

The Nine Best Macedonian Stories from Missouri and Southern Illinois

These are the nine best stories about Macedonians living in and around Granite City, Illinois and Missouri in the early 20th century. Between the Macedonian Ilinden Uprising in 1903 and the start of World War I, thousands of Macedonians migrated to and worked in this Illinois city located just outside of St. Louis, Missouri. While several hundred Macedonians remained in the area throughout the decades, most Macedonians eventually moved away from Granite City – either to return to Macedonia or other US cities. But whether they remained or left, their impact was noticeable and newsworthy.

So, here are LOMA's nine favorite stories about Macedonians in southern Illinois and Missouri!

9. Macedonians Riot and Strike

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2. Dimeff Walks Hundreds of Miles With 3 Loaves of Bread

1. 200 Macedonians and Bulgarians Fight Each Other in Factory

9. Macedonians Riot and Strike

In the early 20th century, working conditions in American cities were not desirable compared to today's standards: factories were dangerous and dirty, and employers worked their employees for many hours in a day without decent pay. Further, for Macedonians who were used to working on farms under the open sky in Macedonia, the stuffy and cramped conditions of factories were dreaded.

Conditions were no different for the American Steel Works company in Granite City. In 1910, ASW had 8 plants across the country and their factory in Granite City had 2,500 employees. By the mid-1910, that number had nearly doubled. Many of these employees were foreigners. For ASW, their labor was cheap. Immigrants who came to America had very little money; and while the money they made in these jobs was little compared to what other jobs offered in the US, for those that planned on returning to Macedonia, it was like striking gold.

Still, in early March of 1909, two hundred Macedonians (and other foreigners) went on strike due to the dismal working conditions and poor pay. Primarily, they wanted an increase of 25 cents per day in pay. By the middle of the month, the numbers of strikers had increased to 400. ASW management ignored their demands and stated that since the Macedonians were simply rammers and laborer, they could easily be replaced.

This wasn't the first time Macedonians gave ASW trouble. A few years before, in the autumn of 1906, many union American employees of ASW and non-union Macedonian employees got in a brawl. For many months, American employees had been striking and Macedonians and other foreigners replaced them. The Macedonians were the overwhelming majority of all foreign peoples represented there. It was obvious that Americans and Macedonians distrusted and disliked each other. The Americans were especially distraught because they were now in a minority in Granite City compared to foreigners and Macedonians.

Thus, in mid-September, tensions came to a boil and 500 Americans and Macedonians brawled. It was triggered by the words of an American named Joseph White, who publicly blamed the Macedonians for giving him malaria. A Macedonian heard the remark and attacked White with a pipe. As he did, several Americans jumped on the Macedonian. Soon, about 500 men were fighting one another. In the end, five Macedonians were seriously injured, including Christo Tole, who was shot in the back; Stano Pedro with broken ribs; and Vassil Pedro, who lost an eye (and eventually died from head wounds). To preserve the peace and prevent further rioting and fights between the two groups, Granite City swore in 200 additional police officers.

Macedonians in Granite City were involved in many more such strikes and fights. In 1914, most of ASW's employees went on a strike that lasted several weeks and caused many disturbances, riots and destruction. The manager of the plant blamed Granite City's mayor, Marshall E. Kirkpatrick, for failing to provide the proper police protection for the plant. The plant manager even issued warrants for the strikers' arrests, who then taunted him by saying that his warrants were meaningless. Similarly, in the spring of 1913, nearly 1,000 employees walked out, demanding recognition of their union and an increase in wages.

In the spring and summer of 1906, the ASW plant was forced to temporarily shut down as 300 foreigners (mostly Macedonians and Bulgarians) went on strike. ASW then hired many Greeks to replace the Macedonians. Soon enough, however, ASW let go of the Greeks because management found their work to be unsatisfactory; so, in late summer, they rehired the Macedonians at higher wages than they were making before the strikes. This upset the Greeks, and these ill-will labor feelings combined with old-world tensions, were the results of many fights and disturbances between the Macedonians and Greeks in Granite City.

To be clear, however, such riots and strikes at ASW weren't limited to Macedonians. Before Macedonians had settled the area, there were many strikes and riots involving white and black employees. For example, in May of 1902, several white molders went on strike. They had been expected to make 9 steel transoms and 15 bolsters per 10-hour shift, but they claimed that the maximum they could make were 8 steel transoms and 14 bolsters. ASW didn't appease their demands and began hiring black men to fill the vacant positions. These black men were not part of any union. In early June, the white and black men (the strikers and the non-union employees) clashed with each other. Five men were shot in the riots and one died.

Thus was the story of Granite City and their largest factory in the early 20th century. Labor disputes and race riots. The Macedonians were often at the center.

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8. A Macedonian Wedding (1935)

The wedding of Sylvia Bogden, of Alton, Illinois (just outside of Granite City) in 1935 was a spectacle of intrigue for many in the Granite City area. Sylvia was a well-known and well-liked young lady in the small Illinois community outside of St. Louis. Born in Macedonia, she was particularly adored in her new home for her singing and acting abilities. Sylvia often sang as a soprano for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in many of their church programs and in recitals put on by her teacher, Mrs. Ray McDow. In one recital, Sylvia sang "Slave Song" by Teresa del Riego.

