

Tape Review- Marie Ferrero Cosimi -May 4, 2004 at her home, 2401 E. 78th Ave., Adams Co.
Interviewer - Alisa Zahller, CHS Program Director, Italians of Denver

Marie Cosimi was living in Welby, Colorado. She is 94 years old, the daughter of John Ferrero and Mary Varello. Her parents moved from Silver Plume, Colorado, around 1905 to the Welby area. Marie was born there on April 29, 1910. She married Anthony Cosimi of Welby in 1934 and they raised their children on their Welby farm.

14 Marie Cosimi's parents are from Turin [Torino], Italy.

25 Father's immigration.

At one time, all male family members had to go to the Italian Army for service. Her father knew that after he came home from Army, all his family could not survive on the acreage of the family. His sister had immigrated to Silver Plume, Colorado, so he decided to join her. He worked in the gold mines there. He was a farmer in Italy -- wheat and fruit. He came through Ellis Island.

55 Mother's family immigration. (Ben Varello)

After grandfather's service in the Italian Army, he and grandmother went to France where Marie's aunt was born -- she was mother's youngest sister. Grandmother died during that childbirth. Grandfather put the children in an orphanage in France and then came to USA as his brother was working in Silver Plume in the mines. He later sent for his children in the orphanage. Marie's mother was age 13 when she arrived in Colorado.

Mother talked about Paris -- about the children at the orphanage and how the nuns were so precise about everything. She learned to sew, knit -- Marie said that she did beautiful work -- a good experience.

Mother came with an uncle and her sister. On the train from New York, she was very uncomfortable as she didn't like men talking to her.

110 Later years. Mother met Marie's father in Silver Plume. Father was 32 and mother 18 years when married. Grandfather objected to the wedding as "he was an old man." Father was a miner, also a jack-of-all-trades. He helped his sister in the boarding house. He helped prepare the dead for burial.

140 Father tells Marie this story about that job. The custom was to sit with dead the night before funeral. Father told of a man who was afraid of the dead. Two men played a trick on him by putting a live person in the coffin and having him make noises. The man ran out of the room. The viewing was on the day of the death -- no embalming. The burial was soon after death. It was difficult to dig the graves in the cemetery - land mostly rock. No coroner as Marie's father did all the work.

190 Aunt Mary Varello ran a Boarding House. Grandfather was a distant relative of Mary's husband. Dad worked in the saloon that was part of the boarding house. Parents met because their relatives knew each other. Parents married in Silver Plume in 1897. When Mother and Father were married, they had a cabin in Silver Plume.

Grandfather and great-uncle were miners; they were paid only if they got gold out of the mine, a very hard life. The miners were close-knit, such as buying presents for children at Christmas time.

Marie's older two sisters went to school at Silver Plume. There were other ethnic groups in the town and many Italians from Northern Italy.

245 Came to Welby.

Miners were getting "miner's consumption." Grandfather and uncle came down with it and Dad began to feel it. Decided to leave high country and come to lower country.

Uncle and Grandfather died here so the family stayed in the area.

270 Rented 10 acres of land in about 1905. Man who owned land had a dairy and was renting some parcels. It was the place where the dairy used to be, the main building. The first year did not do enough to pay rent so they were ready to move. The owner asked them to stay another year if he would not charge rent. Crops were vegetables.

300 Farming was trying because of Dad's health. They did better and later purchased the 10 acres. Dad suffered in his later years.

Dad and mother had "hot beds" -- planted seed and covered them with glass patches and in the fall they would make mats of the cattails to cover the hot beds. All water had to be carried from the ditches by buckets to sprinkle the plants. Had onions, cabbage, pascal celery, bell peppers from the hot beds.

355 Chores. Feed chickens, gather the eggs (sometime Marie would bring an egg and feed it to the pig), pulled weeds, picked beans and peas. Had a cow and 2 horses.

Dad had a spring wagon. He would get up about 2:30-3 a.m. And go to the old City Market and sell his crops. They would put the peas and beans in long boxes and sell by the box. Most people went by nicknames.

At the Denargo Market, some people sold at their booths, then peddlers bought them and peddled them. The eggs were just for the family.

