

A Small Tyrolean Community of Nearly 50 Years in Fontana, California



A description of this community based on
recollection from my parents and grandparents



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About the Author

The author, **James (Jim) DeCarli, Ph.D., MPH, MPA, PGDip**, began creative writing in high school. As he went onto college and graduate schools, studying at the University of Southern California, George Washington University, and the University of Oxford, he continued enhancing literary interests in applying neurological sciences to public policy development. While studying at Mansfield College, University of Oxford he began applying these skills to write environmental health promotion and disease prevention materials and affiliated creative stories to capture the interests of targeted audiences. He is currently an injury and neuroepidemiologist, a Master of Certified Health Education Specialist and Certified in Trauma Model Therapy, where his doctoral studies established a foundation for his expertise in developing behavioral programs in public health to help children, teens, expectant parents and the general public, obtain the necessary skills to make healthier choices to reduce exposure to the risk of injury and promote healthy lifestyles, through evidenced-based research and prevention programs for schools, hospitals, governmental agencies and organizations. He also writes short stories and children's stories to influence readers on specific topics, for educational modules relating to behavior change and healthy lifestyles.

He lived in this community when he was a boy, then later his family moved to another part of Fontana, then again out of the region. He has strong ties to his Tyrolean heritage and community, and maintains regular contacts and visits with family in northern Italy.



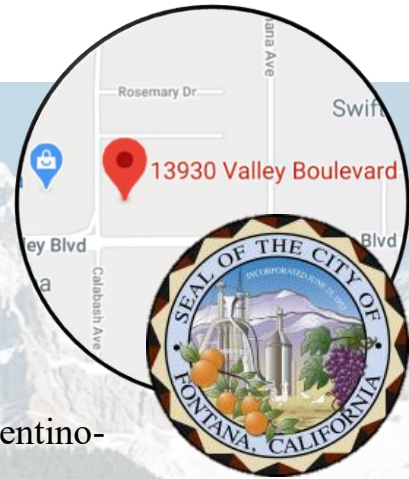
About & Dedication

This book is a description of a small Tyrolean community of southwestern unincorporated city of Fontana, in order to bring to life, the past history of this community that is no longer and for future generations and historians to know about a community that existed in this location. While currently this area consists primarily of trucking industries, but there was a time when a community existed. It was a time of vast vineyards, winemaking, Tyrolean picnics, dances, Bocce, Hollywood movie star visits while on their way to Palm Springs and even adapting the community to help early workers of Kaiser Steel. Eventually however, overtime, this community disappeared. With only one building and few homes existing, these represent nearly 50 years of what was a small Tyrolean community between 1929 to 1975. The families that are mentioned, the Segna's, DeCarli's and Zanella's are also all of my relatives, who's families all originated from Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy.

I dedicate this to those interested in historical demographics and those who desire to learn more about the history of small communities in Fontana. For the experiences, photographs and stories, I honor those from this community who gave me a foundation as a very young child, of which I was fortunate to have experienced briefly, and learned about community.

Italian Immigration to the Fontana Region

This small community was originally part of Cucamonga, an unincorporated area of San Bernardino. Later annexed into an unincorporated part of Fontana. During this early time, this was a small immigrant community of Tyrolean people. These were people, and most of my family, who were from Trentino-Alto Adige in the Dolomites, a beautiful region of northern Italy in the Italian Alps. While Italians from northern Italy also occupied the neighboring winemaking communities, for this small community, these were first and second generations of northern Italians who moved to this part of Fontana for economic opportunity in 1929. This community continued to about 1975, when most Italian families began selling their properties, as land value became more profitable and gentrification occurred.



Aerial view of U.S. Route 70/99 and Calabash, currently in 2020 this designated address is 13930 Valley Boulevard and Calabash in Fontana, California.

Italian Immigration to the United States

Before coming to this region of what is now the City of Fontana, these families traveled by steamboats from Europe to Ellis Island, New York. This was a time of massive migration to America between 1892 and 1954, when more than 12 million immigrants entered the Country through Ellis Island, with over 1,004,756 in 1907.¹ Boats and steamships would often carry from as few at 700 to larger ships of 10,000 passengers and many arriving all at once. This was a time when people were fleeing for their lives in Europe and where no passports, visas or paperwork were required to enter the United States. While there were immigrants from other countries, most were Italians. It took only hours for each passenger to hand write a document that included their point of departure, the passenger's name, age, occupation and destination.



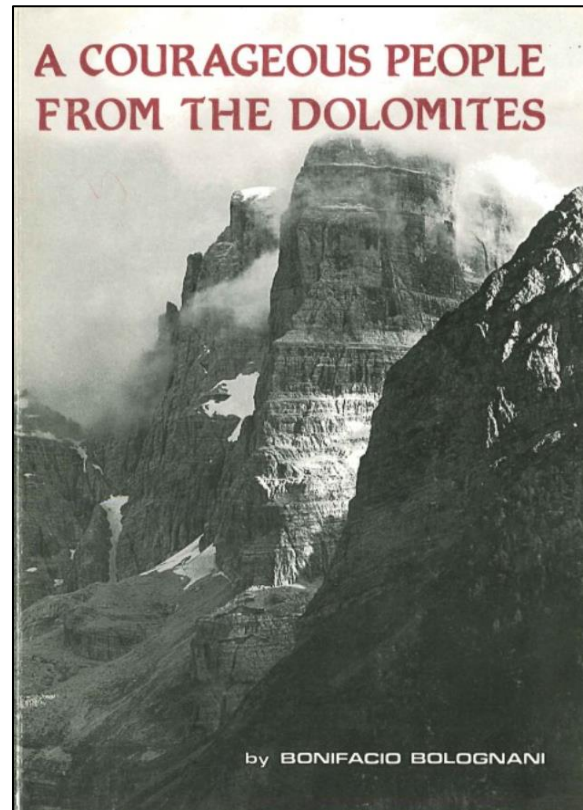
Arriving at Ellis Island. A general photograph. Bain News Service, 1915
[<https://www.loc.gov/item/2014710703/>].

