



Helen Z. Papanikolas

Growing Up Greek in Utah

I Love History | Greek American Community
Lesson Plan
4th grade

Rebecca Kirkman | Utah Historical Society | December 2024

Helen Zeese Papanikolas

Growing Up Greek in Utah

Utah Core Standards:

Standard 4.5.4: Explain continuity and change over time by comparing the experiences of today's immigrants in Utah with those of immigrants in Utah's past.

Teacher Background:

See [I Love History- Greek American Communities](#)

Guiding Questions:

What was Helen Zeese Papanikolas's life like growing up in one of Utah's Greek communities?

What are some challenges Helen faced that immigrants today might also face?

What traditions or special things did Helen's family keep doing that were part of Greek culture? How are these the same or different from things your family does?

I Can Statement:

I can compare my life story with Helen Zeese Papanikolas's experiences and explain how the lives of immigrants in Utah have changed or stayed the same over time.

Materials Needed:

Printed copies of the Growing Up Greek in Utah Graphic Organizer for each student, (pp. 4-7 below).

Optional: [Growing Up Greek in Utah Google Slides](#)

Opening (10-15 minutes):

Imagine you just moved to a new place far away from home, like a new country or state. Think about what special traditions or activities your family would want to keep doing to feel connected to where you came from. Today, we're going to learn about Helen Zeese Papanikolas, who grew up in Utah with her Greek family during the 1920s. We'll explore her story and think about how her experiences might be similar or different from our own.

To help build background knowledge for students, have students read [I Love History- Greek American Communities](#). This lesson relates most closely to the Building Community section. Teachers may choose to have the students read in partners or jigsaw reading.

Procedure:

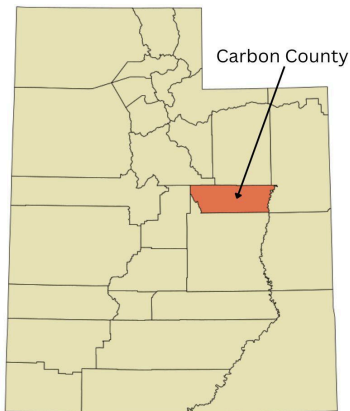
1. Activity (10 minutes)
 - Have students read a short passage about Helen Zeese Papanikolas's life in the first column of [Growing Up Greek in Utah](#).
 - Encourage students to highlight or note any traditions or cultural aspects mentioned.
2. Personal Reflection Writing (10 minutes)
 - Students write their own life stories in the second column of a worksheet.
 - Ask them to include important details and compare them with Helen's experiences.
3. Sharing and Comparison (10 minutes)
 - In pairs or small groups, have students share their stories.
 - Encourage them to discuss similarities and differences with Helen's story and among their own stories.
4. Conclusion (5 minutes)
 - Invite students to share one new thing they learned about Helen Zeese Papanikolas or about themselves.

Name: _____

Helen Zeese Papanikolas Growing Up Greek in Utah Graphic Organizer

Directions:

1. Read about Helen Zeese Papanikolas: She grew up in Utah and was part of a Greek family.
2. Think about Your Life: What are some important parts of your story?
3. Write Your Story: Write it in the second column. Remember to include important details about your life.
4. Answer the questions at the end.

Helen's Story	My Story
<p>Helen's parents</p> <p>My dad came to America in 1907 during a tough time. He did different hard jobs to earn money.</p> <p>My mom came to America in 1912. She couldn't get married in her home country because she didn't have a dowry, which is money or gifts given to the husband. She worked for a Greek family in Salt Lake City.</p> <p>My parents got married in Pocatello, Idaho, in 1915. In 1917, they moved to a place in Carbon County called Cameron, near Castle Gate. They opened a coffee shop for many Greek miners who weren't married. I was born on June 29, 1917, in Cameron, Carbon County, Utah.</p> <div><p>A map of the state of Utah with its county boundaries outlined. Carbon County, located in the southeastern part of the state, is highlighted in a solid red color. An arrow points from the text 'Carbon County' to the red-shaded area.</p></div> <p style="text-align: center;">Map of Utah</p>	<p>My family - Write about your family.</p>

Home

We lived in a white house built by the mining company. It was on one side of a dirt road leading to town. The house had six rooms, but it was split so two families could live there.



