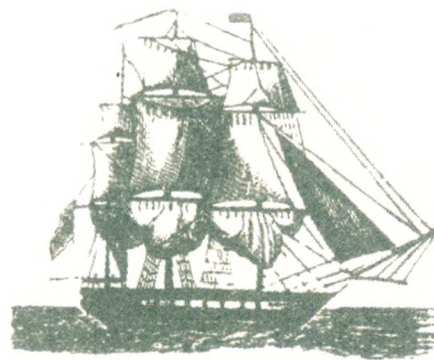


The Olive Press at Papados



YESTERDAY & TODAY



ARCHIPELAGOS SOCIETY

Archipelagos Society, a civil, non-profit organization founded in 1997, is dedicated to the protection of the sensitive Greek territory of the Aegean through cultural interventions and quality tourist development. The Society constantly strives to safeguard the nation's cultural heritage and promote the history, architecture and arts of the islands of the Greek archipelago.

Since its inception, the Society's president has been *Nikos Koundouros*, the distinguished film director. The Society's founding members include well-known personalities from the fields of arts, science and letters, like the late *Jules Dassin*, a film director of international repute and *Ms. Argini Goutou*, a leading exponent of folk culture; poet *Lefteris Papadopoulos*; Professor *Angelos Delivorrias*, Director of the Benaki Museum; architect and politician *Nikos Sifounakis*; University Professor *Nikos Margaritis*; *Giorgos Liontos*, legal consultant and Director of the Ministry of Culture; *Nikos Zouros*, Curator of the Museum of Lesvos Petrified Forest; historian *Evrydiki Sifnaiou*; doctors *Katerina Perlepe*, *Giannis Sifounakis* and *Thanasis Petridis*; directors *Loukia Rikaki*, *Manos Eustratiadis* and *Menelaos Karamagiolis*; research chemist *Nelli Kasdagli*; *Stratis Pothos*, former Chairman of the Lesvos Regional Council; architect *Nikos Nikolaidis*; entrepreneur *Giorgos Isigonis* and legal advisor *Alexis Stefanakis*.

Throughout its first decade of operation, the Archipelagos Society has been intensely active in pursuing its objectives. More specifically, the Society has issued numerous publications; organized exhibitions, congresses and cultural events; and taken the initiative for the preservation of historical memory, the protection of historic architecture and preservable monuments. It has also produced documentaries of historical and cultural content.

The Society has also carried out an array of cultural interventions in Lesvos and the Aegean basin, notably the commission of the bust of Nikolaos Plastiras erected at Kioski, Lesvos, and the statue of Eleftherios Venizelos, the liberator of Lesvos, set up in Kalloni. It also saw to the completion of construction and organization of the Soap-Making Museum at Plomari. Moreover, it filmed the documentary "Όπως φουσκώνει ο καφές και το σαπούνι" (*Bubbling like soap and Greek coffee*) and worked on the conservation of the film "Η δική μου Μυτιλήνη 1925-1927" (*My own Lesvos*), shot from 1925 to 1927. The Society has been particularly active in the reconstruction and restoration of monuments, such as the chancel screens in the *Church of Agia Triada* (Holy Trinity) and *Saint Dimitrios* at Myrina and Plaka of Lemnos respectively and that of *Saint Anthony* in the Venetian settlement at Prasses, Rethymno, Crete.

One of the Society's major interventions has been the preparation and supervision of the project for the restoration and redevelopment of the Venetian settlement at Prasses, Rethymno, in cooperation with the *Municipality of Rethymno* and the *Hellenic Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works*. The project is in progress and has been completed for the most part.

But the most ambitious project undertaken by the Society so far, which has just been completed, has been the restoration of the buildings and old mechanical equipment of the Vranas Olive Press in Papados, Lesvos – a fine example of historic architecture of the 19th century, established by the grandfather of Greece's great poet *Odysseas Elytis*. The olive press now belongs to the Society.

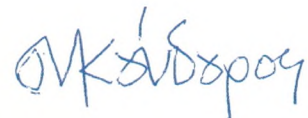
The olive press, after the complex is reconstructed and the original equipment restored, will be put into operation again, so that visitors can have a clear idea of olive-oil production in Lesvos from the end of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century. Apart from being re-assigned their primary functional role, all available areas of the olive press will be put to cultural use, reflecting the history and tradition of the island.