Acting was also one of her creative strengths. In the winter of 1934, she starred as the lead actress in a play called 'Friendship' performed at the YWCA in Granite City. The play was translated into Bulgarian and the performers were all Macedonian and Bulgarian girls. In the play, which takes place in 18th century Vienna, Sylvia played the role of Bertha, a maid in the household of Madame de le Tour and her daughter, Louise. In addition to being a maid, Bertha is an extremely gifted musician who composes music. The credit for her compositions, however, is given to Louise. Bertha's friend Marie then steals one of the compositions, sends it in on behalf of Bertha to a composition competition hosted by Mozart, and wins the competition for Bertha. Louise has Bertha thrown in jail; but Bertha is eventually exonerated.

In this way, Sylvia carved a reputation for herself in her local community. Thus, it is no surprise that her wedding garnered a lot of attention: she was a local celebrity *and* she was Macedonian. She married William Pandoff of Canton, Ohio on Sunday, August 11, 1935 in Granite City. The local newspapers, however, didn't just report on the wedding day itself. They also reported about the days and weeks leading up to the wedding.

For example, on July 27, it was reported that William would be arriving in Alton the next week to prepare for the wedding. On August 11, an article was written detailing the wedding location and time, as well as other details. The wedding was to "take place at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at Third and Market streets with a priest of the Macedonian Church officiating." The newspaper goes on to write that "Miss Boden has been honored with a number of pre-nuptial parties" and that "she is a talented young musician and is well known in Alton."

The specifics of the wedding were detailed in an article the Monday following the wedding. Reverend V. Popoff of Granite City officiated the wedding. Before the services, though, the bridal party entered the church in step to the famous wedding song by Mendelsohn. Dorothy Kioseff and Victoria Kirchoff, the flower girls, then entered into the church. Then came the bridesmaids and groomsmen: Edna Durato, Pauline Fuchs, Thomas Atanasoff, and John Durato.

After the bridal party settled in their positions, Sylvia was escorted down the aisle by Thomas Kioseff, the best man. Sylvia “was attired in a beautiful gown of satin”, which was fashioned with “extremely full sleeves that were gathered at the elbow and fitted tightly from there to the wrist. The dress was made of princess lines and ended in a three foot train.” The veil was decorated with seed pearls and Sylvia held a bouquet of lilies in her hands. William was escorted by Rose Kioseff, the maid-of-honor. The bridesmaids and maid-of-honor each wore a different color dress and with hats of corresponding colors. Rose wore violet, Edna yellow, and Pauline pink.

Rev. Popoff began to officiate once William and Sylvia were given wedding candles that they held throughout the entire service. After the service, the bride and groom received congratulations per Macedonian custom. In the meantime, Sylvia’s voice teacher, Mrs. McDow, sang two songs: ‘O Promise Me’ and ‘I Love You Truly’.

The reception and dinner were held at a hall with 150 guests in attendance hailing from Alton, Granite City, St. Louis, East St. Louis and Canton, Ohio. After the wedding, the couple went on a week-long honeymoon. Then, they moved to William’s house in Ohio.

Of course, this was not the last time the *Alton Evening Telegraph* would report on the whereabouts and happenings of their darling Sylvia. In 1936, the paper included a note about how Sylvia came to visit her parents for several weeks in Alton -- just so people would know that she was around, in case they wanted to visit with her.

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7. Eight Annual Convention of the MPL (1935)

In the 1930s, there were two main Macedonian political organizations in the United States: the Macedonian People's League (headquartered in Michigan) and the Macedonian Political Organization (headquartered in Indiana). These two organizations did not get along. The MPO was formed by Macedonians and Bulgarians closely tied to the Bulgarian fascist government. While many Macedonians were part of this organization, they had little to no idea about its leaders' connections to Bulgarian politics. The MPL, on the other hand, was vehemently against the Bulgarian agenda of MPO's leaders. While both groups believed in a 'Macedonia for the Macedonians', the MPO leadership advocated that a separate Macedonian nationality did not exist. The MPL therefore often encouraged and persuaded Macedonians to leave the MPO because of their pro-Bulgarian leanings. The MPL was also more leftist in their politics and were more likely to be content with the existence of a Macedonian republic within a Balkan confederation.

Being that the Granite City area was home to thousands of Macedonians in the first half of the 20th century, it is no surprise that southern Illinois was a hotbed for political activity. In the city, two different factions of Macedonians (with their own newspapers) existed in the early 1900s – one was pro-Bulgarian and one was pro-Macedonian. In the spring of 1908, hundreds of these Macedonians came together and held a mass meeting in a natural amphitheater near the banks of the Mississippi River outside of Granite City. At the conclusion of their meeting, they sent a telegram to President Theodore Roosevelt requesting him to advocate for Macedonian autonomy.

Even though the following decades saw a decrease in the number of Macedonians in the Granite City area, the MPL decided to hold their 8th convention in Madison, a town adjoining Granite City. The Madison branch of the MPL was called P. Tchaulev and was led by Paul Klyasheff. The program of the convention was to devise ways in which they could promote and encourage support for the national independence movement in Macedonia, as Macedonia was divided amongst Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia.

One of their main grievances with Greece was that letters sent by Macedonians to Greece were returned if they were not written in Greek. Thus, all letters in English and Macedonian written by Macedonians would not be delivered. MPL's eight convention resolved to send a delegation to Washington, D.C. to protest before the Greek ambassador and to plead with American officials to defend Macedonians' rights to correspond with their relatives at least in English.

