



# La Notizia Italiana

**POINTers in Person: Lou Costello Chapter #15**

***In This Issue:***  
***Luigi del Bianco***  
***Chief Carver of***  
***Mount Rushmore***

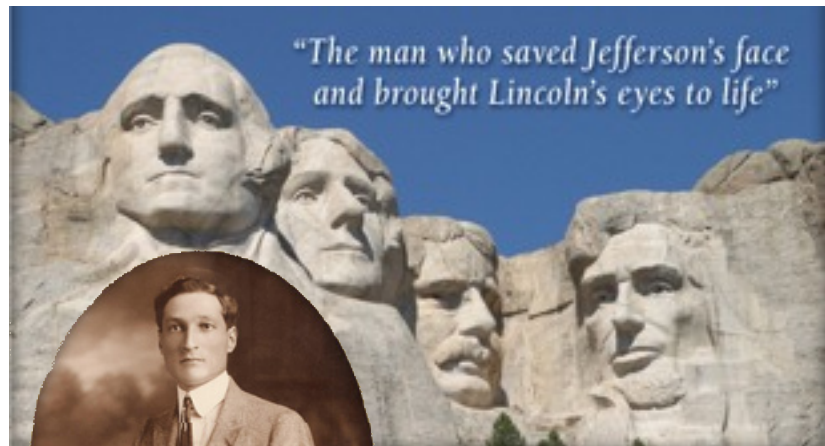


***News from Italy:***

- ***Medici Mystery Solved***
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***Luigi del Bianco:***  
***Chief Carver of Mount Rushmore***



*Luigi Del Bianco, an Italian Immigrant, played an important part in bringing to life a great American monument. For reasons unknown, many authors on the subject of Rushmore have chosen not to mention Luigi and his many contributions to the work*

***The Secret of Mount Rushmore Revealed!***

Posted on 08 October 2009

Each monument and every large project of any type has its stories to tell. In the case of Mount Rushmore, a mammoth undertaking 14 years in the making, there are many stories. One little known story, however, is how the project brought together a renowned, French-trained, American sculptor and an unknown, but very talented Italian immigrant whose hand refined and nuanced the image we see today.

Mount Rushmore, along with the many works of art that depict America, stands out as a symbol of the first 150 years of a new nation. Carved by (John) Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum, the massive likenesses of Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln look down on the visitor's center of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, near Keystone, South Dakota.

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Born in St. Charles, Idaho on March 25, 1867 to an immigrant Danish woodcarver, Borglum later in life studied art and sculpture in Paris, France. During his sojourn in France, he met Auguste Rodin, the creator of works such as *The Thinker*, and was influenced by Rodin's genius. Returning to New York City, Borglum began his career as an artist and sculptor. In 1901, he became the first living American sculptor whose work was accepted by the prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was also honored with the Logan Medal of Arts for some of his portraits. Borglum's passion was to create art depicting American achievements.

From a six-ton block of marble, he carved the head of Abraham Lincoln, which can be seen today in the Capitol Rotonda in Washington DC. In 1908, Borglum created a sculpture of Civil War General Philip Sheridan to be placed in Sheridan Circle, also in our nation's capital. Upon its unveiling, President Teddy Roosevelt affirmed the artist's talent with the quip, "First rate!"

Across the Atlantic Ocean, Vincenzo and Osvalda Del Bianco, on their return cruise from the United States to Italy, welcomed son Luigi on May 18, 1982, as the ship sailed into the port of Le Havre, France. As a small boy at home in Meduno, Pordenone, Italy, Luigi watched his father carve wooden figures; fascinated, he took up the art himself. Vincenzo noticed the boy's talents and encouraged him. At the age of 11, Luigi accompanied his father to Austria, to learn the art of stone carving from master craftsmen. After two years in Vienna, Luigi returned to Italy, where he completed his studies in Venice.