Dear Friends,

A land's soul is reflected on its unique nature and preserved in the living vestiges of its history and tradition, like this wonderful olive press that now takes on a new life. The *Archipelagos Society* aims to preserve and promote history and tradition through the remains granted to us as a legacy. For twelve years, a group of well-known individuals have been serving a common vision, despite the difficulties. We have been publishing books, producing movies, erecting statues, organizing exhibitions and congresses but, most of all, we have been trying to save and revive some monuments in danger.

This joint effort, but mostly the persistence and vision of *Nikos Sifounakis*, who is the Society's soul, brought us to Papados, a long time ago. It all started after the purchase of the *Vranas Olive Press*, ten years ago. The outcome stands before you today and justifies our decision. A wonderful building dating to the end of the 19th century is restored to its original form and now, after three years of incessant work, it can function again, bringing back the memories of the industrial peak of Lesvos, over 100 years ago.

I welcome you to the restored *Olive Press of the Archipelagos Society* - as it shall be called from now on - which bears witness to the innovative and noble endeavor for the revival of a monument that belongs to Lesvos and its people. Here, a dream comes true – and we ask you to share it with us.



NIKOS KOUNDOUROS
President of the Archipelagos Society

The restoration and reconstruction
of the Olive Press-Museum of the Archipelagos Society
was accomplished thanks to its incorporation in the
EUROPEAN PROGRAMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS



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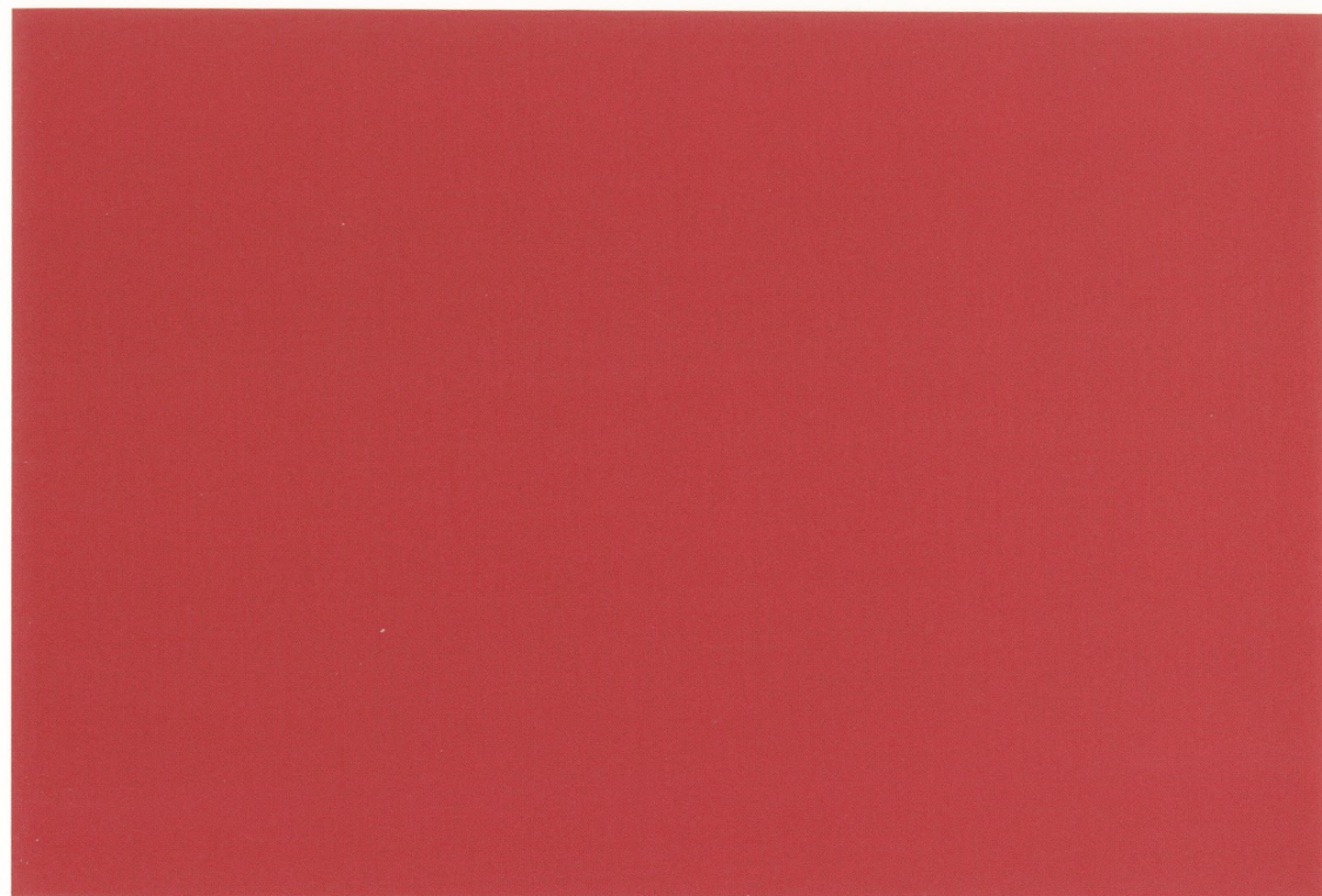
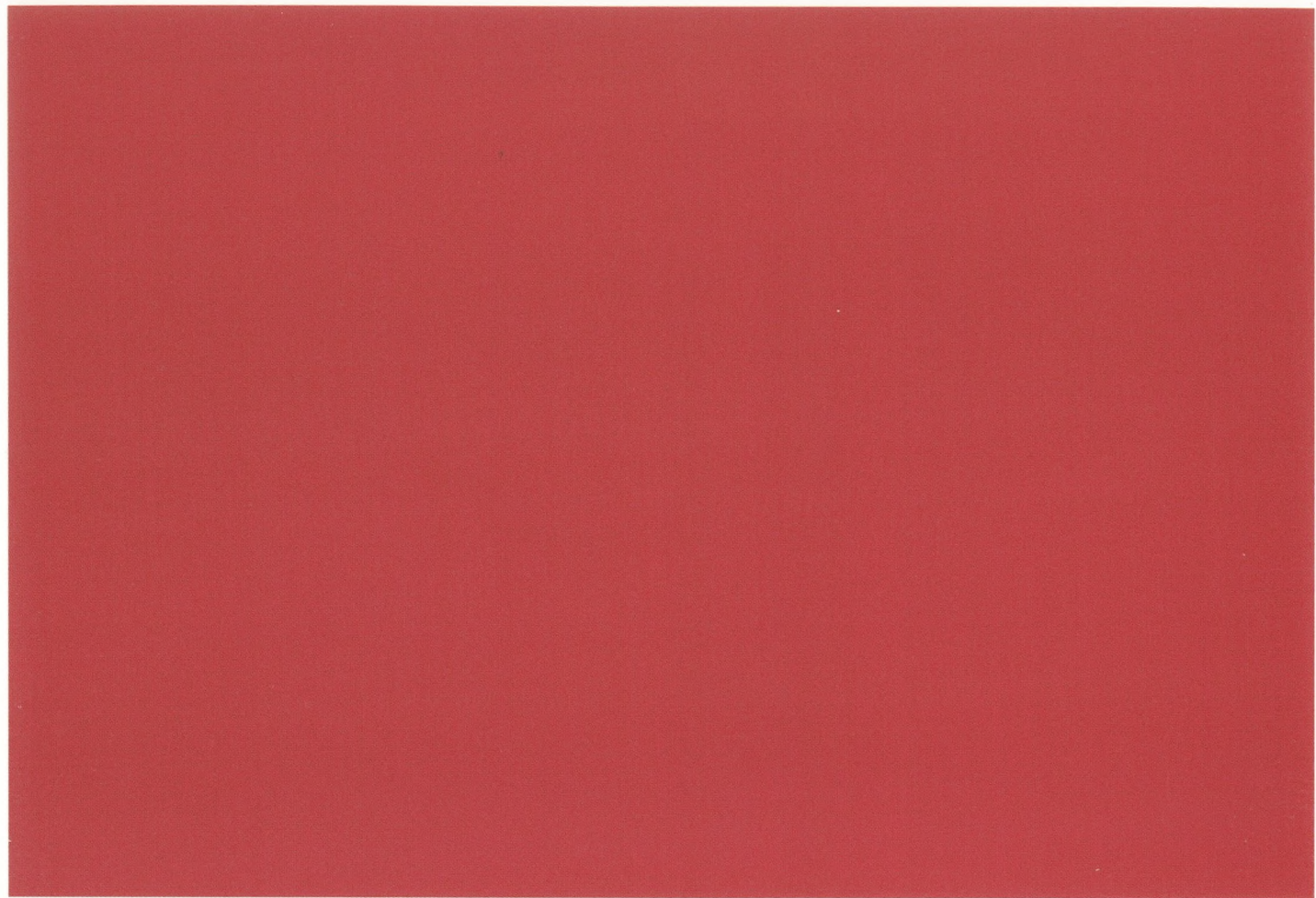
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TODAY







