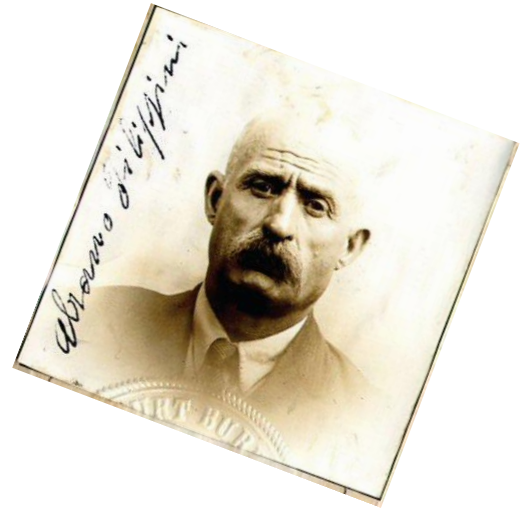


The Filippini Family of Bureau County, Illinois -
A Short-Story



by Ken Pinter
www.kenpinter.com
July 2015
Updated 1 March 2024

Introduction

Some years ago, I completed an in-depth research project on the Abramo Filippini family of Ladd, Illinois, plus allied or associated families, and I wrote a report on that research. That report plus some other related publications and pictures can be found on my web site: www.kenpinter.com.

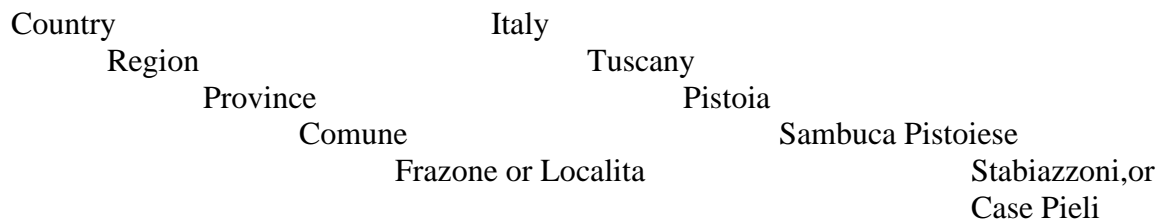
This paper is a short-story version of that report. For more details, please see the web site.

Overview

Abramo Filippini and Annina Cecchini were born in Tuscany, Italy, in the last part of the 1800s. They lived there in their early years, married and had their first child there, and then took the bold step of immigrating to the United States just after the turn of the century. They settled in Ladd, Bureau County, Illinois, bought a house, and raised a family of seven children.

Italian Administrative Organization

As a reminder, Italy is administratively structured like this:

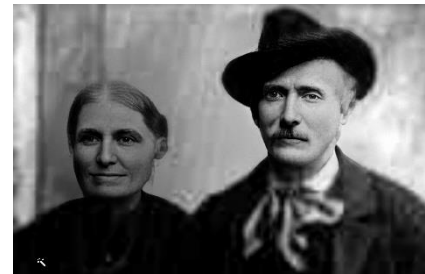


Abramo Filippini

Abramo Filippini was born in the small mountain village of Stabiazioni which is in the Comune of Sambuca, Province of Pistoia, Region of Tuscany, Country of Italy, on 29 March 1874. Geographically, this is about 20 miles northwest of Florence, IT, and about 10 miles north of the town of Pistoia.

His parents were Giulio Filippini and Gioconda Taddei (right). Abramo had 5 siblings: Giovan Batista, Amos, Benjamino, Faustina, and Olinto.

Olinto also immigrated to the United States and died in Ladd, IL, soon after his arrival.



Some members of the Amos Filippini family found their way to Aosta Valley, one of 20 Regions of Italy (Tuscany is also a Region). It is located in the extreme northwest part of Italy and borders to the north with Switzerland and to the west with France.

Nothing else is known about Abramo's other brothers and sisters.

Little is known about earlier generations of the Filippini family. Here is a simplified tree branch showing heads of household going from the oldest to Abramo:

Giuliano Filippini (b: late 1700)
 GiovanBattiste Filippini (b: abt 1830)
 Giuliano Aurelio Filippini (b: 1849)
 Abramo Filippini (b: 1874)

More detail can be found in the longer Filippini report and the tree diagram attached to this report.

