

Greek diaspora in USA: the pioneers in confectionery business P. J. Columbus, George J. Giannios, Louis and John N. Pappas

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ABSTRACT: - During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century large numbers of Greeks migrated to the US, seeking a better future. Many of them were involved in the confectionery business, where the Greeks held a commanding presence. Such is the case of certain immigrants related by kinship, who came in the US from the village Kyparissi, Laconia, SE Peloponnesus. Theirs can be considered as a typical first-generation Greek- American experience. P.J. Columbus and his cousin George Giannios settled in Lima, Ohio and in Richmond, Virginia, respectively, keeping ties between them. They were pioneer confectioners in these cities. Later on, came their nephews, Louis and John N. Pappas (Pappamichalopoulos), and were trained by them. The Pappas brothers settled in San Francisco, California, and became successful confectioners, owing the candy stores “Elite Confections” and “Red Puppy”, respectively. John N. Pappas is a benefactor of his birthplace; he is also the donor of the Hippocrates statue to the University of California San Francisco Hospital. All in all, training of young Greek immigrants as skilled confectioners gave them an important ‘tool’ for social mobility. They became able to start their own business and they adapted in the American society, while maintaining ties with homeland.

Keywords: - Confectionery, Greek diaspora USA, Kyparissi Laconia, Lima Oh, Richmond Va, San Francisco CA

I. INTRODUCTION

Greek migration to the US dates mainly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when large numbers of Greeks crossed the Atlantic, seeking a better future. The majority of them came from small villages in the Peloponnesus area of Greece. They settled mainly along the east coast, but some headed to the Midwest and to the South, while many continued on to the West. Many of them worked on railroad gangs and in the mines, in factories and elsewhere. But many others took the entrepreneurial route. More particularly, the Greek immigrants held a commanding presence in the confectionery business, where they had a presence from the early 1870s. As pioneer confectioners are considered Eleutherios Pelalas of Sparta, Laconia, SE Peloponnesus, who, with Panagiotis Hatzideris of Smyrna (Ismir), Anatolia, opened a candy shop in Chicago, which functioned from 1869 to 1877. Pelalas then moved to Springfield, Massachusetts and opened more stores, while Hatzideris formed a partnership with another associate in New York, who later formed a Confectionery Company that produced candies in New York, Memphis, and Pittsburg. Pelalas and Hatzideris provided employment and confectionery training for many of the initial immigrants from Laconia [1, 2].

The present paper deals with the case study of certain Greek confectioners related by kinship, who came from the littoral village of Kyparissi, Laconia, SE Peloponnesus, a village that had a large migration to the US [3]. The inhabitants of Laconia were among the first Greeks to choose the path of migration, due to the limited financial possibilities offered by the region. The first section of the paper treats of the life and professional activity of Peter J. Columbus, confectioner in Lima, Ohio. The second section concerns the four Giannios brothers, Columbus’ cousins, in Richmond Virginia, where first settled the eldest of them, George, confectioner, while the third section deals with the Pappas brothers, Louis and John, confectionery businessmen in San Francisco, who had been trained by their uncles, Giannios and Columbus; it also presents the benevolent activity of John N. Pappas. At the end, several conclusions are issued. The aim of the present paper is to contribute to the history and culture of the Greek diaspora in the US, to the local history of the

mentioned places, as also to the history of confectionery business in Northern America. The research has used archival records, local Press, oral testimonies and relevant literature.

II. PETER J. COLUMBUS

Peter J. Columbus (or Colombo or Colombus) (1878-1933) was probably originally called Panagiotis I. Colombotos (or Kolomvotos). He was born in Kyparissi, Laconia on August 15, 1878 to John Columbus (Ioannis Colombotos) and Katherine Polymenakos. He migrated to the US in 1890 and settled since 1895 in the town of Lima, in the county of Allen, NW Ohio [4]. Lima was a regional center for industry, whose economic development brought money for entertainment [5]. Columbus opened the Columbia Candy Manufacturing Company at 403 North Main Street. In 1904 he also opened a candy store, ice cream parlor and soda fountain called "The Olympian" at 229 North Main Street with live music on the weekends, a modern store which offered entertainment to the Lima's people and was very much appreciated, according to the local press: "*GREAT SUCCESS Was the Olympia Candy Store opening. Peter J. Columbus Again Demonstrates to Lima People his Great Ability as a Hustler*" [6].

