



Flora Georges and Anastasis Maniskas, 1909; the Maniskas children, circa 1923

ACROSS THE YEARS, ACROSS THE MILES

by Donna Durham Karp, Sydney

I'm an American married to a Greek-Australian, and over the years I have loved hearing my husband's family tell stories about his grandfather, Spyros Karpouzis, who came to Australia from Kastellorizo in the early 1900s to make his fortune. Spyros did well, running a cafe in Kalgoorlie before returning to his island home to marry Chrysanthe (Chrissie) Georges in 1916.

With their first child, the couple returned to Australia the following year. They first went to Darwin, but over the years they moved frequently as Spyros tried to repeat his early success in Kalgoorlie -- Sydney, Murwillumbah, Newcastle, back to Greece during the years of the Depression, then back to Kalgoorlie and finally to Sydney again. When I

retired and had the time, I decided to gather up the stories and write down what I could about the Karpouzis/Karp family in Australia.

I soon learned it was a bigger story. Chrissie, daughter of Paraskevas Georges and Triantafilia Hatzikomninou, had three brothers and two sisters, with whom she kept close ties. When I asked a cousin why the Karpouzis family moved from Kalgoorlie to Sydney in the late 1930s, she said, 'Well, Chrissie wanted to be near her sister Souttana'.

Of course! To understand the movements of the Karpouzis family, I would need to know more about the Georges family and their connections.

Leaving Castellorizo

All six of the children of Paraskevas Georges and Triantafilia Hatzikomninou left Castellorizo between 1908 and 1920. Why?

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Dodecanese Islands were part of the Ottoman Empire. Castellorizo's proximity to the Anatolian coast, its relative freedom to trade and its fine harbour ensured its prosperity. However, in 1908 a conservative Ottoman government imposed new rules on the islands that restricted trade and undermined their traditional way of life. Taxes were increased, military service was required of the young men, and religious freedoms were curtailed. At about the same time sailing ships were being replaced by steamships, and the importance of Castellorizo as a safe harbour declined. The once prosperous island had little to offer its next generation.

Young men like Spyros Karpouzis left Castellorizo to try their fortunes in Egypt or Australia or the Americas. The disruptions of the first Great War – Castellorizo was occupied from 1915 to 1921 by the French – put the island in the firing line of the Turkish enemy and sent many more families abroad to seek safer homes.

The Georges siblings, too, left Castellorizo for a better life. I was told that two of Chrissie's siblings had immigrated to the U.S. There was an older sister, Flora, and there was a brother, Stavros, whom no one seemed to know much about. How much could I find out about the American Georges family?



Flora Georges Maniskas

What had happened to Flora and Stavros, and how had their lives turned out? How did the Greek migrant experience in Australia and the U.S. compare?

I started my research on the Georges family in the U.S. with ancestry.com, which provides a trove of information that gives a factual outline of a person's life: passenger lists, draft registration documents, passport applications, and census lists, which in the U.S. give detailed information about family members. Facts are good, but dry. Then I had the good luck to find a granddaughter of Flora's, Elaine Panos Tate, who lives in Florida. Elaine's family shared their photos and family stories with me, and gradually a picture of Flora's long and eventful life became clearer.

Flora: Marriage and children

Flora was the first of the Georges children to leave Castellorizo when she married Anastasis Maniskas, also a Cazzie. As a young man Anastasis went to the U.S. to work, possibly as early as 1891. He appears in the 1900 U.S. Census working as a 'lake fireman' in Buffalo, New York. With him was Kyriakos Maniskas, his brother.

Flora and Anastasis wed on 5 April 1909 on Castellorizo and the couple returned to the U.S. In the 1910 U.S. Census for Ashland, Ohio, Anastasis, age 39, was married to Flora, who stated she was 23 years old. Anastasis at this time was a 'confectioner' and managed his own store. The couple had not yet started a family, but over fifteen years of marriage Flora would have ten children; only seven of them survived childhood.

Two of Flora's brothers followed her to Ohio: George arrived in 1912 and Stavros, who called himself Steven, in 1914. Both men had to register for the draft when in 1917 the U.S. entered the Great War in Europe. At that time both were unmarried and both worked for the Jones & Laughlin Steel Company near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

By mid-1918 Flora and Anastasis Maniskas had moved from Ashland, Ohio, to Logan, West Virginia, a coal mining area in the southwest of the state. Anastasis opened a restaurant there.

The following year Flora, a naturalised U.S. citizen, applied for a U.S. passport for herself and her five children to travel to Castellorizo. She must have longed to see her family overseas and planned to stay for one year. She departed the U.S. on 11 November 1919 and arrived in Castellorizo on 7 December.

