

THE ETHNIC ROOTS
OF THE
LUCIANI FAMILY

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Mr. Gibbons
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My family roots are firmly entrenched in Woodbridge. My great grandparents first came to this town in 1889, over a hundred years ago. Alesandro Del'Ungaro, the son of Giovanni Josepa Del'Ungaro and Maria Saura Del'Ungaro, immigrated from San Potito Sanitago in 1878 at the age of eighteen. As Alesandro went through immigration his name was changed, as many were, to Henry Longo. He got a job building the railroads and traveled across country as the foreman of a team of men. Alesandro was one of the men who worked on the railroad that connected from coast to coast the United States with the golden spike.

In 1888 Alesandro sent for my great grandmother Agnesa Bontempi, the daughter of Marchelo Bontempi and Concetta Leggeio Bontempi, who immigrated to America at the age of twenty two. She also came from the mountainous provence of Casserta, San Potito Sanitago. The marriage of Alesandro and Agnesa followed shortly after her arrival and they lived in New York City for about a year. They then moved to Woodbridge, where they were the first Italians in the town. Alesandro worked on the building of the dams where he earned a dollar a day. In 1907 they bought a farm on Amity Road where they raised some cows and fruit and Agnesa made cheese.

Alesandro and Agnesa had four children, Maria Oleanna Longo and Anna Longo, who were born on Litchfield Turnpike, and Rose Longo and Anthony Bartholamo Longo, who were born on the Amity Road farm. Maria Oleanna or Lena as she was called was born in 1890 and was the first Italian born in Woodbridge. Agnesa and Lena, her first born, lived in a cabin off of Litchfield Turnpike and Dillon Road. For long periods of time it was only the two of them with a shotgun for company for Alesandro was often away on the railroad. Lena was baptized at St. Michael's Church. Lena was the first Italian child in the school systems of Woodbridge and was ridiculed because of it. The school she attended was located on Litchfield Turnpike. It was later relocated to Amity Road and turned into a house which is still there. Kids were required to stay in school until the age of fourteen. This caused Lena to repeat the 8th grade because she was unable to go on to high school. For recreation and extra money, Lena used to enjoy picking flowers and greens from the fields and sell them to city people riding by on Litchfield Turnpike. Lena's life with her sisters and brother was a relatively stable one.

One day a man "just happened to come to the farm." This man was Ettore Luciani. His parents lived in Italy as he had until his teens. Ettore's father, Vitalo Luciani, was a tailor in central Italy. He and his third wife, Rose, lived in Oscala Pegeniu in the Provence of Marchi. This is the province that named Pope John Paul I as one of its native sons. He shared the name of Luciani and may well be related to me. Ettore was born in 1987, came to this country when he was about 19 and was probably the first Luciani to come to America. Lena and

Ettore were married in 1908 when she was eighteen at St. Michael's church.

Ettore and Lena first lived in New Haven where Ettore worked in an iron mill. They had their first child, Rosalynda. However, tragedy struck when Rosalynda died from convulsions at the age of eight months. Though heartbroken they went on with their family and in 1910 they were given a son---my Uncle Vito was born. A few months later they moved to Woodbridge and bought twenty one acres of land for \$100 per acre located on Seymour Road. This land was all wooded and had to be tediously chopped down and hauled away. Ettore then planted apple trees and grape vines (for wine, of course.) They bought a couple of cows at a time and had about fifty at one time. Five more children were born on this farm, in order: Adolph, Emidio, Rosalynda, Suerino (my dad), and Agnes. They sold the Seymour Road farm in 1920 and moved, once again, to West Haven. They lived there for almost two years running a cheese factory. In 1922 they moved back to Woodbridge and bought Charley Barnes' farm through a proxy because he would not sell to an Italian. This was a dairy farm with about one hundred cows located on Old Amity Road. This farm was the same one that the Sperry's, who helped the three judges in revolutionary days had owned. The house had fourteen rooms, three fireplaces on the first floor and one in the basement and an outhouse. In the mid-twenties tuberculosis broke out in the area dairy herds and when Ettore tested his cows about 85% had a positive reaction. The cows were sold to the government in 1924. This disaster broke Ettore as a dairy farmer.