The Greek confectioner kept close ties with his homeland and with his compatriots in the US, mainly with his cousins, the Giannios brothers, settled in Richmond, Virginia. His contacts with this city are also revealed in the photograph where Peter J. Columbus is depicted with three other men in Richmond, dating from 1904 or 1906. (Fig. 1) He also provided employment and training to young Greek immigrants, as to his nephews Louis and John Pappas. (Fig. 2) He was also a patriot; when the Greek-Turkish war of 1897 broke out, he sold out his business interests and returned to Greece, where he enlisted in the Greek army. He was wounded in the war by a sabre cut, marks of which were visible on his face [6]. This brief war (April 3 - May 7 1897), in which many Greek and foreign volunteers participated, ended in the defeat of Greek forces [7]. When the war was over, Columbus returned to the US.

He was married, during a travel to Greece in 1922 -23, to a woman much younger than him, Maria Gargis (or Gergis) (1905-1987), a niece of his employee Antony H. Gergis, who probably arranged this marriage [8]. Antony H. Gergis (or Gerges), who was born in 1890 in the mountainous village of Doussia (now Kefalari) in Stymfalia, N. Peloponnesus, was later adopted by Peter Columbus and was named Antony P. Columbus (died in 1980) [9]. Peter J. Columbus died in 1933 at the age of 55 of a heart attack. He was buried in the Gethsemani Cemetery of Lima; in his tomb it is written: "*P. J. Columbus 1878-1993 / Born in Greece*" [10].

III. GEORGE J. GIANNIOS AND BROTHERS

George (Georgios) Giannios (or Giannias or Yanios) (1867-1939), was born in Kyparissi, Laconia to Ioannis G. Giannios and Katherine E. Pronzos. He had four younger brothers, Emmanuel, Panagiotis, Michael and Constantinos, and two sisters, Maria, wife of Nicholas Pappamichalopoulos, and Stamatina, wife of Ioannis Polychroniou, residents in Kyparissi. Of the Giannios brothers, only Emmanuel remained in the village, while the other four migrated to America.

The first who migrated to the US was George (Georgios) Giannios, who arrived in 1891. He was drawn to the South by the prospect of entrepreneurial opportunities in the region's newly developing cities, as also other Greeks did [11]. George Giannios settled in Richmond, Virginia in 1896. By 1900 he lived at 403 East Broad, where he ran a confectionery shop which must have been profitable, while by 1910 he had moved to 821 East Broad Street. He was the second Greek in the city, but due to his important presence he remained in the historical memory. He is considered as the founder of the local Greek community, as he was the leader of the Greek Benevolent Society formed in 1906- this was the foundation of the Greek community. In 1910 the society joined the Pan-Hellenic Union, a nationwide Greek organization. George Giannios was elected president of the Pan-Hellenic Union in Richmond [12].

In 1905 he married Mary Elisabeth Carson (1879 - 1925), born in Greenville, South Carolina [13]. They adopted a daughter, Katherine Giannios (1910-1995), later Katherine Gammel. In 1916, George Giannios travelled to Greece with his family to see his aged parents. They returned on April 6, 1917 [14]. They eventually settled in Newport News, Warwick, Virginia. George Giannios and Mary Giannios Carlson died in this town and were buried in Mount Calvary Cemetery in Richmond [15].

George Giannios invited his three younger brothers, Constantine, Peter and Michael, who came to Richmond. (Fig.3) Most probably – at least at the beginning- they worked with him. Constantine (Constantinos or Costas) Giannios (or Chas Johnson) (1877 -1933) migrated to the US in 1898 at the age of 18, according to the Ellis island records [16]. In his petition for naturalization (1925), he declares that he was born in Kyparissi, Greece, on May 21, 1877, is a resident of Richmond and his profession is a restaurateur [17]. Constantine Giannios died a bachelor. He is buried in Mount Calvary Cemetery with his brother George and his sister-in-law Mary [18].

