



# A Trace of Arabic in Granite: Lebanese Migration to the Green Mountains, 1890–1940

*Illustrating the presence of Middle Easterners and their descendants in Vermont shifts one's perspective on state history, an especially timely endeavor in light of contemporary American culture and politics.*

By AMY E. ROWE

Walking through a graveyard in Vermont, one would hardly expect to see Arabic lettering gracefully marking polished granite stones; yet this is what one sees on select family tombstones in St. Monica's cemetery in Barre and St. Joseph's cemetery in Burlington. These commemorative pieces stand as testaments to Arabic-speaking settlers in the state. The words inscribed on these stones have the potential to facilitate remembering, to serve as a text to plot the social history of a small immigrant community.<sup>1</sup> The grave-stones are objects that have an afterlife, a post-text, because they serve to organize remembrance of the cultural history that gave rise to them.<sup>2</sup> Observing these objects in the landscape opens questions about the history of these families: When did they arrive in the area? Why did they

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leave the Middle East? What factors led them to choose Vermont as their new home?

My aim is to trace the early history of Arabic-speaking immigrants in the state, with particular focus on what economic niche they filled and why they settled in particular areas. Today we would call the Ottoman-era Arabic-speaking immigrants “Lebanese”; many of their descendants in the state today either pointedly embrace a Lebanese identity or warmly acknowledge a Lebanese heritage and ancestry. Yet, as this essay reveals, early efforts to officially name these immigrants were fraught with debate at the national level. Lebanon was not a separate country when the Arabic-speaking people settled in the Green Mountain State; it was instead part of Greater Syria. Thus migrants were not referred to as “Lebanese” but rather as “Syrian.” Changes of familial names to Anglo-sounding ones, common for many immigrants at the time, also makes it particularly challenging to track the early history of Lebanese in the state.

Given name changes of people and of nations, this group has been relatively invisible in the historical record of Vermont. Very little written evidence exists in either Arabic or English. The majority of first-generation immigrants were illiterate in both languages, thus they themselves left little record. This makes turning to evidence in the landscape such as tombstones especially appealing; monumental sites like these can contribute to tracking the presence and longevity of this immigrant community. A tombstone can stand as an initial relic enabling a researcher to glean information from the past; it functions as gateway into a network of Lebanese families, whose stories passed down from their ancestors can serve as a basis for the social history of the group. People of Lebanese ancestry represent the past through storytelling, ritual, and shared memories. This type of discourse, sometimes interpreted as unrealistic or unreliable, actually has the potential to structure and encode history.<sup>3</sup> Social memory is, therefore, a helpful tool when external evidence of these people and their history in the region is absent from official written histories.

I draw on these oral histories, memories, and objects in the Vermont landscape to develop a historical narrative against an otherwise incomplete documentary record. The presence of Arabic-speaking Christians from the Middle East whose descendants live around the state today runs counter to a certain understanding of Vermont, and indeed New England, history. To be sure, gravestones in Arabic are emblematic of how Vermont’s past is perhaps not quite what it seems. Illustrating the presence of Middle Easterners and their descendants in Vermont shifts one’s perspective on state history, an especially timely endeavor in light of contemporary American culture and politics.

Information for this essay is drawn from a larger anthropological project centered on the contemporary experiences of descendants of Arabic-speaking immigrants in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Following social science conventions to make sense of social behavior, I have used several methods to collect information; these range from semi-structured oral history interviews to use of archival materials to the quintessentially anthropological participant-observation. In some cases I use family names and examples, though in others I am careful to remove these specifics out of respect for requests for privacy. Therefore, at moments the text is punctuated by individual, distinctive voices and in others a generalized point is drawn from various sources.

#### OTTOMAN ORIGINS

“Born in Syria” or “Born in Mt. Lebanon, Syria”: These are common inscriptions chiseled into family gravestones (see Figures 1, 2, 3). This geographical reference points to the Ottoman Empire, the place of origin for Arabic-speaking immigrants in Vermont. Mt. Lebanon was a small quasi-independent district in the province of Greater Syria within the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Lebanon as a political entity did not exist at the time these migrants left, thus they did not leave Lebanon but rather “Syria.” However, Kamal Salibi cautions, “[B]y the nineteenth century, something we might call Lebanon already existed with inherent attributes making of it a unique social rather than political phenomenon in Syria and the broader Arab world.”<sup>5</sup> It is worthwhile to consider briefly the social and economic conditions in Mt. Lebanon during this period to shed light on why people left and to note how family testimonies today provide a bridge back to the empire their ancestors left.

There are competing opinions among academics as to what fueled the departure of people from Mt. Lebanon in the decades prior to World War I and which factors were most influential. It is beyond the scope of this essay to investigate in great detail the important historical shifts that took place in the mid to late nineteenth century that resulted in many people (the majority of whom were Christians from agricultural villages) seeking opportunities overseas. Broadly speaking the growth of the ports in the region, educational reform, contact with Europeans and Americans, exposure to wage labor, a shift in feudal class-based alliances, and alterations to the system of land ownership all affected the social and economic structure within Mt. Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> The rise in rapid transportation (especially steam navigation) and worldwide communication helped urge people to look abroad for opportunities. Four important points tie Vermont Lebanese to the larger story of the Middle



FIGURE 1. *Brice gravestone, St. Joseph's cemetery, Burlington, Vermont. The Arabic states that this is the grave of Fahad Anton Khalil who died October 1918 (his English name is Phahad Antony Brice). All photographs in this article courtesy of the author.*

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East and international migration at the turn of the twentieth century. The first two relate to the role of Christianity in Mt. Lebanon and the second two are “push” factors cited by the Lebanese in Vermont.

Starting in the early nineteenth century the Ottoman leadership opened its Mediterranean ports to European interests for the purpose of incorporating technology, knowledge, and new ideas into the empire.<sup>7</sup> This opening also facilitated the movement of missionaries, both European and American, into the region. American Protestant missionaries took a strong interest in the region and made it their goal to spread their evangelical zeal to the local people. In particular, New England religious leaders spread their influence in the Holy Land. One of the most prestigious universities in the Middle East today was founded by a missionary from Georgia, Vermont, named Daniel Bliss; he hailed from a farming family and was educated at Amherst and Andover Theological Seminary. The university he founded in Beirut in 1870 was originally called the Syrian Protestant College, and today is the American University of Beirut (AUB). Thus, some of the influence that later



FIGURE 2. *Reverse side of the Brice stone, with the name Anthony K. Brice (perhaps a brother or cousin). Note he was born in “Mt. Lebanon, Syria.”*



FIGURE 3. *Habeeb gravestone, St. Monica's Cemetery, Barre, Vermont. On the top of this stone a prayer in Arabic reads: "Have mercy on me oh God, and keep me in your company." The bottom portion in Arabic states that this is Lena, the widow of Hidder Habeeb from Blouza. The portion in English states she was "Born in Syria."*

drew Arabic-speakers out of Mt. Lebanon came from New Englanders initiating activity in the Holy Land.

Although in the long run few converts were gained to Protestantism, contact with American missionaries was particularly important. While not directly encouraging emigration,<sup>8</sup> the general exposure to American ways of life—English language, American customs, stories of home—as well as the educational opportunities most missionaries provided created important changes in Mt. Lebanon. Missionaries set about developing schools, medical facilities, and an Arabic printing press,<sup>9</sup> thereby

providing important foundations that supported the movement of many people from Mt. Lebanon into an international migrant network.<sup>10</sup>

The status of indigenous Christians in the Ottoman Empire also played a role in encouraging migration. Tension between various Christian sects and other religious groups in Mt. Lebanon, especially between Christian Maronites and the Druze,<sup>11</sup> are most frequently cited in the literature as prompting Christians to leave their homeland. Between 1840 and 1860 there were many violent clashes in the region, culminating with the worst sectarian violence in 1860. The violence was both inter- and intra-communal (due to fractions along Druze/Christian lines and along class lines of peasantry/landed elite). Persecution of Christians during this era has commonly been cited in the academic literature as a primary “push” factor as to why Lebanese Christians (not Druze or Muslims) emigrated. It is also a common point of reference amongst Lebanese Vermont families, nearly all of whom are descended from Christian Maronites.<sup>12</sup> However, some scholars argue that this rendition of events does not reflect the warring dynamics on the ground.<sup>13</sup> They suggest that Christian suffering was overplayed by Christians in the diaspora to gain sympathies in their new context and to show the violence permitted under the Ottoman regime.<sup>14</sup> The violence in the region undoubtedly affected many families, Christian and otherwise. Yet widespread migration did not begin until thirty to forty years after the violence ceased. Assuredly tensions and fear of violence remained, along with memories of violence and displacement for some,<sup>15</sup> but religious persecution was not the direct cause of migration.

