

PROFILE | CAPOZZA



FAMILY MATTERS

Capozza Floor Covering Center
celebrates a half-century in business

By Leah Whalen // Photography by Heidi Kirn





Swallows rendered in mosaic (opposite).

The Capozza siblings in their Warren Avenue showroom (above). From left to right: Tia Green, Joseph Capozza III, and Katie Capozza. They are the third generation of their family to run the 50-year-old business.

Every family has a few generational legends that they tell over and over

—the tale of how Granddad and his brothers saved the farm from foreclosure, or the story of how Great Grandma defied her family and married for love. Sometimes these stories feel worn from repetition, like an old penny burnished by many hands over the years. But for Capozza siblings Joe Capozza III, Katie Capozza, and Tia Green, the story they tell of the founding of the company they now head seems fresh and immediate every time they tell it. Maybe that's because, as the third generation of their family to run the business, they continue to add to the narrative every day.

Joe begins the tale: "My grandfather started the company in 1974, over on Summit Park Avenue in Portland, out of the garage. They always like to say, 'with just a typewriter in the basement!'" he says with a laugh. He continues, "My grandfather sold just tile, I believe, probably mostly for residential and maybe some small commercial projects. My father joined the company shortly after graduating high school in 1976. By then, they had a small crew of installers to help my

grandfather. I think my grandmother received the deliveries; she'd be home anyway and would take care of them. So that was the beginning."

However convenient it was, the company outgrew the basement setup in the 1980s. "They moved to Morrill's Corner and then eventually to Warren Avenue, where we still are today," Joe goes on to say. "My grandfather was involved into the '80s, but my dad was running the company by then; he brought in the residential division here. Then my mother came to work for the company in the late '80s. She tried to get the books more in order than they were. It must have been driving her crazy secretly, and she felt the only way to do it right was to come in here and work too!"

To continue to expand, in 2000 the Capozzas purchased Kenniston's Tile on Commercial Street in Portland, which they rebranded as Old Port Specialty Tile Co. Here, in 2006, the third generation of Capozza family members officially joined the team. "Katie was smart to go right into the business," her



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| AT MARBLE MAGE MULLINGS | AT GLASS AND CERAMIC LAMIN |
| AT MARBLE LINDENHOLMINGS | ESSENCE MARBLE AND GIPS |
| AT MARBLE LINDENHOLMINGS | PINKS BEE STONE PORCELAIN |
| BT MARBLE LINDENHOLMINGS | METERN MARBLE AND FIELD TILE |
| CF MARBLE LINDENHOLMINGS | BT FANTASIA |
| AT MARBLE LINDENHOLMINGS | MARCO CUSTOM BEE TERRAZZO COLLECT |
| MISC MARBLE MARBLE TRAVEL | MISC PORCELAIN MOSAIC |
| MISC MARBLE REMANOR MOSAIC | MISC PORCELAIN MOSAIC |
| MISC MARBLE FLAMINGO MOSAIC | AT MOSAIC PORCELAIN |
| MISC MARBLE LAGAN MOSAIC | TR NUBIA |
| MISC MARBLE MOSAIC | TR PAST DUST |
| MISC MARBLE MOSAIC | TR METRA MOSAIC |
| AT CUSTOM MOSAIC FOR SPOT | AT DIMENSIONAL MARBLE |
| MISC CUSTOM MOSAIC FOR SPOT | AT DIMENSIONAL MARBLE |
| MISC CUSTOM MOSAIC | MISC GLASS MOSAIC |