¹ [<https://www.history.com/news/immigrants-ellis-island-short-processing-time>]

Italian Immigration Settlements and Movement Westward

A Courageous People From The Dolomites

(Bolognani B, 1981), is an informative book for families that provides the names of individuals from specific subregions of the Dolomites and where they immigrated to in the United States. For the families in this Tyrolean community of Fontana, after entering the United States through Ellis Island many settled in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania, to work in coal mines, as well as Chicago, Illinois and other cities for opportunity. From working in the coal mines of Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania and



other cities throughout the northeast, many first generations found work and established families.

Among those in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania, many Italian immigrants in the 1890's settled throughout the Schuylkill River, but not without risk of illness and loss of life. My Nonno (grandfather), Quinto Massimiliano DeCarli, at only 39 years of age in 1929, died in a mine collapse, while he was working in a coal mine.



After his death, my Nonna (grandmother) Ersilia (Zanella) DeCarli, was left alone with a daughter, two older sons and my father who was only 16 months of age at the time. While she cooked Italian food at a restaurant at Visintainer's Motel to feed her children, she did not want her children to be exposed to Black Lung disease and risk of death from working in the coal mines. So, she took her children and moved west to Fontana, leaving her life, job, family and friends in Mount Carmel. Like many immigrants, my Nonna, Ersilia (Zanella) DeCarli, was made aware of opportunity from family, her brother Joseph Zanella, who already had property in the small community of southwestern Fontana. Other Italian families, first and second-generation immigrants, moved west to Guasti, Cucamonga, Etiwanda and Fontana, already had family in the area to work or purchased property for vineyards.

While nearby and neighboring Guasti, Etiwanda and Cucamonga these communities, also of mostly Italian and Mexican immigrants, were already working in the winemaking industry. Many established as far back as the late 1800's. This region had already become a vibrant wine making community with vast vineyards and opportunities for



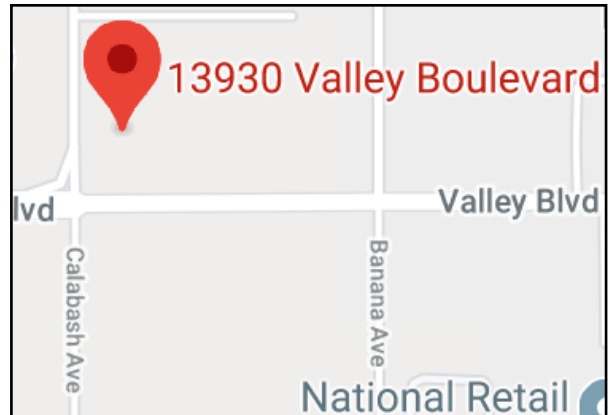
families. Secondo Guasti, an Italian immigrant, who entered the U.S. from Columbia in 1881, founded neighboring Guasti Winery. A large community of Italian immigrant winemakers, that was the largest wine making companies in the world. Larger than Napa Valley California, in 2020.

During the time of prohibition, many local vineyards were also used for private winemaking among families. This small area of southwestern Fontana, consisted of several Italian families from the same region of Trentino-Alto Adige that merged families of the Segna's, DeCarli's and Zanella's. The Segna's were originally from Salobbi, the Zanella's from Covelò and the DeCarli's from Mattarello. They shared the rich cultural traditions and food of Trentino-Alto Adige. As they moved westward to California, they practiced proud traditions among family and community in this part of Cucamonga.



The Geography of this Small Tyrolean Community of Fontana

As mentioned in the beginning, this community started in about 1929. The current location is on Valley Boulevard and Calabash in Fontana. Before the construction of Interstate 10 and during the time of 1929, Valley Boulevard was named U.S. Route 70/99 and this location



was the eastern portion of Cucamonga. According to the National Geologic Map Database, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), this location on Valley boulevard and Calabash, was immediately beyond the western boundary Fontana, thus shown in the year 1944 to have been in the eastern most part of Cucamonga, as shown in Figure A below.

