

## Mariani Family in Rockford, IL



Domenico Mariani arrived as a teen in Rockford, IL, in 1920. His older brother, Alessandro, had been here for some months. He was excited to see his brother. Soon after their reunion, Alessandro informed Domenico that he had made some money, missed home, and was headed back to Italy. Domenico was frustrated. "But I just got here!" he said. Alessandro had made up his mind, however, and went back to Ferentino, Italy. Domenico, although basically alone, decided to stay. The brothers never saw each other again. Domenico was my grandfather. I am Lucia Mariani-Rose, and heard this story told to me many times as I grew up. Domenico talked to some other relatives from Ferentino, who were in Rockford. They let him stay with them. He worked menial jobs, and was able to save a little money; but he was lonely. One friend said they had a niece in Ferentino that would make him a good wife. They sent for her. Her name was Lucia Picchi. Domenico and Lucia married after a courtship, (as I found out from Nonna Lucia when she was in her early 80s), of about 10 days. "10 days! Wow, that was fast!" I exclaimed. "What was there to wait for?" she asked me, in her matter-of-fact style, laughing at my reaction. They bought a house on Clover Ave, after a bank had foreclosed on it, as the prior owners had been bootleggers, and recently arrested. The house had a passageway from the house to a secret room under the garage. My Nonna Lucia had it all blocked up, as she did not approve of it. Domenico and Lucia opened D. Mariani food store, and ran that for many years. Their first son, Luigi (Louie) was born in 1921. He was followed by a daughter, Viola in 1922. In 1926, they had another son, Francesco (Frank), and another daughter, Helen, in 1937. Louie served in the Army during World War 2, and worked for many years at National Lock Company, retiring in 1983. He married Geraldine (Gerry) LaMendola, in 1962. They had two children, Lucia (me), and Dominic Mariani. My dad's brother and sisters never married, but were doting aunts and uncle to the two of us. Uncle Frank ran Mariani Signs in Rockford for

many years, and was an artist. Aunt Viola worked for Nelson Knitting for many years, and was a great cook. Aunt Helen worked for Colorcraft, and was a great photographer, and the official photographer/videographer at all family functions. None of them, sadly, survive today. I miss their vibrant personalities. I am happy to share their story here. I am happy that my husband, Mark Rose, and our two children, Steven and Regina, are able to know them all a little better too. My husband, children, and I were able to visit my great-uncle Alessandro's family in Ferentino, Italy in 2011, re-establishing contact that my Aunt Helen and Uncle Frank had rekindled in the 1980s.

The photographs is a family photo from left to right is Viola, Lucia, Luigi and Domenico Mariani taken in 1923. Lucia and Domenico Mariani in front of their grocery store in the mid 1940s.

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