Being Italian in 'the Sault': The Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 1900-1950

By
Laura S. Carter

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts.

24 April 2020, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Examining Committee:

Dr. James Morrison
Thesis Advisor

Dr. Kirrily Freeman
Graduate Studies
Coordinator

Dr. Andrew Nurse
External Reader

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, with particular attention on the treatment its members received due to the internment crisis of the Second World War. The Verdi Lodge played an important social role for the Italian community in the Sault, in addition to its purpose as a mutual aid society. This thesis focuses on the efforts made by the city's Italian Canadians to be included in civic life, how they were perceived by the rest of the city, and their attempts to maintain a non-partisan sense of normalcy during the Second World War. Through an in-depth examination of the role of civic society in the Italian community, especially during the difficult times of the Second World War, this thesis adds to the historical narrative of Sault Ste. Marie, and of Italian Canadian experiences.

24 April 2020

Acknowlegements

First and foremost, I thank my advisor Dr. James Morrison. His teaching and guidance, especially in the area of oral history, were instrumental to my thesis. I also am grateful for his trust in my work and judgement, and for his support in all things administrative.

Dr. Nicole Neatby provided me with excellent training in historiography and guidance in her role as graduate coordinator for the majority of my time as an M.A. student. Un grand merci!

Thank you to the History Department at Saint Mary's. Its faculty and staff gave me such a warm welcome, shared their insights, appreciated the benefits and challenges of my being a mature student, and were simply lovely. I could not have asked for a more supportive study environment. My fellow students were wonderful to work with and insightful in our classes together. Thanks especially to Courtney Mrazek Callahan and James During for their intellectual curiosity, support, and friendship.

Thanks to Philip Goldring, who long ago took a chance and hired me as a student researcher at Parks Canada. He coached me through my first visit to an archive, gave me opportunities to hone my research skills, and patiently edited my writing. He later was good enough to provide me with a reference for my M.A., and remains a wonderful mentor and friend.

Staff at the Main Branch of the Sault Ste. Marie Public Library, and at the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, were very generous with their time and help, for which I am thankful. I am greatly indebted to the organizers and participants of the Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie. This oral history project captured and saved many perspectives and experiences that would otherwise be unavailable to scholars and the greater community.

Thanks to Steve Schwinghamer, who guided me to the immigration statistics I needed, and who has been a wonderfully supportive colleague in my work at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 and in my academic pursuits.

Many thanks must go to my family. To my parents, Monica and Neil, thank you for your encouragement and support through all my years of schooling, and for looking after everything else so that I could focus on my work during my research trips home. To my sister Allison, thank you for last-minute map formatting, and for letting me stay with you during my two research trips to Toronto.

This thesis would not exist without my husband Matt. He put the idea to return to studies into my head in the first place, and then encouraged me to follow through. Perhaps most importantly, thank you to Matt for caring for our little Anna while I worked to get this thesis finished.

Finally, thank you to my thesis committee: Dr. Morrison, Dr. Kirrily Freeman, Dr. Neatby, and Dr. Andrew Nurse. Their comments helped shape my final draft, and they managed to make a thesis defence by videoconference during a pandemic feel as normal as possible. This thesis is much better because of their guidance. Any and all remaining errors are mine alone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Among the more lasting clichés about Canada is the perception that it is 'a nation of immigrants.' Given that around 7 million foreign-born people were living in Canada (over 20% of the population) between 1911 and 1931, this label is perhaps inevitable; such a number of migrants would naturally have an unmistakeable impact.[1] The majority of these early 20th century migrants came from Europe; most from the British Isles, as preferred by Canadian immigration policy. Other nationalities settled in Canada in fewer numbers overall, Italians chief among them. In 1913, the busiest year for immigration before the Second World War, Italians comprised 4.1% of immigrants to Canada – the largest group after British (37.4%), American (34.5%), and Russian (4.6%).[2] By 1930, nearly 30,000 migrants had come to Canada from Italy.[3] (See Appendix A, Table 1: Arrivals to Canada by Nationality, 1913)

The movement of people from Italy to various destinations around the world was a mass migration; as Robert Harney notes, from "national unification in 1870 [to] World War I, millions of Italians migrated to the Americas."[4] Initially, this migration was composed mostly of men, who were mostly labourers; they were called *golondrine*

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[1] Percentages based on figures from Statistics Canada, *150 Years of Immigration in Canada*, "Chart 2: Number and proportion of the foreign-born population in Canada, 1871 to 2011," archived at https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016006-eng.htm.
(accessed 8 January 2020).

[2] Percentages based on figures from Statistics Canada, "Arrivals at inland and ocean ports in Canada, by nationalities, fiscal years 1911 to 1917," archived at https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1917/acyb02_19170113-eng.htm. (accessed 10 February 2020).

[3] Franc Sturino, "Italian Canadians," *The Canadian Encyclopedia* © Historica Canada 2013. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/italian-canadians (accessed 7 January 2020).

[4] Robert Harney, "The Commerce of Migration," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* IX (1977): 42.

(swallows) since they often followed harvest seasons around the globe "from Autumn in Piedmont to Spring in Argentina."[5] Where migration to Canada differed was that the 'swallows' usually ended up staying permanently, they worked in industrial settings rather than agriculture, and they either sent for their wives and children from Italy, or established families in Canada. The city of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario was a natural draw for labourers, with its steel and paper mills, and its proximity to rail lines for travel to railway construction projects and lumber camps.

The result of two major waves of immigration is that by the mid-1960s, there were over 450,000 people of Italian origin in Canada. In his examination of the Italian community in Canada, journalist Kenneth Bagnell highlighted

> …one of the most vibrant of all Italian-Canadian communities, the city of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. There the 10,000 Italians constituted a full twelve percent of the population, making it, at the time, the most sizeable concentration of Italians in the country.[6]

Despite these numbers, in 1977 one scholar asserted that the "…history of the Italian community in Canada during the 1930s is…essentially the history of the 14,171 Italians in Toronto and the 23,752 in Montreal."[7] As Chapter 2 of this thesis demonstrates, Sault Ste. Marie had a substantial Italian community in the 1930s as well, and it also is worthy of historical examination.

Of course, there are many perspectives, experiences, and stories to examine within any community, and choices must be made: telling a singular story of an entire ethnic community is impossible. This thesis focuses on the Verdi Lodge, the men's branch of

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[5] Harney, "The Commerce of Migration," 42.
[6] Kenneth Bagnell, *Canadese: A Portrait of the Italian Canadians* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1989), 182.
[7] J.A. Ciccocelli, "The Innocuous Enemy Alien: Italians in Canada During World War Two" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1977), 6.

the Order Sons of Italy in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. I have chosen 'the Verdi' as my focus because of its status as the first Canadian lodge of the Order Sons of Italy, and because of the particular attention and treatment its members received during the internment crisis of the Second World War. Chapter 3 of this work examines the early history of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario broadly, and the Verdi Lodge specifically.

Chapter 4 examines how the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario (OSIO), its members, and the wider Italian community were perceived by the rest of the city of Sault Ste. Marie in the 1930s. This chapter includes a study of the shift of the major Order Sons of Italy celebration in the Sault from Columbus Day to Cabot Day, a new contribution to the historiography. Chapter 5 focuses on the experiences of the Sault's Italian community during the Second World War, and how the broader Sault community viewed and treated Italian Canadians. Harold Troper has observed the importance of perception when discussing culture and ethnicity: "[b]eyond culture there is one's perception of oneself and how one is perceived by others both inside and outside the ethnic group."[8] Understanding these perceptions and experiences helps us to understand the greater culture and history of a community – both the ethnic community itself and the broader community at large.

In any discussion of ethnic groups, a comparison is made between the ethnic group and the host society the group has joined. In the early 20th century, the host society was not homogenous, but is often treated as such. Terms such as 'dominant,' 'majority,' 'Anglo-Canadian' or 'Anglo-Celtic' are often used to refer to this host society, made up

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[8] Harold Troper, "Commentary," in *On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, eds. Norman Hillmer, Bohdan S. Kordan, Lubomyr Y. Luciuk (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1988), 243.

of Canadians with a variety of backgrounds from Great Britain and Ireland who did not necessarily think of themselves as one homogenous group. However, as Howard Palmer notes, these Canadians "closed ranks" when it came to other ethnic groups in their midst.[9] Thus, this thesis uses the above terms interchangeably to denote those in Sault Ste. Marie who had more political and social power and who were not Italian or Italian Canadian. 'Italian' is used to denote those persons living in Italy or very recently arrived in Canada; 'Italian Canadian' refers to those born in Canada or having lived in Canada for many years. 'Italian community' will be used to refer to the city's ethnic community as a whole, regardless of birthplace.

Present-day residents of 'the Sault' take the Italian community and its influence for granted; needing to explain to outsiders the impact Italian Canadians have had, and continue to have, seems strange to many a Saultite. Nevertheless, historians have not extensively studied this key component of the city's character. Specifically, through an in-depth examination of the role of civic society in the Italian community, especially during the difficult times of the Second World War, this thesis adds to the historical narrative of Sault Ste. Marie, and of Italian Canadians' experiences.

While Italians are one of Canada's more significant ethnic groups, with a settlement history beginning in the late nineteenth century, a major effort to study the history of Italian Canadians did not appear until the late 1960s, and the historiography of the community did not really expand beyond that until the late 1970s, quite a while after the first and even second major waves of Italian migration.

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[9] Howard Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century," in *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Gerald Tulchinsky (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 300.

A.V. Spada's monograph *The Italians in Canada* (1969) was a pioneering book in the field of Italian-Canadian history. It was published as part of a centennial series on 'ethnic Canada' and is of its time: it acknowledges the two 'founding peoples' of Canada as English and French, and seeks to make a space for Italians within that framework. This perspective is reflective of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, established in 1963 and whose report was published in 1969. *The Italians in Canada* is a broad approach to the subject, as Spada begins his study in the fifteenth century with Giovanni Caboto and Giovanni Verrazano and continues to highlight Italian contributions to Canada through to 1969. In his effort to demonstrate how far back Italian contributions go, and how many Italians have 'made it' in mainstream Canada, Spada is engaging in what ethnic historian Robert Harney negatively called "Mayflowerism."[10] Spada's approach includes long lists of prominent Italians in a variety of Canadian communities and organizations, in order to demonstrate the contributions made by Italians in Canada. This style places it in the category of ethnic history Franca Iacovetta calls "Whiggish histories of 'their own people' [with] a decidedly celebratory or filiopietistic bent."[11] Spada does include a small section on Sault Ste. Marie, along with a lengthy list of names (first initial and family name only) of those Italians who have contributed to the legal, medical, scholastic, and business professions in the city over the years.

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[10] Robert F. Harney, "Caboto and Other *Parentela*: The Uses of the Italian-Canadian Past" in *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigration Experience in Canada*, ed. Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino (Montreal: Guernica Editions, 1989), 38.
[11] Franca Iacovetta, *The Writing of English Canadian Immigrant History*, Canada's Ethnic Group Series Booklet No. 22 (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1997), 3.

In the words of John Zucchi, "Robert Harney was the most important influence on the history of urban ethnicity in Canada"[12] and many would argue Harney was instrumental in encouraging the expanded study of Italians in Canada generally. While he is well known for his research into Toronto's Little Italies, Harney's studies of Montreal's *padrone* leader and of the gendered nature of Italian migration are most applicable to the present thesis. In "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study of Padronism" Harney examines the rise and downfall of the city's most influential *padrone*, or labour broker, Antonio Cordasco. Harney demonstrates that Cordasco's role as intermediary between Italian labourers and Canadian business owners kept each group from dealing with, or learning much about, the "mysterious other."[13] He argues that to understand padronism as a phenomenon, "we must see it as part of the commerce of migration not as a form of ethnic crime," since padronism ended when workers no longer needed the services offered.[14] The article provides insight into the experience of thousands of Italian migrant workers who arrived at the port of Montreal and sought work either in the city or in the Canadian hinterland – an experience that many initial migrants to Sault Ste. Marie shared. It also gives limited details about Cordasco's main competitor, Alberto Dini, who according to Craig Heron was responsible for sending Italian labourers to Sault Ste. Marie.[15]

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[12] John Zucchi, "Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods: Looking Backward, Facing Forward" *Urban History Review* 44:1 (Fall 2010): 73.
[13] Robert F. Harney, "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study of Padronism," *Labour/Le Travail* 4 (1979): 59.
[14] Ibid., 84.
[15] Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1988), 75.

Harney's article "Men without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930" focuses on the experiences of sojourning Italian men, arguing that these immigrants must be studied in their own "existential frame of reference" as men away from family, friends, and home villages or towns, not simply as "an urban problem" for the host society.[16] Harney's work sheds light on the motivations Italians would have had for emigrating either to the hinterland or industrial centres of Canada (both of which could be found by arriving in Sault Ste. Marie), the nature of living conditions for sojourning labourers, and how these men were perceived by Anglo-Celtic Canadians.

In "*Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932,* Donald Avery studies European immigration to Canada with a focus on workers, especially those from Eastern and Southern Europe who found employment in mining, lumber, railway construction, and farming, and the reactions of English Canadians to these workers. He uses a Marxist approach, arguing that Canada's immigration policy can be understood only in the context of "a wider transatlantic capitalist labour market" and mentions the *padrone* system in particular.

Similar in subject matter is Avery's *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (1995) which focuses on the ways that various lobby groups helped shape the priorities of Canada's immigration and refugee policies through the twentieth century. He argues that ethnicity and race were important factors that determined the experiences of immigrant workers. The book uses a comparative framework, examining the effect American policies had on Canada. In this work, Avery

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[16] Robert F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*, ed. Franca Iacovetta, Paula Draper, Robert Ventresca (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1998), 211.

makes a new effort to include the perspectives of the workers themselves when possible. There are no new insights on Italians for the pre-Second World War period in this volume; rather, the bulk of Avery's additional information regards the post-Second World War wave of immigration from Italy to Canada. While Avery's two monographs are without question important to the general historiography of immigrants to Canada, they do not provide insights of social experiences at the local community level.

In addition to his Canadian Historical Association pamphlet *The Italians in Canada*, which provides a brief overview of the migration and establishment of Italians throughout the country, Bruno Ramirez has focused his efforts on studying the Italian community of Montreal. Given that many ships arriving from Italy landed at the port of Montreal, it was natural that the city would develop a significant Italian population, especially given the variety of work available for newly-arrived migrants. In his article "Brief Encounters: Italian Immigrant Workers and the CPR, 1900-1930" Ramirez studied the employer that "first attracted the largest quantity of Italian immigrant labour"[17] and that heavily contributed to the *padrone* phenomenon. He argues that his study of 773 Italian workers is representative not only of Italians working for the CPR, but of Italians in Montreal generally. The article highlights the temporary, sojourning, and seasonal nature of Italian employment by the CPR, observations that certainly apply to other localities where the railways employed Italian migrants. Ramirez's study of the "unstable and volatile" nature of employment for the majority of Italian migrants prior to the Second World War helps to explain why organizations such as mutual benefit societies were appealing and necessary for Italians in Canada.

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[17] Bruno Ramirez, "Brief Encounters: Italian Immigrant Workers and the CPR, 1900-1930" *Labour/Le travail* 17 (Spring 1986), 9.

John Zucchi's monograph *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* is a migration history in the sense that it pays attention to the complete experience of the migrant from original homeland to host society. He examines settlement patterns and Italian-Canadian institutions in order to determine what caused migrants to shift from an identity based on their home town or district in Italy, to one based on an 'Italian' community in Toronto. He argues that an 'Italian' identity grew from the formation of a community elite that promoted an Italian identity amongst immigrants, but that it did not obscure the old local identity immigrants held; rather, local and national identities co-existed and were emphasized differently in various social settings. Zucchi states that "[i]n Toronto, the immigrant learned to live simultaneously in two worlds, in his townspeople's and in Toronto's Italian community. A third world, that of the 'Canadians', existed beyond the first two."[18]

Another pioneering study of Italians in Toronto is Franca Iacovetta's *Such Hardworking People*. Iacovetta argues that migrating to Toronto after the Second World War caused Southern Italians to transition from peasants to proletarians. The shift that saw both men and women perform paid labour outside the home meant that both family and employment demands now affected their lives. Her social history approach emphasizes the intersections of class with ethnicity and gender, the relations between immigrants and the host society, and immigrant militancy. She does not examine community elites, such as leaders of mutual aid societies, as her focus is on the experiences of working-class Italian Canadians.

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[18] John Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 8-9.

A key example of a history of Italian migration is Franc Sturino's *Forging the Chain: Italian Migration to North America, 1880-1930*. Sturino examines the social continuity of Southern Italians, but from "the village outward" as he puts it, rather than using the traditional practice of starting from a New World location and tracing back to Italy. He argues that traditional practices in the Old World directly shaped the social and economic experiences of Southern Italian immigrants in North America. His focus is on the three types of chain migration (via *padroni*, via news from other workers, or the reunification of families), though the themes of family/friend networks, work, and "outside forces" also play a key part. Sturino's goal is to examine the immigrant experience from the personal perspective of migrants themselves, in order to explore their collective attitudes and values. Given that the book's geographic area of study is quite large, it focuses on two large centres of Italian settlement in North America, Chicago and Toronto. Sturino briefly discusses the Italian mutual benefit societies of Chicago, emphasizing their roots both in the Italian middle-class tradition of the *società di mutuo soccorso* and in artisan societies in Southern Italian towns.[19] Because Mussolini banned emigration from Italy in 1929, Sturino does not address Mussolini, Fascism, or the Second World War in any detail.

A topic that has received considerable attention from historians is the issue of fascism, its impact on Italian-Canadian communities, and the internment of Italian Canadians following Italy's entry into the Second World War against Britain (and so against Canada) in 1940. One of the most important volumes on the topic is *Enemies*

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[19] Franc Sturino, *Forging the Chain: Italian Migration to North America, 1880-1930* (Toronto: Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1990), 133.

Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad, edited by Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe.

Principe's chapter in the collection outlines the political and ideological factors that lead to the internment of Italians in Canada, arguing that the fascist propaganda circulated by Italian Canadians for years before the war was the major cause of internment. He provides insight into how both English and French Canadians perceived Italian immigrants, an important perspective given the sizable Montreal Italian community, as well as the French-Canadian populations in other cities with Italian communities, such as Ottawa or Sudbury. Principe also implies that the Order Sons of Italy was essentially a fully fascist organization, arguing that the Ontario Lodge in Toronto was the only lodge to speak up against anti-Semitism while general leadership stayed silent, and contrasting the quick growth of the blatantly anti-fascist Order Italo-Canadese against the sluggish expansion of the Order Sons of Italy in 1938-1939.[20]

In the same volume, Luigi Pennacchio looks at the propagation of fascism within Toronto's Italian community specifically. He argues that fascism was appealing to Italian Canadians because it helped give them an identity, and that the Canadian government was happy to allow the ideology to propagate, until Italy invaded Ethiopia. The article raises important questions regarding the role of Italian consular officials in other cities, such as Sault Ste. Marie, and the propagation of fascism in those locations. Pennacchio also assumes that the Order Sons of Italy was essentially a fascist organization and does not examine any exceptions to that rule.

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[20] Angelo Principe, "A Tangled Knot: Prelude to 10 June 1940" in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 35-36.

Also in *Enemies Within*, Luigi Bruti Liberati examines the internment of Italians from across Canada. He argues that internment of Italians and Italian Canadians was not arbitrary, as has been believed in the past, and demonstrates it was actually quite calculated. While he does not condone or pardon the Canadian government's decision to intern Italians, he does argue that it was an understandable decision to make in a time of war.[21] Enrico Carlson Cumbo studies the effect of internment on the Italian community in Hamilton, looking at both internal and external perceptions of the Italian community. He argues that the role of government informants (or the suspicion that there were government informants) from within the Italian community during the war has caused lasting internal tensions that can still be felt today. Cumbo also assumes the Order Sons of Italy to have been a fascist organization.[22]

Directly linked to the internment of Italian Canadians during the Second World War is the campaign to achieve redress for internees and their families. The redress campaign brought renewed attention to the debate over the degree to which Italian-Canadian organizations and individuals had been fascist, and stirred up old perceptions and stereotypes of the community. Franca Iacovetta and Robert Ventresca argue that the redress campaign was built upon a "simplified version of the past," and that the campaign was "bad history" that caused the story of a few interned Italian Canadians to become the story of the entire Italian Canadian community, including those whose ties to Canada

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[21] Luigi Bruti Liberati, "The Internment of Italian Canadians," trans. Gabriele Scardellato, in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, Angelo Principe, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 76-98.

[22] Enrico Carlson Cumbo, " 'Uneasy Neighbours': Internment and Hamilton's Italians," in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, Angelo Principe, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 99-119.

began only after the Second World War. [23] Ian Radford agrees with Iacovetta and Ventresca's interpretation, and argues that the intolerance that Italian Canadians felt from Anglo-Canadians, even into the 1980s, led to the specific issue of redress for the internments eventually representing all injustices felt by the community.[24] He also notes many Italian Canadians saw the redress campaign as a way to assert the contributions of the whole Italian community nationwide, and summarizes how the campaign renewed the debate surrounding fascism in Italian Canadian organizations and communities. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the effect of the redress movement itself in Sault Ste. Marie, the topic is addressed within a description of the Italian community's feelings and objectives in the post-war period.

By the late 1970s, interest in studying Italians in Northern Ontario communities had established itself among a few graduate students of history. Two examples are Antonio Pucci's study of Fort William (later part of Thunder Bay) and Emilia Kolcon-Lach's study of Sault Ste. Marie. Both theses focused on the early twentieth century and the first major wave of Italian migration to the region.[25] Joseph Ciccocelli's 1977 thesis, supervised by Donald Avery, provides an examination of the Italian experience in Toronto and Montreal during the 1930s and then the Second World War, with a focus on

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[23] Franca Iacovetta and Robert Ventresca, "Redress, Collective Memory, and the Politics of History," in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, ed. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 381.

[24] Ian Radford, "Ethnic Minorities and Wartime Injustices: Redress Campaigns and Historical Narratives in Late Twentieth-Century Canada," in *Settling and Unsettling Memories: Essays in Canadian Public History* ed. Peter Hodgins and Nicole Neatby (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 383.

[25] Emilia Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 1892-1922" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1979) and Antonio Pucci, "The Italian Community in Fort William's East End in the Early Twentieth Century," (M.A. thesis, Lakehead University, 1977).

the internments of Italians. Ciccocelli argues that these years were defined by a "deep-rooted and widespread anti-Italian sentiment among English-Canadians"[26] which culminated in the internment crisis.

Of the three major Italian population centres in Northern Ontario, Thunder Bay has been the most researched, due mainly to the work of John Potestio of Lakehead University. His general study *The Italians of Thunder Bay* (2005) uses a combination of archival sources and oral history (or letters written to him by members of the Italian community in place of interviews) to document the community's evolution. He demonstrates that the Italian communities of Port Arthur and Fort William faced hardships and occasional negative perceptions, but that overall they were accepted and respected by the host community, even during the Second World War.

Potestio's study of the Italian Mutual Benefit Society of Port Arthur (one of the two towns that later merged to become Thunder Bay) is particularly interesting, as it provides insight into how such a society would come to be, what services it offered, and how it evolved over time to serve the needs of the Italian community. Postestio indicates that although the Order Sons of Italy tried to get the group to become a member lodge of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario, the group refused; it also stayed very visibly away from any mark of fascism in the years leading up to the Second World War. For this reason, although Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie are comparable in population size, industrial focus, and ethnic composition, Thunder Bay does not serve as a useful comparison to the Sault where the Italian experience is concerned.

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[26] Joseph Anthony Ciccocelli, "The Innocuous Enemy Alien: Italians in Canada During World War Two," (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1977), iii.

Diana Iuele-Colilli's article "Sudbury's Italian Landscape" is a chronicle of the many contributions Italian individuals and groups have made to the Sudbury area over the years; she mentions the effects of the Second World War only in passing, in one of her article's last paragraphs.[27] Her article appears as the first in her edited collection of papers presented at a conference on Italian Canadians, which, due to its being organized by Laurentian University, focused nearly exclusively on Sudbury's Italian community. The papers in this volume tend to focus on the promotion of Italians; there is little (if any) criticism of the community or desire to investigate darker moments in history.

The Italian community in Sault Ste. Marie is well recognized within the city, but historical treatment of the Sault has tended to focus on other topics, such as the early French exploration of the area, or the founding of the city's major industries by Francis Clergue. John Abbott's 1987 article "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor in the Education of an Industrializing Town: The Case of Sault Ste. Marie, 1895-1914" remains one of the few published academic studies of the Italian community in the city. His social history studies the relationship between the Italian and Anglo-Canadian communities in Sault Ste. Marie from a number of angles, including treatment of foreign workers, alcohol, municipal policies, and schooling. He argues that the host community's focus was on exclusionary policies until 1912, when it then suddenly shifted to an assimilationist stance. Abbott's article focuses on the effect that the Italian community had on local schools before 1914. It provides good detail on the attitudes of the city towards its Italian citizens, based mainly on editorials from the *Sault Daily Star*, but covers a very short and

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[27] Diana Iuele-Colilli, "Sudbury's Italian Landscape," in *The Harvest of a New Life: Documenting, Thinking and Representing the Italian-Canadian Experience*, ed. Diana Iuele-Colilli (Welland, Ont., Lewiston, NY : Éditions Soleil, 2002), 1-28.

early time frame. It is therefore of limited use to this thesis, despite its significance, given its pre-First World War focus.

In their article "Murder, Womanly Virtue, and Motherhood: The Case of Angelina Napolitano, 1911-1922" Karen Dubinsky and Franca Iacovetta study the murder trial of Angelina Napolitano of Sault Ste. Marie in order to analyse perceptions of Italian women in Anglo-Canadian society.[28] They argue that this admittedly unusual case still sheds light on the experiences of immigrant women, especially with regards to gender-based perceptions of ethnicity, and prejudice against women from ethnic minorities. The article provides information on living conditions in the Sault's West End and on Anglo-Canadians' negative perceptions of Italians in the city.

Given the popularity of labour history in the 1970s and 1980s, and the fact that employment was the major motivation for Italian emigration to Canada, it is only natural that a great deal of the available literature about Italians in Sault Ste. Marie is contained within studies of the city's industries and labour. In *Steel at the Sault: Francis H. Clergue, Sir James Dunn, and the Algoma Steel Corporation 1901-1956* (1984) Duncan McDowall examines the Algoma Steel Corporation (the third-largest steel producer in Canada and Sault Ste. Marie's major employer) from a business perspective, focusing on the founding of the company and its two most important owners. Labour movements or reactions are not a focus. McDowall does not mention Italian involvement in Algoma Steel, since during the time period of his study, Italians would have been workers only,

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[28] Karen Dubinsky and Franca Iacovetta, "Murder, Womanly Virtue, and Motherhood: The Case of Angelina Napolitano, 1911-1922." *Canadian Historical Review* 72:4 (1991): 505-531.

and not involved in management. However, the book is an important backgrounder on the dominant employer of Sault Ste. Marie.

Craig Heron's book *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* examines the steel industry throughout Canada, and so studies steelmaking companies in Hamilton, Ontario and Sydney, Nova Scotia in addition to Sault Ste. Marie. Heron argues that geographic isolation, the economic fragility of Algoma Steel, and ethnic tensions made it difficult for workers in the Sault to unite properly in order to protest against Algoma Steel's management. Algoma Steel could not rely "on local labour supplies for their vast operations"[29] and so looked to workers from abroad, including Italians. He also outlines the transient nature of Italian labour in Sault Ste. Marie until the 1920s, echoing Harney's and Ramirez's findings in Montreal.

Collaborating with Robert Storey, Craig Heron has also focused more on the impact of ethnicity upon steelworkers in Canada, including in Sault Ste. Marie. In "Work and Struggle in the Canadian Steel Industry, 1900-1950" Heron and Storey argue that the mechanization and new management policies in the early years of the Canadian steel industry led to increased power and control for owners and managers; workers resisted this control, and joined together to negotiate employment terms and standards from management. However, workers did not demand or win any essential changes in the actual labour process of making steel. Their article looks at the steel industry in Sault Ste. Marie as well as Hamilton and Sydney and provides some insight into the experience of ethnic workers in the steel industry. They find that Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie benefited from the presence of Italian workers already in the city to build railways and its

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[29] Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1988), 51.

own steel plant by offering these men manufacturing jobs. These men essentially lived to work, as Algoma Steel kept them on twelve-hour days until 1935. The rationale was that since these Italians would be staying for no more than a few years at most, management would get the most it could out of their labour power.[30] Heron and Storey argue that while ethnic enclaves in steel towns provided workers with opportunities to join together and successfully resist, having several different ethnic groups within a workforce actually prevented a broader working-class solidarity.

Frances Heath's 1978 article "Labour, the Community, and Pre-World War I Immigration Issue" focuses mainly on American and Chinese immigrants to Sault Ste. Marie and how the host community perceived them, but also provides some insights into the perception of Italian workers.[31] She argues that Italians were respected as hard workers, that Chinese faced disapproval based on race and perceived job-stealing, and that Americans were hated most of all because they took skilled jobs and didn't live in or contribute economically to the community: they simply rowed across the river at day's end. Heath's main argument is that the alien and immigrant labour issue led to the founding of local chapters of two unions, but that it took federal immigration legislation to provide local (that is, non-immigrant) workers with the job protection they sought.

Mutual benefit societies were a common response by immigrant communities to conditions in their new homelands. Jose Moya's 2005 article "Immigrants and

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[30] Craig Heron and Robert Storey, "Work and Struggle in the Canadian Steel Industry, 1900-1950" in *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 220-221.

[31] Frances M. Heath, "Labour, the Community, and Pre-World War I Immigration Issue," in *50 Years of Labour in Algoma: Essays on Aspects of Algoma's Working-Class History*, ed. John Ferris (Sault Ste. Marie: Algoma University College, 1978), 39-56..

Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective" studies the broader phenomenon of immigrant associations, including mutual benefit societies like the Order Sons of Italy, across both American continents from the 19th century to the present day. Moya notes the reluctance of immigrant mutual aid societies to become involved in politics, especially those of their host society, unless such involvement provided immediate benefit in the form of employment or socio-economic advancement.[32] This reluctance can be seen in the actions of Verdi Lodge members and leaders throughout the time period studied.

