

GOOD FRIDAY ON COLLEGE STREET: URBAN SPACE AND CHANGING ITALIAN
IDENTITY

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the relationship between urban space and minority ethnic identity. It makes extensive use of oral testimony and a variety of archival documents including personal correspondence and photographs, parish records, and newspaper records to reveal the way postwar Italian immigrants utilized traditional religious practices to nurture and express a feeling of belonging in the Toronto neighbourhood known as Little Italy.

The Processione di Cristo Morto (The Procession of the Dead Christ or PCM) on Good Friday was part of a larger approach to religious devotion which included public processions for patron saints embedded in the premigration lives of southern Italian immigrants who settled in the College Street neighbourhood. Immigrants brought with them the assumption that public space was an appropriate location for nurturing and expanding dense networks of information and support connected to leisure activity and devotional practices. Although use of neighbourhood space for leisure appears to be a gendered practice among Italian immigrants, during the PCM women occupied and directed the use of public space on a scale equal to men. I argue the PCM was unique in terms of its appeal to Italian immigrants from all regions of Italy and became an important symbolic vehicle for publicly expressing the evolution of personal and communal Italian identity from Italian “immigrant” to Italian-Canadian “ethnic” over two generations.

Urban space is an appropriate category of analysis for understanding the ways immigrant/ethnic minorities develop feelings of belonging in a new city. Sidewalks, roads, neighbourhood businesses and churches are the most visible site of encounter and negotiation between immigrant newcomers and the settled population. In these places, which were

simultaneously the most easily accessible and most difficult to avoid, relationships of power and marginality were revealed at the individual and community level. This dissertation identifies strategies of negotiation for access to urban space employed by Italians in Toronto included, but were not limited to, nurturing relationships with religious, civic and political authorities.

The grassroots evolution of the PCM is an example of the way sensual experience, memory and emotion were located and expressed in urban space. This study argues these elements deserve scholarly attention. They were central to how Italians understood the degree to which they were welcome in different urban places and important for understanding why this highly visible processional practice known as the Processione di Cristo Morto was established in the College Street neighbourhood after migration and endured well beyond the immigrant generation.

Dedication

For my mother,

Dora Paolantonio

1933-2019

Acknowledgments

As a child I didn't know anything about the annual College Street procession. Instead on Good Friday I walked alongside my mother in a procession which began inside our suburban church and travelled around the outdoor parking lot before re-entering the church. There were no statues or musical bands and our group never walked along a sidewalk or entered a road. It was a simple, quiet and unobtrusive devotional practice. For decades I walked with her because my mother asked me to do so. With great disappointment she eventually accepted that religious devotion was not an experience we would share. When my mother learned the topic of this dissertation her hope was that I would finally understand why she chose to walk, pray and sing in so many religious processions throughout her life. I think I finally do.

I would like to thank the members of my committee. Professor Gabriele Scardellato first suggested the procession on Good Friday as a topic. His boundless patience and encouragement allowed me to meditate on the kind of scholarship I wanted to pursue. His advice was invaluable for getting me back on track when I was buried in interview transcriptions. It is difficult to describe all that I have learned from his compassionate mentorship, but certainly editing is at the top of the list. Roberto Perin's questions and prodding challenged me to think more deeply about the connections to be drawn between various texts and provided much needed advice during the final editing process. I am also grateful to Carolyn Podruchny for her thoughtful comments on the final draft.

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This dissertation would have been impossible without the generosity of the various individuals who spent hours talking to me. Men and women shared stories about the things they did to found and grow the procession on Good Friday. But they also shared deeply personal and sometimes painful memories. I hope I have treated these revelations with the respect they deserve. In particular Giuseppe Simonetta and Rosario Iori supported the project by sharing their life stories and personal archives. Photographs, letters and official correspondence filled crucial gaps and provided much needed context. Both men also kindly offered encouragement and support which extended far beyond our formal interviews and not so gently implored me to “hurry up and finish.”

I am indebted to Ricardo Aleixo, Sacristan of St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church who kindly allowed access to the St. Francis of Assisi Parish Archival Collection and shared his extensive knowledge of parish history and Italian processional life. Erin Bienert helped to guide me through the collection of the Archive of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto and responded with endless patience to numerous email requests. I am grateful to Alexander Tabascio for creating the maps in this study. His suggestions and creativity helped to produce maps which enhance the text.

Finally I would like to thank my family. It has been an absolute pleasure to be on the receiving end of enthusiastic support and encouragement from my daughters Alessandra and Via. Their interest in the content of this study and the process of dissertation writing has delighted and sustained me during the last difficult phase of writing. For twenty five years my husband Marzio

Pozzuoli has been my greatest cheerleader. He eagerly embraced my return to graduate school and has supported me in every imaginable way through classes, comprehensive exams and the writing of this dissertation. Pursuing this PhD has been joyful in large part because I have shared it with him.

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Introduction

St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church was made the second Italian national parish in Toronto in 1913.¹ This designation was no doubt influenced by its location in an immigrant neighbourhood where Italians began to settle during the first notable immigration from Italy to Toronto after 1900.² After the Second World War St. Agnes welcomed new immigrants from Italy who brought with them a rich tradition of religious processions. Throughout all regions in Italy, popular devotional practices were common until at least the late nineteenth century. For example, the instance of local devotions connected to visions of the Virgin Mary reflected demographic differences between north and south; twice as many apparitions of the Virgin occurred in northern regions mirroring its larger population.³ Religious processions in honor of patron saints also occurred throughout Italy, but to date there is nothing in the historical scholarship about northern-Italian processional practices after migration to Toronto. Immigrants to the College Street neighbourhood in both periods of immigration were overwhelmingly from southern Italy. It is their popular devotional practices which were adapted to the new urban environment. Religious processions were among the most highly valued of these devotions.⁴

¹ John Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity 1875-1935* (Kingston: McGill-Queens Press, 1988), 120-21.

² Robert Harney, "Toronto's Little Italy," in *If One Were to Write a History...*, eds. Pierre Anctil and Bruno Ramirez (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1991), 37-39. Describes the Italian residential clusters near St. Agnes church.

³ Michael P. Carrol, *Madonnas That Maim: Popular Catholicism in Italy Since the Fifteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 93-94.

⁴ Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 138-42 describes other popular religious practices among southern Italian immigrants in Toronto and the importance of the *festa* (celebration) in honor of patron saints.

After 1945 Italian immigrants who worshipped at St. Agnes church organized and carried out a number of religious processions in honor of hometown patron saints. In the late twentieth century they established the most well-known and attended religious procession in Toronto. It would become known to the descendants of immigrant founders and English speaking residents in the city as the ‘Good Friday Procession.’ But for the Italian immigrants who established and continued to organize it for decades this event was known as *La Processione di Cristo Morto* (The Procession of the Dead Christ).

The historical presence of Italian immigrants in the College Street neighbourhood and its importance as home to numerous postwar processional practices helped to establish this area as Toronto’s Little Italy. Despite this label the College Street neighbourhood is best described as an immigrant space rather than an Italian space.⁵ Immigrant spaces are by definition areas where people from diverse backgrounds live together while accommodating one another’s languages, ethnic and religious practices. Immigrant neighbourhoods are dynamic locales of transition for newcomers as they begin the process of settling into new urban space. Many will later move to other areas of the city. In the College Street neighbourhood postwar Italian arrivals lived alongside a large Jewish population, but determinedly claimed this neighbourhood as their own ethnic area. The annual procession on Good Friday was one practice which helped immigrants establish a sense of belonging in urban space. Over time this event became a vehicle for the immigrant and second generations to negotiate their relationship to one another, their shared

⁵ Denis De Klerck and Corrado Paina, eds., *College Street - Little Italy Toronto’s Renaissance Strip* (Toronto: Mansfield Press, 2006). This collection of essays examines the various immigrant groups who made their first homes on College Street throughout the twentieth century.

history and redefine themselves as Italian Canadians. This dissertation is a study in the transformation of the *Processione di Cristo Morto* (PCM) – what would become known as the Good Friday Procession – from a parish-based religious devotion in the 1960s to a disruptive urban event in the 1980s. In large part the prominent place of the PCM in this neighbourhood was the result of immigrants' efforts to temporarily transform the College Street neighbourhood in ways which asserted their desire to nurture a remembered past while creating new and different lives in the present.

Much of the literature which seeks to understand the lives of immigrants to North America explores the various ways immigrants responded to the demands of living in new urban environments. This study does not engage directly with discussions of assimilation or adaptation. Rather, change is assumed to be a constant companion in the lives of immigrants to which they responded in a variety of ways well beyond the initial years of settlement. Every area of life from how and where immigrants worked, ate, prayed, and in the ways they moved about their new urban environments required constant adjustment, recalibration, and new ways of thinking, often on a daily basis. This is true in individual lives and in the effort to build community.

In addition to the various ways immigrants moved through urban space, they also experienced different places in the city in emotional ways. The role of emotion has not been much explored by historians. However scholarship in various other disciplines has lately begun to incorporate the role of feelings experienced by marginalized groups.⁶ In addition to identifying religious processions, their routes in the College Street area, and various elements of

⁶ *Social and Cultural Geography* 5, no. 4 (2004). This issue is dedicated to scholarship which explores emotion. Human geography has produced a particularly rich literature.

processional practices as they were adapted to the new urban environment, this study also proposes that the emotional experiences of Italian immigrants and their offspring fueled persistent activity to expand the physical size of the PCM over time and its disruptive impact beyond the processional route it travelled.

Methodology and Sources

This dissertation is a local social history. Its approach is qualitative and makes extensive use of oral testimony. Among the testimony collected, nine individuals, five men and four women, with deep personal connections to the PCM were interviewed.⁷ In most cases each individual was interviewed twice for a total of about five hours. Interviews were prepared and structured around a life-course approach with particular emphasis on periods of involvement with the PCM. These oral histories are not treated as representative of the experiences of Italian immigrants and their offspring generally, but as the highly specific experiences, thoughts, perspectives and feelings of the individuals involved. This approach allows us to understand individual intentionality, lived experience, and reflection in ways which might otherwise remain unknowable. The collected testimony also helps make clear the degree to which immigrants can be the originators and designers of important, even disruptive, religious and cultural events in their urban neighbourhoods and co-opt the support of religious, civic, and ethnic leaders for their own purposes. Oral testimonies led to the discovery of photographs and video recordings of the PCM and other processions held in personal archives that would be otherwise inaccessible. Collectively this testimony draws explicit attention to the critical role played by the combination

⁷ The individuals did not request anonymity. The two male narrators were adamant their first and last names be used. The second generation women are identified by first name and last name initial.

of physical and emotional experiences in specific neighbourhood places as motivators for behavior and provides a juxtaposition with the work of scholars who study Italian immigrants. A further eighteen interviews with second-generation Italian women and four Italian-immigrant women⁸ (collected for a different project) were incorporated into various parts of this dissertation because they are useful for discussions of gendered perspectives and experiences of public space, gendered cultural expectations, and religious practices.

The archival collections of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto (ARCAT)⁹ and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Toronto are also quoted extensively. These collections included parish bulletins, photographs, anniversary compilations, documents related to church groups, general correspondence, parish renovations, and parish activities recorded in the unpublished writing of a young pastor, which he called The St. Agnes Chronicle. As stated above, personal archives in the form of photographs, video recordings, and a variety of documents were important, as were to a lesser degree the Italian-language newspaper *Corriere Canadese* and the archdiocesan *Catholic Register*. Information from various census and directories helped to describe change in neighbourhood populations and geography and so contextualize observable changes in the PCM from 1961 to 1990.

Unfortunately, shortly after research for this project began, access to the archival collection held by the Archdiocese was restricted to the period before 1961. Coincidentally this was also the year of the first procession on Good Friday at St. Agnes church. Consequently, the

⁸ All of these participants are identified with pseudonyms.

⁹ Much of the source material which appears in this dissertation was collected before a directive which made all archival material after 1961 inaccessible to researchers. The inability to access the archives of ARCAT and St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church is noted in chapters where future scholarship may help to further illuminate various areas of this dissertation.

thoughts, perspectives and involvement of clergy there, at St. Francis after 1968, and the Archdiocese, are absent from this dissertation. However this absence does not prevent the revelation of the experiences and perspectives of lay organizers which are at the heart of this study. Sources held outside the Archdiocese also made it possible to trace the material and spatial development of the procession beyond the College Street neighbourhood.

Historiography

Public space in Toronto has long been contested space. The diversity of places which made up the public arena provided a variety of forums for different peoples to encounter one another. Workplaces, schools, service agencies, shops and government buildings were a few such places. Peter Goheen proposes that since at least the nineteenth century the city's roads and sidewalks have been the most visible site of encounter and negotiation between immigrant newcomers and the settled population.¹⁰ In these places, which were simultaneously the most easily accessible and most difficult to avoid, relationships of power and marginality were revealed at the individual and community level, sometimes with violent consequences.

The large numbers of Irish Catholics who arrived in Toronto in the mid-nineteenth century entered a city that was ill-prepared to receive them. Religion was only one factor which marked them as foreign among the city's Protestant majority. Pre-famine Irish Catholic immigrants were a smaller, more dispersed and partially assimilated group. In contrast the new arrivals were immediately visible in terms of their extreme poverty, illnesses associated with

¹⁰ Peter G. Goheen, "Negotiating Access to Public Space in Mid-Nineteenth Century Toronto," *Journal of Historical Geography* 20, no. 4 (1994): 430-49.

malnutrition and the overcrowded and derelict conditions of the neighbourhoods where they lived. To the Protestant majority the physical conditions of Irish Catholics were understood to be the result of a corresponding immorality. During this period ethnicity became intimately connected with religious affiliation and recent immigration to Canada. These characteristics were at the forefront of the 'foreign' label given to newcomers from Ireland. For the Protestant majority, the arrival of this large foreign group was perceived to be a threat to the orderliness of the city and the moral character of its residents.

Roberto Perin has described anti-Catholicism as deeply rooted in Ontario's culture.¹¹ The absence of public demonstrations of ethno-religious identity by Irish Catholics in the first half of the nineteenth century was due to at least two factors. First, public Catholic worship in Ireland had been banned so that religious processions were not a feature of public life before Irish Catholics left their homeland. Additionally, the hostility of the majority Protestant population in Toronto towards the newcomers helped to inhibit public demonstrations of minority religious identity. Catholics as a group understood themselves to be a powerless minority regardless of national origin. Clergy in the city had few allies among the political and social elite, generally encouraged assimilation where possible, and refrained from initiating religious practices like processions that might spill into public places.¹²

Within a generation following the arrival of post-famine immigrants, Irish Catholics and clergy took up a highly visible public presence and challenged powerful local authorities and institutions. Murray Nicolson has described 1847 as the beginning of a transformational period

¹¹ Roberto Perin, *Rome in Canada: The Vatican and Canadian Affairs in the Late Victorian Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 25.

¹² Perin, *Rome in Canada*, 22, 26.

when Irish-Catholic religious orders were established and along with clergy and laypeople took control of charitable institutions, previously run by Protestants, which served Catholics in the city.¹³ New churches were built, social organizations established and clergy took on public roles as advocates for the interests of Catholics, especially in the area of education. In response the Protestant Orange Order grew in size and influence. Through its expanding membership the Order was able to maintain control of political institutional culture and limit access of non-Protestants to police, city hall, ward politics, civic employment, and workplaces more broadly.¹⁴ Irish Catholics were the largest ethnic minority in the city but were marginalized from many of the activities and opportunities which urban life offered to its English-speaking Protestant residents. The Orange Order's efforts to ensure Catholics were not integrated into the mainstream was directed at the Irish. It is hardly surprising that an organization would be established in response to the Orange Order. The Hibernian Benevolent Society was formed in 1859 to provide aid to Irish Catholics but also with the declared intention to defend the group's physical safety.

Goheen has described the streets as a favoured site for political activity in the form of community rituals. By assuming a deliberately provocative tone these rituals could be effective tools of negotiation utilized by minority groups which need not always be peaceful.¹⁵ A pointed example is the violent encounters between Irish Catholics and Protestants known as the Jubilee Riots in 1875. Brian Clarke has also described violence accompanying St. Patrick's Day

¹³ Murray Nicolson, "Peasants in Urban Society: The Irish in Victorian Toronto," in *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto*, ed. Robert Harney (Toronto, The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), 52.

¹⁴ Nicolson, "Peasants in Urban Society," 52.

¹⁵ Goheen, "Negotiating Access to Public Space," 439-45.

processions in 1858 and again in 1862.¹⁶ In Victorian Toronto self-assured public declarations of ethno-religious minority identity, and its political implications, were interpreted as an attack on the status quo. Irish-Catholic processions on public roads threatened the city's cultural and religious identity which had long been the source of access to political, economic and social power.

Some non-English speaking Catholics from various national backgrounds were present in Toronto from the 1860s. These religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities included Roman Catholic Poles, Lithuanians and Italians and Christian Orthodox Macedonians. However their numbers were small and they tended to live in a dispersed way. In addition to poverty and precarious employment opportunities non-English speaking newcomers also faced a linguistic barrier which, as Zofia Gagat describes in the case of the Poles, impacted their ability to access religious services.¹⁷ Even though the numbers of non-English-speaking Catholics in the city increased after 1900 they were vastly outnumbered by the Irish. These various groups were poorly served by clergy in the city who were overwhelmingly Irish. By 1900 the Irish dominated in the archdiocese and as clergy and parishioners at local parishes. But public demonstrations of Irish-Catholic identity in the form of processions and parades had ended. As William Jenkins describes the Orange Order remained a dominant force in Toronto's political, economic and social institutions into the twentieth century.¹⁸ Despite their past willingness to engage,

¹⁶ Brian Clarke, "Lay Nationalism in Victorian Toronto," in *Catholics at the Gathering Place: Historical Essays on the Archdiocese of Toronto 1841-1991*, eds. Mark McGowan and Brian Clarke (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 43, 47.

¹⁷ Zofia Gagat, "St. Stanislaus Parish: The Heart of Toronto Polonia," *Polyphony* 6, no. 1 (1984): 50-54.

¹⁸ William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion: The Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1867-1916* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

sometimes violently, with the Protestant majority few permanent gains had been realized in terms of the Irish-Catholic ability to shape their public image or alter the rules for access to political, social and economic resources.

After 1900 non-English speaking immigrants entered the city in larger numbers and became more conspicuous. Their languages, and accented English, identified individuals from these groups as foreign in the city. Language (and accent) were incorporated into ideas about foreignness and heightened Toronto majority residents' well-established, close identification with British interests. Newly arrived Poles, Italians, Macedonians and Greeks settled in Toronto in dispersed ways and were isolated from the mainstream much as Irish Catholics had been. The cultural and religious organizations which developed within these smaller communities reflected their numbers and focused on providing support to individuals and families struggling to survive rather than engaging with powerful local institutions to challenge the living and working conditions of their members or support reform activities in home countries. Consequently these immigrant groups were largely ignored by the English-speaking majority as they used neighbourhood space to establish businesses, network for employment opportunities and gather for leisure activities. However, when particular groups were seen as threatening to British interests both in the city and abroad, their public presence was challenged. This was made clear in the very different response by Toronto's majority residents to Italians and Greeks during World War One.

John Zucchi describes a large parade held by Italian immigrants in Toronto to mark Italy's entry into the war on the side of Britain. Italian flags and chanting during the event made

it clear Italians in the city supported the war and were loyal to the British cause.¹⁹ Perhaps as a result of the highly visible parade, which was favourably reported in the local press, Italians were viewed with less suspicion connected to their foreignness and entered a greater number of public spaces in part through employment in the war industry.²⁰ In contrast the Greek Riots in 1918 demonstrate the fragility of immigrants ability to occupy public space. Torontonians mistaken belief that Greece and her expatriates supported the German war effort resulted in violence and looting which required local militia and military police intervention. This was followed by surveillance of personal letters and other correspondence to immigrants in Toronto originating in Greece. Greek immigrants continued to be viewed with suspicion and treated with hostility when sharing public space with English-speaking Torontonians. This belligerence persisted despite Greece's participation in the war on the side of Britain and numerous public statements by leaders of the local Greek community affirming their loyalty to the Allied military efforts.²¹ So damaged was life in the Greek immigrant settlement that many families left the Yonge Street neighbourhood to re-establish their community along Danforth Avenue.²²

As they became more rooted in the city and observed the various reactions of the majority population to different non-English speaking immigrant groups some immigrants did begin to occupy public space in organized ways. The Polish War Veterans Association held a

¹⁹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 163-64.

²⁰ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 163.

²¹ Lia Douramakou-Petroleka, "The Elusive Community: Greek Settlement in Toronto, 1900-1940," in *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945*, ed. Robert Harney (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), 268-70.

²² Toula Drimonis, "A Century Later, a Vicious Anti-Greek Riot in Toronto Offers Lessons for Today," *Maclean's*, Toronto: Maclean-Hunter Publishing, August 1, 2018, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/a-century-later-a-vicious-anti-greek-riot-in-toronto-offers-lessons-for-today/>.

parade in 1934 which filled a residential road.²³ Macedonians held a public meeting on the corner of King Street East and Trinity Street in 1911.²⁴ In 1934 the youth group of St. George Greek Orthodox Church participated in public celebrations for Toronto's centennial celebration wearing traditional Greek costumes.²⁵ For most of the interwar period Italians continued to enjoy a period of generally unrestrained public activity in the neighbourhoods where they lived in larger numbers. The positive view of the Canadian state to Mussolini and his Fascist party inclined Torontonians to see Italians in their city as unthreatening to the status quo.

Organizational life was expanded with the formation of clubs based on Italian local, regional or national affiliation. Often clubs were connected to their local Catholic parish.²⁶ Religious processions were one way Italians and their children occupied public space in ethnically distinct ways. With the Ethiopian Crisis in 1939 the positive view of Italy and Italians rooted in their support for British interests began to erode.

Luigi Pennacchio has described the dismantling of organizational life in the Toronto Italian community after Italy's entry into World War Two alongside Germany. Suspicion and hostility were directed at Italian immigrants and their descendants connected to Italy's status as an enemy nation. During the war years associational groups and ethnic newspapers virtually disappeared from the College Street landscape.²⁷ Sturino describes the variety of individual,

²³ Gagat, "St. Stanislaus Parish," 52.

²⁴ Lillian Petroff, "Macedonians in Toronto: Industry and Enterprise (1903-40)," *Polyphony* 6, no. 1 (1984), 40.

²⁵ Eleoussa Polyzoi, "The Greek Ladies; Philoptoho Society: Its Early Years in Toronto," *Polyphony* 6, no. 1 (1984), 79.

²⁶ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 169 describes the relationship of Circolo Columbo to both Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Clement parishes.

²⁷ Luigi Pennacchio, "Exporting Fascism to Canada: Toronto's Little Italy," in *Enemies Within, Italians and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin and Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 52-75.

family and village/regional networks which developed as a result of immigration to Toronto before 1930 and which endured both during and after the initial years of settlement.²⁸ Churches remained the one place Italians could gather during the war years and continue to freely nurture these networks to foster a greater sense of community.²⁹ Kenneth Bagnell recounts the impact of these conditions which increased the physical and social isolation of Italians and their children. This included attempts by individuals to disassociate themselves from their ethnic roots, for example by anglicizing their names and a general unwillingness to draw attention to the distinctive features of Italian cultural practices.³⁰

The most detailed historical examination of post-World War II Italian immigrants in Toronto is Franca Iacovetta's *Such Hardworking People*.³¹ While not a primary focus, patron-saint festas are discussed in some detail. Included are descriptions, mostly from the 1950s, of processions and secular elements of these events. Iacovetta's revelations regarding the attitudes of "other" Catholics, parish clergy, and the Archdiocese provides us with a sense of the different ways these groups responded to Italian immigrants' unconventional uses of public space. This work is also helpful for understanding immigrants' pre-emigration lives and the daily rhythms they established during the early years of settlement in Toronto. Iacovetta's work is particularly useful for the distinctions she carefully makes between the lives of immigrant women and men.

²⁸ Franc Sturino, *Forging the Chain, Italian Immigration to North America 1880-1930* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1990).

²⁹ Pennacchio, "Exporting Fascism," 55-60.

³⁰ Kenneth Bagnell, *Canadese: A Portrait of the Italian Canadians* (Toronto: MacMillan Canada, 1989), 101-03.

³¹ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*. Other than Iacovetta historians have not produced detailed studies of post-WWII Italians in Toronto to the same extent they have the earlier group of Italian immigrants. A good deal of the scholarly work done on the post-1945 group has been in social science and education.

This dissertation also engages with the scholarship of Italian immigration to Toronto whose focus includes neighbourhoods, the impact of chain migration, and religious practices mostly for the period before 1939 in the work of Robert Harney, John Zucchi, Gabriele Scardellato, and Roberto Perin.³² Collectively, these works have been critical for developing a lens with which to see the role of processional practices in community building and the importance of feelings of belonging to a place. Jordan Stanger-Ross examines the ongoing significance of neighbourhood churches as a site of connection and ethnic expression for Italians and their children after 1945. In the field of anthropology Nicholas Harney explores the enduring nature of cultural practices connected to villages and regions of origin, for example connected to patron saint *feste* (celebrations), and their adaptations to Toronto. To a lesser extent, but equally important, the work of religious studies scholars Robert Orsi and Colleen McDannel³³ and geographers Peter E. Hopkins and Doreen Massey³⁴ reflect the interdisciplinary perspective of this work.

Theory

The theoretical foundations for understanding the relationship between urban space and processional activity come from the work of spatial theorists. Henri Lefebvre has described the

³² Robert Harney, "Toronto's Little Italy, 1885-1945," in *Little Italies in North America*, eds. Robert Harney and Vincenza Scarpaci (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981), 41-62; Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*; Roberto Perin, *The Many Rooms of This House: Diversity in Toronto's Places of Worship Since 1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

³³ Colleen McDannel, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Robert Orsi, *Gods of the City* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, Indiana 1999); Roberto Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

³⁴ Peter E. Hopkins, "Women, Men, Positionalities and Emotion: Doing Feminist Geography of Religion," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 1-17; Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

importance of understanding urban space as malleable and changeable. His central argument, that urban spaces are constructed as the initiatives and structures put in place by powerful state actors are challenged by a variety of less powerful groups, has influenced a generation of diverse scholars, particularly in the field of human geography.³⁵ Knott's applications of spatial theory to neighbourhood spaces as well as both Kong's and David's examinations of the aural, visual, and temporal impact of processional activity on urban environments have been informative.³⁶ Davidson's and Mulligan's work connecting emotion in fundamental ways to the experience of inhabiting places has provided scholarly inspiration for understanding the expressions of emotion in oral testimony.³⁷

Finally, Cumbo³⁸ and the various works of several scholars above deal either directly or indirectly with gender. The majority of these works draw attention mostly to the specific experiences and perspectives of women. Unfortunately, considerably less has been written which does the same for men. This dissertation seeks to reveal the involvement of women in the PCM at various levels.

³⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

³⁶ Ann R. David, "Sacralising the City: Sound, Space and Performance in Hindu Ritual Practices in London," *Culture and Religion* 13, no. 4 (2012): 449-67; Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 6 (2008): 1102-16; Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion," *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (2005): 153-84; Lily Kong, "Religious Processions: Urban Politics and Poetics," *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (2005), 225-49.

³⁷ Joyce Davidson and Christine Milligan, "Embodying Emotion Sensing Space: Introducing Emotional Geographies," *Social and Cultural Geography* 5, no. 4 (2004): 523-32.

³⁸ Enrico Carlson Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference: Gendered Expressions of Italian-Canadian Immigrant Catholicity, 1900-1940," in *Households of Faith: Family, Gender and Community in Canada, 1760-1969*, ed. Nancy Christie (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

Chapter Overviews

The organization of chapters in this study is loosely chronological with considerable overlap from one section to the next. The themes which are explored, for example public space as contested, the importance of emotion, gender, and grassroots initiatives are not easily bound into strict chronological periods. On balance, however there is an identifiable progression from a procession which begins in 1961 as an unobtrusive walk along the quiet streets around St. Agnes church to a disruptive College Street spectacle in the 1990s.

The following chapter explores the historical process by which public space has been given a particular identity based on categories of citizenship and ethnicity.³⁹ The label “Little Italy” as applied to the College Street neighbourhood was rooted in the characteristics of one group who lived there and the various ways their public presence was conspicuous. This label indicates little regard for both the short- and long-term ways such labels impact the various immigrant groups who inhabit ‘Little’ ethnic neighbourhoods.

Italian immigrants’ desire to maintain religious traditions, which sometimes took place in public, was persistent and presented a problem for the Archdiocese. The national parish structure developed to accommodate Italian immigrants and to ensure their religious loyalty. Even in this early period, when Toronto can be reasonably described as British and Protestant, immigrants at Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Agnes parishes gathered within the churches and in public outdoor spaces around those churches to perform devotions to their patron saints and to observe important religious events including devotions and processions. Their ability to occupy public

³⁹ Kathleen Conzen, “Mainstreams and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11, no. 1 (1991): 5-20; Robert Harney, *Gathering Place: People and Neighbourhoods of Toronto* (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985).

space and to reconstruct that space by using it in new and unintended ways was an important way for Italians to mark this neighbourhood as different in ways they could define.⁴⁰ The presence of Italian immigrant girls and women as active participants in these processions was conspicuous and has implications for their involvement in processional activity in the postwar period.

The second chapter introduces mass migration from Italy to Toronto after 1945 and the impact of chain migration on their residential patterns⁴¹ particularly in the area surrounding St. Agnes parish. Immigrants from San Nicola da Crissa, Catanzaro⁴² in Calabria, and the region of Calabria more broadly, emerged as an important group in the College Street neighbourhood and as parishioners at St. Agnes parish. In addition to attending mass in large numbers, Sannicolesi played a critical role in organizational life at the parish. The PCM was largely the result of the desires and ambitions of members of the Sannicolesi group.

Italian-speaking priests regularly held masses in Italian for large numbers of Italian immigrant parishioners and assisted with their attempts to maintain traditional devotional practices. Several annual processions to honor hometown patron saints were held at Italian parishes as was the earliest known post-1945 procession on Good Friday at Our Lady of Mount

⁴⁰ Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," 156-57.

⁴¹ Nicholas Harney, *Eh, Paesan! Being Italian in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Jordan Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Toronto Press, 2009). Chain migration was also a feature of the earlier migration from southern Italy to Toronto as described in Sturino, *Forging the Chain*.

⁴² The provincial affiliation of San Nicola da Crissa was transferred to the newly created Vibo Valentia province in 1996. The province of Catanzaro still exists but its borders were altered at that time. Although aware of the change in status, immigrants from San Nicola interviewed for this project still identify Catanzaro as their province of origin. Historians cited in this work, for example Zucchi and Scardellato, also use the provincial designation Catanzaro to refer to immigrants from San Nicola and other towns and villages impacted by the 1996 change in provincial status. I use the term Catanzaro to align with the identity of those whose testimonies are included in this work, and for the sake of continuity with the work of other historians.

Carmel.⁴³ By imposing themselves on the physical, visual, and auditory landscape of a neighbourhood Italians were able to mark neighbourhood space through processional practices.⁴⁴

The genesis of the PCM at St. Agnes and the experiences of Italian immigrant men on College Street are the focus of the third chapter. Two different accounts of the origin story for the PCM reflect the unique experiences of two immigrant men before and after their arrival in Toronto and the resulting alternative visions for the symbolic role of the procession in terms of representing and communicating Italian immigrant and ethnic identity over time.⁴⁵

For a time young men were the largest group of Italian arrivals to the city. They became the subjects of a Toronto Police directive known as “move along.”⁴⁶ As described by several individuals this policy became a powerful and persistent vehicle through which Italian immigrants understood public space as contested. Combined with a discussion of religiosity the role of emotional experience is explored as intimately connected to different urban places and the importance of devotional rituals which take place in public.

⁴³ “A Funeral Procession,” *The Catholic Register*, April 26, 1952, 7.

⁴⁴ Pennacchio, “Exporting Fascism to Canada: Toronto’s Little Italy” in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin and Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 55-60; Raymond Breton, “Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants,” *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (1964): 200-01. Identifies religious institutions as key to institutional completeness also speaks to their role in building feelings of belonging and community in new urban space.

⁴⁵ Markers of ethnicity over time discussed by Wsevolod Isajiw, *Ethnic Identity Retention* (Centre for Urban and Community Studies University of Toronto, 1981), 35-36. Does not address religious practices specifically but discusses the connection between ethnic practices and traditions and ethnic identity over time. Lola Romanucci-Ross, “Changing Ethnic and National Identities,” in *Ethnic Identity: Problems and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Lola Romanucci-Ross and George De Vos (New York: Alta Mira Press, 2006), 43-71 discusses how an ethnic group can use traditional practices to both memorialize its past and reinforce or renegotiate ethnic identity.

⁴⁶ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 178-80, 184-85 describes encounters with police during two strikes by mostly Italian immigrant men in the residential construction industry in the early 1960s. Rosario Iori described the feelings of distrust and fear towards police as a result. These feelings were reinforced when encountering police on College Street outside of religious processions. The impact of the “move along” directive also appears in Frank Colantonio, *From the Ground Up: An Italian Immigrant’s Story* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1997), 96-97.

This period also introduces the contributions and physical presence of Italian immigrant women as a permanent part of the organizational infrastructure and as participants in processional activity on Good Friday.⁴⁷ Their involvement also highlights the transformative impact immigrant minority groups can have on public space through its simple occupation with their bodies, and in the individual and communal power of affectively charged maps.⁴⁸

Chapter four establishes the second generation's involvement in the PCM by exploring their experiences in the College Street neighbourhood, St. Francis parish, and their increasingly important role in the organizational infrastructure for the procession.⁴⁹ Networks among immigrant and second-generation Italian women emerged as particularly important to the organizational expansion which happened throughout the 1970s. The entrenched involvement of these young women and their willingness to work with and accept tutelage offered by clergy made the role of pastors in the PCM more visible. Women were also key to the hybridization of the PCM which transformed the annual event into a practice that reflected the experiences of immigrants in two locales. Italian immigrants and their adult children moved from the urban core into suburban neighbourhoods. Italian language services were offered quickly to residents there, often in school gymnasiums as new parishes were constructed. There was little need for

⁴⁷ Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert Harney and Lydio Tomasi, *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America* (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1975). For immigrant women's personal challenges and their involvement in organizational life within various North American cities.

⁴⁸ Manuela A. Vasquez and Kim Knott, "Three Dimensions of Religious Place Making in Diaspora," *Global Networks* 14, no. 3 (2014): 327.

⁴⁹ General patterns and challenges faced by the daughters of Italian immigrants in the 1970s as discussed in Kurt Danziger, "The Acculturation of Italian Immigrant Girls in Canada," *International Journal of Psychology* 9, no. 2 (1974): 129-37. See also Giuliana Colalillo, "The Italian Immigrant Family," *Polyphony* 7 (1985): 118-22 for a discussion of cultural continuity between parents and children.

suburbanites to travel to national parishes in the College Street area.⁵⁰ The ‘Italian’ identity of the College Street neighbourhood was both reaffirmed and recreated by suburban families who did regularly visit the area and engaged in public forms of leisure associated with cafes.⁵¹

The boundary between Italian processional space and secular urban space was chaotic and malleable as the PCM moved onto College Street and disrupted the ‘normal’ uses of sidewalks and roads as well as the visual and auditory landscape. As the numbers attending the PCM grew so did organizers’ desire to control all physical aspects of the processional route.

Finally, the introduction of language about diversity positively associated with multiculturalism policy provided a new vocabulary which organizers used to encourage the support and participation of state and civic representatives for the procession. By the end of the 1970s the PCM was a highly visible annual affair embedded in the calendar of annual events in Toronto.

The fifth chapter explores the temporary transformation of the processional route from secular public neighbourhood space to Italian religious-cultural space. Over the course of the 1980s maximizing the spatial imprint of the PCM in Toronto became the primary goal of both immigrant and second-generation organizers. The removal of all vehicles from College Street during the procession on Good Friday was key to achieving this objective. Road closures enacted by local authorities were a practical necessity and represented the symbolic acceptance of Italian

⁵⁰ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 33-58 discusses the movement of Italian immigrants and their children into suburban neighbourhoods. Father Ezio Marchetto, “The Catholic Church and Italian Immigration to Toronto: An Overview,” *Polyphony* 7, no. 2 (1985): 109-10 describes the dramatic increase in the number of Italian speaking parish priests in Toronto and their dispersal throughout the city.

⁵¹ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 100-01, 106 for the ongoing attachment of the second generation to the College Street neighbourhood despite no longer residing there.

bodies on College Street and of the PCM as an Italian-Canadian tradition which belonged in the public sphere.

The lines between religious observance and street theater were blurred as a dramatic staging of the *Via Crucis* was incorporated into the annual procession.⁵² Women continued to play crucial but largely unacknowledged organizational roles connected to almost every aspect of the PCM.

Testimony by both men and women suggest the powerful ways time and place merged in feelings which captured the “substance of [narrators’] past present and future”⁵³ during the preparation period for the PCM as well as on the day of the procession. In this new environment organizers explicitly connected the size and success of the PCM to the historic importance of College Street for Italians in the Greater Toronto Area and to the new status of Italian Canadians as accepted and respected members of the multicultural-urban landscape. Despite the successful efforts to close roads during the PCM College Street continued to be contested space as police continually tried to move the procession to another less disruptive location.

Conclusion

Increasingly, over many years this religious procession brought individuals and families with various connections to Italy and different levels of religiosity (including none) together into one urban space which for a short time looked, sounded, functioned, and felt like a place everyone could identify as “Italian.” By the end of the twentieth century the success of the PCM

⁵² The transition to a hybrid event which included street theater did not occur in San Nicola da Crissa. The procession on Good Friday there remained a paese-based activity which attendees participated in rather than watched.

⁵³ Hopkins, “Women, Men, Positionalities and Emotion,” 8.

in the neighbourhood known as Little Italy was in part the result of organizers' ability to temporarily transform urban space in ways which accommodated the transformation of Italians from immigrants to ethnics within the multicultural landscape.

Chapter 1: Italian National Parishes and Processional Practice

At the turn of the twentieth century Toronto was embarking on a modern transformation. The city's political centre moved from the Town of York to a newly built City Hall at Bay and Queen Streets. Its civic organization reached a new level of maturity with professional firefighters and modernized policing. There was also an accepting attitude by reformers and engineers towards new building materials and technology which allowed for a quick recovery from the Great Fire in 1904. Newer, taller buildings changed the skyline, while railway tracks dominated the area around the harbour and brought the opportunity for economic prosperity.⁵⁴ Immigrants who arrived during this period entered a city that was finding its place in the modern age in large part by recreating and reorganizing various city neighbourhoods.

In the midst of this change Catholics were the largest minority group in a population dominated numerically and culturally by English-speaking Protestants. Irish and German Catholics, as well as a significant number of Jewish immigrants, were already in the city when small numbers of Italians began to arrive and settle in Toronto. Together with the city's established Anglo-Protestant residents immigrants observed and participated in the modernizing project which included new streetcar lines. The new arrivals also brought with them cultural and religious traditions which they often integrated into their lives in the new urban environment. For

⁵⁴ The formation of Toronto Fire Services took place in 1874. Bill Rawling, "Technology and Innovation in the Toronto Police Force 1875-1925," *Ontario History* 1, Vol. 80 (1988): 53-71 notes the introduction of call boxes connected to a central dispatcher and officers use of bicycles, motorcycles and automobiles during this period among police and other citizens. These changes allowed for quick responses to incidents like the 1904 fire and a general pattern of order during the rebuilding phase. Philip Gordon MacIntosh, "Asphalt Modernism on the Streets of Toronto," *Material Culture Review* 62 (2005), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MCR/article/view/18058/21931> discusses new approaches to road construction by urban planners and reformers in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Toronto which connected that material and modern cities to hygiene, order and the right kind of urban space.

several decades in the nineteenth century annual parades were held by Irish Catholics for the feast of St. Patrick. These processional spaces were often sites of contentious and sometimes violent encounter with the city's Irish Protestants.⁵⁵ In the 1920s German Catholics living in the Ward participated in a number of processions held at St. Patrick Catholic Church.⁵⁶ Little is known about these processional practices. They are an early indication, however, that in at least one case public religious practices by non-English-speaking immigrants occurred, albeit far from the gaze of the Protestant majority. Although Italian Catholics made up a small number of the city's residents their numbers would rise dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. This chapter examines the neighbourhoods where Italians lived in the city before the Second World War, and the beginnings of their use of public neighbourhood space for cultural and religious expression.

Italian immigrants in Toronto consisted of two groups, a large group of sojourning males and a much smaller collection of permanent residents who were dispersed in a number of neighbourhoods. John Zucchi has described the difficulty of accurately identifying the number of sojourners in the city during this period despite their sizeable numbers which in different years

⁵⁵ Michael Cottrell, "St. Patrick Day Parades in Nineteenth Century Toronto: A Study of Immigrant Adjustment and Elite Control," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 25, Vol. 49 (1992): 57-73. In 1863 crowds of mostly Irish Catholic immigrants gathered at St. Paul's Church and proceeded together to St. Michael's Cathedral where they filled the pews for mass. The mass included a powerful sermon about the life of St. Patrick. After mass the procession took to the streets. If clergy participated they would likely not have worn clerical garb. Although there were no explicit references to religion this annual event was an important day when "Irish Catholics could claim the city as their own." By the turn of the century the St. Patrick parade no longer took place. In part this was due to the emergence of the second and third generations as the dominant group of Irish Catholics and their reluctance to rely on religious processions as markers of ethnic identity. Irish catholic clergy in the city also began to discourage the practice of religious processions.

⁵⁶ Roberto Perin, *The Many Rooms of This House*, 169 notes German parishioners took part in processions held at St. Patrick Catholic Church in the early twentieth century and a series of passion plays. Newly arrived Italian immigrants who attended St. Patrick would have been exposed to these processions.

were estimated to be between one third and just over one half of all Italians in Toronto.⁵⁷ Robert Harney has written that most foreign-born in the city were understood primarily through their status as both immigrants and the “foreign quarters” in which they were believed to live. These areas were thought to be in a state of perpetual urban decay by the English-speaking majority.⁵⁸ Assigning labels like The Ward or Little Italy to areas of the city does not help us to understand the internal dynamics of those neighbourhoods or the social systems and cultural lives created by the people who lived there. Labels, however, do contribute to the idea that members of particular ethnic groups can be connected in long-lasting ways to particular spaces in the city.⁵⁹ Before World War One there were three Italian-origin settlement areas in Toronto: The Ward, College and Grace Streets, and farther away at Dufferin Avenue and Davenport Road.

⁵⁷ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 41-46.

⁵⁸ Robert Harney, “Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods,” in *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto*, ed. Robert Harney (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), 5.

⁵⁹ R. Harney, “Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods,” 6.

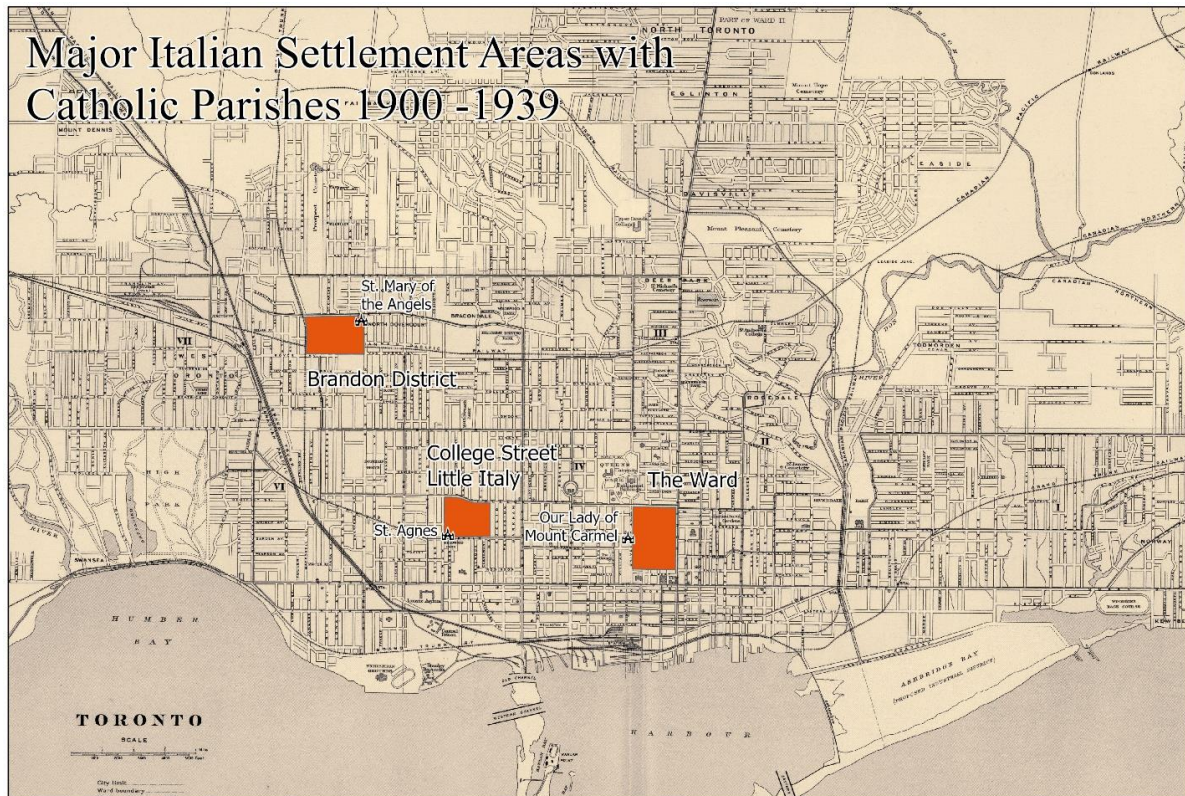


Figure 1.1. Major Italian settlement areas with Catholic parishes before World War I.⁶⁰

John Zucchi has identified each of these communities to be the result of three elements: itinerant vendors and tradesmen who established an Italian presence, a *padrone* (labour agent) system connecting potential migrants to particular neighbourhoods in Toronto, and chain migration facilitating information flows as well as physical and emotional support before, during and after migration.⁶¹ All three neighbourhoods were home to Italians from a variety of different regions and towns. The size of town groups in each settlement area for the period before 1914

⁶⁰ Adapted from Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 38.

⁶¹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 35. While there was a small concentration of Sicilians just east of the Ward who attended Our Lady of Mount Carmel, this regional group was the exception to the pattern. Zucchi describes on p. 57 due to their work Sicilian fruit vendors tended to live in a more dispersed way in various areas of the city. But they were still deeply connected to kin.

ranged from one dozen to a few hundred.⁶² Each of these neighbourhoods included a Catholic church and by 1915 were providing Italian-language services to immigrants. St. Patrick, later renamed as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was located just outside The Ward, St. Agnes was at College and Dundas Streets, and St. Clement, later called St. Mary of the Angels, was located in the Davenport area.⁶³

Geographers Manuela Vasquez and Kim Knott have described the ways immigrant minority groups draw from their religious traditions to create places of “livelihood” in new cities which feed the very human need for connection to their surroundings.⁶⁴ At the centre of this process lies the minority group’s ability to physically occupy specific places and to make those places meaningful through the expression of religious, national and transnational identities.⁶⁵ For some groups religion is a key medium through which immigrants negotiate their new urban spaces in everyday life. In particular religious practice becomes the way immigrant groups communicate their values to each other and the wider society and buttress the challenges of their new physical and cultural environments. Religious practices can also become tools through which minority groups challenge notions of difference which are negatively applied to them.⁶⁶ Roberto Perin has described churches as rallying points for immigrants.⁶⁷ The Old-World

⁶² Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 49.

