

*“Bella Vista Buildings We Love”
Building of the Month”Banca d’Bozzelli*

735-37 S. 7th Street

Built 1892 / Alterations 1903

The early 1900’s brought about a surge of immigrants to America. In just the first 15 years there were more than 15 million arrivals. Unlike earlier immigrants who came from English speaking countries, the new immigrants were arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe including Italy. They settled together in neighborhoods where they could celebrate their heritage and communicate more easily.



As they became settled into their new homes and started earning a living, they needed a place to keep their earnings safe. Small banks were appearing on street corners throughout the city. They were dedicated to the local immigrants in each neighborhood, speaking their language and helping them learn the process. They also were a very important conduit for sending money back to the homeland and facilitating travel for their families to join them here in America. South Seventh St. became South Philly’s Bankers Row.



Lorenzo Bozzelli was one of these immigrants. He was also a successful steamship agent and had the resources to build a bank. He and Antonio Lotti constructed the bank in 1892 using Italian immigrant stone masons. The architect is unknown. When competition with the other banks became evident, Lorenzo decided on an addition to include a clock tower which would attract business. The rear addition, by architects, Watson and Huckle was completed in 1903. When Bozzelli sold the bank in 1918 he left his mark, his namesake and an outstanding building which has been an asset to Bella Vista for 128 years.

The building was sold to the Pizza family in 1943. Alphonso and Lena. They had 8 children. The building was repurposed into a grocery store and was large enough to house the store and sizable home for the family. Alphonso and Lena raised their children and their children raised their children upstairs while running the grocery store. In 1957 Alphonso and Lena passed along the grocery store to their children.

The building currently has a store front on the main level and 3 apartments. Diane Sutera, grand daughter of Alphonso and Lena, her husband Anthony and daughter Francesca are the current owners and continue to reside in the building. A Dry Cleaner occupies the store front.

Anthony spends much of his time restoring and maintaining this prize structure. His talents, attention to detail and craftsmanship are apparent. As neighbors we particularly appreciate the clock located on the top of the building. Anthony makes sure it runs properly and is adorned for the holidays. Thank you Anthony.

A side note: The youngest son of Alphonso and Lena is currently the owner of A&LP grocery store in Wildwood.

The property has been occupied by immigrants and their family since it was built. The owners of the Dry Cleaning Business are also immigrants. Annie Lin and her husband came to America 40 years ago from South Korea. We are happy to have the convenience of a local dry cleaner. They have been operating Bella Cleaners for the past 6 years.



We are fortunate to have this and many other important buildings in our neighborhood. The Bella Vista Neighbors Association will be featuring one each month in our online newsletter. We are hoping to bring awareness and help to preserve these special places. Please contact us if you would be interested in joining our BVNA Preservation Committee, and help us with our quest.