Around the time the sectarian struggles were quelled, a significant change occurred in the silk industry. In the nineteenth century many peasant families in Mt. Lebanon entered the broader market economy by raising silk worms and maintaining mulberry trees to feed them; a small but vibrant cottage industry for production of silk emerged. French investors supported this venture and, in some instances, employed young peasant women outside the home on a limited basis.<sup>16</sup> As some historians argue, these touch points with the international economy and wage-labor prepared Lebanese men and women for immigrant labor in the United States.<sup>17</sup> The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 meant that Syrian silk could not compete with the quality of silk coming through the canal from East Asia and sales of Syrian-made silk began to decline.<sup>18</sup> A silkworm disease also contributed to the decline. These events had a major impact because those in Mt. Lebanon who were heavily involved with the silk industry had ceased to grow their own food and used their wages to purchase food imported from other parts of the empire. When the silk sector began to decline there were few other comparable

industries to turn to and thus the cash flow dried up for wage earners. With local agriculture no longer able to support the population and no cash to buy food from elsewhere, problems ensued and people began to seek opportunities elsewhere. In this way, Mt. Lebanon was tied to the world market via this cash-crop and suffered due to its fluctuations. In particular, some people had become accustomed to an elevated standard of living provided by a wage income and were inspired to emigrate to retain this lifestyle.<sup>19</sup> Though increased demand for raw silk for finishing in factories in France buoyed the Syrian industry for a few decades, in the long run the industry declined and spurred movement of people out of the Mountain.<sup>20</sup>

Several Vermont Lebanese families related lore about a grandparent whose job was to tend to silk worms. Many emigrants recalled being responsible for feeding mulberry leaves to the worms as young children and told these stories to their children who were born in America. As an excerpt from a 1916 autobiography by George Haddad, a Lebanese immigrant living in Rutland, relates, “Almost every family in Barook, when I was a boy, raised silkworms in a least one room in the house. I used to feed the worms and helped my mother at it a great deal. When I went in to feed them I had to carry a candle as the room was always kept dark.”<sup>21</sup> Haddad also noted that during a return trip home in 1908 (to bring his American-born children to see their grandmother) he took his family to tour a silk factory. I did not hear stories emphasizing economic hardship and being forced to leave as a direct result of the decline of this industry, but it is clear that the lives of Lebanese families that came to Vermont were bound up with silk production.

A final item that came up consistently during interviews was the decision made by young men to leave their home villages for opportunities overseas rather than be conscripted into the sultan’s army. In 1907 the Turkish army began conscripting young men from Mt. Lebanon. While military service was not an uncommon requirement for citizens in the empire, Christians in Mt. Lebanon had historically been exempt from service.<sup>22</sup> There was widespread fear among Christians that their young men would be put on the front lines during battles and be more exposed to danger than their Turkish Muslim counterparts—i.e., they were more expendable citizens.

It was common for the Arabic-speaking immigrants from Mt. Lebanon to travel to several areas before arriving in Vermont; it was equally common for them to leave and return to Vermont several times before the start of World War One. Most Vermont Lebanese reference Beirut as their departure port (though some left from Sidon, a city further south on the coast); many had a stopping off period in Marseille, France, or

Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>23</sup> Two families from the Winooski/Burlington area had ancestors who lived first in El Salvador before working their way north, crossing from Mexico to the U.S. and eventually making their way to Vermont. One family from Island Pond first traveled to Cuba, and then to St. Louis, Missouri, before heading to northern Vermont.

The Shadroui family from Barre provides an interesting example of the settlement patterns of Christians from Mt. Lebanon in this era. By combining information from an oral history tape held at the Aldrich Public Library<sup>24</sup> and interviews with three second-generation family members in 2005, it is possible to ascertain just how mobile these immigrants were. They did not make a single journey to a new place with the goal of permanent settlement; instead their lives were characterized by movement.

The great-grandmother of my second-generation informants traveled to Egypt in the 1880s and then Mexico for work (she was accompanied by a male relative). While in Mexico she met and married a Lebanese man and they had four children—one boy, Joseph, born in Argentina in 1888, one girl in Puerto Rico, and girl twins in Mexico. Later the great-grandmother and her children returned to Lebanon (the great-grandfather had passed away). Joseph, the grandfather to my informants, came with his mother (leaving the other children behind with relatives in Mt. Lebanon) and some other relatives to the United States in 1901. They came first to St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and later to Littleton, New Hampshire; eventually Joseph's mother settled in Burlington, but he returned to Lebanon. While there in 1906 he met his future wife. She was born in South Africa to Lebanese migrant parents; the family had recently returned to Lebanon when she met Joseph. They married in 1907, had one daughter in Lebanon<sup>25</sup> and decided to move to the United States. The couple settled in Barre, Vermont, and after this time they never traveled again, though they kept in touch with various relatives in foreign countries.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NAMING

Here I wish to address the issue of “who” is in transit in this story. Ottoman citizens or Christian peasants might be answers, but the question of “who” these people were became significant in a new way when they arrived in the United States. There are two levels to this inquiry. First, what official classification were they given as a group by the state—i.e., what nationality or ethnic label was given, and subsequently used as shorthand by Americans for these new arrivals? Second, what personal names (family names, nicknames) did the Lebanese come to use for themselves in this context? Both questions have implications for

identifying the Lebanese in Vermont across the twentieth century in that passing family surnames through the generations and a group name become the key ways to track one's "heritage" or "ancestry" over time.

Two state structures were involved in the official classification: the Ottoman state and the United States. Both had the authority to categorize citizens, especially those who were moving across state borders. The immigrants from Greater Syria who entered the United States were traveling on Turkish passports as Ottoman citizens, yet they did not speak Turkish and certainly did not think of themselves as "Turks." Yet from the point of view of people in America they were generally called "Turks" because of their legal relationship to the Turkish state and the sultan. When records were taken at points of entry into the country and by the decennial census this group was classified as originating in "Turkey in Asia" (as compared to "Turkey in Europe"). Thus while they were marked as non-European, the overall name designated was "Turk." Many references from both my informants as well as various writings on early Arab-American history note that the immigrants were particularly resentful of being called "Turks" as they felt the Turks were their oppressors and were part of the reason why they had left Mt. Lebanon.

Despite the relationship to the Turkish Ottoman state, not every immigrant traveled with documentation and it was often unclear to immigration officials exactly where these Arabic-speaking arrivals hailed from. Entry documents, naturalization papers, and census records variously refer to them as Turks, Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, Asian, Syrian, Arabian, or as being from "Turkey in Asia."<sup>26</sup> This mix-up in consistent record keeping shows how little the U.S. officials knew of that part of the world; these misunderstandings mean that today it is impossible to know just how many people from Mt. Lebanon really arrived in U.S. ports. In the same manner, as the immigrants spread throughout the U.S. they were variously called by the same assortment of names in local historical records, newspaper articles, and similar documents. Sometimes the migrants from Mt. Lebanon were mistaken for Jews. In 1899 U.S. immigration officials added the category "Syrian" to their roster because it had become clear that so many individuals were coming through U.S. ports from that specific region within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>27</sup>

Given their resistance to the label "Turk," many of the immigrants opted to use the term "Syrian" and occasionally "Arab,"<sup>28</sup> though these were vaguely understood to be cultural identifiers and not referencing nationalistic loyalties (and especially not with any corresponding politicization).<sup>29</sup> Most people thought of themselves in terms of family and religious sect, not in terms of a specific nationality or political alle-

giance. This was primarily due to the organization of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. The Turkish Muslim rulers developed the *millet* system whereby *dhimmi*s (non-Muslim minorities) were allowed to have their own legal courts pertaining to personal law (as long as it did not conflict with the legal code enforced by the sultan). This system permitted localized religious law and political control; strong nationalistic ties and Arab nationalism only developed as full ideological concepts after the dismantling of the Ottoman system, after most Lebanese migrants had left.<sup>30</sup> The immigrants from Greater Syria thus learned by default to call themselves “Syrian” in the United States in order to render a name other immigrant groups and American citizens would understand; yet among themselves, kin and village loyalty were the main way they connected and identified.

It is especially important to outline this self-understanding because it depicts the loyalties beneath the generic term “Syrian” and marks how the people were named according to a wide geographic territory. It also shows that they thought in sectarian terms rather than nationalistic ones. It was only after several decades in the U.S. and substantial political changes in the Middle East (the creation of the state of Lebanon in 1943, with full independence gained in 1946) that a new name appeared for the group: Lebanese. While in some circles people readily adopted the name “Lebanese” to reflect their loyalties and their origin from villages in this new nation, overall it took some time for a full shift from “Syrian” to “Lebanese” to take hold. In the interim, as people adjusted to the shift from Syrian to Lebanese, the hyphenated term “Syrian-Lebanese” was frequently used. For example, in the 1930s Syrian-American social clubs were particularly popular around the country. A Syrian-American club in New England changed its name to the Syrian-Lebanese American Federation of the Eastern States in 1936 specifically to incorporate a reference to Lebanon. A newspaper clipping held in the Aldrich Public Library notes that the Federation held an executive board meeting in the Barre-Montpelier area in the early 1950s, including cocktail parties, Arabic dancing, and the screening of an Arabic film at the Savoy Theater in Montpelier. The clipping highlights that Vermont Lebanese were active in such regional clubs.<sup>31</sup>

The essential point here is to demonstrate that just when a boundary starts to close around this group of migrants, in this case a collective name for the group of people from Ottoman Mt. Lebanon, socio-political shifts prevent the use of a single descriptive term. There is no stable reference against which the cultural practice of naming can be worked out.<sup>32</sup> This makes it especially difficult to establish a continuous regional presence and trace the group from a historical point of view.

Many Arab-American historians observe this as the case at the national level as well. It contributes to the group seeming to be “hidden” and “invisible”<sup>33</sup> within the American population as it is difficult to write about a group when they do not have a consistently *named* history and presence in the documentary record over time.

Scholars must also consider personal and familial names of the Arabic-speaking immigrants. Names are always implicated in social relations; they serve to structure and facilitate discussion about those relations. They are also thought to historicize the self in complex ways. Names have the capacity to facilitate memory and allow for a genealogical account of social time; name changes place individuals in specific points in time as well as in sets of social relations.<sup>34</sup> For Lebanese migrants the family surnames their ancestors adopted, were given, or modified when they traveled to America typically mark the beginning of their “American” family history because there was typically a rupture with ways of naming used in Lebanon. The new naming also facilitated the forgetting of those old ways of naming.