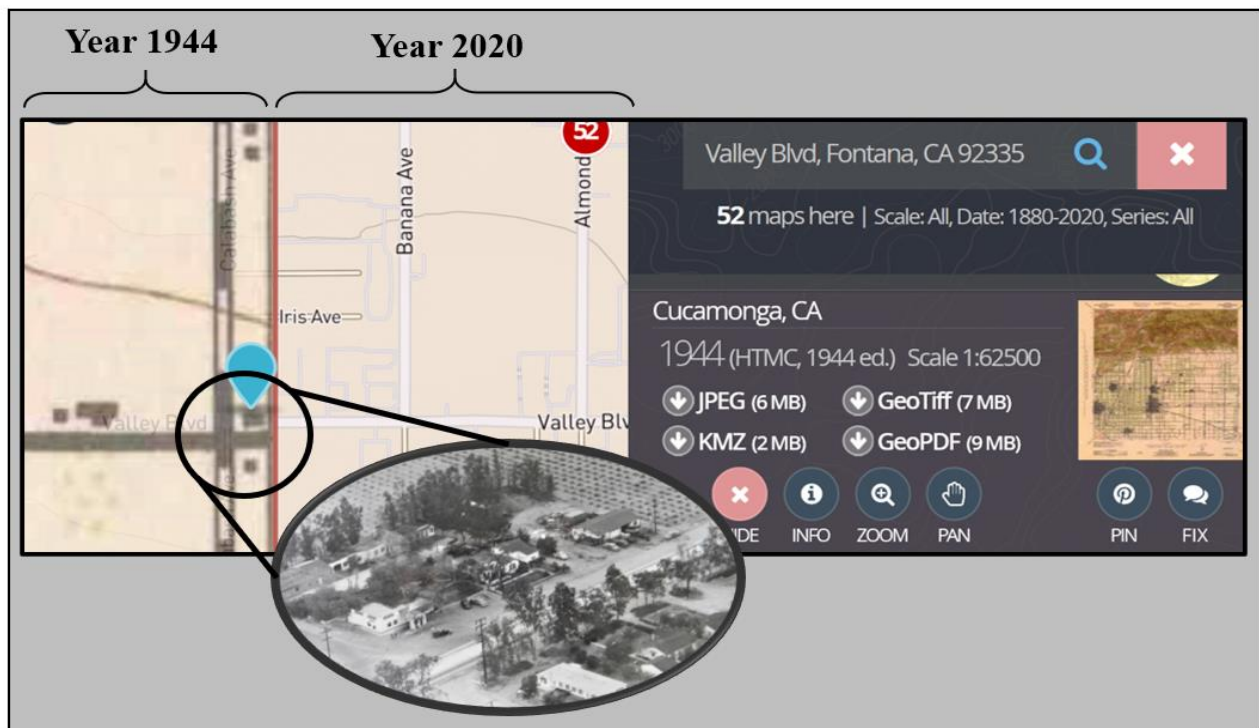
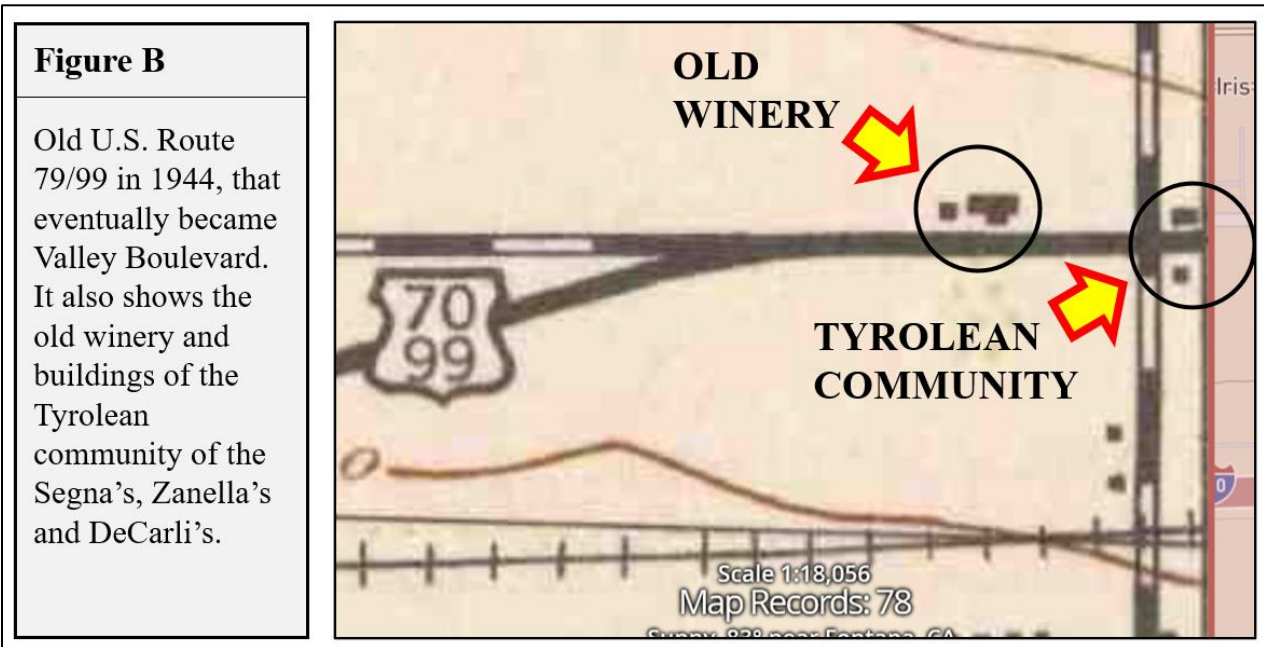
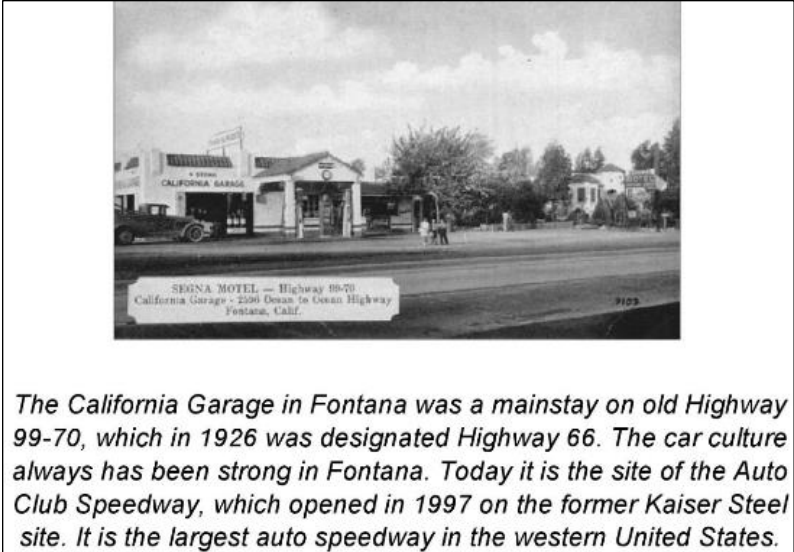


Figure A: USGS Map Comparison of years 1944 to 2020
[<https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#15/34.0704/-117.5013>]

Further, as seen in Figure B below, shows the buildings at the time on the northeast corner of Route 70/99 and Calabash. The buildings to the west, from what I was told by my parents and grandparents, was also an old winery. In Figure C, shows the same location during 1944, with a future map transparency of where Interstate-10 is currently in 2020. Therefore, Valley Boulevard would have been U.S. Route 70/99.



