IMMIGRANT SUCCESS

What Is It, and How Does One Achieve It?

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Ethnic Heritage
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Peter Hall
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FORWARD
FOREWORD

When I planned my project, to gather data on the preservation of ethnic customs and on personal attitudes concerning the perceived reasons for the decline in the importance of maintaining one's ethnic heritage, I had no understanding of the problems that would confront and eventually alter my finished product.

Having no knowledge of any ethnic heritage in my own background, I had no appreciation for any reasons that immigrants might have in not wanting to become "Americanized" as quickly and completely as possible. I took exception to the concept that the dominant culture imposed Americanization upon the immigrants. (I'm still not convinced that this process was a conscious plan on the part of the "establishment" of the day.) However, in directly interviewing twenty persons of varying ethnic backgrounds, subtle examples of "friendly persuasion" kept cropping up. I try to point these examples out in my narrative account of the interviews.

In the original plan, I carefully drafted three forms of questionnaires, and made 60 copies of each form -- a total of 180 questionnaires. I had visions of receiving at least fifteen returns in each category -- forty-five in all. (The three categories of questionnaires were: 1. First generation adult immigrants, 2. Second generation, or those who were very young children when they came here, and 3. Third generation ethnics.)
Friends helped me get the questionnaires passed out to prospective immigrant senior citizens. A month and a half went by, and I only received two returns. In trying to follow up where the forms went, and why the returns were not materializing, the error of my judgment became painfully apparent. Many of the senior ethnics hardly spoke or understood English — a possibility which had not occurred to me. Reading and responding to a lengthy questionnaire was overwhelming to many of the very people who remembered the most about the early part of this century. I discovered that each questionnaire had to be read, paraphrased, and carefully explained by me. Obviously, my inexperience doomed the study plan to failure.

The research model quickly changed from numbered questions whose answers could be categorized, counted, graphed, and generalized, to twenty friendly and informative (but extremely subjective and unquantitative) chats. I learned more about the joys and sorrows of immigrant life than any amount of statistics could have demonstrated.

My paper is now an attempt to convey the feelings about being "Italian American," "Polish American," "German American" — for these are the labels that these ethnics gave themselves, once they decided to make this land their new "homeland."

Many of the interviewees expressed the desire to remain anonymous, and I shall honor that request. But my deep appreciation goes out to all who shared their time
and inner-most feelings with me in this endeavor.

Special thanks go to "Mike" Marino - a walking, talking history book on the "Italian East Side", to Mrs. Oreo, for her firsthand stories about her family, the Arrigonis of Durham, and about their innumerable contributions to the growth of the greater Middletown area, and to Mr. C, who gave me a close-up view of the hard life of a dairy farmer in those early days of this century.

To the people at Sbona Towers and the Old Middletown High building, to the Lutheran Home participants, and to all the individuals who helped out with contacts—my sincere thanks!
THE SICILIANS
Scenario:

The turn of the century—Middletown, located on the Big Bend of the Connecticut River.

Middletown was proud of her WASP history. She had been a successful seaport. She had weathered the storm of Irish immigrants with little more than a ruffling of her surface. (After all, the Portland quarries and burgeoning industrial development had made good use of that timely influx of cheap labor.) The Irish had built a church and settled into the American mold quite smoothly.

Then-ever so gently and imperceptively in the beginning—a new presence began to appear among the "good folk" of Middletown. Soon, a tidal wave from far-away Sicily that would, in less than half a century, reshape the political and cultural boundaries of the city, moved irrevocably onto the landscape.

After the Civil War, a small group of Sicilians from Milazzo found its way to Middletown. In 1895, names such as Basile, Amato, and Santangelo appeared in the Middletown City Directory. In 1897, 41 Italians left Melilli, Sicily. Some of the party went to Brazil, but others found their way to Middletown.

According to "Mike" Marino, a Mr. Miano returned to Melilli to try to convince his brother, Vincenzo, to join him in Middletown. (The story goes that Mr. Miano arrived in Melilli on a bicycle, the first ever seen in that locale.)

In the early part of 1898, another group of Melilose
came here to establish homes. Among the group were the Luigi LaRosa family, Antonio Amenta and his wife, Vincenzo Annino, Sebastian Marino, and Joseph Bartolotta.