The *St. Louis Star and Times* had this to say about the Macedonians in the Granite City region:

“The convention city, Madison, has one of the oldest Macedonian colonies in the United States. Some of its residents participated in the great Elinden uprising of August 2, 1903, when the people of Macedonia made an heroic but unsuccessful effort to throw off Turkish domination.”

Of course, other Macedonians in this area were involved with the MPO. For example, a small delegation of Macedonians left Alton for the Indiana MPO convention in 1934. But the MPO never held a convention in the southern Illinois community, which suggests that their presence was never strong there. Moreover, they only once had a convention in St. Louis, held in 1942.

Hence, while the MPL was eventually forced out of existence in the 1950s because of alleged communist affiliations, their following in the Granite City area was much more robust and meaningful than MPO's impact on the Macedonians there. The MPL only lasted a couple of decades, but they and their ideologies were accepted by most Granite City Macedonians.

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6. From Patriot to Pacifist: Vladimir Kanazireff

Vladimir Kanazireff was born in Razlog, Macedonia in 1879. As a young boy he fled with his family to Sofia, Bulgaria in order to escape the brutal suppression of Macedonian rebellions by the Ottoman Empire. Describing his upbringing in Macedonia, there was much disdain for the Turkish oppression of his fellow Macedonians, who “had to wear a distinctive sash and walk in the streets with their heads bowed and their hands in a supplicating attitude.” In his father’s house in Razlog, in 1896, Goce Delchev helped form a VMRO committee.

When Vladimir was sent to Military College in Sofia, he became indoctrinated into the Bulgarian Cause and developed hatred for Greeks, Serbs and Turks. With this attitude, he graduated in 1901 and became an officer in the Bulgarian Army. He eventually left the Bulgarian army to lead a rebel band in the 1903 Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia. Before this, however, he was ordered to “organize Bulgarian sentiment” under the command of General Tzontchev among the Macedonians of Razlog, which caused some doubt in his mind about his activities in Macedonia. The Ottoman officials discovered this plan, burned much of the town, and killed over a hundred residents. Most local Macedonians did not support the Bulgarian officers – even if many were Macedonians – coming into their villages and towns and instigating such violence on the part of the Turks.

Back in Bulgaria, Vladimir eventually came to believe that Macedonians were going to have little success with their terroristic/rebellious actions. He thus wanted to become a diplomat as a means to advocate for Macedonian freedom. His brother-in-law in America wrote to him, telling Vladimir that if he came to the U.S. to study, he would support him. With enthusiasm, Vladimir arrived in Granite City toward the end of 1907. But as soon as he arrived, the depression of 1907 was in full swing. His brother-in-law had gone bankrupt and could therefore not support him. Vladimir thus had to teach French in order to make a living.

This new job, however, was a blessing in disguise. He met his wife, Lillian Rausch (Rooch), while teaching: she was his student. The two got engaged in March of 1910. They had a small engagement party in Granite City and then got married in Paris in June. For their honeymoon, they toured Europe.

After getting married, though, he was still set on becoming a diplomat. So, he stayed in Paris and enrolled at Paris University, where he also worked at the Bulgarian legation. Unfortunately, however, his time there was cut short because the Balkan Wars broke out in 1912. There, he joined the Macedonian-Adrianople Volunteer Corps as part of the Bitola Battalion. For his actions against the Turks, he was awarded Bulgaria’s Medal of Bravery. Still, the horrors of the wars haunted him.

He returned to Paris in 1913, graduated university in 1914, and received an appointment as a Bulgarian consul to Petrograd in Russia. But in 1915, he was called to serve as Chief of Staff of the Bulgarian Occupation Brigade operating in Serbia. There he was “shocked by the cruelty of the treatment of civilians behind the Macedonian fronts” on all sides of the war. He described the war as “hideous barbarity” and said: “No one who has not seen war could imagine its utter horror. The truth is much too awful!”

At the end of the war, after being dismissed from the army with the rank of major and after failing in his diplomatic efforts as an attorney to “free Macedonia” from the rule of neighboring countries, he returned to the Granite City area to join his wife and daughter. He decided not to invite his family to move to Bulgaria due to the Macedonian situation, in which many of his Macedonian friends had been murdered in the post-war peace in Bulgarian and Serbian Macedonia. He took up work as a substitute teacher, and eventually became a history teacher at Beaumont High School in St. Louis, right across the river, where his family eventually resettled. During this time, however, he never stopped writing and advocating for the Macedonian Cause of freedom and liberation.

In his new profession, however, he found much joy and understanding. He would often write editorials that expressed his views on a variety of matters. In 1934 he wrote:

“I believe that it can be safely affirmed that never before in the whole of human history has man been as irrational and foolish as he is today. The proof? Never before has his suffering been as needless and inexcusable as it is today. Because never before have men had such possibilities for a safe, abundant and happy life for everybody as they have now, when everything man needs and even desires can be so easily provided.

“Past generations had to contend with ignorance and superstition, with famines and epidemics. Migrations and wars were generally the result of necessity. The masses were poorly fed, poorly clothed and poorly sheltered, because man had to work hard, depending on his muscles alone, in order to subsist. Today, merely by making a metal wheel turn inside a metal ring, he obtains light, heat and power – unlimited power! And his food supply is so abundant that he has to destroy part of it!...In spite of these irrefutable facts, however, man lives in uncertainty, in constant worry, in a wave of crime and suicide, and engages in war in which the best of that nations’ youth is destroyed, not to speak of its other calamities.”

