

SERIES: Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Adubato
TITLE: Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward
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Unidentified Man #1: I remember that we lived the whole--all of us like a family. The community was like a family. We helped each other out.

Unidentified Woman #1: ...(Unintelligible) was the nicest place in the city and there was all good people there. There wasn't a bad family around there.

Unidentified Man #2: If I could only paint you a picture of Sixth Avenue--how gorgeous it--it was.

Unidentified Man #3: Everybody who lived around here cared about each other. And they--you know, you walked down the street, everybody knew you, no matter where you went.

Unidentified Man #4: They said this was the slums. You would have walked into any of them houses, they were like palaces--clean everywhere.

Unidentified Man #5: Life had a clear meaning. We knew who we were. It was easy to be happy. It was a fantasy place. It was perfect. If life could be perfect, it was perfect. It was one culture. There was a tremendous desire to live in harmony. And we'll never see that again. It was a life that can never happen again.

STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Imagine, 30,000 Italian-Americans, 11,000 of them children under the age of 13, living, struggling, working and thriving right here in a half-square-mile neighborhood. This was Newark's old First Ward.

Like others in my generation, this is where my ancestors settled. They came from southern Italy. Most of the immigrants were poor, all of them in search of the American Dream. But the First Warders are gone now; died off, moved away. Some say they were forced away. This is no longer their neighborhood. But the interesting thing is that once a year, every year, many of the First Warders come back to this church, St. Lucy's, for one very special celebration: a feast, the Feast of St. Gerard, the patron saint of motherhood.

(Footage of Feast of St. Gerard activities)

ADUBATO: How long have you been coming to the feast?

Unidentified Woman #2: When I was nine years old.

Ms. SYLVIA ENGLAND (Italian-American): So that's about 60 years.

Unidentified Woman #2: Six--60 years.

Ms. ENGLAND: Sixty-five years.

ADUBATO: You never miss St. Gerard?

Unidentified Woman #3: Never.

Mr. DON CECE (Italian-American): When people first come, everybody's head's going like this.

Unidentified Woman #4: Looking around.

Ms. ARLENE DeCARLO (Italian-American): Yes.

Mr. CECE: And you see everybody pointing. 'I remember this one. I remember that one.'

Unidentified Woman #5: It's like a big reunion.

Ms. DeCARLO: You see anybody from the old neighborhood?

(Footage of Feast of St. Gerard procession)

ADUBATO: What does St. Lucy's have that suburban churches don't have?

Reverend THOMAS NICASTRO (St. Lucy's): Well, I think that St. Lucy's has tradition. And I think people need that, especially Italians, of Italian background. They need that tradition in their lives; something that's been handed down on them through generation to generation.

(Footage of Feast of St. Gerard activities)

ADUBATO: That tradition of honoring a saint with a feast is a custom from the other side. Many Italians express their faith through devotion to the patron saint of their native village or town, especially on the saint's feast day, when the statue is taken from the church and carried through streets in a procession. And when the Italians came to Newark in the late 1800s, they brought their saints and customs with them.

Father Granato, where exactly did people come from who emigrated here to this community? And why did they come?

Monsignor JOSEPH GRANATO (St. Lucy's): Most of them came from southern Italy because of the natural disasters.

ADUBATO: Certain towns?

Monsignor GRANATO: La Capasaila, La Calabrayas, Calaprutano, Sanfromieyse.

ADUBATO: And Avellino is a what?

Monsignor GRANATO: It's the province.

ADUBATO: It's the province.

Monsignor GRANATO: Yes.

ADUBATO: And then there are communities within the province.

Monsignor GRANATO: Right.

ADUBATO: OK. All...

Monsignor GRANATO: What we call (Italian spoken).

ADUBATO: Everybody asks, 'What (Italian spoken)?' What is that for? For people who don't know, what does that mean?