⁶³ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 121. St. Clement was partially constructed as a mission in 1915 with Italians attending mass in the basement until construction was completed in 1934 when the church renamed St. Mary of the Angels. See also: Perin, *The Many Rooms of This House*, 64.

⁶⁴ Vasquez and Knott, “Three Dimensions of Place Making,” 326. The term livelihood is usually connected to material conditions necessary for maintaining life. The authors employ a human geography perspective on space and place to discuss the way migrant groups seek to create physical spaces which allow them to maintain their need for emotional, spiritual and communal connection through religious practices.

⁶⁵ Vasquez and Knott, “Three Dimensions of Place Making,” 327.

⁶⁶ Vasquez and Knott, “Three Dimensions of Place Making,” 327. The most striking dimensions of religious place making are embodied performance, spatial management of difference and belonging and multiple embeddedness across networked spaces. All of these elements will be discussed in this thesis.

⁶⁷ Perin, *The Many Rooms of This House*, 5.

practice of attending mass helped men and women transition to a new and perhaps alien urban environment. Churches were especially important during the early years of settlement for the wide variety of services they provided beyond the Roman Catholic Mass and Sacraments. Often churches were one of the few locales, outside the home, where immigrants could socialize with each other.⁶⁸ For Italians, churches were often the first concrete manifestation of institutional life which rooted their sense of belonging and community in urban space. Italians brought with them the experience of the town piazza (town square) as a public space where the secular and religious met. In part this was because the piazza was often where the church was located and where religious celebrations took place. These were in the form of various festas which were traditional occasions combining solemn religious observances with secular activities designed to bring townspeople together for both devotional expression and leisure. The religious component of the festa spilled into the piazza in the form of annual patron-saint processions which began and ended in the piazza. A café, shops, a doctor's or midwife's office and municipal offices also tended to be located there making it an important and well frequented place in daily life.⁶⁹ Even in smaller towns and villages, piazzas held civic and symbolic importance for the families who had often lived there for generations. The historical memory of *paesani* (fellow townsfolk) included political, religious and secular events which occurred in this space since it was often the only gathering place large enough to accommodate large numbers of people. In addition, the piazza was a place where individuals met informally to socialize and exchange information briefly throughout their day. For Southern Italians who made up the majority of Italian

⁶⁸ Perin, *The Many Rooms of This House*, 205.

⁶⁹ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 9.

immigrants to Toronto after 1900 the piazza, in full public view, had been an appropriate locale for a wide variety of activities. Italians brought this understanding of public space into the new urban environment where they settled.

This pre-emigration experience of public space contributed to Italian immigrants' understanding of their Toronto neighbourhoods in ways that, as Robert Harney has noted, was consistent with Clifford Geertz's notion of the "town square."⁷⁰ As they attended one of the three parishes described above Italians may well have come to see churches as nodal points, with surrounding spaces made meaningful as immigrants formed a detailed cognitive map of the larger neighbourhood.⁷¹ There were no piazzas to be found in any of the neighbourhoods where Italian immigrants settled. As Italians attributed uses to spaces surrounding their homes, however, like alleyways, sidewalks and roads, their evolving cognitive maps likely included less rigid notions about public space as exclusively religious or secular compared with English-speaking residents and civic officials in the city. Before 1930 modern urban renewal took the form of establishing distinct locations for leisure, for example parks and beaches, domestic life, mostly in the form of free-standing and distinct single family dwellings, and business activities, located on major roads to create hubs for commerce. Streets and sidewalks were understood primarily as a means to facilitate the orderly access of people and vehicles to these distinctive places.⁷²

⁷⁰ R. Harney, "Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods," 12-15.

⁷¹ R. Harney, "Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods," 5.

⁷² Alla Myzelev, *Architecture, Design and Craft in Toronto 1900-1940: Creating Modern Living* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 223.

When Italians arrived in the Ward, Our Lady of Mount Carmel was already a long-established immigrant parish. While Mount Carmel⁷³ had served, and to some extent accommodated, the various Catholic immigrant groups who made their first homes in the Ward, Irish Catholics dominated the parish in terms of clergy and parishioners. Indeed, the Catholic churches in Toronto were examples of Irish approaches to worship and devotional practices. The Irish had made up over 95% of Toronto's Catholic population until 1880. Over the following three decades they were joined by Germans, French, Italians and Syrians which reduced their proportion to 80% by 1900. As a result of these new arrivals the number of Catholics in the city grew dramatically from 7,940 in 1851 to 28,994 in 1901. Despite this growth in real numbers the percentage of the Catholic population fell from 25.8 percent to 13.9 percent in the same period. Among the various Catholic groups in the city the overwhelming number of established Irish clergy had greater control over the lives of Irish poor in the city than they did over the lives of Catholics from other ethnic groups.⁷⁴ Even before migration the ability of Catholics in Ireland to freely express themselves through public acts of devotion, like processions, was rife with controversy. The anti-Catholic sentiments of the colonial British government, and of Protestants broadly, meant public space in Ireland was highly contested along religious lines. Religious processions so deeply embedded in Southern-Italian religious practices and identity did not become a feature of Irish Catholic devotional culture in the Toronto.

⁷³ Mount Carmel was known as St. Patrick before 1908 when the church was assigned to Italians. A new church named St. St. Patrick was built one block away on McCaul Street.

⁷⁴ Murray W. Nicolson, "The Other Toronto: Irish Catholics in a Victorian City 1850-1900," *Polyphony* Summer (1984): 19-23, <https://archives.studentscommission.ca/magic/mt38.html>.

In the early 1900s the goal of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto was to assimilate Italian Catholics into what was thought of as Toronto Catholicism.⁷⁵ However the language barrier which existed between Italian immigrants and the English-speaking clergy could not be ignored. In 1908 Piedmont-born Father Pietro Pisani helped the Archdiocese to develop a plan which would ensure his newly arrived countrymen remained faithful to the Church, especially in the face of Protestant attempts to convert Italian immigrants.⁷⁶ Pisani had travelled widely throughout North America and visited many American Little Italies that left him feeling deeply distressed by the conditions he found there. Pisani believed Italians leaving their homeland for the New World should not settle in cities. He compared Little Italies to the worst streets of Naples. In his assessment they were squalid, filthy and overpopulated.⁷⁷ His arrival in Toronto's largest Italian neighbourhood, the Ward, would do nothing to change this evaluation. When Pisani arrived the Ward was a derelict area neglected by both local government and area landlords. Urban renewal slowly forced many residents out of the Ward in the thirty years after 1900.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 119.

⁷⁶ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 123-24.

⁷⁷ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 9.

⁷⁸ Gabriele Scardellato, "College Street Little Italy: More than a Century of Toronto Italia," in *College Street Little Italy: Toronto's Renaissance Strip*, eds. Denis DeKlerck and Corrado Paina (Toronto: Mansfield Press, 2006), 81, 86.



Figure 1.2. 21-23 Beverley Street, 1938.⁷⁹



Figure 1.3. 41 Huron Street, 1917.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Archival Citation Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 33, Item 439, <https://oldto.sidewalklabs.com/#247524>.

⁸⁰ Archival Citation Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 1, Item 262, <https://oldto.sidewalklabs.com/#100152>.

The national parish structure which was intended to determine where Italian immigrants worshipped took shape in 1908 under the guidance of Pisani. This approach was arrived at as a result of concerns within the Toronto Archdiocese and the Holy See about the nature of immigrants spiritual lives. As had been noted in other North American cities, Italians who chose migration were often poorly versed in Catholic orthodoxy and tended to adhere tenaciously to religious practices that were not part of sanctioned forms of worship.⁸¹ The national parish approach was one strategy put in place to deal with the relatively small and dispersed number of families and sojourning men who made up the city's Italian population.⁸² Over the next three decades Italian-speaking priests were brought to Toronto to provide religious services to Italian immigrants, but the number of these clergymen remained small as would their influence in the Toronto Archdiocese. As late as the 1920s the parish committee at Mount Carmel filed a complaint, in Italian, with the archbishop about their pastor Father Stephen Auad. Though the Italians surely understood their position as an ethnic and religious minority, they nonetheless spoke out and demanded support from the archdiocese. Their complaint centred on Auad's neglect of the Italian parishioners at Mount Carmel.⁸³ This letter was one example of the lack of dialogue between clergy and Italians which affected how Italians adapted their religious practices within the context of national parishes.⁸⁴ In addition, all but two of the Italian-speaking priests at

⁸¹ Perin, *Rome in Canada*, 159-63.

⁸² Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 119 notes about 70 families had been attending religious services in the Ward since 1902 when Rev. Cyril Dodsworth began to offer them. It is unclear whether all these families resided in the Ward or included families who travelled there from the other Italian-origin settlement areas.

⁸³ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 133. Auad was said to be difficult to locate in the rectory, rarely visited school children, was too busy to hear the confessions of Italians and generally took more care with the "English" of the parish.

⁸⁴ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 19.

national parishes were either from, or trained in northern Italy and brought with them attitudes of condescension typical of the north towards Southern Italians.⁸⁵

The Catholicism practiced by immigrants in the *Mezzogiorno* (Southern Italy) prior to their arrival in Toronto differed greatly from the largely Irish version present in parishes throughout the city.⁸⁶ In the early 1900s, Southern Italians fashioned Christian orthodoxy, pre-Christian practices, folk wisdom rooted in tradition and their own lived experience into enduring and portable devotional practices. Michael Cottrell has explained that while these practices existed in all Italian regions before 1900 afterwards the reach of Tridentine reforms, which began in the seventeenth century and placed practices like veneration of saints and relics under the control of a more centralized church, were more effectively realized in northern regions. In contrast the greater physical isolation of many southern villages and churches made effective oversight of local practices more difficult.⁸⁷ Well into the twentieth century religious practices which included home altars, and personal relationships to particular saints endured in Toronto because immigrants could bring with them or receive from family in Italy the necessary physical objects like rosaries or tiny statues of patron saints. These objects and the prayers and devotional practices already familiar to immigrants were easily integrated into Italian households and taught to children, mostly by their mothers. But even these private religious practices required some contact with the local church and priest in Toronto. Holy water and candles were important parts

⁸⁵ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 21-125.

⁸⁶ Brian P. Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). Nicolson, "The Other Toronto" described the various ways Irish clergy in mid-to-late-nineteenth-century Toronto worked to eliminate as many folk practices as possible in the area of religion among newly arrived Irish Catholics. By 1908 they had largely succeeded and with Pisani's help hoped to do the same with the Italians.

⁸⁷ Michael Cottrell, *Madonnas that Maim: Popular Catholicism in Italy Since the Fifteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), 102-03.

of home altars and needed to be replenished. Italian women typically sought these from their parish giving them at least occasional contact with the pastor and an understanding of the ways Italian immigrants were seen and treated by clergy.⁸⁸ Religious processions and the associated festas were similarly important to Italians, and as will be described in a later chapter, in Southern Italy were often organized by independent committees of townsmen.⁸⁹ The desire for festas in the new urban setting endured among immigrants because they were understood, practicable, functional and immediate.⁹⁰

When Italians arrived in North American cities they were met with considerable hostility from clerics. Clergy viewed Italian immigrant women as theologically ignorant and superstitious; while men were believed to be nominal Catholics, anticlerical and indifferent, perhaps, to the point of irreligiosity. Italians were also seen as unwilling to support the church through financial contributions. Assimilating Italians into the practices of the Irish-led church in Toronto became known as “the Italian problem.” This phrase and attitude endured throughout this first period of migration and was also encountered by the second and much larger wave of immigrants who arrived after 1945.⁹¹ Despite Pisani’s arrival and the decision to institute a system of national parishes, neither the church hierarchy nor parish priests were certain they could overcome this “Italian problem.”⁹² The appearance of religious *festas* with accompanying processions on the streets close to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Agnes churches by the 1930s may have been

⁸⁸ Cumbo, “Salvation in Indifference, 218-19.

⁸⁹ Cumbo, “Salvation in Indifference,” 223, 224.

⁹⁰ Cumbo, “Salvation in Indifference,” 207; Orsi, *Thank You Saint Jude*, 206-7; Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 168-71. These works describe similar traditional religious practices among southern Italian immigrants in an American context.

⁹¹ Cumbo, “Salvation in Indifference,” 205; Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 130-31.

⁹² Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 122-23 describes the reactions of parish priests to their Italian parishioners.

another attempt by clergy, along with Italian-speaking priests, to draw immigrants to local parishes and prevent their departure from the faith.⁹³ Scattered evidence of these early and unexpected processions suggests they may have acted as precursors to the larger religious processions which would regularly fill the streets around St. Agnes and St. Francis, including College Street, in the postwar period, and eventually to the city's most well-attended and well-known procession on Good Friday.

Lily Kong has described processions as the most visible religious activity which can happen in public space set aside for a secular purpose.⁹⁴ By their very nature, processions in urban spaces function as a way to attract and focus the attention of those who participate in the procession, and those who simply observe it. For immigrant participants the procession gives physical form to specific collective values rooted in cultural religious practices, and in so doing encourages a dynamic process of memory-making which connects processional experiences in the homeland to the new urban space. For Italian immigrants, the opportunity to express their religious devotion in such a public way was also a way to demonstrate their good Christian moral character to clergy and other Catholics in the city.⁹⁵

In 1908, having established the national parish structure, Father Pisani invited all the Italians of Toronto to attend St. Michael's Cathedral on October 4th for the religious celebration known as the *Festa della Madonna del Rosario* (The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary),

⁹³ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 123-24. Methodists established Italian missions in all three neighbourhoods of Italian immigrant settlement to attract Italians to the faith. These efforts were well-known by catholic clergy in each neighbourhood.

⁹⁴ Kong, "Religious Processions," 225.

⁹⁵ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 217 notes Italians could be critical in their assessments of the moral character of priests.

celebrated throughout Italy since the 16th century. The invitation expressed Pisani's desire to thank his countrymen and women who had welcomed him so warmly to the city. That this event was to be held in St. Michael's Cathedral rather than Our Lady of Mount Carmel is surprising given the latter had begun offering services in Italian in 1902 and was designated the first Italian national parish in Toronto.⁹⁶ This first-known festa was to consist of confessions heard on Saturday and Sunday morning from 7:00 to 9:00, followed by Sunday mass at 9am. A short rosary and blessing would close the celebration later that evening.⁹⁷ There is no mention of a procession but almost certainly the event would have allowed Italians to socialize with kin in familiar ways both within the cathedral and in the public spaces around it. No doubt the cathedral's grand structure mirrored the significance of the first festa for Italians in Toronto. For a short time on one day St. Michael's, which was an undeniably Irish Catholic space, would be filled with the immigrants' voices and Italian dialects in their own form of worship, the religious festa.⁹⁸

This first festa was an opportunity for Italian immigrants and sojourners from various towns and regions who resided throughout the city not only to socialize but also to share in a traditional religious day of worship in their new urban environment. In the Ward, Italians from Laurenzana in Basilicata, San Sisto in Calabria and Termini Imerese in Sicily were the earliest

⁹⁶ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 52 notes before the national parish was established some Italians had married in St. Michael's Cathedral and St. Paul's Basilica. The cathedral was located approximately 2 kilometres south east of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

⁹⁷ Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Parish History, General Correspondence, Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto (ARCAT).

⁹⁸ Not all festas are religious in nature. The term festa can be translated as "a celebration." The 1908 event and those associated with patron saints festas were held to celebrate the importance of particular religious figures to townspeople. In 1908 Italians gathered to celebrate the Madonna through worship.

residents, especially along Elizabeth Street.⁹⁹ In the College Street area *paesani* from Cosenza in Calabria and Boiano in Molise lived among family and extended kin.¹⁰⁰ In the Dufferin and Davenport area *paesani* from the Lazio and Friuli regions found both homes and work.¹⁰¹ With the need for ongoing support from the family and extended kin who made up the various chains facilitating migration very few residents moved from one Italian settlement area to another before 1939. But by World War Two members of the various towns and regions in each area developed relationships, including marriage, across town and regional lines which created an array of local networks immigrants could use for various purposes.¹⁰² One of these was likely some degree of cooperation for establishing and supporting various patron-saint festas which had been so important in Southern Italy.

In 1910 just two years after the first *fiesta* initiated by Pisani, St. Agnes parish in the College Street neighbourhood held a procession for the Feast of Corpus Christi in which dozens of girls walked along the sidewalks of Grace Street, carrying banners identifying the procession.¹⁰³ Despite the size of the procession the girls (and perhaps other participants who may have been following them) walked in an orderly fashion along the sidewalk rather than the road. The procession would certainly have interfered with pedestrians, causing some physical disruption as well as being a visual spectacle. However, the event made use of the sidewalk in a way envisioned by urban planners who designed the physical space and imagined its use. Sidewalks were intended for walking, and by doing so in an orderly way and holding to the

⁹⁹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 45.

¹⁰⁰ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 4, 57.

¹⁰¹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 41 and 43, Map 5.

¹⁰² Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 67.

¹⁰³ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959, St. Francis of Assisi, Parish History, ARCAT.

outside edges other pedestrians would also have been able to use the sidewalks by walking along the centre of the procession to go about their business more or less normally.

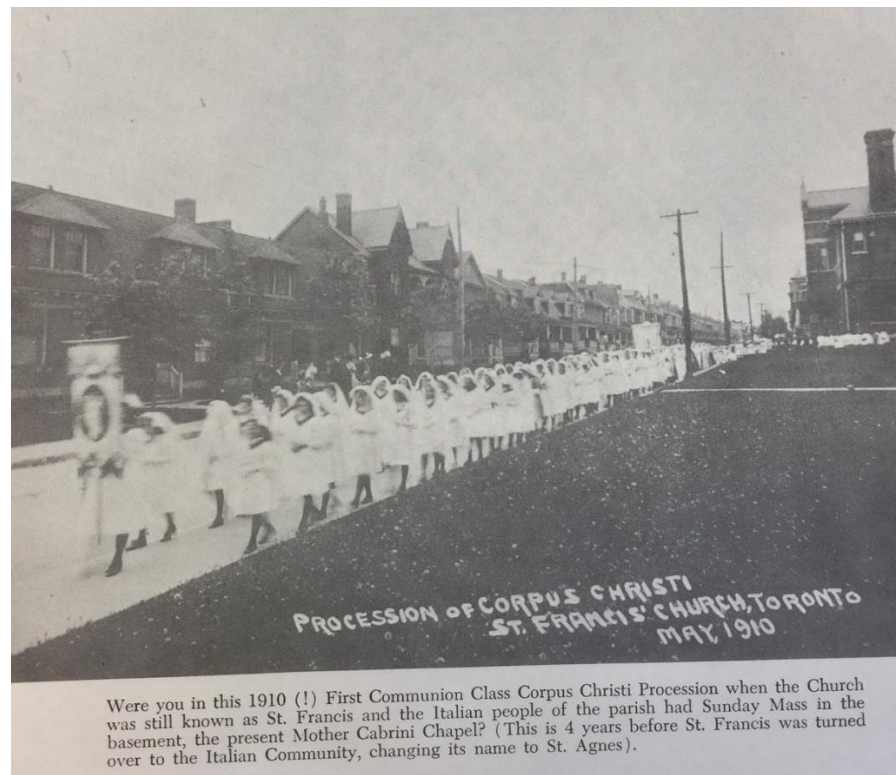


Figure 1.4. St. Francis annual Corpus Christie procession.¹⁰⁴

The way individuals and groups use urban space is an important component of spatial theory and, as will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, is one way minority groups can challenge both the authority of the state and cultural stereotypes depicting them.¹⁰⁵ St. Agnes had not been given over to the Italians yet, but they had begun attending mass in the basement.¹⁰⁶ In 1910 the nave was restricted to English speakers largely of Irish descent. This

¹⁰⁴ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

¹⁰⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 36 provides a succinct definition for spatial practice as applied in this description and the Corpus Christi procession described above.

¹⁰⁶ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 121 makes the distinction that national parishes were established in 1908 but St. Agnes became an Italian national parish in 1913 when its name was also changed. Before 1913 the parish was known as St. Francis and the Irish congregation heard mass upstairs while Italians heard mass in the basement.

arrangement was a contentious one for Italian immigrants who understood themselves to be seen by clergy and other parishioners at St. Agnes as figuratively and literally beneath the Irish and their devotional practices. It is unclear if the Corpus Cristi procession and the mass held before it made up the entirety of the event or if there were also secular activities held either through St. Agnes or at people's homes. Italians who were present in the neighbourhood would have understood this unchallenged religious procession was an accepted use of local streets.¹⁰⁷

The neighbourhoods surrounding St. Agnes church would later become so closely associated with Italians it would become known as Toronto's Little Italy. By 1920 the number of College Street area Italians would grow to 2,500 with a core group of about 400 Calabrians living near Mansfield Avenue.¹⁰⁸ In the 1930s Italians in search of better housing and living conditions had settled in the area of College and Clinton Streets¹⁰⁹ as the photos below along with those on pages 5 and 6 show. Over the same period (1908-1920) the Italian population originally from Lazio and Friuli in the Dufferin and Davenport area was also experiencing growth resulting from migration chains.¹¹⁰ In 1915 Italians crowded the basement of St. Clement mission to hear Sunday mass despite ongoing construction. This would be completed in 1934 when the church was renamed St. Mary of the Angels.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ The feast (festa) of Corpus Christ had been widely celebrated in all regions of Italy and included both a mass and a procession. Carroll, *Madonnas That Maim*, 88-111 discusses the decline in popular religious practices in the north and the opposite pattern in the southern Italy beginning in the years after unification. Patron saint *festas* were one form of popular religious practice.

¹⁰⁸ Gabriele Scardellato, "A Century of Toronto Italia," in *College Street Little Italy: Toronto's Renaissance Strip*, eds. Denis DeKlerck and Corrado Paina (Toronto: Mansfield Press, 2006), 86.

¹⁰⁹ Scardellato, "College Street Little Italy," 85-86.

¹¹⁰ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 39. Italians from these regions began arriving in the 1890s setting those chains in motion.

¹¹¹ John Zucchi, "Church and Clergy, and the Religious Life of Toronto's Italian Immigrants, 1900-1940," *Study Sessions CCHA* 50 (1983): 535.



Figure 1.5. 257-261 Euclid Avenue, 1933 (College St. area).¹¹²



Figure 1.6. Rear of 257-261 Euclid Avenue, 1933 (College St. area).¹¹³

¹¹² Archival Citation Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 1, Item 1208, <https://oldto.sidewalklabs.com/#101477>.

¹¹³ Archival Citation Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 1, Item 1209, <https://oldto.sidewalklabs.com/#101478>.



Figure 1.7. 471 Dundas St. W., 1939 (The Ward).¹¹⁴



Figure 1.8. 42-46 McCaul Street, 1939, rear view (The Ward.).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Archival Citation Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 33, Item 503, <https://oldto.sidewalklabs.com/#247616>.

¹¹⁵ Archival Citation Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 33, Item 618, <https://oldto.sidewalklabs.com/#247797>.

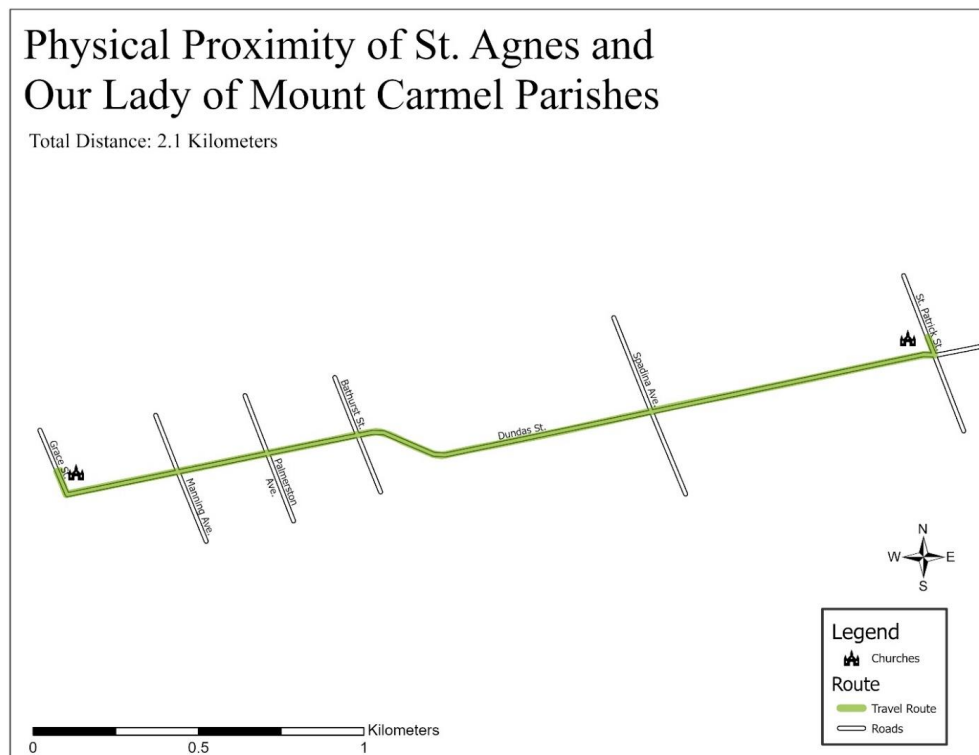


Figure 1.9. Physical proximity of St. Agnes and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parishes.

Unfortunately few sources have survived which allow for a clear understanding of religious and devotional life in the early Italian national parishes.¹¹⁶ While the churches were crowded, often overflowing with Italian parishioners, only a relatively small part of the Italian Catholic population attended services regularly. Those who did engaged in various church functions including joining committees, despite the novelty of this type of parish activity, which was virtually unknown in Italy.¹¹⁷ These relatively low numbers did not apply when it came to the support of devotional activities in immigrants' home villages and towns. Zucchi has described the generosity of paesani who contributed financially to their patron saint's annual

¹¹⁶ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 134.

¹¹⁷ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 136.

veneration which always included a procession. This reflected the ongoing, deeply held feelings of connection to the towns and villages of their birth, often despite having been away for many years.¹¹⁸ Collections were made in support of *La Madonna della Grazia* (Our Lady of Grace) by Toronto *paesani* from Santa Lucia in Lazio, for *Maria S.S. Della Difesa* (Our Most Holy Lady from Difesa) from Casacalenda in Molise, for San Rocco by Montorio nei Frentani in Molise, and in honor of San Rocco for the construction of a church by Pisticessi in Basilicata.¹¹⁹

Perhaps inevitably, though somewhat surprisingly, processional practices and patron-saint festas made their way into parish life in Toronto. Again the scarcity of documentation makes it difficult to establish precisely when these various activities began. But by the 1930s Italians in the Ward were celebrating at least two *festas* as annual events which attracted Italians from across the city.¹²⁰ In addition to these events, Our Lady of Mount Carmel was likely the first site of weekly devotions to St. Anthony of Padova, though it is unclear if the language was Italian or the Sicilian regional dialect of attendees. After 1938 the presence of the pastor for benediction which was included in the devotions would certainly have meant the devotional language would have been Italian.¹²¹ This weekly event was championed and attended mostly by immigrant women, especially from Termini Imerese, Sicily and may have acted as a precursor to the *fešta* and procession which would occur later on. Finally, and still at Mount Carmel a Good

¹¹⁸ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 137.

¹¹⁹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 137-38.

¹²⁰ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 139. In the 1930s Our Lady of Mount Carmel was celebrated at Mount Carmel. She was important to Italians from various townsgroups (and also celebrated later at St. Agnes). San Rocco was celebrated by two different groups at Mount Carmel. Townspeople from Monteleone di Puglia and Modugno di Bari (Puglia) also lived outside the Ward but may have been drawn to the festas at Mount Carmel.

¹²¹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 39. It is unclear how involved in the devotions priests may have been before 1938 when the request to add benedictions was made to the Archdiocese.

Friday Passion play was performed.¹²² An annual feast day for Our Lady of Mount Carmel was established at St. Agnes and likely attended by Italians from various towns and regions because she was the patron of numerous locales. Finally two different towns celebrated the feast day of San Rocco organized by a committee overwhelmingly made up of immigrants from these towns.¹²³ Once established these festas likely became annual events. Given the large numbers who attended the outdoor spaces around the churches hosting particular events probably became areas of religiosity. This spilling out of religious and secular activity into public areas around the churches would have seemed as natural to Italian immigrants in Toronto as it had in their own southern-Italian piazzas. For many among the clergy these *festas* were proof of the ongoing nature of the Italian problem which national parishes may have inadvertently facilitated by providing the dispersed Italian immigrant community with specific churches where their languages and dialects, devotional and cultural practices were accommodated if not encouraged.

National Italian parishes gave immigrants the physical space necessary for the formation of hybrid identities unifying their pre- and post-migration lives. Christine Chivallon proposes diasporic identity as necessarily hybrid and less constrained by the rigid boundaries ethnic identities can imply and impose.¹²⁴ While I do not understand Italian immigrants of this period to be members of a diaspora, Chivallon's notion of hybrid identity as defined by permeability is useful for this group of Italians who certainly understood themselves to be immigrants and

¹²² Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 138-39.

¹²³ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 139. The two towns in Puglia are known as Monteleone di Puglia and Modugno di Bari.

¹²⁴ Christine Chivallon, "Religion as Space for the Expression of Caribbean Identity in the United Kingdom," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19 (2001): 462-63 provides a brief description of hybridity as part of spatial theory and is discussed in more detail throughout the article. She argues religious, church activities and organization are important to hybrid identity formation in her case for Caribbean immigrants.

therefore different from their townspeople still living in Italy and the English-speaking majority in Toronto. National parishes in the early decades of the twentieth century acted as physical emblems of the authority of the Archdiocese and its acceptance of Italians as different but valued Catholics. The three neighbourhood national parishes also added to the personal geographies created by immigrants as they settled into urban life. Joyce Davidson and Christine Milligan describe personal geographies as powerful tools through which individuals develop feelings of belonging in particular physical environments.¹²⁵ The personal geographies of Italians had been largely made up of homes and Italian-run businesses and were expanded to include the national parishes.¹²⁶ By the 1930s it was possible for Italians to understand these various locations in their neighbourhoods as Italian-immigrant places and the roads, alleys and sidewalks connecting those places as spaces where their bodies, languages/dialects and devotional and leisure practices belonged as well. While Italian immigrants and their children developed deeper feelings of comfort and belonging in their new neighbourhoods and churches, the clergy understood this ethnic group to be purposely resisting assimilation into Toronto Catholicism.

Catholic clergy were joined in their efforts to solve the Italian problem by the small Italian elite who saw the church as a vehicle to directly assimilate Italians into the less threatening practices of Irish Catholicism in Protestant-dominated Toronto. Such a move would help make Italians seem less backward to the mostly Irish clergy and English-speaking residents

¹²⁵ Davidson and Milligan, "Embodying Emotion Sensing Space," 523-25 describe the embodied way physical spaces are experienced and how embodiment is altered in different locales in effect creating different spaces at the level of the individual and community. Their work also provides a useful summary of similarly focused spatial scholarship from various fields.

¹²⁶ Personal geographies as discussed here are similar to cognitive maps (see above) with the homes, Italian owned businesses and churches acting as nodal points.

of Toronto. Both Italian men and women resisted these efforts.¹²⁷ Immigrants who organized and attended *festas* were actively choosing to maintain traditional practices while adapting them to the new urban environment. Processions in particular made the presence of Italian immigrants both highly visible and unmistakably identifiable to residents of the neighbourhoods in which processions occurred and to officials – both religious and secular – in the city. In reality, Italian-origin settlement areas were also home to immigrants from other ethnic groups and were places in the city which established residents would not regularly visit. Resistance to processional activity in these neighbourhoods may have been minimal because it was effectively hidden from the view of the established Protestant population.¹²⁸ The ability of Italians to participate in, or even to simply observe devotional activities like processions marking St. Anthony, Corpus Cristi, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and San Rocco combined with their increasing numbers likely encouraged more Italian immigrants to expect that public expressions of religious cultural traditions would be tolerated.

Italian women's irregular attendance at church comprised part of their adaptive religious practices in the new environment. Women chose how and when to re-establish (after migration) church-centered, but home-based devotional practices rooted in prayer, devotions to saints and the transfer of religious knowledge to their children.¹²⁹ Sturino describes the oral tradition of proverbs and folksongs which communicated historical information and taught lessons about

¹²⁷ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 221.

¹²⁸ Sturino, *Forging the Chain*, 176 notes that while Italians drew closer to one another contact with "the English" was minimal.

¹²⁹ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 214-17.

religion and *festas* as women's domain among Calabrians.¹³⁰ Both newly arrived and well-settled Italian women followed alternate agendas which allowed them to maintain control over the family's daily religious practices and long-held traditions in which attending church played a lesser role than culturally embedded religious practices that were more rigorously maintained. In this context the local parish and clergy acted as an extension of, and facilitator for devotions which took place in the home, often connected to particular saints including the patron saint of a woman's southern Italian village. These traditional practices and necessary interactions with clergy were organized and maintained by women.¹³¹ Their interactions with parish priests was not a subservient one. In addition to persistent demands for the objects and blessings necessary to maintain home-based religious practices women were vocal in their desire for Italian-language religious services before the national parish structure was put in place. They also spoke out later when they suspected Italian-speaking clergy to be acting inappropriately or to be negligent in fulfilling their spiritual responsibilities to Italian parishioners.¹³² In this way Italian immigrant women established a public presence and acted as spokespeople for their families both with clergy and in the neighbourhoods in which they lived.

Italian men brought with them a tradition of involvement in religious activity which took place outside the home. Annual religious festas and patron-saint devotions, including processions, were community events which took place in public and were often the basis for

¹³⁰ Sturino, *Forging the Chain*, 41. Work, agricultural cycles, nature and relationships between men and women were also part of women's oral traditions and areas in which children were educated by their mothers and grandmothers.

¹³¹ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 218. Women's relationships with parish clergy were often organized around the need to obtain votive candles and holy water for home shrines.

¹³² Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 132-33 provides examples of all these scenarios. Given the greater frequency with which women would have attended their local parish for holy water and candles they were probably more likely than men to know about clergy's behaviour and possible misconduct.

confraternities in the *Mezzogiorno*. Immigrant men's understanding of the parish as a sacred landscape was due in part to its housing of statues of particular saints which had been important in their home villages. Where national parishes were or became sites to house saints' statues, Italian men assumed a proprietary interest in the parish. The willingness of a parish to house saints was understood by Italian men as an affirmation of their village-based practices and likely produced a general feeling among Italians that Toronto churches could function as cultural-religious extensions of their enclave¹³³ and their participation could take proprietary roles both in the *festas* and the ways in which they moved onto the public streets of their neighbourhoods. Like the national parishes, patron saint statues displayed in highly visible ways and then taken in procession into public spaces helped these early Italian immigrants to explore and create, slowly and over time, the hybrid identity Chivallon describes.

From their earliest days at Mount Carmel, some Italians took an active role in parish organizations. They also expressed their opinions to parish priests. As in the earlier case of Father Auad, this was especially true when Italians were unsatisfied with the attention and respect given to them by their priest, and as they sought to establish hometown traditions in Toronto. Typically, this included patron-saint *festas* which required the involvement of the parish clergy.¹³⁴ Annual patron-saint devotions and *festas* were established in the Ward and the College Street area soon after migration and reflected the inherently adaptive capacities of popular southern-Italian cultural-religious practices.¹³⁵ These devotions required only the necessary

¹³³ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 221.

¹³⁴ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 131.

¹³⁵ No sources have been found suggesting processional activity originating from St. Clement. Given the church was not completed until 1934, and served as a mission until then, there may have been little opportunity for housing statues or for organizing committees to form. Festas and processions did take place in the post-1945 period.

saint's statue, a willing clergyman and the physical space to conduct a mass and an outdoor procession. Men's adaptive capacity in the new setting can be seen as they began to take on public advocacy. In the celebration of San Rocco, for example, ten of the twelve-member committee belonged to one of the two towns of which the saint was a patron. Organizational and participation roles in the parish and community were based on *paesani* networks.¹³⁶ Through these religious activities Italian immigrants can be understood to be exploring and discerning, as a community, elements of the hybrid identity Chivallon identified. Italian men established their own public identity in the new city which highlighted southern-Italian masculinity and respectability through the patron saint *fiesta*. The *fiesta* can also be understood as a vehicle through which men expressed both their desire to be seen as good citizens and Christians and an understanding of the visual vocabulary which they used to communicate this desire to English-speaking Catholics in Toronto. Flags, music and use of the English language where possible in the period before 1940 emphasized immigrant pride in Italian heritage and a corresponding loyalty as British subjects.¹³⁷ In addition, these fiestas both preserved and enhanced the reputations of the families and villages to which these men belonged.¹³⁸ In much the same way Southern Italian women used this processional vocabulary and were important participants during religious processions both in this period and after 1945, when the processional practice grew.

Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century Italian immigrants were aware of their marginalized position in Toronto. From the neighbourhoods and difficult conditions in

¹³⁶ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 139.

¹³⁷ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 225.

¹³⁸ Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference," 213.

which they lived, to the language/dialects they spoke, to their extreme poverty and way they practiced their faith, the majority of Italian immigrants could do little to counter the negative ways they were often seen by clergy and English-speaking reformers and residents in Toronto. So while Italians generally had low rates of church attendance in the various national parishes, and few economic or social resources, they were motivated by the desire for religious livelihood described by Davidson and Milligan to maintain their own personal and hometown networks and traditions, especially those connected to saints and *festas* and an important part of *fešta* celebrations was the procession.¹³⁹

Ann David has argued that it is through the incorporation of sound, movement and ritual that processions become a powerful way for immigrant outsiders to territorialize and organize urban space while also declaring and celebrating ethno-religious identity.¹⁴⁰ In harmony with Kong's work, described earlier, David argues processional practices to be uniquely suited to public expressions of unity by minority groups in urban settings precisely because embodiment is at the core of processional practices.¹⁴¹ By definition processions involve large gatherings of people for a variety of unified purposes (both spiritual and practical) realized in a public setting. The bodies, sounds of prayer, song and friendly conversation in immigrant's languages/dialects and the movement of the group through urban space is at the heart of emplacement¹⁴² which spatial theory proposes to be an important first step to the creation, or in Italian-origin

¹³⁹ Davidson and Milligan, "Embodying Emotion Sensing Space," 523-25. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 134 describes these networks and religious activities to be connected to religiosity and the practical elements of migration chains which continued to function beyond settlement in Toronto.

¹⁴⁰ David, "Sacralising the City," 449.

¹⁴¹ Davidson and Milligan, "Embodying Emotion Sensing Space," 449-51.

¹⁴² Davidson and Milligan, "Embodying Emotion Sensing Space," 450-54.

neighbourhoods the recreation of urban space from secular to religious and from generically immigrant to Italian. In addition to viewing the spectacle of the procession, non-immigrant observers also became observers to one of the ways immigrants, largely through their own agency, created a safe space for themselves in the urban landscape.

It is unclear whether a street procession was ever considered for the 1908 Festa of the *Madonna del Rosario* organized by Father Pisani. Nor is it clear whether the inspiration for this *festa* originated with Pisani or with requests from Italian parishioners. But this first reference to a *festa* and Pisani's attempt to draw all Italians in Toronto together happened quickly after his arrival in the city. As its Italian population grew we also see more evidence of their attempts to establish spaces within churches. With their bodies and voices Italian immigrants engaged in the ritualized religious processional practice that temporarily changed the public streetscapes in ways that echoed those of the *Mezzogiorno*.

Crowded and derelict as the sidewalks and roads of the Ward often were they became vehicles for Italians to express religious and cultural sentiments and begin to construct a public identity over which they had control. The smaller group of Italian immigrants in the College Street area did the same through their processional practices which, by the 1930s, included the Holy Name Procession when participants, which likely included Italian parishioners, walked along Grace Street carrying a large banner that identified the event for all in the area.¹⁴³ As the photo below shows this procession was not only taking up all of the road interrupting traffic, but an audience took up sidewalk space. The men at what appears to be the head of the processional group were likely members of the executive of the Holy Name Society. This is a more disruptive

¹⁴³ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

and confident use of urban space, which interrupted the movement of cars, and people along the road and sidewalks created for their use, than was the case in earlier processions.



Figure 1.10. Holy Name Procession walking on Grace Street.¹⁴⁴

Finally, in 1937 the Feast of St. Anthony was held at St. Agnes. It is unclear if there was a procession on this occasion, but a note was sent to Toronto's Archbishop informing him of the festa and inviting him to attend.¹⁴⁵ St. Anthony of Padova was an important patron for many Calabrians so it is not surprising that a festa in his honor would be held at St. Agnes, where many Calabrians worshipped. Given the hostility directed towards Italians during the Second World War it is unlikely this annual festa continued without interruption throughout the war years, but a festa for St. Anthony would quickly become one of the largest held at St. Agnes in the postwar period.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

¹⁴⁵ St. Agnes, Parish History, General Correspondence, in English and Italian 1915-1961, ARCAT.

¹⁴⁶ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

Despite their relatively limited numbers and a notable scarcity of economic and social resources, Italian immigrants in the first decades of the twentieth century were able to establish their own cultural-religious practices in Italian national parishes and surrounding public spaces. The *festas* and accompanying processions could not replicate those of the *Mezzogiorno* in scale or frequency, and even in the neighbourhoods where so many Italians lived alongside other immigrants, it was clear such practices were not well understood by other Catholics. *Festas* and processions remained Italian-immigrant activities which other immigrant groups and the Irish-dominated church observed and at least tolerated, but in which they did not participate.

Chapter 2: Patron Saints Take to the Streets in Little Italy

At the end of the Second World War the Canadian government looked to immigration to fuel economic growth. While the intent was to reverse the restrictive policy of the 1930s Prime Minister Mackenzie King was careful to assure Canadians a careful selection process would be employed favouring British, American and Northern European workers and families. In 1946 Italy remained on the enemy alien list, and a national Gallop Poll found both English-and French speaking Canadians were hostile to immigration. Approximately 25% were specifically opposed to Italian immigration.¹⁴⁷ Despite the government's best efforts immigrants from the preferred areas did not arrive in the required numbers. As the list for preferred countries for immigration was expanded southern Italians began coming to Canada.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s Italians and their adult children continued to reside in the neighbourhoods around Mount Carmel, St. Agnes, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Mary of the Angels and attended those parishes in large numbers. In 1948 5,000 parishioners attended St. Agnes and there were 320 associational members. The same year St. Mary of the Angels served 2,500 parishioners with 426 associational members.¹⁴⁸ Despite the hostility of the dominant English-speaking Protestant majority, Italians who had settled permanently in Toronto before the war re-established contact with family and paesani in Italy. They soon took up roles as sponsors for Italians who wanted to emigrate to Toronto.¹⁴⁹ Between 1946 and 1955 60% of all Italian immigrants and sponsors were men. The prewar networks of chain migration were revived and

¹⁴⁷ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 21.

¹⁴⁸ Zucchi, "Church and Clergy," 545. Among the parish associations were the Holy Name Society, Catholic Women's League, Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Catholic Youth Organization.

¹⁴⁹ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 46.

quickly enlarged so that a large majority of immigrants came from provinces in Southern Italy especially Calabria, Abruzzo, and Molise.¹⁵⁰ The well-known conditions of poverty and isolation known as *la miseria* which historically engulfed these regions were exacerbated during the war years. When it became possible again, families employed migration as a long practiced strategy to alleviate desperate conditions. Canada's commitment to urban and economic development was well-known among Southern Italians for the opportunities it offered in low and semi-skilled work for both men and women.¹⁵¹ Often the eldest son in a family was the first to be sponsored. He in turn would act as a sponsor for siblings, cousins, wives, children and often much later elderly parents.¹⁵² When they arrived in Toronto the average age of immigrants was 22.7 years.¹⁵³

The earliest Italian arrivals often found homes in the College Street area. In the prewar period Italians never dominated the College Street neighbourhood in terms of numbers but did establish shops and services to meet the daily needs of the growing number of Italian families who lived alongside other immigrants which included a large Jewish community. In 1926 sixty percent of businesses on College Street between Grace and Bathurst streets were Italian owned or used Italian in their names. By 1939 there were approximately 2,500 Italians, both immigrants

¹⁵⁰ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 47.

¹⁵¹ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, chapter 4 describes women's working conditions and their economic contribution to the family household. This period featured industrial growth which offered women employment opportunities in a variety of manufacturing sectors. This was a dramatic change from the prewar period of immigration when the employment opportunities for women were restricted primarily to running boarding houses. Women's postwar employment increased the family's economic security.

¹⁵² Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 48, 49.

¹⁵³ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 49.

and their Canadian-born children, living in the College Street area. Four hundred Calabrians settled close to one another on and around Mansfield Ave.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Scardellato, “A Century of Toronto Italia,” 86.

Areas of One Third or More Residents With Italian Last Names

Population 1939

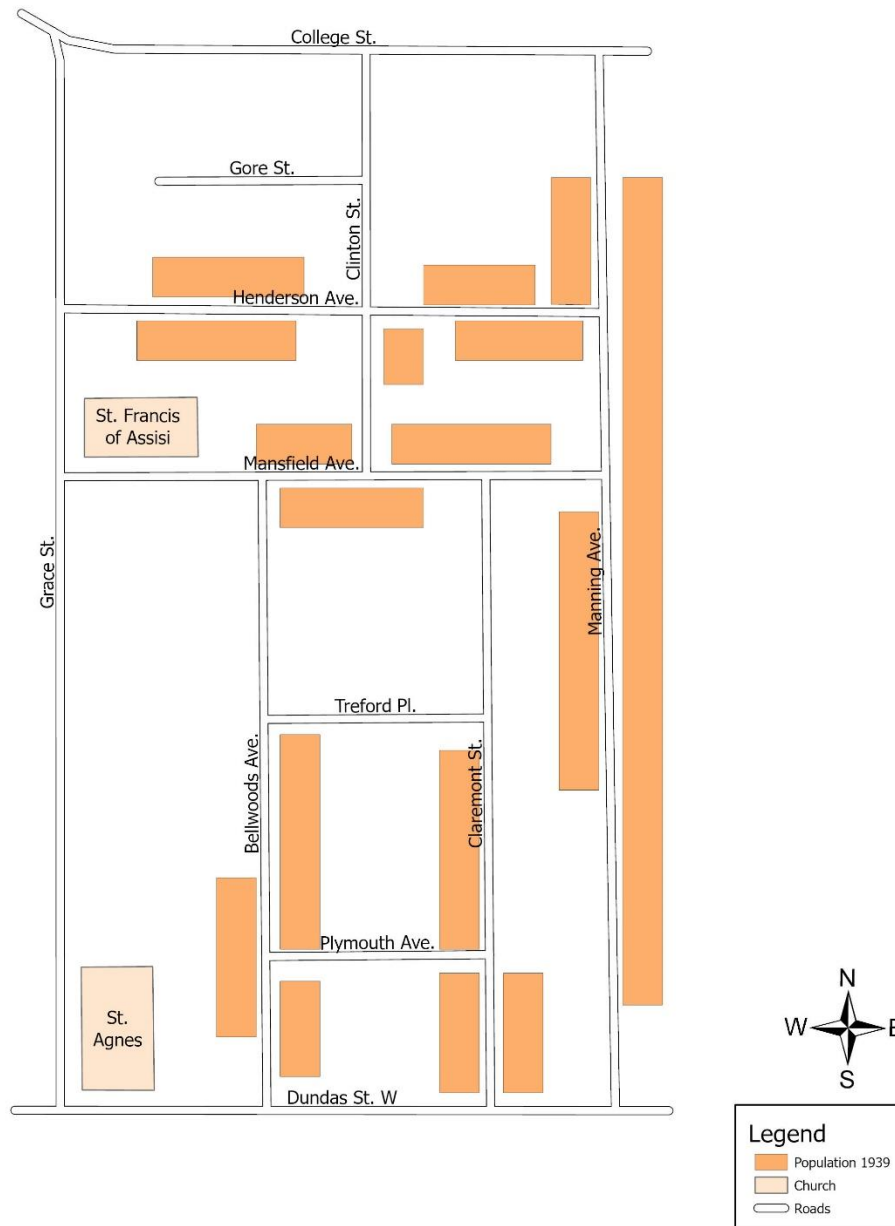


Figure 2.1. Sample of streets near Mansfield Avenue 1939, one third or more residents with Italian surnames.¹⁵⁵

Many Calabrians acted as sponsors for *paesani* after the war and were among the owners of shops and services in this neighbourhood which catered to both long-settled and newly arrived Italians. Giuseppe Simonetta arrived at Union Station in 1954 with his wife and infant son having left his network of family and friends behind in the northern Ontario city of Timmins. The taxi driver who picked up the family and learned they needed rental accommodations took him to the College Street area where he assured Simonetta he would find his *paesani*. As Simonetta described it:

He took me to the house of a family from Calabria. But I didn't know these people. I was born in Calabria but left when I was a boy. I grew up in Milan, I was not born Milanese but after so many years there... I didn't know these people in the house. But what a welcome we received! The man and his wife welcomed us, like we were their family not even like *paesani*. We rented a room from them for several years and remained life-long friends. And you know what? It turns out we were *paesani* of a manner. I was born in San Nicola (da Crissa) and so were this man and his wife! It seemed a miracle to me that this taxi driver who knew nothing about me and could barely say three words in Italian put my family together with this family.¹⁵⁶

Calabrian and other Italian immigrants were the most visible of the immediate postwar arrivals in Toronto. Through the early 1950s, as men struggling to find steady work continued to arrive, the need for housing in the College Street neighbourhood reached critical proportions. Families often shared single-family dwellings, and single men who dominated the flows of newcomers in the early 1950s crowded into rental housing with up to 28 men sharing five

¹⁵⁵ These streets will later become part of processional routes for either St. Agnes or St. Francis.

