



OBJECT ID	2011.7.166A
OBJECT NAME	Mortar
OBJECT COLLECTION	Alex's Candy Shop (is part of)
DATE CREATED	1920 – 1940
MATERIAL	Wood
OBJECT ENTITIES	Rassogianis/Franks families, By (owned by) Franks, Rassogianis; (is related to)

#### OBJECT DESCRIPTION

Small wooden mortar from a mortar and pestle set. This is the bowl and it appears to be lighter than the pestle. The outside of the bowl is rougher than the inside and not as heavily stained. The natural grain of the wood is visible as are the nicks that are commonly present in this material. The inside of the mortar is darker in the very center due to use and staining of the wood. In one area there are also scratches in the wood, presumably from the pestle scraping directly against the surface. The bottom is completely flat and the entire thing is its natural color, without any staining or engravings.

#### 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 entrepreneur, he also had many other accomplishments. Among these was his four years of involvement 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.

The history of mortars and pestles were actually first used around 35,000 years B.C. as dated from the earliest ones found. They are traditionally used in food preparation, as this one was, as well as for pharmaceutical purposes. Usually made of hard wood, marble, stone, bamboo, iron, steel, glass, porcelain, brass, and basalt. The materials must be hard enough to crush the substance rather than be worn away by it and strong enough so they will not break. Smooth and non-porous materials are chosen so that they will not absorb or trap the substances being ground, otherwise the taste from a previous preparation will be noticeable in the food.

#### CITATION

Mortar, 1920 – 1940, Alex's Candy Shop, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://collections.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 04/25/24.

