

Michele Bernardon

# CHISELLERS And STONECUTTERS



*from Western Friuli to the world*

Translated into English by Fr. Marco Bagnarol





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Friulian  
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On the front cover:

United States of America, South Dakota. 1930s. The impressive Mount Rushmore National Memorial of which Luigi Del Bianco from Meduno was the head sculptor.

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For some years now the **Mizza Castle Cultural Circle** has dedicated itself to the research and publication of stories of emigration and, with this publication – compiled by Michele Bernardon – we wanted to give our contribution to the knowledge of the phenomenon of Friulian emigration in the recent past.

For this work, once again, I find myself sincerely thanking Michele, who with his labour allows us to relive the recent past and, above all, with the memories that he has collected, allows testimonies to be documented which diversely would be lost thus depriving the new generations of a piece of history of their territory.

The President  
of the **Mizza Castel Cultural Circle**  
Rita Ferroli





## PRESENTATION

### Harder than stone

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Spilimbergo, *Our Lord's year* of 1376.

The admirable entry portal to the cathedral is inaugurated, done by master Zenone of Campione *de comitatu mediolanensi*, that is, of the plaque corporation of Milan.

At the end of the fourteen century Zenone represents the haggard vanguard of many masters from Como who, in the following century, would have found work in the most prestigious civil and religious factories of Italy. They came, as the word itself indicates, from Como and surrounding areas. Campione, in fact, is on the lake of Lugano, the known Motherland of able chisellers and of other money-grubbers tied to stone, quarrymen, sculptors, architects, entrepreneurs.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century from this area, considered to be more Switzerland than Italy, dozens of stonecutters, seeing the good welcome extended by the Venetian Republic and the excellent possibilities of work, migrated even to Friuli and settled here.

From the long stay on the spot of these *svizars* (Swiss) chisellers, the nickname/surname which defined them was born and consolidates itself: Sbaiz/Sbaizero, Bizzaro, Bizzarro/Bisaro, that is, "Swiss", moreover ascribable even to merchants, men of arms and other artisans coming from those areas.

In our Piedmont area, above all interesting is the case of Travesio where, starting from the beginning of the 1500s, this "foreign" community fixed its own roots in the area of the Ricui, present-day headquarters of the scholastic Pole, between Gondei Street and Villa Street, so much so that, still today, the last elderly people define the area as Switzerland Hamlet.

Perhaps a bit of a long, but necessary, premise in order to confirm how much importance these "Swiss" workforces had in ferrying the Friuli region of Italy from wood sculpting to stone sculpting. Evidently, being innovators, the natives of Como taught and, next to them, groups of local students began to grow and to form themselves which started the school of the Medunese and Toppani *spizzapiera* (stonecutters) and, in general, many micro-schools of the Piedmont area of the province of Pordenone.

Here we are now, throughout past centuries and along ancient roads, Michele Bernardon accompanies us with this last essay of his, the fruit of a long and articulated research of his.

He has known how to patiently collect a lot of scattered cards and to place them again in order to place a composite mosaic under our eyes, made up of capacity, tenacity and many similar but never same stories, experienced by quarrymen and chisellers of a tough hide, harder than stone that they were going to etch out.

Bernardon leads us by the hand to the four corners of the world, to Germany, Romania, Russia and Siberia, Australia, to jobsites where we seem to still sense the rhythmed and silvery beating of the little sledgehammers which hit points and chisels: tact tac, tac tac. It still seems to us that we can smell the pungent odour of charcoal which is burning in the forge, and to see

the long and sooty shadow of blacksmiths bent over the anvil in order to *spiçâ* and *temperâ*, sharpening and tempering the tools of the stone-cutters. Everything, in fact, back then started with wood, with iron and with stone, given that cement and plastic had still not been invented. The search for data and dates which Bernardon conducts is punctual and exhaustive, constant, passionate and fortunate, ingredients which, in their ensemble, make the difference between good and better. The author, in fact, had the perseverance to follow the traces of some of our emigrants even beyond the Atlantic Ocean, and to find in the United States of America entire communities descending from those stonecutters of our Piedmont region, who, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and beyond, had gone *fôr pal mont* (out into the world) in search of better fortune. Here, he even met Caesar and Lou Del Bianco, respectively the son and grandson of that Luigi Del Bianco, from Meduno, who in the 1930s was, on behalf of Gutzon Borglum who in turn on behalf of the government of the United States of America, the head sculptor of the very famous *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* in South Dakota, on the Black Hills, there where the gigantic faces tower of four famous Presidents: Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln. A mega sculpture which even inspired Korczak Ziolkowski, the former assistant to Borglum and Del Bianco, who, always on the Black Hills, worked for many decades on the impressive *Crazy Horse Memorial*, dedicated to the Sioux chief Crazy Horse.

We like to think that, from the stone-cutters of the area of Como, passing through the ones of Meduno, sculpting even landed in America, ideally uniting countries and peoples: Swiss, Friulians, European refugees and Native Americans, citizens of the global village, splinters of the same humanity. Michele Bernardon has known how to make us relive a particular segment of time in which man, though pressed by the hard reality, still entrusted his own dreams to stone, the flourished stone of Pietro Lombardo, of Carlo da Carona, of Pilacorte, of Donato Casella. And in the background I see many humble *stonecutters*, full of dust like millers and with swollen eyes, with the inseparable stonemason's hammer in their hand. And from the little pocket of waistcoat peeps out the prayer card of Saint Lucy, their venerable protector. On the other hand, and the chisellers knew it well, it was necessary to protect oneself, from the moment that one's own eyes are precious and always at the risk of unforeseen splinters. Laurinçut from Clauzetto, who for many years was a *stonecutter* on the Trans-Siberian, would instead raise up Saint Scugni and the principle of fortuitousness: "*Pal mont a no si va nome par cjapâ un franc, ma ancje cualchi scae*".

Men harder than stone, more realistic than a king.

Now, thanks to Michele Bernardon, those stones, having flourished under such wise hands, come to the surface and float in front of our eyes. An accurate mirror of a far distant history, a vast and complicated history, our history.

Gianni Colledani



## PREFACE

If, as was written by Ippolito Nievo, in his “Confessioni di un italiano” (Confessions of an Italian), Friuli Venetia Julia can be considered to be “a small compendium of the universe”, even the history of Friulian emigration can be put inside of this happy definition.

In that varied universe made up of almost two million Friulians who, between the 19th and 20th centuries, left the Small Motherland in order to go in search of a better fortune in the world, we, in fact, find the most diverse and imaginative trades exercised by our fellow regional men, in the most disparate and remote parts of the globe.

A lot has already been written but a lot still remains to be written, just like in certain mines in which the more one digs and the more new veins are found, about that colossal exodus which was the emigration from Friuli between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which even influenced the socio-economic development of our Region.

With this publication I nevertheless tried to add another link to the knowledge of the trade of the chisellers-stonecutters of Western Friuli and of some places, in which they provided proof of their own skill and mastery.

Michele Bernardon



CONSOLATO GENERALE D'ITALIA  
FILADELFIA

I am honoured to write a foreword to this book, which is a valuable contribution to the vast mosaic of Italian immigration history.

Being of Friulan origins on my mother's side, as well as being a citizen of the world, experiencing living abroad myself, I have a personal interest in the subject of this book.

Michele Bernardon here presents to us a comprehensive look into the fascinating and perhaps little-known profession of chisellers and stone cutters: taking us from the origins and development of their craft in quite unique and remote areas and valleys of western Friuli, and then journeying worldwide as they ventured out in various waves of immigration.

Reading these quite-remarkable personal stories of some master chisellers, has left a profound impression on me. For the most part, this is a profession of "anonymity". A profession bordering between skilled craftsmanship and art is a humble position to be in. It takes patient dedication and passion for a job "well done". These traits, particular to the profession, are in line with the Friulan character. Friulan people are well known for being unassuming in demeanour while highly industrious and productive.

The know-how of these patient and hard-working artisans has left us with beautiful artefacts and art pieces. It is incredible to witness how wide-reaching the skills of just a handful of determined men has been. In the age of machines and technology this represents a legacy for our generation and of generations to come. Knowing and understanding the past, appreciating tradition, give us the keys to a richer future. One little stone piece at a time.

Eugenio Boldrini,  
Deputy  
Consulate General of Italy in Philadelphia





Friulian  
Entity for the  
Cultural and  
Social  
Assistance of  
Emigrants

## EFASCE OF PHILADELPHIA

### Chisellers and Stonecutters

It is with great pleasure that Michele Bernardon had asked Father Marco Bagnarol to translate his book into English. These two men realize that our families are the most important part of our lives. This historical story needs to reach the English speaking Friulans of our 2nd,3rd and even 4th generations that have lost the mother tongue.

Father Marco Bagnarol, a Friulan living in Torondo Canada, translated EFASCE Pordenone 100 YEARS WITH THE EMIGRANTS 1907-2007, a few years ago.

The work of our forefathers seemed harsh and rugged, but each chisel and hammer swing was done with love. The years spent away from family and the Friul was a sacrifice made to achieve not a piece of work but a piece of art. Sustaining their families was the main purpose.

Father Marco, I would like to thank you for your attention to detail as you translated each word to make sure the meaning was not compromised, but the true story told. Your gift of both languages will open a door for a very young person to see the History of the Friulans.

Grazie

Robert F. Roman di Catterina  
EFASCE of Philadelphia  
President



## SAN VITO AL TAGLIAMENTO CLUB - TORONTO

### Chisellers and Stonecutters

I'm happy that someone has undertaken the task of translating the book "Scalpellini e Tagliapietre".

The Author Michele Bernardon recently presented this book to the Press in Italy with great success. The extensive research done by the Author deserves recognition; I commend the initiative of Father Vitaliano Papais who presented the book to Father Marco Bagnarol to have it translate it.

Some of the stories as reported by Michele Bernardon are easily identifiable. For us Furlans, especially the younger generations, are better informed with the facts as explained in this book and should make them proud of their forefathers. All Friulian homes should have this book available to read to their posterity.

Silvio Fava,  
President  
San Vito al Tagliamento Club Toronto

## Chisellers and Stonecutters

It is my great and sincere joy and honour to present the English translation of the Italian book "Scalpellini e Tagliapietre" which has been done at a record breaking speed for the English speaking readership that has been clamouring for this publication in its own language. Truly remarkable and incredible are the feats of so many humble chisellers and stonecutters who left their home villages and went to anywhere in the world which could guarantee them an honest and decent living. Even more remarkable and incredible are the impressive works which they have wrought throughout the remotest and inhospitable places on the face of this planet. Never would anybody have imagined that it was Friulian stonemasons and builders who were the brains behind such great works as the City Hall in Vienna, the Tsars' Royal Palaces in St. Petersburg and in Moscow, the Pushkin Theatre in Moscow, the Transiberian Railway (9,000 kilometres long) in Russia, and the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the United States of America just to name a few.

This publication is a tribute to all of those Friulian descendants scattered throughout the world but mainly in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa and the United States of America who notwithstanding the many generations which separate them from their forefathers who originally immigrated still stubbornly cling to their Friulian roots and heritage and continue to be proud of it.

Last but not least, a most sincere thanks to all those who competed amongst themselves in order to make this publication possible for all of the English speaking Friulians scattered around the world.

Father Marco Bagnarol IMC

## THANKS

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- The Artugna director, Roberto Zambon
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A particular thanks finally to Gianni Colledani for his precious advice and suggestions.

*To the many who had to leave  
the welcoming warmth of the domestic hearth  
in order to go look for bread  
in a foreign land.*







## A BRIEF LOOK AT FRIULIAN EMIGRATION

Friulian emigration has remote origins. Already in the 16th century, Jacopo Valvasone from Maniago observes that the Carnic populations “do different trade with the Germans and as industrious people they leave from their towns in great numbers and go to look for food in very far distant places, in such a way that they can by now be found in all of Europe”. During the course of the eighteenth century, the migratory phenomenon not only assumes wider proportions, but even an emigration delineates itself which, above all, in the mountains and in the Piedmont area presents characteristics of more diversified trades from area to area: bricklayers, chisellers, miners, furnace men, blacksmiths, lumberjacks, carpenters.

The vast empire of the Hapsburgs of which Friuli was a part, was looking for qualified tradesmen for many enterprises and Friuli offered them.

Thus Friulians went to work in Austria, Hungary, Silesia, the Carpathian Mountains, Slovenia, Transylvania, Valacchia and the whole basin of the Danube. They even went beyond the borders of the Empire in order to go to the “Germanys”, the German Länders before the birth of the II Reich. They went to build bridges, buildings and railways even in the immense Russian empire and therefore suitable for Friulians and the mysterious requirements of their spirit of adaptation and adventure. With the tools of their trade: mason’s hammers, chisels, levels, bow saws which sounded in the metal toolbox went wherever there was a possibility to work.

From the second half of the 19th century a kind of irresistible call drew them towards even more remote lands: Argentina, Brasil, the United States of America, Canada, Africa and Australia. Until the second half of the 20th century, the inhabitants of Friuli, above all those in the mountains and at the feet of the mountains, travelled seasonally along the roads of Central and Eastern Europe, showing up with a spread of diversified trades from area to area:

The emigrants coming from the mountain towns preferred the trades which were more congenial to them like: lumberjacks, sawyers, sawmill directors, telpher operators, tiers (squarers of railway ties).



The Cartelli Family from Gaiò Baseglia in Russia, beginning of 20th Century Arch. CRAF)

In the building sector we find navvies, tile setters and mosaic artists above all coming from the towns surrounding Maniago and Spilimbergo.



The Cartelli brothers, stonecutters in Colorado (USA) towards the end of the 19th century, beginning of the 20th century. From the left: Sante; Valentino (Tino); Vincenzo (born in 1865); Pietro (born in 1870), grandfather of Pietro Cartelli; Giovanni (born in 1872). Photo courtesy of Pietro Cartelli.

But even stonecutters, chisellers, bricklayers, floorers, carpenters, from upper-middle Friuli as well as labourers, excavators and wheelbarrow pushers coming from the whole Region. From the municipalities of middle Friuli instead came the furnace men. In the gastronomy sector: cooks, waiters and ice cream makers were almost all originally from the feet of the mountains of Western Friuli, while delicatessen sellers, swine gelders, shop boys and porters came from a bit all over Friuli.

Even some itinerant trades, exercised in the past centuries, can be assimilated to the phenomenon of emigration: the portable wooden chair carriers from Valcellina who in the springtime would go down into the valley and would push themselves with their panniers and carts full of wooden objects to all of the cities of the Po Valley plain while the Carnic Cramars would head, with their merchandise, to the towns of the Danube area, but even the resian vendors of garlic and onions just as the vendors of delicatessen and cheese who pushed themselves all the way to Vienna and beyond. The mechanics and the professionalized cutlers of the area of Maniago paradoxically had greater difficulty in emigrating because up until the second half of the 19th century Italians abroad in general were not held to be suitable for work in factories, considered a prerogative of local manpower. An exception was made for the blacksmiths who carried out their work in the unhealthy foundries of Central Europe. In the coal and iron mines we find miners from Caneva and Polcenigo but even from the whole Region. While in the south of France farmers from Lower Friuli easily found work in agriculture.

Painters and decorators coming from the area of Gemona, who in the 18th century detained a kind of a monopoly on ecclesiastical painting, exercised their art above all in the regions of the Hapsburg Empire.

Certain trades were born and developed themselves even due to the territory's natural reasons. Individual people did not only specialize themselves therefore, but the specializations would take place according to geographical area, to valleys, to town's groups. This phenomenon was more accentuated at the feet of the mountains which exported throughout the world many able professionals throughout the course of the

centuries. Even the countries of destination were more or less chosen with the same criteria. So for the valley-dwellers it was natural to choose as a place of emigration those countries in which they could exercise their trade as lumberjacks by squaring railway ties on the railroads of North America and Central Europe. In the same way the farmers of lower Friuli mainly tried to head to countries with an abundance of land to farm like, for example, the endless plains of Argentina.

Thus the mosaic artists and navvies who having learnt the basics of the mosaic art in the restoration work of the Venetian Republic were able to develop and introduce this trade into the more industrialized countries with relative ease given the presence of abundant raw materials (coloured stones) which the beds of the Meduna and Tagliamento torrents abounded in. Thus in the same way the stonecutter's trade caught on with greater ease in the countries within the alpine span due to the presence of numerous stone quarries. Still today going through our hill towns massive portals can still be observed (many unfortunately have been lost due to the seismic events of 1976), with frequent ensigns and dates well beyond a century ago. The variety of the conches, of the chiselling, of the friezes lead to the thought that amongst our peoples a certain yearning must have reigned to provide one's own dwelling place with an impressive entrance indicative of a profound attachment to one's own house and of a kind of "stone sickness".