This is important for historians and for those researching this part of Fontana on Valley Boulevard and Calabash Avenue. Whereas comparing roadway systems from back in 1944 to what exists in the year 2020 can be misleading. An unintentional error can be found in a previous historical publication, as shown in Figure D. In the historical book Inland Empire, on page 28, describes Segna's California Garage as located on U.S. Route 66 (Foothill Boulevard) at the location of the California Speedway.¹



The California Garage in Fontana was a mainstay on old Highway 99-70, which in 1926 was designated Highway 66. The car culture always has been strong in Fontana. Today it is the site of the Auto Club Speedway, which opened in 1997 on the former Kaiser Steel site. It is the largest auto speedway in the western United States.

However California Speedway is located north of where Segna's California Garage was located and where Kaiser Steel Coke Ovens were located. History can easily be misunderstood when roadways and highways change and more importantly when buildings disappear, as with Kaiser Steel and the Segna's. This small community had unique qualities. These were influenced by the adjacent well-established vineyards of Cucamonga and Guasti. Whereas, as shown in Figure E, this area was primarily vineyards. Where families had their own vineyards and even grape vine trellises, and made their own wine.

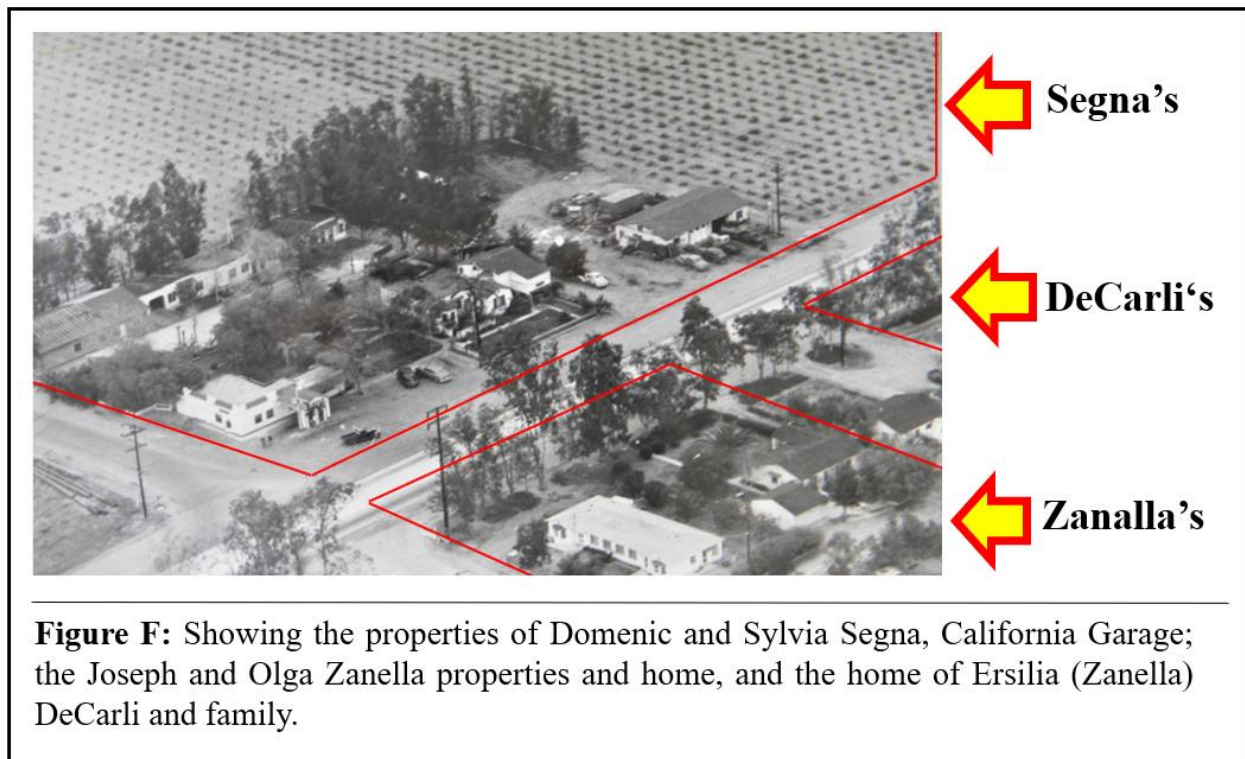


Figure E: Showing vineyards of the area

¹ Weeks, John H. Inland Empire. 2008. Arcadia Publishing [https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/Products/9780738559070]

The Geography of this Small Tyrolean Community of Fontana

While grape vineyards primarily surrounded this community, overtime, it grew and expanded. In Figure F below, shows the location of properties of Domenic and Sylvia Segna, Ersilia DeCarli and family, and Joseph and Olga Zanella.



Segna's California Garage was the commercial and social hub of this community. It started off small, primarily with grape vineyards, their home, and California Garage and service station. Eventually Segna's grew from the California Garage, Chevron gas and service station to a family bar with food and drinks and gifts of distinction.

Segna's was established in 1929, by Domenic and Sylvia Segna, located on the corner of what is now called Valley Boulevard and Calabash in Fontana, California. Before coming to this area to establish the California Garage, Domenic Segna was not new to the automobile industry. Whereas he worked in automotive design industry in Detroit, in the earlier part of his life. He then moved west for further automotive opportunity.

From Detroit, Domenic Segna moved to the city of Long Beach, California, where he opened a garage and an indoor car park (Figure G), which was popular at that time, especially during off season motorists who left their vehicles in the city. The garage and indoor car park were located where the current year 2020, City Hall is located.



