**Kate:** Good afternoon, this Kate Moore for The National Park Service. Today is the 5th of January 1994 and I’m in Atwater Ohio at the home of Filomena Latta who came from Italy in 1921 when she was 7 years old. Why don’t you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Filomena:** My name is Filomena Latta. I was born on November 5th 1913.

**Kate:** Where were you born?

**Filomena:** In Campora Italy, C-A-M-P-O-R-A.

**Kate:** What was your maiden name?

**Filomena:** Filomena Roberto, R-O-B-E-R-T-O.

**Kate:** What size town was your hometown?

**Filomena:** It was about … it had about 1,500 people at the time that we lived there. It’s a much smaller place now.

**Kate:** Where exactly was that town situated?

**Filomena:** It was south of Solano.

**Kate:** South of Solano, I see. What did the town look like exactly?

**Filomena:** It was a town of the middle ages. It had a big castle up on the hill that they called a palace and then there was a big church. It was on a hill by the way and it sloped down to level ground. The houses then were around it. They were all Mediterranean-type houses more like row houses are here.

**Kate:** What was the major industry of that town?

**Filomena:** They were all farmers except for a lawyer and a doctor and two priests.

**Kate:** What was your father’s name?

**Filomena:** Carminie Roberto, C-A-R-M-I-N-I-E.

**Kate:** What was his occupation?

**Filomena:** Well, he was here most of the time. He never lived there very long. He went with his father to Brazil when he was 11 years old. They stayed there for five years and when they came back, they came over here and he stayed here seven or eight years I think. Then he went back to do his stint in the army. After he got out, he came back here again.

**Kate:** What did he do in Brazil and then in the…?

**Filomena:** In Brazil, they worked for a coffee plantation and he picked coffee.

**Kate:** What did he do in the States?

**Filomena:** In the States, he worked for different factories mostly but he also worked for the railroad a few years. Later on, he went on his own after we bought our place and he started a track garden. He raised strawberries and we also had an orchid.

**Kate:** You said … which railroad did he work for?

**Filomena:** The Pennsylvania.

**Kate:** The Pennsylvania Railroad?

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** What was his personality? Describe your father, what did he look like? What was his personality?

**Filomena:** Well, he was a tall man. Most people didn’t think that he looked Italian. When I was very young, he was a very strict man but he softened up. He was an honest man and he worked very hard. Also, he was very much interested in literature and education. I think he was the one that really got us all to go on to school.

**Kate:** If you have anecdote … do you have any story you’d pass on about your father that’s amusing or typifies him?

**Filomena:** Yes, when we had been here about the six months that first year that we were here, he had been here before we were, he had stroke but he started to improve right away. But that winter, we had a very hard winter because we didn’t have much money. He didn’t have the social services then that you have now but it didn’t really get him down. He would tell us stories. He kept us amused all winter long. He had read a lot and he told us stories all winter long. That’s the type of man that he was.

**Kate:** What was your mother’s name?

**Filomena:** Sabatina, S-A-B-A-T-I-N-A Carone, C-A-R-O-N-E was her maiden name.

**Kate:** What was her occupation?

**Filomena:** Housewife.

**Kate:** Took care of the kids. What did she look like?

**Filomena:** She was very small with black hair and sort of greenish-blue eyes. She was always on the go. She never weighed more than 100 pounds in all her life. But she was really the head of the family because she could get things done.

**Kate:** She was a very …

**Filomena:** One thing about my father, he was very straight. Generally, if you asked him first you wanted to go somewhere, she would say no. But if you went to her first and told her you wanted to go some place, she said, “Well I think you can go,” she said, “But we’ll have to ask your father.” Of course, she knew how to ask him.

**Kate:** What chores did she have around the house? Did she have help or did she…?

**Filomena:** Oh, no, no, we did all the work and also outdoors. We also helped with the strawberries and the fruit trees and all of the plants and the animals that we had.

**Kate:** Give a story that you associate with your mom.

**Filomena:** I can’t really think of any when she was young. Now, she was senile in her old age and very hard to take care of because she was still very fast and always on the go. One morning I had her all by myself. My sisters were still teaching and there was no one else to help me that morning. By nine o'clock, she was already driving me crazy.

I just sat her down on the sofa and I said, “Mother, you have to be good because I can’t take this.” She says, “Well, you know that you should have patience with me because I’m crazy, I’m not in my right mind.” For a little while, she was good but in a minute or so, she was back to her old ways, she was still on the go.

**Kate:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**Filomena:** I have five brothers and two sisters.

**Kate:** Could you name them in order?

**Filomena:** Oh, sure. Angelo was my oldest brother and then I was next. Then there was Rose and then Dominic then [inaudible 00:06:35], then Virginia and then there were twins, Nicholas and Amerco.

**Kate:** What house did you live … going back to Italy since you came as a child, what do you remember about your house?

**Filomena:** Well, my father wasn’t there during most of the time that we were there. First, he was over here and then he was in the army after that. Until I was five years old, I didn’t know him. But we lived with our grandfather and our grandmother and there was also our aunt Rose, who wasn’t married at the time and my brother and I and our mother of course.

**Kate:** Whose grandparents did you live with?

**Filomena:** My father’s.

**Kate:** Your father’s parents you lived with?

**Filomena:** Uh-huh.

**Kate:** Did your mother’s parents live nearby?

**Filomena:** They lived nearby but they really didn’t get along with my father’s family. They never came to our house but we always went to their house. We were invited to all their affairs and all that and of course, my father’s parents didn’t care too much for them either.

**Kate:** When you think back to that house that was your father’s parents house that you lived in for the first years, what do you remember about it?

