



EVERYBODY EATS  
*Mozzarella*

RECOLLECTIONS OF JOHN AMATO, SR.



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## Vanishing Hoboken

*The Hoboken Oral History Project*

A Project of the Hoboken Historical Museum and the Hoboken Public Library

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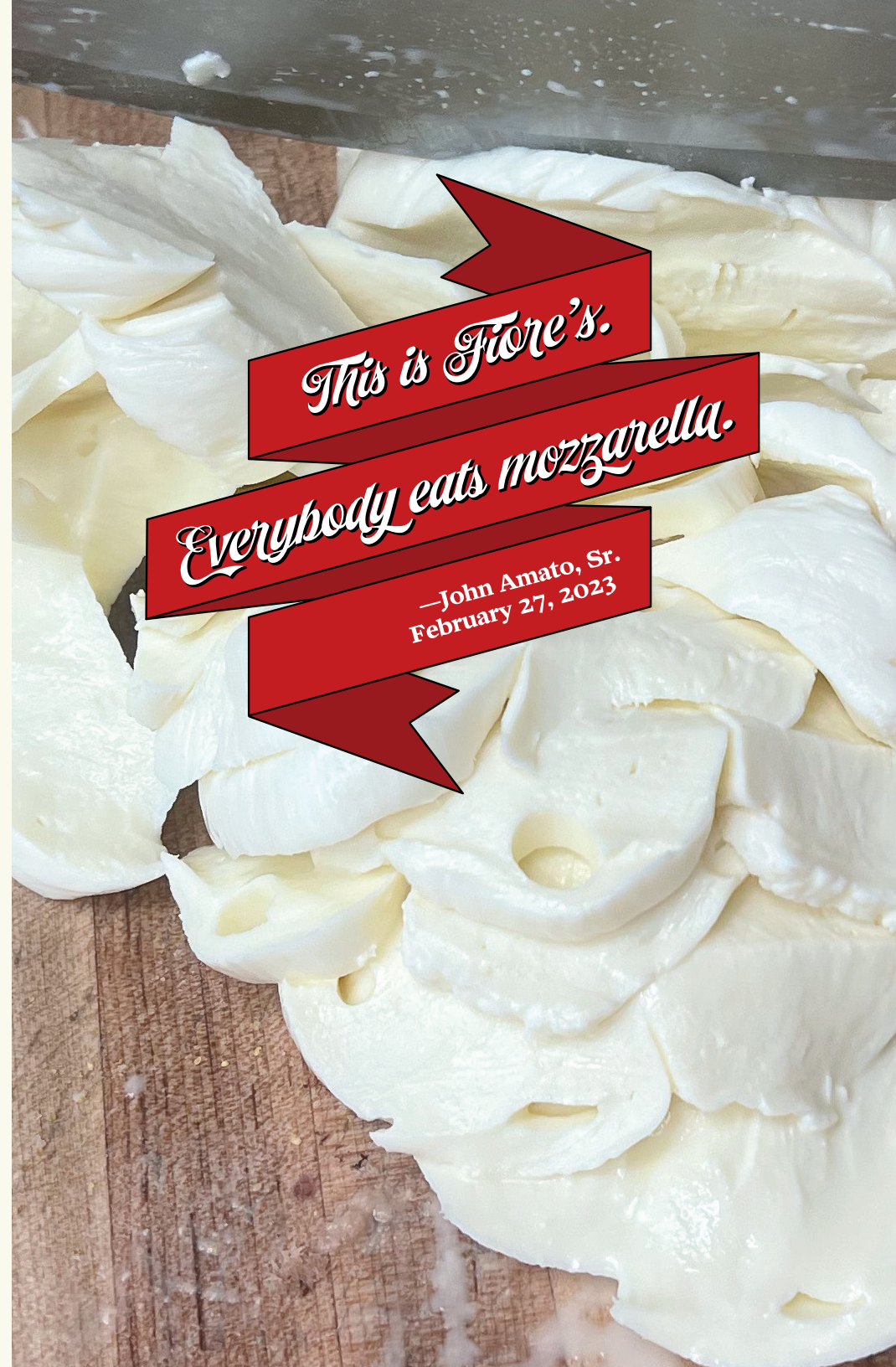
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HOBOKEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:  
CHAPBOOKS EDITOR: Holly Metz  
DESIGNER: Ann Marie Manca  
PROOFREADER: Laura Alexander

HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM:  
DIRECTOR: Robert Foster

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COVER: John Amato, Sr. making mozzarella at Fiore's, 2023.  
INSIDE FRONT AND BACK COVERS: John Amato, Sr. at the counter, serving fresh mozzarella, circa 1970. Photo by Caroline Carlson. From the collections of the Hoboken Historical Museum.  
TITLE PAGE: Deli staff Eduardo Roxas, Michele Gennaro, Mickey Doyle, and Elizabeth Ortiz. John Amato Sr. and his wife Josephine, are in front.  
BACK COVER: Inside Fiore's, 2023.





*John Amato Sr. and John Amato Jr. at Fiore's, 2023.*

## INTRODUCTION

Generations of hungry customers have come to Fiore's House of Quality at 414 Adams Street in Hoboken to purchase a little bit of heaven: the deli's signature fresh mozzarella. Visitors to the shop—first opened in 1929 by Alphonse Fiore, then run by his son, Joseph, then purchased by John Amato Sr. in 1965, and run today with one of Amato's sons, John Jr.—demand the Fiore's sandwich-makers put “mutz” on everything, including, in what was once nearly a culinary affront, on a tuna sub. “Oh, if the original owner were here, you come in here for a sandwich like that, he would have changed it,” John Sr. laughs. “You wanna ruin my business? Get out!”

But the goal of the Amatos, father and son, is to please their customers. They know their product is irresistible. They will add it to whatever sandwich the customer orders; they sell it by the pound, and make smoked mozzarella, too. Fiore's offers a selection of different meats and hard cheeses, but their “mutz”, in a town packed with delis offering mozzarella, is legendary. “Once they taste our mozzarella, we've got them,” John Sr. says. “We made a good friend.”

John Amato Sr. was interviewed by Robert Foster and Holly Metz on February 27, 2023, at Fiore's House of Quality, 414 Adams Street. He talked about being born at home on Adams Street and working a block away for most of his 87 years, about the Italian section of the city, the deli's changing clientele, and the simple beauty of a good slice of mozzarella.

A copy of the transcript from which this chapbook was derived has been deposited in the archives of the Hoboken Historical Museum.



*Above: John Sr. with his sister, Maryann.  
Above right: John Amato, Sr. and his wife, Josephine.  
Right: John Amato, Sr.'s father, Vincenzo and his mother, Elizabeth, with his brother Vincent.*



## BORN ON ADAMS STREET

I was born in Hoboken, May 8, 1935. So I'm 88 now. I was born at 327 Adams Street, and I lived there until I got married, at 23 years old. We moved out from 327 and we moved to 332 Adams, very close by. [Laughs.] We didn't go far! But it was better, because I was living with my family in a cold water flat, no showers, just a toilet. And we moved to 332 Adams, which had hot water, shower, nice bathroom. So we accomplished something.

I wouldn't have considered myself poor. I had my father [Vincenzo], who worked all his life, and my mom, [Elizabeth] stayed home with us to raise us. There were three of us [siblings]: Vincent, Maryann, and of course, myself.

327 Adams was a ten-family house and we had every ethnic group you could think of. Italians, Irish, German, Yugoslavs. And they were all helpful. If you were sick, they'd come up and bring stuff to you. "Here, take this." You know?

