

WILMINGTON'S LITTLE ITALY

By Katelyn Hurley

In the early 20th century, many Italians started immigrating to America to find a better life. Those who came to the mid atlantic, they settled in a area of West Wilmington between Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourth Street. One of the major parts of the Little Italy community is the St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church. For the past few years , the church has got together with the Little Italy Neighborhood Association to help with improvements to the community. But, the Catholic Church wasn't always favored by the Little Italy's community. When the Italian people came to America, Christianity wasn't something they were thinking about. They thought about starting a new kind of religion.

The Italians actually built a church called "Praise Center Church," which is now next to the WoodLawn Library. To change the Italians mind, the church sent out Father Francis Tucker. Father Tucker started to change the minds of the Italian immigrants. Throughout the 20th century, the Italian community grew and started to create their own businesses in Little Italy, which was centered around food and services like tailoring and photography. In the 1990s, the businesses and government aid in Little Italy started to decrease. This inspired the church and other Little Italy business owners to take action. Together, they created the group called LIMA. The group made many improvements to the area including street scaping, new light



fixtures, and the Little Italy archway which welcomes visitors to the historic area. Little Italy's most iconic venue is the St. Anthony's Italian Festival, which brings in about 300,000 people to Little Italy each year. The festival started from small Italian carnivals hosted by St. Anthony's in the early 1930s. It wasn't until 1975 when Father Roberto Balducelli turned the carnival into what it is today. A weeklong celebration of authentic Italian food, culture and entertainment. The festival is from June 9th to 16th on 901 N Dupont St. Wilmington, DE 19805. The price to get into the festival is \$5 for ages 14 to 61. If you are under 14 (with an adult who is 18 or older) and you are over 61 you can get into the festival for free.

