

The Greeks Add Flavor to Falmouth

Barbara Kanellopoulos

The ancient Greeks believed that happiness lies in having scope equal to one's abilities. How well they would have understood those modern Greeks who, disillusioned by constant economic and political crises in Greece, left home in search of a place where they could give full range to their talents. For several twentieth-century Greeks, that place was Falmouth.

Leaving Mytilene

Mytilene is an island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Turkey. In 1906 the island, largely populated by Greeks, was under Turkish rule. Uneasy relations between Greece and Turkey became intolerable when war between the two countries seemed imminent. Greek men would be required to serve in the Turkish military to fight their fellow Greeks! But excited talk in the village coffee houses was of another subject as well: America. Letters from a few sons, cousins, and nephews who had emigrated spread the word that America was the land of opportunity. Proof enough was the money that these young men were regularly sending to their families. Nicholas, George, and Constantine (whom everyone in Falmouth would come to know as "Gus") Tsiknas made the decision to leave. They were among the eight million Europeans who rode the great wave of immigration from 1901-1911, bringing a much-needed labor supply to American shores.

Arrival in America

New arrivals followed a typical pattern. They would connect with other Greeks who could help them find lodgings and work. The Tsiknas brothers found friends in Boston and Lynn, cities that became the

locus of their activities for the next few years. It is not surprising that George Tsiknas became interested in candy making. A few Greek-owned companies were in the area, giving budding young entrepreneurs a chance to learn the trade. Savings from wages could be used to buy equipment and to set up shop as independent candy makers. John Karahalas, a Greek-American whose father made and sold candy in Boston in 1906, explains why Greeks were drawn to candy making. "Sugar was five cents per pound



Nicholas E. Tsiknas and his wife, Aglaia Christothoulou Tsiknas. Circa 1945. Courtesy Frances Vallone.

which yielded twenty pounds of candy. A pound of lemon or horehound drops or ribbon candy sold for twenty cents. Since Greeks initially did all the work themselves – and never counted that cost – they saw potential profits in candy making.”

The Move to Falmouth

Boston, Lynn, and nearby Lowell had burgeoning Greek populations in the early 1900s. A new arrival from Greece could find respite from loneliness in one of the many coffeehouses or in a community building where compatriots gathered for Greek Orthodox church services. Adjustment to a new culture was easier in the city for many Greeks. The Tsiknas brothers, however, would choose to venture into unknown territory. When George was given an opportunity to manage the Boston Confectionery Store in Falmouth, he left the city; Gus and Nicholas soon followed.

Falmouth in 1908 was a country village with a year round population of barely three thousand. But the ambitious young businessmen were able to look beyond the hitching posts that were still in place in front of the buildings on Main Street. What they saw was opportunity. Year round residents were not the only potential customers for the store's candy and ice cream. There were “summer people” also, wealthy owners of large estates that dotted the shoreline and, increasingly, others of more modest means who were vacationing with their families in their second homes in Falmouth.

In 1910, George left Falmouth to open a restaurant in Hyannis. By this time, Michael Christothoulou (Nick's future brother-in-law) and cousins Michael and Louis Hatzikon had left Mytilene, joining Nicholas and Gus in Falmouth. Nicholas purchased the Falmouth business and renamed it the Falmouth

Candy Kitchen. Straightforward, no-nonsense advertising – reminiscent of Nicholas himself – appeared regularly in *The Enterprise* by 1917:

Potatoes at \$2.50 per bushel

This Week Only

Falmouth Candy Kitchen

Nicholas E. Tsiknas, Prop.

Fancy Fruit Confectionery

Ice Cream Parlor

Winslow Block Main St. Falmouth, Mass.

On May 4, 1918, readers were greeted with a single message in bold capital letters:

BUY A BOND

TELEPHONE 228

Falmouth Candy Kitchen

Nick's friends, Thomas and Harris Malchman, ran a full page advertisement in *The Enterprise* urging people to help the boys “over there” by investing in Liberty Bonds.

A Call to Arms

In 1918, Nicholas added a second store, the N.E. Tsiknas Co., Inc., specializing in fruit and produce. But then World War I cast its grim shadow on the busy brothers. Nicholas was exempted from military service, but Gus, Michael Christothoulou and Michael Hatzikon were inducted into the United States military service. Gus was sent to France where he was exposed to mustard gas. Many years later, Reuben Handy, a Falmouth native whom many will remember as an amateur songwriter and Main Street habitué, claimed that his brother “saved Gus' life.” Handy's brother served in the same division as Gus

and, according to Handy, intervened before the exposure became lethal.

