

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF KARYES LAKONIA**  
**1920-2020**

*PART I*  
*(1920-1950)*

A Special edition of the Karyates Association's News Bulletin

Athens, October 2019

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# INTRODUCTION

## The Arachova's situation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Greece at the arrival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was at a crucial point. Although during the 19<sup>th</sup> century many modern institutions had been established at the new state, these changes could only be found at the cities. At the same moment in the countryside, where the vast majority of the population still lived, almost nothing had been done in order to improve the everyday living.

Thus, in Karyes-Arachova, even though the settlement may be considered as one of the biggest villages in Peloponnese, there was only a small School (**Matalio**), grace at the will of **Athanasios Matalas**, which cannot deal with the great number of pupils, a square (**Rachi**) and a smaller one (**Vigla**). At this small square, a rather small building had been constructed by the Greek State to serve as a Community Hall, Telegraph Office and Justice Hall. Meanwhile, there were no roads inside the village and the villagers had access to water only via the two fountains: in **Panaghia** and in **Sakali**.

Although, there were two parishes with three priests, the only big enough church is that of **Aghia Paraskevi**. There were three more small ones **Aghios Andreas**, **Panaghia** and **Aghios Ioannis** and a new one (**Aghios Nikolaos**), which has been built at **1898** in order to move the cemetery from the square of Vigla, where there were no more space, in a new site outside the village. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century two new small chapels were been built: **Aghios Georgios (1902)** at the agricultural site of Kampos and **Aghioi Anargyri (1904)** 2 km away from the village's entrance.

According to the **Marianthi Anastasea'** calendar (**teacher** in Karyes, **1903-04**), as it has been saved by Evangelos P. Kerhoulas "*Arachovitans are mainly **farmers** and **viticulturists**. The Enoyntas Municipality (where Karyes belong at that period of time) may be considered as one of the poorest of Lakonia. So Arachova may be considered even **poorer** because of the **luck of water supply**. The residents cultivate potatoes, wine and wheat. The family's meal is poor. The main meal consists of cabbage, greens and potatoes. Only few families may have meat once a week.*"

The medical treatment was almost absent as there was only one Pharmacist (Leventis) who lived at the village and prepared the medicines by himself. There were only three (3) wine-taverns and four (4) minimarkets with few products and high prices. They bought their products from the village of Aghios Petros which served as a regional market.

The village was almost forgotten by the Greek State. The only public servants were five teachers and the manager of the Telegraph-Post office. This situation may be considered as unfair for the residents, considering that the Karyes' population was almost that of a small town.

However, according to that calendar the quality of the people was perfect: "*Karyates are peaceful, religious, law-abiding and they all adore their village. **We don't have any example of Karyates that immigrated abroad who had forgotten their homeland**. Despite the life difficulties they never surrender. It is almost impossible to find a man or a woman ugly! All the residents are beautiful and handful.*"

As a reaction to the absence of the State, the residents are trying to create associations. The first movement was the "**KARYATIKOS SYNDESMOS**" (**Association**) which was established at **1896**. Although, the village' residents in a general assembly at 1898 assigned to the Association their representation, its actions weren't important. In **1908** the "**KARYATIKI ADELPHOTITA**" (**Brotherhood**) was established but its actions were focused mainly at the reforestation.

As a result there was a large internal migration as early as 1890 to the Greek major cities and mainly to Athens, followed by an external migration to North America (United States and Canada). Thus while from the end of the Revolution to the end of the 19th century (1832-1896) the population increased (from 567 to **1,688** inhabitants), over the next 25 years it slowly decreased (**1,321** inhabitants in 1920). The first Arachovitans-Karyates who went to America were the brothers **Basil** and **Panagiotis Leventakis**, and in **1896** another **36** youths fled en masse, followed by others. Most of the Arachovitans-Karyates were concentrated in the area of the two Carolinas, but many were dispersed to other major cities (**Chicago, New York, Toronto, Boston, San Francisco, Akron, Bingham, Kenton**).