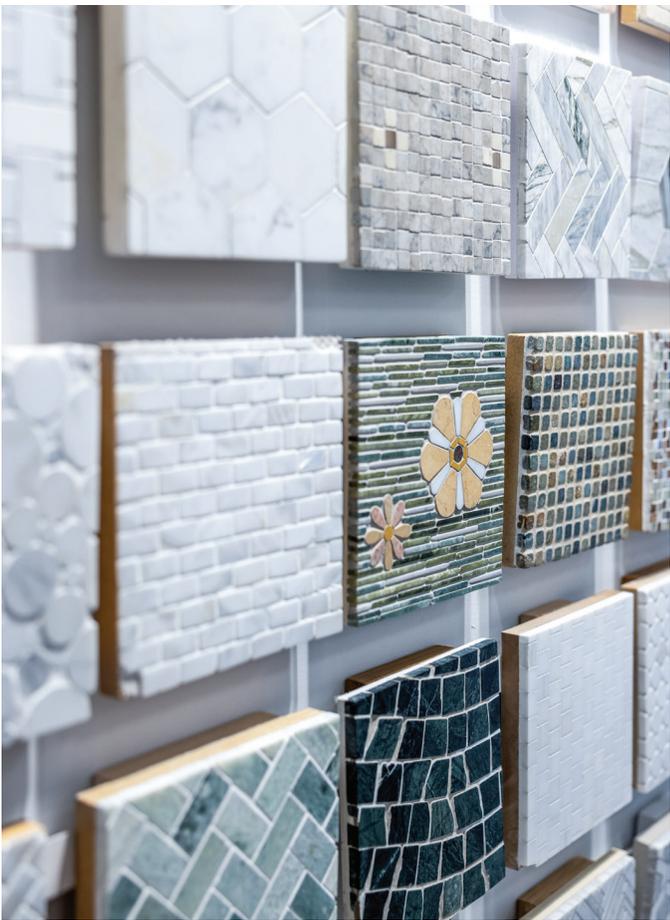


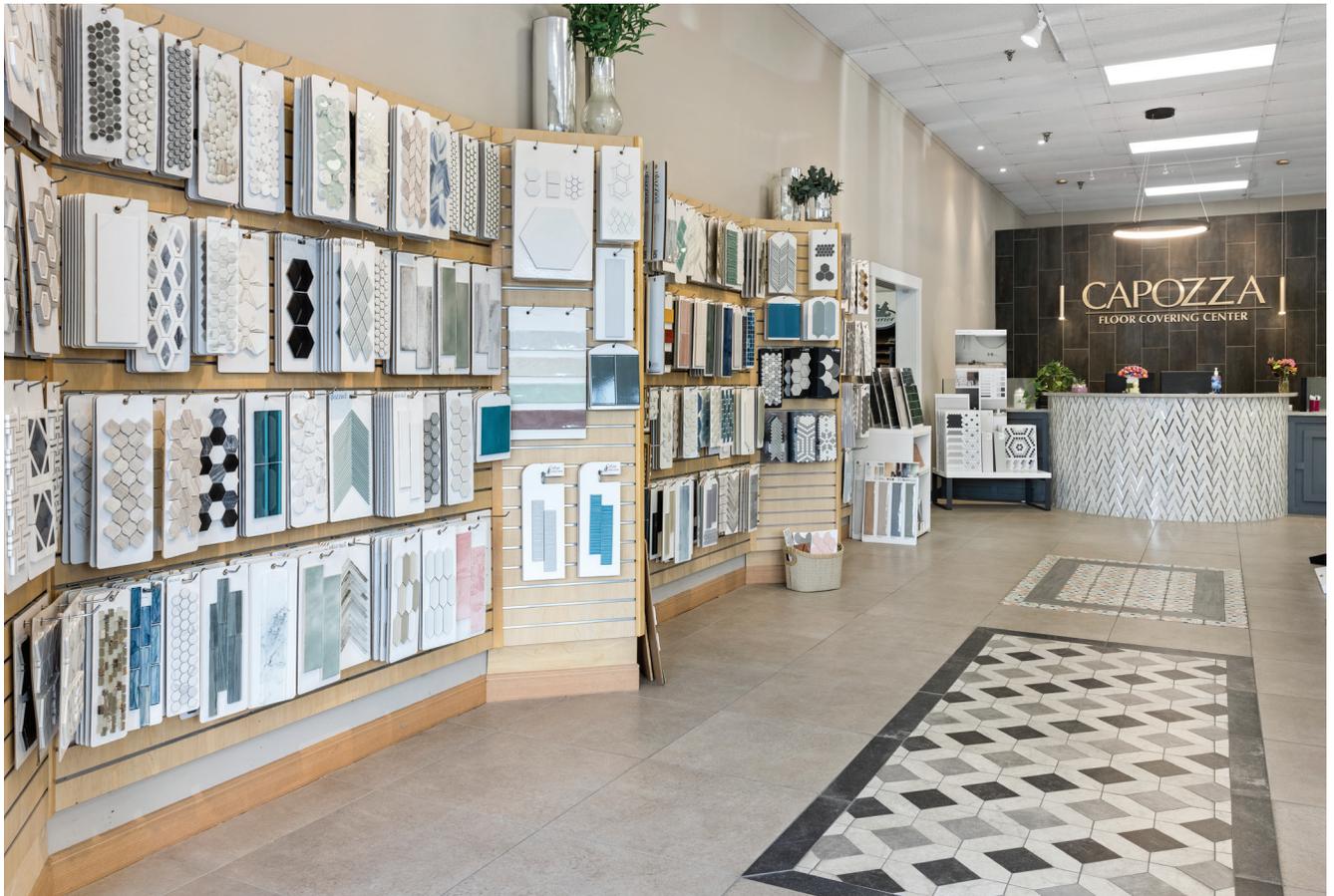
siblings insist. “It was where my interest was!” she protests, laughing. “Even when I was in high school, my dad would connect me with the interior designers that they worked with, so I would intern for those firms in the summer.” At Old Port Specialty Tile Co., she worked closely with Theresa Rosmus, who now runs PR and marketing for the company. As Katie recalls, “I had an entry-level position with Theresa. Theresa was one of the first managers at Old Port Specialty Tile. My dad wasn’t really too involved, right?” she asks Theresa. Theresa concurs, “He was very trusting of the employees and seeing that we carried out his vision.” “It was nice to be in a separate position, with other bosses,” Katie concludes, “because I didn’t feel like I only worked for my dad or my family.”