Figure G: Segna's Garage and Car Park Long Beach

The Segna's California Garage: Valley Boulevard and Calabash in Fontana

The property began with grape vineyards, as with many of the properties in this part of unincorporated Fontana during this time period. In addition to wine making, Domenic and Sylvia Segna had their home built in 1929, along with the California Garage and Chevron service station. Their home was built and designed by their friend Frank Zamboni. As their families grew, they would visit the Zamboni Iceland Skating Rink in Paramount, California.



Domenic & Sylvia Segna behind the counter of California Garage/Family Italian Bar.



The Segna Home in 1929 on U.S. Route 70/99 (Valley Boulevard year 2020) with Domenic's tow truck for services.



California Garage and Segna Home in 1929 on U.S. Route 70/99 (13930 Valley Boulevard in year 2020).



California Garage in 1929.



Domenic Segna behind the counter of California Garage/Italian Family Bar.



California Garage in 1929. View from Calabash Avenue side.



California Garage in about 1929 on U.S. Route 70/99
(13930 Valley Boulevard in year 2020)

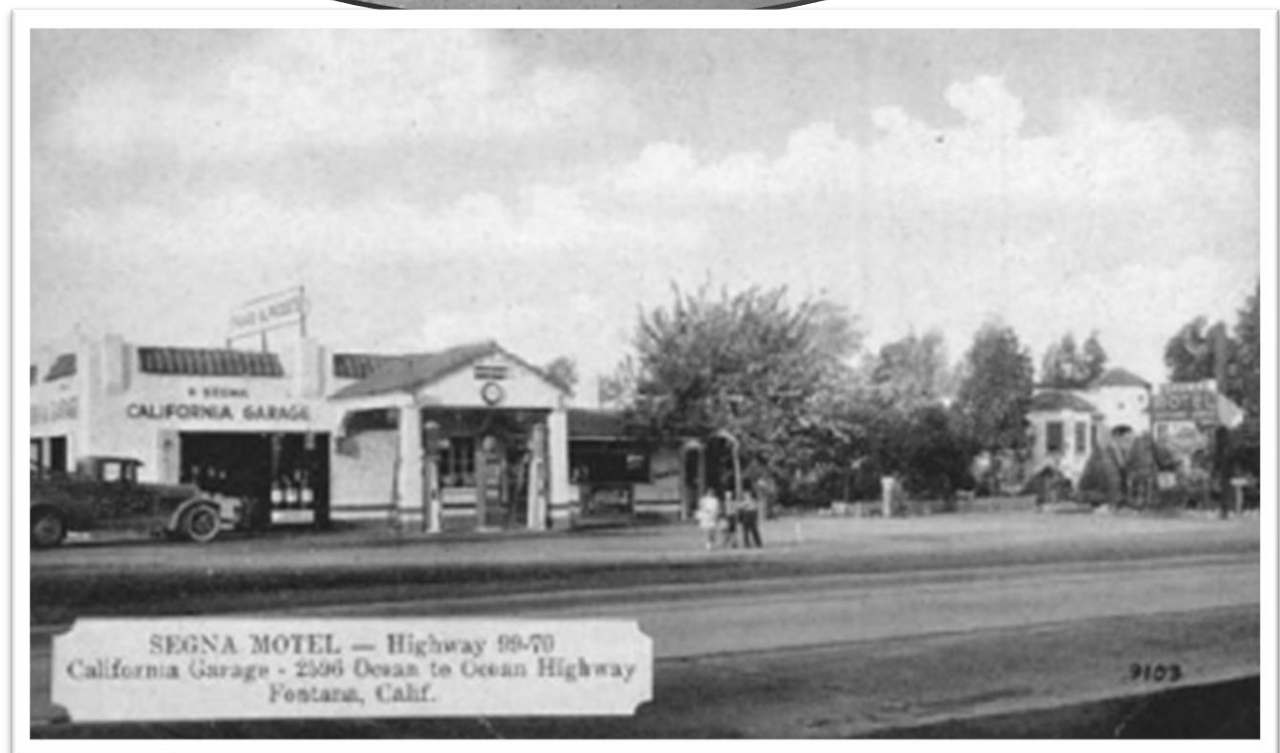
The Segna's California Garage: Modification and Upgrades

As time went on, modifications changed to accommodate growth of the business. Where the California Garage was modified in the front, along with gas pumps and service station cover.



BEFORE

AFTER



Segna Motel Post Card. Shown on U.S. Route 70/99, with address at 2596 Ocean to Ocean Highway (13930 Valley Boulevard in year 2020). Includes service station modification upgrade.

The Segna's California Garage: Further Upgrades and Expansion



Photo of Domenic Segna and his daughter Linda. During this time, the California Garage had been relocated with a new building built at the opposite side of the property on Valley Boulevard to allow for the expansion of the family bar, bench seating and tables, and gift shop.



From the Calabash Avenue side after expansion into the old California Garage.

The Segna's Home Addition and Expansion of Services to the Property

As time went on, their family and business grew. They added a new wing to their home, along with a second story. Various additions to the business portion of the property were made between 1929 to 1945. Eventually, these included a updated gas pumps and Chevron service station, an expanded Italian style family bar, a gift shop of distinction, a new garage service center, a towing service, a hotel, pool, dance hall with bocce courts, barbecue and picnic area that would host community Tyrolean picnics, including other ethnic and community group gatherings.



The Segna home after the new addition.



Sylvia and Domenic Segna by their new home addition.



Years later, in the front, Domenic Segna took pride in growing and grafting his own roses, which he planted along the front wall along the highway, and in gardens on each side of the front lawn. These were enjoyed by family, guests and the community. Even drivers would stop off the highway to experience and the large variety of roses that Domenic took pride in. Landscaping care was common throughout their property.

The following photographs show the home with the new addition compared to the original home of 1929. It also discusses Domenic's rose garden by the 1970's that was well known in the community and by visitors. The home still exists in the year 2020.

