



# CAPITAL PAST TIMES

## NEWSLETTER FOR THE BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 2017

WWW.BISMARCKHISTORY.ORG

### A SPECIAL SYRIAN-LEBANESE FAMILY IN BISMARCK

by Ann Vadnie / after interviewing  
Joyce (Saba) Tello

In the 1880s, the first group of mostly Christians, from Greater Syria (present-day Lebano, Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Syria) immigrated to the U.S. They were fleeing from economic hardships. An estimate of between 130,000 to 350,000 Syrian-Lebanese arrived by late 1930s.

The groups of Syrian-Lebanese who travelled to North Dakota came to take advantage of the Homestead Act. One good sized group settled near Ross, ND. There they hoped to farm for 2 years to satisfy government requirement. Then they would own their land.

“Both sets of my grandparents would talk about the ‘old country’ and how proud they were about their roots. But they were coming from hard times, from a place where they felt they had a cloud over their heads. So, they were also very excited to come to the land of opportunity,” Joyce said.

The family remembers that their maternal grandparents, Stella and Salama Nicola, were very supportive to see that their children and grandchildren would go on to higher education.

Memories about her paternal grandparents, Mike and Sadie Saba, are a little more complete.



Joyce said, “I remember that my grandfather, Mike Saba, had us come over one day and he talked to us about the time he was a peddler and the time for 25 years when he was separated from

the family. He just wanted us to know that he had what he called ‘a lovely life.’ And because he died soon after, it seemed to us that he felt compelled to talk to us about his life.”

Joyce continued, “What I remember the most about my grandmother Sadie was sitting at her knee making stuffed grape leaves for special meals, meals with the family, which we had often. I still do

stuffed grape leaves ‘her way.’ She was the one who taught me to cook and sew.”

Many Christian Syrian-Lebanese came to Bismarck because there were more opportunities here. Also, as some settled here, more followed seeking to form a community.

Joyce (Saba) Tello felt those were the main reasons her parents George Saba and Barbara (Nicola) Saba moved from McClusky to Bismarck after their marriage in about 1936-37.



Eager to start their new life...they hitchhiked to Bismarck catching a ride with a traveling “Cookie Salesman.” Their hopes were realized when they were able to open G & B Market Broadway between 5th and 6th (G for George, B for Barbara) and they lived behind the store.

Later, they found a larger location at 311 7th Street and named that store George’s Food Market. This image is a painting of



the store done by Bismarck Artist Ric Sprynczynatyk. It was a quick walk to George’s Food Market from the Saba home at 412 8th Street.

About her mom and dad, Barbara and George Saba, Joyce said, “They were wonderful people, both born in Sheridan



County (Denhoff / McClusky area). After finishing her teaching degree in just 9 months from Dickinson College, my mother taught

in a one-room school house in rural McClusky. She is the one who gave me my love of education. My parents did not meet until my father was 33, and my mom was 27 or 28. Three weeks after meeting, they were married. My mother was an absolute angel! I look to her always as a strong faith-based woman. She had a wonderful wit and was so precious. I can remember that her favorite quote was, ‘He who makes a mistake makes a discovery.’”

“As far as memories of my dad, remember I was only 12 or 13 when he died, I remember sitting on his knee and listening to stories of the old country. He was a good storyteller, but it was mostly in broken-English because he was still learning the language.

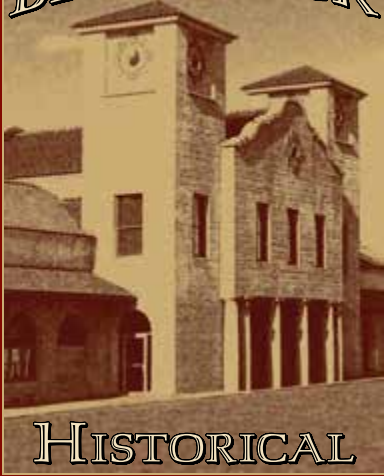
He liked to entertain and have visitors. He was very proud of his garden, even teaching himself how to graft other branches on to an apple tree. I remember that he actually grew eggplant and gave it to one of his customers because he didn’t carry it at the food market.

I was able to have some quality time with him just before he died, sitting in the garden both listening and talking,” Joyce said.