**Filomena:** I remember everything because I saw it just five years ago again. You went into a big kitchen that had a bench and a huge fireplace because they cooked in a fireplace. Then going off the kitchen in one way was my grandparents’ room and the other way was my mother’s room and we slept with her during those early years.

Then downstairs there was a room where my aunt used to sleep. Upstairs there was another big room where the boys used to sleep. Only there weren’t any boys in there. They fought The War.

**Kate:** I see, and The War being which?

**Filomena:** The First World War.

**Kate:** First World War. What was the house made of? Was it …?

**Filomena:** Stone.

**Kate:** It was a stone house. How was it heated?

**Filomena:** By the fireplace.

**Kate:** By the fireplace.

**Filomena:** They cooked by the fireplace, they baked by the fireplace and it was also heated. But of course, you didn’t need much heat there.

**Kate:** Right, what about how it was lit?

**Filomena:** Well, in the first years, it was lit by an oil lamp. But we were the first house in town to get electricity so in our last years, we had electricity.

**Kate:** How were you the first house to get it?

**Filomena:** Because we were the first house in town. Across from our house was a big park, so when they came in, they started with the first house and then went on up.

**Kate:** Was there a garden?

**Filomena:** No, it’s more like a city, more like a rural house in the city.

**Kate:** Was the house … so it was in town?

**Filomena:** All the houses there were in town. They went out to work in their fields.

**Kate:** All right and what kind of furniture do you remember that the house had?

**Filomena:** I remember the big beds and I remember the bench in the kitchen and the table and not much else really.

**Kate:** Did you have any animals though at home?

**Filomena:** No, not at home.

**Kate:** Who else lived in that building of your house? Was it just your family or?

**Filomena:** Just our family.

**Kate:** Who did the cooking in the family?

**Filomena:** My grandmother.

**Kate:** Your grandmother, and what was your favorite food?

**Filomena:** Macaroni. Except at Christmas when they really went all out and baked all sorts of cookies and things and it was nice.

**Kate:** Basically, you were a macaroni kind of…?

**Filomena:** Yes. Of course, I had a lot of vegetables and a lot of food too but not much meat.

**Kate:** Could you describe the kitchen again?

**Filomena:** Yes, the only thing that there was in the kitchen was that big fireplace that took a whole wall, almost … well, bigger than this [inaudible 00:10:33] bench and a table. That’s about all that was in the kitchen.

**Kate:** What was mealtime like? How many meals did you eat and did you eat together or apart or?

**Filomena:** Well, breakfast in Mediterranean countries is generally just bread and coffee or milk or something like that. Lunch was more like bread and cheese and fruit. Then supper, what we called supper, was more of vegetables and if you had any meat, you had it then. Generally you had fruit a lot, vegetables a lot.

**Kate:** Did you eat together?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes, expect of course at noon. Generally, those … my mother, my aunt and my grandfather were out working in the fields.

**Kate:** What fields were they?

**Filomena:** You mean what did they grow?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Filomena:** Meat and all kinds of vegetables. I can’t remember much more than that.

**Kate:** Were you especially close to any particular family member?

**Filomena:** My grandmother.

**Kate:** Your grandmother and this was your father’s mother?

**Filomena:** My father’s mother, yes. I’m named for her too by the way.

**Kate:** Oh yeah, and how would you describe her? Why were you close to her?

**Filomena:** She was always so very nice. No matter what you did, she sort of approved of it. She was really the kind that approved of everything you did. You were wonderful and that was that. I liked that.

**Kate:** Do you know any anecdotes about your grandmother, anything they tell about her that’s typical of her?

**Filomena:** The thing that they tell about her, it really isn’t very nice but it didn’t bother me. She was always getting into debt. They lived well but they were very poor. That’s the reason my father and my grandfather went to Brazil to work because they were in debt and they had to pay those debts off somehow so that’s what they tell me. My mother didn’t like her at all by the way.

**Kate:** So she spent money?

**Filomena:** Oh, she spent money recklessly as if she had it but that didn’t bother me.

**Kate:** What about religious life?

**Filomena:** We were catholic of course. My mother’s two uncles were priests in the town. They were my grandmother’s … mother’s, mother’s brothers. But we really weren’t that religious. We didn’t go to church as often as we should have except that I had Aunt Rose and she was very religious. She used to come home from work, get herself dressed and get me dressed up and off to church we’d go. She and I were generally the only ones that went to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

**Kate:** But did you go during the week at all?

**Filomena:** She did. Well, yeah, often during the week.

**Kate:** You went?

**Filomena:** Yeah, to the evening services.

**Kate:** Did your mother go or?

**Filomena:** No, my mother didn’t go. I don’t know how she got away with it.

**Kate:** Was the church nearby?

**Filomena:** Not far, it’s maybe a block away. Everything was close together there.

**Kate:** So you walked [inaudible 00:13:48]?

**Filomena:** Oh, we always walked, yeah.

**Kate:** What about the church, could you describe it?

**Filomena:** I’ve seen it recently several times and it’s a small church but a very pretty church. When we were young, when I was there then, they didn’t have the pews that they … they do have them now so you just stood or you kneeled all the time. What else was there?

**Kate:** Did they teach you at home prayers to say at night? Did you say any prayers or anything?

**Filomena:** No, no, I never did.

**Kate:** Did you ever experience any religious persecution or a prejudice for being your religion?

**Filomena:** No, never.

**Kate:** Okay and you mentioned Christmas, what was your favorite holiday?

**Filomena:** Christmas of course.

**Kate:** What was that like?

**Filomena:** We always went to church in the morning. I think even my mother went then and then we had the big Christmas dinner and then in the afternoon, it was customary to go and visit at all your relatives’ house so we went to my other grandmother’s house and we went to her- my mother had a lot of uncles and aunts. We used to go to all of those houses and of course, everywhere you went, they fed you and always those delicious things. It was really very nice. I always looked forward to it.