¹⁵⁶ Giuseppe Simonetta (life-long College Street resident), interviewed by author, July 2016. Author's translation from standard Italian. Jerome Krase, "What Happened to Little Italy," October 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320068492_What_Happened_to_Little_Italy describes the stages which define the evolution of North American Little Italies. This excerpt is an example of the first stage: a specific area of the city recognized by locals as the place where Italians live.

rooms.¹⁵⁷ Living arrangements such as these were startling to Torontonians, including those living in the College Street neighbourhood.¹⁵⁸ Italian immigrants were equally unsettled to find themselves living in such conditions. As one man noted, immigrants began to refer to houses where large numbers of men lived not by the house number or names of their inhabitants but with phrases like “la casa di trenta pane [sic]”¹⁵⁹ because thirty loaves of bread were delivered daily to the many men who shared this particular house and prepared their own food.¹⁶⁰ Escaping these living conditions was powerful motivation to endure the hardships and dangers of the labour most men performed especially in the construction industry.¹⁶¹

After 1955 as immigrant men began sponsoring wives and children, households occupied by many men gave way to extended families sharing the single-family homes which were the only form of housing in the College Street area.¹⁶² This was an arrangement that could last several years as wives joined the workforce and couples saved to rent or buy their own homes.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Scardellato, “A Century of Toronto Italia,” 90.

¹⁵⁸ Scardellato, “A Century of Toronto Italia,” 91

¹⁵⁹ *Pane* is the standard Italian word for *bread*, as in a loaf of bread. Iori incorrectly used the singular rather than the plural *pani* when referring to 30 loaves of bread. Iori had previously described his use of standard Italian to be a result of immigration. In his home village of San Nicola townspeople spoke to one another exclusively in the local dialect. Even conversations with the local doctor and civic employees took place in the local dialect. Iori’s only exposure to and use of standard Italian before migration took place during school lessons. Once in Toronto Iori regularly encountered Italian immigrants who did not speak or understand his local Calabrian dialect and began to use standard Italian more frequently. Although he was a prolific speaker (and writer) of standard Italian several grammatical errors occurred during interviews. I understand these errors to be important and distinctive features of his speech and have therefore left them in place during translations from standard Italian to English.

¹⁶⁰ Rosario Iori (College Street resident), interviewed by author, March 2018.

¹⁶¹ Stefano Agnoletto, *The Italians Who Built Toronto: Italian Workers and Contractors in the City’s Housebuilding Industry 1950-1980* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014) describes the dangerous and exploitative working conditions experienced by Italian immigrant men. See Fortunato Rao, *The Lucky Immigrant: The Public Life of Fortunato Rao*, eds. Nicholas Harney and Franc Sturino (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 34-35 for a description of living conditions and crowding. Gil Fernandez, “City Builders: A History of Immigrant Construction Workers in Postwar Toronto,” Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, York University, accessed January 28, 2020, <http://toronto-city-builders.org/>. Includes oral testimony of Italian immigrant men.

¹⁶² Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 48.

¹⁶³ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 88-89.

This living arrangement was familiar to Southern Italians who before immigration had lived in single households as tightly knit extended families. In Toronto young couples and families related to each other by blood and marriage lived together and shared the work required to maintain the dwelling and physical needs of family members. These extended families often participated in religious and leisure activities together nurturing deep bonds which endured the eventual separation of families into their own nuclear households. Over the next several decades Italians would increasingly make their homes in suburbs along the well-known north-western corridor increasingly distant from the College Street area.¹⁶⁴ More than 90% of postwar Italian immigrants were sponsored by relatives already living in Toronto resulting in clusters of town and village relocations which allowed bonds of affection, information and traditional cultural practices to remain unbroken.¹⁶⁵

As had been true in the prewar period, religion played an important role in the daily lives of many Italian immigrants. In 1959 Rosario Iori arrived in Toronto as a single, twenty-year-old man. His first Sunday was spent at St. Agnes church. Iori's arrival there confirmed his belief that the church would be the place to meet other *paesani*, and in fact that first Sunday was comforted to hear the dialect of his native Calabrian town, San Nicola da Crissa, on the lips of so many. While his description may exaggerate the actual numbers of *paesani* present it recalls his sense of welcome and belonging.

¹⁶⁴ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 170-72 briefly describes one such suburb, Vaughan, located north of Toronto which emerges as part of this pattern in the 1980s. The well-known north-western corridor included St. Clair and Dufferin, and North York.

¹⁶⁵ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 48. Sturino, *Forging the Chain*, 155-58 describes this stage of migration as one of family reunification and sponsorship. This more permanent type of emigration was distinctly different from the earlier phase of temporary male sojourners.

It was so nice, so beautiful. I went to church on Sunday and we were all there. The whole church was Sannicolesi. My brother told me I would meet so many people at the church. He was already here so he knew. So when I went, and I met them, I knew it was ok. I felt good there.¹⁶⁶

St. Agnes had become a central institution of Italian neighbourhood life during the interwar period and remained important to Italian cultural religious practices in the College Street area, and beyond, until 1968.¹⁶⁷ In addition to providing religious services in Italian and a rich associational life, clergy at St. Agnes provided much needed secular services and information to new arrivals regardless of where they might reside.¹⁶⁸ Immigrants from San Nicola da Crissa came to play an increasingly important role in parish life during this period. Most Southern Italians spoke in their own dialect most of the time. With little formal education before emigration and few contacts with people beyond *paesani* many could not converse easily in standard Italian when they arrived. While Southern Italians from different regions lived close to one another in the College Street area, they were aware of who their own *paesani* were primarily from the dialect spoken.

Kim Knott summarizes the work of scholars who employ spatial theory in her description of the importance of physical senses for how people respond to particular spaces, especially sound. Knott argues the experience of particular places is mediated through our bodies.¹⁶⁹ As Iori

¹⁶⁶ Iori, March 2018.

¹⁶⁷ Jordan Stanger-Ross, "An Inviting Parish: Community without Locality in Postwar Italian Toronto," *The Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2006): 381-407 examines associational life, marriage registers and advertising in church bulletins to describe the parish as important to Italian immigrants from the Toronto metropolitan area. He includes St. Agnes and St. Francis together in his analysis. After 1968 St. Agnes became a Portuguese national parish and Italian parishioners switched to St. Francis.

¹⁶⁸ Stanger-Ross, "An Inviting Parish," 387; Simonetta, July 2016. Simonetta described his volunteer work with clergy who provided welcome baskets of food and non-perishables to newly arrived Italian immigrants along with help navigating life in the city. Similar services were offered by clergy and volunteers at all four Italian parishes.

¹⁶⁹ Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," 156-59.

heard his native dialect spoken freely and happily in the church he recalled and experienced in a physical way a relationship between his native village and this urban space. Of course the village could not be reproduced in the College Street neighbourhood. But Iori began to experience what Joyce Davidson and Christine Milligan describe as an emotional geography. They argue our sense of who and what we are is continually reshaped by how we feel, and that how we feel is embedded in where we are. Places must be felt to make sense.¹⁷⁰ When Iori stood in a particular place like a church and heard his dialect all around him, he experienced that place differently than if he were to hear other dialects, standard Italian or English. When he heard his dialect Iori understood himself as a *paesano* in a place which understood and recognized him as someone like those around him.¹⁷¹ This place was one where he belonged. Following from Davidson and Milligan's work, if Iori had heard other dialects or languages he would have understood himself to be *other*, to not fully belong in this place. The degree of otherness would be greater or lesser depending on the particular dialect or language spoken and other differences between himself and those in the church.

By the mid-1950s the number of Italians in need of religious services was so great clergy and volunteers at St. Agnes became overwhelmed. Further, the physical structure of the church could not house all those wanting to attend Sunday services.¹⁷² In addition to the three Italian masses said on Sundays in the nave of St. Agnes, one of the basement halls used to host social

¹⁷⁰ Davidson and Mulligan, "Embodying Emotion," 523-24.

¹⁷¹ Andrzej Zielenic, "Lefebvre's Politics of Space: Urban Planning as the Urban Oeuvre," *Urban Planning* 3, no. 3 (2018): 5-15. Social groups access to and use of social spaces (like churches) is determined by their access to various kinds of capital. In addition to recognizing his native dialect Iori was also aware Italian immigrants at St. Agnes were similarly positioned as unskilled, low-paid workers marginalized by their inability to communicate in English and that these factors were at the heart of what brought paesani together in this parish.

¹⁷² Scardellato, "A Century of Toronto Italia," 94; Ricardo Aleixo (Sacristan St. Agnes parish), interviewed by author, November 2018. St. Agnes parish can comfortably accommodate 3,000 parishioners.

events was fitted with a makeshift altar so parishioners could attend additional masses held there. In an attempt to relieve pressure on the parish in September 1957 a letter from the Archdiocese¹⁷³ to parishioners of St. Francis announced the arrival of Italian-born Reverend George Nincheri to assist Father Croke.¹⁷⁴ Croke was pastor at St. Francis and spoke Italian but struggled to adequately serve newly arrived Italian immigrants. Father Nincheri and Father Croke would say masses¹⁷⁵ and assist Italian immigrants. This letter from the Archbishop reassured Irish parishioners Nincheri was bilingual, speaking both Italian and English and life at St. Francis parish would not be radically changed. In addition Irish parishioners' empathy was invoked in the letter which asked them to remember there were many Italian immigrants living in the parish area and therefore "one or two Italian-language Sunday masses were necessary at St. Francis."¹⁷⁶ Despite the addition of very well-attended Italian masses at St. Francis, an overwhelming majority of Italian immigrants continued to attend St. Agnes until 1968 when the Archdiocese announced it would become a Portuguese parish. Only then did Italians leave St. Agnes to become parishioners at St. Francis.

Until 1968 St. Agnes was an important gathering place for Italians, especially from Calabria, to engage in religious and cultural practices in the form of patron saint processions. But it is important to note it was not the only location for such activity. Churches from the prewar era served postwar Italian immigrants in the 1950s and became locales for processional activity.

¹⁷³ The archbishop at the time was Cardinal James McGuigan. His signature was not on the letter to parishioners.

¹⁷⁴ "Archbishop to Parishioners of St. Francis," Letter, September 29, 1957, St. Francis of Assisi, Parish History, Parish Administration 1957-1963, ARCAT. Father George Nincheri was appointed to St. Francis in 1957 and served until 1959 when his position was taken up by Father Cavini Graziani.

¹⁷⁵ In 1957 masses were still in Latin but the sermon and announcements would have been in standard Italian.

¹⁷⁶ "Archbishop to Parishioners of St. Francis," September 29, 1957.

While only scattered documentary evidence has survived, it none the less suggests a persistent and strong demand for patron saint devotions in public spaces existed wherever southern Italian immigrants worshipped in large numbers.

The resolution of the conflict described in chapter one between two groups from Puglia¹⁷⁷ included two separate feast days being established in the 1950s for San Rocco so each town group could have its own procession with the patron saint.¹⁷⁸ In April 1952 a procession in honor of Good Friday was held at Mount Carmel driven by the efforts of Sicilian parishioners. The procession featured two statues; one was the *Cristo Morto* (dead Christ) lying on a bed of roses, the other the *Madonna Addolorata* (the Sorrowful Mother Mary) wearing a black cloak of mourning. Father Pantaleo led the Good Friday service and Father McKenna helped carry the statue of the crucified Christ as part of the procession. The procession began in the church but soon “moved outdoors” where both statues were accompanied by palm bearers and girls in communion dress.¹⁷⁹

Also during this period annual street processions were held for the Madonna of Constantinople, though it is unclear if its home was St. Agnes or St. Francis. The photo below captured a pause as the procession in her honour made its way through a residential street where participants crowded the public space in an unorganized but orderly pattern. This included a small residential front garden area as some observers watched from the veranda of their home.

¹⁷⁷ Both places of origin are in Puglia. Monteleone is named Monteleone di Puglia to distinguish it from other similar place names. Modugno is part of the city of Bari in Puglia. See chapter 1 for a description of the conflict.

¹⁷⁸ Zucchi, “Church and Clergy,” 547.

¹⁷⁹ “A Funeral Procession,” 7.

The processional route is not known, and it is unclear if this group would have moved differently if it travelled along a less residential street.¹⁸⁰



Figure 2.2. Procession for *Maria Santa Santissima di Constantinopoli* (Maria Most Holy of Constantinople).¹⁸¹

Processions were also held for St. Anthony at St. Agnes and for Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Mount Carmel parish. Two photos below suggest differences in the way public spaces were used by processional groups. In the top photo children dressed in communion-garb walk as an orderly group keeping to the inside edge of the sidewalk during the 1956 St. Anthony procession at St. Agnes. As children did in the Corpus Christi procession in the 1930s this group appears to be leaving room for pedestrians to walk along the sidewalk as the procession moves forward. The bottom photo shows a more expansive presence on the road during “one of the

¹⁸⁰ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

¹⁸¹ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

annual processions at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.”¹⁸² The sidewalk is almost empty, but the processional group uses all the space available to them on the road. This is even more striking because the building to the left of the road suggests the group was either on or entering a road that might be more well-travelled. The police officer to the right appears to walk with the group rather than moving them off the road. Almost certainly he was there to guard the physical safety of the group, perhaps ensuring cars yielded to the procession.¹⁸³ Surveillance of the event itself and those involved may also have been part of his role. The relationship between police and Italian immigrants was a complicated one and would remain so through the 1960s.



¹⁸² Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

¹⁸³ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

Figure 2.3. St. Anthony procession held in 1956 at St. Agnes. Bottom photo: annual procession held at Our lady of Mount Carmel.¹⁸⁴

Street processions also took place in 1952 at St. Mary of the Angels as part of a feast for St. Anthony¹⁸⁵ and in June 1954 at St. Agnes, also for St. Anthony.¹⁸⁶ This latter St. Anthony festa would grow in size each year and act as a precursor to the procession on Good Friday.¹⁸⁷ Michael Conzen has proposed that the most important facilitating factor of the spatial imprint ethnic groups are able to mark in new space is the volume of immigration. Conzen further argues when the numbers of arriving immigrants from a single ethnic group are high over a short time they will likely leave a more distinct spatial imprint in the arriving area than if the numbers are low or the time period over which they arrived very long. Conzen has also noted ethnic groups which live in a clustered way are more likely to transform the physical environment.¹⁸⁸ While Conzen was describing changes in the physical landscape, through architecture for example, his work is consistent with spatial theory which understands space to be fluid and pliable. The ability of Southern Italians to impose processional practices on some of the public spaces in their neighbourhoods fits neatly into Conzen's model.

The majority of processions which occurred at Italian churches were held in honour of hometown patron saints. In Southern Italy festas for these protectors were important religious and cultural occasions. Experienced as celebrations, festas often lasted several days and drew attendees from nearby towns and villages. Usually these events were held between May and

¹⁸⁴ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St Agnes Church, 1959.

¹⁸⁵ "St. Mary of the Angels Procession for St. Anthony Feast," *The Catholic Register* (June 28th, 1952): 10.

¹⁸⁶ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959.

¹⁸⁷ Stanger-Ross, "An Inviting Parish," 381 provides a short description of the importance of St. Anthony to Southern Italians.

¹⁸⁸ Michael Conzen, "Ethnicity on the Land," in *The Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Michael Conzen (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 221-448.

October. During these festas the *piazza* became a food court, concert venue, dance hall and the gathering place for the all-important procession. Villagers of all ages participated in a mass which was dedicated to the patron saint and in an annual procession in which the priest also participated. In many villages both the procession and secular parts of the festas were organized by an informal committee of townsmen.¹⁸⁹ The statue of the patron saint was carried by townspeople, usually men, from its place of honour in the church through village streets before coming to rest again in the church. Townspeople followed the statue in prayer and sang hymns accompanied by musicians who also provided music for events in the *piazza* later in the day. These festas were a long-established tradition at the center of religious practices and leisure, and Southern Italians who arrived in Toronto brought with them not only the memory of these processions as expressions of religious devotion, but also as important markers of regional and village or town identity. Through the procession and *piazza* events townspeople expressed the depth of their personal devotion and relationship with the saint, their autonomy from clerical control, and their individual and communal sense of ownership over public village spaces.

Henri Lefebvre's foundational text, *The Production of Space*, has been inspirational to spatial theorists. Lefebvre encouraged scholars to understand physical spaces as locales where power relationships in the larger society can be challenged and reconfigured as those physical spaces are occupied in a variety of ways.¹⁹⁰ Lefebvre employs a fluid and multidimensional view

¹⁸⁹ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 152-54. Describes the contentious relationship for control of the festa (including procession) for the Madonna of Canneto by the paesani of Settefrate in the Lazio region. Harney's description also highlights ways religious traditions like festas were a vehicle to maintain the relationship between immigrants in Toronto with their paesani in Italy.

¹⁹⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 110-15 is particularly useful for understanding space as both diachronic and synchronic and the potential impact of these on individuals.

of physical space which is at once contested and transformational. He argues this is true of all spaces whether rural or urban. For Italians in Southern Italy the Catholic Church was a powerful institution. At the local level this power was exercised by the parish priest. Beyond his role as a religious leader the priest was often the most literate individual in the village/town and his help with documentation connected to migration or other bureaucratic matters could be pivotal to a family's well-being. This in addition to the priest's ability to withhold sacraments made him a very powerful individual. Control of the patron saint's procession was one way village space became contested space and the power of both the church and the priest challenged. By carrying the statue, maintaining an established route or adjusting it, controlling the walking pace, prayers and hymns during the procession and how long the patron saint statue would rest in the *piazza* before its re-entry into the church, villagers were able to mediate at least temporarily the power of the priest and the church. Unlike the secular enjoyments described above, the religious nature of the procession made it a devotional practice which normally would have been in the exclusive control of the local pastor. In many villages, including San Nicola da Crissa, control of the annual procession was a point of pride for residents.¹⁹¹

Lefebvre proposes urban space, in particular, to be a site of struggle between the state and the various groups that make up society. Physical spaces, he argues, are in fact social constructions resulting from the dynamic ways people use them. The state exerts its control of public roads and sidewalks in a variety of ways including through their physical design and the laws restricting their use. As Lily Kong and Ann David have noted the state has at its disposal

¹⁹¹ Nicholas De Maria Harney, *Eh, Paesan! Being Italian in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 153-154 describes the example of the feast for the Madonna of Canneto in the town of Settefrate in the Lazio region. Iori, March 2018.

the ability to encourage or suppress the public processional activities of ethnic and religious minorities.¹⁹² The state is the most powerful actor in the dynamic creation of particular spaces, but it is not the only one. All groups who share a public space participate in its creation and can challenge the actions of other groups. Processional routes in the College Street area and beyond were such contested spaces as various groups responded to processional activity among recently arrived Southern Italians.

In addition to the often ambivalent feelings of parish clergy at Italian parishes and the Archdiocese in the early years of migration, Anglo-Canadian Catholics often saw processions as offensive and worried they reinforced popular stereotypes of Catholics as idol-worshippers.¹⁹³ Some Italian-Canadian young people were so disturbed by processions one group wrote to Monsignor Fulton¹⁹⁴ about an upcoming procession for San Nicola at St. Mary of the Angels church. The group explained the procession to be the result of pressure exerted on the priest by the organizing committee and referred to them as “bad Catholics” who laughed away the concerns of “good Catholics” that the patron saint procession would be seen as an example of superstitious behaviour. They asked Fulton to cancel the procession or limit it to church precincts.¹⁹⁵ By 1960, when this letter was written, the Archdiocese had accepted the central role of processional activity in Italian immigrant religious life even in the face of continued opposition from individual clergy. The Archdiocese encouraged parish priests and all Catholics

¹⁹² Kong, “Religious Processions”; David, “Sacralising the City.”

¹⁹³ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 141. The young people were likely the descendants of immigrants from the earlier period of immigration from Italy.

¹⁹⁴ Monsignor Thomas Benjamin Fulton was appointed Archdiocesan Consultor in 1955 and Archdiocesan Director and Secretary of the Faith. In 1968 he went on to become titular Bishop of Cursola and Auxiliary to Cardinal James McGuigan.

¹⁹⁵ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 142, 260 (endnote 40).

in Toronto to be tolerant.¹⁹⁶ Finally the relationship between police and Italian men in the College Street area made processional routes there complicated spaces.¹⁹⁷

The vibrancy of associational life at St. Agnes parish grew throughout the 1950s. Stanger-Ross has described the parish as the centre of the College Street neighbourhood for social gatherings and leisure activities for Italians of all ages and generations in the 1950s and beyond. Religious as well as secular sports and cultural clubs gathered at the church and in spaces around it.¹⁹⁸ As with the street processions, the ease with which this movement into secular public space was arranged and executed had the effect of enhancing the sense of both welcome and ownership of public neighbourhood space among newly arrived Italian immigrants and their children.

The map below provides a glimpse into the ways Italian immigrants both impacted and experienced the visual, auditory and material landscape of the portion of College Street which would later become part of the procession for *Cristo Morto* (PCM). For Italian immigrant residents and visitors the sensory experience of moving along College Street between Palmerston Boulevard to the east and Roxton Road to the west reinforced the experience of this neighbourhood as Italian-immigrant space. In particular sensory experience helped to merge the cognitive and emotional maps immigrants actively created during the early years of settlement.¹⁹⁹ In tangible but difficult to articulate ways a growing sense of familiarity and

¹⁹⁶ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 142.

¹⁹⁷ Tension was the result of a police directive to disperse even small groups of Italian immigrant men who used sidewalks as gathering places. The directive known among scholars as “move along” and the experiences of two immigrant men will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

¹⁹⁸ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 62-64.

¹⁹⁹ Davidson and Milligan, “Embodying Emotion Sensing Space,” 523-25; R. Harney, “Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods,” 15.

belonging in this neighbourhood developed over the 1950s and 1960s as an increasing number of Italian owned businesses gave physical expression to the practices, preferences and presence of immigrants. In addition to the impact of hearing southern Italian dialects already discussed Italian immigrant men, women and their children were increasingly able to see Italian names on signs, touch objects which came from Italy to local shops and taste flavours they understood to be uniquely Italian.



Figure 2.4. College Street businesses with Italian names, words or place names from Palmerston Blvd. to Roxton R. 1950 and 1960.²⁰⁰

Over a relatively short period the number of Italian owned businesses along College Street increased dramatically and offered immigrant families more than daily necessities. As

²⁰⁰ *Might's 1950 Greater Toronto City Directory, Classified Business Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Limited, 1950); *Might's 1960 Greater Toronto City Directory, Classified Business Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Limited, 1960). See Appendix A for list of names and addresses.

expected Italian owned butcher shops and small grocery stores like Macelleria Venezia Butcher and Giacomini Brothers Grocery were present, as were services new to immigrants like Cianfarani Real Estate and Ventresca Insurance.²⁰¹

Unfortunately gaps in the archival record make it difficult to trace the history of most businesses and their owners in the College Street area which appear on Map 4 and are listed by name and address in Appendix A. A small number of local businesses went on to have greater financial success and their owners a prominent public presence. For example Johnny Lombardi's media company CHIN and Giovanni Violante's Excelsior Foods established in the 1960s after he sold Violante Grocery. In the late 1960s Café Diplomatico transformed the sidewalk near its patio into an open air restaurant during the summer months when the aroma of espresso created powerful sensory connections between this public neighbourhood space and the kitchens in immigrant homes. Italian language movies and artists offered various forms of entertainment at area theaters like the Pylon²⁰² where neighbourhood promoters like Johnny Lombardi and Rocco Mastrangelo²⁰³ offered Italians and their children throughout Toronto the opportunity to stay connected to the popular music and films enjoyed in Italy.

However, the majority of College Street enterprises from the 1950s and 1960s have left a very small footprint making it impossible to guess at the Italian regional origins of their owners or determine whether they were descendants of the prewar generation or new postwar immigrants. Despite these silences in the historical record it is clear the period from 1950 to

²⁰¹ See Appendix A for a list of businesses.

²⁰² The Pylon Theater (now called The Royal Theater) was located at 608 College Street near Clinton Avenue. It was built in 1939.

²⁰³ Lombardi brought Italian artists to perform in many venues including Massey Hall. Mastrangelo purchased the Pylon Theater in the 1950s. He would go on to open Café Diplomatico in 1968.

1960 marked a dramatic increase in the presence of Italian businesses tailored to meet the needs and preferences of the city's new immigrants.

Neighbourhood residents and visitors to the area could easily walk along College Street and into the surrounding streets to shops and services. They could also stop and chat with friends or family they met in ways which recalled the use of *piazze* in southern Italy. As will be described in the next chapter this way of intuitively moving through space sometimes met with harsh resistance. But even these experiences could not diminish the feeling that College Street was a place Italian immigrants belonged.

In 1957, the same year St. Francis began offering Italian-language services, a letter from Reverend Montecalvo, who was assistant pastor at Mount Carmel, informed Cardinal McGuigan that approximately 400 young men and women had joined the Catholic Action group known among Italians in Toronto as *Azione Cattolica*,²⁰⁴ and that on June 12th a celebration would be held at St. Agnes to bless the banner for the group.²⁰⁵ This event included a large street procession featuring the soon to be blessed banner. Bishop Francis Marrocco participated in the procession which was led by Father Edmond Ansaloni.²⁰⁶

For as long as Italians worshipped at St. Agnes *Azione Cattolica* acted as an umbrella organization providing male and female members for the various church clubs with specific interests including patron saint processions. In addition to providing members who would

²⁰⁴ The predecessor to *Azione Cattolica* was a ministry for laypeople formed in 1867. Originally called *Societa della Gioventu Cattolica Italiana* (Italian Catholic Youth Society) this ministry was reorganized by Pope Pius XI during the fascist regime and renamed *Azione Cattolica*. Its goals included the spiritual and moral renewal of its members through acts of charity and community rooted in catholic principles.

²⁰⁵ "Reverend Montecalvo to Cardinal James McGuigan," Letter, 1957, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Parish History, General Correspondence, ARCAT.

²⁰⁶ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959. Father Edmond Ansaloni was Associate Pastor at St. Agnes from October 1955 to June 1956.

perform the voluntary labour allowing clubs to function, *Azione Cattolica* also had an elected executive which oversaw associational life at the parish. In this way *Azione Cattolica* was able to establish a level of independence from the pastor. The procession which took place is notable because it was not for a patron saint. The photos on the next page demonstrate the different ways public space was used during processions. The top photo shows families standing in a large cluster leaving open space around the banner and several young men in suits and ties who might be executive members of *Azione Cattolica*. People appear to be standing comfortably and casually with little regard for maintaining physical distance between one another. This way of standing so closely to one another was likely repeated on the steps, sidewalks and road immediately outside the parish entryway when a patron saint procession occurred. In comparison the lower photo captures a small section of the associational procession making its way to St. Agnes. The procession occupies the sidewalk with participants following in an orderly fashion behind clergy who were clearly leading the group. As will be described below in more detail, this minimally intrusive, orderly hierarchical way of walking along designated sidewalks was one way Italians used public space for their processional practices.

The *Azione Cattolica* processional group was aware their use of neighbourhood space was unconventional, or in the language of spatial theory this space was being used for a purpose that was not intended by the state, in this case the municipal government. Perhaps at the insistence of clergy, walkers in the procession ensured they would not interrupt traffic or the physical use of the roadway and would disrupt the sidewalk as unobtrusively as possible given the size of the group. *Azione Cattolica* was understood to be the result of the organizing efforts of a clergyman. Because of this members may have been willing to accept the leadership of

clergy in determining the processional route, exemplified perhaps by their place at the front of the procession and the way Italians who followed them occupied the space along the route.²⁰⁷ Singing or prayers during the procession may have occurred but unlike patron-saint processions this one did not appear to include a musical band whose sound would fill the air and travel into public areas beyond the processional route in ways that would disrupt the neighbourhood.



Figure 2.5. Members of Azione Cattolica carrying banner for re-entry into St. Agnes after the 1957 procession.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Unfortunately, the processional route is not known.

²⁰⁸ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959.

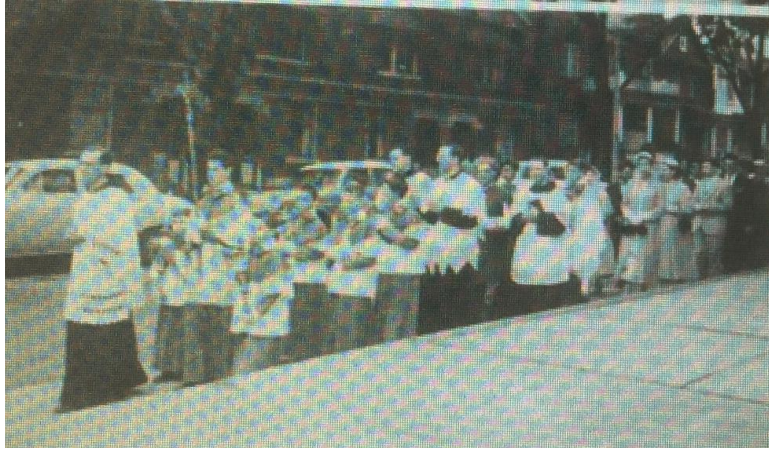


Figure 2.6. *Azione Cattolica* procession led by clergy, 1957.²⁰⁹

The driving force behind the first Catholic Action Group established in Toronto in 1953 was Father Rafael Ranuzzini.²¹⁰ The American-born Ranuzzini became an important figure for immigrants from San Nicola da Crissa who were already parishioners at St. Agnes. After meeting many *paesani* from San Nicola in Toronto and establishing *Azione Cattolica* Father Raffaele, as he became known, travelled to Calabria. He spent several weeks in San Nicola da Crissa getting to know the town and its traditions which were so important to the members who dominated the work of the Toronto group. Many of the villagers he met on that trip would later immigrate to Toronto and join the St. Agnes community.²¹¹ Unfortunately, no membership lists for *Azione Cattolica* appear to have survived. Interviews suggest a large number of young men and women originally from San Nicola were members. Several members of the executive were also immigrants from San Nicola.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959.

²¹⁰ Father Ranuzzini was an associate pastor at St. Agnes from September 1952 to February 1953 and again from October 1959 to July 1961.

²¹¹ Iori, March 2018. Iori met Ranuzzini for the first time in San Nicola and then again when he arrived in Toronto. Iori became a member of *Azione Cattolica* at St. Agnes almost immediately after his arrival.

²¹² St. Agnes Church Bulletin, June 1961, St. Frances, Parish History, ARCAT. Executive and honorary executive members listed include several individuals identified to be from San Nicola including the President Nicola Iori.

Father Ranuzzini is a unique figure in the testimonies collected. Other than Ranuzzini in the case of Iori none of the informants described with detail or duration any other priest at St. Agnes or St. Francis. Simonetta and Iori acknowledged the consistent presence of clergy during all activities organized by immigrants as well as their often tacit and occasionally explicit approval at the initiative of Italian immigrants to hold festas and processions. However and somewhat surprisingly informants often had trouble recalling the specific names of individual priests. As Table 1 below shows, in part this may be connected to the frequency with which clergy were assigned to and then left the College Street churches. But it also appears that in memory the individual attitudes of clergymen toward festas and processions organized by immigrants have faded as have pastors' contributions to the planning of these events. Instead clergy appear in testimony as 'the priest.' Requests by the author to identify 'the priest' by name were met with uncertainty or a list of two to four possibilities. This was consistent among both first and second generation organizers.²¹³

The national origin and other biographical information about specific priests who served at either St. Agnes or St. Francis is elusive, although many arrived from the United States and were the sons of Italian immigrants who had settled there.²¹⁴ In part this is due to incomplete archival records at both parishes and the fact that clergymen from this early period are now deceased. Unfortunately access to the Archive of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto is currently limited to the period before 1961. Available records include numerous gaps similar to

²¹³ Isabel M. was the only other informant who identified and described in some detail another priest. However, this was primarily in connection to his role as a spiritual mentor and source of emotional support during a difficult adolescence.

²¹⁴ Aleixo, November 2018.

those of the parish holdings. Italian immigrants from the Mezzogiorno were served by a community of priests who were familiar with southern Italian processional practices and who allowed several patron saint processions (and eventually the PCM) to become part of the parish calendar. Unfortunately the thoughts and attitudes of clergy about the desirability of these practices both before and after Vatican II are unknown for the time being.

Table 1. List of Pastors and Associate Pastors, St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church 1946-1968

Pastor	Position	Start Date	End Date
POLTICCHIA, Ricardo*	Pastor	July 1944	June 1958
MARTENISI, Arnold	Associate	July 1946	July 1947
PALMA, Gregory	Associate	July 1947	July 1948
BONAVIA, Lawrence	Associate	-----1948	September 1951
DE LORENZA, Francis	Associate	October 1948	June 1950
MAGGIO, Urban	Associate	July 1950	July 1952
TESTA, William	Associate	July 1952	February 1953
RANUZZINI, Rafael	Associate	September 1952	February 1953
BILLO, Stephen	Associate	July 1953	October 1954
CRESCIO, Leo	Associate	July 1953	October 1954
CARUSO, Gerard	Associate	November 1954	September 1955
COZZIO, Attilio	Associate	November 1954	October 1957
ANSALONI, Edmund	Associate	October 1955	June 1956
DE PASQUALE, Romauld	Associate	July 1956	June 1957
BILLO, Stephen	Associate	July 1957	November 1960
ABATE, Honorius	Associate	July 1957	June 1960
DI FIORE, Christopher	Associate	January 1958	July 1961
COZZIO, Attilio	Associate	March 1958	August 1959
MELE, Vincent	Pastor	August 1958	December 1958
RANUZZINI, Rafael	Associate	October 1959	July 1961
MAGGIO, Urban	Associate	June 1960	July 1962
RAUZI, Ermete	Associate	September 1960	December 1961
BALDOLINI, Adolfo	Pastor	----- 1961	----- 1964
CAVAGNARO, Sixtus	Associate	July 1961	October 1961
MICELI, Tarcisius	Associate	July 1961	September 1967
POLTICCHIA, Ricardo	Associate	October 1961	-----
FUSCO, Albin	Associate	July 1962	June 1964
TORCHIA, Daniel	Associate	October 1962	June 1963
DE LUCA, Ambrose	Pastor	July 1964	January 1969
DI STEFANO, Simeon	Associate	July 1964	August 1965
SIMONELLI, Nicolas**	Associate	July 1964	June 1965
CALLIJA, Benvenute	Associate	September 1965	December 1967
FUSCO, Alban	Associate	September 1967	June 1968
PIEDMONT, Edwin	Associate	September 1967	January 1968
ROMERI, Raphael	Associate	June 1968	June 1969
PELELLA, Andrew	Associate	June 1968	June 1969
BOTTE, Gregory	Associate	July 1968	January 1969
NASETTI, Benjamin	Associate	September 1968	January 1969

* Mark McGowan, *Catholics at the Gathering Place: Historical Essays on the Archdiocese of Toronto 1842-1991*. (Toronto: The Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1993), 244. Polticchia was detained during World War II by Canadian authorities. Archbishop McGuigan intervened to secure Polticchia's release. For the remainder of the war Father Polticchia sold Victory War Bonds and collected food packages to prove his loyalty to Canada.

** Name also appears as SIMONELLA, Nicola.



Figure 2.7. Father Ranuzzini with members of Azione Cattolica on the steps outside St. Agnes.²¹⁵

Due to the efforts of Father Ranuzzini and the enthusiasm of young Italian men and women *Azione Cattolica* quickly became the largest parish association at St. Agnes and often took the lead in planning and helping to execute parish events, especially processions. The group also raised funds for local Italian charities and performed at least two dramatic productions each year in one of the church halls. One of these productions was always the Easter Passion.²¹⁶ The photos below indicate the productions included basic props, scenery and costumes all produced or obtained by members. Many of the immigrants who worked on the productions would later use these skills for the PCM and pass them on to the second generation of volunteers when they

²¹⁵ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959.

²¹⁶ Iori, March 2018; Aleixo, November 2018. The Easter Passion depicts the last days of Jesus' earthly life from his entry into Jerusalem to his death on the cross. This is also sometimes referred to as the Stations of the Cross.

became involved in the procession on Good Friday.²¹⁷ By the early 1960s the group had become so well known it was asked to perform its Passion play in the newly established suburban parish St. Philip Neri²¹⁸ which served Italians, and one year gave several performances at the Radio City Theater near St. Clair Avenue West.²¹⁹



Figure 2.8. The Radio City Theatre at 1454 Bathurst streets c. 1942.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Anna Bicci, interviewed by author, December 2018; Elizabeth R., interviewed by author, January 2019. This was particularly true among women who with the help of clergy designed and created costumes and props from the earliest days of the PCM and in the 1970s and 1980s took on increasingly important organizational roles.

²¹⁸ Iori, March 2018. "About our Parish," St. Philip Neri Parish, accessed July 2019, <https://www.stphilipneri.ca/st-philip-neri-parish/about-our-parish/>. St. Philip is located in Downsview. In the 1950s this was a suburb of Toronto. The parish was established in 1952 and grew from 400 families in 1954 to at least 5,000 in 1965. Italian immigrants made up a significant portion of this growth. The first Italian-speaking brother arrived in 1959 as did a number of "weekend" pastors to serve the Italian community until 1967 when two full-time pastors arrived from Italy.

²¹⁹ Iori, March 2018. The Radio City Theater was located on Bathurst Street just south of St. Clair and would have been easily accessible to Italians who lived in the city. It operated from 1936 until 1975 and seated more than 800.]

²²⁰ "The Radio City Theater at 1454 Bathurst Street, c. 1942," Photograph, Toronto, City of Toronto Archives, From the collection of the Ontario Archives, AO2172, <https://tayloronhistory.com/2013/09/13/torontos-old-movie-housesthe-radio-city-theatre/>.



Figure 2.9. Young women in *Azione Cattolica* uniforms.²²¹



Figure 2.10. Dramatic production by *Azione Cattolica*.²²²

²²¹ “Young Women in Azione Cattolica Uniforms,” Photograph, Private collection of Rosario Iori.

²²² “Dramatic Production by Azione Cattolica,” Photograph, Private collection of Rosario Iori.



Figure 2.11. Dramatic production by *Azione Cattolica*.²²³

Azione Cattolica members also played an important role in organizing the annual festa for St. Anthony at St. Agnes parish. Scholars have described some of the patron saint festas which took place in and around Toronto from the 1950s through the 1990s.²²⁴ Until the PCM in the late 1970s the St. Anthony procession was the largest in the city.²²⁵ As noted above festas in his honour took place at various parishes. It is not clear when the first festa for this patron saint was held at St. Agnes but as noted by Stanger-Ross²²⁶ this cultural religious celebration was well attended and beloved by Italian immigrants who worshipped at St. Agnes, especially those from Calabria generally, and San Nicola specifically, and attracted Italians beyond the parish

²²³ "Dramatic Production by *Azione Cattolica*," Photograph, Private collection of Rosario Iori.

²²⁴ N. Harney, *Eh Paesan!*, 143-44; Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 140-42.

²²⁵ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 76-77 describes the symbolic importance of St. Anthony for immigrants and describes the popularity of the St. Agnes procession with over 10,000 already attending in 1958.

²²⁶ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 77-79. Annual festas for St. Anthony also took place at St. Francis after 1968.

community in the 1950s.²²⁷ Photographs of various St. Anthony processions during this decade demonstrate in dramatic fashion a very different use of public space when compared to the *Azione Cattolica* procession, but probably more typical of smaller patron saint processions as well.



Figure 2.12. St. Anthony procession held at St. Agnes, 1950s, photograph 1. Note the men in Top Hats with lifted walking canes who may be members of the Knights of Columbus. Also note the police officer in front of the car in the top left.²²⁸ very

²²⁷ Aleixo, November 2018; Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2016.

²²⁸ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959.



Figure 2.13. St. Anthony procession held at St. Agnes, 1950s, photograph 2.²²⁹

The photos above show large crowds, standing closely together filling the roads with cars both parked and moving, as a densely packed group watched from the sidewalks. In the top photo the statue of St. Anthony, which was the most significant part of the procession, was carried by members of *Azione Cattolica*. Virtually all the faces in the crowd were directed towards the patron saint statue. The absence of clergy near the statue is notable given its importance to the event and its position poised for re-entry into the sacred space of the church. A uniformed police officer can be seen in the top left corner of the photo ensuring cars and people didn't collide. The presence of the police officer is notable, and the size of the crowd suggests there may have been other officers in attendance for crowd control. The presence of police in a way which facilitated the disruptive occupation of this urban space by Italians almost certainly encouraged immigrants to think of the roads, and sidewalks along the processional route as places they belonged. Not only were Italians physically taking up all the space available to them,

²²⁹ Silver Jubilee Commemoration: St. Agnes Church, 1959.

but the loud music, hymns, prayers and conversations in both standard Italian and dialects were filling the air even beyond the processional space with distinctly ethnic sounds.²³⁰

The sensual experience of the processional route created a similar reaction for attendees as Iori experienced his first Sunday at St. Agnes, and as already explained by spatial theorists. However given the size of the event and the support of both religious authorities (through the participation of clergy) and the state (in the form of police presence) feelings of belonging in this urban space were likely intense. In combination with the sensory experiences of walking and shopping along College Street described above feelings of belonging likely extended beyond the processional event into everyday life, making this neighbourhood space feel like Italian immigrant space all the time. Even Italian immigrant residents who did not attend the procession would have been able to hear the traditional hymns and prayers performed in Italian. Other immigrant groups, whether Catholic or not, who did not participate in but accepted these neighbourhood practices, were also indicating that at least during patron saint devotional days this area of the College Street neighbourhood was understood to be Italian.

At least in part this acceptance by police and other ethnic groups who lived in or visited College Street occurred because patron saint devotions were always held on Sundays. Most businesses were closed, and vehicle and streetcar traffic were considerably less dense than they would later become. By holding processions on a Sunday rather than a particular calendar day (as had been done in Southern Italy) Italians were able to make use of a day generally accepted by Torontonians to be set aside for religious devotion and family celebration. As Kong notes the

²³⁰ *St. Anthony Procession*, video recording, 1966. Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. An example of the music, songs and prayers traditionally part of this procession.

use of this time set apart from normal daily routines of work and commerce is a useful way for immigrant minority religious groups to make their own practices understandable and more palatable to the dominant group.²³¹

It is notable that so many of the elements which would become defining features of the procession on Good Friday were already present as part of the St. Anthony event. Undoubtedly, this valuable experience in organizing and coordinating a statue and banners, musicians, police, traffic, crowds which were moving and standing still, and performative elements like singing and prayer, would be important for organizers of the PCM.

By 1961 the St. Anthony procession was part of a well-established two-day annual celebration at St. Agnes. The procession held on Sunday took ninety minutes to complete its route.²³² The map below, taken from a weekly bulletin, indicates the route the procession travelled.²³³ The incorporation of a small portion of Dundas Street West is notable. This area, including streets immediately to the north and south of Dundas, were dominated by Italian residents; unlike College Street to the north there were no streetcars which stopped there. However, even this small area of Dundas St. West would have required a permit for the procession to travel there. The pastor from St. Agnes would almost certainly have been involved in those arrangements and the Archdiocese would have given permission for both the procession and this route.

²³¹ Kong, "Religious Processions," 230, 242.

²³² "St. Anthony Processional Route," *Parish Bulletin* (June 13th, 1961). St. Francis of Assisi Archive, St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church, Toronto. The procession took place from 6:00-7:30pm.

²³³ Aleixo, November 2018. Aleixo asserted this route would likely have been in use for most patron saint processions held at St. Agnes in the 1950s and 1960s. Permits and permissions required would likely have been arranged by the parish priest.

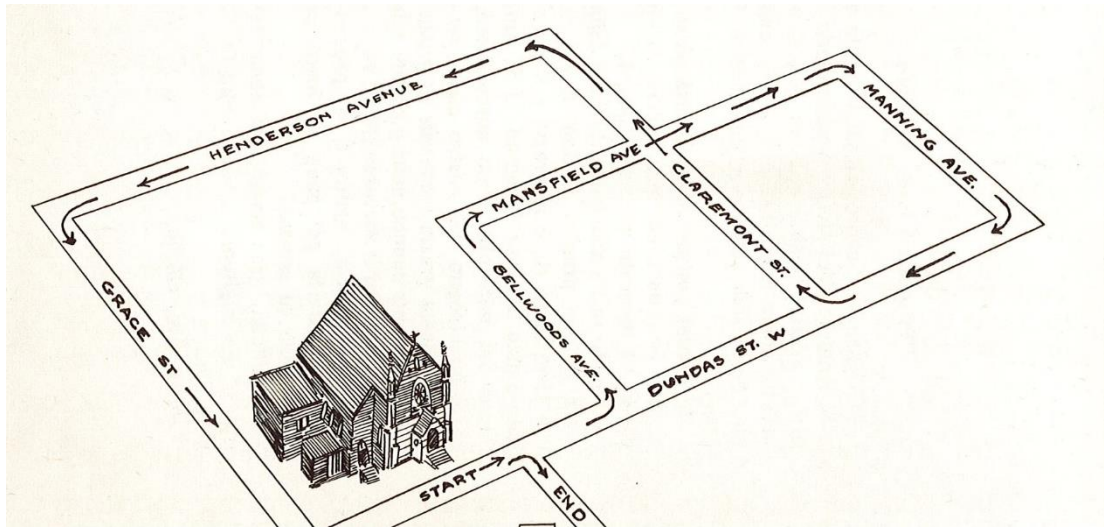


Figure 2.14. St. Agnes processional route for the St. Anthony Procession, 1961.²³⁴

By 1961 the procession had expanded in size and scope. Organizers had already taken further control of the processional route and proclaimed its religious and cultural identity with the inclusion of identifying hand-made Italian-language banners held by various parish societies,²³⁵ the Columbus Boys Band provided music, and communion and confirmation children from area Catholic schools ensured the roads along the route would be filled with Italian immigrant bodies of all ages. A car with a specially fitted loudspeaker allowed the parish priest to lead participants in prayer.²³⁶ It is unclear whether this vehicle was the brainchild of organizers or clergy. Spatial theory suggests the use of this loudspeaker to control the selection and timing of prayers may also have been useful for limiting the control participants may have tried to exert by making spontaneous selections for recitations of particular prayers or hymns and

²³⁴ "St. Anthony Processional Route."

