

# Zaro Family plays important role in South San Francisco's History

A Look Back – by Darold Fredricks  
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The only work available for Ernest Zaro in the winter of 1905 was with the Northwest Pacific Railroad in San Rafael.

He immediately discovered that clearing debris from the bridges during floods was too dangerous for him, so he quit as soon as he could afford it and headed for South San Francisco.

There he found employment with the booming Fuller Paint Company while he saved his money and planned his future.

His future included marrying the woman of his dreams, who he had met while working for the railroad in San Rafael.

Her name was Adelaide Canziana, and she was from his hometown in Italy, near Milan.

Adelaide was living in San Rafael with her brother, Enrico, when she met Ernest.

After Ernest moved to South San Francisco and had a job that provided security and income, he proposed to Adelaide.

She accepted, and they were married in 1907, a year after the disastrous 1906 Earthquake.

They moved into a house at 334 Railroad Avenue, across from the California Iron Works.

A year later a son, Eddie, was born.

The house along Railroad Avenue was a paradise for a boy growing up in South San Francisco in the 1910s.

The house sat high on a bluff of dirt that overlooked the railroad tracks immediately to the south where the trains could be observed closely.

The Southern Pacific Railroad had completed their bypass of San Bruno Mountain in the year of 1907, and these trains could be seen only a block away on their journey down the Peninsula.

This was exciting activity for a youngster to observe. To the south of the railroad tracks flowed the San Bruno Canal to the Bay.

In the winter, the rains would flood the low-lying marshes full of willow trees, and the opportunity for building a raft to further explore captured the imagination of Eddie and his buddies.

The marshes extended all the way to San Bruno and many a day was spent in games and hunting in this wilderness.

In the 1920s, airplanes began using an airstrip in the fields around what was to become the Dupont buildings on South Linden Avenue.

This was of great interest and excitement to the boys, as they dreamed of flying around the world and becoming famous.

This never happened, and the airfield disappeared when Mills Field became the chosen airport in the area.

Eddie began formal schooling at Baden Elementary School and completed it at Spruce Avenue High School in 1927.

That was the year he bought his first car, a 1927 Buick sedan, from Howard Buick in Burlingame.

To earn money for this venture, he had worked after school for the leading meat retailer of South San Francisco, Peter Lind.

Peter Lind was a great practical joker, but he was dead serious when it came to making money.

Eddie learned the meat retailing business, as well as the value of thrift from Peter Lind.

Eddie continued in the meat retailing business, and after the Depression, he started his own business across from city hall at 423 Grand Avenue, in 1941.

This business proved to be very successful, and Eddie continued at this address until his retirement in 1965.

The nature of the meat business took Eddie into almost all of the homes and businesses at one time or another.

He filled special orders for various events during the year for the somewhat isolated vegetable growers along the western unincorporated territory of South San Francisco and made friends everywhere he went.

The city of South San Francisco incorporated vast segments of these vegetable growing lands during the 1940s and 1950s, changing a way of life forever.

Thanks to Eddie, much of his information of the western farmers has been recorded in the South San Francisco History Library for the people who want to explore and relive the beginnings of South San Francisco.

And, thanks to people like Ed Zaro, the past will not be forgotten; looking at the photos and reading about the vegetable growers of South San Francisco will complete the education of area history buffs and the school children of South San Francisco.



*334 Railroad Avenue, SSF, 1916*

**Zaro household:** The Zaro family played a significant part in South San Francisco's early days. Pictured above is Ernest, Ed and Adelaide.