James Roman di Catterina originally from Poffabro (below to the right) at Silverton, Colorado (USA) – about 1905



Alois Beer, Schmiede, Nordseite, Spittal (Austria) about 1890 (CRAF Archive)





Northern Italian stonecutters in Bulgaria, 1928



Stonecutters from Val Colvera in a stone quarry in Westphalia (Germany) beginning of the 19th century

Tuis Company from Cavasso Nuovo – Group photo in Germany about 1910 (Mario Galante Collection, Sequals)



## THE APPEARANCE OF THE FIRST STONECUTTERS

The majority of scholars make the period in which the first stonecutters made their appearance in Friuli date back to the end of the 15th century.

Friuli's annexation to the Venetian Republic in 1420 opened up in a certain way the doors to a new world and favoured exchanges with the other regions which were a part of the Venetian Republic from which fifteenth century Friuli with a still substantially feudal society, had a lot to learn.

Notwithstanding the new political reality, nevertheless, the profound lacerations between those who had supported one side or the other, the relative inertia of the nobles and of the leading town class as well as the minute and poor orders of popular and devotional extraction did not, however, create a strong development.

In the 15th century, Friulians lacked a taste for sculpture in stone, the local trades were above all active within the sphere of wood sculpting, the people remained fascinated by the gold of those bright altars.

It was the builders, the stone-cutters, and the Lombard trades (a real and proper dynasty had been created in those parts of these artisans who had a monopoly on a greater part of that Po Valley and Venetian area) which infiltrated through Venice, with the fact that in the meantime the market competition in the Lombard Venetian area had become stronger being an accomplice, they decided to push themselves towards the new eastern markets of the peninsula, taking to Friuli their knowledge and where they began to exercise these trades and to realize their first works.

The old Motherland was therefore the new destination of some of these valiant artisans like Peter Lombardo, who planned the cathedral of Cividale; Charles da Corona who worked on the cathedral of Udine; Bernardino da Bissone who, in particular, worked at Gemona and Tricesimo and John Anthony Pilacorte active at Spilimbergo and its surroundings. Already in the second half of the



Cavasso Nuovo – Parish church of Saint Remigius. Baptismal font of 1542, work of Francis son of Baldassare from Meduno.



14th century, the first local second and third generation shops arose in Friuli working in the manner of their masters with appreciable results even if with impoverished and provincial languages.

But notwithstanding this, these shops, first run by the Lombards and then, bit by bit as they picked up the trade, even by the Friulians themselves, quite soon reached the considerable number of about thirty.

The first orders mainly came from the religious field: doors, balustrades, baptisteries, holy water fonts, coats of arms, sepulchral monuments, etc. were the first works done.

The Friulians learnt quite soon the basics of this trade, by refining and improving during the course of the years new working techniques so much so as to be considered in all of the regions of the world in which they exercised their profession real masters in this field.

Contemporarily, a considerable number of quarries from where thousands of tonnes of stone have been extracted throughout the course of the centuries have been singled out throughout the whole span of the footsteps of the Friulian mountains, from the Livenza River to the Karst region.

Louis Luchini

Meeting between sculptors, *Homage to the stonecutters of Meduno*



Meduno – Parish church of Saint Mary Major. Holy water font of the 15th century



## John Pilacorte

Amongst these new arrivals from the Lombard region, stands out the figure of John Anthony Pilacorte called “the artist of the angels” due to the frequent presence of angels and cherubs in his works.

Born at Lugano in 1455, he landed, at the end of the century in Friuli and established himself at Spilimbergo where he opened up his own workshop. In 45 years of activity, he worked on an impressive number of works so much so that at a distance of over four centuries more than seventy of them remain which can be attributed to him with sufficient certainty.

His first work is located at Travesio: a Portal (1484), an Annunciation, the Baptistery and an Eternal Father still existent inside of the parish church. Then in 1490 we find him at Gaio in the construction of the Portal of the church of Saint Mark.

Pilacorte was even a master, in a minor tone, of the local artisans and taught to build and to sculpt. From a document reported by V. Joppi (IV Contribution, page 123) we find out that “on the 13th April, 1496, in Spilimbergo, he promised to teach the art of cutting stone for five years to John Anthony a stone-cutter from Carona living in Portogruaro, as long as he be obedient and departing from him without a reason can be called back in the midst of the judge. He will then have food and will receive a ducat a year for his clothing”.

As a good entrepreneur, Pilacorte signed all of the works of his shop even if done by his collaborators. More than about sixty works of his are known dated and signed with his name, however by the incoherency of styles it can be understood that they are not of his hand but of the one of his helpers. This sculptor took the Renaissance world even to Friulian wooden engraving which was still impregnated with late Gothic forms (Bergamini, 1970).

During the first decade of the sixteenth century, Pilacorte having remained a widower moved to Pordenone where his only daughter Anne lived married to the stone-cutter Donato Casella and died there around the year 1531.

Various artisans came out of this sculptor’s shop who then set up their own shop.



John Pilacorte – Baptismal font and angels in the church of Saint Andrew at Sequals



John Pilacorte – Capital of the colonnade of the Cisternini building in Spilimbergo

Thus we see at Sequals the stonecutter Stephen who in 1523 built the holy water basin for the church of Saint Marizza of Varmo and in 1521 worked on the reconstruction of the parish church of Saint Andrew at Castions di Zoppola.

Other master builders of Sequals were: Thomas Cristofori (1696), Anthony Cristofori (1763), and others still. At Fanna worked m.o. Baptist q. John from Bergamo (16th century). At Domanins m.o. Gioseppo Spizapiera (1568). At Pinzano, we remember the famous shops of the Sabbadini and of the Comiz or Comici (1750). At Dardago, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we see the shops flourishing of the Antonelli and Janna stonecutters. Finally, there is the huge crowd of the natives of Meduno.

Claudio Romanzin and Maurizio Driol

*Pilacorte – The artist of the angels*

Louis Luchini

*Meeting between sculptors, Homage to the stonecutters of Meduno*

John Pilacorte – Baptismal font in the church of Saint Mary Major at Meduno, dating back to 1485



In the wake of these precursors, a real and proper group formed itself, after often having worked for a certain number of years in the shops of these artisans, of stone-cutters and chisellers who pushed themselves in the following years to the four corners of the globe.

Louis Pognici in his *Guide of Spilimbergo* remembers a Del Mestre – Ortali from Forgaria given a prize at the Kunstgewerbeschule: a young man to be considered a beautiful promise.

Another one from Forgaria, a certain Vidoni Del Mestre, in charge of the sculptures of the very ornate median portal, had conquered for himself a particular sign of distinction, attributed to him even for his attitude to study. After the work in Vienna, he found himself in Romania doing important work there on the royal castle of Sinaia. Even a Lawrence Collino from San Rocco (Forgaria) attended the jobsite of the Votivkirche who from 1860 to 1874 worked on the statues of the façade.

He then went to Leopoli to draft the allegorical groups of the Palace of justice, of the Governorship and of the Savings Bank, as well as the Muses which decorate the theatre of that city. Amongst the artists which entrust their models to him, there is Zombush of the Academy of Leopoli.

Collino took his son Domenic along with himself, who from 1894 to 1898 attended the Pscmeslowa art school of Leopoli, and later on, together with Celsus Midena of San Daniele, was in Budapest at the studio of Zala, author of the monument of the Millenary of the Hungarian capital city: a sumptuous work in the form of a rich portico of statues, done with thirty years of work (1929).

Even Anthony Del Piero of Nimis worked with Zala, who lived in Budapest more than twenty years before, very much appreciated by the sculptors who turned to his work.

Louis Pognici

*Guide of Spilimbergo and surroundings*

A very precious source of information for the scholars on emigration is certainly the book “Friuli migrante” (Migrant Friuli) by Ludwig Zanini (1883-1975) – written in 1937, still one of the most interesting works on Friulian emigration straddling the 19th and 20th centuries.

Some German and Slav historians – according to Zanini – made the migrations of our construction workers go back to the beginning of the 16th century, when the countries beyond the Alps, fearing a return of the Muslim hordes, wanted to equip themselves with military fortresses.

Joseph von Zahn, with diligent research at the parish archives of Styria, collected a



quantity of names of Friulian, who at that time were going to Austria for the construction of buildings and for the carving of stone. “They were many” – he affirms – “which in that case it would be convenient to use the word *invasion*”. And he immediately added that around the year of 1570 every construction company was entrusted to Italians, who were looking after the jobs and would leave the most common toils to the people of the place. Later on, emigration decreased, without ever ceasing all together, in order to resume once again in the 19th century in exceptional proportions. Already around 1848-1854, our stonecutters represented Friuli in the big artefacts of the Semmering railway; later on they headed towards the Caucasus and the As-suan dam, and they flowed towards the metropolises of Europe, where grandiose construction was underway, like the Parliament of Budapest or the Alexander III museum in Moscow. In this city, in 1900, there were about a hundred of them, lead by Peter Collino from Forgaria, who returned to his town awarded with a prestigious decoration released by the Tsar.

Those who were at the opening of the canal of Kiel are remembered in the booklet by Joseph de Bottazzi, dean of Italian in Stuttgart: *Italian in Germany* (1895). Our stonecutters came from every part of Friuli; but there were towns where the trade, so to say, was at home and they were more frequent in the pre-Alpine area which extends itself like a big arch from Aviano to Cividale, rich in quarries which feed the aptitudes for the trade.



Toppo – Internal courtyard on Furnace Street



Toppo – Furnace Street

According to Louis Pognici – *Guide to Spilimbergo and surroundings* 1872, Castelnovo counted 83 stonecutters, Forgaria 71, Meduno 69, Travesio 57, Pinzano 51, Vito d'Asio 32 and Clauzetto 6. In such regards, Pedemonte di Aviano and Torreano di Cividale, at the extreme ends of this area, offer a clear and interesting example. Pedemonte, in the past, could count about fifty men, who, in case of need, knew how to talk about mouldings, about drafted cuts, about rustic and sanded finishings and give proof of professional expertise.

Torreano, at the opposite end, was one of the places where there was an uncommon capacity to treat stone. The men of this town, who from 1880 to 1910 were found on the railways of the Balkans, of Russia and of Siberia, pushed themselves all the way to America and Australia. At the beginning of the twentieth century we find many of them in France.

At Beausoleil, close to Guret, where excellent cutting stone was found, there was an entire village of natives of Torreano, all employed in the jobsites of the place.

In Friuli in the nineteenth century – according to Zanini – there were entire villages of stonecutters: Toppo, a hamlet of Meduno up until 1929, the year in which it went over to the Municipality of Travesio, counted some amongst the most reputed of them, capable of transforming the models of a sculptor into marble.

Zanini refers: "Stone worked everywhere!" the veterans of the quarries of Poloowina, of Otoman, of Birjiussa, of Komorowa in Siberia would repeat to me "and it was a question of such hard granite that in the evening they had benumbed and swollen arms and hands due to the strain.

Then a certain Beacco from Meduno, who, remembering his past, would shut his eyes in order "to see once again" the big mountain of stones which in sixty years he had silhouetted in many parts of Europe. And a certain Muran from Valvasone who proclaimed himself sure of recognizing the "pieces" of his chisel, wherever they were. And Nicholas Sudicio from Torreano di Cividale who traced with gestures the form and the consistency of the masses, while his voice would imitate the sound of the tools; so that in listening to him, it seemed that he found himself in a workshop where there was banging, scraping and smoothing. He too had travelled half of the world: he had been in Russia, in the Balkans, in Westphalia, in Ankara; he had taken part in the erection of the Cernavoda Bridge and many viaducts of the Trans-Siberian. And according to him, only our own were able to treat stone: *Cognossûs par ogni banda, tant ch'el bòro* (Known everywhere like money).

In Romania, Blaise Vidoni from Forgaria had a lot of proof of esteem on the part of Prince Stirbei Ghika and on the part of the sovereigns themselves, during the big jobs conducted by him in the royal castle of Sinaia.

These proud veterans of our prewar craftsmanship, were willing to only appreciate the buildings built in stone; and they would conclude the re-evocation of their cases by repeating: *Pière a e' pière e no cjacares!* (Stone is stone, don't chatter!)

Ludwig Zanini  
Friuli migrante – page 109 to 134



## THE PLACES OF THE STONECUTTERS

### At the feet of Mount Cjaurlec – Toppo

Toppo was a hamlet of Meduno up until 1929, the year in which, by ministerial decree, it became a hamlet of Travesio. Nestled at the feet of the first chain of the feet of the Carnic Pre-Alps, in front of which a vast alluvial plain opens itself up, it can rightly be considered to be the capital city of the Friulian stonecutters. As we have already seen, Toppo gave birth to different generations of stonecutters who left still visible indelible traces in our region and gave proof of their mastery in the most isolated places of the globe. Two impressive buildings, one civilian and one religious and the facades of some private dwellings along the streets of the hamlet, are there to give witness to it.

#### The castle of Toppo

The majestic medieval castle erected perhaps at the time of the Longobards (the first documentary pieces of news, however, date back to 1188) at the feet of Mount Cjaurlec towers with its impressive structure over the small town below. In order to build this enormous structure thousands of squared stone conches and of considerable dimensions were used.

Practically in proximity of almost all of the jobsites in which wide use of stone was used: bridges, churches, buildings, castles, fortifications, retention walls, etc. a stone quarry was tried to be sought for the aim. The whole hill feet of the mountains of the area of Pordenone is peppered with these quarries.

The castle of Toppo seen from the Brei quarry





On the mountain at the back of the castle there luckily was stone in abundance. Various quarries were used in order to extract the enormous quantity of conches necessary for the realization of the enormous structure and along the Brei slope right above the castle there are still traces of a limestone quarry from which stone artefacts of a modest size could have been extracted. Judging from the abundance of manufacturing detritus it would seem that the quarry had been cultivated for quite sometime.

It is easier to find big size semi-finished pieces the more one goes up. Up until a few years ago, in a quarry located just above the Brei slope it was still possible to see a big hard stone parallelepiped piece on the spot, perfectly refined and ready to be transported down into the valley.

Luke Villa  
*The castle of Toppo*

### The aqueduct

Amongst the many miseries which afflicted our towns during past centuries, to the hamlet of Toppo, was added the one of a lack of water. Finding itself halfway, at a distance of various kilometres between the Meduna and Cosa torrents, the only supply sources remained the wells which were located at the feet of Mount Cjaurèc.

One of these, the *Bûs del Tamer* well at a height of 610 metres above sea level, constituted



Detail of a stone pipe of the aqueduct of Toppo

the main source of water. In order to take the water of this well to supply the three public fountains of the hamlet, almost two kilometres were used of pipes, originally made out of wood, later on substituted and remaining in working condition until 1897 by stone pipes. Extracted from calc-tufa of the stone quarries of Col Palatis, Col Palota and other surrounding ones, they were worked by hand by skilled chisellers and placed in action along a stretch about two kilometres long.

Delia Baselli  
*Top mal intopât cença aga al è restât...*

### The church of Saint Lawrence the Martyr

The religious feeling of the 18th century was deeply felt in the spirit of the population. For this reason the inhabitants of Toppo upon returning from temporary emigration to European countries, began with tenacity and will, in 1776, the construction of the present church, dedicated to Saint Lawrence the Martyr and they finished it, with immense sacrifices, in 1798. The church is made up of a single nave and five altars; worthy of a note is the main altar and the one of Saint Lucy, all in marble worked by the skilled chisellers of Toppo.



"Piera da l'âga", considered to be from the Roman times, found in the archaeological area of Ciago di Meduno. Rainwater contained in the cavity of the stone was traditionally considered to be beneficial for eyesight

In the aristocratic chapel of Saint Jerome adjacent to the castle of the Wasserman Counts, a stone statue is found representing Saint Lucy whose realization is attributed to the son-in-law of John Pilacorte. (Saint Lucy is considered by the devotees to be the protector of eyes, of the blind, of eye specialists, of electricians and of chisellers and is often invoked for illnesses of the eyes).



Toppo – The statue of Saint Lucy in the chapel of Saint Jerome



Toppo – Stone portal of the church of Saint Lawrence the Martyr

### The Masera dai claps

On Mount Cjaurlèc, at the beginning of Plan di Chiampis, on the west side of the trail, beyond a stretch of forest, the ascent begins which goes to Val Maggiore. Having gone beyond a long perfectly conserved dry wall one reaches the base of a grassy slope, where centuries ago stones were made to slide down from the quarry above, anciently known as *Masera dai claps*.