In October of the same year, (1898), Mrs. Sebastian Marino and her two daughters joined Sebastian, Mr. and Mrs. Vincenzo Miano, and Antonio and Josephina Marino, the parents of my storyteller, Sebastian, "Mike" Marino.

These first families worked as laborers in the beginning, but many quickly moved on to more responsible employment. They saved every penny possible to send for relatives back in Sicily. Oftentimes, they bought the tickets for passage here, and sent them over to the relatives, rather than sending them cash. (Today, there are more people of Melillese background living in Middletown, Connecticut than there are living in Melilli itself.)

The City Directory's Italian surnames mushroomed. Between 1902 and 1910, names such as Joseph Annino, Michael Marino, Lorenzo and Joseph Pagano—Nocera, Aresco, Cannata, Cavaleri, Fiducia, Fortuna, Garofalo, Labella, Lentini, Marchese, Monarca, and Antonelli took their places in the listings. Most of the addresses of these new entries were listed as Elm Street, Green Street, Green Place, Ferry Street, Water Street, and Court Street: The northeastern section of the city, from Main Street to the river, was taking on a new ethnic identity—a Sicilian identity.

Many of these early immigrants worked as laborers, but many skilled tradesmen also brought their crafts here to enrich
the labor force. Shoemakers, tailors, barbers, masons, carpenters and musicians joined the ranks.

Let us trace some of the history of one of the families that epitomizes the rising status of Melillose immigrants in Middletown, the Antonio Marino family.

Antonio and Josephina came to Middletown in October of 1898, and resided at 3 Green Place. Antonio got a job in the construction business with Dennis O'Brien and Son. Mrs. Marino did not like Middletown's cold winters, and longed for the warmer clime of Sicily. She kept vowing that the family would return to Melilli the next winter, but it seemed that Josephina was always pregnant when winter rolled around, and so they persevered. (The couple had eight children.)

In 1902, the family rented a six-room apartment at 56 Water Street. Josephina opened a one-room grocery store, catering to the area's Sicilians, and rented out the remaining rooms to boarders. At one time, Mrs. Marino was an agent for the Cunard Lines, and did a brisk business selling tickets to immigrants sending for relatives.

The grocery business prospered, and in 1905, the Marinos purchased a building on lower Court Street, and Josephina now had a "real" store with a large windowed storefront. Her store became the prime supplier to the Italian neighborhood.

Many single people frequented her store, and Josephina often played the role of matchmaker. (Joseph "Fish" Riggeri and Josephina Saraceno were married through Josephina's "matching" and the Marinos were their attendants.)
Josephina never had the opportunity for formal schooling. She couldn't read or write English, but she sure could add up those prices in the grocery store with no trouble at all.

Antonio did very well in his construction work, and soon rose to the rank of foreman. In 1905, he built a six-apartment house behind the store on Court Street. In 1909, he built another six-apartment house in the rear of the first, and in 1911, he built still another six-apartment house on the north side of the street, where the new court building now stands. By 1914, Antonio Marino was considered to be about the richest Italian in Middletown.

A son was born to the Marinors in 1905, and they named him Sebastiano. (He is known to his friends as "Mike" Marino.) Mike went to Central School and started Middletown High. He left high school to go to work for his uncle in the macaroni business.

The Sons of Italy organization was formed in 1902, and the Garibaldi's in 1905. Very early on, the Sicilian community banded together for fellowship with their countrymen, and for the practicing and preserving of their old world customs.

One of these celebrations was the "Carnivale Dance" in February, a pre-Lenten masquerade festivity. Mike remembers musicians playing in vacant stores in the Italian neighborhoods and charging the costumed revelers five cents a dance.

"All Soul's Day" was another old holiday kept in the new world; The children were told that the spirits of all their dead ancestors would have goodies for them while they slept. Mike remembers that his mother's store would always run out of Italian pastry at that time.
Mike remembers that they had no Christmas tree in their observance of that holiday. The stable scene was the most prominent symbol, and the caraway seed candy was a tradition.

