

## A Brief History of Lefkas

In 2018 the Pan-Icarian Brotherhood Lefkas Chapter 16 is celebrating its 50th Anniversary. The chapter was founded in 1968 in Washington, D.C. and included the surrounding suburbs of Virginia and Maryland. We thank our founding members for their hard work and tireless efforts to establish our chapter. The torch has now been handed down to the next generation to lead the way.

In 1968, Gus Mavronicolas, was elected the first President of Lefkas.

Some would say he was the driving force behind the formation of our chapter. He with other fellow Ikarians would literally go door to door enlisting members. Lefkas did not have a chapter house in the early years so they met in various Ikarian homes and in various Ikarian restaurants around the Washington, D.C. area including the Ikaros restaurant in Georgetown, that was owned by Stelios Tsantes. Baltimore Ikarians soon joined in and they had to alternate meetings between Washington, D.C., Western Maryland and Baltimore.

The Ikarians came to Washington, D.C. to find work. They came with their families and they came without their families. Ikarians had learned about the chapter before they came and were eager to join! At that time Gus Mavronicolas along with Alexandros Ploutis, the first Vice President, ensured that any Ikarian that came to town was welcomed and registered as a member of the chapter.

*Our first female  
President,  
Angela Koutsoutis.*



*Gus Mavronicolas, founding father of Lefkas*

In 1971, three years after they began the chapter, Lefkas would host its first convention in Washington. Alex Ploutis was the only Lefkas chapter member to attend the prior convention and convinced everyone he knew to vote for Lefkas to host the upcoming convention. Everyone was surprised and anxious.

Gus Mavronicolas was elected the convention chair. The convention was held at the Mayflower Hotel (a historic landmark) on Connecticut Avenue, NW.



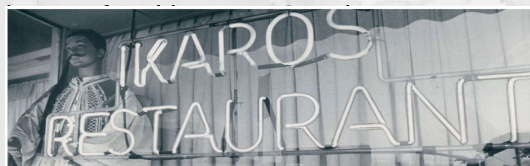
*The Mayflower Hotel, location of 1971 Convention*

Prior to Lefkas the Ikarians would drive to the Atheras chapter meetings in Philadelphia. The ladies continued to do that up until 1975. That year, a motion by Theodossios Kohilas was voted on to allow females to become members of the chapter. The women had only gathered before to assist with domestic tasks but that would soon change. The same year, the first female President was elected, Angela Koutsoutis.

After several years the population of Ikarians in Baltimore grew and the meetings stayed predominantly in Baltimore. Meetings were often held at the Ikaros restaurant, owned by Theodossios Kohilas on one basic principle, that none of the members would argue amongst themselves. He allowed Lefkas members to meet in his restaurant once a month on Sunday afternoons. Brother Kohilas ensured there was complimentary coffee and desserts on every table. Back then, the meetings were “a packed house”. Everyone happily came to the Ikaros restaurant for the monthly meeting, even Ikarians who were visiting family from out of town would stop by. After the meetings, everyone stayed for a delicious meal and everyone always would take food home with them because of their generous portions!

Ikarians always felt at home at the Ikaros Restaurant.

In the early 1990's, a Leski was purchased in Baltimore, for members to meet. Which like Ikaros is located in the



*Ikaros restaurant in Greektown, Baltimore, MD*

**FUN FACT:** *The name Lefkas was chosen for the new chapter because it was founded in Washington, DC, home of the White House. Literally translated, the name Lefkas means “white.” In Icaria, Lefkas refers to the town of Lefkada Hot Springs near Glaredo. There, visitors can bathe in the hot saltwater which is said to be extremely beneficial for one's health especially dermatological and rheumatary disorder.*

In addition to the conventions it has hosted, the Lefkas chapter holds many events throughout the year outside of typical meetings for members to gather and spend time together. An annual dance is held annually to raise money for the chapter. Currently, the dances are held at the new Ikaros Restaurant. Members enjoy a fall picnic and crab feast, a formal Christmas dinner, an end of the year barbecue, participate in the annual Greek Independence Day parade, attend Washington Nationals and Baltimore Orioles baseball games, and occasionally a Greek exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of Art. We currently have 97 paid members and still growing!