Mr. MICHAEL FEDE (Italian-American): That's the town. And that's established your r--I guess that was where you were from.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. FEDE: You know, let me see, your grandmother was from--your grandfather was from--Where?--Mona--Manochalzade.

ADUBATO: Manochalzade.

Mr. FEDE: That's where my grandmother's from, right. My grand--my--my father's mother's from Manochalzade.

ADUBATO: Isn't that something?

Mr. FEDE: There's about two people in the world that can probably pronounce that, all right. And that's...

ADUBATO: That's right. And to spell it, forget about it.

Mr. FEDE: I can just--and--and--well, St. Gerard is from Caposele.

ADUBATO: That's right.

Mr. FEDE: And most of the people came into this neighborhood from Avellino, outside of Naples.

ADUBATO: The province of Avellino.

Mr. FEDE: Right side of--right out--from between--from western

Naples, I would imagine.

ADUBATO: Most of the immigrants who came and settled in the old First Ward were poor.

Monsignor GRANATO: Yes.

ADUBATO: Did they have--did most have skills?

Monsignor GRANATO: I doubt it. I doubt it.

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Monsignor GRANATO: They had to take whatever job they could get when they got here.

ADUBATO: The Italians who emigrated to Newark at the turn of the century settled in a largely undeveloped area known as the Quarry District. Over the next two decades, in essence, they built their own village. By 1920, Newark had the fifth largest Italian population in the United States and the First Ward was home to Newark's Little Italy. It was an intense and colorful community with an old-world feel, a neighborhood with a million stories, and every family had one.

Tell me about Uncle Tom.

Mr. STEVE ADUBATO Sr. (Italian-American): Jeez. Uncle Tom was the first Italian-American hero in Newark. And he chased this guy into New York. He and a--a detective--I think it was Flaherty. Bottom line is they were both shot in a tenement house and he carried his partner downstairs and dropped dead, you know, in doing that.

ADUBATO: Because people were packed together in the First Ward, they couldn't help but be friendly. Tenements often housed 20 or even 30 members of an extended family. Entire families broke bread together and went with neighbors to the municipal bathhouse on Clifton Avenue.

Unidentified Man #6: There was push cars all along Sixth Avenue, anywheres from Stone Street all the ways up to Garside Street. And every peddler sold something different, who sold peaches, who sold apples and who sold pears.

ADUBATO: Who was El Fumo?

Ms. LOUISE FERRARA (Italian-American): El Fumo was the sweet potato man, a very grungy, dirty old man who sold sweet potatoes for one penny.

ADUBATO: That was his name?

Ms. FERRARA: That was his name, El Fumo, because he looked like a smokestack.

Mr. ANTHONY COPPOLA (Italian-American): Eighth Avenue was a very colorful street, from--from Clifton Avenue all the way down to High Street. The restaurants, the baker shops, the shoe shops, the grocery stores. There was too ma--too--too many to count. And on a Saturday night, Eighth Avenue would rival Little Italy in New York. We had so many fine restaurants.

Mr. STEVE GEORGE (Italian-American): People from New York used to come to the First Ward to eat and to spend a late evening. They loved it.

ADUBATO: Say you wanted take--you wanted to take somebody through the ward. You wanted to take them to the best seafood place. Where was that?

Ms. ROSE MARIE GIANNETTA (Italian-American): La Main.

Mr. GEORGE: Bill's Clam Bar and Fragasso's, another fabulous place.

ADUBATO: So the best pastries?

Ms. GIANNETTA: The bes--the best pastry was Ferrara's.

Mr. GEORGE: Ferrara's. Ferrara's pastries--that was tremendous. Still is.

Mr. FEDE: Because the people, I guess, left the other side, they left their--their families and their home, their--their new homes became important to them. The families became important to them. They made friendships and family bonds that transcended blood--blood relations that they had back in Italy. And--and I think that's what we had down here. You live here--you know, the guy across the street would--knew your grandfather on the other side. The guy over here was from the same village as your mother, you know what I mean?

