



OBJECT ID	2008.32.1
OBJECT NAME	Trunk
DATE CREATED	1920s
MATERIAL	Leather; Metal; Wood
OBJECT ENTITIES	Fotopoulos, Peter and Mary (owned by) Fotopoulos, Peter (is related to) Fotopoulos, Panagiotis (is related to)
ACCESS POINTS	Panagiotis Fotopoulos Peter Fotopoulos Travel trunk

OBJECT DESCRIPTION

Green painted wood trunk with metal corners/brackets and hardware.

"P. Fotopoulos Chicago" hand painted on side of trunk.

Sticker for New York and letter F inside of red and yellow crest on side.

The interior of the trunk is "upholstered" with blue and white floral print fabric. A box with lid and open drawer sit inside the trunk.

ORIGIN

Panagiotis (Peter) Fotopoulos, Psari, Korinthos

Born either in 1896 or it may have been 1893 according to records of pension and Social Security. Most of Peter's birth records had been destroyed in Psari by the Germans. He came to the US in 1910 with a person that was much older than him. We don't know who that was or much about that trip. We do know that he was to train directly from NY to Chicago and find another man from Psari. It took him one week to find this man and when he did find him,

he saw he was a drunk. He left him immediately and did odd jobs like shoe shining then drove cars pulled by horses transporting public. We believe him to be 14 yrs. old when he came to U.S. however we cannot seem to find records of any of his travels to Ellis Island.

Peter started working for the CTA, known as Chicago Surface Line (public transportation) back in 1913. He went back to Greece (after sending all the money he could muster up to set up a dowry for his sister in the village). Peter's arranged Mary was to Mary Stamatopoulos, also of Psari, in 1928. Peter was forced to return in 1928 without his new wife because her papers were taking too long and if he waited for her the CTA-CSL was going to fire him. So he came back alone, with Mary arriving on her own a few months later. We cannot find records for this journey that Peter took either. Is it possible he came in through Canada either in 1910 or 1928?

Mary was born in 1906 and had told us that it was a very long and scary trip for her, coming here without knowing a word of the English language.

She was very unhappy here in the U.S. and did not adjust too well because of the difficulty she had with the language and American customs. Peter was working 70-80 hours a week, it was the Great Depression and many people were out of work. She was very miserable and insisted she return to Greece to see her mother. She missed her, and was homesick. So she was ready to go to her homeland. Peter agreed, but as fate has it her mom died and the trip was canceled. This was in 1939 when Hitler went on his rampage in Europe and invaded Poland. His troops moved to other countries including Greece. Who can possibly know what would have happened to the Fotopoulos family had she gone back with her two young sons? George Peter Fotopoulos was born in 1932 and Jim Fotopoulos born three years later.

Peter finally took his much deserved pension from the CTA in 1958. Then he and Mary took their first trip back to Psari. Neither he nor Mary had seen their sisters or brothers in all those years; in fact papou was on the outs with his brother Evangelis Fotopoulos due to some family property issues. But they mended the relations during the visit of 1958 and had kept in close touch with frequent visits after that trip.

We suspect the trunk may have been used when they took their first trip back to visit Greece since arriving and making it through the difficult times since the late 1920s. Mary sewed a lot and we questioned whether she may have found a way to upholster the old trunk had it been used when one of them came alone in the 1920s. We don't suspect it came with Peter on the first trip he took back in 1910. It remained with them in the basement or garage storage until Mary, the last survivor of the two, passed away in 2004.

CITATION

Trunk, 1920s, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://collections.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 07/17/26.
