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The Lebanese in North Carolina Project: Sourcing the Community for a History Only They Could Tell

This poster illustrates the way in which *The Lebanese in North Carolina Project* uses a specified community as primary sources for a multi-disciplinary project dealing with Lebanese immigration to the American South. In 1880, Lebanese immigrants arrived in North Carolina, scarcely two decades after the American Civil War. Over 100 years later and after Lebanon's own civil war the community in North Carolina has become part Middle Eastern and part Southern. This project, housed at North Carolina State University, seeks to document the history of this unique immigrant community. Using over 60 oral histories, digitized family photographs and documents made available through our digital library, this project of which I am the Project Manager, has created a full-length documentary in conjunction with PBS and is curating an interactive physical and virtual museum exhibition. Without the contributions from personal archives, the historical narrative of this community would not formally exist, as statewide repositories contain nearly no materials relating to this community. Thus the community *is* a form of archives designed as a tool for education for the Lebanese community and general public including scholars, researchers and students.

First, the poster will provide an overview of the project highlighting the idea of returning to the source of this history: the community. Second, the poster will frame the project within the scholarship on digital storage and preservation as related to the digital library, oral histories and documents. Third, the poster will centralize the project's goal of going far "beyond borders" of statehood, local repositories, kinds of sources, and the official record to challenge the concept of archives itself.