ADUBATO: Is everybody related in the ward?

Unidentified Man #7: And...

Unidentified Women #6 and #7: Yes.

Unidentified Man #8: Definitely. Definitely.

Unidentified Woman #6: We are. We are. We are related.

Unidentified Man #7: Well--well...

Unidentified Woman #7: We're all cousins. We're like cousins.

ADUBATO: What would you say to people around the country who say, 'What's with these Italians? They're all related'?

Unidentified Woman #6: We are. We are.

Unidentified Man #7: We are. Right. Everybody...

Unidentified Woman #7: Yeah. Right.

Unidentified Woman #6: Everybody says the same thing.

Unidentified Woman #8: Everybody comes from the same town practically.

Unidentified Woman #6: `What is it, all you Italians are'--that's true. That's true.

Unidentified Man #8: Yeah. Yeah.

Ms. DeCARLO: And even if you're not related, you're related.

Unidentified Woman #6: Yeah.

Unidentified Woman #7: You're related.

Unidentified Man #8: Yeah.

Unidentified Woman #6: Not. You're related.

Unidentified Man #8: Right.

ADUBATO: Even if you're not related, you're related.

Ms. DeCARLO: People used to walk by when we were kids; everybody used to say hello to each other whether you knew them or you didn't know them.

Mr. MICKEY IMMERSO (Italian-American): Knew everybody.

Ms. DeCARLO: I remember gentlemen tipping their hats to the older women.

Unidentified Woman #7: That's right.

Mr. IMMERSO: That's right.

Unidentified Man #8: That is...

Ms. DeCARLO: People used to--I mean, it was just--it was a closeness. We will never see those days again.

Unidentified Woman #6: Never. Never.

Ms. DeCARLO: I mean, the world isn't like that.

Unidentified Woman #6: No, no. Never.

Mr. IMMERSO: You knew everybody. We were--it was safe to walk a--walk around. It was great. It was a great place. And would...

ADUBATO: And it's true about the doors not being locked?

Mr. IMMERSO: Oh...

Unidentified Woman #7: Why?

Ms. DeCARLO: That's true. Never did.

Unidentified Woman #7: No.

Mr. IMMERSO: During the summer months they used to sleep on the fire escape when it was warm.

Unidentified Woman #7: Right. Right.

Ms. DeCARLO: We did, too.

Unidentified Man #9: There was no air conditioning.

Mr. IMMERSO: There was no air conditioning. That's right. Used to sleep on the--on the--on the fire escape.

Unidentified Woman #6: That's right. That's right.

Unidentified Woman #7: That's right. That's right.

ADUBATO: There was no air conditioning. Sleep on your--on the fire escape.

Unidentified Woman #6: On the--on the fire escape or on the porch.

Mr. IMMERSO: Right on the fire escape. There was a window where you could let the air in.

Unidentified Woman #7: That's right. We did it.

Mr. IMMERSO: Fresh air. Yeah.

Unidentified Woman #6: Everybody got so hot, we used to go under the water hydrants.

Ms. DeCARLO: That's it.

Mr. IMMERSO: Right.

ADUBATO: What are our kids going to miss?

Mr. RICHIE ROMANO (Italian-American): Our kids miss being able...

Mr. FEDE: Miss the smell of gravy on a Sunday morning.

Mr. ROMANO: The chance to go out and play right in front of the house with--with other kids from the neighborhood. I mean, for--for my kids to play, we've got to get kids to go to their house or they come to our house.

Unidentified Man #10: With a play group.

Unidentified Man #11: Play group.

Mr. ROMANO: Right. The...

Mr. FEDE: Play dates. Play dates.

Mr. ROMANO: Yeah. There's no--there's no outside.

Unidentified Man #11: Yeah, play dates.

Mr. FEDE: Play dates.

Mr. ROMANO: We used to go outside our door, he was there, he was there, we hung out and we played in the street.