So [when it came to making wine,] we'd help [my father] squeeze the grapes. But then he made around 60 gallons of wine, and everyone in the house had to get a gallon of wine. And that was beautiful. [He made it in the basement.] The press we used was right under the foundation of the house. [Laughs.] That would never move.

But it was nice growing up. It was a friendly atmosphere. You know, it was beautiful. And I remember that. I always said, "I hope my kids can enjoy some of those fine things in life," which we take for granted now.



## MY PARENTS

My mother was born in this country, but as a child she moved back to Italy. So she was there until she was around 15 years old. My father came from a little sea town, Molfetta, in 1930-31, and settled. Then he met my mother and they got married.

My father worked, he supported the family. He did a nice job. We didn't do lavish things like go out to restaurants for dinner, but we went on vacations. We always did it in a family style. I had a cousin who lived in Coney Island, so that would be our vacation, going to Coney Island and visiting families.

[Did my parents bring over other family members?] Not really. We had one of my aunts who wanted to come over with the family, but she was on a quota system. She waited almost four years, and by that time the kids were starting to grow and became accustomed to staying in Italy, so they never came.

[My parents came over for] a better life, where you could work, make some money. My dad started work the second day after he landed in the United States. He had a job with the trains. He would pour water into the steam engines.

*Left: John Amato Sr.'s parents, Elizabeth and Vincenzo. Below left: John Amato Jr. and his grandmother Elizabeth. Below right: Vincenzo Amato on a fishing boat.*

## A TOUGH JOB AT PROGRESSIVE SILK

And then [my father] started with Progressive Silk [in Hoboken]. He was very intense as far as working to support his family. He was a great guy, a great, great guy. [As a silk finisher, he] would get fabrics and add the chemicals so it would give it a sheen, a nice shine, and a protective coating. It would be a tough job. I wondered how he could survive there.

But the job that he did, he loved. I don't know how he did it. The chemicals and all that. And he died of pancreatic cancer. So that might have been the cause. Who knows? Two of my uncles worked there, too. They, of course, made a living [there], so they could support their families.

I would bring [my father] his lunch every once in a while. [The factory was] where the Acme is [now, on Sixth and Clinton Streets]. I mean, the stench of the chemicals would burn my eyes. I don't know how he did it for eight hours a day, five days a week. [The factory closed] around 1970.

[And when] they closed, then he came to work here with us [at Fiore's]. We were making raviolis at the time, and he made the raviolis, besides making mozzarella.



## THE FIRST TWO GENERATIONS OF FIORE'S HOUSE OF QUALITY

The [founder, the] old man, Alphonse Fiore, lived in Brooklyn, and he would take the ferry over every morning and open up. He started it in 1929 as a *latteria* store, which meant it only sold mozzarella, ricotta—*latteria*, pertaining to milk, milk products. When Joseph, [his son], took it over, he opened up a deli. He opened up the store as you see here.

And then in 1950, I started here as a delivery boy, sweeping up, cleaning up. And from that day on, here I am. You work it up, because you not gonna stay the delivery guy. You had to work behind the counters. 1950 to 1965. In '65, I purchased the business from Joseph. The name was so good, as far as business, that we kept the name.

[When I worked with Joseph, he taught me.] And he did a good job. I often remember what he said to me, "Mozzarella is 16 ounces, not 18 ounces, not 13 ounces. You give them the honest weight." That was one of his credos. Or he'd say to you, "Listen, handle the best. Even if you have to charge a little more, don't worry about it, they'll come back." And he was right.

He stopped at 65. About 35 years [working at the store. And now I've been here] seventy-some-odd years.

[Joseph created] a beautiful store. It was a smaller store, and you notice, he had mozzarellas hanging in the windows. Of course, that would be taboo right now [because of the health code]. We have provolone hanging on the ceiling. [Is it a liability? *Laughs.*] To be hit with a provolone, tell it to the judge.

