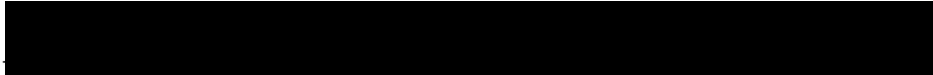


Interviewer: Lindsay Schmitz

**INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY**

Name: Tomea Loman Kirchoff

Date and Place of Birth: Macedonia

Address: 

Telephone Number: 

Interview Date, Time, and Place:  
October 29, 2001 1:00 pm

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):  
See attached

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:  
See attached

### Interview Summary:

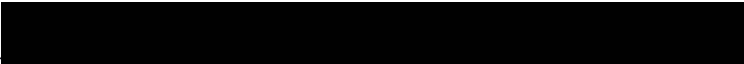
- Mrs. Kirchoff's father's employment as a saloon owner and at American Steel in Granite City
- The grocery store owned by her husband
- Education of girls and learning English as a second language
- Community Center in Lincoln Place
- World War II and sewing that Lincoln Place girls did to help the war effort
- St. Cyril and Methody Bulgarian-Macedonian Church in Lincoln Place
- Traditional Macedonian food
- Bulgarian-Macedonian Ladies Aid Society

Interviewer: Lindsay Schmitz

**INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY**

Name: Tomea Loman Kirchoff

Date and Place of Birth: Macedonia

Address: 

Telephone Number: 

Interview Date, Time, and Place:  
Nov. 12, 2001      1:00 pm      at Mrs. Kirchoff's home

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

- Macedonian Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society
- The Community Center
- The Macedonian Church

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Lincoln Place Oral History Project*  
*Dept. of Historical Studies, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville*

***Biographical Information and Family History***

**Current Information**

Full Name:     Kirchoff    Tomica    Loman      
                    Last                    First                    Middle

Maiden Name:     Tomica Loman    

Current Address:     [REDACTED]      
    [REDACTED]    

Telephone Number: (home)     [REDACTED]     (work)     

Best time/way to reach:     phone    

**Family History**

Years/dates lived in Lincoln Place:     Since 1915    

Address(es) in Lincoln Place:     824 Pacific Ave    

Date and Place of Birth:     Aug. 2 1907    ,    Macedonia    

Current Marital Status:  
single [ ]    married [ ]    divorced [ ]    widowed []

Spouse's name and place of birth:     

Mother's name and place of birth (if known):     

Father's name and place of birth (if known):     

Children's names:     1 daughter

Throughout the interview Mrs. Kirchoff was clearly uncomfortable with the tape recorder and the idea of being recorded. She asked me repeatedly to turn it off and at the beginning of the interview, after we had spoke for approximately five minutes regarding the circumstances under which her family immigrated to the United States, she asked that I turn the tape off, rewind it, record over what had already been taped and start the interview again. The information that was recorded over was, in my opinion, valuable historical information, however, Mrs. Kirchoff did not agree. She told me repeatedly that what she had to tell me was not important and that she felt that she was wasting my time. Even after constant reassurances from me that I was extremely interested in what she had to say, she was still not convinced and did not feel that much of the information she had to offer me was important enough to be recorded. Mrs. Kirchoff and I spoke for approximately two hours, however, only a small portion of this conversation is actually recorded. During the time that the tape recorder was not running I took notes on what she was telling me.

Mrs. Kirchoff began her conversation with me talking about the circumstances of her family's immigration to the United States, however, as previously mentioned, this information was recorded over at her request. I was at first unsure if I should even include this story in this interview at all, however, after much thought, I believe that it is appropriate to include. I do not believe that Mrs. Kirchoff did not want this information included, I think she was just too self-conscious to have it recorded as she was clearly uncomfortable with the presence of the tape recorder. With that being said, Mrs. Kirchoff told me that her family immigrated from Macedonia in 1915 in the middle of World War I. Her father left her mother and the children in Macedonia while he left for

the United States to find work. After several weeks with no contact from their father, the family finally heard that he was safely in the United States and had found work in Granite City, Illinois. He had saved enough money to fund their immigration as well, so the family was able to join him in the United States. She recalled vividly how they walked several miles through Macedonia as bombs fell all around them to board a ship that would take them to Ellis Island. There, they were placed on a train bound for Illinois and were warned not exit the train until they had arrived safely in Granite City. Eventually, after several days of traveling, the family was reunited with their father. When Mrs. Kirchoff agreed to turn the tape recorder back on, we began the story where she had left off as she described the kind of work her father was doing when her family arrived in Granite City. This is where the transcribing begins.