The first book written about the mutual benefit society Order Sons of Italy was *The Purple Aster: A History of the Order Sons of Italy in America*. Written by Ernest Biagi, a member of the Order Sons of Italy, the book's tone is at times overly favourable towards the society, or defensive of it or Italians. It provides detailed information on the founder of the Order and on some of its important figures in the United States, along with mini-histories of each of the Grand Lodges of the Order in North America. On the subject of fascism in the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario during the Second World War, Biagi writes only the following: "The existing Canadian laws had reduced its activity and almost made its contacts with the Supreme Lodge practically impossible."[33] No mention of possible fascist infiltration or the subsequent internment of members of the Order is made.

The only monograph on the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario is Gabriele Scardellato's *Within Our Temple: A History of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario.* The book is an overview of the organization's history by its archivist and historian, based on

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[32] Jose C. Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31:5 (2005): 844.
[33] Ernest L. Biagi, *The Purple Aster: A History of the Order Sons of Italy in America.* (New York: Veritas Press, 1961), 192.

the archival holdings of the Order. A particular focus is given to listing the members and officers of the local lodges, as well as participants in Grand Conventions and Grand Councils. While no overarching argument is made in the work as a whole, Scardellato does take a stance on the fascist influences of the organization, stating that the Order "suffered the dissension that resulted from the efforts of Italian consular officials and staff in the Order's organization to instil the membership with the ideology of Italy's dictator, Benito Mussolini." Scardellato also argues that one of the lasting effects of the internment of members of the Order and other Italian Canadians was that the community was ill-prepared to interact with the huge wave of post-war immigrants from their mother country.[34] According to Scardellato, three key members of the administrative committee that took over after the emergency dissolution of the Grand Lodge in August 1940 (after the RCMP arrested most of the Grand Lodge under the War Measures Act) were from Sault Ste. Marie.[35] He does not clearly state that these three members were anti-fascist, but the fact that they remained un-arrested is perhaps an indication of their political leanings, and may demonstrate that the Order in Sault Ste. Marie was less affected by fascism than in other Canadian lodges.

Most recently, Angelo Principe's article in *Ontario History* examines the struggles related to fascism within the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario up to 1946.[36] Toronto is the focus of the article, though Sault Ste. Marie's lodges are mentioned on occasion. Principe argues that conflicts of politics and ideology were present in the Order Sons of Italy from

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[34] Gabriele P. Scardellato, *Within Our Temple: A History of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario.* (Toronto: Order Sons of Italy of Canada, 1995), 4-5.
[35] Ibid., 20.
[36] Angelo Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle in the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario, 1915-1946" *Ontario History* 106:1 (Spring 2014): 1-33.

its earliest days in the United States and Canada because of the broad, umbrella-like nature of the organization. Principe is able to give more detail on one particular incident in Sault Ste. Marie than was provided by the local Sault newspaper by drawing on Toronto-based sources. He cites oral history interviews "in the author's possession" but does not indicate when the interview was recorded, who the interviewer was, or where the interview is archived. Principe also cites a number of pamphlets, leaflets, and other ephemera, again making no mention of where these sources are archived.

A survey of the disparate historical studies related to Italian Canadians and the city of Sault Ste. Marie demonstrates that there remain large gaps in the historiography. John Abbott and Emilia Kolcon-Lach have covered important ground with their studies of the community from the 1890s to 1922, but further work remains to be done past that date, and beyond the methods and sources they used. This thesis begins to fill the gaps by studying the whole first half of the 20th century, and by taking a social and cultural approach to the history of the Italian community in the Sault.

The Anglo-Canadian majority's perceptions of the Italian community in the Sault have not yet been addressed by historians, and so this thesis makes an important contribution to the historiography by examining these perceptions. By keeping a tight focus on the Verdi Lodge, by using a wide variety of sources including oral history, and by highlighting the memories and experiences of members of the Italian community themselves, this work exposes more perspectives than previous studies have done. Examining Italian Canadians in Sault Ste. Marie from 1900-1950 allows us to learn about their experiences during the Italian community's establishment and growth in size and prominence. It also provides a better understanding of the impact of fascism and the Second World War on the community. In analysing perceptions of the Italian community

through the interwar years and during the war itself, this thesis also prepares the way for future studies of the second wave of Italian immigration to Sault Ste. Marie in the post-war years.

Howard Palmer observed that historians have had a tendency to "view the topic [of ethnicity] through the lens of official government records"[37] and Harold Troper agreed, noting that "Canadian historians tend to see immigration and ethnic groups as issues of policy and administration."[38] In contrast, using a community-founded organization like the Order Sons of Italy as the lens for examining the Sault's Italian community allows for a less mediated understanding of its experiences. The activities of this mutual aid society were social in nature, and so provide a view of the experience of being Italian in the Sault.

Jose Moya notes that small, informal ethnic associations were far less likely to have written records preserved, if indeed there were any to be kept; historians thus focus on "larger, more institutionalised associations," those that were legally regulated or involved in "formal politics." This reality gives us a "distorted picture" of ethnic organizations because the smaller associations were much more typical.[39] Focusing on one lodge of a broader federation – the Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario – allows for the best of both worlds. More written records are available, especially those having to do with the management of the life and sickness insurance angle of the lodge's

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[37] Howard Palmer, "Commentary," in *On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, eds. Norman Hillmer, Bohdan S. Kordan, Lubomyr Y. Luciuk (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1988), 237.
[38] Harold Troper, "Commentary" in *On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, eds. Norman Hillmer, Bohdan S. Kordan, Lubomyr Y. Luciuk (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1988), 242.
[39] Moya, "Immigrants and Associations," 835.

activities, but more personal and less political aspects of the organization are sometimes documented as well.

The Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds are held at the Archives of Ontario, and contain documents related to the Order Sons of Italy from its beginnings in Canada in 1915. The fonds include financial, administrative, and legal documents relating to the Verdi Lodge, as well as ephemera such as newspaper clippings featuring the Lodge and/or its members. Membership lists and some member application forms are included in the fonds, but meeting minutes for the Verdi Lodge are not. This lack of local meeting minutes is a significant and unfortunate gap in the archival record; minutes might have revealed members' attitudes towards important events like the construction of the new Temple, lectures on Mussolini, arrests of Italian Canadians in June of 1940, and the subsequent major restructuring of the Order. The Fonds do include a copy of the newspaper *L'Unione*, which seems to have been published starting in 1945. The paper called itself "The 'Order Sons of Italy in Canada' Official Bulletin" and was printed twice a month in Montreal, with all articles in Italian. The only edition found to have relevant material is from July 1946. Generally, what was preserved from the activity of the Order Sons of Italy in the 1930s and 1940s were financial and legal documents regarding the organization's activities as an insurance provider. It is important to note that the Fonds have changed hands several times over the years, which may have contributed to the incomplete nature of the collection. Records had been kept at the Multicultural History Society of Ontario and later transferred to the Archives of Ontario.[40] Indeed, one pamphlet directly related to the Verdi Lodge is still held at the

[40] Archives of Ontario, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, F 4378-1-11-53, "History Research Project Progress Report" 18 May 1988.

Multicultural History Society of Ontario, but not labelled as being connected to the OSIO. There was also discussion about acquiring documents from the families of early leaders of the Order; such an approach to document collection would necessarily lead to an incomplete archive.[41]

The Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie (OHSSM) was founded in the early 2010s by community members interested in preserving memories of those "who have lived through some pivotal times in our city's evolution."[42] A volunteer oversight committee manages the project, in partnership with the Sault Ste. Marie Public Library, which serves as the designated public archive for OHSSM interviews and associated materials. Because the OHSSM's purpose is to preserve the individual memories of community members, and not to examine any specific topic, interview questions are broad, and quite gentle. Interviewers are often connected to interviewees through family or professional ties. While these ties likely helped to put interviewees at ease during their recording sessions, it also means that the interviews have less academic focus and rigor to them. However, the OHSSM is vital, both generally and to this study in particular, as it has captured interviews with former members of the Order Sons of Italy in the Sault who have since passed away.

As the most important newspaper in Sault Ste. Marie during the time period addressed in this thesis, the *Sault Daily Star* is central to understanding events that took

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[41] Archives of Ontario, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, F 4378-1-11-54, John Andreozzi to Chris Bennedson, 4 September 1986.
[42] "Origins of the Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie," http://www.ohssm.ca/about.html (accessed 26 May 2019); https://livinghistoryalgoma.com/projects/ohssm/project-history/ (accessed 27 March 2020).

place in the city, and the viewpoints of residents on major events. Studying the *Star* provides continuity, as it was, and is, an institution in the Sault. In the 1920s, the paper showed a new dedication to the city's immigrant and ethnic West End in the regular column "West End Briefs." It is important to note that there was no local Italian community newspaper at any point in Sault Ste. Marie, in either Italian or in English – a clear exception to the general ethnic rule – and so there is no Italian counterbalance to the *Star*. The paper is representative of the Sault's Anglo-Canadian majority, which included those who owned and ran the company. James W. Curran and his brother John were owners and publishers of *The Sault Daily Star* from 1901 until 1941, when James Curran's son Robert took control of the paper.[43] The *Star*'s political stance seems to vary depending on the question or issue at hand. Its editorial board took no hard-line affiliation with any particular political party.

In the early 1900s, the *Star*'s writers certainly shared their opinions of the city's Italians and other ethnic groups; these views were often based on stereotypes and could be quite harsh. Stories on ethnic groups or 'races' became more common in the 1920s and 1930s as the permanent population of the West End expanded and became a fact of civic life in the Sault; however, the tone of many of these articles indicates that the ethnic communities of the West End were definitely considered to be 'other' and separate from readers in other parts of town. By the 1920s, editors at the *Star* were not really taking a position regarding Italians and other immigrant groups; rather they tend to allow locals' quotations to speak for themselves. By the 1930s, the *Star* became more supportive of

[43] Frances Heath, *Sault Ste. Marie: City by the Rapids* (Burlington, Ontario: Windsor Publications Canada Ltd.), 184.

West End residents, and was definitely supportive of local ethnic communities, especially Italian Canadians, during the outbreak of war with Italy and internments in 1940.

Taken together, these primary sources demonstrate that the Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy played an important social role for the Italian community in Sault Ste. Marie, in addition to its purpose as a mutual aid society – though the organization's contribution to the Italian community and city as a whole is not always acknowledged in Sault Ste. Marie today. The following chapters of this thesis will examine the Verdi Lodge's involvement in wider community events. Through this close examination, we can see the efforts made by the Sault's Italian Canadians to be welcomed and included in civic life, how they were perceived by the rest of the city, and their attempts to maintain a non-partisan sense of normalcy in the distinctly not-normal years of the Second World War. The Italian community strived to be – and was – accepted, only to be again viewed with suspicion by 1940.

Chapter 2: Context – Italians in the Sault, 1900-1939

"The West End was such a special place. People should know about it."[1]

In July of 1902, the American newspaper *Commercial Advertiser* described Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario as "English and French with a dash of Italian thrown in for tone and color…"[2] Italians have been a part of the Sault since its shift from frontier settler village (founded at a location valued by the Anishinabeg people for thousands of years for its fishing, and used as a political gathering place[3]) to industrial city. The Italian community centred itself in the city's West End, near the industries that had attracted the earliest immigrants, and experienced many of the challenges and circumstances felt by Italians in other, larger Canadian cities. Knowledge of Sault Ste. Marie's early days is key to understanding the Italian community's roots in and responses to life in the city, including the founding of the local lodge of the Order Sons of Italy.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the newly-industrializing Sault was "a magnet for migrant Europeans" with jobs available in railway-building, the iron works, steel mill, pulp mill, and other heavy industry. High wages were on offer, but jobs were seasonal; it was natural then that many transient workers were attracted to the town. John Abbott aptly describes the Sault's earliest days: "[i]n the construction phase of Sault Ste.

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[1] Gene Ubriaco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 3 November 2011, 23:12.
[2] *Commercial Advertiser* 7 July 1902, as cited by Emilia Kolcon-Lach, 103.
[3] Karl Hele, " 'By the Rapids': The Anishinabeg-Missionary Encounter at Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie), c.1821-1871," (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 2002), 2-3.

Marie's development…most foreigners were assumed to be migrant labourers."[4] Abbott states these workers lived in boarding houses and dormitories, making them "men without property, in an age when the possession of real estate was regarded as incontrovertible evidence of a stake in the community." The transience of this new labour force "fixed an assumption that 'foreigners' could not aspire to membership in the community."[5] These workers came from unfamiliar lands, brought with them unfamiliar customs, and seemed to show no sign of staying in Sault Ste. Marie long enough to make a proper contribution. While their labour was valued as part of developing the northern area nicknamed "New Ontario," they were not valued as individuals by their host community.[6]

At the national level, ethnicities were certainly ranked in order of preference: British immigrants, along with Northern Europeans, were considered best for Canada. J.S. Woodsworth referred to this attitude throughout his 1909 publication *Strangers Within Our Gates*: English, Dutch, and Irish were considered "the 'better class' of immigrants"[7] while Germans were "among our best immigrants,"[8] there could be "no better settlers" than the Swedes,[9] and more British immigrants were required "to assist us to maintain in Canada our British traditions and to mould the incoming armies of foreigners into loyal British subjects."[10] Italians were viewed with caution; Woodsworth wisely observed that "of few people have we so many unreconciled, detached ideas." He

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[4] John R. Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor in the Education of an Industrializing Town: The Case of Sault Ste. Marie, 1895-1914" *Ontario History* 74:4 (December 1987): 331.
[5] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 1.
[6] Ibid., 327-328.
[7] J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers At Our Gates* (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, Canada, 1909), 31-32.
[8] Ibid., 100.
[9] Ibid., 87.
[10] Ibid., 50.

noted the contrast between the accomplishments of Garibaldi and Mazzini and the stereotype of the 'dirty Dago.'[11] He then engaged with perhaps the most common stereotype regarding Italians: the apparent contrast between those from the North and those from the South. Northerners were "…intelligent…skilled…compar[ed] favourably with the Scandinavian."[12] A Southerner, however, was "…invariably an unskilled farm labourer…often has no definite purpose…the descendant of peasantry illiterate for centuries…"[13] Generally, he believed that the "criminal instincts" of Italians had been overstated, and that any crime was the result of rural Italians not knowing how to "make the most" of their city accommodations – which he admitted were "crowded, unsanitary tenements."[14] Woodsworth was willing to ascribe positive qualities to Italians as well, calling them "quick to learn"[15] and "industrious… temperate… family morality is high."[16]

Similar attitudes towards immigrants prevailed in Sault Ste. Marie. According to John Abbott, city officials in the Sault preferred Finns, Swedes, and Norwegians, while lowest in their view were Italians, Bulgarians, and 'Polacks.' Officials based their ranking on "a scale of citizenship values that placed possession of, and pride in, property at or near the top."[17] Despite this official preference, a variety of 'less-desirable' immigrant groups made their home in the Sault by the early twentieth century, with Italians figuring prominently among them.

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[11] Woodsworth, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 160.
[12] Ibid., 161.
[13] Ibid., 162 3e.
[14] Ibid., 164.
[15] Ibid., 163.
[16] Ibid., 165.
[17] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 338.

For example, by 1909, there were "approximately 13 Chinese laundries" in Sault Ste. Marie, and Frances Heath contends that most ill-will directed at 'foreigners' was really aimed at Chinese immigrants. They were thought to take jobs away from white residents, and were known to send most of their income back to China.[18] Worse still, according to many locals, were American workers, who "were never accepted by the community." Americans also took jobs that resident Canadians wished to have, and while Chinese residents paid rent and bought necessities in Sault Ontario, Americans simply crossed the river at the end of the day and spent all their earnings in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.[19] This distaste for Americans was an attitude particular to the Sault and its location on the international border; generally, Americans were considered "shrewd" and beneficial as immigrants to Canada.[20] With wartime, even those labelled 'Austrians' were viewed with disdain. A 1918 federal conciliation board heard the following concerning Austrian workers at Algoma Steel:

> …there are nearly twelve hundred (1200) Austrians employed (alien enemies); they almost entirely run the coking ovens; they have been hard to control; they receive such good pay that they do not require to work all the time, so they knock off whenever they like… On occasion the company has been obliged to round these men up with the police in order to get men enough to operate this department, so as the mills could be kept going.[21]

It is important to remember that until the end of the First World War in 1918, the label 'Austrian' could apply to a wide variety of immigrants, as the Austro-Hungarian Empire

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[18] Frances M. Heath, "Labour, the Community, and Pre-World War I Immigration Issue" in *50 Years of Labour in Algoma: Essays on Aspects of Algoma's Working-Class History*, ed. John Ferris (Sault Ste. Marie: Algoma University College, 1978), 53-55.
[19] Heath, "Labour," 55.
[20] Woodsworth, *Strangers At Our Gates,* 76.
[21] As cited in Craig Heron and Robert Storey, "Work and Struggle in the Canadian Steel Industry, 1900-1950," in *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada*, eds. Craig Heron and Robert Storey (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 228.

included some north-eastern Italians, Czechs, Croatians, and Bosnians, among many other groups.

Fred Griffith, a life-long resident of the Sault born in 1925, described the city in the 1930s as a "small, isolated community… self-contained, small, intimate…"[22] Mike Sanzosti, an Italian Canadian born in the city in 1923, recalled that "we had a lot of Croatians in the area" near his home on James Street in Sault Ste. Marie's West End, and that "a lot of them were our friends, we mingled with them and got along good."[23] Don Santana, born in 1932, says of the West End that "it was a close-knit community and people felt comfortable being together there…we had a mix in the West End of mainly Italian immigrants and their offspring, and we had a few from, um, Croatian [sic], Yugoslav, some Polish, and we were all considered the same type of people." Dr. Santana says that those living outside the West End considered these immigrants to be the "same type" because "we loved the same type of foods, even though we had different foods" and because those in the West End would eat foods from the cultures surrounding them, not only their own.[24]

Ron Irwin, born in 1936, recalls his Italian grandmother having a particular perspective on the various ethnicities living in the West End of Sault Ste. Marie. She "…had the world broke [sic] up into three groups…first there were the *mangiacakes*, the cake eaters…" or British Canadians, whose white bread resembled cake to newly-arrived Italians. Secondly, "…there were the Polackis, that's Polish, Ukrainian, and she had the

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[22] Fred Griffith, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 9 June 2014, 18:30. https://livinghistoryalgoma.com/projects/ohssm/
[23] Mike Sanzosti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 5:22.
[24] Don Santana, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 21 September 2011, 5:35.

Croatians in there, see, but Croatians are not Polish…" Thirdly, "…the Italians, there's the Marchesan, the Friulian, the Calabrese…" and Irwin's grandmother told him "… 'don't trust any of them except the Abruzzese, but only relatives and only the ones I tell you to trust!'…" Based on his grandmother's teaching, Irwin recalls that in his 1940s childhood, "when I went through the Finnish section [of town], I never knew who they were, I always thought they were Polish, the poor Finns, 'cause they didn't fit into any of these three categories."[25] Irwin's grandmother had her own variation on the theme John Zucchi observed in Toronto, where "….the immigrant learned to live simultaneously in two worlds, in his townspeople's and in Toronto's Italian community. A third world, that of the 'Canadians', existed beyond the first two."[26]

The turn of the twentieth century saw Sault Ste. Marie's transformation from a mainly British and French settlement to a town with multiple ethnic groups, including the significant Italian community. The 1891 census states that there was only one Italian settler living in the entire District of Algoma, which at the time covered 371,693 km^2 and included communities as far west as Port Arthur (part of today's Thunder Bay) and Fort Frances. The next census in 1901 listed 524 Italians in the town of Sault Ste. Marie alone.[27] A 1914 edition of the *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, a report published by the Italian government, claims the first Italian migrants arrived in Sault Ste. Marie in 1895, but that "the great part" were attracted to the town in 1902, because of the "metallurgy

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[25] Ron Irwin, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 13 February 2014, 4:45.
[26] John Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988) 8-9.
[27] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 1.

industry,"[28] referring to the series of industries founded by F.H. Clergue. Italian immigrants were attracted to Clergue's Consolidated Lake Superior Corporation businesses because they were used to working with stone, concrete, and steel in demanding industrial settings. Even during the economic slump of 1903, during which workers rioted because the Clergue industries could not make payroll, Italians kept coming to the Sault.[29] The Consolidated Lake Superior Corporation "created jobs that could not be filled by local labour" because it was the "largest Canadian industrial conglomerate of its time" and the local population simply could not keep up with the demand. [30]

In 1902, 200 Italian immigrants apparently arrived in Sault Ste. Marie. The Italian newcomers were labelled skilled labourers, but Frances Heath suspects this was likely an overstatement of their abilities, made to avoid trouble with immigration officials. She argues that these early arrivals were unexpected, as there was no preparation made for them: "they were settled in the West End…. many were forced to live in tents until suitable accommodations could be built."[31] Unfortunately, Heath does not cite a source for her findings. It is more likely that these labourers were recruited to work in the Clergue industries and expected to arrive; it was in 1902 that the Consolidated Lake Superior Corporation set up its own Immigration and Labour Department, and Craig

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[28] Gerolamo Moroni, "La colonia italiana in Sault Ste. Marie (Ontario, Canada)," *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* 4 (1914): 83-86. Translated and edited by Russell M. Magnaghi, *Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region* 2 (2014): 13. https://commons.nmu.edu/upper_country/vol2/iss1/2/

[29] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 20.

[30] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 327.

[31] Heath, "Labour," 42.

Heron states that 200 Italians came to the Sault through the efforts of that department.[32] It is also likely that the men planned to spend one season in Sault Ste. Marie and return to Italy with their earnings, as did thousands of other Italian migrants who travelled to Canadian railway, mining, and lumber camps. As Robert Harney has made clear, most Italians came to Canada hoping to spend a few years at most abroad, then planning to return home a little better off financially. [33] The Sault had its share of Italians who expected to be migrants, not immigrants. One such example is Ray Stortini's father, whose first trip to Canada was in 1910, and who made several trips back and forth before being caught in Italy during the First World War; he finally came to Canada permanently only after the war's end.[34]

Because the labourers and their recruiter considered themselves to be sojourners, tent accommodation would not have been unusual, except to locals who thought it more natural that Italians should arrive in the Sault with plans to settle there. The transient nature of the Italians' accommodation would not have enamoured them to city officials, who preferred those immigrants who owned property. The *Sault Daily Star* made an effort to explain the reasons behind the habits and living conditions of various 'foreigners' in the Sault to its readers. Northern Europeans, like the Finns, lived in "substantial and permanent structures…of a very good class" because they emigrated to Canada intending to stay. Southern Europeans, usually meaning Italians, saw themselves

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[32] Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1988), 75.
[33] Robert F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930" in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s* ed. Franca Iacovetta, Paula Draper, Robert Ventresca (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1998), 210.
[34] Ray Stortini, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 0:37, 0:47.

as sojourners and so their dwellings reflected their intentions. The *Star* published this analysis in July of 1913, months after it had noted that "a good many of the better class of Italians" were leaving Little Italy in favour of other parts of the city.[35]

According to Emilia Kolcon-Lach, "well over three quarters" of Italians in the Sault were transients at the turn of the 20th century, staying less than 5 years.[36] The *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* states that in 1914, the Italian population in the Sault numbered "approximately 3,000 permanent residents and between the spring and autumn 600-800 seasonal residents."[37]

Workers were drawn to Sault Ste. Marie because of the efforts of *padrone* Alberto Dini, who was based in Montreal. There was an apparent family connection between Alberto Dini and a Dini family in the Sault, according to an interview with Justice I.A. Vannini conducted in August 1976. As Emilia Kolcon-Lach explained, "information could be easily, safely and readily passed among the family members" allowing for an employment network to develop between Montreal and the Sault.[38] Craig Heron states that it "appears" that Alberto Dini was involved in channelling workers to Sault Ste. Marie, specifically to the Clergue industries.[39] Kolcon-Lach argues that Dini's work can be seen in the "substantial number of northern Italians" found in the Sault's pre-1914 community. The majority of Italian emigrants to Canada at that time were from the country's south, and so the large numbers of northerners "would seem to reflect the

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[35] *Sault Daily Star* 21 July 1913 and 13 December 1912, as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 339.
[36] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 22.
[37] Moroni, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 13.
[38] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 19.
[39] Heron, *Working in Steel*, 75.

results of agent-selected immigration."[40] Kolcon-Lach's research also shows that the first Italian to open a business in the Sault was one Alberto Dini of Montreal; the business was transferred to James Palangio upon Dini's return to Montreal in 1903. She does not clarify whether this Alberto Dini was also the well-known *padrone*.[41]

The best-known Clergue industry, the Algoma Steel Company, initially hired a "large number of Italians" to build needed railways and the steel plant itself; it later found these workers "could be profitably shifted" to working in manufacturing. The *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* stated that in 1914, about 440-500 of the 3,000 workers hired each summer were Italians.[42] Heron and Storey report that Algoma Steel used "special employment agencies" and "labour agents" to recruit "certain ethnic groups" – implying that the company used the services of *padroni*.[43] Newly-recruited workers mostly arrived in Canada alone, boarded in crowded facilities near the steel plant, and lived cheaply in order to save money. As the *Sault Daily Star* commented: "[t]he Italian will board himself and thrive upon a dollar a week, on which men of any other nationality would starve."[44] Italians were considered to be attractive workers, due to their not being fussy about the type of work they did; as long as they earned cash to send home, they were content.[45] The *Bollettino* also claimed that there was an "Italian agricultural colony" spread out around the Sault "for a distance of eight miles" and that this smaller

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[40] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 19-20.
[41] Ibid., 87.
[42] Moroni, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 13.
[43] Heron and Storey, "Work and Struggle," 220.
[44] *Sault Daily Star*, 5 March 1903, as cited in Heron and Storey, "Work and Struggle," 220.
[45] Heron, *Working in Steel*, 78.

community was formed by "about twelve families primarily from Calabria."[46] Clearly these farming families were the exception to the industrial rule in Sault Ste. Marie.

According to a regular column in *The Sault Daily Star*, the city's first Italian resident, Mr. Frank Dinni, arrived in Canada in 1878 and came to the Sault in 1901. "West End Briefs" featured a small notice to mark his birthday in 1936, describing Dinni as "well over the 80 mark" and as being a resident of the Sault for 35 years, having arrived in Canada "58 years ago."[47] While the article states the man's name is Dinni, the correct spelling is actually Dini,[48] and it is possible he came to the Sault through connections with the *padrone* Alberto Dini.

Laura Tucci Erlandson was born in the Sault in 1925, and she and her brother say their mother was among the first few Italian-Canadian children born in the city. Their mother "was a big help to most of the new people that came to Canada, as an interpreter."[49]

In contrast to many other cities with major Italian migration, the Sault's Italians did not all originate from one particular province or region; the community became a mix of northern and southern Italians. The 1914 *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* states that Italians came to Sault Ste. Marie from Calabria, Marche, Abruzzi, and Veneto, with "a small number from other parts of the Kingdom" of Italy.[50] A small feature in the *Sault Daily Star* in 1940 noted John Vannini as "one of the few Tuscans in the Sault" and

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[46] Moroni, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 14.
[47] Florence Craig, "West End Briefs," *Sault Daily Star* 9 May 1936, 10.
[48] Tim Dickson, "J. Vannini Recalls When James St. Was Bush Road," *Sault Daily Star* 27 May 1940, 3.
[49] Laura Tucci Erlandson, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 3 August 2011, 3:24, 3:50.
[50] Moroni, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 13.

reported he had lived in the Sault for 36 years, since leaving his home village in Tuscany to join his brother in 1904.[51] Enrica Pedinelli (born 1918 in Italy) remembered different groups of Italians (she mentioned Calabrese and Northerners specifically) living in the Sault, because she had to get used to various dialects when she worked in a West End shop.[52] Although there was variety in the community, Ron Irwin, whose grandfather came from Abruzzo, notes that "a lot of people came from a place called Fano, in Marche." Irwin states that these immigrants "tended to become the businessmen – like the Oraziettis" and that "the Calabrese, Abruzzese, tended to work for them…"[53] The Fano link continued past the early years of Italian immigration and into the major post-war migration wave of the 1940s, as in the case of Ricordo Castellani. Born in Fano in 1926, he arrived in the Sault in the spring of 1949, coming to Canada because his "…mother was an Orazietti…[my] uncle wanted to reunite the family" since there were already so many members in the Sault.[54]

In 1911, those of Italian origin made up 11% of the Sault's population; in 1921, they were 13%, and by 1931, accounted for 14%. In all three of those census years, the Italians surpassed the French in population; by 1931, there were over a thousand more Italians than French in the Sault.[55] Although "[t]here were far fewer Italians at Sault Ste. Marie at any one time than contemporaries thought" when compared to other major

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[51] Tim Dickson, "J. Vannini Recalls When James St. Was Bush Road" *Sault Daily Star* 27 May 1940, 3.
[52] Enrica Pedinelli, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 28 March 2012, 10:00-11:00.
[53] Ron Irwin, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 13 February 2014, 3:24.
[54] Ricordo Castellani, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 31 October 2012, 1:38, 1:05.
[55] Percentages calculated based on figures cited by Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 30.

centres, the Sault's community was huge in proportion to the overall city population. In 1911, Toronto had the largest Italian community in Canada, numbering just over 4000, but that accounted for only 1.3% of its total population. Montreal's Italians formed only 1.6% of its population in 1911.[56]

W.W. Lee made a shocking claim during his 1912 visit to Sault Ste. Marie, that "[y]ou have here in proportion to your population a greater number of what, for lack of a better term, we call foreigners, than any other city in Canada. I would say that 4000 or 4500 was a conservative estimate of your permanent foreign population, exclusive of the large transient population you have."[57] Lee's claims are surprising when considering that the total population of Sault Ste. Marie in 1911 was 10,984 – he was claiming that nearly half the city were "foreign."[58] The 1911 census listed a total of 2,558 "foreign-born" people in Sault Ste. Marie, making Lee's accounting of the "foreign" element in the city nearly double that of the Sault's reality. [59] (See Appendix A, Table 2: "Foreign-born" Population of Sault Ste. Marie, 1911)

With word-of-mouth encouraging labourers to come to the Sault, and with many finding themselves settling down and starting families, the Italian community in the city grew. According to the 1931 census, Sault Ste. Marie's population was 57.6% British, 9.3% French, and 14.1% Italian. On the surface, the Sault's Italian percentage does not seem high, but comparing this figure to other cities and towns known for their Italian

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[56] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 30.
[57] *Sault Daily Star* 9 December 1912, as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 337.
[58] Percentages calculated based on figures from "Table I. Area and Population of Canada by Provinces, Districts and Subdistricts in 1911 and Population in 1901," *Census of Canada 1911*, vol. 1, 72-73.
[59] Percentages calculated based on figures from "Table XVI. Birthplace of the population in cities and towns of 7,000 and over" p. 435. *Census of Canada 1911*, vol. 2, 435.

communities quickly puts the situation in perspective. By this time, Montreal's Italian community was the biggest in Canada, but composed just 2.5% of the city's total population. Toronto's Italians accounted for 2.1% of that city's population, while Sudbury was 3.4% Italian. Sydney, Nova Scotia, a town often compared to the Sault in this time period because of its steel plant and nearly identical total population, had only 1.8% of its population formed by Italians.[60] (see Appendix A, Table 3: Selected Italian Populations in Canada, 1931)

In 1931, a total of 5.8% of Sault Ste. Marie residents identified their birthplace as Italy, indicating that the Italian community had become mostly Canadian-born in the three decades since the first Italians arrived in the city. By comparison, 9.6% of Saultites were born in the British Isles, and 71% in Canada.[61] In the whole of Ontario, only 0.6% of the population was born in Italy.[62] (see Appendix A, Table 3, and Table 4: Population by Birthplace, Selected Examples, 1931)

By 1941, the growth of the Italian population of Sault Ste. Marie had stabilized; it amounted to 14.2% of the total population. However, the number of residents who were born in Italy had dropped to 4.6% of the Sault's total population. Given that the Canadian government essentially banned immigration from Italy during the Great Depression, it is entirely reasonable that the number of Italian-born residents decreased to a certain degree.[63] However, in comparison with Montreal and Toronto's Italian-born populations

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[60] Percentages based on figures from "Table 34. Population of cities and towns 10,000 and over, classified according to racial origin," *Census of Canada, 1931.*
[61] Percentages based on figures from "Table 47. Birthplace of the population in cities and towns of 10,000 and over, 1931," *Census of Canada, 1931.*
[62] Percentages based on figures from "Table 45. Birthplace of the population by sex, for provinces, 1931," *Census of Canada, 1931.*
[63] Order-in-Council P.C. 695 of 21 March 1931 limited immigration to American citizens, as well as British subjects from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Newfoundland,

(2.6% and 0.73% respectively), the Sault's figures are still fairly high. Even industrial Sudbury had only 1.15% Italian-born residents in 1941.[64] (See Table 6: Italian and British Populations in Selected Canadian Cities, 1941)

Despite the relatively high number of foreign-born Italians in the Sault, within the Sault's West End, there were apparently distinctions to be made between those who had immigrated long ago and those who had arrived in the city more recently. A small but telling article in the back pages of the *Sault Daily Star* in 1936 detailed the experiences of an unnamed female reporter who went to the West End while wearing "a three-cornered scarf draped more or less artistically across the head and tied under the chin, peasant fashion" and who received the comment "Just off the boat!" from those around her. The reporter decided that this incident showed the difference in fashion between European countries and Canada, saying that while women in the West End used to wear shawls "European fashion," this was no longer the case: "the sight is so rare today as to elicit comment."[65] This seemingly trivial incident actually reveals the attitudes of some West End residents towards newer migrants: they were different, old-fashioned, and rare enough by 1936 to be easily noticed.