In addition to the topics of war and peace, Vladimir believed that fundamental changes were needed to America’s education systems. Writing in 1936: “If the children are to be trained to become good and capable citizens, the classroom must be a social unit in itself. The time a child spends in school is not only preparation for life. It is part of his life.”

Vladimir had a few solutions to improve education:

“First, lighten the teacher’s load. Four classes a day should be the maximum. The teacher has a lot of school work between classes and at home. Second, lengthen the time of the class and the school day. Third, take away the teacher’s clerical work and bookkeeping. Fourth, establish intelligent and effective supervision....Good education is the only way to solve the economic and political problems of the time – including crime and child delinquency – and incidentally, to save democracy (if we really love it).”

In 1949, Vladimir wrote about the state of society and the role of technology, especially automobiles and radios:

“Yes, the radio in the cars is another addition to all those things that make people nervously high-strung, restless, running, rushing – not to mention the rising wave of crimes of all kinds. Perhaps this kind of living more than anything else prevents people from seeing and understanding the utter stupidity, the unbelievable absurdity, of the present state of mankind: Living in uncertainty and insecurity and fear, in cold war and feverish preparation for hot war, all at a time when science and technology make a life in peace and well-being for all unquestionably possible.”

His words may ring just as true today as they did when he wrote them.

Vladimir retired from teaching in 1949 and died in on December 23, 1962 at the age of 83. Despite the fact that Razlog, his hometown, was now a part of Bulgaria, his obituary listed Macedonia (and not Bulgaria) as his birthplace. No matter where life takes you, you never forget where you were born. As reported by a 1934 newspaper: “At heart Vladimir Kanazireff is still a Macedonian leader of comitadji (rebels), however well-tempered by experience.”

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5. The Macedonian Bankers

As Granite City's Macedonian and foreign population began to grow, some of the city's original Macedonian settlers realized they could create additional wealth for themselves by providing services and goods for Macedonian newcomers. This made a whole lot of sense because new Macedonian arrivals did not understand the language or culture and it was much simpler for them to turn to people who understood them.

Konstantine (Karl) Mitsareff and Prodrom Gosheff were partners in the saloon business in 1906 and soon began to act as bankers for the Macedonians of Granite City and its environs who were employed in the region's factories and mills. They also participated in real estate transactions together, buying up property to either open other businesses or to create boarding houses to room the influx of Macedonians, Bulgarians, Serbians and other Eastern European immigrants to Granite City. At his peak, Mitsareff owned 28 rooming houses, two saloons, two grocery stores, a dry goods store, a bank and a bakery. Together, the two men were known as the financial kings of Granite City.

Mitsareff and his brothers were political refugees from Turkey. The Turkish government had issued warrants for their arrests because of their involvement in rebellious activity, agitating for Macedonian freedom. Thus, they fled Macedonia and the reward for each of their captured, dead or alive, was \$10,000. K. Mitsareff arrived in the US in 1905 and began working as a day laborer. His friends and coworkers quickly came to trust and confide in him, and soon they were leaving deposits with him as they traveled back and forth between Macedonia and the US. With this capital, Mitsareff and his brothers began investing in their other business ventures.

In 1907, one of Mitsareff's brother was murdered in his store. The murderer was never identified, but the \$500 on Mitsareff's brother ended up in Mitsareff's possession. He claimed that two of the black men who killed and robbed his brother had handed it over to two Macedonians who then gave it to Mitsareff. Because of the murder, Mitsareff sought another partner in his sister's husband, Gosheff, who was still in Macedonia at the time. Gosheff eagerly came to America and joined Mitsareff in business.

By 1908, Mitsareff has set up "wild cat" banks in Indianapolis to cater to that area's growing Macedonian population. Soon, however, Macedonian and Bulgarian newspapers in the US reported that Mitsareff and some of his partners (Evangelos and Gichefzi) claimed to have \$20,000 in capital when in actuality they had nowhere near that amount. The newspapers claimed these bankers owed the American Balkanic Association \$5,000, as well as \$1,000 to other individuals. Further, ten checks sent to Paris by Mitsareff and company bounced back for the lack of funds. He would send

Macedonians to Europe with pieces of paper that they were to exchange for money in Paris, but those pieces of paper were worthless. Editors of Macedonians and Bulgarian newspapers relentlessly attacked Mitsareff for swindling Macedonians and Bulgarians out of their hard-earned money.

For example, one of the misleading or false advertisements claimed: “We send money with checks to well-known banking institutions, also notes with best conditions for Macedonians. Your money are always warranted. We receive money for year or less time. Those for year deposit we pay 3 per cent interest. We give (or lend) money with lawful percentage for solid guarantee (or security). We exchange any kind of money. Our firm has twenty-one buildings, thirteen lots or places for building we rent. Our people at us will find rooms furnished at reasonable prices. To all we show a brotherly welcome.”

In Indianapolis, Mitsareff’s agents were Jordan Piperka and Michael Doshef. He visited them after investigation began into his practices, but Mitsareff refused to let the Indiana state auditor examine the books in his Indianapolis bank. So, the state arrested his agents and held them on \$1,000 bond each for violating private banking laws. Mitsareff put up the money for their bond and eventually the matter was settled.