The Syrian-Lebanese families, like Joyce’s extended family, give Bismarck an added international flavor. They helped Bismarck grow in a wonderful way and became an essential part of our community.

As to Joyce’s own sense of heritage she said, “When I think of that, I think of pride...how proud I am of my heritage. I have passed it on to my two boys. I am a lifelong learner about everything ancestry, because it is fascinating to me.”

# BISMARCK



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CAPITAL PAST TIMES  
is published by  
Bismarck Historical Society  
PO. Box 47  
Bismarck, ND 58502

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### SIMPLE MUSINGS

by *Kate Waldera, Bismarck Historical Society President*

The month of March is Women's History Month and that got me to thinking about the dynamic women who played a role in our city's history. Names like Fannie Dunn Quain, Sister Boniface Timmins OSB, and Linda Slaughter come to mind. We also want to honor those women whose names were not prominently etched in our city's history but who still played an enormous role. Unfortunately, my column isn't long enough to pay homage to all these amazing women.



Fannie Dunn Quain was born in Bismarck, D.T. on February 13, 1874 to John P. Dunn III and Christina Seelye Dunn. She studied at Bismarck High School and had a keen interest in being a physician as many of her family members were doctors. Fannie graduated from the University of

Michigan Medical School at Ann Arbor in 1898 and was the first North Dakota woman to hold a doctor of medicine degree. She met Dr. Eric P. Quain and they married in 1903. They had two children. Fannie continued to practice medicine for a few years, but eventually withdrew from active practice. She took a keen interest in eradicating tuberculosis and in 1909 helped establish the North Dakota Tuberculosis Association, now the American Lung Association of North Dakota. Other accomplishments were the founding of the North Dakota Tuberculosis Sanitarium at San Haven, raising the standards of nurses' training in the state, and serving as president of the Nurses Training School during the 1930s. Dr. Fannie Dunn Quain died in Bismarck on February 2, 1950.

#### Sources:

- "Changing the Face of Medicine-Dr. Fannie Almara Quain" (U.S. National Library of Medicine)
- State Historical Society of North Dakota (00091-0252)



Linda Warfel Slaughter was born February 1, 1843 in Cadiz, OH and educated at Oberlin College. She married Dr. Benjamin F. Slaughter in 1870 and moved with him to the frontier post of Fort Rice and then to the new town of Edwinton, now Bismarck. Mrs. Slaughter was the first

postmistress, the first school teacher, and the first county superintendent of schools. By the late 1880s Mrs. Slaughter was a Washington correspondent for the Dakota Territory newspapers and in 1892 attended the Populist Party convention, becoming the first woman to vote in a national convention for a presidential candidate. She also wrote regularly for the Bismarck Tribune, authored several books, and organized the Ladies' Historical Society of Bismarck and North Dakota. Linda Slaughter died in St. Cloud, MN on July 3, 1911.

#### Sources:

- "Encyclopedia of the Great Plains-Linda Warfel Slaughter" (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
- "Find-a-Grave-Linda W. Warfel Slaughter"
- Obituary, Bismarck Tribune, July 7, 1911.
- State Historical Society of North Dakota (A5418-0001)



Sister Boniface Timmins, OSB, was administrator of St. Alexius Hospital from 1892 to 1934. Under her leadership, the institution was always at the forefront of medical technique and services.

A woman of remarkable character and a born leader, Sister Boniface left an indelible mark on the

history of health care, St. Alexius Hospital and Bismarck. "She was one of the most remarkable women North Dakota has ever known," according to former Governor William Langer.

She guided St. Alexius Hospital and health care in Central and Western North Dakota for 42 years. "It is seldom granted to any one human being to accomplish so much for so long a span of time. The great work performed under her guidance could only have been accomplished by one whose actions were inspired by a great and noble spirit," said Dr. Ramstad of the Quain and Ramstad Clinic, at Sister Boniface's funeral in October, 1937.

Her commitment to the Rule of St. Benedict, "That above all else, care must be taken of the sick ..." was the hallmark of her administration. Monsignor Feehan, St. Mary's Catholic Church, noted, "Her life marks the passing of a grand character, one who has grown old in the service of God and in the cause of humanity."

