

CH Conservancy's lecture offers history of Italian workmen who built many Hill homes

Posted on May 2, 2018 (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2018/05/02/chc-lecture-offers-history-of-italian-workmen-who-built-many-hill-homes/>), updated on May 3, 2018 (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2018/05/02/chc-lecture-offers-history-of-italian-workmen-who-built-many-hill-homes/>) by Sue Ann Rybak (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/author/sue-ann-rybak/>)



(mailto:?)

by Sue Ann Rybak

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy's lecture "The Italian Artisans Who Built Chestnut Hill," held on April 25 at the Venetian Social Club, gave an audience of more than 100 attendees a rare glimpse into the lives of the skilled Italian stonemasons and tile setters who built Chestnut Hill's well-known Wissahickon Schist homes, churches and public buildings.

Lori Salganicoff, executive director of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy, gave a presentation which featured rare family photos from the nonprofit's archives, including a photo of the Lorenzon family's first house that they began building in 1908, a three-story twin structure at the corner of Benezet and Ardleigh streets (7909-911 Ardleigh). She said stories about Italian immigrant families from such as the Lorenzon family, who emigrated from the northern Friuli region of Italy to settle in Chestnut Hill, help bring history alive.

She said the stonework, the tile and terrazzo work on Chestnut Hill's house facades, entryways, and interiors of houses are an enduring legacy of Italian heritage in Northwest Philadelphia.

After the slide show, Salganicoff introduced a panel made up of descendants of the artisans who built Chestnut Hill and the surrounding community. Panelists Alma Marcolina Fuess, Robert Roman di Catterina (a.k.a. Bob Roman), Joseph Manero, Ellen Rosa-Bian Cericola, Eric Lorenzon and George Filippe shared stories about why their families



(<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/first-lorenzon-house-7909-ardleigh.jpg>)

The first home built by the lorenzon family in Chestnut Hill at 7909 Ardleigh Street.

emigrated, where they came from and the work they did in Chestnut Hill and other neighborhoods.

Joe Manero talked about the pride the men had in their work.

"Their work was sacred," he said. "I don't think you can find many families around here with this lineage, this amount of extraordinary craftsmanship and art from one area."

Salganicoff said personal stories are one of the reasons the conservancy exists, "to document and share the many histories that enrich the Chestnut Hill community."

"We want to help the community understand and treasure these stories and others like them," she said. "We are grateful that we were able to share photographs from the community's history and the histories of these families and as a result of that more families are offering to share their families' stories with us. We are very interested in hearing and recording those stories."

Joan Forde, who has lived in Chestnut Hill for over 40 years, was just one of Wednesday night's many attendees.

"These stories are so unusual," she said. "You don't hear about them. I live in a very beautiful Wissahickon Schist stone house that was built in 1924. I often wondered about the people who built it, because the walls are three feet thick of pure stone and it is so solid. I really appreciate living here and what these people did and how hard they worked. It's a great privilege to hear these stories."

Correction: An earlier version of this article erroneously stated: that "She [Salganicoff] added that because Chestnut Hill is a National Historic District, this architectural treasure is preserved for future generations." According Salganicoff, Chestnut Hill's listing as a National Register Historic District is a solely honorary designation. Only listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and the creation of preservation easements actually offer protection from demolition and drastic alteration. Of the 2700+ buildings in the Chestnut Hill National Register Historic District, only 93 are listed on the Philadelphia Register and another 14 have preservation easements. This article was updated on May 3 at 10 a.m.

(mailto:entry was posted in News (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/category/news/>) and tagged News (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/tag/news/>). Bookmark the permalink (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2018/05/02/chc-lecture-offers-history-of-italian-workmen-who-built-many-hill-homes/>).

Conse

rvancy - CHCA board gets notice of area street projects (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2018/05/02/chca-board-gets-notice-of-area-street-projects/>)

Food, atmosphere regal at Flourtown's new Queen's Teapot → (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2018/05/03/food-atmosphere-regal-at-flourtowns-new-queens-teapot/>)