TODAY

island. He has turned public opinion away from the mundane realities of life and focused it on making further progress. Therefore, it is hardly coincidental that his ideas have been endorsed by personalities like *Jules Dassin*, *Nikos Koundouros*, *Angelos Delivorrias* and *Argini Goutou*, to mention just the better-known members of the great creative team of *Archipelagos*, which, as you may already know, has greatly benefited Lesvos, Lemnos and Crete. His crowning achievement has been the restoration of the *Vranas' Olive Press* at the village of *Papados*, Lesvos. I had been to this place many times in the summers that I have spent on Lesvos over the years but, of course, I could never imagine that this run-down facility would one day be miraculously transformed, with immense love and care, not only into a superb place, a *Museum of the Study and Research in Industrial History*, but also into a *model olive-oil standardization facility*.

Congratulations to all those who have contributed to this superb complex which, since its inception in 1887, has been associated with many prominent individuals, *Odysseas Elytis* being one of them.

Lefteris Papadopoulos

[The poet Lefteris Papadopoulos is a founding member and Vice-President of the Archipelagos Society]



Today...

The olive press, which was founded by *Vranas Nikolaou* at *Papados*, Gera, about 130 years ago, has been restored and converted into a museum. This has been the most challenging and ambitious project ever undertaken by *Archipelagos Society*, a non-profit organization, in its twelve years of operation. Since its inception, the Society has contributed to the cultural, tourist and production development of the Aegean in a number of ways.

The Vranas Olive Press, which closed down in the mid-1970s and fell into years of disuse, was eventually acquired in 1999 by five members of the Society who, six years later, donated it to the *Archipelagos Society* so that this historical industrial complex could be preserved and converted not only into a museum dedicated to the study of industrial history, but also into a model organic olive-oil standardization facility.



Lefteris Papadopoulos talks about today...

TODAY

Nobody could imagine a few decades ago that the abandoned run-down olive presses and soap-making facilities on Lesvos could one day be transformed into outstanding cultural centres – venues for theatrical performances, musicals events, exhibitions and conferences· places where art and dreams can thrive.

It is truly amazing how these derelict industrial buildings, once overflowing with rubbish and waste, have given way to unique structures, both in terms of functionality and aesthetic value, which have become an integral part of life in their locality and proved a valuable source of inspiration.

Mr. Sifounakis is largely credited with this astonishing achievement. When I first met him, a young architect and newly appointed prefect at the time, he struck me – right from the start, after our first few conversations – as a man with innovative ideas and a vision he was clearly intent on fulfilling. And so he did, either by engaging local communities in constructive dialogue and spurring them into concerted action, or by openly confronting them, when needed. He has succeeded in getting islanders to reconsider their way of thinking and convinced them to put their own personal interests aside, joining forces for the general good and prosperity of the



The donation was followed shortly afterwards by a study for the restoration and conversion of this historical industrial monument into a museum, which was completed in 2005.

The restoration work, which began in the following year and lasted for almost three years (2006-2009), was in keeping with the simple unadorned architectural style of the stone facility, built around a splendid atrium and dominated by a towering chimney. The architectural style is reminiscent of monastic buildings and gives evidence of the financial strength, magnanimity, monumental perspective and rationalism at the time the facility was established and the status of its first owners.



The main entrance area, fitted with a ramp, houses an exhibition of various bygone objects, such as small clay vases, iron or bronze vessels and olive-oil tin cans, all of them intended for home use and manufactured on Lesbos by local oil-packaging companies.

There are photographic records of every area before and after the complex was restored. Visitors are provided with special equipment at the entrance to the olive press for a guided tour of the premises in Greek and English.



The olive press has been restored following international restoration guidelines and practices, in keeping with the original construction techniques and complying with the requirement that any subsequent interventions be clearly marked out. In this context, the conservation work carried out at the olive press' nine units aimed at restoring the facility's original condition and was devoid of any embellishments.

