

hostile to their form of religion. Fewer Italian-American men than Irish-American men chose the priesthood, and they were much less likely to send their children to parochial schools.

Men participated enthusiastically in the annual festivals held to celebrate the feast day of a particular madonna or patron saint that had been celebrated in that part--often a very tiny part--of Italy from where they came. This was possible because the American settlement patterns of many Italians resulted in groupings based on the hometown or village of migrants. Italians and others who lived in their own ethnic enclaves often had little contact with non-Italian-Americans. They spoke Italian, ate Italian food, celebrated Italian holidays and on Sundays entertained relatives and friends. They knew nothing of the outside world.

This was the world I grew up in. Scotch Plains had its Italian community; most of the immigrants came from the small village of Montazzoli.

This narrative begins with my ancestors and traces the emigration of my parents to America at the beginning of the century. It is an account of growing up in an Italian community and becoming an American.

Today, I can return to Scotch Plains to visit my old neighborhood on Mountain Avenue, get together with old neighbors and schoolmates, and feel that I had never left home.

Florence Iaione Kelly

1999