

Earliest Ice Cream Stores of Windsor Locks by Mel Montemerlo

The people of Windsor Locks have had a long-standing love affair with ice cream. Ice cream stores have been a prominent fixture in Windsor Locks since before 1880. This article presents photographs and information about the earliest ice cream stores of Windsor Locks from about 1888 to about the 1930s. These “Mom an Pop” stores were owned and operated by Italian immigrants on Main Street. The next trend in ice cream stores was the national chains of stores such as Friendly’s in the 1950s. Still later came the introduction of soft ice cream at places like the Dairy Cream on Ella Grasso Turnpike, across from Bradley Field.

The original ice cream stores were:

- Dominick Alfano’s store, in the Barrett building on Main St., just south of Church St.
- Pasquale Colapietro’s store, in the Mather Block of Main St.
- Leo Viola’s store, in the Barrett building on Main St., just south of Church St.
- Vito Colapietro’s store, which at the Main St. level of Coly’s Hotel

The earliest of these was Dominick Alfano’s store in the corner of the Barrett. There is a photo of it which appeared in the Windsor Locks Journal of June 8, 1888. However in that photo, one could not identify the name on the store. A later photo shows the name in the front window, and shows some of the items that were for sale. In the window, you can see fruit, bread and canned items. If you look very closely, there are Moxie signs on the two windows on the left. Moxie was a precursor of Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola, and is still sold today.



Dominick Alfano Co. Ice cream shop, in the Barrett Building,
Corner of Main St and State St., just south of Church St.

Later, Leo Viola had a similar type of store in the exact same location. We know Mr. Viola owned the shop in 1913 because the 1913 Aero Map of Windsor Locks has a listing for him. All of the confectionary stores, including Leo Viola's sold a wide variety of goods, such as fruits, cigars, tobacco, groceries, confectionery, postal cards and toys, and imported olive oil.

Not far from Leo Viola's shop, was the shop of "Patsy Coly", whose' real name was Pasquale Colapietro. The photo of the interior of Patsy's shop shows not only Patsy's family, but also his ice cream counter, and the variety of items that he sold. You can see Patsy's talented dog, his daughter, his wife, and his brothers, Vito Colapietro and Leo Colapietro.



Pasquale Colapietro's store, Main St., Windsor Locks, Conn. about 1906.
Pasquale (seated), daughter, Pasqualina, Vito Colapietro,
Grazia (Patsy's wife), Leo Colapietro behind the counter.

As with most of the immigrants, the first to arrive in the U.S., often worked hard to bring family members here. Vito and Leo worked for Patsy for a while, and later started their own businesses. Leo started the Windsor Locks Macaroni Manufacturing Company. Vito bought the hotel across from the Railroad Station, and opened a confectionery shop on the ground floor of the hotel in 1917. See the 1917 photo of Vito in his store. Notice the similarity to Patsy's store.

Before Vito and Leo started their own businesses, they went back to Italy for a short time and found nice Italian girls. Both were married when they returned. Vito's store also served as his office for the hotel above the store.

If you would like to read the full article on the early ice cream stores of Windsor Locks, please go to my website where you can download it. The web address is:
windsorlockshistory.com