Although his health was compromised, Gus survived the war and returned to Falmouth as did the others. Gus sold fruits and vegetables from the back of a truck to residents and businesses in Falmouth Heights, Falmouth Village, West Falmouth, and East Falmouth. Nicholas managed the two stores with the help of Michael Christothoulou and the Hatzikon brothers. It was around 1918 that the N.E. Tsiknas Co., Inc. store opened under the management of Louis Hatzikon on Water Street in Woods Hole.

As the years went by, changes were made in the businesses to keep pace with changing times. In 1933, Nicholas opened the Nicholas E. Tsiknas, Co., Inc., a restaurant and bar, at the present site of Edwards Interior Decorator on Main Street. It was issued the first liquor license in Falmouth after Congress repealed Prohibition. And so the five men from Mytilene became, over the next four decades, familiar faces in Falmouth and Woods Hole.

A Bride from Greece

When Michael Christothoulou set sail for America, he left behind his young sister, the lovely Aglaia. They were reunited in Falmouth thirteen years later when Aglaia arrived in Falmouth to become the bride of Nicholas Tsiknas. Their daughter, Frances Vallone, recalls the story her mother enjoyed telling about that eventful time in her life. Aglaia had traveled some five thousand miles by steamship, arriving in New York alone and unable to speak or understand English except for one word – Falmouth:

A society of Greek-Americans who were originally from Mytilene met me in New York and

helped me board the train for Boston. Another group met me in Boston and put me on the train for Falmouth. Worried that I might miss the Falmouth station, I listened carefully as the conductor called out the stops. When I heard "Falmouth" I got up immediately but the conductor made a motion for me to sit down. Then I heard him call out "Falmouth" again. I got up. Again, the motion to sit down. Finally, he called out "Falmouth" and made a motion for me to get up. And there they were, waiting for me at the station. It was only much later that I understood that there is a North and West Falmouth and that you pass by them before you get to Falmouth.

Aglaia Christothoulou and Nicholas Tsiknas were married in 1925 and lived on Shore Street. They had two daughters, Frances (Tsiknas) Vallone and Catherine (Tsiknas) Fackos. Both daughters reside in Falmouth.

The Candy Kitchen

The sign over the door said "Falmouth Candy Kitchen" but everybody called it "The Greeks." Stopping at "The Greeks" for a five-cent Moxie was, for Clarence Anderson, a daily ritual. Edwin Donnelly whose father owned the barber shop at the other end of Main Street, preferred Coca-Cola which he sipped at the soda fountain after he bought the evening newspaper. Occasionally he would stop at the Tsiknas grocery store next door to chat with "Little Mike" Christothoulou. "Little Mike," "Big Mike" Hatzikon, and Gus and Nick Tsiknas were "the Greeks" of the Candy Kitchen. Their names evoke memories for Cynthia Botelho of "the best banana splits in town, and only fifty cents each." After a football game at Guv Fuller Field, Dick Kendall and his teammates would walk to the Hall

School, shower and dress, and head over to “the Greeks” to meet their friends. At the end of any given school day, scores of children would stream out of the nearby buildings and descend on “Big Mike” who, white-aproned and broom in hand, stood behind the big glass display case filled with penny candy and enormous five-cent chocolate bars. Teenagers, too, when they were not draped on the booths along the wall, leaned over the glass case and deliberated. Cynthia Kendall, whose class was the last to graduate before the old Lawrence High School was torn down, remembers running across the lawn to Main Street to buy candy at the Candy Kitchen between classes. “It was,” she said, “an institution.”

Remembering Louie Hatzikon

He was affectionately known as Louie and the store he managed, the N.E. Tsiknas Co., Inc., was known by the locals as “Louie’s.” His association with Woods Hole began in 1918 when Woods Hole was a country village; the scientific community was represented by the wooden structures housing the Fisheries Laboratory and the Marine Biological Laboratory. A lone brick MBL building stood next to the Candle House on Water Street. The store carried candy, ice cream, fruits, vegetables, and sundries; what most people remember, however, is Louie himself – his generosity and good will. Recalling his father, Charlie



A view from the Woods Hole bridge in the 1930s. Louie's fruit store is beyond the striped awning on the right. Note traffic of the era! Postcard courtesy WHHC.

Hatzikon said, "He cared about other people more than he cared about himself."

Susie Steinbach, a long-time Woods Hole resident, said that Louie always carried a special supply of cash – a roll of bills that he pulled out of his pocket when someone was in need. She remembers her panic one Friday night many years ago when she found the door of the bank locked. Her young son had to attend the funeral of a college friend many miles away and she had no cash with which to buy his ticket. Louie came to the rescue – with no questions asked.

Jane McLaughlin, another Woods Hole resident, remembers with delight the years when Louis would give her a beautiful red-dyed Easter egg; quietly he would show it, then put it into a small brown paper bag for her. The red egg, a Greek Orthodox tradition, was his way of sharing a part of his heritage.