*Original Exterior*



*In front of Fiore's: Joseph Fiore, right, with his daughter Jean behind him, circa 1920.*

*Original Interior*



*Inside Fiore's: Tony Cuzzio (far left) Joseph Fiore (middle) with unknown employee; standing, delivery boy Michael, circa 1920.*





## THE ITALIAN SECTION

This was the Italian section. Adams Street, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, up to Willow Avenue. That seemed to be the ending part right there, where the Italians would go no further than that, at that time [because of the divisions in the city, between Italians and Irish].

[I remember some of the buildings that were where Church Towers are now.] That was an Italian section. On the left side going east was Vito Bruno's Electric Company. All electric products were sold by him. On the opposite side of the street, going east, was Batasta's Butcher Shop. An Italian butcher. And then coming west on the corner you had a big grocery store.

What was here? What was there? The pencil factory, Ferguson Propeller. We had [a place] where you go practice shooting firearms. And Yum Yum Ice Cream was on 3rd and Clinton. He took the whole corner, and you would walk by there and you could smell the lemons. He had crates of lemons just stacked up in his place and he'd make the Yum Yum, and he'd make [a dessert that was] more like a cream. It was done very well. Of course, he did a big business; he sent out all the carts.

[On Adams,] next to [me] was Carlo's Bakery, [the original one]. Then Fiore's. And when I first started in 1950, it was mandatory that you spoke Italian because you had an awful lot of customers



*Top left: 500 block of Adams Street, Hoboken, ca. 1933. Collection of the Hoboken Historical Museum. Left: Behind the counter at Fiore's, 1970s.*



Above: 400 block of Adams Street during the festival for the Madonna Dei Martiri, ca. 1960. Photo by Anita Heimbruch. Bottom: Lucille Conti and Ann D'Atilla with a Yum Yum cart, 416 Clinton Street, Hoboken, ca. 1950s. Both from the collections of the Hoboken Historical Museum.

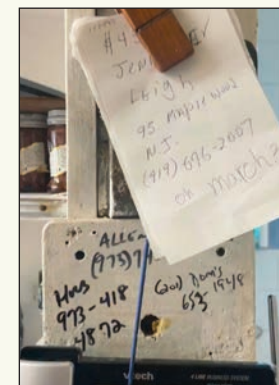


that were here for many years, but never got the language. So they wanted to stay with their home language.

Two doors down from Fiore's, there was a butcher shop. Mike Marinara was the butcher. On the corner was a fish store. This side of the block we had a poultry market and a bread shop. That was Gustoso's. He had the best bread.

But we've seen a lot of business disappear in Hoboken. [Dom's Bakery, the last local Italian bakery to supply our bread, has closed.] It's amazing how the scenery changes. We had, in Hoboken, 15 bakeries making Italian bread. [Now we're ordering from] Antique Bakery. They were originally in Hoboken [but moved to Jersey City].

[In the early years, I worked alongside my brother Vincent and brother-in-law Dominic; they are both deceased. Now] I have my son, John, who is taking over the whole business. He does all the buying. He does all the essential things. And then we have Michael Doyle and Michael Gennaro. And we have people that come in part time, [like Joe Truglio]. So we have a nice group.



The number for Dom's bakery and other important vendors on the wall at Fiore's, 2023.



*Inside the store (left) John Amato, Sr.'s brother-in-law, Dominick Vitolo (left) and Tony Casino, behind the counter, late 1970s. Photo by Jack and Peter Mecca.*

*Making mozzarella*

*with John Sr. & John Jr.*







## ST. FRANCIS: THE CHURCH FOR ITALIAN HOBOKENITES

St. Francis, that was my church. And I did my grammar school at St. Francis – many, many years ago. There was a little prejudice then, [against Italians, in the school]. I went to kindergarten at St. Francis, and, of course, in the house we spoke only Italian. So I spoke only Italian. The nun [who was teaching me] grabbed my mother and she said, “Mrs. Amato, are you going to stay in America or are you going back to Italy?” She said, “No, I’m gonna stay here.” “Well, you better start speaking English!” [Laughs.] That you could have done 50, 60 years ago. Today, my God, no.

