100 Years of Italian American History
A Historical Perspective on the Italian American Community in Metro Detroit

Bonaldi’s: A Detroit Landmark Since 1915

In 1915, Angelo Bonaldi opened his first store on Rivard Street in Detroit serving the Italian American community by selling music and books. The store was also located on the same block as Roma Hall and Giglio’s Market. At that time, the area was a thriving center of commerce in the Italian American community.

When he returned to Italy, his son Louis and wife Gertrude took over the business with the help of their children Bonaldo (Burt Holiday), Vida and Ezio. Bonaldo, as Burt Holiday, later made it big as part of the singing group “The Gaylords.” His brother-in-law, Ilio Benvenuti, was also an accomplished singer in the Metro Detroit area as well.

Over the years, they have expanded the store to include jewelry, imports from Italy, greeting cards, communion items and many other items of interest to Italians in Detroit.

They include product lines from Fontanini, G Armani and Capodimonte among others. The shop also offers 18K Italian gold jewelry, pizzelle irons, pasta machines, espresso cups, Italian chocolates, holiday cakes, seraphim angels, rosaries, Jordan almonds, bombonieri and baptismal items.

When Louis passed away in 1956, his son Ezio, who was enlisted in the MPs took an honorable discharge to return home to help run the family business with his mother Gertrude. In 1964, Ezio and his wife Diva took over the business.

Originally located in the heart of the Italian American community in Detroit on Gratiot, Ezio and Diva moved the business to East Detroit in 1968.

But in 1988, a growing populace of Italians in Clinton Township called for a move to their current location on Garfield at Canal in Clinton Township. Ezio and his wife Diva ran the store until their children Eddie, Rosanne and Donna took over in 2000, who still man the store today.

Eddie’s children, Angelo, Justin and Samantha, along with their cousins, Roseanne’s sons, Timothy, Christopher and Michael and Donna’s children, Robert, Jessica and Nicholas have all worked part-time in their parents’ store.

Bonaldi’s is currently located at 41740 Garfield, Clinton Township. Call the store at (586) 263-1233.

Photos courtesy of THE BONALDI FAMILY

Editor’s note: If you have a business, club or individual that you believe deserves historical recognition in a future edition, call (586) 783-3260 or email Italiantribune@yahoo.com