Charlie Hatzikon's apprenticeship began when he was eight years old and sat beside Louie as he drove from house to house, peddling fruit and vegetables from a loaded truck. Susie Steinbach was a regular customer throughout the 1930s and 1940s. She smiles as she recalls a familiar scene:

I was the last stop after Louie and Charlie had delivered to the 'old money' on Penzance Point. I was buying produce for my large household and for two busy scientists and a graduate student. The Hatzikons would spread the order on a grassy slope near the front door to make it easy for my friends to pick up their purchases. People passing by must have been surprised to see this huge spread of bananas, oranges, apples, carrots, peppers and such on my front lawn. Louis gave me any leftover merchandise because he knew I would put it

to good use. My young son once turned up his nose at a piece of overripe fruit. "That's free," I explained. "Louie always gives those away."

Louie and Charlie brought their truck to the back doors of the Breakwater Hotel, the Quissett Harbor House, Sippowisset House (in 1938 this name was changed to the Cape Codder Hotel by the next owners, Captain and Mrs. John Peterson), and to the estates on Penzance Point. Louie always had some choice fruit for the household help and they, in turn, would offer Louie and his son a piece of cake or a sandwich. When they visited the Tsiknas store on Thursdays, their day off, Louie always had a cold soda or ice cream for them.

Louis Hatzikon had some first-hand experiences of the power of hurricanes. On the fateful day of September 21, 1938, he had just passed over the Woods Hole drawbridge to arrive safely at the store which was farther down on Water Street. Just then, the full force of the hurricane struck the drawbridge, causing its collapse. Luckily, Louis was not harmed. Hurricane Carol in 1954 was not as forceful but it did knock out the power on Water Street and elsewhere. Louie quickly gave away the food in the store's refrigerators and freezers rather than have it all go to waste.

Louis Hatzikon bought the grocery store from the Tsiknas family in 1971 and renamed it Louis Fruit Store. It has since become the Food Buoy.

The Succannessett Club

In the early 1930s, Nicholas Tsiknas was invited to become a member of a prestigious men's club which met in rooms above Eastman's Hardware Store on Main Street. A common interest in the community and in card playing brought the men together. Meet-

ings provided members with opportunities to exchange information – to ‘network’, in today’s parlance.

The club had been formed in 1894 by several prominent men who enjoyed meeting each other informally in the old office of Squire Dick Wood, a lawyer and one-time postmaster. They decided to become an organization with membership rules and bylaws and a name – the Succannessett Club. In addition to conducting formal meetings, they played pool, cards (euchre and duplicate whist), checkers and chess, and, while producing clouds of tobacco smoke, talked about local affairs. The list of charter members includes familiar names: H.V. Lawrence, F.T. Lawrence, E.E.C. Swift, Jr., Simeon Hamlin, W.H. Hewins, George E. Dean and Henry Herbert Smythe.

Smythe, who was rector of St. Barnabas Church in 1894, reported in an article written in 1928 that Falmouth residents were not “wholly cordial to the club.” Some in the community were particularly against allowing the club to be open on Sundays. The reaction of the men was to close the door to the card rooms and cover the pool table. Righteous neighbors were left with little to say and, Smythe reports, “the club and the community thus finally married have lived happily together ever after.”

The Kaffeneion: A Greek Institution

“...There was much comment passed upon local affairs tobacco smoke frequently made an ‘airing out’ desirable.” Reverend Smythe’s account of the early days of the Succannessett Club suggests another male refuge – the *kaffeneion* or Greek coffeehouse, a venerable social institution still found all over Greece. *Kaffeneia* appeared in major cities in the United States when Greek immigration was at its peak. There, in a smoke-filled storefront, lonely immigrants heard news of Greece, played cards, and sipped thick Turkish coffee out of small cups. Conversation centered on politics; the word ‘conversation’ is too lifeless to describe what happens when several loud and voluble Greeks take up their favorite subject.



The Falmouth Fruit Exchange on Main Street, Falmouth, where the Cape Cod Times office is now. From l. to r. Mr. Kariotes, Amend Parent, Miss Angie Kariotes, Sophie Marken, Anthony G. Marken (owner.) 1939. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

New arrivals went to the *kaffeneia* to find work. Falmouth restaurateur Constantine Kanellos, who owned the Midtown restaurant in the 1950s and 60s, often found a potential dishwasher or short-order cook at one of the *kaffeneia* in Boston. As the immigrant adjusted to his new country, and as work and family took precedence in his life, visits to the coffeehouse were less frequent. Today the *kaffeneia* have all but disappeared. As familiar way stations along the road to Americanization, they were indispensable.

The Succannessett Club served a purpose too, and lasted for almost fifty years. Nicholas Tsiknas was well served by it. The club provided him with opportunities to develop his gift for forging strong personal associations.