[But the church was] started by the Genovese, people from Genoa [Italy]. And then, of course, the “Mulfies” [from Molfetta] moved in. As they started to migrate, they took over. But the Genovese had already started to move out of town; they wanted a better place to go.

St. Francis is a small church, so it is a very intimate thing, [worshipping there]. You know your pastor. He knows you by your name. He’d say, “Hello, John, how are you?” That’s pretty nice.

*Left: Final stage of the mozzarella-making process—Fiore’s signature twist.*



*Right: St. Francis tile, installed at Fiore’s.*

I think they're the only church in Hoboken that has an Italian mass yet. So no matter where people move, they come back to St. Francis at eleven o'clock for an Italian mass. The whole mass is done in Italian—the scriptures, the Gospel. All the rest of the masses are in English. There's only one, at eleven o'clock on Sunday, in Italian.

[Our current pastor is] Father Chris [Panlilio] he's Filipino. He studied in Rome, so his Italian is impeccable. He speaks beautiful Italian. I understand that if they need a priest to go to St. Ann's to say an Italian mass, they ask him to go, or the Monsignor that we have there now, Monsignor Paul [Bochicchio].



## FACTORIES IN HOBOKEN

[There used to be a lot of factories in Hoboken.] Oh, my God, did we have factories. [For example, we had Keuffel & Esser, a huge surveying equipment company.] As a boy growing up during the Second World War, we would often see tanks coming through Adams Street [to get outfitted by K&E]. They had a department that was [run by Catherine, a woman they called] the “spider woman”. [They used the spiderwebs for the prisms on the gunsights. When the tanks came,] that was a funny thing, because we played in the street and it was very, very quiet. Very rarely did you have a car come through during the Second World War. But then, of course, all hell broke loose, and here we are in Hoboken [with the tanks].

But the biggest industry in our city [when I started working at Fiore's] was clothing—coats. Coat factories were by the dozens. You could tell the time of day [by the factory workers]. Our business depended on them. They were very good customers. And they would get out of work at four, and they would start to come in here, and buy for dinner. And you knew it was four o'clock because they were here buying.

*Opposite: (Left) St. Francis Church, 308 Jefferson Street, Hoboken, 1962. (Right) Statue of Madonna Dei Martiri carried by St. Francis church members, 1962. Both photographs by Anita Heimbruch, in the collections of the Hoboken Historical Museum.*



## FAMOUS CLIENTELE

Well, of course, I had one of our famous customers, Dolly Sinatra. She'd call me, she'd say, "John." I say, "Yes." She said, "The king is coming." [Laughs.] He liked salami, and his bread, and his mozzarella.

She was tough. She was very tough. I mean, if she didn't like you, she'd tell you where to go. I think Frankie's sentiment was more like Dolly's. You know? If he liked you, okay, but if he didn't like you, get out of his way.

Frankie moved her from Hoboken to Weehawken on the bluffs, and then he brought her up to Fort Lee. So from Fort Lee, she'd call me. She'd say, "John, I want this, and I want that." And I'd say, "Dolly, I can't deliver. You're too far away." And she got mad at me. So she says, "Go to hell."

But then, Frank moved her to California, Palm Springs. We would get orders from Frankie. He'd call in the order. If the plane was coming to New York, they'd pick up the food. So that was nice. I had a couple of checks I got paid with from Frankie, [and I told myself] I'm gonna hold them. [But really,] I gotta cash them. [Laughs.] What, am I crazy?