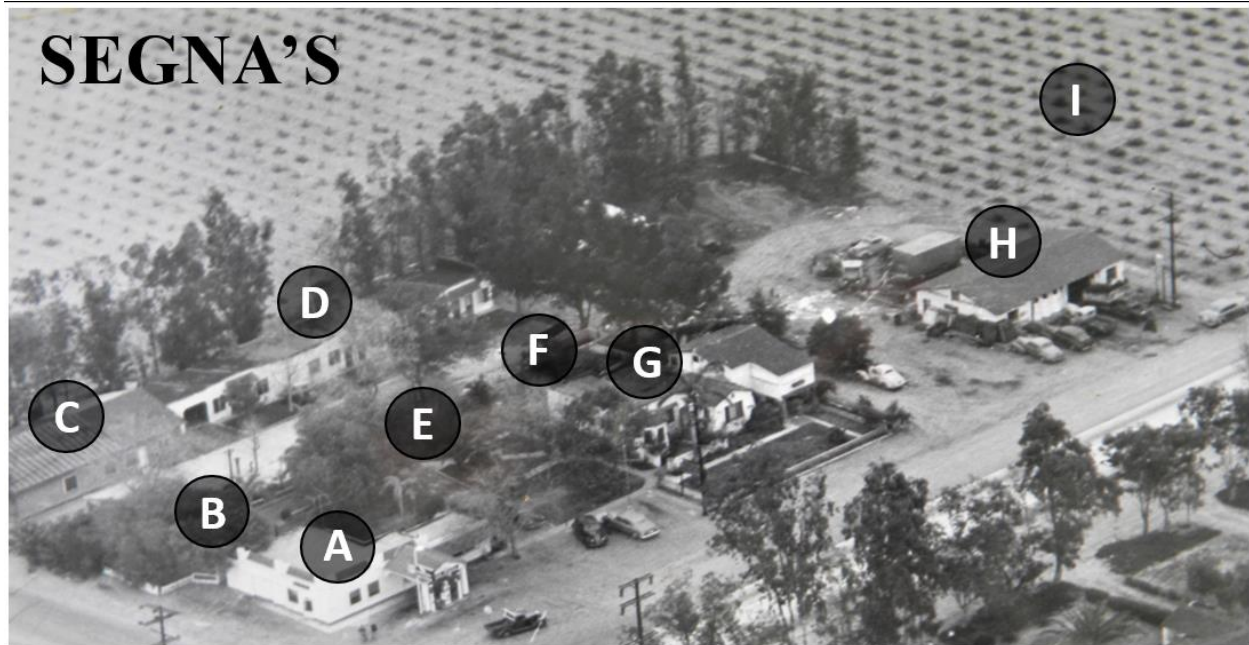


The Segna home before the addition (1929).



The Segna home after the new addition. The above photograph shows the roses that Domenic planted along the front wall adjacent to the highway.

Expansion of Segna's California Garage, Services, Activities and History



- A. **Chevron Service Station/Family Bar/Gift Shop:** The Standard/Chevron service station was upgraded. The old California Garage, the Italian family style bar expanded into the old California Garage with additional seating. The gift shop was expanded to include gifts of distinction. Domenic and Sylvia would purchase unique wholesale items in downtown Los Angeles to display and sell.
- B. **Bocce Courts and Barbecue:** Italian Bocce Courts and barbecue for bocce, food and drinks.
- C. **Dance Hall:** A dance hall with a piano and music would host Italian dances, Swing, as well as other cultural groups such as those from Mexico or western style. Later as Kaiser Steel began operations, this was converted into a dormitory with bunks and showers in order to accommodate workers.
- D. **Hotel Rooms:** Hotel rooms were built to accommodate travelers. These rooms were also used later to accommodate Kaiser Steel workers.
- E. **Picnic Area:** The Segna's would host Tyrolean picnics that would bring in hundreds of Tyrolean families. They would also host picnics for others from Mexico and community picnics.
- F. **Pool:** A stone pool was built behind their home.
- G. **Family Home:** The family home that was originally build in 1929 was expanded an additional wing and second story. It still exists currently in the year 2020.
- H. **Garage:** A new automotive garage (exists in 2020) was built to replace the Old California Garage.
- I. **Grape Vineyards:** Grape vineyards surrounded the property. Many of the grapes would go to local wineries and families also made their own wine during prohibition.

Segna's Motel and California Garage and Home



Image shown with Linda Segna, youngest daughter of Domenic and Sylvia.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Fred Segna, youngest son of Domenic and Sylvia, serving beer at their family bar.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Fred Segna, youngest son of Domenic and Sylvia, socializing and enjoying working at their family bar.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Donald Segna, oldest son of Domenic and Sylvia, socializing and enjoying serving beer while working at their family bar.



Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Donald Segna, oldest son of Domenic and Sylvia, serving beer at their family bar. Behind the bar, oak cabinets displayed various types of gifts, as well as other gift items such as vases, sculptures, paintings that were hung on the wall and shelves throughout the bar. It even included a variety of candy and soda, and even toys, popular among children and teens.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Donald Segna with his Mother Sylvia Segna serving during a celebration at the family bar.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Domenic and Sylvia Segna, behind the bar at the family bar.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Sylvia Segna behind the bar serving with Domenic Segna sitting with friends at the family bar.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



Domenic and Sylvia Segna, behind the bar at the family bar. A tradition of them being behind the counter ready to serve their customers, friends and families Monday through Saturday. On Sunday, the family bar, the “store” was closed. This was a day of celebration on the property, sometimes in the store and sometimes traveling to the local mountains or elsewhere for day trips with the family.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



The above photograph that was taken in 1953, according to the Segna's calendar on the wall, is of Condy DeCarli, who later became my father. He is the son of Ersilia (Zanella) DeCarli, who lived across the street on Valley Boulevard, and at this time, was the husband of Anita Segna (my mother), daughter of Domenic and Sylvia Segna.