All structural damage, like the collapsed wooden tiled roofs, has been fully rectified. Woodwork, such as doors, windows and skylights, has also been restored to original specifications, while the chimney (a masterpiece of solid brickwork), the large water reservoir and the nearby well have also been restored. The only areas where interventions were deemed necessary in order to meet contemporary needs were the guard's house, which also served as a coffee shop; the area occupied by the Museum Office, where an opening was created between the ground and the first floor; as well as two small storehouses, which were converted into visitors' toilet facilities.



The *Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece* provided temporary storage for the facility's archives until their transfer to Papados and authorized the use of its equipment for the archives' digitization and microphotography processing. In the basement, the venue for the archive's permanent exhibition, *artist Io Angeli* created a unique painting inspired by the archival material which, thanks to its unique form and valuable insight into local history, is a work of art in its own right.

The area that once housed the steam-powered boiler is now the site for an exhibition of various works of art by *famous Greek painters*, who were inspired by the facility's architecture and the popular theme of the sacred olive tree.



Because of the total destruction in the 1970s of the facility's original machinery, which was all manufactured locally by *Loukas and Karamitsopoulos*, similar equipment of the same time period was procured by the Society. This equipment was transferred to the *Industrial Museum of Ermoupolis*, Syros, for conservation. The "new" machines, made at the famous *Isigonis factory* in Smyrna, came from the deserted *Chiotellis-Eresiotis olive press* at Polychnitos and are contemporary to the Vranas machinery. Part of this new equipment is a diesel-powered *TANGYE* machine, made in Birmingham, England, between 1930 and 1935. According to the project engineer, there are only seven surviving machines of this type worldwide.



TODAY

The boiler room housing the boiler that was used for burning olive kernel to produce steam for the operation of the machinery was completely destroyed. Only the boiler's *"mirror"* survived, which was duly conserved and restored to its original place. Fully-functioning equipment, which helps visitors form an all-round picture of traditional olive production processes on the island of Lesbos, includes the *diesel engine*, the *axe with the conveyor belts*, the *grinding mill* on the west side, one of the *pumps* and a *press*. The equipment is aptly complemented with informational signs about the display areas and exhibits, unobtrusively illustrating their *use* and *origin*. In 2004, the facility's financial archives came to light in the soap production area, covered in rocks and mud.

The 122 items in the archives, dating from 1894 to 1959, include ledgers, journals, cost reports, payroll journal entries for wages and project journal entries, as well as copies of correspondence. Today, these accounts constitute reputedly the most comprehensive financial records of an oil-producing unit ever found in the whole of Greece. They were carefully conserved by the *Laboratory of Paper Conservation of the Educational Foundation of the National Bank of Greece* between January 2008 and March 2009.

YESTERDAY





There were about 13 people – 14 including the accountant – working at the olive press. We would also have at least 2-4 porters to assist with the handling of relatively small quantities of olives. However, when production increased, we would take on 4, 6, 8 or even 10 porters, if the crop was exceptionally plentiful in supply.

We had to maintain high production rates to minimize rotting of the stored olives. Olives wouldn't keep for many days, or else the oil produce would be of poor quality. Of course, we wouldn't find that out until later, when the olives had been pressed and the acidity levels of the oil produce estimated. But low acidity content alone did not ensure the quality of the oil produce. Everyone involved in the process - us running the olive press and locals milling their olives on the day - was intent on producing good quality oil. In other words, after milling and pressing was done, good quality oil was not only low in acid content, but also palatable to the taste. Because taste mattered quite a lot [...]

Based on a videotaped conversation between Michalis Vranas [1921-2009] (the proprietor of the olive press until 1998), Nikos Sifounakis, Roura Sifnaiou and Manos Eustratiadis on February 28, 2008.



Yesterday...

The historical *Vranas Olive Press* - which is now called the Olive Press- Museum of the *Archipelagos Society*, is one of the first steam-powered factories on Lesbos. It was built in 1887 by Vranas Nikolaou, grandfather of our great poet Odysseas Elytis, at the eastern end of Papados, which, from the mid-19th century, was one of the most important villages of Gera and the hub of economic activity in a region with a long tradition in olive-oil production. The factory operated continuously until the beginning of the 1970s.

