

MEMORANDUM

To: Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board
From: David Peterson
Re: Cettolin House (4022 32nd Ave SW) – Supplemental Material for the 4/19/2023 LPB Meeting
Date: April 11, 2023

Please find below additional information regarding the Fausto & Erma Cettolin House property, following Board requests/questions during the March 1, 2023 nomination meeting. This material is intended to supplement information and images already in the landmark nomination report; please refer to that report as needed.

More information about the Italian community in Seattle.

- The “Garlic Gulch” area was home to people from both the south of Italy – primarily Naples, Calabria, and Abruzzo – and from the north, including Milan, Turin, and the many small towns of Tuscany. Notably absent were those from Sicily, who tended to stay on the east coast. (Cipalla)
- The Garlic Gulch “business district” was a thinly developed series of businesses that stretched over one mile along Rainier Avenue from Atlantic Street to McClellan. Businesses included Italian bakeries and groceries, a pharmacy, several barbershops, and a social hall. None survive intact. The Atlantic Street Center, a social services house founded in 1910, offered assistance to recent Italian arrivals. (Woodward)
- At the south end of the valley, near McClellan Street, the Isernios, Vaccas, and Desimones had truck farms ca. 1910s-1930s. Joe Desimone was one of the founders of Pike Place Market. (Woodward)
- During World War II, Italian-born residents of Garlic Gulch and other neighborhoods were considered “enemy aliens” and subjected to curfews, travel and employment restrictions, and other controls. A local Italian-language newspaper, radio show, and the community’s Italian language school all ceased operation during the war years. In the 1950s, a new wave of Italian immigrants arrived in Seattle, increasing from 929 people in 1950 to 2555 in 1960. (Woodward)
- Several prominent politicians grew up in the Garlic Gulch area. One of the most well-known was Albert D. Rosellini who served as Washington state governor for two terms. He was the first Italian-American governor of any state west of the Mississippi. (Cipalla, Woodward)
- Multiple issues led to the Garlic Gulch as the center of Seattle’s Italian community. Besides the construction of the Lake Washington bridge through the neighborhood between 1940-1980, the postwar flight to the suburbs was also a factor. Census Tract 95 (around Mount Virgin Church) lost more than half its white population between 1960 and 1980, while the African American population increased five-fold and the Asian population more than doubled. Catholic Asian refugees from Laos, Vietnam, and China began to arrive in the 1970s and attend Our Lady of Mt. Virgin Church. (Woodward)
- No additional information or significant structures could be found regarding the historically small Italian-American community in West Seattle.



Fig. 1 – 1957 view of the intersection of Rainier Avenue S and S Atlantic Street, showing the heart of the Garlic Gulch commercial district. These buildings were demolished with the expansion of the I-90 interstate around 1979.