*Far left, above: Architects' level made by Keuffel & Esser Co. (K&E), 1911; left above: K&E building, 4th and Adams, ca. 1960s; K&E employees in front of the plant, 1907. All images from the collections of the Hoboken Historical Museum.*



*Above: Hoboken-born singer Jimmy Roselli behind the counter with John Amato, Sr. undated.  
Below: Frank Sinatra and his mother, Dolly, with Franciscan friars and others at St. Francis Church, Hoboken, ca. 1936. From the collections of the Hoboken Historical Museum.*



## CHANGING CLIENTELE

[Yes, I'd say when we started the clientele was] all Italian. [Now it's] completely changed. We speak very little Italian now. It's unbelievable. But it's nice. It's beautiful that you see all these diverse groups of people that like our product. This is Fiore's in Hoboken. Everybody eats mozzarella.

Today, we have such a mixture of people. You say the ethnicity, and I say, "They're customers of ours." I have many people of diverse backgrounds that come in and buy mozzarella. I mean, it's so different today than it was then. We have all these young people that come in. And of course, they buy the products, and what they do is, they take it home to their families when they go visit. So we now have them as customers too—their parents. We've had almost four generations of people come in here, which is wonderful.

## MAKING MOZZARELLA

So now, mozzarella is a very nice thing to make. If it's done correctly, it's beautiful. You get a slice of mozzarella, as you're eating it, milk is falling out of it. Most of the places make mozzarella, but it's hard and dry. It has no flavor.

We make it in our shop, right here. We make mozzarella every day.

So we start with the curd. It's not Polly-O [any more]. They sold to Belgioioso. And we take it, we slice it on that guitar [a cheese slicer], put it in the



stainless steel pot. We add water almost to boiling—about 160 degrees—and we shake it up all around. We break it up in little pieces. Then with the hot water, we cook it, and we bring it back together again in one solid form. And then, from that part on, we make mozzarella.

[We make] one twist [to the mozzarella]. Our signature. Most people can't make twists. It looks like you braided someone's hair, you know?

We make about 30 pounds to 40 pounds at a time. And it's maybe 15, 20 minutes. My son John makes it, and Michael [Gennaro] and myself. We're usually the cheesemakers. John has been doing it for twenty-seven years. And Michael, he's with us now for two years. He came as a mozzarella maker. So that's very good.

We've kept it [much the same.] Well, actually, we did change, of course, to conform to the Board of Health. Three sinks and we have now a grease [trap] that we never had, which is great because it doesn't go in the sewer anymore.

For smoked mozzarella, what we do is we work it a little dryer. When we're ready to make it, we stretch it, completely stretch it, to get rid of the excess juice and then we form it. And we salt it for maybe 4 ½ hours, and then we put it in the smoke. [We make it in a smoker in the back.]

[How much fresh mozzarella do we sell in a week, on average?] Thirty-five bundles by 40 pounds,

[so that's] 1,400 pounds. Of course, all these young people coming in, they like what we have. And they buy. Once they taste our mozzarella, we've got them. We got 'em. We made a good friend.

## ALSO, TRY FIORE'S PROVOLONE, PROSCIUTTO...

So almost every day we have people coming in for sandwiches or maybe taking a product home to their parents, such as the cold cuts, or the cheese, or our provolone, which is an Italian specialty. It comes from Italy. We get 100-pound loaves of cheese. We have some hanging up on the ceiling inside right now. We hold them for a year, and that cheese is extra sharp. It's a beautiful taste.

Our cheeses are good. We get some from Denmark, we get some from Italy. So it's a variety. Not as big [sellers] as it was when the Italians ate cheese. They had that cheese on the table. We do sell the cheese, but not as much as we did then.

And, of course, we have the Parma prosciutto from Italy. A very fine piece of meat. It's stamped by the government of Italy that the product was made [according to certain] standards. We also handle all kinds of dry sausage, and it's getting to be popular. Everybody buys it now. I'd be lying if I tell you the Italians alone buy it; everybody buys it now.