Mr. FEDE: Play dates. You have a play date.

Mr. ROMANO: And our parents--when they wanted us, they whistled for us (whistles).

Unidentified Man #10: Right.

Mr. ROMANO: Today you can't do that.

Mr. FEDE: Franklin playground, 5:00, Mr. Labortos stuck his head out the door, whistled. All the Italian kids went home.

Mr. STEVE GEORGE (Italian-American): You...

ADUBATO: If there's one word that describes the First Ward, what's that word?

Mr. GEORGE: Heart. It had a tremendous heart. No matter where you went in the neighborhood, no matter what part of the--the First Ward you went to, there was love and affection and people that you knew and--and understood. And they were like--they were like family.

ADUBATO: Everywhere you looked there was a family-owned grocery store, a fruit or vegetable market. And it seemed like every block had at least one bakery.

Mr. STEFANO GIORDANO (Italian-American): I grew up waking up in the morning and getting dressed and going to school--we lived above the bakery. And I would come downstairs and my father would be pulling bread out of the oven. And I would--and I would actually run over to the oven, ducking the stick because he'd be coming back with the pill--with the pillstick, grabbing a hot roll--roll and running off to school.

ADUBATO: How important was food here on the ward?

Mr. GEORGE RESTAINO (Italian-American): Very important. But the macaronis was the best on a Sunday.

ADUBATO: On a Sunday. What was that like?

Mr. RESTAINO: Well, Sunday was like a special day for us. We'd be playing on Drift Street, Factory Street, and after we were finished playing ball, about 12:00, we'd yell up, 'Put the water on.'

Ms. CONNIE GESAULDO (Italian-American): Going up Cutler Street on the way home from church, walking over Carson, all you did was smell gravy all the way over Cutler Street. Everybody was making the gravy for the macaroni.

Unidentified Man #12: The First Ward at that time had about 40,000 inhabitants. The ICU was the main as--association of the ward. And then we had very many social clubs like the ACKWEES, the Club Bridier, Abu Dabas, the Webster AA, the Mayflowers, the Sheffield PC, The Royal Nuts, and it seemed that every corner had a little club.

ADUBATO: Through it all, St. Lucy's Church was the First Ward's spiritual anchor and most enduring institution. The church, established in 1891, was originally a small wood-frame structure, but under the guidance of Monsignor Joseph Perotti, the parish grew rapidly.

Mr. ANTHONY GENUARIO (Italian-American): St. Lucy's Church was extremely poor. Don't forget, most all the people around here were all immigrants. Everybody was poor working people. And it didn't have the money to donate to the church like we have now.

ADUBATO: In 1925, the old church was torn down and replaced with a magnificent structure. St. Lucy's was where First Warders brought their children to receive the sacraments. It was where they were married and where they came to bury their dead. First Ward funerals were elaborate and emotion-filled spectacles. The most unusual funeral occurred in 1920 when, believe it or not, a cobbler held a funeral for his pet canary. It was called the canary funeral. He hired a band, a hearse and pallbearers. Ten thousand people lined the streets to watch the spectacle.

However, it was the feasts to the patron saints of their native villages back in Italy that were the most cherished events. The streets surrounding St. Lucy's were illuminated with lights and the church facade was often decorated with elaborate replicas of the hometown church in Italy.

Mr. COPPOLA: In the spring, summer and fall, St. Lucy's Church conducted eight to nine outdoor feasts. We had the Feast of St. Anthony. We had the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Our Lady of Snows, Our Lady of the Assumption, St. Rocco, St. Sabino, St. Michael. St. Michael was a very colorful feast.

Ms. ROSE MARIE GIANNETTA (Italian-American): They selected children from the school. They used to dress as angels.

Unidentified Woman #9: And go on the wires.

Ms. GIANNETTA: They used to go--they used to go across the wire on Sheffield Street.

Unidentified Woman #10: Sheffield Street.