Peter (Panagiotis) Giannios (1874-?) settled in Richmond [12]. **(Fig. 4)** In his petition for naturalization (1911), he declares that he was born in Kyparissi, Greece, in 1874, he arrived in the US in 1904, he is a resident of Richmond and his profession is a restaurateur [19]. Peter I. Giannios died a bachelor.

Michael (Mihalīs) Giannios (1875-?) settled in Richmond, as well. He worked as a confectioner or a restaurateur. In 1922 he travelled to Greece, most probably along with his cousin P. J. Columbus, and he was also married to a woman much younger than him from the village of Doussia in Stymfalia. The couple, after visiting Michael's family in Kyparissi, where they christened his newborn nephew Athonios E. Giannios (born June 7, 1922), travelled to the US. Antony had since then the nickname "Doussias", due to the village of his godmother.

IV. LOUIS AND JOHN N. PAPPAS

4.1 Life and professional activity

Louis and John Pappas were born in Kyparissi, Laconia to Nicholas L. Pappamichalopoulos, a landowner and wine merchant, and his wife Maria Giannios, they also had a younger brother, Alexandros, and two sisters, Vassiliki and Katherine. The extended Pappamichalopoulos family was one of the most important families of the region, with political and social activity [20].

The eldest brother, Louis N. Pappas (Leonidas N. Pappamichalopoulos) (1887-1976), was the first to emigrate in the US in 1902, after having assisted the high school [21]. He was followed by his younger brother John (Ioannis N. Pappamichalopoulos) (1889-1985), who arrived at the age of 16, on April 28, 1905, according to the Ellis island records [22]. Both brothers followed the same route after their arrival in the US, as their families recall. They first went to Richmond, Virginia, and then to Lima, Ohio, where they were trained respectively by their uncles, George Giannios and P. J. Columbus, in the art of candy-making and the confectionery business. Louis Pappas is photographed with P.J. Columbus in Lima **(Fig.2)**, while his brother John declares at his arrival to Ellis island as final destination "Lima, Ohio, uncle P.J. Columbios, resident of 403 North Main Street" [22]. Besides, the newspaper "San Francisco Chronicle" (January 16, 1915) mentions that John Pappas was employed in his uncle's factory in Richmond Va, where he learned the candy manufacturing business and later, he went to Ohio, following the same line of business [23].

After their training, Louis and John headed – separately- to the West and arrived in San Francisco, California. Few Greek immigrants had settled in San Francisco in late nineteenth century, but hundreds of them arrived after the catastrophic earthquake and fire of 1906, to rebuild the city's railway lines. Others followed, focusing mainly on catering and trade. Within a few years the Greek element began to be distinguished and over the years one of the most prosperous Greek -American communities was created [24]. Among the Greeks of San Francisco were many Laconians, including immigrants from the village of Kyparissi. In fact, in 1909 the Kyparissioton Society of America was founded in San Francisco, which carried out a lot of public benefit activities in favor of the village [25].

Louis N. Pappas arrived in San Francisco after the earthquake and initially worked as a clerk in a candy store. In just a year, however, he was able to open his own store. His success was "proverbial" in the Greek community, according to the newspaper "San Francisco Chronicle" (January 16, 1915), which in its tribute "Great Progress by the Greeks of the San Francisco Bay Area", ranked him among the most successful Greeks in the city. He owned three candy stores called "Elite Confections", one in San Francisco, on 941 Market Street, and two others in the neighboring towns of Hollister and Livermore. As the newspaper says, "*Louis Pappas is an example of what a man may accomplish if he but sets his will on forging ahead*" [26]. **(Fig. 5)**

