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## **A note about transcriptions:**

Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

Throughout the transcript, all references to *Castell' Morrone* should be *Castel Morrone*. Thanks to Davide Bernardo and Mariano Villano, RcmLive (<http://www.radiorcmlive.it/>), for the corrections.

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

Anthony Bernardo

833 N. Clayton Street

Wilmington, Delaware

Interviewed by  
Francis J. Fierro  
May 30, 1968

Transcribed by  
Irene H. Long

O.K. Where were you born, Mr. Bernardo?

Wilmington, Delaware.

And what year were you born?

1898.

A..... where was your father born?

In a Castell' Morrone, Italy.

Castell' Morrone in Italy and that's near Naples,  
right?

Uh huh.

What year did your father come to the United States?

A..... that I can't answer the exact year, but it was  
in the 1800's.

Uh huh. Do you have the approximate year?

A.....

Would you say in the 1870's?

1870's.

In 1870's?

Early '70's.

In the early 1870's.

Yeh.

What was the reason for his coming here, do you have  
any idea?

Well, I never did know his real reason except what  
everybody else has - to make a fortune I guess in the United States.

In other words, to better himself.

To better himself.

Right. Do you know why he came to this area, why he

to Wilmington?

Well, a, when he came to the United States, he didn't come to Wilmington. He came up in the New England states, a up around New Haven.

Uh huh.

And gradually made his way to Wilmington.

But you don't know what it was that a brought him to Wilmington?

No.

Precisely what it was?

I don't, no.

Did he have any relatives here in Wilmington?

At the time then, no.

Was he the first of his family to come here?

He was the first of his family to a settle in Wilmington.

I see. Now, a what did a your father do for a living in Wilmington?

A, well, at first a.... he was a laborer for the Pennsylvania Railroad and later became a section gang foreman.

Uh huh.

He was a section gang foreman at the time the Pennsylvania station was rebuilt in 1898.

I see. And after he left the Pennsylvania Railroad, what did he do then?

A..... I was too young to know, but I do remember the next thing I do remember about anything was that he bought out a grocery store at Eighth and Scott in nineteen oh three.

Uh huh and.....

That made me five years old.

Right. Did he stay in this grocery store very long?  
They're here from nineteen oh three to nineteen.....

sixteen, I think it was.

Now in those early years do you remember what it was  
like in this general area, the area today they call Little Italy?

Yeh.

What was it like? What was the area like?

Well, it was mostly inhabited by Italians. That's why  
it was called Little Italy.

Uh huh.

And.....I think it was more friendly then than it more...

Well, what.....

It had a few scattered colored but not many.

Uh huh. Well, physically what was the area like? A.....  
certainly it was a lot different than it is right now.

O yeh, it wasn't build up as much.

And a was this like a suburban area?

It was considered in my early young a young days it was  
considered almost in the country.

Oh, really? Almost in the country?

Yeh, yeh.

Could you give me a description of what some of the areas  
were like? For example, what was Lincoln Street like? What was  
Union Street like?

A.....

And so forth.

A....Union Street and Lincoln Street. We'll start with  
Lincoln Street first....a...between Fifth and Sixth was empty lots.

On both sides?

On both sides. It was built later years by DiSabatino's  
...a.... Lincoln Street on the north side from Eighth to Ninth was  
empty and coming up Eighth Street half way up was empty. A from  
Howland Street to Ninth on the west side was empty. In fact there  
was thickets and swamps all the way to Union, Ninth and Union.

Oh really?

Yeh...a... where St. Anthony's Church stands now was  
empty ground with the exceptions of row houses that faced Scott  
Street from Tenth halfway up to Ninth.

Other than that there was nothing in that area?

A..... Scott Street wasn't even cut through for a  
street between Eighth and Ninth.

How about.....

In my, in a my boyhood days.

Yes, how about a....DuPont Street.

DuPont Street was open, yeh.

Was it open all the way down to Pennsylvania Avenue?

It was open all the way to the B&O.

Uh, were there houses a all the way along?

Not all the way along, no. They were a, they were pretty  
well built up, but there was a lot of empty spaces.

Uh huh. Who lived in those houses in those days?

In those days was all white.

They were all white....a....

Yes, with the exception a between Tenth and Eleventh  
and Eleventh and Twelfth.. There was just a.... about a half a dozen  
.... houses with colored people in them.

Uh huh. Were they considered expensive houses in those  
days or were they.....

No.

They were always a.....

You could, no...a... as far as I can remember the house that you bought in them days were anywhere from eighteen hundred to thrity-five hundred dollars-at today's value is, is up in the thousands - fifteen, sixteen thousand dollars.

Yes?

Yeh.

In other words.....

These houses right here we live in - new of course not in this condition - were sold for about thirty-five, four thousand dollars.

Uh huh. When were these houses built?

These houses were all, these houses I remember in my boyhood.

Uh huh.

Yes, that's just these six here that sets back.

I see.

The houses beyond this one next door was empty all the way down to the corner.