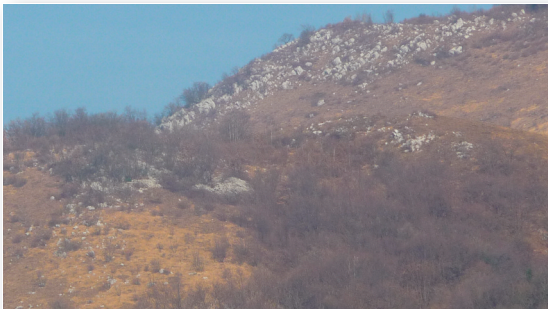


A rough-hewn stone in the shape of an arch, about a metre and a half long, abandoned in the *Masera dai claps* quarry.

Unlike the extraction methods used elsewhere, traces of rock cutting or the usual series of linear holes provoked by the insertion of wet wooden wedges, cannot be found. It can be deduced that the masses were simply uprooted from the rocks sticking out from the ground in order to then be semi-finished on the spot.

An area of about 100 square metres in which the stones were evidently trimmed down and chiselled, while on the other side the chiselled off pieces of stone were piled up, can still be seen in the quarry in question. Towards the descending slope the working area ends with a pile of un-worked masses. At that point to the south side, a huge stone was abandoned, on which the line was sketched of a big conch for a vault arch.

Outside of the quarry area, towards the northeast, a slight depression begins which goes down straight along the whole slope, until it reaches the path down below. Such a linear ditch is what remains of the slide through which semi-finished stones were sent down into the valley.



View of Mount Cjaurlèc with at the centre, quite visible, the *Masera dai claps*

Hippolitus Marmai  
*The castle of Toppo*  
 Chapter 2.3 The stone quarries in the vicinities  
 of the castle



## In the Tramontina Valley

### The Racli Bridge and the Redona quarry

Grandpa Domenic Ronzat “Diana” was the leader of a team of stonecutters who worked on the construction of the old Redona Bridge “Il Puint da Racli” whose remains are still visible, next to the new concrete bridge built after the construction of the Redona Dam in the 1950s.

Domenic worked on the first of the three vaults which the bridge was made up of. There should still be an incision with his name on a stone at the base of the structure by now submerged by the waters of the artificial lake.

Domenic’s son “Toni de Menot” worked on the stone holy water font of the church of Chievolis.

The stone blocks which form the bearing vault of the main arcade have impressive dimensions: 110x85x35 centimetres weighing more than 8 tonnes, and were put into their overhanging position on the gorge of the Meduna torrent in the vicinities of the Redona hamlet.

Testimony of Mary Quas, originally from Faidona

An enormous quantity of stones which, through the mastery of the chisellers of the valley, have taken the shape of plaques, arches of doors, gates and windows, retention walls, etc. has been extracted for many years from the “Racli Bridge” quarry. Even the gigantic squared stones used for the construction of the Racli Bridge were hewn from that quarry.

Racli Bridge and the new bridge, in concrete, built after the construction of the dam.





The Racli Bridge quarry – Tramonti di Sopra



The Racli Bridge seen from the narrow gorge of the Meduna River before the construction of the dam



Detail of the Racli Bridge arcade

## The Cosa Valley, Castelnuovo and Travesio

Even the towns of Val Cosa have made their contribution towards the spreading of the chiseller-stonecutter trade in the world.

In Russia, for example, at the dependencies of Domenic Indri, an excellent organizer, who knew Russian very well and who due to his capacities was called “engineer” by many, various people from Castelnuovo and Travesio worked there.

Peter Bortolussi was the paternal grandfather of Peter (Pieruti, 1935) from Paludea. His grandson tells that he was a very skilled chiseller and that he had replicated in stone a terraced Maya pyramid style Moscovite monument, surmounted by a big sphere subdivided into seven painted reliefs with just as many colours, probably the ones of the rainbow. It was at the centre of Red Square, but then it disappeared at the time of the Russian Revolution.

The work taken to Italy as a *souvenir*, survived the craftsman but not the awkward games of a careless granddaughter of his. The grandfather and the great uncle Joseph (Iose), between 1901 and 1905 worked, always with entrepreneur Indri, on the Alexander III Fine Arts Museum, now the Pushkin Museum, planned by the architect Roman Ivanovic Klein. Having finished their Russian experience, both of them emigrated to Argentina where Peter died at Mar del Plata in 1927. Joseph was then in the United States of America. Having definitively gone back to Praforte, here he passed away in 1947.

Even other *Prafuartsins*, as attested to by John Bortolussi (1930) from Travesio, were on



Stonecutters from Vito d'Asio - 1913

the Trans-Siberian railroad towards the end of the nineteenth century and in successive moments. Amongst these his maternal grandfather Anthony Pagnacco (1860-1908), who in the summer worked in the stone quarries and in the winter as a chiseller in a workshop. Singular without a doubt was the vicissitude of Louis Pagnacco (1871) told by his daughter Dora (1922) from Travesio.

He had the fortune, after sixteen years

in Siberia, to put a consistent sum of money aside which, at the time of his return to Praforte, which took place around 1913, he imprudently left behind in Russia trusting in the stability of that government and in the solidity of its currency. Five years later, in order to recover his savings which he sweated for, he went back there but he only found himself with a handful of flies. Not even Louis came out unscathed from the turmoil of the October Revolution. History had turned a page, without having warned him. Very embittered he





Travesio, Zancan locality – Small votive church, Blessed Virgin of Cosa, even called the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Milk. The portal is the work of John Pilacorte (1505) and in the upper relief of the lunette the Blessed Virgin Mary is portrayed breastfeeding, from which the second name of the church derives

returned to Praforte and immediately after, in search of a better fortune, he emigrated to France, where he died in 1956. Just as interesting was the experience of another *cjastelan*, Matthias Benvenuto Bertoli (1865), maternal grandfather of John De Michiel (1933) residing in Turin. He refers that, due to his knowledge of design, he was a foreman in Manchuria, probably along the Harbin-Vladivostok stretch and that, having finished his Trans-Siberian experience, he moved to Cochichin, in the parts of Saigon. From dry cold weather to humid heat.

John Colledani  
From Praforte to Bajkal  
In *Sot la Nape*, Page 92 – 97

John Colledani  
*The voices of Val Cosa*, Page 175-180



25 rouble banknote – 1909



## Between Mount Cavallo and the Cansiglio Park

The hilly reliefs of Western Friuli which extend from Aviano to Caneva, rich in limestone, in general quite well stratified and often very fractured, provided the necessary raw material for centuries for entire generations of stonecutters from the area.

### Aviano

The presence of quarries and of stonecutters in the territory of Aviano was well-documented by Siegfried Cescut in his book *“Una storia collettiva – Scalpellini avianesi all’inizio del Novecento”* (A collective history – Chisellers from Aviano at the beginning of the twentieth century).



Stonecutters from Aviano in 1910 – S. Cescut collection

A decree issued on the 20th August, 1667 by the Republic of Saint Mark which authorizes “the Subjects of the Venetian Republic of the Community of Aviano to dig up stones which are in its mountains” testifies to the presence in activity of the stonecutters in that place right from the 17th century. a quarry above the hamlet of Castel d’Aviano notes how “Opoich Quarry” and another one in the hills above the feet of the mountains, always

having been indicated as the “Municipality’s stone quarry”, are probably the first ones used by these “Subjects of the Venetian Republic”.

With the material extracted from these and other quarries, entire generations of stonecutters from Aviano built the patrician dwellings of Pordenone, as well as churches and bell towers all the way to Venice, a very attractive city during the course of the centuries for Friulian emigrants. After which, and the step was brief, we see them at work in Trieste, Vienna in order to then thrust themselves more to the north in the Prussian landers; in Berlin, in Saint Petersburg and to the east in all of the provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire all the way to the mythical Trans-Siberian railway on the great bend of Lake Bajkal on the borders with Mongolia.

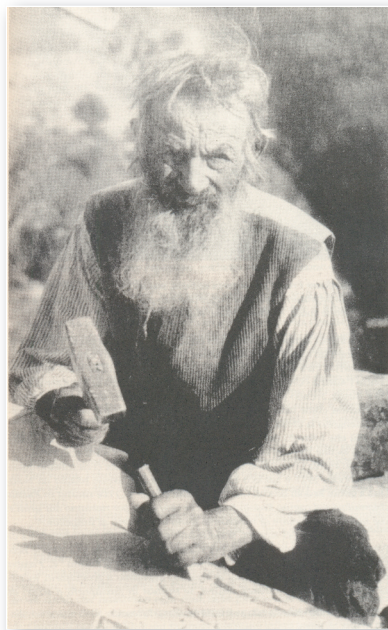
In Vienna, in the first half of the 18th century we find them working on the construction of the cathedral of Saint Stephen and between 1875 and 1887 on the *Rathaus* (the capital city’s town hall). Some of them even worked with the entrepreneur James Ceconi from Pielungo on the construction of the greater part of the Austro-Hungarian railways, including the cut stone single span bridge of Salcano – Nova Gorica, which crossing the Isonzo River with a

85 metre bounce, at the time, - in 1905 – turned out to be, with those characteristics, the biggest in the world. And it is always the railways which during the last years of the 19th century call emigrants from Aviano far away from their districts. Stonecutters and bricklayers go down to Romania all the way to Cernavoda, close to the Black Sea, where in a five-year period (1890-1895) they connect the banks of the Danube River with a two kilometre long iron railway bridge which rests upon various pillars made out of cut stone. And more or less in those same years, the most intrepid went to Russia beyond the Ural Mountains, to Krasnojarsk in Siberia, and even more to the east, to Kultuk on Lake Bajkal, in order to make the Trans-Siberian railway move on (between 1891 and 1911).

### **Migrant stonecutters from Aviano towards far distant districts**

John Baptist Cipolat Andrean was by antonomasia the master chiseller of the “Big Quarry” of Pedemonte; his son Augustine instead, during the first years of the 19th century, reached Krasnojarsk, in Russia, in Central Siberia, where the Trans-Siberian railway was advancing. Even Joseph Brocon, with his brothers Mark, George and his cousin Basil, at the beginning of the 19th century, are at Krasnojarsk, where they, above all, dedicate themselves to cemetery work.

The cousins Louis and Anthony Dell’Angela Rigo in 1907 land at Ellis Island – New York City in search of fortune as expert stonecutters. They dedicate themselves to the construction of buildings and bridges.

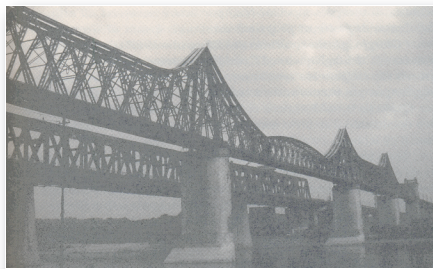


The master chiseller John Baptist Cipolat Andrean  
S. Cescut collection

Mark Pitter an exceptional figure of a craftsman from Aviano, thrusts himself all the way to Kultuk, on Lake Bajkal in order to build the Polovinka tunnel of the Trans-Siberian railway. Of the Pitters, famous chisellers from Castel d’Aviano, it should, moreover, be mentioned that Anthony exploits the Opoich Quarry of Col Guarda for quite sometime and his son Richard actually becomes a famous sculptor in Milan. Ferdinand Cipolat Gotel, a master chiseller from Pedemonte up until the middle of the 1920s, later on emigrating to Switzerland in order to flee from fascist persecutions; Louis De Zan, who at the beginning of the 19th century dedicates many years of work to the activity of a chiseller having emigrated to Mulhausen, in Eastern Prussia; Joseph Basaldella, an exceptional figure of a stone craftsman, having emigrated to Austria, Prussia and Romania, should, moreover, not be forgotten.



Chisellers from Aviano and from the Carnic area – Königsberg (Prussia), 1904



Iron railway bridge built over the Danube River, at Cernavodă – Romania (1890-1895).  
S. Cescut photograph

### The Stonecutters' Cooperative

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the presence of stonecutters at Aviano was so consistent that the most enterprising ones decided to give life to a cooperative, a fact which in itself was innovative for those times.

On the 27th February, 1908, the first 35 workers give life to the "*Società Cooperativa fra gli scalpellini di Aviano*" (Cooperative Society amongst the Chisellers of Aviano), (which within a short period became 70 in number) followed a few months later by a "League of Mutual Assistance amongst Workers". One of the first concrete acts of the Cooperative was to rent the municipal Quarry of Aviano in order to have free access to the raw material instead of having to depend upon anybody.

Joseph Redolfi Brocon was one of the architects and promoters of these forms of cooperation amongst the chisellers of Aviano.



Stamp of the Cooperative Society amongst the Chisellers of Aviano

Born in 1871, he emigrated at a very young age to Romania where he participated, with other natives of Aviano, in the construction of various railway works (including the big bridge over the Danube River at Cernavodă).

Later on, he moved to Russia in the com-

pany of the brothers Mark and George, his cousin Basil and other fellow townsmen where at that time the Trans-Siberian railway was being built. For a certain period he settled in the city of Krasnojarsk, where he began a chiselling activity on his own, mainly doing cemetery work.

Upon returning to Italy for a long period of holidays, he decided to remain definitively and in 1908 he devised, promoted and organized the foundation of the “Cooperative amongst the chisellers of Aviano”, mainly made up of former emigrants.

The society, in its little less than thirty years of activity (it will be disbanded in its office in 1942 by the “Ministry of the Corporations”) provided work for various labourers, trained many boys who in turn became talented chisellers and, moreover, various cartwrights benefited from it for the transportation of stones to the various localities.

Siegfried Cescut

*A collective history – Chisellers from Aviano at the beginning of the twentieth century*



Cooperative Stone Quarry – S. Cescut photograph



## Budoia

The Municipality of Budoia, with the hamlets of Dardago and Santa Lucia, is located in the hilly area at the feet of the mass of Mount Cavallo and is crossed by the Artugna torrent which is an affluent of the Livenza River. This territory seems to be the kingdom of stone of an almost disappeared ancient civilization whose testimonies are visible through civil and religious buildings.

Numerous testimonies and documents on the activity which the stonecutters of Budoia and in a particular way of the hamlet of Dardago exercised during the course of the centuries have been collected and published, during the course of the years, in the periodical *L'Artugna* which the community of Dardago has been publishing since 1972.

Many of these articles have been reported in a significantly entitled publication "*Paesi di pietra*" (Towns of Stone) from which the present chapter has been drawn.

At the archive fund of the "V. Joppi" Civic Library in Udine – it is read – a manuscript has been found dating back to 1754 entitled "Catalogue of the people who exercised liberal or mechanical arts in the Motherland of Friuli..." divided by towns. There were not many people who at that time and in those places with a predominantly agricultural economy could boast about exercising a professional activity. By thoroughly examining the various trades one can find *bricklayers, dive managers, Iseppo salt vendors, bakers, tailors, weavers, innkeepers, etc. Amongst these there are even three stonecutters, Oswald Scuzuto (Scussat), Anzolo Antonelli and Anzolo Bozzo.*

Angelo Antonelli belonged to a well-known dynasty of stonecutters from Dardago, which even included Anthony, Domenic, Francis, John and John Baptist, all active in the area between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries; a



Workers in a stone quarry at Hattingen (Germany) beginning of the 19th century  
Courtesy of L'Artugna

Group of workers in a stone quarry in France in 1932 – Courtesy of L'Artugna



family of talented artisans who surely left, in the area of Budoia but even beyond, various artefacts. Angelo himself a few years before the drafting of the “Catalogue” in 1751, had, for example, done the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary in the church of nearby Marsure. Even Oswald Scussat was a member of a family of stonecutters which included Angelo, Bortolo, Francis, John Baptist, John Mary, John Peter, Matthias, Natale and Valentine, all active between the 17th and 19th centuries. Besides these, Budoia and, above all, the hamlet of Dargado churned out throughout the centuries, numerous other stonecutters amongst whom the Bardalis (Bortolo, Michael, Oswald and Peter), Angelo Pellegrini author of works in the church of Marsure between 1765 and 1783, Zanne (John) Zambon and others.

Even stonecutters from this western part of the feet of the mountains in the province of Pordenone together with their neighbours of Val Colvera, Val Meduna and Val d'Arzino a bit out of necessity and a bit out of a spirit of adventure pushed themselves out into the world, above all, following the roads to Austria, to Hungary, to Bosnia and to Romania arriving all the way to Siberia where they distinguished themselves for their skill and capacity in the construction of churches, public buildings and railways. Besides the innumerable works and artefacts done on the spot during the course of the years, it is known that chisellers from Budoia even worked on the royal palace of King Charles I in Romania, on the Opera House in Vienna during the first half of the nineteenth century and more recently in Geneva on the building of the United Nations Organization.