Sam Cannata was the organizer and first chairman of the Feast of St. Sebastian Committee. Celebration of the Feast began on East Court Street, and from that humble beginning came the building of the beautiful and imposing St. Sebastian's Church on Washington Street. The Sicilians here are proud of the fact that their church was built because of a grass-roots movement among the Italian people here.

The Feasts were always day-long events held in an atmosphere of carnival and gaiety. A Mr. Marchese made a statue of St. Sebastian, the patron saint of Melilli and on Feast Day he took it to St. John's Church for a high mass, since the Italians had no church of their own. Two bands, (one local and one brought in from out of town), would parade through the Italian section. At two o'clock in the afternoon, the auction would begin. Joe "Fish" Riggeri was the auctioneer, and he would get up on a projecting store roof and show the articles to be auctioned off, (when possible). What an array of livestock, foodstuffs and wares there were. You could buy cattle, calves, sheep, rabbits, needlework, homemade wine, scaccia, Italian pastry, and much more.

In the evening, a band concert would be held, and the festivities would close with a glorious display of fireworks.

At the age of sixteen, Mike Marino became a member of the Feast of St. Sebastian Committee. It seems he was asked to join the illustrious committee for a very good reason—he had a truck, and the Committee needed someone to pick up fireworks in Wall-
ingford for a savings of $25.00.

There is a story that goes like this--

East Court Street grew to be a busy commercial section, one could find a tailor, barber, macaroni shop, a grocery, meat market, hotel, laundry, blacksmith, and taverns there. There were always some vacant storefronts available for special uses. Since many Italians prayed to St. Sebastian for favors, they would often donate money to the saint for petitions granted. The Feast Committee decided to place the statue of St. Sebastian in one of the storefronts, and put the money collected into a savings account to help defray the expenses of the Feast celebration. A Mr. Mazzotta came to pay his respects to St. Sebastian, and was appalled that the statue had been placed "in a banana store". He felt that this was downright disrespectful, and he organized a committee to build a church. Mike Marino was a part of that committee.

The committee sent a delegation to the Bishop, asking for permission to establish an Italian church in Middletown. The Bishop's consent was given with the stipulation that the committee must first raise $50,000 in those lean depression years. Hard work and unselfish sacrifice were needed but the Italian community came through, the money was raised, and the church was built. What a magnificent monument to all who cared enough about preserving their national religion in their new homeland to give and work so sacrificially.

In 1940, Mike Marino became chairman of the Feast Committee. The location of the Feast was changed to Wadsworth Playground, (where the county courthouse stands on DeKoven Drive.) Con-
cessions that had previously been run by individuals were taken over by the church and all profits went to the church.

The Feast grew and grew, and was advertised on radio and in newspapers. People came from all over New England. The statue of St. Sebastian was paraded through the streets of the Italian neighborhoods, and on to the carnival site. The people on the East side collected money on each street to decorate and illuminate their own street. The Committee collected money door-to-door to defray expenses. The Italians were willing to give and give to maintain their special holiday.

Grateful worshippers who had petitioned St. Sebastian to bring home their servicemen safely from WW II pinned over $11,000 on the processing statue the year after the was ended.

The celebration of the Feast of St. Sebastian started the movement among the Italian people to build the church. The Feast monies paid off the church mortgage in 1949.

Mike Marino is proud of his Italian heritage and of his part in keeping the traditions of his forebears alive. He married Carmelina Carta in 1926. Carmelina was born in America, but returned to Italy, then returned again to Middletown at the age of sixteen. They both speak Italian fluently, but their children do not, although they understand much of it.

Mike has never felt personally discriminated against because of his ethnic background, although he did cite three instances in Middletown when a lone Italian ran on a political ticket, (twice on the Democratic ticket and once on the Republican), and the entire political ticket was voted in each time, except for the Italian candidate. These were certainly examples of the dominant cultures saying, "You're not quite acceptable."
Not yet!"

Mike and his Italian community have the last laugh when talking about those early political snubs. Just one look at the names of most of the candidates running for city offices clearly portrays the political power picture in Middletown today. The Italian-Americans are in control! Mike's son, Anthony, has served as our city's mayor for four years, and is now challenging the incumbent mayor (also an Italian-American) in a primary for the right to be the Democratic Party's candidate in the November election.