New Zealand, Australia, and the Union of South Africa, provided they had "sufficient means" to support themselves. Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons, House of Commons Debates: Official Report, Third Session – Twentieth Parliament, Volume 3* (Ottawa: King's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1947), 2644. As cited in Jan Raska, "Port of Entry, Process and Gatekeepers – The Port of Quebec during the Great Depression" http://www.pier21.ca/blog/jan-raska/port-of-entry-process-and-gatekeepers-the-port-of-quebec (accessed 10 March 2019).

[64] Percentages based on figures from "A-6 - Table 3. Population by birthplace and sex, for urban centres of 15,000 and over, 1941," *Census of Canada, 1941.*

[65] *Sault Daily Star,* "Scarf Draped Head Of Star Reporter Causes Comment" 7 February 1936, 10.

From the CPR tracks to Gore Street lived the "first comers to the West End, chiefly the Finns and the French Canadians." The few Anglo-Canadians who settled in the area did so to be closer to the Clergue industries. The first Italian arrivals stuck to West St., James St., Roma Lane; Cathcart, Murray (later Albert Street West), Superior (later Queen Street West), and Portage Street, to the CPR tracks.[66] The Italian community was established on the far western bank of the St Mary's River, a central location for Algoma Steel, the Algoma Central Railway yards, and the pulp and paper mill. Non-Italians who worked in these industries had to travel through the Italian section, and were thus able to observe Little Italy.[67] (See Appendix B, Map 1: Shipping canal at Sault Ste. Marie, 1907 and Map 2: Ethnic districts of Sault Ste. Marie, 1912.) Ron Irwin described the Italian section of town in his childhood as having been "Algoma Steel, James and Albert, to the Finnish section which was just opposite the bridge plaza [i.e. Huron Street], north and south of that too, from Queen up to Cathcart."[68] The Buckley and Harris subdivisions (north of the steel plant) and Bayview (west of the steel plant) were "settled primarily by the Ukrainians and Poles respectively." Tagona, a small area within Buckley, was where mostly "British and Anglo-Canadians" who worked for the Consolidated Lake Superior Corporation lived.[69] (See Appendix B, Map 3: Sault Ste. Marie, 1952 and Map 4: Buckley, Bayview, and the West End)

In the early years of the West End (up to 1921), Italians were blamed for their horrible living conditions, and accused of building a crowded ghetto in Little Italy. The

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[66] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 93-94.
[67] Ibid., 51.
[68] Ron Irwin, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 13 February 2014, 4:15.
[69] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 94.

situation resulted from new immigrants not being able to afford better living quarters until they had been in Canada for some time, and as noted earlier, that was not the goal of most Italians in this time period.[70] However, Italians were not helped by the lack of city infrastructure in the area of town where they lived. Other areas of the city were also crowded, but Little Italy's situation was made worse by the neighbourhood's lack of sewers for up to 10 years after it was properly settled. Barns were often built attached to, or quite near to houses, as was the custom in Italy. Sault Ste. Marie's administration and companies simply did not focus on the "foreign quarter" when it came to providing costly permanent services.[71] Abbott argues that

> [i]f the mayor and council decided in 1906 to extend a water service into Little Italy, it was as much because the area was a blight on the face of the town as it was a prick on the Anglo-Celtic conscience or a means of securing some immigrant votes.[72]

However, by 1910, the situation had clearly not improved. One Sault resident described the situation as follows:

> [i]t would disgust you to visit some places that are not kept clean. Take Little Italy, deadly poisonous water laying in the ditches that would poison a bull-frog before he leaps into it. There are 1,500 people, men, women and children inhaling the poisonous gases that arise from that dirty stagnant water…[73]

By 1912, the *Sault Daily Star* saw improving the West End as a prime means of assimilating the newcomers who lived there: "…the better and cleaner we make our foreign quarter the more easily the Canadianization of its inhabitants will be

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[70] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 101.
[71] Ibid., 107-108.
[72] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 336.
[73] *Sault Daily Star* 21 July 1910, 4, as cited in Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 107.

accomplished."[74] However, there must not have been much emphasis on integrating Italians into the mainstream community at this point, since the 1914 *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* observed in a plaintive tone, "but our Italians live completely separated from the English and Canadians and have a quarter completely their own called 'Little Italy.'"[75]

By 1912, "James Street, at the heart of Little Italy, was a prosperous commercial thoroughfare."[76] By 1913, twenty Italian-owned businesses could be found in the West End/Italian quarter.[77] Angelo Bumbacco, born in the Sault in 1931, summarized the Sault's Little Italy as follows:

> We were self-sufficient. We had about 10 or 11 grocery stores, we had two hardware stores, we had two shoe stores, we had four bakeries, we had a drugstore, so we hardly left the West End.[78]

In later years, "the term 'Little Italy' often was applied to the entire area west of Gore St."[79] but only by outsiders to the neighbourhood. Ray Stortini recalls that "the West End – we never called it Little Italy, everybody else did, we called it the West End."[80]

Those who grew up in the West End have mostly fond memories of the area. Ilda Bumbacco, who immigrated to Sault Ste. Marie from Italy as a child in the 1920s, remembered that many houses had large vegetable gardens behind them. However, she

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[74] *Sault Daily Star* 17 December 1912, as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 339.
[75] Moroni, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 15.
[76] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 341.
[77] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 88.
[78] Angelo Bumbacco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 19 March 2014, 4:23.
[79] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 94.
[80] Ray Stortini, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 20:08.

also recalled that polio was a danger, and that there were ringworm epidemics in the West End.[81] Ray Stortini, born in 1929, called James Street:

> …the heart of the West End, it was the business section, you could do all your business in the Italian language. My mother was here for forty years and never picked up much English – she didn't have to. My dad picked up some English, of course, working at the steel plant, but the housewives didn't have to. They'd do the shopping in Italian, the doctor in Italian, the dentist, the drugstore, the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker all spoke Italian, so – so she never picked up much English.[82]

Aldo Diotallevi, born in 1923, referred to the West End as an "enclave" where he knew all his neighbours,[83] while Dorothy Kutcher, born in 1922, recalled "we used to have a community of our own, in the West End"[84] and Gene Ubriaco, born 1937, said "James Street was, for me, my whole world."[85]

Gore Street was considered to be the division between the eastern and western ends of the city even in the early period of 1898-1921.[86] East End resident Fred Griffiths remembers "the division at Gore Street" and that the East End was predominantly "Anglo-Saxon" while the West End was home to "the communities, the Italians on James Street, Poles on Goulais Avenue, the Finns around Hudson Street, and [there was] not much communication" between the two ends of town. Griffiths called the East and West Ends "two different worlds" and says there was "probably suspicion" between citizens

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[81] Ilda Bumbacco, interviewed by Jerry Bumbacco and Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, March 26 2014, 9:30, 17:25.
[82] Ray Stortini, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 23:45.
[83] Aldo Diotallevi, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 7:58.
[84] Dorothy Kutcher, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 May 2011, 19:15.
[85] Gene Ubriaco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 3 November 2011, 1:00.
[86] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 125.

from either end of town.[87] As an East Ender, he did not go to the West End of town very often; he recalls that the "only time we went up there was to play hockey" at the rink near James Street.[88] Gene Ubriaco recalls another sports-related reason to cross over Gore Street : "I can remember fellas telling me, that lived in the East End, that the only time they came to the West End was when we had Little League baseball… we just never crossed the line."[89] Angelo Bumbacco states "I would say I didn't go past Gore Street until I was 14 or 15."[90] Enrica Pedinelli (born 1918 in Italy) said of the divide "not that you couldn't go, they said you shouldn't go… But then, some of the girls, like Mrs. Cushley, she had married an English boy…" so the Gore Street boundary was not always impassable.[91]

At some points, the Gore Street divide was more serious than others. James Ardito, an Italian Saultite born in 1929, stated that in the "Second World War we couldn't even pass Gore Street! You crossed Gore Street, you, you got half killed!"[92] Dorothy Kutcher recalled that "kids didn't have to go out of, out of the West End…every time an English kid came up, there would be fights." She further explained that "the West End fought the East End, steady. Fights galore."[93]

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[87] Fred Griffiths, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 9 June 2014, 19:20.
[88] Ibid., 20:10.
[89] Gene Ubriaco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 3 November 2011, 11:44, 12:24.
[90] Angelo Bumbacco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 19 March 2014, 4:23
[91] Enrica Pedinelli, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 28 March 2012, 20:18.
[92] James Ardito, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 17:13.
[93] Dorothy Kutcher, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 May 2011, 18:48, 19:01.

There was a perception that the East End and its residents were of a better class than those living in the West End, and this perception seems to have been held even by West Enders, at least to a degree. Dorothy Kutcher mentioned in her interview a particular West End dress shop, owned by Una Cornacchio. Mrs. Kutcher called the shop "beautiful…one of the exclusive ones" and pointed out that "we used to get a lot of East End people – we used to call them the East Enders" as customers in the shop. Her linking of the shop's exclusive nature with its East End clientele betrays this class distinction.[94]

The West End was often associated with bootlegging liquor, especially in the 1930s. It was not entirely a false association. John Arcangeletti (born 1924) recalled that the only way his mother could keep her family of seven children afloat after his father's death was to bootleg. He stated "there was a lot of it [bootlegging] in the West End."[95] Angelo Bumbacco claimed that "…to make ends meet, every third, fourth house sold alcohol, to supplement their income. You had widows that had no pensions, that was their only way of surviving" and the practice was very common when he was growing up, in the midst of the Depression.[96]

Mike Sanzosti recalled the Depression as the toughest time for his family; despite being only "kindergarten age I guess" at the time, he remembered it being "tough in the Depression, just like everybody else."[97] Dorothy Bonell said that for her "the sad times

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[94] Dorothy Kutcher, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 May 2011,16:20.
[95] John Arcangeletti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 7 May 2014, 14:15, 14:38.
[96] Angelo Bumbacco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 19 March 2014, 18:28.
[97] Mike Sanzosti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 15:02.

were the Depression, it was really bad"[98] The 1931 Canada census showed that Central, Eastern, and Southern Europeans were the first to feel the effects of the Depression, along with those working in construction and unskilled labourers. J.A. Ciccocelli rightly points out that many Italians were caught in the intersection of these two descriptors; families in the Sault were no different in this respect than those in Toronto or Montreal.[99]

According to the *Sault Daily Star*, Italian families in the Sault initially attended St. Ignatius, the mainly francophone Catholic parish on Cathcart Street. In the early days, St. Ignatius "embraced" Italian, Polish, and English-speaking families in addition to Francophones.[100] The multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic nature of the parish makes sense, given the population of the West End. By July of 1907, St. Ignatius had an Italian priest, Father Bruno, who took responsibility for the Italians of the parish. He founded an exclusively Italian parish, having purchased a hall at Queen and James Street that became the Italian chapel in August of 1908. Father Bruno was also responsible for the founding of Holy Rosary Church, purchasing land for the building in 1909. The motivation for the Italian split from St. Ignatius may have been numerical: by 1911 St. Ignatius counted 265 French families, 167 English families, and 83 Polish families; there were 180 Italian families registered for the new Italian church in 1910. By 1911, there were 250 Italian families registered as parish members of Holy Rosary.[101]

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[98] Dorothy Bonell, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 October 2011, 33:00.
[99] J. A. Ciccocelli, "The Innocuous Enemy Alien: Italians in Canada During World War Two," (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1977), 7.
[100] Florence Craig, "St. Ignatius Dates Back To 1890," *Sault Daily Star* 9 May 1936, magazine page.
[101] Ibid.

However, Italians in the Sault were not uniformly Catholic. In the 1920s, Rev. Libero Sauro was in charge of "the small Italian Protestant church located at the foot of Queen St. West" run by the All Peoples' Mission;[102] he went on to be an important and respected leader of the Order Sons of Italy both in the Sault and at the provincial level. Prominent local businessmen Luigi Palumbo and Toni di Pietro petitioned the public school board in 1913 to build a second public school in the West End, the McFadden School, to accommodate Protestants living in the neighbourhood, as well as those who wished their children to learn in English, not in French at St. Ignatius.[103]

Abbott states that two self-help organizations had emerged in the Sault's Little Italy by 1913: the Marconi Society, and the Duke of Abruzzi. The 1914 *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* supports this claim, stating that each society was founded in 1912, the Marconi with 65 members and the Duke of Abruzzi with 50 members. In 1913, the Marconi's leader was Antonio Luzzi, and the Society aimed to encourage interest in "the glories of the old land" and "thrifty… provision for the rainy day, thus enabling the Italian to take his place among the citizens of this great country as a self-respecting and intelligent individual…"[104] Enrica Pedinelli said that the Marconi Society was the one place in town where all groups of Italians from various regions in Italy came together.[105] Little information is currently available about the Duke of Abruzzi society. It must have been defunct by the 1920s, as its events are not mentioned in West End columns in the

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[102] Alberindo Sauro, "The Work of the Rev. Libero Sauro in the Italian Community," *Italian Canadiana* 13 (January 1997): 48.
[103] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 345.
[104] *Sault Daily Star* 18 June 1913, as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 342.
[105] Enrica Pedinelli, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 28 March 2012, 10:00-11:00.

Sault Daily Star in those years and beyond. The Sault's Italians founded a third mutual benefit society in 1915, the Order Sons of Italy. This society would prove to be significant to the community's social fabric, but would also come to be seen as a source of trouble and suspicion by outsiders during the Second World War, as subsequent chapters of this work will address.

The Italian community of Sault Ste. Marie was founded and came into its own in the first forty years of the twentieth century. Concentrated in the West End of the city, Italians and Italian Canadians mingled with immigrants from other parts of Europe and established their own neighbourhood around the hub of James Street. The community grew from 11% of the Sault's population in 1911 to 14% in 1931, and became recognized by the broader Sault Ste. Marie community, as evidenced by articles in the *Sault Daily Star*. While both Catholic and Protestant churches were an important source of leadership, civil societies were also founded and created leaders for the Italian community. These early years saw the founding of the Order Sons of Italy, an important organization to the history of the Sault's Italian community, both because of the support and events it provided, but also because of its central implication in the internment crisis of the Second World War. A closer examination of the Order Sons of Italy and its Sault Ste. Marie lodge, "the Verdi," allows both a better understanding of the Order generally, and of the role and experiences of its members in the Sault specifically. This close examination will be the focus of this work's next chapter.

Chapter 3: Order Sons of Italy

Historically, social and mutual-aid organizations were run in Italy by various elite groups; these organizations were not only a product of life in the New World. Agricultural workers set up groups to protect peasants "against the encroachment of the *signori*," the landowners who sought to expand their holdings at the expense of peasants. There were also artisan organizations, especially in middle-class northern Italy, whose aim was to maintain the traditional relationship between masters and workers. In southern Italy, cultural associations often offered reading and writing lessons, or information on new crops and cultivation methods.[1]

In North America, ethnic voluntary associations appeared in the United States in the mid-18th century, and saw huge growth from the 1860s to the start of the First World War (thus coinciding with the continent's biggest immigration wave). The number of such organizations levelled out until the 1950s, and then went into decline. Giovanni Schiavo, an Italian, observed while visiting the United States in 1928 that "the desire to form mutual benefit societies turned into a veritable mania" amongst Italian-Americans.[2]

In smaller towns, or locations with smaller concentrations of one group, mutual aid societies were organized by "pan-ethnic loyalties" (i.e. all Italians, not just Calabrese/Abruzzese/etc.) because the size of the group did not make specialization viable. This is also why ethnic societies ended up serving many roles within one community: "patriotic associations, social and recreational clubs, and advocacy groups."[3]

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[1] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 78.
[2] As quoted in Jose C. Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31:5 (2005): 837.
[3] Moya, "Immigrants and Associations," 844.

However, immigrants were far less likely to form groups related to host-society politics. This reluctance reflected their priorities ("socio-economic advancement, mutual aid, recreation") and their perception that getting involved in politics did not help them advance in these areas. Before the creation of the welfare state, immigrants got involved in local political machines in North America mainly for the patronage and jobs that could result.[4]

In Sault Ste. Marie, membership in the two main Italian mutual benefit societies was not limited to those from a particular region of Italy, and the groups filled many roles within the community. The Order Sons of Italy in Sault Ste. Marie became politically involved out of necessity, pushed by the declaration of war by Canada against Italy in 1940 and by the political infiltration of the organization elsewhere in Ontario by Mussolini's representatives in Canada. While other ethnic organizations in North America came to embrace a political role, it seems members of the Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy were ever reluctant to appear or become political.

The first mutual aid institution founded by the Italian community of Sault Ste. Marie was formed 5 December 1912, when 31 men organized the Guglielmo Marconi Italian Mutual Benefit Society. Its primary purpose was financially assisting members who became sick and were unable to work.[5] The second Italian organization in the Sault was founded in 1914. After one year, this second group applied for a charter to be affiliated with the Order Sons of Italy in America.[6] While both groups were founded with the same general idea in mind, there were key differences between them from the

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[4] Moya, "Immigrants and Associations,"851.
[5] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 78-79.
[6] Ibid., 81.

beginning. The Marconi Society apparently "drew its support from Northern Italians" while the Order Sons of Italy was recognized as "a club for Southern Italians" and was "more closely concerned with the interests of Italy and the promotion of contacts with that country."[7] In addition, the Marconi Society was an independent organization, unlike the federated Sons of Italy. Sault resident Jerry Bumbacco, born in 1943, compared the division between the two organizations to the divisions between Liberal and Conservative voters, or New York Yankees fans and Detroit Tigers fans; he explained that "everything was polarizing in the West End" and that the choice to belong either to the Marconi or to the Sons of Italy was no different.[8]

The Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA) was founded in New York City in 1905 by a Sicilian immigrant, Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro.[9] The Order was formed by merging several small Italian mutual aid societies; the idea was that by joining together these smaller groups, the "larger collective" would be in a better position to serve its members.[10] Originally named *L'Ordine Figli d'Italia in America* (with *figli* most closely translating as 'children' and therefore including women), the Order's purpose was "to reunite in one single family all the Italians scattered throughout the Americas, the Dominion of Canada, Territories and Dependencies."[11] United together, they could better "defend them[selves] and… assert themselves and their rights by putting an end to an

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[7] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 82-83.
[8] Jerry Bumbacco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, March 26 2014, 26:29.
[9] Gabriele P. Scardellato, *Within Our Temple: A History of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario.* (Toronto: Order Sons of Italy of Canada, 1995), 1.
[10] Luigi G. Pennacchio, "The Order of the Sons of Italy in Ontario: A Brief History" Unpublished article, 1992, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, Archives of Ontario, F 4378-2-8, page 1.
[11] Order Sons of Italy Constitution, as cited in Scardellato, *Within Our Temple,* 2.

unjust discrimination."[12] Angelo Principe believes that the OSIA's purpose was rooted in Italians' desire for social justice and need "to assert their collective or national worth."[13] He also notes that from its beginning, the Order Sons of Italy attracted people with conflicting viewpoints because a primary goal of the organization was *l'italianità*, Italian-ness, and nothing more specific. Thus, there was an ideological tension within the organization as early as 1915.[14]

As the Order grew outside of New York City, a three-tier administrative structure was created to better manage the organization. At the top was the supreme lodge, followed by grand lodges, then lodges. Five individual lodges with at least 500 members could form a grand lodge, whose grand council oversaw funds, activity requests, and approved by-laws brought by individual lodges.[15]

The Giuseppe Verdi Lodge in Sault Ste. Marie was founded in 1915; it was the first Canadian lodge of the OSIA and "the beginning of what is now the oldest active association of Italian Canadians in the province of Ontario."[16] The Verdi Lodge began as a social club for Italian immigrants, organized by Father J.P. Martinez, the parish priest at Holy Rosary Church (later called Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish). However, Angelo Principe claims that Father Martinez founded the group in 1914 in order to provide an alternative to a "very active anarchist group." Umberto Martignago, known for his

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[12] Ernest L. Biagi, *The Purple Aster: A History of the Order Sons of Italy in America* (New York: Veritas Press, 1961), 9-10.
[13] Angelo Principe, "The Difficult Years of the Order Sons of Italy: 1920-1926" *Italian Canadiana* 5 (1989):105.
[14] Angelo Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle in the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario, 1915-1946" *Ontario History* 106: 1 (Spring 2014): 5-6.
[15] Pennacchio, "The Order of the Sons of Italy in Ontario," 1-2.
[16] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple,* 2.

"strong anticlerical and anti-nationalist bent," led this anarchist group.[17] Father Martinez was also known to teach evening English language classes to members of the Italian community, so it is not surprising that his students would be open to forming such a club, especially given the familiarity southern Italian immigrants would have had with similar groups providing reading and writing lessons.[18] Meetings were held in the church's basement, in the heart of the West End. By January of 1915, Father Martinez had convinced the thirty or so members of the social club to apply for affiliation with the Order Sons of Italy of America, and their application was successful.[19]

It appears that the first Venerable (president) of the Verdi Lodge was William Grassi, whose name appears on the Lodge's 1915 incorporation certificate along with Rev. Martinez and Giovanni Gentile. Grassi also happened to be the Royal Italian Consular Agent for the Sault Ste. Marie region at the time. The Consular Agent's job included "efforts to bring squabbling Italian groups together so they would recognize their common Italian heritage." Grassi was involved in the founding of the Marconi Society as well, so he was "ideally suited to appeal to both the southern and northern Italians."[20] However, according to Emilia Kolcon-Lach, "many of the functions and duties performed as part of his consular position could not be disassociated from the Sons of Italy."[21] Grassi's involvement with the Order Sons of Italy foreshadowed the active interest and even infiltration of the organization by consular officials in other Ontario cities in the 1930s.

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[17] Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 7.
[18] Moroni, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 15.
[19] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 119.
[20] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 83.
[21] Ibid., 85.

In its first five years, the Verdi Lodge actively promoted a variety of Italian initiatives in Sault Ste. Marie. It circulated a petition to have the Italian language taught at McFadden School in 1916, and though this motion was rejected, the Lodge was later successful in getting Columbus Day recognized as a holiday for Italian children in the West End. The Lodge held Garibaldi Day celebrations every year, and the Lodge band played at dances to fundraise for causes like the Red Cross and an Italian earthquake relief fund.[22]

The formation of a Grand Lodge in Ontario for the Order Sons of Italy was discussed in 1915 when the Verdi Lodge was founded, but members recognized they needed at least five local lodges to be created in Ontario before a Grand Lodge could be formed. The Grand Lodge was officially announced in Hamilton during the first grand convention of the newly created Order Sons of Italy of Ontario (OSIO) in September 1924. Not only did the Grand Lodge hold symbolic importance, as it demonstrated the strength and growth of the Order Sons of Italy in the province, it was also legally necessary: there had been changes in Canadian law, so that per capita dues or taxes could no longer be sent to the United States, as had previously been the practice.[23]

However, the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario was not actually incorporated until 1926, as the lodges took time to sort out the bureaucratic angles of the social and mutual benefits they offered their members. The OSIO needed to register with the Ontario Registrar of Friendly Societies, the governing body for organizations providing insurance or similar benefits to their members. Thus, the OSIO was incorporated in two phases. The OSIO Grand Lodge itself was incorporated on 21 May 1926, while the Order Sons of

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[22] Kolcon-Lach, "Early Italian Settlement," 85.
[23] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 13-14.

Italy in Ontario Mutual Benefit Society was incorporated on 4 September of the same year. Both entities were part of the one organization known as the OSIO, but they each had a separate board of officers (though many individuals held positions on both boards simultaneously).[24]

The OSIO outlined the following obligations in its charter of incorporation:

- To unite in one sole family citizens of Italian origin who are living in Ontario
- To promote the moral, intellectual and material welfare and progress of the members, emancipating them from prejudices and superstitions
- To contribute to the protection and betterment of the members
- To contribute to the diffusion of the knowledge of their duties as citizens
- To spread among the members the conviction that the acceptance and observance of such duties require their contribution to civic life, thereby elevating their social conditions, and for this reason, to prepare and assist the members in applying for Canadian citizenship
- To provide for the diffusion of the knowledge of the language and history of their country of origin and of their country of adoption, giving support to any initiative of an educational nature that may bring benefit and credit to citizens of Italian descent
- To accept or refuse gifts and donations.[25]

At least two studies have highlighted the prescience of the OSIO's charter, with its dedication to preserving the Italian language and heritage while also contributing to Canadian society as Canadian citizens. By acknowledging that these two goals were not mutually exclusive, the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario were unknowingly preparing their members for the multiculturalism that would eventually become national policy in Canada some fifty years later.[26] Moya observes that to be successful, mutual aid societies need as many members as possible, in order to have a secure financial structure. A

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[24] Pennacchio, "The Order of the Sons of Italy in Ontario," 3.
[25] Direct quotation from Letters Patent, Order of Sons of Italy of Ontario, September 4, 1926. Archives of Ontario, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, F4378-1-1-1.
[26] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 11; Pennacchio, "The Order of the Sons of Italy in Ontario," 4.

society cannot risk alienation of possible affiliates, or of disagreements/schisms within the group. This financial reality explains why larger groups stayed away from political/religious debates or affiliation. What Moya labels the "blandest form of patriotism" is the best that groups such as the Order Sons of Italy could do.[27]

Locally, there is evidence that the Order Sons of Italy was valued and respected in Sault Ste. Marie, despite its being the newest Italian organization in town. The 7 September 1924 laying of wreaths at the War Memorial by the Sault's Italian community made front-page news the following day, likely owing to the fact that "over 2000 people gathered" to observe the event. According to the *Sault Daily Star* there were over 500 Sault Italians present, most of them members of the Verdi Lodge of the OSIO, the Marconi Society, or the Giuseppe Verdi Musical Club. The Italian Consul was in attendance and made a short speech in English, while Mr. G. Falsetto, President of the OSIO, spoke briefly in Italian. Just below the article was a brief reporting of the new appointments to the Grand Lodge that had been announced at the OSIO convention held a week earlier in Hamilton, Ontario. Three Saultites were named to provincial-level positions at the Grand Lodge, and one of them was responsible for performing "the rites of the installation of the 300 members" according to the *Sault Daily Star.*[28] That this information was deemed to be of front-page importance speaks to the prominence of the OSIO in Sault Ste. Marie, while the article itself demonstrates that members of the Verdi Lodge were respected and valued by members of the OSIO throughout the province.

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[27] Moya, "Immigrants and Associations," 844.
[28] "Sault Italians Placed Wreaths at Foot of Civic War Memorial Yesterday" *Sault Daily Star* 8 September 1924, 1.