We don't know what kind of work Abramo and his father were engaged in. Maybe they harvested and processed chestnuts because the area of Tuscany was thick with these trees in that time. Chestnuts were ground into flour from which many food items were made.

Or maybe they worked making woodcarbon (charcoal). The production of charcoal was prevalent in southern parts of Italy. Perhaps Abramo and/or his father traveled to these areas at various times in the year to engage in the making of charcoal.

Of course, it is possible that they engaged in some kind of farming although the surrounding area is mountainous.

Or maybe Abramo served for some time in the French Foreign Legion. There are stories that suggest that he did this for some time in his life. If this story is true, then he might have trained and even fought in Algeria. Italian men joined the Legion in that time with the promise from France that they would be given residence and perhaps settle in France following their service. Abramo was known in his new home of Ladd as Galiano and there is a story that he acquired this name while in the Legion. Most of this story about the French Foreign Legion is considered family lore and is unproven, however.

Since Abramo did not emigrate until he was about 32 years old, he very well may have engaged in one or more of the above occupations until his departure for America.

Stabiazioni

Stabiazioni is a small mountain village north of the town of Pistoia. It sits at an elevation of 750 meters (about 2250 feet) and is comprised today of approximately 20-25 buildings built on either side of a narrow mountain road that parallels what is now route SS64 connecting Pistoia and Bologna. Many of the residences share common walls. The name Stabiazioni is derived from the old Longobard word Stabizzo that means literally "animal pen" or "yard for animals". The Longobards (or Lombards) were a Germanic people who lived in the mountains surrounding Stabiazioni in the Middle Ages.

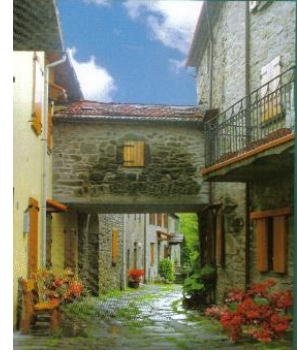




It is believed that Abramo continued to live in Stabiazioni until he migrated to America in 1906.

Most of the buildings in Stabiazioni, including Abramo's home, have been restored and are used as summer homes today. While the home that Abramo lived in has been

restored, it has a cornerstone in the foundation that is dated 1530 or 1658. Relatives of Abramo's brother Amos own the home today.



Various photographs of the home in Stabiazioni, and included in this report and album, show a room spanning across the road from Abramo's home to a building on the other side of the road. This overpass is utilized as a bedroom today, but it used to be a passageway from the house to a stable across the street.

Today, the road that passes through Stabiazioni and under the overpass described above is the "Via Francigena of Sambuca". It was part of the Via Francigena. This medieval route was heavily traveled by pilgrims traveling from Germany, Scandinavia, Austria and other Northern points to Rome, and back again. It was the main road from Pistoia to Bologna until 1860 when what is now SS64 was constructed in the valley. Many pilgrims passed under this overpass on their way to and from Rome in ancient days.

Today, Stabiazioni is comprised of restored homes plus a small church. In the day of Abramo, some of the buildings were stables that were later remodeled into residences.

Annina (Anna) Cecchini

Annina Cecchini was born in the small village of Case Pieli on 26 July 1886. She is the daughter of Jacope (spelled Iacopo in Italian) Cecchini and Faustina Jacometti (spelled Iacometti in Italian). She has six siblings: Candida, Giulia, Candida, Giuseppe, Maria, and Paolo. It is assumed that the first Candida died in early childhood.

Little is known about the family's history. However, the names of the male heads of household for the Cecchini family, going back to the late 1700s, is known. Here is a simplified tree branch going from the oldest to Annina:

Jacopo Cecchini (b: late 1700s)
 Giuseppi Cecchini (b: abt 1806-1811)
 Jacopo Cecchini (b: 1856)
 Annina Cecchini (b: 1886)

More detail can be found in the longer Filippini report and the tree diagram attached to this report.

Once again, the occupation of Annina's father is unknown. We can only speculate, as we did for Abramo and family, that he had a similar occupation because Case Pieli is just a short distance from Stabiazioni and the country sides are quite similar.

Case Pieli

Case Pieli is a very small village just off of the main road SS64 and very close to the village of Corniolo. This village is about 2-3 km north of Stabiazioni. While it was a thriving village in Annina's day, today it is almost completely abandoned.



