

Nicola Marra
by Niece Roberta
McEwen
Italian Immigrant



My Uncle Nicola Marra told me about his arrival in Halifax. He had arrived by boat and had an afternoon free to spend in Halifax before boarding the train to Toronto. He began to walk around to see the city and as he was walking he saw a while unsmoked cigarette lying on the sidewalk. Fantastic, he thought, and picked it up to smoke it. Then he saw another one, and then he saw one falling from the sky. He looked up and there were two kids throwing them out the window at him - I'm not sure exactly where this happened and whether the reason they were throwing them was because they knew he had just landed. And he said to me "I thought, my God, what a fantastic country this was where children could afford to throw cigarettes out the window when in Italy a group of men would share just one."

Well, I don't know if a story of a country with streets lined with cigarettes would go over well in our smoke-free times, but for him this was like the reputed streets paved with gold. I thought it was a lovely story and he said that the kindness of those children and this happening on his first day in Canada made him always remember Halifax with fondness even though he has never been back.

Another interesting story - my mother just found out that when she and her sisters came over from Italy (she was a young lady) they were supposed to come on the Andrea Dorea that sunk in the Atlantic. They had their tickets arranged but Italian bureaucracy, notoriously slow, caused them a two week delay and so they came on to the Queen Frederica instead. Probably the only time that someone thanked heaven for the inefficient Italian bureaucracy.