²³⁵ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 77 indicates social clubs handmade their own banners to carry in the procession by the late 1950s.

²³⁶ "25th Year Franciscan Fathers Honor St. Anthony," *The Catholic Register*, June 13, 1960, 11.

also for minimizing conversation among walkers.²³⁷ This action might be understood as an example of the processional route as contested space as clergy tried to establish some control of the event organized by immigrants by dominating its soundscape.²³⁸

During the 1960s the procession also attracted the attention and support of various politicians and civic officials. In one year the following individuals either facilitated or walked in the procession: George T. Bell, head of the Toronto Department of Public Parks, The Honorable John Yaremko, Provincial Cabinet Minister and (Giuseppe) Joe Piccinini, Toronto Councillor. The police chief was acknowledged for the officers he provided to help with crowd control. In addition the Beaver Bread Company supplied at no cost bread distributed to all attendees which was a traditional part of the St. Anthony festa.²³⁹ For Southern Italians the support and participation of such powerful individuals was an important marker of acceptance. Rather than limiting the processional practice, representatives of the state were acknowledging immigrants' right to perform this public religious cultural event.

During the 1950s processions and festas became an increasingly common part of life not only for parishioners at St. Agnes but also for residents and visitors to the College Street area.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ *St. Anthony Procession*. Italian immigrant women initiated hymns and prayers. Often the voice of a single woman can be heard above the crowd singing the first line of a hymn or reciting a prayer before being quickly joined by other women singing or speaking loudly and confidently.

²³⁸ Kong, "Religious Processions," 238-39 discusses the importance of aural space and its relationship to the state in spatial theory. In the case of processional activity by-laws controlling the volume of sound in public places could be applied. Bands provided music and immigrants loud voices in prayer and song likely carried beyond the processional route, but it seems microphones were only used by clergy.

²³⁹ St. Agnes Chronicle Book I, St. Francis of Assisi Archive, St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church. These individuals were thanked for their participation in the procession. According to a news clipping saved in the St. Agnes Chronicle *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, Martedì 14 Giugno 1960, St. Francis of Assisi Archive, St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church. Four priests also participated in the procession.

²⁴⁰ Aleixo, November 2018. The specific number of religious processions in addition to those for St. Anthony and Corpus Christi held at St. Agnes and St. Frances could vary slightly from one year to the next. Processions were held for the Festa della Madonna della Pietra (Feast for Our Lady of the Rock), Saint Bruno, Festa Maria Santa

Although St. Francis of Assisi was not a national parish during this decade the demand for Italian-language services was so great and the overcrowding at St. Agnes so overwhelming some Italians began attending St. Francis because it was easily accessible to them.²⁴¹ Soon after they became parishioners, immigrants demanded services in Italian. As described earlier, by 1957 those services were offered.²⁴²

Santissima di Costantinopoli (Maria Most Holy of Constantinople) and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Unfortunately, no complete list of processions held at either St. Agnes or St. Francis during the 1950s is available.

²⁴¹ Aleixo, November 2018. St. Agnes parish could comfortably hold approximately 3,000 parishioners; St. Francis, approximately 5,000.

²⁴² See footnote 24 above.

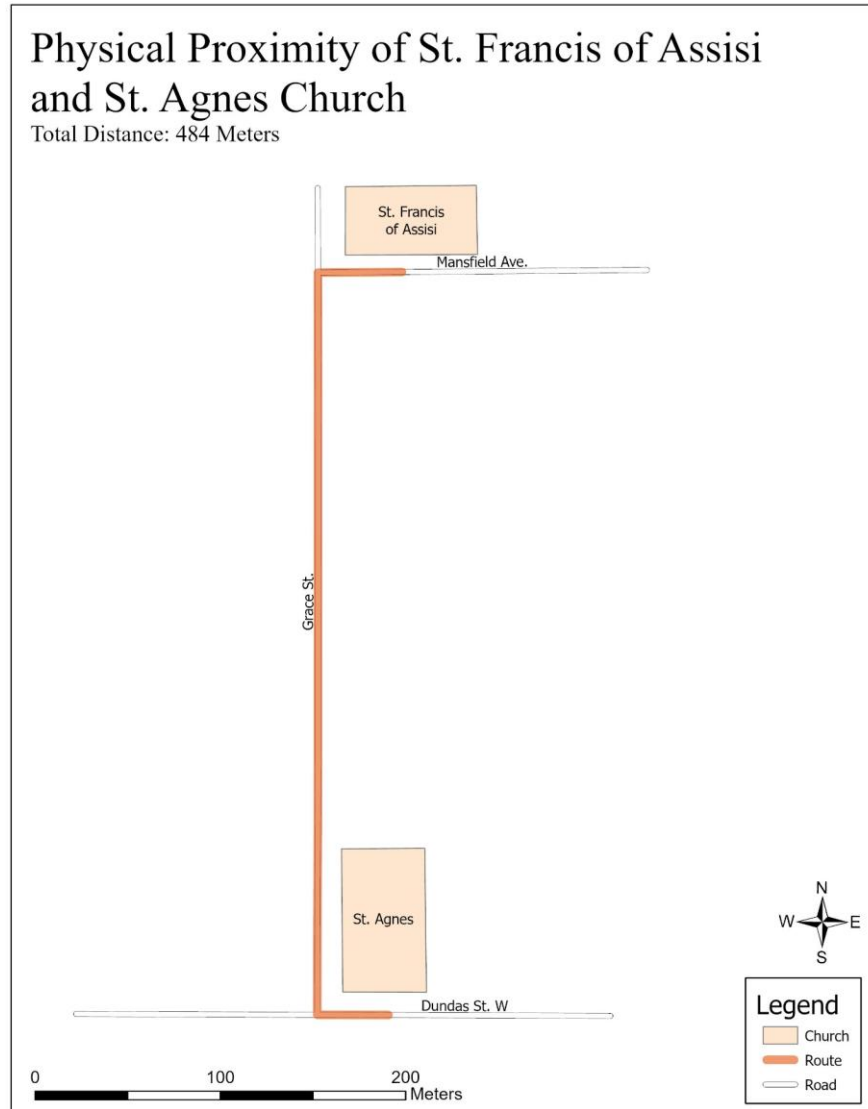


Figure 2.15. Physical proximity of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Agnes Roman Catholic Churches.

At least one annual procession with all the elements of a southern Italian procession already described had been established at St. Francis. It is unclear if the feast of Corpus Christi was continuous from the 1910 event noted in chapter one, but a newspaper account describes the procession in 1959. Thousands attended including parish priests, the Columbus Boys Drum Band, parish societies carrying banners, children in communion dress and an honour guard

formed by the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus. In addition, an altar was constructed outside the church where a blessing was given, and saints' statues rested for part of the day. Like the St. Anthony procession this one also required considerable organizational labour. Unfortunately no records describing those efforts appear to have survived. The Corpus Christi processional route ran from St. Francis church to Grace Street, then turned onto Henderson Avenue, travelled along Manning Avenue and finally ended on Mansfield Avenue where St. Francis was located.²⁴³

²⁴³ *Catholic Register*, May 13, 1959, St. Francis of Assisi, Parish History, News Clippings, ARCAT.

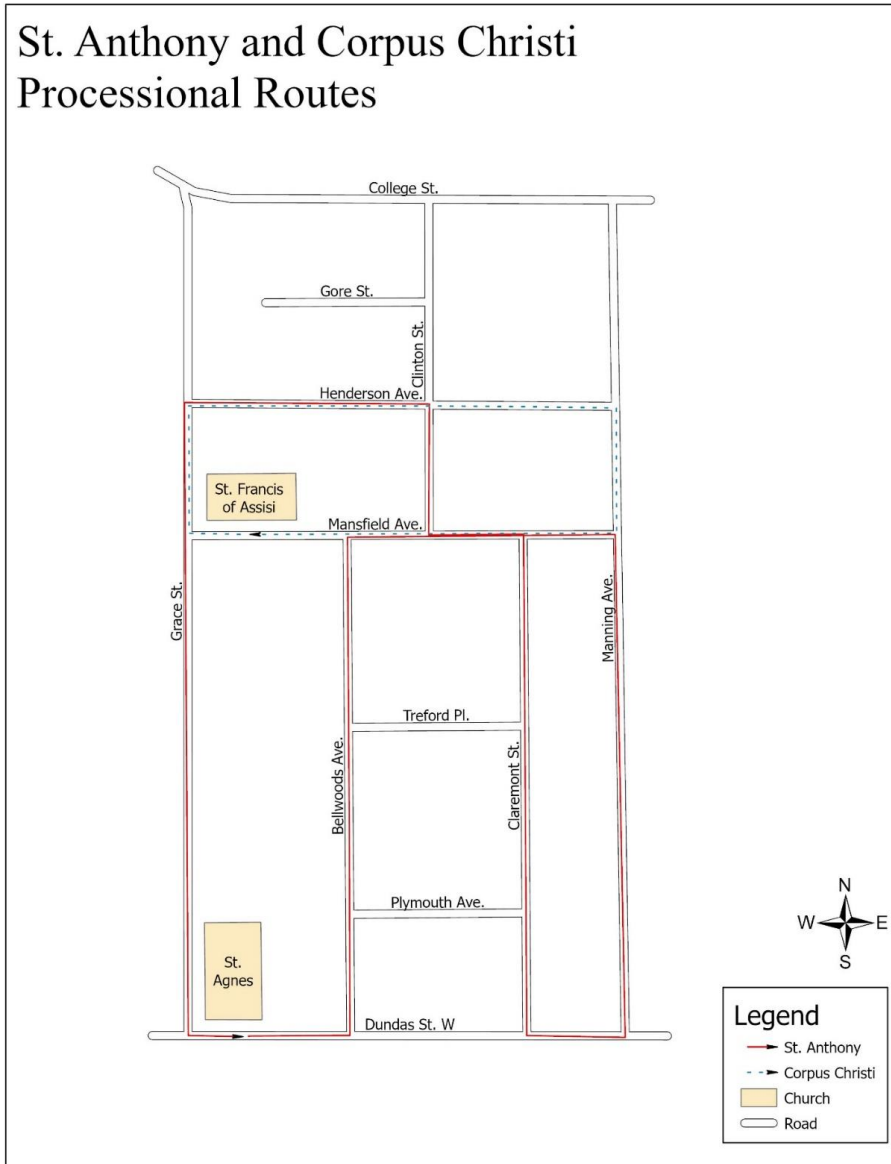


Figure 2.16. Routes for St. Anthony and Corpus Christi processions.

It is interesting to note the use of Henderson Street for processions by both St. Agnes and St. Francis; in particular because it seems that committees at each parish were careful to ensure this street was the only shared part of their respective processions. The use of Henderson Street by both groups was also facilitated by ensuring processions in each parish were held on different

Sundays. It is likely that many Italians attended processions which originated both from St. Agnes and St. Francis.

Processions in the College Street neighbourhood may appear to be the result of greater initiative by postwar Italian immigrants than was expressed by immigrants during the first phase of Italian immigration to Toronto. However as Zucchi and Cumbo have described Italians at Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Agnes also exhibited considerable initiative in expressing their own religious needs before 1939. As described in greater detail in chapter 1, Italian immigrant women and men were persistent in their requests for Italian language services, devotions to St. Anthony, blessings, candles and Holy Water for home altars and by the 1930s religious processions.²⁴⁴ These demands are particularly notable given the much smaller size of the Italian population in the city and the dominance of the Irish among Toronto's catholic population and clergy. The larger and more frequent processional devotions which took place after 1950 were likely the result of the much larger and ongoing nature of immigration to the College Street area from southern Italy.

Italians who began worshipping at St. Agnes and St. Francis were likely further encouraged to express their desire for processional devotions by the processions which were already taking place. Additionally the formation of *Azione Cattolica* in 1953 under the leadership of Father Ranuzzini provided members at with an organizational framework through which their ongoing desire for processional practices could be expressed to clergy and realized as part of parish life.

²⁴⁴ See footnote 89 above.

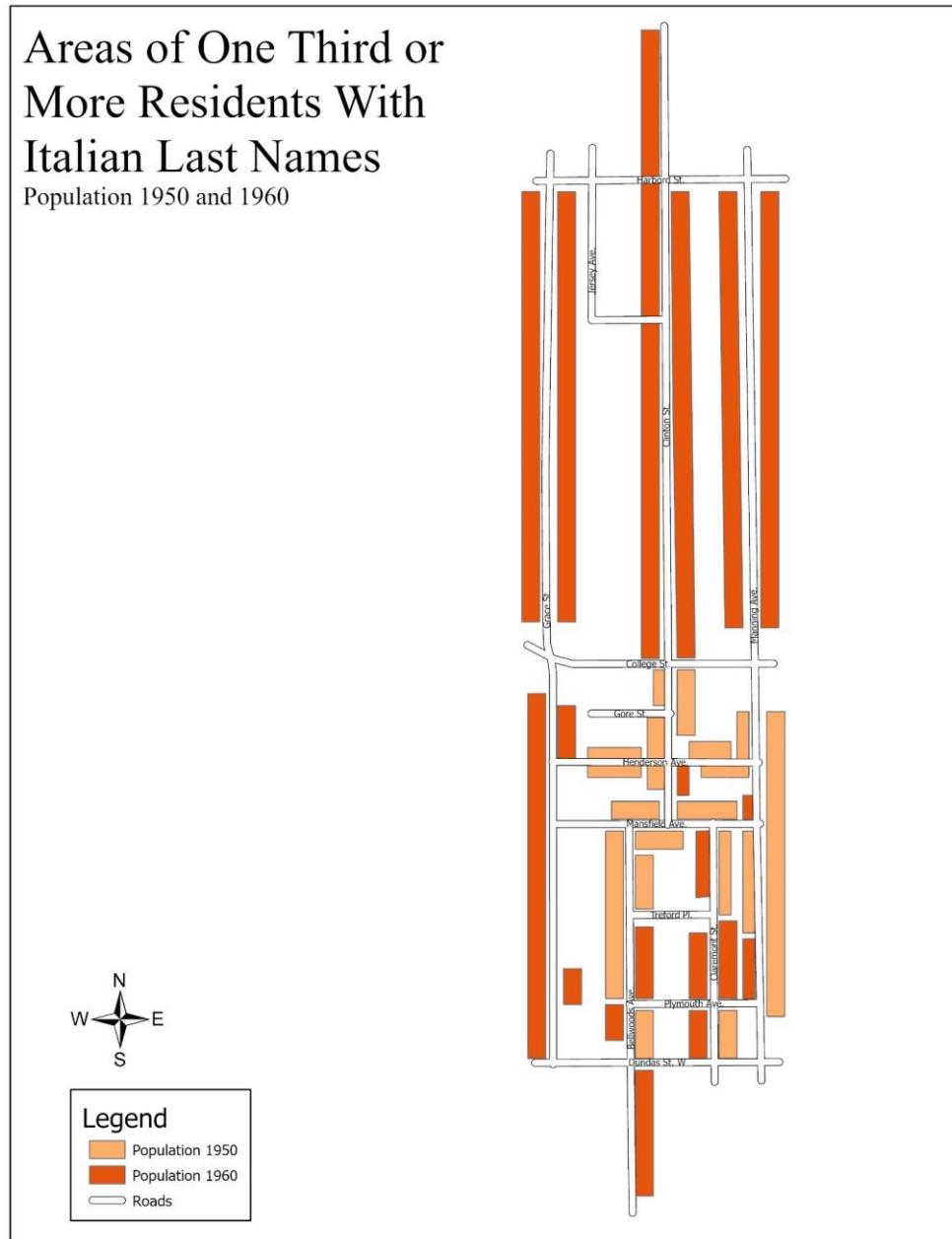


Figure 2.17. Areas where one third or more of residents have Italian surnames along processional routes 1950 and 1960.

As already described, festas and their processions were a well-established and important part of religious and leisure life in Southern Italy. Throughout the region paesani attended the events held in nearby towns and villages as well as their own. These events held in various

piazzas allowed families and individuals to maintain a large network of friends and acquaintances. With such a history, Italian immigrants in Toronto likely continued to participate in festas and processions as a way of maintaining social connections and enjoying leisure as well as providing a familiar way of expressing religious devotion.

In addition to religious services and processions, patron-saint festas in Toronto included secular events for all ages. At St. Agnes during the two-day St. Anthony celebration, games, music and food filled the outdoor area around the church and nearby Trinity[-Bellwoods] Park. On one day during the 1963 festa a solemn benediction was given at the park.

Over 20,000 attended the three-day event.²⁴⁵ Like their processional counterpart these activities filled the urban space with the dialects and music of Southern Italians. With their bodies and voices immigrants literally took up physical, visual and aural space in dramatically identifiable ways which temporarily but powerfully extended the transformation of some neighbourhood space into Italian-immigrant space well beyond the processional route. Under the religious banner of the patron saint, and with the cooperation of clergy, Italian immigrants were able to temporarily transform some public neighbourhood spaces into areas of southern Italian religious cultural practice. Statues and banners were walked along roads and sidewalks, crowds restricted the movement of cars and pedestrians and a park became the site of a benediction. In keeping with Lefebvre's conception of space as socially constructed (and continually reconstructed)²⁴⁶ Italian immigrants and clergy were using these spaces in ways that were

²⁴⁵ St. Agnes Chronicle Book II, St. Francis of Assisi Archive, St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church. Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 77 suggests the religious activities in the park may have been a regular occurrence at least from the late 1950s.

²⁴⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, chapter 4.

contrary to the designated uses envisioned by urban planners and civic officials, including police. In doing so, they not only recreated the space itself but also challenged the notion of what public space in Toronto could be.

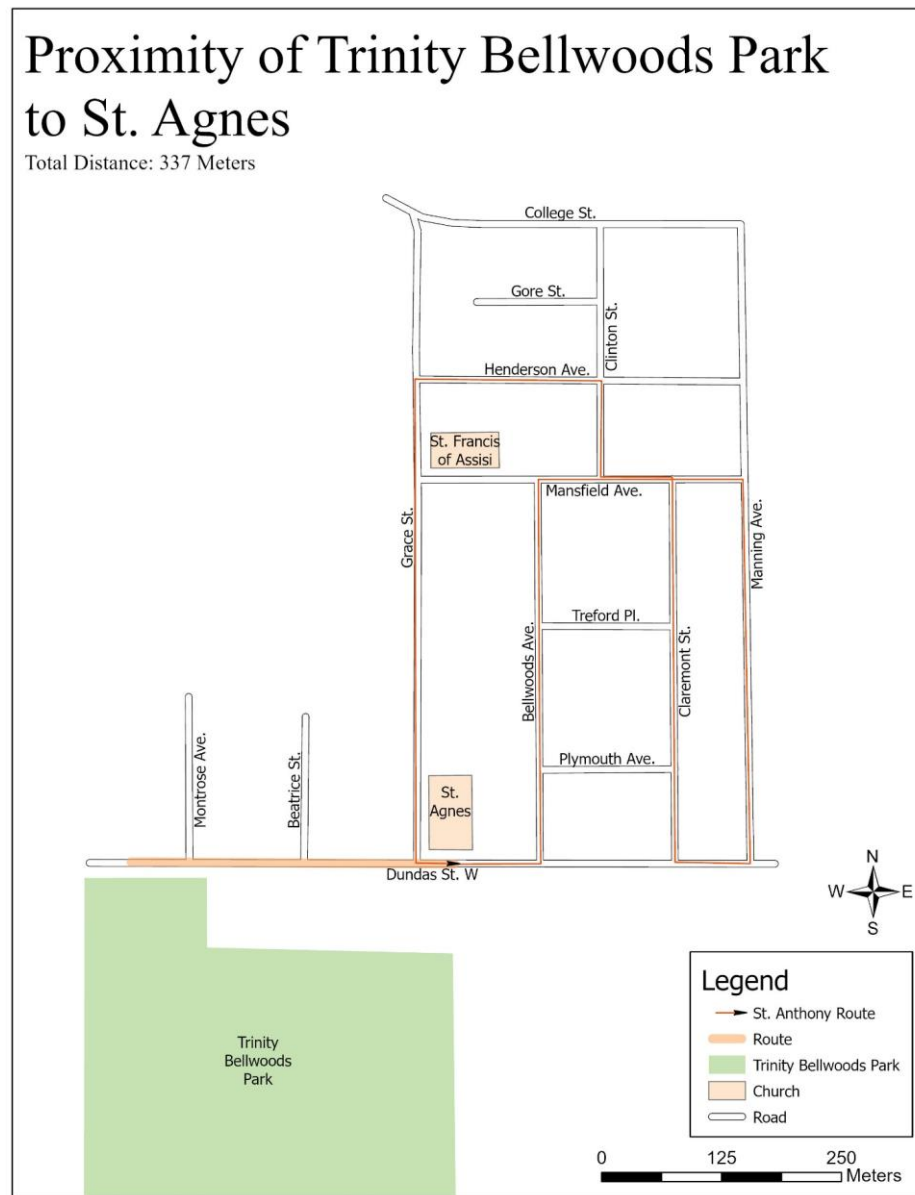


Figure 2.18. Physical proximity of Bellwoods (-Trinity) Park to St. Agnes.

Chapter 3: Origins, Memory and Place: Narratives About *Cristo Morto* and College Street

Throughout most of the 1960s southern Italian immigrants continued to arrive in the College Street area. As they settled into urban life the deeply meaningful religious experience offered by the practice of processions helped to create a sense of continuity, but for the new arrivals and their sponsors there was also a desire to recapture a series of secular feelings.²⁴⁷ How to identify and describe these feelings is difficult. What immigrants were trying to recreate through processional practices was associated with familiarity and predictability. They wanted to establish a sense of belonging to a place and being able to freely and unselfconsciously express that belonging without feeling ‘othered’ or sanctioned. On a daily basis this included the ability to gather in groups of various sizes and speak enthusiastically in southern Italian dialects.

The ability to occupy processional space with their bodies was the first and most important part of reconstructing urban space through religious performance.²⁴⁸ With patron saint processional practices in the College Street area Italians had already “crossed an ontological barrier”²⁴⁹ embodying and enacting their difference, exposing themselves, (bodies, beliefs and practices) to possible ridicule.²⁵⁰ Eventually, the procession on Good Friday in this

²⁴⁷ Davidson and Milligan, “Embodying Emotion Sensing Space,” 526 discuss the ways emotion is often assumed but not specifically identified in various kinds of spaces including rural and urban environments. The former associated with feelings of natural ease, calm, and community and the latter with stress, anxiety and isolation. Hopkins, “Women, Men, Positionalities and Emotion,” 4 describes young Muslim men’s feelings of fear and shame associated with particular streets after September 11th, 2001. Both these works suggest changing emotions experienced in particular spaces is a necessary part of transforming urban space. Both are consistent with spatial theory already described in this dissertation.

²⁴⁸ Chantal Saint-Blancat and Adriano Cancellieri, “From Invisibility to Visibility? The Appropriation of Public Space through a Religious Ritual: The Filipino Procession of *Santacruzán* in Padua, Italy,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 15, no. 6 (2014): 646. Describes embodiment and its inherent visibility as crucial in “place making” and is consistent with Lefebvre’s work which she also references in this article.

²⁴⁹ Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri, “From Invisibility to Visibility?,” 646.

²⁵⁰ Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri, “From Invisibility to Visibility?,” 646.

neighbourhood became a way for organizers to become fully engaged actors defining and displaying Italian immigrant identity through a religious vocabulary.

Beginning in 1961 *La Processione di Cristo Morto* (PCM) or ‘The Procession of the Dead Christ’ became an annual event at St. Agnes parish.²⁵¹ It was organized by a committee largely made up of southern Italians with an important core group of immigrants from the Calabrian town of San Nicola da Crissa.²⁵² As already described, Sannicolesi played an important role in lay organizational life at St. Agnes parish in the 1950s. Processional practices on Good Friday were a cherished memory for immigrants from that town, and unlike processions in honor of patron saints, which were a largely southern Italian practice, a variety of large and sometimes spectacular processions associated with Easter were traditionally held in all regions of Italy.²⁵³

Detailed interviews with two immigrant men, both founders of the PCM, provide valuable insight into desires for religious expression and the creation of a tangible, positive Italian-immigrant cultural presence. Both were part of an on-going process marking the College Street area as Italian-immigrant space.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ In interviews Italian immigrant founders refer to the procession according to the Italian moniker and its abbreviation PCM is used throughout this dissertation. Founders specifically identified local Italian- and English-speaking media, and many younger organizers, as mistaken when they refer to the event as ‘The Good Friday Procession.’

²⁵² The important role played by immigrants from San Nicola da Crissa in parish life at St. Agnes has been described in chapter 2.

²⁵³ A few such processions are *La Madonna Che Scappa* (The Dashing Madonna) in Abruzzo, *Via Crucis* in Umbria and Rome, *La Processione dei Misteri* (Procession of the Mysteries) in Sicily.

²⁵⁴ Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. Each man was interviewed three times for a total of approximately 8 hours. Interviews were mostly in standard Italian, with some English.

Vasquez and Knott assert that in new urban space immigrants' ethnic identities are experienced as a sense of connection which transcends time and place.²⁵⁵ Like Doreen Massey, they understand immigrants' ethnic 'identities' to be constructed through specific interactions between places which exist simultaneously in the past and present. Immigrants live with a sense of connection to a spatially and temporally distant homeland; to a place, people and culture not accessible to them in the present but where previously shared culture and social life informs the present and helps immigrant minorities make sense of the new urban environment.²⁵⁶ Ritual performances and embodied memories – which make use of sacralized landscapes and artefacts in the new setting but associated with the homeland – play a key role in how immigrants carve out spaces of livelihood²⁵⁷, and how urban space can become an ethnically othered space in the eyes of the dominant cultural group.

Interviews with founders further reveal different responses to changes in the size and content of the PCM over four decades. Rosario Iori and Giuseppe Simonetta were founders and organizers of the PCM, Iori at St. Agnes from 1961 when it was an Italian-national parish, and Simonetta after the re-allocation of the Italian community to St. Francis from 1968.²⁵⁸ The differences in their approaches to the PCM and to its evolution were in part the result of each

²⁵⁵ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 344.

²⁵⁶ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 121.

²⁵⁷ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 344. For a description of "livelihood" see chapter 1. The term livelihood is usually connected to material conditions necessary for maintaining life. The authors employ a human geography perspective on space and place to discuss the way migrant groups seek to create physical spaces which allow them to maintain their need for emotional, spiritual and communal connection through religious practices.

²⁵⁸ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 204. Table 1 "Postwar Emigration from Italy and Return Migration to Italy" indicates emigration from Italy to Canada was increasing from 1961-1966 but fell dramatically after that. The majority of Iori's years as an organizer of the PCM happened in a context of high migration. Simonetta was aware of the decline in new Italian arrivals from his work with the Italian consulate which began in the 1950s and continued for more than fifty years.

man's pre-migration experience and to the position each came to occupy in the College Street Italian community.

Rosario Iori was born and raised in San Nicola da Crissa; he was one of four sons. Unlike many families there, the Ioris were not subsistence farmers. Instead, Iori's father earned regular wages by combining his trade as a shoemaker with administrative and similar work for a large local landowner. Iori attended the local school for five years followed by a short apprenticeship to a tailor. He was soon persuaded by family and friends to leave that apprenticeship for another as a bricklayer. Construction work was more highly valued for its income potential both in Italy and through migration.

There was no way to survive over there. No matter what you did, which apprenticeship you did there was no space. Not enough land to build a house so you could get married.²⁵⁹

As was the case in much of Southern Italy San Nicola's population was larger than its seven square kilometers could support. Most residents were small-scale farmers who lived in poverty. Even for Iori, whose father's wages enabled him to learn a trade, the opportunities for employment were few. A small number of tailors were already available in San Nicola and were underemployed because most *paesani* could not afford to have clothes made or professionally altered. His decision to pursue a construction trade was in part due to this realization. The lack of available land also made envisioning a future in San Nicola difficult for Iori.

Even if you had money to buy a small piece of land to build a little house no one would sell because they needed it themselves. So most of the young men they left because it was the only way. I had my brother who came here to Toronto. He sponsored me. And he was already the vice-president of *Azione Cattolica* at St. Agnes when I came. We were always a religious family, my grandparents and parents, the kids, all very religious. When I

²⁵⁹ Iori, March 2018.

arrived in Toronto, the first Sunday I had to go to church. Not I should go but I GOTTA go to church. I went to St. Agnes right away on Sunday.²⁶⁰

In 1959, twenty-year-old Rosario arrived in Toronto as a single man connected to the College Street neighbourhood, and St. Agnes, through his older brother. He was quickly welcomed into the community of Sannicolesi who worshipped there. With few social outlets the parish and especially *Azione Cattolica* were welcome opportunities to meet other newly arrived young Italian immigrants and reunite with those from San Nicola. Through *Azione Cattolica* Iori participated in fundraising, dances, and small voluntary repair and renovation tasks to the church and rectory. The parish priest's welcoming attitude and easy acceptance of offers of help and ideas for new clubs and activities helped Iori to feel both valued and at home at St. Agnes.²⁶¹

We used to stay there in the church, all the time. When we was not working where else were we gonna go? We used to do all kinds of activities there in the church. But also we missed home you know? We wanted to be with other people like us. We had nostalgia for home. We liked church activities like we had at home, special masses for this and that.²⁶²

The activities Iori missed the most were the festas. He recalled with great emotion not only the festas he attended in San Nicola but also in neighbouring villages. He described deep feelings of pride and belonging during his village's St. Anthony festa. Because this saint was patron to many Calabrian towns and villages the festa brought huge crowds to San Nicola. Even before his arrival in Toronto Iori's brother had informed him there was a St. Anthony festa at St. Agnes parish.

It was a big festa, not exactly like at home but you know it was like that. We (*Azione Cattolica*) used to organize that too. It was great, a really beautiful mass and procession.

²⁶⁰ Iori, March 2018.

²⁶¹ Father Christopher Di Fiore was pastor at St. Agnes from 1958 to 1961. The pastors who followed Di Fiore were also supportive of lay involvement in church life. They were pastors Adolfo Baldolini 1961-1964 and Ambrose De Luca 1964-1968. St. Agnes also had numerous associate pastors who were involved in various aspects of parish life. See Appendix B for a complete list of pastors and associate pastors.

²⁶² Iori, March 2018.

Then the fun with games and music, people just getting together enjoying some free time. So the festa, the procession, all that was so beautiful for us when we were all together. I saw even more people from San Nicola through these types of events.²⁶³

In Italy, and for many months after his arrival in Toronto, Iori's only consistent personal exposure to Italian-language speakers with more years of formal education and higher social status was to be found among the Roman Catholic clergy.

*Cavaliere*²⁶⁴ Giuseppe Simonetta was also born in San Nicola da Crissa but left as a boy to be educated in Milan. Simonetta's uncle was a priest and assumed financial responsibility for his education and performed the duties of a surrogate parent. Simonetta had no desire to become a priest, but both his uncle and mother decided this was the path his life should take. Simonetta described the value of a seminary education and the powerful position held by priests in the Italy of his boyhood. His mother was certain the seminary would lead to a better future than could be offered by staying with his family in San Nicola. The young Simonetta quickly realized his objections were futile, "I had no choice. One day my uncle and mother said today you go. That was it."²⁶⁵ Except for brief visits to San Nicola to be with family, Simonetta remained in the north of Italy and considers himself a northern Italian.

I didn't ever want to be a priest. When I was seventeen I joined the military police, the *carabinieri*. This was not long after the war. I continued with private studies to finish my education, I got married. So my life in Italy was ok. You know I didn't live in the

²⁶³ Iori, March 2018.

²⁶⁴ Cavaliere, loosely translated as 'officer,' refers to a 4th Degree Member of the Italian Military Police. In 1987 Simonetta was awarded *Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana* (the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic) and in 1997 was made *Cavaliere Ufficiale* (Official Knight) of Italy. In Toronto, among other positions Simonetta was Director of the Patronato IPAS-ANCOL; Representative of the *Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Emigrate* (National Association of Immigrant Families); Segretario Generale per il Canada della F.I.D.I.C.A., *Federazione Ex Combattenti Alleati* (Canadian Secretary General of the Federation for Former Allied Combatants); *Membro dell'Associazione Polizia Internazionale del Canada* (Member of the Association of International Police in Canada).

²⁶⁵ Simonetta, July 2016.

desperate rural conditions of the south. My wife Maria and I liked living in the north, in a large city like Milan.²⁶⁶

Maria Simonetta went to Milan after her marriage. She was born and along with her siblings was raised near San Nicola while her father worked in Timmins Ontario and sent money home. Despite the couple's comfortable life Maria's father wanted the couple to join him in Timmins. While they had no intention of emigrating, they decided Maria would visit her father alone and explain the couple's determination to make their life in Italy. "My wife was pregnant with our first child when she left for Timmins. She was going to stay a couple of months then come back. But it didn't turn out that way."²⁶⁷

On her arrival in Timmins, Ontario Maria Simonetta developed health problems and soon required the consent of her husband for necessary medical treatment. Simonetta was given a leave of absence from the *carabinieri* and travelled to Timmins where his wife underwent surgery while pregnant and soon after delivered a healthy son. However, she refused to return to Italy, fearing another sea voyage which Maria blamed for her ill health. The couple decided to try to make a life in Canada. But Timmins offered little opportunity for an Italian *carabiniere*. Simonetta described being dismayed by the desolate conditions which, combined with the harsh weather, made life in the northern Ontario settlement even more difficult than in southern Italy. After writing to a friend who had settled in Toronto the Simonettas decided to leave Timmins to see what opportunities Toronto could offer.

My friend had told me there was an Italian area, so it was possible to get a start even without knowing how to speak English. My wife and I were young people, we weren't afraid. We packed our suitcases and the baby's crib and took the train to Toronto. We

²⁶⁶ Simonetta, July 2016.

²⁶⁷ Simonetta, July 2016.

didn't have anyone to meet us or help, but we didn't worry about that. I had an education; I was used to urban life so we were confident we would manage.²⁶⁸

Like Iori, Giuseppe Simonetta began attending St. Agnes parish immediately after his arrival. While he had not felt the calling of the priesthood Simonetta described himself as deeply religious.

St. Agnes was the Italian parish when I arrived in 1954. It was exploding with people attending mass. After some time I also went to St. Francis. It was so close and so much bigger. It was mostly an Irish parish at that time, but some Italians also attended on Sundays. These Italians were more educated, not better or superior you understand, but it was a different atmosphere. I was welcomed there by the priests and they encouraged me to continue to attend St. Francis. They introduced me to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and I started doing volunteer work for Italian immigrants.²⁶⁹

Soon after his arrival in Toronto Simonetta began working part-time for the Italian Consulate and became familiar with issues of underemployment, poor wages and crowded living conditions faced by Italian immigrants. This newly acquired knowledge motivated what would become a lifelong commitment to volunteer efforts on behalf of Italian immigrants. The beginning of these efforts was an association with Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Pastors at that parish had begun greeting new Italian arrivals at Union Station with welcome baskets. Food, personal hygiene products, and diapers were among the most useful items collected from various donors. As Simonetta met more immigrants he understood that while his education and experience as a city-dweller gave him some advantages over the majority of new Italian arrivals, he also shared many of their disadvantages. An inability to speak, read or write in English, limited resources and difficulty finding work were all obstacles Simonetta shared with those he

²⁶⁸ Simonetta, July 2016.

²⁶⁹ Simonetta, July 2016. Priests at Our Lady of Mount Carmel organized volunteers to assemble baskets of goods for newly arrived Italian immigrants.

sought to help. This was the beginning of his sense of being both part of the southern-Italian immigrant community and apart from them. The Iori and Simonetta interviews revealed important differences in their backgrounds and experiences of the College Street area in the 1950s and 1960s. These will be discussed in greater detail below, but there were also several common themes. There was, for example, ongoing tension in the relationship between police and Italian men on College Street. This included a conscious and persistent sense of being monitored and constrained by police through the ‘move along’ directive ²⁷⁰ and the constant presence of uniformed officers on foot patrol as representatives of the Canadian majority. This sense of being monitored was intensified by the need for frequent interaction with municipal bureaucracy to obtain permits to serve alcohol at family events held in private homes throughout Little Italy. The granting of such a permit required additional information including the location and type of event, the number of people attending, and the quantity and type of alcohol served.²⁷¹ Finally, Italian-speaking priests were presented as powerful figures and necessary allies.

²⁷⁰ The police practice of dispersing groups of Italian men along College Street was most likely done with the use of “Bylaw 17451 The Regulation of Pedestrians,” City Council Minutes Toronto, Vol. 2, Appendix B, November 30, 1948. The bylaw required pedestrians to yield the right of way to vehicles in all circumstances as well as refraining from walking or standing on roadways.

²⁷¹ From 1927 to 1962 permits were required for individuals to purchase alcohol from the LCBO for private use. Permit books with personal information including address, marital status, occupation and employer as well as the type, value and volume of alcohol at each purchase. In 1957 permit books were replaced by permit cards identifying holder by name and address and had to be presented at the LCBO. New purchase orders were introduced to be completed at the time of purchase which recorded the type, value, quantity of alcohol and name and address of the purchaser. Clerks at the LCBO examined the documents and recorded the names and addresses of individuals who were purchasing amounts of alcohol beyond what was “reasonable.” “Liquor Control Board of Ontario,” Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, February 29, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liquor_Control_Board_of_Ontario. Simonetta and Iori referred to being questioned about their purchases by clerks and having to provide further information about the type, size and location of events at the time of purchases. See Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003): 277-82 for a brief account of oversight and regulations for purchasing alcohol in various provinces developed in the 1920s and 1930s. These measures were designed to discourage drinking and limit access to alcohol in private homes. The permit requirements described above were part of a persistent attempt to limit access to and consumption of alcohol.

Both men also expressed a deep, quickly acquired and enduring sense of belonging and ownership of College Street as Italian-immigrant space and as a space of Italian commerce, physical and emotional support, and interpersonal networking of various kinds. The presence of elderly Italians who had emigrated in the early twentieth century led Iori and Simonetta to see the neighbourhood as a historically Italian-immigrant space. The adult children of this group also had a visible presence in the neighbourhood. While many did not speak any Italian dialect fluently they ran businesses which catered to new immigrants and were recognizable by their last names as employees in various service agencies and at St. Agnes and St. Francis parishes. Work connected immigrants to other areas of the city, but it is clear that throughout the 1950s and 1960s College Street was an important centre of Italian immigrant life.

A single narrative has come to dominate popular accounts about the circumstances and details surrounding the origins of the PCM and of its size and importance while its home was St. Agnes parish.²⁷² It is unclear how this narrative came together and who its originator(s) may have been. This narrative has conflated two single events over the seven years during which the PCM was organized from St. Agnes parish: the somewhat dramatic discovery of the central Christ statue (*Cristo Morto*) and the decision to hold a procession. Apart from these two events, its organization and growth before 1968 remain largely invisible and silent. The years 1961-1967 are relegated to a backdrop for the procession's important move to St. Francis parish in 1968 while this widely accepted narrative is at the centre of public accounts of the PCM. Recently, the

²⁷² See Vincenzo Pietropaolo, *Ritual* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2017), 191 for a detailed description of the popular narrative. It is included as part of a feature on Simonetta.

details of this narrative have been challenged.²⁷³ Iori's and Simonetta's descriptions of the origins and early years of the PCM at St. Agnes also reveal their different understandings of the cultural role of religious processions for southern Italian immigrants.

Simonetta was not the original author of the popular narrative but knows it well. He contextualized and summarized it making sure to distinguish the PCMs at St. Agnes from those held at St. Francis. He explained the account of the first PCM procession at St. Agnes as a small, simple affair among neighbourhood *paesani*.

Before 1968 the procession was a small thing attended by only a small group of people. It was limited to the people who attended St. Agnes, and even among them the PCM was not really that popular as a procession. Saint Anthony was the big procession. Much bigger by far. This procession for St. Anthony was something immigrants from Calabria remembered from home. It was an important act of devotion there and immigrants tried to keep that tradition here. But processions on Good Friday were not as big a memory for immigrants from San Nicola.²⁷⁴

Simonetta's religious education and time as a member of the *carabinieri*, with its visible public presence and ceremonial traditions,²⁷⁵ informed his understanding of the power of public pageantry, ritual and tradition, and the various ways public events could be used to draw attention and respect to a group as well as communicate its identity and values to the wider society. His understanding of when the PCM became a processional event, rather than a locally

²⁷³ Vincenzo Pietropaolo, interviewed by author, December 2017. Iori approached Pietropaolo at a public talk, given at St. Francis about the release of Pietropaolo's book *Ritual*. Iori told Pietropaolo about the mistaken account of the origin of the PCM at St. Agnes as Pietropaolo had presented in the book.

²⁷⁴ Simonetta, July 2016.

²⁷⁵ Carabinieri are the fourth branch of the Italian Armed Forces and carry out domestic policing while being under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence. The carabinieri have a historical ceremonial uniform which is worn for parades of various kinds in Italy. A parade featuring *La Banda dei Carabinieri di Roma* was held in Toronto on August 14th, 1974. Ceremonial uniforms were worn by members and former members from Italy and Toronto. The large parade began at Queen's Park and travelled along University Avenue. Greg Riccio, *Un Ricordo della Banda dei Carabinieri di Roma Visita a Toronto*, edited by Agostino Cogliano (Toronto: International Video Productions Ltd., 1997), personal archive of Giuseppe Simonetta.

based traditional activity was informed by this background. While discussing its earliest years Simonetta emphasized the local scale and limited reach of the PCM at St. Agnes. He associated it with the processional activity not specifically in San Nicola but in southern-Italian towns and villages generally, where processions were always designed to serve the need for religious devotion and expression among *paesani*. Simonetta saw the earliest processions on Good Friday as locally significant but essentially as events in a series of isolated practices. Several times during the interviews Simonetta referred to the early years of the procession at St. Agnes as “*una cosa piccola*” (a small thing) not to diminish the significance of the event for those involved, but to differentiate those years from the purposeful growth of the processional practice into a grand ceremonial event especially, in the 1980s. In that decade the event was transformed into one designed to draw attention and respect to the Italian immigrant community in Toronto by aligning it with powerful religious, political and civic authorities.

While at St. Agnes, Iori’s concern with recreating the emotional experience of Sannicolesi on Good Friday produced a procession that was effectively, though not purposely, hidden from the larger city. For Simonetta a procession should take up public space in unambiguous ways and communicate pride, respect, legitimacy, honor, and competency. Because of this understanding Simonetta used his considerable skills to build networks and convinced others to see the PCM as a way to bring a new kind of visibility to Italians in Toronto. Simonetta was well-acquainted with the stereotypes which depicted Italians as ignorant, backwards, unruly, unskilled and fragmented.²⁷⁶ When he became a member of the organizing

²⁷⁶ These qualities were cited by Simonetta as at the heart of stereotypes especially connected to Italian men. Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 103-04, 118-23 describes the efforts of some sympathetic politicians and journalists to counter negative stereotypes of Italian immigrants in the 1950s and early 1960s.

committee Simonetta soon came to believe the PCM could prove Italians were in fact well-informed and respectful Christians, united through their faith and dedication to family with competencies and skills far beyond simple manual labour. In addition to his comments above, Simonetta's description of the discovery of the important statue at St. Agnes helps us to understand his perspective.

A maintenance man found the statue of *Cristo Morto* (the Dead Christ). His name was Vito Telesa and he was from San Nicola. He worked at St. Agnes for many years. He found the statue hidden in the church basement behind a kind of wall. I never saw it so I'm not really sure what it looked like. He happened upon it while he was working. He came into my bar (Bar Sport Café) on Clinton Street shortly after that. He said, "Pino I have had such good fortune, I found a statue of *Cristo Morto*." As I said it was behind a kind of wall and when he broke it down there was the statue. It was very dirty, damaged in places but not broken. He said the priests were also surprised to see the statue. Vito said none of the priests at St. Agnes knew where the statue had come from or that it was even there. They certainly weren't interested in a procession on Good Friday. Vito repainted parts of the statue using craft paints, and some of the parishioners there decided they wanted a procession.²⁷⁷

Simonetta had long been attending St. Francis parish when the statue was found and did not participate in the decision to hold the first procession or its organization. He was intrigued by the statue and unhappy with the lack of interest by the clergy in determining its origins. At various times Simonetta tried to uncover the history of the *Cristo Morto*, especially after the statue and procession were held at St. Francis. He was unsuccessful.²⁷⁸ Simonetta explained the reasons for the limited interest in the PCM while it was at St. Agnes as being connected to the desire for a small devotional event by parishioners and the apprehensions of priests at the parish.

Those processions at St. Agnes were nice events but very casual, very simple, small devotions intended only for paesani, like would have happened in San Nicola. It never went onto College Street. Actually the first year it was just in an alleyway next to St.

²⁷⁷ Simonetta, July 2016.

²⁷⁸ Chapter 2, p. 65 describes a statue resembling the *Cristo Morto* carried in a procession on Good Friday, in 1952, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. However, it is unclear if this is the same statue later found at St. Agnes.

Agnes. The priests were not sure how the PCM would be received by the police and other people. Toronto was a different city then, mostly Protestants and not many people who didn't speak English. The priests knew police were still suspicious of Italians from the war years. The priests didn't want to bring negative attention to the neighbourhood. So the PCM started small and definitely didn't go onto College Street. That happened much later.²⁷⁹

Simonetta's account of the scale and importance of Good Friday processions in southern Italy and of the one held at St. Agnes are quite different than the Iori recollection.

Iori had vivid memories of processions on Good Friday in San Nicola. These annual events included the parish statues of *Cristo Morto* and the *Addolorata*, and a musical band hired for the day to accompany the processional group. Though simple in its organization the processional group was large with most residents of San Nicola participating. The religious importance was reflected in the sombre atmosphere surrounding these processions that were understood as communal events and experiences, deeply emotional and spiritual as well as reflections of inherited values which identified this village and its residents as devout and respectable.

It was a big thing, a very big event in San Nicola. Good Friday is an important day for Catholics and in San Nicola we always had a big procession. The *Sannicolesi* here at St. Agnes not only remembered this tradition, they were thirsty for it. We wanted to relive it to reexperience the Passion as we had when the procession made its way through San Nicola. Even at the first procession there were lots of people waiting outside the church for the statue. Of course it was small compared to later, but we were not five or six people doing this procession. We were hundreds. And then each year it grew and grew. No advertising nothing like that, just people tell each other and hear in the church that there was a procession and they showed up. As I said before, the people at that time had a deep connection to our own village to the tradition of a procession on Good Friday. Because a procession is not just something you do, you don't just walk. It is a devotion something you do together to say we believe in this we respect this. You know in San Nicola, that procession belonged to the people. Here we wanted the same thing, our procession like we experienced it at home – but over here.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Simonetta, July 2016.

