

# The Feast (La Festa)

## San Nicola Di Bari

### Labor Day

Summer was over and it was time to go back to school. But before that day came, we all looked forward to the feast held traditionally on Labor Day. It was in honor the patron saint of the Italians in the community, St. Nicola di Bari.

The day began with an outdoor Mass outside on the grounds that the Italian community had invested in for its future church.

After the Mass there was procession through the Italian community--Cook Avenue and Mountain Avenue. As the Madonna's statue was carried through the streets, the neighborhood people would come out of their homes and pin money on the saint. It was quite a show. Italians were very generous, because one day they hoped to have a church of their own.

Later in the day, dressed in our best (no one would think otherwise), we would walk down Cook Avenue and then Westfield Avenue to the feast. As we encountered friends of the family, we would be given quarters or dollars to spend at the feast. I remember this so well. Everyone wanted the kids to have a good time.

All day and into the evening music was played by an Italian band. It seemed every song was the same. But it was a live band and the music was soothing. The food stands selling sausages and peppers, and other Italian concoctions were set up early and people ate all day.

Of the rides, I especially liked the ferris wheel. Booths were set up with various games and prizes like a doll or teddy bear were awarded. We seldom won anything, but it was fun and it didn't matter.

The best was yet to come. The fireworks. The excitement would build as the evening shadows appeared. Everyone found a place to sit on the ground and when it was time there was no holding back our joy. The ahs and oohs could be heard a long way off. And the grand finale was the American flag. Patriotism was a big thing then. It was war time and everyone took pride in being American.

After the feast, friends, neighbors, kids all walked home, recalling the wonderful time they had that day.