*Contributors to this article:  
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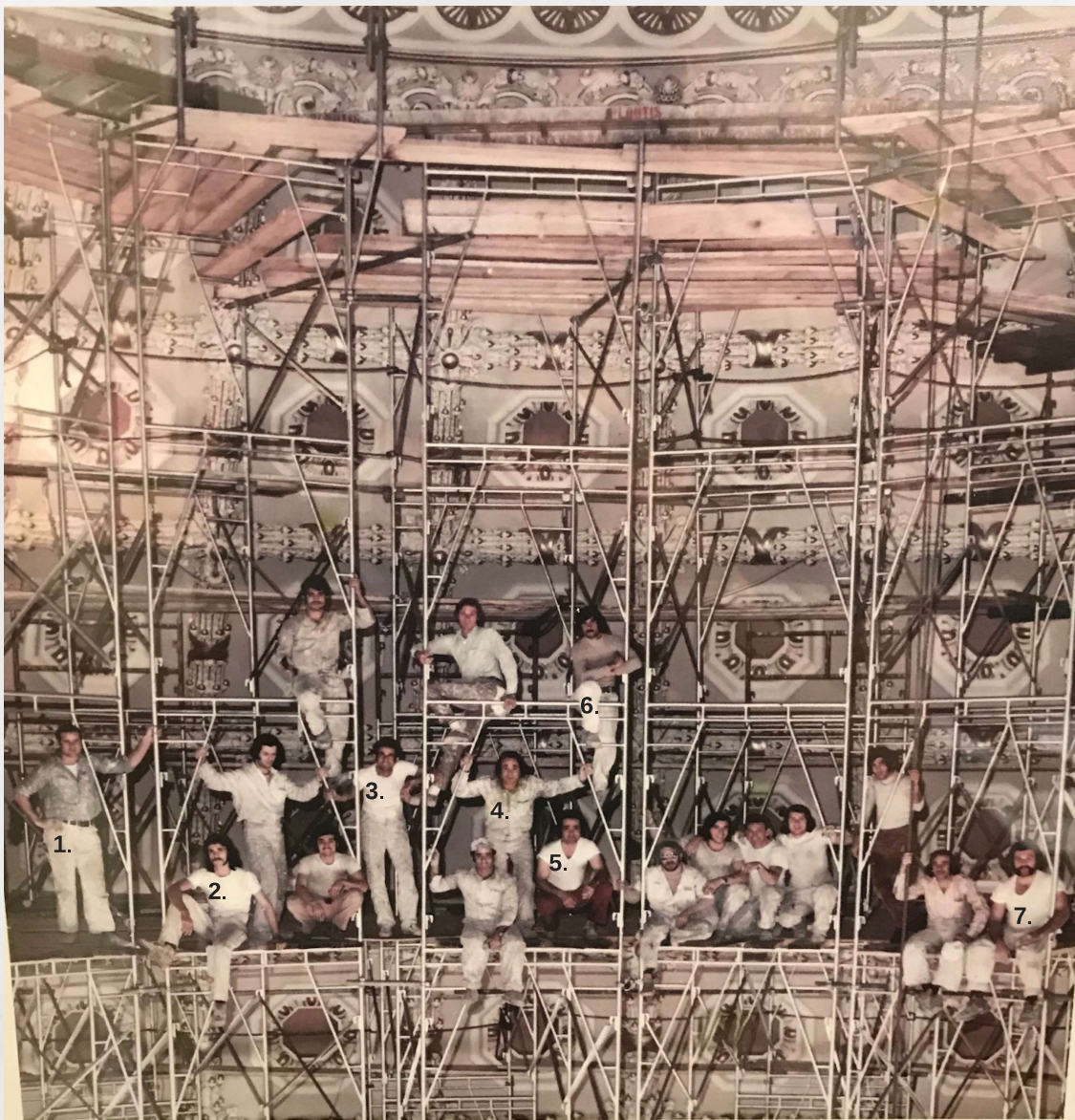
## **The Leaders & Founders of Chapter Lefkas No. 16**