²⁸⁰ Iori, March 2018.

Iori insisted the PCM and its origins were misunderstood and diminished by the popular narrative. While acknowledging the tremendous growth in terms of size, scale, and visibility that were achieved in the two decades after control of the event passed to a new organizing committee at St. Francis in 1968, he insisted the procession could not be understood without a clear appreciation of its founders and of the Sannicolese community who attended St. Agnes parish in 1961 when the statue was discovered. He argued the meaning and power of the procession were to be found in those early years, not in the large spectacle it later became. He identified Vito Telesa, whom Simonetta also referenced, as the most important individual in the creation of the PCM at St. Agnes and challenged the credulity of those who would accept the popular account of the discovery of the *Cristo Morto* statue.

Vito was the important one, he found *Cristo Morto* and told everyone. Now if there was a wall in the church or whatever those people call it don't you think the priest would know? Why would there be a little hole in this wall? And who would put a statue of *Cristo Morto* behind that wall and nothing else? It's ridiculous, would you believe that? There was no wall, it was an open space under the stairs, anyone could see the statue if they looked there. I'm sure other people saw it and just ignored it. When Vito saw it he had a deep feeling. He felt it was wrong for that statue to be dirty like that in the basement, just forgotten. He was also from San Nicola.²⁸¹

Iori described the close relationship between the Iori and Telesa families in San

Nicola. In Toronto the relationship continued between Telesa, Iori and his brother.²⁸²

After he found the statue the first person he went to talk to was my brother (Nicola) who at that time was the vice-president of *Azione Cattolica*. Vito said, "I can't ignore that statue, we have to do a procession." They spoke to Father Di Fiore²⁸³ and said "listen we will take all the responsibility for this solemn procession. *Azione Cattolica* will do all the work and organize everything with love, with pride and respect." We were about 250 members at that time, and we also organized the festa and procession for St. Anthony, so

²⁸¹ Iori, March 2018.

²⁸² Rosario Iori, "Certificate of Confirmation," June 5, 1960, Personal archive of Rosario Iori. Vito Telesa acted as confirmation sponsor for Nicola Iori.

²⁸³ Father Di Fiore was pastor at St. Agnes from January 1958 to July 1961 and was present for the first CMP.

the priest knew we were capable people. He said go ahead. We didn't need him or somebody else to tell us what to do for the PCM, we knew from back home. We knew what we wanted. Vito fixed the statue because it was a little bit damaged. He made it beautiful, we were so proud of that. And that's it! On the day of the first procession when the statue came out, you should hear the applause from the people waiting outside. The band (we hired) started to play and we were so happy to feel that procession again, to feel the Passion the way we were used to all together.²⁸⁴

Iori went on to challenge the account of the early processional routes in the popular narrative. In particular that the first PCM occurred in a laneway, and that College Street was never part of St. Agnes' processional routes.

Would you take Christ into an alley with the garbage? Can you imagine if we had tried to do that? If we had to do that we wouldn't do a procession. We would wait until we could do it in the street like it's supposed to be done. We went on Dundas Street (West) and on College Street. There was no problem with that. The Saint Anthony procession was very big at that time and it was going on the roads no problem, so why would the PCM be different? The Saint Anthony procession used to take up **one side** of the street on College. We did the same thing. The priests, the police, the TTC, they were all ok, they helped us. After the procession we used to have refreshments in the church hall for the police and TTC people who helped us that day. No problem at all.²⁸⁵

Iori's origin narrative and his efforts to make it public demonstrates the power of an individual dissenting voice to challenge accepted community histories. For Iori the simplicity of the event was at the heart of its power and legitimacy. The central role of priests and the Roman Catholic Church as helpful and unifying community forces was also on full display. This annual event, which embodied the sacrifice and suffering of the Holy Mother and her earthly Son, were examples of important common values held by *paesani*: devotion to family, sacrifice, humility, respect for religious devotion. As Sannicolesi in Toronto attended the PCM they knew their

²⁸⁴ Iori, March 2018; Rosario Iori, "La Processione del Venerdì Santo a Toronto," *La Barcunata*, August 2011, 11-13 is the only written account of Iori's account.

²⁸⁵ Iori, March 2018. Contrary to Iori's memory a parish document does not include College Street as part of the established St. Anthony procession. See chapter 2, Figure 2.14: Processional Route for the St. Anthony Procession, June 1961.

family and *paesani* in San Nicola also participated in a similar procession on Good Friday. In Toronto the procession on Good Friday created a physical and spatial vocabulary for Sannicolesi to express a common identity by compressing the time and distance between their premigration lives and their current ones. The power of the processional experience was not connected to its size, scale, grandeur or reach beyond networks of *paesani* in Toronto, instead it came from the statue of *Cristo Morto*, the presence of a group of any size of like-minded devout *paesani*, the appropriate public space to honour the statue respectfully, and the participation of a priest.

Without being prompted both men connected the PCM to College Street in their narratives. Other roads travelled by the procession were mentioned only as part of a route which the procession travelled as it made its way (in the Iori account) or didn't (in the Simonetta account) onto College Street in the 1960s. Interviews with these founders of the PCM made it clear that especially in the 1960s College Street was important in ways which did not apply to adjoining residential streets or other major roads in the area. The same sentiments are also expressed in interviews which appear in the documentary *Johnny Lombardi: The Great Communicator*.²⁸⁶ In interviews from that documentary, and those described here, we see confirmation of the work of spatial theorists who describe the various ways transnational religious communities establish themselves in a variety of local urban places which they reimagine and recreate in ways guided by traditional practices.²⁸⁷ Through spatial acts – which

²⁸⁶ Grace Fusillo-Lombardi, *Johnny Lombardi the Great Communicator*, Documentary (Toronto: OMNI Media, 2007). This documentary is particularly notable for the acknowledgment made by former Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino of the move-along directive as it applied to Italians in the 1950s and 1960s.

²⁸⁷ Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," 159-60.

can range from the mundane, to ritual, to performative – immigrants can temporarily create public spaces which are at once imagined and real, part of a past home and a present one.²⁸⁸

While in public spaces, immigrants use their own emotions as cues to assess the degree to which they are welcome in and belong to new urban space.²⁸⁹ The Simonetta and Iori narratives make it clear College Street was experienced in emotional ways that can be connected to the PCM. Their descriptions of College Street during ‘normal time’²⁹⁰ below suggest the PCM was part of transforming the emotional experience of that urban space so that it eventually became an extension of nearby residential streets where Italian men felt more comfortable and secure largely because they were less constrained by surveillance and harassment, especially by police.

As described in what follows, Simonetta’s and Iori’s narratives are infused with their feelings of physically occupying College Street at different times. For them this is an Italian space and an immigrant space, but College Street is also a space always shared with municipal authorities in the form of the police. The relationship between Italians and neighbourhood law enforcement is further complicated by linguistic, social and cultural differences. In the 1960s neither Simonetta nor Iori could completely escape a feeling of ‘otherness’ there. Both men were aware of being monitored in a variety of ways typified by, but not limited to, the “move along” directive. Both men’s narratives of College Street express a conscious awareness of this space as a contested urban space. Knott discusses the dynamic nature of public space for immigrants and religious minorities. Its dynamism comes in part as state attempts to control public space by

²⁸⁸ Knott, “Spatial Theory and Method,” 160.

²⁸⁹ Hopkins, “Women, Men, Positionalities,” 4.

²⁹⁰ Kong, “Religious Processions,” 230 discusses the idea of processional time as “time apart” from secular time which is defined by the normal routines and uses of urban spaces.

regulating its uses are met by individuals and groups who subvert that authority in temporary but meaningful ways through both their spontaneous and ritualized uses of space.²⁹¹ As groups make imaginative and symbolic use of physical space they can also realize the possibility of resisting dominant discourses about them which otherwise encourage the group's marginalization and perpetuates negative stereotypes.²⁹² In this resistance, and particularly if successful, the emotional experience of particular urban spaces can be transformed from fearful and tenuous to confident and rooted.

Simonetta became a well-regarded member of the College Street Italian-immigrant community soon after his arrival in 1954. In addition to his volunteer work with Our Lady of Mount Carmel church in the late 1950s he opened Bar Sport Café on Clinton Street²⁹³ which became a popular meeting place for Italian men to gather, sip espresso, and network for employment opportunities as well as socialize and find emotional support. Employed full-time at Massey Ferguson, Simonetta opened the café in part as a response to the persistent police harassment faced by Italian men who chatted in groups on various sidewalks in the neighbourhood. These men needed a place to meet that was indoors. Espresso coffee was not readily available in the city and Simonetta saw an opportunity to provide an important product and service.²⁹⁴ He was critical of police who seemed unwilling to understand the conditions in which immigrant men found themselves.

²⁹¹ Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," 165.

²⁹² Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," 165.

²⁹³ Bar Sport Café was located at 41 Clinton Street and operated for more than twenty years.

²⁹⁴ Simonetta's father was experienced with the workings of a similar café in San Nicola. Simonetta sponsored his father's emigration to Toronto, and together they ran the Clinton Street café. Profits from the café were an important part of the family's income, though never enough to allow Simonetta to leave Massey Ferguson. Simonetta also worked in the café evenings and weekends.



Figure 3.1. Simonetta standing behind the bar. Note the Madonna figurine and smaller prayer card on the shelves behind Cavaliere Simonetta's right shoulder.²⁹⁵



Figure 3.2. Men enjoying leisure time at Bar Sport Café in the 1950s.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ "Giuseppe Simonetta in Bar Sport Café," Personal collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

²⁹⁶ "Italian immigrant men reminiscing in Bar Sport Café," Personal collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.



Figure 3.3. Men enjoying leisure time at Bar Sport Café in the 1960s.²⁹⁷

Simonetta described the lack of knowledge among police about Italian immigrant cultural practices and of the economic difficulties immigrant men face.

When the police encountered groups of men on the sidewalk right away they started saying “Move! Move! Move!.” They didn’t stop to listen or even to ask any questions. These Italian men were not inciting rebellion, they weren’t protesters or criminals (*Mafiosi*)²⁹⁸. These men were looking for bread, for work. They needed to build friendships to find out about where there was work, who was a good employer. Who would tell you those things? Only a friend of course. That’s what these men were doing on the sidewalks.²⁹⁹

Simonetta described his confusion at the openly hostile behaviour of police towards Italian men. He was surprised by the explanation offered by priests at St. Francis which connected police action to more general lingering wartime attitudes towards Italian immigrants by English-speaking Torontonians. Simonetta had little intimate contact with Italians who had

²⁹⁷ “Italian immigrant men enjoying leisure time in Bar Sport Café,” Personal collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

²⁹⁸ Simonetta, July 2016. The term “Mafiosi” was used by Simonetta.

²⁹⁹ Simonetta, July 2016.

settled in Toronto before World War II and did not realize the full impact of Italy's status as an enemy alien during the war for those immigrants and their children³⁰⁰. Simonetta's response to the move-along directive and police presence on College Street was shaped in part by what he learned about police surveillance of Italians during the war. Simonetta had little patience for unfair treatment of Italian immigrant men by police.

Simonetta was never subject to the move-along tactics because he didn't spend leisure time in spontaneous sidewalk gatherings. But he recounted occasions when he was asked to intercede with police on behalf of immigrant men who had been arrested or detained likely on the charge of loitering.

I couldn't speak English very well, but I brought my papers which showed my status as a member of the *carabinieri*. Police recognized those papers and treated me respectfully because of that. There was one Italian officer, the son of Italian immigrants from Calabria who settled in the area many years earlier. He didn't want to help at first. He didn't want to show that he spoke Italian but eventually he translated so I could speak to the police at the station. They had taken this poor man in and he couldn't pay the fine they imposed.³⁰¹

Simonetta was unsure of the specific year in which this incident occurred. Criminal Code reforms which took effect in 1955 retained the description of loitering but separated it from the vagrancy section so that those convicted of loitering would no longer be deemed "vagrants" under law.³⁰²

Simonetta recounted the above detention as a typical example of the move-along directive. He acted as an advocate, assuring police of the man's good character which, he argued,

³⁰⁰ Pennacchio, "Exporting Fascism to Canada."

³⁰¹ Simonetta, July 2016.

³⁰² Prashan Ranasinhe, "Reconceptualizing Vagrancy and Reconstructing the Vagrant: A Socio-Legal Analysis of Criminal Law Reform in Canada, 1953-1972," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 48, No. 1 (Spring, 2010): 67, 68 and footnotes 53 and 54. Criminal Code 1927, ss. 238 (b), (c), (e), (g), (h). Criminal Code, S.C. 1953-1954, 2 Eliz. 2, c. 51, s. 160 [Criminal Code 1953-1954].

was exemplified by his attempt to learn about employment opportunities. Simonetta also acted as cultural translator, explaining the role of the *piazza* in southern-Italian life to help police understand why so many young men gathered on the already crowded sidewalks and roads of the College Street neighbourhood.

I don't know if the police believed me. After much back and forth they released him. I'm not saying it was common for Italians to be in jail, but the police were always there. The way they looked at us was not with hatred but as if we were barely human (*bestie*)³⁰³. It was like we were nothing, just something to be moved from here to there.³⁰⁴

Simonetta acknowledged several times that Toronto police at all levels were unaccustomed to the animated conversations likely to occur among Italian men, and that neighbourhood officers were following a directive and not acting on their own initiative. Nonetheless, he regarded their harsh behaviour and the threat of what he saw as large fines to be outrageous and a way to let Italians know they were being watched. Simonetta's position as a member of the *carabinieri*, and doubtless as a husband and father with a neighbourhood business and full-time job at Massey Ferguson (which did not typically employ Italians), afforded him a degree of respect among police officers in the neighbourhood. He was sometimes able to have a young man released or a fine rescinded by vouching for the young man's character. From the time of his arrival on College Street Simonetta felt more welcome than Iori to engage with powerful individuals and institutions like the police, city hall and politicians at various levels though he often did so with the assistance of Italians who were the children of Italians and already well-established in the city.

³⁰³ Translates as "animals" or beasts of burden."

³⁰⁴ Simonetta, July 2016.

Iori spent his first two years in the city working in a factory at Dundas Avenue West and Keele Street which manufactured car accessories. He did not like being indoors and joined the construction industry where he spent the rest of his working life. Although never employed as a bricklayer in Toronto, a member of the Sannicolesi network helped Iori find positions with various employers. Other than work, there was no need to leave the College Street area. Iori did not even travel to St. Clair Avenue West which, after 1960, was a receiving area for newly arrived Italian immigrants because housing in the College Street neighbourhood was at full capacity.³⁰⁵ In addition to spending much of his leisure time at St. Agnes, as a young unmarried man Iori also spent time gathering with friends on College Street.

With my friends we used to stay on College Street. At that time in 1959, 1960 those years there were not many Italian cafes, so we used to stand around the street and talk. The police didn't like that, they didn't like us really. You know they used to come so close to us, push us on the road and yell.³⁰⁶

Iori recalled a specific incident which took place outside Lombardi's supermarket on College Street. This grocery store served area Italians and was owned by neighbourhood celebrity Johnny Lombardi. Lombardi was unconcerned by a group of young men who had gathered that day (as often happened) in front of his store. While standing inside the store Lombardi saw an officer push one of the men in the group onto the road. Iori was touched and proud of the way Lombardi challenged the authority of the police officer on behalf of the young men.

I'll never forget how he came running outside. He was so mad. He walked right up to that policeman pointed right in his face and yelled at him, "you move back three feet and then

³⁰⁵ Michael Buzzelli, "Toronto's Postwar Little Italy: An Urban Ethnic Landscape Study" (Master's thesis, McMaster University, 2007), 43-44.

³⁰⁶ Iori, March 2018. In addition to the threat of a loitering charge as described on p. 108 police could impose fines based on the bylaw described in footnote 271 in this chapter.

you talk to *me*”! We were so shocked by that. He could do that (challenge the police) because he was already somebody. He was born here, went to school. He had the store, so he was above us in a way. The police didn’t do anything to him. If I had talked like that to the police I would have been in jail for sure.³⁰⁷

Iori was upset at the unnecessarily aggressive treatment by police that day but was unwilling to lay all the blame for the incident at the feet of the officer. Iori acknowledged that in addition to talking about family and friends still living in Italy, and employment and housing opportunities, these young men were also boisterous.

I’m not saying the police were completely wrong, because we were a big group of guys and we blocked the whole sidewalk. And then sometimes we would see a pretty girl and whistle, because you know we were young. The police didn’t like those things but the way they treated us was too much. It was a lot of frustration for us all the time. They used to push us onto the street like we were nobody.³⁰⁸

Iori also recalled encounters away from the College Street neighbourhood which he believed targeted Italian immigrants but were less overt than the actions of police. He described “lots of hatred for Italians”³⁰⁹ among English-speaking Torontonians whom he encountered on his daily travels throughout the city. He described one chance meeting while navigating public transit as typical of the 1950s and 1960s. Iori described some difficulty navigating the subway system as a typical immigrant challenge. Subways were especially challenging because the physical markers available when riding busses and streetcars above ground were not present. It was easy, Iori insisted, to miss one’s stop or to confuse exits out of the subway once off the train. These incidents were especially unsettling when travelling alone. This encounter has remained a vivid memory. After exiting the subway at the correct stop Iori mistakenly took an exit to the

³⁰⁷ Iori, March 2018.

³⁰⁸ Iori, March 2018.

³⁰⁹ Iori, March 2018.

street which he had not used before. Realizing his mistake Iori asked an English-speaking man standing nearby to identify the bus he should take to get to his home in the College Street area.

He didn't even look at me just said "You take that one." I took that bus but then after maybe 5 minutes I realized he told me to go the wrong way, it was the wrong bus. I felt so bad, why did he have to send me the wrong way? Because he didn't want me there – he let me know that he didn't want us here.³¹⁰

Iori said these kinds of encounters were upsetting but mediated by the experience of returning to his familiar neighbourhood of Italian immigrants who had similar stories to tell. He also explained the importance of the College Street community as a haven of acceptance and belonging in the face of such experiences. He described public transit in particular as a location where Italian immigrants experienced strong feelings of otherness.

Many Italian ladies used to work on Spadina doing sewing work, so they all took the streetcar together. The driver used to announce the street names. When he came to Spadina he would say "Spadina! And Spadeena for the Italians!" He was a funny guy and people liked him. He was making a joke and the ladies all laughed. But it was still a nice way to say you are Italian, you are strange here.³¹¹

There was another important reason Iori's assessment of police in the early 1960s was not wholly negative. Iori described the ways police accepted gestures of respect paid to them by immigrants. One example described by Iori involved the many wedding receptions held in both church halls of St. Agnes' basement. The unofficial caterer for activities at St. Agnes was Tony Martino. When wedding receptions were held a tray of food from each reception was delivered by Martino to the local police station for officers to enjoy. These food trays were gifts from the newlywed couple to officers. Individual officers who were on patrol in the area of St. Agnes

³¹⁰ Iori, March 2018.

³¹¹ Iori, March 2018.

came into each reception as Iori described to “control things, especially the alcohol.”³¹² Officers were offered food and drink.

Oh they used to eat! They ate and drank when they came downstairs, they really liked it. That’s a little bit why they were ok with us when we did the procession. They supported us. On those days there was no problem.³¹³

Iori insisted police understood these gifts of food as gestures of respect and solidarity, and that when it came to religious processions generally, and the PCM in particular, police were tolerant and accommodating. Simonetta, on the other hand, understood courteous and respectful behaviour towards the people they were policing to be indicative of basic levels of competence. He assessed police in Toronto by standards taught to him during training for the *carabinieri*. He disapproved of officers eating and drinking alcohol at wedding receptions in particular. Simonetta insisted professionalism included a little distance from the people police were responsible for protecting. He insisted people must see officers as equally approachable by all citizens regardless of food offerings.

I was taught to behave in a certain way which allowed citizens to know police had no bias and showed no favoritism. That training never left me. I always tried to follow that code of conduct.³¹⁴

Iori has attended and participated in the PCM since 1961. After the Italian community and procession moved to St. Francis church in 1968 he was no longer involved in the organizing committee. Then in the early 1970s, as a married man, he moved away from the College Street neighbourhood but continued to carry the *Cristo Morto* statue with his paesani in the PCM each year. The growth of the procession which began in earnest in the 1970s is seen by Iori as nice but

³¹² Iori, March 2018.

³¹³ Iori, March 2018.

³¹⁴ Simonetta, July 2016.

unnecessary. Iori acknowledges the considerable efforts of organizers at St. Francis who transformed the event in size and visibility. However, from his perspective, the procession did not need to grow to establish or increase its legitimacy. He noted that as the PCM grew to include the *Via Crucis* it also became a curiosity.

Not everyone who attended came for devotion for the experience of the Passion, to feel it. A real procession is not something you watch while you're talking to your friend. It is something you do, even if you're not walking but you feel it. You feel the devotion, you feel together. That was what we did at St. Agnes. I don't go for the spectacle; many people don't come for that. Especially the older people they don't come for the spectacle. They come for the tradition, for the feeling.³¹⁵

The addition of street theater in the 1980s created a different atmosphere with less devotion and opportunity to connect with *paesani* as larger crowds attended to view a performance of the *Via Crucis*. The personal and communal religious experience of the event was most important for Iori who placed little value on its role as a vehicle for increasing the social status of Italian immigrants in Toronto. Simonetta understood the spectacle to be an important addition to the procession for the visibility it gave to Italians as competent organizers and innovators. Also he appreciated the opportunity it provided to lessen regional distinctions and divisions among this group of Italians which, by the 1970s, also included many children and teenagers raised in Toronto.

Simonetta wanted the PCM to be a source of pride for these young people. He believed this event was uniquely positioned as a creation of Italian immigrants, not clergy or another organization, to demonstrate the ingenuity and competence of immigrants. Simonetta was aware that parents were often dependent on teenagers and children to act as translators during

³¹⁵ Iori, March 2018.

encounters with English speakers. He worried this meant children would see the immigrant generation as incapable of living comfortably in the urban setting. Simonetta also knew children raised in Toronto witnessed the sacrifices and hardships endured by their parents and hoped the young people would understand the PCM as a creative expression of the experience of living as a marginalized outsider. He also hoped a larger more spectacular event would draw the attention and respect of English-speaking Torontonians.

It was important these young people saw what the immigrant generation could do. We imagined it, we wanted it and we did it. Even for those who were not religious, they could come to the procession and see what we could do. They could learn about the things we (the older generation) loved and believed in through the procession. It is also a way for others, for the English to see what Italians can do, that we are united, respectful and capable people. The PCM is not the only way to do these things, of course it's not the only way but it is not a bad way.³¹⁶

Regardless of areas of convergence and disjuncture in these narratives, they are invaluable for revealing some of the ways postwar immigrants' experiences of this urban neighbourhood, and especially College Street, contributed to organizers' attempts to craft the PCM in particular ways. This allows us to challenge the notion that unity within ethnic groups is built by the eradication of differences and disagreements among them, and instead to look for ways unity is built as ethnic groups confront and manage their internal differences within a particular urban context. The interviews about the PCM also allow us to begin to understand the importance of specific urban spaces as receiving areas and as part of an evolving physical and symbolic vocabulary used by immigrants and their descendants to communicate with powerful actors in the city.

³¹⁶ Simonetta, July 2016.

College Street is a historically Italian-public space which immigrants in the 1960s experienced in physical and emotional ways rooted in the mingling of memories of the homeland and necessary adaptation to the new urban setting. Davidson and Milligan survey the work of various scholars who draw attention to the importance of emotions in interpretive frameworks within and across disciplines. They assert that the emotional relationship between people and the spaces they inhabit always help form the basis of uniquely personal geographies as we become rooted to some spaces over others.³¹⁷ In order to understand why Italian immigrants not only felt a sense of belonging on College Street but also, as will be described in the following chapters, expressed an increasing sense of ownership over it, it is necessary to understand how immigrant organizers felt when they were on that street for both secular and religious purposes.

College Street was a contested space which in the 1950s and 1960s was identified by Italians and non-Italians as an Italian immigrant space. This occurred through the various ways postwar newcomers used this public space at both an individual and community level. In a variety of ways, involving both movement and stillness, Italians used College Street for gathering, networking and socializing in spontaneous and coordinated ways.

At this point it must be noted that the experiences and emotions described are from a male perspective. Italian immigrant women also made use of College Street. They shopped, went to church, walked children to school, visited with friends and family, and travelled to and from work. The few and tangential references to immigrant women in the narratives of both these men is also a feature of Italian women's presence in Italian immigrant histories of the postwar

³¹⁷ Milligan and Davidson, "Editorial: Embodying Space: Introducing Emotional Geographies," *Social and Cultural Geography* 5, no. 4 (2004): 524.

period.³¹⁸ Religious processions are notable in part for the scale of women's participation and public visibility. As was the case with immigrant men, Italian women were certainly also aware of being observed by police as they travelled along College Street. Given the absence of any information or direct testimony by immigrant women, nothing can be said about their thoughts, feelings and experiences of being observed in this way. The practice of gathering on the sidewalk connected to networking for the purposes of paid employment seems to have been a largely male experience of College Street, though this may be an overstatement of the reality. The use of College Street for religious devotion was an experience shared by both women and men of all ages.

College Street was also a public space where Italian immigrants encountered public images not of their own creation. They came to understand these identities through encounters with non-Italian individuals, the adult children of an earlier generation of Italian immigrants, and with police who they encountered. In the last instance this was especially through the mostly male experience (and presumably mostly female observation) of the 'move along directive,' as well as what seemed to immigrants an obtrusive and consistent oversight of their behaviour by police, especially regarding their physical presence on College Street. Additionally, Italians were aware of other types of monitoring in public space, including language or dialect spoken and the volume, animation and number of individuals engaged in conversation.

³¹⁸ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, especially chapter 4, examines the lives of Italian immigrant women mostly as connected to family and work. This chapter remains the most detailed look at Italian immigrant women in both periods of migration to Toronto. Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 106-07 briefly discusses teenage girls taking leisurely walks along College Street in the 1970s.

Each time Italians stepped onto College Street they brought with them the echoes of their encounters with, or observations of, police conducting the move-along directive, but they also experienced College Street as uniquely Italian-immigrant space. As they travelled the city on foot and public transportation feelings of otherness and of being unwanted in public spaces, described by Iori and Simonetta, were likely common among Italian immigrants. This was created largely through their encounters with various authorities and non-Italian individuals. For Italian immigrants' ownership over College Street as 'their space' was rooted in a feeling of belonging exemplified by their ability individually and as a community to occupy that space in their own physically and emotionally determined ways. For the founders of the PCM, both at St. Agnes and St. Frances, the event became a communal expression of what Kong describes as boundary-making activity.³¹⁹ Annually, for the period of the procession, Italian immigrants were able to exert some control over the landscape, soundscape and timescape of the neighbourhood.

³¹⁹ Kong, "Religious Processions," 234.

Chapter 4: Organizing for Growth: Immigrants and Ethnic Working Together

In 1968 the Archdiocese relocated Italian parishioners from St. Agnes at 15 Grace Street to nearby St. Francis church at 72 Mansfield Avenue.³²⁰ This was done to allow the growing number of Portuguese Catholics moving into the College Street area their own national parish. Over the next decade the procession and College Street became physical representations for some of the ways Italians began to reject their status as immigrants in favour of an evolving hyphenated ethnic identity during both religious and ‘normal’ time.³²¹ The emergence of official Multiculturalism in 1971 and local policy initiatives like the Heritage Language Program coincided with, and supported, a number of observable changes in the physical appearance of the PCM and the use of College Street as commercial and community space. The procession and the neighbourhood it occupied became living examples of Chivallon’s hybrid identity.³²² In addition to describing a spatial framework for the relationship between the state, the (re)creation of urban space and minority groups Chivallon’s work provides a way to capture the tangible and subtle ways ethnic minorities struggle to embrace change over time in ways that allow them to maintain a feeling of community and belonging in the present that is rooted in a shared cultural past. The organizing committee’s decision to integrate the ideas and participation of the second generation are largely responsible for the ongoing growth of the PCM as it overtook the St Anthony procession in size and popularity after 1970. Young women contributed to both the evolution of the PCM and Italian-Canadian identity when they assumed new leadership positions in the

³²⁰ Aleixo, November 2018. Although no list is currently available numerous patron saint festas of various sizes took place from St. Francis after 1968.

³²¹ Kong, “Religious Processions,” 230. Also referred to as “time apart.”

³²² Chivallon, “Religion as Space.”

organization of the procession and a more public presence on College Street beyond devotional activity.

The close physical proximity of St. Agnes and St. Francis meant Italian immigrant families did not have to deal with increased distances or modes of travel to participate in Sunday services or associational life at their new parish. Additionally, St. Francis was larger, making it possible for many more Italians to attend services in the nave without having to use the church basement.³²³ The most detailed descriptions for processional life in the College Street neighbourhood until 1972 come from the St. Agnes Chronicle.³²⁴ The St. Anthony festa was the largest Italian religious processional event in the city throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. The descriptions below of the size and spatial imprint of this procession and festa were important as a precursor to the growth of the PCM.

The event in June 1966 began on Saturday evening with a concert in nearby Bellwoods Park from 8 to 11pm. It was attended by thousands and likely performed almost exclusively in Italian. The following day the St. Anthony procession was “like Easter Sunday” with an estimated 12,000 people attending the 10 masses conducted there.³²⁵ The procession along St.

³²³ Aleixo, November 2018. The nave held 1,000 parishioners until a renovation in the mid 1970s when that number was lowered slightly. Beginning in 1968 the nave could not accommodate all those wanting to attend mass. The basement became referred to as “the lower church” after 1968. It was used in conjunction with the nave for the multiple Italian language masses held Sundays to accommodate the large numbers of Italians who attended St. Francis.

³²⁴ St. Agnes Chronicle, St. Francis of Assisi Archive, Toronto. This collection resembles a personal journal. It is mostly in diary format with some clippings collected from local English language newspapers. It was created, and named, by a young unnamed priest who was assigned to St. Agnes. The length of his appointment is not known, but the Chronicle records events at St. Agnes and St. Francis of Assisi parishes between 1958 and 1972. It has never been published.

³²⁵ St. Agnes Chronicle. While not explicitly stated in the St. Agnes Chronicle it is likely all masses held in conjunction with Italian immigrant processional practices were performed in standard Italian. This assumption seems appropriate given the reforms of Vatican II regarding use of the vernacular of parishioners rather than Latin during mass.

Agnes's established route began at 5pm, lasted two hours and was carried on the radio.³²⁶ A musical concert and fireworks closed the festa at the park on Sunday evening. An estimated 100,000 people attended the two-day festa.³²⁷ The following year the procession included two musical bands, seven associations and large numbers of children dressed in their communion and confirmation-garb walking in the event. A mass and benediction were held at nearby Bellwoods Park, temporarily but unmistakably making this secular public space an extension of the processional route and another secular public place for Italian religious-cultural practice. This reference to religious activity in a public park was recorded in the Chronicle as a simple statement, suggesting it was not the first time Bellwoods Park was used by St. Agnes parishioners and clergy in this way. The decision to occupy this secular public space in such a visible way may have been made by clergy to accommodate the large numbers of devotees who could not find a place within the church nave or basement during one of the fifteen masses held that day. That number was estimated to be close to 14,000. Again, in 1967, an estimated 100,000 people attended the festa. The two hour procession which began at 6:00 pm, was followed by a concert and fireworks display at Bellwoods Park afterwards.³²⁸

Some of the most salient dimensions of place making among religious minority groups are embodied performance (as described in previous chapters) and the spatial management of

³²⁶ St. Agnes Chronicle. The specific radio and television stations are not named. It is likely CHIN Radio was involved in this coverage. CHIN AM began broadcasting from its College Street location June 6th, 1966. The St. Anthony procession that year was on June 13th. See <https://www.chinradio.com/chin-radio-toronto> for a brief broadcasting history of CHIN.

³²⁷ St. Agnes Chronicle. Estimates for concerts and processions, including the PCM in the Chronicle were provided to the parish by Toronto Police.

³²⁸ St. Agnes Chronicle. The estimates for attendance at religious services held in the parish were compiled by clergy there, usually based on the number of hosts given in communion. Since not all those attending mass received communion these may be low estimates. For the processional route see chapter 2, Figure 2.18: Physical Proximity of Bellwoods (-Trinity) Park to St. Agnes Church.

difference and belonging also referred to as emplacement.³²⁹ For immigrant minorities, religious practices are about remembering a homeland in a new locale while deciding whether to be visible or invisible at the individual and community level.³³⁰ As they make choices about which religious practices to mould to the new setting and which will reside in memory immigrants also make decisions about how they will negotiate, regulate and affirm difference.³³¹ Organizers of the St. Anthony procession and the PCM responded in a creative manner to the spatial configurations of the College Street neighbourhood as they, and clergy, made use of Bellwoods Park.³³² The decision taken by Italian immigrant men and women to attend religious services and concerts associated with the St. Anthony festa in the park ensured they would not only become visible to the larger neighbourhood, but also expose this highly valued religious cultural tradition to potential criticism and themselves to scorn.³³³ The same would be true in the 1970s when College Street was incorporated into the PCM processional route.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the St. Anthony procession was the largest known religious gathering of Italian immigrants in the city. It presented lay organizers of the event, and clergy, with many challenges which, in addition to the overwhelming numbers of attendees, included navigating several different private and public physical spaces within the church and

³²⁹ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 327. Although the focus of this article is the spatial performance of religion, the groups discussed are ethnic, often immigrant minorities. The authors argue "embodied performance, the spatial management of difference and belonging and multiple embedding across networked spaces" intersect in dynamic ways but can be discussed in isolation as well. The focus of previous chapters has been embodied performance. Spatial management of difference and belonging is highlighted the current chapter. Multiple embedding across networked spaces will be the focus of Chapter 5.

³³⁰ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 344.

³³¹ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 344.

³³² Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 336. Religious practices are inherently emplaced as organizers and participants respond creatively to the existing spatial configuration of the local environment.

³³³ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 338.

neighbourhood, addressing Italian-language media interest, the transportation and safety of the important statue, the coordination of various groups who walked in the procession itself, and crowds who watched. In addition to the many other patron saint processions held by groups from various towns, the assortment of religious and secular activities which were always part of the St. Anthony festa allowed organizers to develop expansive networks of information and communication for holding events of different sizes in public neighbourhood space. The experience of hosting the procession during the festa allowed organizers to assess the tolerance of non-Italian residents, police, clergy, and the Archdiocese for religious processions, and to understand the various factors which attracted such large numbers of Italians to attend the St. Anthony procession but not other patron saint events.³³⁴

The remarkable number of Italians who attended the St. Anthony festas in these years was in part due to its long history. As discussed in previous chapters, St. Anthony was an important part of southern-Italian immigrant devotional and cultural life supported by all three Italian parishes during both periods of Italian emigration. Postwar arrivals quickly learned about the importance of St. Anthony in the College Street neighbourhood and understood this celebration as an established tradition for Italians in Toronto. In contrast, the more recent PCM was less well attended from its inception to the early 1970s. While the first PCM was held in 1961, St. Agnes clergy did not sponsor the event until 1965.³³⁵ Approximately 10,000 Italians

³³⁴ Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. There were a variety of close relationships between the men and families of organizers at both parishes that began in the 1950s and extended beyond 1968. Those relationships were embedded in networks of friendship, work, extended family and village/town of origin.

³³⁵ St. Agnes Chronicle. It is not clear what form this sponsorship took. The delay in formally connecting the parish to the PCM meant that for the first few years this event was recognized by founders, and presumably participants, as an Italian immigrant event in all respects.

participated in the procession that year which still featured only the statues of the Dead Christ and Sorrowful Mother.³³⁶

Many who attended came with flowers and candles which they laid at a shrine erected in the sanctuary at St. Agnes. So many people entered the church to lay their gifts that clergy had to allow many to exit through the Sacristy.³³⁷ Large numbers of Italians from beyond the College Street neighbourhood visited St. Agnes at some point during the Easter Holy Week for confession with an Italian-speaking priest.³³⁸ Their attendance at St. Agnes for this purpose during the Easter weekend was likely an annual pilgrimage that, beginning in 1961, allowed them to learn about the PCM and further connected them to the College Street neighbourhood. Those who frequented the parish on Holy Saturday in 1965 would have understood in a visual way the popularity of the PCM from the thousands of candles and flowers which remained on the Sanctuary until Easter Sunday.³³⁹ This may have contributed to the larger numbers who attended the PCM the following year. On April 8th, 1966 25,000 Italians took part in the PCM, more than double the previous year's number.³⁴⁰ This was also the first time a new visual element was added to the PCM which was not connected to the processional memory of organizers and their *paesani* from San Nicola.

³³⁶ St. Agnes Chronicle.

³³⁷ St. Agnes Chronicle. This area of the church is where vestments are kept and where priests prepare for mass. It is highly unusual for laypeople, other than servers, to be in the Sacristy.

³³⁸ St. Agnes Chronicle; Marchetto, "The Catholic Church and Italian Immigration to Toronto," 109, 110. Until 1966 there were only 17 parishes in the metropolitan area offering services in Italian. In 1967 that number grew to 22. Given the large Italian population (by 1971 there were more than 271,000 Italians living in metropolitan Toronto) it is not surprising that many Italians would have established the practice of attending St. Agnes during Holy Week.

³³⁹ St. Agnes Chronicle. Although the St. Agnes Chronicle only records candles and flowers brought by Italians to the PCM in 1965 these offerings were a traditional part of Holy Week devotional activity among Southern Italians which survived the migration process, and likely occurred even at the first PCM in 1961.

³⁴⁰ St. Agnes Chronicle.

Earlier that year, with the help of Father Benvenute³⁴¹, the Dramatic Society at St. Agnes had begun preparing for a five-act, three-hour play titled “Passion of Christ” to be staged during Holy Week.³⁴² The drama was mounted in the church hall and was well-received by the full capacity audience of 450.³⁴³ Although the play was not performed on Good Friday, actors from the drama participated in the PCM that year.³⁴⁴ Unfortunately, it is not clear which characters were represented. Nor is it clear whether the idea to have actors in costume walk in the PCM began with members of the Dramatic Society, Father Benvenute, PCM organizers or if it was perhaps the result of some spontaneous action taken by the actors. But the presence of these young actors walking silently in the procession was the first visual element which did not attempt to recall the San Nicola procession. This was the first creative addition to the PCM resulting from Italian immigrants’ experiences in the College Street area of Toronto. This action began the transformation of the PCM from a practice rooted in historical memory (of San Nicola specifically, and Southern Italy generally) into a hybrid of immigrants’ experiences in two locales as outlined by Chivallon. She proposes that religious practice can be seen as “a symbolic space”³⁴⁵ where immigrants can confront and selectively challenge stereotypes generated by the host society which define them in narrow and largely negative ways.³⁴⁶ In these symbolic spaces

³⁴¹ Father Benvenute Calleja was appointed as assistant to Rev. De Luca at St. Agnes parish in 1965. He remained at St. Agnes until 1968.

³⁴² St. Agnes Chronicle. A play about St. Francis of Assisi was also performed that year. Iori, March 2018. Two plays were performed annually until 1967. One of these was always the “Passion of Christ.”

³⁴³ St. Agnes Chronicle.

³⁴⁴ St. Agnes Chronicle.

³⁴⁵ Chivallon, “Religion as Space,” 461.

³⁴⁶ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 103-04, 118-23 discusses stereotypes of Italian immigrants in Toronto.

immigrants can also confront their own subjectivities associated with the experience of migration and settlement.³⁴⁷



Figure 4.1. The Life of St. Francis of Assisi performed by the Dramatic Society at St. Agnes, performed for the first time at St. Agnes in 1966.³⁴⁸

In interviews Iori and Simonetta described post-war Italian immigrant life as emotionally rich, socially vibrant and intellectually satisfying.³⁴⁹ Both men chronicled the various ways immigrants experienced and expressed a range of emotions including love, joy, surprise, pride, and excitement as they raised families, embraced friendships, engaged in hobbies, learned to speak English and unravel the various confusing aspects of urban life. But more often both men discussed sacrifice, hardship and suffering as the defining feature of migration and settlement, especially connected to brutality in the workplace and the ways work often dominated and

³⁴⁷ Chivallon, “Religion as Space,” 461.

³⁴⁸ Private collection of Rosario Iori.

³⁴⁹ Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

defined their lives.³⁵⁰ On several occasions Iori and Simonetta referred to themselves or Italian immigrants generally with the dehumanizing term *bestie* (animals or beasts of burden).

We worked like animals; this was our only value here. Nobody cared if it was safe. They just pushed us to work faster and faster all the time.³⁵¹

In those days Italians were disrespected in many ways. The English didn't see poor workers around them, on streetcars. They insulted those workers because they were dirty with the aroma of hard physical labour. For them Italians were not humans they were animals. But that work was necessary to build a life. It was necessary to work like animals to eat.³⁵²

The PCM in particular allowed immigrants to contextualize and reframe their experiences as beasts of burden. During the procession immigrants saw sacrifice and dehumanization experienced by the religious figures of Christ and his mother. Through their faith, immigrants were reassured it was their own humanity that allowed them to cope with and overcome attempts to define them only as workers or which, in other ways, marginalized them.³⁵³ Chivallon's work helps to explain how organizers of the PCM began to believe it could become a unifying event ensuring a level of cultural continuity beyond the immigrant generation. Increasingly over this decade immigrant and second-generation organizers came together within the processional space to build a hybrid Italian-Canadian identity. Chivallon does not believe hybrid identity inevitably

³⁵⁰ The men referenced mostly work done by men which mirrored their own experiences. See also: Colantonio, *From the Ground Up*; Rao, *The Lucky Immigrant*; Marino Toppan, *The Voice of Labour: A Life in Toronto's Construction Industry* (Toronto: Frank Iacobucci Centre for Italian-Canadian Studies, U of T, with the Mariano A. Elia Chair, York University, 2004).

³⁵¹ Iori, March 2018.

³⁵² Simonetta, July 2017. For descriptions of the dangerous working conditions and the disregard for safety, see: <https://toronto-city-builders.org/page/z/zanini-bruno/>; Colantonio, *From the Ground Up*, 37-38.

³⁵³ Robert Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016) explores the relationship between religious practices in the contemporary world and modernity. Personal relationships with religious figures are at the centre of this relationship for Catholics. Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) explores the intersubjective nature of social, cultural and religious identities as they are expressed by individuals in feelings of connection with particular religious figures.

arises in religious space. Rather, she envisions the unifying power of hybrid identity to be the result of its openness. The primary characteristics of hybrid identity are the flexibility and permeability of its boundaries when compared with ethnic identities based on national affiliation.³⁵⁴ Within processional practice Italian immigrants and second-generation organizers raised in Toronto did not approach each other as ‘Italians’ encountering ‘Canadians.’ Instead they used processional space and its religious vocabulary to develop an understanding of community which allowed for diversity of individual and generational histories and experiences.³⁵⁵

The first year the procession was held at St. Francis, in 1968, three biblical characters walked the route.³⁵⁶ The two statues Cristo Morto and the Addolorata continued to be of central importance but they were joined by three costumed individuals.³⁵⁷ The Dramatic Society at St. Agnes had been disbanded when Italians left the parish. No similar organization was formed at St. Francis nor is it clear if the two women and one man who walked in the 1968 event were former members of the St. Agnes Dramatic Society.

³⁵⁴ Chivallon, “Religion as Space,” 461, 470-73.

³⁵⁵ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 193-98 summarizes his findings which similarly indicate the evolution of ethnic identity among immigrants and the second generation to be rooted in encounters between individuals and groups with various personal histories and migration and settlement experiences.

³⁵⁶ St. Agnes Chronicle. The move to St. Francis occurred in January 1968. This gave new organizers several months to prepare for the event. St. Francis, as the new Italian national parish, sponsored the PCM from the outset. Anecdotal evidence suggests immigrants from San Nicola again played a significant role in the executive and membership of most new committees formed at St. Francis.

³⁵⁷ St. Agnes Chronicle.



Figure 4.2. Walking along Dundas Avenue, 1969. The St. Agnes Chronicle identifies Frank Noto dressed as Christ. Noto's reasons for assuming the role of Jesus are not known. Nor is it clear if this was his only appearance in the PCM.³⁵⁸



³⁵⁸ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 40.

Figure 4.3. Beatrice Street. The St. Agnes Chronicle identifies Mrs. P. Sciamarella dressed as Mary Magdalene and Maria Pesce dressed as the sorrowful Mother. This is currently the only archival evidence of their participation in the PCM.³⁵⁹

The first PCM at St. Francis was described as a “truly moving and religious exercise.”³⁶⁰ Frank Noto dressed as Christ carried a large wooden cross, Mrs. P. Sciamarella dressed as Mary Magdalene, and a young girl named Maria Pesce dressed as the sorrowful Mother.³⁶¹ They walked the processional route in solemn silence. Despite the cold weather, thousands attended this first PCM but there are no known attendance figures.³⁶²

Three years later in 1970, after the 3pm Good Friday liturgical service, more than 35,000 gathered to watch the procession, surprising both organizers and the six police officers present to help with crowd control. Seventeen additional officers were quickly called in to assist.³⁶³ Organizers, clergy and police were clearly surprised by the number of Italians who took part in the event suggesting a sharp increase at the beginning of the decade. By the end of the 1970s the numbers frequenting the St. Anthony procession fell dramatically while the PCM continued to grow.³⁶⁴

Unlike the St. Anthony procession, the procession on Good Friday appealed to a religious-cultural tradition practiced by Italians from all regions of Italy. By 1970 the long

³⁵⁹ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 39.

³⁶⁰ St. Agnes Chronicle.

³⁶¹ Unfortunately, none of these individuals appear again in archival records that are currently available. They were unknown to all first and second generation organizers.

³⁶² Anna B., December 2018; St. Agnes Chronicle. It is unclear if these costumes were brought from St. Agnes. Italian immigrant women and their daughters designed and produced many of the costumes after the PCM moved to St. Francis. It is not clear if any of these women also produced costumes for religious dramas or the PCM while it was at St. Agnes. Many women worked as seamstresses or in the textile industry.

³⁶³ St. Agnes Chronicle.

³⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the St. Agnes Chronicle appears to end in 1972. It is clear the focus of the parish and clergy at that time continued to be on the St. Anthony procession for its size, complexity, and fundraising potential.

history and predictable nature of these annual events made the transformation of public neighbourhood space into religious-cultural space easier for non-Italian residents and visitors to the area to accept. This in turn increased PCM organizers' confidence in their ability to enlarge the visibility of both the procession and of Italians in the city. To this end organizers worked throughout the 1970s to introduce new dramatic elements into the PCM, to bring more Italians of the immigrant and second generation to the event and to gain the cooperation and involvement of various religious and secular officials in the city.