Another year passed and another of Mitsareff’s brothers died in March of 1909. This time, a gasoline range explosion killed his brother Mitri and severely injured his other brother John. The next month, Mitsareff made it into newspaper headlines again. This time Mitsareff was arrested for forgery and larceny. State Attorney J.F. Gillham issued a warrant for his arrest and Constable John H. Glass in Granite City arrested him. Mitsareff faced Judge Joseph Edmonds in his preliminary hearing.

Why was he charged with such serious crimes? Apparently, Mitsareff wrote a letter to Macedonians and Bulgarians in West Virginia using the name of G. Zapuroff, who was the editor of the Macedonian newspaper *Narodna Glas*, based out of Granite City, in which Mitsareff also had an investment. Several Macedonians and Bulgarians in West Virginia claimed that they sent him money and in return were supposed to receive French Napoleons, which is the currency Macedonians preferred when they wished to return to Macedonia. They did so after reading about Mitsareff’s bank and dealings in his advertisements in *Narodna Glas*. But for the \$3000 that the Macedonians sent, they only received \$500 in French gold.

The Macedonians and Bulgarians in West Virginia became suspicious and felt cheated. So, they wrote to Zapuroff asking him to investigate what Mitsareff was up to and to report back to them with his findings. Zapuroff, however, never received the letter. Zapuroff, Mitsareff and other Macedonians shared the same post office box and Mitsareff intercepted the letter addressed to Zapuroff from the West Virginian Macedonians. Mitsareff, and possibly his secretary, V. Stefanoff, then took it upon

themselves to forge a letter in Zapuroff's name. The letter praised Mitsareff as an honest man who was a genius in banking and other matters. It also claimed that Zapuroff had personally seen the Macedonians' money in the safe at Mitsareff's bank and that it would be on its way soon. "I am not so much for the money," the letter quoted Mitsareff as telling Zapuroff, "but for my honor, because I do not wish people to think I am another Frank Zotti, who ruined so many of our brothers."

At his preliminary hearing, 20 Macedonians and Bulgarians were in attendance. Mitsareff said that he sent to New York for the rest of the French Napoleons, but was forced into bankruptcy before he could get the rest. Some Macedonians testified that after 5 months of not receiving their money, they traveled to Granite City to confront Mitsareff. Mitsareff housed them for several days, for free, promising them money; but then claimed he went into bankruptcy and would not be able to pay them. The case was eventually settled.

Shortly after, in June of 1909, Mitsareff had Gosheff arrested on charges of embezzlement. The two men represented a Macedonian bank in New York that failed for \$1,000,000. The Macedonians of Granite City lost \$75,000 in the failed bank. Mitsareff blamed Gosheff for his loss of \$30,000. In the previous month, Gosheff had abandoned Granite City for New York City and bought a half a share in a restaurant. While in bankruptcy and faced with his own charges, Mitsareff tracked Gosheff until he found him across the country in New York. Mitsareff claimed that Gosheff had looted the private bank they had together while Mitsareff was in Europe getting married. This is what led to the downfall of the bank, stated Mitsareff.

Gosheff countered, however, that when Mitsareff went into bankruptcy and began experiencing financial troubles, the best thing he could do for himself was to make a clean break and invest his money elsewhere. He insisted he was not in hiding nor was he a fugitive. The courts eventually acquitted Gosheff, who then remained in Granite City and opened his own grocery store.

On March 21, 1911, Mitsareff shot and killed Gosheff over this dispute. A small boy witnessed the shooting and said that when Gosheff entered his saloon, at Olive and Pacific streets, a man stepped out of the shadows of a doorway and shot Gosheff three times: in both legs and through the heart. Mitsareff's sister (Gosheff's wife) also claimed to have witnessed the shooting, claiming that the shooting was cold-blooded and without excuse. Mitsareff called the police three hours after the shooting and said he shot Gosheff in self-defense. He claimed that he went to Gosheff's saloon to discuss some matters when Gosheff made a move as if he was going to draw a revolver. "Then I got him first," said Mitsareff. The police found no weapon on Gosheff's body.

After investigating, police found out that Mitsareff "was in an ugly mood all day" on the day of the shooting. He had shouted that he was going to kill someone, and many

thought that someone would be A. Morris of the Morris Real Estate Company. Mitsareff had accused Morris of allowing Gosheff to get the better of Mitsareff in a real estate dealing. Yet, most of Mitsareff's friends did not take his threat against Morris seriously. Mitsareff was eventually sentenced to 14 years in jail but made parole four years later in 1915 after many prominent Americans and Macedonians worked tirelessly to get him released. Upon his release and reentrance into Granite City, he was greeted by a 35-piece brass band and scores of Macedonian friends.

Several years later, however, Mitsareff met his fate. On Saturday, February 2nd, 1918, Morris and Mitsareff got in a quarrel at Morris' real estate office in Granite City. The two were trying to resolve differences stemming from past years' failed dealings and Morris invited Mitsareff to his office to chat. But Mitsareff came with a gun and threatened he was going to kill Morris. As Mitsareff pulled out his gun, Morris shot Mitsareff in 3 times. Three female employees fainted upon witnessing the shooting, and Morris immediately called the police. Upon getting shot, Mitsareff ran to Granite City National Bank yelling that he was going to kill D. J. Murphy, who was the cashier there. At the bank door, however, Mitsareff fell unconscious and died several hours later at St. Elizabeth's hospital.

