

## PIONEERS of AMERICA

a brief autobiography by Angeline Nino Hurd  
written in 1972

Our family originated in Italy when my father and mother were married on a September day, September 13th, 1876. While in Italy they became the parents of boys, Louis ("Uncle Louie Nino"), Charles Paul and Marion.

My father came to America to work for the new railroad that was being built from east to west. In the meantime he made 2 trips back to Italy to try and coax my mother to come to America with him, as there did not seem to be any future in Italy. Both times he came back without her. Then he took my oldest brother back with him, who was only years old, and mother soon followed with the other three.

They bought 50 acres of land ("the farm", located just east of Forest Volunteer Fire House, Route 590 E, Hawley). and soon settled on it, living with neighbors until they could get a shack built to live in until they could build the big house, and by that time they needed a big house. As from that time until the big home was ready there were more children, four girls. My oldest sister Mary ("Nanny Sartori") then me, Angeline ("Aunt Angie") and next a pair of twins girls, Elizabeth and Anna. After moving in the new home there were 3 more girls Thresa ("Rowe"), Julia ("Becker") and Jane ("Trivelpiece"). I happen to be the middle one of eleven children.

We were very very poor, but we didn't know it then.

We all went to a small country school near our farm ("at the intersection by the fire house"). We only had up to 5th grade (reader) as we called it. I was through school when I was 11 years old, with first year books borrowed from Hawley High School. We could not go to High School as we would have to pay a high tuition, and besides we would have to travel nearly 5 miles one way on very narrow dirt roads. We never had rubbers or arctics or boots no matter what the weather. In our early school days we all helped with home and farm chores.

First the land had to be cleared as it was all woodlands and rocks and infested with rattle snakes, black snakes and all kinds of snakes, but we cleared it and planted most of it.

We used to raise between 300 and 400 bushel of potatoes. All the tomatoes, beans and vegetables we needed for the winter. We would can around 2 or 3 hundred cans every summer and fall. We always sold the surplus to buy material to make our school dresses and things we needed for the home, also someone always needed a pair of shoes. And everyone had chores to do, even the youngest ones, as soon as a child could walk they could feed the dog or carry kindling. Those days there was "child labor" and any child 10 years old could get work in the Silk Mill or the Glass Factory.

My 3 oldest brothers soon got work in the Silk Mill. They earned from \$9.00 to \$12.00

per month. By the time I was old enough to go to work they had child labor laws and I had to be 15 years old. I earned \$15.00 per month. Mary went to work in a boarding house as soon as she was finished with school, and lived out.

The mill work did not agree with me and soon I developed a condition of nerves and fainting spells. After about a year or so they sent me home one day with a note saying they could not be responsible for me. So I helped out at home and soon I was helping out in the neighborhood, wherever any one needed a hand. If some one was sick or having a baby, or canning fruit, or vegetables. I did not get any pay but I made a lot of good friends which I kept for life. As I am past 81 years now, most of them have passed on. Very few are left.

My nervous condition soon took the form of convulsions and it was agreed they should call in a doctor. By this time I was almost 17 years old. Doctors were unknown at our house, as my mother delivered her own babies, all 11 of us, and we had no need for a doctor up until then. When the doctor finally came, I was in a bad spell, and after observing me for some time, told my parents there was nothing could be done for me and said I would probably die and could not possibly live very long. Along with my nerve condition I had asthma. A lady I had worked for took me to her doctor in Scranton, and he talked kindly to me, and took away some of my fears and frustrations, and gave me a very strong iron tonic, which I took over the period of 2 or more years. All the time I worked at something. I was never put to bed as most sick people usually are, and I think it was better for me to keep going if I could.

In a few years my 3 brothers were made foreman in a mill in Scranton and there was less heavy house work at home with 3 men gone, as we did all our baking, washing and churning of butter, all by hand. Besides for about 5 years we had to carry our drinking and cooking water from either of two springs, which was about 1 mile from our house. My Mother and I would take the washing there and do it in a little brook by the spring, we used to call Indian Spring as an old Indian man had a hut there for many years. We would make a fire in a formation of stones, and put our clothes boiler on the top of it and heat our water for the wash tubs, and we made a place in the brook where we could rinse out the soap, and then we only had to carry water in the tub for the last rinse. On nice days we stretched the clothes over bushes to dry, and most of the wash went home dry. I always got to rub all the stockings, and socks and believe me it was just about all I could do.

My mother did not have any education but she seemed to know how to do just about every thing that had to be done. She doctored any of us when we were sick and one time when my sister Betty broke her wrist she set it and it healed wonderfully. She made a cast from beaten egg whites and hemp rope and a few boards from a small store box made splints.

When the twins were born we were still in the little shack. The carpenters were building the big house. She asked them if they would make her another cradle, as the cradle she had was only big enough for one baby. They told her they were under contract to build the house, and they could spare neither the time, or the lumber. The next morning when they came for their tools they seen the two babies each in her own cradle, and asked who made it for her and where did she get the lumber. She told them she made it after they went home the night before, and I don't think

they ever believed her, but make it she did.

She knew all about planting, when, how and what, and pruning grape vines and trees, and just about anything that had to be done. She always sowed whatever grain we raised on the farm. We always raised our own buckwheat for winter pancakes. Them days there were grist mills and you could take your buckwheat and have it ground into flour, or rye for rye bread. There were also saw mills and the men would cut trees on the farm and haul them to a saw mill and bring back a big load of lumber. All our buildings were built with lumber from our farm, only it was green lumber, as there was no time to dry it and cure it, but some of the buildings are still standing and used.

When I got better and could go to work in a mill again, 2 of my brothers were hired as foreman in a smaller mill than the one they first worked in. They left their jobs in Scranton and one was on the night shift and one on days. By this time I went to work for the same people, and my brother was my boss. I worked for a while but I guess being caged up all day was not my nature so before s long I found myself working on the farm again and doing just about anything that had to be done. And there was a lot to be done.

By this time (1905) I was old enough to go to the parties that folks would have in the neighborhood, and one night I went with my brothers and oldest sister, and a young man. asked me if I would like to dance. I had never been to a dance and of course I did not know how. So he took me by the hand and said he would teach me. Well, it was a wonderful experience and I learned to dance very well. I also liked my teacher very much. After meeting at a few parties, we got to know each other very well and finally got going steady.

Our lives went on very much the same until we were all quite grown up. Each one contributing what each one could and gradually we could soon begin to see we were getting a home very much like the neighbors. Although we all worked long hours, we were all quite happy as a family and no one complained.

We especially enjoyed the weekends, as that was the time most neighbors got together, and soon we knew we were accepted by the crowd, and that was good.

By that time my sister Mary was married, also my brother Charles, and myself. It had been 9 years since I met the boy that taught me how to dance. So were married in the month of September on the 16th, 1914, and right after that war was declared and they closed most of the factories and work that was not necessary to the war effort.

As my husband was a glass cutter he was soon out of work. It is needless to say that our first year was a very lean one. Our first summer we had to close our home, and we took a job where we could work together. It paid very little. Together we made \$36.00 for a month plus our room and board. But at least we were together and that meant a lot to us. Then there was 2 years of just work by chance.

In the meantime my brothers had a Silk Mill in Tobyhanna and they asked Basil if he

would like to go and work for them. In the meantime I had a child, February 25, 1917. We named him Vincent and he was a very small baby when his father had to leave us to go away to work. It was a very rough experience for us, but we managed. We had bought a small old house and the baby and I stayed there by ourselves. In the meantime, my brothers built a new mill in Nanticoke and we were moved there, and once again we were together.

All this time the war was going on and on. November 11th, 1918 it was over. All during the war we were on rations. Paying big prices for the necessary food we could get with our cards, and there were a great many things you could not buy at all, as it was against the law.

In 1920 on January 1st, I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. We named her Helene Jeanette (McHale). When she was about three months old her father took sick and died. About a year after he died my little boy, Vincent, took sick and he passed away. That left me and my baby girl alone.

When she grew up she married a very wonderful man. They had two girls and a son. They are all married now, with families of their own.

Now my daughter Helene is taking care of me. God bless her. If I live until September 4, 1981 I will be 90 years of age, and that's not young.