Modification of personal names of non-English-speaking immigrants to the United States was commonplace in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was often done under pressure to swiftly assimilate into American life, the idea being that if immigrants shed their names (and aspects of their cultural selves) they would be better accepted and understood in American society. Both immigration officials and the Lebanese themselves modified their names on official documents and in common parlance. Some people interviewed mentioned that their ancestors altered their names primarily to avoid being targeted by nativists, thus expressly to avoid discrimination and keep a low profile rather than to assimilate.

The majority of the people interviewed for this study have modified Arabic family names to varying degrees. Some names remained, just shifting from Arabic lettering into English but retaining the basic sound and quality of the Arabic name—for example: Shadrouri, Ziter, Deep (or Deeb), or Shatti (see Figure 4). In other instances the Arabic name was translated to an approximate English-sounding name. For example, in Vermont the Allen family was the *al-'alam* family (see Figure 5), and the Handy family was the *al-henda* family.<sup>35</sup> In other cases the kinship group name was dropped and replaced by the patriarchal given name such that the father’s “first name” became the “last name” of the son (or daughter). This change was partly based on the longstanding tradition in the Middle East (and in Mt. Lebanon in particular) of adopting the father’s given name as a middle name by the son, but also to foreground the biblical Christian names of the Maronite tradition in order



FIGURE 4. *Shatti gravestone, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Burlington, Vermont. The Arabic indicates that this stone is for Youseh Romanos Shakti who was born 15 February, 1888 and died in 1936 (the "6" of the date 1936 somewhat unclear in Arabic, but the English on the reverse side confirms 1936). In the Lebanese dialect Shakti is pronounced as Sah'ti, which sounds very similar to the English spelling "Shatti." The Arabic also states that the home village in Lebanon is Hadshit.*

to be more recognizable to the receiving culture.<sup>36</sup> It also relates to the practice of stating a name in its full Arabic form— e.g., Jibreel/Gabriel ibn (son of) Maroon/Charles ibn (son of) Ibrahim/Abraham ibn (son of) Jijris (George) and so on. The Arabic family names did not correspond to the classification system common in the United States whereby a person is expected to have just one surname. Thus when the immigrants were stating their names they were often given their father's first name as surname because it was the second thing they said after their own given name.<sup>37</sup> In some instances names were translated properly from Arabic to the English equivalent (Yusuf to Joseph, for example). The Joseph family from Island Pond is an example of how the name of the immigrant's father, Joseph, became the new last name for the immigrant and his descendants in Vermont.



FIGURE 5. Allen gravestone, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Burlington, Vermont. This stone is for Nijmeh Sam'an al-'Alam. Nijmeh (also pronounced Najma) means "star," suggesting a possible direct translation of her first name as Stella, which also means "star." Sam'an means Simon, but is not noted in English. The third name, "al-Alam," means "flag" in Arabic, and when spoken sounds similar to the English "Allen," which was adopted as the last name in this instance. The Arabic also indicates she was from Hadid al-Jibba, Lubnan (Lebanon).

#### FROM MOUNTAIN TO MOUNTAIN

Thus far the examination of relics in the landscape and understanding state classification of citizens and immigrants assists us to develop a historical narrative for the Lebanese in Vermont. Yet ultimately family oral traditions provide the structure and substance for such a history. Personal descriptions, memories, and stories passed down highlight why their ancestors chose Vermont and how they created a new home for themselves in the Green Mountains.

Perhaps the best place to start when considering "why Vermont" is with the common association made between the mountains of Lebanon

and the mountains of Vermont. Many explain that their ancestors would have had a natural affinity for the place because it resembled the terrain in and around their home villages. The following discussion may highlight where this sentiment originated.

From what I understand, from what was told to me, there was a Syrian banker in New York City who would meet people right as they got off the boat at Ellis Island. He would tell them they ought to go to a mountainous place to live and work, seeing as they came from mountainous terrain . . . [T]his banker would help them start peddling by giving them the initial cash. Then he would send the people out by way of the major railroad routes into the north country. This made it easier so that when the Lebanese were peddling they could go back to New York City to the garment district to pick up clothing and needles, thread . . . and then follow the train lines back up here to sell the new goods to the farmers. This is how my family got started, and ended up in Vermont — this would've been in 1908 or 1910.<sup>38</sup>

This description shared by a second-generation man in his seventies from Barre, Vermont, was repeated in one form or another by the majority of the Lebanese with whom I spoke. Some versions of this story note that it was a Lebanese banker or merchant, others that it was a Jewish wholesaler who got the new arrivals into the peddling trade.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes the story suggests that the financier (or *simsar* in Arabic<sup>40</sup>) was someone from their home village. During an interview in 2005 two second-generation Lebanese women said they thought the last name of the Syrian banker was “Shaw.” A 1976 oral history tape from Barre records the “Faur” family as the Lebanese banking family that supported people coming to Vermont. Finally, one study from New Brunswick, Canada (where some New England families had relatives and business connections), describes the Faour Bank of New York as the main provider of small wares on consignment for newcomers to sell and argues that this bank directly encouraged Syrian migrants to take up peddling and facilitated the process.<sup>41</sup>

The “Syrian banker” in New York took into consideration what part of Lebanon people were from when he sent them into new territories to peddle. Those from southern Lebanon near Sidon and Tyre were sent to the southern Atlantic states such as South Carolina and Georgia (as members of one Vermont family whose mother came from a southern Lebanese family confirmed), while those from villages at a high altitude in Mt. Lebanon were sent north to mountainous places like Vermont. The result of this story is that Lebanese families today have a strong sense that their villages of origin in Mt. Lebanon have a terrain akin to the mountains of Vermont because they were sent to this part of the United States for that reason by their New York liaison. This resonance between the environments of the two places provides a sense of belonging and brings the seemingly very distant parts of the world together in their family narratives.

While the specifics may vary from story to story, the motivations and attributes of these financier(s) are consistent: They would supply the new migrants with some initial wares to sell on credit and instruct them to send the profits back to New York, at which point new supplies would be sent for them to continue peddling (again often along railroad lines, and later via major trucking routes). Sometimes people explained that their migrant ancestor came to a specific Vermont town because they already knew someone there, typically a relative from the home village, not because they intended to peddle. Yet even in these cases I could often work out by looking collectively at local stories that the “original” group of Lebanese in a given area had some touch point with a peddling financier in a major city (occasionally Boston or Montreal were also cited as origin cities from which people set out to peddle). In a study of Syrians in New York State, peddlers are cited as responsible for the initial movement into the state.<sup>42</sup> Research findings suggest the same is true for Vermont, where Lebanese peddlers were always the originators of the communities, the initiators of a chain migration pattern. They encouraged others to join them, with the secondary wave sometimes taking up different occupations.

All this suggests that someone clearly had a vision for sending peddlers into these northern states, and received commission on their work for several years. While efforts to track down who exactly was supplying the migrants in this way have to date yielded no further information, these narratives do at the very least connect to larger studies of Lebanese peddling across the United States. These studies identify New York City as the parent peddling community, sometimes called the “Syrian colony” in the literature, and find that key merchants actively recruited fellow villagers into their peddling network.<sup>43</sup> Alixa Naff notes that the process was replicated once a veteran peddler had established independence in a new city or town, he would send for relatives or friends and become the local supplier for new arrivals: “Soon kin drew kin and villager drew villager until a peddling settlement developed around the supplier’s leadership. . . . By 1900, a network of supplier’s settlements filled the nation, providing opportunities for thousands of newcomers and distributing Lebanese all over the United States. By 1910, Syrian-Lebanese were reporting destinations in all the states and territories.”<sup>44</sup> The new arrivals, then, swiftly developed a network across the region based primarily on village alliance and mutual support.<sup>45</sup>

#### EARNING A LIVELIHOOD IN TRANSIT: A CLOSER LOOK AT PEDDLING

The discussion thus far demonstrates how and why Arabic-speaking people traveled to Vermont and how village and kin-based networks

were established to support one another. Yet the activity of peddling itself must be considered in more detail. Sometimes the occupation is called “pack peddling” or “back peddling.” When first starting out it was most common for peddlers to walk carrying goods on their backs or holding suitcases in each hand; later, if enough money was earned, they would invest in a wagon (and later trucks) to help deliver goods. Lebanese peddlers traveled into farming communities and logging camps selling rare goods and staples that people did not have the time to travel to obtain. This was often referred to as “selling notions.” For example, they would sell clothing such as men’s suits, undergarments, and sewing accessories; cooking implements, cigars, and tobacco products were also common. Sometimes goods from the “Holy Land” were offered, emphasizing the proximity of Mt. Lebanon to Jerusalem and the shared Christian religion. George Haddad of Rutland, on several return trips to the Middle East, ordered “oriental goods” and had them shipped back to New York City where he collected them to sell in Vermont.<sup>46</sup> In areas that were newly opening to settlement or separated by long distances with limited transport (especially remote logging camps) no large-scale infrastructure existed for the distribution of household goods.<sup>47</sup> Peddlers played a vital role in this context.

Many people of Lebanese ancestry in the state today have stories of parents or grandparents traveling and selling goods door to door; it was a common topic of discussion growing up in a Lebanese household. Today they often express a sense of amazement that their parent or grandparent carried suitcases and walked all over the region selling goods. They are impressed by their ancestors’ endurance, and their willingness to walk miles for just the potential of a sale. Many of the peddlers gained a specific route and over time developed a trade relationship with certain farm families. These relationships eased the burden somewhat, and sometimes meant that if a storm came up unexpectedly or a person was traveling late at night he or she would be offered food and possibly shelter for the night at a client’s house.