Uh huh. O.K. now, you told me that your father ran the grocery store up until 1916?

That about 19..... six - now wait a minute now. I may be wrong there in exact date because.....

Uh huh.

Just a couple years before Prohibition he gave the store up. Prohibition went into effect '18 or '19.

It was around there some place.

'18 or '19 while he had the saloon on East Second

Street about two, two and one half years before it went dry. And he went from the grocery store to the saloon. He sold the store and got the saloon.

You say the saloon was on East Second Street?

Yeh, no, 10 East Second.

That was pretty far down town.

Oh, near King, Second and King.

Yes, how was, how was the area down there in those days? Was a it a anything like it is today?

Oh no, no, no, safe! You could travel any time or day or night.

Was it mostly white in those days?

Oh yeh, mostly white.

Yeh.

There was a colored section down east further but not right around in there.

Uh huh, so.... in those days it wasn't considered nearly a the type area it is today?

Oh no, no, no, no, no, no, in my young days a when we lived out on West Sixth Street beyond a Greenhill Avenue, there was no fear at all of the walk Pennsylvania Station out there anytime in the middle of the night, two and three o'clock in the morning. I, I have done it many a time.

Uh huh, now, what did you do as a young man during those years?

Well, a, I went to school until I was second year high and a most of my working days were just laboring work - truck driving the most.

Uh huh, a.... in addition to that a.... where did you



go to elementary school?

A..... Number Eleven here Ninth and Scott.

At Ninth and Scott?

Uh huh.

Oh, today that's part of St. Anthony's, right?

Yeh, that's part of St. Anthony's.

And a was there any such thing as a junior high school in those days?

No, we went from a to grade school to grammar school which was a the Willard Hall School at Eighth and Adams. Now that was toward, down by the freeway.

Yes.

And from there we went to the Wilmington High School on Delaware Avenue.

What were conditions like in school for you, for any of young Italian Americans? What were conditions like in school?

Well, I had no difficulty at all.

You ever run into any sort of bias at all?

A... not, not in the schools I went to. Wha.... the reason I... for that I would say because the majority of us in school were Italian descent.

Was this also true of a the high school?

No, it wasn't true of the high school, but still we didn't have any, any difficulty in there as far as bias was concerned.

Were a, did the a.....Italian American in high school in those days participate in every phase of a.....

Every, yes, sports, everyhting. Some of our best athletes at that time in high school were Italian descent.

Uh huh. O.K. now....a..... did many a Italian Americans

finish high school in those days?

Oh yes, yes, quite a few went on to college.

There were quite a few that.....

Yeh.

Did finish and went on to college?

Michael Fidance.

Uh huh.

Civil Engineering.. My own cousin, Dr. Bernardo....a...

I'm trying to think now who else when I went to school but since I got out of school quite a few. Now my daughter graduated high school. She went to the University of Delaware.

Uh huh, yes, well, of course this is fairly recent days.

My a, my a nephew, my wife's nephew, Jan Bove, he went to Wilmington High School.

Uh huh.

He's a lawyer today.

Yes....a... back in those early years going back to the early 1900's, do you recall many of the young Italian immigrants that were coming over in those days?

A..... I can't say that I do remember them coming over.

Uh huh.

But a after they got here I got acquainted with them.

Yes, now what was it like for them when they first came over? Do you have any idea?

Well, the only, the only barrier they had was the language.

This was the only barrier?

Yeh, the only barrier they had because most of them did get work.

Uh huh.

They couldn't, it was only laboring work but they did get work.

What were the chances for an Italian to get a work other than just laboring work.

Well, there was a little bit of discrimination in the higher brackets of work in those early days. A..... there was also some dis...discrimination in living.

In...where you...can...

What, what I mean by the living, moving in different neighborhood.

Could you point out some of these neighborhoods where an Italian would experience some difficulty in purchasing a house and so forth.

Well, a, I think they discriminated in the early part of the 1900's say like over in Brandywine, especially in the suburbs

How bout a the "flats" down here on the other side of Union Street. When did they build that do you remember?

They had difficulty getting in there at the beginning.

Well, they couldn't get in there at all.

I don't think they could in the early days.

(MRS. B.) Uh uh, no Italians.

No, they couldn't.

No Italians. Now that place is owned by who, the Woodlawn Trustees?

Woodlawn Trustees con- was at that time controlled by the Bancroft family.

Uh huh.

Yeh.

And a this place was just closed to a Italians?

It was practically closed to them.

How about.....

I think, I think the only way they got in- anybody of Italian descent got in - if a, a girl had married an English name.

In other words if an Italian girl had married someone who was not an Italian.

That's right.

That's the only way that a the Italian got in over there.

An Italian got in but if an Italian father with an Italian name tried to get in.....

He couldn't, he couldn't get in.

He couldn't get in.

Now how a.....

Of course now you understand that's not so today.

No, it isn't so today.

No.

I realize that a there is a change but a I'm speaking about the early a.....