Lefebvre describes the role of imagination in the construction of urban space. He proposes modern urban spaces to be the result of unexamined (often unconscious) assumptions by urban planners, and architects who play important roles in the physical creation of urban space, the negotiation of relationships between various groups of people who inhabit those spaces, and responses to the attempts of less powerful groups to transform established urban space.³⁶⁵ Over time those assumptions are absorbed by civil servants and others responsible for the management of public space and embedded within bureaucratic structures and institutional memory. This in turn creates resistance in the face of new or different visions for the organization and use of urban neighbourhoods. This is especially true when the new vision is proposed by minority groups with little economic, political or social capital.³⁶⁶ When in the 1970s PCM organizers began to consider the inclusion of College Street into the processional route city officials, police and public transit officials faced a new vision for the use of major

³⁶⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. See Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1974), 361-63 for a brief but helpful discussion of conceived (imagined) and lived (daily use) space and the distinction between the two.

³⁶⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 361-63.

thoroughfares. Secular parades which travelled along roads and disrupted urban life had an established history in Toronto.³⁶⁷ But the same cannot be said for religious processions by ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.³⁶⁸ The support of St. Francis clergy and the Archdiocese of Toronto, who were both familiar with the long history of processional practices by Italian immigrants in the city, was key to the entry of the PCM onto College Street in the 1970s. With the support of the powerful Archdiocese it was possible for Italian immigrants to begin to redefine their relationship to police, local politicians, bureaucrats and transit authorities.

In addition to the impact Italian immigrants had on the neighbourhood through their use of its public spaces in ways consistent with embodiment and emplacement, clergy at St. Francis invited Italian-speaking parishioners to participate in the transformation of various interior spaces in St. Francis church. Liturgical changes announced in Vatican II, changes to Toronto's Municipal building code, and the advanced age of the building resulted in a massive renovation which began in 1972.³⁶⁹ The specific motivation for selecting Italian materials, design and craftsmen for the material and aesthetic changes made to the church interior is unknown. The longstanding presence of Italians in parish life and the consistent and substantial financial support of Italian immigrant parishioners and visitors to St. Francis parish, however, were

³⁶⁷ Goheen, "Negotiating Access to Public Space." Explores the history of parading in Toronto and the meaning given to public space through a process of contentious negotiation between groups and civic authorities.

³⁶⁸ Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades in 19th Century Toronto" explores internal tensions among Irish Catholics and between Irish Catholics and the host society. By the late 19th century this parade, which appears to be the largest and most visible known public event named for a Roman Catholic saint, in Toronto had ended.

³⁶⁹ Aleixo, November 2018. Canadian architect Alex Von Svoboda was commissioned to work with Father Arthur Lattanzi on the renovation which was in its planning stage in 1972. The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, commonly known as the Second Vatican Council, took place in Rome from 1962 to 1965. Various reforms resulted in reconciliation with other Christian faiths and friendship to non-Christians. Changes to the liturgy included the inclusion of languages other than Latin. In addition, priests began to face their parishioners when performing mass and sacraments. Changes were intended to allow for greater parishioner participation in the liturgy.

certainly well understood by parish clergy and the Archdiocese. This reflected the broader prominence of Italian Catholics to the Archdiocese. In 1971 Italians made up one third of all Catholics in the city and the number of Italian-speaking priests in the city had risen to 65.³⁷⁰

Father Gregory Botte played a pivotal role in decisions for the style and materials used in the renovations, in particular a large mosaic titled “The Canticle of Brother Sun” featuring St. Francis of Assisi.³⁷¹ This large work was comprised of tiles made in Venice and artistic work done in Florence. The work was so large it had to be disassembled for safe shipment and then reassembled over a three month period in the parish.³⁷² In addition a new Altar, Baptistry, and Altar of the Blessed Sacrament were all made of pure white Carrara marble imported from Italy and several woodcarvings, statues and six gilded Baroque candlesticks were carved for the parish in Bolzano, Italy.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Lydio F. Tomasi, “The Catholic Church and Italian Immigration to Toronto: An Overview,” *Polyphony* 2, no. 1 (1985): 109.

³⁷¹ “St. Francis,” Word Press, 2010, http://www.stfrancistoronto.org/sfoa_2/?page_id=231. Olga Pugliese, “Beautifying the City: 1960s Artistic Mosaics by Italian Canadians in Toronto,” *Quaderni d’italianistica* 28, no. 1 (2007). Mosaic artwork was being championed in Toronto by Remo Di Carli, who ran Conn Arts Studio. The St. Francis mosaic is one of several created and installed in various public and private locations in the city during this period by Conn Arts. Di Carli and his family emigrated from the Friuli region of Italy in the 1930s and many of the artists and craftsmen who designed and installed the murals were also Italian or the sons of Italian immigrants.

³⁷² “St. Francis.”

³⁷³ “St. Francis.” Woodcarvings included “The Last Supper” inlaid on the main Altar and “St. Francis with the Animals” in the Baptistry. Statues included The Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception and St. Anthony.



Figure 4.4. View of South Transept wood carvings.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ St. Francis of Assisi Parish Archive.



Figure 4.5. The Canticle of Brother Sun. The mosaic is 55 feet tall with up to 360 tiles per square foot. It was constructed in Florence Italy then disassembled and shipped to St. Francis of Assisi parish in Toronto in 1,100 individual crates.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ “Connaught Laboratories Mosaic and the Rediscovery of a Master Artist Alexander von Svoboda,” Heritage Research.com Health Heritage Research Services, March 6, 2020, <http://www.healthheritageresearch.com/alexvonsvoboda/Churches/StFrancisAssisi-DSC01415.jpg>.



Figure 4.6. View of the Sanctuary. New marble Altar with mosaic.³⁷⁶

The cost of these renovations to be carried out by Con-Arts Studio in Toronto was estimated in 1972 to be \$159,000. In 1971 parish expenses totalled \$35,149.98 while income was \$44,381.97 and through various associational activities parishioners raised a further \$32,000 intended to finance renovations. These figures were cited in a letter from St. Francis' pastor Lattanzi to Archbishop Pocock. The letter also predicted that the generosity and commitment of

³⁷⁶ St. Francis of Assisi Parish Archive.

parishioners would likely ensure all debt incurred for the project would be paid completely within three years.³⁷⁷ Such fundraising and financial support by the overwhelmingly Italian immigrant working-class parish community is surprising. During the 1970s Italian immigrants continued to engage in low-paying or seasonal work as they raised children and paid mortgages. Given their financial constraints it might be expected they would have few resources to share with parishes. The monies contributed are persuasive evidence of a powerful and enduring commitment to St. Francis church and the devotional activities there. It is also a potent indication of the financial importance of this ethnic group to the parish, and of the role of churches and religious devotional activity in the lives of Italian immigrants and increasingly of their children who, as teenagers and young adults, attended many of these fundraising events. Cash contributions were routinely collected by organizers during various patron saint festas, in particular during processions. This included the PCM. All of those donations were given over to St. Francis parish to be used at the discretion of clergy.³⁷⁸ Unfortunately, none of those records are available. Collection drives led by clergy to fund the renovation were also held. Most of the recorded donations were made by families with Italian last names in amounts between \$10 and \$100.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Rev. Arthur Lattanzi, "Letter to Archbishop Pocock," January 4, 1972, St. Francis of Assisi Church Archive, Toronto. Rev. Lattanzi was born in Italy in 1913. The date of his arrival in Toronto is unknown but he served at St. Francis of Assisi from 1970 to 1976.

³⁷⁸ Aleixo, November 2018; Iori, March 2018; "Il Comitato di Arte e Cultura Italiana: Organizzatori delle Processione della Chiesa di S. Francesco d'Assisi di Toronto," Meeting minutes, May 5, 1989, St. Francis of Assisi Archive, Toronto. In 1989 during the PCM \$14,000 in donations was collected along the processional route.

³⁷⁹ "Draft Letter of Thanks to Parishioners of St. Francis," St. Francis of Assisi Archive, Toronto. This draft written in Italian is addressed to parishioners and described in accompanying notes as part of a pamphlet to be distributed "as a souvenir" after repayment of the renovation debt. The draft also includes a "List of Contributors to Date" and records their names, addresses and donation amount. It is unclear if the pamphlet was later produced.

The use of Italian materials, workers and design was well-known and supported by Italian immigrants in the neighbourhood who attended the many parish fundraisers.³⁸⁰ While they were not aware of specific amounts contributed to the parish by Italians as a group, immigrants were certainly aware they dominated the parish numerically on Sundays, in associational life, and as attendees at the various parish events where donations were collected. These physical and seemingly permanent changes to the structure of the church were interpreted by Italian immigrant parishioners and their children as a validation of their place in the parish and respect for their financial and cultural contributions to church life.³⁸¹ [

The renovations and the subsequent consecration and dedication of the altar to Father Polticchia solidified the parish as Italian space not only in the past and present but also into the future.³⁸² This act in the renovated church further rooted the sense of Italian presence in the parish and neighbourhood for PCM organizers and the thousands who would be told about it in subsequent visits to St. Francis on Good Friday. It can also be assumed to have made an impression on young people who, as will be described below, either lived in the neighbourhood or continued to visit even as they lived farther away from the College Street area and established their own nuclear families. This sense of uncontested Italian-Canadian presence, and the increasing sense of belonging, present in the parish and the neighbourhood in culturally distinct

³⁸⁰ St. Agnes Chronicle. In 1972 approved fundraising activities for the renovation project included spaghetti suppers, dances, a raffle held during the St. Anthony festa, a three-day bazaar to be held before the St. Anthony festa and bazaars to be held at various times during the year.

³⁸¹ Aleixo, November 2018. Father Botte's vision for the renovation may have resulted from his deep connection to, and feelings of affection for Italian parishioners and his knowledge of their historic presence in Catholic life in the College Street area. He was supportive of their processional practices and encouraged the input of Italian immigrants and their children regarding parish life.

³⁸² "St. Francis." The altar was dedicated to Father Riccardo Polticchia in 1976 in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination. Father Polticchia was an important and well-known priest who had served Italian immigrants since the 1930s.

ways in the 1970s, helped to transform the feelings of Italian men and women who remembered the experience of being on College Street during the years when husbands and brothers could be arrested / detained for loitering or not “moving along.”

Unfortunately, after 1972, there appears to be no source similar to the St. Agnes Chronicle which records processional activity at St. Francis. There is also a distinct absence of information about the PCM from the archival record generally.³⁸³ The richest source of information for the PCM in the 1970s comes from the photographic record,³⁸⁴ and the memories of those involved. Vincenzo Pietropaolo began photographing the processional activities of Italian immigrants as a teenager in the 1960s. As a boy Pietropaolo immigrated with his parents from Maierato, a town located approximately twenty kilometers from San Nicola, in Calabria. As a resident of the College Street neighbourhood he was well acquainted with processional practices there. The PCM became a lifelong subject of his work.³⁸⁵ His collection offers a valuable opportunity to understand the chronology of the PCM’s development and its presence in the College Street area on Good Friday. Additionally Pietropaolo’s work captures the deeply emotional experiences of immigrant women as they occupied College Street during the annual procession. Italian immigrant women’s voices are often elusive in scholarly work, including this one. The photographs below provide a sense of how Italian women’s religiosity was expressed in urban space.

³⁸³ Access to the Archive of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto (ARCAT) is currently limited to the period before 1961. Much of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish Archive is not currently accessible.

³⁸⁴ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*. This chronologically organized volume is a study of the PCM. It includes photographs from the 1970s to the 2000s.

³⁸⁵ Pietropaolo, December 2017. The family were long-time residents of the College Street neighbourhood. Pietropaolo left the neighbourhood shortly after his marriage in the 1970s but often returned to visit with friends and family and to photograph its residents in daily life, during the PCM and other processions.



Figure 4.7. Women kneel on Grace Street as statues of saints are carried past them. Notice the rosary held by the older woman wearing the headscarf.³⁸⁶



³⁸⁶ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 80.

Figure 4.8. Mother and son watching the PCM.³⁸⁷ Note the differences in the facial expressions and body language of the mother and the men behind her.

Robert Orsi uses the idea of ‘presence’ to describe how and why Italian American women’s religious practices incorporated particular saints into narratives about their own lives.³⁸⁸ Presence captures the various literal, physical and embodied relationships between people and heavenly figures.³⁸⁹ Statues of saints in churches and homes, prayer cards, rosaries, the recitation of prayers, and the consumption of the host during mass are all examples of the way saints and Jesus Christ regularly appear in people’s external and internal lives. Orsi argues it is through the objects themselves and their use during devotional activities that women create and nurture real and ongoing relationships with religious figures.³⁹⁰

Regular dialogue, expressed through prayer and embodiment, with favoured saints is one way women continually reaffirm their religious beliefs and commitment. During the PCM kneeling on roads or sidewalks appears to have been an exclusively female practice and may be an indication of presence in the lives of Italian immigrant women in Toronto. Testimony collected for this work revealed the way immigrant women adapted home altars, modified daily prayers and were generally more vocal about experiences of suffering and sacrifice during Holy Week. Perhaps the spontaneous acts of prayer and kneeling in public during the PCM were also the result of the frequency and intensity of devotional activity during this period which brought immigrant women together in public as well as in churches and private homes. On Good Friday Italian immigrant women could speak directly to Holy Mother Mary (and other religious figures)

³⁸⁷ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 84.

³⁸⁸ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*.

³⁸⁹ See Orsi, *History and Presence* for a detailed discussion.

³⁹⁰ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 102-12.

by positioning their bodies and engaging in prayer and religious hymns to publicly express the fear and suffering they experienced as immigrant women. Perhaps these actions were also expressions of the courage and strength immigrant women knew they possessed and had used to overcome the challenges they faced in their new urban setting. Second-generation women who joined PCM committees described the frequent expressions of religiosity in phrases like “aiutaci o Dio” (help us oh Lord”) “forza Santa Maria Maddalena” (stay strong Saint Mary Magdalen) and “per l’amore di Sant’ Antonio” (for the love of St. Anthony) by the immigrant women during their annual work as organizers of the PCM. Second-generation women explained their PCM organizational efforts as a way to publicly enact and express their own religiosity which was different in form but not intensity from that of the immigrant women who knelt during the procession.

Isabel M. and Anna B. were both raised in the College Street neighbourhood and participated in the PCM from the time they were children. Isabel M became a volunteer at St. Francis in her teens and eventually took on a leadership role in character recruitment and artwork for the PCM. Her father was a local entrepreneur and well acquainted with Simonetta and other Italian immigrant men who formed the executive of the PCM committee.³⁹¹ Anna B is Simonetta’s daughter and has intimate knowledge of the work of various organizing committees as they took shape in the 1970s. She also became a volunteer helping with costumes and co-

³⁹¹ Isabel M., interviewed by author, December 2018. From her childhood the family lived within easy walking distance of St. Francis parish. The church was a place of relief and comfort during a difficult adolescence. Isabel noted with affection her relationship to Father Gregory Botte, who acted as advisor and mentor, even after he left the parish. See Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 196-97 for a detailed account of her involvement with the PCM and her portrayal of Veronica.

ordinating participating actors on the day of the procession.³⁹² As was the case with the narratives of PCM founders (Iori and Simonetta) these interviews are not approached as representative of the experiences and views of second-generation ethnics or of second-generation women broadly. Rather, these testimonies captured the very specific experiences and reflections of two women who were both part of the event as it evolved from a local Italian-immigrant parish activity into an Italian-Canadian Easter tradition. They were thoughtful observers of the relationship between the growth of the PCM, changes in the College Street neighbourhood and its relationship to Italians who increasingly lived and worshipped in suburban neighbourhoods.³⁹³ By 1975 the majority of new parishes offering Italian services were along the north west corridor running through the boroughs of York and North York.³⁹⁴ This reflected a preference for homes in suburban neighbourhoods.³⁹⁵

Throughout this decade the organizational framework for a much larger PCM was put into place as established and new organizing committees and volunteers worked to understand the most popular elements of the procession and use them to attract suburban Italians to St. Francis on Good Friday. More statues were added to the procession, and Italian men constructed the platforms on which they were carried. Fresh flowers were both a decorative and devotional

³⁹² Anna B., December 2018. Her involvement with the PCM and St. Francis generally was informal in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite this as a member of the Simonetta family she had a great deal of knowledge about the inner workings of committees and individuals involved in shaping the evolving vision for the PCM. Anna had a particularly close relationship to her sister Filomena Simonetta and several other committee members. Anna became involved more formally with the PCM in the years following her sister's death.

³⁹³ Lydio Tomasi, "The Italian Community in Toronto: A Demographic Profile," *International Migration Review* 11, no. 4 (1977): 488, Table 2 "Italian Migration to Canada 1946-73. According to Canadian and Italian Sources." A dramatic drop in immigration from Italy to Canada is recorded for the period 1968-1973. Before that period the College Street area acted as a landing site for new immigrants. The drop in new arrivals in the 1970s was noted in the St. Agnes Chronicle and by immigrant and second generation PCM organizers.

³⁹⁴ Marchetto, "The Catholic Church and Italian Immigration to Toronto," 110.

³⁹⁵ Mario P. Venditti, *The Italian Ethnic Community of Metropolitan Toronto* (Master's Thesis, York University, 1976) describes this suburban residential pattern with special attention to North York.

element which mirrored the practice of laying flowers by the Christ statue in the Sanctuary as described above. Artistic elements were added to the procession in the form of textiles, prints, props, and various robes for participants. The figure of Jesus taken up by Giuseppe Rauti was already an annual fixture.³⁹⁶ When Rauti arrived in the College Street neighbourhood from Chiaravalle Centrale in Calabria, just under twenty kilometers from San Nicola da Crissa, the PCM was already an annual event. It reminded him of the procession held on Good Friday in his native town and helped him to feel at home in the new urban setting.³⁹⁷ Neither Rauti nor the other narrators recalled when he began to portray the character of Jesus.³⁹⁸ But all recalled new characters were introduced shortly thereafter. During the procession executive members of the organizing committee (all Italian immigrant men) identified themselves as leaders of the event by wearing sashes and assuming important roles during the PCM including directing crowds, collecting donations, and handing out prayer cards and song sheets as they were incorporated into the event. Finally, flags became important visual components which identified for participants and observers the connection between Italy, the Vatican and Italians in Toronto captured by the procession. Handmade banners identified groups from the parish, and beyond, who began to participate in the PCM over the 1970s. As they had during the St. Anthony processions loudspeakers and music became important for maintaining a devotional environment

³⁹⁶ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 198-99. Giuseppe Rauti arrived in the College Street area as a husband and father in the 1960s. His annual participation in the PCM as Jesus is a personal act of faith. He has become so connected to the PCM that strangers sometimes respond to him by asking “Are you Jesus?” and some St. Francis clergy began to jokingly refer to him as *Gesu* (Jesus). He was preceded in this role by Frank Noto. See above for a photo of Noto portraying Jesus.

³⁹⁷ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 198-99 for a detailed description of Rauti’s reasons for participating in the PCM.

³⁹⁸ Giuseppe Rauti, interviewed by author, December 2018.

as clergy used the powerful equipment to encourage participants and observers to participate in religious songs and prayers rather than chat with each other.



Figure 4.9. Children with *Ecce Homo* (Behold the Man, The Flagellation of Christ). The statue was carried in the PCM in 1975.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 33.



Figure 4.10. Beatrice Street, 1975. Note the heavy wooden cross carried by Giuseppe Rauti leading the small group, and the three statues carried on a large platform surrounded by fresh flowers. Rauti began portraying Christ in 1970. He continues to perform this role annually.⁴⁰⁰

⁴⁰⁰ For the first time since 1961 the PCM was cancelled in April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic measures. Rauti would have participated. Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 43.



Figure 4.11. Grace Street, 1975. The Vatican City flag and young boys dressed as monks and as altar boys. The torches and wooden crosses had to be assembled.⁴⁰¹



Figure 4.12. Grace Street, 1971. Women dressed as mourners carrying whip, crown of thorns and nails on pillows all made or collected by volunteers. The bier on which the Christ statue lay

⁴⁰¹ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 49.

during and after the procession is just visible in the top right. The bier was made by a volunteer.⁴⁰²



Figure 4.13. Clinton Street, 1971. Father Isidore De Miglio leading a prayer on the loudspeaker.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 47.

⁴⁰³ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 52.



Figure 4.14. Grace Street, 1970. Members of the organizing committee wearing sashes and holding torches helping to direct the procession back into St. Francis. The statue known in Italian as *la Pietà* (The Sorrow) on a decorated platform was incorporated into the PCM.⁴⁰⁴

As the photographs in this chapter demonstrate, not all of the processional route was crowded with observers or participants throughout the 1970s. In addition to unfavourable weather conditions, adjustments made to the route from year to year may have meant Italians from outside the parish who came to watch the PCM did not know the route well enough to gather in those areas. The densest crowds assembled along the roads, sidewalks, and open spaces around St. Francis. It is unclear when and by whom the decision to move onto College Street was made. The mix of cars, streetcars and pedestrians not connected to the procession moved along roads, sidewalks and across intersections encountering processional statues, musical bands, characters with props, marchers who walked in the event and observers who stood on the sidewalks along College Street. This became a chaotic mix. The photographs below give

⁴⁰⁴ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 55.

physical form to the disruption. The first photo taken in 1979 suggests little impact for the normal use of College Street during the PCM. The following two photos taken a year later tell a different story.



Figure 4.15. St. Francis prayer group on College Street, 1979.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁵ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 53.



Figure 4.16. Intersection of College and Beatrice Streets, 1980. The streetcar is moving eastbound on College Street.⁴⁰⁶



Figure 4.17. Intersection of College and Beatrice Streets, 1980. The streetcar is moving westbound on College Street.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 71.

⁴⁰⁷ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 71.

Over the 1970s the expansion in the size of the procession and its route was achieved through the vision and efforts of volunteers, the support and involvement of clergy, and the participation of Italian families who travelled to St Francis and the PCM from various locales throughout the city. It is impossible to know when families began to attend only the procession without participating in religious services in the church. By the end of the 1970s suburban Italians could perform their Holy Week devotions in a neighbourhood parish with Italian-speaking priests and services. These parishes conducted their own services and offered confession so there was no need to travel to St. Francis for access to Italian-speaking priests. In interviews, organizers described their sense that many of those who took part in the PCM in the 1970s were returning to a neighbourhood to which they felt connected in positive way.

Oh my goodness College Street was where it was at in the 70s. Definitely everyone went there. They came because there was so much going on. You know the cafes were really getting popular. Well this was still with just the Italians really. The cafes were full of people eating gelato or drinking cappuccino or just hanging around. People of all ages, young families too. Other people started coming later, in the 80s and 90s I think. A lot of people came for the procession in the 70s. On Good Friday they went to the church (St. Francis) for mass, all of that. You know a lot of families had been doing it for years, so it was a tradition for them to come to College Street on Good Friday. Little Italy was a fun place for Italians then. You would meet people you hadn't seen for years there, so it was kind of like going back in time. People would remember the things they did together. I think it was like going home even for people who hadn't ever lived there.⁴⁰⁸

It was so busy all the time. Weekdays, weekends all the time. There were still all the little shops and places to buy Italian things. Groceries, shoe stores, gifts all those types of things that Italians wanted but maybe they couldn't find where they were living. A lot of Italians were moving to the suburbs, but they were still coming to College Street to shop. The young people came too, young families or just groups of guys and girls. They would come for coffee or just to walk up and down, along the side streets. My father's café (Bar Sport Café) was still around and even though it wasn't right on College a lot of people would go there. Maybe they were mostly residents from the area I don't remember exactly. Actually others who didn't live here probably also went because paesani used to get together like that, and that café had been around for twenty years by then, so it was

⁴⁰⁸ Isabel M., December 2018.

well known. There were other little cafes on the streets around College, but it was the main street for people in those days. Everyone knew College Street. They liked it there.⁴⁰⁹

The emotional sense described above of comfort, sociability and belonging during normal time⁴¹⁰ were the result of relationships to the neighbourhood parish, residents and various practices like the PCM as well as the freedom to move about in public spaces. Former residents, members of extended families and larger groups of *paesani* reunited in St. Francis church and along the processional route. This act of coming together in this neighbourhood, which was undeniably marked in many immigrants' historical memory as Italian immigrant space, became a part of Easter for many families.⁴¹¹ PCM organizers knew from their experiences with the St. Anthony procession that large numbers of Italians (beyond Calabrians) would travel to the College Street area to attend an important religious-cultural event. Organizers and clergy realized the PCM was increasingly the reason many Italians were attending St. Francis on Good Friday. Together with young people who were taking on leadership roles in the parish, clergy and organizers worked to make the PCM a bigger and better event each year.

Oh yes we worked on it (the PCM). There were lots of us young people who used to hang around in the church. There were clubs and a youth group, so it was a very busy place. Italian parents were ok with kids being involved in social things at church. The priests were always around keeping an eye on things so I guess parents felt nothing 'bad' could happen. Especially with the girls, well we were teenagers then. The priests used to encourage me to get involved in activities there. Then when I went into a graphic design program at college they said, "oh great you can do all the artwork." So I did all kinds of things like the bulletin, posters for processions, sure all of that. It was kind of natural I guess. I was there all the time, so I got involved in things. I'm sure it was the same for most of us.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Anna B., interviewed by author, August 2018.

⁴¹⁰ Kong, "Religious Processions," 243.

⁴¹¹ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 79-81.

⁴¹² Isabel M., December 2018.

Young women were actively involved in associational life at St. Francis in the 1970s and were behind an organizational effort which helped control and direct the growth of the PCM. Children born shortly before or after their parents arrival in Toronto in the 1950s and early 1960s grew into adulthood in the 1970s.⁴¹³ Parents were happy for their daughters to become involved in associational life at St. Francis as teenagers.⁴¹⁴ Priests there had long been aware of the difficulties faced by the children of Italian immigrants as they learned to merge their Italian immigrant homes and cultural experiences with Canadian schools and cultural life. Father Gregory Botte had a particular interest in serving the needs of troubled families and youth. He visited homes and engaged Italian parents wherever he could in an attempt to build rapport and discuss problems, especially around the lack of dialogue between parents and youth who, in addition to a generation gap, also had to navigate cultural gaps which were revealed in relationships with non-Italian peers.⁴¹⁵ He encouraged youth to become involved in associational life at the parish. By the time he left the parish in 1976 Father Botte was a well-respected confidant to many youth and advisor to many immigrant parents.⁴¹⁶

Some young women continued to be active in associational life at the parish into their twenties and beyond. Over the 1970s they became increasingly important members of the PCM

⁴¹³ Tomasi, "The Italian Community in Toronto," 497. More than half of Italians in the 1971 Census were under the age of 25.

⁴¹⁴ "Minutes St. Francis Youth Club," December 17, 1978, St. Francis of Assisi Archive, Toronto. Includes a membership list which appears incomplete. It contains the names addresses and phone numbers for 28 members and an executive of 3 males and 8 females. The list of activities planned by the executive and members for the month of December includes Christmas Eve Caroling, Christmas Disco and Mass for Youth members.

⁴¹⁵ Anna B., August 2018; Gina V., interviewed by author, November 2011; Isabel M., December 2018; St. Agnes Chronicle. The women drew distinctions between various peers. They identified similarities between their own experiences as the children of Italian immigrants and the children of other non-English speaking immigrants. But described cultural differences between themselves and peers whose parents were immigrants of British descent and those whose families had been Canadian-born for several generations.

⁴¹⁶ Aleixo, November 2018.

volunteer group, absorbing knowledge and skills from older women who continued to help informally with the PCM. In years to come these young women transferred their knowledge and skills to new volunteers.⁴¹⁷ It appears new sub-committees grew organically as a result of young women's increasingly collegial relationship with parish priests who began to take greater interest in the annual procession on Good Friday by the middle of this decade.

All of that work was done by my sister and other women. She was a teenager when she started working on the procession and never stopped. It took a lot of work and organization to pull off the procession every year so there had to be committees. Those were just young women who were already involved at St. Francis and started helping. The parish secretary guided them. She was Italian too and she went to school here so you know she understood how things should work. She knew everyone involved, so she helped them get organized and sort of showed them how to set things up. She was great.⁴¹⁸

There was such a feeling of faith when we were all working together. The older generation doing what they knew and the young people doing our thing. It was so special.⁴¹⁹

Through their own initiative and with the support of clergy and the consent of immigrant men organizing the event (including Simonetta) young women created PCM subcommittees that organized and assigned the many tasks which accumulated as the procession grew each year. Young, often single, women both attended and ran regular meetings that brought volunteers together and helped create and communicate a common vision for what the PCM could become in the Italian community. In addition they provided much of the labour for those subcommittees.⁴²⁰ The parish secretary helped the subcommittees to establish more formal meeting times and a structure with leaders, clear divisions of labour within committees, and

⁴¹⁷ Anna B., August 2018.

⁴¹⁸ Anna B., August 2018.

⁴¹⁹ Isabel M., December 2018.

⁴²⁰ Aleixo, November 2018.

methods of communication. The secretary in turn collected copies of meeting minutes and acted as a central source of knowledge for everyone involved with the PCM. She also ensured clergy were kept informed of all plans made by the various committees.⁴²¹

The growth of the PCM over the 1970s was due in large part to the work done by the various committees for months prior to and on the day of each procession. Before Holy Week women on the food and drinks committee walked to neighbourhood shops and sent letters or visited Italian-owned businesses located nearby in the St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Road area as well as various suburban locations. They collected, sorted and stored items or arranged for the delivery of food like pizza, *panini* (Italian-style sandwiches) cookies and pastries. They also collected soft drinks, water and coffee. A young woman who was a police constable acted as liaison and led a small committee which communicated with police during the planning stage and on the day of the PCM. An advertising and artwork committee spent weeks designing and creating posters and pamphlets which were posted around St. Francis and in smaller versions included with the weekly bulletin at the start of Holy Week. Some of their materials were also distributed to neighbourhood Italian-owned businesses. At some point late in the decade a small recruitment committee was formed to encourage parishioners at St. Francis to participate as biblical characters. They assembled at the back of the church on several Sundays chatted, answered questions and collected the names of interested parishioners as they exited the various services. Finally a costume committee worked to design costumes, purchase materials and sew costumes and robes for participants.

⁴²¹ Isabel M., December 2018. She was a member of the artwork/advertising committee and later character recruitment.

This was by far the most labour intensive committee. In addition to creating costumes women also laundered, ironed, sorted and labelled the garments. They created lists for the distribution of clothing and ensured individuals were properly dressed. On the day of the PCM members of the costume committee gave characters instructions for their place in the procession and the demeanour they should maintain. The women on the committee also helped to assemble lists of props which increasingly became part of the PCM. Many of these props were made by immigrant men and women of various ages.

On the day of the procession women who had collected food and drinks took control of the kitchen where they provided refreshments to the many participants, clergy, police and dignitaries. Many of the women who made up these committees saw only small segments of the PCM because they continued to work behind the scenes in the parish basement which acted as central command for the annual event. Many women were also unofficial members of a clean up committee. They stayed behind for several hours after the procession ended to organize and decide how to distribute remaining food and drink, collect and prepare costumes to be laundered and any number of other activities.⁴²²

Confirming the idea that women's work is invisible, neither Simonetta nor Iori⁴²³ talked about this important involvement by women in the parish. Other than Mena (short for Filomena) Simonetta, they did not recall the names of specific women involved in the organization of the PCM. Many of those who joined the various committees were related to each other or men on the

⁴²² Aleixo, November 2018; Anna B., August 2018; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁴²³ In the case of Iori this was true while the PMC was at St. Agnes. In the early 1970s he moved out of the neighbourhood in the early 1970s and transferred his volunteer efforts to his new parish. He maintained personal relationships with members of St. Francis and participated annually in the PCM by helping to carry the important *Cristo Morto* statue.

organizing committee by birth or marriage. Mena is a notable example of this phenomenon. She was Simonetta's daughter, Anna B's sister and later married Joe M. His family were also long time residents of the College Street neighbourhood active in the St. Francis parish and the PCM. Mena was also responsible for bringing many of her peers into the annual procession as members of committees or characters in the *Via Crucis*. She died from cancer in 2010 at age 50. In the narratives of male organizers Mena was often referenced by her early death, deep religious faith and personal commitment to the PCM rather than her specific contributions to the growth of the procession. Otherwise women were mentioned only in the broadest terms as unnamed seamstresses who provided costumes worn by characters. In contrast, the women interviewed were able to identify by name and contribution many of the women and men from both generations who were involved with the PCM in different periods. Establishing the record of women's contributions to the PCM is important for understanding the internal dynamics of this immigrant community event and its evolution over three decades.

Interestingly, young men's involvement with the procession is harder to identify. Interviews indicated sons often followed their fathers but mostly in informal ways not reflected in documents currently available.⁴²⁴ Setting up temporary barriers, cleaning and moving statues into place, returning them to the church and cleaning up after the event were all activities with which young men were said to be involved each year. Immigrant men who held positions on the original organizing committee at St. Francis remained in their positions for decades.⁴²⁵ This may help to explain why young men's involvement is not recorded.

⁴²⁴ Anna B., August 2018; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁴²⁵ Aleixo, November 2018; "Il Comitato Direttivo del: Catholic Association Organizing Committee for Religious and Celebrations Held St. Francis of Assisi and Church," Letter, 1992, Simonetta Documents.

The exception to this is Joe M who is credited with encouraging a connection between the PCM and Italian immigrant clubs and associations as they emerged throughout the 1970s.⁴²⁶ As a result of his own extended family and social networks and making use of the networks developed through the St. Anthony festa, many Italian-immigrant organizations established a tradition of participating in the event annually.⁴²⁷

As the PCM changed over the 1970s the visual appearance of the College Street neighbourhood became more ethnically distinct. Buzzelli argues building facades and the outdoor areas nearby can be read as expressions of agency by ethnic minorities who want to claim public space.⁴²⁸ This is another way Italians made themselves more visible in the College Street neighbourhood. As the PCM route took participants along various streets, changes made to the physical landscape were another way embodiment and emplacement transformed this urban space. These changes were already evident in the 1960s as families transformed their backyards into urban gardens. Over the 1970s more and more Italian-owned homes along Euclid Avenue, Grace Street and Beatrice Avenue could be identified from their physical appearances.⁴²⁹ “Found materials” like discarded galvanized water pipes were used to build pergolas (grape arbours) which in addition to producing grapes for homemade wine were valued for the shade under

⁴²⁶ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!* 143-47, 152-56 describes the proliferation of associations devoted to patron saints which began in the late 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s. Robert Buranello and Michael Lettieri, “Italian Regional Organizations” in *The Luminous Mosaic: Italian Cultural Organizations in Ontario*, eds. Julius Molinaro and Maddalena Kuitunen (Toronto: Soleil Publishing, 1993), 154, 159. While they do not reference processions on Good Friday specifically the authors describe various religious activities organized by village and regional groups. Additionally, the authors note a trend away from narrow village identities and activities in favour of more inclusive regional and national identity built in part through expanded networking among the executive and membership of Italian cultural groups.

⁴²⁷ Isabel M., December 2018.

⁴²⁸ Michael Buzzelli, “Toronto’s Postwar Little Italy: An Urban Ethnic Landscape Study” (Master’s Thesis, McMaster University, 2007).

⁴²⁹ Vincenzo Pietropaolo, *Not Paved with Gold: Italian-Canadian Immigrants in the 1970s* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2006), 56.

which families could sit together. The now iconic tomato plants became a common and abundant feature of large vegetable plots in backyards sometimes along with a few chickens or rabbits, contained in homemade coops.⁴³⁰ While many of these features could be found in suburban neighbourhoods where Italians lived, unlike the College Street area, most of those gardens/areas were not visible to passersby from the sidewalks and roads.



Figure 4.18. Pergola on Euclid Street, winter 1985.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ Pietropaolo, *Not Paved with Gold*, 57, 59, 62.

⁴³¹ Pietropaolo, *Not Paved with Gold*, 58.



Figure 4.19. Tomato plants under clothesline, Euclid Avenue, 1976.⁴³²

⁴³² Pietropaolo, *Not Paved with Gold*, 59.



Figure 4.20. Raising rabbits, 1977.⁴³³



⁴³³ Pietropaolo, *Not Paved with Gold*, 62.

Figure 4.21. Euclid Avenue, 1971. Nonna with grandchild, basil plants being started for spring planting in the basket in the foreground and in one on the bench.⁴³⁴

Jordan Stanger-Ross recorded the feelings of deep connection to College Street among young people whose families had immigrated from Pisticci, Basilicata and Siderno, Calabria. As Isabel M and Anna B described above, walking along College Street in the evenings in the 1970s was a favorite activity because of the sense of belonging and ownership which continued to exist there,⁴³⁵ likely fueled in part by the familiar visual landscape and daily practices they saw in that neighbourhood. As one young man stated, “College Street was my street...my street” where he could meet with friends and freely “roam around.”⁴³⁶ This was a distinctly different sentiment than was recalled by Iori and Simonetta about the 1950s and 1960s. As friends roamed the neighbourhood they recognized the homes as Italian by the arches added to entrances, plaster or cement statuary near verandas, and the language/dialects spoken by people they passed tending gardens, resting in the shade of pergolas, or playing with grandchildren.

By the early 1970s Café Diplomatico had opened on College Street and established one of the first outdoor patios in the city.⁴³⁷ In addition to serving espresso-style coffee Café Diplomatico and other cafes in the area began offering cappuccino and gelato as well as providing comfortable indoor and outdoor seating areas where a wider variety of patrons were encouraged to linger. The new atmosphere was designed to attract families and young people, including young Italian-Canadian women who began to use public neighbourhood space for

⁴³⁴ Pietropaolo, *Not Paved with Gold*, 61.

⁴³⁵ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 100.

⁴³⁶ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 100.

⁴³⁷ “About Café Diplomatico,” Café Diplomatico Restaurant and Pizzeria Since 1968, YP Dine, 2020, <http://www.cafediplomatico.ca/about-us/>. Rocco Mastrangelo Sr. opened Café Diplomatico in 1968. It was certainly not the first Italian café to open in the College Street neighbourhood, and not the only one offering patio service in the 1970s.

socializing and leisure in ways their mothers had not.⁴³⁸ The Italian names of Café Diplomatico, Bar Sport Café and those of other neighbourhood businesses continued to be another way this neighbourhood was ethnically marked.⁴³⁹ By the end of the 1970s College Street and its surrounding residential roads were an example of Italian-Canadian space, now largely uncontested, created through embodiment and emplacement during ‘normal’ time as well as during religious processional events.⁴⁴⁰



Figure 4.22. Friends enjoying the seasonal patio outside Bar Sport Café, 41 Clinton Street.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Simonetta, July 2017. In the 1970s he began serving gelato as families and young single women began to frequent the café. However, it was still unusual for Italian immigrant women who had arrived in Toronto in the 1950s and 1960s to come into his café, even with their husbands. See also interview excerpts with Isabel M. and Anna B. above for more on young women and families in cafes.

⁴³⁹ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 72. Riviera Gifts, Casa Loma Furniture and Appliances, and a sign advertising spaghetti, ravioli, lasagna and Italian sandwiches at the intersection of Beatrice and College Streets.

⁴⁴⁰ Kong, “Religious Processions,” 238, 243.

⁴⁴¹ Personal archive of Giuseppe Simonetta.

College Street was one of several centres of Italian life in Toronto in the 1970s,⁴⁴² but its long history as an Italian enclave made it unique. Over the decade this neighbourhood attracted Italians, including many second-generation young people and families who had not been residents. Francesca S never lived in the College Street neighbourhood. But in the 1970s she visited the area with her husband and young children to shop because “going to College was an outing ... the traditional escape.”⁴⁴³ The aptly though not ethnically named Sidewalk Café she frequented was a popular place where her husband could speak in his Sicilian dialect with the owner while their children ate gelato.⁴⁴⁴ By the 1970s Italian dialects had been a common sound in public neighbourhood space for decades.

Nicholas Harney has described how particular urban spaces become identified as Italian space. He calls attention to the cognitive maps created by immigrants and their children which reflect “intriguing disjunctures in the relation between space and community” resulting in a kind of transnational mapping.⁴⁴⁵

Harney reproduces an anecdote in which members of a university Italian-Canadian student federation were asked the question “Where is Sora?”⁴⁴⁶ They responded by giving the location of the Sora social club in Toronto.⁴⁴⁷ Like their parents, these young people were aware that social (and religious) events provided an opportunity to recapture a familiar cultural space not through the act of recreating the old space but by “fostering of a new sense of belonging in a

⁴⁴² Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 104.

⁴⁴³ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 104.

⁴⁴⁴ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 104.

⁴⁴⁵ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 141.

⁴⁴⁶ Sora is a city located in the Lazio region.

⁴⁴⁷ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 139.

new community and a new place, with extended kin and friends, while...[also]... asserting a continuity with the land of emigration.”⁴⁴⁸ The same phenomenon was at work as the organizers of the PCM struggled in this decade to create an emotional experience within the processional route which married the religious devotional practices of Southern Italy with the vivacity and lived experiences of Italian immigrants and their children in Toronto. It is in large part within this struggle that Chivallon’s hybrid identity is located.

Over the next two decades Simonetta played a pivotal role in garnering the support of powerful individuals for the PCM. His initiatives would be responsible for bringing politicians, police, city officials and bureaucrats into the annual event. Neighbourhood police often entered Simonetta’s café and got to know him. Local politicians and neighbourhood agencies were also familiar with the café and developed relationships with Simonetta who became an active supporter of various community events within and beyond the St. Francis parish.⁴⁴⁹ During the 1970s Simonetta was elected the director of ushers at St. Francis, director of the committee which oversaw all processions at the parish, and he became the unofficial spokesperson for the PCM.⁴⁵⁰

By 1970, Johnny Lombardi’s CHIN Radio was well-established in the College Street neighbourhood and well-known in the Italian immigrant community throughout the GTA. Lombardi’s grocery store had operated on College Street since 1946 and was one of the few places Italian food products could be purchased until the mid 1950s. In addition he was an

⁴⁴⁸ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 141.

⁴⁴⁹ Anna B., August 2018; Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

⁴⁵⁰ Aleixo, November 2018; Anna B., August 2018.

established promoter of Italian musical events in the city.⁴⁵¹ By the time the PCM had moved to St. Francis parish in 1968 CHIN operated both AM and FM stations and aired 60 hours of Italian programming weekly.⁴⁵² In the 1970s Lombardi's profile in the Italian immigrant community grew as CHIN was the only media company offering daily Italian-language programming which included news, entertainment and call-in programs allowing listeners to comment on a variety of topics.⁴⁵³ This along with Lombardi's gregarious and engaging personality and outspoken pride in his Italian heritage made him a natural ally of his neighbourhood's PCM. Lombardi and his wife were married in St. Agnes parish in the 1940s and were well known to clergy there. Lombardi's sister was a regular church-goer in the parish and often gifted packages of food to clergy from the family grocery store where she also worked.⁴⁵⁴

In the 1970s, Lombardi's youngest daughter was a member of the Youth Group at St. Francis which organized and ran activities for young people at the parish.⁴⁵⁵ While Lombardi did not regularly attend religious services he was well-informed about the various activities which took place at St. Francis and of the long-established and highly valued processional practices

⁴⁵¹ In the 1950s Lombardi began bringing singers from Italy to perform concerts at the Eaton's store theatre hall at College and Bay, and soon after to Massey Hall, the O'Keefe Center (now the Hummingbird Centre), Roy Thompson Hall and Maple Leaf Gardens (now a multi-use facility known as Ryerson's Mattamy Athletic Center). "Johnny Lombardi," CHIN Radio, CHIN Radio Canada, 2018, <https://www.chinradio.com/johnny-lombardi>. CHIN Radio's first offices and studios were located above the Lombardi Supermarket on College Street.

⁴⁵² Lenny Lombardi (President, CHIN Radio/TV), interviewed by author, August 2018.

⁴⁵³ Lombardi, August 2018. The television version of *Festival Italiano di Johnny Lombardi* was broadcast from CKVR Television located in Barrie by 1970. From 1974 to 1990 the weekly program had moved to GLOBAL Television (in 1985 CITY TV also began carrying it). Television programming was in addition to daily Italian-language programs on CHIN AM and FM.

⁴⁵⁴ Lombardi, August 2018.

⁴⁵⁵ "St. Francis Youth Club Minutes," December 17, 1978, St Francis of Assisi Archive, Toronto. Donina Lombardi (youngest child) was listed as a member of the Youth Group.

among Italian immigrants in the neighbourhood where he lived and worked throughout his life.⁴⁵⁶

Italian language programs were hugely successful on CHIN and Lombardi's skills as a promoter of Italian-language events made him a powerful ally of the PCM. There is little evidence that clergy or organizers sought Lombardi's help to promote or cover the event.⁴⁵⁷ But through CHIN Lombardi did both in the 1970s and for decades afterwards.⁴⁵⁸ It is difficult to assess the impact this attention had on the number of families who learned about and decided to attend the PCM.⁴⁵⁹ Given the popularity and reach of CHIN in the 1970s its promotion and coverage was likely the reason many suburban Italian families who had no personal connection to the College Street area learned about the procession's existence and perhaps led to their attendance. CHIN's reach extended to non-Italian Catholics as it provided programming to an expanding number of different ethnic groups in the city. It is not clear if the PCM was promoted or covered by other ethnic programs on CHIN AM or FM.

The introduction of multiculturalism policy by Pierre Trudeau's government in 1971 coincided with organizers efforts to enlarge the physical space taken up by Italians during the PCM. Although Brian Mulroney's government passed the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, for PCM organizers of both generations Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was credited with recognizing and valuing the contributions of Italians in Toronto.⁴⁶⁰ One goal of the policy

⁴⁵⁶ Lombardi, August 2018.

⁴⁵⁷ Aleixo, November 2018; Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

⁴⁵⁸ Lombardi, August 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

⁴⁵⁹ Michele Amatiello, "CHIN Radio and its Listeners: A Negotiation in the Post-War Commerce of Ethnicity," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 33, no. 1 (2012): 63-82.

⁴⁶⁰ Anna B., August 2018; Iori, March 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 305 describes the increasing importance of postwar immigrants as political constituencies in

described by Trudeau in 1971, to breakdown discriminatory attitudes towards minority cultural groups in Canada, spoke directly to the Iori and Simonetta experiences in the 1950s and 1960s. Simonetta noted the changing attitudes of police towards Italian men in the 1970s and the disappearance of the move-along directive to be the by-products of the new policy.⁴⁶¹ For Isabel M and Anna B Trudeau's other stated aim, that culture could be chosen and Canadians should be able to choose the culture(s) to which they belonged, was powerful. Both women described the PCM's popularity among the second generation in the 1970s to be one consequence of the greater respect given to traditional cultural practices embraced by the 1971 policy.⁴⁶²

In 1977 *The Heritage Languages Program* (HLP) was introduced into Ontario schools. HLP employed teachers from various ethnic communities to hold classes for minority children so they could gain a deeper understanding of their cultural and linguistic communities and develop more positive self-esteem connected to their respective ethnic heritage. Classes were held in public schools in a variety of ways including integrated extended-day, before, after school and summer school programs.⁴⁶³ When the HLP began a large pilot program was already underway in Toronto.⁴⁶⁴ Both these endeavours gave Italian immigrant children who participated another

the 1970s and the churches and community organizations with which they were associated as increasingly vocal about policy formation, especially as it impacted immigrants.

⁴⁶¹ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁴⁶² Anna B., August 2018; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁴⁶³ See G. Feuerverger, "'On the Edges of the Map': A Study of Heritage Languages Teachers in Toronto," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 13, no. 1 (1997): 39-53 for an assessment of the program's implementation by HLP teachers.