When Luigi turned 17, he received a letter from his American cousins in Barre, Vermont, telling him of the need for stone carvers in America. Boarding a ship in Naples, Italy, he sailed to America for a new life in a new land. In 1913, World War I erupted and Luigi returned to Italy to fight for his country. After the war ended, he returned to Vermont and in 1920, settled in Port Chester, New York, where he met and married Nicoletta Cardarelli. This would prove to be pivotal point in his life. Nicoletta's brother, Alfonso Scafa, introduced Luigi to Gutzon Borglum, and thus began a friendship that lasted until Borglum's death in 1941.

Borglum quickly recognized Luigi's talent and affectionately nicknamed him "Bianco." In 1920,

Borglum enlisted Bianco's help in carving the Governor Hancock Memorial on Stone Mountain, Georgia and the Wars of America Memorial in Newark, New Jersey. *(pictured below)*



***Wars of America*** is a "colossal" bronze sculpture by Gutzon Borglum containing "forty-two humans and two horses" [3], located in Military Park, Newark, New Jersey. The sculpture sets on a base of granite from Stone Mountain.

*The sculpture was erected in 1926, eight years after World War I ended, but its intent was broadened to honor all of America's war dead. In describing it, Borglum said "The design represents a great spearhead. Upon the green field of this spearhead we have placed a Tudor sword, the hilt of which represents the American nation at a crisis, answering the call to arms."*[4]

*The sculpture was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 28, 1994.*

In 1933, Borglum hired Bianco as chief carver to supervise the Mount Rushmore project, a major undertaking that would last fourteen years. Bianco's specialty was refining the President's facial features in the granite after they had been shaped crudely by dynamite.

During the construction, Borglum often praised Bianco for his expertise and dedication to making Mount Rushmore a work of art.

One of the problems that arose during the sculpting was Jefferson's nose, which revealed a large crack in the stone. But with Bianco's expertise, the face was shifted, placing the crack on Jefferson's lip. The lip was then filled in with granite and pinned in place, thus making the repair barely noticeable. Bianco also put his deft touch on Lincoln's eyes.

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Although Borglum wanted to craft monuments made by Americans with American themes, he realized that the Mount Rushmore Memorial would never have been completed in accordance with his vision without the aid of an Italian immigrant.

As the late Paul Harvey would say, "Now you know the rest of the story."



## The Borglum Papers

Interview with Lincoln Borglum

Historic Documents

*Below are chronological highlights of Luigi Del Bianco's role as chief carver on the Mt. Rushmore National Memorial. All of the writing is from the designer, Gutzon Borglum.*

*They are actual excerpts from "The Borglum Papers" in the Library of Congress and the National Archives in Washington, D.C.. The papers were discovered by Luigi's son, Caesar after extensive research.*

**JUNE 3, 1933**

Bianco has all of Villa's ability plus power and honesty-and dependability—we could double our progress if we could have two like Bianco . . .

**JUNE 9, 1933**

I have all men Lincoln, Billy, and Bianco to strictest instruction regarding their separate duties—or tasks and there will be no delay nor confusion; the work now will go straight into large sculpture work.

. . .

**OCTOBER 10, 1933**

Luigi del Bianco, Chief carver, in charge of all Close Drilling and Carving.

Your duty is to give all your attention and study to the carving of the Jefferson head and removing the stone between the Jefferson head and the Washington head. . . .

Gutzon Borglum,  
Sculptor and Engineer

**JULY 30, 1935**

Re-organization No. 2

William Tallman

Please post this in the dining room for the men. All drilling of all kinds, roughing, finishing and carving of features must be directed by the chief stone carver and his directions followed. The chief carver will be held responsible for the ways and the means for removing and finishing the sculpture. . . . I have appointed Luigi Bianco for this most important task.

**JULY 1935**

He is worth any three men I could find in America, for this particular type of work, here and now, but Mount Rushmore is not managed that way and doesn't want that kind of service. He entirely out-classed everyone on the hill, and his knowledge was an embarrassment to their amateur efforts and lack of knowledge, lack of experience and lack of judgment. He is the only man besides myself who has been on the work who knows the problems and how to instantly solve them. His absence is a great loss to this work this year. . . .

