



Frances Xavier Cabrini

A remarkable humanitarian, the first American citizen canonized a saint by the Catholic Church and one of Colorado's most significant Italian Americans, Frances Xavier Cabrini was born in 1850 in the northern Italian province of Lombardy. In 1899, Mother Cabrini came to the United States to help immigrants in Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn. Three years later, she arrived in Colorado to help Denver's poor Italian immigrants.

In June of 1902, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Denver—founded by Cabrini—opened a convent in the Notary family home on Navajo Street and school in the Notary's carriage house. When it opened, the school welcomed more than 200 daughters, sons, and grandchildren of Italian immigrants. A few years later the school relocated to the unused Saint Rocco Chapel on Osage Street. The Mount Carmel School's continued growth ultimately led to the construction of a high school in 1951 and a new grade school in 1954.



In October of 1904, the Missionary Sisters founded an orphanage in the Notary home which they quickly outgrew, resulting in the opening of the Queen of Heaven Orphanage in 1905. Whereas the Notary home accommodated eighteen children, the new building accommodated 160 children. Located at Forty-eighth and Federal in a renovated farmhouse, the original Queen of Heaven building was replaced in 1921 by a new, much larger facility. Many of the orphans at Queen of Heaven were there because one parent had died, forcing the other to work long hours, leaving the children alone during the day. Some orphans lived there full-time while others stayed at the orphanage during the week, returning to their family on the weekend.

In 1910, Mother Cabrini founded a summer camp for the orphans in Mount Vernon Canyon west of Denver. Lacking water, the site was thought to be useless until Cabrini located an underground spring. The faithful consider her feat miraculous.

Mother Cabrini died in 1917, but her Colorado legacy remains strong. Though the Mount Carmel schools closed in the 1960s—due to the neighborhood's declining Italian population and because fewer families chose to send their children to the parochial schools—and the Queen of Heaven Orphanage was torn down in 1973, the summer camp, now known as the Mother Cabrini Shrine, still houses the Missionary Sisters and attracts thousands of visitors yearly. Colorado's shrine is one of three in the United States with a second in New York and the third in Chicago.

In addition, to her works in Colorado, New York and Chicago, Frances Xavier Cabrini established institutions in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Mississippi, Washington State and California. She was a champion of immigrants and the poor. During her lifetime, there were many orphaned children and sick people with no place to turn and she cared for them. Many were uneducated, and she established schools for them. Her social service and outreach programs included industrial arts lessons for young women, visits to city hospital wards, jails, prisons, mines and plantations. Cabrini did this primarily with volunteers and private donations.



For those unaware, there is currently a movement to establish Frances Xavier Cabrini Day as a state holiday in Colorado. If the measure passes, Colorado will become the first state with a paid state holiday dedicated to a woman. A woman with a direct connection to Colorado that is still revered in our state today, a woman that represents the voices of many diverse individuals and communities, and a humanitarian whose life and work have the power to inspire and influence positive change now and in the future.

For more information on the proposed Colorado Cabrini Day visit <https://www.cabriniday.com/> ■

Top: First Holy Communion, Queen of Heaven Orphanage, about 1908 with Eliza (Barbato) Panzini in the back row, far right under check mark. Eliza was the mother of Louise Caruso. Courtesy Louise Caruso.

Prayer card, Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, canonized 1946. Courtesy Don Eafanti.

If you have additional information on the stories featured here, please contact Alisa DiGiacomo at CoItalStories@msn.com



PRIMA DOMENICA

M A S S I N I T A L I A N

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Come join our Prima Domenica Mass at 9am followed by a Cultural Reception in the Parish Hall!

Sunday, March 1st • Sunday, April 5th • Sunday, May 3rd







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