Becoming an Old Cape Coder

In 1941, Nick Tsiknas brought the Falmouth stores together as a block of stores in one cream-colored concrete building trimmed with blue and silver metal. At the present site of the County Fare restaurant stood the Candy Kitchen which was two stores in one: a restaurant and bar on one side; a store selling candy, ice cream, newspapers and magazines on the other. The N.E. Tsiknas Co., Inc., a combination gourmet grocery and liquor store, was adjacent.

It did not take Nicholas long to gain the admiration of the people of Falmouth who, like most Americans, have a fondness for the self-made man. Guided by a native intelligence that was enlivened by his daily habit of reading several newspapers, he created a diversified and successful business. One *Enterprise* reporter, summing up his distinguished presence on Main Street, said, "He has become part of the town; an old Cape Coder."

Late in life and with tears in his eyes Michael Christothoulou visited Mytilene with his sister Aglaia Tsiknas and his niece Frances Vallone; however, none of the men who came to Falmouth at the beginning of this century expressed a wish to return to Greece. Thus these self-made men all became old Cape Codders – solid Americans who lived, worked, and raised their families on Cape Cod.

"The Little New Yorker" and "The Big New Yorker"

The official names of two very popular restaurants on Main Street in Falmouth in the 1930s and 1940s were The New York and The New Yorker. The former occupied the present site of the Colonial Candle Company, the latter the present site of the Quarter-deck Restaurant. The two restaurants were owned by Ernest Helmis and his wife Antigone.

Born in Athens, Greece, Ernest emigrated to the United States in 1909 when he was seventeen years old. The economy of Greece, never robust, was in a state of anemia. Given the unfair taxation practices, an ineffective government, the constant threat of war with Turkey, and letters from America extolling the virtues of the "land of Columbus," a young man would not have to think hard before making the decision to emigrate.

His entry into the hospitality business was through the back doors of several New York hotels where the young Ernest was employed as a bus boy. He came to Falmouth in 1930 when, in partnership with Ernest and Peter Panesis, he opened the New York Sandwich Shop. In 1935 he remodeled the restaurant, enlarging it to seat 200. *The Enterprise* described the new restaurant as a "revelation in vitrolite, glass, stainless steel, and oriental walnut." Known earlier as the New York Sandwich Shop, it was renamed The New York restaurant.

Mr. Helmis' responsiveness to his customers is evident in the following incident, reported by *The Enterprise*. He had commissioned a Providence artist to paint a mural called "Bacchus on Frolic" for the newly remodeled New York restaurant. The restaurant had a very successful opening, but the mural apparently shocked those customers who were not impressed with Greek mythology. Shortly after the unveiling, Ernest arranged to have it painted over. The year was 1935.

The restaurants attracted many summer residents. *The Enterprise* reported: "To see who was down for Patriot's Day, Memorial Day or Columbus Day it was only necessary to drop into Ernest's. There tables were always occupied by folks from Megansett, the Moors, Penzance Point, or Davisville."

Ernest Helmis and his wife, Antigone, always responsive to community needs, made frequent donations of food to charitable causes. In 1933, they provided dinner in The New York restaurant for 200 Falmouth children. In 1934, the number was 227 and in 1937, they were hosts to 300.

An American flag flew above their home in Falmouth. According to those who knew him, Ernest felt deeply grateful to the country that gave him the opportunity to put his considerable abilities into practice. But Greece, too, was close to his heart.

On March 25th, Greek Independence Day, the blue and white stripes of his native land flew below the Stars and Stripes. Ernest was active on the Cape in the effort to send aid to Greece during the German occupation of his homeland.

Ernest Helmis died on February 20, 1949. On that day the flag at the Falmouth Post Office on Main Street was flown at half mast. St. Barnabas Church was packed with friends, business associates, and local and state dignitaries. Parked cars completely encircled the Village Green; others were double parked on the south side of Main Street. Most of the businesses were closed. It is evident that Ernest Helmis had won the respect and affection of the Falmouth community.



The New York restaurant, a "revelation in vitrolite, glass, stainless steel, and oriental walnut." Late 1930s. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

Theodore Economides managed the restaurants for the next few years with Antigone Helmis, his sister. He had learned a great deal about the restaurant trade from Ernest. Ted, the son of a Greek Orthodox priest, was born in Athens. He came to the United States at a young age and graduated from Lawrence High School in 1944. He became a well-known restaurateur in his own right, operating Joan and Ted's with his wife Joan and, later, Eco's Landing at the present site of Seafood Sam's Restaurant on Palmer Avenue.

Falmouth Gardens

Anyone strolling along Falmouth's Main Street in the late 1930s might have observed that at least six stores within walking distance of each other were Greek-owned and operated, reflecting the tendency of Greeks to prefer self-employment, however arduous, to working for wages. One of those Greek-owned businesses was Falmouth Gardens.

