

Decicco

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**THE FAMILY STORY**

**FOR ALICE DECICCO-CAREY and family**

FROM YOUR COUSIN, MICHAEL J. DECICCO

The First DeCiccoss in America

The New Bedford north end home of Vincenzo "James" DeCicco carried the rich, earthy scents of the pipe tobacco he smoked and the produce he grew, of tomatoes ripening on an old kitchen table with a faded blond finish and of grapes fresh from the arbor in the back yard that sheltered a picnic table and beach chairs, my grandparent's 'deck'. He had a broad, craggy face and a pot belly always bulging from underneath a faded plaid shirt.

When I knew him and my mother's father, John Landry, they were both in the twilight of lives that rode the waves of history they grew up in and in which they raised their children--through poverty in a new country, an economic depression, a world war. Their stories need to be told before the memory of their era disappears.

The DeCiccoss

James DeCicco came to America from the town of Gesualdo, Provincia Lavoin, Italy, around 1900 at age 18 to search for his father, who had come to the United States ten years earlier but had yet to send back for the rest of the family.

James found his father living in New Bedford, in its Italian immigrant enclave, the Holy Acre, which sat near one of the city's largest mills, the Wamsutta Mill. James and his father joined forces, took a tenement together, found jobs, and finally sent back money for my great grandmother and great aunt, James' younger sister Mary, to join them in America.

### Working and Building the Family Home

By the time James married his first wife, he and his father were working together maintaining the tracks of New Bedford's trolley company, the Union Street Railway. They would clear and repair the path of the first trolley cars of the day early every morning with picks and shovels. They also took in boarders, fellow newly-arrived Italian immigrants, to help the DeCicco family make ends meet.

They found a plot of land in the woods in the north end of New Bedford on what is now known as Appleton Street and spent their weekends building a house there--bringing bagged lunches with them and using rocks in the surrounding ground for the foundation.

After uncles Pat (who would advance to bus driver for the Union Street Railway Company) and Henry (who, at this writing, is still alive and active in his 90s) were born, James's first wife died of a sudden illness. From James' second marriage, to Roseanna Solimita, my father John was the first born, followed, in order, by Annie, Louise, Marion, your great grandfather Salvatore (Sully), Joseph and Frances. Similarly, Mary DeCicco's first husband died young and she married again to become a Colangelo, a branch of the family that lives in the same neighborhood as the original DeCicco homes.

As James DeCicco's family grew, uncle Henry went to live for a few years on a farm that great grandpa built on a street nearby, and Henry helped work that farm--a work ethic I would experience first-hand when Henry became my foreman at my first summer job.

James and his father both had farms that raised everything from cows, rabbits and chickens to grape and tomato vines and plum and apple trees. James ended up buying most of the block surrounding the house that I came to know as "grandma and grandpa's". The area is still known today as DeCicco Village; James eventually gave or sold most of the lots around his home to my uncles and aunts.