

A Chronicle from The Chairman, E. Andrew DiSabatino, Jr.

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This newsletter celebrates our 90 years in the construction business. We researched our company archives and were impressed by our meticulous record keeping. But to really understand the company's origin, rewind history to circa 1905...



Ernesto and sons Arthur and Clarence were constructing the Simplon Tunnel through the Alps near the Swiss border in Italy hundreds of miles from their home town of Sant'Omero on the Adriatic coast. All three were master stonemasons and traveled the country working side by side. Ernesto not only taught the construction trade, but he also taught them about the values of life.

Soon after the tunnel was complete, Arthur was to serve a compulsory three years in the Army. Because of a misdiagnosis of Tuberculosis he failed his Army physical. With the opportunity to start anew, Arthur and Clarence wanted to immigrate to America. They proposed this to Ernesto and were flatly denied.

He did not want the family separated and forgotten as was the case with many of his friends who immigrated. He understood, however, that America offered many opportunities for a better quality of life for his family and surprised his sons by saying that the three of them would travel and settle in America leaving behind his wife, Angela Dea, his sons Domnick and Paul, and daughters Splendora and Clelia.

They arrived in New York in April 1906, and settled in Wilmington near friends on Fourth Street. Their masonry skills provided them with immediate employment and although there was a language barrier, they were determined to succeed in this new land. They worked 12 hours a day, six days a week as master stone masons. They soon became confident that they could succeed and establish Wilmington as their permanent home.

By January 1907, the rest of the family emigrated from Italy. They were detained at Ellis Island because Clelia was diagnosed with Diphtheria. She died shortly after their release.

Domnick, the third son, became an important part of the family business. He was formally educated, learned the English language quickly, and was trained in the architectural profession. Early in 1908 Ernesto outlined his plan to start a masonry contracting company. Quality construction by skilled tradesmen was the principle upon which he founded his company. He was later joined by his young son Paul who learned the masonry business at the early age of 12.

The family expanded to include another son Joseph and a daughter they again named Clelia. They moved to their first office at 415 Lincoln Street in 1917 and through hard work became a leader in the construction field and in the community.

Ernesto died at the age of 67 in May 1932. He lived to see his sons take over the family business never dreaming that the third generation (his grandsons) would step in years later and lead the company to become the area's largest building general contractor. His legacy lives on with the fifth generation. His values have been passed down from generation to generation. His decision in 1906 to keep his family together has endured for over 90 years.

At his funeral the late Reverend J. Francis Tucker extolled the virtues of Ernesto in his sermon at the Requiem Mass. "If a man does not have faith he is a disappointment to his Creator and he is a failure among his fellowmen. The faith that this fine man had, carried him higher in life than all the teachings in the world could take him. This faith in God and mankind he carried from his Mother's knee to his grave, always steadfast, never wavering."

EDiS honors all of the founders who have influenced our company.