In the terminology of Italian administration, Case Pieli was a localita in the Comune of Sambuca Pistoiese.

The village of Case Pieli was built on the side of a gradually sloping hill. It is comprised of perhaps 10-12 buildings. Each building was constructed of stones, and many had roofs made of flat stone. Some of the buildings were two stories high. It requires a hike of perhaps a mile of switchbacks and an elevation change of 500 feet to reach the village from the main road. Today most of the buildings are in severe disrepair, with, in some cases, collapsed ceilings/roofs. A few of the houses have been renovated, however, and are used as summer homes.



Life in 19th Century Italy

Abramo and Anna apparently never talked to their children about their life in Italy. Since we have no first-hand accounts of their life between birth and their emigration, it might be interesting to speculate on what it was like, based on other written accounts.

Italy was a poor country late in the 19th century when Abramo and Anna were born. We might assume, then, that their life was poor and difficult. Both were born and lived in a mountainous area...not like the Rocky Mountains but rather more like the Appalachian Mountains. The area (shown at the right) was covered with chestnut trees but it is not clear how dense the trees were in that time. The trees thrived at lower elevations. Today it is lush and green but in the 1880s it may have been less dense.



We have a sense about what their homes looked like because we have some modern-day pictures. Both were 2-level rock structures. In at least the kitchen, there was a wood stove or fireplace and a minimum of cooking utensils. The floors were either dirt or wood planks.

Early in the morning, cooking for the day was done. Polenta was boiled on the stove while chestnut-flower breadstuffs were prepared. One such bread was called Necci and was prepared by sandwiching chestnut flower dough between chestnut tree leaves and hot flat round stones (see picture at right).



A household was comprised of the husband and wife, children in bare feet, and most likely one or more elders. The household probably had a few head of livestock. One cow was retained for milk but the remaining were consumed, sold, or traded. A garden was raised and included vegetables, wheat, potatoes, plus other foods, but the land was not conducive to high crop production. Children as young as 5 years participated in chores around the village.

Winter was a slow time due to the cold and snow. Often, the men of the village would migrate to southern Tuscany in winter to cut trees and make wood carbon (charcoal). The women and elders remained at home and had to keep fireplaces or stoves going in order to survive. There was essentially nothing else to do. Snow was always present in the winter which lasted about 6-7 months.

It was in this world that Abramo and Anna grew up, met, and later married.

Marriage of Abramo and Annina

Abramo and Annina were married in Italy. At that time, couples may have had two marriage ceremonies: a civil ceremony and a church ceremony. Abramo and Annina's civil marriage occurred on 12 October 1902 (see a document for this date at the end of this report). No record of the church ceremony has been found so far.

Note that prior to 1929, the only recognized marriage was the civil marriage. After 1929, church marriages were recognized by the state. So, perhaps Abramo and Annina had two separate ceremonies in order to comply with the requirements of those times.

Abramo was age 28 when he married Annina. Annina was 16 years of age. Their marriage certificate has wording that indicates that Annina's parents had given their permission for this marriage.

Early Years of Marriage

Abramo and Anna's civil marriage was 12 October 1902. Abramo left Italy for America in October 1906, four years after their marriage. We have no evidence of their residence during this time, nor do we know what his occupation was.

We know that a child was conceived before October 1906 because this child, Ada, was born in September 1906. Abramo emigrated to the USA a month later. Ada died on 2 January 1907,

probably from complications due to the flu. Anna later emigrated to America in November of 1908.

Once again, we can only speculate that they lived in Stabiazzoni and that Abramo worked at one of the occupations discussed earlier during this time.

Abramo and Anna Migrate to America

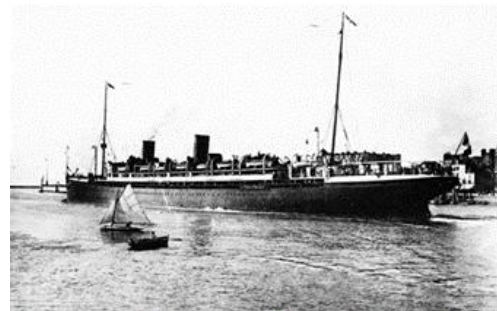
For many years, Italy was actually a collection of poor and separate states. In 1861, however, these states were unified under one king and in 1871, Rome became the capital of the new Italy. Nevertheless, the country remained predominately poor with some wealth in the northern regions where the influence of the rest of Europe was felt.