**Kate:** What about gift giving at Christmas?

**Filomena:** No, there was no gift giving.

**Kate:** Any other special music there was or?

**Filomena:** Only at church.

**Kate:** Only at church, right. What about school life, did you go to school?

**Filomena:** I did start school. My father came back from the war and I was five years old and he determined that I should go to school. I remember my mother taking me in, she bought the book that I needed. We sat at big benches and I hadn’t wanted to go to school but I listened to the other children, everyone was on a different page.

They each went at their own speed. It came to my turn and I had listened to the person next to me and I started to read that. Of course, the teacher said, “You can’t read.”

I had two cousins that were a year older than I was and we were good friends all the time. We played around all the time but when we went to school, they acted as if they’d never seen me before and I hated school more than ever. In time, I got up to my mother and she let me quit. She said, “Well, we are going to America anyhow and you can go to school there.

I think my schooling lasted about two months I think, maybe less than that. I didn’t learn to read.

**Kate:** Did you learn any English before coming to America.

**Filomena:** No, my grandfather had been here and the only word I’d learnt was candy, I loved candy. That’s the only word he ever taught me and that’s the only word that I did know.

**Kate:** You said your father came back from the First World War, do you remember the day he came back?

**Filomena:** No, I don’t, although I remember when my uncles came back. That’s a strange thing. I think he must have come back during the night and my brother and I were not the least bit glad to see him. We didn’t know him and of course he started to discipline us, we weren’t used to that.

**Kate:** Yeah, I see.

**Filomena:** He had a hard time with us.

**Kate:** At the beginning or always?

**Filomena:** I think always in a certain way, we were the ones that rebelled. The other children all got along fine.

**Kate:** Is it that had to do with you not knowing him when you were …?

**Filomena:** I think it was that because I can’t imagine anything else.

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment back when you were a little kid there? What kind of games did you play and … or did you?

**Filomena:** I don’t really remember many games that we played. Although I was with my friends, those two cousins and other cousins all the time but I don’t remember what we did. We must have played games, I just don’t remember them.

**Kate:** You’ve been in contact with those cousins since?

**Filomena:** Only one of them.

**Kate:** What stories do you tell to each other about that time?

**Filomena:** I told her about the time that she slighted me at school. She didn’t remember it. I told her about the hard time that she gave me. No, she didn’t remember it

**Kate:** Do you remember the discussion about coming to America?

**Filomena:** A little bit.

**Kate:** What do you- the first remembrance you have of that?

**Filomena:** I know that before I was born, my father had intended for my mother after he married to come over here but she didn’t want to come, she didn’t want to lose her family. Her family was very much against her coming, so they didn’t come then. He had tried several times to get her to come and she didn’t really care for it.

Then we had the flu of 1918 and after that, a lot of the animals died. They had a very hard time and so she came back one morning quite discouraged and she said to my father, “Let’s go.” He didn’t wait for her to change her mind. He went to Naples that very day and got ready to come.

**Kate:** You think he came back because she did not want to go to America?

**Filomena:** Yes, that’s the only reason he came back.

**Kate:** Your father knew someone in America already, did he have a …?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes. He had cousins and other people from our town. The reason we came to this particular town is because there were people that he knew here already.

**Kate:** When they decided to go, who paid for the tickets? How did they pay for the tickets?

**Filomena:** My father paid.

**Kate:** So he had earned money. When he came back to Italy, had he earned money in the States?

**Filomena:** Well, they had some money saved up. They had my mother’s dowry saved up so they had money to come.

**Kate:** Once your mother said, “Let’s go,” and your father went and got the tickets, what-

**Filomena:** Well, he came alone that time and then she got ready to come. She was pregnant and was expecting a child. She wouldn’t want to come before the child was born and so it was about nine months or so after that I think before she came.

**Kate:** But what led up to that? What do you remember of the preparations, packing, do you remember any of those things?

**Filomena:** A very interesting thing happened. She had this trunk and she had a lot of very nice things from her [inaudible 00:20:36]. I remember packing that trunk and also, I remember her selling a lot of things that she had. She had a lot of olive oil and all sorts of things like that and giving away other things that she didn’t want to sell.

**Kate:** What about you and your toys or anything? What did you pack for yourself?

**Filomena:** I just had one doll.

**Kate:** You took that with you?

**Filomena:** No, my brother ripped it.

**Kate:** He ripped it before you...

**Filomena:** Yes, he tore it apart, I was so mad at him. I didn’t really have anything.

**Kate:** Do you remember leaving Italy and the family sending you off?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes.

**Kate:** What was that like?

**Filomena:** We had dinner I remember with different members of the family before we came and I remember the morning that we left. My mother’s brother came with us and someone else, a relative of my uncle, he wasn’t related to ... oh, his father in law came with us and of course, my uncle was going with us.

We had to walk to the nearest town because there wasn’t a bus or anything from our town at the time. We got the train there to Naples.

**Kate:** How far was that walk?

**Filomena:** Four or five miles I imagine.

**Kate:** Who carried the trunk?

**Filomena:** Someone did, I don’t remember who it was. I think they brought it on the donkey in fact.

**Kate:** You had a donkey and the walk?

**Filomena:** And the walk.

**Kate:** Right, to the train?

**Filomena:** To the train, yes.

**Kate:** What was your reaction with your grandparents about leaving? Do you remember anything?

**Filomena:** My mother’s father was very upset about it. He really didn’t want her to leave. Of course, my other grandmother had died the flu epidemic of 1918 and her husband, my grandfather that we had lived with, remarried so to him it wasn’t much. So just our grandfather and grandmother on my mother’s side were really upset. They hadn’t wanted her to go anywhere.