### ***Founding Members: Washington DC***

Christos Fradelos	Gus Mavronicolas
John Glaros	Stanley Pardos
George Kanakopoulos	Christos Plakas
James Karafas	Alex Ploutis
Kosta Karafas	Chris Tsarnas
Steve Karafas	Stellios Zizis

### ***Founding Members: Baltimore, MD***

Nickolas Klikos	Costas Kouvaris
Theodossios Kohilas	Costas Manolis
Chris Kokinos	James Markakis
Peter Koutsoutis	Nick Markakis
Socrates Koutsoutis	James Mastrogeorge
	Avgerinos Mavrophilipos



1. Leonidas Karoutsos, 2. Vasilis Sirigas, 3. George Kavarligos, 4. Lambros Ploutis, 5. Alexandros Ploutis, 6. Louie Kavarligos, and 7. Alexandros Pylaras

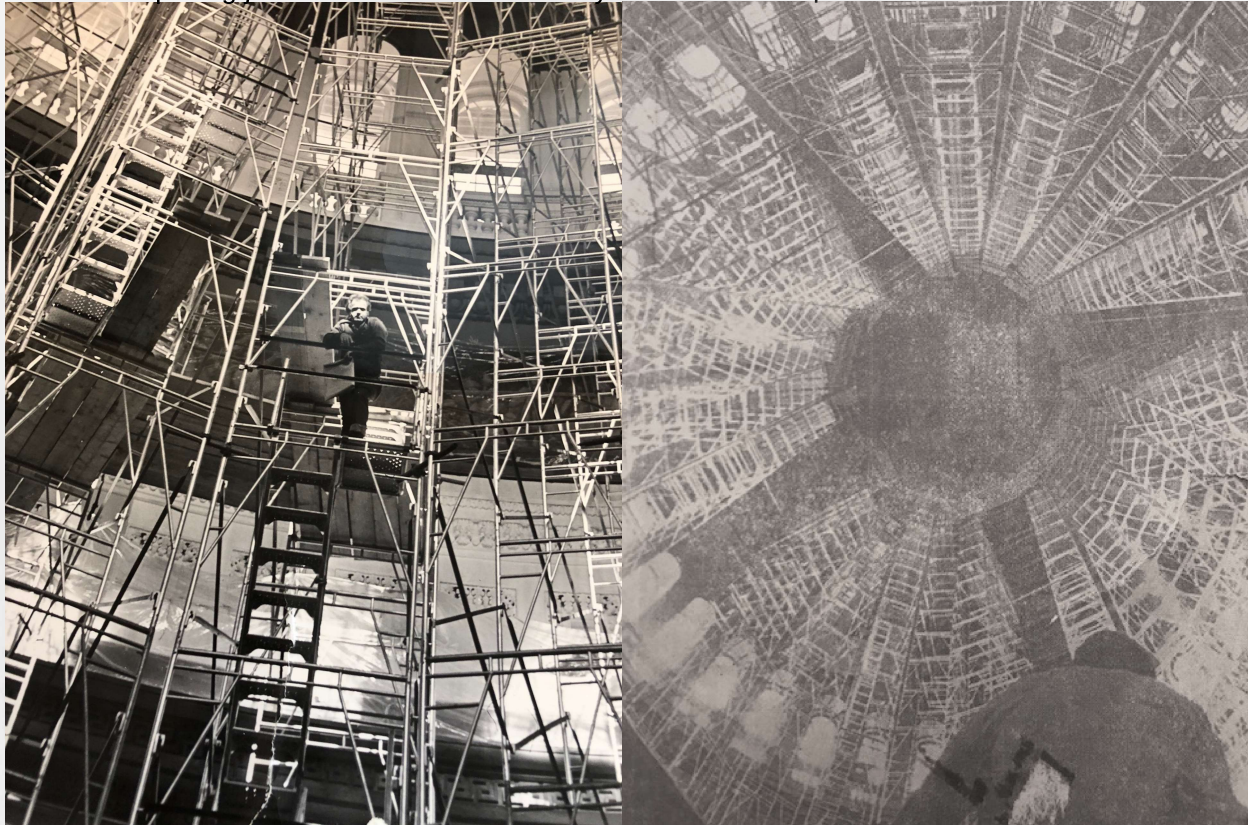
## From the island of Ikaria, to the top of the U.S. Capitol