⁴⁶⁴ "International Language Elementary (ILE) Program," Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2020, <https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/InternationalLanguages/Pages/default.aspx>. The pilot program implemented by the Toronto Catholic District School Board involved fourteen schools and began in 1973. Marcel Danesi and Alberto Di Giovanni, "Italian as a Heritage Language in Ontario: A Historical Sketch," *Polyphony* 11, nos. 1-2 (1989): 91-94 describe the private efforts to teach standard Italian to the second generation prior to the introduction of Heritage Language policy. These privately-run classes for children were often located in church basements. The authors also discuss the challenges and benefits of teaching students who understood and

common language and allowed them to better understand the Italian-language radio and television programming preferred by their parents. Perhaps most importantly for the first time the HLPs (and soon afterwards high school Italian-language courses offered in addition to French) brought Italian into schools in a positive and tangible way. Many immigrant children were accustomed to hearing Italian (though often in dialect form) at home and English at school with an invisible but powerful barrier separating their lived experiences in both places. Italian-language school programs made it possible for the second generation to see that barrier was not impassable and encouraged the children of immigrants to broaden their ability to speak and take pride in standard Italian, which was increasingly spoken by their parents, especially when they were in public places.⁴⁶⁵

In suburban neighbourhoods throughout Metropolitan Toronto Italian families from different regions lived next door to each other and often socialized with one another. Neighbours living side by side on one North York street were Sicilian, Friulian, Calabrian and Abruzzesi. When adults (all immigrants) spoke to each other over backyard fences or across kitchen tables it was in standard Italian without dialect intruding and with less *Italiense* than might be expected. The same use of standard Italian was observed in area shops, the local parish or other public places where Italian immigrants from different regions encountered one another.⁴⁶⁶

spoke Italian dialects which had incorporated English words in speech patterns, albeit with restructured pronunciations and grammar.

⁴⁶⁵ Speaking standard Italian as would be heard on the radio became more common as immigrants from different regions increasingly spoke to each other. Radio and television helped immigrants to improve their ability to speak standard Italian. Danesi and Di Giovanni, "Italian as Heritage Language," 92. Children enrolled in Heritage Language shared knowledge with their parents and grandparents which increased the latter's ability to distinguish between standard and dialect versions of Italian.

⁴⁶⁶ Vienna Paolantonio, observations by the author, March 6th, 2020. Marcel Danesi, "Canadian Italian: A Case in Point of How Language Adapts to Environment," *Polyphony* 7, no. 1: 111-14. *Italiense* describes the phenomenon of incorporating English language words into Italian (standard and dialects) and the process of borrowing English

In the 1970s many Italian immigrants in Toronto were no longer newcomers. They, often with the help of their children (typically from very young ages), were well versed in navigating Canadian bureaucracies at various levels and had well established routes to employment and rich social lives. Many became Canadian citizens in the 1970s and were an important constituency for politicians at all three levels of government.⁴⁶⁷ Immigrants and their adult children became participants in societal debates that took place throughout the 1970s about Canadian nationalism and multiculturalism as ideology, ethos and public policy and understood the potential impact for Italian Canadians. This was especially true for the adult children of immigrants who were assuming positions within ethnic organizations alongside the immigrant generation.⁴⁶⁸ Ideas about equality, diversity and heritage that took shape in positive public discourse about the contributions of immigrants generally, and of Italians specifically, were embraced by organizers of the PCM.⁴⁶⁹ The language of multiculturalism provided both generations of PCM organizers another way to describe and explain to each other and various authorities the larger public presence they envisioned for the annual event. By the end of the decade the PCM would become known throughout the city as The Good Friday Procession. This English-language title for the annual event was not supported by Simonetta or Iori but accepted as an inevitable if unfortunate

words and modifying them to reflect standard and dialect Italian patterns of speech in place of the standard Italian equivalent. For example, *store* becomes *storo* rather than *negozio*.

⁴⁶⁷ Clifford Jansen, *Factbook on Italians in Canada* (Toronto: York University Institute for Social Research, 1987), 19, 74. By 1981 85% of all Italians in Canada had Canadian citizenship; 79% of Italians in Toronto had Canadian citizenship.

⁴⁶⁸ N. Harney, *Eh Paesan!*, 74.

⁴⁶⁹ Anna B., August 2018; Iori, March 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. All remarked on a positive change in the public perception of Italians which began slowly in the 1970s. All of them connected these changes to an increasing tolerance for diversity in Canadian society generally rooted in multiculturalism policy. They also remarked the positive attitudes did not necessarily extend to all cultural practices.

consequence of reaching out to the second generation. Both men have always referred to the procession by its original title *La Processione di Cristo Morto*.

The second generation who were born shortly before or after their parents arrival in Toronto entered adulthood, post-secondary institutions, the workforce and established their own households in the 1970s and 1980s. With the help of new discourses surrounding multiculturalism, second-generation organizers embraced the hyphenated identity Italian-Canadian which gave voice to their lifelong experiences within two cultural contexts.⁴⁷⁰ They were well acquainted with the negative stereotypes applied to their mothers, fathers and grandparents but did not carry the weight of them in the same way.⁴⁷¹ As this group joined the founding generation of PCM organizers their combined but distinct skills and enthusiasms fuelled the procession's growth. In the 1980s this powerful combination would result in the PCM reaching a new level of organizational complexity and the confident declaration by organizers that it had become the largest religious procession in North America.

⁴⁷⁰ Bruno Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada Yesterday and Today* (Toronto: The Marino A. Elio Chair in Italian-Canadian Studies, 2016), 42-49 describes the variety of ways Canadian-born Italian Canadians embraced and expressed their hyphenated identities.

⁴⁷¹ Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, 43 describes the different educational and occupational patterns of the second generation which placed this second generation outside older stereotypes rooted in the low educational levels and occupational status of the immigrant generation.

Chapter 5: “The Biggest Procession of its Kind in North America”⁴⁷²

The 1980s were a time of dramatic change for the *Processione di Cristo Morto* (PCM) and Italians on College Street. The number of Italian-origin residents in the area fell dramatically from 12,000 in 1971 to around 5,000 in 1981.⁴⁷³ There were still a number of Italian-owned businesses aimed at meeting the daily needs of families, and cafes where locals and Italian visitors to the area gathered. But Italians were a much smaller presence in this neighbourhood which had become home to a growing number of Portuguese immigrants through the 1970s.⁴⁷⁴ Other urban and suburban neighbourhoods, especially the area around St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street, had many more Italian-Canadian residents of both the immigrant and second generation.⁴⁷⁵

It was in this context that organizers worked to make the PCM the largest, most visible, widely accepted religious procession in Toronto,⁴⁷⁶ and a symbolic vehicle for expressing a more positive public image of Italian Canadians. Giuseppe Simonetta, with the support of the organizing committee and clergy at St. Francis, remained an important point of contact between the PCM and powerful actors in Toronto. In ways described by Vasquez and Knott organizers found ways to connect Italians across urban space and national borders by promoting the PCM as

⁴⁷² Giuseppe Simonetta, “Giuseppe Simonetta to Emilio Mascia,” Letter, Toronto, February 15, 1990, Translated from Italian, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Over the 1990s this phrase was used in media releases and invitations issued by Simonetta in his role head of the organizing committee for the PCM.

⁴⁷³ Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian*, 31. Figure 6: Italian origins population of College Street Little Italy, 1961-1991.

⁴⁷⁴ Domingos Marques and Manuela Marujo, “Early Portuguese Settlement in Toronto’s Little Italy,” in *College Street Little Italy: Toronto’s Renaissance Strip*, eds. Dennis De Klerck and Corrado Paina (Toronto: Mansfield Press, 2006), 107-17.

⁴⁷⁵ “Selected Characteristics for Component Census Sub-divisions of the Census Metropolitan Area” (Census of Canada, 1986). The number of Italians was given as 24,680 in York Centre, North York 85,760, Etobicoke 32,235, and Vaughan 25,855.

⁴⁷⁶ Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

a relevant event for all Italians. Women's leadership was crucial to this endeavour and expressed in the form of initiatives designed to expand the size and impact of the *Via Crucis* (Stations of the Cross). Italian language newspapers and television became important partners for transforming the identity of the PCM into an Italian-religious-cultural event rather than a traditional practice of Sannicolesi or Calabrians more broadly. The *Corriere Canadese* in particular emphasized the unique historical relationship between Italians, the PCM and the Little Italy designation of the College Street neighbourhood. This narrative helped organizers to position the PCM, and its route, as an opportunity for the realization of new ideas about diversity and tolerance captured in the Multiculturalism Act. In the context of popular discourses about diversity associated with multiculturalism as practice, as well as policy, politicians declared their support for the PCM by accepting invitations to participate in the devotional practice with Italian Canadians. Larger and generationally mixed crowds continued to endorse the procession and spurred PCM organizers' efforts to have the processional route closed to traffic so Italian Canadians could temporarily but completely transform and control this urban space.

Organizers of both generations believed increasing the number of Italians along the processional route was key to ensuring the ongoing cooperation of powerful local officials including the local city councillor, mayor and police chief as well as transit officials. Organizers were happy to welcome all Catholics to the PCM. However, none of them actively worked to bring non-Italian Catholics to the procession in the 1980s. Simonetta, Isabel M. and Anna B. were explicit in their commitment to the PCM as an Italian-Canadian event, and their belief that the ongoing success of the PCM was dependent on the dominant presence of Italian-Canadian bodies as participants and observers. As the numbers of Italians attending the St. Anthony

procession began to drop dramatically after 1980⁴⁷⁷ the procession on Good Friday became the only vehicle with the potential to ensure public space in the neighbourhood, and especially College Street, continued to be understood and used as religious-cultural space by Italians of all generations in Toronto.⁴⁷⁸ Organizers' ongoing concern with the primacy of embodiment in claiming public space even after two decades of continuous processional practices is consistent with Knott's contention that the body is the primary place where local cultural orders play themselves out. Not only do bodies become a representation of that order but they are conditioned and disciplined by it as they move through all public space.⁴⁷⁹

For organizers the increasing numbers of Italians who attended the PCM was understood as proof that changes they made to the procession, which included a greater emphasis on the *Via Crucis* were in step with the religious and cultural sensibilities of this postwar ethnic group which now included three generations. As will be described in more detail below, Simonetta and the other organizers fought to maintain control of the event by seeking road closures to harden the borders around the Italian-religious cultural tradition on Good Friday. In previous decades

⁴⁷⁷ "Il Comitato di Arte e Cultura Italiana E Organizzatori delle Processioni della Chiesa di S. Francesco D'Assisi di Toronto" ("Committee of Arts and Culture and Organizers of All Processions at St. Francis of Assisi Church"), Meeting minutes, Toronto, May 5, 1987, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Clergy announced the upcoming St. Anthony procession would be reduced from two full days of activities to only one day, including church service and procession. All events were to take place on Sunday. A request to limit spending for entertainment to no more than \$1,300 suggests a decline in attendance was accompanied by a drop in funds raised during the event. This may have made clergy more cautious of costs for hosting the event. Father Angelo Bucciero, "Application for Permission to Hold a Parade," The Metropolitan Board of Commissioners of Police, Toronto, October 21st, 1988, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Only 2,000 were expected to attend the St. Anthony procession in 1989.

⁴⁷⁸ The Little Italy Business Improvement Association was formed in 1985 with a mandate to draw patrons to businesses along College Street (from Shaw to Bathurst Streets) by highlighting the Italian history of the neighbourhood. These efforts helped to maintain the area's reputation as Toronto's Little Italy by drawing attention to traditional foods and secular cultural activities. Jason Hackworth and Josephine Rekers, "Ethnic Packaging and Gentrification: The Case of Four Neighbourhoods in Toronto," *Urban Affairs Review*, 41 (2005): 211-36. Explores the connection between BIAs and their surrounding neighbourhoods including the College Street neighbourhood.

⁴⁷⁹ Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," 158.

the many Italian residents and their daily practices made the College Street area's association with Italian ethnicity appear to be an organic and inevitable one to organizers. But over the 1980s Italian families settled into suburban neighbourhoods farther away from College Street and its small Italian population. Suburban Italians began attending Italian-language churches as well as frequenting the businesses and services which became available in their own neighbourhoods.⁴⁸⁰ In addition, another urban neighbourhood of importance in the postwar period maintained its Italian population. In the early part of the decade, St. Clair Avenue West became a gathering place and potentially a replacement for College Street to thousands who wanted to celebrate their Italian heritage and identity in public.

Although the St. Clair neighbourhood did not have a historical pedigree to compare with College Street, it was well-known among Italian Canadians. Italian immigrants who arrived in the city during the 1960s often bypassed the College Street area making their first homes in the St. Clair neighbourhood instead. Although neither Simonetta, Anna B. nor Isabel M. described the St. Clair Avenue West area as a rival for the affections of Italian Canadians in the city, all of them described it as another popular place for Italians to gather. With family and paesani networks, religious services,⁴⁸¹ goods and services readily available on the streets near St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street many immigrants had no need to leave their neighbourhood beyond work. Italian immigrants and their children likely developed the same emotional sense of

⁴⁸⁰ "Selected Characteristics for Component Census Sub-Divisions of the Census Metropolitan Area." Listed by ethnic origin the following suburban areas had the largest number of Italians: North York (85,760), Etobicoke (32,235), Mississauga (27,930), and Vaughan (25,855).

⁴⁸¹ St. Clare, St. Alphonsus Liguori and San Nicola di Bari Roman Catholic churches were all easily accessible to Italian speaking Catholics residents.

comfort and belonging in this urban area as had happened for immigrants in the College Street locality.

Michael Buzzelli has studied the St. Clair neighbourhood and described the impact Italian business owners had on the visual landscape in that area which was similar to College Street.⁴⁸² He describes the area around St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street as the largest postwar Italian-immigrant settlement area after the College Street Little Italy and the Italian presence in public places of this neighbourhood to be as strong as in the College Street area over the same period.⁴⁸³ According to *The Italo Canadian Commercial Directory* there were at least 61 listings for businesses offering services in Italian in the College Street area in 1971-72 when the population was still quite high. In comparison in the same year the area along Dufferin Street from St. Clair Avenue West to Eglinton Avenue West listed 349 businesses.⁴⁸⁴ Cafes and sidewalks in the St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street area were also important gathering places for men in the 1960s, but no information is available concerning the enforcement of the move-along directive.⁴⁸⁵

Perhaps inspired by the ongoing popularity of the PCM, on Palm Sunday in 1984 the Italian Pastoral Commission organized a *Via Crucis* procession along St. Clair Avenue West between Lansdowne Avenue and Dufferin Street. The Italian Pastoral Commission was created in 1970 to coordinate Italian-language priests and give them a greater voice in church

⁴⁸² Buzzelli, *Toronto's Postwar Little Italy*, 1. As early as 1961, 30,000 Italians lived near St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street. This population continued to expand through the 1970s and was maintained through the 1980s.

⁴⁸³ Buzzelli, *Toronto's Postwar Little Italy*, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ *Italo Canadian Commercial Directory* (Toronto: Charles Caccia & Associates, 1972).

⁴⁸⁵ There is a general lack of scholarship about the move-along directive but see chapter three above for a brief discussion. No residents of the St. Clair neighbourhood were interviewed for this project.

administration. The commission also tried to cope with the rising demand for religious feste and processions by incorporating them into the bureaucratic structures of the church. In addition the Commission worked to control the formal religious elements (masses and processions) within feste. These actions did not go unchallenged by the regional and village social and religious clubs which sponsored these devotional occasions.⁴⁸⁶ Although there is no mention of road closures in newspaper coverage, photographs taken during the St. Clair procession suggest closures were likely in place. Fifty thousand Italians attended the event, which included a large cast of costumed actors and props in a dramatic performance of the Stations of the Cross.⁴⁸⁷ Little is known about the organization of the event and it did not become an annual tradition. Currently, the only available evidence of this *Via Crucis* is found in the *Corriere Canadese*.⁴⁸⁸

The newspaper was invited by the Italian Pastoral Commission to attend the dramatic production and present it to readers.⁴⁸⁹ In more direct and explicit language than had been used by organizers of the PCM the *Corriere* commented on the symbolism of Christ's journey for Italian immigrants. Captions which accompanied photographs in the newspaper explained the appropriateness of holding the St. Clair procession on the urban thoroughfare by drawing a parallel between the dramatic scenes in the procession and the experiences of Italian immigrants. Like Christ and his Mother in the *Via Crucis* it was on roads and sidewalks that Italian

⁴⁸⁶ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 149-51.

⁴⁸⁷ "50,000 italo-canadesi hanno volute dirgli 'Siamo al tuo fianco,'" *Corriere Canadese*, April 18-19, 1984, 18.

⁴⁸⁸ Unfortunately, public access to archival material held by the Archive of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto is currently limited to the period before 1961. In the 1980s the *Corriere Canadese* was an exclusively Italian language newspaper published weekly. In the 1990s it was published twice weekly. The majority of articles were still written in Italian but some were written exclusively in English.

⁴⁸⁹ "La Via Crucis: un momento magico per la comunita, abbiamo detto insieme "Siamo tutti fratelli," *Corriere Canadese*, April 18-19, 1984, 16.

immigrants suffered as they laboured first to survive and then to thrive in Toronto.⁴⁹⁰ To explain the large crowd which attended this event the *Corriere* described the same hunger to experience Italian religious devotions during Easter among immigrants in Toronto that Iori described earlier as having been the inspiration for the first PCM.⁴⁹¹ In newspaper coverage examined in this chapter the *Corriere* does not note the regional origins of attendees at the *Via Crucis* which takes place on St. Clair Avenue West or any of the processions on College Street.



Figure 5.1. 1984 *Via Crucis* on St. Clair Avenue West sponsored by the Italian Pastoral Commission.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ “50,000 italo-canadesi hanno volute dirgli ‘Siamo al tuo fianco,’” 18.

⁴⁹¹ “Un ricordo di un giorno ... al nostro paese,” *Corriere Canadese*, April 18-19, 1984, 19.

⁴⁹² “50,000 italo-canadesi hanno volute dirgli ‘Siamo al tuo fianco,’” 18.



Figure 5.2. The caption reads: The Calvary retraced on St. Clair: How Moving!⁴⁹³

Interestingly, none of the immigrant- or second-generation organizers of the PCM recalled this event. When asked directly if they remembered any Easter procession which rivalled the PCM in size and complexity all replied in the negative. It seems unlikely that PCM organizers would not have known about this procession held in such close proximity to their own or noted that it took place on Palm Sunday, one week before the PCM. The hybridization of the PCM to include a dramatic performance of the *Via Crucis* did not take place until 1987 but it is clear from photographic evidence in the previous chapter that numerous elements of the 14 Stations of the Cross had been in place for several years prior to 1987. Indeed, the St. Clair Avenue West procession may have encouraged PCM organizers to envision the greater dramatic potential for their own event.

In addition, at the beginning of the decade, Simonetta and the other organizers knew many suburban Italian parishes were serving large numbers of Italian-Canadian families during

⁴⁹³ “Il Calvario ripercorso a St. Clair: che commozione!” *Corriere Canadese*, April 18-19, 1984, 17.

Holy Week before Easter. This included traditional all-night vigils and, according to word of mouth, small processions on Good Friday.⁴⁹⁴ Simonetta described these events in ways similar to his description of the first PCMs held at St. Agnes; very small parish-based events limited to a few residential streets circling a parish, or around the church parking lot.⁴⁹⁵ Both Isabel M and Anna B also talked about the efforts of PCM committees and clergy, and of Simonetta in particular, to make the event more attractive to Italian families who increasingly lived farther away from College Street and St. Francis parish.⁴⁹⁶

As described by Vasquez and Knott, place making is in part the result of criss-crossing translocal flows and networks across physical spaces.⁴⁹⁷ Finding ways to connect individuals who live separately becomes increasingly important as minority groups settle in diverse ways into urban space. This is complicated by generational status and daily experiences that produce variations in ethnic identity which may not give primacy to traditional religious practices. In this context, increasing visibility becomes an important and appropriate strategy for the expression of a unified (if not universal within the group) religious cultural identity.⁴⁹⁸ Three processes are involved in creating translocal networks which allow minority groups to maintain community across distance. The first is to identify a specific place as important for nurturing community. For

⁴⁹⁴ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 149-50. Already by 1971 there were thirty-three Italian-language parishes throughout Metropolitan Toronto. They served more than 840,000 Italian families, many headed by immigrants. Although only 14% of Italian speaking priests came from southern Italy all Italian speaking clergy were familiar with the importance of processional practices among Toronto Italians. It is likely clergy in Italian-language parishes responded with small processions on Good Friday. For example, in the 1970s St. Augustine of Canterbury in North York began to hold a small procession on Good Friday in which clergy led parishioners outdoors around the church parking lot and back into the nave. This became an annual event. Vienna Paolantonio, author's personal recollection.

⁴⁹⁵ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁴⁹⁶ Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁴⁹⁷ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 340. The three processes described are intertwined but separated here for heuristic purposes.

⁴⁹⁸ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 339.

PCM organizers this continued to be the roads and sidewalks connecting St. Francis parish and College Street. Second is the ability to express through shared traditions real and symbolic connections across time and space which allow differences within the group to be minimized. Organizers understood the PCM to be the ideal traditional practice to bring together immigrants, their children and increasingly their grandchildren, temporarily minimizing differences of generation, Italian region of origin, degree of religious devotion and personal experience of dislocation through emigration. Finally, a willingness to engage with powerful representatives of the state in contested space is intrinsic to the transformation of urban space by religious ethnic minority groups.⁴⁹⁹ When Simonetta and the PCM organizing committee encountered resistance in the form of refusals by police and hesitancy by some civic officials to support road closures on Good Friday, they responded by refusing to relinquish control of the PCM or change their use of neighbourhood space for religious cultural practices. Organizers of both generations were determined they would control and direct the content and choreography of this annual event. Only the suggestions of clergy with regard to the content of the PCM were given consideration. Testimony made it clear that the processional route was determined by the organizing committee and would include College Street.

As has been described earlier, translocal networks connecting Italian immigrants to one another were well-established in Toronto through the 1970s. PCM organizers' efforts to enter these networks was further expanded in the 1980s by inviting Italian-language media into the processional space. In addition to CHIN Radio and Television, various Italian-language media in

⁴⁹⁹ See Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 340-43 for a different example of these processes at work.

the city and beyond were invited to promote and cover the event. In so doing organizers were able to reach Italian Canadians whose personal networks were not already connected to the PCM.

The *Corriere Canadese* first included a photo and brief caption about the PCM in 1982.⁵⁰⁰ A single photograph and small caption described the procession as a popular annual event attended by local politicians and Italian Consular officials (all unnamed).⁵⁰¹ Over the next few years the newspaper ran photographs with small captions and articles about the PCM.⁵⁰² A 1983 headline proclaimed at least 60,000 people attended and noted by name and title the participation of various groups and individuals from Italy. For example a folk music group from L'Aquila in Abruzzo, the president of the *Coltivatori Diretti* (Farmer's Association) of Abruzzo, Italy's Finance Minister, and the Consul General of Italy walked in the PCM. The same year Toronto's first catholic mayor Art Eggleton and his deputies Jim Coutts and Dan Heap (who was the Member of Parliament for the constituency which included St. Francis church) also participated.⁵⁰³ In other years Liberal Member of Parliament Sergio Marchi, and Rosario Marchese a Toronto School Board member in the 1980s, attended. The *Corriere* was an important vehicle for ensuring Italian speakers from throughout metropolitan Toronto knew the PCM was an ongoing annual event. The photographs of political leaders which appeared, and the

⁵⁰⁰ A survey of the *Corriere Canadese* published two weeks before Good Friday until the week following Easter from 1961-1982 found many articles of various lengths and photographs about Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter. Articles included discussions of religiosity, and the religious significance of specific events, cultural traditions in Italy, processions and passion plays in other cities and countries. The first reference to the PCM in Toronto occurred in 1982.

⁵⁰¹ "Solonne processione del 'Cristo Morto,'" *Corriere Canadese*, April 13-14, 1982, 5.

⁵⁰² "La Passione di Cristo secondo Toronto," *Corriere Canadese*, March 30-13, 1983, 18. "Tutti insieme, come una volta, in Italia," *Corriere Canadese*, April 24, 1984, 4. "Toronto vuol dare l'ultimo addio al Cristo," *Corriere Canadese*, April 3-4, 1985, 22.

⁵⁰³ Le processioni del Venerdì Santo seguite da almeno 60,000 persone," *Corriere Canadese*, April 5-6, 1983, 5.

individual participants and groups from Italy highlighted in descriptions, helped to remind readers of what organizers believed to be the Italian event's increasing position of prominence and legitimacy in the city. Organizers also emphasized the ongoing relationship between the PCM, Italian Canadians in Toronto and various Italian regions including Puglia, Abruzzi, Campania, Campobasso and Calabria.⁵⁰⁴

Understanding the nature of the relationship between ethnic and religious minorities and various representatives of the state remains central to understanding how minority groups continuously adapt public space over time.⁵⁰⁵ Road closures in the 1980s became *the* issue which mobilized PCM organizers and drove the relationship between police, local officials, and organizers represented by Simonetta. Although clergy did have some contact with all of these groups, it was Simonetta who sought out and nurtured those relationships (including with the media) for the benefit of the PCM.⁵⁰⁶ As organizers grew confident about the support of politicians like Eggleton, Marchese and Marchi, they were able to imagine an even larger and more extravagant Good Friday event.

PCM organizers efforts to close vehicular access to College Street during the procession included nurturing a strong demonstration of support by local representatives of the state.

⁵⁰⁴ Simonetta, July 2017. These regions are all located in southern Italy. These regional connections appear to have begun in the 1980s and were ongoing thereafter. "Processione del 'Cristo Morto' Venerdì Santo – 14 Aprile 1995, Ore 1:30," List of clubs and associations, representing different regions, to carry statues in the 1995 PCM, Toronto, 1995, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

⁵⁰⁵ Kong, "Religious Processions," 227.

⁵⁰⁶ Aleixo, November 2018. Simonetta was the primary point of contact for media, political figures and others who became involved with the event. In part this was due to clergy's refusal to treat the PCM as a media spectacle or vehicle for vote getting by politicians. However, clergy did not try to limit Simonetta's use of his own expansive personal and professional networks to draw attention and dignitaries to the annual event. It seems unlikely that road closures would have been put in place without the support and perhaps active efforts of clergy, but as stated earlier access to archival records at both St. Francis church and ARCAT is limited to the period before 1961.

Without access to the collections of the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto or St. Francis of Assisi church it is impossible to know the scale of these efforts. However, Simonetta's testimony and private archival collection makes clear bringing politicians into the procession was considered key to gaining their support for the procession and Italian Canadians. Simonetta indicated both elected and unelected members of local government were especially responsive to requests framed within the context of tolerance for diversity. Simonetta was convinced his ability to contextualize the PCM as an important cultural (rather than religious) practice was an effective strategy for attracting the interest of politicians at the local and provincial level. By the 1990s the success of this approach was evident as Ontario Premier Bob Rae, New Democratic Member of Provincial Parliament Tony Silipo and San Nicola born Rosario Marchese, who was now the Minister of Culture and Communication in Ontario, walked in the PCM.⁵⁰⁷ But this plan of action had been implemented much earlier. In addition to mayor Art Eggleton with whom Simonetta had a well-established relationship, Italian-Canadian politicians were the first to be courted. Toronto's first Italian-Canadian city councillor was elected in 1960 to the ward which included the St. Clair neighbourhood. Joe Piccininni held his seat for twenty-five years.⁵⁰⁸ It was not until 1980 that College Street Little Italy had its first Italian-Canadian representative on Toronto City Council.⁵⁰⁹ Joe Pantelone was elected in that

⁵⁰⁷ "Honorable Bob Rae," Letter, Toronto, February 12, 1991, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. "Mr. Tony Silipo," Letter, Toronto, February 12, 1991, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. "Honourable Rosario Marchese," Toronto, February 12, 1991, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

⁵⁰⁸ Piccininni was born in Toronto to Italian immigrant parents in 1922. He represented Ward 3 Corso Italia-Davenport from 1960 to 1985. The branding of this area is likely connected to the formation of the Business Improvement Association which formed in 1984.

⁵⁰⁹ Art Eggleton was the local councillor for the College Street area from 1969 to 1979. Eggleton was elected mayor in 1980 and served until 1991. Anna B., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. During his time as city councillor in the 1970s Eggleton visited Simonetta's Bar Sport Cafe on Clinton Street as a patron. During these visits he became

year and served for almost twenty years.⁵¹⁰ All three politicians walked in the PCM but Pantelone, and mayor Eggleton, were cited by Simonetta and Anna B as important allies of the procession during the 1980s when organizers faced numerous challenges which threatened the annual event.⁵¹¹

Inspired by crowds which grew larger every year both clergy and second-generation women worked to incorporate more visual elements to represent all fourteen stations of Christ's last journey.⁵¹² This required not only a greater number of individual characters and props but also a way to create enough physical space between the various stations so attendees would be able to recognize and understand each one. In addition, the long-standing participation of different musical bands providing religious music, religious-and village-based associational groups and school children who had long participated in the event also needed to be accommodated. Road closures were necessary to allow for all these processional elements to co-exist. Residential streets were effectively (though not officially) closed to traffic because the thousands of attendees who stood and walked along those streets, took up all the available road space so that there was no way for cars to enter. College Street, however, continued to be only partly available to the PCM. In the early part of the decade, cars and streetcars continued to travel along one side of that roadway.

well acquainted with Simonetta and his involvement with St. Francis parish processional activities, in particular Simonetta's commitment to the PCM as a unifying force within the Italian-Canadian community.

⁵¹⁰ Joe Pantalone was born in Sicily in 1952 and emigrated with his family to Toronto at age 13.

⁵¹¹ Anna B., 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵¹² Isabel M., December 2018. Clergy helped organizers to understand each station of the *Via Crucis* and the various historical elements which allowed organizers to develop characters through costumes, props, and detailed stage direction. This process began in the 1980s and continued throughout the 1990s as different pastors joined St. Francis of Assisi. This included the return of Father Gregory Botte in 1992; he remained at St. Francis until his death in 2012. See Appendix B for a list of pastors and associate pastors at St. Francis of Assisi from 1968 to 2000.

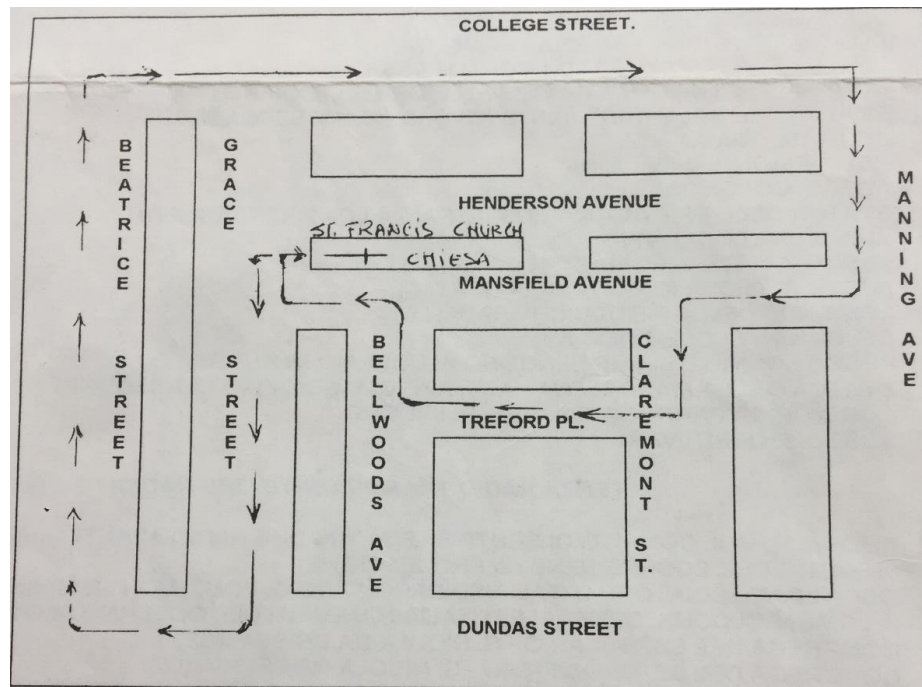


Figure 5.3. PCM processional route from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.⁵¹³

Photographs and the testimony of organizers are again important to understand the changes which took place in the PCM and its supporting infrastructure for much of the 1980s. The most prominent development in the early part of the decade was the growth in the number of individuals participating as characters, from the life of Christ, in the procession, following the decision by organizers and clergy to invite parishioners to become involved.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ “Le associazioni, e club che porteranno le statue, le loro rappresentanze sfileranno con le statue” (“The associations and clubs to carry statues and their representatives in parade with statues”), Program including itinerary for the PCM, Toronto, April 14, 1995, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Simonetta, July 2017. The processional route was adapted as organizers tried to accommodate larger crowds.

⁵¹⁴ Isabel M., December 2018. The role of clergy is very important in this decision. It is not clear with whom the inspiration to invite parishioners to join the PCM originated. But it is clear clergy’s willingness to use the altar during Sunday services to encourage involvement in the annual event was responsible for the dramatic increase in numbers of new volunteers.



Figure 5.4. From the 1980s until the early 2000s the sign-up sheet for main characters was a 22 x 28 bristol board.⁵¹⁵

Both Isabel M and Anna B described the overwhelming number of requests received by various committee members and clergy from parishioners at St. Francis who wanted to join the event. In these requests organizers and clergy saw the potential for a much larger and more elaborate undertaking which would attract Italians to the procession who had never attended and encourage the annual return of those who did. Organizers and clergy decided to honour all requests for participation.⁵¹⁶ This led to a small army of Roman soldiers and a village-sized assembly of devout men and women by the end of the decade. In addition, requests to portray important religious figures were also granted. The result was multiple versions of Jesus, the

⁵¹⁵ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 9.

⁵¹⁶ Aleixo, November 2018; Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018. The single bristol board sign-up sheet did not reflect the actual numbers of volunteers to be included as characters in the PCM. More detailed annual lists were likely maintained by the costume committee. These lists are likely held in the St. Francis of Assisi archive which is currently inaccessible.

Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene in particular. Interestingly, at least three women portrayed male characters in the 1980s and 1990s.



Figure 5.5. Devout woman portraying Jesus. Notice the police officer to the left.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 81.



Figure 5.6. Unnamed women as Roman soldiers mounted on horseback.⁵¹⁸

The organization of the procession to represent the Stations of the Cross did not mean earlier elements were discarded. In fact, organizers continued to reach out to prayer groups and village-based associations to join the PCM throughout the 1980s. Some of these were supplied with tunics or torches to carry as they walked.⁵¹⁹ They continued to participate in the procession with their own identifying banners, and sometimes alongside statues. Organizers treated their

⁵¹⁸ Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

⁵¹⁹ “Venerdi Santo, Club, Torchie, Tuniche 1987,” List of groups by name, statue and number of tunics and torches required, Toronto, 1987, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Ten of 31 processional elements were associational groups. This list appears to be incomplete as it includes only associational groups connected to particular statues or choirs. Banner carrying religious- and village-based associational groups participating in the event were not listed in this document. “Processione del ‘Cristo Morto’ Venerdi Santo 1995,” List of groups by name, statue and number of tunics and torches required, Toronto, 1995, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. By 1995 the total list of participants in the procession had grown to 53 with 23 associations. All the associations listed in the 1987 document also appear in 1995. This confirms organizers’ testimony indicating groups who walked in the PCM did so annually for decades.

participation as separate from the evolving *Via Crucis* ‘performance.’ By the end of the decade those Italians who came to the College Street area on Good Friday effectively got to watch two intertwined processions: the PCM with the two important statues of the Dead Christ and the Sorrowful Mother, the historical assembly of associations and musical bands with spontaneous outbursts of song and prayer⁵²⁰ and the *Via Crucis* with characters and props telling the story of Christ’s final journey, death and burial.⁵²¹



Figure 5.7. Over the 1980s many young people joined the event as biblical characters.⁵²²

The transformation of the procession on Good Friday into this hybrid PCM and *Via Crucis* was made possible by the ongoing efforts of sub-committees which continued to be dominated by the ideas and work of women, facilitated by clergy. Mena Simonetta was at the

⁵²⁰ “Processione del ‘Cristo Morto’ Venerdì Santo 1995.” Three bands were listed: *Banda Maltese*, *Banda Portoghese*, *Banda Italiana*. Although the exact year the Portuguese Band joined the PCM is unknown, it was the most recent addition. The Maltese and Italian Bands had been performing annually for many years.

⁵²¹ None of the organizers ever referred to the Good Friday event as the *Via Crucis*. Simonetta and Iori continued to call it *La Processione di Cristo Morte*. Anna B. and Isabel M. called it *The Good Friday Procession*.

⁵²² Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 101.

centre of women's attempts to increase the size and visibility of the PCM by increasing the number of biblical characters and supporting cast members. Large numbers of nameless devout men and women and Roman soldiers were important additions to this end. Equally important were the many individuals who portrayed Mary and Jesus in the various stations. Costumes and props became an even more important component of the PCM as scenes from the *Via Crucis* became larger and more popular with the crowds who attended. While the number of sub-committees working on the annual event was unchanged more members were recruited to join, and the practice of 'jumping in and jumping out,' begun in the 1970s when subcommittees were established, continued to be an important way for volunteers to develop deep bonds to the PCM and each other.⁵²³ Isabel M described this period.

We all did it together. Especially the characters and costumes. I wasn't really part of the costume committee. But I was there sewing away. I just jumped in and helped. That's how we did it. When one of the committees had a lot to do then whoever was available just jumped in to help and then we jumped out to our own (sub-)committees again.⁵²⁴

Each woman had her own personal reasons for volunteering rooted in religious devotion. But Isabel M. also described the communal sense of mission shared by the women who worked to bring Italian-Canadians to St. Francis and the PCM.

⁵²³ Elizabeth R., January 2019; Isabel M., December 2017. The 1980s and 1990s were the height of volunteer involvement in sub-committees. During this period there were approximately 25-30 women who acted as regular volunteers. Committee members sometimes asked female friends and relatives who also attended St. Francis to assist sub-committees. Unfortunately, there is currently no way to identify informal volunteers or trace the scale or frequency of their involvement in the PCM.

⁵²⁴ Isabel M., December 2017.



Figure 5.8. Costumes in the basement of St. Francis of Assisi.⁵²⁵

The hybridization of the PCM appears to have been enthusiastically accepted by both the participants and crowds who attended each year. Despite being part of the event for decades Rosario Iori's place, at the rear of procession, near the *Cristo Morto* meant he never actually watched the event or the changes made to it. However, he was positioned to observe the reactions of attendees who responded positively to the *Via Crucis* elements. Iori was happy to see the PCM change despite the less devout atmosphere it produced.

Yes it was good. It was really something to watch the procession change. People would tell me afterwards what they saw and how much they liked it. It became like watching the combination of a procession and a play I think. There was still a feeling of devotion; many older people with their rosaries watched, some even knelt on the sidewalks. I could see this from my place in the procession. But some people started coming only because they were curious. It was the beginning of that..⁵²⁶

This openness to changing the event also reflected the increasingly distant experience of the premigration processional tradition. By the 1980s Iori's cherished memories of processions on Good Friday in San Nicola were less emotionally vivid and increasingly nostalgic as he entered middle age, having spent more years in Toronto attending the PCM than Easter

⁵²⁵ Private collection of Isabel M.

⁵²⁶ Iori, March 2018.

processions in San Nicola.⁵²⁷ Simonetta could not recall processions on Good Friday in Italy. Anna B and Isabel M had no memories or personal experiences of Good Friday processions in San Nicola but easily recalled the excitement and solemnity they felt attending Toronto processions in their childhoods. Both women's memories of the PCM were firmly embedded with their lifelong experiences of Good Friday rooted in the College Street neighbourhood and St. Francis church.⁵²⁸

Memory is an important part of how individuals belong to and bridge physical distances between various places and time itself. Anouk Belanger describes the way markers of memory are powerfully encoded into popular cultural practices.⁵²⁹ Individuals revisit and reconstruct their memories within urban space and in the face of changes to the way that space is organized and used.⁵³⁰ This is especially true for groups who have particularly strong and historic attachments to specific urban spaces which have been important for the expression of cultural identity.⁵³¹ Memory is also the place where time and space become compressed.⁵³² The PCM was an encoded religious cultural practice and an expression of Italian immigrant and Italian-Canadian identity. Attending it evoked different memories for Iori, Anna B and Isabel M based on their own personal histories. Regardless of those differences, their memories were accompanied by the kind of powerful emotional experiences Davidson and Milligan described as inherent to

⁵²⁷ Simonetta had only occasionally travelled from Milan to spend Easter with his family in San Nicola.

⁵²⁸ Anna B., December 2018; Elizabeth R., January 2019; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁵²⁹ Anouk Belager, "Urban Space and Collective Memory: Analyzing the Various Dimensions of the Production of Memory," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 11, no. 1 (2002): 69-92.

⁵³⁰ Belager, "Urban Space and Collective Memory," 71

⁵³¹ Belager, "Urban Space and Collective Memory," 72

⁵³² Belager, "Urban Space and Collective Memory," 73.

occupying urban space.⁵³³ Collectively their understanding of the various cultural traditions and kinds of emotional memories held by both generations of Italian Canadians in the College Street area were key to their ability to transform the PCM and their commitment to do so.

Given the speed with which it appears to have happened organizers may have had the hybridization of the PCM in mind when they began to request road closures. Organizers had long been frustrated by the chaos, and despite the presence of police to control traffic, the danger presented by sharing processional space with vehicles and streetcars on College Street. The PCM had long occupied all of the available road and sidewalk areas on residential streets, but College Street and, to a lesser extent Dundas Avenue West, presented ongoing challenges which, in addition to safety concerns, often led to lengthy delays in the progress of the event. Despite crowds which grew annually Simonetta described police as purposely impeding organizers' efforts to expand the event by refusing to support requests to divert traffic away from the processional route on Good Friday. For Simonetta this once again made College Street contested space.⁵³⁴ His sentiments were echoed by Anna B and Isabel M.⁵³⁵

Documents and testimony make it possible to glimpse the challenges organizers faced and the ways they were successfully overcome. In 1983 the *Corriere Canadese* reported 60,000 people attended the PCM. In 1989 that number grew to 120,000 and by 1990 was estimated to be 150,000.⁵³⁶ Although it is not clear how these figures were arrived at all indicators point to a

⁵³³ Davidson and Milligan, "Embodying Emotion Sensing Space," 524-30. See also chapter 1, pg. 27 and footnote 65 for a brief description.

⁵³⁴ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵³⁵ Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2017.

⁵³⁶ "Le processioni del Venerdì Santo seguite da almeno 60,000 persone," 60,000 attended. "The Toronto Transit Commission, Chairperson Ms. Lois Griffin," Letter, Toronto, March 30, 1989, Personal collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. In 1989 the crowd estimate was 120,000. "D.ssa Arnalda Baroli, Representante della Rai Radio Televisione Italiana," Letter, Toronto, February 15, 1990, Personal collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. The 1990

rapid and dramatic increase in the numbers of people who attended the procession on Good Friday over the 1980s. It is clear Simonetta was both encouraged by and responding to the demand for greater access to the PCM represented by the increasing crowd size. Simonetta understood police were at the heart of trying to limit Italian-Canadians' presence in public space in ways reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s move-along directive. From his brief interactions with Police Chief Jack Marks,⁵³⁷ Simonetta was convinced the Chief was opposed to the inclusion of College Street and Dundas Avenue West in the processional route and that this opposition delayed road closures. In response, as described above, Simonetta worked to encourage politicians connected to the College Street area and Italian-language media to promote and attend the event. Simonetta was sure that by raising the public profile of the PCM and bringing vote-hungry politicians into the large event to see the thousands of Italian Canadians who supported it, the Police Chief could be encouraged to agree to street closures.⁵³⁸ Simonetta explained that despite living, working and raising families in Toronto for three decades, Italians who had immigrated were often still seen as outsiders by many English-speaking people in the city. He argued persistence, patience and a respectful approach were especially important to any interactions between immigrants and police or city officials. Simonetta was philosophical as he

crowd estimate was 150,000. Unfortunately, these are the only currently available attendance figures for the PCM between 1980 and 1990. It is likely that attendance figures referred to by Simonetta in correspondence were based on police estimates as they had been in the past. These figures also demonstrate that the upward trend in PCM attendance continued after 1983.

⁵³⁷ Jack Marks was Toronto Police Chief from 1984 to 1989. His predecessor Jack Ackroyd did not support road closures either but was described by Simonetta as less strident in his opposition. Ackroyd was Police Chief from 1980 to 1984.

⁵³⁸ Aleixo, November 2018. Clergy did not prevent Simonetta from employing this strategy but were unlikely to have initiated actions taken for road closures.

described the ongoing efforts to have College Street closed on the day of the PCM. But his anger was also palpable.

It was disrespectful to us, that for a few hours the streets in our neighbourhood couldn't be closed to allow the procession to happen with dignity. People prayed when they watched the procession. Some people were on their knees when *Cristo Morto* passed. There was the feeling of devotion. That's all we wanted, to experience the procession. But still we had to be careful and a little calculating. We had to show the police that closing the roads was supported not only by Italians but also by the mayor, city councillors and other important people.⁵³⁹

The most significant challenges PCM organizers had to address before the road closures were put in place included increased insurance costs, maintaining order in the face of larger crowds, complaints about noise, and public safety concerns connected to the inclusion of live animals as part of the procession. Due to the chaotic nature of the College Street portion of the event it was also very difficult to reliably predict the time necessary to complete the procession. Simonetta and Anna B., in particular, commented about how organizers dealt with some of these concerns and purposely ignored others.

Issues directly connected to orderliness and safety were a high priority. To ensure the clergy at St. Francis would continue to support the PCM, despite increased insurance costs, organizers stepped up their fundraising efforts during the procession. Simonetta understood the need to insure such a large event, particularly because of the chaotic conditions resulting from sharing College Street with moving cars and streetcars. However, he described dramatic increases in insurance premiums for the PCM as threatening to its survival.⁵⁴⁰ In response Simonetta and the organizing committee stepped up efforts to collect donations on Good

⁵³⁹ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁴⁰ Simonetta, July 2017.

Friday.⁵⁴¹ These efforts included the introduction of prayer cards, imported from Italy, which created a tangible connection between the PCM and Italy and acted as a symbolic representation of the connection many Italian Canadians (regardless of generation) felt to that country.⁵⁴² Using his extensive personal network, Simonetta arranged for the prayer cards to be donated.⁵⁴³ They were handed out by men who were longstanding members of the organizing committee for processions at the parish or who were ushers at St. Francis.⁵⁴⁴ Receiving a prayer card was not conditional on a financial donation. But the use of the same collection baskets to carry prayer cards, as those used to collect donations during Catholic masses in St Francis, was an unspoken signal to recipients that a donation should be made.

⁵⁴¹ "Il Comitato di Arte," May 5, 1987. \$14,000 profit for the event was recorded. This was after the most dramatic costs for insurance had been put in place.

⁵⁴² Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 5. Physical objects can represent symbolic connections between people, distant places, the past and the present.

⁵⁴³ "Egr. Prof. P. Pietro Addante," Letter, Toronto, March 11, 1989, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. "Gentile P. Addante, Centro ricerche storico-filosofica," Letter, Toronto, March 18, 1990, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. "Carissimo amico Cav. Giuseppe Simonetta," Letter, Italy (Bari), April 20, 1990, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. This correspondence captures the ongoing nature of one such network which resulted in the donation of religious cards, and other written material, to be given out at various events, including the PCM.

⁵⁴⁴ "Il Comitato Direttivo: Organizzatore delle feste alla chiesa di S. Francesco d'Assisi, in Toronto 1982-1992," List of committee members and titles or responsibilities 1982-1992, Toronto, 1992, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.