**Kate:** Was your mother upset, do you remember?

**Filomena:** No, I don’t think she was very much. She had made up her mind to go. She wasn’t going to live there any longer. She was ready to go.

**Kate:** Did you take any food with you?

**Filomena:** Yeah, I think they took cheese and wine and bread and some things like that because I know we had things ... and oranges I remember.

**Kate:** Did your mother take any special belongings? She took that trunk.

**Filomena:** Well, that trunk had her special belongings, the nicest things from her [inaudible 00:23:22] and her best clothes, her wedding dress was in it. Of course, she had her jewelry but she took that separate from it.

**Kate:** You went on the train, where did the train go from, do you remember?

**Filomena:** Yes, it’s the nearest town to our town that’s a town of any size. It’s called Vallo Della Lucania

**Kate:** Can you spell that?

**Filomena:** Vallo is V-A-L-L-O D-E L-U-C-A-N-O.

**Kate:** You took a train to where then?

**Filomena:** To Naples.

**Kate:** To Naples, and where was your port of departure?

**Filomena:** Naples.

**Kate:** Did you have to stay overnight in Naples?

**Filomena:** Yes, we stayed there several days.

**Kate:** With whom?

**Filomena:** In a hotel.

**Kate:** In a hotel, and do you remember was that fun or?

**Filomena:** Yes, because we took those ... well, they were riding buggies, carriages I guess you’d call them and we were taken throughout Naples. We went to see the ship in the port and it was a lot of fun. It’s all so new to me, I’d never seen anything like that before.

**Kate:** How was your uncle and your mother? Were they in good spirits?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes.

**Kate:** So they were looking forward to the trip?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes.

**Kate:** What was the name of the ship?

**Filomena:** Apatria, P-A-T-R-I-A.

**Kate:** Did any family member see you off? Did anyone come?

**Filomena:** Yes, my uncle’s father in law and my mother’s brother, they stayed with us until we went aboard the ship.

**Kate:** Was that like a big party then?

**Filomena:** No, not really, we just went on.

**Kate:** What was the month and year the ship departed?

**Filomena:** March 1921.

**Kate:** When you got on the ship, what were the accommodations like?

**Filomena:** My mother thought that she would have a whole cabin to herself. She didn’t know ... and here was like a big dorm. She thought she’d have her trunk with her but that of course was put ... I don’t know where they put it, some place because when we got here to the States and got to New Milford where we came, the trunk came about a day after we got there.

She opened it and practically everything was gone. They’d left her wedding dress and they’d left a beautiful blanket that she had. I remember a nightgown and I don’t think there was much else.

**Kate:** What was her reaction?

**Filomena:** She was really heartbroken at that because they were things that they had made. In fact, her father had raised the flax to make the sheets and linens and so forth.

**Kate:** Okay, we’ll go back to that room a bit. Al right, so those dormitories that you slept, what class was it?

**Filomena:** I think it was ... didn’t the immigrants have ...

**Kate:** Third class?

**Filomena:** It had to be third class, it couldn’t have been worse. It was especially bad for my mother because she had those two babies. At Palermo, a woman got on from ... a Sicilian got on. She was coming here to marry somebody. She couldn’t stand those kids. But there was another really nice woman who ... I think she got on at Naples, who really helped my mother with them. She had lost the baby and she was coming here to join her husband. That helped a little bit but it was a nightmare for my mother that whole trip.

**Kate:** What about eating in the dining room?

**Filomena:** No, you didn’t eat in a dining room. I remember we ate on the deck most of the time.

**Kate:** You ate your own food or did you...?

**Filomena:** Oh, no, they gave us the food.

**Kate:** What was the food like?

**Filomena:** Not much. I don’t really remember to tell you the truth but it couldn’t have been much.

**Kate:** You were allowed then on deck, did you remember playing?

**Filomena:** Oh, we were always on deck practically all the time.

**Kate:** Because it was a nightmare below?

**Filomena:** That’s right, it was a lot nicer on deck.

**Kate:** What did you see on the deck or hear or smell?

**Filomena:** People, not much else, look at the ocean.

**Kate:** Were the people predominantly Italian or were there other...?

**Filomena:** I think they were. I think they were all Italian.

**Kate:** What about the trip, was the trip rough or smooth?

**Filomena:** It was March, in the North Atlantic, it’s terrible in March and so ... at night we were in the middle of the ocean when we had a really terrible storm. I remember we were on deck and the sailors came and got us all back into the dorm let’s call it.

The water was so high that it even came down in there, in the isle, not in the room itself. It was really ... I know some women, they were praying. I don’t know whether they expected their prayer I suppose to help the storm.

**Kate:** Was the ship rocking...?

**Filomena:** It was bad, very bad, yes.

**Kate:** Were people sick, do you remember?

**Filomena:** Yes, well, a lot of them were seasick anyhow.

**Kate:** The majority of people, had they ever seen water before?

**Filomena:** I have no idea. My mother hadn’t but my uncle had.

**Kate:** Did you become sick?

**Filomena:** No, I don’t think children do very often become seasick. I’ve been seasick later in years but not then.

**Kate:** How long was that voyage?

**Filomena:** About 21 days.

**Kate:** 21 days, and did you come through Canada or did you come...?

**Filomena:** Oh, we came through Boston, we landed in Boston.

**Kate:** Did you come to Ellis Island after?

**Filomena:** No, we were supposed to land in Philadelphia and my father came there to meet us but for some reason ... I’ve heard that there was a quarantine, they were thinking about quarantining the ship so they didn’t let it land at Philadelphia, they sent it on to New York. That’s when we were at Ellis Island

**Kate:** Quarantined for what? Do you know?

**Filomena:** I have no idea.

**Kate:** But were there people sick on boat?

**Filomena:** There were a lot of people seasick but when they are in their cabin, you don’t see them.

**Kate:** Do you remember having any medical examination before you went to the boat?

**Kate:** Where did you have that?

**Filomena:** In Naples.

**Kate:** In Naples, and how thorough was the examination? Do you know?

**Filomena:** Not very I don’t think.

**Kate:** But you had your papers?

**Filomena:** Yeah, I think they always do examine immigrants from their place of getting on board.

**Kate:** If you were going to describe a story about that voyage as a child, what do you remember most?

**Filomena:** The storm really.

**Kate:** The storm? So you were frightened?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes.

**Kate:** How about your mother?

**Filomena:** She was too, I think everybody was. The ship was bouncing around so much and people were sick and with those two babies. Seeing other people scared I think scares you too especially when you are a child.