At the time of Flora's visit her youngest sister Sultana was the only Georges child still at home with their mother Triantafilia. Sister Chrissie had married Spyros Karpouzis in 1916 and the couple went to Australia the following year; brother Spyros joined Chrissie and her husband in Darwin in 1918. According to family stories, Flora wanted Sultana to come to the U.S. as she had a young man for her, but Chrissie wanted Sultana to join her in Australia as *she* had a young man for her. Sultana was reluctant to leave her mother on her own, but Triantafilia wanted her to go and build a better life for herself. Sultana soon left for Australia to marry Nick Lucas in Sydney in January 1921.

During her stay on Castellorizo Flora gave birth to another son, Michael.



*Flora (in the hat), Triantafilia and Soultana
Flora is holding baby Michael, born 8 March 1920. Her son Paraskeva
(Perry) sits on his yiyia's lap, Nick is next to her. Daughters Viola,
Rose and Mary sit in front.*



Viola Panos, Flora Maniskas, Elaine Panos Tate

We know that Flora and her children were in Castellorizo at the time that the 1920 U.S. Census was taken, and yet she was listed in the census for Logan, West Virginia. Because her presence in Greece was temporary, the census-taker recorded her at her 'usual place of abode', in Logan in her husband's household.

There was another person of interest listed in the Maniskas household in the 1920 census: Flora's brother Stavros/Steven. He was listed as 22 years old, single, with no occupation and no income the previous year. Why was a 22 year old man not working? In 1918 when he registered for the draft, Steven was able-bodied and employed. However, due to illness or accident, by 1920 he was unable to work and needed care. Flora would take responsibility for Steven until his death in 1966.

While Flora and the children were in Europe the youngest Georges brother, Spyros, made the journey from Australia to the U.S., joining his older brother George in Pennsylvania in 1920. Spyros didn't stay long. By May 1922 he was in San Francisco, on his way back to Australia. According to family stories he found the winter weather in the eastern U.S. too cold for his liking. George also left the U.S. at about the same time to return to Castellorizo to marry Marou Tsolakis.

Flora and her six children sailed from Piraeus on 14 June 1921 aboard the SS King Alexander and arrived in New York on 2 July 1921. Within a year of her return from Europe, Flora and Anastasis welcomed another little boy, Constantine. Sadly, this child died of pneumonia on 24 Feb 1923, just nine months old.

Flora's last child, Carl, was born on 1 January 1924. Her husband Anastasis Maniskas died two months later, on 4 March 1924, leaving Flora with seven young children and a disabled brother to support.

Widowhood

How did Flora cope with her changed circumstances? Her brothers George and Spyros had left the country, and she had no other family nearby. She looked for help from her husband's younger brother Kyriakos (George) Maniskas, a shopkeeper who lived in Athens, Ohio, with his wife Martha. Flora left West Virginia and moved her family to Ohio.

In late June 1924, Stavros/Steven was admitted to the Athens State Hospital for the Insane under the name of Steve Paris. The Athens State Hospital admitted people for many reasons, physical problems as well as psychiatric complaints. We don't know why Steve Paris was admitted because details of a patient's illness and treatment are confidential even now, decades later. Elaine Panos Tate remembers visiting Stavros in hospital with her mother Viola and grandmother Flora in about 1947. The hospital would be his home for the rest of his life.

Flora's daughters were married off at a young age. Her eldest girl Viola married Gus Stergios Panagiotidis (Panos) at the age of 15, in June 1926 in Birmingham, Alabama. In November 1928 her second daughter Rosina (Rose) married George Vavanlakis (Varlos) of Athens, Ohio. On the marriage license Rose claimed she was 21, but she was in fact 16.

Flora's decision to approve such early marriages for her girls will raise modern eyebrows, but really, she had few options. She had no means of support at a time when no government-funded safety net was available. Family was all one had to get through difficult times. In 1927 her brother-in-law George Maniskas died, so even that slender support was torn away. With no other help nearby, Flora's best bet was to find responsible husbands for her girls, men who could support a wife and maybe help the wider Maniskas family too.

In the 1930 U.S. Census Flora Maniskas was listed in Athens, Ohio, in the household of her son-in-law George Varlos and daughter Rose. Flora had one unmarried daughter (Mary) and three sons (Nick, Michael and Carl) living with her, but her 13-year-old son Paraskeva (Perry) was listed in the census as an inmate of the Athens Orphans Home. During the Depression parents who could not provide for their children sometimes placed them in care temporarily, and Flora must have had to resort to this desperate measure. George Varlos was supporting his wife Rose, her mother and four of her young siblings on his income from running a restaurant. Hard times.