When Mike was questioned about the decline in keeping ethnic customs and about the reasons for that decline, he gave this opinion. He said that the people immigrated here at a great personal sacrifice. They loved their homeland, but it could no longer support them or offer any future to their children. They made up their minds to leave all the old ways behind, and to find a new life as an American. Whatever sacrifices had to be made to gain the economic security they sought, they were willing to make. They wanted to Americanize because that was the way to be accepted and to be more likely to share in the community's opportunities and financial rewards. That was why they came here in the first place.

However, the Sicilian community grew so large so rapidly that its members could feel comfortable within its confines, and could Americanize more slowly than less concentrated immigrants. One elderly lady interviewed spoke no English, but told the interpreter that she would never leave her homeland to come here, if she had it to do over. She never really mingled with the
people outside the Sicilian community, never learned the language, and so she never felt that she really belonged in this land. She is the only person interviewed who did not say that they would do the same thing again.
A NORTHERN ITALIAN FAMILY
A family of northern Italians found their way to the rural town of Durham, and left their indelible mark on that town, and the surrounding areas.

Two Arrigoni brothers, Frank and Dionigi, were born in the little village of Vendoza, near beautiful Lake Como, not far from the Swiss border. Their father was one of the town's richest men, but lost his fortune because he rashly guaranteed business obligations of friends.

When Frank was twenty one, he listened to the glowing accounts of his friend, Charles Acerboni, who had worked as a waiter at the Chicago World's Fair, and he was persuaded to emigrate to America. Two of his older brothers were already here, working as laborers in North Branford. Acerboni and Frank started out from New York to find them. They took a train to New Haven and then to Branford. Since they couldn't afford to pay the $5.00 charge for a team to take them to North Branford, they started walking. They walked from 8 P.M. until 2 A.M. to reach their destination.

Frank Arrigoni stayed in North Branford for three years, working as a woodchopper. At the end of the first year, he was joined by his brother, Dionigi, then fifteen years old. He, too, worked as a woodchopper. Then all four brothers went to Durham and hired out to a prosperous farmer, Henry Nettleton.

At the end of a year, Frank and Dionigi saved enough money to buy a 100-acre woodlot in eastern Durham. They built
a shack and camped on the job for eighteen months, working
from dawn to dusk to save money for future investments.
From the original lot, they sold their first load of charcoal
to Sargent Mfg. Co. of New Haven.

Business increased, and the brothers invested in another
timber lot in the western part of town.

Early on, the brothers became citizens of this country.
Both of them married at about the same time, and both families
lived in the Reuben Hubbard house. Just five years after
arriving in America, they bought a 550-acre farm at the lower
end of Durham. By 1915, they owned about 3,000 acres in eight
towns.

Dionigi's wife became ill, and the family traveled back to
Vendroga, where Dionigi left his family, except for the oldest
son who returned to America with him. After his first wife's
death, Dionigi remarried another woman from his home town,
and the whole family returned to Durham. The children were not
allowed to speak English in the home, because the new step-
mother could not speak or understand the language.

The Arrigoni's business ventures branched out rapidly,
and they excelled in whatever fields they entered. They went
into the road construction business, and got a contract for a
$4,000.00 macadamizing job midway between Middletown and Durham.
Their firm prospered, and it constructed a large proportion of
the principal highways of the state. In 1909, they built the
Newton Road.

In 1914, the Arrigonis opened up the Middletown Coal Company, and became the largest dealers in charcoal in the state. They inaugurated the custom of putting up charcoal in paper bags. (See an original sample in the appendix.)

The political arena has been another scene of triumph for the Arrigoni brothers. Their successes there are far removed from the farm where the young immigrants who could speak no English worked for a few dollars a month and board. Natural ability and a willingness to work extremely hard had moved these men into positions of power.

Frank was elected town selectman on the Republican ticket as soon as he received his citizenship papers. He was elected Republican representative in 1909 and in 1911, and Dionigi was elected to the post in 1914. After every state election, the brothers gave a celebration and invited the entire male population of Durham. It was truly a man's political world then, but that changed with the next generation of Arrigonis.