Provincial incorporation in 1926 helped the organization to grow. The OSIO also benefitted from the "improved self-image of Italians in Ontario" after the Great War, where Italy had fought alongside Britain and the other allied forces.[29] However, there was slow growth in the number of OSIO lodges for most of the inter-war period. Five new lodges were added in the1920s, while only one new lodge, the women's Principessa Maria José of Sault Ste. Marie, was added from 1930 to 1934. The small number of new lodges during the late 1920s and early 1930s can be attributed to the Great Depression, as workers lost their ability to pay mutual benefit society dues along with their jobs.[30]

Despite the economic troubles of the Depression, the OSIO in Sault Ste. Marie was able to start construction on its new 'Temple' on the corner of Hudson and Cathcart Streets in May of 1932, and managed to open the new building in September the same year. The speed with which the Temple was completed is clearly indicative of the support and dedication from lodge members, and is especially remarkable given the project was undertaken in the thick of the Depression. Principe notes that the Sault Ste. Marie lodges "alone were growing and very active" in the early 1930s, and cites the new Temple as an example. He states that donations for the building ranged from $150 to $500, but that "most" donations took the form of free labour because of the Depression.[31]

The souvenir program from the Temple's opening ceremony included a message from Mayor James Lyons, and a message in Italian from the local OSIO Venerable, Luigi Pasquantonio. The mayor's text stated he had "watched with interest the progress of your community for over thirty years" – meaning the Italian community generally, given the

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[29] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 2.
[30] Ibid., 15.
[31] Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 17.

OSIO itself had not yet existed for twenty years. Lyons thought the new hall would "give your organization added dignity and strength" and remarked on the ability of the Order to build such a facility during an economic depression. He recognized the OSIO's efforts in promoting "good citizenship" and closed with his belief that the new hall would promote a "keen interest" resulting in even more success for the group.[32]

Luigi Pasquantonio's message in the program thanked members of the Verdi Lodge for contributing their own labour to the construction project, listing each member and his accomplishments in the text. Some of these members, including Giacomo Colizza, had also taken out ads in the souvenir program to advertise their services.[33] Pasquantonio reminded his audience to be "close, tenacious, strong so that our Order continues its upward journey" and called for members of the Order to "stay a humble militia under the banner of the Blond Lion…inspired by the Sublime Trinity; Liberty – Fraternity – Equality…" Interestingly, Pasquantonio's message stated that members of the Order "are and will always be devoted and disciplined subjects to His Majesty Vittorio Emanuele, King of our delightful country of origin to which we will always demonstrate our attachment…"[34] but did not mention any obligations of citizenship to Canada. The *Sault Daily Star*'s report of the opening of the Temple, meanwhile, claimed that "Canadianism Theme at Opening Ceremony" in the sub-headline of its extensive coverage of the event.[35] The same article indicated that Mrs. G. Colizza, orator of the ladies' lodge, "reminded members of… their duties to their adopted country" in her

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[32] Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Microfilm 55: Three Italian-Canadian Pamphlets, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, "Souvenir of Opening Day," 2.
[33] Ibid., 10.
[34] Ibid; my own translation.
[35] "2,000 Visit New S.O.I. Hall" *Sault Daily Star*, 22 September 1932, 1.

speech to the crowd gathered for the opening, while her husband's address "also urged…development of good citizenship."[36]

The advertisements in the souvenir program indicate that the importance of the new Sons of Italy Temple was recognized by the broader community of Sault Ste. Marie: there were twenty advertisements for East End businesses, and fifteen from the West End (using Gore Street as the traditional boundary between the two). While the central business district of the Sault is fully east of Gore Street, and so there would be more businesses to approach for support in the East End, it is still remarkable that so many shops recognized and took advantage of the possibilities of advertising in the OSIO's booklet.

The OSIO was known in Sault Ste. Marie for its community and fund-raising activities; along with all the lodges of the Order, the Verdi and Maria José placed an emphasis on the well-being of the whole community, not only their members. One charitable activity the Order undertook was staging various Italian plays, including a performance of *Il Vecchio Caporale Simon* to support the Italian Red Cross.[37] Another fundraising effort was a series of Wednesday night dances held at the Verdi Hall; this venture began in 1935, and proceeds were donated to local charities.[38] Sault resident Dorothy Bonell, born in 1923, remembered attending "the dances at the Verdi" which were mostly formal dinner dances.[39] She recalled, "of course you know Italian people like to have a good time, and they did have a good time" at these dances.[40] By 1936,

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[36] "2,000 Visit New S.O.I. Hall" *Sault Daily Star*, 22 September 1932, 1.
[37] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 122.
[38] Ibid., 121-122.
[39] Dorothy Bonell, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, October 18 2011, 21:40, 23:58.
[40] Ibid., 8:43.

dances at the Verdi Hall were common enough that an entry under the heading West End Briefs in the *Sault Daily Star* stated the Sons of Italy would hold a Valentine's Day dance "as usual."[41]

When Mussolini came to power in 1922, Canadian fascists were few and far between, a situation not aided by news coming from Italy. According to the Italian Consul in Montreal, at the time fascism was being described in Canada "as an anti-democratic party at the service of the propertied classes, that limits the freedom of others with violence, is soaked in imperialist ideas, and threatens the peace of Europe"[42] so it is not surprising Italian Canadians were unimpressed by the new regime in Italy. While there had been attempts to found a *fascio* in Toronto and Montreal, these had failed. Faced with these failures, fascists in Canada chose instead to infiltrate and control existing Italian organizations in Canada.

With its commitment to develop and maintain home country pride among Italians, the Order Sons of Italy was a prime target. In addition, its Supreme Venerable, the highest officer in the organization, was now Giovanni Di Silvestro, a nationalist who took it upon himself to send Mussolini a telegram pledging that "[w]hile Fascism under your leadership lifts Italy up in the Roman way, the 300 000 members of the Order of the Sons of Italy send you their greetings and good wishes" and that the entire Order "follows you with faith."[43] Di Silvestro went so far as to refer to the Order as "*il fascio dei figli d'Italia in America*" during one speech in 1922, though this was never the official title of the

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[41] "Valentine Dance," *Sault Daily Star,* 7 February 1936, 10.
[42] Giulio Bolognari to Mussolini as cited in Principe, "Difficult Years," 106. My own translation.
[43] As cited in Principe, "Difficult Years," 106-107.

organization.[44] The 1924 inauguration of the Grand Lodge in Hamilton showed that fascism was being debated within the Order in Ontario. Nanni Leone Castelli, a known Montreal fascist and editor of the first fascist Italian newspaper in Canada, was invited to be the main speaker at the event. He used his speech to criticize the OSIO for not being openly supportive of fascism. In response, two lodges voted a motion against Castelli and his position. Thus, the battle within the OSIO over the ideas of fascism had begun.[45]

It is somewhat puzzling that there was ever a debate over fascism within the OSIO in Ontario. A prominent member of its leadership, Rev. Libero Sauro, took pains to underline some of the requirements of membership that should have prevented any political ideology from taking hold of the Order. In a document entitled "Facts About the Order of Sons of Italy of Ontario Mutual Benefit Society" he stated that "the fundamental principles of the Organization is [sic] non-political and non-religious, that is to say no one can play politics in the Order nor foster religious ideals of any kind," thus informing readers of the contents of Article 47, Section 2 from the Order's by-laws.[46] While fascism was a political ideology, it was also very closely connected in the minds of many Italians with patriotism and pride for their country of origin. Since one of the main goals of the OSIO was to promote knowledge of Italy and pride in its citizens' achievements, it is likely that members of the Order saw supporting Mussolini and fascism as another way to take pride in their Italian roots, rather than as a purely political statement. Thus the

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[44] Principe, "Difficult Years," 107.
[45] Ibid., 109.
[46] Rev. Libero Sauro, "Facts About the Order of Sons of Italy of Ontario Mutual Benefit Society," Columbus Centre ICEA2010.0008.0003.a-b http://italiancanadianww2.ca/images/uploads/transcripts/3281/icea2010-0008-0003a-b_transcript.pdf (accessed 2 October 2014).

Order's by-laws and founding principles could not resolve its members' conflicting views on fascism, and the debate could continue.

The Italian vice-consuls sent by Mussolini to spread fascist propaganda in Canada found an audience that was generally willing to listen, despite the negative press fascism had received so far. Italian immigrants "had been accustomed to being ignored by Italy" and were also used to being treated as foreigners in Canada. As Luigi Pennacchio explains, fascism gave them "recognition of their worth as Italians and Canadians."[47] Vice-consuls like Gianni Battista Ambrosi in Toronto "usurped indigenous social organizations" for their purposes, and the largest such organization in Canada was the Order Sons of Italy.[48] Although the Order in America had been under fascist influence since the 1920s, and there had been Castelli's controversial pro-fascism speech at the 1924 Grand Lodge inauguration, the OSIO was free of fascist control until the 1934 Grand Convention, when fascists and sympathizers were elected to the Grand Lodge leadership.[49]

The Italian consul seems to have been in contact with the Sault Ste. Marie lodge of the OSIO in October of 1935, regarding losses on the Italian side in Ethiopia. The *Sault Daily Star* reports simply that "a dispatch concerning the war" was sent to "a local Italian lodge in the Soo."[50] While the article is not specific, the Sons of Italy were the

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[47] Luigi G. 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, Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 53.
[48] Ibid., 55.
[49] Ibid., 56.
[50] *Sault Daily Star*, "Small Italian Losses," 14 October 1935, 2.

only group in the Sault to be dubbed a lodge – the Marconi Society did not use the same label.

Beginning in 1935, there was a steady growth in the number of OSIO lodges in Ontario, with 19 new lodges founded from 1935 to 1940. The swift rise in new lodges from 1935 to 1940 has been associated with the propaganda efforts of the Italian government's consular agents in Canada. The names of many of the lodges founded in this period imply a connection with the image and heroes of Italy as promoted by Mussolini's regime.[51] Names like Imperia and Roma Imperiale recalled Italy's greatness during the Roman Empire while also echoing Mussolini's attempts to form a new Italian empire in the twentieth century. Guelph's Principe V. Emanuele lodge was named for King Vittorio Emanuele III, who had appointed Mussolini prime minister, and claimed for himself the title of Emperor of Ethiopia in 1936; Windsor's Elena Di Savoia women's lodge was named after his wife, Queen Elena.[52] By 1939, the OSIO Mutual Benefit Society had nearly 1700 members contributing to the mortuary benefit fund[53] and was enjoying great strength as an organization.

The year 1935 marked the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Verdi Lodge, and thus of the Order Sons of Italy in Canada. In July that year, the Giuseppe Verdi Lodge hosted a week-long festival open to the whole city. Activities included a bazaar, a draw for a new car, and a grand ball.[54] The milestone did not go unnoticed by the broader community of Sault Ste. Marie. In preparation for the OSIO's 20th anniversary, the *Sault Daily Star* published an article that included a short history of the organization in Sault

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[51] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 17.
[52] Ibid., 16.
[53] Pennacchio, "The Order of the Sons of Italy in Ontario: A Brief History," 6.
[54] Ibid., 121.

Ste. Marie. The article was credited to John A. Curran – giving credit to a particular author was unusual for the *Star* at this time, and this article was perhaps the exception to the rule because it was written by one of the newspaper's two owners.[55] The article cites the membership of the Sault OSIO as 175 members and "continually growing." A later article reports the 20th anniversary banquet was "attended by 225 members and a few guests"; this larger attendance figure must include members of the ladies' lodge.[56] Both articles were accorded the largest headline on the municipal news page of the paper, attesting to the significance given the event by the *Star*'s editorial board.

The Verdi and Maria José lodges were involved in fundraising to support the Italian government, as were all OSIO lodges in the 1930s. Members from the Sault lodges participated in the very successful *Oro pro patria* (Gold for the Fatherland) campaign in 1935-1936. According to a list compiled by Mrs. Isabella Pilo of the Maria José lodge, 22 women and five men from Sault Ste. Marie had donated a total of 34 gold pieces and seven silver pieces. Mrs. Renzoni, former Venerable of the Maria José lodge, had apparently collected some 157 gold pieces from 70 women in the Sault.[57] Those who had donated received elaborate acknowledgement certificates from the Italian government, and women who donated wedding bands were given steel bands as replacements. In Toronto, at least, women wore their steel bands with pride.[58] No evidence is available to date that this was the case in the Sault. This fundraising, along with the newly bolstered pride that OSIO members had in being Italian, contributed to the

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[55] "5 Day Fete Marks Sons of Italy 20th Anniversary," *Sault Daily Star*, 6 July 1935, 3.
[56] "Banquet Climaxes Sons of Italy Celebration," *Sault Daily Star,* 15 July 1935, 3.
[57] *Il Bollettino* 24 January 1936, as cited in Principe, *The Darkest Side*, 121.
[58] Pennacchio, "Exporting Fascism," 66.

popular opinion across Ontario that supporting fascism was part of belonging to the Order Sons of Italy.

Because of this perceived link between the Order Sons of Italy and fascism, the RCMP targeted members of the Verdi Lodge and their supporters for internment as enemy aliens in June of 1940. Amongst those interned were key leaders of the Verdi Lodge, and so those members left to continue life in the Sault were charged with maintaining normalcy and rebuilding the Order as much as possible.

Other ethnic groups saw their organizations become more politically minded during the 1930s. For example, the German Workers and Farmers Association (GWFA), founded in 1929, provided mutual aid to its members, as well as social activities. However, it had as its main goal to demonstrate that ethnic and class interests were one and the same, and that only through the elimination of capitalism could German Canadians' problems be resolved.[59] The GWFA's local clubs emphasized political and social action in order to win members.[60] Being a communist-leaning organization, its members were wary of Hitler's ideology and propaganda, and the GWFA actually called out another German Canadian organization, the *Deutscher Bund Canada*, for veiling its Nazi propaganda efforts as non-political, cultural work. The *Bund*, meanwhile, managed to infiltrate the popular summer cultural gatherings known as *Tagen*, which "soon

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[59] Grenke, *German Canadians: Community Formation, Transformation and Contribution to Canadian Life* (Trafford Publishing, 2018), 196, 198. https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=t6tvDwAAQBAJ&hl=en_US&pg=GBS.PT2 (accessed 12 October 2019)

[60] Ibid., 198.

transformed from cultural festivals into obvious pro-Nazi rallies" including political lectures and the Sieg Heil salute.[61]

Some locals of the GWFA joined efforts with the League Against War and Fascism, as did the Windsor, Ontario local in 1934. [62] There was no federated Italian organization similar to the GWFA that was visible enough in Sault Ste. Marie to counter any fascist activity in the federated Order Sons of Italy. The Marconi Society was prominent, but fully independent of any other Italian group. The Order of Italo-Canadians was founded "to balance the power of the Order Sons of Italy"[63] but this new organization had no significant presence in the Sault.

When sharing their memories of the Order Sons of Italy, Sault Ste. Marie elders discussed only social activities. In her interview for the Oral History Project of Sault Ste. Marie, Dorothy Bonell connected the Order Sons of Italy with its community hall (which she and other interviewees called 'the Verdi') and its social events, including dances and plays. She did not mention it in any way as being troubled during the Second World War, connected to fascism, or having its members interned. When asked to recall sad times in the West End, she stated "well the sad times were the Depression, it was really bad"[64] and made no mention of the effects of the Second World War on the OSIO or on Italians in the Sault more generally. It is possible that Bonell did not choose the internments as a 'sad time' for the West End because it did not affect her personally in the same way as the

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[61] Jonathan Wagner, "The *Deutscher Bund Canada* 1934-9," *Canadian Historical Review* 58:2 (June 1977): 186.
[62] Grenke, *German Canadians,* 199-200.
[63] Angelo Principe, "The Italo-Canadian Anti-fascist Press in Toronto, 1922-40" *Polyphony* 7 (Fall/Winter 1985): 45.
[64] Dorothy Bonell, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 October 2011, 33:00.

Verdi dances and Great Depression did, or perhaps it was a moment so difficult she chose not to discuss it at all. Still, her positive memories of dances at the Verdi demonstrate that the Sault's Italian community did not exclusively think of fascism and internment when they thought of the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario.

Sault resident Nicholas Marinelli remembers the Verdi Hall as a place for special occasions, but also said "but before it was Verdi they called it Sons of Italy, then after the war, they changed the name to the Verdi Hall."[65] Marinelli's recollection may indicate an effort at rebranding the OSIO after the war, but is more likely an example of simple confusion by an outsider to the organization.

Enrica Pedinelli (born 1918), herself a member of the Marconi Society, recalled that "Mrs Irwin, Ron Irwin's mother… she was in the Marconi…"[66] Pedinelli is mistaken here, as Antonietta Irwin was one of the members of the Sons of Italy widely credited with maintaining and rebuilding the Order throughout Ontario during and after the Second World War.[67] The fact that Pedinelli associated community service with the Marconi and no other organization may simply speak to her own membership or to an error of memory, but it may also indicate that the OSIO and its legacy, fascist or otherwise, simply isn't a prominent concern in the Sault.

Saultite Mike Sanzosti, a member of the Verdi Lodge's leadership in the 1950s and 1960s, connected the Verdi with Carmel Cushley directing Passion plays and the

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[65] Nicholas Marinelli, interviewed by Karen Montgomery-Jones, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 21 October 2012, 16:33.
[66] Enrica Pedinelli, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 28 March 2012, 20:18.
[67] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 20.

building's tennis courts, and not with any of his work with the organization.[68] He also recalled the Depression as the toughest time for his family, not the war.

By the Grand Convention of July 1946, the OSIO had recovered enough that four lodges had been re-organized in Toronto, three in Hamilton, and one lodge in each of the towns of Niagara Falls, Guelph, Thorold, and Galt. However, eleven of the lodges founded before the Second World War were never re-formed; most of these were lodges organized during the "nationalist fervour" of 1937-1940.[69]

After the war, the Order Sons of Italy was again wary of becoming politically involved, and this time it was not only the Verdi Lodge displaying such reluctance. *L'Unione*, the Order's newspaper, noted in its July 1946 issue that it was glad to publish news about any Italian-Canadian organization, as long as its principles were followed. These principles required that articles be "exclusively of an instructive, educational, sporting, and hygienic nature."[70] The organization was eager to leave politics in the past.

The Verdi Lodge of the OSIO was an early and important institution to Sault Ste. Marie's Italians, and understanding how and why the organization was founded gives a good context for the lodge's work and community involvement. As the Verdi became more and more active, the broader community became more aware of its members and its work, and perceptions of Italians in the Sault began to change. Through records of the Verdi's efforts, we will see how OSIO members, and the Italian community more broadly, were perceived by the majority in Sault Ste. Marie in the years before the Second World War.

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[68] Sanzosti, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 21:45.
[69] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple,* 21.
[70] *L'Unione,* 2:12 (July 1946): 8; my own translation.

Chapter 4: Perceptions of the Italian community, 1900-1939

This chapter explores Anglo-Canadian perceptions of the Italian community in Sault Ste. Marie by examining four key events. First, early fears regarding living conditions and alcohol in the West End are analysed, followed by Cabot Day festivities in the 1920s, and finally two celebrations of Verdi Lodge milestones in the 1930s. This analysis demonstrates that in the period from 1900-1939, three themes emerge in Anglo-Canadian perceptions of the Italian community. From the arrival of the first immigrants until the First World War, Italians were mostly perceived negatively, and stereotypes abounded. After the founding of the Order Sons of Italy in 1915, and during the inter-war years, the Italian community was viewed rather positively, as the Anglo-Canadian majority came to link it with the accomplishments of ancient Rome and the Italian Renaissance. However, Italian Canadians were always considered subordinate to Anglo-Canadians, and to Canadian – that is, British – laws and conventions. These changing viewpoints in Sault Ste. Marie mirror the first two theories of assimilation presented by Howard Palmer.[1] First, the Sault wanted Italians to conform to the Anglo-Canadian way of life and viewed immigrant culture as sub-standard. Later, as positive elements of Italian culture were identified, attitudes in the city began to lean towards a 'melting pot' of Canadian culture, though this position was far from universally accepted. The increasing positivity with which the Sault's Italian community, as represented by the

[1] Howard Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century," in *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Gerald Tulchinsky, (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 297-298.

Order Sons of Italy of Ontario, was viewed was later challenged by the increasing notoriety of Italian fascism and the lead-up to war.

In the early years of the Sault's Italian community, newly-arrived Italians faced several negative stereotypes. As noted earlier, approximately 200 Italian immigrants arrived in Sault Ste. Marie in 1902, and settled in tents in the West End. It did not take long for these few hundred to fall prey to negative perceptions from the Anglo-Canadian majority. By 1903, the editor of the *Sault Daily Star*, James Curran, recommended that government recognize "the presence of hundreds of Italians at the west end" and do it quickly. He described two events that occurred in one day – a woman "chased by a partly undressed dago" and another person being threatened with weapons – as evidence that the new arrivals were trouble. According to Curran, "the Italians – and some others – need to be told a few things, and at once."[2]

Curran blamed easy access to alcohol for the West End's troubles, claiming, "every other shack sells liquor," and later called for the segregation of Italians from the rest of Sault Ste. Marie, along with the designation of a resident constable for the West End.[3] A "substantial body of public opinion" wanted liquor licenses issued in the West End in 1905, because it was believed that "virtually every house kept 'a keg on tap'" and so granting licenses would at least offer some regulation to the area.[4]

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[2] *Sault Daily Star* 9 January 1902, as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 330.
[3] *Sault Daily Star* 9 January 1902 and 16 January 1902, as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 330-331.
[4] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 333.

Public hearings regarding alcohol licenses were held in 1905. John R. Abbott described the views of the majority towards the immigrants hoping to obtain these licenses:

> The foreigners – silent (speaking through lawyers), single, packed into boarding houses, prone (or so it was thought) to go for knife or gun in moments of anger – represented a palpable threat to the town.[5]

Abbott summarizes here the main perceptions of Italians by the majority in Sault Ste. Marie. In addition to causing trouble with alcohol (either by drinking or by selling it), Italians were dangerous and violent, and maintained "abnormal" living conditions by crowding so many single men into dismal quarters.[6]

Bootlegging did take place in the West End; it was a practice born of economic necessity, rather than a desire to irritate the broader public, and it continued to be a response to economic conditions in the West End for decades after the initial fears of 1905. Aldo Diotallevi spoke of the adaptations made by families in the West End, hesitating to call it a "subculture, but – there was things that happened in the Italian community that we all did, and, uh, we did it through necessity." Diotallevi referred to "mostly bootlegging" and recalled his father "bringing it [alcohol] in, in huge quantities" since he was involved at "the supply end" of the business. [7] Angelo Bumbacco recalls that "every third, fourth house sold alcohol, to supplement their income. You had widows that had no pensions, that was their only way of surviving." In contrast to early fears surrounding alcohol use in the West End, Bumbacco's view is that bootlegging "never

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[5] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor,"334.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Aldo Diotallevi, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 0:58, 3:05, 3:55.

caused any problems at all, there was no drunks lying around…it was just fine, we just accepted it. It was just another way of making a living, to make ends meet."[8] Dorothy Kutcher was clear about how her mother supported their family: "she was a bootlegger, in plain English…from day one."[9] Her brother John Arcangeletti explained that since their father died young, at the age of 53, their mother had no choice but to be a bootlegger, to keep her seven children fed.[10]

Others from outside the Sault recognized the early conflicts between the Italian community and the mainstream. In December of 1912, a Secretary of the Canadian National Council of the YMCA came to the Sault to give a speech at the Canadian Club. W.W. Lee's lecture was entitled "The Building of a Nation" and through it, he attempted to help the Sault's leaders cope with the 'foreigners' in their midst, whom he argued they could ignore no longer. Lee explained that the lifestyle displayed by the Italians was simply a rational response to the particular conditions they faced. He pointed to migration patterns as the cause of squalid living conditions in ethnic communities: men arrived on their own and needed to support themselves as well as their families overseas, so boarding houses became necessary despite the awful conditions they presented.[11]

In addition to delivering his lecture, W.W. Lee visited several Sault officials and the "foreign element in their own homes" to fully investigate conditions in the town.

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[8] Angelo Bumbacco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 19 March 2014, 18:28, 1846.
[9] Dorothy Kutcher, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 May 2011, 1:00.
[10] John Arcangeletti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 7 May 2014, 14:15.
[11] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 336.

When interviewed by the *Sault Daily Star* at the close of his investigation, Lee issued a challenge of sorts to residents:

> The first thing that is required in the Sault in regard to the foreign problem is a change in the sentiment of the people of this place toward the foreigner. He is generally considered the scum of the earth by our citizens.[12]

Abbott argues that after Lee's visit, the *Sault Daily Star* changed its tone when reporting on ethnic issues in the city. The newspaper now treated the West End as "part of the municipality for civic purposes" although it continued to be critical of the area's "distinct sub-culture." The newspaper's attitude – and perhaps that of the city in general – had shifted, but only slightly. "No longer was the foreign quarter viewed as a 'nuisance' – rubbish inviting removal: now it was a 'condition' requiring amelioration."[13] Editor Curran held the following views on the West End, or in his words, on "The Sault's Foreign Problem":

> If these citizens had a Canadian standard of living there could be no objection to them, but very many of them are content to live in such a way that in the event of slack times, Canadian labor could not compete with them.
>
> But they are here to stay. Manifestly the best thing to do in our own interests and theirs is to see that their standard of living is raised.[14]

The situation in Sault Ste. Marie was just as Robert Harney argued happened throughout Canada to Italian immigrants: the dominant society had figured out that Italians were not going home, just as the men themselves had also admitted. [15] So now, Anglo-Canadians

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[12] *Sault Daily Star* 9 December 1912 as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 337.
[13] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 337.
[14] *Sault Daily Star* 13 August 1913 as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 340.
[15] Robert F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History,*

adopted an assimilationist attitude to the Italians in their midst. Perceptions in the Sault also reflect Howard Palmer's theory of attitudes towards immigrants in Canada: here we see the first assimilationist attitude displayed towards the city's Italians. The mainstream community accepted the presence of Italians, but maintained they needed to change.

One way of improving the standard of living in the West End was to address the major concern of sanitation. When sewer extensions into Little Italy were finally provided in 1913, the city's sanitary committee reported to council that the area's homeowners were quick to set up their connections using higher-quality materials. The committee noted that residents were beginning to clean up the area and move towards a more modernized way of life.[16] Given half a chance, the Italian community had taken advantage, and made great efforts to move towards a more 'Canadian' standard of living.

Although the *Sault Daily Star* seemed dedicated to portraying Italians in a negative fashion during most of this early period, not all in the city found them to be a nuisance. When asked by the *Star* about Canada's immigration policy, a local police official called for the exclusion of the "criminal and lazy class" from Canada, and thought that "no country…sends us more of these" than Great Britain. When pressed about Italians, the official stated that they were never as much trouble as the English and Americans. He believed:

> [The Italian] is either too good a man to get in a position where he needs public help, or else his country men won't see him thrown on the public for aid. I have a very high opinion of our Italian citizens for their independence and steadiness. The only fault they seem to have is that they are given to the carrying of weapons with sometimes unfortunate results.[17]

1840s-1960s ed. Franca Iacovetta, Paula Draper, Robert Ventresca (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 211, 218-219.

[16] Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 340.

[17] *Sault Daily Star* 16 January 1908 as cited in Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 335.

The officer did hang on to the stereotype of weapon-wielding Italians, but was willing to accord them praise nonetheless, displaying that flexibility and ambiguity were possible within perceptions.

The Italian-as-bootlegger stereotype continued into the 1920s, but with a twist. A reader wrote to the *Sault Daily Star* to complain about "Sunday night bouts" on James Street, laying the blame squarely with "a number of English boys and young men" who ventured to Little Italy seeking bootleg liquor, which the letter-writer noted was "quite plentiful in the west end." The letter acknowledged that Italians also participated in the "noisy gatherings" but that their participation was slight, given their access to "better stuff," which in this case may have meant Italian wine.[18] A shift in perception of Italians in the Sault had begun. Twenty years or so after the arrival of the first Italian immigrants, the city had gotten to know them, and it seemed ready to admit they might be admired, at least for their wine, if not for their total avoidance of trouble. However, Italians were still thought to have problems with alcohol, but now only because of their bootlegging. Instead, it was now the English who were the drunk and disorderly ones. Dorothy Kutcher recalls that "every time an English kid came up [to the West End] there would be fights" but also that "kids didn't have to go out of the West End" for these fights – indicating that trouble was brought to the Sault's Italian community by Anglo-Canadians, even into the 1930s.[19] In the years to come, public perception of Italians and Italian

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[18] "Sunday Night Rows in Little Italy Unpopular", *Sault Daily Star* 30 October 1922, second section, 1.

[19] Dorothy Kutcher, interviewed by Cathy Shunock and Wendy Hamilton, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 May 2011, 17:30.

Canadians in the Sault continued to become more positive, but always while maintaining a belief in the superiority of Canadian – and therefore British – ways of life.

After its founding in 1915 and during its early years, the Order Sons of Italy was not particularly noticed by the *Sault Daily Star*. The newspaper reported on the activities of other local societies, such as the Orange Lodge and the founding of the Chinese Free Mason Lodge, but there are few reports of the early activities of the OSIO. This situation is remarkable, given the tradition of the annual Columbus Day parade held in the West End and supported by the Verdi Lodge. Carlo Fera, former member and Grand Venerable of the Verdi Lodge, recalled that Columbus Day "was a big day. The Sons of Italy would always have a big do."[20]

Columbus Day 1920 was celebrated by the Sons of Italy with a parade and a "mass meeting" which was held at the Victoria Theatre. The *Sault Daily Star* noted that the meeting would include speeches in Italian and English, the English speakers being Judge Stone and the Sault's Conservative Member of Parliament, T.E. Simpson. The *Star* announced these celebrations on the bottom of its front page the day before they took place, but did not provide any summary or comment in the days following the celebration.[21] The Columbus Day activities of 1921 received similar treatment, this time on page 3 and with less detail than the previous year. Again, there was no follow-up article with additional coverage.[22] The *Star* must have thought it important to report about these OSIO events ahead of time, but not important enough to send a reporter to

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[20] Carlo Fera, interviewed by Russell Magnaghi, 18 October 1982, transcribed 10 March 2003, Northern Michigan University Archives, 11.
[21] "Sault Sons of Italy Remember Columbus' Work" *Sault Daily Star* 11 October 1920, 1.
[22] "Sons of Italy in Sault Will Honor Columbus' Memory" *Sault Daily Star* 8 October 1921, 3.

witness and record them. In later years, the *Sault Daily Star* published articles after Sons of Italy events had taken place, with thorough descriptions of the entertainment, and direct quotations from the speeches. This was the case for events commemorating a different Italian explorer (the Cabot Day celebrations of 1924) and for many other OSIO events to come. The links made by the Anglo-Canadian community between Italian immigrants and ancient Italian culture are evident in the *Star*'s coverage of three OSIO activities: the 1924 Cabot Day festival, the 1932 building of the Verdi Hall, and the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Verdi Lodge.