In 1925 Ettore started a new venture, a truck farm. A truck farm is essentially a vegetable farm. My grandfather grew lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, spinach, sweet corn and lots of beans. With the help of his large family, which was steadily increasing, and some hired hands, Ettore prospered. He bought more land, one of the first Ford cars and a Republican truck to deliver wood, peaches and apples. He had one of the first one cylinder engine saws and was the first in the farm valley to use a tractor in the fields.

About this time Ettore brought his mother over to America after the death of his father. He also brought over his brother Louis and some cousins who had emigrated to Argentina to help on the farm. Some of the cousins moved back to Argentina eventually but some were too happy in America to think of leaving it. Ettore was also still very much in the baby business. Ever since their first born Lena and Ettore had a steady stream of children with about one child every two years. On the old Amity Road farm five more children were born: Alexander, Ettore, Jr., Laurence, Raymond, and Robert in 1931 was their last child.

As the years went by, Ettore began buying real estate. He eventually obtained between one hundred fifty and two hundred acres of land, all in Woodbridge. This land he had surveyed for building lots and put it on sale. Ettore died at the age of 65 on April 8, 1952 in his house on Old Amity Rd. farm. The cause of death was stomach and pancreatic cancer. Of Ettore's original holdings between seventy five and one hundred acres located in Woodbridge still belong to the Luciani family. This land is for sale to the right buyer.

My grandmother Lena, meanwhile, was becoming well known throughout the surrounding towns. She was affectionately called Mom Luciani by nearly everyone who knew her. She always had a smile for everyone and even in the large department stores she was greeted by name by many of the sales clerks. She was an excellent cook and, I am told, a kind and gentle lady. She enjoyed the outdoors and had a lot of pride in her gardens and rightly so. In the early days when she had spent a full day making cheese or working in the fields she would work under spot lights until late at night on her flowers. It was her favorite pastime. She was a great sports fan and loved the Yankees and the Giants. She was sitting watching a Derby High football game with my Aunt Dolly, whose husband was and still is the coach of the team, when she suddenly fell over with a stroke. The ambulance that was there for the team reacted immediately and she was rushed to the hospital but to no avail. She died of a cerebral hemorrhage on August 30, 1968 less than a month before her seventy eighth birthday. Lena considered herself very lucky in the outcome of her family. Though diverse, the Luciani children all choose useful careers. At the age of 72, my Uncle Vito still wholesales corn and garden plants to retailers, raises turkeys and keeps gardens through the summer. Uncle Adolph had a garden center on Whalley Avenue for many years until he retired and still is involved in considerable real estate. Uncle Midge (Emidio) runs the farm growing plants and crops with my Uncle Larry's help. Aunt Rose married a pharmacist and has had her own beauty salon for many years. Aunt Dolly married a very successful football coach and is a housewife. My Uncle Sheik (Ettore) and Uncle Bobby are in the construction business. My Uncle Ray was the only one to

