

Felice and Louisa Bianchi



Felice Bianchi was one of the founders of the St. Ambrose Society. Felice and Louisa lived in the 800 block of Cunningham St. They cooked for many weddings in south Rockford.

Felice was born c.1885 in Ferentino, Italy, the son of Angelo and Elisabetta (Sisti) Bianchi. His parents had eleven children but only three survived. It was said that his mother Elisabetta took the children to their patron saints' statues in the local churches and intoned the old Italian saying, "If you are not going to have a happy life, it is better to die young." Thus eight of the children died young.

Louisa (Ceccerini) Bianchi was born in Perugia, Italy. When the couple was ready to leave for America, Felice was a chef for a seminary in Rome and Louisa cooked for the queen of Italy. Louisa took their two children, son Andrea and daughter Maria, with her to say good-bye to the queen. The queen warned Louisa, "Do not love your children too much; they belong to God." Andrea died before they left Italy; Maria died shortly after arriving in Rockford. The couple had a second daughter here in Rockford also named Maria who also died as a child. Daughters Clara, Angelena (born 1917), and Bianca followed. When Bianca was yet a toddler, Louisa went across the street to Giorgi's Store, locking the yard gate behind her. She returned to find Bianca in flames from playing with matches. Louisa was hindered in rescuing her daughter because of the locked gate. Bianca died within days.

For years Louisa grieved for her four departed children. Finally, she had a dream in which her son Andrea showed her that death was God's plan. If he had seen adulthood, his death would have been much worse. He would have been the engineer of a locomotive colliding with another locomotive. That dream finally gave Louisa peace.

Felice died c.1937 and Louisa died in 1947. Daughters Clara (Bianchi) Villani died c. 1975 and Angelena (Bianchi) Rigolo (wife of Richard Rigolo) died in 1996. Angelena told me these stories. I asked her what Felice's eight siblings passed away from. She felt they had heart issues. Clara and Angelena both passed away from strokes.

Felice was the brother of my great grandmother, Rosa (Bianchi) Sisti and the uncle of my grandmother, Annunziata (Sisti) Palombi, wife of Giovanni Battista Palombi.

In the photograph from left to right is Louisa, Bianca, Angelena, Felice and Clara Bianchi taken in 1921.

Submitted on November 9, 2016 by Roberto Palombi for the Genealogy Project for Culture and Education Committee of GRIAA “Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families”