**Kate:** Were you able to play on deck at all?

**Filomena:** Oh, sure, we could if we wanted to run around and...

**Kate:** Were there any other activities on the boat?

**Filomena:** No, no.

**Kate:** Was it very crowded, the boat conditions?

**Filomena:** Well, they were down where we were. I think they were quite crowded, yes but on deck, it wasn’t crowded.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing land for the first time?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** No, did you ever see the Statue of Liberty?

**Filomena:** I probably did but didn’t notice it. I don’t remember seeing it.

**Kate:** How did you get ... did you go through Ellis Island?

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** How did you get from the ship ... wait a minute, let’s go back. You probably didn’t see land. Do you remember any reaction to seeing land on board?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Do you remember getting off the boat?

**Filomena:** I don’t remember getting off the boat or getting back on the boat but I can remember that we went to that huge building, which of course, I didn’t know that it was Ellis Island. That’s what I remember about it.

**Kate:** What do you remember about that huge building?

**Filomena:** I remember that we were examined there.

**Kate:** What happened, were you frightened by that or?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Was there any worry by the people that they wouldn’t pass?

**Filomena:** If there is, they certainly didn’t tell me.

**Kate:** What type of examination did you have?

**Filomena:** I think it was quite thorough. I remember that some women ... I saw some naked women that they must have examined but outside of that, I really don’t remember too much. I remember a lot of women and children there in that big hall.

**Kate:** What were you and your family wearing? What were you wearing at that time, clothing?

**Filomena:** I have no idea.

**Kate:** You don’t remember that. What did your mother feel about Ellis Island? Did she ever talk about it later?

**Filomena:** No, she thought the whole journey was something terrible. You couldn’t have got her on a boat after that.

**Kate:** It was not a pleasant experience?

**Filomena:** No, it certainly wasn’t.

**Kate:** What about the Ellis Island experience, did she think that was bad too?

**Filomena:** I think so. I don’t think she cared for anything at all concerning it.

**Kate:** Was Ellis Island crowded? Do you remember?

**Filomena:** Yes, I think it was quite crowded.

**Kate:** Was it clean?

**Filomena:** As far as I could tell it was.

**Kate:** Were your treated well by the people there?

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** Did everyone have the same medical examination? Do you know?

**Filomena:** No, I don’t.

**Kate:** What did they exactly do in that medical examination? I’m trying to see...

**Filomena:** I don’t really remember that much. I know that I never took my clothes off. I think they just looked at me and let me go.

**Kate:** Were you ever detained there?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** How long did you stay?

**Filomena:** I think it was just for the exam and then we went right back.

**Kate:** Did you have any food there?

**Filomena:** No, not that I remember.

**Kate:** Where did you sleep that night?

**Filomena:** We were back on the ship.

**Kate:** You were back on the boat. Okay, are there any stories in your head associated with Ellis Island that your mother told or your uncle told, anyone?

**Filomena:** They never mentioned it again.

**Kate:** Was there any entertainment there?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Okay, now when you got to Boston then, you went back on the boat...

**Filomena:** And went to Boston.

**Kate:** And went to Boston so you got off the boat in Boston?

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** Was your father or anyone there to meet you?

**Filomena:** He was there but they wouldn’t let him on the ship. He had to wait until we got off. That’s where he met us.

**Kate:** Did your mother know any English before going?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Did your uncle?

**Filomena:** Yes, he had been here before.

**Kate:** He was able to speak English.

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** How about your brother?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** You?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Candy?

**Filomena:** Candy.

**Kate:** What was our mother’s expectations about America? What do you think or your father’s and mother’s?

**Filomena:** Oh, my father knew because he had been here several times but I don’t ... she never said really. I don’t remember her ever saying that she expected this or that or...?

**Kate:** When your father came to get you in Boston then, where did he take you then?

**Filomena:** To the railroad station to get on the train to come to Ohio.

**Kate:** To Ohio, and where in Ohio did you come to?

**Filomena:** New Milford, it’s right about five miles from here.

**Kate:** You got there by train? Do you remember anything about that train trip?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes, it was wonderful.

**Kate:** What was wonderful?

**Filomena:** We could run a long in the aisles and there was a water fountain at one end. It was fun to just go and take a drink of water and then run. My father of course, would buy things as people came along so we ate most of the way over.

**Kate:** When you got to West Milford...

**Filomena:** New Milford.

**Kate:** New Milford, sorry. When you got there, who was waiting for you there?

**Filomena:** My uncle. I had an uncle ... I had twin uncles and one of them was already here and he came to meet us.

**Kate:** How did he meet you? How did he pick you up from the train station?

**Filomena:** Well, we were just a short distance from the train station. We just walked there.

**Kate:** So you walked?

**Filomena:** Yeah, it was just a short walk.

**Kate:** Do you remember anything different you saw for the first time?

**Filomena:** It’s a strange thing coming from a mountainous place and here was a plain and it didn’t strike me at all. It seemed natural. As far as I know, it never made any impression on me.

