building were assumed by individuals and organizations of the church and local communities. The Church youth organization said that they would donate the funds needed to construct the altar. Hovhaness Boghosian was asked to look for an architect to construct the altar. The job of painting the hall was given to a Mr. Speptrin, for a fee of \$435.00. The construction of the altar was given to the New Britain Lumber Company for a fee of \$134.00. The picture for the altar was procured from

⁶⁰History and Statistics, "New Britain" sec..

the Ukranian Hall for \$35.00. Almost all of the articles that were removed from St. Stephen's Church were used to furnish and decorate the interior, thus minimizing the need for finances. A fund raising meeting which would involve the general community was called for December 14, 1940. Results of that meeting were not recorded.⁶¹

On January 29, 1941 the Parish Council decided to write a letter to the Diocese requesting the Primate to come to New Britain and consecrate the new church. On March 12, 1941 the Council reported that other construction and donations would be supplied by local Armenians. The baptismal font was designed and constructed by Peter Egazarian without any charge. The finishing work on the twelve crosses that represented the twelve Apostles would be done by Levon Azarigian.⁶² Also mentioned for their endless efforts were Sarkis Azarigian and Yagoob Yagoobian.⁶³

The consecration of the church took place on March 19, 1941 by the Primate, Archbishop Karekin Hovsepien. The church was officially called The Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection. Levon Azarigian would be the Godfather of the Church, in memory of his brother, Harootyoon Azarigian.⁶⁴

Parish Council elections were held on May 18, 1941.

⁶¹Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, p. 190 and p. 191.

⁶²Ibid., p. 198.

⁶³History and Statistics, "New Britain" sec..

⁶⁴Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, p. 201.

The following were elected: Ghevont DerMargosian, Chairman; Armenag DerHoosigian, Secretary; Haig Yessian, Treasurer; Ardassess DerBagdassarian, Hovhaness Boghosian, Tavit Tavitian, and Garabed Hovsepien, Advisors. The Council reported that the financial status of the Church was favorable and decided to pay the mortgage "as soon as possible." A financial report of the preceeding fifteen month period read: Income, \$4,340.49 and Expense, \$3,979.55. A ^{Surplus} profit of \$360.94 had been realized. Thus, the Church had been established and appeared to be flourishing without severe financial difficulties. Organizations, previously established, continued to lend their support to the parish, namely the Women's Guild, established in 1914; the Armenian School, which held its first official class in 1918; and more recently, the Sunday School, which was established in 1932 and a youth organization, established as the "Sons and Daughters of the Armenian Church, which in 1936 was renamed the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (A.C.Y.O.A.).

In July of 1941 an educational committee was formed by the Parish Council. The committee consisted of: Lazar Manoogian, Khatchadoor Markarian, and Sirvart Simonian. Also, because of the reported "lamented state of the choir," Sarah Yagoobian was officially named choir director on September 18, 1941 in hopes that "her guidance would build the choir back to a respectable level."⁶⁵

The Parish Council meeting of November 27, 1941 concerned itself with the resignation of Father Nesrob

⁶⁵Parish Council Minutes, beg. 1934, pp. 216-217.

Semerjian. He had announced that Sunday, November 30, 1941 would be his last Sunday as pastor of the New Britain parish. During the crucial period of refurbishing, his guidance and leadership cannot go without recognition.

Thus, the tragic severance of the local Armenian community, caused by different political ideologies and leading to the establishment of a second Armenian Apostolic Church in New Britain. Both local churches are presently self governed, ~~and self subsistent of the other.~~ I contend that the Armenian community could have greatly flourished but, in my opinion, it has only flourished at a retarded rate.

The growth of the two churches can possibly be a credit to a number of individual Armenian people in the community who are very dedicated to their church. People such as, Miss Sarah Yagoobian, who began as choir director of her church in 1941 and has persisted at this task until the present day.

The extreme emotional feeling of severance has subsided and both churches tolerate the existence of the other. Some parishoners attempt to keep Armenian politics and the Church separate. On certain occasions, joint social participation is evident and some have reestablished friendships. The present situation can best be exemplified by the term that one calls the other...my "separated brethren." Although the groups have severed, both have cultural, historical, and religious ties that will never die.

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*You don't list a person as a source. He is not.
The interview, the tape, the letter is the source.
This source material applies to other interviews.*

