



Muslim in the Metro

Early Muslims in America

Many historians have attempted to discover the earliest American contact with Muslims or Arabs. A Chinese document known as the Sung Document records the voyage of a Muslim sailor to Mu-Lan-Pi (America) in 1178. Starting in the early sixteenth century, African slaves were brought to America, a minimum of 7 to 10 percent of the 10 million slaves to the new world were Muslims and very few maintained their religion.

Our Founding Fathers' Views on Muslims (President Obama Feb 3, 2016 at a Baltimore Mosque)

Muslims were often called Mahometans. Thomas Jefferson explained that the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was designed to protect all faiths, “--- “the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahometan.” Presidents Jefferson and John Adams had their own copies of the Qur’an. Benjamin Franklin wrote “even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach to us, he would find a pulpit at his service.” Generations of Muslim Americans helped to build our nation. They were part of the flow of immigrants who became farmers and merchants. They built America’s first mosque in North Dakota. America’s oldest surviving mosque is in Iowa. The first Islamic center in New York City was built in the 1890s. Muslim Americans worked on Henry Ford’s assembly line, cranking out cars. A Muslim American designed the skyscrapers of Chicago. In 1957, when dedicating the Islamic center in Washington, D.C., President Eisenhower said, “I should like to assure you, my Islamic friends, that under the American Constitution ... and in American hearts... this place of worship, is just as welcome... as any other religion.”

Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) Honored By the U.S. Supreme Court As One Of The Greatest Lawgivers Of The World In 1935

As the United States Supreme Court judges sit in their chamber, to their right, front, and the left sides are friezes depicting the 18 greatest lawgivers of the world. The second frieze to the right features a person holding a copy of the Qur’an, the Islamic holy book. It is intended to recognize Prophet Muhammad as one of the greatest lawgivers in the world, along with Moses, Solomon, Confucius, and Hammurabi, among others.

Here is what the Supreme Court’s website says about this frieze:

Muhammad (c. 570 - 632) The Prophet of Islam. He is depicted holding the Qur’an. The Qur’an provides the primary source of Islamic Law. Prophet Muhammad’s teachings explain and implement Qur’anic principles. The figure above is a well-intentioned attempt by the sculptor, Adolph Weinman, to honor Muhammad, and it bears no resemblance to Muhammad. Muslims generally have a strong aversion to sculptured or pictured representations of their Prophet.

Early Muslim Immigrants to Kansas City

During the 1950s, a group of local followers of the Nation of Islam established Mohammad’s Temple Number 30. They met at various locations before settling at 2715 Swope Parkway, Kansas City, Missouri. The building was an old church purchased with donations from Nathaniel Mohammad (son of Elijah Mohammad). Other donors included former boxing champion Mohammad Ali.

In the early 1970s a small community of Muslim immigrant professionals settled in Kansas City. But they were not the first Muslim immigrants in Kansas City. Before them there was Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who visited Kansas City in 1945. His visit resulted in establishment of a major hub of Saudi Airlines in Kansas City in later years. Another visitor was Mr. Liaquat Ali, the prime Minister of Pakistan, who stayed for a few days with a family here in Kansas City. He addressed a student crowd at UMKC in 1950.

In 1973-1975, today’s Masjid Omar was still called “Muhammad Temple #30” and it had not adopted mainstream Islam yet. So initially some of the professional immigrants of the 70’s met at an empty apartment in mid-town for their Eid celebration. Later, they held weekly Sunday meetings at a community center owned by the Kansas City Mennonite Church on 40th Avenue and Rainbow Boulevard. As part of their vision, the group decided to establish an umbrella organization and named it the Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City.

In the early 1980s, they purchased a four-acre parcel of land in South Kansas City to build a mosque that opened its doors to all Muslims in March of 1981. The center is located at 8501 E. 99th Street, Kansas City, Missouri. The Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City and the Muslim community in Columbia, Missouri jointly purchased a second piece of land for a Muslim cemetery to serve Missouri and surrounding states. In 1989 the community established a full-time Islamic school.

In the early 1990s a second wave of immigrants from Somalia and Bosnia came to Kansas City. The Somali community settled in Northeast Kansas City and established Masjid Al-Huda. During that time period, Masjid Omar had to move to a small adjacent location, creating need for another Islamic Center, Al-Inshirah, which was opened at 3664 Troost Ave. Kansas City, Missouri. A third wave of immigrants came in the 2000s from Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq.

With the arrival and expansion of several national and international corporations in Overland Park and Kansas City, the Muslim population in Kansas City has grown rapidly during the last twenty (20) years.

In the Greater Kansas City area, there are eighteen (18) masjids/centers serving an estimated 30,000 Muslims:

Al-Haqq Islamic Center 6941 Prospect Street, Kansas City, MO
Al-Inshirah Islamic Center, 3664 Troost Ave., Kansas City, MO
Al-Kahaf 4206 E 9th St, Kansas City, MO 64124
Az-Zahra Islamic Center 8350 Leavenworth Rd, Kansas City, KS
Islamic Center of Greater St. Joseph, 2407 Messanie Street, St. Joseph, MO 64501
Islamic Center of Johnson County, 9001 W 151st St., Overland Park, KS
Islamic Center of Kansas, 14750 W 143rd St., Olathe, KS
Islamic Center of Lawrence, 1917 Naismith, Lawrence, Kansas
Islamic Center of Leavenworth 545 Oregon Street, Leavenworth, Kansas
Islamic Center Of Northland (ICN), Hillside Church, 900 NE Vivion Rd, Kansas City, MO
Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City, 8501 E 99th, Kansas City, MO
Masjid Al-Ghurabaa 2904 Park Ave, P.O. Box 270482, Kansas City, MO
Masjid Al-Mustafa 3607 NE Antioch, Kansas City, MO
Masjid Al-Huda, 4608 St John Ave., Kansas City, MO
Masjid Al-Mustafa 3607 NE Antioch, Kansas City, MO
Masjid Omar, 2700 East 49th St., Kansas City, MO
Masjid Taqwa 1340 Admiral Blvd, Kansas City, MO,
MSA House 5501 Charlotte, Kansas City, MO

In addition, other Muslim organizations/services include:

Crescent Peace Society www.crescentpeace.org

Midland Islamic Council www.midlandcouncil.com

Muslim News Digest (Free Subscription). To subscribe, **Email:** HeartlandMuslimCouncil@gmail.com

Other Interesting Facts:

Today, there are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. Of the 1.6 billion Muslims, 20 % are Arab. Not all Arabs are Muslims as there are many Arab Christians and Arab Jews.

Estimates on the number of Muslims living in the US vary, ranging from 3 million to 7 million. 40% of Muslim Americans are African American and the majority of Arabs in America are Christian.

Muslims serve the greater Kansas City area in various professions, namely medical, engineering, information technology, business and education. Several Muslim entrepreneurs have established businesses and services. Many Muslims are actively engaged in professional, cultural, political, civic, charitable and interfaith organizations. Young Muslims are also involved in Girl Scouts and Boys Scouts with several Eagle Scouts.