**Kate:** What about things like cars? Were they different things, different...?

**Filomena:** Well, they were still having horses and buggies over here then too so that wasn’t too different.

**Kate:** Right, what about anything to eat that was different, anything that was that was...?

**Filomena:** No, because my aunt was still cooking Italian style.

**Kate:** There was no foods here...

**Filomena:** Well, there was plenty of candy of course. There was a candy store down the way and there were bananas that I had never had before either. That’s the only new thing that I really remember. We had never had bananas where we lived in Italy. We had oranges and all kinds of fruits but not bananas.

**Kate:** Did you like them?

**Filomena:** Yes, I still like them.

**Kate:** I interviewed somebody yesterday that said they hated them from then. What about the house that you were brought into? Whose house was it and...?

**Filomena:** It was a house that my uncle rented. We had the upstairs, there were three bedrooms there. He and his wife ... and they had a baby. The day after we got there, his wife had a baby and they had the downstairs. It had a plot of ground around it I remember.

**Kate:** Was it a wooden house?

**Filomena:** It was a wooden house, yes.

**Kate:** Could you describe it, what kind of wooden house? Was it like a ... with a porch?

**Filomena:** It had a front porch I remember and it had a back porch. It had a big kitchen and a living room and a dining room and two bedrooms downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs.

**Kate:** It was quite a large house.

**Filomena:** It was quite a large house, yes.

**Kate:** How was it furnished?

**Filomena:** Just regular, ordinary, nothing much, I don’t think. I don’t remember that part.

**Kate:** How was it lit?

**Filomena:** Electricity.

**Kate:** Electricity, and was there indoor plumbing?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Was there indoor plumbing back in Italy in that house you lived in?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** So when you came here, you had outside facilities?

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** What about the neighborhood? What was that like?

**Filomena:** Well, there wasn’t any house near there. It was country and the houses were rather far apart, not too close together. I remember there was a store, a grocery store not too far away and a post office.

**Kate:** Were there many other Italian people in the area?

**Filomena:** Well, we came here because we did have as I said, some Italians. There were around eight families that was all together and we came from the same town.

**Kate:** How many families, eight?

**Filomena:** About eight.

**Kate:** Did you get along well with your nearest neighbors?

**Filomena:** Oh, they were very near and yes, we got along fine.

**Kate:** What job did your father...?

**Filomena:** My father was working on the railroad then.

**Kate:** He got a job with Pennsylvania Railroad...

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** When he first came here. And what did he do on the Pennsylvania Railroad?

**Filomena:** They just put the ... what do they call that, section man or something? They built and repaired the tights and everything else.

**Kate:** He worked on the rails, his job?

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** He supported the family? What did your uncle do?

**Filomena:** Well, he worked the same place.

**Kate:** Oh, so they worked together?

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** Did anyone else work? Did your mother or your aunt work or...?

**Filomena:** No, not in those days. Well, they worked at home and they always had a good garden and that sort of stuff but not for pay.

**Kate:** What about school, when you started school here?

**Filomena:** I still knew candy and that was all.

**Kate:** How was it when you started?

**Filomena:** We had a very wonderful first grade teacher really.

**Kate:** What was her name or his name?

**Filomena:** Her name was [inaudible 00:40:11] and I remember that when I first went there, everything was Greek to me. Of course, I couldn’t understand a thing but gradually, and I don’t know how it happened, I started to understand the words. We used to have just ... our school year used to last just eight months in those days.

I was so happy one spring. It must have been around in April. She used to ... when we got our lesson done and if we were the best in the class, she used to put a star up on the board and it’s if it was perfect. One day in April, I had more stars than anybody else and that was really the crowning point of my fist grade class.

**Kate:** Did anybody make fun of you for not knowing English?

**Filomena:** No, remarkably ... at least I wouldn’t have known if they were making fun of me.

**Kate:** Because you couldn’t understand them?

**Filomena:** No, I couldn’t understand ... but I had friends right away though so I don’t think they did that in those days. People were more civilized.

**Kate:** Do you think there were lots of other children in the same situation as you?

**Filomena:** No, my brother and I were the only ones. Everyone else could speak English.

**Kate:** What about your mother, how did she learn?

**Filomena:** She never learnt.

**Kate:** Never learnt any English?

**Filomena:** She never learnt English.

**Kate:** How did she get along?

**Filomena:** We translated for her, we ... and of course, she had her Italian friends.

**Kate:** Is it because she didn’t want to?

**Filomena:** I think that there are some people that can’t learn a foreign language. She was one of them because we spoke English all the time at home, we spoke English and Italian but more English than Italian I’m sure, especially as we got older but she didn’t pick it up. Now, I can pick up a language if I hear it but she couldn’t.

**Kate:** Did you use English as a secret language?

**Filomena:** No, we spoke out whenever we wanted to. When it was easier to say something in English, we did.

**Kate:** Did she understand it?

**Filomena:** No, she never understood English, she never spoke English.

**Kate:** How about your father?

**Filomena:** Oh, he could read and write in English. He could understand as well as I could.

**Kate:** How about your uncle’s wife, did she learn English?

**Filomena:** Yes, she was much younger than my mother though.

**Kate:** Your mother was how old when she came here?

**Filomena:** 33 and my aunt was only about 20.

**Kate:** Do you have any stories associate with learning English? Anything that ... mistakes or...?

**Filomena:** No, because I don’t remember learning it, it just came. One day, I couldn’t speak English, by the ... when I entered school, I couldn’t speak English and in April, I was speaking quite fluently.