## SPECIALS

Thursdays and Saturdays we serve the hot roast beef with the sauce from the beef. And that's starting to be such a big thing. Very big. With mutz, of course. Everything is with mutz. We had a police sergeant, Clancy. And he come in one day and says, "John, can I have the tuna fish sandwich?" "Yeah." He says, "Can I have mozzarella on it?" I says, "Come on. Stop."

And of course, today nobody buys tuna fish without mozzarella on it. I mean, we get some crazy, crazy combinations. We get some of them buy prosciutto, roasted garlic peppers, okay, mozzarella, mayonnaise, and vinegar. Oh, if the original owner were here, you come in here for a sandwich like that, he'd have changed it. [Laughs.] "You wanna ruin my business? Get out!"



## TASTING MOZZARELLA IN ITALY

[I do go back to Italy.] I was there this May. My granddaughter got married and she had a destination wedding in Lucca, Italy.

[Did I sample mozzarella there?] Of course. And I tell ya, I was disappointed. [Laughs.] And I said to the waiter, "It's okay," I says, "but I think I make a better mozzarella than you." His eyes were wide

*Left, top and bottom: The lunchtime rush for mozzarella and roast beef sandwich, Fiore's, 2023.*



open. He says, “Americans don’t know nothin’ about mozzarella.” I said, “Okay.” I’ll keep my mouth shut. When in Rome do as the Romans do.

[And buffalo milk mozzarella?] I don’t care for buffalo milk—only because it has a little sour taste to it. It’s very, very soft in texture. But the flavor, to my liking, I say no. Now, we have people who say, “Mozzarella de buffalo, the best.” You know? Okay, you’re entitled to your opinion.

## NEXT GENERATION

[John Junior is running the business now.] Ninety-five percent of the ownership is his. I’ve got a little five percent. John has been a wonderful, wonderful son. We’ve had a wonderful relationship and we work together, as I did with my brother. We worked together. There was never any kind of argument. He goes, “No,” he says, “Ah, you’re a jerk.” You walk by him. Then 15 minutes later, “Hey, John, what about ...” It was really a wonderful relationship. That made life easier too.

John is gonna take over the business and take over the building.



*Left, top: (from left to right) Countermen Dominick, Phil, and Larry, with John Amato Jr., 2005.*

*Bottom: Fiore’s countermen during the lunchtime rush, 2023.*

[My other son, Vincent] worked here. He said, “Dad, this is not for me. I don’t like this business.” I said, “Okay. What are you gonna do? If you don’t like it, get out.” [He worked up at Stevens.] He just retired. He beat me out.

Vincent is the oldest of my children. I have two boys and two girls: Vincent, Lisa, then John, and Josephine is the baby. My two daughters are out west now. Right now my one daughter who lived in Colorado moved to Redding, California, and the other one is in LA. And John’s in Secaucus.

And I live in Secaucus, too. Better because of the fact I have plenty of parking. I can park my car. I don’t have to go around. That was the one thing, that when I got married, and we’d have to go out somewhere, I’d say, “Do we have to go out to lose the space?” [Laughs.] Isn’t it terrible?

[But I am in Hoboken most of the time.] I’ve been coming in almost every day, except Wednesday I take off. I’m eighty-eight. I’m a person who doesn’t play golf. I don’t belong to any social clubs, and I don’t hang out in bars, so the next best thing is come down here and meet people. It’s nice seeing people that I haven’t seen maybe in 30 years, who maybe have moved to Florida or elsewhere and they come back: “Hey, John, you’re still here.”



## I DO LOVE FOOD

I do love food. Yes. I go to a cardiologist, and he weighs about 140 pounds, and he says, “Johnny, you gotta lose some weight.” He says, “You’re getting heavy.” So I looked at him, I says, “Doc, you don’t know who I am. I own a deli, an Italian deli.” “Oh ...” he says. That’s all. [Laughs.]



