

Per Niente

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Luigi Del Bianco

Chief Carver on Mt Rushmore

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

Luigi Del Bianco was born aboard a ship near La Havre, France on May 8, 1892. His parents, Vincenzo and Osvalda, were returning from the United States to Italy. When he was a small boy hanging around the wood carving shop of his father in Meduno, Pordenone province, men of the village used to say, "How curious the little one is!" Vincenzo Del Bianco became convinced that his son was interested in carving and had more than ordinary ability. He took the 11 year old boy to Austria to study under a skilled stone carver. After 2 years in Vienna, Luigi studied in Venice. When cousins in Barre, Vt. wrote that skilled carvers were needed, 17 year old Luigi boarded the La Touraine out of Naples and headed for America.

In 1913, World War I broke out and Luigi returned to Italy to fight for his country. After the war, He emigrated back to Barre, Vt. in 1920 and after a year of work as a stone cutter, he settled in Port Chester, NY where he met his wife, Nicoletta Cardarelli.

It was his brother-in-law, Alfonso Scafa, who

introduced Luigi to Mount Rushmore designer Gutzon Borglum. "Bianco", as Borglum affectionately called him, began working at Borglum's Stamford, Ct. studio and the association of the two men continued until Borglum's death in 1941.

Throughout the 1920's Luigi assisted Borglum with the Governor Hancock Memorial in South Carolina, Stone Mountain in Georgia, and the Wars of America Memorial in Newark, NJ. Because of Luigi's strong stature and classic Roman features, Borglum used him as a model on 20 of the figures on the Newark sculpture.

In 1933 Borglum hired Bianco to be chief stone carver on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Luigi's job was to carve the "refinement of expression" or detail in the faces. He was paid 1.50 an hour; a considerable sum for the Depression.

It was "Bianco" who carved the life-like eyes of Abraham Lincoln. In a 1966 Interview with the Herald Statesman in Yonkers, NY, he said about carving the eyes, "I could only see from this far what I was doing, but the eye of Lincoln had to look just right from many miles distant. I know every line and ridge, each small bump and all the details of that head (Lincoln's) so well. I would do it again, even knowing all the hardships involved. I would work at Mount Rushmore even without pay, if necessary. It was a great privilege granted me."

It was "Bianco" who also singlehandedly saved the face of Jefferson; a task Gutzon Borglum would have entrusted to no one else. In Judith St. George's book, *The Mount Rushmore Story*, she writes: "Luigi Del Bianco, one of the best stone carvers Rushmore ever had, patched the crack in Jefferson's lip with a foot deep piece of granite held in place by pins- the only patch on the whole sculpture, and one that is hard to detect even close up."

St. George goes on to reinforce the value of "Bianco":

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