Dionigi's daughter, Mary, was born in Durham in 1901. She became involved in Republican politics, also. She was the first woman that Durham sent to the General Assembly. She served two terms, from 1949 to 1953. Mary was extremely active in community organizations. She was one of the organizers of the Notre Dame Church, a member of the Young Republicans, a member of the board of corporators of Middlesex Hospital, a director for Catholic Charities, a member of the District Nursing Assoc., of the Garden Club, and of the Middlesex District
Council of Catholic Women. I mention all of Mary's political and community involvements to make the point that she was a powerful and influential member of the community, despite the fact of being the daughter of an immigrant and being a woman. Quite a feat! Other male members of the second generation were also politicians, and one served in the governor's office for a brief period when the governor was away. He had the distinction of being the first acting governor to become a father while serving in that office.

Another of Dionigi's daughters, Mrs. Catherine Orio (an interviewee), said that she never felt that the native population of Durham discriminated against her family members. The children went to public grammar school. After that, the girls went to boarding school in Hartford, and the sons went into the family businesses. The family was financially successful and eager to serve their community, and the community embraced them wholeheartedly.

Mrs. Orio did feel that the influence of ethnic heritage diminishes with each succeeding generation. It is difficult for anyone to feel an intense sense of loyalty to a land they have never lived in, or to customs that are not a part of their everyday experience. She felt, as most other interviewees did, that the lessening of interest was due to the natural evolution of social intermingling and intermarriage.
THE POLISH
Mr. C____ came to Middletown from Poland very early in the century, but his son (the interviewee) was not sure of the exact date. His first job was cutting wood, and he was paid ten cents per hour. Then he took a job as a weaver in Derby. Soon after that, he went to work for the Russell Company. His next employment was at the Star Mill, and the family (now there was a wife and three children) lived on Middlefield Street. Times were hard, and Mr. C____ just didn't think that the hard labor for long hours and the meager pay were worth keeping his family in this new land, away from familiar language, customs, and relatives. So in 1910, he returned with his family to Poland, and they lived with his parents there. Another child was born while they were back in Poland.

If life was hard in America, it was impossible for Mr. C____ to support his family in the old country. So he made the decision to break with his homeland again. In 1916, he, his wife, and the oldest and youngest sons returned to Middletown. They planned to send for the other son and daughter as soon as they were settled. By the time the family felt ready to be reunited, World War I was fast developing in Europe, and the middle two children were unable to leave Poland. They stayed with their grandparents and attended Polish schools. After the war, they rejoined their parents in Middletown. They spoke no English at that time.

After the War, Mr. C____ had saved enough money to buy a farm on Camp Street. By 1923, he owned seventeen acres, and still
worked at the Russell Co. It was then that he decided to go into dairying, and he peddled his milk door-to-door.

When the recently returned son (the interviewee, whom I will call Stan, although that is not his real name) reached the age of sixteen, he sought work in the local factories. He worked for a year at the Portland Silk Shop on Stack Street. Then he got into the Russell Co. and learned weaving. He worked on the midnight shift there until 1943. He would go directly from the factory to help his father with the morning milking, and then work on the farm until afternoon. Then he would have to go to bed until time to get up and go back to work on his eight-hour graveyard shift at Russell Co. Even after he was married and lived on Flower Street, he kept up this grueling pace, and his wife complained that she seldom saw him or had the opportunity to talk to him. This willingness on the part of so many immigrants to devote almost all of one's waking hours to hard labor was evident in almost all of the interviews. The desire to be "successful" in the new land was an overpowering obsession.

When Mr. C found it necessary to retire, "Stan" bought the farm and gave up his factory job. There were just three horses on the farm at that time, and "Stan" immediately began modernizing. His first mechanical miracle was an old car that he adapted to blow the corn into the silo. He then began to buy machinery, like tractors and a corn binder. He said that he never had any trouble getting financing for his
purchases. He had a reputation for being a hard-working honest man, and the businessmen of the town respected that. His wife told the interviewer that neighbors often commented about their being rich because of all the modern improvements that "Stan" made. "Little did they know," she said, "that we were always mortgaged up to the hilt, and were practically penniless."

When "Stan" decided to build a large, modern barn, the City Savings Bank gave him the mortgage, although he had many other outstanding obligations. They trusted him.