Right.

Part a of this century that it was rather difficult for them to obtain houses.

They, they had a discrimination at that time.

Now, how about churches?

Churches, the only church in my early days that we knew - and of course they didn't go very much on account of distance - a the only church close for all of Little Italy was St. Thomas, which was at that time was what the St. Thomas Hall is now, behind the new church.

Yes.

And on account of the English speaking sermons very few Italians went to church.

Did they ever have an Italian Mass there?

Not that I can remember.

Did they ever specify that a Italians could only go to say the nine o'clock Mass and no other?

No.

How about St. Peter's Church down here on West Street?

A..... St. Peter's, I don't know too much about. That was considered too far away.

Uh huh.

For us in them days when we were young boys and I know of very few people from here went. And the other church that was anywhere near close was St. Ann's and that was out of their bounds of wanting to go to church every Sunday.

Now, did you ever a hear of a Italians being asked to leave St. Peter's Church because they got there for the wrong Mass or anything like that? Now I, I know that they used to have an Italian Mass down there.

At St. Peter's?

At St. Peter's.

Yeh.

The nine o'clock Mass, I believe.

Uh huh.

And if an Italian got a, got there late - if he got there for a ten o'clock, they'd ask him to leave.

Well, that I don't know. See, I, I've never, never been there.

You never been there? You've never heard of this?

I have attended Mass at St. Peter's but not in my young

days.

Yeh. You never even heard of this?

I never heard of that before, no.

Did you ever hear of any Italians experiencing difficulty if they went for example to St. Ann's Church, which was and still is pretty much an Irish a parish?

Yes, it is but I've never heard of any difficulty, no.

You, you never heard of anybody experiencing difficulty at all?

I didn't.

O.K.

Someone may have but I didn't.

Uh huh, now a, how would a you say that a Prohibition affected Little Italy?

A.... how it affected the individual I, I don't know. But a I know the big effect it had that it sprung up a lot of bootleggers.

It caused a lot of this. Now what was the atmosphere in Little Italy prior to a, a Prohibition?

Oh well, a, a the atmosphere was much different. We had saloons. Everybody could go in the saloons at, at that time before Prohibition. You were allowed to go to the saloons with a pitcher and bring your beer home, which you're not allowed to do now. A... the head of the family could go and get it and bring it home and then the whole family would it.

Uh huh.

And then also in them days they had a bottle distributor to serve house to house, which they don't have now.

Was there any ...a... age limitation on a....

Yeh.

Who could go into the a.....

Yeh, twenty-one years.

It, it was twenty-one years.

It's still twenty-one.

Yeh.

Yeh.

Um.....

And a the hours were different than they are now. They were from six to twelve at night.

Uh huh.

Six in the morning I mean to twelve at night.

Twelve at night?

Yeh.

A..... in so far as a clubs are concerned. Were there any clubs - social clubs, political clubs or ----- clubs?

Yeh.

Which existed a.....

Yeh, there were. We had the Young Men's Democratic Club where the Neighborhood House is now.

Uh huh.

It was built by then.

Uh huh.

A.... where Mike Fierro used to live on Sixth Street was the Young Men's Republican Club and then a they had a St. Michael's Society, they had a club.

Where was that club located?

A....a... they tore the houses down on Sc- Lincoln, east side of Lincoln Street between Sixth and Seventh.

Uh huh.

They .... and all those clubs they had their own bars and a.... nobody was allowed to go in but members, of course. But they were open on Sundays.

A.... did you a .... ever see ...a... drunks on the street in Little Italy in those days?

Oh yeh, yeh, you saw them on the street.

Were there many of them or were there few?

Well, a I mean you'd just see.....

Just occasionally.....

Occasionally you see one, yeh.

After Prohibition came in, did a... this situation still exist or did you see more on the street or less?

Well, you saw, you saw more.

You saw more on the street.?

I think, I think a that Prohibition brought on this blue-flame thing.

Uh huh.

You know this saying about your blue-flamer?

Yes.

I think Prohibition, Prohibition brought that on more than it ever was before.

Yeh.

For the simple reason that a, a they brought out this a....de...naked alcohol - would burn se- se- burn off so much of it and mix it with so much water and drink it. I think that all increased with Prohibition.

I see.

To my knowledge I think it did.

Uh huh.

I saw more of it during Prohibition than I saw before



or after.

Uh huh. Now ...a... before Prohibition you saw an occasional drunk on the street of Little Italy?

Yeh.

And this man would be an Italian I, I would assume.

Well, a, I, I saw both.

The Italian.....

Italian, colored, Irish. I saw them all but a I think them days you saw less than you do now.

Uh huh. Would you say then that a... the a.... Prohibition caused more of this sort of thing than a ... you saw before?

I think so because a they had so many more places to go and get it.

Yeh.

Everybody tried to make a killing, you know.

Yes. Now a, the people that you saw after Prohibition came in, would you say they were mostly non-Italians that you saw in, in this area that were drunk or.....