Morris, the son-in-law of the oil magnate W.C. McBride, claimed self-defense and he was exonerated for the killing. Mitsareff's funeral was held at the Macedonian Church, with his father and two living brothers leading the arrangements. A few months later, in October of 1918, Morris died at the age of 35 from the flu, which he contracted on his trip to the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

And thus is the tale of the Macedonian bankers of Granite City.

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4. Stefanoff Wins the Irish Sweepstakes

Bello Stefanoff was not much of a better. He was born in 1878 in Tetovo, Macedonia and came to Granite City in 1913 after first traveling to Romania. In Macedonia he left behind his wife and three children as he accumulated money in the US and traveled back and forth between his homeland and St. Louis, where he eventually lived and worked.

In 1933 he became employed as a parking lot operator. It wasn't everyone's dream job, nor was it his; but for Stefanoff, it's how he supported his family back in Macedonia. Times were tough in the US in the 1930s and a man had to make a living however he could. Prior to being a parking lot operator, he was a baker, hotel operator, and fruit vendor, among many other jobs. His highest paying job was as a fruit vendor, where he made a few thousand dollars in one year. As a parking lot operator, he charged cars 5 cents for all day parking and mustered several hundred dollars per year.

On one early May day in 1938, a fellow Macedonian from Tetovo named Sam John sold Stefanoff a ticket for the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes Derby. "I had a book of twenty tickets," said John, "and had sold all but two, when one day I said, 'Hey, Bello, come here: I sell you a ticket on the Sweeps.'"

So, Stefanoff bought the ticket for \$2.50. But after a week he had doubts and returned to John. "Sam," he said, "maybe this ticket a fake." John told him that if he thought it was a fake, he should give it back to him and John would refund him. In the end, Bello said, "No, I keep it: that's all right."

Stefanoff's ticket was one of eleven Americans who had a ticket for Scottish Union at the Epsom Derby, taking place in England. Unfortunately, Scottish Union did not finish in first place. But the horse did finish in 2nd place. For a second place finish, Stefanoff was entitled to \$75,000.

A St. Louis newspaper reporter first informed him of his winnings:

"Have you heard how the Derby came out?" asked the reporter. Stefanoff said no. "You won \$75,000." Stefanoff shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I'll wait until I see it in the newspapers. Please don't talk to me now. I don't want to be bothered."

Soon, another reporter asked him about how he felt to be a winner. Stefanoff's reply? "A lot of people have been bothering me about my ticket. I got five letters from people

who wanted to buy an interest in it.” The reporter asked where the ticket was. “Very safe in a bank,” was Stefanoff’s reply.

Others asked him what he was going to do with the money.

“I can’t tell,” said Stefanoff. “Man’s mind changes like water changes. I can’t tell. You start to walk down Washington and you go to Broadway, what difference does it make?” But before he won, he had commented: “I’ll live like a Turkish pasha if I win, that’s what I’ll do. Sit on a fine carpet with my legs crossed and smoke cigarettes and drink coffee. Like a pasha. But first, I’ll get married. I have been married in Macedonia, but my wife is dead. My two daughters and my son are still in Macedonia.”

After he won, another reporter asked: “Are you going to stay in business here, or sell out?” Stefanoff smiled and asked if the reporter would buy his parking lot from him. The reporter asked how Stefanoff would handle all these people calling him. “Well,” said Stefanoff, “when you got it in the pocket, you have friends. No pocket, no friends.” He continued about the \$75,000 he won. “That ain’t money. Money is when you have millions. Then you can go where you want to go, and do what you want to do. This kind of money – it will go in two or three months in Chicago.” In another conversation, he said: “Make a living, that’s all that matters. Some people got lots of money – billions. Make money, save it, lose it.”

Stefanoff’s \$75,000 turned out to be much less, after taxes. The federal government took over \$19,500 and the state took nearly \$3,000, leaving Stefanoff with just over \$52,600. Even though the government took about 1/3 of his easy-won money, \$52,000 was still an impressive sum in the 1930s.

Perhaps because he had much more money now, or perhaps because he was tired of people bothering him, Stefanoff checked out of the hotel he was living in, in which he paid 25 cents per night. Shortly after, he sold his parking lot. Then rumors circulated when, 3 months after winning his money, he was nowhere to be found. He had gone to the Tax Collector’s office right after he won saying he would pay the income tax as soon as he got his money, even though the bill didn’t need to be paid until March of 1939. But a few months after receiving the money, Stefanoff still hadn’t paid. The tax collectors weren’t after him yet, but people began spreading theories about him. Did Stefanoff flee with the money? Was he still alive?

In October, an “informant” told tax collectors that he could tell them as to Stefanoff’s whereabouts if they paid him a reward for the information. However, the tax collectors refused. They acknowledged that they had no idea where Stefanoff was, but that his

taxes weren't due yet. Despite rumors that he may have fled back to Macedonia or another country in an attempt to avoid paying taxes, they had no confirmation of that. Moreover, the tax collectors didn't even have 100% concrete evidence that Stefanoff indeed received his reward.