The loss of Bianco will probably prevent the finishing of the Washington and Jefferson heads this year.

**JULY 31, 1935**

I have just received a note from from Bianco, resigning tonight. I called Billy, Bianco and Lincoln together and discussed the situation.

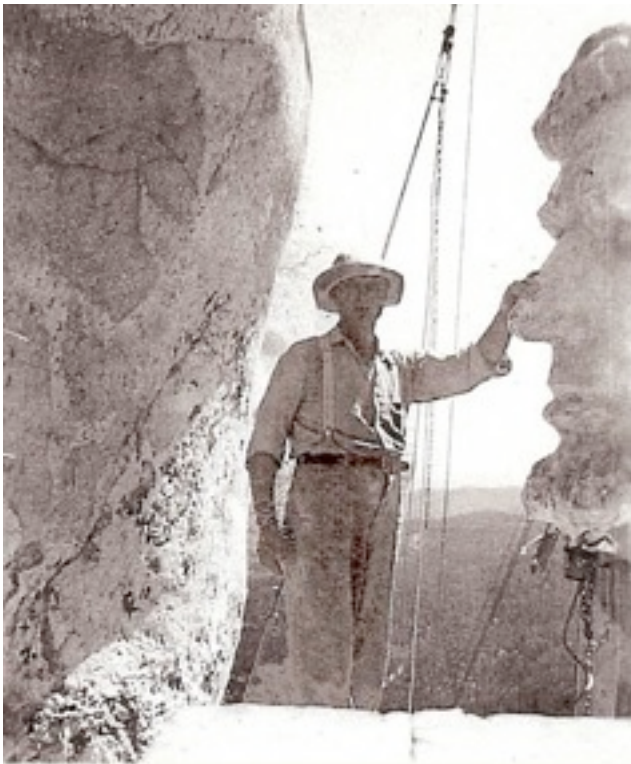
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This quitting revives the old policy of "penny wisdom and pound foolishness" that has threatened the wreck of the Black Hills mountain sculpture from its beginning. . . .

In the absence of a highly trained competent executive who knows sculpture, I yesterday posted an order, dividing the responsibility of the work under the two or three trained minds that I have on the mountain, placing the removal of all granite, methods of removal, form and use of tools, under Bianco; all measurements of every kind what so ever and the full responsibility of any faults in measurements not provided for drillers on Lincoln. Handling the work preparing the scaffolds, providing tools, under Johnson. Billy to remain as general aid to all and special assistant to Lincoln, he asked for that. . . .

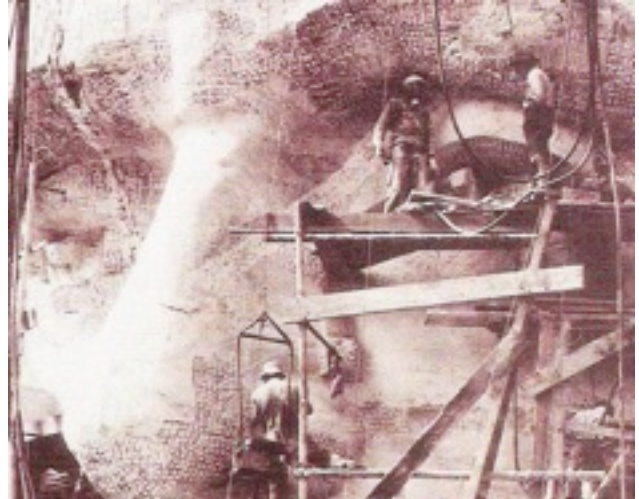
I have given orders that no powder shall be used or shots fired that are not approved by both Bianco and Lincoln . . . .



As far as I am concerned, I shall let Bianco go. I am not going to make up his wages, nor the wages of anybody else. I have spent the last money that I shall spend running into many, many thousands, for the sole purpose of lifting a standard here, a burden

I should never have had to carry and cannot continue.

His leaving will stop all work on the features of Washington and Jefferson.