A nice discussion of the peddling system developed by members of the Handy family was recorded in the transcripts of an interview done by Jane Beck with Ned Handy in January 1998. After mentioning that the New York City liaison sent members of his family to Newport near the Canadian border (it was a cold climate that they would appreciate because they were from the mountainous part of Lebanon), Ned provided the following commentary:

When they got to Newport, they lived together, they pooled together, they worked together. They worked for a couple of months on the railroad. Then there was a couple of months that they worked in a

sawmill. But then they took the notion to be backpeddlers. Each, my aunt, my uncles would each have 4 suitcases, they packed 2 on their back and one in each hand, and they would walk, they each had their own route, they would walk from one farm to the other selling for a profit naturally. The first couple of times before you adjust yourself to the farmer and you acclimate yourself through your acquaintance was very difficult. Some of them after 4 o'clock they're looking for a place to sleep. And if they're lucky a lady would find a place in a shed or in an attic or in a basement, and gave them a blanket and for a bar of soap or package of razor blades you get your supper and your lodging and your breakfast the next morning. But after a fashion, after you get adjusted and real friendship, then you have no problems at all because they knew who you are . . . The third week of the month they'd all congregate back to the apartment [in Newport]. And then they would restock, and then they would go back on their route. And if however you order something they don't have, they'd jot it down and try to have it for you the next time they go around.<sup>48</sup>

Along similar lines, Sadie, a second-generation woman from Barre,<sup>49</sup> related that her mother had been a peddler throughout central Vermont. She had carried suitcases door to door in the 1930s and 1940s. She would often stay the night with farm families because it was such a far distance to travel back home in the evening. Sadie found that when she went to work at a state office in Montpelier many of the women she worked with had grown up on farms in places like Plainfield and Marshfield. They often told stories of their lives on the farm and vividly recalled Lebanese ladies coming to the door to sell their goods. To them, the Lebanese peddling women looked very strange, they were all dressed in black with their kerchiefs over their heads. Sadie often thought of her mother when they spoke, and wondered if in fact her mother had visited the farms of her co-workers.

One excerpt from the recent publication *Men Against Granite*, a compilation based on interviews and information gathered under the auspices of the Federal Writers' Project from 1938–1940, includes a chapter about a Syrian woman peddler—Peddler Jenny. The interview describes how she peddled around the Winooski valley in the summertime, rolling a carriage filled with various wares. Using the carriage “is better than to carry the suitcases, they pull the arms out of me.”<sup>50</sup> She sometimes only brought the suitcases on journeys to smaller towns, keeping the carriage in Barre. She declared that she had friends in “every town,” and thus a network of places where she could both stay the night (she had no permanent residence) and sell her goods. Peddler Jenny avoided certain affluent streets in Montpelier and Barre because some residents were disapproving and did not want to buy her goods. Even some Syrians are disapproving of her: “To my own people, the

Syrians here, I don't go so much. We see different. They're high class, I'm low class. They don't say so, but I feel they say so in the minds. In town, down the other end, is a pretty good bunch of Syrians. They got fruit stores or grocery stores, most of them. They stay in one place, them, and they build a house and a family."<sup>51</sup>

The involvement of women raises another fascinating dimension to this trade. The fact that both men and women participated in this economic activity is especially notable given the strict gender codes in Lebanese society (and among immigrants in the diaspora) during this era. Recent scholarly literature demonstrates that it was common for both Lebanese men and women to peddle.<sup>52</sup> Lebanese women traveling to the U.S. either with brothers or husbands sometimes were peddlers alongside them, and sometimes peddled alone. One of the arguments for women peddling separately was that Yankee housewives would be more receptive to a woman knocking on the door selling wares rather than to a man, and hence more likely to purchase items. The employment of women outside the home, and hence outside of the range of patriarchal protection, began in Greater Syria and continued in the diaspora. These changes challenged codes of honor prevalent in most Arab families. Women's honor defined *'ird* (family honor) and women were expected to follow *hasham* (codes of modesty).<sup>53</sup> Modification to the honor code was necessary for women to peddle, though they often remained under the guardianship of a patriarch in the broader peddling network. Women often chose to work together in pairs and not to stay overnight at customers' homes in order to safeguard their honor.<sup>54</sup> Widowed women or older (post-menopausal) women may have faced fewer constraints from the honor code and could operate a bit more independently as merchants.<sup>55</sup> Despite stories of hardship, and pressure from nativist and charity groups to stop immigrant women from peddling, most continued to do so. American-born Lebanese women did not typically engage in peddling.<sup>56</sup> Many second-generation Lebanese related how their grandmothers and mothers would peddle even long after the men in the family gave up the trade to open full-time establishments such as grocery stores.

This discussion demonstrates that these immigrants had some familiarity with finance, trade, and a money-based economy. People I interviewed often stress that their ancestors were subsistence farmers who had no familiarity with trade and commerce prior to entering the United States. Yet the fact that they could and did enter into the peddling trade suggests that the migrants had some commercial skills in addition to their farming background. Peddling also uniquely linked them to urban city centers and remote villages; the scale of their operations was small

on an individual level, but the network they were part of was vast, and the flow of information and money through it quite remarkable.

As previously discussed, Mt. Lebanon and Greater Syria underwent significant economic changes during the late nineteenth century. Professions such as banking, transportation, and insurance were on the rise,<sup>57</sup> while traditional craftsmen, artisans, and merchants found it more difficult to secure employment. With an increasingly unfavorable balance of trade with Europe many such craftsmen traveled to other parts of the Middle East, especially Egypt, and to the Americas.<sup>58</sup> Many of these people were already migrants (moving from villages to cities in Lebanon, where women found employment in silk factories), and familiar with the growing cash economy in Lebanon. Sarah Gualtieri calls attention to this “step migration,” the one that precedes the transatlantic one, as foundational for the economic activities they later launched in North America.<sup>59</sup> One interesting hypothesis suggests that those involved in the export and sale of silk were paid in foreign currency. Thus when the silk industry fluctuated they were in a better position to go abroad during these stages as they had international currency in hand to fund their voyages.<sup>60</sup> While it is difficult to ascertain the specific economic background of those who settled in Vermont and neighboring New England states, there is strong evidence to suggest that they may have developed skills and familiarity with petty economy exchange prior to their migration and that this may have been the main cause (or at least a supporting factor) in their migration to the U.S. rather than a consequence of their move.

Data from the U.S. shows that this particular immigrant community was slightly more skilled and had more ready access to cash than other immigrants. The 1911 report of the U.S. Immigration Commission highlights that among Syrian immigrants, 22.7 percent worked in skilled occupations and 20.3 percent in trade as compared to 20.2 percent and 19.1 percent for all other immigrant groups.<sup>61</sup> Most people made use of their trading abilities rather than enter into wage labor contracts.<sup>62</sup> A 1912 survey shows that one quarter of all Syrian immigrants were classified as “craftsmen” and one half were “laborers.”<sup>63</sup> There are also some references to the ability of Christian immigrants (compared to Shi’a, Sunni, or Druze) to secure the funds for travel more easily (partially answering why most of the people who left Mt. Lebanon were from Christian and not Muslim sects). Easier access to money may be attributed to higher socioeconomic status of Christians over Muslim counterparts,<sup>64</sup> to assistance from Christian missionaries, or even to the recruiters for steamship companies choosing to assist Christians to come to the Americas over Muslims. Other studies note that the Syrian-Lebanese owned

homes in their countries and thus came from more stable financial circumstances when they immigrated and this enabled them to become relatively financially secure within the first generation.<sup>65</sup> The evidence for these latter examples is ambiguous, but it does point toward a migrant group with some ability to financially support their own migration and develop a trade diaspora internationally.<sup>66</sup> The Lebanese were prepared for commercial life abroad and swiftly became ethnic entrepreneurs, or a “middleman minority,” based on the substantial number of members working in one commercially specialized sector.<sup>67</sup>

#### MAPPING LEBANESE SETTLEMENT

Having established what propelled Arabic-speaking immigrants to come to the U.S., it is useful to examine more precisely where they originally lived in Mt. Lebanon and where they eventually settled in Vermont. It is very rare that families have any documentation of where their ancestors were from in Lebanon. Sometimes naturalization papers have been saved or copies of such documents from microfilm have been recently collected from the archives in the process of doing genealogical research; however most of these list the point of departure, i.e., where the ancestor boarded the steamship, as the place of origin. For the majority this means that “Beirut, Syria” is recorded as the place of origin. Some people may well have been from Beirut, but the historical trends point to outlying villages. Many families I interviewed note that they have forgotten the specific name of a village where their ancestor(s) came from, and will often generally say something like, “we are from a village twelve miles outside of Beirut.” The problem of transliteration also inhibits research into family history in the Middle East. Sometimes families have discarded paperwork in Arabic because no one could read it; more often than not the immigrants were not fully literate in Arabic and were unable to read such paperwork or letters.<sup>68</sup> Often immigrants did not have any documentation from Ottoman Greater Syria.

The absence of a Maronite parish in Vermont also means that an ethnic church did not serve as a repository for historical documents about the origins in Lebanon as it did in many other communities throughout America, and does not assist in documenting a local Lebanese presence. In other neighboring states Maronite Churches frequently held small historical collections and produced documents (anniversary celebration books, parish cookbooks) that contained information about where people were from in Lebanon. Because the Maronite rite is one of the liturgical rites in the Catholic Church, most Lebanese Maronites chose to attend religious services at Latin Rite Catholic churches. Yet some families maintained a strong Maronite tradition. In the 1910s Elias

Hendy, a Maronite priest and relative of several Lebanese in the state, spent time in Vermont and traveled around the state to conduct services in chapels adjacent to Latin Rite churches, or in private homes.<sup>69</sup> Thus although a Maronite Church was not available as a locus of memory and documentation, Maronites did periodically gather together for religious festivals and social gatherings.

