

Vincent Spaniolo Dies in Lansing

Death claimed Vincent Spaniolo, 82-year-old retired merchant and one of Charlotte's oldest businessmen. He died Saturday in St. Lawrence hospital after a long illness.



Mr. Spaniolo, a Main Street figure since 1896, came to Charlotte from Wabash, Ind., a short time after emigrating to the United States from southern Italy.

A wholesale and retail fruit merchant for more than five decades in Lansing and Charlotte, he delivered fruit by horse and wagon before the advent of motor trucks.

In those days Charlotte's Main street was a typical corduroy with wooden sidewalks. Those were the days when Lamb & Spencer and Warren Shaul's grocery stores did much of the retail grocery business.

Coming to this country to avoid European tyranny, Mr. Spaniolo returned to Italy in 1897 to bring his wife and first son, John, here to these shores. Shortly after coming here, he took steps to take out his citizenship papers.

The late Congressman J. M. C. Smith assisted him in getting his citizenship papers. Ernest G. Pray, who was county clerk, remembers when Mr. Spaniolo received citizenship.

Some of the old-timers who were businessmen at the turn of the century were the late Frank Beard, Myer Vomberg, A. A. Houghtaling, Frank McElwain, Warren Shaul and Harp Krebs.

The Spaniolo store was first located in the building owned by Myrta Warren's parents. Later he moved next door to a building of Bill Heilway's.

By dint of hard work and economy, Mr. and Mrs. Spaniolo, like many of that hardy stock of Europeans, reared a large family of children who have become a credit to their family and community.

Proud of his citizenship, he instilled in his children the importance of voting and taking part in civic responsibilities. Three of his sons served in World War II.

He was born Feb. 26, 1871, in St. Ippolito, Italy, and spent some time in Africa and South America before he chose the United States as his adopted country.

Mr. Spaniolo had the distinction of buying the first Reo Speed-Wagon in this part of the state at a time when many were still ridiculing the automobile and truck. He enlarged his base of wholesale operations and opened up in Lansing, becoming one of the pioneer fruit merchants in central Michigan.

He and his family moved to Lansing in 1922 and returned to Charlotte in 1932, when he retired from the wholesale business. His sons continued the business here.

Mr. and Mrs. Spaniolo were married 57 years. Survivors include the widow, Theresa, of 123 East Shaw street; seven sons, John and Michael of Lansing, Charles and Peter of Charlotte, Robert of Muskegon and James and Victor of Cassopolis, co-publishers of the Cassopolis Vigilant; two daughters, Mrs. Charles Spaniolo and Miss Virginia Spaniolo, both of Muskegon.

Funeral services were held Monday at St. Mary Catholic church. Rev. Fr. Michael Mleko officiated. Burial was in Maple Hill cemetery. A Rosary was recited Sunday night at Pray funeral home.

The seven sons were pallbearers.

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