#### Source:

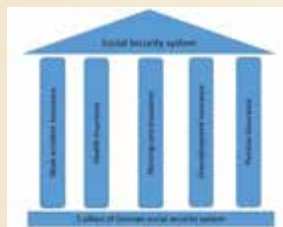
- Image and information courtesy of the Benediction Sisters of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, N.D. (Archives).

## TRIVIA

### MAN FOR WHOM WE NAMED OUR CITY



It is interesting to note that the man for whom we named our city, Germany's Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck was not only a politician and military leader. He should also be remembered for founding both the German social security system and healthcare system which are both still recognized and admired today.



Germany became the first nation in the world to adopt an "old-age social insurance program" or a system of social security

in 1889, designed by Bismarck. Participation was mandatory and contributions were taken from the employee, the employer, and the government. And, in 1883, he proposed what was called the Bismarck Healthcare Model. He viewed universal health insurance as an effective tactic in his grand design for German unification. The Bismarck Model survived: the German militarism of World War I, the unstable democracy of the Weimar Republic, Nazism, World War II and its aftermath, and eventual reunification.

Even today, the Bismarck Model is the leading plan for guaranteed universal healthcare coverage and it is used in Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Japan.



# THANKS FOR THESE GREAT PROGRAMS:

## NOVEMBER 8, 2017 – BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2017 ANNUAL MEETING

“BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY—HISTORY WELL KEPT”



- Dakota Stages for play tickets
  - Blarney Stone for meal gift cards
- our Master of Ceremonies—Mike McCormack
- the meal blessing—Fr. Paul Becker
- Executive Director Walt Bailey
  - the tribute and toast to Myron Atkinson, Jr.
  - presentation of the slate of candidates for the board of directors
  - presenting a special award for volunteering to Marjean Schauer



Members were able to pre-order the wonderful Bismarck Historical Society Cookbook and check out the display boards. They also were eligible for special drawings--each winner would receive two tickets to a Dakota Stages play of their choice for this season and a generous Gift Card for dinner at the Blarney Stone before or after the play.

The entire evening went smoothly in this beautiful setting and the food was so wonderful!

### Special thanks to:

- our Sponsors for this year's Annual Meeting (image of the sponsor thank you display)
- North Dakota Guaranty and Title Company for the venue of the Northern Lights Atrium Heritage Center
- H.A. Thompson & Sons (Claudia and Mark Thompson) for the dinner



- presentation “Bismarck Historical Society: History Well Kept”—Tom Mayer, President
- acknowledgement of volunteer members—Marilyn Snyder
- “Atkinson Family Award”—presented by Tom Atkinson to Neal Bohrer, a local Boy Scout who did a great deal of work at Camp Hancock as part of his project to achieve his Eagle Scout award
- the Cookbook Committee for their hard work and dedication: MaryJo Bailey, Carol Heid, Marilyn Snyder, Carolyn Twingley



One more successful year was topped off by this great night!

## DECEMBER 13, 2017

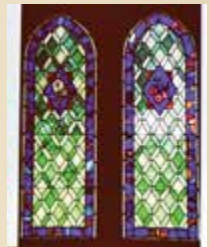


Tom Tudor presented a wonderful tour and talk about “St. George’s Episcopal Memorial Church” and all of the beautiful stained glass windows.



painstakingly picked up and cataloged from the rubble of bombed and destroyed churches during the Second World War.

Looking from the sanctuary to look toward the entrance of the church, one sees high in the front gable, framed through an arch, a round window depicting the patron saint of this church, ST. GEORGE, slaying the dragon. (photo-St. George Window)



On September 10, 1949, the members of St. George’s parish attended the first services in the new church. The church building is noted for its many memorials and especially the stained glass windows that include fragments of glass from English churches. These fragments, some of which date back to the 11th century, were

## JANUARY 10, 2018

Marilyn Snyder:

### “HOMESTEADING IN WESTERN NORTH DAKOTA”

A hardy group ventured to the library in a snow storm to listen to Snyder’s talk about growing up like an early homesteader in several locations along the North Dakota/Montana border. She told great

stories and shared wonderful photos of her own family as well as a painting of her grandparent’s homestead. The audience really enjoyed the presentation. There were many questions and audience family stories as well.



