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From Italian Lives, Cape Breton Memories From the Memoirs of Thomas Cozzolino  
A Labour Contractor • Born in Italy, December 1866, and Died in Sydney, September 1949 The following excerpt is taken from a new book of memories, life experiences, and photographs, called Italian Lives, Cape Breton Memories, published by the University College of Cape Breton Press and edited by Sam Migliore and A. Evo DiPierro. A labour contractor, Thomas Cozzolino brought many of the "human bulldozers" who built 20th-century North America. The excavation for major parts of the steel plant and coke ovens, the water lines from Sydney to Sydney River, about 16 million cubic yards of excavated material in the Intercolonial's railbed, and 200 thousand tons of masonry in the railway's bridges • all this was work by Italian labourers. Through Cozzolino's Memoirs, we get a picture of groups of itinerant Italian workers, going where they were needed, working like dogs • but always demanding dignity. In her introduction to his Memoirs in the book, Elizabeth Beaton writes: "They were called dagos and were consistently singled out (across North America) as an undesirable group. We see that Cozzolino felt that his men were under constant threat of violent attack when he worked in the United States, hence they often carried guns. In Sydney, newspapers strove to back the view that Italians were inclined to be violent, immoral, or stupid...." The original Memoirs are in the Beaton Institute, UCCB. They are a typescript from what appears to be Cozzolino's dictation. Sam Migliore has skilfully edited those Memoirs, putting in the appropriate punctuation. Here are portions from those Memoirs. From Thomas Cozzolino's Memoirs : My mother died when I was 13 years old. She was the last of four to die. My brother died first at 23 years of age, then my sisters • one was 17 and the other 18. They all died of cholera within a three-month period in 1879. Many people died of cholera that year. Mother was only 55 years old. Father and I were left alone. I was lonely. I often heard people speaking of America and what a wonderful country it was. At 13 1/2, I began telling Father that I wanted to go there. He laughed at the idea of one so young wanting to leave home • Art Gallery • Beaton Institute • Boardmore Playhouse • Attention UCCB Alumni I CD Have you seen this publication? if so, I, then you are missing out on the brand new, revamped ' edition of your alumni ' news publication, ' Distinction. Class Notes, 3 alumni profiles, ' University College J happenings... it's all ~ there, in each regularly ' scheduled issue. The (D UCCB Alumni Office O can make sure you 3 receive your free copy ' oi Distinction by • updating your contact O information. Take a moment to drop us a line, we'd be glad to -q include your latest news in Class Notes. ' 00 Please contact: 5 Debbie UlacAlay o Alumni Officer "' UCCB Alumni Office ' P.O. Box 5300 = Sydney, NS B1P6L2 o Tel: (902) 563-1349 ca Fax: (902) 563-1377 O Toll Free: 1-800-282-0314 ' E-mail: [alumni@uccb.ns.ca](mailto:alumni@uccb.ns.ca) ' CD Canada Games Complex • Sullivan Field House • CQ o o to go so far alone. I however spoke of it every day. Finally, to be rid of me, he said, "Well, if you can get the money for your passage, you may go." He



felt sure that \_\_\_\_\_ would be the end of \_\_\_\_\_?  
 ?\*\*\* ""V ""??y"" Cozzolmo circa 1910 it; there was no one who could or would  
 give me the money for such a trip. Father, however, had a friend named Salvatore  
 who would do any? thing for him. I knew Salvatore would not give me the money to  
 go away against my father's wishes. But, one day, I took the opportunity to ask. My  
 father was a Contractor of Highways, and he paid the men every Saturday evening.  
 I said to Salvatore, "My father is \$80 short, and wants to know if you would help."  
 He said yes. The next day, I went to Piedimond, 12 miles from our place, for my  
 papers. Once the arrangements were made, I told Father I was going and asked for  
 his consent. He did not believe me at first, but then said, "If you are so determined  
 to go, I will give y6u my consent." I told him, "I will earn and will take care of you  
 when you are old." He wanted to know where I got the money, but I would not tell  
 him. He then said, "You'll be sorry when, in the middle of the ocean, you see only  
 sky and sea." I then went to see my godmother. She too tried her best to dissuade  
 me. But when she heard that my father had given his con- Nightingale Nursing  
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