



BEIRUT on the BAYOU

بيروت في البايو



"For years, he carried his goods to isolated villages, walking through rain and mud, in hot and humid weather. Like many immigrants, Alfred Nicola contributed to the building of a new nation with sweat, determination and resilience."

- Raif Shwayri

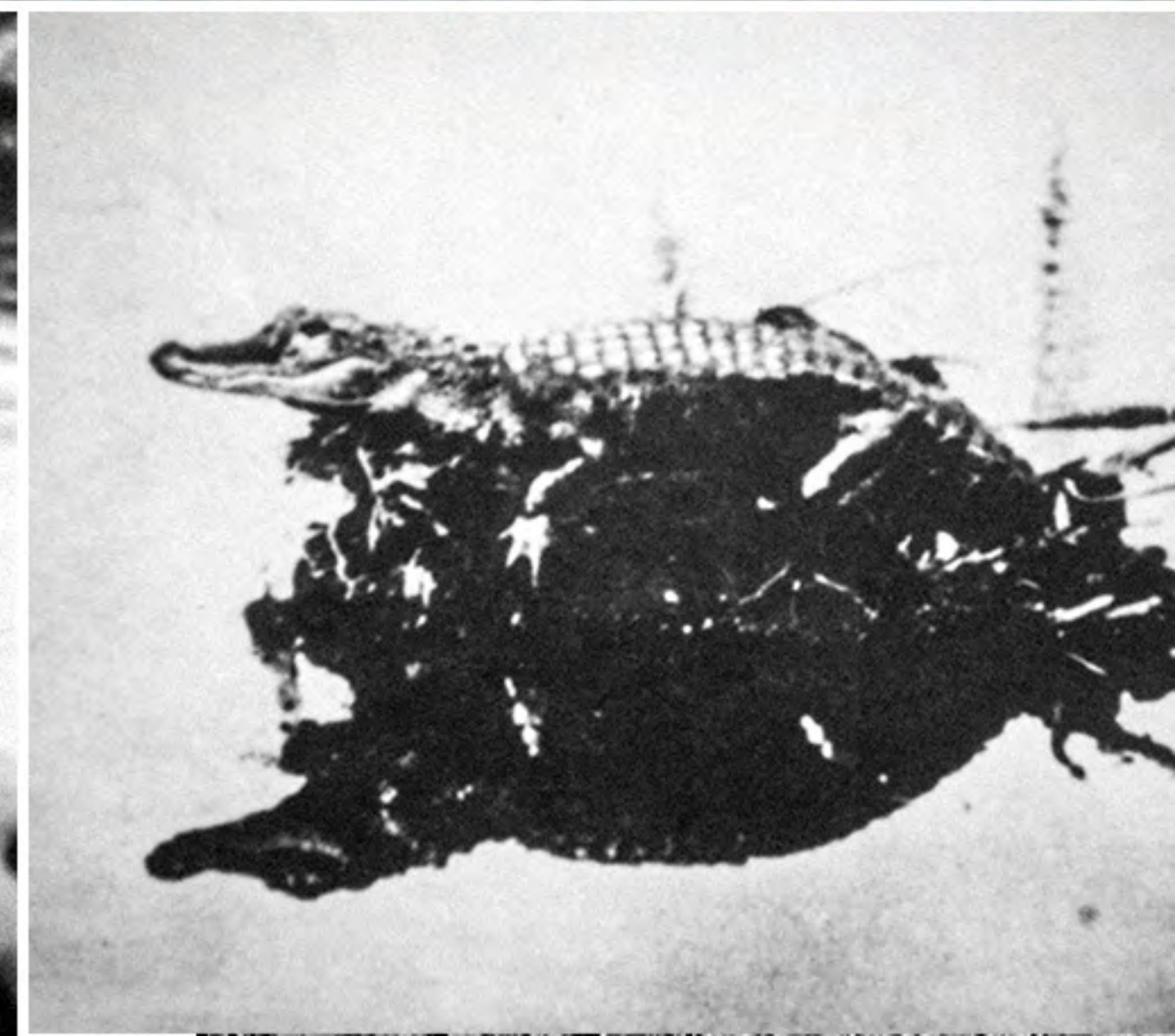


LOGLINE



In 1902, Raif Shwayri's grandfather emigrated from Lebanon to the U.S., where he worked as a peddler in Louisiana, defying the odds to build a lasting legacy. The writer retraces his grandfather's footsteps to reveal a compelling hidden history along the Cajun bayou.





SYNOPSIS

Lebanese writer, Raif Shwayri, travels from Beirut to Bayou Lafourche, a 100-mile-long waterway in southeastern Louisiana where his grandfather worked as a peddler in the early 1900s. Alfred "Sweet Papa" Nicola sold clothes and other goods to the French-speaking melting pot that inhabited the isolated region, earning enough money to keep his family alive back home. On a quest to fill the pages of an unknown family history, Shwayri uncovers an expansive shared history that takes us from the Middle East to Ellis Island to the remote bayous of Cajun country where refugees contributed to the building of a new nation. Alfred Nicola not only helped to save his family, but his hard work laid the foundation for a university that would improve the lives of generations of disabled and impoverished children in Lebanon.

Based on the book, *Beirut on the Bayou*, written by Raif Shwayri (SUNY Press).

"There are people today on bayou who would be shocked to find out their name is Lebanese, because they think they are Cajun."