"Stan's" family kept some of the old Polish customs, especially on Christmas Eve and Ester. Ethnic foods would be prepared, and on Ester the priest would come to bless the food. The Mrs. would prepare cabbage and green split peas, mushroom soup, pierogi, and apples and rice casserole, pickled herring, and babka.

"Stan's" children do not speak Polish, but they understand most of it. The family does not feel that the people of Middletown were prejudiced against them. The businesses honored his reputation as a responsible man, and gave him credit whenever he needed it. The couple believes that the diminishing of observing the old customs is a natural result of their children's feeling of belonging to the American culture.

One little story recounted by the Mrs. did point out some subtle discouraging of using the Polish language at home. She recalled receiving a note from her daughter's first grade
teacher requesting that the family speak English only to the children. It seems that the little girl, when shown a picture of a hoe and asked to identify the object, answered, "Oh! That's a botika." Gentle coercion to Americanize? --- Perhaps ---

In 1959, "Stan" gave up farming and went to work for the city. He sold his acreage to a developer for the building of a housing project. Then he built a lovely new brick home that any founding father would be proud to own. He is pleased with his accomplishments in Middletown. And well he should be!

In contrast to the immigrant families who acquired land, a single Polish lady lived a very different lifestyle. M.M. came over here as a young girl. She was one of eleven children, and her older brother lived in Willimantic, but he was not good about keeping in touch with the family. M.M.'s father went at her leaving Poland, but he was honest with her and told her that the family simply could not properly feed all the children, and that she would have a chance for a better life in America. And so she came. She boarded with a distant relative in town, and talked to the interviewer extensively about how lucky she was that the woman of the house cooked such good food for the boarders. For breakfast, there was bread, butter, and coffee. A sandwich was taken to work for lunch, and M.M. commented that she always had something hot to eat for supper, usually some kind of soup with some meat in it. She really appreciated having enough food to eat, and that was a measure of the success
of her new life in this country.

She worked at the horseblanket factory in Middletown until it closed. For a short time after that she was a housemaid for a Wesleyan professor's wife. Then she worked for the Russell Company. She remembered the floorlady as being very kind to her and telling her not to disclose the amount of her paycheck to other workers, because she might be working faster than some others on the piecework, and they would be mad at her. She really appreciated that advice, and never thought that it might well have been given for the company's good than for M.M.'s. M.M. went to work for the Conn. Valley Hospital after she left the Russell Co., and she worked there until she retired.

Most of her life was spent as a boarder in someone else's house. For a period of time she lived with a brother, who ran a meat market, and his family. Again, when telling the interviewer about this time period, she dwelled on the fact that there was always plenty of good food to eat when she was living in her brother's house.

When asked if she ever felt discriminated against, M.M. kept saying, "Oh, no. I can't complain. People have been very good to me. Even when I worked as a maid, the professor's family taught me English and they always brought me back a little something when they went on a trip. I have had a good life here."

People's expectations often determine perceived success or failure.
SUMMING UP
For my study, I surveyed twenty first and second generation ethnics. These included: 1 Czechoslovakian (Maromas), 1 German (West Street), 1 Portugese (raised in R.I.), 2 Swedes (Lutheran Home), 5 Polish (3 at the old Middletown High Senior Apts., 1 at Sbona Towers, and 1 in his own home in the Westfield section), 2 northern Italians (1 from Durham and 1 from Spring St.), and 8 Sicilians (2 from Westfield, 1 on Home Ave., 2 at Sbona Towers, and 3 from the North End). Only one person questioned stated that she would never leave her homeland if she had it all to do over. Nineteen of the twenty said that they never felt personally oppressed or discriminated against because of their ethnic backgrounds. Thirteen of the twenty believed that the immigrants wanted to Americanize and blend into the culture here as quickly as possible. Five believed the decrease in the importance of the old world customs to second and third generation ethnics was the natural result of social intermingling and intermarriage. Two of those interviewed felt that the establishment did apply pressure to the ethnic groups in order to Americanize them more quickly.

These results seem to indicate that if the dominant culture did apply pressure, it was so subtle and gentle that it was not perceived as a hardship by the majority of the immigrants.

