

Cooking up a sweet legacy in Martinsville

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"There's an old saying," says Jan Poulos, son of the late Louis Poulos, long-time owner of the Rushville Candy Shop. "Two Greeks meet and they open a candy store." In Indiana, Greek emigrants proved this true by helping each other establish businesses that thrived through the 1960s, when customers moved to suburban homes and patronized suburban businesses. Today, the Martinsville Candy Kitchen, opened in 1919 by James Zapapas, remains a sweet legacy of the state's immigrant history.

From 1890 to 1920, an estimated 186,000 Greeks came to the United States; most were male, rural adolescents. Many emigrated to escape an economic depression, others for more personal reasons. Demetrius Costonos Zapapas, known as Jim, didn't desire a future in his uncle's grocery store in Greece, so he sailed to New York in 1913, arriving a few weeks after his seventeenth birthday. He spoke no English but carried a note directing him to a friend's brother in a suburb of St. Louis. He was soon apprenticed to a Greek confectioner in St. Louis. Zapapas's experience was shared by countless young Greek emigrants; established Greeks in America vouched for their character, provided a place of residence, and helped to secure employment.

From 1913 to 1916, Zapapas lived in an apartment over the store and learned the candy-making trade. He was established enough by 1916 to sponsor his cousin, Nick Banos, who arrived in St. Louis to apprentice to the same confectioner. By that time, Zapapas had left for Indianapolis to operate a "shoestrung store" of his own at 364 Mas-



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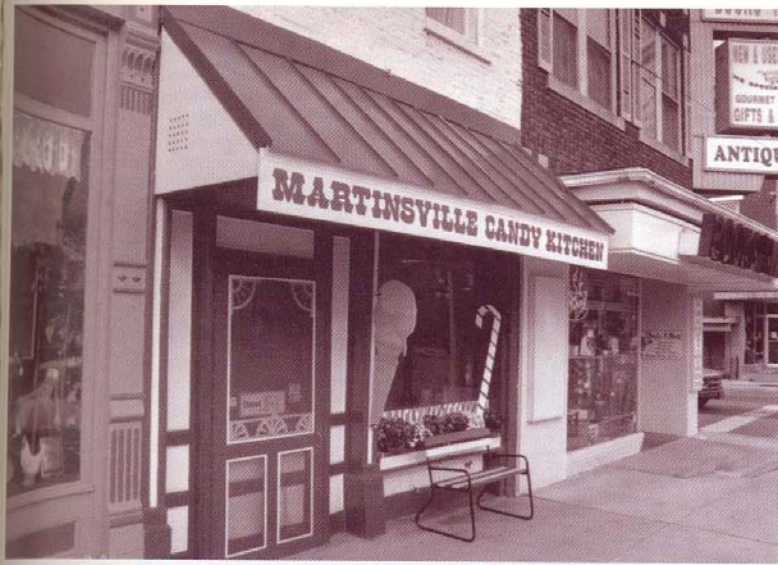
The late Jim Zapapas perfected the technique for rolling and twisting the famous candy canes that would become the trademark of the Martinsville Candy Kitchen. Like many Greek immigrants, Zapapas learned his trade as an apprentice after moving to the U.S. when he was just 17 years old.

sachusetts Avenue (now a parking lot). Starting one's own store required little capital, and candy-makers usually rented existing commercial buildings in downtown areas.

By 1919, Zapapas had followed the booming sanitation trade to Martinsville. Even in a small-town Indiana competition was keen. When Zapapas arrived in Martinsville, the town already had two Greek-owned confectioneries: the Greek Candy Store operated by Louis Poulos and a partner, and the Cargakos candy store on Main Street owned by Nicholas Cargakos. Zapapas appears to have worked briefly at the Greek Candy Store, though before Christmas 1919, he had bought the Cargakos business, renamed it the Martinsville Candy Kitchen and advertised it as "newly remodeled with a sanitary soda fountain." By 1929, Poulos had departed for Rushville, leaving the Candy Kitchen the sole confectioner in Martinsville. The shop was very popular with sanitarian guests, who dropped in for ice cream and bought candy

by the boxful to take or send home. Zapapas sold the Martinsville Candy Kitchen in 1965, before the effects of suburbanization hit downtown Martinsville. His cousin Nick Banos and friend and former competitor Louis Poulos didn't fare so well.