Various Authors  
*Towns of Stone*



Construction of a church.  
Some natives of Dardago are recognizable: Berto Zambon Pinal,  
John Baptist Zambon Pinal, Hannibal Zambon Pinal and  
Mondo Janna Tavan.  
Kolozsvart (Hungary) 1903 – Courtesy of L'Artugna



## Polcenigo

Just like in the neighbouring towns even at Polcenigo the first traces can be found of the presence of stonecutters right from the 16th century.

The majority of the local stonecutters were originally from Coltura of whom the names were found of Matthew, Mark, Peter and Daniel; and then Florito *the stonecutter*, his son John and a certain Valentine, respectively remembered in 1601, in 1604 and in 1639; John Mary Canal, stonecutter and bricklayer, employed in work on the church of Saint James in 1781; John Mary and Oswald Bravin, always active in the 18th century, plus others – in particular some members of the Canal and Cosmo families – between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

They were the authors, in general unfortunately anonymous, of dignified handcrafted work like arches, gates, stairs, door and window frames, balconies; but stonecutters were not missing who distinguished themselves for works of greater artistic content, like the adoptive resident of Polcenigo Alvise Copeta called *Saltariello*, who made in the second and third quarter of the 17th century pleasant altars for the churches of Saint James and Saint John, as well as various jobs for the nearby church of Saint Lucy on the hill.

A survey of the *Venetian Cadastre* of 1746 lists amongst the people who exercise *the liberal or mechanical arts* well over 93 craftsmen or self-employed professional people, amongst whom around ten stonecutters.

In the difficult economic situation of the second half of the nineteenth century, even at Polcenigo the sad phenomenon of emigration gained greater consistency.



Sculpture in the centre of the town of Greci – Romania  
Work of John Del Puppo

Tombstone in the cemetery of Greci – Romania  
Work of John Del Puppo



So that even many stonecutters had to reach German lands which were asking for great numbers of quarrymen, miners and bricklayers during that period. Amongst the many who chose this way even John Del Puppo, a talented chiseller from Polcenigo who together with many other stonecutters from the foot of the mountains of Western Friuli, thrust himself all the way to the region of Dobrugia, on the delta of the Danube River, in Romania, where still today in the town of Greci various admirable works of his are still visible.

Alexander Fadelli  
*History of Polcenigo*

Peter Victor Canal (with the white stick in his hands) a stonecutter from Polcenigo – Siberia, 1908



## Caneva

The small territory of the Municipality of Caneva provided during the course of time great quantities and varieties of raw material, both for construction and industrial applications, amongst which the most important and still extracted today, are marble and limestone.

The limestone which is extracted from the mountain above Sarone has various, valuable characteristics: it is subdivided into layers of variable power by a few centimetres all the way to almost two metres and so suitable even in order to provide blocks of great dimensions, it presents itself with a white-ivory colour, compact and easy to work, very suitable as a construction material in particular in order to make jambs, stairs and doorsteps.

Between the 18th and 19th centuries, there were many functioning quarries but during the summer manufacturing was very limited because the dealers, who were the quarrymen themselves, would emigrate abroad.

In fact, the workers from Sarone who dedicated themselves to this activity felt more like chisellers than quarrymen and the important phase for them was the working of the stone, not so much its extraction: the quarry had to simply be the place in which the raw material was extracted for the job.

In the immediate First post World War period even the cooperative was founded of the chisellers of Caneva which in 1921 ran eleven quarries, but due to the almost absolute lack of requests for material only three of them turned out to be open. In the first two, at Fontanagal, up to ten people between quarrymen and chisellers worked off and on.

Notwithstanding this, the overall production in that year was 450 tonnes of manufactured stone. In 1947, two new quarries were opened up, one with 9 and the other with 4 workers, with an overall production of building limestone of about 600 tonnes a month. During the following decade, on the whole up to 40 workers worked in the limestone quarry of Sarone.

John Paul Gri  
Caneva

## The Sacile-Gemona railway

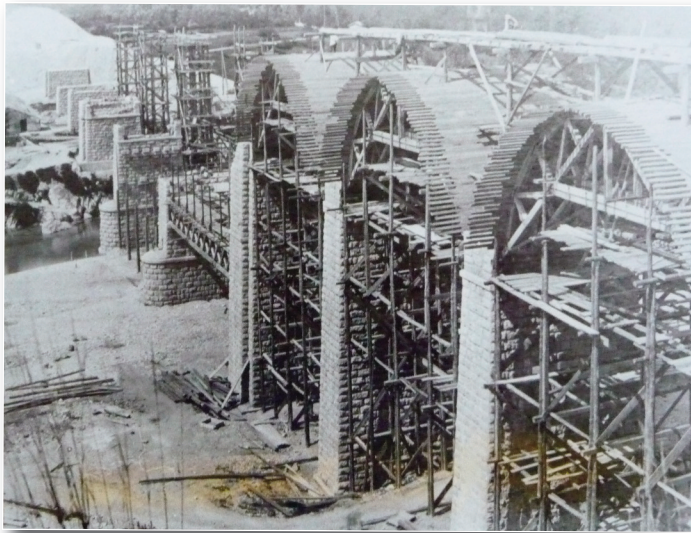
A transportation work which, at the beginning of the last century, connected the towns at the feet of the mountains of the province of Pordenone, was undoubtedly the Sacile-Pinzano railway called precisely "The railway of the feet of the mountain". A railway which, devised and planned originally for military purposes, was in reality used between the 1930s and 1970s, above all, by seasonal emigrants at the feet of the Friulian Mountains in order to reach the countries of Central-Northern Europe so much so that it was soon re-baptized *The emigrants' railway*.



Its construction begun just before the outbreak of the First World War had seen work on it interrupted because of the conflict and of the invasion of Friuli on the part of Austro-Hungarian army troops. Work resumed, initially at a slow pace, due to the lack of funds at the disposal of the local administrations, at the beginning of the 1920s.

A bit of relief for the many young unemployed men who returned home after four years at war. During the decade which went from the beginning of the work and 1930, the year in which the entire stretch of railway was inaugurated, work was found throughout the different jobsites along the whole stretch by: excavators, bricklayers, carpenters and stonecutters.

The construction of the bridges in order to allow the railway line to cross above the Cellina, Colvera, Meduna and Cosa torrents, plus other minor waterways and the construction of various viaducts along the whole stretch, represented for our stonecutters, a partial temporary alternative to the way of emigration.



Construction of the railway bridge over the Meduna torrent – about 1920

## THE PLACES OF EMIGRATION

Venetian Friuli's passage to Austrian domination in 1797 had favoured Friulian emigration towards the imperial countries given that from a movement abroad it became a movement within following the knocking down of political borders with Austria. The first testimonies of a real and proper organized emigration are found in the second half of the 18th century with the great construction development promoted by empress Mary Teresa.

This migratory flow had an even more considerable increase after the peace of Vienna in 1814 when Friuli, having become a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, found no difficulty whatsoever in sending its men to other provinces of the Empire.

It can, therefore, be affirmed that in the 19th century, with the means of communication, with the opening up of big labour markets in the more industrially developed European countries, the Friulian worker becomes aware of his own attitudes and of the new prospects offered by a qualified job.

Other than the great impulse given to Viennese construction by empress Mary Teresa, the fervour of public works in the States of the Germanys (Friulians often identified as the "Germanys" all of the German speaking territories of Central Europe and the Danube River) favoured a mass emigration towards those regions.

Our workers went from Austria to Germany and from here, in 1875, to Hungary and then to Bosnia, Romania and to Bulgaria. Later on, they went to Serbia, to Russia, to Siberia, to Turkey and to Asia Minor to look for work wherever there was an opportunity for it.

The majority of young men mainly originating from the feet of the Friulian Mountains learnt the first basics of the stonecutting trade at the age of 10-12 by accompanying their own parents, relatives or some fellow townspeople to the jobsites in nearby Austria. After a few seasons they were ready in order to begin the great adventure on their own in other European countries and later on even beyond the ocean.



Ferruccio Di Danieli at work in a stone quarry – Belgium, 1956  
A. Degano collection





## In Austria

### Natale Tonitto

Natale Tonitto, from Toppo was already a third generation stonecutter.

His grandfather and father had already worked in Trieste and during winter in their town, they had instructed those willing who intended to learn the trade: young men from Clauzetto, Meduno, Navarons and Tramonti, who would then go to Nabresina, in search of a first job.

By now eighty years old interviewed by Zanini he compiled his career as a chiseller with the phrase *Mièz secul di strùssies vie pal mont!...*

In Vienna, from 1875 to 1887, he had worked on the Rathaus (the town hall of the capital city) where more than three hundred chisellers were employed: the majority of them Friulians. The head director was architect Haigen, who was happy to observe the hand and the speed of our men and used to award prize

money to those assigned to the most difficult pieces. The same Tonitto, after more than a year around one of the more ornate monoliths, earned the conspicuous prize of a hundred florins.

By the order of the jobs, the Rathaus jobsite could have been considered to be a big school; all of the young men, what's more, had to attend the Kunstgewerbeschule, which had its headquarters in the Josephingasse. Subjected to a rigorous discipline, they even had to abstain from smoking before receiving their qualification as workers. And, for such a promotion, they used to be given a long cigar as a gift: a kind of investiture which declared them to be full-fledged men.

Tonitto had passed, together with other young men, a special decoration course, which was followed by lunch in a pub in Grinzing with the intervention of the instructors and of Haigen himself, who took pleasure in praising the skill and the love for work of our craftsmen.

Another big jobsite in Vienna, the Votivkirche, occupied a big group of Friulian chis-



Vienna town hall. Group of chisellers from Aviano with the engineer and the architect at the centre. Vienna, 1879

ellers. The cathedral was wanted by the young monarch Francis Joseph as a votive offering for having come out unscathed from an attack by the work of an anarchist. A popular campaign raised twenty-five million florins which were spent on just as many years of work, an enterprise supported by an enthusiasm worthy of the centuries in which the great cathedrals had flourished. Architect Kraner, who never got tired of repeating "Langsam, aber recht gut!" (slowly but well) and foreman Schwner, who had sympathy for the Italians, had remained famous amongst our workers of the Votivkirche.

Many Friulians employed right from the beginning on the jobsites of the Votivkirche, as simple boys, came out of there as skilled ornate and figure sculptors.

Ludwig Zanini

*Friuli Migrante*, Page 88-90



Votivkirche – Vienna

## In Czechoslovakia

### John Ciani from Lestans

John Ciani was born at Lestans, a hamlet of Sequals, in 1847, of a humble family. After having attended elementary school classes in his hometown, he begins to work in the shop of his father Leonard, a widely famous chiseller, from whom he learns the first basics of the trade by training himself with the hard stone extracted from the local "Da la mont Quarry", placed in the vicinities of the small church of Saint Zenone and later on attending the design school in Spilimbergo.

But quite soon John Ciani interrupts this apprenticeship in order to emigrate abroad: at the age of 14 he goes to Vienna, capital city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where he participates amongst other things in the construction work on the Opera House Theatre.

In 1864, he temporarily returns to Italy in order to start a business on his own, by doing various jobs amongst which the arch of the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Cathedral of Spilimbergo and the family grave in the cemetery of Lestans.

In 1873, after having spent a period of perfecting the art of marble sculptor and decorator in Rome, he once again moves to Vienna where his superior capacities quite soon earn him a great fame and the title of royal master chiseller of the court. But he only stays at the Hapsburg court for two years before moving to Prague, following the proposal to do some sculpture decorative work at the Bohemian National Theatre and he settles there stabling, in 1876, the Italian marble company *Marmor e Granit Industrie*.

He did a lot of jobs for the national museum, for the cathedral, for the Rudolfinum and for the castle of Konopisle, the last residence of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria. He even did works of considerable importance in Germany, Poland and Hungary.



John Ciani in Prague



The honours received and his wealth nevertheless do not make him forget his origins and the humble living conditions of his fellow townspeople, both those who followed him to Bohemia for whom he founds the Italian Aid Association, and those who remained back home for whom he founds the Dairy Cooperative and even contributes financially towards the construction of the nursery school and favours elementary education by establishing the fourth year of elementary education. In 1909, he definitively returned to his hometown and became the Mayor of the Municipality. During the course of the years, he obtained numerous recognitions, certificates and medals, but the greatest recognition came to him from the Emperor of Austria who bestowed upon him the title of Imperial and Royal Master-Chiseller of the Court (*Hoflieferant*).

Lara Zilli

*Il Barbacian* No. 1 July, 2002 – No. 1 August, 2007

Lara Zilli

*History of the workers' society of Lestans and the life and work of John Ciani*

## In Romania

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On the basis of the statistics obtained by the prefectorial authorities, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were 3,943 Italians in Romania. Of these 2,373 were workers, employed in various sectors of activity, amongst whom well over 418 were stonecutters, to a good extent Friulians.

Renzo Francesconi and Paul Tomasella  
*Friulian emigrants in Romania from 1860 up until today*

Having begun around 1870, our emigratory current towards Romania became so intense within a brief period as to bring a note of particular animation to Friuli.

A big country with a fertile soil where, however, the people barely lived on *mamaliga* (cornmeal porridge) and onions which was described by two known Romanian writers as:

“A rich country which dies of hunger” (Take Ionescu).

“A people condemned to starvation, while eggs cost a cent each” (Nicolau).

Where everything had to be built: roads, railways, aqueducts, factories for industry, public administration buildings, a country which seemed to be specifically made for our workers.

In Romania, Blaise Vidoni from Forgaria had a lot of manifestations of esteem on the part of Prince Stirbei Ghika and on the part of the sovereigns themselves, during the great works conducted by him in the royal castle of Sinaia.

In the surroundings of Greci, located at the mouth of the Danube River there still live well over seventy-five families of Friulian origin which still exercise today the trade of stonecutting in the nearby quarries.

In the district of Tulcea the village of Iacobdeal, which arises on the spot of Roman Troesmis, at a height at about 10 kilometres from Greci, is mainly made up of Italian workers amongst whom various stonecutters from Maniago who work in the quarry of the Romanian Stefanescu company.

We even find stonecutters originally from Spilimbergo in Bucharest employed in the construction of the pillars of the bridges over the Danube River.

Ludwig Zanini  
*Friuli Migrante, Page 129-141*

At a stretch are the names of stonecutters with their relative town of origin and of residence in Romania:

Fontanin Francesco	Maniago	Tulcea
Cordolo Antonio	Maniago	Macin
Pellegrini Sebastiano	Osoppo	Galati
Piazza Giuseppe	Andreis	Galati
Spadon Osvaldo	Maniago	Turcoaia
Stella Giacomo	Maniago	Macin

Renzo Francesconi and Paul Tomasella  
*Friulian emigrants in Romania from 1860 up until today – Page 33-39*

### **Peter Cargnello**

Construction entrepreneur, arriving in Bucharest in 1890. With the remittances of his work in Romania he built in 1915 his house at Vivaro, a building which can be considered to be the first example at Vivaro of a squared stone construction by the work of chisellers from San Foca.

### **Emilio Santalena**

1888-1951. A former seasonal worker in Romania, Emilio carried out his activity as a marble cutter and chiseller in Bucharest and Timisoara and started a company for the manufacturing of covering marble, finishing elements, balconies and statuary. He worked together with other Friulians, on the construction of the Royal Palace in Bucharest. Emilio Santarossa is remembered as a great stone industrialist.

Renzo Francesconi and Paul Tomasella  
*Friulian emigrants in Romania from 1860 up until today – Page 126-130*



Three stone columns donated by the Italian community to the Orthodox church of Greci in 1910 (following this donation the Italians received permission to use the structures of the church in order to bury their dead)

### Otilia Gattaiola

A testimony on end by Otilia Gattaiola (originally from Frisanco from where, in 1904, her grandparents emigrated to Romania) on the life of the Friulian community of Greci-Tulcea.

Italians arrived in Dobrugia ever since the Middle Ages. Constance, on the Black Sea, was a Genoan colony known for its trade with Western European countries up until the period of Turkish influence (14th-19th centuries). Later on, Italians with a humanistic education, were called to the courts of the great Romanian princes in almost all of the regions of the country (13th-17th centuries), in order to exercise their professions as doctors, painters, sculptors and architects.

But Italian colonization in Dobrugia (and in other small regions) began after the War of Independence (1877), when the young Kingdom had a great need for skilled manpower in order to build infrastructure. Thus foresters, railway workers, farmers, bricklayers and chisellers arrived. The elderly tell that the Friulians came to Romania with a wheelbarrow and tools. They would stop wherever they would find work: in Dobrugia they found it in the marble quarries of Iacobdeal (a village located at about 8 kilometres from Greci) and in Greci. On the outskirts of these towns wells, barracks and houses were built in order to give accommodations to these new arrivals.