The history of Falmouth Gardens begins with Theodore and Nicholas Karalekas, brothers who were born in a small village in the Peloponessus. They emigrated to the United States around 1896, arriving in Boston. They shined shoes at first, working long hours for meager pay. They thought they had found a better opportunity in selling chestnuts on street corners, but one day they found their cart overturned, chestnuts and hot coals scattered everywhere. They had refused to give a local policeman his share of the profits. Then they tried peddling fruit, first with a pushcart and, later, with a horse-drawn wagon. But their horse was a fire horse who would take off with a wagon-load of fruit at the first sound of an alarm.

Having had enough of peddling, the Karalekas brothers opened a produce store on the corner of Commercial and South Market Street, across from Faneuil

Hall. They worked hard and paid careful attention to the quality of their produce. Before long Theodore became known as the "Mushroom King." The story is told about a visit Mayor Curley of Boston made to the Karalekas' store. When he objected to paying \$2.50 for a basket of mushrooms, Theodore explained that they were fresh hot house mushrooms from Kennet Square in Pennsylvania. Unconvinced, the Mayor left the store to "shop around." He returned a few hours later with the admission that he couldn't find any mushrooms as good as those sold by Nicholas and Theodore for the same money.

Theodore and his wife lived in Revere with their six children: Marion, Dear, Charles, Nicholas, James, and John. Dear had been christened Adamandia, but her schoolteacher could only manage the last two syllables of her name and so she became Dear for the rest of her life. Around the neighborhood the four boys were called – with hard-won respect – "the tough Greeks." Around 1939, Theodore's nephews, John and Peter Karalekas, opened Falmouth Gardens near the present Town Hall Square. They planned to invite Theodore's sons to join them in running the business. Their plans were cut short by World War II.

A Chance Meeting on the Eve of Battle

John tells a poignant story about an event that occurred during the war years. John's group, the 41st tank battalion of the 11th armored division, part of General Patton's third army, was about to drive his tank, nicknamed the Chattanooga Choo Choo, onto one of the many LSTs (LandShipTanks) that would take the soldiers across the English Channel to Le Havre, a port city in northern France. He knew that his brother Jim, in the Navy, was stationed on LST number 357. Here is John's story:

We were on Salisbury Plain. A Provost Marshall I knew from back home told Jim that we were coming. But there was so much confusion, so many soldiers and tanks boarding the LSTs, that he had no idea where I was and I had no idea where he was. When we brought the Chattanooga Choo Choo onto an LST, I spotted the number. It was 357. A short while later, I found Jim. We were able to cross the Channel together, but I didn't see him again until the end of the war.



Theodore Karalekas, age 101, waiting for grandson Ted to clear customs when the *RV Chain* returned to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution from Africa. 1968. Courtesy Holly Karalekas.

John fought at the Battle of the Bulge. Nick served on an aircraft carrier and Charles was with the Army artillery. "The tough Greeks" were in the thick of it.

Back to Work After the War

Mrs. Karalekas, back in Revere, hung a banner with four stars in her window. Neighbors always stopped to ask, "Are the boys all right?" Luckily, they were all right and all four returned after the war to Falmouth to buy the Sisson estate near the present site of

Dunkin Donuts on Main Street. They built a new Falmouth Gardens and soon attracted a loyal following. Every member of the Karalekas family had an appointed task. Marion took care of phone orders and book-keeping; John went to the market in Boston to buy the produce; Nick managed the wholesale department; Charles did just about everything, and, when the family acquired a liquor license, James managed the liquor department. It was not easy to get a liquor license in those days – even for four young veterans. The quota system meant that new licenses were issued only when the population increased. The opportunity came in the 1950s when they bought the E.E.C. Swift business, a meat and grocery market on Depot Avenue, and acquired its liquor license as part of the sale. (The old Swift market is now the Market Bookshop.)

Each member of the family worked seven days a week including holidays. Theodore, well beyond ninety, would put on his white apron to lend a hand during the busy season. Meats were added to the product line which required the addition of three butchers. There were four trucks on the road delivering to houses and restaurants.

The Best Peaches in Town

John Karalekas enjoys talking about those days and about the people he has met through the years. One woman from New York, an eminent judge, loved the Antolone peaches from Pennsylvania, the ones John describes as "so juicy you had to eat them with a bib on." Providing his customers with those peaches meant that John had to drive to the Boston market at 1:00 am to select the best he could find. Often it was well after 2:00 in the afternoon before he had finished. He became so knowledgeable that other grocers would seek him out for advice which he gave freely. Regarding the reputation the Falmouth Gardens had for quality products, the judge from New York has the last word. "John," she said, "I never bought a peach from you that I had to throw away."

