

Vincenzo DiGiacinto
by Son Ignio
DiGiacinto
Italian Immigrant
and Pier 21
Volunteer Interpreter
1913



Vincenzo DiGiacinto was born on February 11, 1897, in Castellalto (Teramo, Abruzzo) Italy. He spent his early childhood and youth on the family farm. He left home at age 16 and immigrated to Canada; settling in Fredericton, New Brunswick. After several years working as a labourer he established his own billiard and pool room, and became known as 'Jimmy'. Later he sold the business to his brother who immigrated to Canada in 1923. He also started a restaurant in Fredericton and later sold it to his sister who also immigrated to Canada.

While residing in Fredericton he also applied for a patent. He received an Italian patent in November, 1921, for a Film Mechansim used on movie projectors.

He travelled back to Italy on numerous occasions. In June, 1930, while in Italy, he married Elisabetta Saccomandi; and in July, 1930, he returned to Canada with his wife and this time settled in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

He purchased and ran for 30 years a grocery store and rooming house on Bruswick Street where now stands the Trade Mart a part of the Scotia Square complex. In Halifax he became known as 'Tony'. He had two children: a son Igino and a daughter Christina.

The end of the Second World War brought a huge influx of Italian immigrants to Canada. The port of Halifax became the gateway to Canada since ships were the popular means of travel. While sponsoring some Italian immigrants to Halifax he became known to I.H. Mathers and Son - the agent for the Italian steamships. He became the agent's Italian interpreter and the relationship lasted until air travel became prominent. All Italian immigrants to Canada, save a few, who came through Pier 21 met and talked with him. On many occasions he also assisted Canada Immigration and Canada Customs. The name 'Tony' became a very familiar one at Pier 21.

In March, 1920, he received his certificate of Naturalization and became a British subject; and on January 1, 1947, became a Canadian automatically under the Canada Citizenship Act. A proud Canadian, he always felt thankful for the opportunities found in the Canadian system which allowed him to succeed in life.

He died on April 12, 1969. Like his predecessors, Christopher Columbus and John Cabot, Vincenzo DiGiacinto did not discover America; but he sure helped populate it. This is his legacy.