The tradition of the Columbus Day parade faded from the Sault's social calendar in the early 1920s. Carlo Fera recalled the parade happening "back in the old days, the early twenties…after that it died out."[23] A new and arguably more Canadian celebration, Cabot Day, rose in its wake. The 1924 celebration of Cabot Day, sponsored by the Order Sons of Italy, was covered extensively by the *Sault Daily Star*. The newspaper's accounts of the celebrations demonstrate two new perceptions of Italian Canadians in Sault Ste. Marie: as being more closely linked to Britain and Canada through the efforts of Cabot, and of continuing the cultural achievements of ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy.

In the issue published the day before the Cabot Day celebrations, the *Sault Daily Star* explained to its readers that the "great Italian explorer John Cabot… set foot on America on June 24, 1497, under the English flag."[24] The fact that the Italian Cabot had worked for the English crown would be referred to time and again during the festivities, mainly by members of the Italian community. By placing emphasis on Cabot as a link

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[23] Carlo Fera, interviewed by Russell Magnaghi, 12.
[24] "Miss Ilia Vannini Will Be Crowned Queen of Cabot Day at Mission Tonight" *Sault Daily Star* 23 June 1924, 3.

between Italy and Britain, perhaps Italians in the Sault hoped to gain respect and a more elevated place in the minds of their fellow citizens. The Italian community also used the Cabot connection to remind the Sault's Anglo-Canadians that they, too, were descended from immigrants, and this reminder was not limited to Cabot Day. In the letters to the editor in the 19 October 1922 edition of the *Sault Daily Star*, a bit of poetry from P. Renzani focused on his love for Canada. However, Renzani also acknowledged discrimination as part of his Canadian life, and highlighted what Italian and Anglo-Canadians have in common:

> Although some call us dogs, foreigners or Wops
> They are without common sense and full of chili sauce
> If they are sensible and consider further
> We came here to Canada for the same purpose of their forefathers.[25]

Mr. Renzani's appeal to Anglo-Canadians to recall their immigrant roots was repeated by representatives of the Italian minority, and also by officials from the Anglo-Canadian majority, throughout Cabot Day celebrations in the 1920s. While Italians using the trope were hoping for acceptance, Anglo-Canadians were encouraging assimilation.

Proceeds from the multi-day Cabot Day celebrations of 1924 were going to the Order Sons of Italy benefit fund and other related activities, according to Rev. Libero Sauro. However, members of the Marconi Society were also planning on marching in the parade, demonstrating the importance of Cabot Day not only to Sons of Italy members, but to the Sault's broader Italian community.[26] There was hope that Cabot Day would draw more people generally to its events than Columbus Day had in the past; the *Star*

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[25] "A Sault Italian's Tribute to Canada" *Sault Daily Star* 19 October 1922, second section, 4.

[26] "Miss Ilia Vannini Will Be Crowned Queen of Cabot Day at Mission Tonight" *Sault Daily Star* 23 June 1924, 3.

remarked that the Order expected a larger crowd for the crowning of the Cabot Day queen than the full-to-capacity numbers for the same event during the previous year's Columbus celebrations.[27]

In its 1924 June 24 edition, the *Star* summarized the previous evening's events, beginning with information on that year's 'Queen of Cabot Day' Ilia Vannini. The *Star* described her as "a pretty and popular young lady of the west end of the city" and reprinted an excerpt from her acceptance speech. Vannini thanked all those in attendance for the honour she had just received, then carefully highlighted her motivations for wanting to be crowned Queen:

> But all my efforts to achieve it were done with one purpose in my mind, to honor a great man, John Cabot, who, 427 years ago, unfurled the British flag on the shores of this land of ours which we try our best to make a land of renown.[28]

Vannini took care to focus on Cabot's link with Britain, but she also made sure to claim Canada as her own. In her ceremonial role as Queen of the festival, she was now the Italian community's representative, and so also was claiming Canada for the whole community. Her pledge that Italians would make Canada "a land of renown" demonstrates a commitment to Canada and not to Italy, which must have been important to many Anglo-Canadian Sault residents. Vannini's pledge may also have been a challenge – either intended or simply perceived as such – to Anglo-Canadians. If someone perceived as 'foreign' could make such a public promise to being Canadian and supporting British ideals, what more must be expected of them as Anglo-Canadians?

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[27]"Miss Ilia Vannini Will Be Crowned Queen of Cabot Day at Mission Tonight" *Sault Daily Star* 23 June 1924, 3.
[28] "Cabot Day Fete Opens Well With Crowning of Queen; Fair on School Grounds" *Sault Daily Star*, 24 June 1924, 3.

The *Star* also included notes from the Rev. Libero Sauro's speech, which echoed the themes presented by Vannini. According to the *Star*, Sauro explained that the Sault's Italians "felt it their duty to celebrate Cabot Day because Cabot discovered the land where they now live." Sauro took care to highlight that while the Sons of Italy may "…carry a Italian name they are a Canadian institution with Canadian ideals" and repeated that the group's "aim was to bring out the best in the Italian nationality in Canada."[29]

It was not only Italian residents of the Sault who made the link between Italy and Britain via John Cabot. Mayor James Dawson also did so when he spoke at the opening of the 1924 Cabot Day festivities. He began by giving his "greetings to the people of the west end" – thus demonstrating his assumption Cabot Day was uniquely celebrated and valued by the Italian community, not by others in the Sault more generally. Dawson told the crowd:

> I am very grateful to my Italian friends of Sault Ste. Marie for the opportunity afforded me of expressing my admiration of John Cabot, one of the greatest adventurers… I feel that I am doing honor not only to this interpid [sic] explorer, but to those persons in our midst who have left their native land and have come to dwell in Canada, and who are so rapidly becoming an integral part of our Canadian citizenship. [30]

The mayor's speech recognized the transition taking place in the city, and showed that the city and its leaders were now more accepting of the Italians in their midst – even acknowledging that Italians could be Canadian citizens too. Anglo- and Italian Canadians alike were coming to realize the permanent place of the Italian community in the city. Mayor Dawson compared John Cabot and his sons to modern immigrants, calling them "…worthy examples of native born Italians, who become British subjects and with the

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[29] "Cabot Day Fete Opens Well With Crowning of Queen; Fair on School Grounds" *Sault Daily Star*, 24 June 1924, 3.
[30] Ibid.

best qualities of both nations…planted the British flag for the first time on the coast of America."[31] He commended "the spirit of optimism" he saw in the city's Italian community, and stated that the whole of Sault Ste. Marie needed such an outlook. He further praised the Italian community, explaining that despite trouble at Algoma Steel, Cabot Day festivities had gone ahead; he believed "[i]f things had turned out the same downtown the celebration would have been cancelled."[32]

However, the mayor did not hesitate to provide the community with criticism while he was at the podium: he also reminded Italian Canadians that they should refrain from sounding their car horns when celebrating weddings on Sundays, especially while passing city churches.[33] This portion of Dawson's speech raises the question of how often he really spent time with leaders or ordinary members of the Italian community. If he were more frequently present and engaged with people of the West End, perhaps he would not have found it necessary to take advantage of his Cabot Day appearance to chide the Italian community about their sonorous wedding celebrations. It also demonstrated a persistent air of superiority amongst Anglo-Canadian leadership in the city, as the mayor refused to allow the Italian community to fully enjoy the praise he had given earlier in his message by highlighting another way in which they did not conform to the expectations of the rest of the city.

Another speaker at the 1924 Cabot Day celebrations, Mr. John A. McPhail, presented a new stereotype of Italians. In his speech, he listed the contributions of Italian

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[31] "Cabot Day Fete Opens Well With Crowning of Queen; Fair on School Grounds" *Sault Daily Star*, 24 June 1924, 3.
[32] Ibid.
[33] "Italians Show Way to Other Sooites Said Mayor Dawson" *Sault Daily Star*, 25 June 1924, 2.

masters in art, music, and religion, and stated that "the debt that Britain owes to Italy can never be repaid" where these achievements were concerned.[34] This association of modern Italians with the traditions and accomplishments of ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy grew in popularity in the years to come.

An uncredited *Sault Daily Star* editorial published just after the 1924 Cabot Day celebrations reported on Rev. Libero Sauro's invitation to speak to members of the Sault's Rotary Club. A Presbyterian, Rev. Sauro was quoted as saying that Sault Italians were "very proud of the old land, Italy, but we are putting on this Cabot celebration as Canadians." According to the article, Rotarians in attendance at the event applauded this statement, and were pleased to hear "…Rev. Mr. Sauro's intimation that Sault Italians, while remembering the old home with reverence, were first of all Canadians." The editorial took care to mention that the Rotary Club made efforts to attract citizens of different backgrounds to its activities. Furthermore, the article praised "the splendid qualities of our Italian fellow citizens" while pointing out that "the Sault desires every citizen of whatever tongue, to do his share" in contributing to civic life. It also demonstrated an ongoing assimilationist attitude: Italian Canadians were expected to blend into the mainstream Anglo-Canadian culture, since "[t]he genius of British institutions is that they provide always a place for all races and creeds." The editorial also assumed that these British institutions were beneficial to others, as the closing sentence read, "[i]t is only those who deliberately hold themselves aloof that Anglo-Saxon principles will not do something for."[35]

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[34] "Italians Show Way to Other Sooites Said Mayor Dawson" *Sault Daily Star*, 25 June 1924, 2.
[35] "Sault Italians are Canadians" *Sault Daily Star* 26 June 1924, 4.

This expectation that Italians join the Anglo-Canadian mainstream is further evidence of an attitudinal shift in Sault Ste. Marie. It was less than twenty years prior that the *Sault Daily Star* recommended that the Italians of the West End be kept separate from the rest of the city, regardless of whether those living there wished to keep themselves "aloof" or not. However, it also demonstrates some interesting reasoning. The editorial argues that to be Canadian was to participate in "British institutions" which had space for all, implying equality for all participants. But the fact that "Anglo-Saxon principles" were thought to "do something for" those who possessed them, implies that those who were not Anglo-Saxon needed to learn them and were lacking in some way. While clearly praising and welcoming the Italians of the Sault, the editorial also subtly distanced them from the mainstream, much as Mayor Dawson had done on Cabot Day.

By the 1930s, views of the Sault's Italian community had again shifted slightly. More positivity was evident as both Anglo- and Italian Canadians linked the Italian community with the glory of ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy; however, the community was still kept at a distance by Anglo-Canadians. Coverage of two major milestones for the Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy demonstrate this shift: the 1932 building and opening of the new OSIO Temple, and the 1935 celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the Verdi Lodge.

When the Sault lodge of the OSIO was able to build a new hall in 1932, the event made the front page of the *Sault Daily Star*, beginning with plans for the upcoming ceremony and laying of the cornerstone. The event was to include a parade from the old hall on Queen Street West to the new building site at Hudson and Cathcart, followed by a ceremony officiated by Judge Fred Stone, and remarks by Dr. Vittorio Sabetta, assistant grand venerable of the Verdi Lodge. The *Star* also included a list of prominent Saultites

who had been invited to attend the ceremony. T.E. Simpson (local Conservative Member of Parliament), Mayor James Lyons, the local Crown Attorney W.G. Atkin, and *Sault Daily Star* editor J.W. Curran were listed, amongst others. Father Belcastro of Holy Rosary Church and Alderman Carmine Talarico were to represent the Italian community. Interestingly, the *Star* made no distinction in its list between prominent Italian Canadians and those with more Anglo-Saxon names; indeed, Alderman Talarico was named before his colleague Alderman W.W. Baldwin.[36]

The day after the cornerstone was laid for the new Verdi Hall, the *Sault Daily Star* provided numerous details about the parade and ceremony. Three hundred people were in attendance for the event, according to the *Star*, which described it as "another step of advancement…made by the Italian colony" of the Sault. In his remarks during the cornerstone ceremony, Judge Stone instructed members of the Order Sons of Italy to "never forget the glorious traditions of their native land" while they "joined with the people of Canada" to make their new country "as glorious as had been their native Italy." He acknowledged that "most of the Italians in the city" were naturalized, despite having just talked of them as needing to join with Canadians. He reminded members of the OSIO "you have come from a wonderful country…that dates back 2,500 years, to that magnificence in art, culture, wealth, glory, and most of all the power, that was Rome."[37] With these words, Judge Stone evoked a common theme in the perception and depiction of Italians in the Sault in the inter-war period: Italy, and therefore Italians, were great because of the country's Roman past, not because of any more recent or contemporary accomplishments. Dr. Sabetta's speech also echoed this theme, as the *Star* reported he

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[36] "Cornerstone to be Laid" *Sault Daily Star* 6 August 1932, 1.
[37] "300 Attend Laying of Cornerstone" *Sault Daily Star* 9 August 1932, 3.

reminded those in attendance of the "virtue of the past, the glory of Rome, the science, the art, poetry, literature and song of Italy."[38]

In another speech at the cornerstone ceremony, Alderman W.W. Baldwin gave his and the city's congratulations to the Verdi Lodge for their new hall, where he recognized that Canadian citizenship and Italian traditions would be taught and honoured. According to the *Star*, Baldwin "commended the Italians of the city for the fine work they were doing in building up the west end of the city," and recognized their efforts in funding a new building in the midst of an economic depression. Baldwin also "paid very high tribute" to Alderman Talarico for his efforts on behalf of the West End.[39] Alderman Baldwin's exact words were not reported, but his choice to commend Italian residents for their efforts in "building up the west end" gives the impression he did not believe the state of the West End to be the responsibility of city council. Baldwin's remarks, although meant in praise, recall the reticence of city council to extend sewers and other city services to the West End twenty years earlier.

The official opening of the new OSIO temple took place only weeks after the cornerstone laying. According to the *Sault Daily Star*, plans for the opening included a parade of both the men's and women's lodges from the old hall to the new one, led by the Sault Regimental band. Upon arrival at the new building, Father Belcastro of Holy Rosary Church would be on hand to dedicate it. The *Star* took care to note that

> Officials of the lodge promise that the hospitality for which the quarter of the city represented by the lodge is noted will be in evidence, and every guest will be made to feel at home, at the bazaar Thursday afternoon and the grand opening ball Thursday evening, as well as the official opening.[40]

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[38] "300 Attend Laying of Cornerstone" *Sault Daily Star* 9 August 1932, 3.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "Open New Sons of Italy Hall Tomorrow" *Sault Daily Star* 20 September 1932, 3.

The Verdi Lodge's emphasis on welcoming guests could have been based on assuaging a fear of cultural differences found in the Anglo-Canadian community. Perhaps the organization was taking advantage of a perception of Italian hospitality so their event would make as big a splash as possible. In either case, OSIO members were definitely not "holding themselves aloof" from the rest of the city, as had been the concern in the 1924 *Star* editorial mentioned earlier.

The *Star* concluded its article by listing all the "distinguished figures in the Sons of Italy Society and Italian affairs on this continent" who had been invited to be in attendance. These included C.B. Ambrosi, the Italian vice-consul; N. Masi, the head of the Ontario Grand Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy; and the Rev. Libero Sauro, Grand Orator of the Ontario Grand Lodge, a former resident of the Sault, and the only distinguished guest to have confirmed he would be in attendance.[41]

The following day, the *Sault Daily Star* reported that Order Sons of Italy "lodges and officials in all parts of Canada and the United States" had sent congratulatory messages to the Sault lodges. The paper again reported that the opening of the "fine new temple" would be attended by Rev. Libero Sauro and emphasized that he was "credited with a large part in the development of the first Sons of Italy lodge in Canada during his term in office."[42] It is worth noting that the opening of the OSIO temple was taking place at the same time that the Sault was hosting the Ontario-Quebec-Maritimes District convention of the Kiwanis Club, and yet the OSIO still received excellent coverage in the

[41]"Open New Sons of Italy Hall Tomorrow" *Sault Daily Star* 20 September 1932, 3..
[42] "High Italian Officials Congratulate Soo Lodge" *Sault Daily Star* 21 September 1932, 1.

Star.[43] This attention to events that were of significance arguably only to the Italian community demonstrates an acceptance of, and interest in, the Italian minority by the majority in Sault Ste. Marie.

The day of the hall's opening, the *Sault Daily Star* proclaimed "2,000 Visit New S.O.I Hall" on the front page, and continued their detailed reporting of the story on page 3. In contrast, the Kiwanis meeting did not make the front page. In the opening paragraph of its article, the *Star* referred to Italians as "the Sault's outstanding group of citizens-by-adoption."[44] The "outstanding" description placed Italians above other ethnicities in the city, but it may have been chosen merely to underscore the magnitude of the occasion. The label "citizens-by-adoption" is odd and intriguing, as it implies that it was the dominant community that chose Italians to live in Canada, as parents choose an adopted child; of course, it was precisely the opposite that occurred. The adoption trope also serves to establish a power relationship, in which British Canadians are superior, in their role as 'parents' to Italian-Canadian 'children.'

In his speech at the opening, Mayor James Lyons called the new hall "the finest in the city" and stated that those who had contributed to building it "deserve the thanks of the city."[45] The mayor saw the hall as having "climaxed" the development of the West End "from bush land" to an area equal to any other in town.[46] While Mayor Lyons was prepared to declare the West End equal to the rest of the city where urban development was concerned, he did not make a similar evaluation of the West End's residents.

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[43] "Kiwanis Clubs Have Done Soo High Honour Says Mayor Lyons" *Sault Daily Star* 21 September 1932, 1.
[44] "2,000 Visit New Sons of Italy Hall" *Sault Daily Star* 22 September 1932, 1.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 3.

After praising the community for its efforts in building the hall, and positively noting the general qualities of Italians who sought better chances in Canada, the mayor moved on to what was by now commonplace at Order Sons of Italy events in the Sault: assimilationist instructions to the broader community. The *Sault Daily Star* called this perspective part of the "Canadianism Theme" of the evening. Mayor Lyons reminded "Canadians" – that is, Anglo-Canadian residents – that they needed to welcome all newcomers, and help them to become citizens who followed and respected Canada's laws. Lyons believed newcomers "must be made…to realize the cost of making a country" and attributed Canada's success to those he called "the pioneers," referring to those earlier immigrants of British origin. He reminded his audience that the "character, intelligence and faith" of these pioneers were significant to Canada's "present advantages," which only these attributes could maintain. The mayor concluded his remarks by repeating his appreciation of the new hall's contribution to the West End, saying it was part of the "development to a higher standard of the citizenship of the community." When Mayor Lyons referred to "the community" he meant the Sault in general, but earlier in his speech he referenced the many ethnic groups of the West End, who needed to rise to a standard set by the "pioneers" and maintained by their descendants.[47] His attitude reflects the 'melting pot' views that Palmer argues many Canadians developed in the late 1920s, an attitude towards ethnic groups that recognized their cultural contributions as valuable, but expected them to eventually blend "into a new Canadian type."[48]

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[47] "2,000 Visit New Sons of Italy Hall," *Sault Daily Star* 22 September 1932, 3.
[48] Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts," 308.

On the Saturday following the Order Sons of Italy temple grand opening, the *Sault Daily Star*'s editorial page commented on the event in a piece entitled "Newcomers Have Something to Offer to Canadian Life." The editorial repeated the two themes raised by speakers at the event. First, the article acknowledged "the contribution that can be brought to the building up of Canadian civilization by those of non-Anglo-Saxon origin." Next, it commented on the Italian traditions in art and music, and quoted Rev. Sauro: "We have customs and traditions which we do not intend to sacrifice in making our homes in this new land, because we feel that we have something to offer to its development." The *Star* assumed in its editorial that Rev. Sauro was referring exclusively to art and music, and made the connection that the local OSIO lodge was named after Giuseppe Verdi, "lending an example of respect and admiration for a great artist which Canadians as a whole might well consider." The *Star* editorial board was quite happy for Italians and other newcomers to contribute to Canada artistically, since it considered Canada "a young country and a busy country" that had not quite yet gotten around to developing its own arts and culture. However, the editorial also made it clear that "Anglo-Saxon ideals of government, of justice…of the rights of the individual are things which must continue to dominate Canada," thus picking up on the 'Canadianism' theme of the mayor's speech at the hall opening.[49] The *Star*, and perhaps by extension the non-Italian majority of Sault Ste. Marie, had distinct ideas about what contributions Italians were qualified, expected, or even permitted to make to Canada and to the local community.

Three years after the opening of the new OSIO temple, the 20th anniversary of the Verdi Lodge in 1935 provided another opportunity for the Anglo-Canadian majority to

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[49] "Newcomers Have Something to Offer to Canadian Life" *Sault Daily Star*, 24 September 1932, 4.

witness celebrations by the Order Sons of Italy, and to comment on the place of Italian Canadians in the Sault. The Verdi Lodge celebrated the occasion with a banquet at its hall on Cathcart Street. Amongst those seated at the guest of honour table were Mayor R.M. McMeeken, Prof. O. Sabetta, McFadden School principal Miss Anna McCrea, Father Belcastro, J. Colizza (ie James Colizza, or Giacomo in Italian), and Mr. and Mrs. L. Pasquantonio. According to the *Star*, Mayor McMeeken took advantage of his speech at the banquet to raise the proposed routes of the Trans-Canada Highway (a much-discussed issue at the time) and to reinforce his view that having the Highway come through Sault Ste. Marie would "mean work for many of our citizens." The mayor congratulated the OSIO "for their progress in building up such a splendid lodge" but that seems to be the extent of his focus on the group of honour in his speech.[50]

It was left to Prof. O. Sabetta, the venerable of the Verdi Lodge, to give a history of the Order Sons of Italy in the Sault. According to Sabetta, in 1915 the founders "realized that during the war period, it was important to keep the good name of Italy, and at the same time, keep in mind the principle of being loyal to the country of their adoption, the country which was host to them." The *Star* reported that Sabetta gave his speech in Italian, but did not say who had provided the newspaper with a translation. Similarly, Mrs. L. Longarini of the Maria José lodge also gave a speech in Italian, reported in translation by the *Star*. According to the *Star*, she stated that it was the responsibility of the women's lodge to cooperate with the Verdi Lodge, in order to "elevate the name of [Italy] to the name of Canada."[51]

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[50] "Banquet Climaxes Sons of Italy Celebration," *Sault Daily Star*, 15 July 1935, 3.
[51] Ibid.

Of all the speeches made at the banquet, the *Sault Daily Star* declared the awarding of an honorary Order Sons of Italy lifetime membership to Miss Anna McCrea to be "perhaps the most outstanding event of the evening." The award was significant because the OSIO allowed only Italians to be members, which normally would have excluded McCrea. Miss Nora Ferrone presented the honour, reminding those present that McCrea "…is known not only for her friendliness to the Italian people but for her work in coming among us and teaching our little boys and girls to become good Canadian citizens."[52] An otherwise gossipy column by Florence Craig regarding the 20th anniversary banquet refers to McCrea's "teaching the youth of the Italian colony" and states that "the life membership shows how well and truly Miss McCrea is loved by her Italian friends."[53] Two other honorary memberships were to be bestowed that evening, to former mayor James Lyons and to T.E. Simpson, Member of Parliament for the area. According to the *Star*, "[n]either was present and the presentation of the certificates has been delayed."[54] While no official reason for their absence was noted, one can imagine that it was keenly felt and that it would have spoken loudly to members of the OSIO.

Father L. Belcastro, the priest of the Catholic Holy Rosary Parish, also spoke at the anniversary event, and again focused on the Verdi Lodge's history since its foundation by his predecessor, Father Martini [Martinez].[55] Belcastro told the audience that the Verdi Lodge had "always gone ahead" but that it "had only begun" and should

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[52] "Mayor McMeeken Has New Scheme For Eating Peas," *Sault Daily Star*, 15 July 1935, 3.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] It is interesting to note that the *Star* here reports the founding priest's name as Martini, while all other available sources give his name as Martinez.

"[a]dvance—always advance."[56] J. Colizza, labelled "operator of the society" by the *Star*, "gave an impressive speech also in Italian" but spoke first in English to say that the lodge had been founded to prove that loyal Italians could also be loyal Canadians. Colizza thanked Father Belcastro and gave credit to Longarini, McCrea, James Verdone, and expressed regret that Lyons and Simpson were unable to attend. He closed his remarks with the following statement: "I salute Canada, the prime minister R.B. Bennett, Italy and Mussolini."[57]

These fascism-tinged statements from Belcastro and Colizza – the encouragement to always advance, the salute to Mussolini – went unremarked at this time. Their speeches show a dual allegiance to Canada and to Italy, one that many Italian Canadians shared. In Colizza's case, he had balanced his tribute to Mussolini and Italy by first saluting Canada and Bennett. However, indifference from the broader community did not last, and Belcastro, Colizza, and other members of the Verdi Lodge soon found themselves in a great deal of trouble for their public words and actions. Statements considered balanced and acceptable in 1935 were later considered too ambiguous, as they did not reject fascism outright, nor pledge unique allegiance to Canada. The increasing positivity with which the Sault's Italian community was viewed would soon be replaced, among some, by increasing suspicion and accusations of infidelity to Canada.

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[56] "Banquet Climaxes Sons of Italy Celebration," *Sault Daily Star*, 15 July 1935, 3.
[57] Ibid.

Chapter 5: The War, 1939-1945

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the tone and attitude of Saultites towards the local Italian community shifted again. A fear of "fifth columnists" was present, all while the local war efforts of the Italian community were recognized by the city at large. The *Sault Daily Star,* to its credit, was both supportive and defensive of Italian Canadians in Sault Ste. Marie. As the city's only English-language newspaper at the time, it provides an authoritative voice on events in the city. The *Star* also must serve to speak for the Italian community, as there was no Italian-language newspaper at any point in Sault Ste. Marie. Where other Order Sons of Italy lodges, especially Toronto's Ontario Lodge, took a political stand, the Verdi Lodge kept its focus on the social aspects of the organization. Despite the overall social focus of the lodge, individual members of the Verdi lodge were targeted for internment by the RCMP due to their personal political views.

Long before war was declared between Italy and Canada, residents of Sault Ste. Marie were interested in Mussolini and his fascist ideology. They turned to Rev. L. Sauro of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario (OSIO) for his expertise. Sauro, formerly of the Sault and now of Toronto, spoke to the Sault Ste. Marie Rotary Club on 1 Oct 1935 and the *Sault Daily Star* reported on his speech the following day. Rev. Sauro's thesis was that Mussolini's fascism was Italy's saving grace, pulling the country out of "disruption and chaos." According to the *Star*, Sauro explained that "since ancient times Italy had been in the limelight of history," apart from a time "when the nation was divided into many groups through foreign dominance." In contemporary times, Sauro believed that Italy was again a world focus because of the chance of what he called a "friendly scrap

between Great Britain and Italy," while stressing he hoped such a conflict would not come to pass. In his speech, he stated that few truly understood fascism, that it was distinctly different from other forms of government, and that it had its roots in the unrest following the Great War, when Italians felt betrayed by the Treaty of Versailles. There had been "great discord and disappointment amongst the Italian people," in addition to communism, radicals, strikes, and transport disorganization. Sauro argued that Mussolini "was the product of the times and the circumstances" and that while many men were affected by these circumstances, there were "none possessing the initiative and courage" of Mussolini himself. He called Il Duce a man "of a most interesting and dynamic personality." Finally, Sauro shared his view that Italy had seen progress under fascism, although it had "required sacrifice on the part of the Italian people to make it possible." Italians were "submitting to the rule necessary…in the hope that the destiny of Italy will be made the greater." The *Sault Daily Star* did not report on the Rotarians' reaction to Sauro's speech, except to say that the club's president thanked him for his presentation, and that another presentation by Rev. Sauro on Italy and the situation in Ethiopia would take place in the coming days at a local United church (a fitting location given Rev. Sauro's affiliation with the United Church).[1]

It appears that Sault Ste. Marie was interested in knowing more about Mussolini, his governing style, and his approach to international relations, and that Sauro was considered a trustworthy authority on these topics by the broader community. It is important to remember that at this point in time, Mussolini was accepted and appreciated by many Canadians for his stance against communism and supposedly radical, militant

[1] "Mussolini Stood Between Italy and Disruption" *Sault Daily Star*, 2 Oct 1935, 3.

labour activists. Hence the admiration Mussolini received from R..B Bennett and Mackenzie King, amongst other prominent Canadians.[2]

Rev. L. Sauro's later presentation on Italy's role in Ethiopia defended Italy's actions and argued it had not wanted a war. He explained that Mussolini was simply trying to ensure that promises made to Italy during the Great War regarding colonial expansion would be fulfilled, and that Italy needed access to Ethiopia's "fertile plateaus" which remained "at waste, uncultivated" as well as its mineral resources, which he noted were still "untouched and unused by the Ethiopians."[3] Sauro explained that fascism had arisen out of the negative reaction Italians had towards the Treaty of Versailles, that it meant a strengthening of Italian rights, and that the country's increased military power meant newfound respect on the international stage.

Sauro's comments seem to have met with an uncomfortable response from the audience. The *Star* remarked that Sauro "struck a reassuring note by saying that the Italian and British governments were on peaceful terms" and that he quoted both Italian and British officials as having said so. The newspaper tactfully reported that there was an "interesting discussion" amongst the "large audience" present for the lecture, but also hinted at tension in the room when it noted that the chairman for the event reminded the crowd that "100,000 Italian-Canadian fellow citizens in Canada…felt the present crisis keenly, and that there are two sides to every question, which need understanding."[4]

Sauro's lecture was apparently more divisive than the *Sault Daily Star* was willing to admit. The event was notable enough to warrant coverage by the *Toronto Evening*

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[2] Angelo Principe, *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years: The Italian-Canadian Press: 1920-1942* (Toronto, Guernica, 1999), 51.
[3] "Claims Italy Tried Peaceful Penetration" *Sault Daily Star* 5 October 1935, 3.
[4] Ibid.

Telegram, which reported that Italians attending the lecture "booed and hissed the newsreel showing pictures of the British fleet" and celebrated when "Italian troops" were portrayed. According to the *Telegram*, the event prompted "squads of members of the Canadian Legions…to guard against any recurrence" of similar incidents.[5] The outburst at this 1935 lecture foreshadowed what was to come for some Sault Italians, despite the frequent positive portrayals of the community by the *Sault Daily Star*.