John and Freda Karalekas live in Falmouth. Freda is the daughter of Nathan Snow Ellis, Jr. and the granddaughter of Nathan Snow Ellis, the town's first highway surveyor, for whom the Nate Ellis highway is named.

Christos Kanellopoulos

In 1979, Christos G. Kanellopoulos opened the restaurant known as Christopher's, located at the corner of Worcester Court and Route 28. The site was previously owned by Tony Marks who had operated Antoun's Snack Bar at that location for almost twenty years. Today, the site is occupied by CVS Pharmacy.

Chris was born in Avlona, a village in the Peloponessus in the southern part of Greece. In 1958 he had completed his military obligations and was trying to decide what to do with his life. Greece was slowly recovering from a cruel civil war that erupted while the country was still rising from the ashes of World War II. Chris was beset with conflicting emo-

tions: his love of Greece and its rich traditions at one turn; at another, his obligation to family; at still another turn, the desire to achieve personal goals which required more benign circumstances than could be found in Greece at that time. Should he leave? Should he stay? It is an ancient dilemma, one that each emigrant has to resolve in his or her own way.

Peeling Potatoes at The Midtown

The decision was easier for Chris to make than for many. His uncle, Constantine Kanellos, had left Greece in 1914 and was well established in Falmouth as owner of the Midtown, a restaurant he opened on Main Street in 1951 (at the present site of the Golden Swan restaurant.) Chris joined his uncle in July of 1958 and began peeling potatoes, washing dishes, and learning English. One of the cooks at the Midtown was Frank Dardis who, with his wife Agnes, had once managed the Howard Johnson's restaurant located at the corner of East Main Street and Falmouth Heights Road, the present site of BankBoston. Frank set about teaching the bewildered immigrant how to make BLTs, cheeseburgers, and turkey clubs. After hours, when the kitchen was closed, Frank gave Chris an English lesson. He would open the back door, point to the night sky, and shout, "That's the moooon. Those are staaars."

In Greece, as elsewhere, Americans are viewed as generous, friendly people. Chris found these qualities in the people he met on Falmouth's Main Street. Maurice Appel, owner of Appel's Drug Store, John Fackos of the Tsiknas store, Frank Gonsalves, a frequent visitor in all the Main Street stores, "Ike" Issokson, son of the founder of Issokson's clothing store, Ray Williams, bartender at the Midtown – these are just a few of the many people who offered him words of encouragement and welcome and,

when needed, sound advice. Chris was also fortunate to have the support of his uncle and aunt, Charles and Helen Kanellos.

Forlorn Moments

But occasionally immigrants experience what the Portuguese call *saudade* and the Greeks call *xenitia* – the longing for the familiar things of one's native land. This feeling gripped Chris one summer night after he had closed the restaurant. Seeking companionship, he visited Christo Kapopoulos, a Greek-American who had operated the Falmouth Hotel with his wife Kyriakoula (or Kay) since 1953 on the corner of Shore Street, not far from the Midtown. Christo and Kay and their four young daughters welcomed Chris when he first arrived in Falmouth and made him feel like one of the family. Christo was happy to have company; a leg he had broken some weeks before was still encased in a heavy cast and he was restless.

Christo, born in New Bedford of Greek immigrant parents, had been immersed in Greek culture all his life. He had grown up in a house that was a stone's throw from the Greek Orthodox Church, a guarantee that he would attend "Greek school" each evening for two hours after his regular public school day. As a result of several years of strict instruction, Christo is able to speak, read, and write Greek. His wife, Kay, also a first-generation American, has a similar background. On the night of Chris' visit, she poured out a small glass of ouzo for each of the men, put down a plate of *mezethakia* (savory appetizers) and bid them good night.

The men sipped a little ouzo and talked of old times – Chris' boyhood in Greece, Christo's in New Bedford. Once they were able to recall one folk song, others came tumbling forth. The ouzo worked its

wonder on their vocal chords, and soon they were singing the old, familiar songs of unrequited love and implacable fate. Then came the rousing ballads known as *klephtika*, those traditional poems in praise of bravery in battle. One folk song was a spirited dance, a *tsamiko*. To dance at this point was obligatory. All went well until Christo tried to add a classical flourish to the dance by slapping his foot with the palm of his hand. He came crashing down. The balladeers spent the next few hours quietly, hoping that the leg had not been damaged.

A Meeting – By Chance?