The government in Rome was weak and there existed a conflict between the state and the Catholic leadership. Overall, Italians saw little hope in being able to rise up out of the poverty and lack of direction that existed. As a result, many left the country. Between 1876 and 1924 (the time frame when Abramo and Anna were growing up), 9 million Italians left Italy for America while another 7.5 million went to other places.

Anna and Abramo were part of that 9 million who sensed a better life in America. By 1900, a few other Filippini family members had already arrived in America, in Ladd, and so, as was usually the case back then, Abramo followed the advice of these people and decided to sail to America.

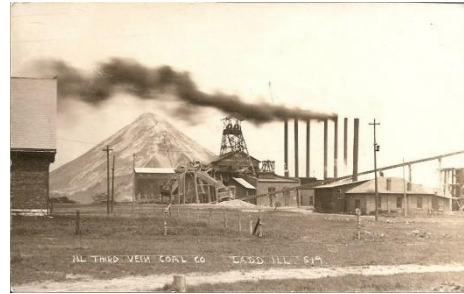
His journey started in September 1906 when he set out for Le Havre, France, a popular port of embarkation in Europe. He most likely traveled with a group and probably walked or used wagons or a train to get there from Stabiazzoni. In La Havre he had to buy a steerage ticket and wait his turn to board a ship.

His ship, the La Touraine (shown at right), departed France on 6 October 1906 and docked at Ellis Island on about the 14th of October. He was carrying only a few belongings and no more than about 30 US dollars. According to the ship passenger list, Abramo was 32 years old, he was 5'6" tall, and was married but traveling alone.



We can only guess that he spent a short time in New York before boarding a train for Chicago, and then Ladd. Since there were train routes to Ladd in that time, he may have been able to take the train to Ladd. In Ladd, he was met by a cousin, Oreste Filippini, and found a temporary place to live.

Soon after arriving, he secured a job in the Ladd mine (shown at right) and started his new life in America.



The life of a miner was difficult, tiring, and dirty but for Abramo, this was his key to a better life. He saved his earnings probably with the intent to go back to Italy to escort Anna to the US. But it was not uncommon for Italians to work in the US for some time, and either send the money home or else return to Italy permanently.

Whatever the plan was, ultimately, they decided they should both be in the USA. He sent home enough money for Anna to travel to America.

Anna made the same trip from Stabiazioni to Le Havre, France, in November 1908, and finally boarded the same ship, the La Touraine, bound for New York. The ship docked at Ellis Island on 6 December 1908 after about 8 days at sea. A week or so later, she was in Ladd, IL. She was 22 years old, 5'2" tall with blue eyes and blond hair according to the ship's passenger list.

Anna actually had an escort for the trip. The ship records show that she was accompanied by an individual coincidentally also named Abramo Filippini. The records also show that he was married to a woman named Maria and it is assumed he was simply escorting Anna to America. His tombstone was found in a small cemetery near Stabiazioni.

Life in Ladd

Anna and Abramo found a residence in Ladd. Perhaps they lived in housing provided by the coal company. It was probably a boarding house.

Anna and Abramo's second child, a girl named Dina, was born in 1909. She succumbed to the measles in 1914.

Abramo worked and saved enough money that he was soon ready to buy a house. In December, 1910, he and Anna signed papers to buy the only home they ever owned. The house was on Chicago Street, and they lived in that house and raised a family of 7 until they passed away. The mortgage for the house was a total of \$625. They paid off the mortgage in 1912! In 1933, they bought two lots on the south side of their home.

The house (shown at the right) was essentially a simple 2-level house. In the early days, the lower level housed the kitchen and possibly an extension of the kitchen where an icebox (and later a furnace) were located. The upper level was comprised of bedrooms for the family that totaled at its maximum 9 people. Heat for the upper level was provided by wood or coal burning stoves. A wood-burning (or coal) cook stove heated the lower level. Access to the upstairs was provided by a stairs that led up to the back corner bedroom.



Upstairs is where everyone slept. The kids slept 3 per bed and often slept on the porch in the summer months.