Stone quarry at Greci – 1930s







Preparation of the stones downhill from the quarries

If in a first moment Italian emigration was a season phenomenon, the stabilization began with the arrival of their families. These Italians mainly came from Western Friuli: from the towns of Poffabro, Maniago, Andreis, Frisanco and Vivaro and responded to the surnames of Spadon, Grando, Iattoni, Bertig, Gordolo, Giacomelli, Del Puppo and Roman Walz.

Granite, a hard stone extracted from the quarries of Iacobdeal, was used for roads throughout the whole country and even sent abroad. Later on, following the discovery of the quarries of Greci, a lot of families moved to that locality. In the years of 1902-1904, the Iacobdeal Colony was very big and rich and it had a club, a church and even a blacksmith. The Italians of Iacobdeal chose not to

live in the village, because their hutments were closer to the mountain, therefore, close to the quarries. The village itself was on the banks of the Danube River, from where the ferries would depart in order to take rafts of stone to the town and beyond.



Memorial stone placed at the entrance to the town of Greci (work of Friulian chisellers)

The Italians of Greci settled shortly after the ones of Iacobdeal and lived in the shacks built for them in the proximities of the quarries of Ghiunalt, Morus, Baba Rada, Carabalu. The stone was transported in the beginning with oxen drawn carts all the way to Turcoaia (Iacobdeal), in order to then be loaded onto the ferries, on the Danube River. A railway was then built which directly connected Greci to the Danube River. The vans full of stone worked at Greci were unloaded at Iacobdeal, at the same point. The Italians lived in the shacks until when the financial situation allowed them to purchase land and houses in the village. Those who worked in the stone quarries brought a new trade along with themselves, without precedents in this

region, the one of chiselling, a trade which was then taken up by the men of the village, contributing towards the economic development of the town. Other Italians, farmers by profession, coming from other rural regions, settle at about 60 kilometres from Greci where they founded the Italian colony of Cataloi and within a short period of time built 88 houses, an Italian school and a church there. Greci remained in time the only Romanian village in which the Italians remained. They would have been able to return to Italy as citizens up until 1953-1954. But by deciding to stay, they kept their language, traditions and customs, and they continued to live like a big family, out of respect for the local people.

Today, after more than forty years of communism, they still speak the Friulian language and Venetian dialect and they still have not lost the Italian national identity. The colony of Greci was big in the beginning. In order to satisfy the needs of the community, the "Irridio Mantovanni" Italian school was built, which functioned up until the school year of 1939-1940, when the Italian teachers went back to Italy. In 1912, they even built a church, under the direction of the parish priest Gustav Muller. After the expiry of the concessions, many Italian farmers of Cataloi, chose to come to Greci, in order to learn the chiseller's trade. Few Italians of Greci returned to Italy; it was rather their children who returned, the seniors instead stayed put.

The descendants of those who remained still live up until today and Otilia Gattaiola is one of them.

Those who have remained found themselves more united and have made a name for themselves. Their diligence, seriousness and skill, is recognized throughout all of Romania. Just as their participation is recognized in the construction of many impor-

Italian colony of Iacobdeal-Turcovia 1904





Salvatore Savioli working on a detail of the artesian fountain for the soccer stadium of Constance – 1956

tant buildings. They worked on the construction of the Bicaz Hydroelectric Dam, on the bridges of Sendreni and Giurgiu, on the stadium and casino of Constanta, on the People's House and many others. The monument of Greci, dedicated to the heroes of the First World War, was made by an Italian who signed himself as "Volpe".

Up until a short while ago, we had with us an artist whom we are proud of and will always remember with affection: John Del Puppo. John continues to live with us through his work and his pieces. There is something else that we can be proud of. The chisellers have brought a new trade to these parts, contributing in such a way

to the economic development of the region. This trade has been handed on down to the local workforce wanting to learn, so much so that they became very much appreciated like their teachers.

Otilia Gattaiola



In front of the Italian church of Greci – 1930



Italian church of Greci – Built in 1912.



## In Russia

Testimonies on the presence of Friulian stonecutters in Russia can already be found in the 1860s where there is talk of some chisellers who are working in Saint Petersburg and in the regions of the Crimea and of the Caucasus, demonstrating their skill in the working of stone, above all, on the construction of bridges.



Young man from Clauzetto in Siberia

But a much more consistent presence is registered a few decades later on the various jobsites of the Trans-Siberian railway. The construction of the Trans-Siberian railway was wanted and deliberated by the Tsar Alexander III in 1891 and the work, on the main branch, lasted up until 1906. From Moscow to Vladivostok it is 9,434 kilometres long and it overcomes mountains, crags, bogs and impressive rivers.



Side of a train wagon: Moscow-Vladivostok

The first invitation to work on the Trans-Siberian railway landed in Osoppo in the winter of 1893 when the Russian government called Peter Brovedani from Clauzetto, who was in the Caucasus, so that he invite Italians to go to work on the Trans-Siberian railway. From then on an emigration began especially of Friulians, than of Turinese, Modenese, Aquilians and from other parts.





Il Transiberiano Domenico Luigi Tramontin  
(Laurincut/Spongje), scalpellino, nato  
a Clauzetto il 7.2.1854 e ivi morto il  
27.6.1943. Lavorò anche a Mosca alla  
costruzione del Museo delle Belle Arti  
Alessandro III, ora Museo Puskin.

The Trans-Siberian Domenic Louis Tramontin (Laurincut/Spongje), chiseller, born in Clauzetto on the 7th February, 1854, and died there on the 27th June, 1943. He even worked in Moscow on the construction of the Alexander III, now Pushkin, Fine Arts Museum.

According to the testimony of Professor Salvatore Minocchi of the University of Pisa, who visited the job sites on the Trans-Siberian railway in 1903, writing up a report published in the "Il Giornale d'Italia" newspaper at the end of the same year and taken up again by Zanini in Friuli Migrante on page 110, there were at least 450 Italians at Lake Bajkal, mainly Friulians and he adds that along a certain stretch of the railway he had counted about 200 of them from Clauzetto and surroundings. Other sources talk about at least 300 young men coming from just the town of Clauzetto. Through his fellow townsman Domenic Indri, Brovedani had thirty-four workers come from Clauzetto and another group of about a hundred appeared when the railway line progressed towards Irkutsk.

The first group, therefore, left Clauzetto in February of 1894, a second one on Easter Monday of that year and gradually others, a real avalanche.

An ungrateful soil and a lack of opportunities in the Italian Motherland pushed them to leave. There was no other choice and not having anything to lose they had everything to gain.

The Friulian workers were excellent chisellers, for this reason they were easily employed by the Russian workforce for the construction of viaducts, bridges, galleries, tunnels and huge retention walls.

An intense, gruelling job, done together with forced labourers and prisoners of war in prohibitive climatic conditions up until all of 1904, when the stretch of railway was finished which connected Mysovaja, today Babuskin, a railway port, with Irkutsk: three hundred Italians committed to working for the construction of 39 tunnels and 400 construction works necessary in order to bend a hostile nature to the railway's needs.

The work on the main branch of the railway continued instead all the way to 1906, finally connecting the cities of Ekaterinburg, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Krasnojarsk, Tajset, Irkutsk, Ulan-Ude, Cita, Mogoca, Alekseevsk, Chabarovsk and then Vladivostok.

The conditions in which they worked were really prohibitive: an intense cold in winter, with dips of fifty degrees below zero, which actually touch upon the minus sixty degree mark, when the terrible Sarma, an inexorable eastern wind, blows; the summer instead is made unbreathable by a sultry heat, infested by mosquitoes, responsible for malaria fever which was often deadly for many Italian workers on the shores of Lake Bajkal.

Amongst the first to leave Pradis (a hamlet of Clauzetto) was Bonaventure Zannier who together with his companions, set out in 1895 and took 40 days in order to reach his workplace, travelling by train, by boat, by sled and on foot.

They had with them the clothes woven by the women at home and the tools of their trade, above all, chisels. Their worst enemy was the winter cold and the summer

mosquitoes. And then the dust of the splintered stone which stagnated inside of the shacks and produced silicosis thus they kept a samovar (a metal container traditionally used in Russia for the preparation of tea) always boiling in order to drink hot tea with which to warm up the stomach and rinse the dust.

There is even the story of the stonecutter Louis Tramontin (Laurincut) who during his six years in Siberia wore out 24 jackets and of the blacksmith Leonard Colledani (Barbe Nato) who in order to allow for the quick advancement of the work in the tunnels would temper and sharpen chisels and mine moulds even at night and he was considered an unbeatable master in his trade.

Ludwig Zanini  
*Friuli migrante* – page 110

Various Authors  
*Fôr pal mont*

Gianni Colledani  
*From Clauzetto to Vladivostok*  
*Il Barbacian* no. 2 December 1984

Gianni Colledani  
*Louis Tramontin, chiseller on the Trans-Siberian railway*  
*Il Barbacian* no. 2 December 2001

### Domenic Indri

Born on the 25th October, 1845, at Pradis di Sopra (a hamlet of the Municipality of Clauzetto) in the Ropa locality, after having completed his first studies in the town's elementary school he emigrated, like many other young valley-dwellers who at the age of twelve would go to earn a living for themselves together with the adults in stone engraving workshops in Austria and in Germany. He was a boy in Austria right from his early youth, then, he worked on construction sites in Germany, Hungary and Romania. From 1882 until 1884, he worked on the construction of the railway from Bitumi to Baku, where he got to know Peter Brovedani. Together with him he organized the recruitment of a lot of young men from Clauzetto who since 1894 began the great adventure in the big jobsites of the Trans-Siberian railway on the Cita stretch and on the Mysovaja-Pereemnaja Trans-Bajkalian stretch.



To the right Domenico Indri senior with powdered girls and a fellow townsman



Moscow, 1899/1900 Little Domenico Indri (Bocje) from Pradis di Sopra

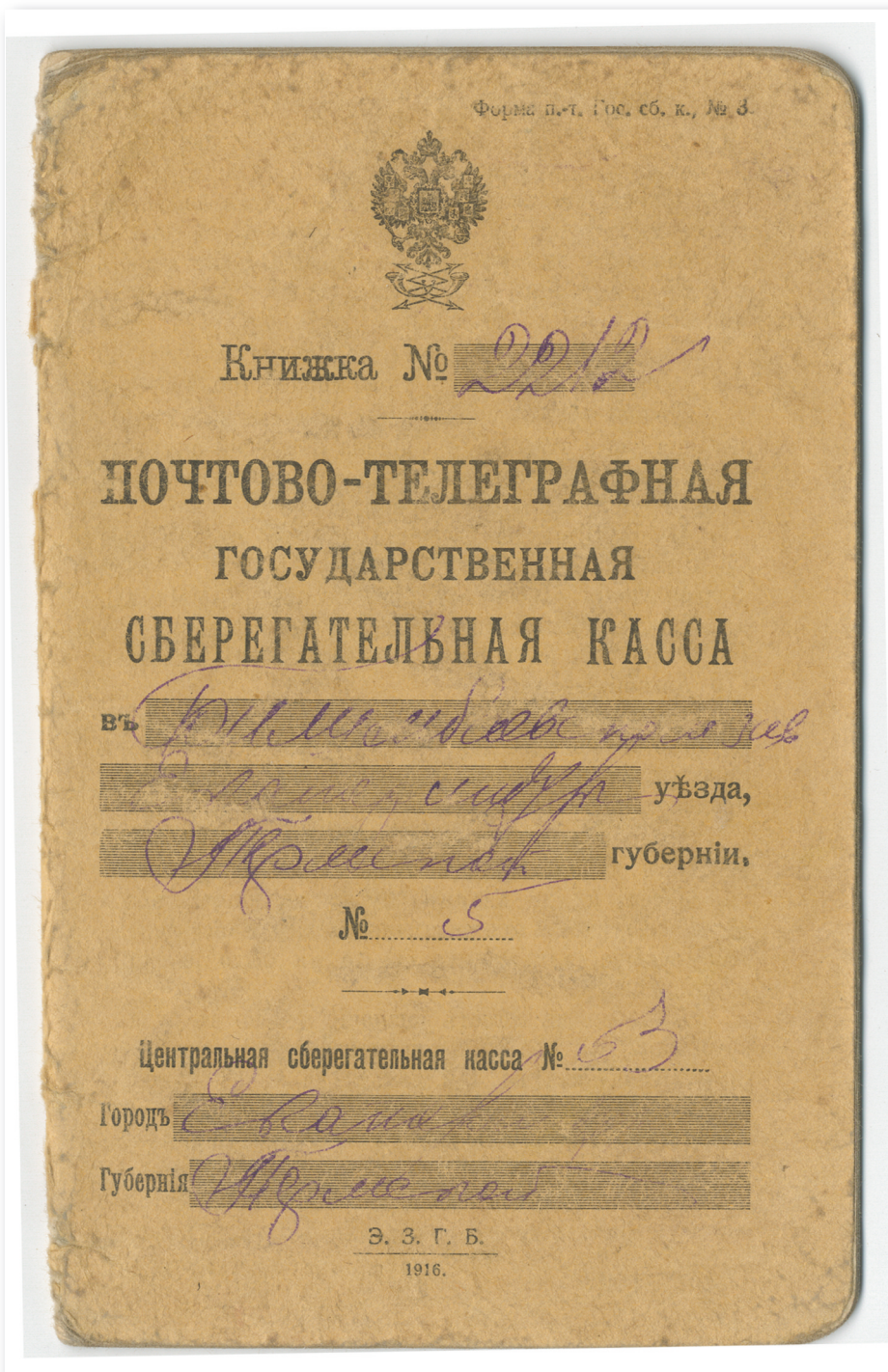
His nephew Domenico (Bocje) was a very skilled chiseller: it is told that at the end of the season he gave a gift to the job director of his site two twin pears in stone joined together by the stalk, so remarkably sculpted in green granite from the Ural Mountains and then accurately rubbed with wax that the engineer, at a first look, thought that they were real.

Elvira Kamenščikova  
*Italians on the shores of Lake Bajkal*

John Colledani  
*Domenic Indri, entrepreneur on the Trans-Siberian railway*  
*Il Barbacian no. 1 August 1985*

John Colledani  
*The small Trans-Siberian*  
*Il Barbacian no. 2 December 2012*





Domenic Indri senior's savings bankbook, 1917 (John Colledani Collection)

## Silvester Tonitto

Born at Toppo, the homeland of the best stonecutters in Friuli, in 1843, he emigrated to Russia in 1871, worked on the Dnieper Bridge at Dnipropetrovsk for Leonard Perini's company; then went over to Sebastopol in Crimea and to Nakhichevan in the Caucasus to sculpt the statues of imperial people, and to Testov to embellish the church of Saint Alexander with marble. He had even provided a lot of stone for the churches of the provinces of the Don, of the Cuban and of the Caucasus.

The monument to the poet Lermontov, in the city of Pyatigorsk (Caucasus), and the decorations of the imperial palace in Tehran, are realizations of his able chisel.

But his greatest enterprise was the temple of Novochoerkassk on the Don, dedicated to Jermak, the conqueror of Siberia. The construction was very much ahead of schedule, but it did not give guarantees of stability, when Tonitto was called to propose necessary remedies and then assume the running of the whole factory. The inauguration of the work which should have taken place in 1903, in the presence of the Tsar, was then suspended due to the war between Russia and Japan. At that time, Tonitto was bestowed with the award of the city's honorary citizenship.

He would usually return to Italy every year in order to recruit workers, buy Carrara marble and enjoy a brief period of rest. The Bolshevik Revolution took away from him the possibility to finish the rest of his days back home. He died at Rostov, where he had received honorary citizenship, in 1919. Silvester Tonitto's daughter married a certain Ivanov. From the marriage was born Alexander who, in order to pay tribute to grandpa Silvester's work, when he was the dean at the University of Udine, wrote the book *Cent'anni di lavoro friulano in Russia* (A Hundred Years of Friulian Work in Russia).



Silvester Tonitto

Ludwig Zanini  
*Friuli emigrante*, page 88

Alexander Ivanov  
*A Hundred Years of Friulian Work in Russia*, page 36

Joseph Tonitto  
*Toppo di Travesio in the World*, page 351



### Peter Collino

Born in Forgaria, in 1868, Peter Collino emigrates to Romania at the age of 11, we then find him in Austria, in Klagenfurt where, after four years of apprenticeship, he becomes a “chiseller craftsman”.