Unlike the other Greeks who found a country village when they came to Falmouth, Chris found a sophisticated community. Many Falmouth residents have traveled widely. They enjoy preparing and eating ethnic foods and are eager to learn about other cultures. Chris also found a well-established Greek Orthodox Church on Cape Cod and a large community of assimilated Greek-Americans. One day he met a Greek-American who would play a significant role in his life. He relates the story:

I stopped by St. George's Greek Orthodox Church in Hyannis to chat with Father Spyros Mourkis. While I was there, he had another visitor – a young woman who had brought prosforo, a loaf of bread used for holy communion. Her mother baked this bread for the church as did other women of the parish. The visitor was Barbara Nanos. Father Mourikis introduced us, but there was not much that we could say; I knew very little English and her Greek was, as she said, "rusty." We did discover a mutual interest in Greek poetry, especially the poetry of Constantine Cavafy. I guess I impressed her because I knew the Greek version of one of her favorite poems, "Waiting for

the Barbarians." I had learned it in high school. We began seeing each other and, as they say, the rest is history. We were married in 1963. Whenever we see Father Mourikis, we are reminded of the prosforo, the Communion bread that brought us together. Barbara taught English at Falmouth High School for many years. She retired in 1986. From 1986 to 1997 we managed the restaurant together.

Community Meeting Place

Through the years, Christopher's Restaurant provided a meeting place for community organizations like the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) and the League of Women Voters of Falmouth. Fundraisers and receptions for political candidates were frequent. When Michael Dukakis ran for reelection in 1982, the Democratic Town Committee organized a fundraiser at Christopher's. It was held outside in the parking lot on a very warm day in July. The Governor was to appear at 2:00 pm.

Dancers in a long line swayed to the rhythms of the Greek music while passing motorists gaped. Drinks in hand, people clustered in small groups laughing and talking. A long buffet

table displayed moussaka, pasticchio, roast lamb, Greek salads, stuffed grapeleaves, and, of course, baklava. The restaurant chef and his assistants were lined up behind the buffet, waiting to serve the hungry crowd. The only thing missing was the guest of honor – Governor Dukakis. His car was tied up in traffic at the Bourne Bridge. He arrived two hours late, apologized, and immediately joined the line of dancers. Less than a year later, the Jeremiah Cahir highway was completed, greatly improving the flow of traffic. No one can convince Dick Kendall, who had been at the Governor's fundraiser, that there was no connection between the Governor's encounter with Cape Cod traffic and the rapid completion of the project.



Governor Dukakis arrived two hours late and immediately joined the line of dancers. July 24 1982. Courtesy Christos Kanellopoulos.



Governor Michael Dukakis with Barbara and Christos Kanellopoulos. Chef Richard Maranhao on left, Chef James Bentley on right. July 24 1982. Courtesy Christos Kanellopoulos.

Some people will always associate Christopher's with the annual Christmas Parade organized by the Falmouth Chamber of Commerce. Starting at the Falmouth Mall, the parade passed Christopher's on

its way down Main Street. Crowds gathered in the large parking lot to view the parade. Here the Falmouth Community Television van was stationed, staffed by dedicated volunteers who captured the pa-

rade events live on camera. The Christmas party at which awards were given to the best floats was held inside the restaurant after the parade.

When Hurricane Bob struck in 1991, Christopher's Restaurant lost electric power as did practically every place in town. But Christopher's had what the ComElectric Company needed for the many repair crews who were working around the clock – food! Power was quickly restored to the restaurant, and all restaurant hands were called in to help. For what seemed like weeks, groups of twenty or thirty hungry men and women filled the restaurant. One night, just as the restaurant was closing, Chris Kanellopoulos saw the familiar yellow trucks pull in to the parking lot. There were about fifty ComElectric workers. He and the remaining cooks

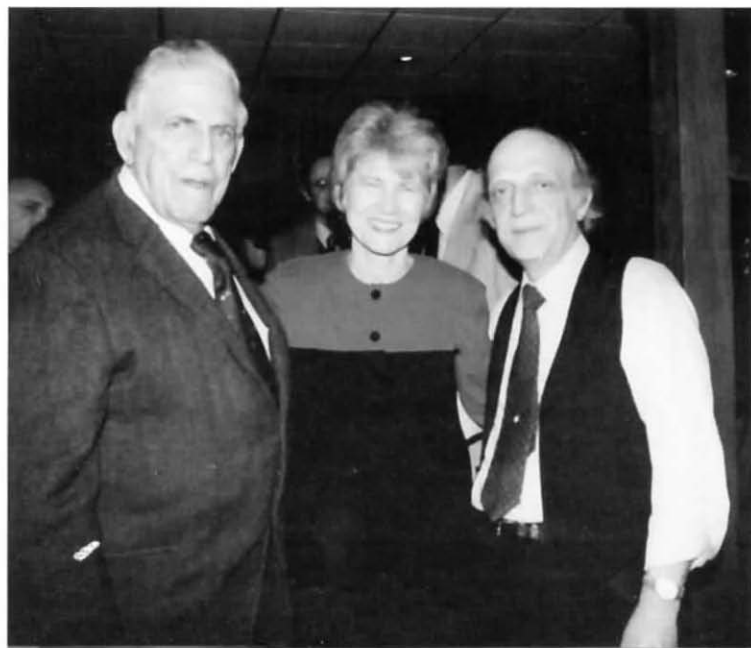
took off their coats and rolled up their sleeves. They made and served about one hundred cold but hearty roast beef sandwiches. When dessert was served – cold milk and all the pie and pudding left in the refrigerator – Chris telephoned some of his suppliers to arrange a few quick deliveries for the next day.

