

A FAMILY'S STORY

Between 1900 and 1914, as a result of an increasing demand for unskilled labor in America's factories and the erosion of the peasant agricultural economy in Europe, over 9 million people from eastern and southern Europe emigrated to the United States. Many of these immigrants arrived with no knowledge of English and perhaps with only a relative's name or a city destination to guide them. The Malucci and Polvino families of Fairport were two of those families whose story was related by Louis Malucci, a grandson.

Antonio and Petrina Polvino came to America in 1907 from Sicily. Living for a time in Rochester, they eventually settled in Fairport at 22 Elm Street to raise their family of eight children. The oldest child, Josephine, was the only one born in Sicily; the others, George, Philip, Mary, Rose, Anna, Grace, and Lucy, were all born here. Antonio tended a garden, all by hand, that ran from Elm to Park Street and from DeLand Park A to DeLand Park B. He grew a variety of vegetables and made wine from his fruit trees and grape vines. Grandson Lou remembers at one time picking 54 bushels of grapes.

The house had neither electricity nor running water. The children remember going to the Fagnoli family house on Park Street for water. Heat came from a big stove, and there were lanterns for lighting. Two outhouses were in the backyard.

Antonio worked in construction, eventually working for his son-in-law, and Petrina walked to a farm on Turk Hill Road in the vicinity of today's Perinton Community Center to work in the fields. Philip served in World War II, returning to build a house on Park Street at the south end of his father's garden.

Michael Malucci arrived at Ellis Island from Accadia, Italy (about 100 miles from Naples in the mountains), at age 12. The family "paisano" or friend who was travelling with him promptly abandoned him when the ship docked; however, somehow he managed to get to his brother's house in Buffalo where he began work as a shoe-shine boy and spent much of his free time learning English. Over time he worked as a lamplighter in Buffalo and a coal miner in West Virginia, leaving when labor disputes turned violent. Back in Buffalo, Michael turned to construction work. An assignment took him to Fairport where he found a room on Park Street near the Polvino garden. He noticed Josephine, who was seven years his junior, working in her father's garden, talked with her, and eventually asked her for a date. They were married in 1925.

Michael and Josephine also built their house on Park Street. He dragged the house that was there into the back yard and built a new house on the old foundation, contracting out the framing, but doing all the other work himself. As most people did at the time, he had his own garden and also grew potatoes in another plot near the Erie Canal. Lou Malucci and his two sisters were born in this house.

Michael and his father-in-law Antonio were involved in the construction of the bridge over Irondequoit Creek near East Rochester, the dam at Honeyoe Lake, the façade of Strong Memorial Hospital, and the front 9 holes at Midvale Country Club. Subsequently, Michael worked for the American Can Company, but spent a number of years at the Lawless Brothers Mill in East Rochester which provided him with a pension of \$17 per month upon retirement.

Lou Malucci, who still lives in town, clearly remembers growing up on Park Street and among many other memories, recalls playing on top of the several barns there, jumping from one to the other, and in late summer jumping off into large piles of grass clippings. In addition to being a good student, Lou played baseball and basketball in high school and still plays in a softball league. After graduating from Fairport High School, he attended Oberlin College where he met his wife, Dorelle Flavin.

Music has played a large part in the Malucci family, Dorelle is a professional musician, Lou sings with several groups and played the trumpet in the firemen's band, and their youngest child was a music teacher. Lou's work life included time at Stromberg-Carlson, Bausch and Lomb, Kodak, Itek, and RIT.

It was indeed a pleasure to hear the story of Lou's family and to visit the streets where he grew up. His story has been replicated by innumerable families all of whom make up the mosaic that is America at its best.