Given this scenario, it is a strong oral tradition within families that has maintained the name of the home village in Lebanon. Difficulties arise in that they do not know how to spell the names in either Arabic or English; however, careful recording of phonetic names can be compared with other sources such as gravestones, reports from other settlements in Canada or the U.S., and historical studies of sending villages in Lebanon. Thus despite challenges, it is possible to piece together the main Lebanese villages that sent immigrants to Vermont. The Barre Ethnic Association notes that the two primary Lebanese villages for people in Barre were Blouza and Hadid (variously referred to as el-Hadid, Hadid al-Jibba, Hadith al-Jibba, Hadet ej-Jebbe, or Hadath El-Jebbeh). Wadi Qannoubine, Hadchit (Hadshit), Ser'eel (Siriil), Bcharre (Bsharri), and Diman were also villages of origin for Vermont Lebanese. There are a variety of ways to spell these village names in English, again accounting for translation from Arabic into English lettering. Most of these villages are in the Bsharri District and sit atop a mountainous ridge above the Kadisha (Qadisha) Valley. Some of these place names have been translated from Arabic writing on tombstones in St. Joseph's cemetery in Burlington and St. Monica's in Barre (to confirm spellings and family stories). Figures 6–11 provide examples of stones that list the specific home village of the deceased person or persons.

Many of the people leaving these villages and arriving in Vermont did so via New York City, as noted earlier. However, some came through Montreal and entered the state in Newport or other border towns. Island Pond was also sometimes listed as a point of entry to the United States on Declaration of Intent forms (to begin the process of naturalization), indicating that the travelers came from Canada by train and their first point of disembarkation was Island Pond. Boston was a port of entry for some, and a few came from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (often living with Lebanese there for some time) via Maine to Vermont.

The very nature of peddling meant that people moved quite frequently. However, as peddlers established their own set routes and, given that many would travel to the garment district in New York City to collect more wares to sell, it was important for them to have a town on a railroad line that served as their home base. Research with descendants of the peddlers thus reveals that St. Johnsbury, Newport, Island Pond,



FIGURE 6. Masi gravestone, St. Monica's Cemetery, Barre, Vermont. The Arabic indicates that this is the grave of the wife of Jirjis Elias Masih (George Elias Masih). The family name el-Masih is a reference to the messiah. She was born in Hadid al-Jibba, Lubnan (Lebanon) on June 11, 1875 and died in June 1925. A further part of the inscription reads "May God have mercy on her and all the dead."

Rutland, Montpelier/Barre, St. Albans, and Burlington/Winooski were the primary centers where Lebanese settled.<sup>70</sup>

A look at federal census statistics of the foreign-born population in Vermont, including enumerators' reports that have been made available,<sup>71</sup> reveals a further dimension to the Arabic-speaking immigrants' settlement patterns.<sup>72</sup> It is important to bear in mind that many who came through the state and worked for several years may have eventually



FIGURE 7. *Deep mausoleum, St. Monica's Cemetery, Barre, Vermont. The Arabic indicates this mausoleum is for Sarkis Mansour Deeb and his family and that the family hails from Bouza, Lebanon.*

settled elsewhere in the United States or Canada. The rate of return migration was quite high for this group prior to World War One as well. Estimates suggest perhaps as many as a third returned to Lebanon permanently, so many who lived in Vermont for a time may have eventually returned to settle permanently in their home villages. Finally, many of the peddlers had no permanent address and thus it is likely many were not counted in the census.

In 1900 the U.S. census counted anyone from the Ottoman Empire as being from “Turkey,” not distinguishing between the vast areas (European and Middle Eastern) it encompassed. Twenty-two foreign-born people from Turkey were resident in Vermont. Even though in 1899 immigration officials had started categorizing people from Greater Syria as “Syrians,” this was not the case at the Census Bureau. By 1910 foreign-born Ottoman citizens in the U.S. were counted as either from “Turkey in Asia” or “Turkey in Europe.” Oddly, however, the records for Vermont still only list 220 foreign-born people from “Turkey” in the tables, not breaking it into Asian and European groups as was done for Maine and New Hampshire in that same year.<sup>73</sup>



FIGURE 8. *Shadroui gravestone, St. Monica's Cemetery, Barre, Vermont. The Arabic side of this stone notes the same dates of birth and death, and that Peter was 7 years old when he passed. It also contains a prayer that translates: "He is moved (transported) to the lap of his Lord; the one we are sorry for; Hadid al-Jibba, Lebanon." Thus at the end they include the family's village in Lebanon.*





ANTHONY JOSEPH

BORN IN MT. LEBANON

1883 — 1938

HIS WIFE

THERESA JOSEPH

1896 — 1943

انطون يوسف جوزا  
الليمان لبنان



JOSEPH

ENLOWED

FIGURE 9. *Joseph gravestone, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Burlington, Vermont. The English portion indicates Anthony was born in Mt. Lebanon, yet the Arabic at the bottom more specifically states he was from the village of Diman, Lebanon. (It may be implied that the same is true for Theresa.)*



FIGURE 10. *Simon gravestone, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Burlington, Vermont. The Arabic writing under John Simon indicates that he was born in Hadchit, Lebanon, in 1874 and died in 1930; for Mary, the Arabic says exactly what is written in English.*

By 1920 the term “Syria” came into use at the Census Bureau to distinguish those from the historic province of Greater Syria (including Mt. Lebanon), which was under French Mandate rule by that time, from other foreign-born people from Asia.<sup>74</sup> In Vermont that year, 228 people from Syria were recorded with Barre, Burlington, and Rutland having the largest concentrations. Syrians were listed as living in all but four counties.<sup>75</sup> As a point of comparison, New England had 11,181 of 51,901 total Syrians in the United States at that time, or 22 percent. The



FIGURE 11. *Shiner gravestone, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Burlington, Vermont. The Arabic (the script and carving here is especially poor) indicates this is the grave for Marina, translated as Mary, who was born 25 November 1877 and died 17 July 1927. She was from Hadchit, Lebanon.*

228 Syrians in Vermont represented just 2 percent of the New England Syrian population in 1920, the smallest per capita of the New England states (New Hampshire: 4.7 percent, Maine: 5.6 percent; thus most Syrians resided in southern New England).

In the 1930 census people from Syria and Palestine were counted together, with a total for the state of 390. The majority of these were in Chittenden and Washington counties, and the cities of Barre (106), Burlington (94), and Rutland (10) had notable numbers of foreign-born

people from Syria and Palestine. The statistical abstracts for the 1930 census list 267 foreign-born from Syria and 384 children of foreign-born Syrian or mixed (Syrian and native-born American) parentage. By 1940 the children of foreign-born Syrians were no longer counted as such; they were included in the native-born white category only and are indistinguishable from all other native-born whites. In 1940 the foreign-born population from Syria in the state had fallen to 229, likely reflecting the change in immigration laws that restricted the number of Syrians permitted into the U.S. after 1924 to only 100 per year.<sup>76</sup> Some of the original migrants may have passed away or moved to other states; their descendants remained in Vermont, but no others from Lebanon migrated to the state after these restrictions were put in place (with a few notable exceptions of family members being allowed to join those already in the state).

Enumerators' reports for the census detail the place of residence for everyone surveyed so it is possible to see where the Syrian-Lebanese settled. In Burlington the three to four Lebanese families were living on the lower part of Maple Street in the 1920s. One family from Ser'eel, Lebanon operated their home as a sort of "welcome house" for any Syrian-Lebanese passing through Burlington. Many families that later moved to St. Albans or Montpelier or beyond originally spent a few months with the Lebanese already established on Maple Street.<sup>77</sup> Many families assisted new arrivals in Vermont in this manner, however the nature of peddling (needing to establish one's own route and customer base) often meant that settling in a sort of ethnic neighborhood or enclave happened very rarely. Certainly there were some concentrations of families, for example on Prospect Street in Barre, but this was not always the case. The overall small numbers of Syrian-Lebanese in the state as well as the occasional personal/professional competition among them meant they did not always strive to settle in proximity to one another. Yet they maintained extensive knowledge of where around the state Syrian-Lebanese lived, as they would often stay with one another when traveling for business or to socialize. Regular gatherings of Syrian-Lebanese were common in these early decades to share stories of home, exchange news, find suitable marriage partners, for special Maronite Catholic worship services, and to enjoy Arabic foods, music, and dance.

#### PEDDLING: A PATH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP AROUND THE STATE

While not all Lebanese became peddlers when they first arrived in Vermont, peddling itself can be thought of as the linchpin to understanding the reasons for travel to Vermont—either being sent there by

a client supplier or invited to join a family member already peddling there—and settlement patterns of Arabic-speaking immigrants around the state. A look at the peddling occupation also shows the progression from this itinerant sales work into other entrepreneurial endeavors.

Peddler Jenny's story from *Men Against Granite* highlights a transition moment as regards peddling as a full-time occupation. Her commentary indicates that some of her customers no longer bought from her because now they had cars and came into town frequently on their own.<sup>78</sup> As transportation systems throughout the state improved, home delivery of items became less profitable. Many Lebanese continued in their same line of business, but now opened specialized stores in town centers. Owning and operating dry goods stores, butcher shops, fruit stores, and general stores or 'mom & pop' style corner stores were the most common. A. & W. Josephs' dry goods store in Island Pond is a good example; the store sold clothes, shoes, rubbers, cigars, tobacco, fruit, confectionary, and ice cream.<sup>79</sup> Similar stores were operated in Barton and Brattleboro by Lebanese families; in Rutland, Burlington, and Barre, Lebanese had shops specializing in the sale of particular goods, for example, clothing, fruit, or meats.