#### **DECEMBER 19, 1935**

Monument has been produced without the trained aids originally contracted for and also without any trained stone men what so ever one summer of Bianco's aid was not enough to make any appreciable difference . . .

#### **POSSIBLY 1936**

I returned Bianco to his work this morning as Chief Carver, and granite expert, at a dollar and fifty cents per hour.

He will have complete charge of the practical ways and means of dealing with the finesse of carving and instructing the other carvers, in the ways and means of handling this particular stone. . . .

#### **SEPTEMBER 17, 1936**

The plans for the remaining approximate two months of good weather are to finish completely the face of Washington with all refinements of expression; this work being in the hands of Mr. Borglum and the one stone carver on the work, Bianco. . . .

#### **NOVEMBER 19, 1936**

There are only two men on the entire job who came to us as master workman; those are Bianco, carver, trained by me for the past 12 years in the east and our blacksmith, a master of his job. . . .

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### **AUGUST 26, 1936 (telegram)**

BIANCO CHIEF CARVER GETTING HIGHEST WAGES ON SCHEDULE STOP . . .

### **FEBRUARY 28, 1938**

For the purpose of Washington's "red tape", a portion of our better men are designated as carvers; there are no carvers on the mountain—there never have been but one and he refused to return because of the chronic sabotage directed at him by influences in Rapid City, and the Park Department. We have no men on the mountain except my son who can read or understand contours, curvatures, and sculptural modeling necessary to direct the carver. Work on all the heads has been automatically stopped where the carving of the features required intelligence not available in Rapid City or by local workman. . . .

### **DATE NOT KNOWN**

Lincoln Borglum Pointer in Charge.  
You will hold yourself in readiness to assist Bianco in all pointing. . . .

I want the work on the face of Washington finished (by Bianco) beginning ten inches from the hairline proceed downward . . . .

Tallman will aid you and Bianco with scaffold and men in every way, promptly as necessary. . . .

### **MAY 7, 1940**

Mr. Luigi Del Bianco  
108 South Regent St  
Port Chester, NY 10573

Dear Bianco,

I wish you would come as soon as you can if you want to be of help to me. I must finish the faces by the 1st of July—and all of them. I need you.

Your pay will be exactly what it was before, and there will be no reductions from it. You are the only man who is on that pay.

Sincerely Yours,  
Gutzon Borglum  
Sculptor-Director  
Mount Rushmore National  
Memorial Commission

**To read more on Luigi and to view more photos go to:**  
<http://www.luigimountrushmore.com/>

## **MOUNT RUSHMORE F.A. 2**



### **Who are the four Presidents depicted on Mount Rushmore?**

From left to right: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln

### **Why were those 4 Presidents chosen?**

- Washington: for leading the 13 colonies to independence and for being our first President
- Jefferson: for writing the Declaration of Independence and for doubling the size of the US through the Louisiana Purchase
- Roosevelt: for expanding international commerce with the completion of the Panama Canal and for creating our first National Parks
- Lincoln: for keeping the Union together and freeing the slaves

### **How long did it take to carve Mount Rushmore?**

It took 14 years, from 1927-1941

### **What are the size and dimensions of the faces?**

- From top of head to end of chin: 60 ft.
- Nose: 20 ft.
- Mouth: 18 ft. wide
- Each eye: 11 ft. wide
- Height of Mt. Rushmore: 500 ft.

### **Who came up with the idea for Mount Rushmore?**

It was Doane Robinson, South Dakota state historian who had the original idea for Mount Rushmore.

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### **Who designed Mount Rushmore?**

Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum (March 25, 1867 - March 6, 1941). Borglum was an American artist and sculptor famous for creating the monumental presidents' heads at Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, the famous carving on Stone Mountain near Atlanta, as well as other public works of art.

Borglum and Luigi Del Bianco worked together for more than 20 years, until Borglum's death in 1941.

