



Angelo Patri
The Father of New York
City's Educational System
1876-1965

Angelo Patri was an Italian-American author and educator.

His was born Angelo Petraglia in Piaggine (Salerno). He and his family came to the United States in 1881 and lived in New York's East Harlem. His mother, Carmela, hoped that he would become a priest. His father, Nicholas, a laborer, who though illiterate was a raconteur who re-

galed his neighbors with wonderful tales of historical Italian figures and past events.

His parents, realizing the value of education, enrolled Angelo in school at the age of eleven. With only a limited knowledge of English, Angelo struggled. But his tenacity and desire to learn soon overcame his shortcomings and he made great strides in continuing his education.

He earned a B.A. at the College of the City of New York in 1897, and an M.A. at Columbia University in 1904. He was a schoolteacher in New York from 1898 to 1908, At which time he became princi-

pal at PS #4 (the first Italian-born to do so in the United States)

From 1908 to 1913 he was Principal of PS #45 in the Bronx, a school that housed students from immigrant families. There, one of Angelo's students was Julius Garfinkle, a dead-end kid who was also scholastically poor because he spent much of his time running with neighborhood gangs. Garfinkle's potentially bleak future took a positive turn when Angelo Patri saw something special in the boy and became his mentor. Patri channeled the boy's energy and introduced him to the world of Theatre. Garfinkle began performing in school plays and a new vista opened for him. His scholastic record improved because high marks were required in auditioning for plays.

Patri was later instrumental in Garfinkle receiving a scholarship to the Heckscher Foundation where Garfinkle learned the fundamentals of Theatre. Julius Garfinkle who upon becoming a professional actor and changing his name to John Garfield said of Patri, "For reaching into the garbage pail and pulling me out, I owe him everything."

Editors note:

Angelo Patri's syndicated column on child psychology called "Our Children", appeared in national magazines and major newspapers including those in Buffalo.



John Garfield