



My Late Grandfather, Pietro Lima: Prisoner of War #224

By Marianne Perry

Introduction

Canada entered World War II on Britain's side against Germany on 10 September 1939. William Lyon Mackenzie King was Prime Minister. Italy entered World War II on Germany's side in June 1940. Benito Mussolini was Prime Minister. After King authorized The Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enforce The War Measures Act, they arrested and interned residents of Italian origin suspected of undermining the war effort.

My late maternal grandfather, Pietro Lima was one of the approximately 31,000 Italian-Canadians designated "enemy aliens" by the Canadian government and the 600 interned at camps in Canada. A Canadian citizen, he was married to my late grandmother, Rose. They had four children including my late mother, Dorothy Lima Perry.

The R.C.M.P. arrested Pietro Lima, aged 41 at the family home in Toronto, Ontario on 12 June 1940. Aged 15, my mother witnessed her father's arrest. She said that authorities failed to explain to the family why they were "taking her father away."

Pietro Lima was confined to The Exhibition Buildings in Toronto under orders of Internment Operations, The Department of The Secretary of State, Canada. Referred to as Prisoner of War #224, he was interned at Camp 33-Petawawa, Ontario. On 18 December 1942, he was transferred to Camp B70-Ripples, Fredericton, New Brunswick. Pietro Lima was released on 6 February 1943.

In mid-1943, Canada joined in the invasion of Italy. Benito Mussolini was voted out of power on 25 July 1943. Italy surrendered to the Allies on 8 September 1943. Germany surrendered on 7 May 1945. On 14 August 1945, Japan surrendered. World War II ended.

Pietro Lima died, aged 81 on 1 October 1979 in Toronto, Ontario. Rose Lima died, aged 84 on 17 October 1982 in Toronto, Ontario. Though I knew my grandparents well, I understood that discussing this subject was verboten. My mother, Dorothy Perry died, aged 91 on 4 October 2016 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. She was predeceased by her siblings. Despite our close bond, she struggled to speak about it.

On 27 May 2021, the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau apologized in the House of Commons on behalf of the Canadian government for the internment of Italian-Canadians during World War II. Acknowledgment was made that none of the interned were ever charged

or convicted and that they were denied due process. The apology came without compensation.

I am a second-generation Canadian-Italian and have conducted genealogical research for 20 years. To learn about my grandfather's experience, I contacted Library and Archives Canada. I received a Custodian of Enemy Property File #2888 with documents specific to Pietro Lima. The Department of The Secretary of State, Canada had delegated responsibility for overseeing an internee's assets/businesses while interned to the Custodian.

My mother's anecdotes also informed me, plus I consulted other resources. I was unable to obtain any R.C.M.P. records and therefore, lack a full comprehension of everything that happened to my grandfather.

Who Was Pietro Lima?

Born in Trabia, Sicily on 29 June 1898, Pietro emigrated, at 16 on his own to Canada via Ellis Island, New York on 15 October 1914. His four older siblings emigrated to the USA. He settled in Ottawa, Ontario and worked as a barber. He met my late grandmother, Rose Mandia there.

Born in Termini Immerse, Sicily on 14 September 1898, Rose emigrated, aged almost two years with