Again census enumerators' records can provide information about the occupations and trades those born in Syria were engaged in around the state. Examples from Rutland in 1920 show Syrian-Lebanese in the following occupations: salesman of oriental goods, peddler of dry goods, laborer in a factory, bellboy at a hotel, and a barber in a barbershop. Listings for Burlington in 1930 include: proprietor of clothing store, peddler of dry goods, repairman in a furniture shop, barber in a barber shop, storekeeper in a grocery store, laborer in a brush factory, winder in a woolen mill, laborer doing "odd jobs," salesman at a fruit company. These are not exhaustive lists, but provide a sample of occupations for this cohort. Based on census and oral history findings, it is clear that some worked in factories (for example the woolen mills in Winooski, a veneer factory in Newport, and a few as granite cutters in the granite sheds in Barre), however, retail and merchant activities were the norm for most Lebanese.

One particularly unique venture for Lebanese immigrants—in Vermont and indeed across the country—was owning and operating ice houses around the state. In a time when peddling was the norm for Lebanese, Peter Handy purchased the Newport Ice Company in 1913. His descendants today do not have a clear idea as to how or why he got involved in cutting ice. The Handys had peddled in the Newport area prior to 1913, and Peter and his brother may have worked for the ice company before buying it. In any event, cutting ice swiftly became a

profitable business for them, and enabled them to bring more relatives from Mt. Lebanon to Vermont. As ice houses came up for sale in other towns, a member of the family would be given the initial investment to go and purchase them. It was particularly important that the businesses they bought were in towns with a creamery. Creameries were the biggest markets for ice, which they used to process the milk and send dairy products by train to Boston, a trip requiring eight to ten hours at that time. In this way the ice companies were shared and supported by an extended family business network. At one time or another between 1913 and the late 1940s, when this ceased to be a viable industry, members of the Handy family (or Lebanese who had married a Handy, and in one case a close friend) owned and operated ice companies in Montpelier, Burlington, St. Albans, Barton, Island Pond, St. Johnsbury, Lyndonville, Newport, and Littleton, New Hampshire.

After World War Two many expanded their businesses or started new ventures. Many Lebanese families owned and operated drive-in movie theaters, restaurants, beverage distribution companies, motels, auto dealerships, farm machinery companies, and real estate agencies. In some cases people went into business together, helping family members get started by expanding from one original business (along the lines of peddling). This is one reason many Lebanese went into the same type of industry, but another reason is competition. Some people explained that when one Lebanese person saw another enter into a new business venture and become successful, he or she would then scramble to get into the same business. Many informants noted that a strong sense of competition runs through and between Lebanese families when referencing the history of various family occupations and earnings.

#### CONCLUSION

An Arabic-speaking peddler, carrying a suitcase in each hand and a pack on his back, walking alone through valleys amidst the Green Mountains is not an image usually associated with Vermont. Indeed, Vermont is more often associated with a classic Yankee past, one that is pre-industrial, representative of simpler times, and set in rural towns filled with Protestant Christians of primarily English ancestry.<sup>80</sup> Descriptions of Vermont in popular culture as ethnically pure and religiously Protestant mean there is little room left in the imagination for Lebanese Christians to have been part of town communities for over one hundred years.

This Yankee myth speaks to a wider phenomenon, one that affects the history of many ethnic communities in the state. To the extent that local industrial and economic histories and the corresponding population movements out of the state are camouflaged, groups like the Lebanese

are prevented from being visible. A recent article on ethnicity in Vermont notes that a limited understanding of ethnicity in the state is tied to a limited understanding of industries such as manufacturing, mining, and lumber. Indeed in cultivating a bucolic image, collective memory of such activities has receded and is not passed on to subsequent generations.<sup>81</sup> The prevalence of a Yankee myth is apparently not a new phenomenon. The following excerpt from Elin Anderson's 1937 book *We Americans*, from a chapter titled "The Myth of a Yankee Town," suggests that Burlington is imagined to be filled with Yankees or "Old Americans" as she calls them, but that this is not quite the case.

[T]o a Yankee farmer . . . Burlington has a lot of foreigners. As he walks along the main street, he looks in vain for a few faces which remind him of the features of Calvin Coolidge. Going into a store he may be greeted by a proprietor whose short and stocky build little resembles the long, lean Yankee storekeeper of earlier days. While waiting to be served he may listen abstractedly to an animated conversation between the clerk and a customer only to realize suddenly that he is listening to a foreign language. "French" he probably decides, as he turns to give his order. He goes into another store to be waited on by the Jewish proprietor. . . . If he stays in town for lunch, he will have to look hard along the main street to find a restaurant which is not Greek, or Syrian, or Chinese, or run by some other "foreigner." It is only when he goes into the bank that he can breathe easily, knowing that here he is still on Yankee ground.<sup>82</sup>

This seventy-year-old work suggests that the reader (along with the Yankee farmer) would be surprised to find so many foreign-born people living and operating businesses in Burlington. Anderson was working as much with the Yankee myth as we are today, running the realities on the ground against a powerful regional narrative that does not include ethnics in the mix.

It is as though we are continually surprised by the presence of foreign-born immigrants and their descendants in the state, including Middle Easterners. The difficulty lies in the lack of a framework to sustain memories of historical realities. As Maurice Halbwachs writes, "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections."<sup>83</sup> Perhaps the solution is to work on adjusting our framework to acknowledge the industrial history of the state, which then enables memories of Vermont's immigrant and ethnic past to be sustained. Then the rituals and commemorative storytelling within families that has sustained collective memory to date, coupled with relics in the social landscape, could cease to be fragmentary and could fuse to form a more cohesive public history of the Lebanese in Vermont.

I offer that the Lebanese make a particularly interesting case study at this moment given the broad contemporary interest in Arab Americans in the United States. It must be noted that some Lebanese (in the diaspora and in Lebanon) do not affiliate with being Arab, or Arab American. Instead they insist on having a unique Phoenician ancestry (see endnote 28), or argue that the term “Arab” is most often associated with Islam, and since they have longstanding pre-Islamic Christian religious traditions they do not, therefore, wish to be classified as Arab.<sup>84</sup> Along similar lines, Lebanese in Vermont are also sensitive to being associated with the term “Syrian,” even though for the first half of the Lebanese history in America they were called “Syrian” and they themselves embraced that term. Syria was an ally of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, while Lebanon had strong ties to the U.S. This often accelerated the shift from identifying as “Syrian” to “Lebanese” among the immigrants in the U.S.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, given Syrian involvement during the thirty-year-long Lebanese Civil War and continued interference in Lebanese politics, today people of Lebanese ancestry wish to distance themselves from the historical associations of being Syrian.

Recognizing the political and cultural implications of such categorizations, I maintain that the Lebanese story in Vermont is part of a broader Arab American history. The emigration of Christians from Mt. Lebanon to America is considered to be the origin point of Arab American history. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War is often cited as a moment of consciousness when many Lebanese Americans, including some from Vermont, became more politically active regarding the Middle East and began to affiliate as Arab American.<sup>86</sup> Further, many post-9/11 writings tie Lebanese Americans into a broader Arab American presence in the nation.<sup>87</sup> So, too, do official briefs that are based on the 2000 U.S. census ancestry questionnaire.<sup>88</sup>

Given that Lebanese Americans are continuously drawn into this historical narrative, that they are already part of the conversation, I offer that the voices of the Lebanese in Vermont deserve to be part of such a process. Tracing their history is particularly challenging given the name changes (both personal and those due to geopolitics in the homeland), absence of a Maronite parish, and the particularly mobile lifestyle of the Lebanese; many moved in and out of Vermont, and around the state, for years before settling. Yet there is a real need to understand the long history and presence of Arabs in all corners of America—and this makes the task of understanding the Lebanese in Vermont all the more compelling. This article is the first of what I hope will be many to add Vermont Lebanese voices to the national history of Arabs in

America and one that contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Vermont history itself.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See for example: Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (London: Harper & Row, 1980).

<sup>2</sup>Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 15.

<sup>3</sup>For literature regarding oral narratives and collective memory see the following examples: Jolene Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria 1927–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Andrew Lass, “From Memory to History,” *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, ed. Rubie S. Watson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), 87–104; Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup>“Mount Lebanon” specifically referred to the mountainous region west of the littoral (occasionally in the literature it is simply called “the Mountain”). Greater Syria was the name given to a large administrative district that included parts of present day Turkey and Jordan, all of present-day Syria and Lebanon, and all of Palestine (which today includes Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip).

<sup>5</sup>Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 164.

<sup>6</sup>Key texts that address these issues include: Leila Fawaz, “Zahle and Dayr al-Qamar: Two Market Towns of Mount Lebanon during the Civil War of 1860,” *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, eds. Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies, in association with I. B. Tauris, 1988), 49–63; Philip K. Hitti, *The Syrians in America* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924); Charles Issawi, “The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration: 1800–1914,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: I. B. Tauris, 1992), 13–32; Claude Boueiz Kanaan, *Lebanon 1860–1960: A Century of Myth and Politics* (London: SAQI, 2005); Kemal Karpat, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, 2 (1985): 175–209; Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Samir Khalaf, “The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration,” *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States before 1940*, ed. E. J. Hooglund (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 17–35; Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); J. Spagnolo, “Franco-British Rivalry in the Middle East and Its Operation in the Lebanese Problem,” *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, eds. Shehadi and Mills, 100–123; Michael W. Suleiman, “Introduction,” *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 1–21; Kais Firro, “Silk and Agrarian Changes in Lebanon, 1860–1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, 2 (1990): 151–169.

<sup>7</sup>E. D. Akarli, “The Tangled Ends of an Empire and Its Sultan,” *Modernity & Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, eds. Leila T. Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 262.