Yeh.... I would.

You, you.....

They were Italians but I think the non-Italians were the most.

You saw more, right?

Yeh.

Now, were there any big clubs in Little Italy that were a illegal clubs a.... after Prohibition set in...a... Speak Easies...a..

Oh, they had the Speak Easies but they weren't clubs.

Uh huh.

They were just people that....just sold the stuff illegally. That was all.

That was it?

Yeh.

Did the people drink on the premises there or did they buy it and carry it away?

Well, they did both. They drink on the premises or they'd go in and buy it by the bottle and take it out.

What sort of thing did they sell? What was it? Was it wine or was it.....

Well, they sold both but the most thing they sold was a mixture of a alcohol and water and coloring.

And that was it?

That's all it was.

That's all it was, I see.

Yeh.

All right. A..... how did the start of World War One affect the Italian community here?

Oh, well, now let me see. World War One, 1914.

Now, of course, in 1914 the war started. Of course, the United States didn't get into it.

It was 1917 before we got in it.

Right, now.....

Uhhh...

Italy of course was in it from almost the beginning.

The beginning, yeh.

How did this affect a.... especially the Italian immigrants, the people who came from Italy?

Yeh.

The young men.

Yeh, well, it affected them I think. I, I know of a couple of instances where some of the boys who came from Italy went

back and joined the army over there.

They went back and....

Yeh, because they were under subscription anyhow.

Uh huh.

See and rather than lose anything in case they wanted to go back there, lot of them went back but a lot of them -(Francis sneezes) God bless you -

Thank you.

Lot of them didn't.

Well, how did.....

And some of them in order not to lose on account of Italy being on our side at that time, they joined the, the army here and give them credit for over there.

Uh huh. Now...a... during World War Two...a...I'm not exactly sure of these figures but I think they're pretty close..... the (Sneezes) Excuse me. The..a... Italian population when you a - the percentage of Italians in the population of the United States I think amounted to about five percent, but the casualties that were taken by American troops ten percent of the casualties were Italian Americans.

Italian-Americans, yeh.

Right, which means that there were twice as many a percentage wise who a were a killed or wounded in combat ...a... fighting for the United States.

Uh huh.

As a there were..... in the pop-, in the population, the entire population. Now a, how many a young men do you remember who went into the army, into the American army from this area? Do you remember their being any of them? What was the atmosphere? What was the attitude of the, these men when they a went in?

Well, a, I know of quite a few of my buddies went and their attitude wasn't ....against going. They just took it and they went. They went a... they went with an open mind and open heart. Just something they had to do and they did it.

Uh huh, were there many who volunteered to go?

Yeh, quite a few volunteered. Yeh, they had quite a few Italian volun - Italian descent volunteers.

Yeh, new....

Yeh.

A.... when these people left, what was it like when they went in? Was it a holiday atmosphere or.....

Oh, I don't think so, no. No, I don't think it was a holiday atmosphere. I think the biggest holiday was when they came back.

Uh huh. Well, but when they went, it was just a.....

It was solemn and quiet and they went to see them off and all. What they did with them which they didn't, they don't do now, they would meet at the Armory in a body, all those who had to go, especially the ones who were drafted. Course now, the ones who were volunteers, it was all done quietly. Nobody even know they volunteered till they found it out.

Uh huh.

But the draftees all assembled at one point, which was the Armory here and in a lot of cases they all marched in town down to the station, you know. And everybody, their relations and friends and family, all saw them off.

Uh huh.

That, that was done.

Now, which station did they march to, Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania Station.

You mean to say they marched from here, DuPont Street,  
from a Tenth and DuPont?

Well, I guess on account of where they had to go the  
B&O couldn't take 'em.

Right.

See?

So they'd march all the way down there?

A....a.... a big percentage from here went to Fort Dix.

Uh huh.

See, and the B&O couldn't take 'em there.

Yes.

See? And if they were going south, the B&O got some  
of them, too.

I see.

Yeh.

A.... when they marched down, what was it like...a....

Oh, it was ..... hooping.....

A, could you describe, hooping and hollering, huh?

Yeh. (Laughs)

They were having a heck of a good time?

Oh yeh, yeh. There was hooping and hollering. I saw  
them come a.... not too many times cause lots of times during World  
War Two I wasn't in town.

Uh huh.

But what few I saw they was - everything was happy.

This was World War One now?

Huh?

World War One?

A.... no, this was World War Two.

Oh no, I was talking about World War One.

Oh, World War One.

Yes.

Oh now, well no. I didn't see much of that. No, cause I was - World War One I was eighteen years old and I was workin' for I was chauffeuring for a family. That kept me out of town most the time.

Uh huh.

The only time I came back in town cause I was called up for induction. I was examined and everything and I was put in class A and I was to report for duty to go to camp on a fifteenth of November and the war ended on the eleventh.

I see, yeh.

See? But a what they went on, how they went and left town with the draft in World War One, I couldn't tell you much about that because I wasn't in town too much.