- Glen Pitre, Louisiana
Author & Filmmaker



AUDIENCE APPEAL

With the popularity of TV shows such as *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*, as well as websites like Ancestry.com, there has never been more interest in **family history** and **genealogy**. In addition, debates over **immigration** as well as interest in the burgeoning field of **social entrepreneurship**, give *Beirut on the Bayou* the potential to strike a chord with a wide audience. The film deepens our understanding of who created America while also showing what's possible when we take risks to invest in the future of our families and communities.



RARE FILMS

Includes never-before-seen 16mm film of Lebanon & Louisiana from the 1950s photographed by the filmmaker's grandfather.

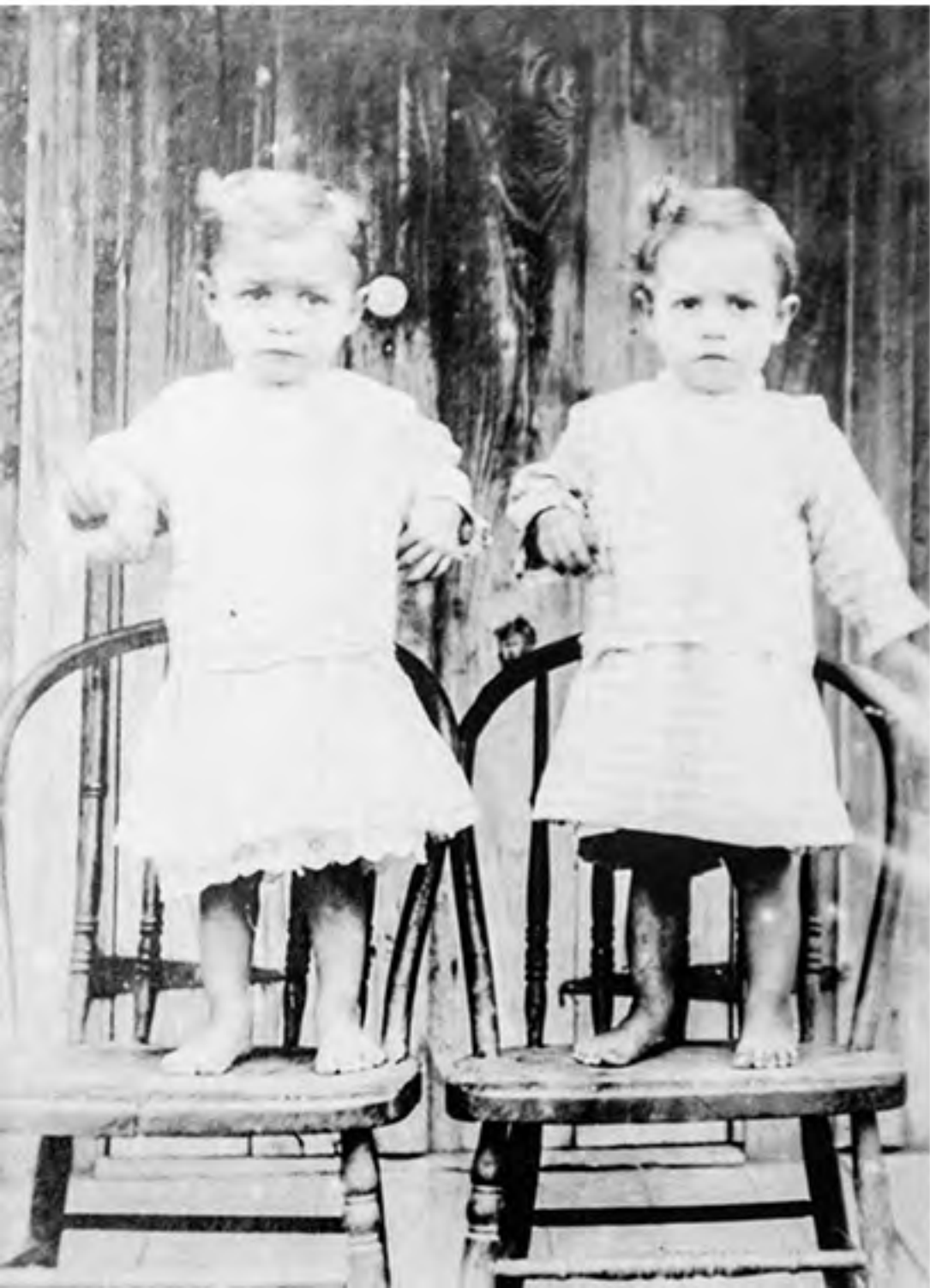






RARE PHOTOGRAPHS

Includes pictures discovered in the storage locker of a library housed in a former Wal-Mart along the bayou.



MUSIC

New York-based composer, Brian Prunka, created an original Arabic score for the film which includes a cover of the Cajun classic, "La Danse De Mardi Gras" using Arabic instruments.



Oud
Brian Prunka

Accordion
Simon Moushabeck

Violin
Marandi Hostetter

BIOS

Brent Joseph is an award-winning writer & director. His films have played at more than twenty festivals from Los Angeles to Paris including: AFI, Full Frame, Rooftop Films, Slamdance and the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University.



Raif Shwayri is a specialist in Sustainable Economic Development with 28 years of experience in Developing countries as CEO and Senior Advisor for NGOs, Universities and leading Foundations. He has written four books, chief among them is *Beirut on the Bayou*, the book upon which this film is based.

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