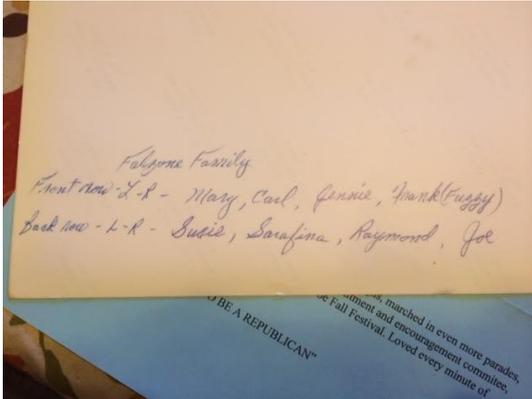


Falzone Family History



If you lived in South Rockford in the 1930s and '40s and heard someone whistling as he walked down Montague Street, chances are it was Frank "Fuzzy" Falzone. Handsome with an infectious smile, Frank Falzone didn't own a car, so he made the best of the situation as he did in his lifetime. He is one of two members of Raimondo and Serafina Falzone's family to make significant local contributions as Italian-Americans. Frank Falzone, a son of Raimondo and Serafina, and John Falzone, a grandson, have been honored by the GRIAA by being named to Rockford's Italian-American Hall of Fame.

Before he served Rockford's Fifth Ward as alderman for 12 years, Frank was known around the state as one of the most respected referees in Illinois state boys basketball history. He officiated several state basketball title games and was named to the Illinois Basketball Association Hall of Fame. John Falzone has been involved with GRIAA since it was known as the Columbus Day Committee. He was chairperson of the Festa Italiana in 1988, 2003 and 2013, chair in 1995-96, continues to serve on the group's board and is a fixture at every Festa. He currently is co-owner of Cherry Valley Garden Center and Tomato World and also was known nationally as president of the Ladies Professional Bowling Tour when he was the manager of the Cherry Bowl. In addition to being a member of GRIAA's Hall of Fame, John is also a member of these halls of fame – Illinois Sports, Greater Rockford Bowling Association and Professional Women's Bowling.

Raimondo Falzone and Serafina Galluzzo were both born in Aragona, Provincia di Agrigento, Sicilia. Raimondo, son of Giuseppe and Carmela (Saldi) Falzone, was born on March 21, 1875, and Serafina, the daughter of Francesco and Anna Maria (Attardo) Galluzzo, on July 14, 1882. Raimondo and Serafina were married on October 2, 1897, in Aragona. As was the custom for many Sicilian immigrants, Raimondo came to the U.S. first, arriving at Ellis Island in New York on December 1, 1906, aboard the SS Algeria. He settled in Marion, Illinois, which is deep in the southern part of the state in Williamson County, and lived there until his young family joined him two years later. Serafina, then 26-years-old, came to the U.S. on the SS Cretic on September 11, 1908, with her young daughters, 9-year-old Carmella and 6-year-old Gerlanda.

After living in Marion for several years, in 1923 the family moved to Rockford, where their six youngest children were born.

Raimondo and Serafina had 10 children but lost two at an early age – Assunta, who was born on February 11, 1904, and died three years later on her birthday; and Vincenza, who did not survive childbirth on December 30, 1906. Their other children were Carmela, who married Francesco Fuca on January 18, 1912; Gerlanda, who married Salvatore LaRosa on September 5, 1920; Joseph, who married Noma Talbert and Betty Wells; Jennie, who married Paul Spera on December 30, 1929; Susie, who married Bruno Catalani on June 2, 1941; Frank, who married Lucille Leggio on September 24, 1939; Mary, who married August Musso on June 7, 1941; and Carlo, who married Bernice Buchmann on July 5, 1947. Raimondo (Raymond) worked at the George D. Roper Corp. in Rockford and was a member of the Aragona Club. He died on August 22, 1948. Serafina died on April 6, 1935.

Carmella (Nellie) and Frank Fuca had 11 children – Rose, Joseph, Fannie, Raymond, Theresa, Helen, James, Angelina, Jerry, Carmen and Albert. Gerlanda (Julia) and Sam LaRosa had 10 children – Frank, Mary, Sara, Gerlanda (Gerrie), Margaret (Maggie), Eleanor, Helen, Deloris (DeDe), Raymond, and Sam. Joseph had five children – Donald, Raymond, John, Joseph, and Mary. Jennie and Paul Spera had one son, Benjamin Lamont (Monty). Susie and Bruno Catalani had two sons – Robert and Thomas. Frank (Fuzzy) and Lucille had four children – Patricia, John, Frank, and Raymond. Mary and August (Augie) Musso had two children – Antoinette and Anthony. Carl and Bernice had one daughter, Susan.

For 36 years, Nellie and Frank Fuca ran a grocery store on South Main Street, across the street from the original St. Elizabeth Center, and lived in an apartment above it. Julia and Sam LaRosa were married in Rockford, where he ran a grocery store for seven years and then the Main Tap for nine years on South Main Street. Joe Falzone operated Kona Liquors on West State Street and also was a self-employed house painter and special deputy of the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department. Jennie and Paul Spera lived on Rockford's Wall Street, and he worked at Sundstrand as a tool and gauge inspector. He also was known for his skill repairing sewing machines. He operated Spera Brothers Sewing Machine Company and well into the 1960s, he was still making house calls. Bruno Catalani was a machinist at Special Machine Company in Rockford. In addition to serving the Fifth Ward as an alderman and officiating high school, college and professional football and basketball games, Frank Falzone worked at Dierks Foods. Mary and Augie Musso lived for many years on North Court Street. She worked at Rockford Hosiery Company, while Augie was a self-employed house painter. During World War II, Augie was in the U.S. Medical Corps in France, England, and Germany. Before shipping out, he was stationed at Camp Grant in Rockford and Mary would often visit him there. Carl served in the U.S. Marines for 24 years after enlisting in September 1942 at the age of 19. He worked with naval intelligence, including a secret mission in Japan. His visits to Rockford were joyous occasions as his nephews and nieces delighted in his stories and his ability to blow smoke out of his ears. Often, he would be dressed in his colorful Marine uniform.

The eight children of Raimondo and Serafina had many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Their legacy is found all over the United States and stands as a testament and model of how Sicilian immigrants made a lasting impact on our country.

Submitted on January 20, 2017 by Mike Doyle for the Genealogy Project - Culture and Education Committee of GRIAA “Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families”