By Athina Ploutis Kohilas

In 1974, the District of Columbia was preparing the city for the upcoming Bicentennial celebration in 1976. The Rotunda of the United States Capitol had only been painted and cleaned twice in 1905 and 1949. During the civil war, the Capitol was painted all white and used as a hospital. Twenty five years later it would be restored to its original colors from 1865. At the young age of 34, Alexandros Ploutis, had established Ploutis Painting into a reputable contracting company in the metropolitan area and won the bid on restoring the U.S. Capitol in preparation for the Bicentennial celebration. Ploutis Painting would be responsible in the scaffolding, cleaning, and painting of the Main Rotunda, Small Rotunda on the House Side, and Statuary Hall.

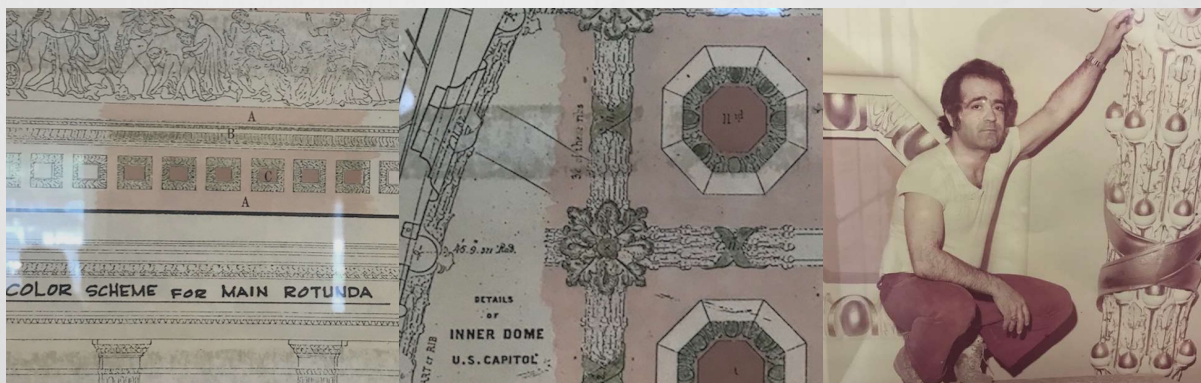
With a crew of Kariotes and Cypriots, these Greek Americans found themselves working diligently for the next six months to complete the restoration. Together they raised over a hundred feet of scaffolding to reach the medallions that decorated the interior of the dome to restore them to their original colors and with the use of gold leaf.

Alex Ploutis posing just below the domes balcony. Bottom view up of the scaffolds in the Inner dome.



The Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol is a large circular room 96 feet in diameter and 180 feet in height. The project was completed without any interruption to the normal daily business flow of the House, Congress, and thousands of tourists. George White, FAIA was appointed in 1971 as the Architect of the Capitol, and was truly impressed by their work and trusted worthiness. At the start of the project there were 20 security guards watching their every move but the security detail was reduced to just one security guard by the end of the project. Leonidas Karoutsos, Vasilis Sirigas, George Kavarligos, Louie Kavarligos, Lambros Ploutis, Alexandros Ploutis, and Alexandros Pylaras were all Kariotes living the American dream. They are all pictured 100 feet above ground proudly posing what would be the beginning of their many accomplishments of life in America.

The young men of Ikaria left their native homes and families to live the American dream. They were hungry for success and the opportunity to live a comfortable life. Most of these hard working men had jumped ship from Greek naval ships to seek a better life. Others traveled by plane not knowing what lay ahead but they all took that chance. As Kariotes they helped each other out. They knew who to call, where to go and who had work. Together they raised each other up to reach for the dreams they all shared. It took a village, literally.



Diagrams of the Main Rotunda consisting of 4 colors and gold leaf.

Alex Ploutis with details of dome.