In the context of proposed international sanctions against Italy in late October of 1935, the *Sault Daily Star* featured a small article on its front page announcing that the Sons of Italy of America were to boycott Britain, due to her actions against Italy in Egypt. In addition to the boycott, the American organization planned to ship 4,000 bales of munitions cotton to Italy, had cabled Mussolini to pledge the organization's support, and resolved to telegram President Roosevelt "commending the neutrality resolution passed by congress."[6] It is important to recall that by this point, the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario had been completely separate from its American equivalent since 1926, and so Canadian lodges were not automatically affected by this political decision. Indeed, the *Star* published another brief article the following day that made it clear the Sault's Verdi Lodge would not be joining its American counterparts in their boycott. Venerable L. Pasquantonio explained to the *Star* that the "resolution was passed by the grand convention in Boston" and "we will do nothing here." He also repeated that any links to the Sons of Italy in America were fraternal in nature, and that the Sault lodge was not

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[5] *Toronto Evening Telegram*, 8 November 1938, as cited by Angelo Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle in the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario, 1915-1946" *Ontario History* 106: 1 (Spring 2014), 22.

[6] "Sons of Italy of America Decide to Boycott Britain" *Sault Daily Star*, 18 October 1935, 1.

controlled by the American Supreme Lodge.[7] Given the geographical proximity of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, it was especially important for Pasquantonio to make such a distinction to the public in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The Verdi Lodge had been forced into making a political statement by the actions of their American brothers. Canada joined 34 other nations in sanctions against Italy on October 30, 1935.

Other lodges of the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario did not hesitate to make their own political statements. Toronto's Ontario Lodge took a stand against Mussolini's anti-Semitism in late December of 1938. The lodge's resolution called Italy's policy "absolutely intolerable among the Italians in Canada" and made clear its members' desire to treat all people with respect. The resolution is especially prescient: it states "…the fact that the Italians, being a racial minority, could someday become themselves victims of such hatred…" as motivation for the Ontario Lodge's declaration.[8] A Toronto Italian-language newspaper observed that the Ontario Lodge's position was "very meaningful because in the Grand Executive there are some doggedly anti-Semitic people."[9] There is no evidence of such a political statement being made by the Verdi Lodge. Angelo Principe argues that silence from the general leadership of the OSIO was taken as complicity, even support, for anti-Semitism by the RCMP and Canadians in general.[10]

Indeed, when one member of the Verdi Lodge's leadership made a political statement in November of 1938, it was against the wishes of the rest of the lodge council,

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[7] "Soo Sons of Italy Plans No Boycott" *Sault Daily Star,* 19 October 1935, 2.
[8] "La 'Ontario' dei Figli d'Italia contro l'antisemitismo" *La voce degli italo-canadese* 31 December 1938, 1, in translation. Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, Archives of Ontario, F 4378-1-11-58.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Prinicpe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 28.

and he was "forced to resign" from his position.[11] Giacomo (James) Colizza, in his role as Venerable of the Verdi Lodge, was placing a wreath at the Sault Ste. Marie cenotaph on Armistice Day when he "defiantly raised his right arm in a fascist salute." Angelo Principe claims that Colizza's actions "created a wave of protests that reverberated throughout the country" but does not cite examples or sources for this statement.[12] According to Carlo Fera, who would soon replace Colizza as head of the Verdi Lodge, Colizza was instructed at a meeting on 10 November 1938 to place the wreath as usual, but "instead he was advised by some of his friends that he should salute fascistically" which Colizza then did. Fera recalled that a co-worker at Algoma Steel phoned him to say that "if I wanted to keep the door [of the Verdi Lodge] open … we should do something about Colizza." Fera said of his co-worker, "how he got the information I don't know. But he was a member of the Masonic Order and, while he was not member of the Canadian Legion, he was a regular at the Canadian Legion bar…"[13] Fera's statement supports the *Evening Telegram*'s claim that Legion members were particularly concerned after the incident at Rev. Sauro's 1935 lecture. Because Colizza made a fascist political statement while representing the OSIO, Fera and Luigi Pasquantonio called a meeting of the Verdi Lodge's leadership and asked Colizza to resign, which he did.[14] The Verdi Lodge was making efforts to stay politically neutral.

Canada declared war in September of 1939, but only against Germany; Italy was not involved at this point. The *Sault Daily Star* commented in an editorial in mid-May of

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[11] Prinicpe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 21.
[12] Ibid., 22.
[13] Interview with Carlo Fera, in the possession of Angelo Principe, as cited in note 87 of Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 22.
[14] Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 22.

1940 that Canadians were finally beginning to realize that a war was on, that Canada had responsibilities, and that "this conflict is not something in which they are 'helping the old land'…but something that is of vital concern to themselves."[15] The paper believed that the founding of the local Citizens' Win-the-War League was evidence that residents were realizing the impact of the war, and that the organization would call attention to the national war effort while allowing individuals a chance to help locally.[16]

By May of 1940, there were strong concerns for security and national loyalty across Ontario, and they were being felt in the Sault. The *Sault Daily Star* included on its editorial page a brief opinion piece from the Brantford Expositor, which concluded "There should be no toleration whatever in Canada for disloyal persons, whether they are native born or come from foreign countries."[17] There appears to have been no reaction to this statement in later letters to the editor. Perhaps this lack of reaction was because so many of the Sault's Italian Canadians had spent most or all of their lives in Canada and so considered themselves loyal. It might also be attributed to the fact that war had not yet been officially declared against Italy.

Actions taken in Hamilton, Ontario, also affected the Sault. In mid-May of 1940, Hamilton's city council passed a resolution which called on the federal government to disenfranchise any citizen convicted of subversion. Numerous southern Ontario mayors were in support; the *Sault Daily Star* noted it could not reach the Sault's mayor Jack McMeeken for his comment on the matter.[18] Two days later, the *Star*'s editorial page

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[15] "Canada Begins to Wake Up to War Responsibilities," *Sault Daily Star* 18 May 1940, 4.
[16] "Sault Win the War League Helps to Awaken Public" *Sault Daily Star* 20 May 1940, 4.
[17] "Subversive Elements" *Sault Daily Star* 21 May 1940, 4.
[18] "Would Deny Vote for Subversion" *Sault Daily Star* 16 May 1940, 7.

supported the Hamilton council's decision. It called the resolution a "natural outcome" of the news of "Nazi 'fifth column' tactics in other countries" and stated that "in time of war a nation cannot afford to take chances" even if actions such as disenfranchisement risked becoming "purely arbitrary." The newspaper maintained this view even while reminding its readers that there had not yet been any "authentic cases of sabotage" in Canada, and that "the Sault's own scares in the early days of the war proved unfounded."[19] The article made no further reference to what these early scares were. My own research in the *Star* found no references relating to Italians, so perhaps the incidents in question involved German Canadians, or were manifestations of a more general fear of foreigners.

By the end of May 1940, Sault Ste. Marie's city council had "heartily endorsed" a motion to endorse the city of Hamilton's resolution. The motion was proposed by aldermen Anthony Nino and Earl Dinsmore, and it received unanimous support.[20] That an Italian-Canadian alderman submitted the motion demonstrates that Italian Canadians were not yet considered a threat in the Sault. If it were otherwise, Nino would not have risked his political success (and his personal ties – he was an active member of the Verdi Lodge[21]) with the Italian community by proposing the motion.

On 25 May 1940, all editorials in the *Sault Daily Star* are concerned specifically about Hitler, the Nazis, and fears of German fifth column activities. There is no mention of Italians being considered a potential threat. In other major Italian-Canadian communities, however, the situation was quite different. Venera Fazio notes that Toronto newspapers, especially the *Globe and Mail*, were all too eager to link the city's Italian

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[19] "Stiffen Attitude To Possible 'Fifth Column' in Canada" *Sault Daily Star* 18 May 1940, 4.
[20] "Soo Endorses Loss of Franchise For Subversion" *Sault Daily Star* 28 May 1940, 3.
[21] Scardellato, *In Our Temple*, 126.

Canadians with subversion and sabotage.[22] Any and all fears recorded in the *Sault Daily Star* at this time are German-related, possibly since only the Nazis were official enemies of Canada at this point. The *Sault Daily Star*'s editorial page on 30 May 1940 plainly stated, "[w]hile there is no escaping the fact that there is a certain amount of subversive activity going on in Canada, there is no reason to become hysterical so that we see a spy in everyone we meet."[23]

Particularly intriguing in light of fears about Italians in other Canadian cities is a position taken by the *Sault Daily Star* earlier in May: that the city's Italian character was something that could be marketed for economic development. The *Star* suggested that the Sault's Italians follow two American examples (a hotel in San Antonio and the entire Tampa Bay suburb of Ybor) of capitalizing on Spanish culture to create a tourist destination. The newspaper argued that the Sault's Italians were "all good Canadians" who could contribute by creating "Italian menus and atmosphere," thus benefitting "visitors and themselves."[24] The *Star* was proposing that the Sault capitalize on a community by making a spectacle of it. This plan turned the Italian community into a marketable commodity that would serve the wants of visitors before the needs of the community – not the best way to demonstrate acceptance and integration of an ethnic group. However, this article shows the *Star* was finally willing to call the Sault's Italian community "Canadian," and indicates a pragmatic acceptance of the Italian-Canadian presence in the city. Indeed, at a time when Italian communities in other Canadian cities

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[22] Venera Fazio, "Frenzy of Fear: Prelude to the Italian Canadian Internment," in *Beyond Barbed Wire: Essays on the Internment of Italian Canadians*, ed. Licia Canton, et.al (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2012).
[23] "Today's Comment" *Sault Daily Star* 30 May 1940, 4.
[24] "Southern Towns Help Selves; So Can Algoma" *Sault Daily Star,* 2 May 1940, 4.

were being vilified, the *Sault Daily Star* was arguing that Sault Ste. Marie should become synonymous with Italian culture.

Late in May 1940, the *Sault Daily Star*'s editorial board published and supported a statement made by the minister of defence, Norman Rogers, who reminded a Canadian Legion convention that so many people "left far off lands and came to Canada because they knew this country was free" and that Canadians must take care not to "encourage oppression ourselves when it is the very enemy against which we are fighting." The *Star* added it was important to consider the treatment of "the strangers within our gates" but emphasized the responsibilities these "strangers" had to Canada, which had "given them shelter."[25] We are left wondering who exactly the *Star* considered to be "strangers within our gates," given that there was so little immigration during the 1930s – most of the Sault's immigrants would have been established in town a decade or more, and not strangers at all.[26] The *Star*'s position, whether intentionally or not, created a class of people who were permanent strangers, who were expected to show gratitude to Canadian society, and who were not considered equal citizens with rights and responsibilities.

On 1 June 1940, the *Star* reported the arrest of ten "fascist chiefs" in Montreal, while also announcing that Italians in Hamilton planned to meet in order to "reaffirm their loyalty to Britain."[27] Meanwhile, a letter to the editor the same day proved that there was

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[25] "Government Moves to Check Subversive Activities" *Sault Daily Star* 31 May 1940, 4.
[26] During the 1930s, an average of 16,000 immigrants per year were admitted to Canada, while during the 1920s, an average of 126,000 immigrants per year were admitted to the country. Steven Schwinghamer, " 'There is no Exclusion Act in the Dominion of Canada': Deportation from Canada during the Great Depression." https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/deportation-from-canada-during-the-great-depression (accessed 10 March 2019).
[27] "10 Fascist Chiefs Held Without Bail"; "Says Hamilton Italians Loyal" *Sault Daily Star*, 1 June 1940, 2.

some suspicion in the Sault regarding citizens' loyalty. Its author, choosing the pseudonym "On Guard," suggested that all households and businesses "display a small patriotic flag at the entrance" so that sympathies might be publicly known and suspicions of "unpatriotic feelings" avoided. While "On Guard" conceded that those who did not display a flag would "of course give cause for suspicion, even for investigation perhaps of a painful nature," the author concluded that there was no reason why those with "sympathetic feelings" should hide them, and signed the letter "Yours for more power against Fifth Columnists."[28] The nationality of these supposed fifth columnists is not mentioned. This exclusion may have been an effort to be wary of all those who might possess the aforementioned "unpatriotic feelings," regardless of motivation. The letter's author did not address what might prevent "unpatriotic" residents from displaying a flag outside their homes and businesses in order to escape suspicion. Nor did the letter consider that a 'fifth column,' if one did exist, would not draw attention to itself by refusing to participate in such a simple activity as displaying flags. Overall, the letter's tone and content suggest that the author's motivation was not exposing a fifth column, but forcing others to publicly display their identities and loyalties. The goal was to enforce conformity through a ritual display of citizenship; the irony of forcing people to make certain declarations in the name of democracy seems to have escaped the letter writer.

This letter recalls a "West End Sketches" column, published just a week earlier, that mentioned all the flags (and associated loyalty to Canada) displayed in the West End. Amidst all the concern and speculation about fifth columns and enemy aliens, the column reported that "West Enders showed their loyalty" by raising flags at "all the schools," at

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[28] "Suggests Every Patriotic Sooite Display A Flag" *Sault Daily Star*, 1 June 1940, 12.

both the Sons of Italy Temple and the Marconi Hall, and at "many of the homes."[29] The "Yours" letter writer was either ignorant of these flag displays in the West End, or unsatisfied by what was there and wanted more. The situation also demonstrates that the same symbol, a flag, could be used by both dominant and marginalized communities, either as an attempt to assert superiority, or to affirm a right to belong. Of course, it is possible that any action taken by West Enders would have been insufficient for "Yours" given the overall tone of the letter. West Enders could not win in the eyes of the letter writer because they were not Anglo-Canadian, nor would they ever be considered as such. For this Saultite, a person's birthplace and community involvement did not matter, only their ethnicity.

By June of 1940, the Sault Ste. Marie Citizens' Win-the-War League was well established; its goal was to support the broader war effort through such activities as collecting fabric bags for agricultural and refugee support purposes.[30] The Win-the-War League wanted its directorate to be "as representative as possible" according to its temporary chairman Dr. George Westman; he declared the "only requirement" for being a member of the League was a "desire to assist our fighting forces" in the war.[31] The League received an endorsement from Mayor McMeeken and city council at its inaugural meeting on 20 May 1940; at that meeting, the League also passed a resolution in favour of the internment of aliens in Canada.[32]

Despite the League's presence, former Sault Ste. Marie alderman Carmen Talarico suggested forming a "kindred association" similar to the Win-the-War League for those in

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[29] Tim Dickson, "West End Sketches" *Sault Daily Star* 25 May 1940, 3.
[30] "Bags Needed by Soo War League" *Sault Daily Star* 7 June 1940, 3.
[31] "Name War League Officers Tonight" *Sault Daily Star* 20 May 1940, 5.
[32] "War League" *Sault Daily Star* 21 May 1940, 3.

the Sault "of Italian and other racial origin." A *Sault Daily Star* interview with Talarico revealed his eagerness to affirm Italian support for the Canadian war effort; it also revealed his unease about prevailing attitudes held by the broader Sault community. Talarico spoke of the safety immigrants enjoyed in Canada, and how many Italians had "fought side by side with Canadians" in the First World War. He made clear that Italians and those of "other racial groups" had as much at stake as other Canadians, reminding readers that "[a]ll our ties are here in this country and this, too, should not be forgotten."[33] What the interview did not clearly reveal was why he felt there was a need for a separate war effort group for Italians and those of other non-British ethnicities in the Sault. Talarico stated that he wished to form "an association that will work with and through the Citizens' Win-the-War League."[34] Was such an association necessary because of doubts or fears from Anglo-Canadians in the Win-the-War League? Or was Talarico simply looking to bring attention to the dedication of the Italian community (and other ethnic communities) from the Sault's West End at a time when these groups might have felt a heightened need for public support and approval?

The initial meeting of the West End Win-the-War League was held on 7 June 1940. Originally it was to be held in Carmen Talarico's home, but since "about 40 enthusiastic persons" showed up for the meeting, the Club Esquire made their hall available to the group. Talarico was made chairman, and the *Sault Daily Star* reported that he "affirmed the loyalty of the Italians and other racial groups in the Sault, and urged all West Enders to unite in a strong body which will be a part of the Citizens' Win-the-War League." Donations totalling $80 were made, and officers of the League were

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[33] "Plans Italian Section of Soo War League" *Sault Daily Star* 7 June 1940, 3.
[34] Ibid.

nominated. Among those whose names were submitted to be officers were members of the OSIO, including Sam Chiappetta and Luigi Pasquantonio. Carl Fera, another OSIO member, is reported to have pledged support to the group but was absent from the initial meeting due to a prior commitment.[35]

On 6 June 1940, in a small section titled "Algoma Viewpoint," the *Sault Daily Star* included an analysis of Italy's possible entry into the war. The author reluctantly concluded that all signs pointed to Italy siding with Germany, but was still certain that the people of Italy, with the "tradition of Rome behind them" could not truly be willing to do so. The Roman Empire had built bridges, aqueducts, government, western civilization itself, the author argued, so surely modern Italy could not be willing to ally itself with Germany and Hitler, "the voice of destruction."[36] This line of reasoning demonstrates the continuing tendency by Canadians to equate contemporary Italy and Italians with the accomplishments of ancient Rome, and echoes statements made by Sons of Italy representatives and prominent Saultites a decade earlier. During the inter-war period and Mussolini's initial rise to power, this perspective of Italian culture was complimentary, and showed an effort on the part of Anglo-Canadians to accept the Italian Canadians amongst them. Now, on the brink of war, this desire to look to the ancient past and ignore the present may have seemed foolish to those more concerned about national security than community civility.

In the "West End Sketches" column on 8 June 1940, the *Star* emphasized the many contributions of West Enders, mainly Italians, to the war effort. The sub-committees of the Win-the-War League were the first example given, followed by an

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[35] "West End War League Plans Mass Meeting" *Sault Daily Star* 8 June 1940, 7
[36] "Will Italy Be Dragged Into War Against Its Will?" *Sault Daily Star*, 6 June 1940, 4.

upcoming canvassing for donations. The newly formed League believed that West End residents would be happy to contribute. The *Star* set out the following text separately from other portions of the column, ensuring attention would be paid: "To as great an extent as the other residents of the Sault, West Enders have been supporting the war effort since last fall although they have been saying little about it." The column concluded that the "…attitude of the West Enders is sincerely 100 per cent Canadian, and anyone who has any doubt of their loyalty would do well to check up on his facts before saying anything that would reflect adversely."[37]

On 10 June 1940, the day war was declared against Italy, the *Sault Daily Star* editorial page "Algoma Viewpoints" reported positively on the efforts of Italians in the Sault to help the Win-the-War League, stating that their work was "warmly welcomed" by others in town. The article concluded that "it is a matter of great encouragement to find those of differing racial strains standing together in this time of crisis."[38] This editorial is proof that the efforts of Italian Canadians were welcomed and appreciated by many Anglo-Canadians, though it also demonstrates members of the Italian community in the Sault were still perceived as being of a different race than the majority.

Clearly the *Star* was supportive, even defensive, of the West End's residents; the same week's letters to the editor indicate that West Enders seemed to need any help they could get. Letters with titles like "Doubts Gossip Will Help to Catch Any Spies" and "Feels Some People See a Spy Behind Every Tree," while cautioning against idle speculation and rumours, also did nothing to quieten any suspicions or offer support to targeted communities. The author of "Doubts Gossip," who signed off 'Loyal Canadian,'

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[37] "West End Helps in War Effort" *Sault Daily Star* 8 June 1940, 7.
[38] "Sault Italians Line Up to Aid Win-the-War Moves" *Sault Daily Star* 10 June 1940, 4.

reminded readers that gossiping would only "blacken reputations and hamper police investigation" but never questioned whether such investigations were in fact necessary.[39] The second letter was unusual in that it was signed by Anna Ross of nearby Richards Landing, rather than closing with a pseudonym like most letters to the *Star* at the time. Ross advocated for common sense and caution in the search for 'fifth columnists,' but not out of any personal concern for those who might be targeted. She closed her letter sternly:

> If those who start this kind of thing were allowed to cool their heels (and their tongues) in jail, loyal Canadian citizens of English and Scottish ancestry, whose past is an open book, would not be subjected to this annoyance.[40]

Since Richards Landing is over 60km east of Sault Ste. Marie, and did not have an Italian population of any significance, Ross may have felt detached enough from the situation in the Sault to deem it a simple "annoyance" and of no consequence to most Canadians. However, her characterizing only those "of English and Scottish ancestry" as "loyal Canadian citizens" implies that those were the only nationalities Ms. Ross was willing to accept in her midst.

Canada declared war against Italy on 10 June 1940, and from that day on Italian Canadians were considered 'enemy aliens.' Over the course of the war, almost 600 Italians would be interned in camps, mostly at Petawawa in heavily-forested eastern Ontario.[41] Of course, it was not only Italian Canadians who suffered discrimination and internment during the war. From the declaration of war against Germany in September 1939, German Canadians were considered by the RCMP to be enemy aliens and were

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[39] "Doubts Gossip Will Help to Catch Any Spies" *Sault Daily Star* 8 June 1940, 14.
[40] "Feels Some People See a Spy Behind Every Tree" *Sault Daily Star* 8 June 1940, 14.
[41] Travis Tomchuk and Jodi Giesbrecht, *Redress Movements in Canada*, The Canadian Historical Association Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada Series 37, 2018, 15.

watched, arrested, and interned. All those who had immigrated to Canada after 1922 were made to register with the government as enemy aliens. In total, about 800 German Canadians were interned over the course of the war.[42] Ironically, amongst the German internees were a number of Jewish refugees who had arrived in Canada via the United Kingdom.[43] Also somewhat ironic is the internment of members of the vocally anti-Nazi German Canadian League (the re-branded German Workers and Farmers Association). The organization was proudly supportive of the working classes and the Soviet Union, and so when the Soviets did not join in the war against Germany in 1939, some of the League's more communist members were interned. Also interned were a group of miners in Nova Scotia, and members of the Independent Mutual Benefit Association, the organization that provided mutual aid to the German Canadian League.[44]

The treatment of Japanese Canadians during the war was the most extreme and betrayed the intense racism present in Canadian society and government. While only "selected hundreds" of Italian and German Canadians were targeted for arrest and internment, all Japanese Canadians were subjected to forced relocation, without exception.[45] By Order-in-Council PC 1486, the government declared in February 1942 that all those of Japanese racial origin were to be removed from coastal British Columbia – men, women, children, those born in Canada or in Japan, all would be equally subjected

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[42] Evelyne Massa and Morton Weinfeld " 'We Needed to Prove We Were Good Canadians': Contrasting Paradigms for Suspect Minorities," *Canadian Issues* (Spring 2009): 20.
[43] Paula J. Draper, "The Camp Boys: Interned Refugees from Nazism" in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
[44] Arthur Grenke, *German Canadians: Community Formation, Transformation and Contribution to Canadian Life* (Trafford Publishing, 2018), 203. https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=t6tvDwAAQBAJ&hl=en_US&pg=GBS.PT2
[45] Massa and Weinfeld, "Suspect Minorities," 17.

to removal.[46] A total of about 23,000 Japanese Canadians were forcibly relocated.[47] Around 12,000 people were sent to "interior housing centers" which were really internment camps; 750 were made to live in prisoner-of-war camps in Northern Ontario. A further nearly 7,000 people were sent to work camps or forced to work on sugar beet farms.[48]

The outbreak of the Second World War was a "critical divide" in the history of the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario. For years, Italian Canadians had been encouraged by their community elites to embrace Mussolini's fascism, and Anglo-Canadians had done nothing to counter the propaganda. A commonly-held view was that Mussolini "had brought order and discipline to the land, peace between workers and capital" and so leaders like Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King admired him. Mussolini's regime, though a dictatorship, was "the ideal of capitalism and the conservative classes."[49] In June of 1940, Canada and Italy were at war, and Italian Canadians were now being declared 'enemy aliens.'[50] The officials representing fascist Italy in Canada, covered by diplomatic immunity, were simply expelled from the country with no further repercussions. It was individual Italian Canadians who would be punished for the spread of fascism through their communities. Acting under the War Measures Act, RCMP officers arrested "most of the grand lodge officers who had been elected a few months before."[51] Also arrested were trustees of the OSIO Mutual Benefit Society, venerables

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[46] Tomchuk and Giesbrecht, *Redress Movements*, 4.
[47] Ibid., 5.
[48] Massa and Weinfeld, "Suspect Minorities," 23.
[49] Principe, Angelo. *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years: The Italian-Canadian Press: 1920-1942* (Toronto: Guernica, 1999), 31.
[50] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple,* 4.
[51] Ibid., 19.

and officers of local lodges, and even ordinary members. Most were later interned as enemy aliens. In addition, the funds of the OSIO were frozen.[52] Despite its members being targeted for internment, the OSIO was not banned by the Canadian government in June of 1940, though this was the fate of six other Italian groups.[53] By late 1940, many lodges were not functioning, and membership in the OSIO had dropped to approximately 400 members,[54] a loss of nearly 1300 members in less than a year.

Other Italian organizations in Ontario were quick to pledge their support of the Canadian war effort against Italy. For example, Italians in the Thunder Bay region were said to "reaffirm loyalty" due to a "satisfactory" number of volunteers signing up for the Lake Superior Regiment.[55] Thunder Bay's Italian associations had also resisted joining as lodges of the Order Sons of Italy, and its local consular agent Emilio Marino had not managed to bring them into the fascist fold.[56] In the Sault, the Marconi Society published its support for Canada the day after war was declared. The *Sault Daily Star* featured at the bottom of its front page a statement issued by the president of the Marconi Society, Angelo Braido. The statement reaffirmed the club's commitment to Canada and Britain, and gave examples of past friendship and respect between famous Italians and Britain. One such example was that Guglielmo Marconi himself "had to go to England to get help to perfect his immemorable humanitarian invention," the telegraph. The statement quietly ignored the ironic reality that Marconi was a fascist supporter. The Marconi Society's members wanted it made clear that they were Canadians, affirming "our interests are in

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[52] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple,* 19.
[53] "Canada Outlaws 6 Italian Groups" *Sault Daily Star* 14 June 1940, 5.
[54] Pennacchio, "The Order of the Sons of Italy in Ontario", 9.
[55] "Lakehead Italians Reaffirm Loyalty" *Sault Daily Star* 11 June 1940, 2.
[56] Angelo Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 20.

Canada" and that they were "ready to defend Canadian ideals and institutions in any way possible."[57]

In addition to his leadership of the Marconi Society, Angelo Braido was a travel agency owner and Sault Ste. Marie's Italian vice-consul.[58] Vice-consuls in other cities, like Nicolas Masi of Hamilton and Vittorio Restaldi of Montreal, were subjected to arrest and internment, but Braido was not.[59] Perhaps the Marconi's early statement of loyalty contributed to Braido's remaining untouched by the RCMP, a situation further aided by the fact that he was not connected to the OSIO.

Meanwhile, the only mention of the Order Sons of Italy in the 11 June 1940 *Sault Daily Star* was a lengthy, detailed review of the musical *Ship Ahoy*, which had been performed at the Verdi Hall the night before. The cast was largely of Italian descent, and the play had been organized by the choir of Holy Rosary Church, the Italian parish.[60] Based on the *Star*'s coverage, life seems to have continued as usual for members of the OSIO. Sadly, this was not actually the case.

Sault Ste. Marie resident Ray Stortini recalls the internment crisis of 1940 in the city. He explained that "Mussolini was very popular until he signed up with Hitler,"[61] and connected Mussolini's popularity to his heroic service for Italy during the Great War

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[57] "Marconi Society Deplores Italy's Declaration of War" *Sault Daily Star* 11 June 1940, 1.
[58]Ray Stortini, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 11:35.
[59] "Internee List," *Italian Canadians As Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II,* online exhibit hosted by Columbus Centre. http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees (accessed 7 April 2019).
[60] "Musical Comedy Given by Choir" *Sault Daily Star* 11 June 1940, 5.
[61] Ray Stortini, in conversation with Alfio Gasparelli and James Ardito, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 18:30.

and his advocacy for veterans after the war.[62] Stortini further noted it "didn't matter that my father fought on the side of the allies, and suffered, during World War One – it's now World War Two, and, ah, you're an enemy of the country. So we felt that."[63] He also recalled "…some of the people we knew…the men, were interned…" and was even able to justify it to a certain extent, saying that "in bad times, there's a danger of passing bad laws, we saw a recent example with 9/11…"[64]

Saultite Alfio Gasparelli remembered the attitudes of older Italians living around him in the West End in the 1930s, saying "well, they used to boast about Mussolini."[65] Stortini felt that internment of OSIO members came about because "somebody didn't know what the Sons of Italy was, it was just a fraternal organization, they said 'uh, Italy, one of the Axis members, we gotta put this guy away' and that's what they did."[66] Sault resident James Ardito remembered "standing outside and they [RCMP] picked up Father Belcastro, a priest…Frank Permoli…"[67] Whether Belcastro or Permoli were fascists or members of the OSIO is not yet clear. Father Belcastro is said to have had a "fervour" for Mussolini's desire to expand his power beyond Italy. Angelo Principe stated that "most of the Italian priests who were then working in Canada became fascist supporters. Some,

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[62] Ray Stortini, in conversation with Alfio Gasparelli and James Ardito, 6 June 2011, 18:40.
[63] Ray Stortini, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 22:05.
[64] Ibid., 3:22.
[65] Alfio Gasparelli, in conversation with Ray Stortini and James Ardito, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 18:25.
[66] Ray Stortini, in conversation with Alfio Gasparelli and James Ardito, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 20:00.
[67] James Ardito, in conversation with Ray Stortini and Alfio Gasparelli, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 19:50.

like…Father Belcastro in Sault Ste. Marie…became activists."[68] However, Belcastro does not seem to have been interned, though he was arrested. [69] I have not been able to locate any information on Frank Permoli.