400 Family traditions. Each Italian group that came from different parts of Italy would gather together in those groups. Marie's parents were from the North and did not participate in the celebrations such as the "pig kill." Dad would be asked to do the slaughter but would not stay.

Mother went to school in Italy & France. Father was educated. The only other Italian in area was a cousin [from the North]. Went to Denver often -- they knew two families in North Denver; one family was the Boggio's of the Denver restaurant.

445 Went to Denver to shop. On Larimer St. there was a JC Penney store.

Marie was closer to her brother's age so she would rather play ball and marbles. She learned to sew but didn't like it especially. Liked to read. Books were hard to get. She liked the newspaper -- she would get the papers that they used to wrap the celery.

470 In the basement there was room for the canning items, storing the celery. Had a large vat, wine press and wine barrels.

480 Celebrations. Birthdays, anniversaries, patron saint of Dad's was St. John.

Monsignor Bosetti was a priest at the time. He came to Welby and said Mass at the Mercantile Building. He came to Marie's house on N. Washington in a horse and buggy collecting money to build a church in Welby. Mother and Dad sat with him and decided to give him \$200 to build the church. Marie was born April 29, 1910 and just celebrated her 94th birthday.

510 Mail carrier would come in horse and buggy down Washington St. Marie and her brother would go to the end of the lane to wait for him. They would go to the middle of the road and listen for the buggy with ears to the ground -- like the Indians.

570 In 1918, Dad decided to buy a truck -- no doors on either side. He made seats in truck. Marie sat on a box. Had to crank the truck to start it.

590 1912 was the year they gave money to the church. Welby Mercantile Feed Store was purchased by her father-in-law. The Catholic Church used it until the church was finished. (78th & Cleveland) Benedict Cosini lived there about 2 years until he bought the mercantile. It was on the main street as was the Kline School. Marie taught at Kline School in 1935-36.

620 Went to school at Rankin School 1-8 grades. There was no toilet indoors. Had pot belly stove. 1st-3rd were in one room. The school had no equipment, only desks and blackboards. No pencil sharpeners -- went outside and sharpened pencils with knives. Marie took her lunch in a small lard can. Her lunch was butter and jelly sandwiches. The other children had fried peppers and fried potatoes.

Tape 1, Side B

Some of the time, Marie would have fruit. Got water from the pump - a water dipper.

632 Marie always wore a dress and in winter underwear. She would pull up her underwear so you couldn't see it. Teacher would have a pan of water on the stove for washing hands. Family bought shoes from a peddler -- he had general merchandise. At Rankin, each class had 4 or 5 students. Eight grades at Kline and Rankin School. Later she graduated from Assumption School.

She is remembering the neighborhood "box suppers" for the older people at night. The men would bid on the box that he thought some young lady made -- a way to raise money.

702 In 1920, Assumption Catholic School opened when she was in 5th grade. After graduating the 8th grade, she went to Assumption for 9th and 10th grades. The school was not accredited so she transferred to Adams City High. Then went to Greeley to college about 1929. At the college it was mostly women. You could teach after two years. She lived in a dormitory. The girls had to tell where they were going every day, in by 10 p.m., weekends 12 p.m. If you wanted to stay in Greeley on weekends, there was a "Blue Law" which meant that you could not play tennis, etc. on a Sunday. Her first month in Greeley, if she had a way to get home, she would have. Marie had a roommate who knew some people. It was a sad time. She met a girl from Sterling and they became friends -- played tennis.

