

Mr. Kozhaya Akiki, friend of LERC and staunch supporter, donates historic material to the Museum

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Reported by LERC staff

Mr. Kozhaya Akiki, a staunch supporter of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, has donated one of the primary artifacts of Lebanese migration, the *Kasheh* as it is known, to the Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum at NDU. The *Kasheh*, a suitcase-like knapsack used for peddling goods by newly-arrived immigrants, was used by Mr. Said Maroun Salameh, Mr. Akiki's father-in-law, in the Tupper Lake region of New York State between 1920-1924.



Close-up photo of an early immigrant's *Kasheh* (Sept 2011).

Mr. Kozhaya Akiki was born in Kfardebian, Lebanon, in 1938. He met his wife Nora Bernadette Maroun, resident of Tupper Lake, New York, in 1958, while on a visit to Lebanon. They married in Lebanon and then moved together to Tupper Lake, where they taught at various local schools.

Mr. Akiki noted that, in coming to rest at the LERC museum in Lebanon, the *Kasheh* “has now completed a full circle” by coming home. He went on to say that the *Kasheh* was a material emblem of the difficult road taken by early Lebanese immigrants as they struggled to make a living and build their lives abroad.

LERC Acting Director Dr. George Abdelnour referred to the *Kasheh* as the starting point of Lebanese emigration. Although pictured in many photographs, he said that its presence in the

museum recreated the experience of living history and placed the emigration experience in context.



Dr. G. Abdelnour (left) officially receives the Kasheh from Mr. K. Akiki to its new home at the Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum at NDU (Sept 2011).

The *Kasheh* will be displayed at the museum along with photographs, documents and other sources of ethnographic data, including private photos from Mr. Akiki's family collection. Such private donations lend a human face to the often-forgotten story of individuals and families in the diaspora.

Mr. Akiki's previous donation chronicling his family's migration include family photos, a book of memoirs he lovingly put together in memory of his late wife, a sample of her obituaries, and press articles that trace the Akiki family accomplishments, all assembled in the Kozhaya Akiki Collection.

His commitment to LERC's mission as the collective memory of Lebanese emigration inspired Mr. Akiki's goodwill, leading him to establish a monetary grant to assist student interns at LERC. The Kozhaya and Nora Akiki Internship Grant provides financial assistance to local Lebanese students as they transition from undergraduate to professional life.



LERC's team (from left to right) Mr. E. Nabhan, Mr. E. Sfeir, Dr. G. Abdelnour, Mrs. L. Haddad stand with donor Mr. K. Akiki (Sept 2011).