He immediately embarks for the United States of America and works in Washington, in Pennsylvania and in Maine. He returns to Friuli in 1891 and emigrates once again to Austria.

In 1898, he leaves for Russia, in the footsteps of the first Friulians, who had arrived there in 1893 because they had been invited by the government for the execution of the most difficult jobs on the Trans-Siberian railway.

He operated with the tasks of head technician on the most difficult part of the gigantic work; the stretch which connects Irkutsk to Cita going along the southern

bend of Lake Bajkal with such climatic conditions that the cold would even put the construction stones in danger!

Between 1901 and 1911 we find him in Moscow where he takes part in the construction and stone covering of the Alexander III, presently dedicated to the poet Pushkin, Fine Arts Museum, the second Russian museum after the Hermitage.

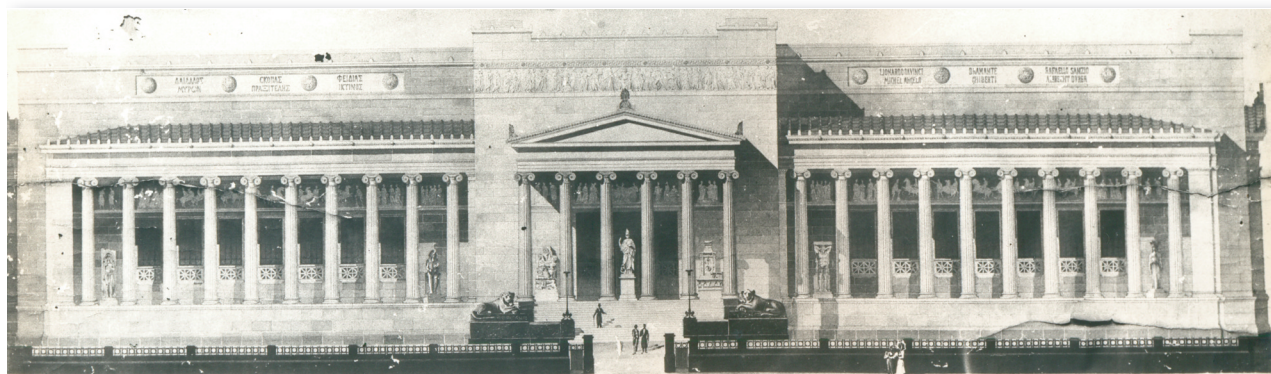
There were about 180 mainly Friulian and Russian workers at his dependencies: chisellers, navvies, bricklayers, blacksmiths and carpenters. Between 1901 and 1906, not less than 75 Friulian chisellers worked there (see the list in the appendix).

Plan of the Alexander III, now Pushkin, Fine Arts Museum in Moscow, conceived by the architect Roman Ivanov Klein.

It was built between 1901 and 1911 with workers of the Collino and Indri companies. Even many *asins* and *cjastelans* participated in it amongst whom James Rizolati, Leonard Colledani, Louis Tramontin and the brothers Joseph and Peter Bortolussi from Praforte



The Trans-Siberian Peter Collino.



At the end of the work, Collino received a cross and a medal as a recognition for the merits acquired during the realization of the prestigious work.

From the 20th November, 1905 to the 15th May, 1906, he even receives the task of doing the marble work on the chapel destined for the mortal remains of Grand Duke Sergius, uncle of Tsar Nicholas II and Governor General of Moscow, killed by the terrorist Ivan Kalisev in 1905.

Due to the care demonstrated in the realization of this chapel, Collino earned the gratitude of the widow Elizaveta Federova, who wanted to meet him and even had a coat of arms sculpted by him.

Novella Cantarutti  
*A Friulian builder amongst thieves, Grand Dukes and revolution*  
*In Ce fastu?*, page 27-74

Various Authors  
*Fôr pal mont*, page 47



Domenic Tambosco from Forgaria,  
working on one of the capitals of the Pushkin Museum



Pushkin Museum today (photo by John Pignat)



### Humbert Napoleon (Locandin)

Born at Pradis in 1880, at the age of 11 he was already cutting stone at Klagenfurt. He went to work on the Trans-Siberian railway with other fellow townsmen of his at the beginning of the 19th century. Later on, he was even in Argentina and in the Antilles and crossed the ocean seven times.

About the Siberian parenthesis he would usually tell about the day in which, going by sled with other workers across frozen Lake Baikal the ice suddenly cracked and they barely managed to save themselves from the bite of the cold and to take refuge in a forest where they lit up a fire in order to dry themselves up. But, as soon as the night came, they were attacked by wolves and had to climb up trees and stay there until dawn.

John Colledani  
*Domenic Indri, entrepreneur on the Trans-Siberian railway*  
*Il Barbican no. 1 August 1985*

Elvira Kamenscikova  
*Italians on the shores of Lake Baikal, page 17*



Detail of the work on the vault of a tunnel on the Trans-Siberian railway – 1904

Life on the jobsites on the Trans-Siberian railway was, in short, harsh.

The work shifts usually lasted eight hours and the daily earning varied from 6 to 7 roubles. Every small group of Friulian workers was flanked by a team of 45/50 prisoners condemned to forced labour or people who were common delinquents or people who were political exiles and they would earn a few kopecks for their work.

The hardships were continuous due to the toil of the exhausting shifts in the tunnels where the dripping of cold water soaked clothes and numbed the limbs. In the covered shacks instead, where the squared stones were prepared in order to put in place during the beautiful

season, such a heavy and bad-smelling air stagnated that the dust produced by the work of tens of chisels favoured silicosis. The workers tried to produce evermore and better in order to be able to set aside as many roubles as possible.

There were those who, according to various testimonies, managed within a span of twenty-four hours to do their shift in the tunnel and at a distance of a few hours another shift squaring stones.

After the work was finished on the main and secondary sections of the Trans-Siberian railway, almost all of our workers came home before the October Revolution and the fall of Tsar Nicholas II, given that the prerogatives which foreigners in Russia enjoyed at the beginning of the last century were less.

Some stayed behind but later on it was difficult for them to come back and they integrated themselves into the local community.

This was even the case of the brothers Domenic and Peter Del Missier (Materia) from Dominisia di Clauzetto who, having left very young for Siberia after having attended at Pielungo the Design School started by Count James Ceconi, at the outbreak of the Revolution they remained stuck in Vladivostok, where they had worked as chisellers on the construction of the railway station.

In the book *Cent'anni di lavoro friulano in Russia* (A Hundred Years of Friulian Work in Russia) Alessandro Ivanov reports, referring to another publication, *Italiani in Russia e in Siberia* (Italians in Russia and in Siberia) – Salvatore Minocchi – Florence 1933, a minute list of Friulian workers (general labourers, pieceworkers, bricklayers and chisellers) who had worked on the various jobsites on the Trans-Siberian railway.



Viaduct at the gorge of Marituj – 1904



Kultuk. Portal of a tunnel – 1904



Railway retention wall – 1904

Sljudianka railway station – 1905





At a stretch is an extract of the list with the names of those specifically classified as chisellers and stonecutters with their relative town of origin:

Tomat James	Vito d'Asio
Cucchiaro Valentine	Trasaghis
Aita Augustine	Buia
Tosoni Peter	Clauzetto
Rizzolati Louis	Clauzetto
Zannier Louis	Clauzetto
Vidoni John	Forgaria
Lorenzini John Mario	Vito d'Asio
Pilin Louis	Castelnuovo
Pitter Mark	Aviano
Canal Joseph	Polcenigo
Canal Stephen	Polcenigo
Marcuzzi Frederick	Vito d'Asio
Sabbadini John Baptist	Vito d'Asio
Blarasin Louis	Vito d'Asio
Pasqualis James	Vito d'Asio
Tramontin Frederick	Vito d'Asio
Barazzutti Peter	Forgaria
Fabrici Francis	Clauzetto
Tramontin Louis	Clauzetto
Indri Justus	Vito d'Asio
Indri John Baptist	Vito d'Asio

Alexander Ivanov  
*A Hundred Years of Friulian Work in Russia*



William Jackson, Construction work on the Eastern Siberian Railway, Khabarovsk 1895 (Courtesy of the CRAF)



Workers from Clauzetto, Forgaria and Vito d'Asio on a locomotive wagon in service on the Trans-Siberian railway, 1896 (Cavasso Nuovo Emigration Museum)

## In North America

We have seen how the learning of the stonecutter's trade quickly spread throughout the towns of Meduno and Travesio and even in the surrounding ones of Val Meduna, Val Cosa and Val d'Arzino (Frisanco, Tramonti, Clauzetto, Castelnuovo and Vito d'Asio). With the entrepreneurship which has always distinguished Friulian emigration, they, after having pushed themselves, as we have just seen, throughout all of the regions of Europe, even ventured beyond the ocean towards North America, Australia with some stops even in Argentina.



Stone quarry where Olivo Muzzin from Bannia worked  
Canada, 1922 (A. Degano Collection)

## Pennsylvania

In the city of Philadelphia the majority of the old houses are mainly made out of bricks. But as soon as one moves to the north of the city to the Chestnut Hill neighbourhood it can immediately be noticed that the majority of the buildings are made out of a local stone called Wissahickon Schist. This stone, unique in the region, gives its distinctive look to the architecture of the area.

The region of Philadelphia is rich in a kind of rock which in the 18th century, Peter Kalm, a Swedish naturalist passing through those parts, after having studied them at length nicknamed them "sparkling stone" due to their particular shininess. This rock, known as Wissahickon Schist or more commonly Chestnut Hill Stone is defined in geological terms as "Appalachia" and is a part of the rocky formation of the North American continent and is considered amongst the oldest of the country. One of its main characteristics is the one of being a moderately hard rock but which hardens even more with its exposure to air, so as to make it very suitable as a construction stone allowing the realization of rough forms, finely carved by skilled artisans before the lasting hardening. In this region even known as Wis-



Road indications at Wissahickon





Church in stone



Fire station



PNC Bank branch

Typical stone houses



sahickon Valley from the name of the rock with the same name which the subsoil is rich in, already in 1840 the first quarries arose for the extraction of the stone blocks which were worked on the spot but even sent, in great quantities, to far away places.

As a result, Chestnut Hill has been and still is a primary source of construction material used by the local workforce at Chestnut Hill and in the surrounding periphery.

These quarries have provided stone for construction projects of whole neighbourhoods and for far away projects like at Bryn Mawr, Detroit and Los Angeles.

During the period of the maximum construction expansion (1910-1930), Italians and Irish did the almost totality of stonework in Chestnut Hill, about eighty percent of the shingles and stones on the Main Line and completely paved Germantown Avenue.

Up until 1870, Chestnut Hill was popular as a summertime holiday resort. Later on, with the introduction of the trolley line and the railway it developed itself into a residential area.

It was during this period that the Italians, in particular Friulian bricklayers and stonecutters, almost all coming from Poffabro, established their residency in Chestnut Hill.

It is calculated that at least 200 families, about a thousand people, all coming from Poffabro, arrived at Chestnut Hill between 1891 and 1906. About 1,500 descendants of these first arrivals still live in Chestnut Hill and surroundings today and many of them still live in the area within a radius of a mile, centred around block 8000 of Germantown Avenue. So that consulting the local telephone book it is very easy to find surnames like Marcolina, Lorenzon, Roman, Brun, Rosa, Collussi, Giacomelli, Tramontina and Filippi.

## The Marcolinas

One of the first natives of Poffabro to arrive in Pennsylvania was Augustine Marcolina who, together with his brother-in-law Emilio Roman, emigrated in 1871 from Poffabro to Pittsburgh in order to work in the open air coalmines.

After a few years they returned to Italy but in 1909 the eldest son Peter decided to follow in his father's footsteps and at the age of just 13 left for the United States of America where there were great possibilities for stonecutters to work. After having for a few years unloaded and shovelled coal from cargo boats in the port of Philadelphia, he found work with a Scottish construction entrepreneur where he learnt the trade of stone bricklayer.

In just four years he was able to bring over his five other brothers from Poffabro, his sister Mary and his father Augustine who had already previously been emigrants in Pittsburgh. Shortly after, Peter and his six brothers opened up, around the year of 1913, a stone quarry of their own at Waverly Road in the vicinities of Cheltenham Avenue.

In 1918, they founded the Marcolina Brothers Masonry Contractors Incorporated with Augustine Marcolina as the President.

The Marcolina dynasty continued with Peter's son, (Pierre) who since 1981 occupied in turn the office of President. The quarry, still functioning, since 2008 is run by the Wissahickon Stone Quarry, LLC, ("WSQ")

Philip A. Todd  
*The history of Italian Stone Masons in Chestnut Hill*

Wissahickon Schist Quarries  
<http://schist.org/avenue/11/index.html>

<http://www.wsqllc.net>

Elisabeth Farmer Jarvis  
*Images of America – Chestnut Hill Revisited*

Augustine Marcolina,  
(at the centre of the photo-  
graph) together with other  
components of his family at  
Chestnut Hill towards the  
end of the 1920s.





## The Lorenzons

Charles Lorenzon originally from Poffabro in the municipality of Frisanco emigrated for the first time to the United States of America in 1897. Charles was the eldest of five brothers who had learnt the stonecutting trade and construction techniques for buildings from their father Vincent. In the following years even the other brothers,



The Lorenzon home in Poffabro

after having had other working experiences, some in Egypt on the construction of the railway, some in the silver mines of Silverdale in Colorado, definitively moved to Chestnut Hill finding work in the construction sector where they had a way of proving their skill in the construction of some prestigious stone buildings.

In 1914, Charles, with his brothers Augustine and Emilio, founded the Lorenzon Brothers Company, initially taking on subcontracted stone laying jobs from big local companies.

With the years they widened their activity becoming a company of success active still today under the leadership of Herbert, the grandson of Emilio.

Between 1898 and 1900, the Lorenzon brothers, under the leadership of their father Vincent, finished, in Poffabro, the construction of the big family home, a five storey stone building which still today, their descendants, mainly residents in the United States of America, occupy in turns during their holidays in Friuli.

They got the stones from the stone quarry of Monte Raut, got the necessary lumber from nearby forests, not only for the constructive elements, but even for the work tools and the furniture: one of Vincent's brothers was a carpenter and made the furniture for the home.



Entrance to the Lorenzon home

The most tangible testimony of their skill as stonecutters is still widely visible to whoever, transiting along the road in proximity of the built-up area of Poffabro, stops to observe that beautiful building close at hand. The structure is impressive and the cornerstones placed at the base of the basement are of unusual dimensions for a civil dwelling place: the cornerstones measure 80 x 60 x 50 centimetres weighing more than 600 kilograms.

These stones were extracted and squared in the Monte Raut quarry and taken within the proximity of the home being built with robust sleds.

*Lorenzon Family A Brief History 1896-1926*

*The Val Colvera Echo  
Our emigrants – The Lorenzons of Poffabro*

*Germantown Crier  
Italians of Chestnut Hill  
Volume 53 number 2 Fall 2003*



Detail of the cornerstones of the basement of the Lorenzons' house in Poffabro



Construction of the Lorenzons' house at Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, in 1908



## Star Junction

Many emigrants from Poffabro found work during those years even in the gold, silver and coal mines in the various internal States: Colorado, Wyoming, etc.

One of these was a member of the Tramontin family from Poffabro. At the beginning of the 1900s, he embarked upon a ship heading to New York City and from there took a train in which he encountered many young men from other cities of northern Italy, they too heading to Colorado. After a few years in the mines, almost all of the Italian workers had died due to pulmonary deterioration. At this point, our Tramontin having heard that there was work in Pennsylvania moved together with others to Star Junction not too far from Pittsburgh. There in the area there were other natives from Poffabbro members of the Colussi family who had already emigrated to Bridgeville, close to Star Junction. They had arrived quite early in order to be able to affirm themselves as stonecutters before the construction boom at Bridgeville. As a result, it can be said that the Colussi family practically contributed towards the construction of the city of Bridgeville.



Louis and Michael Colussi at Bridgeville  
at the start of the 1900s

*Star Junction was founded in 1893 when the Washington Coal and Coke Company opened up the "Washington 2" coalmine.*

*Having become famous for its workers' unrest amongst which the strike of 4,500 miners in 1922 during the course of the years saw the extraction of coal decreasing.*

*The mine is closed by now but the old company houses have remained for many years hosting the residents and the whole area has been inserted by the Bureau of Historic Preservation into the "Determined Eligible List" as an example of a typical "coal city".*

Philip A. Todd  
*The History of Italian Stone Masons in Chestnut Hill*

Nicholas P. Ciotola  
*Images of America – Italians of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania*

## Vincent Struzzi

Vincent, the uncle of John Baptist's mother, emigrated to Pittsburgh in the United States of America in the 1920s. A few years later, he encouraged the arrival even of his younger brothers Peter and Domenic. Later on, Peter participated as a chiseller in the realization of a stone monument built in order to commemorate a worker who had died in an accident during the inauguration of the local railway. It seems that on the statue there is the inscription of Peter's name.

