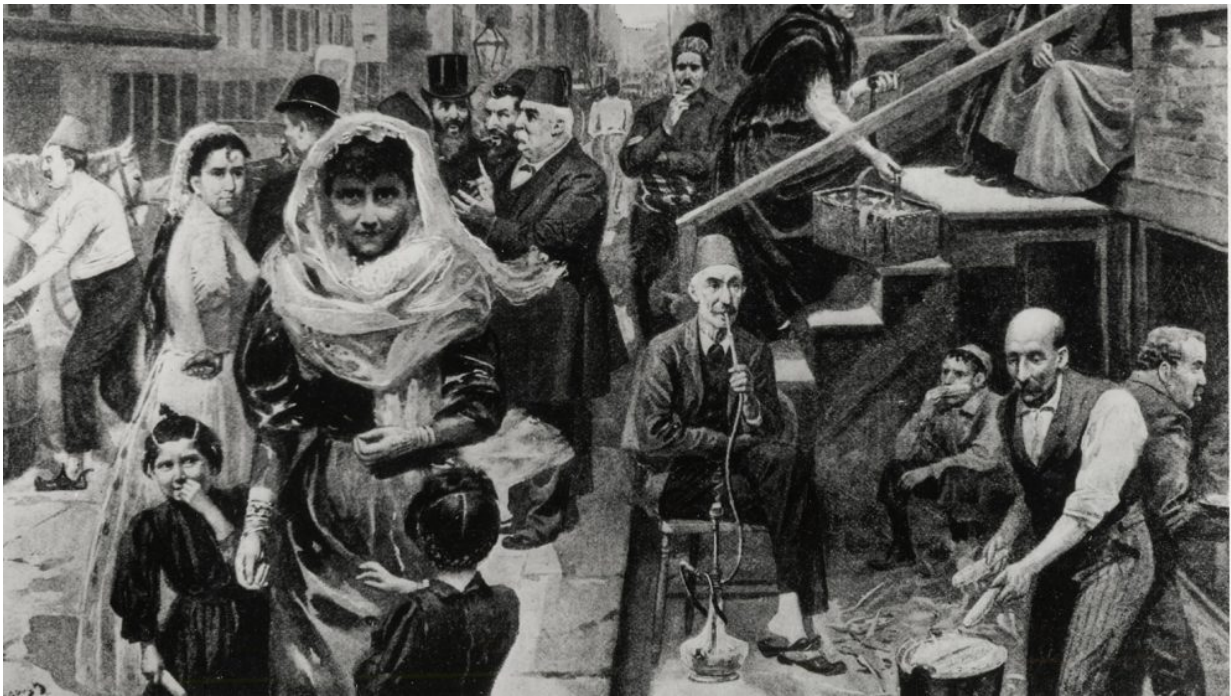


# Interactive tool offers window into history of Arab-Americans in NYC

September 19 2017, by Matt Shipman

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Detail of an illustration by W. Bengough, circa 1896, of Syrian immigrants on Washington Street in Manhattan.

Researchers at North Carolina State University are unveiling an interactive site that allows scholars and the public to better understand the long history of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants to the United States. Focused on New York City in the early 20th century, the tool highlights the growth of Arab-American communities in the city and their

integration into American life.

The [project, Syrians in New York: Mapping Movement, 1900-1930](#), was developed by the Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies as part of the center's ongoing efforts to conduct digital mapping and analysis of Arab-American immigrants.

"As an ethnic group, Arabs have been largely overlooked in narratives of American history until 9/11, when an Arab presence suddenly became symbolic of, and synonymous with, terrorism," says Akram Khater, director of the Khayrallah Center who worked on the project. "By dislodging our gaze from 9/11 back to the turn of the 20th century, this project shows that rather than being alien to American values and history, Arab immigrants are a critical part of both."

In order to develop this interactive resource on Syrian immigrants in NYC, researchers drew on census data, business directories, local newspapers, demographic studies and personal documents.

"These communities had a very active press, which gave us the opportunity to conduct case studies on individual families, as well as using big-data techniques to extract relevant information from the census and other sources," says Claire Kempa, an archivist at the Khayrallah Center who worked on the project. "It's also worth noting that, in the early 20th century, Lebanon and Syria were one country, which is why the project is titled 'Syrians in New York.'"

"This was a period of rapid growth for the Syrian-American community in New York," says Marjorie Stevens, senior researcher at the Khayrallah Center. "And while Syrian immigrants and their descendants retained close ties within their communities, they were also starting businesses and forming ties with the broader New York community and business entities across the city and internationally."

"They're an example of the American dream," Stevens says. "They came to the United States, built successful lives here, and contributed to American prosperity."

Provided by North Carolina State University

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