The end of World War I (1918) found them all restored, prosperous with plenty of wealth. All these years the amount of money that the immigrants sent back to the village is breathtaking. According to the chronicle, "*Of the 1,800 residents, **450** men have immigrated to America and with the money they send home from simple huts they have been transformed into spacious and two-storey homes.*" For example, in **September 1904**, 40,000 drachmas, or about \$ 8,000 U.S., arrived at Karyes' Post Office, a colossal amount for that period of time (**\$8,000** in 1900 is equivalent in purchasing power to about **\$245,000** in 2019).

As we read in "**THE GOLDEN BOOK OF BROTHERHOOD**": "*It was a natural consequence for many to remember their village and to nostalgically return to where the first daylight saw them, where they grew up with the melodious song of their mother. But after their arrival, facing the situation in the village, they were not happy at all. The women of the village were carrying on their shoulders large barrels of water from the Panaghia and Sakali fountains, in order to bring water to their family. While in the old days that situation didn't impress them, now they all felt sorry as they had all the modern facilities and means in America and they had left their sisters, their mothers, their wives to be tyrannized and deprived of this drinking water, so precious to human happiness.*"

# I. 1920: A CRUCIAL YEAR FOR KARYES' FUTURE

## The immigrants react and the village wakes up

In order to face the situation, at the summer of 1920, **Dr. Panagiotis Leventis** invited those Arachovites immigrants from America and other cities in Greece who had come to spend their holidays, to a meeting in a dusty room of the small old community building in Aghios Andreas. There, "we all understood that the craving that was in everyone's breasts was overflowing and that the blessed hour had come, as the Friendly Society of the Greek Revolution had organized the poor Greek slaves to the Turks a hundred years ago, to create a new institution which will organize the Arachovites-Karyates and ask the help of our brothers in America without any hesitation" (THE GOLDEN BOOK OF BROTHERHOOD). ). Immediately the **ARACHOVA'S WATER AND IRRIGATION COMMITTEE** was created and the immigrants in America started to raise money. But while a significant amount had already been accumulated, the Asia Minor Disaster (1922) took place, the drachma lost its value and the amount accumulated was almost zero.



Young and old Karyates with their barrels at the springs



The Arachovites, however, did not surrender, and on a Sunday morning in **Gastonia NC** at the home of Paraskevas P. Leventakis decided to invite all of his compatriots to set up a union to help the village. As a result, on **September 9, 1923** in Gastonia, North Carolina, more than fifty Arachovites met and decided on the establishment of the **Brotherhood "Ai Karyai"**.

The aim was to supply the village with "the most perfect water supply system of European and American cities", to construct an artificial lake, to design and construct roads in order to connect the village with the big cities and the surrounding villages and finally to construct various public buildings such as Schools, Post Office, Community Store etc.

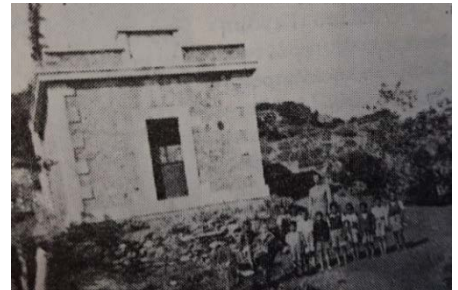
This section will not be detailed about the Brotherhood's work, but it will only emphasize that its work has been characterized by a combination of **unselfish love** for the village and **serious organization structure**. Within five years, branches were established in all the major cities of North America and the amounts raised will lead to the major water supply project.

In **1924** a first study was done by a Swiss engineer, while in September **1925** the Brotherhood appointed delegates to oversee the aqueduct project and a new study by a professor at the University of Athens Sinos.

The project finally began in the **spring of 1927** and the Arachovites worked so hard that in just three days they transported the heavy pipes, open the ditches, and by **July 1928** the entire project, consisting of a **central tank and 32 running water taps**, throughout the village had been completed.