Testimony by  
John Baptist Michieli – Meduno

## The quarries of Chestnut Hill

The stone used in order to build 80% of the buildings in the area of Chestnut Hill mainly come from the quarries of the nearby areas. It should be noted, given the conformity of the terrain, that some buildings in Chestnut Hill have been built with stone extracted from their very own foundations.

The first quarry of which there is news is the Rittenhouse quarry located on six hectares just outside of Rittenhouse Street and Wissahickon Avenue. This quarry started functioning since 1830 and, straddling the century, still employed about 75 stonecutters. Nevertheless, the quarry was abandoned in 1917 and incorporated into Fairmont Park. The Marcolina quarry, founded in 1913 by Augustine and Peter Marcolina, has been handed down from generation to generation in the same Marcolina family and is used in order to supply stone for bricklaying constructions. It is located on a fourteen acre piece of land outside of Waverly Road at Laverock. It is found close to another quarry, first run by Torro Vecchione and then by his son Salvatore, at the corner between Waverly Road and Cheltenham Avenue at Laverock.

Both were rich in "Chestnut Hill" stone which was extracted and cut by hand by Italian craftsmen.

The Comley quarry, which was located at the Wyndmoor Station on Willow Grove Avenue, was sold by H.S. Comley to Walter A. Dwyer in 1926. Dwyer rented it out to an Italian entrepreneur, probably a member of the Lorenzon family, who had eight employees. These quarries and the stonecutters are responsi-



Stone piled up in the courtyard next to the quarry



Blocks of stone in a rough state

ble for the construction of the buildings in Chestnut Hill and in the nearby suburban areas.

In many years the stone extracted from these quarries has been used at Chestnut Hill and in the whole surrounding area: 90% of the houses in Chestnut Hill, 70% of the houses on Main Line and 60% of the houses in Rydal and Huntingdon Valley. Many even are the public buildings, churches, schools and hospitals. Amongst these: Abington School Friends, The William Penn Charter School, Germantown Academy (Fort

Washington), Beaver College, the Villanova University, All Saints Hospital, the Chestnut Hill Hospital, the Episcopal Hospital and the Rollin Hill Hospital.

Today, all of the quarries remembered above have ceased their activity, except for the Marcolina quarry which remains the only quarry in the United States of America from which Wissahickon stone is still extracted. During the last moments under his management, Pierre Marcolina had widened his own market base: besides the sector of the construction of elaborated buildings and covered in stone he had included landscaping jobs, gardens, pools, waterfalls, lakes and dams. At the end of the 1980s, 35 stonecutters and 9 apprentices were employed in the company and at the time, it was estimated that in the quarry there were still two million tonnes of stone which could have been extracted which would have allowed the Marcolinas to keep the quarry open for another three hundred years.

But Pierre Marcolina already a few years ago ceded his activity and since 2008 the quarry is run by the Wissahickon Stone Quarry, ("WSQ") which has re-dimensioned the personnel a lot, by substituting the hard manual labour with the introduction of mechanized means: jackhammers and excavators in order to extract the blocks of stone from the quarry and hydraulic presses in order to break the blocks of stone into the requested measure and shape.



Mechanical extraction of stone from the quarry

Philip A. Todd  
*The History of Italian Stone Masons in Chestnut Hill*

## South Dakota

### A Friulian sculptor at Mount Rushmore, Louis Del Bianco (1892-1969)

One of the most well-known tourist localities in the United States of America is Mount Rushmore, for the Americans “Mount Rushmore National Memorial”, a mountain side in South Dakota on which the faces of four famous American Presidents were sculpted. It is visited by about 2.7 million people a year. Here, some scenes were filmed from the Hitchcock film “International Intrigue”, with Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint.

Less known, at least up until the 1980s, is that the head sculptor who personally looked after the most critical parts of the grandiose monument was a Friulian, Louis Del Bianco, originally from Meduno.

Louis Del Bianco was born at Le Havre, France, on the 9th May, 1892. (His parents were returning to Friuli from a trip to the United States of America). After having spent his childhood years at Meduno in the Del Bianco hamlet, at the age of just 11 he emigrated and found work as an apprentice chiseller in Austria.

In 1908, at the age of 16 he emigrated to Port Chester, New York State, in the United States of America and began to work as a stonecutter at Barre in Vermont (the Massa Carrara of the United States of America). At the outbreak of the First World War he voluntarily returned to Italy in order to enlist to fight for his own country.

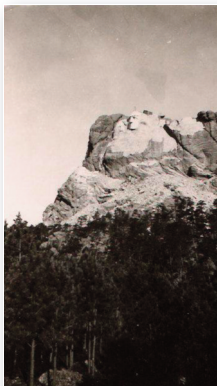
At the end of the conflict, he crossed the ocean once again and returned to Port Chester where he got married to Nicoletta Cardarelli from whom he had five children: Teresa, Silvio, Vincent, Caesar and Gloria. At the beginning of the 1920s, he began to collaborate off and on with the sculptor Gutzon Borglum who had a sculpting studio at Stanford in the nearby State of Connecticut. From 1933 to 1941, he almost uninterruptedly worked on the Mount Rushmore Monument.

It was Caesar, the fourth of Louis' five children, who made the role played by his dad known in the realization of this impressive Monument. Starting from the 1980s, he dedicated the majority of his free time to looking for documents and information on the period in which his father worked “at the mountain”. He obtained a first result by reading the book “Mount Rushmore” by Gilbert Fite, published in 1952 and



Portrait of Louis Del Bianco





The face of President  
Thomas Jefferson

reprinted in 2003 by the "Mount Rushmore History Association" as this Monument's official history book. On page 128, referring to Del Bianco, he, in fact, found the following quotation: "... one of the most competent men ever to work on the mountain". Encouraged by this first finding, Caesar went to Washington D.C. many times, where, in the Congress Central Library and in the National Archives, he methodically examined all of the documentation available regarding the Monument.

To his great satisfaction he found many documents, photographs, letters and interviews relating to the period in which the Monument was made. Through the reading of these documents, (the majority are letters written by the sculptor Borglum to the project's business manager John Boland), Caesar managed to reconstruct and to make known the important role played by his father in the execution of the colossal work.

On the 3rd July, 1991, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the Monument, Louis Del Bianco received, although very late, his deserved recognition: a postal cancellation issued for the occasion by the United States Postal Service in which his name and photograph appear in the foreground.



Postal cancellation issued by the federal postal service on the 3rd July, 1991, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the monument's inauguration

Caesar Del Bianco (1931-2009) lived for many years at 10 Trew Street in Port Chester in an apartment transformed by him, during the course of the years, into a small museum where he had exposed various marble and plaster sculptures, mosaics, photographs and documents which had belonged to his father. And when, with legitimate pride, he would show his guests these precious objects, which reminded him of the expertise and the feats of his illustrious parent, his eyes, just like the ones of the four Presidents on the Black Hills, would shine from the commotion.



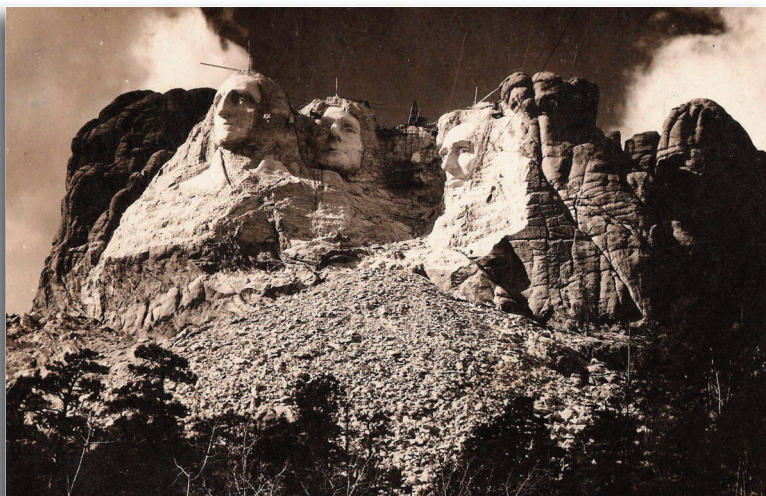
Louis Del Bianco at work on the big mountain

Mount Rushmore, one of the most colossal works of art in the world, represents the faces of four American Presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

It was done by taking away 450,000 tonnes of granite, (90% of which was blown up using dynamite) from the mountainous chain of the Black Hills, in the State of South Dakota at an altitude of more than 1,500 metres above sea level. The dimensions are impressive: the Monument is 150 metres high, every face is 18 metres high, the nose is 6 metres long and the eyes are 3 metres wide. From 1927 to 1941, about 400 workers worked on it between, miners, drillers, chisellers, etc. During the 14 years that the work lasted, notwithstanding the prohibitive environmental conditions, no deadly accident ever took place.

Following the approval, in 1924, from the law with which the Congress of the United States of America authorized the execution of the work, the task was given to a sculptor of Danish origin, Gutzon Borglum, to study the project. A plastic model on a scale of 1:12 (an inch on the model corresponded to a foot on the mountain) was made in the studio. The work began in 1927 and, during the first years, proceeded in the midst of a lot of difficulties. The face of the first President, George Washington, although already drafted in 1930, was

The almost completed work





presented to the public only in 1934. In 1932, the then head sculptor Hugo Villa quit the job and left the jobsite. It was then that Borglum remembered Del Bianco and of his qualities as a sculptor and he got down to bringing him to work on the mountain. Louis Del Bianco began to work at Mount Rushmore in October of 1933 in the role of head sculptor.

In presenting him to his collaborators, Borglum affirmed: *"... He is worth any 3 men I can find in America, for this particular type of work..."*.

His initial task foresaw executing the face of Jefferson and eliminating the granite between the face of Jefferson and the one of Washington.

At the beginning of 1935, Del Bianco quit the role that he was given because of the salary, considered by him to be too low, (US \$ 0.90 an hour) leaving Borglum in the most complete desperation. He, in fact, wrote: *"... the loss of Del Bianco interrupts the whole finishing work of the faces of Washington and Jefferson which will not be able to be completed by this year"*.



Finishing work on the face of President Thomas Jefferson



Louis Del Bianco in South Dakota, in 1936, between two Native Americans.  
To his right the 106 year old cousin of the legendary Sioux chief, Crazy Horse

On the 30th July of the same year however, he was hired once again with a salary of US \$ 1.50 an hour, which, according to his son Caesar, was not bad in those days. Del Bianco's return was a great sigh of relief for Borglum and his satisfaction transpires in an eloquent way from some passages of this other letter: *"... Del Bianco, as you know, has returned and his presence shows us his indispensability evermore. He is the only intelligent and efficient stonecutter who understands the language of the sculptor"*.

With Del Bianco's return, Borglum sets up a new organization of the jobsite by giving superintendent William Tallman the following orders: *"... hang up this notification in the dining hall. All of the drillers of every kind, the rough-casters, the finishers and the sculptors of the lineaments, will work under the supervision of the chief sculptor and will follow his instructions. The head sculptor will be responsible for the ways and methods of the refining and finishing of the sculpture. I have appointed Louis Del Bianco for this important task"*. Later on, the work proceeded quite quickly enough.

In 1936, Del Bianco resumed the finishing in order to give greater expressivity at the face of President Washington. In the same year the face of President Jefferson was completed, in 1937 the one of Lincoln and, in 1939, the one of Roosevelt.

A particular technique was finally used in order to make the eyes visible from long distances. In order to highlight the pupils some granite stones in the form of a wedge were carved and inserted into the inferior cavities of the eyes. In this way, the eyes



would reflect the light making them shine as if they were alive. This delicate operation was personally carried out by Del Bianco.

After the presentations of the single Presidents which respectively took place in 1934, 1936, 1937 and 1939, on the 31st October, 1941, just a few weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the Mount Rushmore National Monument was officially inaugurated.



Louis Del Bianco with boxer Primo Carnera



Louis Del Bianco and Primo Carnera in New York City. Primo is observing the reproduction of his fists made in plaster by his friend Louis

### Louis Del Bianco junior

Any scholar or even simple person in love with the history of emigration knows about the *Ellis Island Museum* in New York City. A little less known even if it is a museum of very great interest to scholars on emigration is the *Lower East Side Tenement Museum* which is located in Manhattan.

However, in none of these museums is a trace found of Louis Del Bianco and of his work. It took the opening up, in 2008, of a third museum at 155 Mulberry Street, in the heart of Little Italy in Manhattan, to bridge this gap.

Born under the aegis of the University of New York State, the *Italian American Museum* sets out to be something more than a normal museum on immigration. Amongst its aims there is the one of documenting the myriad of contributions on the part of the people of Italy and its descendents towards the very fabric of American society right from its first origins, by showing, for the first time, the struggles and the conquests of Italian Americans, by presenting the difficulties and the successes at an individual and collective level with which Italians and their descendents contributed towards the *American way of life*.

In 2010, thanks to the interest of Luigi (Louis) Del Bianco, a display case containing a collection of objects, documents and images on the work of the native of Meduno Louis Del Bianco, head sculptor at Mount Rushmore, finally found a place in the main hall of this museum.

Louis, Vincent's son, one of Louis' five children, lives in Port Chester a few kilometres to the north of New York City and is an actor, singer and storyteller by profession. For a few years now, he has collected the witness of his uncle Caesar in the *mission* of spreading with every means the role had by his grandfather in the execution of the monumental work.

On the 3rd July, 2011, he went to South Dakota where he put on a 40 minute theatre production called "One Man Show", centred on the story of his grandfather, in the visitors' hall right at the feet of the impressive monument.

The display case dedicated to Louis Del Bianco on display inside of the Italian American Museum in New York City.





The gigantic cake prepared by the pastry team of Buddy Fallasco, for the "Louis Del Bianco Day"

On the 25th June, 2012, he appeared on the TLC television network during the course of the Cake Boss program where shots were shown of the various phases of the preparation of the Mount Rushmore cake. A gigantic cake, almost two metres high, representing, in fact, Mount Rushmore with the famous four Presidents, prepared by the team of the chef of Italian origin Buddy Falasco.

The cake was served, on the 14th March, 2012, in the presence of the Mayor of Port Chester, Dennis Pilla, to more than 200 guests who came in order to participate in "Louis Del Bianco Day", a sympathetic ceremony organized in honour of their fellow citizen who was the head sculptor at Mount Rushmore. His last initiative, in order of time, was the compiling of the book "In the Shadow of the Mountain", written together with his wife Camille Cribari Linen, with the aim of making this singular figure of an emigrant and the role he had in the execution of the impressive Monument known even to the greater American public.

Cake Boss S05 E08 Presidents, Peanut Butter & Popping-in – You Tube

Interview of Caesar and Louis junior (Lou) Del Bianco  
National Park Service - United States Department of the Interior

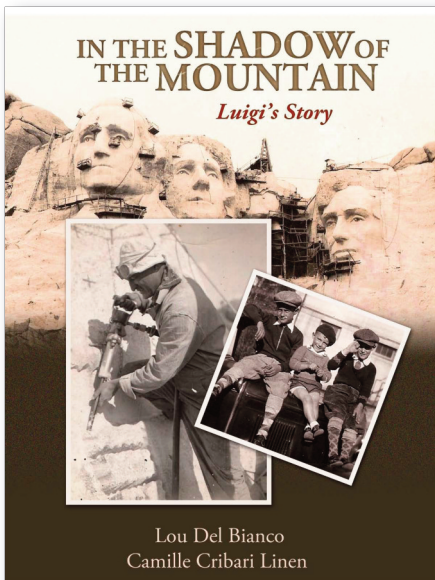
*The Mount Rushmore visitor's guide – Issue 1*

[www.luigimountrushmore.com](http://www.luigimountrushmore.com)

Lou Del Bianco at Mount Rushmore – You Tube

Louis Del Bianco – Camille Cribari Linen

*In the Shadow of the Mountain*



## In Australia

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### **Peter Mazzaroli**

Born in Toppo in 1884, he emigrated at a young age to Austria and Germany in the company of the elders of his town where he learnt the chiselling trade.

During the period of his seasonal re-entry, he got married and continued for a certain number of years to be a seasonal emigrant. In 1927, upon the invitation of the Peter Melocco Company he decided to leave, together with his brother Lawrence for Sydney, in Australia.