805 First year teaching at Edgewater for 4 years. Taught 54 youngsters in 5th grade.

- 835 Met husband.
 In 1933, she was teaching in Edgewater. Marie and her mother decided to to to France, Italy and Switzerland. It was a long trip. First, St. Louis on train, then to Wash. DC and then New York City where they took a tour. Then NY to Genoa, Italy, on a Liner-- Marie and Mom both got sick.
 In Rome, an uncle was a Monk so they saw all the Cathedrals; went to Pompei, then Turin where an uncle (father's brother) lived. He met them at train station. Uncle and aunt lived on a small acreage. Uncle had notified the young men that Marie was in town. Men would come and play accordion, etc. to impress her. They stayed for 3 months. Celebrated Feast Day there. Wheat Harvest was celebrated. She explains how a coating was put on back yard, then they would put the wheat out to dry and bring it in in the evening. There was a parade on Feast Day.
- 930 In France they visited grave of Grandma at the cemetery. The stone was not there; every few years the cemetery workers gather all of the bones, put them in a huge pit, and then bury the bones. You could look down (a glass over the pit) to view the bones. It is depressing.
 Then traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, then to Cherbourg, France, to get on a Liner to Canada; stopped at World's Fair in Chicago before coming home.
- 953 More in Italy. Father had a brother and sister in USA; one brother lived in France. Marie saw the house where her great-grandfather lived in Italy. Father's 3rd brother had the land in Turin; he raised wheat. His home was a long, stone building, the last section was where the chickens were housed (no connecting door to this part of the building). Marie describes the house--bedrooms on 2nd floor. There was a barn. Food that the family served was usually roast, vegetables, soup, lot of fruit -- not a lot of pasta. The community was doing better. Mussolini had done some good for the country. On train to Rome, there was a Fascist whom they met. When they got to Rome, he ordered a cab of horse and carriage for Mother and Marie.
- 1030 Welby. When Father died in 1925, Marie's Ferrero brothers bought the land and became farmers. Marie saved her share and invested -- used some to travel.
- 1040 Onelia [Cosimi] was her best friend at Assumption. Marie's husband-to-be was 6 years older than Marie. Marie didn't know about Onelia's older brother. When Marie left home to go to Greeley to school, she and Onelia lost track for a few years. She ran into Onelia at church and was invited to come over to show her travel pictures. Her brother was there and they were introduced. Next weekend Onelia called to see if she wanted to double-date to a movie at Paramount Theater.
- 1075 Married at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Denver. Reception at home. Honeymoon trip to Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico.
 When married, Mr. Cosimi was in farming. His folks bought land near the river and gave them the house -- it was much smaller then.
 Marie kept teaching 6 more years, had children, went back to teaching -- 40 years total.

- 109 Changes in community. Development of warehouses, storage houses. No young people around there; were all older people of 2nd generation. This was a great neighborhood for education. People should be proud of their families.
- 1117 After WWII. Thornton developed by people who loved Colorado, mostly families of service veterans. They moved here because they loved being here. Marie said when she was principal in Thornton, parents wanted things in their town school like they had in their old towns. She told her new parents, "Let's take the best of your home-town school and put it in our school." That is how she got along with them.
- 1132 In about a 3-mile radius of her home, there are many professionals. Those who have stayed: The Welby Gardens (Gerace family), Pallino Gardens, nurseries, etc. From humble beginnings, much has come to fruition.
- 1145 Marie could easily teach at school when her children were young as the school was next door. She had grandparents help with her children and a girl who helped some.
- 1155 Store behind Marie's house. It was originally Labriola's, then Frank Ciancio bought it. He and his wife built the tavern called Welby Tavern. The business closed when the parish bought the land.
- 1165 The old schoolhouse was across 78th on SE corner. It has been torn down. Assumption Church. Feast Day was a procession -- had St. Anne, St. Rocco, The Assumption. A Bazaar every year and a spaghetti dinner.
- 1190 When Marie was young, her playmates called her "Frenchie" and told her that she was more French than Italian. It bothered her. At Rankin School, she would come home and tell her father that they called her "Frenchie." He said, "You tell them -- Italy is made like a boot and you are the top of the boot and they are the heel of the boot."

Tape 2, Side A

- 1200 Discrimination. Did not know of any with her father or with her becoming a teacher. In Italy, she knew there was a division. The southerners think they're most important and the northerners think they're most important. It was very obvious when she visited Italy. During harvest, there is "maneuvering." Soldiers from north and south would be there at the "maneuvers." An aunt told Marie that she could not go because of the young men -- Uncle said to keep her away from the men from the south of Italy. In Rome, people consider they are better than anyone south of Rome.
- Marie shows Alisa pictures of Rankin School children.
- 1280 End of interview by Alisa Zahller, CHS Director, Italians of Denver Project