In July 1930 Flora's daughter Mary and her beau applied for a marriage license in Athens, Ohio. Gus Kallas was 31, a restaurant worker, born in Crete. Mary gave her true age, 16, and the license was not issued – she was underage.



Viola and her godfather, George Maniskas, 1912

Undeterred, the couple crossed the state line and applied for a marriage license in Parkersburg, West Virginia. This time Mary gave her age as 21. With this license Mary and Gus were married in Athens, Ohio, on 17 August 1930.

Flora's oldest son Nick found work in the restaurant trade, first as a waiter and later as a manager for brother-in-law Gus Kallas's restaurant. In the 1940 census Flora Maniskas again headed her own household. Living with her in Gallipolis, Ohio, were sons Perry (22), Mike (20) and Carl (16), and her grandson Anthony Varlos. Perry and Mike were looking for work. No occupation other than housework was listed for Flora and no income from wages received in the previous year, although income from an unidentified other source was listed. It looks like the family was still struggling, and I think Flora was being supported by Nick and Gus.

Military service opened up options for the young men of the family. Perry enlisted in the U.S. Army at Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio, in February 1941, and he served until September 1945. Two of his brothers joined up after the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor which brought the U.S. into WWII:

- Mike enlisted in the Navy at Charleston, West Virginia, and served from 29 August 1942 until 3 November 1945.
- Carl enlisted in the U.S. Army on 21 July 1944 at Fort Hayes, Columbus, Ohio, and served just over a year when he was discharged for disability.

By the late 1940s Flora's seven children were independent, six of them married and raising families of their own. Life would have been a bit easier for her. She lived well into old age, surrounded by children and grandchildren, and despite her early years of hardship, her granddaughter Elaine remembers Flora as being a 'sweet and jolly lady'.

Flora Maniskas died on 18 October 1979 at the age of 92.

She is buried at the Mound Hill Cemetery in Gallipolis, Ohio, near her brother Stavros/Steven and her son Carl.

The migrant experience

My research into the Georges family suggests that the migrant experience for the Cazzies who went to Australia and to the U.S. was very similar.

Often siblings followed siblings to the new country, to societies that were not particularly welcoming to foreigners even if their labour was useful. The new arrivals relied on family and on the wider Greek migrant community for mutual help. They worked hard. Often they ran their own small businesses, which allowed them some protection from discrimination in the labour market and, for the more prosperous, allowed them to support extended family.

Did they stay in touch, the various members of the Georges family who were scattered in Australia and America?

Yes, they did. On a trip from Australia to the States in 1963, Chrissie and her daughter Stella travelled by bus from California and stayed for two months in Ohio with Flora, meeting many of Flora's children and grandchildren. Flora left Castellorizo for the U.S. with her new husband in 1909 and Chrissie immigrated to Australia as a young bride in 1917. On the occasion of their reunion in 1963 the sisters had not seen each other in over fifty years.

Across the miles and across the years, still close.