<sup>8</sup>Hitti, *The Syrians in America*, 55.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Suleiman, “The Arab Community in the United States—A Comparison of Lebanese and Non-Lebanese,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Hourani and Shehadi; Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997). Shakir writes that Presbyterian missionaries from New England were perhaps the most influential and while they were not particularly successful as proselytizers, they made a clear mark as educators (*Bint Arab*, 22).

<sup>10</sup>Early on graduates of the missionary-run schools were the ones to make the journey to America for jobs or further education. As their initial reports of success and opportunity filtered home, it became commonplace for others (including the uneducated) to follow in their path. Relaying of messages and remittances, as well as information provided by those who returned from working abroad, accelerated the movement overseas for a large percentage of the population of Mt. Lebanon.

<sup>11</sup> A religious sect with origins in Ismaili Islam, but which also has drawn on other religious traditions to develop unique monotheistic beliefs; the Druze hold al-Hakim (an Ismaili caliph) to be divine. They are not considered to be Muslim.

<sup>12</sup> Every family I interviewed has a Christian Maronite background. There was one historical reference to a Greek Orthodox woman from Massachusetts marrying a Maronite man from Rutland, but otherwise I did not come across references to Lebanese from other Christian sects nor Druze nor Muslims settling in Vermont during the Ottoman period.

<sup>13</sup> See for example: Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914"; Fawaz, "Zahle and Dayr al-Qamar."

<sup>14</sup> In particular, new research by Akram Khater has brought this to light, as he noted in "Mahjar: The Rise of Lebanese or Syrian Nationalisms," a paper presented at the Politics, Culture, and Lebanese Diaspora Conference at the Lebanese American University, Beirut, May 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Many Maronites sought asylum in Beirut during the violence in the Mountain in 1860 and subsequently decided to stay. See: L. Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 42.

<sup>16</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*.

<sup>17</sup> Sarah Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878–1924," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, 1 (2004): 68.

<sup>18</sup> Robin Cohen, "Trade Diasporas: Chinese and Lebanese," *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1997); Elsa M. Harik, *The Lebanese in America* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1987); Khalaf, "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration."

<sup>19</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Firro, "Silk and Agrarian Changes in Lebanon, 1860–1914."

<sup>21</sup> George Haddad, *From Mt. Lebanon to Vermont: The Autobiography of George Haddad* (Rutland: Tuttle, 1916), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Exemption from military service was due to the semi-autonomous status (known as the *Mutasarrifiyya*) Mt. Lebanon gained after the violence in 1860.

<sup>23</sup> Some would stop in these ports for many months to work to earn money for the remaining part of the journey; others had to wait in quarantine before the steamship company doctors approved them for the transatlantic voyage.

<sup>24</sup> May 3, 1976, Hannel Shadroui Acker Oral History tapes, Aldrich Public Library, Barre, Vermont.

<sup>25</sup> This was Hannel Shadroui Acker.

<sup>26</sup> John G. Moses, *The Lebanese in America* (Utica, N.Y.: T. C. Peters Printing, 2001 [1987]); Elizabeth Boosahda, *Arab-American Faces and Voices: The Origins of an Immigrant Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Many researchers have worked with the limited records available to estimate how many immigrants came to the United States from Lebanon. "By 1940, U.S. official statistics indicated that about 350,000 immigrants were of 'Arabic-speaking' origin. About 80 percent of those immigrants are estimated to have come from what is today Lebanon; 15 percent from Syria and Palestine; and the rest from Iraq and Yemen" (Khalaf, "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration," 20). Estimates put the number of Arabic-speaking people and their descendants in the contemporary U.S. at three million (some of whom are in their sixth generation); this constitutes about one percent of the total population, see Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Not Quite American? The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States* (Waco, Tx.: Baylor University Press, 2004), 6. Importantly, estimates of the exact number of immigrants vary widely; publications by immigrant or ethnic activist groups commonly inflate population size (Andrew Shryock, "In the Double Remoteness of Arab Detroit: Reflections on Ethnography, Culture Work, and the Intimate Disciplines of Americanization," *Off Stage/On Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture*, ed. A. Shryock (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 297.

<sup>28</sup> The relationship of the Lebanese migrants to the term "Arab" is a complex topic that extends beyond the scope of this article. The main issue to stress here is that from the earliest phase of migration there was some resistance to being called "Arab" among Lebanese immigrants. The noted historian Phillip K. Hitti in his book *The Syrians in America* goes to great effort to explain that the term "Arab" refers to a culture and "not a strain of blood," such that it has a linguistic rather than an ethnic connotation. The claim for a Lebanese separation from Arab-ness is also connected to the development of "Phoenicianism," an ideology created and supported by Lebanese nationalists to justify Lebanon as its own national community; see Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004). This perspective has been especially popular with Maronite Lebanese in the diaspora. For some Lebanese, especially Maronites, the Lebanese state that was created after World War Two is a "natural" entity with the state boundaries reflecting a non-Arab cultural entity; this argument contrasts greatly with Muslim perceptions

of the Lebanese state as an artificial creation of European imperialism (Kanaan, *Lebanon 1860–1960*, 16).

<sup>29</sup> Alixa Naff, “The Early Arab Immigrant Experience,” *The Development of Arab-American Identity*, ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 25.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Suleiman, “Early Arab-Americans: The Search for Identity,” *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States before 1940*, ed. Hooglund, 41.

<sup>31</sup> The newspaper clipping was donated in 1978 along with other Lebanese memorabilia to the Aldrich Public Library in Barre, Vermont. While no exact date was given, based on when some of the speakers were in office it must have occurred in the early 1950s. Speakers at this event included: Halim Shebea, consul general of the Republic of Lebanon from New York, U.S. District Judge Ernest W. Gibson, Governor Lee E. Emerson, Mayor Reginald T. Abare of Barre, and Mayor Anson Barber of Montpelier. Mrs. Louis Nassif, president of the Eastern States Federation, was to give the farewell address. A photograph was included in the article listing the convention officials: Mrs. Anna Tash, Mrs. Josephine George, Joseph Corey, Dr. Ray Romanos, Mrs. Hannah [Hannet] Acker. Also mentioned were L. Romanos, John Shadroui, Peter Shadroui, Ray Ziter, Herbert Ziter, Louis Ziter, Edward Tash, and A. Corey.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas B. Hansen, “Where Names Fall Short: Names as Performances in Contemporary Urban South Africa,” *The Anthropology of Names and Naming*, eds. Barbara Bodenhorn and Gabriele vom Bruck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 221.

<sup>33</sup> Nadine Naber, “Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab American Invisibility,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, 1 (January 2000): 37–61; Joanna Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Bodenhorn and Gabriele vom Bruck, “‘Entangled in Histories’: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Names and Naming,” *The Anthropology of Names and Naming*, eds. Bodenhorn & vom Bruck, 26.

<sup>35</sup> Name provided in many interviews with members of the Handy family. Also provided in the document of Handy family genealogy (given to me in August 2005) compiled in 2003 by one third-generation member of this large, extended family. Sometimes it is also spelled *al-hende*, and further “Hendy” rather than “Handy.” People of Lebanese descent with both these surnames live in Vermont today.

<sup>36</sup> J. Ashton, “They got the English Hashed u pa bit: Names, Narratives, and Assimilation.” *Lore and Language* 17, Part ½, (1999): 70.

<sup>37</sup> Sometimes when stating one’s name a person would derive a surname from a father or ancestor; such names are called patronyms (Moses, *The Lebanese in America*, 18). The patronymical prefix common to many Lebanese names is “Abu,” “Abo,” or “Abou” meaning “father.” Examples include: Abounader or Aboushaheen or Abouboutros. This prefix was not common among the Vermont families but does occur frequently among North American families of Lebanese descent.

<sup>38</sup> Personal interview, August 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Peddling was a common trade among eastern European Jewish immigrants at this time. Some note that the Lebanese picked up old peddling routes from Jews as they moved into other trades (Albert Hourani, “Introduction,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Hourani and Shehadi). Some of my informants stated that the Lebanese were not welcome in other trades or occupations (e.g., certain factories would not employ Lebanese), and that peddling was a “Semitic trade” (implying the Lebanese and Jews had a lot in common in this respect). During this research project, I did not come across specific references to Jewish peddlers in Vermont or evidence that the Lebanese took over old Jewish peddling routes. The most comparable activity for Jews in Vermont towns was working as “junk dealers.” This involved collecting refuse, for example old cloth or tires, and reselling it in a different marketplace; yet this was different from peddling, an activity involving bringing new and rare goods to sell door to door.

<sup>40</sup> Hourani, “Introduction,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Hourani and Shehadi.

<sup>41</sup> P. D. Murphy and B. Peters-McDermott (authors), J. C. Gabriel (editor), *As the Cedars Grow: The Origin of the Saint John’s Lebanese Community in Canadian History* (St. John, N.B.: Saint John Canadian Lebanon Association, 2002), 30.

<sup>42</sup> Stuart G. McHenry, “The Syrian Movement into Upstate New York,” *Ethnicity* 6 (1979): 337.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* See also Moses, *The Lebanese in America*; Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985).

<sup>44</sup> Alixa Naff, “Lebanese Immigration into the United States: 1880 to the Present,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Hourani and Shehadi, 146.

<sup>45</sup> There is ethnographic evidence from Vermont to suggest that for some immigrants a patron-client relationship developed with the original immigrant taking advantage of poorer kin or co-villager recent arrivals (who were less familiar with the town and American society). The latter

became dependent on the former (not unlike how the “Syrian banker” operated in New York) such that they remained in a patron-client relationship for their entire working life.