The Grand Opening



The Tank of the New Aqueduct

At the same time, all this activity is a trigger for the permanent residents of the village to organize, so in **1925** the "**ASSOCIATION OF YOUNG KARYATES**" was established. It's members worked for the tree planting of the village roads and the completion of the Aqueduct.

The second major event of this decade is the founding of the "**KARYATIS**" **SPORTS CLUB** in **1926** by young Karyates studying in high school. Immediately the club participates in games in Vlachokerasia (1928, 1929) and organized football matches with Sparta and Krokees village. Furthermore, grace at the initiative of the late benefactor **Georgios Th. Skiouris**, President of the Karyes Community, a fundraiser was organized in **1929**, and the amount collected helped the members of the Club to buy a small farm owned by Panayiotis Papadogiannis at Pinigoura site and converted it into a football field.



The St Constantine and St. Helen Chapel

Finally, we should also mention that two new parishes were built in the same period: **Aghios Constantinos (1923)** and **Aghia Barbara (1928)**. The former, though begun to be built in 1911-15 at the expense of **Elias I. Kopsiaftis** and his wife **Margarita** and was completed after their death - with their inheritance - and the latter was built at the expense of **Georgia's wife George N. Matalas**.

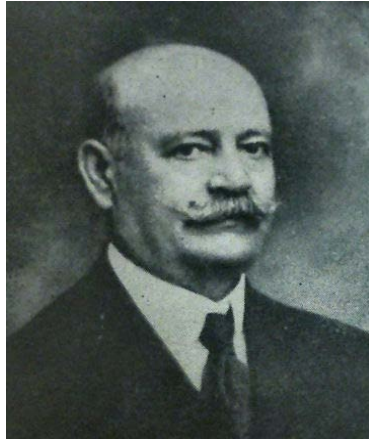


## II. 1930's The Golden Era

The 1930s began with the renaming of the village of Arachova to **Karyes Lakedeimon**. Grace at an amount given by a select compatriot **Georgios Elias Heliopoulos (1864-1931)**, a Piraeus merchant (active in Bulgaria and Southern Russia), a beautiful granite building was built in **1831** at the hill near Aghios Ioannis parish: the "**Heliopouleian Clock**". It is reported that the donor had initially decided to donate his home to serve as a school, but after the decision taken, as we shall see below, to build a new school at the expense of the Brotherhood at Agia Paraskevi site, he allocated the amount for the new Clock.



Photo of the Clock



George Helias Heliopoulos



Photo of the St. John's region

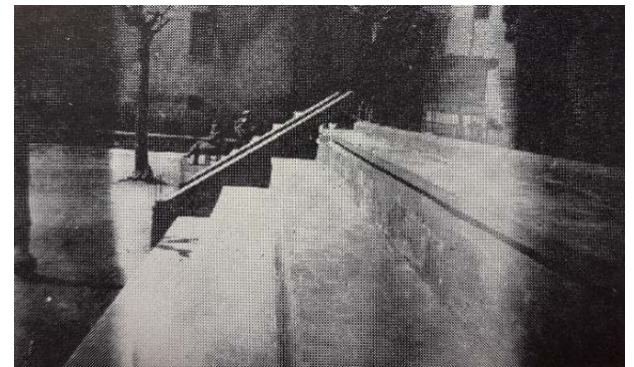
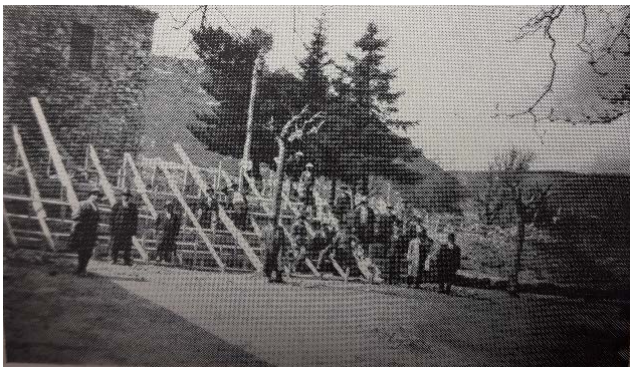
The second grooming project concerned the **small square of Vigla (Aghios Andreas)**. Although the space was small, it was decided to flatten and build a rostrum so that people could rest daily, as well to create a space for the **celebration (panighyri) of St. Panteleimon's feast**. The work was done during the period **1931-1933**, again with the financing of the Brotherhood, along with a vast personal work from the residents.