Two Georges sisters - Flora (at left) and Chrissie, May 1963

My special thanks to

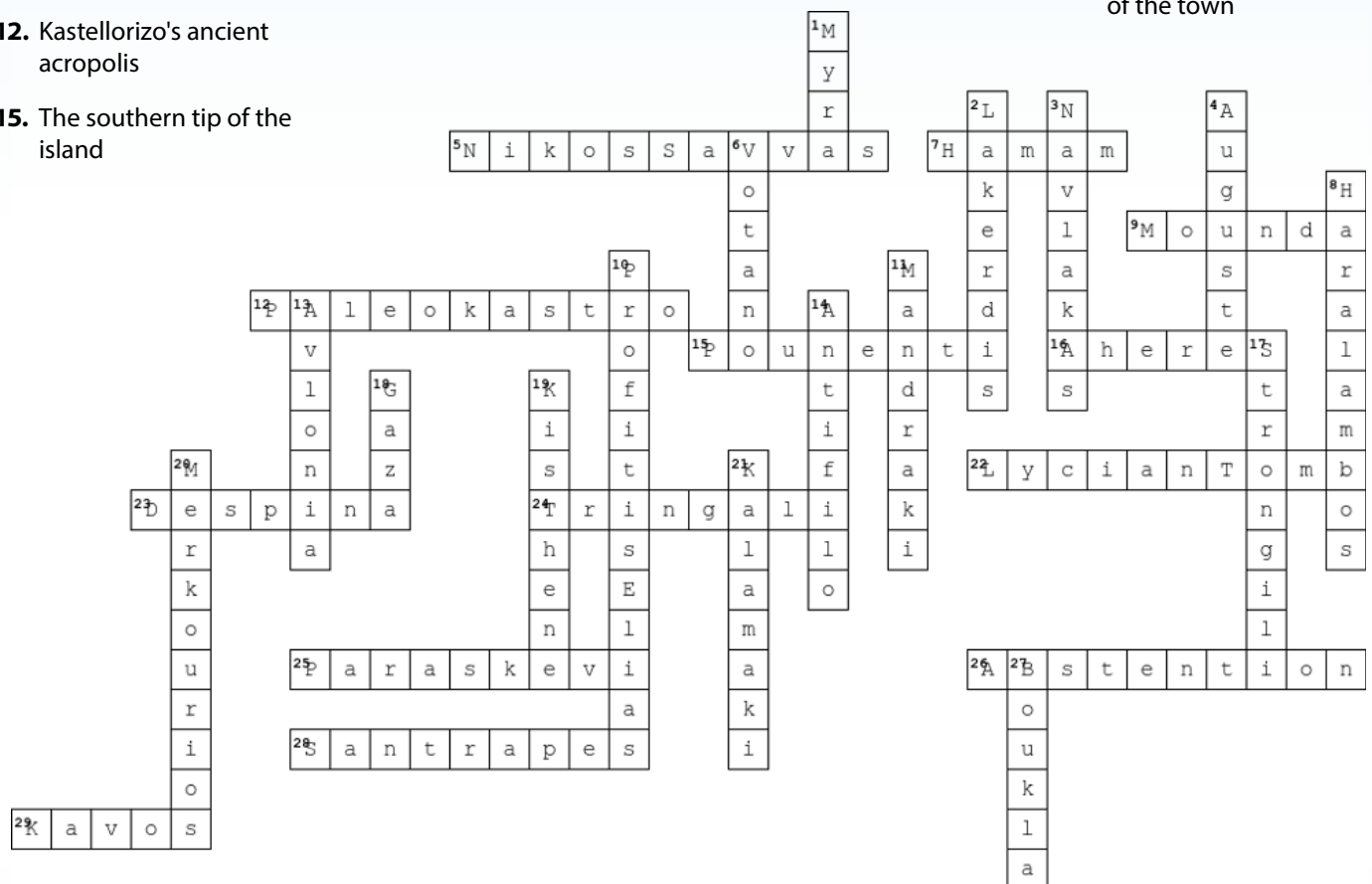
- Elaine Panos Tate and her daughters Kathy Tate and Julie Helms for information about Flora Georges, Gus Panos, Viola Maniskas and Stavros/Steven Georges
- Peter and Tessie Papapetrou for information about Tessie's mother Stella Karpouzis and the Karpouzis/Karp family
- Leni Latos and Sandra Voukelatos for information about Sultana Georges

Answers: Kastellorizo Crossword Challenge No. 1

The Crossword Challenge is a new Friends of Kastellorizo feature created by Nick Pappas that will be appearing in Filia in every second edition. We hope you enjoy building your knowledge about the island.

Across

- 5. The island's WWII hero whose bust stands in Kavos square (two words)
- 7. The Ottoman bathhouse near the castle
- 9. A bare hill rising above the western side of the main harbour
- 12. Kastellorizo's ancient acropolis
- 15. The southern tip of the island
- 16. The nine large water basins in the valley above the main harbour
- 22. The 4th century BC rock-cut burial chamber (two words)
- 23. The first name of the woman who lived alone on the islet of Rho
- 24. The surname of Italy's governor of Kastellorizo between 1925-1934
- 25. The saint to whom the church below the castle on the Mandraki side is dedicated
- 26. The codename for the British commando raid on Kastellorizo in February 1941
- 28. The surname of the benefactor who funded the construction of the boys' school
- 29. The northern extremity of the town



Down

- 1. A Kastellorizian 'colony' famed for its monastery of St Nicholas
- 2. The surname of the island's mayor in the 1920s and early 1930s
- 3. A sheltered cove on the island's east coast
- 4. The surname of the first Kastellorizian to set foot in Australia
- 6. The plant collected for the traditional celebration on the eve of a wedding
- 8. The saint after whom the island's subterranean chapel is named
- 10. The monastery overlooking the main harbour dedicated to the saint associated with water (two words)
- 11. Kastellorizo's secondary harbour
- 13. The elevation that rises above the Mandraki
- 14. The town opposite Kastellorizo now known as Kas
- 17. Greece's most easterly islet upon which stands a lighthouse
- 18. The place where the bulk of the Kastellorizian refugees were settled between 1943-45
- 19. The name incorrectly attributed to the island in Antiquity
- 20. The saint after whom one of the island's three neo-gothic vaulted churches is named
- 21. A Kastellorizian 'colony' now more widely known as Kalkan
- 27. The filigree fastener worn by the womenfolk as part of the traditional bridal costume

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