In an interview in 1966, Luigi Del Bianco had this to say about Borglum:

***"It was a sad, sad day when my master died,"*** he said, with eyes misted and voice filled with emotion. ***"The world lost a great genius."***

### **How much did the carving of Mount Rushmore cost?**

It cost approx. 1 million dollars.

### **How was the carving funded?**

Through local, state and federal funding, not to mention Gutzon Borglum's own pocket.

### **How many people worked on the mountain?**

360 to 400 men worked on Rushmore as drillers, carvers, powder men, laborers, etc.

### **What was the average worker's salary?**

Anywhere from .45 cents to .75 cents an hour

### **Who was paid the highest salary?**

Luigi Del Bianco, as Chief Carver, was paid 1.50 an hour.

### **Why is Luigi Del Bianco's contribution unique?**

- Luigi Del Bianco was an Italian immigrant who worked on an iconic "American" Memorial.
- He was, in the words of Gutzon Borglum, "...the only intelligent, efficient, stone carver on the work who understands the language of the sculptor. . . ."
- Luigi Del Bianco was a classically trained stone carver who helped Gutzon and Lincoln Borglum train former mine workers to be carvers, drillers or any skill required to get the job done.

All information on Luigi del Bianco taken from:

<http://www.luigimountrushmore.com/>



## • NEWS FROM ITALY •

### **Researcher Puts 400-Year-Old Murder Mystery to Rest**



(July 16) — New research by an Italian scientist has solved a murder mystery that has lingered for more than 400 years. The death of Francesco I de' Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany, has been shrouded in uncertainty for centuries. Francesco died in 1587 within 24 hours of his wife, Bianca Cappello.

The official death certificate cited malaria as the cause of death. However, suspicion soon settled on Francesco's brother, Cardinal Ferdinando I. After the deaths of his brother and sister-in-law, he resigned his position with the church and assumed the title of duke, and rumors swirled that he had poisoned them with arsenic to clear the way.

An Italian scientist says he's confirmed that Francesco I de' Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany, died in 1587 of malaria, not poison, as some suggested. Now, Gino Fornaciari, a researcher at the University of Pisa, has absolved the cardinal and confirmed that Francesco did indeed die of malaria, a disease that was endemic in Tuscany right up until World War II.

"With the use of modern methods, we provide robust evidence that Francesco I had falciparum malaria at the time," Fornaciari writes in an article in *The American Journal of Medicine*. "Our findings also absolve Ferdinando I from the shameful allegation of being the murderer of his brother and sister-in-law."

To solve the ancient mystery, Fornaciari's team turned to Francesco's skeleton. The researchers tested the bones for a specific kind of protein that would suggest the presence of malaria, and the tests came up positive. No tests could be performed on Bianca's skeleton, though, as nobody knows where she is buried.

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This is the first time ancient bones have shown the presence of malaria at the time of death. Previously, researchers have turned to muscle tissue as the best indicator. Even before Fornaciari cleared up the ancient riddle, history has been kind to Ferdinando. Whatever the suspicions around how he became grand duke, he put his position to good use, bolstering industry and patronizing the arts.

“He ruled with great skill and was the real beginner of a very rational trend in the government of Tuscany,” Cristina Acidini, superintendent of Florence museums, told Discovery News.

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### **Scientists Unlock Dreamy Mystery of ‘Mona Lisa’**

(July 17) — It’s one of the things about the ‘Mona Lisa’ that’s long baffled art historians and viewers alike — how Leonardo da Vinci used rudimentary pigments in the year 1503 to create such subtle shadows and light on the mysterious woman’s face. And it’s taken scientists more than 400 years to come up with technology to figure out how.

Now French researchers are using X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, a noninvasive technique, to isolate and study each ultrathin layer of paint and glaze da Vinci used on the Mona Lisa and six other paintings at Paris’ Louvre Museum. Scientists from the Center for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France brought their hightech machine into the museum while it was closed, and zeroed in on faces depicted in the paintings, which have a dreamy, hazy quality about them.