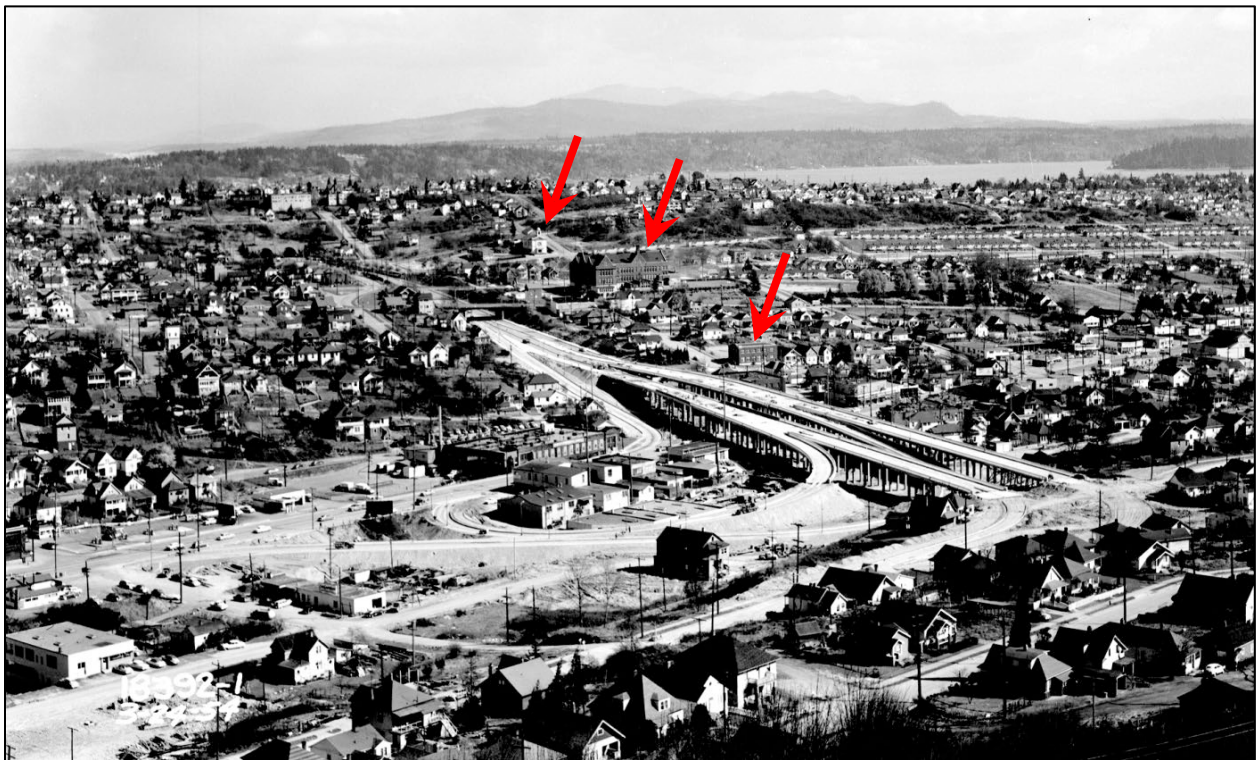


Fig. 2 – 1954 aerial view east showing the Rainier Valley and the growing highway approach to the Lake Washington Floating Bridge built through the heart of the main Italian-American community, known as the Garlic Gulch. Rainier Avenue S runs left to right under the bridge at center. The highway would continue to be expanded through the 1970s, destroying much of the historic Garlic Gulch business district around S Atlantic Street and Rainier Avenue S. (Arrows identify Our Lady of Mt. Virgin Church, the Colman School, and the Deaconess Settlement/Atlantic Street Center, all important institutions to the Italian-American community).

Existing buildings associated with the Italian community in Seattle are:

1. Our Lady of Mount Virgin Catholic Church at 28th Avenue S & S Massachusetts Street was built on the site of an earlier wooden church erected by the German Catholic community in the 1890s and named for St. Boniface. As more Italians poured into the area, they initially shared the building with the Germans but soon the Italians wanted a church that reflected their own heritage and language. A new church, designed in a simplified Italian Renaissance style, opened in 1915 and a small parochial school nearby opened in 1918. The parish was established without geographic boundaries so it could attend to the spiritual needs of the Italian community wherever they lived in the city. The school, run by the Dominican sisters of Tacoma, remained open for 60 years. Fr. Ludovico Caramello would visit the school every week to teach Italian. Eventually, the smaller St. Boniface was decommissioned and served as a parish hall. By the 1980s, many Italian Americans had left the neighborhood. New immigrant groups replaced them and the church began to serve the Vietnamese, Lao, and Chinese Catholic communities. In 2022, the church was closed by the Archbishopric in a city-wide parish consolidation effort. (Cipalla)

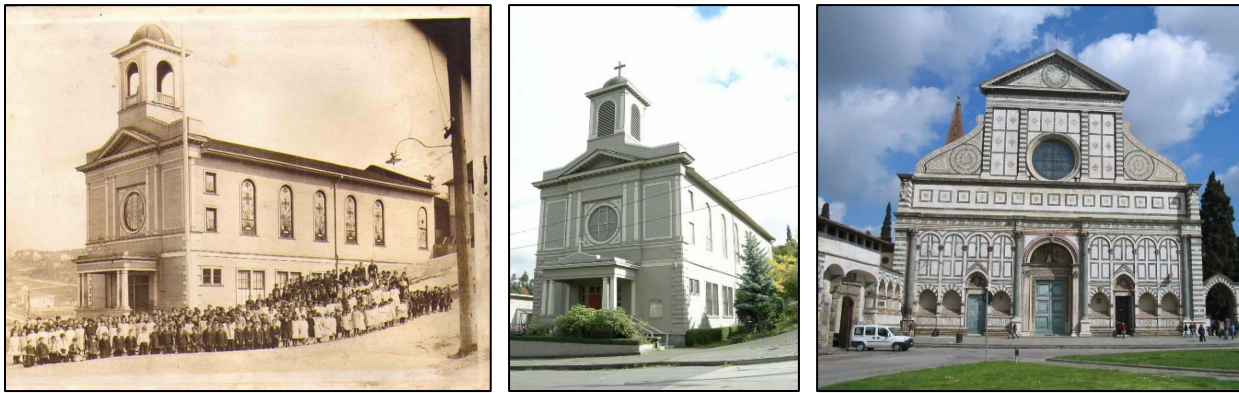


Fig. 3 – (Left) Ca. 1915 view of Our Lady of Mt. Virgin Catholic Church, at 28th Avenue S and S Massachusetts Street. (Center) View in 2020. (Right) An example of a Renaissance period Italian church, Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Italy, representing the architectural style that Our Lady of Mt. Virgin was intended to emulate.