A mining company house in Carbon County

Home- Write about your home and where you live.

American Treats

A lady named Mrs. Sarah "Killarney" Reynolds, who was married to an Irish railroad worker, often visited us. My mom learned how to cook American food from her. We liked American food like lemon meringue pies, Parker House rolls, fruit cakes, and raisin oatmeal cookies more than Greek sweets.



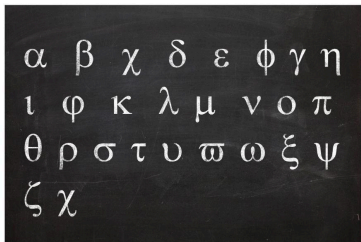
Lemon meringue pie, Parker House rolls, fruit cake, raisin oatmeal cookies

Treats- Write your favorite treats, and your family's favorite treats.

Attending Greek School

Greek families thought it was very important to keep their culture alive. This included speaking Greek and following the Greek Orthodox religion. At home, we spoke Greek, and kids were good at it.

After the regular school day, the Greek children attended a different school, where we learned to read and write in Greek. Parents really supported the Greek school, and you couldn't miss school or misbehave. We also celebrated Greek Independence Day, wore special costumes, recited poems, sang songs in Greek, and acted in plays.



Greek Alphabet

After-School Activities - Write about what you do after school or what after-school activities you would like to do.

Feeling Different

I kept my Greek school book hidden from my American friends at public school. Even though the American children knew we were Greek, some teased and bullied us because we were different.



Greek School in Bingham, Utah.

How can you help make your classmates feel welcome?

Greek Orthodox Easter Holiday

Before Easter, we fasted, which means we didn't eat fish, birds, meat, or anything from animals like milk, eggs, cheese, and yogurt. We mostly ate beans, lentils, greens, and sometimes didn't even use olive oil because it was special. Our meals were bread, pickled peppers, spinach with rice, beans with rice, and soups made from lentils and beans. For dessert, we had halvah, which is made from sesame seeds and honey. For snacks, we ate dried, salted chickpeas.

On Easter, some people ate Greek Easter Soup. I would enjoy my mom's pastries, red-dyed hardboiled eggs, and sweet bread sprinkled with sesame seeds.



Tsoureki (Greek Easter Bread)

Holidays- Write about the holidays you celebrate. What do you do and eat to celebrate?

1. What was Helen Zeese Papanikolas's life like growing up in one of Utah's Greek communities?
2. What are some challenges Helen faced that immigrants today might also face?
3. What traditions or special things did Helen's family keep doing that were part of Greek culture? How are these the same or different from things your family does?

References

- Flickr. n.d. "Tsourekki." Flickr. Accessed Oct 10, 2024. https://live.staticflickr.com/185/440498883_84871c01f1_b.jpg.
- Papanikolas, Helen Z. 1980. "Growing Up Greek in Helper, Utah." Utah State Historical Society. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6dz07n9/423058>.
- Resprinter123. 2014. "Carbon County Utah Incorporated and Unincorporated areas." Wikipedia. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carbon_County_Utah_incorporated_and_unincorporated_areas.svg.
- Skedros, Constantine J. 2005. *100 Years of Faith and Fervor: A History of the Greek Orthodox Church Community of Greater Salt Lake City, Utah 1905-2005*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Salt Lake.
- Utah Historical Society. n.d. "Greeks in Utah." Utah Historical Society. Accessed 10 10, 2024. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6xw4hk6>.
- Utah State Historical Society. n.d. "Coal Mining P38." Utah State Historical Society. Accessed 10 08, 2024. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6fr04s3>.