Monsignor GRANATO: They were supposed to be angels, because St. Michael was an archangel and they would have...

ADUBATO: And they would be flying across the street.

Monsignor GRANATO: Yes. And one day they got stuck out here. Imagine the lawsuit you'd catch nowadays.

Mr. COPPOLA: About 10,000 people would be out there watching these girls and they're acting as angels. It was a very colorful feast. And then the big feast was St. Gerard. And that was in October 16th.

ADUBATO: Father, for those who wonder, why do people put the money on the saint? I mean, they understand the devotion part, they understand the religious aspect, the prayer part; what about the money?

Monsignor GRANATO: I'll tell you the beginning. I was little when I first came. I wondered about that myself. But they're either asking for a favor--that's their way of asking for a favor--or giving thanks. That's a custom from other side.

ADUBATO: From Italy.

Monsignor GRANATO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: So they would do the same thing. They would have a procession through the streets...

Monsignor GRANATO: Sure.

ADUBATO: ...money on the saint--pin the money on it...

Monsignor GRANATO: Yes.

ADUBATO: ...and they just carried it across the ocean here.

Monsignor GRANATO: Yes.

ADUBATO: And so one--at one point did you back off and say, 'OK, I understand'?

Monsignor GRANATO: When I saw the people in the processions.

(Footage of processions shown)

Ms. FERRARA: The people used to march in a procession. And those who made a vow to St. Gerard would--say they had a difficult childbirth or were not able to conceive and then all of a sudden they did conceive--usually named their children after them, Gerard or Gerarda.

Mr. GENUARIO: When the feast was first originated, the St. Gerard Society controlled the priests. The church did not run the priests. And when the statue came home at night, as soon as it s--got in front of the church, right in front of the church, they would undress and take all the money and they would count the money and pay the--and pay the bills for the--for the priests. I think it was in 1933 that Monsignor Perotti passed away. Then Father Ruggiero became the pastor of St. Lucy's Church. The very, very first thing that Father Ruggiero did, and he was a strong character--he was a very strong-minded person...

Mr. RESTAINO: What he--what he did was he took over all the priests. He--he--he made them conducted by--all the priests were conducted by the church and all the money that was received from those priests went to the church. There went that money. He completed the church. And as you know now, we have one of the most beautiful churches in the diocese. In fact, they now call St. Lucy's the Italian Cathedral.

ADUBATO: So the Depression hits. What happens on the ward?

Mr. GEORGE: The way gets even better as far as the--the people. We all pulled together.

Ms. GIANNETTA: Imagine, my mother sent us to the store with a nickel to buy a dog bone. You know what she made with it? Soup. Soup.

ADUBATO: You guys were poor.

Mr. RESTAINO: Very poor. I worked in every bak--I worked in every baker shop at the age of 15 and 16 in the north ward to bring home food to my brothers and sisters.

ADUBATO: Why did so few go on welfare?

Unidentified Woman #11: Because they were embarrassed. They really wanted to work.

Ms. DEBRA KERR (Italian-American): They used to offer her a coupon for sugar.

Unidentified Woman #12: Never.

ADUBATO: The government did.

Ms. KERR: Yep. Yeah. And my grandmother used to say, 'No, give it to the other people. They need it more than me.'

Mr. ANTHONY TRAVISANO (Italian-American): We were poor. We were poor, yeah. We ate one--you know, we had three meals. There was no going to the refrigerator and say, 'I want cookies and milk.' No. There was nothing like that. We ate three meals a day.

ADUBATO: If someone said, 'Hey, how could it have been that great in the ward if you guys were dirt poor,' you'd say what?

Mr. RESTAINO: Well, we loved it. The poor is to me nothing. We're just like one big family here.

ADUBATO: Despite the close-knit bonds, First Warders still lost their jobs and had to cut back, but it did have the effect on drawing a very tight-knit, some might even say clannish group, even closer together. It was also during the Depression that a prominent local gangster named Richie "The Boot" Boiardo earned a place in many a resident's heart.