Louis N. Pappas was naturalized in 1915. He enlisted in the US Navy in 1918 with the rank of warrant officer during the First World War. In 1925 he traveled to Greece to see his parents and his sister Katherine, wife of Petros D. Vassileiou, merchant. During his visit he christened his newborn niece Maria Vassileiou. He also got married to Panagiota G. Papamichalopoulos (1903-1992) from the nearby village of Kremasti. The following year the couple left for the US [21]. **(Fig.6)** They settled in New York, in order for Louis to work with Panagiota's half-brothers, who were active there. However, this cooperation, given the financial crash of 1929, did not work. Thus, after the end of World War II, Louis N. Pappas, returned to San Francisco in June 1946 with his wife and the three sons they had in the meantime, Nicholas, George and Alexander. Louis Pappas opened on Market Street the "Red Cherry", candy store and ice cream parlor. He operated the business until he retired in 1953. Louis N. Pappas's sons all received a college education, while all three had worked in the family business at a young age. Louis N. Pappas legacy in confectionery became a good background for his daughter -in- law, Lou Seibert Pappas, well known cookbook author [27].

John N. Pappas came to San Francisco after the earthquake and worked for a Jewish family until he could open his own small candy store on Fillmore Street in 1908. Some years later, according to the newspaper "San Francisco Chronicle" (January 16, 1915), he was included among the most successful Greeks in the city, owner of two candy stores called the "Red Poppy" in Fillmore street, a store at no. 1803 and another store and workshop at no. 1905 of the same street in the commercial area of the city. As the newspaper reports, "*Mr.*

Pappas is 25 years of age and a property owner" [23]. In 1918 he opened a larger store on 1549 Polk Street (**Fig.7**) At this location he developed a big clientele and became a well-known confectioner and businessman in the city. His business bloomed and he sent his candies all over the United States. These candies, called the "Red Poppy", became very popular and are still remembered in San Francisco. Greek-born senator Nicholas C. Petris recalled that there was a very famous candy store in San Francisco, the "Red Poppy", owned by John Pappas from Kyparissi, Laconia, a man who made many donations [28]. John N. Pappas operated his confectionery business till 1953, when he retired. After the sale of his business, he successfully traded in the stock market.

John N. Pappas married in his first marriage Belle (Bilio) Katsoris (1898-1983) from Kyparissi, who had come to America with her parents at a very young age (in 1900). They had four children, Marie, Nicholas, Tassi (Arnest Tasi) and Irene. In a second marriage, he married in 1944 or 1945 Jennie G. Kokkoris (1911-1997), originating from Kyparissi, widow George Aleck, and adopted her two daughters, Patricia and Demetria.

The third brother Alexander N. Pappas (Alexandros N. Papamichalopoulos) (1891- 1936) migrated to the US in 1909 at the age of 19, according to Ellis island records [29]. He declared as his final destination San Francisco, near his brother John N. Pappas, on Fillmore street. (**Fig.8**) In the early 1930s, he returned to Kyparissi to take over the management of the family estates and business (wine trade). After a short illness, however, he died there in 1936. He was not married.

The Pappas brothers invited in the US their sister Vassiliki, (1886-1939), who got married to Andrew (Andreas) J. Fatseas (1893-1957) from the island of Kythera. In 1927 they had a son, John. They lived in Oakland, California, where Andrew Fatseas owned the "Fairfax" restaurant.

4.2. Public benefit activity

John N. Pappas travelled to his birthplace, Kyparissi, in 1949, and then came regularly from 1960 to the 1970s. During his visits he had the opportunity to identify deficiencies in infrastructure. Thus, in 1960, with his own sponsorship, the water supply network was created, solving the chronic water supply problem of the village, a basic infrastructure project that laid the foundations for its future touristic development. This event is recorded on an inscription in Greek on a marble slab at a fountain near the donor's house: "*WATER SUPPLY DONE GRACE TO THE EXPENSES OF DONOR IOANNIS NIC. PAPAMICHALOPOULOS IN YEAR 1960*". A few years later, in 1971, he took care of the cement paving of the road that connects two settlements of the village, as mentioned in another inscription. He also offered regular financial support to the needy of the village, as also financial support to best students of the region [30].