This house had no running water and bathroom facilities until about 1946. Prior to that, water was manually pumped from a well next to the house as well as a pump in the basement kitchen. A privy, aka “outhouse”, was found at the back of the lot near the alleyway. Later, a kitchen was added upstairs, a coal furnace was added in the basement (it was then later converted to gas) and the upstairs was remodeled to contain a bathroom, living room, dining room, and two bedrooms plus the small kitchen. The house remained in that configuration until it was sold sometime after Anna passed away in 1981.



An arbor was constructed in the back yard and grapes were grown on the arbor. Abramo and Anna made wine and jams from the grapes. To make wine, they would stomp the grapes in a large vat. The wines produced were only used on special occasions. The family also raised a variety of fruits in their backyard and many of these products were canned for later use.

In addition to the canned fruits, the family raised and ate chickens and also enjoyed oxtail meals. Polenta was an important food and was usually served on a clean cloth at the center of the table. Other frequent foods were raviolis (in broth) and oatmeal.

Christmas was celebrated without a Christmas tree in the early years. But each child had a hanging stocking. The children usually shared what few toys they had such as a dolls and wagons. The girls often made paper dolls. The children were required to speak Italian at home. Anna and Abramo learned some basic English plus the Pledge of Allegiance which they were required to recite in order to become US citizens.

Abramo’s job in the mine was “digger” which means his job was to manually load coal cars with coal deep underground. It is said that he frequently returned home from work with bruises and cuts on his head. The company was the Third Vein Coal Company. He held this or other jobs in the mine until it closed in 1924. He then worked at other mines in the area until he was no longer able to do so. Then, he and Anna worked in the local hemp factory for some years.

Abramo, like many other miners, developed “black lung disease”. He later obtained some monetary compensation from the government.

Ironically, even though Abramo worked in a coal mine, Anna would go to the railroad tracks once in a while with a bucket or wheelbarrow to pick up coal that had dropped off of the cars and use it in the two household stoves.

Abramo and Anna applied for and were later granted US Citizenship. His citizenship was granted on 18 September 1929 while hers was granted on 6 January 1932. Pictures taken for their citizenship papers are found on the front cover. Their signatures are also included.



The first car in the Filippini family was the Whippet, a car manufactured only between 1927 and 1930. But Abramo and Anna never had a driver's license. It is believed the car belonged to Paul, probably in the early 1940's.

Anna and Abramo have a total of nine children. Two of the nine died at a very young age, one in Italy and one in Ladd. They have 24 grandchildren and one step-grandchild. They also have 62 great-grandchildren. These numbers are accurate. The count of great-great-grandchildren is not quite as accurate. The author knows of 40 but that list is probably incomplete.

Abramo died of a cerebral hemorrhage on 26 October 1954 in his living room at the age of 79 years. Anna continued to live in their home in Ladd. She lost much of her sight and hearing in her later years but thrived on her own until she passed away in her sleep on 20 June 1981 in Ladd at the age of 94 years. Both are buried in the Ladd Cemetery next to their daughter Dina and Abramo's brother Olinto.

It was a difficult but rewarding ride. Rest in Peace.