Alfio Gasparelli recalled that "one of the Colizzas" was arrested and interned, which was indeed the case.[70] Giacomo Colizza was arrested 10 June 1940 and interned at Petawawa and Fredericton. He was released with conditions by the RCMP 4 November 1942; one of the conditions was that he could not travel outside of Toronto without checking in with police.[71] Presumably this condition would have caused extra concern for the extended Colizza family that remained in the Sault. After his internment, Colizza was expelled from the OSIO, likely because of his fascist beliefs.[72]

Other members of the OSIO in Sault Ste. Marie who were interned were Luigi Pasquantonio, arrested June 10, 1940 and Oreste Sabetta, arrested July 12, 1940. Pasquantonio was arrested despite his prominent role in the Sault's Win-the-War League, as he had held the offices of Treasurer, Venerable and Past Venerable of the Verdi Lodge, while Sabetta had been Venerable, Past Venerable, and Orator. The evidence presented to justify Pasquantonio's internment was a letter he had sent to a former Italian vice-consul in Toronto, informing him that the film *Ninth Fascist Year* had been shown at the

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[68] Angelo Principe, *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years: The Italian-Canadian Press, 1920-1942* (Toronto: Guernica, 1999), 55.
[69] *Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times: Italian-Canadian Experiences During World War II.* Exhibit curated by Columbus Centre, displayed at Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, 16 December 2016.
[70] Alfio Gasparelli, in conversation with Ray Stortini and James Ardito, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 19:42.
[71] "Internee List," *Italian Canadians As Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II,* online exhibit hosted by Columbus Centre. http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees (accessed 11 May 2019).
[72] Ibid. (accessed March 29, 2015).

Verdi Temple, and stating that the Lodge would be "grateful to you if you will cooperate in obtaining other films of this kind so that we may reveal to our emigrants more and more the excellence of Fascist Italy."[73] However, the fact that this letter was written in 1933, well before the outbreak of war, along with an allegation that he had expelled a leader of the Verdi Lodge (Giacomo Colizza) for having given a fascist salute on Armistice Day, led to Pasquantonio being released unconditionally in January 1941.[74] It is not clear what evidence was used against Oreste Sabetta. His brother Vittorio Sabetta of Ottawa was a prominent member of the OSIO, and was also interned. Vittorio Sabetta, in his capacity as Grand Venerabile of the OSIO, had "sought to indoctrinate the brothers of the Order in the fascist ideals" and had sent a letter to Rome asking for books "for divulging the fascist doctrine" in Canada.[75] Oreste Sabetta was given a conditional release from the camp at Petawawa in 1942.[76] It is probable that Oreste was arrested and interned because of his brother's actions, in addition to also being a member of the OSIO.

Remarkably, one of the highest-ranking members of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario, Rev. Libero Sauro, remained untouched by the RCMP in the summer of 1940, and so he was able to call a special meeting of the Grand Lodge on August 12 in order to plan the Order's response to the arrests. As a result of this meeting, the grand council was dissolved and an administrative committee assembled in its place. Carlo Fera of the

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[73] "Internee List," *Italian Canadians As Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II,* online exhibit hosted by Columbus Centre. http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees (accessed 11 May 2019).
[74] Ibid.
[75] Angelo Principe, "The Fascist-Anti-Fascist Struggle," 18-19. Principe cites a letter written by Sabetta to the Minister of Press and Propaganda, dated 4 March 1937 and held in the Foreign Affairs Archive, Rome.
[76] "Internee List," http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees (accessed 29 March 2015).

Verdi Lodge in Sault Ste. Marie served as assistant chairman, and Sam Chiapetta and Tonietta Irwin of the Verdi and Princess Maria José lodges served as committee members, in addition to three other OSIO members from Toronto. The committee worked to reopen its lodges, especially those in the Toronto area, but faced a new challenge when Rev. Sauro was arrested and interned on September 7, 1940.[77]

Following Sauro's internment, Carlo Fera became chairman of the administrative committee, supported in his efforts by Sam Chiapetta and Tonietta Irwin, who each held leadership roles in the Verdi and Princess Maria José lodges in Sault Ste. Marie.[78] The Sault Ste. Marie lodges "were able to continue with their work almost uninterrupted" by the events of 1940, and so were able to provide support to the broader OSIO; this support was desperately needed following the internment crisis.[79]

On 12 June 1940, the *Sault Daily Star* began reporting on the arrests of local Italians. Publishing specific names and numbers of arrests was banned, but the *Star* reported "several homes" were searched by police looking for "fascist literature" and that "one man was arrested at his work at the steel plant."[80] At the very end of the article, buried on page 5, was the mention that the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario had sent a letter to its lodges "reminding all members that they are pledged to love Canada, obey its laws and respect its government and constitution."[81] No mention was made of the Marconi Society or any other local Italian group.

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[77] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 20.
[78] Ibid., 20.
[79] Ibid., 122.
[80] "Some Sault Italians Arrested" *Sault Daily Star,* 12 June 1940, 1.
[81] "Some Sault" *Sault Daily Star,* 12 June 1940, 5.

The same day, after at least two of its members had been arrested, the Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy finally unanimously approved a resolution that condemned Italy for declaring war on Britain, and reaffirmed their pledges of loyalty to Canada. The *Sault Daily Star* reported on the resolution the following day, giving it the same location and headline size as the loyalty announcement made by the Marconi Society a few days earlier. Most of the article was given over to the text of a letter sent by Rev. L. Sauro to all OSIO lodges. The letter reminded members of their obligations to Canada as set out in the OSIO pledge, recommended they cooperate with government authorities at all levels, and warned them that violating their pledge would mean removal from the Order.[82] The newspaper's presentation of the resolution is interesting; it portrays the OSIO as taking a stand against Italy, rather than in support of Britain and Canada, as other Italian-Canadian groups had done. The Verdi's copy of the OSIO resolution does not appear to be extant. Perhaps OSIO members felt it unnecessary to state their support for Canada and Britain, given that their membership pledge was based on loyalty and support for Canada and its laws. However, the nature of this pledge was likely not known by those outside the Order. In the Sault specifically, perhaps members of the OSIO did not feel threatened; after all, the *Sault Daily Star* had continually referred to them as loyal Canadians, which must have been a comfort to many. Perhaps something as simple as distraction due to organizing the performance of *Ship Ahoy* was to blame for the Verdi Lodge's delay in making a statement regarding war between Canada and Italy. Another interesting detail in the 13 June 1940 article is that it quotes Louis

[82] "Soo Sons of Italy Condemns Italy for Declaring War" *Sault Daily Star,* 13 June 1940, 1.

(Luigi) Pasquantonio as having spoken with the *Star* that same day, when Pasquantonio is on record as having been arrested by the RCMP on 10 June 1940 and later interned.

Once war had been declared, the immediate local sentiment towards the Sault's Italians is not obvious in the editorial pages of the *Sault Daily Star*. Under the heading "Today's Comment" the paper wondered how the people of Italy would react if they knew "the scorn poured forth by the world on the action of their Duce in declaring war at this time?" It also reminded readers that though Mussolini had pledged Italy would "observe the rules of war… British commentators are recalling the poison gas used against the Ethiopians."[83] The *Star* also featured an editorial from the *New York Times* that declared Mussolini a "traitor to Italy's interests" and called the war "this cynical adventure into which [the people of Italy] have been led." The *New York Times* piece stated that the people of Italy "could have continued to serve as the custodians of Western law and Latin culture" had they been "given a wiser leadership."[84] Yet again we see the trope of Italians being positively equated with art, music, and ancient Rome, and all comment is aimed at Italy, not at Saultites of Italian descent.

Four days after the declaration of war, the *Sault Daily Star* mentioned that "[t]wo Italian organizations in the Sault have now formally condemned Italy's declaration of war…and proclaimed their loyalty to Canada."[85] No other comment was made, no official position taken by the paper. It was simply a reminder of the statements the *Star* had reported days earlier, and was easily lost in small print on the editorial page. When compared to the bold headlines elsewhere in that day's edition calling for harsh measures

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[83] "Today's Comment" *Sault Daily Star* 13 June 1940, 4.
[84] "Mussolini Traitor To Italy's Interests" *Sault Daily Star* 13 June 1940, 4.
[85] "Today's Comment" *Sault Daily Star* 14 June 1940, 4.

against 'enemy aliens' it was hardly equal, and not likely to convince anyone who might doubt the loyalty of the city's Italian Canadians.

In a nod to what must have been a tense atmosphere in the Sault after war with Italy was declared, a letter to the editor pleaded for an end to "idle talk that… did more to unsettle the people than many of the dispatches from the battle fronts of Europe." The letter was not specific as to the subject of the rumours, or if they concerned a particular section of town. The author argued that the clear majority of rumours were false, and wanted "the people who start [rumours] on their way punished." However, the subject seems not to have been at the top of priorities for letter-writers to the *Sault Daily Star*, as the other letters published that week addressed downtown parking concerns and a 10 June article regarding farmers' revenues.[86]

A *Sault Daily Star* report of a city council debate held 18 June 1940 perhaps best presents the conflicting attitudes towards Italians in the days after war was declared. Aldermen Walter Harry and W. Hill sponsored the following resolution, which passed unanimously:

> That this council go on record by asking the Dominion government to insist that all enemy aliens be interned and that all industries in the city be asked to cooperate to the extent of dismissing all such as come under the above classification and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Dominion government and the industries operating in the municipality.[87]

A clause that would prevent a "foreign-born person of enemy extraction" from supervising "British-born subjects" was proposed but not added. Alderman E. Dinsmore, who sat on the Indigent Committee, was concerned that those 'enemy aliens' who lost their jobs would then request relief; Mayor Jack McMeeken reminded him that if such

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[86] "Would Punish Those Who Start False Rumors" *Sault Daily Star* 15 June 1940, 14.
[87] "Ask Enemy Aliens in Soo Lose Jobs" *Sault Daily Star* 19 June 1940, 1.

people were then interned, as requested, they would be the Dominion government's concern.[88]

Council also debated a resolution that all 'enemy aliens' be removed from the relief rolls starting 24 June 1940, with Alderman Dinsmore specifically stating that Italians were included in this action. Alderman Harry was quite harsh throughout the debate, stating that "[i]f they are not naturalized then they are enemy aliens and we should not be asked to take care of them at all" and arguing that Canadian-born children of those deemed enemy aliens should be left "to the powers that be" and not be the concern of the municipal council. Harry admitted that the "large Italian colony" in the Sault was "mostly naturalized British subjects" but believed "if those of their blood who are not British subjects are cut off relief…the least they can do is to maintain them. It is something they owe to their own blood."[89] Harry's argument showed he was more concerned about distancing the 'aliens' from other citizens than he was about caring for Canadian-born children. His position might have been influenced by the panic surrounding enemy aliens; it could also be evidence of prejudice against non-Anglo-Canadians, regardless of their naturalization status. When Mayor McMeeken and Aldermen Hill and Brien objected to the lack of concern for Canadian-born children of those not yet naturalized, Harry's response was "you have got to get a little iron into your souls" so that the British Empire might emerge victorious. Hill objected to this attitude, and his response seems to indicate that Harry was British-born, not Canadian:

> I hope that Alderman Harry does not mean to imply that we born in this country have not the best interests of the empire at heart… I am not an old country man, but I have as great an interest in this country and the needs of the empire as any man…

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[88] "Ask Enemy Aliens in Soo Lose Jobs" *Sault Daily Star* 19 June 1940, 1, 7.
[89] Ibid.

Alderman Brien also defended the Sault's Italians; according to the *Star* he believed local Italians were "loyal to the Commonwealth and not sympathetic to Mussolini."[90] The resolution to remove all 'enemy aliens' from the relief rolls passed; Mayor McMeeken and Aldermen Brien, Hill, and Nino went on record as opposed.[91] It is important to note that this Council debate and vote was not split along ethnic lines. Alderman Nino, an Italian Canadian, opposed it, but so did two other Anglo-Canadian aldermen and the Anglo-Canadian mayor.

The *Star* allotted a separate article for some of Mayor McMeeken's comments from the same 18 June council meeting, regarding rumours that seem to have circulated in the Sault. In the *Star*'s words, McMeeken "urged on all citizens to preserve calm in the present troubled times" and that they avoid discussing rumours "without foundation and that were apt to cause trouble." The mayor emphasized that authorities wished to hear from anyone having concrete information, but that they also needed the public's cooperation in limiting gossip.[92] The *Star* respectfully did not report on what the rumors might have been about, and so was not complicit in stirring up negative sentiment or further spreading harmful gossip. However, its willingness to protect those who might have been the targets of rumours does mean that a fuller reporting on public opinion, attitudes, and fears is not available. To the city's credit, nowhere in the *Sault Daily Star* or in the oral histories accessed is any violent incident motivated by the war recorded against any ethnic minority group. Saultites seem to have taken Mayor McMeeken's words to heart.

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[90] "Ask Enemy Aliens in Soo Lose Jobs" *Sault Daily Star* 19 June 1940, 7.
[91] Ibid.
[92] "Mayor Warns Soo Citizens Against Idle Rumors" *Sault Daily Star* 19 June 1940, 3.

The *Sault Daily Star* described the local impact of the provincial order that all arms and ammunition held by enemy aliens be turned in to police. The *Star* specified that the order applied "to all enemy aliens, and to all persons of Italian, German, 'or other racial groups' who have been naturalized since September 1, 1929." However, the headline mentioned only "Sault Italians," and twice in the article referred specifically to Italians, though the phrase "other ethnic groups" was added after each reference.[93] The *Star* likely did not want to be perceived as attacking or isolating the city's Italians, but the article's headline essentially negates any efforts to that end.

Despite all the war-related turmoil affecting the city, the *Sault Daily Star* maintained a focus on the upcoming summer tourism season, and published its Algoma Vacation Edition in 1940. Emblazoned above the newspaper's name on the front page was the phrase "Respectable Strangers are Welcome in This Town" while an advertisement for tourism in Algoma on the second page declared in bold capital letters that there were "No restrictions on visitors entering Canada." Another full-page ad reminded Americans that there were "no new restrictions" on visiting Canada, and "no passports… no delays." This same ad reminded locals that American tourists were necessary for a strong war economy, and made clear (again in capital letters) that: "Tourists should be: Welcomed! Fairly Treated! Assured full exchange rates on their money!"[94] The Vacation Edition must have been a painful irony for the Italian community. While they were targeted and suspected, often regardless of their place of birth or true sympathies, American tourists of any background were being accepted, even

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[93] "Sault Italians Turn Over Arms, Ammunition to Police" *Sault Daily Star* 20 June 1940, 1

[94] *Sault Daily Star Algoma Vacation Edition*, June 1940.

welcomed, with no documentation checks. "Respectable strangers" and their money were more welcome in town than long-time residents of the Sault.

In January of 1941, the Italo-Canadian Society of Canada began its "Free Italy" campaign, which quickly won the support of both the Order Sons of Italy and the Marconi Society in Sault Ste. Marie. The orator of the OSIO's Verdi Lodge, Sam Chiappetta, called the campaign "a swell idea" and reasoned that "millions of Italians in Canada and America" should not "suffer" because of Mussolini's actions. He reminded the *Star* that local Italians were not in favour of the war, and neither were most Italians in Italy. Chiappetta believed it "better for Italy to lose the war to England than to win it with Germany" and felt sure that the city's Italians agreed with him.[95] Past President of the Verdi Lodge John Gentile supported Chiappetta's views, and stated that Mussolini had made "a big mistake" by becoming Germany's ally.[96] Chiappetta made sure to claim his remarks as his own, and not the official stance of the Verdi Lodge. Carl Fera's support for both the Free Italy movement and all statements made by Chiappetta and Gentile appeared in the *Star* the following day.[97] The *Star* also noted that city Alderman Nino (who had served as Assistant Venerable of the Verdi Lodge in 1939)[98] "was pleased when he heard of the proposed Italo-Canadian Society's movement for a 'Free Italy.'" In the same article, an anonymous Sault Italian is quoted as believing that the movement "will bring us to a closer relationship with the British."[99] The editorial page of the *Star* that week declared "it was only to be expected" that the city's Italians would support the

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[95] "Sault Italians Ready to Back Campaign For a 'Free Italy,'" *Sault Daily Star* 13 January 1941, 5.
[96] Ibid.
[97] "C. Fera Backs 'Free Italy' Movement" *Sault Daily Star* 14 January 1941, 3.
[98] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 126.
[99] "Alderman Nino Backs New Move" *Sault Daily Star* 15 January 1941, 3.

movement, given that "their ties are here and their interests are here" and that "the Italy they knew was an Italy of free institutions" just like Canada. The editorial cited local Italian support of the Red Cross and other organizations as proof of the community's "loyalty to this country and to British institutions" and claimed the 'Free Italy' movement could "hardly fail to be a substantial contribution to Allied effort."[100] The *Star* continued to stand with its city's Italian Canadians, and the Verdi Lodge continued to carefully tread a path of gentle political involvement.

Interestingly, the OSIO archives do not reveal what steps were actually taken by its members and executive to manage the internment crisis and ensure the survival of the organization. The few documents available that describe the re-organization of the OSIO do not actually use the words 'internment' or 'arrests' to describe what was taking place to cause re-structuring in the first place. An unsigned memo from the Grand Administrative Secretary dated 28 February 1942 states that the Secretary had been notified by "Federal Authorities" in August of 1940 that it "was in order for the Sons of Italy to carry on their normal operations." Similarly, an official from the Department of Insurance was quoted as writing "We know of no reason why either the Grand Lodge or the subordinate lodges should not continue to collect dues and pay benefits as usual in accordance with the by-laws."[101] The Order as a whole across Ontario was being allowed to carry on as usual; the Sault's lodges were not unusual in this respect. What was unusual was the concentration of leadership in Sault Ste. Marie in a time of crisis. The purpose of the memo was to request that members of non-functioning lodges contact the

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[100] "Sault Italians Put Their Faith in a Free Italy" *Sault Daily Star* 14 January 1941, 3.
[101] Archives of Ontario, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, F 4378-1-11, Grand Administrative Secretary to all OSIO members, February 28, 1942.

administrative committee in order to contribute to the reorganization of the Order after the numerous arrests had been made, but it never actually refers to why the reorganization was necessary.

The organization was not acknowledging the political causes of its reorganization, at least in writing. Politics was affecting the social benefits work of the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario. Unlike in other ethnic organizations, the OSIO was not moving from the social to the political; by refusing to address the internment of its officers for political purposes, it was doing quite the opposite. In the years after the war, the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario continued to tiptoe around the political causes of its wartime crisis and rebuilding efforts, placing its focus solely on the social purposes of the organization. This renewed social focus is logical, given the efforts of Italian Canadians before the war to appear respectable in the eyes of Anglo-Canadians. After the stresses of the war, Italian Canadians in the Sault also refocused their energies and memories towards other challenging events and away from wartime internment.

Chapter 6: Conclusion – Italian Canadians and the OSIO after the war, 1945-1950

"…it was nice growing up. This is all before the war, and then after the war, things changed. People changed."[1]

In July of 1946, Gloria Esposti commented in her column "West End News" on the pleasant view of West Street from the Highline Bridge, saying that the vegetable gardens lining one side of the street were "very, very nice." She remarked that in the past, that particular side of the road had been only "rubble and rubbish" and that "without the efforts of the families living on West Street, the rubbish would still be there."[2] Esposti was picking up the old theme of the state of properties in the West End, the focus of many a *Sault Daily Star* commentary at the start of the century. Her comments further underlined that Italian Canadians in the city could be, and were, responsible for caring for their property – only this time the observations were coming from someone within the Italian community. Esposti's column also demonstrated life was returning to normal after the war – or at least that this was what the West End wanted the rest of the city to see.

The 1946 annual Grand Convention of the Order Sons of Italy was held in Sault Ste. Marie, and so the city welcomed Order members from throughout Ontario and the Montreal area. The Order's newspaper, *L'Unione*, welcomed guests to the Sault, documented plans for the convention, and re-stated the Order's goals and vison for itself and its members. A front-page editorial reminded convention participants "You have

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[1] Anthony Devoni, interviewed by Karen Montgomery-Jones, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 21 October 2012, 17:55.
[2] Gloria Esposti, "West End News," *Sault Daily Star* 4 July 1946, 5.

been invited to the beautiful, hospitable and picturesque city of Sault Ste. Marie in order to study accurately all of the Order's most important problems."[3]

The editorial continued with a vision statement for the Order: "A firm will to work for the progress and well-being of Canada – which is our adoptive Homeland – while intensifying and maintaining the spiritual bonds that unite us to our Homeland of origin, Italy!"[4] The editorial gives the impression that all Order Sons of Italy members are immigrants, or that its members do not feel at home and welcomed in Canada. By 1946, some Italian families in the Sault were already boasting three generations in Canada. Those leading the local Order Sons of Italy were most likely of the second generation. Possibly this statement signals there was a disconnect within the organization regarding what its members wanted and needed, or that the Sault's members were in the minority.

This issue of *L'Unione* also included the following ad copy for the newly-published book *Città Senza Donne* [*City Without Women*]:

> The book of America's Italians – How the Italians lived in the internment camps – The best gift to your relatives in Italy – Reserve your copy now because copies are selling fast – [5]

A bit of hyperbole in marketing is to be expected, but to recommend a book about life in the internment camps as the "best gift" to Italians abroad is shocking, and raises a number of questions about the publishers' purpose and motivation. Did they wish to assure Europeans that Canadians also suffered during the war? Did they see this as their only way to broaden their selling audience? The ad text makes it sound like all Italians in North America were interned, which obviously was not the case. There is no evasion of

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[3] *L'Unione* 2:12 (July 1946), 1, my translation.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 2, my translation.

the subject of internment at all in the advertisement. This was not the case in the rest of this issue of *L'Unione*. The closest the newspaper got to mentioning the internments was a reference to "the Order's difficulties…and the collective problems of our Grand Association"[6] – language so broad that it could refer to nearly anything. Nor were the internments clearly and directly addressed in the Order generally.

The arrests and internment of OSIO members in the 1940s appears to have been the proverbial elephant in the room for the organization into the 1970s. A 1973 document recommending that Carlo Fera be nominated for the title of President Emeritus refers to the internment crisis, but never in obvious terms. The document outlines that "in 1940 during a time of turmoil and hardships for our Order Bro[ther] Carl was elected as assistant chairman of the Order." It goes on to explain that "at this time there was an insufficient number of Lodges to form a Grand Council" but does not state why this was the case. Rev. Sauro's internment is addressed, but is referred to as "circumstances beyond his control" that meant he was "forced to vacate his position as Grand Chairman" thus causing Carlo Fera to take his place. In the most detail of any document located, Fera's efforts to maintain the OSIO are described: numerous trips to Toronto and two visits to Montreal, usually paid from his own funds; hours spent contacting government representatives; time away from his regular paying job. He was elected Grand Venerable of the Order in 1944, and "during the next four years he and the Grand Council reconstructed the Order." No further details are given on how – or why – this reconstruction was needed, though it must have been understood by those reading the

[6] *L'Unione* 2:12 (July 1946), 1, my translation.

document that the internment crisis of the Second World War was the cause of the reconstruction. [7]

Certainly the shame and anger associated with the internments would warrant such a response. What is interesting is the lack of surviving documents regarding the actual restructuring process of the Order during such a difficult period. There are documents preserved that allude to the restructuring having taken place, but nothing that records the day-to-day operations needed to rebuild the OSIO. It is possible that those involved in the reconstruction were nervous about keeping written records, given what they had witnessed their fellow members experience at the hands of the RCMP. However, since there are some existing records from the 1940-1946 period in the OSIO fonds at the Archives of Ontario, this explanation seems inaccurate.

Perhaps the Verdi Lodge had a similar experience to that of Leonard Frenza, an Order Sons of Italy secretary in Montreal. Frenza, who was interned during the war, contacted the RCMP in September of 1945 to request the return of meeting minutes seized from "chapters of the lodge all over Montreal" but to no avail.[8] There is also the fact that the OSIO records have changed hands numerous times over the years. The organization's historian held them for many years, transferred them to the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO),[9] which then transferred them to the Archives of Ontario. Given that one Verdi Lodge pamphlet (the 1932 souvenir program referenced earlier in this work) is still held by the MHSO, but is not labelled as a document related to

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[7] Untitled document, Archives of Ontario, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, F 4378-1-2.
[8] Bagnell, *Canadese*, 101.
[9] "History Research Project Progress Report 18 May 1988," Archives of Ontario, Order Sons of Italy of Canada Fonds, F 4378-1-11-53.

the Order Sons of Italy, it is entirely possible that other such documents are similarly more challenging to trace.

The one surviving record located that does actually use the word 'internment' is an undated document by Rev. Libero Sauro, likely written just before his resignation from the administrative committee. In the document, Sauro refers to himself and Vincenzo Bilotta, writing "this last one and myself both were interned soon after the formation of this Administrative Committee." He also explains that he is resigning from the Order on "advice of my Church Authorities, because of my recent experience of internment."[10] It may be significant that this record is not kept in the Order Sons of Italy in Ontario fonds, but was donated by the Sauro family to the Villa Columbus Centre's museum exhibit and online project *Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II*. Perhaps the OSIO did not want to preserve any documents that made explicit mention of the internment crisis, in an effort to distance the organization from a reputation of fascist connections. Given the efforts of Italian Canadians to attain acceptability and respectability in the eyes of their Anglo-Canadian neighbours before the war, any efforts made by OSIO members to ignore the internment crisis certainly make sense.

Post-war, feelings of humiliation were said to be stronger than any feelings of rage amongst Italian Canadians across the country. Younger community members tended to blame their own leaders, not Canadian politicians, the RCMP, or other officials – there was a distinct 'blame the victim' mentality in many towns and cities. Massa and Weinfeld argue "there was little interest in reviving the 'Sons of Italy' and other national

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[10] Rev. Libero Sauro, "Facts About the Order of Sons of Italy of Ontario Mutual Benefit Society," Villa Columbus Centre ICEA2010.0008.0003.a-b http://italiancanadianww2.ca/images/uploads/transcripts/3281/icea2010-0008-0003a-b_transcript.pdf (accessed 2 October 2014).

Italian associations."[11] Kenneth Bagnell reported that "…young Italians, feeling fresh stigmas because of the labels placed on their elders, began to shy away from any assertion of their culture."[12] These statements do not reflect the Sault Ste. Marie experience, as the Verdi Lodge continued with its social programming and status as a community hub. In the post-war period, it is not at all apparent that having connections to the Order Sons of Italy was viewed with any negativity in Sault Ste. Marie.

Frank Sarlo, a Sault Italian Canadian of a younger generation (born 1942), thought of the Verdi Hall after the war as a place where "the Italian men at the time congregated a lot together, playing cards…so you didn't spend a lot of time with your father. And it wasn't just me, it was basically all [my] friends."[13] Sarlo recalled how much he also wanted to join the Verdi, and how he later got his first job parking cars at the new location of the Verdi Hall on Queen Street in the 1960s.[14] Ron Irwin, whose mother Antonietta had been so crucial to the survival of the Order Sons of Italy of Ontario during the war, recalls his experience campaigning for public office in eight elections for various levels of government:

> I'd have my literature, I'd knock on a door, 'I'm so-and-so, I'd like your vote' and '*aah, il figlio d'Antonietta DiLabbio*!' (Antonietta DiLabbio's son) It would drive my opponents crazy because they didn't want to hear anything about policy, that [family connection] was good enough – and that lasted through my whole political career.[15]

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[11] Massa and Weinfeld, "Suspect Minorities," 18.
[12] Bagnell, *Canadese,* 96.
[13] Frank Sandy Sarlo, interviewed by Russ Hilderley, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 21 June 2016, 10:24.
[14] Ibid., 24:04.
[15] Ron Irwin, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 13 February 2014, 2:45.

Irwin's experience also shows that, within the Sault's Italian community, there was no stigma attached to his mother's intense involvement with the Order Sons of Italy.

In his 1969 book *The Italians in Canada*, A.V. Spada claimed that following the Second World War, "almost half" of the immigrants to Sault Ste. Marie were Italian, and that "they have taken their place in the community easily, and command respect."[16] According to Patrick Marsh, Italian-Canadian oral history participants in Cape Breton showed "a desire to put the ordeal [internment] behind them, and move on to more important issues in the community, such as preserving their Italian heritage."[17] This observation is also true of the Sault's Italians. The older generation, many of them born in Canada, turned their attention towards helping newly-arrived post-war immigrants from the old country. After the war, Aldo Diotallevi was "entitled" to a federal job after his military discharge, and so went to work for what he called "the employment service," which he recalled as being part of the department that managed immigration and unemployment insurance. He eventually became the district director. Diotallevi remembers his early years "in charge of employment…in the fifties, all the immigrants…that's one of the things in my life I'm really, really proud of."[18]

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[16] A.V. Spada, *The Italians in Canada*, (Montreal: Italo-Canadian Ethnic and Historical Research Centre, 1969), 321.
[17] Patrick Marsh, "Oral History in Cape Breton: An Italian Internment History" in *Beyond Barbed Wire: Essays on the Internment of Italian Canadians*, ed. Licia Canton et al (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2012), 110.
[18] Aldo Diotallevi, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 36:45, 37:05.

Mike Sanzosti stated:

> I can remember, the second wave of immigrants after the Second World War, people didn't have the facilities, government facilities and advice and they would go to their local alderman, somebody they knew, their priest, the fellow who gave them the groceries, for advice, and I can remember doing that [giving advice] – the satisfaction you get from seeing people, how thankful they were, really led you to keep going.[19]

Most interesting about Sanzosti's recollections is that he did not specifically include his post-war involvement with the Order Sons of Italy. In his interview with the Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie (OHSSM), Sanzosti mentioned his involvement with a "men's club" but did not give a specific club name.[20] He must have meant the Verdi Lodge, as he was its administrative secretary in 1955,[21] its venerable in 1956 (while also serving as Grand Deputy at the provincial level of the OSIO)[22] and a delegate to the 1959 Grand Convention.[23] He did not mention any personal involvement with the OSIO at all in his interview, apart from participating in Carmel Cushley's passion plays as a child, which were performed at the Verdi Hall.[24] When asked about his public service, Sanzosti mentioned his city council service, but never his OSIO membership and responsibilities.

It is curious that Sanzosti would avoid speaking about his OSIO involvement in any specific way, especially in contrast to others' pride in their Marconi memberships. Is it because the Verdi no longer has any particular prominence in the Sault, while the

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[19] Mike Sanzosti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 19:50.
[20] Mike Sanzosti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 18:32.
[21] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple,* 127.
[22] "History of the G. Verdi Lodge No. 1 Order Sons of Italy of Ontario," 3. Order Sons of Italy of Ontario Fonds, F 4378-2-8, Archives of Ontario.
[23] Scardellato, *Within Our Temple*, 127.
[24] Mike Sanzosti, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 22:50.