Meanwhile, Joe says, “Tia and I worked outside the industry. I worked briefly for the Providence Bruins and then as a carpet sales rep for three years after college.” Tia picks up the thread: “I worked at a retail tile store in the Boston area, as some experience in this industry, but I also had other jobs like substitute teaching and different things that had nothing to do with tile. One thing that we haven’t mentioned yet,” she continues, “is that our parents encouraged us to go to college and choose whatever path we wanted to go down, but we always say that whatever we were doing mirrored what we would be doing here. And it kind of brought us back.”

“Our grandfather founded it, our parents built a great foundation, and it’s been a great opportunity for us to try to take that over the years to another level,” says Joe. “For example, in 2015 we purchased an epoxy and polished concrete company and rebranded it to Capozza Concrete and Epoxy Flooring. So the epoxy is a new feature of what we do. And we have probably doubled the size of the staff and labor capabilities through subcontractors and in-house labor. Our volume is about two and a half times what it

At Capozza Floor Covering Center and Old Port Specialty Tile Co., there are styles of tile to suit every taste and every budget. Not only are tiles displayed on the walls of both showrooms, but they are also showcased on every floor.





Old Port Specialty Tile on India Street in Portland's Old Port keeps a focus on specialty and custom mosaic tiles (opposite).

The locations on Warren Avenue (above) and on India Street (right) may have slightly different offerings, but they are united by the siblings' commitment to quality and detail. As Katie says, "The things we sell will be in people's homes, with their families, and so we want to be as passionate about it as they are."



was." Tia continues, "It does seem like a big scale and a short time, but it helps that there are three of us at the helm. I feel like it's less overwhelming, because we can support each other. If there is anything that we're unsure about, we can bounce it off each other. I feel confident taking risks or making decisions, because I feel like they have my back."

This familial feeling extends to the company at large. "A lot of the employees do feel like family members," says Theresa. "If you've been here long enough, when somebody asks you, 'Oh, are you a Capozza?', you just start to nod. It's easier than saying you're not!" She continues, in a more serious tone, "One thing that I think has positively affected the business today is that these three have been able to bring newer ideas to the table while remaining true to its spirit. It's because, as the company rose, they never forgot who they were." Katie continues, "We have so many people working here who are truly passionate too. People who really get into tiles or flooring

tend to stay." "The customers have sustained us, but the employees have sustained us too," says Tia.

To mark their fiftieth anniversary, the company has decided to expand their family circle to include community members. Theresa explains, "True to the culture of this family, we didn't want it just to be something where we were acknowledging 50 years by patting ourselves on the back." The siblings all nod. "Our longest partner in our community has been the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital and, in more recent years, the Maine Children's Cancer Program. We plan to turn this into a fund-raising year for them. The family has committed, along with our other industry partners, that we will donate \$50,000 for our 50 years." She notes that the first Capozza family donation was from their grandfather, who gave \$100 in 1995. By continuing this important relationship, the Capozza siblings are adding their own lines to a family story to be told by future generations. **MH+D**