Segna's Family Bar and Gift Shop



From the left, looks like Linda Segna, daughter of Domenic and Sylvia Segna; next Domenic Segna, then Fred Segna, and Donald Segna, at the family bar.



Domenic Segna in front of the hotel rooms, referred to as “the cabins”.



Domenic and Sylvia in their home with Joseph Zanella.



Sylvia Segna cooking. It was common to cook Tyrolean meals including polenta, canederli (Tyrolean bread dumpling), smorn, pasta, zabaglione, to name a few favorites.

Segna's Bocce Courts



(Above) Domenic Segna socializing and drinking beer at the Bocce courts. A traditional Italian game well known and played by Italian immigrant families.

(Left) Anita Segna, oldest daughter of Domenic and Sylvia.

Segna's Dance Hall and Cultural Picnics

At Segna's, Domenic and Sylvia hosted many cultural and themed dances from traditional Italian, Mexican to swing. They also hosted many cultural celebrations such as Tyrolean picnics, Mexican celebrations, festivals and music in the Dance Hall and picnic area. Often similar to those of the All States Picnics in Ontario, California.



Cultural Celebrations. Dance Hall in the background.



Cultural Celebrations. Motel "Cabins" in the background.

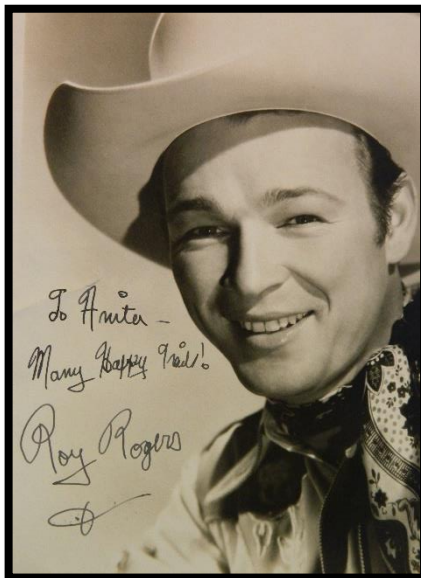
Segna's: The Halfway Stop Between Hollywood And Palm Springs

At Segna's, in addition to Tyrolean, Mexican and other cultural picnics, swing and western dances in the dance hall, and Bocce, it was also the half-way point on U.S. Route 70/99, between Hollywood and Palm Springs. It became a common stop for gas, and panini and drink at the Italian bar and gift shop, for actors and actresses of the 1940's who were making their way to Palm Springs.



Segna's Hollywood Stars and Anita's Autographed Photographs

When Domenic and Sylvia's daughter Anita was young, after having the opportunity of seeing Hollywood actors and actresses at the Segna family bar, she began collecting personalized signed photographs. Eventually she would write to them once meeting them. Her passion of this hobby, resulted in a collection of hundreds of personally signed photographs and letters. The following are some from her collection.



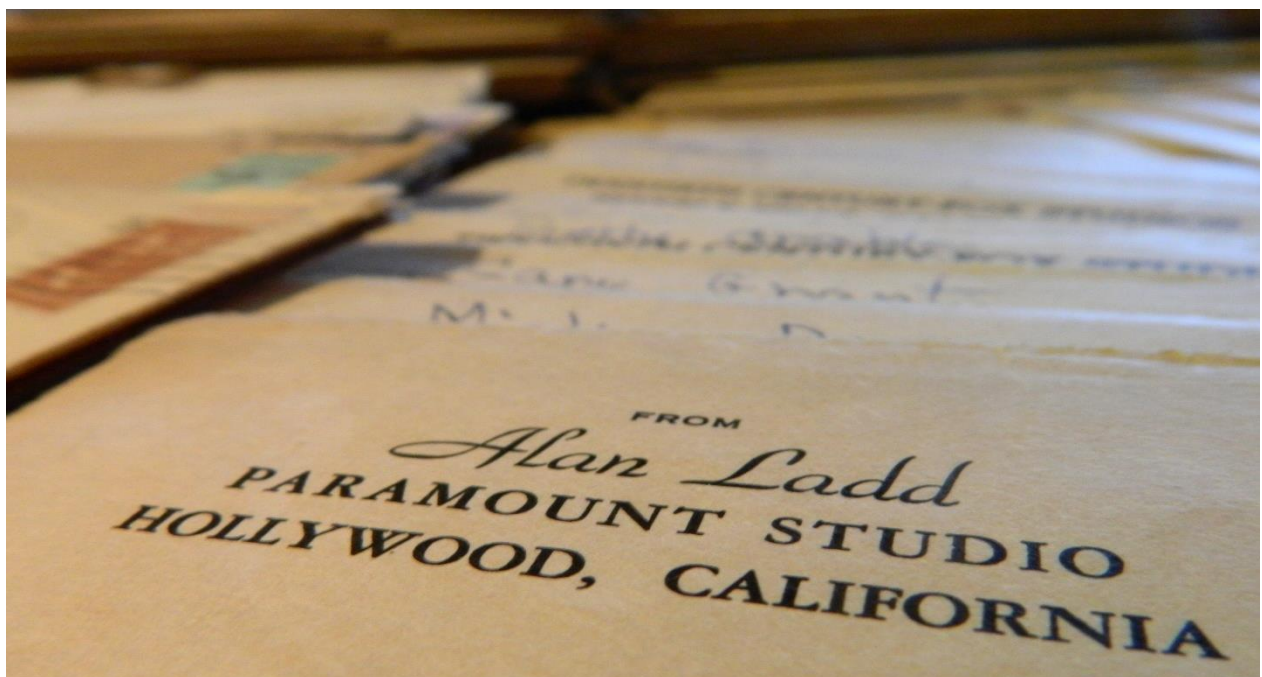
Roy Rogers



Bette Davis



Alan Ladd



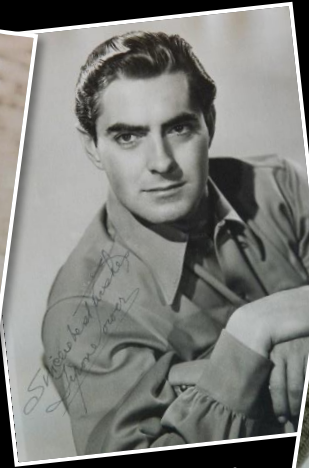
Segna's Hollywood Stars and Anita's Autographed Photographs