To cite a specific example of a strong desire to Americanize, Mr. William Langer's story is ideal. Mr. Langer said that he refused to speak German at home. Furthermore, he and a group of youths were instrumental in persuading the church fathers
at St. Paul's Lutheran Church on High Street to conduct one
service a month in English. He said that the service became
very well attended because all of the young people would come,
so many of the parents would come with them.

To illustrate the other side of the coin, a strong attempt
is made to preserve the old customs for the residents at the
Lutheran Home on Congdon Street. The staff provides a coffee
hour every day at one-thirty P.M., as is the custom in Sweden.
On Dec. 13th each year, the St. Lucia custom is observed. A
staff member dresses up in traditional native costume, including
a crown of candles, and goes around to each room, waking each
resident and serving coffee and goodies. The Home also pre-
pares the traditional Christmas Eve Smorgasbord for all the
residents, staff, and special guests.

The three immigrant families studied in depth were all alike
in some outstanding characteristics---they worked extraordinarily
hard, were extraordinarily thrifty, and purchased property
as soon as possible. The Marinos and the Arrigonis ran successful
businesses besides, and parleyed their families into positions
of community leadership, wealth, and political power. The
Polish family ran a thriving farm whose sale eventually brought
them substantial financial gains.

In the Middletown of the 20th century, it appears that
the old cliche that "Anyone who works hard can be a success"
is more than a myth. Of course this will always have to be
tempered by the worker's perception of "success."
APPENDIX
Dear Seniors:

So many of you have been in Hildesheim for many years. You have seen the town grow and change, and you know much more about our community than I can ever learn from history books.

I am taking a course at Wadsworth called "The Immigrants' Contributions to Hildesheim," and there are very few written sources for learning about how it is for the people from "the old country" in the early 1900s. I'd love to learn more about that from the people who actually lived it.

How did it feel to be an immigrant, or the son or daughter of an immigrant, living in Hildesheim in the first quarter of this century? Do you have time to talk to me and tell us what life was like in your home? If so, please call me at 347-6567 after 4 o'clock, and I will come to your home (or any place that is convenient for you) to interview you. I will not use your name in my report if you do not want me to. But you can help future generations to know about that "special era" in Hildesheim's history, when so many people found a new life here in our town.

I will be so grateful for any help you can give me.

Many thanks,

Margaret Fisher

If you do not feel that you would like to talk to me, will you at least answer some questions on a questionnaire? You do not have to sign your name, but the more answers I can get, the more accurate my report will be. Please take a few minutes to think what you remember about those years.
Questionnaire for immigrants who came here as adults:

1. What is your name?

2. Where was your country of origin?

3. Did you have a specific reason for coming to this country?

4. What were your experiences before coming to this country?

5. What are your current plans for the future?

6. Did you have any family members who came before you?

7. How did your family help you settle in?

8. Have you faced any difficulties since arriving here?

9. How do you feel about your life in this country?

10. How do you think you will feel 5 years from now?
Questionnaire for immigrants who came here as adults

1. What country did your parents come from?
2. How old were you when you [illegible].
3. What job did you do?
4. Did you marry here?
5. Did you send your children to public [illegible].
6. How did you feel about the [illegible]? Can you tell us both the good and the bad aspects of [illegible] of the school open to your children?
7. Do you think that your children were proud of their immigrant background? Did they want you to [illegible] their [illegible] and to [illegible] their friends that were not immigrants? Did you attend activities at the school? Did you feel uncomfortable with groups of non-immigrants? Why or why not?
8. Did you feel discriminated against or looked down upon? If so, by whom? (What persons or groups?)
9. Did your family have any customs that you think were particularly “ethnic”? If so, can you tell us some of the things you did to your home that other groups probably did not?
10. Did you celebrate any special holidays, or celebrations [illegible] in special ways, like the “old country”?
11. How important do you think the “old” customs were important to your children? Very Imp. ___ Important___ Not important___
Questionnaire for children of immigrants (second generation)