With the Melocco Company he took part in the construction of two huge piers which upheld the famous Sydney Bridge. The carving of the stones for that project, was done on the spot of the extraction, at Maruya, a place very far from Sydney, where the presence of our chisellers was requested: Peter, Lawrence, Attilio De Martin (Bolta) and others were sent there by the Melocco Company for a few years.

Giuseppe Tonitto  
*Toppo di Travesio in the World*



The Sydney Bridge with the piers at the ends of the huge arch.





## APPENDIX

### The works of the natives of Meduno

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The stone-cutters of Meduno carried out their activity, within a span of four centuries, in many towns of Western Friuli. Later on, we will provide the list with the names of the works, of the craftsmen and of the towns in which such works were done.

#### List of the stone-cutters

1524 – Polo, son of Francis, father of Franciscutto, John Anthony and Bernardino – husband of Helen, died in 1526, maker of the baptismal font of Arba.

1502-1527 – Baldassarre and Rigo, sons of Andrew and brothers of Francis, makers, in 1508, of the portals of the parish church of San Martino al Tagliamento. With the restoration of the church, the main portal was stacked in the courtyard of the rectory and the relief with Saint Martin was placed above the present portal, while the side door remained intact. Baldassarre in 1527, moreover, built a holy water font for the same church.

1517-1542 – Francis, son of Baldassarre, maker of the portal of the old church of Saint Nicholas of Castelnuovo and of the baptismal font of Cavasso Nuovo, died at Valvasone in 1546 (15th November). He left two children behind: Peter Anthony and Luigia.

1531 – The nephew of Baldassarre, maker of a lantern door for the parish church of Valvasone.

1536 – Anonymous maker of the baptismal font of San Martino al Tagliamento.

1531-1546 – John Anthony, son of Polo and brother of Francescutto, died on the 3rd October, 1548, maker of the altar of Saint Roch and Saint Sebastian at San Foca.

1584-1585 – James and Andrew, makers of the main altar (now disappeared) of the parish church of Castions di Zoppola.

1598-1602 – John Leonard (Zuanardo) present in the construction of the sacristy of Orcenigo Superiore.

1584 – Sel, witness of a baptism in said year (baptismal registry of Meduno).

1584 – Arsenio, father of Bernardina, Veneria and Peter, died on the 4th February, 1585.

1605 – John Andrew died in 1605.

1603-1628 – Joseph, in 1603 maker of the balustrades, now disappeared, of the parish church of Castions di Zoppola, between 1608 and 1610 present with Dante in the construction of the bell tower cell and, in 1628, maker of a holy water font always in said place.

1624 – Joseph Casella, probably is the same one named above, maker of two pyramids for the parish church of San Martino al Tagliamento.

1601-1638 – Mark Anthony Casella, husband of Adriana, present at the baptism of the son Baptist on the 21st January, makes his will in 1638.

1600-1647 – Alexander, son of Joseph Casella, contracts marriage with Elizabeth from Ciago on the 20th October, 1600; in 1621, he was present in the construction of the floor of the choir and of the doors of the sacristy of the parish church of San Martino al Tagliamento; in 1647, he built the balustrades for the church of the Blessed Virgin of Graces in Prodolone.

1660 – Baldassarre, maker of the portal of the parish church of Castions di Zoppola.

1669 – Anthony Ciatto, present at the various jobs in the parish church of Castions di Zoppola.

1678-1680 – Daniel and Valentine Ciatto together with their cousin Joseph, were the makers of the altar (now disappeared) of Saint Nicholas in the parish church of Valvasone. We find Joseph Ciatto present in 1685 in the construction of two altars, now disappeared, and in the portal of the parish church of Orcenigo Superiore.

1720-1767 – Leonard Sacco, present in the construction of the floor of the sacristy of Meduno and in the restoration of the church of Ciago. In 1740, we find this stone-cutter together with John Mazzarolli present in the construction of the choir of the parish church of Meduno, then in 1752 makers of the pyramids placed at the entrance to the cemetery which surrounded the church of Meduno and finally in 1767 in the construction of the bell tower.

1763 – Peter Mazzarolli, working on various jobs on the parish church of Castions di Zoppola.

Louis Luchini  
*Meduno and Navarons: historical notes*

## The works and the towns

**Andreis** – Parish church – *Holy water fonts and baptistery* by Peter Colusso from Meduno, done in 1668.

**Arba** – Parish church – *Baptismal font* made in 1524. The makers of it were Polo (+1526) son of Francis from Meduno, father of Francescutto, of John-Anthony, of Bernardino and husband of Helen (+1561) (Goi 1970).

**Arzene** – Parish church of Saint Michael the Archangel – *Portal* (beginning of the 16th century) attributed to a workforce from Meduno. After the restoration of the church, the portal was put back on the new bell tower. It presents itself with tulip motifs and a slight pod.

**Baseglia di Spilimbergo** – *Side portal and pyramids* of the church of the Holy Cross with ball (16th century). These objects can belong to the same master from Meduno who sculpted the right portal of the church of Saint Peter of Travesio (Bergamini 1970).

**Castelnuovo** – Parish church of Saint Nicholas – *Portal* of the old church in 1517. The executor was Francis son of Baldassarre, who died at Valvasone on the 15th November, 1546, leaving behind two children: Peter-Anthony and Luigia.

**Castions di Zoppola** – Parish church of Saint Andrew the Apostle – *Main altar* in 1584 (now disappeared), work of James and Andrew from Meduno. *Balustrade* in 1603 (now disappeared) done by Joseph from Meduno. We, later on, find Donato (1608-1610) present in the construction of the *crutches* of the bell tower cell and, in 1628, Joseph the maker of the *holy water font*. In 1660, we find Baldassarre from Meduno present who built the present *portal* and, in 1669, Anthony Ciatto on the parish's restoration work and, in 1763, Peter Mazzarollo always from Meduno on maintenance work (Luchini 1972).

**Cavasso Nuovo** – *Baptismal font* in 1542 in the parish church of Saint Remigius done by Francis son of Baldassarre from Meduno. The well-worked nape is decorated with circles and upheld by very ruined sphinxes.

In 1517, the artist even built the chapels of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Saint Anthony in the old parish church (Goi 1970).

**Dignano** – Church of Saint Peter. The stonecutter Leonard di Colussio from Meduno built, in 1557, the *altar* of the old parish church and Joseph from Meduno carried out the *tombstones* of the confraternity (Zoratti 1973).

**Fraelacco** – Church of Saint Vito, Modest and Crescenzia. *Madonna with Child* inserted into a gabled niche in 1546, attributed to a workforce from Meduno (Bergamini 1970).

**Lestans** – Parish church of Saint Mary. *Main portal and side portal* in 1504, works attributed to a workforce from Meduno, just like the *Madonna with Child* in the small church of Saint Zeno (Bergamini 1970).



**Maniago** – Cathedral. *Baptismal font* (first decade of the sixteenth century) attributed together with the one of Rivignano to a workforce from Meduno (Bergamini 1970, Goi 1973).

**Meduno** – from the canonical registries the presence of the following stone-cutters is noted:

1584 – *Gel*, stone-cutter present as a witness at a baptism.

1584 – *Arsenio*, father of Bernardina, of Veneria and of Peter, died on the 4th February, 1585.

1605 – *John Andrew*, died on such a date.

1601-1638 – *Mark Anthony Casella* married to Adriana present at the baptism of the son Baptist on the 21st June, 1601, and makes his will in 1638.

1600-1647 – *Alexander*, son of Joseph Casella, stonecutter, contracts marriage with Elizabeth from Ciago on the 28th October, 1680. In 1621, he was present at the construction of the floor of the choir and of the doors of the sacristy of the parish church of San Martino al Tagliamento and, in 1647, built the balustrades for the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Graces in Prodolone.

1702-1706 – *Francis Ciatto*, an altar maker, is present.

1704 – *Anthony Schezzi*, chiseller.

1720-1767 – *Leonard Sacco*, present in the construction of the floor of the sacristy of Meduno and in the restoration of the church of Ciago. In 1740, we find this stone-cutter together with Zuanne Mazzarotti present in the construction of the choir of the parish church, then, in 1752, as makers of the pyramids connected at the entrance of the cemetery which surrounded the church and, in 1767, in the construction of the bell tower always at Meduno.

**Orcenigo Superiore** – Parish church. In 1598-1602, John Leonard (Zuanardo) from Meduno built the sacristy (Luchini 1972).

Rauscedo – Old church of Saint Mary demolished in 1846. Portal (16th century) now incorporated into the secondary door of the present parish church. Later on, we find various restoration jobs executed in the old building by Peter Mazzaroli in 1773 (Luchini, parish bulletin, 1993).

**San Foca** – altar of Saints Roch and Sebastian – 1531-1546. The piece was built by John Anthony (3rd October, 1548) son of Polo and brother of Francescutto (Forniz 1966).

**San Giorgio della Richinvelda** – Parish church. *Side portal with statuary group of Saint George and the dragon*. Probably the work of Baldassarre and Rigo from Meduno (Bergamini). Balustrades executed by a workforce from Meduno in 1667.

- Small church of Saint Nicholas at the Richinvelda – *Little altar pale* dated 1667 and *balustrades* attributable to natives of Meduno.

**San Martino al Tagliamento** – Parish church of Saint Martin, Andrew from Meduno built the *bell tower* in 1495 together with John di Leonardo and a Lawrence Silanut. *Two portals* – 1508, works of the Baldassarre stonecutting brothers and Rigo di Andrea from Meduno, executed in 1508 as turns out from an archive note and from the date sculpted on the secondary portal. Its placement was done by the masters Peter Prosador from Valvasone, Simon di Domenico Tesador from Meduno and Romano. The minor door presents itself with smooth jambs surrounded by a double circling and on the lintel a Saint Martin on a horse is sculpted.

The big door removed during widening work on the church was placed back at the entrance to the parish oratory and the relief with Saint Martin was placed above the present main entrance. This last door is of a simple make, it has a single dentil contour and a twisted cable decoration.

*Holy water font* 1527.

In the chamberlains' registry the payment can be noted for the holy water font to master Baldessarre of Meduno.

*Baptismal font* 1536.

The date of the execution is revealed by the payments made to the masters from Meduno and registered in the chamberlains' books. It is a copy, in its essential lines, of the one of Travesio del Pilacorte.

The work is handcrafted, the nape bares an inscription which runs around the basin, but its deteriorated conservational state hampers noticing it completely, immediately above an ornate strip with festoons and cherubims. The stem is flanked by three cupids playing music seated on scroll ornaments.

*Portal of the sacristy and floor* 1621.

From the archive notes it is revealed that on such a date master Alexander the stone-cutter from Meduno did the floor of the choir in red and white squares and the doors of the sacristy.

*Pyramids* 1624.

Master Joseph Casella from Meduno built two pyramids with a ball above for the church (Luchini 1969, Goi 1970).

**Tramonti di Sotto** – Parish church of Saint Mary Major.

*Balustrade with four angels holding up candles*, probably the work of artists from Meduno (Bergamini 1970).

**Travesio** – Parish church of Saint Peter.

*Side portals* – the right side one has regular and symmetrical sparse leaves sculpted at the stem and the left side one has an ornament interrupted by two rounds with rosettes, they are neither signed, nor dated, but it is thought that they are the work of a workforce from Meduno. (Bergamini 1970).

**Usago** – Parish church of Saint Thomas.

*The main, lateral portal and holy water font* have been attributed to a workforce from Meduno (Bergamini 1970).

**Valvasone** – Old church of Saint Mary and of Saint John the Evangelist demolished in 1866. *Portal* (around the year of 1500) with tulip motifs. Work attributed to the natives of Meduno now incorporated on the carriage gateway of Luigi Basso's residence at 12 4th November Street.

*Lantern stand* (now disappeared) built in 1531 by the nephew of Baldassarre from Meduno.

*Altar of Saint Nicholas* (now disappeared) built in 1678-1780 by Daniel Valentine Ciatto together with his cousin Joseph from Meduno (Luchini 1972).

(Louis Luchini)

*Meeting amongst sculptors – Homage to the stonecutters of Meduno*

## Chisellers who worked in Moscow, from 1901 to 1906, on the Alexander III Museum

1	Basandella Michael	Toppo	39	Fabbris Francis	Toppo
2	De Martin Peter	Toppo	40	De Giorgio Peter	Forgaria
3	Vitori Francis	Sagrado	41	Jogna David	Forgaria
4	Treleani Anthony	Sagrado	42	Tambosco John Baptist	Forgaria
5	Cosolo Joseph	Sagrado	43	Jogna Blaise	Forgaria
6	De Martin Eugene	Toppo	44	Franceschino Pacific	Cornino
7	Farlatti Charles	Gorizia	45	Abranik James	Gorizia
8	Farlatti Anthony	Gorizia	46	Colledani Domenic	Clauzetto
9	Tonitto Angelo	Toppo	47	Colledani Leonard	Clauzetto
10	Selva Francis	Gorizia	48	De Martin John	Toppo
11	Rizzolati James	Clauzetto	49	Bortolussi Vincent	Toppo
12	Marcuzzi Anthony	Cornino	50	Campiutti Alphonse	Flagogna
13	Garlatti Jerome	Forgaria	51	Vitori Richard	Sagrado
14	Tambosco Domenic	Forgaria	52	Vitori Prosperous	Sagrado
15	Venier Angelo	Toppo	53	Lorenzutti Ferdinand	Pola
16	Colledani Francis	Clauzetto	54	Deotto John	Pola
17	Coletti James	Forgaria	55	Martinis Anthony	Migea
18	Simonitti Vincent	Travesio	56	Vriz Joseph	Migea
19	Marcuzzi Leonard	Vito d'Asio	57	Del Negro Anthony	Peonis
20	Battelino Silvio	San Daniele	58	De Gaspero Louis	Pontebba
21	De Martin Peter II	Toppo	59	Vitori James	Sagrado
22	Collino Nicholas	Forgaria	60	Colautti Silvestre	Verzegnis
23	Bosero Vincent	Forgaria	61	Rasatti Francis	Clauzetto
24	Tonitto Anthony	Toppo	62	Bortolussi Peter II	Preforte
25	Ivan Vasili	Russian	63	Bortolussi Peter III	Preforte
26	Zancan Joseph	Travesio	64	Kufarle Charles	Verona
27	Elia Antonovic	Russian	65	Bin Domenic	Travesio
28	San Pietro Vito	Naples	66	Cruciatti Philip	Pinzano
29	Bortolussi Peter	Castelnuovo	67	Campeis John Baptist	Pinzano
30	Jogna Anthony	Forgaria	68	Chieu Leopold	Toppo
31	Marcuzzi Silvio	San Daniele	69	Zuliani John Baptist	Forgaria
32	Bosari John Baptist	Pinzano	70	Zanardi Amedeus	Medea
33	Bortolussi Frederick	Pinzano	71	Venegoni Eligio	Medea
34	Pauletto John	Vienna	72	Piverotto Bortolo	Medea
35	Vidoni Blaise	SanDaniele	73	Cecot Louis Peter	Medea
36	Indri di Joseph	Clauzetto	74	Chitussi Louis	Forgaria
37	Peresutti Daniel	Anduins	75	Culot Charles	Sagrado
38	Battelino Anthony	SanDaniele			

Novella Cantarutti  
A Friulian builder amongst thieves, Grand Dukes and revolution  
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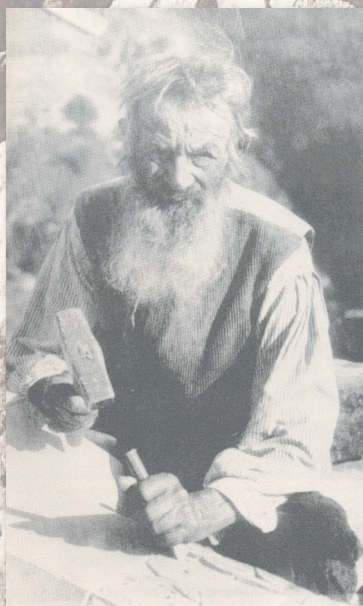




*“Pièra a è pièra, e no cjacares” - Zanini*

*“Pietra lavorata dappertutto e trattavasi di un granito così duro che la sera essi avevano braccia e mani intormentiti e gonfi per lo strapazzo” - Zanini*

*“Langsam, aber recht gut” - Kraner*



*“Socchiudeva gli occhi per rivedere la gran montagna di pietre che in sessant’anni aveva lavorato in tante parti di Europa” - Beacco da Meduno*

*“He is worth any 3 men I can find in America, for this particular type of work, one of the most competent men ever to work on the mountain” - Borglum*



MICHELE BERNARDON

**CHISELLERS AND STONECUTTERS** *from Western Friuli to the world*