Uh huh, yeh. This was what I was wondering about...a...

Yeh, oh I was, what I was telling you about was all about World War Two.

Yeh, well, this is, you see I was mainly interested right now in World War One because.....

Oh, I see.

During the period that we had most of the young men who had just come.

Yeh.

From Italy, see?

Uh huh, yeh.

Who a many of them could go back.

Yeh, yeh.

And fight. Many of them did go back and fight.

Many of them went back to fight for their own country.

Yes.

And those who didn't want to go back, they a- in order not to get in wrong with their country, which they were not citizens here yet.

Yes.

See? They joined the United States Army here and automatically by doing that they became citizens.

Right. O.K. now, what were the houses like, the dwelling place of the people, prior to World War One?

Well, prior to World War One I, I don't think there a....a... in the city here?

Yes, in Little Italy,----- just the Italians.

In Little Italy, the conditions and the quality of the house was just about like it is now with the exceptions of the modern things in the inside.

Now, this is what I want to know.

Yeh.

What a, what, what conveniences did they have in the house at that time?

Well, the conveniences they couldn't have had then in World War One would probably have been up-to-date plumbing and heating.

They didn't have that?

A.... very few at that time.

Very few of them even had any sort of centralized heating right?

Right.

Most of the houses didn't have any centralized heating.

And a, didn't have..... and a lot of them didn't have

all the inside plumbing either.

And a lot of them didn't have, did not have electricity.

Electricity and they didn't have a....well, now electricity in and around Little Italy was pretty popular.

Uh huh.

In.. 19....14, '18 in those years, yeh, it was pretty popular because there was, electricity came here as far as my father's store in nineteen five or six cause he was the first one of the biggest place to have electricity put in and that was early in 1900.

What did the other places use if they didn't have electricity?

A.... oil lamps hanging from the ceiling.

Really? They did have oil lamps, huh?

Cause that was my job in the store.

Uh huh.

To keep them clean so they'd be lit every night.

How bout gas light a....

They had gas lights...a... on the street. They had gas lights on the street but very few houses had gas in the houses. They had mostly coal stoves.

Yeh, well, I, I'm talking about the lights.

The lights on the street?

The gas lights.

The biggest part of the lights on the streets were gas lights.

But they didn't have too much of that in the houses, you say?

No.

What was the reason for not having it in the houses?



Well, I guess the mains weren't all out there yet.

That's what it was, uh?

Yeh.

Was that gas dangerous at all in the house?

Well, I don't know. That at that time it was all manufactured gas.

Uh huh

It was all manufactured gas then because it's only been here in these late years we've been getting a mixture of natural gas and manufactured gas.

Uh huh. Now a, what would you say was the biggest change that occurred from just before World War One and right after World War One? What was it like when all these young men started coming back from the service?

Well, a, I think the thing that changed this neighborhood and this community was the building of St. Anthony's Church.

Uh huh. Now that didn't happen till what - around....

'24.

1924.

Yeh.

Uh huh.

Yeh, because World War One ended in what, '19?

Eh?

'19 or '21?

1919.

Or something like that.

Yes 19.....

It lasted four years. They went in '17. They went in '17. Did it last four years?

1918, 1918. Right, it ended in 1918.

About '21, '21, between '21 and '22.

Is when they built a.....

No, is when t.... just the ending of the war.

Well, it was 1918.

Uh...no, what.... it only lasted eighteen months then?

The war...a... for the United States, yeh.

Yeh, 1919. Well...a... well, you can take '21 to '22 by the time they got everything a...organized and brought the boys home, got 'em discharged and everything. That was another year or two. Then in 1924, well in 19..... between 1922 and '23, they started organizing St. Anthony's Church. By the time ..a... they had all these wrangles. You know they had a big wrangle about, about not wanting an Irish priest.

No, tell me about that. I, I don't know anything about that.

Oh yeh, they had a big wrangle about that. See....a...a... our church is a national church.

Right.

A...appointed by the Pope.

Uh huh.

And...a... Father Tucker's name was recommended to the Pope and he appointed Father Tucker to build this church. And a lot of the Italians were against it because they wanted an Italian priest. So many of them didn't know Father Tucker. I guess probably had never seen him said, "What do you want an Irish priest for? We want somebody who can talk Italian. Father Tucker can't talk Italian." And the first time they met him, had, they had a meeting with him, they talked Italian to him. Why he floored them! See, he could talk Italian grammar better than they could.

Yes, he spoke better Italian than most the Italians in the area.

Yeh, see.

Right.

And so ...a... that, that settled that argument right then and there. When they a had, had first one a or two meetings with him and when a the church finally got under way and a converted a lot of Italian people.

Now...a... prior to the building of St. Anthony's, there were, were a lot of Italians, I understand, who became Protestant. Is that so?

Yeh.

Why did they become Prostestant?

A...a... (hestiation).

I, I don't think it could be because a there wasn't an Italian Catholic Church because there wasn't an Italian Protestant Church either.