Marconi is a community force? Or is his silence for reasons more connected to the internments? Unfortunately these questions cannot be clarified, as Sanzosti passed away shortly after his OHSSM interview in 2011. It is also interesting that interviewers from OHSSM didn't press for more particular details. Adriana Davis noted the tendency of interviewees to gloss over or completely avoid the topic of the internments, calling it a "collective amnesia." She rightly questions whether this avoidance was done with intent, to avoid painful memories, or was simply due to the elderly and possibly weakened memories of oral history participants.[25] If there is any shame, bitterness, or animosity in the Sault related to the OSIO, it is not discussed, not even with trusted members of the community (ie: Cathy Shunock and other interviewers of OHSSM).

Franc Sturino has argued that when Italy became a founding member of NATO in 1949 it "helped to erase [the] stigma of fascism" and encouraged Italian Canadians to become active participants in politics more generally.[26] In Sault Ste. Marie, Mike Sanzosti was a city councillor and served as acting mayor in 1996.[27] Ron Irwin became involved in federal politics for the city after serving as its mayor from 1972-1974.[28] Ray Stortini served on city council along with Ron Irwin.[29] However, it is doubtful that any of these men would cite Italy's joining NATO as a motivation for their civic contributions.

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[25] Adriana A. Davies, "The Black-Shirted Fascisti Are Coming to Alberta" in *Beyond Barbed Wire: Essays on the Internment of Italian Canadians*, ed Licia Canton et al (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2012), 257.
[26] As cited in Massa and Weinfeld, "Suspect Minorities," 19.
[27] https://saultstemarie.ca/City-Hall/City-Council/Former-Mayors.aspx (accessed 28 February 2020)
[28] Ibid.
[29] Russell Hilderley, interviewed by Jim Cronin, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 5 November 2014, 49:30.

When the Sault's Italian Canadians did turn their attention to negative experiences, they tended to recall discrimination they suffered because of their background, but these experiences were never directly connected to the internments. Saultite Les Pyette (born 1945) gave a non-Italian perspective of discrimination in the city. He recalled that he was told "to stay out of the deep West End," but he was also told to avoid Pim Hill (in the centre of town) and "the deep East End"[30] which realistically left him very little of Sault Ste. Marie as a 'safe' zone. The first time Pyette ate pasta was when a friend brought him home to James Street, which was the first time he had been to the West End.[31] He summed up the situation by saying "if you kept to your own little area, you were okay."[32]

Ron Irwin recalled, "…there was a lot of discrimination, I didn't get it because I had an Irish name, [but] living with the Italians…I had a better understanding what discrimination was."[33] He also recalled that "it was difficult for an Italian boy to go out with a non-Italian girl" east of Gore Street, because parents would say "… 'you don't go out with those Italian boys, ya gotta watch'em'…"[34]

Angelo Bumbacco, born in 1931, remembered discrimination in employment in the years after the war. He attended Sault Tech during his high school years, and took woodworking.[35] He recalled that "…when we graduated, we were promised jobs in

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[30] Les Pyette, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 16 June 2014, 10:33.
[31] Ibid., 11:05.
[32] Ibid., 11:36.
[33] Ron Irwin, interviewed by Art Osborne, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 13 February 2014, 7:53.
[34] Ibid., 48:45.
[35] Angelo Bumbacco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 19 March 2014, 7:20, 7:47.

Algoma Steel, but in those days, because of our ethnic background, we weren't allowed to work in the pattern shop" despite his being specifically trained to do so; his older cousin Freddy had found himself in the same position one year earlier.[36] Bumbacco instead got hired to work in the coke ovens, a position with uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous working conditions, and eventually worked as a pipe fitter.[37]

There were two events that figured much more prominently in the memory of the Sault's Italian community than the internments. The Great Depression, referenced by many contributors to OHSSM, looms large in the memories of those who experienced it as children, as detailed earlier in this work. After the war, the 'urban renewal' of James Street had a significant impact on the West End, both geographically and personally. The project tore down the old houses and businesses on James Street and surrounding areas, replacing them with a modern outdoor shopping plaza. "With the urban renewal, it decimated the West End. Things haven't been the same ever since."[38] Ray Stortini compared the urban renewal of James Street to the project that affected Africville in Halifax, saying "they destroyed a viable community there, and they destroyed a viable community here."[39] Dorothy Bonell sadly and passionately stated her experience of the urban renewal, saying "I don't go up the West End anymore because I cry… all those good memories gone… it was a beautiful community and it was destroyed by, by somebody who didn't know what he was talking about."[40]

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[36] Angelo Bumbacco, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 7:54.
[37] Ibid., 8:25.
[38] Ibid., 16:28.
[39] Ray Stortini, in conversation with Alfio Gasparelli and James Ardito, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 6 June 2011, 7:53.
[40] Dorothy Bonell, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 18 October 2011, 11:25.

In contrast to the experiences of other community elders, Gene Ubriaco, born in 1937, stated "I can't honestly say that there was any difficult times, I think that was the most beautiful thing…nothing was passed down onto the kids that would be a negative."[41] Ubriaco's belief that children were sheltered from negativity may also explain why the difficulties of the internment crisis and the war are not commonly discussed or acknowledged in the Sault.

This lack of acknowledgement seems to extend to those who were older during the war, and who (arguably) should have been more aware of the effects of internment. Ray Stortini believes that Italian Canadians have not asked for an apology for their internment, because "they don't want to make any trouble" and maintained "that's why you don't hear much about the Italian internment." He has also said that he does not "sense any bad memories or bad feelings about that, it's not the Italian way."[42] Stortini repeated twice during his OHSSM interview that Italian people "don't want to make any trouble" and strongly believed that since Italians "just wanna get on with their lives" they would not "rise up and claim compensation or apologies."[43]

However, there was indeed a redress movement for Italian internees. Efforts by the community resulted in Prime Minister Brian Mulroney giving an address to the Congress of Italian Canadians and the Canadian Italian Business Professional Association in 1990, wherein he apologized for the internment. More recently, in 2005 the Government of Canada and the Italian Canadian Community arrived at an Agreement-in-

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[41] Gene Ubriaco, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 3 November 2011, 16:31.
[42] Ray Stortini, interviewed by Cathy Shunock, Oral History of Sault Ste. Marie, 27 July 2011, 6:45, 7:10, 7:42.
[43] Ibid., 6:40.

Principle regarding redress for the internments.[44] Stortini's comments demonstrate that the internment and its impact is not discussed at any length in Sault Ste. Marie, unlike in other communities such as Hamilton or Toronto. By extension, Stortini believes that it is not an issue in any Italian community in Canada.

Further evidence that the internments still weigh heavily for Italian Canadians are the museum exhibits, online exhibits, and conferences which have been dedicated to the topic. Toronto's Columbus Centre hosts a permanent museum exhibit entitled "Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II" along with a related travelling exhibit, "Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times: Italian-Canadian Experiences During World War II" which has been displayed in such prominent locations as the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.[45] The Columbus Centre also maintains a web exhibit on the topic, allowing visitors to search documents and photographs by geographic location or family surname, and to watch oral history interviews with elders who were affected by the internments. In 1995, an audience member at a conference on the 1940 internments raised an important question: "Were those Italian Canadians who supported Mussolini and who joined local fascist clubs really fascists? After all, they were only expressing their patriotism, their Italianness."[46] The question reflects the conflicting goals and perceptions of OSIO members that were recognized back in the 1930s, and

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[44] Tomchuk and Giesbrecht, *Redress Movements in Canada*, 1.
[45] "About Us" *Italian Canadians As Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II.* Online exhibit hosted by Columbus Centre. http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/static_pages/freeformpage/footer_about_us (accessed 4 March 2020); "Temporary Exhibitions" https://pier21.ca/temporary-exhibits (accessed 4 March 2020).
[46] Principe, *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years,* 19.

demonstrates that even sixty years later, what one Canadian deemed pride or patriotism might be treason to another.

The Verdi Lodge of the Order Sons of Italy serves in this thesis as a lens through which to examine the significant Italian community of Sault Ste. Marie and its place in civic life in the city in the first half of the 20th century. The Sault's Italian community felt the influence of both Catholic and Protestant churches within civil society, as seen through the leadership of the Catholic founder of the Verdi Lodge, Rev. Martinez, and the ongoing efforts of Rev. Sauro of the United Church. In moving their focus to commemorating John Cabot instead of Christopher Columbus, members of the Verdi Lodge were able to use their Italian heritage as a tool to promote and achieve acceptance and integration into the heavily British-oriented mainstream society of the 1920s and 1930s. This acceptance came into question with the declaration of war against Italy in June of 1940.

The Verdi Lodge is an exception to the general rule of mutual benefit societies becoming politically involved – for the most part. The Second World War and the related internments of suspected enemy aliens forced the Verdi's members to speak out in support of the federal government's decision to declare war against Italy. The Verdi Lodge also illustrates another exception to a general rule: the effect of the internment crisis on Italian pride in Canada. In fact, the internments do not seem to have affected Italian community pride in Sault Ste. Marie. There is no sense that anti-Italian discrimination was linked to the internment crisis, the war, or the OSIO – the discrimination that took place after the war stemmed more from the old, pre-war feelings about Italians in the city. It is also important to note that other major events in Sault Ste.

Marie, such as the Depression and the ‘urban renewal’ of James Street, overshadow the internments in the memories of its Italian Canadian elders.

This study of the Verdi Lodge provides a perspective on the Italian community of Sault Ste. Marie that has been lacking in the scholarship to date, and gives a better understanding of this now-influential community and its roots. More broadly, this examination of the Italian community in a small city allows us to better understand the nuances and variety of experiences possible for Italian Canadians across the country.

Appendix A: Tables

Table 1: Arrivals to Canada by Nationality, Selected Examples, 1913

Nationality	Arrivals		As Percentage of "Other Nationalities"
Total British including Irish	150 542	37.4%	N/A
Total "Other Nationalities" (ie non-British)	251 890	62.6%	100.0%
Chinese	7 445	1.8%	2.9%
Finnish	2 391	0.6%	0.9%
German	4 938	1.1%	2.0%
Italian	16 601	4.1%	6.6%
Russian	18 623	4.6%	7.4%
American	139 009	34.5%	55.2%

Based on figures from "1. Arrivals at inland and ocean ports in Canada, by nationalities, fiscal years 1911 to 1917" *1917 Canada Year Book*. Archived at https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1917/acyb02_19170113-eng.htm (accessed 10 February 2020).

Table 2: "Foreign-born" Population of Sault Ste. Marie, 1911
(Percentages indicate proportion of overall population)

	Men		Women		Total	
Sault Ste. Marie	6 321	57.5%	4 663	42.5%	10 984	100.0%
"Foreign-born"	1 809	16.5%	749	6.8%	2 558	23.3%
Austria-Hungary	219	2.0%	27	0.2%	246	2.2%
British Isles	634	5.7%	482	4.4%	1 116	10.2%
Finland	234	2.1%	88	0.8%	322	2.9%
Italy	734	6.7%	204	1.9%	938	8.5%

Based on figures from "Table XVI, Birthplace of the population in cities and towns of 7,000 and over," *Fifth Census of Canada 1911, Volume II*, 434-435.

Table 3: Selected Italian Populations in Canada, 1931

	Italian		British Isles		Total Population	
Sault Ste. Marie	3 264	14.1%	13 294	57.6%	23 082	100%
Toronto	13 015	2.1%	510 432	80.9%	631 207	100%
Montreal	20 871	2.5%	178 461	21.8%	818 577	100%
Sudbury, ON	627	3.4%	6 790	36.7%	18 518	100%
Sydney, NS	417	1.8%	18 339	79.4%	23 089	100%
All Ontario	50 536	1.5%	2 539 771	74.0%	3 431 683	100%

Based on figures from "Table 32, Population, male and female, classified according to racial origin, by counties or census divisions, 1931" and "Table 34, Population of cities and towns 10,000 and over, classified according to racial origin, 1931," *Census of Canada, 1931*.

Table 4: Population by Birthplace, Selected Examples, 1931
(Percentages indicate proportion of total population)

	Canada		British Isles		Italy		Total Population	
Sault Ste. Marie	16 362	71%	2 222	9.6%	1 350	5.8%	23 082	100%
All Ontario	2 627 398	76.6%	514 400	15.0%	22 179	0.6%	3 431 683	100%

Based on figures from "Table 45, Birthplace of the population by sex, for provinces, 1931" and "Table 47, Birthplace of the population in cities and towns of 10,000 and over, 1931," *Census of Canada, 1931.*

Table 5: Sault Ste. Marie Population by Ethnicity, Selected Examples, 1931

Sault Ste. Marie total	23 082	100%
British	13 294	57.6%
French	2 150	9.3%
Finnish	1 110	4.8%
German	493	2.2%
Italian	3 264	14.1%
"Jugo-Slavic"	479	2.1%
Polish	341	1.5%
Ukrainian	802	3.5%

Based on figures from "Table 34, Population of cities and towns 10,000 and over, classified according to racial origin, 1931," *Census of Canada, 1931*.

Table 6: Italian and British Populations in Selected Canadian Cities, 1941

	Total Population		Italian		British	
Sault Ste. Marie	25 784	100%	3 673	14.2%	14 898	57.5%
Toronto	667 457	100%	515	1.9%	523 588	78.4%
Montreal	903 007	100%	23 752	2.6%	182 948	20.3%
Sudbury, ON	32 203	100%	959	3.0%	13 379	41.5%
Sydney, NS	28 305	100%	515	1.9%	22 322	78.9%

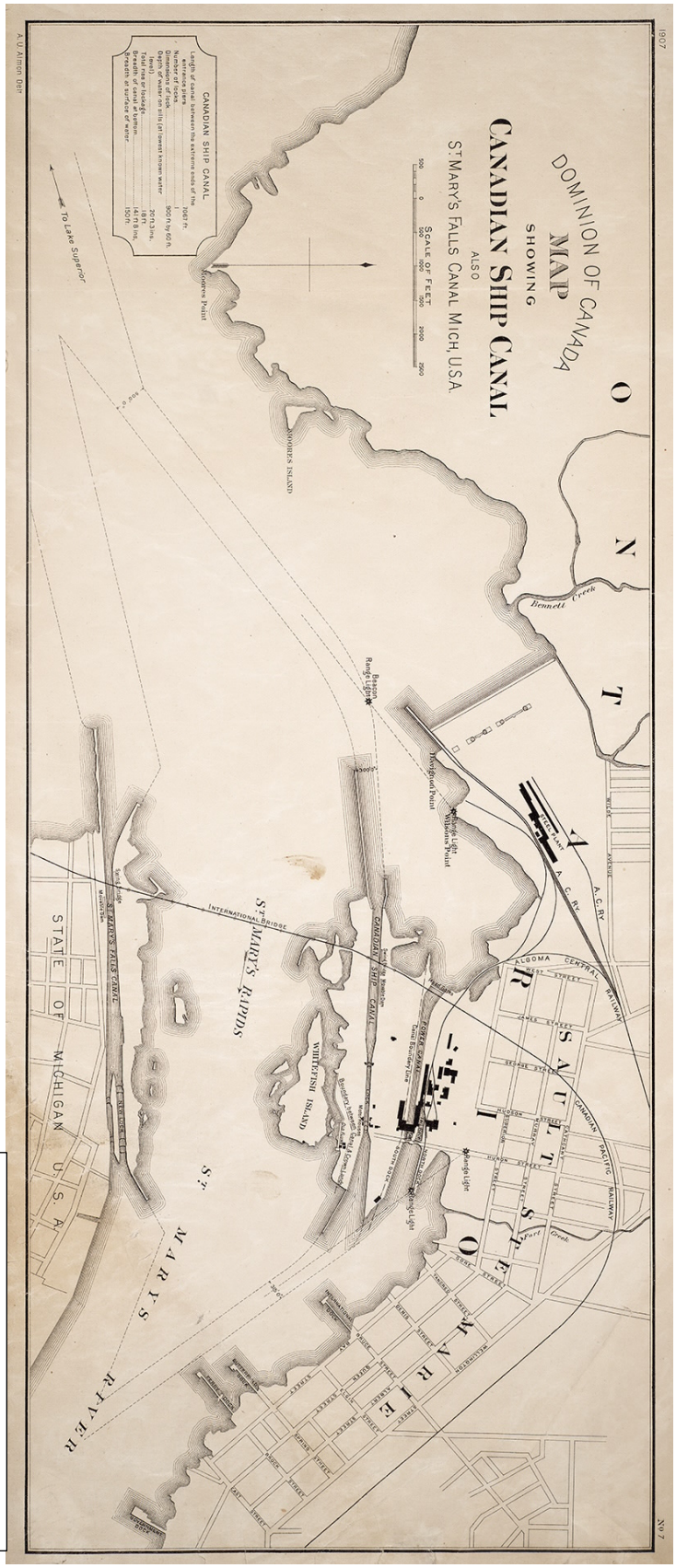
Figures based on "A-4, Table 3.- Population by racial origin and sex, for urban centres of 15,000 and over, 1941," *Census of Canada 1941*.

Table 7: Population by Birthplace, Selected Examples, 1941
(Percentages indicate proportion of city's total population)

	Canada		"Other British Countries"		Italy		Total Population	
Sault Ste. Marie	19 979	77.4%	1 913	7.4%	1 195	4.6%	25 794	100%
Toronto	457 766	68.6%	138 220	20.7%	4 870	0.73%	667 457	100%
Montreal	777 151	86.1%	48 597	5.4%	7 917	0.87%	903 007	100%
Sudbury, ON	26 493	82.3%	1 537	4.8%	372	1.15%	32 203	100%
Sydney, NS	23 778	84.0%	2 956	10.4%	130	0.56%	28 305	100%

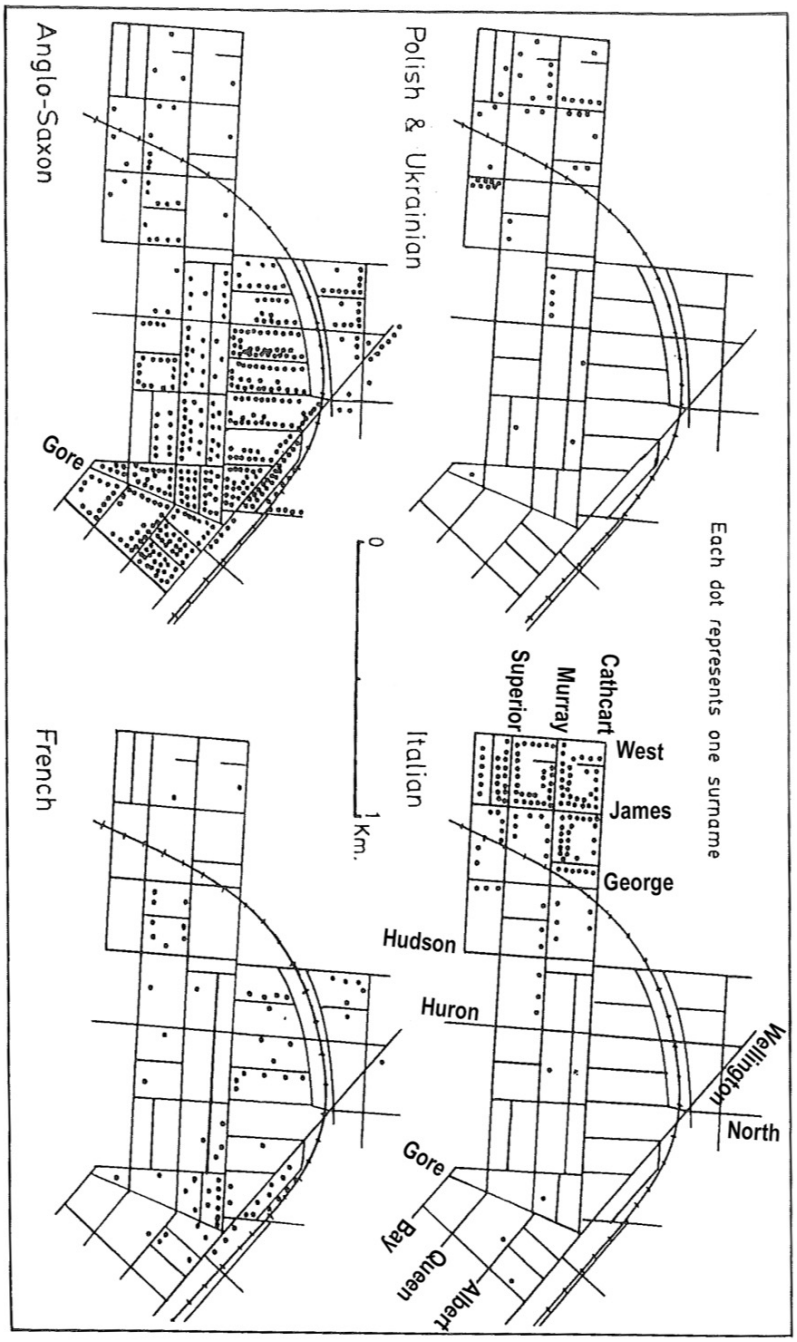
Figures based on "A-6, Table 3. – Population by birthplace and sex, for urban centres 15,000 and over, 1941," *Census of Canada 1941.*

Appendix B: Maps



Map 1:
Shipping canal at Sault Ste. Marie, 1907.

Features Algoma Steel, railway lines, West End, Downtown (east of Gore) and a portion of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.
(Toronto Public Library)



Ethnic districts, west end, Sault Ste. Marie, 1912. Maps compiled from an analysis of surnames in Vernon's 1912 City Directory.

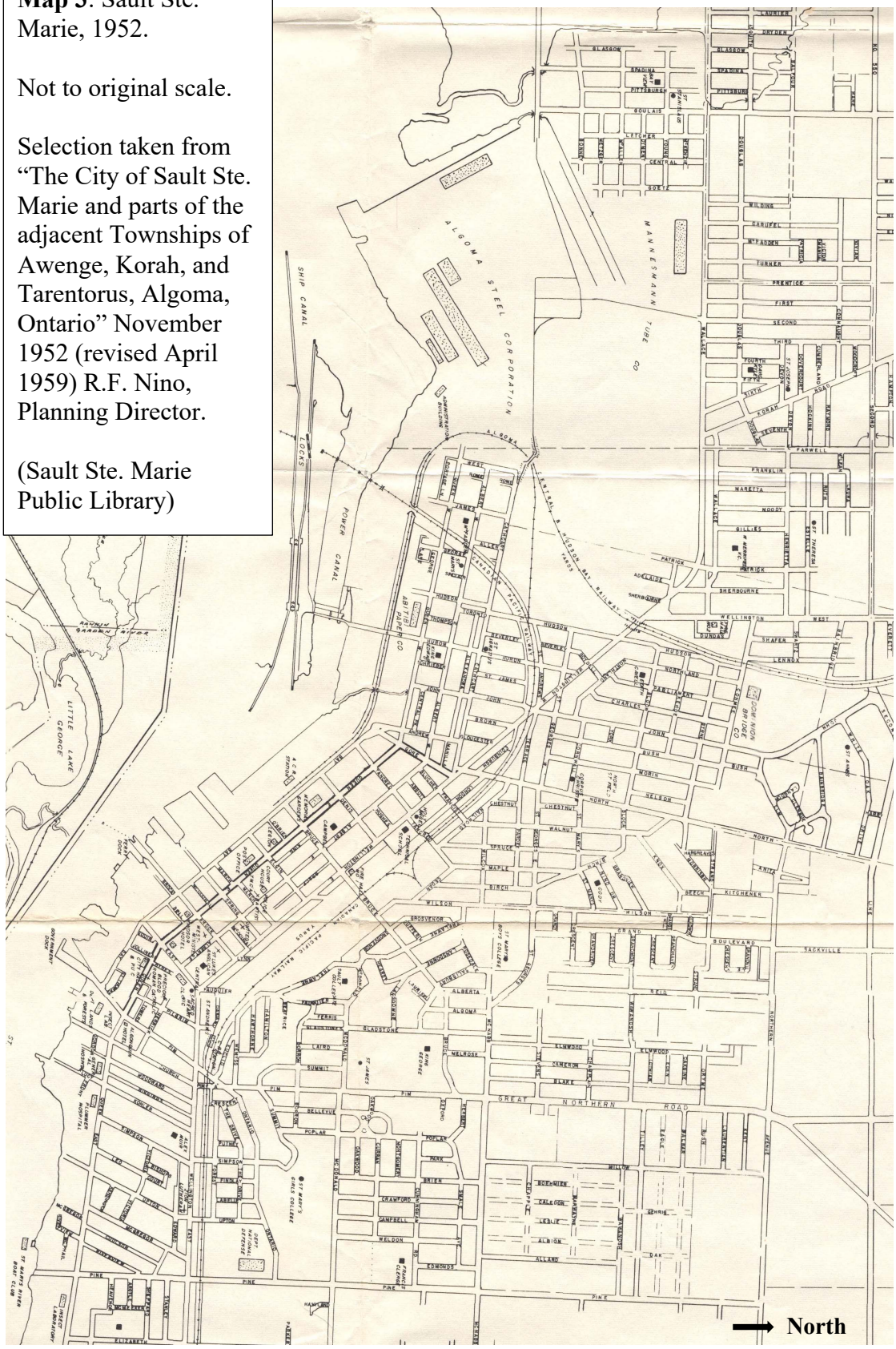
Map 2: Ethnic districts of Sault Ste. Marie, 1912. Adapted from Abbott, "Ethnicity as a Dynamic Factor," 329.

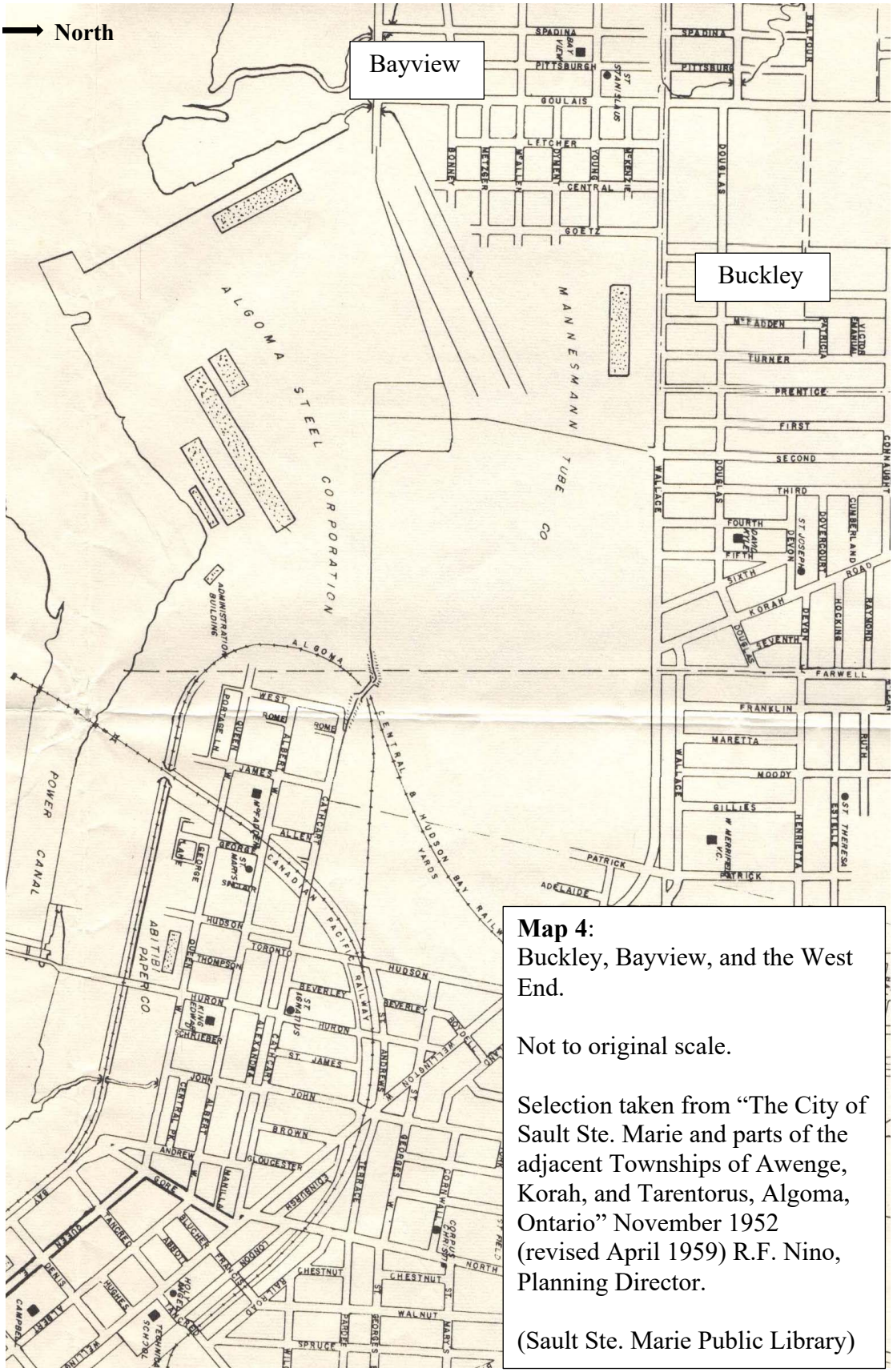
Map 3: Sault Ste. Marie, 1952.

Not to original scale.

Selection taken from "The City of Sault Ste. Marie and parts of the adjacent Townships of Awenge, Korah, and Tarentorus, Algoma, Ontario" November 1952 (revised April 1959) R.F. Nino, Planning Director.

(Sault Ste. Marie Public Library)





Map 4:
Buckley, Bayview, and the West End.

Not to original scale.

Selection taken from "The City of Sault Ste. Marie and parts of the adjacent Townships of Awenge, Korah, and Tarentorus, Algoma, Ontario" November 1952 (revised April 1959) R.F. Nino, Planning Director.

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"Internee List." *Italian Canadians As Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II.* Online exhibit hosted by Columbus Centre. http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/tour/internees#

Colizza, Giacomo

Masi, Nicholas

Pasquantonio, Luigi

Restaldi, Vittorio

Sabetta, Oreste

Sabetta, Vittorio

Sauro, Libero

Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times: Italian-Canadian Experiences During World War II. Exhibit curated by Columbus Centre, displayed at Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, 16 December 2016.