Like many first-generation Greek immigrants, Banos and Poulos hung on to their stores until old age weakened them and the changing times made their buildings and businesses a thing of the past. They discouraged their children from following them in the business because of the long hours and hard physical labor, and in the end, their



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businesses simply closed. Banos—
 attracted by Hoosier basketball and
 Franklin's Wonder Five team—settled
 in Franklin and operated the Franklin
 Candy Kitchen from 1922 to 1983,
 when the store's contents were sold at
 public auction. Despite local preserva-
 tion efforts, the building was torn
 down to make way for a parking lot.
 Pealos owned his building in
 Nashville. He moved his candy shop
 to a garage at the rear of the building
 and rented out the storefront. The
 Pealos store closed in 1986; the build-
 ing now houses a jeweler, and the
 garage is used for storage.

Now in its third location, the
 Martinsville Candy Kitchen is in a
 leased, c.1860 two-story brick com-
 mercial building painted white with
 peppermint red details and trim. A
 local man owns the building, but the
 store owners maintain it. Behind the
 glass storefront, workers make candy
 in a small area separated from custom-

• **P**assers-by and custom-
 • **e**rs can watch Candy
 • **K**itchen workers using
 • **Z**apapas's time-honored
 • **m**ethods to create the
 • **s**ore's many treats.

ers by a Plexiglas wall. An 1800-pound
 marble slab, a copper kettle, and a
 Vulcan gas stove are still the primary
 candy-making equipment.

Store owners Karen Boyce and
 Molly Singleton turn out an assortment
 of sweet treats including fudge, divini-
 ty, gels, dipped chocolates, caramels,
 pecan logs, and my favorite, cinna-
 mon-coated divinity logs. One speci-
 alty is Komstock, white taffy pulled
 on a wall-mounted hook. Local tales
 say the taffy is named for an India-
 napolis confectioner who operated



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• **C**losing downtown
 • **h**igh schools hurt the
 • **b**usiness of many down-
 • **t**own candy shops and
 • **s**oda fountains, who
 • **s**erved students lunch
 • **a**nd after-school treats.

three candy shops and
 pushcarts around Monu-
 ment Circle. But the special
 attraction at the Candy
 Kitchen, especially this time
 of year, are the hand-rolled
 and -twisted candy canes
 made by long-time former
 owner Ken Addington.

Nearly all the candy is
 made from recipes passed down from
 Zapapas, under whom Addington and
 his wife Jean were apprenticed for
 almost three years. Zapapas taught
 Addington to make candy canes, and
 Addington is teaching Boyce and
 Singleton. It takes several years of
 experience to turn sugar syrup cooked
 to 300 degrees into snowy white and
 red peppermint canes. For those who
 don't like peppermint, the Martinsville
 Candy Kitchen makes canes in 19
 other flavors. Peppermint remains the
 favorite, with cinnamon gaining.

Over the years, the confectionery
 business has changed very little. Inno-
 vations have occurred in candy-mak-
 ing, such as powdered albumen,
 which assures a candy's quality better
 than fresh egg whites, but the methods
 remain the same. State food laws have
 also brought changes; once Zapapas
 hung unwrapped candy canes in the
 front window, but now they must be
 wrapped. Despite the passage of
 years, all roads still lead to candyland
 on Martinsville's Main Street.

*Martinsville Candy Kitchen, 90
 North Main Street, Martinsville; 765-
 342-6390; call for times of candy
 cane-making demonstrations.*