The works



The outcome



Then an important issue aroused as there were two major needs of the village: A **modern school** big enough to accommodate all the children in the village, or a **water dam** that could hold enough water to irrigate the fields?



The works

Eventually, the **need for a new school prevailed**, and the Brotherhood once again decided to bear the cost entirely. There were disagreements over the location and finally the site near the church of Agia Paraskevi was chosen, next to the existing small building of Matalio School. The works began and in **1938** the new school was handed over to the youth of Karyes.



The New School

At the same decade the "**KARYES AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE**" (**1932**) was established. However, its great activity began in 1936, when the Greek State initiated the creation of a **Parnon Potato Seed Production Center**. Grace at that initiative the fine potato seed came through the Agricultural Bank and was given to the producers. As a result the yield almost tripled, whilst the wholesalers were eliminated and the price from 2.20 drs. reached to 5 to 7 drachmas per kilo. The village economy was then boomed and the Cooperative from 38 members in 1936 reached 280 in 1942. Furthermore in **1939** the "**KARYES MILK COOPERATIVE**" was founded too.

On the initiative of the President of the Agricultural Cooperative **Andreas Dimas** another water project had been carried out at the same time. As after the completion of the aqueduct, the water from the source of the Panaghia was unused, a co-operative was formed under his presidency and a reservoir was built by the personal work of its members. So the water from the spring was collected by an oil pump and transported to Pinighoura region by cement pipes.



Andrew Demas



The "Panaghia" Chapel from above



The Project still works properly

The project, that resulted in irrigation of about 1,000 acres of fields, still exists and serves the village and was completed in 1936. Furthermore 1,100 apple trees were planted to support producers' income.

### **III. KARYES BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF THE II WORLD WAR Unprecedented Prosperity**

In the late 1930s, grace at all the efforts previously mentioned, Karyes was a vibrant and organized settlement. It is noteworthy that the population grew from 1,321 permanent residents in 1920 to **1,788** in **1940**. During the summer with the arrival of the holidaymakers it looked more like a town.

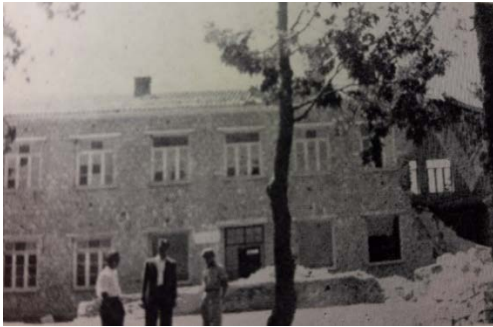
As it is mentioned in the "**KARYATIKA VOL. I**" (**1950**) there were **five (5) Grocery Stores, three (3) Cafes, eight (8) Wine and Cook Shops, two (2) Hotels, two (2) Barbershops, three (3) Tailoring Shops, two (2) Steamboat Agencies, two (2) Bank Agencies, two (2) Shoemakers, one (1) Motor and three (3) Hydraulic Flour Mills, a Steel Mill, a Bakery and one of the largest Post-Bank Offices** in the area. There was also a **Medical Clinic with four (4) permanent doctors and a dentist** during the summer, a **Pharmacy, four (4) lorries and a bus**, while several small businesses and craftsmen were active.

The efforts had been rewarded and the goal had been achieved. Nothing showed the impending disaster coming.