Preserving Their Greek Heritage

Both the early Greek immigrants and those who came later embraced American culture and assimilated with remarkable success. They never wanted that success to mean that they would lose their ethnic and religious identities, however. They tried to hold onto the traditions of Greek Orthodoxy, Greek culture, and the Greek language. This was difficult to do on Cape Cod in the early years. The Greek population was sparse. Greek families from the Cape

traveled to New Bedford to attend the one Greek Orthodox church in that city. They knew that they needed their own church on Cape Cod to retain their heritage and pass it on to their children.

It took years of planning and fundraising – with the full participation of Falmouth families – but, finally, the St. George Greek Orthodox Church opened its doors in Hyannis in 1947 with the Reverend Father Spyros Mourikis as the officiating priest. In addition to his clerical duties, Father Mourikis gave Greek language lessons. The church became an important social and cultural center as well as a place of worship, bringing Greek families together and encouraging them to retain their religious and cultural traditions.



Victory celebration for local Democrats with Lt. Governor Evelyn Murphy at Christopher's. l. to r. Manuel Rapoza, mainstay of the Falmouth Democratic party, Evelyn Murphy, Lt. Governor 1987-1990, and Christos Kanellopoulos. July 29, 1989. Courtesy Christos Kanellopoulos.

The Greek population on Cape Cod outgrew the small church in Hyannis and, in 1983, a larger church in the neo-Byzantine style was built in Centerville. Reverend Father Spyros Mourikis continued as officiating priest until his retirement in 1995. The Reverend Father Panayiotis Giannakopoulos is the officiating priest at the present time.

The Greek Orthodox Church has played a significant role not only in preserving Greek culture but also in spreading that culture to other Americans. Greek Orthodox Church festivals have become well known throughout the United States. At these festivals, usually held on church grounds, Americans of all backgrounds enjoy Greek music and dancing, Greek food, and Greek arts and crafts. A high point of the summer on Cape Cod is The Grecian Festival of the St. George Greek Orthodox Church which will be held in 1999 in Centerville on July 16th, 17th and 18th.

More Greek than Irish

Ethnic traditions are very effectively spread by people themselves. The Tsiknas and Hatzikon families lived in friendly neighborhoods on Shore Street and Queen Street. The "Greekness" of the adults was a natural part of the environment as were the various ethnic backgrounds of their neighbors. Alice Murphy grew up on Shore Street; the Hatzikon and Tsiknas children were her playmates. She recalls the fun she had learning Greek folk dances. Mrs. Hatzikon arranged the young girls in a circle in her living room, put Greek records on the phonograph, and taught them how to form the intricate steps in time with the rhythmic music. Alice learned to make Easter bread – long braided loaves of mastic-flavored sweet bread. There were picnics at Acapesket where she learned to enjoy flavorful Greek food, the names of

which she pronounces correctly and with ease. She was able at one time to read the Greek words in one of the children's primers. How did she acquire such facility with the Greek language? "Sometimes," she explains, "I feel like I am more Greek than Irish."

The Last of the Line

The Greeks who owned and operated businesses in Falmouth in the early 1900s were pioneers. They worked hard, lived honorable and productive lives, gained entrance into American society, and did their best to keep alive their culture and traditions. Others came later and had their own adjustments to make but they, too, worked hard. All of them can be proud of their significant contributions to the local economy. These men and their families can be proud of something less tangible but just as important – the pleasure they brought to hundreds of people over the years. People remember those pleasures: the Candy Kitchen's vanilla creams for a penny; Louis Hatzikon's annual gift of an Easter egg; Ernest Helmis' complimentary after-dinner liqueur; John Karalekas' sweet and juicy peaches; Chris Kanellopoulos' flaky spanakopita. Members of the younger generation, full Americans now, are not eager to work as hard as they worked. They have their own goals and are creating their own futures.

The old stores are gone; the white aprons have been carefully folded and put away.

Barbara Kanellopoulos was born in Waltham of Greek Orthodox parents. She attended Northeastern University and Bridgewater State College, earning a B.S. in Education; and went on to earn her Masters in Education at Harvard University. She taught English at Cape Cod Community College for ten years, then taught English and developmental Reading at Falmouth High School 1973-1986. With her husband, Chris, she managed Christopher's Restaurant 1986-1997. They have two children, Anastasia Kanellopoulos Karplus and Paul Kanellopoulos, and one grandson, Christos.