Mr. TRAVISANO: He was the greatest man you ever want to know. He helped all the poor people. He put food on their table. He went around with baskets on Thanksgiving, Christmas and gave them all food to eat.

Ms. FERRARA: Thanks to him it was a safe neighborhood, but...

ADUBATO: What do you mean?

Ms. FERRARA: Well, people were protected in those days. I mean, if a girl was violated, that person was taken care of very quickly.

ADUBATO: Somebody told me that the neighborhood partly was safe because of Richie.

Unidentified Woman #11: No, no.

Ms. GIANNETTA: No, Richie had nothing to do with that.

ADUBATO: Was he a hero?

Mr. GEORGE: No, not by a long shot a hero. There was people who were afraid of him or intimidated by him or in awe of him...

ADUBATO: Re--respect him?

Mr. GEORGE: But, no, no, no. Not really.

Mr. TRAVISINO: The old man was a good man.

ADUBATO: Richie's restaurant, Vittoria's Castle, was frequented by many a New York celebrity.

ADUBATO: Is it true about Joe DiMaggio that he used to come to Vittoria's Castle? I see you shaking your head yes back there.

Mr. CECE: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Ms. DeCARLO: Yes. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Unidentified Man #13: Correct. Correct.

ADUBATO: He--he actually came?

Ms. DeCARLO: Uh-huh.

Mr. CECE: Yes. Yes.

Ms. DeCARLO: Uh-huh.

ADUBATO: And brought some of the Yankees with him.

Ms. DeCARLO: Uh-huh. Yep.

Mr. CECE: Right.

Mr. TRAVISINO: He'd stay right in the middle of the street sign, you know, I was there. Oh, you know, we was saying...

ADUBATO: How did he look?

Mr. TRAVISINO: He was always a good dressed man.

Mr. GEORGE: He was like a god, especially to the Italian people. But all people that lived in the neighborhood, they all idolized him. He was a real gentlem...

ADUBATO: Did you ever see him?

Mr. GEORGE: Oh, yes. Tall and handsome.

ADUBATO: You got close to him?

Mr. GEORGE: Oh, yes.

Ms. ROSALIE LINFANTE (Italian-American): Oh, he was fantastic. What a build. I mean, I hated Marilyn Monroe because he married her.

Unidentified Woman #13: He was good-looking.

Mr. TRAVISINO: But I...

ADUBATO: But as an Italian kid to have Joe be there, what did it mean?

Mr. TRAVISINO: It meant he came to the right neighborhood. Came to the First Ward. Came to the First Ward.

ADUBATO: When World War II broke out, hundreds of young men from the First Ward were inducted. Some who served in Italy passed through the villages where their parents and grandparents were born. Back home, the neighborhood proudly displayed its service banners on Seventh Avenue. After the war, life in the ward returned to normal. New restaurants opened for business along Eighth Avenue. The feasts at St. Lucy's were as grand as ever. And the neighborhood elected one of its own, Peter W. Rodino, to the United States Congress.

But suddenly, it all changed. In 1953, the First Ward was selected by the federal government for urban renewal. The heart of the neighborhood was leveled to build the Columbus Homes housing project.

Ms. GIANNETTA: A disaster. It broke the people's hearts.

Mr. GEORGE: It was a blight on the whole neighborhood. Ruined everything. Changed everything.

Monsignor GRANATO: Eight hundred to 1,000 homogeneous, hard-working families were told they have to leave.

ADUBATO: No choice.

Monsignor GRANATO: No.

Ms. GESAULDO: And it--it--you know--it--I think people actually cried that they had to get out. It was really, really, really sad.

Mr. GEORGE: It didn't matter what they would get for their homes or anything. They never wanted to leave.

ADUBATO: It wasn't about the money?

Mr. GEORGE: No. No. No, Money didn't have nothing to do with it.

It was just being happy.

