

Twentieth Century Settlers in the Blackstone Valley

Museum of Work & Culture, Woonsocket, Rhode Island

A Marche Match Made in Woonsocket

The U.S. Bureau of Immigration at New York's Ellis Island processed over 12 million immigrants before it closed in 1954. Many immigrants hailing from Southern and Eastern Europe arrived there and then traveled to the Blackstone Valley to meet family members, sponsors, and acquaintances from their home villages. Italian immigrants at the turn of the century often expected to return to Italy eventually, and did not plan to become citizens of the United States. Yet, in reality, most stayed and became Americans.

Augusto and Gina Andreani were among the new Italian immigrants who settled in the Valley during this period *per lavorare* ("to work"). Augusto was born in 1888 in Orciano, a small town in an agricultural region of northern Italy called Marche. His family's farm was threatened by an economic depression that affected all of Italy. Augusto immigrated to the United States on January 31, 1901, and stayed with the Pandolfi family in Manville, Rhode Island at first. The Pandolfis also sponsored several other immigrants from the Marche region. Italian immigrants worked on their Sayles Hill Road farm in return for room and board.

Ginerva Rinaldi, whom everyone called Gina, was also born in the Marche region in Montemaggiore al Metauro. Like many others, she worked for the Pandolfis. In Rhode Island she met Augusto and the two were married in 1908. The Andreanis lived at 1168 Social Street in Woonsocket for most of their married life. For many of those years, Augusto worked at the nearby New England Paper Tube Co.



Eliza Brunetti's Certificate of Naturalization, 1956, courtesy of Doris Chamberland



Esmond Mill workers, 1916, courtesy of Patricia Salley



Italian Workingmen's Club Inauguration banquet dinner, courtesy of the Italian Workingmen's Club

Social Clubs Aid New Immigrants

The Andreanis were not the only family from Marche living in the Valley, where, along with the others who settled there, they maintained many of their Italian traditions—such as an annual winemaking ritual—and eventually formed clubs, such as the Italian Workingmen's Club, where they would play traditional Italian card games and socialize. In later years, these groups still focused on aspects of cultural preservation, but often their activities shifted from immigrant support to social and cultural functions. Manville, which also had a sizable Italian population, created the Enrico Caruso Club, named for the famed Italian tenor, for its community.



Family photo album, courtesy of Christina Vallone-Ramos