Carole Landis



Alan Ladd



Tyrone Power



Mickey Rooney



Ronald Reagan



Betty Grable



Robert Taylor



Shirley Temple



Maureen O'Hara



Cornel Wilde



Sonja Henie

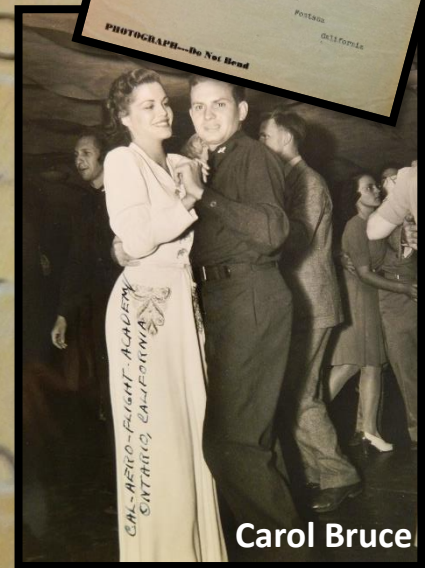


Cary Grant

Segna's Hollywood Stars and Anita's Autographed Photographs



Martha Raye



Carol Bruce

Segna's Chevron-Standard Service Station



Fred Segna, youngest son of Domenic and Sylvia with their dog.

Segna's



Anita Segna, oldest daughter of Domenic and Sylvia, on the front lawn of their home with her dog.



Anita Segna with her best friend.

Segna's



Anita Segna and her best friend Dodie sitting on front lawn by the rose garden.



Anita Segna playing her piano. This piano was her pride that she loved. It used to be in the dance hall, before being converted to a dormitory for Kaiser Steel workers.

The Small Tyrolean Community: Fast-Forward Years Later as a Child

My Mother, Anita (Segna) DeCarli married Condy DeCarli, the son of Ersilia DeCarli, who lived across Valley Boulevard from the Segna's. My cousins, similar to my age, daughters of Linda (Segna) Chipman and Fred Chipman, also lived in the Segna's home when we were small. During that time our Nonno, Domenic Segna purchased a surrey that we would ride around the property. We even had our own large fenced play area, that Nonno called the "play pen" where the picnics used to be held.



We also loved going to the "store" which is what they called the family bar. It not only had drinks, panini, snacks, gifts, but for children it had soda and candy. During this time, there were no vineyards behind Segna's as it was just opened fields. However, by my house, we had vineyards, and more to the side. During summer we would sell bags of grapes in the front of the store. Customers knew that we were children of the owners so we always had sales. Living next to vineyards we had a view of green vines in spring and summer, picking grapes anytime. In Autumn, the grape leaves would change from a beautiful bright yellow, orange, red to brown. The vineyards were also a perfect place for us children to play as well, as we did daily.



We were the youngest of the children in this community and we were fortunate to have known our Nonno and Nonna (Domenic and Sylvia) when we did. They had such passion in everything they did, from being at “the store”, to socializing or helping customers to family and the community that they both loved. While we were very young that then, upon looking back at the photographs and remembering the stories told, it was clear that they truly had passion and loved serving this community.



Domenic Segna, behind the counter at “the store”. This is an image of his character, when greeting customers or family. A welcoming smile, holding a beer, likely with a cigar, and wearing his hat and western shirt and tie. In the background are examples of unique gifts for sale, that he would purchase at the Los Angeles gift shows.



Domenic and Sylvia Segna



The Small Tyrolean Community Slips Into History

When looking back in history, this is only a glimpse of our own memory. It is a capture of experiences, daily life, activities that form a story of our past. This small Tyrolean community, eventually changed from zoning changes and gentrification. In most cases it became more profitable to sell their properties and move onto another community to make home. There were many other Italians throughout Fontana who owned restaurants and Tyrolean's who were winemakers, Italian restaurant and food market owners, but also throughout Cucamonga and Guasti (known as Rancho Cucamonga and Ontario in the year 2020). As a child, we were fortunate to have experienced a short time of this Tyrolean community. My older relatives, of course, had many more experiences.



Overall, this was a thriving community, from the time it began in 1929, through about nearly 50 years. From expanding the Chevron service station and family bar, to the Dance Hall and Motel, to bocce courts and hosting Tyrolean and picnics, to expanding the home as the family grew. To even second generations, like my Mother Anita, who collected autographed photographs of the movies stars that stopped by the Segna's while on their way to Palm Springs.



And for later generations, such as myself and cousins, we were fortunate to have had these experiences as children. While I have memories, stories and old photographs, many in the year 2020 might even be aware that this area of Valley Boulevard and Calabash Avenue in Fontana, was a small Tyrolean community.

The Small Tyrolean Community Slips Into History

So, the next time you drive on Valley Boulevard, or visit the area, between Banana Avenue to Calabash, while you will observe the presence of the trucking industry (as of May 2020), you will only see the original Segna family home and service garage building. The original home of the DeCarli's and another home still exists as well. While these buildings are now part of the trucking community, when you drive by and see these buildings, imagine the past of this small Tyrolean community.





*Ricorda il passato, ma vivi il momento e segui la tua passione! Remember the past,
but live in the moment and follow your passion!*

-James (Jim) DeCarli







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