

ASIKIN, JOHN - ANGELOPOULOS, ANGELIKI

Deep in the Central Peloponesos, one mile west of Tripolis, Greece lies the village named Zevgolation. From this place, Theodore Asikin took his son John and booked passage to America which they entered through Ellis Island in 1906. Another son, Gus, joined them separately and they found work at American railroads. Theodore returned to Greece leaving his sons in America. Gus relocated to New York but John Asikin remained in the Midwest working at one time or another on the Northwestern Railroad and the Illinois Central Railroad where he attained the level of section foreman at a very young age living in Broadwater, Nebraska. John supervised railroad track maintenance. Unlike the great majority of Greek immigrants but very much akin to the previous experience of most immigrants of the time, John also became a part-time farmer.

While John Asikin was working on the railroad and farming, a lovely young lady, Angeliki Angelopoulos had found her way on her own from Valira, a village in the hills above Kalamata, to Hoboken, New Jersey and from there to the Massachusetts textile mills where she worked in a hosiery factory. A definite antecedent to the Freedom for Women Movement, she apparently not only came on her own but also brought with her a dowry. In Greece the father of young woman would negotiate with the father of a putative groom over a dowry of so many olive trees or goats to accompany the future bride to the home of the groom. Angeliki appears to have negotiated her own marriage to John Asikin with the help of the family with whom she boarded and who were acquainted with John. Unlike the men who had come to America, Angeliki did not have the onus of sending money back to Greece to marry sisters. Rather, she had made an independent living. After her marriage in January, 1921 in Massachusetts, with her dowry and savings she was able to help John buy a herd of swine in Nebraska. The venture failed because of an outbreak of a swine disease but John continued his work on the railroad and Angeliki began her child bearing years in Broadwater, Nebraska with their first born, James. The remaining four children were born in Blairsburg, Iowa, namely Christine, Theodore, Frances and Violet. The railroad moved the family to Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1939.

As has been the case with many practicing Christians but non-corporate worshipers, the family did not attend St. John's regularly for many reasons including the time and street car transfers required for travel from their Council Bluffs, Iowa home to 16th and Martha. Nevertheless, both Theodore and Violet

Asikin later made faithful Greek Orthodox practice at St. John's a priority in their lives and the lives of their own families. Theodore served many years as St. John's Treasurer during some difficult times both honorably and without a hint of sloth or impropriety. Even declining health in his later years did not deter him from physical work at the church in addition to his treasurer's chores. Violet has been a regular church choir singer (and at one time choir director) and for a few years during the tenures of Rev. John Demos and Rev. John Loejos she chanted during weekday services. Also, brother and sister, Ted and Violet, each held high offices and worked on behalf of church organizations including GOYA, AHEPA, Daughters of Penelope and Philoptochos (Violet was president in 1977).

John Asikin died and was interred in Waukegan, Illinois where John and Angeliki had moved. After the demise of John Asikin there, Angeliki moved back to Council Bluffs, Iowa where she passed away. Her funeral services were held at St. John's and then arrangements were made to move her to her final resting place next to her husband in Waukegan.