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Mr. GEORGE: And being comfortable. They were comfortable. They were where they wanted to be.

ADUBATO: Why wouldn't Italians live in a tall building like that?

Ms. GIANNETTA: First of all, they're not used to living like that. That wasn't their way of life.

Mr. TRAVISINO: They were afraid to live--we had--the old people were afraid of elevators and all. The highest house we had was maybe th--three floors.

Monsignor GRANATO: There was some people died of broken hearts. They had their cellars, their back yard, their--their vine with the grapes, made their own wine, were here from the time they arrived--they were unceremoniously uprooted. Some really never recovered. And it left a great deal of bitterness.

ADUBATO: Did the government destroy it?

Unidentified Man #14: Absolutely. The government destroyed it; didn't understand it. Thought it was a slum. They looked at the physical. They didn't und--a neighborhood, a human society, has the least to do with the physical.

ADUBATO: The construction of Columbus Homes marked the beginning of a long, tortuous decline for the First Ward. Many families fled the area. And as the old timers died, their feasts died with them. But many First Warders remain loyal to the neighborhood.

(Footage of demolition of Columbus Homes)

ADUBATO: In 1994, the city of Newark began demolition of the long abandoned Columbus Homes. That same year, St. Lucy's celebrated its 100th anniversary and the St. Girard Feast continues to draw people back to the old neighborhood.

Why is it that St. Girard not only survived, but flourished?

Monsignor GRANATO: One reason I would guess is he's the patron of motherhood. And I can tell you from personal experience of women who can't conceive come here, pray, make a novena, walk in procession, whatever, and they--they conceive.

ADUBATO: They believe, don't they?

Monsignor GRANATO: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: You believe, don't you?

Monsignor GRANATO: Absolutely.

Mr. DOMINICO AMATUCCI (Italian-American): He's the patron saint of--of mothers today and, obviously, I've had two children, so we've prayed to him during her pregnancies. And--and my personal life with children, health and stuff like that has never left--never let me down.

Ms. SYLVIA ENGLAND (Italian-American): I came. I prayed to St. Girard and three months later I was pregnant. And my son Girard was born on St. Girard's Day October 16th.

Unidentified Woman #2: And here he is.

ADUBATO: And this is Girard.

Ms. ENGLAND: And this is Girard.

Unidentified Woman #2: And this is my--my miracle boy.

ADUBATO: This is the St. Girard baby.

Unidentified Woman #2: This is the St. Girard baby.

Ms. ENGLAND: The St. Girard baby.

ADUBATO: Many children and grandchildren of the First Warders, including myself, bring our own children to the feast, hoping to capture and hold onto this beautiful and enduring tradition.

What do you remember most?

Mr. FEDE: My grandfather. My grandfather came to Newark in 1916. And when I come back here and I see--my grandfather had a store right here. He had a store over here. He had the bank over here. And that's what I remember. I remember my grandfather, my father as a young man. And just--everybody who lived around here cared about each other.

ADUBATO: What's going to happen, though? Because our parents and our grandparents would tell us about the ward, but we're too young...

Mr. FEDE: We're going to keep telling them.

Mr. ROMANO: Yes, we are.

ADUBATO: Are we going to do that?

Mr. FEDE: We're going to keep telling them. You're going to tell your kid about it, and you're kids going to look up to you and say,

'You know what, Pop? I don't know what the hell you're talking about, but you know something? The way you're talking, it must mean something to you.'

Mr. ROMANO: They know. They know.

Mr. FEDE: It must mean something. They're going to see it in your eyes and just the way you feel. My daughter, I tell her stories and she looks at me like I'm gone with the wind, but...

Mr. ROMANO: The church will be here.

Mr. FEDE: Yeah. That's right.

Mr. ROMANO: This church will be here.

(Vintage photographs of the First Ward and its residents are shown)

Mr. RESTAINO: I was very fortunate to come from this place, and I would do it all over again.