

OBJECT ID	2011.7.139
OBJECT NAME	Box
OBJECT COLLECTION	Alex's Candy Shop (is part of)
DATE CREATED	1920 – 1940
MATERIAL	Tin; Tissue ; Wax
OBJECT ENTITIES	Rassogianis/Franks families, By (owned by) Franks, Rassogianis; (is related to)

OBJECT DESCRIPTION

This tin is perfectly round and the lid has a Christmas sleigh scene covering the entire space. There is a small red house in the center of the tin surrounded by snow and some pine trees directly next to it. Behind the house are more trees but they are all bare. In the front of the house the parents are riding on a red sleigh pulled by two horses. They are waving to two children who are playing with a small dog and pulling a sled. The whole scene is pushed back and there are larger trees seemingly closer to the viewer like you are looking through them to the scene.

The sides of the container which are not part of the lid are an orangeish red color. It has rust in various places . The bottom and inside of the canister are the normal silver color of the tin. There are multiple rust stains and darker areas that are from either dirt or use but most of the surface is still the shiny finish of the metal.

ORIGIN

Paulina Franks' grandfather, John Rassogianis, came to Chicago in the 1890s. He began his life in the new city by peddling fruits and later, with the help of his sons Alex and George, would open a candy store. In the 1920s Paulina Franks' father Constantine became a part of the family business and the store was able to prosper. When the second business closed Paulina Rassogianis chose to hold as many of the candy store's items as possible and, later, donate them to the National Hellenic Museum.

The Rassogianis family began their candy business in Chicago proper, working out of their own shop named "St. Louis Ice Cream Parlor." Eventually, the shop was closed and the Rassogianis' chose to continue their candy store venture in Berwyn, Illinois. The new shop they chose to open was named Alex's Sweet Shop.

Paulina Franks' father was a key contributor to the success of the Rassogianis candy stores. While Constantine Rassogianis was a noteworthy entrepeneur, he also had many other accomplishments. Among these was his four years of involvment in the Greek national military during World War I wherein he obtained the rank of sergeant. Also, he was a published author and poet, an experienced mandolin player, a church officer and had extensive knowledge of psalti.

In today's market, the most collectible tins are those from the 1920s through the 1960s. These tins were produced in such large quantities that they are still easy to find and in today's market we can see a revival of the tin as a collectible.
In 1810, fellow Frenchman Pierre Durand (also known by his English name, Peter Durand) was granted a patent from King George III for the idea of preserving food. He then created the first "tin" container which was made of iron coated with tin to prevent rusting and corrosion, and it could be sealed to make it made airtight, but it was not breakable like glass. The earliest tins were laboriously made by hand. Iron was pounded into sheets and dipped into molten tin. The resulting tinplate was then soaked in brine baths. Using considerable skill and muscle, artisans cut the sheets into the required body parts and ends. The body pieces were bent around a mould or hammered into a die, while the seams and ends were soldered in place. Some tins were real artifacts with embossed and beautifully painted decorations. This process allowed even the most skilled workers to only make about ten ordinary food cans per day, let alone the special editions of tins which required much more time and craftsmanship. The tins often contained commodities such as tea, tobacco, coffee, spices, chocolate and snuff.

By about 1850 Britain had become the dominant world supplier of tin plate, through a combination of technical innovation and political control over most of the suppliers of tin ore. The British biscuit tin came about when the Licensed Grocer's Act of 1861 allowed groceries to be individually packaged and sold. Coinciding with the removal of the duty on paper for printed labels; printing directly on to tinplate became common. The new process of offset lithography, patented in 1877 allowed multicolored designs to be printed on to exotically shaped tins. The earliest decorated biscuit tin was commissioned in 1868 by Huntley & Palmers, a Quaker firm in Reading, England of De La Rue. By 1900, Huntley and Palmers was the largest biscuit manufacturer in the world. Early methods of printing included the transfer process (essentially the method used to decorate porcelain and pottery since about 1750) and the direct lithographic process, which involved laying an inked stone directly on to a sheet of tin. Its disadvantage was that correct color registration was difficult. The breakthrough in decorative tin plate production was the invention of the offset lithographic process. It consists of bringing a sheet of rubber into contact with the decorated stone, and then setting-off the impression so obtained upon the metal surface. Any number of colors could be used, correctly positioned, and applied to an uneven surface if necessary. Thus the elaborately embossed, colorful designs that were such a feature of the late Victorian biscuit tin industry became technically possible.

The most exotic designs were produced in the early years of the 20th century, just prior to the First World War. In the 1920s and 1930s, costs had risen substantially and the design of biscuit tins tended to be more conservative, with the exception of the tins targeted at the Christmas market and intended to appeal primarily to children which this tin was made to do. The designs generally reflected popular interests and tastes. The advent of the Second World War stopped all production of decorative tin ware and after it ended in 1945, the custom did not enjoy the same popularity as before.

Tin containers now have been replaced by tin-free steel which is given a tin coating, usually as thin as a human hair, to prevent rusting. Protective (plastic) coatings applied to the inside of the cans ensure the integrity of the contents, allowing tins to hold a wide variety of products. Except for the day-to-day food cans, the tin is nowadays a marketing tool, giving the product a luxury image. Although they are still being made, the tins from earlier decades are more sought after as collectors' items.

CITATION

Box, 1920 – 1940, Alex's Candy Shop, *National Hellenic Museum*, https://collections.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/Detail/objects/. Accessed 11/10/26.