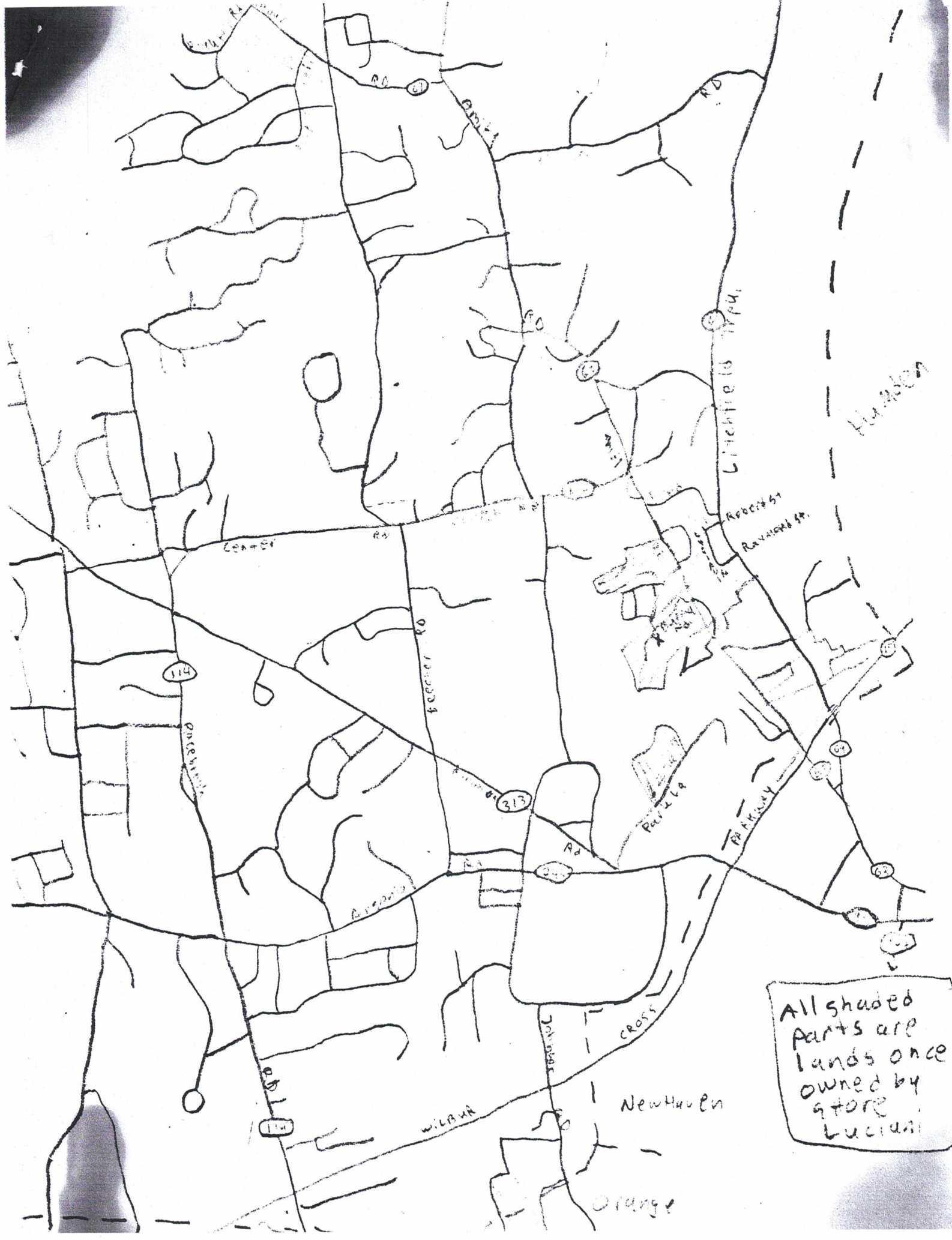
go to college and he became a pharmacist and owns a pharmacy in North Haven. Uncle Sonny worked in construction for many years and now is in the North Haven Shopping Center with his Luciani Sports store. The North Haven Shopping Center was built and is owned by four of the brothers: Adolph, Sheik, Sonny and my father. It was one of the first shopping centers built in the United States.

My dad, Guerino Arthur Luciani, started a construction company called Luciani Brothers, Inc. with his brothers Shiek and Sonny. They built the shopping center, other commercial enterprises and many houses in Woodbridge as well as surrounding towns. My dad was the President of the company and it lasted from 1947 to about 1975 when he had a mild heart attack. (He has since stopped smoking.) He retired from the building business and started a greenhouse in our backyard where he raises hanging house plants. He designed and built a solar greenhouse. He also designed many of the homes he built. He also farms the Johnson road farm now with a 'pick your own' policy.

My father also served in the armed forces in W.W.II. He was the only one of the Luciani brothers who was drafted. He served as a sargeant with the 740th tank battalion as the radio man. He kept the radios in repair through all the battles. The first battle he was in was the Battle of the Bulge. The batallion and my dad continued on until Germany was defeated. The battalion was given many unit citations - my dad received a Bronze Star. He was in Germany for six months more before returning home. About ten years later in 1956 my mother and father were married and settled in Woodbridge.

They had five kids, three boys and two girls, and I am the youngest. We live on land which was once used as pasture on my grandfather's farm.

The history of my family is vast and extensive. I have covered the history of one Luciani family that came to America. The uncovering of the settling of my family in Woodbridge was an interesting experience for me and has enabled me to learn more about my family than I ever thought about. I can truly say that I am glad I am part of this family.



New Haven

New Haven

Orange

All shaded parts are lands once owned by store Luciani

114

37

54

52

52

Center Rd

Beecher Rd

Rd

Arrows Rd

Wilam

Parilla

PA Highway

Litchfield Tp

Robert St

Rainbow St

Cross

Rd

Rd

Rd

Center Rd

Arrows Rd

Rd

Wilam

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FOOTNOTES

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