Specialists from the Center for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France found that Leonardo da Vinci painted up to 30 layers of paint on his works to meet his standards of subtlety. Da Vinci used a renaissance painting

technique called “sfumato,” mixing thin layers of pigment, glaze and oil intricately to yield the appearance of lifelike shadows and light. The technique is well known and has been employed by other artists over the years. But only now have scientists been able to analyze just how intricate da Vinci’s layers are.

They believe da Vinci used up to 30 layers of paint on his works. But altogether they only add up to a thickness of less than 40 micrometers of paint — about half the width of a human hair. Details were reported Friday by several news agencies. The scientists were able to beam X-ray technology at the paintings without even removing them from the museum wall.

“This will help us to understand how da Vinci made his materials... the amount of oil that was mixed with pigments, the nature of the organic materials,” senior scientist Philippe Walter told CNN. “It will help art historians.”

The new analysis also shows that da Vinci was constantly trying out new mixes and methods. In the Mona Lisa, he mixed manganese oxide with his paints, but in others he used copper, Walter also told The Associated Press. Da Vinci used glazes in some paintings but omitted them altogether in others, he added.

“We realize when glazed over, for instance on the ‘Mona Lisa,’ that he managed to place layers as thin as one or two micrometers, which means one or two thousandths of a millimeter,” Walter told EuroNews. “By super-imposing the layers very progressively and slowly, he managed to create the effect he was seeking.”

The research was published in Wednesday’s issue of a chemistry journal, *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*. In addition to the ‘Mona Lisa,’ scientists also studied Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks*, *Saint John the Baptist*, *Annunciation*, *Bacchus*, *Belle Ferronniere*, *Saint Anne* and the *Virgin and the Child*, Agence France-Presse reported.

While this research solves one mystery about the ‘Mona Lisa,’ others persist, like who the enigmatic woman is, and why she holds that subtle half-smile. Many experts believe she’s Lisa Gherardini, the wife of a prominent merchant from Florence. Da Vinci is believed to have started the painting in 1503, and worked on it for four years.

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### **POINTErs in Person**

The POINTErs In Person program, an autonomous branch of **POINT - (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together)** was founded in 1992. Our group, Chapter 15, was organized in September 1996. The 21 nationwide chapters of POINTErs In Person provide genealogical researchers an opportunity to meet socially, and learn and share information pertinent to Italian research. Each chapter is independent and sets forth its own procedures and schedules of events.

We cordially invite Italian genealogical researchers to attend our quarterly meetings. Membership is open to all. In addition to regular meetings our group takes occasional field trips to genealogical research sites in the New Jersey/New York area.

Membership in our parent organization, POINT, is not a prerequisite to joining our group; however, it is highly recommended.

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 POINTErs In Person  
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## **Calendar**

### **POINT Chapter 15 Future Meetings:**

Elmwood Park Municipal Building, 10 AM

#### **Future Meetings:**

November 6, 2010

February 6, 2011

### **Passaic County Genealogical Society: August 14**

Genealogy Club Picnic at Lambert Castle

### **Passaic County Historical Society: September 1**

Society Quarterly Meeting:

Richard Velt & Mark Nonesteid:

*NJ Cemeteries & Tombstones: History in the Landscape*

### **September 12**

Member Open House

### **Lambert Castle Events:**

#### **July -August**

Paterson Youth Photography Exhibit

### **September 25**

NJ Microbrew Festival

### **October 2**

Passaic County History Day at Lambert Castle

***For more information on PCHS  
& Lambert Castle Events:  
973-247-0085 ext 200  
[www.lambertcastle.org](http://www.lambertcastle.org)***

### **Genealogy Society of Bergen County:**

7PM, Ridgewood Library

#### **Aug 23:** Meeting:

*"Using City Directories" - Sydney Robertson, Presenter*

#### **Sept. 27:** Meeting:

*"Migration Routes in America: How Did Your Family  
Get There & Why Did they Go?"  
Sharon Hodges Presenter*

#### **Oct. 25:** Meeting:

*"Bergen County Diarists & Their Diaries  
- Maria Hopper, Presenter*