This superb industrial complex is made of local marble stone. Both its external appearance and layout testify to the prosperity of its owner and reflect his desire to build a lasting production unit that will echo the aesthetics of its time.



YESTERDAY

Michalis Vranas recalls memories of a bygone age...

I first became involved in the olive press when I was a little more than a baby. Back then, children went to school only in the morning; there were no afternoon classes. After school, between one and two in the afternoon, all the children joined their fathers and helped them with whatever job they were doing, for four to five hours.

So, I used to work, too. I didn't do any manual work, as I was very young, but I stood by the man who weighed the olive oil and the olives because we had to weigh everything. That was my first job. As my father became increasingly bogged down with health problems, I stepped in as the owner's son. I did all I could to help my father and relieve him from the pressure at work. The olive complex had, at the time, two mills and two presses. That was the norm. When the olive crop was in plentiful supply, we added a third mill and a press. And we had to put in overtime, because olives would not keep in storage for very long. We would start working at 7 in the morning and stop at around 2 or 3 and, when necessary, carry on up to 5 in the afternoon.



Vranas Nikolaou, who later turned his name round to Nikolaos Vranas, was an innovator and a visionary. His steam-powered factory, which began its operation on November 20, 1887, as indicated by the marble plaque above the central entrance bearing his "signature", brought prosperity to his village, made olive oil a strong commodity in Eastern Mediterranean and paved the way for trade transactions between Papados and the markets of Constantinople and the Sea of Marmara.



- This area was dominated by the towering, elaborately designed round *chimney*, where the day's work started and ended with the sound of a horn. Opposite the chimney there was an open-air water reservoir supplying the olive press with water flowing down the mountains and drawn from the well. On the west side, a dated sundial can still be seen, counting time from the olive press establishment to this day, when this historical manufacturing unit comes back to life.



In its heyday, the olive press was a major industrial facility, bustling with life. The path that leads, even today, to the building, has always been an indispensable part of the facility. Along the path stood the *coffee shop*, the large *entrance* to the estate, the *boiler room*, the *engine room*, the *main production building*, the main *olive-oil storehouse* and the olive *storerooms* with the large door – the “Portara”. Opposite the entrance stood two small buildings that also belonged to the factory. They housed the owner’s office and provided storage space for olive kernel. Today’s parking lot, to the right of the entrance, originally featured the olive storehouses, the “bates” as they are called in Lesvos, where the producers used to store their olive crop until their grinding. These storehouses were pulled down in 1985, when the facility was donated to the Community of Papados by the Vranas family.



The engine room, the *"heart"* of the complex, was located to the left of the production area and, next to it was the boiler room, the unit's *"lungs"*. The engine room, a warm and clean place, housed the *steam engine*, the wooden *tool bench* behind it and, beside it, the *water heater*. To the left of the engine room was the *boiler room*, where the *boiler* of the steam engine burned the olive kernels and produced steam to drive the machinery. There was a *coffee shop* by the side door to the boiler room. That was also the keeper's house, the customers' waiting area and the workers' meeting point for their morning coffee. The inner yard was circumscribed by the olive oil storehouses, the back side of the main production area and the small-scale *soap making facilities*.



The main production area is impressive in terms of space and construction and affords a view of the main street. The area originally had a superb roof made of Black Sea wood. It is in this area that production activity mainly took place: the *compression* of the olives, the *squeezing* of the olive pulp and the *separation* of oil from water. The area housed two olive mills and three presses with their pumps, all of them manufactured on Lesbos, as the Vranas olive press was the first to entrust the construction of steam-operated machinery for industrial use to a local machine manufacturer by the name of *Loukas and Karamitsopoulos*.

The millstones came from the local quarries of Mystegna, famous for their brown stone. The separation of water and oil was originally achieved using simple techniques in special tanks, but later on centrifugal *de Laval* separators were added to accelerate the procedure.



During the production process, the olive press was bustling with activity and workers switched continually from one machine to the other. It is estimated that 10 to 12 people worked in the production area at the time of olive collection, with the total number of workers coming to about 20: two *stone workers* at the mills, six at the *presses*, one at the pumps and one for *weighing the oil*. The workforce further included the boiler's *stoker*, the *mechanic* in the engine room, the *keeper*, the *director* and the *accountant*. There were also *porters* for carrying olives, oil and olive kernel from the production area to the storehouses.