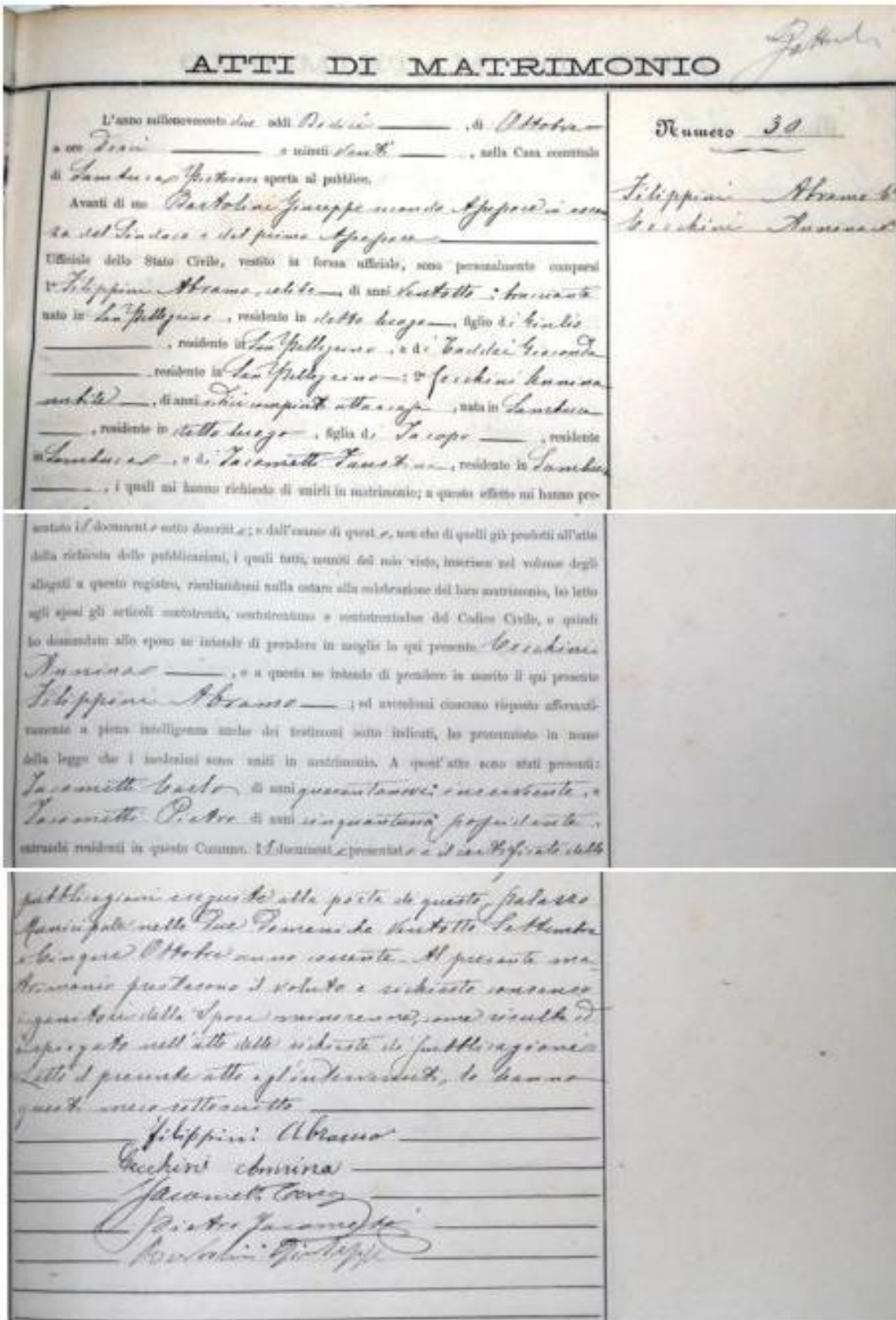
Filippini Images

Additional images are found in accompanying Photo Galleries

Map of Italy Showing Abramo and Anna’s Homeland



Abramo and Anna's Marriage Papers



Wedding Photos of Abramo and Anna's Children



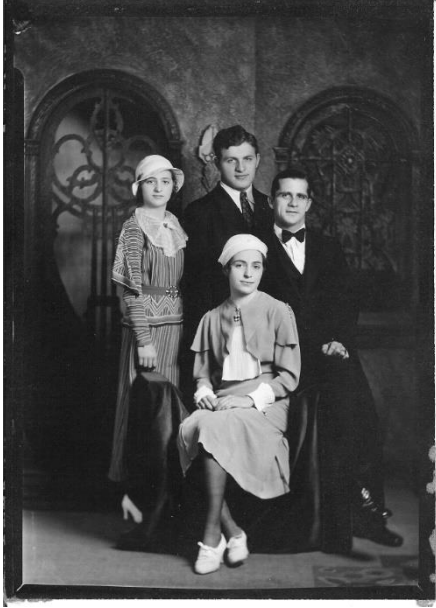
Julia and Harold Pinter,
22 September 1940



Margaret and Glenn Korte, 1 June 1946,
with Anna and Abramo.
House in background is original and only home
owned by Abramo and Anna.



Jerry and Paul Filippini
21 April 1951
Wedding party: Nina Ellerbrock, Louise
Filippini, Dino Filippini, Glenn Korte



Alma and Frank Ellerbrock,
18 January 1934
Attendants: Julia Filippini and Dino
Filippini



Bertha and Delmo Filippini,
date unknown



Mary and Olinto (Specs)
Filippini, 19 January 1935



Dino and Dorothy Filippini,
7 June 1941
Actual wedding day picture
unavailable

Filippini/Cecchini Partial Family Tree Diagram

Showing baby Ada's ancestry