Others had spread rumors that Stefanoff was held for questioning by immigration officials in Detroit, but was soon released. The tax collectors and immigration officials could not confirm that rumor. But they did come across information that someone had told Stefanoff "that it could be arranged for him to leave the country without paying the tax." Thus, the IRS asked the Bureau of Immigration to put out a circular to all seaports, border crossings and foreign consulates to report any attempts by Stefanoff to leave the country.

Will we ever know what happened to Stefanoff and his money?

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3. Manajoff Arrested for Selling Peanuts

Panajot Manajoff was born in Macedonia and came to America in 1907. He eventually found a job in Kansas City mending shoes in the day time and selling peanuts on Main Street during the night. For two years he worked 15 hours per day so he could save enough money to bring his wife and three children from Macedonia to Missouri.

The Kansas City Times reported this following story about him from May 1909:

“Manajoff did not trust banks. He kept his \$72 of savings always near him. At night it was hidden in a pocketbook under the peanuts in his wagon. It was there when the policemen arrested him between Eleventh and Twelfth streets on Main Street Sunday on a charge of obstructing the streets. The Macedonian has nothing to say about the justice of the charge the officers made. He hardly knew what it was. But when he tried explain about the treasure in his wagon and pleaded in Macedonian for time to get it before going to the police station, the officers only hurried him away faster. The peanut wagon was left without protection.

“At police headquarters the offender was made to understand that his bond was \$6. He kept only the night’s receipts in his pockets and he found when he counted them up on the sergeant’s desk that they amounted to only \$4.80. He was put in the holdover. At daybreak he said through the interpreter the police accepted his \$4.80 as bond. Then Manajoff ran all the way to his wagon, eight blocks away.

“The wagon was where he had left it, but the money and the peanuts and the popcorn were gone. He was miserable as he rolled the dismantled wagon homes. Yesterday in police court he tried to explain to the municipal judge what the arrest had meant to him, but the judge couldn’t understand Macedonian. The fine was \$3. His offense had cost him \$75.”

Manajoff spoke through an interpreter to a reporter about what this meant to him. “In Macedonia I have a wife and three children. For them to come to this country costs \$200. I have been over here two years and had only \$72. Maybe I’ll never the \$200 now.”

But, in an ironic way, this arrest and the loss of all his money allowed his dreams to come true. After the news reported about his troubles and situation, citizens of Kansas City began donating money to the man. They donated so much that, after a couple months, he had \$100. Not only did they donate, but they wrote angry letters to newspapers and government officials.

Charles E Hall wrote:

“The writer read in your paper of the unfortunate experience of Panajot Manajoff, a Macedonian. Enclosed find \$5 as one of fifteen to pay back to this poor man some of the money which was so ruthlessly taken from him. It does seem strange that in our so-called Christian country that such a proceeding should have been permitted to take place. Hope that the money he saved can be restored to him and the subscriptions will also be sufficient to repay the costs and expenses. Please get him word that he has sympathizers and thus cheer up the poor fellow and keep him from getting despondent. Cannot the city government be compelled to make restitution under the circumstances? If my three children were to be separated from me till I earned \$200 at the rate this poor Macedonian is accumulating life would not be worth the effort to me.”

An anonymous individual wrote:

“The notice of the arrest of the Macedonian peanut vender in the issue this morning attracted my attention. Is this case of arrest to an ignorant foreigner a sample of justice as meted out to one ignorant of the law in Kansas City? The loss of his small stock in trade would be bad enough, but when the savings of two years, if only \$72, is added it means a good deal more to the poor man. Why did not the police protect the property of the prisoner? The pathetic side of this case makes one cease to wonder that such injustices makes criminals of the discouraged, disheartened man, alone in a strange country, unable to speak the language, with no sympathetic friend to help him endure the disappointment. Kansas City should restore to him all he lost and a substantial sum beside to enable him to bring his family here.”

Mr. A.R.D. wrote:

“I noticed an article in The Star of the 17th, regarding a Macedonian arrested by a policeman for the grave offense of obstructing the streets while trying to make an honest living. The vigilant officer took the man to the holdover, but left his cart and wares and (as it happened) two years’ savings, standing on the streets, unprotected and at the mercy of any unscrupulous person who cared to steal a part or the whole of the outfit; and as a result, the poor man lost \$72 and was fined \$3 besides. I don’t believe there is any law or any justice in an act of this kind and I think the city should be made to reimburse this poor man for his loss.”

This goodwill encouraged Manajoff to work harder and longer, mending shoes and selling peanuts. By April of 1910, about a year after he was arrested, he saved up

enough money and was on his way back to Macedonia to pick up his family. Speaking of his gratitude to those who donated: “Oh, it isn’t such a bad country after all.”

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2. Dimeff Walks Hundreds of Miles With 3 Loaves of Bread (Taken from *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 14, 1908)

Tanas Dimeff staggered as he walked down the center of the street through the Macedonian quarter in Granite City Monday. He ignored the cinder sidewalk and tramped down the center of the unpaved street, kicking up eddies of black dust.

The loungers in front of the saloons stood up the better to see the strange figure that shuffled along in the cloud of dust, and Momiroff, the interpreter, arose from his seat, and, shading his eyes with his hand, stared at the man, who walked as if he was a drunk.

“It’s Dimeff,” said Momiroff, in his own language. And then the little man emerged from the dust and fell upon the porch of the saloon.

It was Dimeff, sure enough, but not like the Dimeff who left Granite City two months ago to work in a construction camp in Arkansas. Then he was stout and strong. Now he was thin, his hands trembled and his eyes stared round and big like those of a man ill with fever.