**Kate:** Did you remember any bigotry or persecution for being Italian?

**Filomena:** Not really, no.

**Kate:** What about your religious life when you came to this country, did it change at all?

**Filomena:** Yes, we didn’t go to church anymore. There wasn’t a catholic church near where we lived and of course, we had no way of getting there so of course, we just got into the habit of not going. When I was in the third or fourth or fifth grade, my friends would ask me to come to their church. The friend that I liked the best went to the Methodist Church so that’s where I went.

**Kate:** Did you ever have your First Confirmation in the Catholic Church?

**Filomena:** I had it in Italy, yes.

**Kate:** You had it in Italy but then you basically went to a Methodist Church because your friends...

**Filomena:** My friends were going there.

**Kate:** Did your mother and father ever go to church?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** How about Christmas?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** All right, did you stay in that address very long with your uncle?

**Filomena:** No, just seven or eight months.

**Kate:** Then where did you go?

**Filomena:** Well, my father had a stroke and they had just money enough to buy some land. A friend of theirs loaned them some money to build a small house so we went to that house.

**Kate:** You said your father recovered?

**Filomena:** Yes, but he was out of work for six months and it was a pretty tough winter.

**Kate:** How old was he when he had that stroke?

**Filomena:** 35.

**Kate:** 35.

**Filomena:** He was very young.

**Kate:** Did they say why he got it?

**Filomena:** I don’t know, he had been a prisoner of war for 18 months and gone without food for sometimes 48 hours at a time. Perhaps all that stress had brought it on but we don’t know, of course, we don’t know. He did perfect, 57 years after that so...

It didn’t do him any harm although my mother said that there was a difference. He wasn’t the way he had been before but of course, I didn’t know that because I didn’t know him before.

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment? What did you do to amuse yourself when you were kids?

**Filomena:** We used to play with the neighborhood kids baseball and racing and all sorts of things like that.

**Kate:** Any child games that you played, hopscotch?

**Filomena:** Oh, all of that, those, yes, of course. Drop the handkerchief. The neighbor kids used to come over and hide and seek, all of that sort of thing.

**Kate:** How did your family members ... how did your brother adjust to life here?

**Filomena:** Not very well really. He quit school in the seventh grade. Well, he was 10 years old starting in the first grade. It just wasn’t the thing.

**Kate:** When he came over here, he started at 10 years old in first grade?

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** Which was much older than the other children?

**Filomena:** Well, the others were six.

**Kate:** Yes, and so did he learn English?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes, he spoke English. He learnt English alright but when he was in the seventh grade, he lied and got a job in a factory in [inaudible 00:46:12] and quit school. That’s the last he ever saw of school.

**Kate:** How did your parents react to that?

**Filomena:** They didn’t like it very well but they couldn’t do anything with him so they let him do it.

**Kate:** Were you close to him?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** He went to work right away at seventh grade. Now, at seventh grade he was about what, 13?

**Filomena:** Yes, but he was about 17 or 16 ... no, he must have been 16.

**Kate:** He was 16, that’s right, he was older for his age. Did he continue working?

**Filomena:** Yes, he did very well in spite of that. He got good jobs and he worked for a steel mill most of his life and did very well.

**Kate:** But you say he didn’t adjust, what do you mean by that?

**Filomena:** Well, he didn’t get along in school, he didn’t get along with our parents very well, he didn’t get along with me at all.

**Kate:** Ever since the doll incident?

**Filomena:** That’s right. Well, it started before that. He just didn’t care for another child in the family, that’s all.

**Kate:** He was...

**Filomena:** He was three years older than I am.

**Kate:** Do you have any family tragedy following the years coming to America?

**Filomena:** One of our twins died, that’s really the only one.

**Kate:** How was that?

**Filomena:** He was eight years old and he got appendicitis. They operated on him and he developed peritonitis and died.

**Kate:** How about your mother’s reaction or your father’s reaction to that?

**Filomena:** My mother is one who would hold things to herself. If she did the crying, she would do it alone. But they both were ... well, all of us really were quite devastated by it.

**Kate:** How about the other twin?

**Filomena:** The other twin is all right now but he felt it hard too. But they were not identical twins. The other twin was very different, looked different, acted different, was bigger so he got on all right. Although I’m sure it hurt him too.

**Kate:** How about your father, how did he react?

**Filomena:** He reacted too, he was quite sad about it.

**Kate:** Could you tell us a little bit about the course of your life since you ... okay, so you went through school and you became a teacher. You told me [inaudible 00:48:30]. You went through high school and then what?

**Filomena:** Went to Kent State.

**Kate:** How did you decide to become a teacher as such?

**Filomena:** It’s about the only thing for a woman in those days unless you became a secretary or a nurse. I wouldn’t have made much of a nurse or a secretary so it was ... you never really thought about anything else because knew how limited your choices were. That’s how I became a teacher.

**Kate:** You went as an undergrad to Kent State and you went to teachers training there.

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** Then you came ... what area did you do your teaching in?

**Filomena:** At Warren Ohio, close to Youngstown.

**Kate:** Close to Youngstown.

**Filomena:** You weren’t in Warren, were you?

**Kate:** Yeah, yesterday we were.

**Filomena:** Oh, yeah, I...

**Kate:** What school was that?

**Filomena:** Roosevelt.

**Kate:** Roosevelt School. Was that grade K through sixth?

**Filomena:** No, it was first to sixth.

**Kate:** First through sixth.

**Filomena:** We didn’t have kindergarten in those days.

**Kate:** Good. All right and so you were a ... what grade ...?

**Filomena:** Sixth grade.

**Kate:** Sixth grade teacher for how long in that school?

**Filomena:** Seven years until I got married.

**Kate:** And then?

**Filomena:** Then we moved to New York. We lived in Long Island for ... in 21 years and then we lived in Jersey for seven years.