Yeh, and, and a the ones, the ones who turned, the ones who who did turn them were Italian preachers.

Oh, really?

And they got a..a.. they got the idea they would hear the Italian language and they changed and the ones who changed were the ones who didn't go to church.

Uh huh.

Mostly because I...I won't say that every Italian because they didn't have an Italian church or priest to go to, didn't go to church. An awful lot of Italian people went to church whether they understood the sermon or not. They went to church for the simple reason of wanting to go to church.

Yes.

And..a... what Italians turned Protestant were the ones who didn't go to Catholic Church anyway.

Uh huh, now.....

Then on the other hand when St. Anthony's Church was built and started, a lot of those who turned came back.

Uh huh. Yes, I, I had heard this. Now, when they came back, did Father Tucker go after them or did they come back of their own volition?

Well...as I understand Father Tucker went around and talk to quite a few of them but a lot of them came back.

Uh huh.

Because Father Tucker did make a big change in the Italian population of Wilmington.

Now, somebody put it to me this way: that with the start of St. Anthony's Church, the Italians then felt proud.

Proud of their own church.

They felt they could hold their heads high because they had their own church.

Had their own church.

Would you say this is a pretty accurate statemet?

I would say that was exactly how it was and a what made them feel so much more proud was that they helped to build the church.

Uh huh.

See? And they felt more proud when they, when they built the school because that school was more voluntarily built than the church was.

Yeh, well now, of course, there's a a difference of some thirty years though a between.

Yeh.

The building of the school and the church.

Yeh.

There's quite a few years a....

And they built their own club.

Right, yes. Now a, going back to the church and a going back to Father Tucker, what sort of things did he do a in Little Italy here? Did a.... what sort of an impact did he as a man as well as a priest have on this community?

Well, he as a man did more than any priest we had at St. Anthony's Church. He helped a lot of people - financially. He helped an awful lot of people financially. If people - come time for a First Communion, Confirmation, you had to be dressed a certain way, if the family couldn't afford it, he would see to it that they were dressed that way because he even asked my wife and I a.... if we had our daughter old enough for Confirmation because, you know, after while they changed the law you had to be twelve years old to receive Confirmation. And just a few weeks before Confirmation he come past the house and the two girls were out on the street. "Are you going to make your Confirmation?" "Yes, Father." "Well, how bout you?" "Oh no, Father, I'm not old enough." "Who said so?" She said, "The sister said I have to be twelve." He said, "You make your Confirmation with your sister." Then he said to my wife he says a, "Can you afford to have both of them at the same time?" "Oh yes, Father, we can do it." And when he said that to us he had been doing it to other people, too.

Yes.... now.....

And so all little kind of thing like that and they're not the only help he gave.

What a.... were the a conditions in this area say a in the twenties?

Well, in the twenties the a conditions in this area was pretty bad, you know. We had an eighteen month depression, I think from '21 - the latter part of '20 or '21 - to last about, I don't know, anywhere from twelve to eighteen months. We had a depression then and a just about time that got over we had the big one in 1929. So conditions were pretty bad anywhere in the twenties till almost the forties when this other war started coming around.

Uh huh. Now, with conditions being so bad, there certainly weren't too many luxuries that people could afford.

No, there wasn't, no.

For themselves or their children.

A...a... good many of the people out here were on relief.

Uh huh, well now, course now, the relief didn't start till about '31, '32, right?

A.... yeh.

When Roosevelt came in.

Yeh.

How did they make out before ...a... the welfare was put into a effect?

The...the... the ....a going was tough for the average a... poor family. The average was tough, the going was tough for the simple reason that they had just gotten over one.

Uh huh.

See? And a when you go through one, you're set back quite a bit.

Yes.

And you hardly get out of it when the next one hit you.

Yes.

So, that set you back again and the other one it lasted from a - what '32 till about '39?

'39 or '41.

'41 almost.

When the war started then.

So the conditions were pretty bad all during those years? They, they were hard years.

Yes. Now I'm going to go back quite a few years now and start asking some more questions about a then. A, when you were a young man, I'm assuming that a there were relatively - I say relatively now - relatively few women here, Italian women, mostly men. Is that true?

A..... you mean immigrant?

Yes.

Yeh, yeh, because so many of them, the husband came over first and worked in order to make enough money to bring either their wife or some - then one at a time, a child or if he had a little bit of luck, he would bring two at a time - but a yes, a of the immigrants there were mostly men.

How did they live?

Well, they, they a they roomed. In those days they lived with Italians and the Italian family that they lived with would supply the room, do their laundry, and do their cooking for them. A... they would pay to have all this done. They would do their own buying. Very few would go into a house with full room and board. I know that for a fact because I, I know a lot of them used to come to the store and do their own buying and.....

Uh huh.

And a my father had the store at that time and they would leave orders that if my landlady comes and do some buying for me, you

give her what I tell, what I told her to buy, put it on my account. I knew what they're - lot of men lived that way.

