



# *HEIRLOOM DOCUMENTATION*

*DOCUMENTED LEGACY LLC*

## *A LITTLE GIRL'S AFTERNOON ON A SILVER PLATTER*

ONE HEIRLOOM, ONE STORY

The story of a little girl, two grandmothers and an  
adventurous afternoon together

*Documented Legacy*  
Recording memories for future generations



# LEGACY

## *A Little Girl's Afternoon On A Silver Platter*

Ten fragile crooked fingers reached to the back of the third shelf and pulled a wrapped package out of the closet, years of dust accumulating on family sentimentals came trailing behind.

"Unwrap it, dear. I want to show you something. Hold it carefully."

Her smile went way back. You could see it in the way her hands gingerly touched the edge of this 15-inch dish, circling it several times. It had been wrapped in a cloth bag made from old garments decades earlier.

An elegant green cut crystal platter, it is edged in sterling silver with scrolls of vines intertwined with cosmos and daffodils (her favorite). It is in remarkable shape considering its age. No dents or scratches. The cut of the crystal gives the center of the platter a star burst effect, which is beautiful in natural light.

"This was such a fun afternoon," she said. Her elderly voice picked up steam as she began to tell the story.

"I can still remember the smell of the trolley car wires overhead. They made a distinctive burning smell that I could still smell on my clothing hours later. Oh, it made me sick. The trolley cars would rock back and forth all the way downtown. Mixed with the smell from the overhead wires, I almost vomited the entire way there. I was green.

"Both my grandmothers – young widows at the time – took me to the Grand Concourse in New York to go shopping for the day. We took two trolley cars to get there. It was an outing for them and for me, too. It was a big exciting "to do" in those days. It also gave my mother a break while she was taking care of my little brother."

The Grand Concourse, which was originally known as the Grand Boulevard and Concourse when it officially opened in 1909, was the first major thoroughfare in the Bronx in New York City. Built during the height of the City Beautiful movement, it was modeled on the





## *The Grand Concourse*

Champs-Élysées in Paris, but is considerably larger, stretching four miles in length, measuring 180 feet across, and separated into three roadways by tree-lined dividers. Some minor streets do not cross the Concourse. The original road stretched from the Bronx Borough Hall at 161st Street north to Van Cortlandt Park. By the time she was five years old, Yankee Stadium opened down the hill from the Concourse Plaza Hotel at 161st Street and Lowe's Paradise Theater – one of the largest movie theaters in New York City at the time – was in the planning stages.

"This was right at the start of the Great Depression. My grandmothers would love to take me downtown to shop and talk," she said. "There would be pushcarts all along the streets where people would sell their possessions and other goods. I can still see my grandmothers, both dressed in all black, because they were mourning, always mourning, with their little pocketbooks going up to these pushcarts. There was a lot of negotiating going on. Sometimes they would struggle with the language. I think they paid 50 cents for this platter and, still, they thought it was too much money."

"We had this at home for years. My parents used it in the dining room."

## *Two Grandmothers & a beloved granddaughter*

She circled the tray's edge again several times with her fingers, as if she could still feel the hands of her Nonna and Nanna holding their victorious shopping treasure. Her eyes and her smile were way off in the distance while she was looking straight at me.

The platter's real value is in its legacy: A little girl holding the hands of both grandmothers while shopping flea market style at the start of the Great Depression in New York City. The most pleasant of memories – a moment of history, our personal history – can be relived through the simplest story of family heirlooms.

### *Story Told By*

Nina Camuti Danielsen to her daughter Mary V Danielsen. Heirloom documentation: The simple stories of things we've enjoyed adding value to our life stories.