## FEBRUARY 14, 2018

Annette Willis, owner and operator of Bismarck Tour Company:

Willis will speak about her new business and the tours she has planned.

More in next newsletter.

## DO YOU REMEMBER?

### SOAPBOX DERBY

In 1950 the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District introduced the first year of many annual Soapbox Derby competitions held at the capital mall.

As with all new experiences, there were many early questions and problems. So, it was announced in April that several clinics would be held to help get the event going.

For example, a float in Mandan 4th of July Parade showed what finished cars would look like and soon after the Derby site was set for the west drive leading down

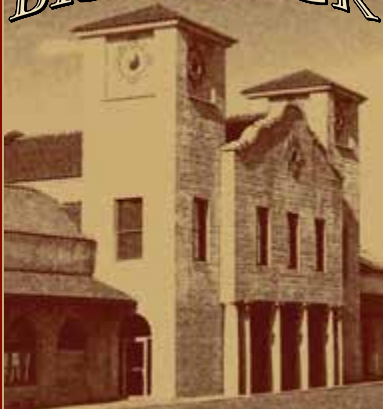


from Capital on the mall. A two lane, 875-yard course lined with snow fences was planned with small ramps at the starting line. Bleachers would be provided for the audience at both the start and finish lines.

The check-in for all entrants was held mid-July. Important requirements included: the boy and car must not weight more than 250 pounds and everything concerning specific measurements must be followed carefully.

Continued on Page 4

# BISMARCK



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Individual: \$25.00
- 3-Yr Individual: \$65.00
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- 3-Yr Family: \$110.00
- Corporate Member: \$100.00
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## DO YOU REMEMBER?

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Bismarck officials, including Bismarck's 1st Parks and Recreation Director, George Schaumberg, traveled to observe at the Fargo Soapbox Derby to see first-hand how the competition should be held. Several days before the completion, a final inspection was held, Official Soapbox Derby helmets were distributed to 68 entrants, and the final pairings were set.



Then, on July 26, 1950, Bismarck's first Soapbox Derby was held in front of 5,000 spectators! The first winner was Mike Walsh who was also celebrating his 12th birthday! And what a great birthday present that must have been!



## COMING EVENTS:

### MARCH 14, 2018

*Note the change of presenter and topic:*  
 Fern Swenson, Director of Archaeology and Historic Preservation for the State Historical Society of North Dakota presenting on "DOUBLE DITCH"

### APRIL 14, 2018

Dr. Barbara Handy-Marchello: "THE WAR BONDS PROGRAM IN NORTH DAKOTA"

### MAY 9, 2018

*Note the date change*  
 Ann Vadnie and Kate Waldera—"Bismarck Mayors Through the Years"  
 This will still remain a "FOUNDERS DAY" event but will follow our typical program format. It will be scheduled for 6:30pm at the Bismarck Public Library in Meeting Room A.

### AUGUST 8, 2018.

All-Member Picnic  
 Change in venue this year to the Lions Hillside Park Community Room (Located within Lions Park, 1719 E. Boulevard Ave.).  
 More information will be available later.

### SEPTEMBER 12, 2018

St. Mary's Catholic Church  
 On-site tour and talk, including information about the beautiful stained glass window in this historic Bismarck Church.

### IMPORTANT NOTE:

All programs, unless noted otherwise, will begin at 6:30 and be held in Room A at the Bismarck Public Library.  
 More information on coming events in the next newsletter.

### OCTOBER 10, 2018

"HIGHLAND ACRES AREA NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION PROJECT"

### NOVEMBER 14, 2018

Annual Meeting

### DEC. 12, 2018

Marilyn Snyder "EARLY MEDICINE IN BISMARCK"

### JANUARY 9, 2019

Terry Bohn "MODERN BASEBALL IN BISMARCK"

### FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Mike LaLonde (and friends) "THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF LEO LALONDE"

### MARCH 13, 2019

TBA

### APRIL 10, 2019

Susan Lundberg "THE HISTORY OF SLEEPY HOLLOW"

### MAY 8, 2019

"FOUNDERS DAY" celebration of "Bismarck's Birthday,"