1. What country did your parents come from?
2. How many children were in your family?
3. What kind of work did your father do?
4. What kind of work did your mother do, if she worked outside of the home?
5. In what part of town did you live?
6. [Illegible] of your friends and neighbors from the [illegible] background?
7. Did you go to public schools?
8. Did you have to leave school and go to work before graduation? If so, how did your parents feel about that?
9. Did you talk about your ethnic background at school?
10. Did you feel “different” because your parents were immigrants?
11. Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your national background? If so, by whom?
12. Did your parents come to school affairs?
13. Did you want them to? Are you proud of your ethnic heritage, in general?
14. Did you do anything at home that people outside your ethnic group didn’t? (Was your life in any way ‘unique’ from other groups?)
15. How important were, and are, the old customs to you personally? Very important___ Important___ Not Important___
16. Did you marry within your nationality?
17. Did parental pressures have any bearing upon whom you dated and whom you married? Explain.
Questionnaire on the preservation of heritage:

1. Your country were your grandparents from?

2. Do you speak the language from their "old country"?

3. Do you go to public school?

4. Do you ever talk about your ethnic background?

5. Does ethnicity have anything to do with your life outside your own home?

6. Do you go to the church that your grandparents went to?

7. Will ethnic background (or ESL?) have anything to do with your choice of a marriage partner?

8. Did your parents ever share the importance of sharing a faith "your own kind"? Would it have gone to you if they did?

9. Have you ever discussed the early immigrant days with your grandparents?

10. Do you feel it is important to know about and carry on ethnic customs, and pass them on to your children?

11. Do you think you are more conscious or less conscious than your parents are about national background?

12. Do you think it is important for your children to carry on their own nationality within their own culture and within their own race?

13. Do you see the "Americanization" of immigrant culture as a result of:

2. the dominant culture's imposing its way upon others

3. immigrants wanting to "Americanize" as quickly as possible

4. the natural evolution of cultural interactions?
Questionnaire for grandchildren of immigrants

1. What country were your grandparents from?
2. Do you speak the language from their “old country”? 
3. Do you go to public schools?
4. Do you ever talk about your ethnic background? If so, when, and to whom?
5. Does ethnicity have anything to do with your life outside your own home?
6. Do you go to the church that your grandparents went to?
7. Will ethnic background (or did it) have anything to do with your choice of a marriage partner?
8. Did your parents ever stress the importance of choosing a mate from “your own kind”? Would it matter to you if they did?
9. Have you ever discussed the early immigrant days with your grandparents?
10. Do you feel it is important to know about and carry on ethnic customs, and pass them on to your children?
11. Do you think you are more conscious ___ or less conscious ___ than your parents are about national background?
12. Do you think it is important for your children to marry within their own nationality? Within their own religion? Within their own race?
13. Do you see the “Americanization of immigrant culture as a result of:
   a. The dominant culture’s imposing its ways upon others
   b. Immigrants wanting to “Americanize” as quickly as possible
   c. The natural evolution of social intermingling and intermarriage?
WORKED THEIR WAY TO WEALTH.

Arrigoni Brothers of Durham, Once Woodchoppers, Now Successful Road Builders.

ERECT FINE HOTEL IN MIDDLETOWN.

First Business Venture Was Charcoal Making—Prominent in Politics.

Special to The Times.

Middletown, April 17.

From whatever direction one approaches this city at night, attention is attracted, while miles away, by the name "Arrigoni," blazing against the sky by the big electric sign on top of Middletown's thriving new hotel at the corner of Main and Liberty streets. The name is a lightning rod. It means that while a modern hotel has been the dream of Middletown people for years, it was left for two former farm laborers of the country town of Durham, Frank and Dionigi Arrigoni, to take the business chance which three weeks ago turned the dream into a reality.

The new hotel is a solid evidence of the remarkable success and in an ordinary New England community by the industrious enterprise of these two young Italians. Emanating from two young men and twenty years ago, respectively, without funds to start with and without knowing a word of English, starting their life in this new country on farmhands for a few dollars a month and board, they have risen, made themselves men of power. As farmers, charcoal dealers, mariners, contractors, road builders, real estate speculators, and incidentally as political leaders, the two brothers have touched no branch of activity in which they have not succeeded. In the short time that their new hotel has been open for business, its patrons have been so plentiful as to indicate that this enterprise, the most novel one of their career, is also to be crowned with success.