## IV. DISASTER AND RECONSTRUCTION (1945-1950)

Everything stopped in 1941. Already in 1939, when World War II erupted, the communication with the US became difficult and after the October 1940 when Greece entered the war it became almost nonexistent. Finally, after the summer of 1941 and the Greece's triple occupation from the Axes Forces the communication stopped entirely.



The Scholl in ruins

**We all know how much the people of Arachova (Karyes) suffered during that period.**

The liberation in 1944 found Karyes in ruins. Dozens people were dead, 90% of homes were burned down, the school and the municipality clock had been blown up.



The ruins of the Heliopouleian Clock



In the **spring of 1945**, the first compatriots who fought in Europe with the U.S. and the Canadian Army forces asked permission from their units to visit their parents' village and when they arrived in Karyes they faced the disaster. The news arrived in America and everyone was anxious to find out about their own family. A Karyatian of America wrote a letter to his wife and children, concluding: *"If none of my people lives, my wife, my children, my brothers, please I would like to be informed by anyone who knows about it. I owe him gratitude."*

In the **summer of 1945**, the first mail parcels with food and money-checks from America arrived. In the **spring of 1946**, 248 parcels and 14 trunks of clothes, shoes, food and agricultural tools, as well as animals arrived in the village.

At the same time, in **1945** the "**PHILANTROPIC BROTHERHOOD OF KARYES' LADIES**" was founded, and in Athens the Arachovites were gathered for the first time to help the village by establishing in **1948** the "**KARYATIC UNION OF ATHENS AND SUBURBS**".



The first Union Board



The healing of the wounds gradually began. The village houses were slowly being repaired and so did the building of the **Brotherhood's school**, while the destroyed Matalaio school building was demolished and the site took its current form. At the same time, American citizens living in the village were being compensated and their homes were rebuilt.



However, it was obvious that the **golden era of the village was by then a history**. The Greece's economic situation was very difficult and as a result the second mass immigration took place that would last during the 1950s and 1960s. Grace at an **U.S. law** specializing in migration from villages that had been destroyed by the Nazis, hundreds of young Karyates are leaving. According to a Brotherhood's survey, **700** young people came to America's "New Arachova" to progress in life, while immigration to Australia's remote continent began in the 1960s. Those who did not go overseas migrated to the big cities and mainly to Athens.

The residents of Karyes from 1,788 in 1940 are reduced to 1,310 in 1951 and to just **601** in **1971**.

**At the next issue:**

***The renovation of Karyes Lakonia (period 1950-1990)***

***The infrastructure and renovation projects***

***The Caryatid's Monument: a dream come true***

The Information of that Special Edition was provided by the books:

- **"BYBLOS"** (BOOK), Brotherhood of the Arachovites "AI KARYAI", Gastonia N.C. U.S.A. (1929), editorial Paraskevas John Meidanis,
  - **"KARYAI"**, writer Constantine Michael Pitsius (1948),
  - **"KARYATIKA"**, Paraskevas John Meidanis and his son Dr. John Paraskevas Meidanis, Washington D.C.. A work consisting of two volumes (1950 and 1972), edited by the Brotherhood of the Arachovites "AI KARYAI" Gastonia, N.C. U.S.A. which has been awarded by the Athens Academy
  - **"THE CONTEMPORARY KARYES LAKONIA"** Panagiotis Stylianos Macheras (1987),
- and from the newspapers:
- **"AI KARYAI"**, Karyates Association of Athens and Suburbs "ARACHOVA LAKEDEMONOS" (1950s)
  - **"KARYES, ARACHOVA LAKEDEMONOS AND VILLAGES OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF OINOUDOS"**, Annita Gleka-Prekezes president of the "KARYATES ASSOCIATION" (1986-2010).

**The Karyates Association**

**Athens, October 2019**



## ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΑΝΤΑΧΟΥ ΚΑΡΥΑΤΩΝ