Figure 5.9. Church usher Pasquale Cariati with collection basket handing out prayer cards.⁵⁴⁵



Figure 5.10. Man with collection basket and prayer cards. Notice the money visible in the collection basket.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 106.

⁵⁴⁶ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 98.

To deal with the larger and larger crowds Simonetta reached out to even greater numbers of fellow *carabinieri* in Toronto and Italy to join the procession.⁵⁴⁷ Simonetta described the role of the *carabinieri*, dressed in impressive ceremonial uniforms, as helpful to managing crowds.⁵⁴⁸ Toronto police were, in fact, responsible for crowd control with the *carabinieri* acting as an honour guard. But Simonetta insisted the *carabinieri*⁵⁴⁹ contributed to the orderly atmosphere along the processional route. Simonetta hoped police would see their inclusion in the PCM to be the result of organizers taking responsibility for maintaining public order.⁵⁵⁰ In addition, organizers increased the use of temporary physical barriers to ensure crowds were kept at safe distances from roads at various locations along the route, and recruited volunteers (often the sons, nephews and other male kin of organizers) to help direct people's movement in the public spaces around St. Francis church as they waited for the procession to begin and then as it re-entered the church.⁵⁵¹

These efforts connected to crowd control were the extent of actions taken by organizers to address timelines for the PCM which could not be reliably predicted. Simonetta, Isabel M. and Anna B described the timely movement of crowds along College Street and Dundas Avenue

⁵⁴⁷ Greg Riccio Jr., "Banda dei Carabinieri di Roma Venuti a Toronto" (International Video Production Limited, 1997), DVD, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Simonetta was heavily involved in the organization of this event which took place in summer 1974. Through it he expanded personal networks to active carabinieri in Italy and former carabinieri in Toronto. This parade featured the carabinieri musical marching band which began at Queen's Park and travelled along University Avenue. Parts of the recording are damaged and missing. It is unclear where the parade concluded. Simonetta, July 2017. These networks were instrumental to increasing the presence of carabinieri in the PCM.

⁵⁴⁸ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁴⁹ Simonetta worked as a *carabinieri* before immigrating to Toronto. He became an active member of various organizations of former *carabinieri*. For a list of some of these organizations see chapter three.

⁵⁵⁰ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁵¹ Bicci, December 2018.

West to be beyond the organizers' control as long as cars and streetcars were present.⁵⁵² There was, in fact, little they could do in these areas that was not already being done by Toronto police. Simonetta also suggested the inevitable delays which occurred in these locales may have encouraged the police chief to eventually support road closures, if only to shorten the length of time it took to complete the PCM.⁵⁵³

When it came to complaints about live animals along the processional route, and concerns about noise levels, organizers did nothing regardless of where those complaints originated. In these cases organizers described complaints as rooted in an unreasonable desire to limit or remove Italians from public space on Good Friday. Iori, Simonetta, Anna B and Isabel M all described this as particularly egregious given the historical presence of the procession and of Italians in the College Street area.

Anna B recalled the resistance encountered by PCM organizers who interacted with staff at City Hall or the Police Department's 14 Division about various permits. Organizers were often told anonymous complaints had been made about noise levels or animals associated with the previous year's procession.

But we just ignored those things. It was ridiculous. Yes it was loud, that was absolutely true. It was a procession, of course there is going to be singing, praying, music. It was so loud because there were 100,000 people! They aren't going to whisper like they're trying to hide.

As for the complaints about the animals,⁵⁵⁴ that was just silly. There were only a few (animals) and when they made a mess it was all cleaned up. Eventually the animals did

⁵⁵² Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. In each case the individual responded by changing the topic of conversation or dismissing the notion that organizers were responsible for timeliness when they could not control the route.

⁵⁵³ Simonetta, July 2017. Anna B., December 2018 also made this connection.

⁵⁵⁴ Organizers of both generations indicated specific animals were included in the PCM because of their presence in the biblical account of Jesus' last days. Neither Simonetta nor Iori connected the addition of animals to village life in southern Italy.

have to go. I don't remember how all that happened. But we had the animals for a long time.⁵⁵⁵



Figure 5.11. Men with donkey during the PCM.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ Anna B., December 2018.

⁵⁵⁶ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 77.



Figure 5.12. Representation of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. A second donkey is just visible behind the man in the red robe. To the far right a volunteer carries a shovel and creative disposal unit to collect donkey droppings.⁵⁵⁷

Isabel M wasn't sure why anyone would want to record a complaint about the PCM on College Street which had long been associated with Italians in Toronto.

I don't know why it took so long for people to just accept the procession. How can you have an Italian procession that doesn't go on College Street, you can't! We had thousands and thousands coming every year, so it was clear that Italians wanted this procession and wanted it on College. I guess it took time for the police and the city and the TTC people to accept it and see that this procession was here to stay.⁵⁵⁸

Simonetta was particularly attuned to how police would interpret new elements added to the procession as well as the changing cultural climate of tolerance for difference which multiculturalism encouraged. Simonetta understood the policy, which became the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, as an opportunity to reframe his own interactions with local

⁵⁵⁷ Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

⁵⁵⁸ Isabel M., December 2018.

officials and for Italian-Canadians (as a group) to connect their desire for religious-cultural expression to their rights as citizens whose ethnic origins were recognized and cultural traditions protected through the Act. Simonetta understood the dominant culture in Canada to be rooted in British traditional practices and cultural mores. He believed police and other officials were of the opinion their only responsibility was to ensure public order and the participating ethnic group's protection during traditional activities but did not extend to facilitating those practices.

It was important that we could do the procession the way we wanted to do it. It was an Italian procession and had to reflect what Italians wanted and what they would appreciate. This is the beauty of multiculturalism. If you really believe in it then you have to accept that you will see things you don't understand or like. At those times you have to accept it. For people who were not Italian or Catholic they didn't understand our tradition, but they had to accept what we were doing.⁵⁵⁹

The testimony above makes clear organizers wanted the historic presence of Italians on College Street to be respected by police and municipal officials. Organizers understood the refusal to close the processional route to traffic as a direct attempt to limit their efforts to expand the event further and Simonetta, in particular, relied on the federal messaging around multiculturalism to strengthen arguments in favour of road closures. Multiculturalism policy of the 1970s and legislation in the 1980s asserted the government would recognize the existence of communities with a common origin, their historic contributions and would enhance the development of those communities.⁵⁶⁰ Simonetta believed the PCM was the embodiment of Canadian multiculturalism. When organizers ignored complaints about the PCM they passively challenged the authority of police to limit the presence in, and use of, public urban space by

⁵⁵⁹ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁶⁰ *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1988 Bill C-93(d): "...recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society and enhance their development."

Italian Canadians. College Street was at once a neighbourhood road and a major artery in Toronto's road system. In the 1980s PCM organizers were able to assert their right to use public space in their own way.

Nicholas Harney has described the 1980s as an important period for Italians in Toronto. It was during this decade that Italy and Italian culture was transformed in the popular Canadian imagination. Anna B. and Isabel M. described a palpable positive shift in the way they as individuals and Italian culture (though not necessarily Italian immigrant cultural practices) were seen by Torontonians.⁵⁶¹ Harney points to three important factors which fueled a transformation from largely negative images of Italian immigrants and their adult children to more positive ones. The first of these was connected to the spontaneous outpouring of ethnic pride in the St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street neighbourhood after Italy's 1982 World Cup soccer victory. He describes this peaceful but enthusiastic celebratory public demonstration as a "symbolic transition(al) event for... understanding complex conditions impacting changing meanings associated with Italy and Italians in Toronto's public culture"⁵⁶² Prior to 1982 Italian immigrants were largely understood in terms of stereotypes depicting them as country bumkins, hardworking but uneducated, undisciplined and unskilled manual labourers, or members of organized crime (the Mafia).⁵⁶³ Schools in Ontario had reinforced these images in the 1970s when they employed streaming in ways which guided large numbers of second-generation Italian students away from universities and professional careers and into vocational programs and

⁵⁶¹ Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁵⁶² N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 173.

⁵⁶³ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 158-59. It is important to note Harney's description largely describes stereotypes of Italian men. Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 104 describes stereotypes depicting Italian women as "suffering wives of domineering men."

technical schools instead.⁵⁶⁴ The peaceful celebration by Italian Canadians after Italy's 1982 World Cup soccer victory helped to diminish associations of disorderliness and danger with public gatherings of Italians.⁵⁶⁵

The economic success achieved by Italian immigrants in Toronto was the second factor which, after 1982, contributed to their more positive public image. High rates of home ownership were an easily understood and visible marker of this success. Italian homeowners outnumbered the national average by more than ten percent. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney recognized the economic and entrepreneurial success achieved by Italians when he declared "the first generation of Italian Canadians built the city of Toronto; the present generation owns it."⁵⁶⁶ This status as homeowners was seen as an example of legitimate economic success and a trend towards middle class status and respectability.⁵⁶⁷

Finally, beginning in the 1970s, Italy became a world-class producer of textiles, clothing and furniture. By the mid-1980s its luxury brands in fashion, cars and food were established global leaders in style and taste. This became a particular point of pride among Italian Canadians.⁵⁶⁸ Italian Canadian women in Toronto had long demonstrated a preference for custom clothing associated with weddings. Inspired by economic constraints, brides and their

⁵⁶⁴ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 106. See also: Sandro Contenta, *Rituals of Failure: What Schools Really Teach* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993), chapter 4; Elio Costa and Odoardo Di Santo, "The Italian-Canadian Child, His Family, and the Canadian School System," in *Must Schools Fail? The Growing Debate in Canadian Education* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 242-50.

⁵⁶⁵ The response Harney describes to this event is particularly notable given large peaceful assemblies of Italian-Canadians had been occurring for well over a decade in the form of the PCM, and for much longer in the case of the St. Anthony procession.

⁵⁶⁶ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 106.

⁵⁶⁷ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 170. Members of racial minority groups made up a larger proportion of new immigrants to the city in the 1970s and 1980s than had occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. Italian Canadians of both generations more and more often purchased homes in the suburban neighbourhoods of Vaughan increasingly distant from the College Street neighbourhood.

⁵⁶⁸ N. Harney, *Eh, Paesan!*, 170.

mothers found creative ways to express a sense of style often with the help of Italian immigrant women who worked as seamstresses⁵⁶⁹ from their homes.⁵⁷⁰ A preference for traditional foods among postwar Italian immigrants is well known. In the 1980s these simple foods rooted in rural poverty began to appear as delicacies on restaurant menus. Restaurants in the College Street area, newly popular with young professionals and trend followers, were among the first to serve these dishes and attract a diverse clientele.⁵⁷¹ These new and positive changes may have encouraged younger Italian Canadians to engage with the traditional practices of their parents and grandparents more openly.

Bruno Ramirez also describes the 1970s and 1980s as a pivotal period for the second generation who came of age and established themselves in professions, the civil service and the creative arts. In addition to the trends outlined above, Ramirez proposes the creative efforts of Italian-Canadian writers (and other artists) were particularly important for revealing the experiences of the immigrant generation and daily life in Italian-Canadian communities.⁵⁷² In addition to speaking directly to the life experiences of their second generation peers, by the 1980s these artists were successfully reframing the historical Italian-Canadian experience for wider Canadian audiences.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 93 and Appendix, Table 14: “Occupations, Metro Toronto, 1961: Italian Women, Experienced Labour Force.”

⁵⁷⁰ Ida B., interviewed by author, October 2011; Lorena L., interviewed by author, January 2012; Marianna L., interviewed by author, March 2011; Nina B., interviewed by author, October 2011. Pseudonyms as requested by participants.

⁵⁷¹ Olindo Romeo Chiocca, *College Street* (Toronto: Guernica Press, 2005), 17 describes Giancarlo’s as one such restaurant on College Street. Interestingly, the restaurant was in the former location of Simonetta’s Bar Sport Café on Clinton Street.

⁵⁷² Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, 45.

⁵⁷³ Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, 48. Ramirez identifies these artists collectively as a “collective historical actor.”

Simonetta and Iori also described a positive and new appreciation in the city for Italian immigrants and their children in the 1980s. They described, with some pride, the emergence of several important “Italian places”⁵⁷⁴ especially the St. Clair Avenue West and Dufferin Street area which became known in this decade as Corso Italia.⁵⁷⁵ Organizers also talked about suburban areas in the GTA where churches continued to play an important role in connecting Italians of all generations to one another and encouraging them to understand each other through an Italian-Canadian identity with traditional religious practice as central.⁵⁷⁶ With the potential of other Italian places to attract visitors who would otherwise frequent the College Street area during both sacred and normal time, the continued growth of the PCM at St. Francis took on a new urgency.

Simonetta’s personal experience with the move-along directive remained vivid. He believed if police and the general public saw the PCM as a peaceful, efficient and well run event they would be more likely to support the much desired road closures. Simonetta also believed the PCM could contribute to the positive public image of Italians in Toronto. Even though Iori was no longer an organizer of the procession, he also understood the PCM as a symbolic event which countered the old negative images of Italians. Simonetta continued to prioritize the expression of religious devotion to explain the continued growth in numbers of attendees at the procession. But he also argued the PCM was important for other reasons.

It showed the police and politicians what Italians could do. To organize an event like that is not easy. It takes skill and co-operation, patience and determination. Of course Italians could always do such things, but others didn’t always know that. People used to think bad

⁵⁷⁴ Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁷⁵ The branding of this area as Corso Italia is likely connected to the formation of the BIA (Business Improvement Area) in 1984. Hackworth and Rekers, “Ethnic Packaging and Gentrification.” The BIA of Corso Italia is discussed.

⁵⁷⁶ Bucci, December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

things about Italians. The police especially, but also others. This procession showed them what we could do.⁵⁷⁷



Figure 5.13. Three generations watching the PCM.⁵⁷⁸

In the mid-1980s road closures were finally put in place on Good Friday.⁵⁷⁹ Simonetta, in particular, understood this action to be a tangible expression of the acceptance of Italians (of all generations) as full citizens in Toronto. He described being encouraged by the symbolic opportunity road closures presented for the children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants to understand it was possible to live fully as Canadians while still remembering and valuing the immigrant generation and participating in Italian-cultural religious traditions. Simonetta also believed the PCM could play an important role in continuing to build a feeling of community which would connect younger generations to each other and to older generations regardless of

⁵⁷⁷ Iori, March 2018. "William J. McCormack, Chief of Police Metropolitan Toronto," Letter, Toronto, April 18, 1990, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. McCormack was Police Chief from 1989 to 1995. He appears to be the first Toronto Police Chief to walk in full uniform in the PCM. He did so annually throughout his tenure.

⁵⁷⁸ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 85.

⁵⁷⁹ The specific year for the first road closure is unclear.

where they lived and how their lives evolved.⁵⁸⁰ It was also during the 1980s that Simonetta remembered ‘other Catholics’ began to attend the PCM. He insisted organizers did not reach out to other Catholic minority groups in the city but acknowledged that in the 1980s many Portuguese families who resided in the College Street neighbourhood began to attend the annual event. They joined a small but notable group of Maltese families whose attraction to the PCM may have been inspired by the Maltese marching band which had been walking in the event for almost two decades.⁵⁸¹

The overwhelming majority attending on Good Friday were still Italian, but you could see others were also beginning to be interested. When they came we welcomed them. It was our procession, but we welcomed anyone who wanted to come and participate with us.⁵⁸²

The implementation of annual road closures made it possible for the entire processional route to be transformed for a few hours in the ways described in previous chapters by Kong and David.⁵⁸³ Temporary barriers, road signs diverting traffic, police officers stationed around the processional perimeter and increased media attention in both Italian-and English-language media warned drivers and pedestrians about the road closures. With roads closed to traffic Italians could fully occupy the processional route. Dramatic elements were added so that all fourteen stations of the *Via Crucis* were present.

In 1987 actors in the various scenes representing the Stations of the Cross performed for crowds who watched from beyond the barriers. Expanded media coverage and a larger number

⁵⁸⁰ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁸¹ “Venerdi Santo.” Although the exact year the Portuguese Band joined the PCM is unknown, it was the most recent addition. The Maltese band performed from the earliest years of the PCM at St. Francis.

⁵⁸² Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁸³ David, “Sacralising the City,” 450-54; Kong, “Religious Processions,” 227-28, 234-35.

of dignitaries walking as part of the event became common features of the annual procession. The clergy at St. Francis were pleased with this evolution of the PCM and in a meeting held after that year's event suggested the organizing committee send thank you notes to various police and Toronto Transit Commission officials for their help with the efficient management of the procession. Also included in the list of organizations to be thanked were members of the Italian media who both promoted and covered the PCM in real time.⁵⁸⁴ In addition to CHIN Radio and Television, multicultural Channel 47 in Toronto and Channel 11 in Hamilton were specifically named as important for reaching more Italians and encouraging them to attend the procession.⁵⁸⁵ Father Angelo Bucciero also suggested businesses that had contributed food to help feed volunteers or who otherwise made financial donations be formally thanked.⁵⁸⁶

The task of writing thank you notes was taken up by Simonetta. By the end of the decade he had established an annual routine of issuing letters of invitation and then thanks to media and local officials as well as Italian consular officials and visiting Italian dignitaries and organizations. Although these letters were signed by Simonetta the use of St. Francis parish letterhead indicates the clergy continued to be supportive of Simonetta's efforts to bring more attention to the event. A list of area businesses suggests organizers were also attempting to

⁵⁸⁴ "Il Comitato di Arte," May 5, 1987.

⁵⁸⁵ "Il Comitato di Arte," May 5, 1987. Emilio Mascia was a well-known television personality and cultural empresario among the large numbers of postwar Italian immigrants who had settled in Hamilton. His presence and coverage of the PCM was understood as an endorsement of the event by organizers and was another network across urban space to attract and connect Italians to the PCM and College Street.

⁵⁸⁶ "Il Comitato di Arte," May 5, 1987.

record and formalize a relationship with various retailers who either had been or might, in the future, be contributors to the PCM.⁵⁸⁷

Organizers also noted much appreciation for the “improvisational” dramatic elements which took place during the 1987 procession.⁵⁸⁸ By this time the PCM was organized into the various Stations of the Cross and actors were better able to understand their place as connected to the events of the station in which they were placed. The first improvised dramatic action is generally acknowledged to have been performed by Giuseppe Rauti. Rauti had been portraying Jesus for many years when he spontaneously began blessing the crowd.⁵⁸⁹

The enthusiastic response of crowds encouraged both Rauti and organizers to see the potential for a procession that was also interactive performance. Isabel M., who took on the role of Veronica, described spontaneous declarations of faith and prayer by spectators as they witnessed various scenes.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ “Untitled List of Area Business,” Toronto, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. The specific year in which this list was compiled is unknown. However, the presence of Lombardi Foods which closed its doors late in 1988 indicates the list was compiled before 1989.

⁵⁸⁸ “Il Comitato di Arte,” May 5, 1987.

⁵⁸⁹ Isabel M., December 2018; Rauti, December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017.

⁵⁹⁰ In the *Via Crucis* the character of Veronica wipes Jesus’ face when he falls. An image of his face appears on the cloth she uses. The full choreography and prop for this scene was developed over several years with the input of several individuals including Isabel M., Giuseppe Rauti, the costume sub-committee and clergy.



Figure 5.14. Giuseppe Rauti as Jesus blessing the crowds.⁵⁹¹



Figure 5.15. Isabel M. as Veronica.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 149.

⁵⁹² Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 126.

Each year dramatic elements became more choreographed and scripted. Mena Simonetta, Father Ralph Paonessa and later Fathers Gregory Botte and Raymond Falzon worked with sub-committees and actors to help them understand each of the fourteen stations to further develop the props and stage the various scenes.⁵⁹³ Both major and minor characters were tutored. From the photographic evidence it is clear the lessons were well learned.

However, road closures achieved in the 1980s did not mean the PCM processional route became uncontested space. Almost immediately after the road closures were in place organizers were being pressured to move the procession from the College Street neighbourhood to the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition.⁵⁹⁴ Simonetta again cited the police to be the instigators of these efforts. Police argued road closures actually made the PCM more disruptive to the use of urban space than it had been in the period before closures were approved. In addition to disruptive streetcar and automobile traffic Police Chief William McCormack argued pedestrians were impeded from going about their non-processional activities by the dense overcrowding along all areas of the route.⁵⁹⁵ In response Simonetta, with the support of the clergy and the various PCM committees, worked to maintain attendance levels by further developing tangible relationships between the procession on Good Friday, Vatican City and

⁵⁹³ Aleixo, November 2018; Isabel M., December 2018.

⁵⁹⁴ The Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) is a 192 acre site located along Toronto's waterfront approximately four kilometers from the College Street area. For eighteen days beginning in mid August an annual fair is held at the CNE. During the rest of the year it is available to organizations and citizens holding large events. The proposed move to the CNE grounds may have been inspired by the relocation of the International CHIN Picnic to that site in 1983. The original name for the CHIN Picnic was the "Spaghetti Dig-In." It was first held on College Street in 1968 and geared to the city's Italian community. In the 1970s the event was renamed the International CHIN Picnic and began attracting people from many different ethnic groups.

⁵⁹⁵ Simonetta, July 2017.

various regions in Italy. Simonetta believed Chief McCormack⁵⁹⁶ understood embodiment (in the form of high attendance figures) to be the result of the historical importance of the College Street neighbourhood to Italian Canadians, and the responsibility of police was to protect urban space from disruption rather than to protect public cultural practices by ethnic minorities. The processional route which occupied College Street continued to be contested space into the next decade.

Organizers of both generations discussed persistent pressure faced by the organizing committee to move the procession away from College Street to an area where road closures would not be necessary.⁵⁹⁷ They were also in agreement that the Toronto police chief, Chief Bill McCormack, was the driving force behind these efforts.⁵⁹⁸ Simonetta continued to act as head of the organizing committee for processions at St. Francis. Now well into middle age he was tired of the ongoing battle to maintain the College Street portion of the processional route. With help from the organizing committee Simonetta reached out to Chief McCormack shortly after the death of the chief's mother in 1990.⁵⁹⁹

Simonetta and the other immigrant PCM organizers understood the powerful emotional relationship that can exist between particular places and people. In an attempt to build a more positive and intimate emotional connection between McCormack, St. Francis church and the

⁵⁹⁶ McCormack was the only official named by Simonetta, but he also noted there were likely others who shared the Chief's attitude.

⁵⁹⁷ Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. The Canadian National Exhibition continued to be the site recommended by Police Chief Bill McCormack.

⁵⁹⁸ Anna B., December 2018; Isabel M., December 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. In his role as the head of the organizing committee for processional activity at St. Francis of Assisi church, Simonetta had the most contact with the chief and provided the most detailed account.

⁵⁹⁹ Simonetta, July 2017. Simonetta and other members of the executive of the organizing committee of the PCM attended the visitation for Margaret McCormack and invited the chief to a memorial mass which was in the early planning stage.

College Street neighbourhood, Simonetta and other PCM organizers attended the visitation and funeral for Margaret McCormack. On behalf of the organizing committee, Simonetta invited the chief and his family to St. Francis for a memorial mass to be held on December 3rd in honor of his late mother.⁶⁰⁰ In addition to the McCormack family, officers from Division 14 and many area residents also attended the service. Local businesses donated food and beverages for a fellowship gathering in the church hall after the mass. Simonetta described McCormack as deeply moved by the presence of so many Italian-speaking parishioners who attended the mid-week evening service and afterward expressed heartfelt condolences to the McCormack family. Simonetta further believed a personal and emotional sense of kinship between McCormack and Italians in the College Street neighbourhood was achieved on that evening with long lasting benefits for the PCM.⁶⁰¹

The Chief expressed his thanks for the memorial mass in a letter to Simonetta.⁶⁰² McCormack subsequently attended St. Francis for Sunday mass to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany and presented Simonetta with a personal gift.⁶⁰³ Simonetta noted the pressure to move the PCM to another location faded quickly after these events. He insisted the organizing committee saw this as proof that their effort to build a sense of community between St. Francis parishioners, their processional organizing committee and police was successful.⁶⁰⁴ Additionally, organizers' efforts are an example of Massey's contention that in part the construction of urban

⁶⁰⁰ In the catholic tradition memorial masses are usually performed in lieu of a funeral mass when the remains of the deceased cannot be recovered or when family cannot attend a funeral. Italian Catholics often hold a memorial mass after the funeral mass has taken place generally either one week, one month or one year after a funeral.

⁶⁰¹ Simonetta, July 2017.

⁶⁰² "Dear Sir," Letter, Toronto, January 7, 1991, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

⁶⁰³ "Dear Chief McCormack," Letter, Toronto, January 9, 1991, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

⁶⁰⁴ Simonetta, July 2017.

space must be understood as an articulation of social relations as they exist and change over time.⁶⁰⁵ Prior to the memorial mass McCormack's relationship to the annual event was rooted in his professional duty to maintain order. From this vantage point the PCM was a disruptive problem to be solved. After an evening spent with parishioners at a time of vulnerability connected to grief in his own life, McCormack's understanding of the PCM was expanded to include a sense of emotional kinship with Italians at St. Francis, effectively transforming his experience of the College Street area in the ways articulated by Davidson and Milligan, and Hopkins.⁶⁰⁶ When the threat of the PCM's removal from the College Street neighbourhood was withdrawn organizers worked to build an international audience for the annual procession.

As the literature on chain migration has shown paesani often settled in significant numbers in various cities.⁶⁰⁷ Toronto Sannicolesi and immigrants from other locales in Calabria shared information about the PCM and its remarkable growth with other Italian immigrants in southern Ontario and several American cities.⁶⁰⁸ In many cases a strong desire for religious processions also existed in these other cities and annual festas, with processions, for patron saints were held there by regional- and *paesi*-based associational groups. In the 1990s some of these groups chartered buses and travelled to the PCM from Canadian cities St. Catharines, Welland and Windsor, and from Boston, Rochester and Utica in the United States. Members of the PCM organizing committee also travelled to some of these locales to attend religious processions.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 120.

⁶⁰⁶ Joyce Davidson and Christine Milligan, "Embodying Space: Introducing Emotional Geographies," *Social and Cultural Geography* 5, no. 4 (2004): 523-532; Hopkins, "Women, Men, Positionalities and Emotion."

⁶⁰⁷ Sturino, *Forging the Chain*. Examines the migration experiences of immigrants from the Rende area of Calabria who settled in Toronto and Chicago.

⁶⁰⁸ Iori, March 2018; Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 193.

⁶⁰⁹ Iori, March 2018; Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 193.

In 1992 *RAI International* began broadcasting Italian language programs outside Europe. *Rai International*, an arm of the national broadcaster *RAI Italia*, was created to attract an audience made up of expatriates and foreign citizens of Italian descent.⁶¹⁰ All content was created and produced in Italy and included news, music, sports, drama and documentaries. With the new Italian programming Italian-Canadians of all generations could engage with Italian culture and current events in real time on a daily basis. Clergy's role in fostering *RAI International's* coverage of the PCM is not clear, but it is difficult to imagine they would not have known about Simonetta's efforts to bring *RAI International* into the processional space on Good Friday. Following a promotional trip of *RAI* celebrities and journalists to Toronto Simonetta wrote to the General Director of *RAI* Radio and Television in Rome to describe the interest shown in the PCM by the head of *RAI* Corporation Canada.⁶¹¹ Simonetta went on to describe *RAI's* transmission of the PCM into various Italian regions as a powerful way to deepen bonds of affection between Italy, the historic College Street neighbourhood and Italian Canadians of all generations.⁶¹²

This letter, written in Italian as much of his correspondence was, is another example of Simonetta's efforts to increase the footprint and status of the PCM while maintaining its Italian identity and presence in the historic College Street Italian-Canadian neighbourhood. *RAI* did broadcast the PCM in real time to viewers in Italy. Belanger's discussion about the importance of media in creating and enhancing the identity of urban places is informative for understanding

⁶¹⁰ The first broadcast of *RAI International* occurred on January 1, 1992.

⁶¹¹ "D.ssa Arnalda Bartoli," Letter, Toronto, February 15, 1990, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta. Simonetta issued an invitation for the PCM to RAI Radio and Television's representative in Toronto.

⁶¹² "G. Direttore della RAI Radio Televisione Italiana," Letter, Toronto, February 12, 1991, Private collection of Giuseppe Simonetta.

how media can be introduced into transnational networks by immigrant and ethnic minorities to reinforce their claim to urban space.⁶¹³ This strategic use of media may be important for inspiring feelings of kinship with the homeland well beyond the immigrant generation.

The ongoing relationship between Italy and the PCM was given physical form with the inclusion of a valuable religious sculpture in the PCM in 1998. An eighteenth century heritage Baroque sculpture entitled *The Crucifixion* was brought to Toronto from Recco, in the northern region of Liguria. The approval of the Italian government and the Vatican were necessary for this treasured piece to leave Italy.⁶¹⁴ For organizers of both generations the sculpture was a new and tangible connection between the PCM, Italian-Canadians and Italy. All of the changes introduced into the PCM over several decades were rooted in the lived experience of immigrants and their children in Toronto. Italian consular representatives had long been honored guests in the annual event, but for organizers their presence represented a symbolic connection to Italy in part because their attendance was always the result of invitations issued by organizers. Testimony indicated the sculpture was important not only because it was a physical connection to Italy, but also because its inclusion in 1998 was the result of a request from (northern) Italians who sought the permission of organizers to participate in the PCM, and Italian state and religious leaders who supported the request.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹³ Anouk Belanger, "Urban Space and Collective Memory: Analyzing the Various Dimensions of the Production of Memory," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 11, no. 1 (2002): 85-86.

⁶¹⁴ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 17.

⁶¹⁵ Anna B., December 2018; Iori, March 2018; Simonetta, July 2017. Iori in particular noted the request from this northern area was symbolic of the PCM as Italian event, rather than a practice strictly associated with southern Italians.



Figure 5.16. The Crucifixion being lifted into place.⁶¹⁶



⁶¹⁶ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 110.

Figure 5.17. *The Crucifixion* being carried in the 1998 PCM.⁶¹⁷

Taken together, the involvement of *RAI International* and the Baroque piece from northern Italy demonstrated the PCM's relevance four decades after its inception was not only the result of the historical practice of Sannicolesi or southern Italian immigrants but also to its status as a valued Italian-Canadian practice in the present. The PCM continued to be a powerful example of the reality that for migrant minorities in super-diverse cities, religion can play a major role in constantly re-centring and re-inscribing urban space, linking the personal and local to the transnational and global beyond the initial years of settlement in a new city.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ Pietropaolo, *Ritual*, 113. The sculpture was carried without the use of hands. Traditionally the piece is carried by a single individual, balanced upright on a special harness attached to shoulders and back.

⁶¹⁸ Vasquez and Knott, "Three Dimensions of Place Making," 331.

Concluding Thoughts

This study begins with the premise that public places are dynamic sites of encounter and negotiation between groups with various degrees of political and social power.. Streets in immigrant neighbourhoods are real and symbolic sites of dialogue between newcomers to the city and representatives of the host society. Local politicians, bureaucrats, civic officials and police participate in the negotiation of public space through a vocabulary which emerges from the embodiment of neighbourhood places by immigrant minorities. This dissertation explores how immigrants establish feelings of belonging in urban space as they engage in traditional practices which publicly expose cultural differences between newcomers and the local authorities who police them.

This project is in dialogue with scholars whose work is focused on cities and neighbourhoods. Local histories have engaged with theories of space and place as they emerged in other disciplines. Place as method has encouraged historians to reflect on urban places in what T. Creswell describes in “Place” as an essential fact of peoples’ lives. In addition to revealing relationships of power and marginality through place-making, it is useful to think of urban places as the result of processes of movement. Creswell cites for example the movement of people, objects and ideas. The implications of space and place in the histories of immigrant groups in Toronto have been explored by various scholars, for example Varpu Lindstrom’s *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada*, Stephen Speisman’s *The Jews of Toronto, a History to 1937* and Peter Li’s *The Chinese in Canada* in their discussions of residential patterns, associational, religious and family life.

This research contributes to the history of Italians in Toronto. In particular ideas about urban space and place extends the argument made by John Zucchi in *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* that national identity overcame village-based and regional identity as immigrants from different areas encountered one other on neighbourhood streets (as residents and workers) and in churches. The success of the Processione di Cristo Morto (PCM) was in part the result of the postwar group's willingness to engage in this emotional devotional practice with Italians beyond their own region. The theory of place as fluid and malleable is consistent with Robert Harney's criticism, in "Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods," of the term "Little Italy" as a way to understand neighbourhood space. Harney rightly points to the inability of such labels to reveal the variety of relationships and social status within the immigrant group and its internal organizational life. Also absent from the "Little" phenomenon, and highlighted by this work, is any connection to time and in particular change over time. The designation "Little Italy" is a static term which implies an unchanging set of characteristics by which both the neighbourhood and its residents can be understood. In addition to masking changes in the physical organization of immigrant neighbourhoods, the movement of people from any ethnic group within, into and out of "Little" neighbourhoods is also hidden from view.

The symbolic meaning of the PCM over time expanded alongside its physical parameters and with the changing status of Italians in the city. This study engages with the work of scholars within history, for example Enrico Cumbo's "Salvation in Indifference: Gendered Expressions of Italian-Canadian Immigrant Catholicity, 1900-1940" and in other disciplines, for example Nicholas Harney, whose *Eh Paesan! Being Italian in Toronto* explores religious and other cultural rituals to access immigrant culture and its relationship to urban surroundings. Rituals

always occur in place. The processional practices described in this study provide an example of the ways specific neighbourhood places, and the various social relationships of the people who occupy those places, require newcomers to selectively modify meaningful rituals from their premigration lives. Identifying the physical objects used by people in rituals and the visual and aural imprint of specific traditional practices on urban space is one way to understand how and perhaps why immigrants selectively adapt some parts of their premigration identities to new surroundings while other such markers are abandoned.

The study of place at the neighbourhood level helps us to identify individuals who are not normally recognized as leaders. The grassroots nature of processions as they developed in Toronto during the postwar period of Italian immigration brings into focus individuals whose agency operated narrowly but impactfully. In *Community Organization and Leadership* Clifford Jansen has suggested some of the ways ethnic leadership may be understood. He describes the roles played by institutional leaders, for example parish clergy, and “situational” leaders, for example members of the PCM organizing committee, as ethnic leaders. These categories help us to identify the different ways immigrants can forge relationships with locally powerful individuals and institutions which result in their willingness to act as allies in furthering the group’s effort to occupy public space in culturally distinct ways. As Catholics Italian immigrants in both periods of immigration entered a city with an existing religious infrastructure. By enthusiastically and persistently participating in all aspects of parish life, including through financial support, Italian immigrants became a highly visible and valued group for Catholic leaders in the city. As revealed in this dissertation, immigrants’ sense of welcome and belonging in specific places, like churches, is highly dependent on their ability to feel a sense of ownership

in those places. When Italian immigrants created church clubs and organizations, conducted meetings and held events they deemed important with the support of parish clergy, and free from their overt control, Italians felt the neighbourhood church was part of their cultural community rather than simply the physical location for religious observance.

Michael Buzzelli's thesis, *Toronto's Postwar Little Italy: An Urban Ethnic Landscape Study*, discusses the importance of physical structures, like ethnic storefronts and signs, to create neighbourhoods which reveal both the presence and impact of ethnic minorities on urban space. Buzzelli's work argues physical features help to create an *atmosphere* which reflects the ethnicity of its residents, in the case of College Street an Italian *ambiente*. While these terms are useful they are also ambiguous. This study takes inspiration from Joy Parr's influential article, "Notes for a More Sensuous History of Twentieth Century Canada: the timely, the tacit and the material body," in which she calls for a more sensuous historical practice to combat the haziness of these terms. As Parr proposes a sensual approach reveals deeply felt connections between people and the environments they inhabit. The ways immigrants and ethnic minorities experience sights, sounds, touch, and smells helps bring clarity to the conversation about ethnic neighbourhoods by exploring their relationship to memory and emotion.

Immigrant groups have long been discussed within a framework of assimilation and accommodation. While useful, this dissertation argues there are often unstated connections to memory in these discussions which along with the emotional experiences of immigrants are worthy of study and require a more explicit discourse. The difficulty of exploring the memories and emotional experiences of immigrants has been complicated by the absence of an appropriate method and associated vocabulary. Space as method and the incorporation of immigrant's

sensual experiences in particular places begins the process of establishing a vocabulary to understand expressions of ethnic identity and belonging that incorporates memory and emotion. This approach provides a valuable juxtaposition with the work of historians who employ other approaches, for example class or gender, to understand how immigrant communities experience and respond to their new urban environments.

A number of histories have been written about immigrant women's experiences. As individuals and members of families immigrant women faced challenges similar to their male counterparts in what appeared to be an identical urban landscape. But gender impacted every aspect of immigrant women's movement through urban space and their experiences in specific public places. In *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* Franca Iacovetta has described many of ways gender imposed itself on postwar Italian women's work and family lives. Iacovetta's, Marlene Epp's and Frances Swyripa's edited collection *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic and Racialized Women in Canadian History* expanded the discussion of women's gendered experiences to include space and memory. This dissertation seeks to join that conversation. Identifying women's activities as organizers in the PCM brings visibility to the ways immigrant and second generation women embodied agency through their contributions to the physical form and symbolic function of this community ritual. Place is central to locating the ways women assume positions of leadership and impose themselves on urban space. Particular neighbourhood places and the ethno-religious practices that occur there can reveal the ways ethnic minority women express their desire to act as leaders and reveal the leadership styles they employ, which may differ from those of immigrant men. Regardless of citizenship or place of birth women's community-building work is often invisible or anonymous,

even when it is highly impactful. In addition to locating the contributions of Italian immigrant and second generation women to the PCM this dissertation has demonstrated the ways women's work and vision includes purposeful activity intended to alter the physical size, scale and symbolic impact of specific religious-cultural traditions, their impact on urban space and the emotional sense of belonging in place co-ethnics experience during those practices. Future work may do the same for other immigrant women and introduce the complex issue of race into the conversation.

Immigrants who arrived in Toronto after 1945 have been little explored by historians thus far. As part of the recent past these groups provide a rich opportunity to access information about their immigration experiences in time-sensitive ways. Oral testimonies can capture the rich pre-migration lives of immigrants and reveal the unique factors impacting decisions to leave their homelands as well as the various strategies and pathways employed to successfully relocate in new countries. This is especially important in the case of refugees who are often absent or anonymous in institutional archives. Personal archives contextualized by accompanying narratives offer a multitude of opportunities to explore the experiences of ethnic groups which include linguistic, religious and racial minorities. As this dissertation has shown the photographs, home video and document collections held in family homes can provide insight into the lives of ordinary immigrants (whether documented or undocumented) which are often absent in other archival collections. Privately held copies of correspondence related to immigration, citizenship, religious participation, organizational life, and interaction with local government and agencies, to name only a few, can help to fill gaps created by limits to scholarly access of various institutional archival collections. Individual narratives and private collections can also be useful for

understanding the implications of national policy directives, like Multiculturalism, in the associational life of immigrant minorities and the location of subtle but important changes in ethnic identity among different generations of ethnic and religious minorities.

When it was introduced multiculturalism policy had the potential to redefine the relationship between immigrants and the host society at individual, community and institutional levels. Provincial and municipal government efforts to comply with directives in the federal policy had a direct and immediate impact on immigrants and their descendants. Heritage Language policies in education discussed in this study are one such example. The cessation of the move-along directive as it was applied to Italian immigrant men may have been another. In addition to the institutional implications of multiculturalism for Canadian society in terms of access and representation, the policy also promoted a change in attitudes about the cultural and public space occupied by ideas about ethnic diversity. This dissertation has drawn attention to the way organizational activity was impacted from the increased sense of confidence and authority ethnic minority groups felt as a result of this policy initiative by the Canadian government. An example of this confidence was expressed in PCM organizers' demands that College Street be closed to traffic on Good Friday after the introduction of multiculturalism by Pierre Trudeau. Organizers freely proclaimed their right to the exclusive use of a portion of College Street for Italian cultural-religious practice based on language directly connected to multiculturalism policy. They understood the policy as confirmation of their belief that not only did traditional practices belong in public space but that specific public places could belong to Italian-Canadians based on the historical presence of immigrant families who settled there, and the ongoing memories and feelings of belonging which persisted among immigrants and

subsequent generations who continued to visit the area regularly and used neighbourhood space in culturally distinct ways. Stated another way, positive messages by the federal government about the value of cultural diversity and the presence of ethnic groups were interpreted by minorities as confirmation of their right to claim a visible presence in public space. Future histories written about postwar immigrants will help to reveal the various ways different immigrant groups were (or were not) able to access the benefits of government initiatives about diversity.

The role of religion and associated practices remained an important marker of ethnic identity for PCM organizers and many Italian-Canadians who attended the procession annually. As Roberto Perin notes in *The Many Rooms of This House, Diversity in Toronto's Places of Worship Since 1840* this was true despite a general downward trend in Canadian society which de-emphasized the role of religion in public life as a result of several social movements and the changes they produced. Increasing incomes resulted in more time and a larger appetite for new leisure activities. Greater public expenditures provided community centers and other neighbourhood locations for youth to gather far beyond what churches could offer. Individual conscience and tolerance for different lifestyle choices became more highly valued than religious orthodoxy. These trends helped to consign religion to the private sphere.

When Italian-Canadians relocated in large numbers to suburban neighbourhoods they carried their religious traditions with them. Patron saint processional practices were relocated to suburban churches and neighbourhoods, though none occupied streets there in ways that had occurred in the College Street area. Instead the important saints were carried around church parking lots, in nearby parks (or park-like settings) far from traffic and pedestrians and the gaze

of the majority population. In the parks paesani could organize picnics and games to maintain the tradition of the *festa* associated with their patron saint. Many suburban churches with large numbers of Italian-speaking parishioners held small processions on Good Friday. But none imposed themselves on public space in the disruptive style of the PCM. The ways Italian-Canadians made use of public places in suburban neighbourhoods to explore and express their evolving ethnic identities will likely be the subject of future work.

Over the past thirty years the PCM has lost many of its immigrant and second generation organizers to old-age, illness and suburban relocation. The 2019 organizing committee (including sub-committees) was made up of less than a dozen volunteers and the number of attendees continued to reflect a downward trend begun a decade earlier. A few well-established Italian businesses continue to operate in the College Street neighbourhood and its café culture has spread throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Except for the PCM (and several secular events) processional organizers acknowledge the neighbourhood's Italian *ambiente* is now located almost entirely in memory. But they are quick to point out that *ambiente* is revived whenever Italian-Canadians gather on College Street and remember their connections to one another rooted in immigration but nurtured and transformed in Toronto. For the first time since it began in 1961 the COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of the procession on Good Friday. Organizers hope the event will resume in 2021.

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Appendix A: List of College Street Businesses with Italian Words or Names from Palmerston Boulevard to Roxton Road, 1950 and 1960

1950⁶¹⁹

North Side

(584 ½)* Sannuto Barber
(710) Cappe's Drug Store

South Side (532-647 age is illegible.)

(637) Johnny Lombardi's Italian Foods. (Johnny Lombardi, second generation, opened 1948, CHIN began operating from the same location in 1966. CHIN continues to operate in 2020))

1960⁶²⁰

North Side

(522) Giacomini Brothers Grocery
(554) Cianfarani Real Estate
(556) Italian Meat Market
(558) Violante Grocery and Meat Market (Giovanni Violante, arrived in Toronto 1951 from Bari in the Puglia region. The grocery store was established in 1953 and sold in 1965. Violante opened a second business importing Italian products Excelsior Foods in the 1960s. It remains a thriving enterprise in 2020)
(576) Cosentina Meat Market
(578) Caristena's Italian Bakery
(580) Capriccio Restaurant and Billiard Hall
(582) Camilli's Grocery
(584 ½) Sannuto Barber
(586) Sorrenti Grocery
(592) Capri Meat Market
(598) Tanti's Cigar Store
(612) Vesuvio Restaurant (Domenic Pugliese, arrived from Italy (via New York) 1957, established 1957, by the 1970s had 8 locations.)
(616) Ventresca General Insurance
(680) Macelleria Venezia Butcher (maybe: Pasquale Cammareri?)
(682) Italian Grocery
(684) Italian Shoe Repair
(692) Porco Brothers Supermarket
(698) Sartoria Mode

⁶¹⁹ Might's 1950 Greater Toronto City Directory. (Toronto: Might Directories Limited, 1950).

⁶²⁰ Might's 1960 Greater Toronto City Directory. (Toronto: Might Directories Limited, 1960).

*Numbers in brackets refer to street address on College Street.

(710) Cappe's Drug Store
(712) Sicilian Ice Cream Company (Galipo brothers (Natale, Aurelio, Giuseppe, Francesco),
established 1959, immigrants from Sicily.)
(772) Puglia Fruit Market
(784) Sicilia Bakery
(786) Macelleria Aurora Butcher
(790) Catalano Brothers Grocery
(792) Abruzzi Restaurant

South Side

(533-535) Dannetta Press Limited, Del-Mar Clothes Limited
(539) Tuscan Restaurant
(543) Augustino Custom Tailor
(567) Maria's Ladies Fashion
(573) Di Stefano Custom Tailor
(579) Venetian Shoe Repair
(581) Sartoria Romana Tailor
(619) Venetian Shoes
(637) Johnny Lombardi's Italian Food Limited, Ferra Tailor, Biotti and Di Lella Barbers
(645) Orrico Grocery
(661-663) Morelli's Grocery and Meat
(665) Campo Brothers Italian Canadian Dry Goods
(671) Roma Bakery

Appendix B: List of Pastors and Associate Pastors St. Francis of Assisi Church 1968-2000

Name	Position	Start Date	End Date
NINCHERI George	Pastor	September 1957	January 1968
DE SANTIS Marcus	Associate	October 1957	January 1968
CAMPO Polycarp	Associate	November 1957	October 1965
CARMIGNANI Alessandro	Associate	August 1958	November 1961
PHARAND Patrick	Associate	August 1958	August 1964
MCMANUS Columba	Associate	May 1963	April 1964
GRAZIANI Amelio	Associate	September 1964	-----
GRASSO E.M.	Associate	January 1967	December 1967
DE LUCA Ambrose	Pastor	January 1968	August 1970
PIEDMONT Edwin	Associate	January 1968	May 1969
POLTICCHIA Ricardo	Associate	January 1968	December 1978
ROMERI Raphael	Associate	February 1968	March 1976
BOTTE Gregory	Associate	August 1986	May 1977
BASETTI Benjamin	Associate	September 1968	March 1969
DE MIGLIO Isidoro	Associate	March 1969	-----
NEVES Alessandro	Associate	April 1969	August 1970
NUZZO Peter	Associate	July 1969	April 1971
LATTANZI Arthur	Pastor	September 1970	July 1976
MAZARELLA Frederick	Associate	September 1970	November 1976
ABEGG Victor	Associate	October 1972	September 1976
IZZU Januarius	Pastor	September 1976	November 1979
BUCCIERO Angelo	Associate	October 1976	-----
GLIATTA Ronald	Associate	September 1977	October 1979
WALTER Francis	Associate	December 1979	-----
PISCITELLO Primo	Associate	February 1980	September 1982
CARPINELLI Francis	Associate	February 1983	-----
BUCCIERO Angelo	Pastor	February 1983	-----
PAONESSA Ralph	Associate	May 1984	-----
BOTTE Gregory	Pastor	August 1992	-----
MAZZARELLA Frederick	Associate	August 1995	-----
FALZON Raymond	Associate	December 2001	-----