The second time Mrs. Kirchoff asked me to turn off the tape recorder was when she was discussing her husband's grocery store. She had a copy of an article that was written in a book (she could not remember the name of the book or when it was published) about her husband's grocery store. As she began telling me about his store, she wanted me to look at the article, however, when she could not remember when it was written, she asked that I stop recording our conversation. A copy of this article is included with this interview. Mrs. Kirchoff again asked that the tape recorder be turned off a third time when she began describing the first Macedonian – Bulgarian church in Lincoln Place, St. Cyril and Methody. She was embarrassed that she could not remember some important dates in the history of the church and asked that this particular part of our conversation not be recorded. All of the information she was referring to about the

church, however, appears in a church publication that is included with this interview packet.

Mrs. Kirchoff asked that the tape recorder be turned off for a fourth and final time when she was describing her role in the Macedonian-Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society. As we began this part of our conversation she got up from the table where we were sitting to locate some papers and photographs pertaining to this organization. When she got up, she asked that I turn off the tape recorder and not turn it back on. She returned to the table with a photo album, some newspaper articles and a brochure that commemorated the organization's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The newspaper articles and the brochure are included with this interview. The photo album included pictures that spanned the twenty-five years that Mrs. Kirchoff had been the president of the Macedonian-Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society from the early 1970's to the late 1990's. She had pictures of many of the major fundraising activities that the organization had participated in, including one in which she made small dolls in traditional Macedonian costumes to sell and give the proceeds to the group. Mrs. Kirchoff ended the interview with some current personal information about her grandchildren.

Biographical Summary for Tomea Kirchoff

Interviewed by Lindsay Schmitz on October 29, 1001

HIST 447

Dr. Valk

November 13, 2001



## Biographical Summary for Tomea Kirchoff

Tomea Loman Kirchoff was born in Macedonia in 1907. When she was a small child her father immigrated to the United States in search of more lucrative employment. Upon his arrival in the United States he secured a job in Granite City, Illinois. He eventually saved enough money to finance his family's immigration and they left Macedonia in the middle of World War I to join him in Granite City, where he was living in an immigrant neighborhood known as Lincoln Place. Kirchoff spent much of her childhood and adult life living in Lincoln Place. She married another Macedonian, John Kirchoff, who owned a local grocery store and together they started a family. After her husband's death in 1950, Kirchoff moved out of Lincoln Place to another neighborhood in Granite City. Despite the fact that she did not continue to live in Lincoln Place, Kirchoff has dedicated much of her life to community service and charity work to better the lives of immigrants in Lincoln Place.

In 1925, Kirchoff and a group of Bulgarian and Macedonian immigrant women in Lincoln Place started a women's organization, the Macedonian-Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society. This group was started as a charitable organization to aid new immigrants and their families. Each member paid dues to the organization and fundraisers and other community events were also held periodically by the group to raise money for their cause. In the event of the death of one of the members, a portion of the money was given to the member's family and, in addition to these death benefits, the organization also donated to various organizations in the community such as the YMCA. Kirchoff, throughout her life, has been an active and leading member of the Macedonian-Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society. From 1971 to 1996, Kirchoff served as president of the organization. When the organization finally dissolved in 1996, Kirchoff also played an important role in the distribution of the nearly \$40,000 the group had saved over its seventy-five year history. This money was divided up and donated to several charities in Granite City, such as St. Elizabeth's hospital. Although the Macedonian-Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society has been

dissolved, Kirchoff is still an active in her community. She continues to attend a local Macedonian church along with other immigrants and their children who once lived in Lincoln Place.