Uh huh.

But they did their own buying and paid for it.

What did these men do for recreation?

Oh, didn't do much of anything to save money cause the pay was so low. They may, they may have played an occasional game of cards, maybe for a beer or something like that. Now if they gambled on the side, then that's, that's a illegal and it was something private only a, only they knew.

Uh huh. Now...a...

But I do know that a the recreation for most of them was very slim in order to save money to bring the rest of their family over.

Uh huh. Was there ever any...a...a... were there movie houses or anything like that in a Little Italy?

Yeh, yeh, we had a movie place where the Sons of Columbus is.

Uh huh.

We had the movie house at Fourth and Union.

Uh huh.

A..... several people used to come from Philadelphia once or - anywhere from once to four times a year and give Italian shows.

What, what sort of shows were they? Were they plays or were they a.....

Well, some.....

Variety shews, vaudeville type shows?

No, uh...uh... it was, it was mostly drama and a.... what wasn't drama was comedy but ..a..a... there wasn't too much in



the line of vaudeville.

Uh huh. Where did they put those shows on?

Well, they put them on, they put some on the, the Young Democratic Club, the Young Men's Democratic Club.

Uh huh.

Down there. They had them in Columbus Hall.

Uh huh. O.K. now, in the early twenties Mussolini was coming to power in Italy.

Uh huh.

How did that affect the Italian community here?

A.....

What was the general attitude towards this?

The general attitude was very minor a.... You had a group..a... well... let's, let's put it this way: you have some people right now believe in communism, but it's a small group - I mean a small percentage compared to the rest of the.....

Uh huh.

Of the population. But we had the same thing then. We had a group that were dedicated to Mussolini, but it was such a small minor, minority. But they, they were open about it. There wasn't, there wasn't anything secret. They were open about it.

Well.....

We a, we knew a the population knew who they were, but they were so few that they didn't do anything. They didn't amount to anything.

Uh huh. But what was the general attitude about this? I mean the people didn't look down on Musselini and didn't.....

No.

Think he was a bad man. I, I was under the impression

that they thought he was a good man. They thought a lot of him.

A.... they praised him. They praised him sky high until World War Two.

Yes, everybody. But in, in the early twenties.....

Yeh, yeh.

When he was coming into power he was very highly thought of here.

The, the people, the people who didn't belong to that group that I just mentioned had a high regard for Mussolini.

Right! This is exactly what a.....

They had a high regard for him that he did a lot for Italy.

Uh huh.

But then when he made Germany do to him what they did, then they dropped regard right quick.

Right. Well, of course when this happened I think even the people who were in this a ...

In this group.

In this group. I think it was called the Fascist League of North America.

Yeh.

I think this thing completely disbanded that.....

That, that was the end of that.

That was the end of that, yeh. Did this group ever a sponsor any a sort of a social functions in ...a.....

Well, now, that I don't know. I don't know. I couldn't answer that, whether they did or not. That's so far back that I don't remember if they ever did. That's publically I don't know.

Yes. Now, what a, what was it like now when the Great

Depression hit, when the, the stock market a...a... completely dis-integrated?

Yeh.

Practically in 1929. What effect did it have here in Little Italy.

Well, it affected .... at that time, why a the Italian, the Italian descendant was starting to getting up in the world a little bit.

Uh huh.

About that time and a we had lawyers, we had doctors. And whatever they had invested, it, it hit them pretty good. A.... some a mechanic a.... some tradesmen that had a pretty good job, he might have had something invested, it hit him. And a I think it, it made quite a repercussion to a lot of people.

Well, how did it affect the man who had to work for his daily bread...a... so to speak.

Oh well, it affected him by being layed off.

In other words, he was out of work.

He was out of work, sure.

How did he make out? How did he live?

Well, he a made out like everybody else did. He had, he had to live off relief.

Well, a before relief, how did he live? How did he live?

Oh, oh, you mean from the time he got layed off till the time he got relief?

Yes, well before relief even came into the picture. Relief didn't come into the picture until I think 19.....

Until, until he got, until he got relief why he went into debt. He a probably had a.... he had credit up until that time.

He just extended his credit till it couldn't be extended any more, and then he went on relief. Now here's what they did during the relief. See... that a, they made, they made a proprietor of a house accept it. A relief would give a family nine dollars a month toward their house rent and a the property owner had to accept that and that's all the property owner got.

Uh huh.

See that? They got the nine dollars a month for their house rent and a .... the occupant of the house got their share of relief according to the size of the family.

I see.

See and a they distributed coal. They gave you so much coal at a..... for such a length of time. It all depend on how big your family was. They give you quarter of a ton or a half ton at a time. They gave clothing and they gave you certificate to buy food.

Yes...a... when World War Two started in 1941, what was the general attitude? Now, when World War One started, of course, the United States and Italy were on the same side.

Yes.

But with World War Two, the United States and Italy were on different sides.

On different sides, yeh.

Yes, a how did this a affect a....

