



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 Two 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 forty-one at the family home in Toronto, Ontario on 12 June 1940. Aged fifteen, 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 February 6, 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 Two ended.

Pietro Lima died, aged eighty-one on 1 October 1979 in Toronto, Ontario. Rose Lima died, aged eighty-four 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 ninety-one 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 Two. Acknowledgement 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 twenty 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 as to everything that happened to my grandfather.

Who Was Pietro Lima?

Born in Trabia, Sicily on 29 June 1898, Pietro emigrated, aged sixteen 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 Immerge, Sicily on 14 September 1898, Rose emigrated, aged almost two years with



Pietro Lima and Rose Mandia's wedding day in Ottawa, 1 October 1918.

her mother to Canada via Ellis Island, New York on 26 June 1900. The Mandia family operated a fruit and vegetable market. Pietro and Rose were married in Ottawa, Ontario on 1 October 1918.

Pietro and Rose moved to Toronto in 1919. They established and operated a wholesale and retail, fruit, groceries and vegetable

store located at 994 Bathurst Street. Their children were born in Toronto. The family lived above the store and were members of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church. Pietro was the Social Convenor at the Casa d'Italia, one of the city's local Italian clubs when he was arrested. He played bridge there regularly.

Camp 33-Petawawa, Ontario

Like most internees from central and eastern Canada, Pietro Lima was sent to Petawawa in June 1940. On 15 June 1940, the Lieut.-Colonel who served as the Assistant Director of Internment Operations informed The Official Custodian of Enemy Property, The Department of The Secretary of State, Canada that the R.C.M.P. had apprehended Pietro Lima in Toronto. After arrival at Petawawa, internees completed a Department of Justice questionnaire and were interviewed by a Judge. I was unable to secure my grandfather's records.

Camp Petawawa had barracks, dining rooms, recreation buildings, detention rooms and a hospital. Approximately 600 men including lawyers, doctors and laborers between the ages of 16-70 were interred. Internees were issued uniforms. They did road repair, camp maintenance, vegetable gardening, worked in the kitchens and infirmaries, etc. A robust man, Pietro Lima was assigned manual labor. Internees and families were permitted to correspond. Before letters were exchanged, a censor examined them and blacked out what he evaluated as inappropriate comments. There were no family visits allowed.



INTERNMENT CAMP 33, PETAWAWA, ONTARIO
PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA.
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Camp 33-Petawawa. (Library & Archives Canada)



Family Life During Pietro Lima's Internment

June 12, 1940 to February 6, 1943

As was customary at the time, the family's assets were registered in Pietro Lima's name and he managed their business and financial affairs. Since internees were forbidden to own any assets, the family lawyer had to secure the appropriate legal transfers to my grandmother, Rose. Aged forty-one at the time, she had Grade One education and scant knowledge about running the store. My mother finished Grade Nine that June then quit school to help out.

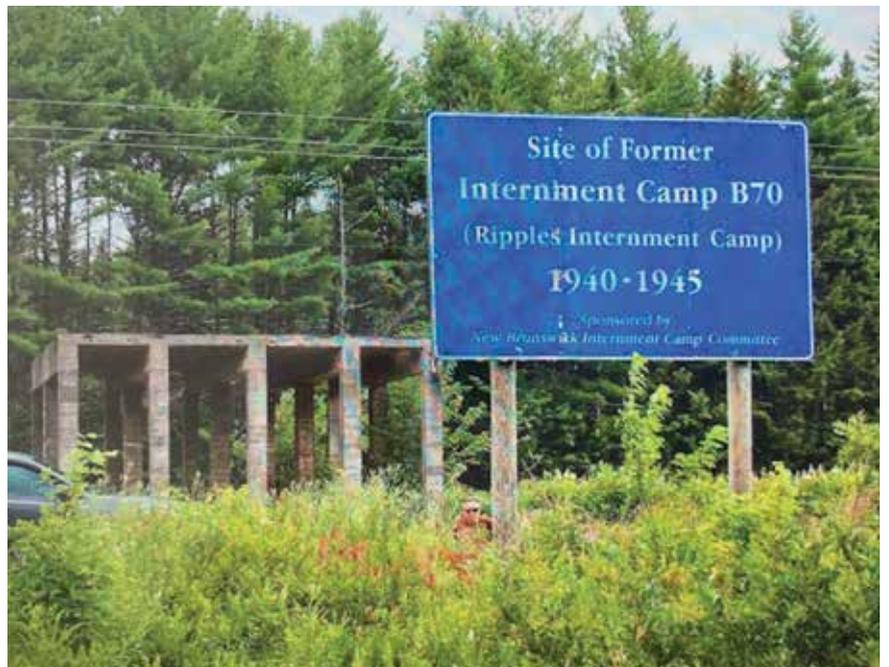
The circumstances of my grandfather's arrest and detention created tremendous upheaval in the lives of his family. The store lost many of its regular customers and friends shunned them. My mother was unable to complete her education and graduate with a secondary school diploma. Her father's absence took an emotional toll on her life. Aged fifteen when he was arrested and eighteen when released, she missed his presence terribly.

Since internees were forbidden to own assets, the family lawyer had to secure a transfer of Power of Attorney from Pietro Lima to his wife, Rose so that she could operate the store. The Department of The Secretary of State, Canada appointed Price, Waterhouse & Co., Chartered Accountants, Toronto as Inspectors for The Custodian of Enemy Property. Rose was permitted to operate the store while they investigated her husband's business affairs. Pietro Lima's bank accounts were frozen. No withdrawals were allowed without prior approval from Price Waterhouse. The same condition applied to life insurance policy transactions.



