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Macedonian Origin, People of - As early as 1896 a few young Bulgaro-Macedonian peasants left the regions of Kastoria and Florina in south Macedonia and migrated to Canada, to escape from Turkish oppression and extreme poverty. They were followed during the next decade by only scattered individuals. But in the tempestuous aftermath of the Macedonian revolt against the Ottoman rulers in 1903, large-scale emigrations to Ontario began. Over 6000 Bulgaro-Macedonians, mostly men, had reached Canada at the commencement of the First World War, when all migration was interrupted. These pioneers were mostly the heads of families who wished to establish themselves in jobs and homes in the new country before bringing their families. Women and children moved steadily to Canada after the war and throughout the 1920's, until the economic collapse of 1929 slowed their progress. They continued to come in varying numbers right up to the outbreak of the Second World War — from Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

The guerrilla warfare that kept Greek Macedonia in a ferment long after the 1945 termination of the conflict in Europe was instrumental in accelerating a new movement of Macedonians to Canada. It is estimated that upwards of 4000 left the upper valleys of Macedonia after 1947, swelling to 16,000 the total number of Macedonians established in Canada, principally in and around Toronto.

Despite a nearly total ignorance of the English language the early immigrants quickly adapted themselves to life in Canada. The majority of them, accustomed to hard manual work, were immediately employed as general labourers, in construction work, or in the meat-packing industry. Because they led a frugal life they were able to save rapidly the necessary sums that allowed them to return to their families in Macedonia for a few months. Up to 1915 they were very transient, some crossing the ocean as many as 20 times. The travel prohibitions of the First World War and their well-paid work in war plants did much to settle them, however. They saved their earnings and invested them in small business. Many of the more enterprising among them opened restaurants, groceries and butcher shops, the greater number of which have prospered with the passing years. It is an interesting fact that over half the present restaurants in Toronto are owned by Macedonians and their families. By their diligence and thrift they have steadily risen from the position of unskilled workers to that of thriving businessmen. Many of their children have received a university education.

In Toronto there are two Bulgaro-Macedonian Orthodox churches and a considerable number of Macedonians attend the Greek church. There are numerous social or community organizations. Except in business, the older generation has few contacts with Canadian families. The younger generation, however, as a result of its Canadian schooling, tends to lose its mother tongue and to become part of the larger Canadian community.

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