They crowded around him and asked him a hundred questions. To all them he shook his head, pointed to his mouth and said the one word: “Bread.”

He would not talk until they had fed him and given him a quart of beer, and all the time he was eating the black bread like a starving man, Momiroff stamped up and down cursing the labor agents and the railroad contractors who had sent Dimeff out to Arkansas to work. At least Dimeff was able to sit up and tell his own story.

Two months ago he paid a labor agent of his own nationality \$5 for a job in Arkansas. He spent the balance of his money for a railroad ticket. He worked a month in a railway construction camp in Arkansas and then his employers told him that he not only had no wages coming, but he yet owed \$16 to them. Then he knew that he had been cheated, and without a cent he started to walk back to Granite City, the only place he knew of where he could find men of his own country.

He had three loaves of rye bread wrapped in his coat which he carried on a stick over his shoulder. Those three loaves lasted him five days. And then he walked two days more without a morsel of food. The only word of English he could speak was: “Bread.”

When he became so weak that he could walk no further he went into a house and pointed to his mouth and said in broken English: "Bread." They refused him and told him to go on. He went from one house to another and at last he was given a meal.

He walked on until he fell from exhaust in a village street. He does not know the name of the place, but the people there fed him and collected a lot of food and gave it to him and that lasted until he reached Kansas City.

There he found a Macedonian banker and lived with him two days and then, with four loaves of bread wrapped in his coat he started to walk to St. Louis. He was so exhausted when he reached here Monday morning that he sank down on the sidewalk and a policeman found him and took him to the North Side Dispensary. He was given a meal and 5 cents with which to pay his way across the bridge. He reached Granite City at noon so weak that he fell upon the porch of Nick Albach's saloon.

"I wouldn't care, only my feet went to pieces" said Dimeff as he told of the hardships of the trip. He was so ill from hunger when he reached Granite City that it will take several weeks of careful nursing before he is able to work again."

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St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, Missouri) 14 Jul 1908, Tue Page 2

1. 200 Macedonians and Bulgarians Fight Each Other in Factory *(Taken from Alton Evening Telegraph, February 15, 1909)*

Bulgarian Said Lincoln Greater Than Macedonian Brigand and Macedonians Attack Bulgarians!

Race animosity, fanned by the discussion of a chance remark in a saloon, precipitated a riot at the American Steel Foundry in Granite City Sunday morning, in which six men were injured more or less seriously and a score of others received broken noses and blackened eyes.

Angered because a Bulgarian had declared Abraham Lincoln was a greater man than Boris Saraffoff, Macedonians employed at the plant attacked a group of Bulgarians.

Saraffoff was a sort of brigand who won international fame several years ago by kidnapping Miss Ellen M. Stone and exacting for her a ransom of \$65,000. All of the money he spent in the cause of Macedonian liberty. [*LOMA note: this is an error; it was Jane Sandanski who kidnapped Miss Stone.*]

The strife at the factory Sunday was not ended until Anthony Jacovaski, leader of the Bulgarians, had fallen, probably mortally wounded. By the time the police of Granite City had reached the scene, the rioters had dispersed, and the trouble was hushed with characteristic repression of the Slavic-Greek races.

For several months there has been intense rivalry between the Macedonians and Bulgarians employed at the big factories in Granite City. An outbreak has been feared, but leaders of the foreign settlements have succeeded in preventing open strife. The outbreak yesterday resulted from a remark made by a Bulgarian Friday night, which Macedonians construed into a deliberate insult.

Because of the Lincoln centennial celebration, the foundries were closed Friday night, and many of the laborers spent the evening in neighboring saloons. The career of the American patriot was discussed by the foreigners, with comparisons to Saraffoff.

George Chenowski, a Bulgarian, sauntered up to a group of Macedonians who were discussing the matter. He listened to their conversation for some time. Then he shouted out in a loud voice:

“Lincoln was a great man, a patriot who did things. Your renegade Saraffoff was not. Saraffoff said he would free the slaves of Macedonia, but he did not.”

The Macedonians flamed into anger at the remark. It was a blow to their national hero, and a blow at their self-esteem. By the words "Macedonian slaves," Chenowski was understood to mean the Macedonian people, who are tributary to the Turkish Empire.

Cooler heads prevented a fight in the saloon that night, but the "insult" was discussed widely. Bulgarians sided with their compatriot, while the Macedonians denounced him hotly.

Saturday night the men said but little as they toiled at the furnaces. But they nursed their wrath until it was as hot as the fires they fed. Macedonians spoke to nobody but their compatriots, while the Bulgarians were equally clannish.

When the whistle blew yesterday morning, the men marched out of the works, grouped under their leaders. Jacovaski, a sort of potentate among the Bulgarians, headed a crowd that was sneering and determined. A Macedonian whose name is not known headed others who were equally angry.

Before the two bands had left the works, trouble started. In a second the feud became a pitched battle. Stones were thrown, knives were drawn, men fought fist and skull. In three minutes, 200 men were struggling in a battle which but for the general of firearms would have been a fight to the death.

In a few moments, however, Jacovaski fell, crying to his friends that he had been killed. This stopped the fight.

The Bulgarians gathered around their fallen leader. They picked the man up and hurried him to his home in "Hungry Hollow." The Macedonians collected their wounded and disappeared as quickly.

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