Certificate of Vesting dated November 11, 1942 (Library & Archives Canada)

Under Regulation 8 of the Regulations Respecting Trading with the Enemy (1939), the Department of The Secretary of State, Canada appointed Messrs. Price, Waterhouse & Co. in July 1940 to supervise Pietro Lima's business and financial affairs. As of 7 April 1941, Rose Lima was running the business.



Camp 70-Ripples, Fredericton, New Brunswick.
(www.unb.ca/nbmhp-database/index.php)

The Department of The Secretary of State, Canada issued a Certificate of Vesting on 11 November 1942 confirming that legal ownership of Pietro Lima's Bathurst Street property was transferred to The Custodian of Enemy Property.

Camp B70-Ripples, Fredericton, New Brunswick 18 December 1942 to 6 February 1943

Under The Defense of Canada Regulations, internees could object to their detention. Pietro Lima had objected and his request was denied. Commencing the summer of 1942, internees including Pietro Lima still considered a threat were transferred to Camp 70. Others had been released. Pietro Lima was transferred from Camp 33-Petawawa to Camp-B70 Ripples on December 18, 1942. I was unable to ascertain whether my grandfather had legal representation at his hearing, what evidence was presented against him, why his request was denied and the

reasons that he was still considered a threat.

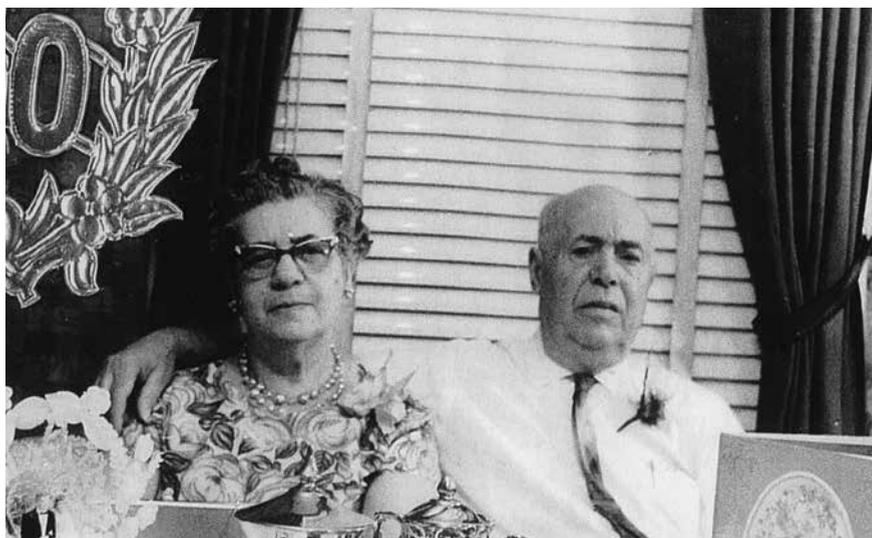
Ripples was the only Maritime WW2 internment camp. Constructed in a forested area 30 kilometers east of Fredericton, the fenced prison compound was on 15 of the 58 acres. Internees lived in barracks and were paid .20 cents daily. Pietro chopped wood for the stoves that heated the buildings. Other men were assigned kitchen and hospital duties.

Release from Internment

6 February 1943

The Minister of Justice, Canada approved Pietro Lima's conditional release from internment on 1 February 1943. As a result, he was conditionally released from Camp 70 Ripples, Fredericton, New Brunswick on 6 February 1943. I was unable to ascertain what the conditions were or why they were warranted. Pietro Lima was required to proceed to his Bathurst Street home, Toronto, Ontario. I was also unable to ascertain the special undertaking subscribed.

The Department of The Sec-



Rose and Pietro Lima on their 60th wedding anniversary. October 1, 1968, Toronto, Ontario.

retary of State, Canada approved the release of any right/interest of the Bathurst Street property to Pietro Lima in March 1943. Pietro Lima regained ownership of the Bathurst Street property and control of his business and financial affairs. Pietro Lima resumed managing the family store. My grandmother, Rose and mother, Dorothy continued to assist him. Pietro Lima and his family lived the rest of their lives without

understanding the reasons for his arrest and internment.

Count Your Blessings

Life goes on, my mother always said and, one must count their blessings. She emphasized that everyone suffered during World War Two. While the family carried the sorrow of Pietro Lima's arrest and internment to the end of their days, they found joy and laughter again. Rose and Pietro Lima danced at the 23 July 1947 Toronto wedding of my late parents, Dorothy Lima and Arnold Joseph Perry and on 1 October 1968, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

I have tried to heed my mother's advice and I am thankful that the Canadian government issued an apology. Though I wish that my mother had lived long enough to have heard it, I am grateful for the acknowledgement. ©

MARIANNE PERRY is a second generation Canadian-Italian. *The Inheritance*, a historical fiction, and *Before the Peony Died*, a soon-to-be-published mystery novel were inspired by her ancestral research. Visit www.marianneperry.ca.

a sample of resources

Library and Archives Canada, www.bac-lac.gc.ca.

Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War 2, www.italiancanadianww2.ca.

Historical timeline. On-line exhibit. Internee list. Interviews. Photographs. Resources.

Italian Canadian Community Website, www.windsor-communities.com/italian-introduction.php. List of WW2 internment camps. Questionnaire internees required to complete at Camp 33-Petawawa.

New Brunswick Military Heritage Project. (www.unb.ca/nbmhp-database/index.php) Scale model of Camp B70-Ripples. Historic trail. No buildings remaining.

New Brunswick Internment Camp Museum. www.nbinternmentcampmuseum.ca/camp-history. Maps. Visitor information.

My New Brunswick. www.mynewbrunswick.ca. Photos. Camp B70 Ripples site plan.