John N. Pappas did not forget his "second home", San Francisco, and in 1978 he donated a statue of Hippocrates to the University of California San Francisco Hospital, which stands on Mount Parnassos outside the Hospital. (**Fig. 9**) The statue is made of white Pentelic marble and has a height of 2,286 meters. It rests on a high granite pedestal. On the marble base of the statue, on the front, the name of the person depicted and the dates of his life have been engraved in Greek: "*ΙΙΙΙΙΟΚΡΑΤΗΣ / 490-386*", while on the side is the signature of the creator: "*C. GEORGACAS / SCULPTOR / GREECE*". The name of Hippocrates is engraved in English on the granite pedestal. On a bronze plate is placed the dedicatory inscription: "*PROVIDED THROUGH THE GREAT GENEROSITY/OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN NICHOLAS PAPPAS. MR. PAPPAS/A GREEK EMIGRANT FROM KIPARISI, LAKONIA, GREECE/AND HIS WIFE JENNIE PAPPAS, DONATE THIS STATUE/IN APPRECIATION OF SAN FRANCISCO, THE HOME OF/MR. PAPPAS SINCE 1905*".

The offer of the statue of the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates, father of medicine, to the University Hospital of San Francisco was highly regarded and remained in the memory of the California San Francisco University [31]. On May 10, 1979, the unveiling ceremony of the statue was held by the Chancellor of the UCSF, in the presence of officials, such as Senator Nicholas Petris, many members of the Greek community in the city and members of the donor's family (Demetria Aleck was employed at UCSF) [32]. (**Fig. 10**)

This statue is the sixth - in chronological order - of the nearly identical statues of Hippocrates offered by Greek- Americans to American medical schools. The others stand at the University of Arizona, Tucson, (1967), the Wayne University, Detroit (1969), the University of Alabama, Birmingham (1970), the University of Illinois, Illinois (1972), and Rutgers University, Piscataway, New Jersey (1973). As it has been observed, these donations were motivated on the one hand by the donors' pride in their ancestral homeland and on the other hand by their love for America, as well as their appreciation for opportunities offered to them in the cities where they had settled [33, 34].

These six statues of Hippocrates are works of the Greek sculptor Costas Georgacas (1904-1991). Born in Sidirokastro, Messinia, SW Peloponnesus, C. Georgacas studied sculpture at the Athens School of Fine Arts and continued his studies in Paris. In 1936 he returned to Athens and established his own workshop. After the War he left for Ethiopia and settled in Addis Ababa, where he carried out a rich artistic activity. In 1960 he returned to Athens and continued his work, which is characterized by humanistic and classical values [33, 34].

V. CONCLUSION

This case study of Greek immigrants indicates some common characteristics of the so called “first wave” of the Greek diaspora to the US (late nineteenth- early twentieth century): they were young, single men, who considered economic advancement as their major goal [11]. They are included among the early Greek immigrants who established permanent homes in the United States, while others worked temporarily and returned to Greece. Moreover, they were drawn by the prospect of entrepreneurial opportunities in newly developing cities. They took advantage of family networks, which contributed to the training of the new immigrants through the learning of a skill, as in this case the confectionery, one of the sectors in which Greek immigrants in America were particularly engaged. Their training gave them an important ‘tool’ for social mobility, since they became able to start soon their own business. Grace to hard work and their business skills, they became successful businessmen and well known in the local societies.

Concerning their marriage practices, like all early Greek immigrants, the majority of them preferred brides from their homeland once they had enough money to support a family, while some remained unmarried or - some few - married women of other nationalities [11].

In time, they were naturalized and adapted in the American society, while maintaining ties with their homeland, as it is best shown by public benefit activities. Particularly characteristic of the feelings and the mentality of Greek immigrants is the inscription on the statue of Hippocrates, where the donor John N. Pappas refers to both his birthplace, Kyparissi, Greece, and to his second homeland, San Francisco, California. This shows the duality of first generation of Greek- American identity.

