

RICCARDO & VIRGINIA CAMPOBELLO FAMILY



My paternal grandfather, Riccardo Campobello, and my paternal grandmother, Vincenzia “Virginia” Fiorentino, were born in Sicily in the late 1800’s. Riccardo traveled to the United States on his own in July of 1902. He worked for the railroads as a laborer. He was called back to Italy to serve in the army in 1905. He and Virginia married in Casteldaccia, Sicily in November of 1908. Riccardo returned to the U.S. in March of 1909. Their first child, Peter, was born in Casteldaccia in November of 1909. Virginia arrived in the U.S. in December of 1910 with Peter. Their second child, Rose, was born in the U.S. in December of 1911. Virginia returned to Sicily with their two children in March of 1912 and returned to the U.S. in 1913. They lived in the LaSalle-Peru area of Illinois before moving to Wenona, IL in 1914. Their daughters Virginia, Josephine, Frances, and Geraldine were born there. Riccardo was working in the coal mines during this time. The family moved to Rockford in 1919. They lived at the corner of Ferguson and Morgan streets in South Rockford. Their sons Samuel and Richard were born in Rockford in the early 1920’s. In 1923 they moved to North Rockford where Riccardo bought a store building at the corner of N. Main St. and Brown Ave., across the street from Greenwood Cemetery and just a block from Brown’s Park. They ran a grocery store there and lived on the 2nd floor. They moved back to South Rockford to be closer to friends and the center of the Italian community. The Depression experience included a move back to N. Main St. Two more children joined the family in the 1920’s: Marian and James. The building at the corner of N. Main and Brown Ave. eventually became Peter Campobello’s upholstery shop and his family lived on the 2nd floor until Peter’s death in 1973.

Around 1939, Riccardo and his now smaller family moved to N. Church St. where they purchased and refurbished a home. During these years, Riccardo was working in maintenance on the grounds at the Ingersoll Plant. In 1955, when their children were all adults and on their own, Riccardo and Virginia moved to a newer home on West Pearl

Ave. where they had a larger yard with garden space. Later they moved to Hooker Ave. to be closer to shopping areas and where there was plenty of room for a big garden. One family tradition for about sixteen years was to celebrate Christmas at the Harmony Grange Hall in North Park. Here the extended family shared an abundance of food and enjoyed visiting and playing games. The highlight of the day was always Grandpa Riccardo's annual speech and announcements of expected additions to the family.

Two (Peter and James) of Riccardo and Virginia's four sons and five (Rose, Virginia, Josephine, Frances, and Geraldine) of their six daughters remained in the Rockford area to work and rear their families. Richard moved to Massachusetts and Samuel and Marian to Texas. Riccardo and Virginia were the proud grandparents of 34 grandchildren. Many of their children and grandchildren graduated from West High School. Three of their sons graduated from the University of Illinois and served in the military. Riccardo and Virginia learned English and encouraged their children to speak English at home. The value of an education was stressed in all our families. Most of their grandchildren are college graduates. We are all proud of our Italian heritage.

My parents, Peter and Josephine Bruscato Campobello, were married at St. Anthony Church in Rockford in April of 1936. I am the fourth of their six children. It was a somewhat unusual life for us to be reared in a home where my father's business was on the first floor and our living residence was on the second floor. It gave us the opportunity to help with my father's business and spend a lot of time with him. Our mother helped our father with the sewing required in the upholstery business. All six of us children attended Welsh Grade School, Roosevelt Jr. High, and West High. All of us went on to college where most of us earned advanced degrees.

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