**Kate:** Where in Jersey?

**Filomena:** Basking Ridge, south of Morristown.

**Kate:** My parents live in Denville.

**Filomena:** Oh, do they?

**Kate:** That’s right.

**Filomena:** Yes.

**Kate:** What about ... did you continue teaching when you went up?

**Filomena:** No, I had children. 19 months after we were married, my first child was born.

**Kate:** How did you meet your husband?

**Filomena:** A friend of ours introduced me.

**Kate:** What ethnic background was he?

**Filomena:** He’s part German and part Scottish. His real name was S-C-H-U-L-Z-E. His father was German but his father and mother were divorced and his stepfather ... she remarried and his stepfather adopted him and that’s where he got the Latta name.

**Kate:** Did he speak German?

**Filomena:** No. His ancestors, they came here quite a long time ago.

**Kate:** When you married him, you went to have children and lived in Long Island and you stopped teaching then?

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** You never resumed teaching again?

**Filomena:** Never.

**Kate:** Never, did you miss it?

**Filomena:** I did the first year because I’d been going to school for all my life up to that time in one capacity or another but after that ... no after, I had the children, I was busy with them.

**Kate:** How many children did you have?

**Filomena:** Three.

**Kate:** Three children, what are their names?

**Filomena:** Robert, Jane and Caroline.

**Kate:** They are now how old?

**Filomena:** Robert will be 49 this month, Jane is 47 and Caroline is 44.

**Kate:** What do they do?

**Filomena:** They live in Japan.

**Kate:** All of them?

**Filomena:** All of them. Bob has a PhD from Washington University and he teaches western philosophy and English literature at a university in Kyoto. The girls are on their own. They write, translate, interpret, edit and they also narrate the films for their doctors. They work mostly for doctors and they specialized in medicine, molecular biology and chemistry. They live in Osaka.

**Kate:** He went first and then...?

**Filomena:** No, Caroline went first. At the University of Chicago, she specialized in- what do they call it, oriental studies specializing in the Japanese language. She went to Japan because she wanted to learn the language better in its native place. She liked it so much that she stayed. She got a good job and she stayed.

Then Bob was divorced and he thought that he’d go and spend a year or two in Japan and then come back. None of them intended to stay but he got a good job and he stayed and so Jane went too after a while and there they are.

**Kate:** Do you go visit them?

**Filomena:** Yes, I’ve been there twice. I’ve been there about ... well, three months the first time and then one month the last time.

**Kate:** They are married to Japanese or just...?

**Filomena:** No, none of them are married right now. Bob is divorced and the girls have never married.

**Kate:** Basically, your husband is...

**Filomena:** He died.

**Kate:** He died a long time ago or?

**Filomena:** 12 years ago.

**Kate:** Basically, you are here in Ohio in your original area.

**Filomena:** That’s right.

**Kate:** You came back, why?

**Filomena:** Because my parents were sick and we were looking for a place to retire.

**Kate:** All in all, you came very young. Do you think that your parents were happy they came here?

**Filomena:** Oh, yes. Even my mother after a while because she knew that in Italy, we never would have had the chance that we had here.

**Kate:** How about your grandparents, did you ever see any of them again?

**Filomena:** No, no.

**Kate:** Did they see them again?

**Filomena:** No.

**Kate:** Did your mother and father- did anybody in your family ever return back to Italy?

**Filomena:** My sisters and I. You couldn’t have hired my mother no matter how much money you gave her to get on a ship again. I think my father would have liked to go back but he wouldn’t go without her.

**Kate:** Did anybody go back for good? Of all the people who came here originally, did anybody just pack it up and go back home?

**Filomena:** No, I met one couple when I was in Italy who had. He had worked for the steel mills in Pittsburg and they didn’t have any children, so as they were growing older, they decided that this wouldn’t be the place for them. To go back to Italy where they had their friends and family. They did and they built the most beautiful little house with roses all around it. They live like kings because they get their pensions from here and they are quite well off over there.

**Kate:** Are you happy that you came?

**Filomena:** Yes, definitely.

**Kate:** You wouldn’t think of going back to retire there?

**Filomena:** Oh, I’d like to go and stay there maybe for six months at a time, something like that. I’d like that but not to live, no.

**Kate:** Why not?

**Filomena:** I think even though they have all modern things now, still, I didn’t see a newspaper in the whole town while I was there. They had big television sets and all that but not a newspaper. I didn’t see a magazine and I’d be lost without that, those sorts of things.

**Kate:** What about your Italian, have you kept up with your Italian?

**Filomena:** No, I don’t speak very well.

**Kate:** How about your children, did they pick any of it?

**Filomena:** My son is quite interested in languages and he’s taking Italian lessons. I think he does pretty well.

**Kate:** But he didn’t learn it from you or...?

**Filomena:** No, he took lessons.

**Kate:** Your parents didn’t instruct your children?

**Filomena:** Oh, no. Well, they didn’t see my children much because we lived far away.

**Kate:** In Long Island. I think that just about ... Do you have any other thing you’d like to add about your experience about coming here that you can think of?

**Filomena:** Not me. It was really a pleasant experience for me because I met new friends here and I learnt the language right away and I didn’t have the troubles that a lot of people had. For me, it’s been wonderful.

**Kate:** Would you identify yourself as an Italian-American or?

**Filomena:** No, I hate hyphenated people. No, if you’re here, you’re an American, aren’t you? If you’re a citizen of this country, why should you be an Italian any longer?

**Kate:** You could do dual, you could be both.

**Filomena:** No, I don’t think so. I think you owe your allegiance to only one country.

**Kate:** I’m really happy that you gave us the chance to interview you and on behalf of Ellis Island, I thank you.

**Filomena:** Sure.

**Kate:** This time, it is Kate Morse signing off in Atwater, Ohio on the 5th of January 1994 for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.