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FIGURES

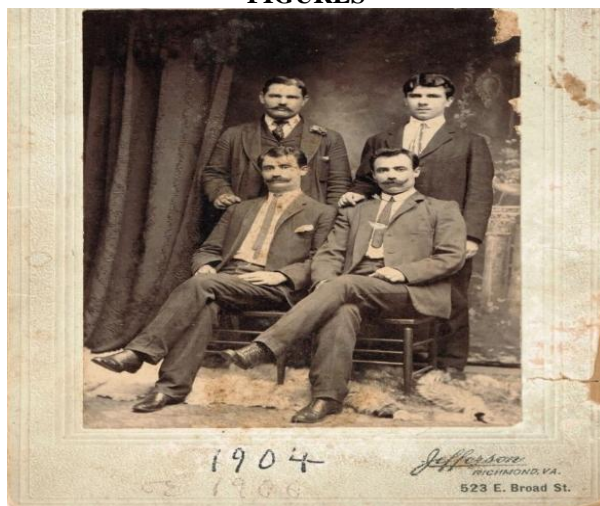


Fig. 1. Peter J. Columbus (left, sitting) and three other Greeks. Richmond, Va 1904 or 1906
(Photo: Niko Pappas)



Fig. 2. Peter J. Columbus (left, sitting) and young Louis N. Pappas, Lima, Ohio (Photo: Niko Pappas)

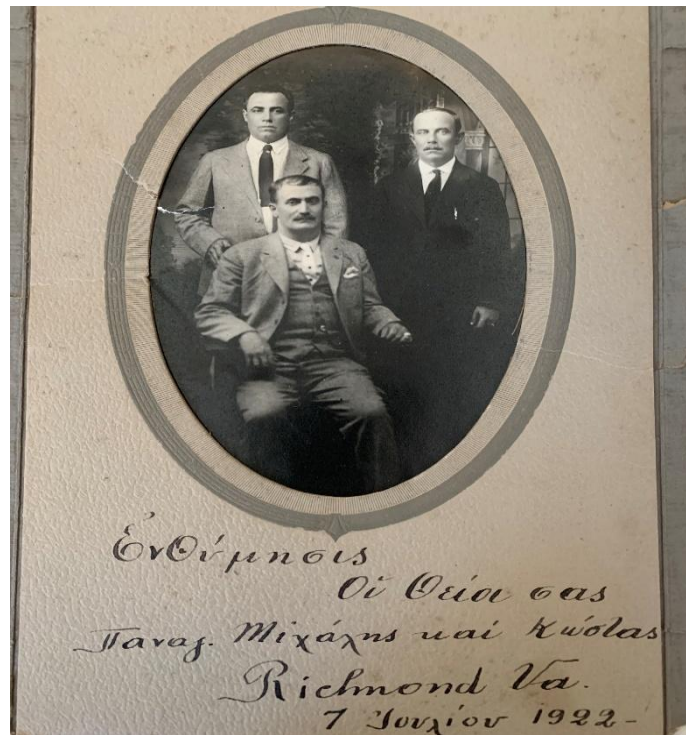


Fig. 3. “Souvenir. Your Uncles Panagiotis, Mihalis and Costas. Richmond Va. July 7, 1922”
Peter, Michael (sitting) and Constantine Giannios (Photo: Mina Raissis- Economou)



Fig. 4. "P. J. Giannios 8.25.27 Richmond Va" (Photo: Maria Giannou- Papafrangou)



Fig. 5. Louis N. Pappas in his candy store- Elite Confections, San Fransisco, CA (Photo: Niko Pappas)



Fig. 6. Louis and Panagiota Pappas (1926) (Photo: Niko Pappas)



Fig. 7. John N. Pappas- Red Poppy Candies (Photo: Patricia Aleck)



Fig. 8. Louis N. Pappas (center, sitting), Belle Pappas, John N. Pappas (center, standing), Alexander N. Pappas (right) (Photo: Alex. L. Pappas)



Fig. 9. Hippocrates Statue (1978), UCSF Hospital (Photo: Mina Raissis- Economou)



Fig. 10. Unveiling ceremony (1979): John and Jennie Pappas, Maria Vassileiou- Raissis, Patricia Aleck (second row) (Photo: Patricia Aleck)