

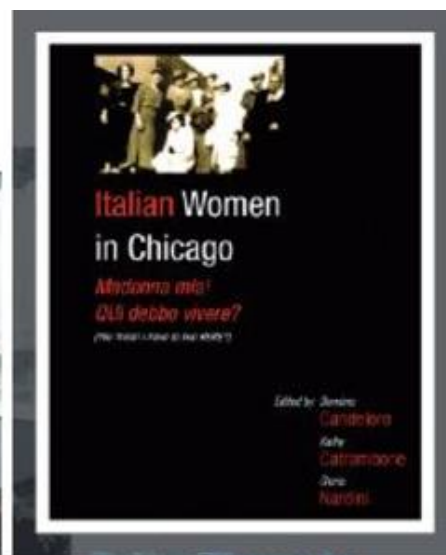


## Madonna mia ! You Mean I Have to Live Here?

RoseAnna Mueller (February 24, 2014)



An Italian immigrant family in Little Italy, Chicago 1930 (Library of Congress)



**Italian Women in  
Chicago: Madonna mia!  
Qui devo vivere? (You  
mean I have to live  
HERE?)**

**Ed. Dominic Candeloro, Kathy  
Catrambone & Gloria Nardini**  
Italian Cultural Center  
at Casa Italia

► PAGES 312 ► \$ 24.99

Biographies, essays and creative writing highlighting the experience of Italian women who immigrated to Chicago and who made their mark on the city. "The big picture that emerges is a varied one. Chicago Italian women have been ragpickers, needle workers, midwives, labor organizers, farm workers, club women, county commissioners, lawyers, doctors, dentists, writers, entrepreneurs, broadcasters, performers, homemakers, and mothers."

It bears worth repeating that as half of the human race, women have always "made history". Yet their accomplishments have often been invisible. This volume focuses on the experience of Italian women who immigrated to Chicago and who made their mark on the city and Italian American women who continue to do so.



The volume is an eye-opening, diverse and immensely readable collection of biographies, essays and creative writing that highlights the important roles these women undertook as politicians, activists, musicians, writers and housewives who kept up Italian traditions.

These are women whose lives deserve to be remembered as historically important and whose experiences and memories continue to provide inspiration for future works. Nearly fifty authors contributed to this anthology, which is divided into two sections: "Chicago Italian Women in History" and "Chicago Italian Women in Essays, Fiction and Poetry."

The first section includes women's biographies and life stories. In the second section we discover how the re-discovered stories or memories of Italian American women act as a catalyst for creative works and the many ways these women's lives inspire writers.

In order to produce this volume, oral history and archives were scoured to research and bring to light the contribution of Italian American women in Chicago and their accomplishments. Some names may be more familiar than others: Mother Cabrini, Florence Scala and Tina de Rosa, for example. Other women are evoked through fiction and essay, as in the case of Tony Ardizzone's portrait of his grandmother in the short story "Nonna," the personal tribute of professor Fred Gardaphé to his mother in, "Good Mammias: The Story of One," and Mary Jo-Bona's essay, "The Remarkable Rosa," in which she explains why her students are drawn to the story of Rosa Cassettari and her role in the Chicago Commons Settlement House. As one of the editors, Dominic Candeloro, reminds us in his introduction, Italian American women have come full circle: "The big picture that emerges is a varied one.

Chicago Italian women have been ragpickers, needle workers, midwives, labor organizers, farmworkers, club women, county commissioners, lawyers, doctors, dentists, writers, entrepreneurs, broadcasters, performers, homemakers, and mothers".

The book takes us through the journey of the lives of these women who were uprooted from their agricultural communities and subjected to oppressive conditions in an urban setting.

We learn how they found community and stability thanks to organizations such as the Jane Addams Hull House and the Chicago Commons Settlement House. Benefit societies and adherence to traditions such as religious festivals and weddings provided continuity and stability. Women went to work in the 1920s, learned to make do, and made it through the Great Depression. They worked through the identity anxiety caused by World War II, contributed to the success of their family business, emerged as political leaders and became CEOs all in the span of three or four generations. Women began to write their own stories.

In "Inventing an Identity" another of the editors, Gloria Nardini points out how "in less than thirty years Italian/American women's writing has come a very long way".

After being exposed to the rich array of cultural history the reader encounters in this book, the editors hope it will inspire readers to S.O.S: Save our Stories through documents and memorabilia that will help to preserve and continue to tell the stories of this important and influential group, many of them unwritten.

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