<sup>46</sup> Haddad, *From Mt. Lebanon to Vermont*, 65, 97, 114.

<sup>47</sup> Hourani, “Introduction,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Hourani and Shehadi, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Handy, Ned. January 21, 1998. Interview with Jane Beck. Accession Number [TC1998.0001], Collection Number [VFC1995.0001.003], 4–6. Vermont Folklife Center Archive, Middlebury, Vermont.

<sup>49</sup> This is not her real name. The interview took place in October 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Roaldus Richmond and Mari Tomasi, *Men Against Granite* (Shelburne, Vt.: The New England Press, 2004), 123.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Shakir, *Bint Arab*; Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878–1924,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, 1 (2004): 69–80.

<sup>53</sup> Paula M. Hajar, “Changes and Continuities in the Code of Honor among Syrian Lebanese Immigrants to the United States.” (Harvard School of Education, M.A. Thesis, 1989).

<sup>54</sup> Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis,” 72.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Many Syrians faced criticism by the American public for sending their women out to peddle. Syrians in general were seen as in need of “moral uplift” and “improvement,” and thus confining women into a different set of “virtuous work” arose out of a desire to integrate into American life rather than as enduring Arab patriarchal tradition (Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis,” 73–74).

<sup>57</sup> Karpát, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914”; Cohen, “Trade Diasporas: Chinese and Lebanese.”

<sup>58</sup> P. Sluglett, “Aspects of Economy and Society in the Syrian Provinces: Aleppo in Transition, 1880–1925,” *Modernity & Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, eds. Fawaz and Bayly, 144.

<sup>59</sup> Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis,” 69.

<sup>60</sup> Cohen, “Trade Diasporas: Chinese and Lebanese,” 95.

<sup>61</sup> Karpát, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914,” 180.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Issawi, “The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration: 1800–1914,” *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Hourani and Shehadi, 31.

<sup>63</sup> Khalaf, “The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration,” 23.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Amir Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney, *Middle Eastern Lives in America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Cohen, “Trade Diasporas: Chinese and Lebanese.”

<sup>67</sup> “Middleman minority theories have been developed to explain the ethnic specialization of certain ethnic and immigrant groups in commerce, as well as to analyze the relations between the commercially specialized groups and their neighbors of other origins. They constitute a set of socio-economic explanations of ethnicity and . . . are particularly applicable to such problems as the examination of the involvement of Arabic-speaking immigrants as self-employed businessmen in North America.” Walter P. Zenner, “Arabic-speaking Immigrants in North America as Middleman Minorities,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 5, 4 (1982): 457.

<sup>68</sup> A common facet of family lore was identifying one person in the broader Lebanese community who acted as reader and translator for all the Lebanese in the region. Occasionally a letter would arrive from Lebanon and this person would be called upon to visit the house and read the news. Often such a person (examples of men and women were provided) had attended a missionary school in Mt. Lebanon before migrating and therefore knew how to read and write some Arabic (and possibly French and English).

<sup>69</sup> In the late 1990s land in Shelburne, Vermont, was donated to the Maronite Eparchy in Brooklyn and a new Maronite retreat center was established. The retreat center is for monks and other visitors to come and stay; in the house on the property there is also a small chapel where the liturgy is performed each Sunday. Many second- and third-generation Lebanese Maronites attend these services today, keeping the Maronite liturgy of their ancestors alive in the Green Mountains.

<sup>70</sup> George Haddad wrote in his autobiography that he especially liked Rutland and chose to settle there (moving away from North Adams, Massachusetts) because of its good railway connections.

<sup>71</sup> The enumerators were hired by the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct the census survey. They received instructions about how to canvass a neighborhood and ensure they accounted for all residents there (often in immigrant communities people had boarders or lodgers, and they, too, were recorded under the household within which they resided). The actual records (handwritten notes on



standardized forms) were then sent to Washington, D.C., for analysis and compilation in printed form. Due to privacy laws (because it lists personal details) the specific records (names of people, ages, place of birth, occupation, residence, etc.) are not available to the public until seventy years have passed. Thus I was able to access the original records for Vermont towns only for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930.

<sup>72</sup>Between 1890 and 1920 less than half of one percent of the total foreign-born in Vermont were from the province of Greater Syria.

<sup>73</sup>Consulting the "Composition and Characteristics of the Population" tables from Vol. III of the 13th Census of the USA, it is unclear why this record only references the foreign-born from "Turkey." This may in part be due to small numbers; regardless, it is not possible to distinguish those Arabic speakers from Mt. Lebanon based on this table. People from "Turkey" at that time could have been Armenian, Turkish, or Greek speakers, for example. However, for 1910 another statistic suggests that the foreign-born from "Turkey in Asia" in Vermont must have been counted because 102 males over the age of 21 from "Turkey in Asia" were registered in the state with 28 being naturalized and an additional 9 holding their first papers, while 48 were registered as alien and the remainder listed no citizenship (see Table 33, Chapter XI: "Voting Age, Militia Age, and Naturalization").

<sup>74</sup>Syria was listed as one category for foreign-born people from Asia. Other categories include: Armenia, Palestine, Turkey in Asia, China, Japan, India, and Other Asia.

<sup>75</sup>Addison: 2, Bennington: 17, Chittenden: 99, Essex: 12, Franklin: 5, Lamoille: 1, Orleans: 25, Rutland: 16, Washington: 48, Windsor: 3.

<sup>76</sup>Starting in 1921 the United States government introduced the Quota Act, which was highly symbolic of the new isolationist phase in American politics and in many ways is the final achievement of the nativist movement. The Quota Act, which took on its best known and most restrictive form in 1924, established quotas based on the national origin of entrants. It limited the annual entry of people of a certain nationality to a percentage of the foreign-born of that same nationality as recorded in previous censuses. "The Act 'limited the annual number of entrants of each admissible nationality to three per cent of the foreign-born of that nationality as recorded in the U.S. Census of 1910.' It was made more restrictive in 1924 when quotas were set at two percent of the 1890 Census, thereby drastically limiting the number of eligible immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean" (Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis," 68).

<sup>77</sup>Personal interview, Jim Fayette, February 2006.

<sup>78</sup>Richmond & Tomasi, *Men Against Granite*, 127. She also mentioned that several of her people, Syrians, were settled down with families at the south end of Barre. It is likely that in earlier years these Syrians were also peddlers, but the arrival of children and the accumulation of some wealth prompted them to open businesses in the city.

<sup>79</sup>As advertised on a 1920s sales receipt and photograph from the store (courtesy of a member of the Joseph family).

<sup>80</sup>See: Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Michael Hoberman, *Yankee Moderns: Folk Regional Identity in the Sawmill Valley of Western Massachusetts, 1890–1920* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); George H. Lewis, "The Maine that Never Was: The Construction of Popular Myth." *Journal of American Culture* 16, 2 (1993); James Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Joseph Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Joseph Conforti, "Ice and Granite: The New England Character," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* 28, 2 (1988): 92–109; Blake Harrison, *The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006).

<sup>81</sup>Joseph-André Sénécal, "Nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois: Ethnicity and History in Vermont," *Vermont History* 71 (2003): 69, n14.

<sup>82</sup>Elin L. Anderson, *We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), 16–17.

<sup>83</sup>Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 43.

<sup>84</sup>Randa A. Kayyali, *The Arab Americans* (London: Greenwood Press, 2005), 62. Though they share the Arabic language, they argue that they are culturally separate from Arabs.

<sup>85</sup>Naff, *Becoming American*, 16

<sup>86</sup>Eric J. Hooglund, ed., *Taking Root, Bearing Fruit: The Arab-American Experience*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 1985); Hooglund, ed., *Crossing the Waters*; Ernest McCarus, ed., *The Development of Arab-American Identity*; Gregory Orfalessa, *The Arab Americans: A History* (Northampton: Interlink, 2006); Thomas Pulcini, "Trends in Research on Arab Americans," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, 4 (Summer 1993): 38. For how new Arab American immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s connected to the earlier wave of Arabic-

speaking immigrants, see Helen Hatab Samhan, "Politics and Exclusion: The Arab American Experience," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, 2 (1987).

<sup>87</sup>To provide two examples: The 2005 *Encyclopedia of New England* published by Yale University Press has no entry for Lebanese or Syrians in the immigrant section; you can only find them under Arabs in New England. Demographers and health specialists also posit Syrian-Lebanese ethnicity as a subset of Arab American ethnicity. See Andrzej Kulczycki and Arun Peter Lobo, "Deepening the Melting Pot: Arab-Americans at the Turn of the Century," *Middle East Journal* 55, 3 (2001): 459–473; Andrzej Kulczycki and Arun Peter Lobo, "Patterns, Determinants, and Implications of Inter-marriage among Arab-Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (February 2002): 202–210.

<sup>88</sup>In the (voluntary) questionnaire people were allowed to check boxes indicating ancestry, and there were separate categories for "Lebanese" and "Arab" ancestry. For Vermont, 0.2 percent of the population indicated Lebanese ancestry and 0.2 percent Arab ancestry ("Ethnic Makeup of Vermont from the Census 2000 Summary Tables" [[http://www.vt-fcgs.org/vt\\_2000\\_ancestry](http://www.vt-fcgs.org/vt_2000_ancestry)]). However, recent census briefs issued in 2003 (*The Arab Population: 2000*) and 2005 (*We the People of Ancestry in the United States*) define Arabs as people with ancestry based in Arabic-speaking countries or originating in parts of the world categorized as Arab (Kayyali, *The Arab Americans*, 57). While based on the 2000 questionnaire, these briefs collapse everyone into an "Arab" category; they report that 0.34 percent of the Vermont population has Arab ancestry ("The Arab Population: 2000" [<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-23.pdf>]).