2. Atlantic Street Center at 21st Avenue S & S Atlantic Street was constructed in 1928 as an enlarged facility for the Deaconess Settlement, a Methodist Church-related organization established in 1910 to serve the social welfare needs of the growing Italian immigrant community. The original wood-frame building had been located at 1519 Rainier Avenue S. The present structure, designed in a simple Lombardy Romanesque Style reminiscent of Northern Italian buildings, continues to house social services for the neighborhood.



Fig. 4 – Atlantic Street Center, formerly known as the Deaconess Settlement House. (DAHP photo)

3. The Colman School at 21st Avenue S & S Atlantic Street was constructed in 1910 by the Seattle School District to serve the growing elementary school population in the neighborhood. As the closest school to the Garlic Gulch area, many Italian-American students attended it. Colman also was a primary elementary school for the African-American population in the neighborhood that grew during the postwar years. The structure survived the construction of the I-90 highway and tunnel built nearby, but the primary school program ended in 1979, replaced with an alternative school program that closed in 1985. During the 1980s, there was a movement to establish an African-American heritage and cultural center in the building. In 2008, the Northwest African American Museum opened to the public in the former Colman School.



Fig. 5 – Colman School, now the Northwest African American Museum.

Buildings associated with the Italian community in Seattle that are no longer extant:



Fig. 6 – No longer extant: The Oberto Sausage Company operated at this location at 1715 Rainier Avenue S beginning in 1953, and the building was constructed in 1955. The Oberto company was originally located at 1043 S King Street from 1918 to 1953. The building was demolished in 2020.



Fig. 7 – No longer extant: Borracchini's Bakery at 2307 Rainier Avenue S, long associated with the Italian-American community in the Garlic Gulch area, was originally built in 1939 according to tax records, but by the 1960s had been updated as Modern-style retail shop (left photo, view in 1975). In the 1980s or 90s a second floor was constructed, and architectural details such as red tile pent roofs and arched elements were added, evoking a Mediterranean or Italian heritage (right photo). The building was destroyed in a fire in 2021.

“Garlic Gulch” Neighborhood Residential Survey

In 2018, the Rainier Valley Historical Society (RVHS) researched Italian-American family houses in the “Garlic Gulch” neighborhood centered around S Atlantic Street and Rainier Avenue S, in an attempt to recreate the neighborhood that had existed in the early 20th century. Using ca. 1937 King County Tax Assessor photos, RVHS identified numerous Italian-American families and their homes addresses.

Notably, the houses represent very typical wood-frame or brick vernacular and higher-style ca. 1900-1930s designs that are found throughout Seattle, including Victorian cottages, Craftsman-style bungalows, or Tudorbethan houses. Whether the houses included in the RVHS study were built by the Italian-American owners, or simply purchased by them, is unknown. In contrast, the Cettolin House represents an entirely different Italian immigrant experience. Rather than being satisfied with purchasing an existing house or building a house following local building traditions, Fausto Cettolin constructed his own house referencing forms and imagery from his youth in Italy. The Cettolin House represents a completely unique vernacular structure in Seattle.

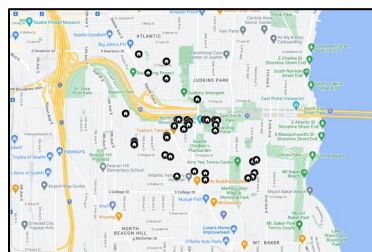


Fig 8 – (Above) “Garlic Gulch” neighborhood survey poster by the Rainier Valley Historical Society, 2018 (courtesy Karen O’Brien, RVHS). (Left) Map at left shows houses plotted on a map. The neighborhood was severely impacted by the construction of the I-90 approach and connection to the Lake Washington Floating Bridge from the 1940s through the 1970s.