*Left, pictured from left to right: Vincent Amato, unidentified customer, and John Amato, Sr., at Fiore’s, late 1970s.*

*Above: John Amato Sr. and grandson Giovanni at Fiore’s.*

*Back page, (top): Painting of John Amato Sr. and his brother Vincent, undated. (Bottom) John Amato Sr. working at his desk at Fiore’s, 2023.*

## The Hoboken Oral History Project

“Vanishing Hoboken,” an oral history project, was initiated in 2000 by members of the Hoboken Historical Museum and the Friends of the Hoboken Public Library in response to dramatic physical, social, and economic changes in the city of Hoboken over the preceding twenty years, and to consequent “vanishing” of certain aspects of public life.

For much of the last century, Hoboken was a working-class town, home to many waves of immigrant families, and to families who journeyed from the southern regions of the U.S. and from Puerto Rico—all looking for work. Hoboken, close to ports of entry in New Jersey and New York, offered a working waterfront and many factories, as well as inexpensive housing. Each new wave of arrivals—from Germany, Ireland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Puerto Rico—found work on the waterfront, at the Bethlehem Steel Shipyards, Lipton Tea, Tootsie Roll, Maxwell House, or in numerous, smaller garment factories. Then the docks closed in the 1960s; factory jobs dwindled as Hoboken’s industrial base relocated over the 1970s and ’80s. Maxwell House, once the largest coffee roasting plant in the world, was the last to leave, in 1992.

In the go-go economy of the 1980s, Hoboken’s row houses, just across the river from Manhattan, were targeted by developers to young professionals seeking an easy commute to New York City. Historically home to ever-changing waves of struggling families—who often left when they became prosperous—Hoboken began in the mid-1980s to experience a kind of reverse migration, in which affluent condominium-buyers replaced poor and working class tenants, many of whom had been forced out by fire, through condo-conversion buy-outs, or through rising rents. More recently, building construction has further altered the face of Hoboken, as modern towers are rising up alongside the late-19th century row houses that once spatially defined our densely populated, mile-square city and provided its human scale.

The Hoboken Oral History Project was inaugurated with the goal of capturing, through the recollections of longtime residents, “Vanishing Hoboken”—especially its disappearing identity as a working-class city and its tradition of multi-ethnic living. In 2001, with the support of the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State, the Oral History Project transcribed and edited several oral histories to produce a series of “Vanishing Hoboken”

chapbooks. Since 2002, thirty-eight chapbooks—including this one—have been published, with the support of the Historical Commission, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities; and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

## Vanishing Hoboken Chapbooks

The editor of this series chose to call these small booklets “chapbooks,” a now rarely heard term for a once-common object. And so, a brief explanation is now required: A chapbook, states the most recent edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is a

...small, inexpensive, stitched tract formerly sold by itinerant dealers, or chapman, in Western Europe and in North America. Most chapbooks were 5 x 4 inches in size and were made up of four pages (or multiples of four), illustrated with woodcuts. They contained tales of popular heroes, legends and folklore, jests, reports of notorious crimes, ballads, almanacs, nursery rhymes, school lessons, farces, biblical tales, dream lore, and other popular matter. The texts were mostly rough and anonymous, but they formed the major parts of secular reading and now serve as a guide to the manners and morals of their times.

Chapbooks began to appear in France at the end of the 15th century. Colonial America imported them from England but also produced them locally. These small booklets of mostly secular material continued to be popular until inexpensive magazines began to appear during the early 19th century.

Although some of the chapbooks in the “Vanishing Hoboken” series are considerably longer than their earlier counterparts, others are nearly as brief. They are larger in size, to allow us to use a reader-friendly type size. But all resemble the chapbooks of yesteryear, as they contain the legends, dreams, crime reports, jokes, and folklore of our contemporaries. One day, perhaps, they might even serve as guides to the “manners and morals” of our city, during the 20th and early 21st centuries.





A PROJECT OF THE HOBOKEN PUBLIC LIBRARY  
AND THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM