

An Immigrant's Family

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My grandfather's family went from Italy to Brazil in 1895. His two oldest sisters were already born when they took the ship to cross the ocean. Once in Brazil, he and his other four sisters were born. His family was like that, he and six sisters, three older and three younger than him. He was the only man, exactly in the middle of his six sisters. I just have some memories about two or three of his sisters, but I was really young and they were really old. I just saw this family together in two pictures, both remarkably old; probably they were taken in some moment before 1910, since my grandfather looks like a young boy in both pictures, and he was born in 1899.

However the most interesting aspect of in these pictures was the occasion in which they were taken. Both were taken in funerals, in front of the church; and, in both pictures, all family's members look like they were going to a party, not to a funeral, for the way how they were dressed, that was so formal. I believe that, for those people from that time, this was a really special moment. It was when they could leave the farm, where they used to live, and go to the town. It was when they could meet different people and have the rare opportunity of taking a picture. I'm grateful they did it. As I said, they had recently come from Italy, and they did this surely more for necessity than for choice. As most of Italians that came to Brazil in that time, their lives back in Italy were certainly hard enough to make them plunge themselves and their families in such adventure, dreaming of some way to have better live in this new and unknown land. Probably they faced many truly hard financial problems, and these moments, even being funerals, were when they could

wear some new and special clothes and be at the town. Then, they used these moments to make this simple registry, just a simple picture, about how they were.

The funniest and most interesting in these pictures is to notice that the clothes they were wearing were almost all of them made with the same few pieces of fabric. We can notice the same pattern in some skirts and in some shirts. The pants of my grandfather and his father were almost equal, and their shirts were also so similar, surely sewn with the same fabric. Looking just at those eight clothes they were wearing, side by side, it seems to be a mosaic, eight top and eight bottom parts made with just three or four patterns of fabric.

The disposition of them were also the same in both pictures, the father and the mother in the middle, the three oldest daughter were standing in the same level of the parents, my grandpa and his other three sisters in a lower level; both of the pictures were taken in the stairs of the church. All of them were looking really serious, almost as they were a little ashamed, perhaps for the situation, perhaps for that new technology they were not familiar with, perhaps for being aware of their poverty.

I confess I would like to see more pictures of them. It could be a picture of my grand grandparents landing from their ship in Brazilian lands, with a hopeful look in their eyes. Maybe I would like to see one picture of my grandpa coming back home at 6am, after being breaking the ice that had been formed during the frost of the night and was lying over the coffee trees; he had been awakened at 4 and barefoot he had worked with his dad, his mom and his sisters, saving the plantation of the landowner, to avoid the coffee got burned by the ice when the sun rose. They knew there was not any extra

gratification for this, this was their duty. The only gratification would be the watery cornmeal porridge my grand grandma was going to prepare to warm them up, to break the ice from their bodies, and then, with their bodies a little bit warmer, in that house they considered comfortable, but it was not, they laughed for the simple joy of being together, for the happiness of being a family, and then, one of my grandpa's sister would take a surprising picture, showing those spontaneous laughter. I would like just one picture that showed me a little more of happiness, or hope, I do not know. However the only pictures I had access are not like that, they are as they are, and that's fine.