The people?

Yes, most the people.

Well, a, it affected the people...a... by what happens a... to my estimation now it affected the people by what happened at a Pearl Harbor. See? That's what I think a....that a made the people

a all for World War Two as far as the United States is concerned.

Yes, a they supported the United States?

They supported the United States one hundred percent on account of what happened at Pearl Harbor.

But how bout a this business with Italy? How did they feel about that? What, certainly a.....

Oh, yeh.

They, they had to have a some sort of mixed feelings about this.

They, they, they were mixed feelings but I would say that the majority of the people in this country who were citizens were with the United States.

Uh huh. Were there any cases that you can think of of people who a refused to go fight for the United States against Italy?

To my knowledge, I never heard of one.

Never?

There might have been, but I didn't hear of any.

Do you have any ideas as to how many a young men from St. Anthony's parish here went into the service?

Oh.....

Do you have any idea at all?

Heh, heh, I'd say, I'd say the biggest part of the young men went.

Yeh, but you have no idea as to the number?

I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

Uh huh.

See, because I myself was too old for it. A.... 1941 that thing started I was forty-three. See? They wouldn't take me

and at that time I was working for the city and my job was considered essential cause I was working in the Water Department. It was an essential job and I could have gotten, if I was involved, I could have gotten a deferment.

Uh huh.

A.... but giving an answer of how many boys went, I really couldn't tell you. I could say this - it was in the hundreds, maybe more.

Yeh.

Because an awful lot of young boys were taken.

Yes. O.K. now, What impact would you say that World War Two had on this community?

.....Well..... the only impact that I could reason if any impact at all would be that, that the family had to give up their, their sons.

Uh huh....um.... what changes did you detect in this general area after Franklin Roosevelt came into office?

After Franklin Roosevelt came in? The changes (heh, heh) it might be wrong to say, I don't know, but it made a lot of changes. It made a lot of people didn't want to work any more.

Yeh, why, why was that?

Well.... the dole was given out. The...a... WPA....a day like today you didn't work. All you had to do was to go down to your headquarters and say, "Here I am." You'd go home and you got paid for it. That's why we got such a high welfare now because people think they ought to have it the rest of their life now.

Uh, did you find many of the people from Little Italy here that abused this sort of thing?

No, no, I didn't. Cause the people from Little Italy

they wanted to go to work. They wanted steady work. They didn't want this thing of a send me a card every nine weeks. See? Report such and such a place, put in six days worth of work and you put in your six days and then you had to wait several weeks before you got another card to go work again. See, they had to make the rotation round to everybody. The Italian people didn't want that. Italian people they wanted work. See? And when a things got better, the Italian person he went to work. Course now, there's an exception to everything. We do have some loafers.

Yes.

But when you count this thing as a whole, the Italian person he wanted to go to work.

Uh huh. What were the, what was it like after the, after World War Two ended?

In Little Italy?

Yes.

After World War Two? I'd say after World War Two things kept picking up. People bettered themselves.

A, right after the announcement came that the war was over, what, what happened up here?

Oh well, it just..... bedlam broke loose. That was all. A, church bells rang for an hour or more. People hollered out in the middle of the street. A, I remember one family here on Scott Street say, "My brother coming home; my brother coming home." Just rejoiced, everything. Naturally, they would.

Yes.

Now course the ones that didn't rejoice I suppose were the ones that didn't have anybody coming back.

Yes, yes, I guess just about everybody was happy the

thing was over, right?

Yeh.

Now, a, what would you say now if you had to pick out ...a... the biggest change or maybe the biggest changes that occurred from your earliest recollection until now this time in Little Italy?

In Little Italy?

And with the Italian population, what would you say?

There's, there's, there's only one big change in the Italian neighborhood in my time. The one that had the most impact and I gave it to you before - the building of St. Anthony's Church.

That is the a.....

That is, to my mind, is the biggest impact on the Italian colony of Wilmington.

Uh huh.

It made Christians out of the Italians in Wilmington.

Uh huh.

It really did. And you know that St. Anthony's Church is well-packed.

Yes, yes, it's, it's well-attended now. I've known all my life of having been very well-attended. A.... is there anything else you'd like to add now? I'm sure you've had a lot of experiences in you lifetime and there've been a lot of things that have happened. Is there anything that you feel is noteworthy that we might add to what we've already been over.

Well, I a, I think I covered things pretty good ...a... I say the general feeling of the population was more cordial in the early days than it is now. A... to tell you the truth, I don't think people are as cordial to one another as they were in the older days. You could walk along the street and you could walk past a stranger, "Good morning, how are you?" "Good morning, how



are you?" And you'd speak back. You'd walk along the street now, you pass a stranger. Nothing's said. You just walk past each other. You find maybe one out of a hundred speak to you - unless you meet somebody you know.

Yes, yes.

See?

O.K. then. You think that pretty much covers a.....

In, in my time I'd say so, yeh.

O.K. Fine.

(END OF TAPE)