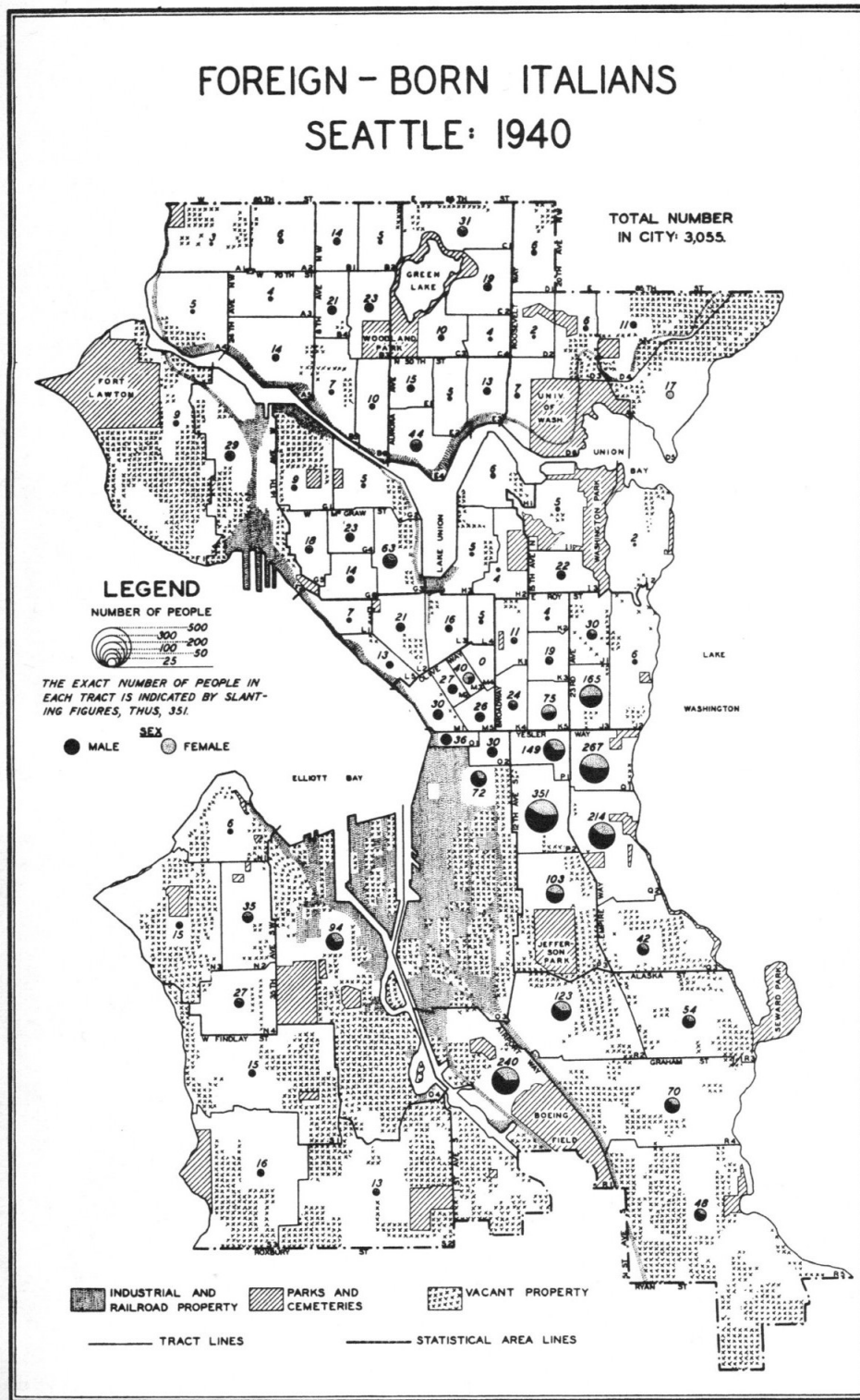


Fig. 9 – 1940 map showing distribution of Italian immigrants living in Seattle. (Calvin Schmid)

Bibliography

Boba, Eleanor. "See All the People: Mt. Virgin Church Changes with the Times," *Historic Seattle* newsletter, April 30, 2020.

Cipalla, Rita. "Garlic Gulch, Seattle's Version of Little Italy," *L'Italo Americano*, February 14, 2022. <https://italoamericano.org/garlic-gulch-seattles-version-of-little-italy/>

----- . "Amid Declining Attendance, Historic Our Lady of Mount Virgin Catholic Church Closes," *L'Italo Americano*, September 27, 2022. <https://italoamericano.org/our-lady-mount-virgin-closes/>

Rainier Valley Historical Society. "Garlic Gulch" neighborhood history project, 2018.

Henry, Mary T. "Atlantic Street Center (Seattle)," HistoryLink essay 9613, December 18, 2010. www.historylink.org.

Italian Club of Seattle. "History of the Italian Club," (2022). <https://italianclubofseattle.org/history.html>.

Studio TJP. "Oberto Sausage Factory" SEPA Appendix A Report (for the City of Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections), June 2020, revised October 2020.

Woodward, Mikala. "Whatever Happened to 'Garlic Gulch?'—Southeast Seattle's Italian Community Since World War II," Neighborhoods-Southeast Seattle Community History Project, context statement prepared for City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program, 2011. www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/southeastseattle.