

93rd Annual Devotion to St. Joseph -- Festival

Approximately 25,000 attended the Labor Day Weekend 93rd St. Joseph Festival, which opened August 31st at 6 p.m., with rides, games, entertainment, super 50-50 with a \$10,000 winner, and the "Best Italian Food." This annual program benefits the St. Joseph Church operating fund.

On September 1st, 2nd and 3rd, starting at 9 a.m., there were Processions by the St. Joseph Society with Italian Feast Band -- throughout Lodi and surrounding towns.

The Band was the Tony Neglia Band of Local 248 Musicians Union, Paterson, NJ. They have been playing this Festival for over 50 years.

The Band formed up at St. Joseph Church at 9 a.m. and played the "Star Spangled Banner" and the "Italian National Anthem."

Society members and The Band split into three groups and held Processions starting at various points in Lodi, covering a majority of the streets in Lodi and surrounding towns such as Garfield and Hasbrouck Heights.

Each group went out with a "stenardo" (banner) of Saint Joseph. Each door bell at every house was rung and the band would play favorite songs such as "Mamma," "Oh Marie," "Santa Lucia," etc.

The highlight of the Feast is a Solemn Procession of St. Joseph throughout Lodi on Labor Day at 3 p.m.

Society members took the Statue of St. Joseph from the Church and set it on the float. They decorated the St. Joseph statue with blue ribbons and flowers. Seven children, who made their First Communion this year, rode on the float. The float also held a Society member who would accept donations and pin them to the blue ribbon.

Originally, the stand which supports the statue was supported by long poles and carried on the shoulders by the Society. It was converted into a float in the '30's.

The procession was led by the Lodi Police Department, a color guard, St. Joseph Society members, St. Anthony Society, San Pio Prayer Group, Sacred Heart of Jesus Society (all from Garfield) and Immaculate Conception Society from Lodi,

altar boys and clergy; the St. Joseph Float was followed by over 100 laity, at times saying The Rosary. In the past, some women would make this devotion barefoot.

Traditionally, during the Procession, two homes at Arnot and at Charles, set out refreshments.

Upon the completion of the Procession, the statue was returned to St. Joseph Church, and there was a Benediction.

For the past 93 years, this Festival has been a parish affair. The food court, games and raffles are organized and operated by the parishioners, with all of the profits donated to the Church.

These booths have been family operated for generations. For example, the Palumbo/Esposito Families have about 30 members who work the sausage sandwich booth. Charles Palumbo started this family tradition when he was 14 years old, when the Festival began.

There are a few outside vendors and the amusements are contracted. ###

St. Joseph Society

The St. Joseph Society was founded on December 7th, 1915 by Italian immigrants from various towns in Sicily devoted to St. Joseph.

Their mission was to have a place of worship in honor of their patron saint to be located in Lodi, New Jersey.

The founding fathers worked together to help build the first St. Joseph Church in 1917.

Each member took out a personal loan to help contribute financially and did the actual work in building the first St. Joseph Church.

Labor Day is a national holiday here in the United States. The Society decided that what better holiday to celebrate the life of St. Joseph since he was a laborer. So, the idea was born to host a Feast in honor of St. Joseph during Labor Day Weekend.

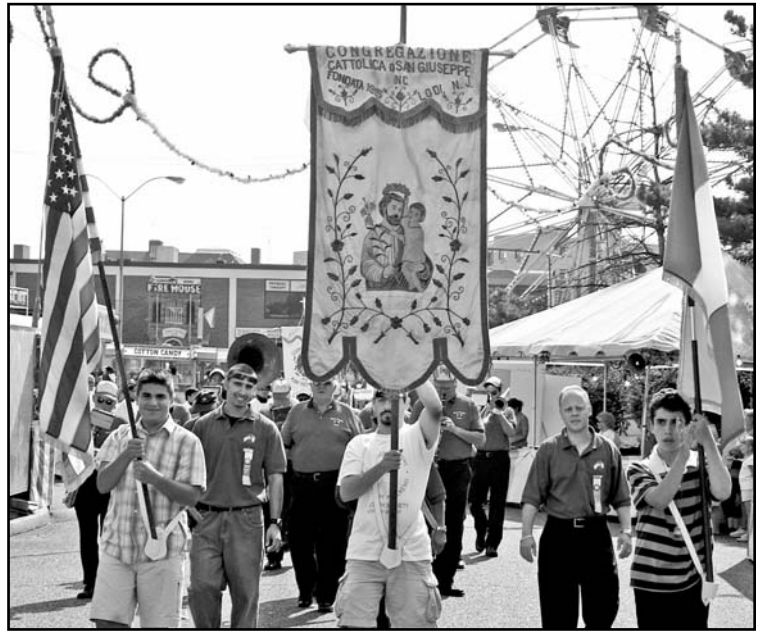
The Feast activities were to include rides, games, Italian food specialties and nightly entertainment.

The highlight of the Feast would be the Procession which would be held on Labor Day in the afternoon followed by a

Benediction. Ninety two years later, this is still the case. It is still a large success and well known event in Northern New Jersey.

The St. Joseph Society was once a strong group having close to 100 members during the 1940's to the 1960's.

The decision was made to hand over the majority of the Feast responsibility to the Church. Hiring the rides, games, and food would be the Church's responsibility. The entertainment would be the Society's, in addition to the tradition of collections during the Feast weekend and Procession. ###



St. Joseph Society leads the procession throughout Lodi. Area societies also join in this Procession.



Society member Domenico LaSpisa prepares for the Procession.



St. Joseph Society takes the float throughout Lodi.



Society Treasurer Giuseppe Pagano prepares the Statue.



St. Joseph Society President Antonino Pollaro with his 3 month old daughter, Laura.



St. Joseph Society members.



The original St. Joseph Statue base.



Tony Neglia Band has been the Festival Band for over 50 years.



Palumbo/Esposito family have worked the Festival for 93 years. All profits are donated to St. Joseph Church.



Dennis Esposito displaying the Festival memorabilia that he donated to the Society.