



San Francisco Call, Volume 98, Number 90, 29 August 1905 — TONINI FAILS FOR BIG SUM [ARTICLE]

TONINI FAILS FOR BIG SUM

Agent for Italian Steam-
ship Company Files a
Petition in Bankruptcy

LOSE SMALL SAVINGS

Many Poor Foreigners Whose
Money Was Held by the
Insolvent Are Sufferers

Michael G. Tonini, local agent for an Italian steamship company, filed a petition in bankruptcy yesterday, fixing his liabilities at \$57,716. His failure caused quite a sensation in the Italian quarter. He is a prominent member of several Italian societies and until recently was a member of the Italian Board of Trade.

Most of Tonini's creditors are poor

Most of Tonini's creditors are poor Italians, who had intrusted him with their savings. He had been doing a banking and clearing-house business, accepting money from Italian laborers to forward to their relatives in Italy. Since the news of the crash came there have been ugly rumors circulated about the manipulation of such money, and it is certain that the creditors will demand that the accounts of the agency be looked into closely.

Two of the big creditors are secured by mortgages on property belonging to Tonini. The two are the Bank of California, \$8000, and Bigelow & Smith, \$2500. Other large creditors are the Bank of Genoa, \$6000; the Bank of Lucca, \$1200; the Bank of Chivari, \$4000, and a Swiss bank, \$8000. None of these are secured. The other creditors are out sums ranging from \$20 to \$500. Tonini's total assets are \$18,368 33.

Some of those who lost all their little savings through the failure are: E. Cirini, \$1245; Vincente Pandolfe, \$2000; A. Borradori, \$1000; B. Cademartori, \$1254. Most of these live out of town. The news of the crash has not yet reached the ears of any of the depositors. When they hear about it it is thought there will be trouble around Tonini's office, at 4 Montgomery avenue, to-day.

Tonini did not appear at his office yesterday. A clerk declared that his employer was at his ranch near San Anselmo.

When inquiry was made for Tonini at his San Anselmo home his wife said that he had left. She would not say where he had gone nor how long he had been away from home. All that she would say was that she did not expect to see him for several days.

Tonini has three daughters who are prominent in society of the local Italian colony. The family of Tonini are packing their effects, preparing to leave the San Anselmo home and return to the residence in this city. It is reported that Tonini was seen boarding a 9 o'clock train at San Anselmo Sunday night.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1905.

TONINI HAS NOT RETURNED

Steamship Agent and Private Banker Not to Be Found by Anxious Italian Creditors.

Michael G. Tonini of 4 New Montgomery street, whose failure last Monday surprised and shocked the local Italian colony, has left town, and his many creditors do not know where he is.

Many sad features of the failure are daily coming to light. Perhaps the most pitiable was the loss that Mrs. Emilia Gavello of 1813 Dupont street sustained. A widow, she is the sole support of a crippled son. She saved \$110 out of her meager earnings as worker in a local cannery. This was deposited with Tonini in her son's name. A subscription was started by one of L'Italia staff and in one day amounted to \$20 more than she had lost. The balance was given to a young girl, also employed in the cannery, who had intrusted \$20 with Tonini.

These creditors claim that Tonini promised them higher interest than any of the banks paid, and that he had often paid them small sums which he said was interest.

John Bulotti, a clerk employed by Tonini, stated yesterday that Tonini had paid but little attention to his business for several days prior to the crash, and that during this time \$260 had been paid in by four depositors who trusted him. This money Tonini overlooked and no one knew of it but the clerk. He returned it to the depositors.

The Bank Commissioners say that Tonini had, of course, no license to transact a banking business and that if he did so, as is claimed by the creditors, he is liable to suffer the penalty.

BANKER TONINI IS A FUGITIVE

Angry Depositors Hold Meeting and Decide to Bring Him Back for Prosecution

WARRANT IS SWORN OUT

Said to Have Fled to Mexico and Circulars Are Issued Asking for Arrest

As a result of an indignation meeting held in Garibaldi Hall on Friday night, G. Barra of 330 Vallejo street obtained a warrant from Police Judge Fritz yesterday for the arrest of M. G. Tonini on a charge of felony embezzlement. Tonini conducted a private bank at 4 Montgomery avenue, and a few days ago filed a petition in bankruptcy. Those who attended the meeting, about fifty altogether, were depositors in his bank, and it was decided to prosecute Tonini criminally. Attorney J. A. Spinetti was employed as special prosecutor.

Tonini is a fugitive from justice, as was announced exclusively in The Call, and it is believed that he has gone to Mexico. The depositors are all poor people, Italians and Swiss, and not more than ten had amounts deposited over \$500. Tonini has a villa near San Anselmo and a residence on Pacific Heights. He was formerly a clerk with John F. Fugazi & Co., and by that means secured the confidence of that firm's patrons, enabling him to get the poor people to deposit their small savings with him when he started his private bank.

Last Tuesday, three days after his disappearance, his attorney filed a petition in bankruptcy. In the petition it was alleged that Tonini owed \$57,000, most of it to banks in Italy. His assets were given as \$18,000. It is said that the total amount deposited in his bank was in the neighborhood of \$20,000.

Barra, the complaining witness, had \$300 deposited and Judge Fritz was so impressed by the story told him by Barra and Attorney Spinetti that he fixed Tonini's bonds in \$10,000. Chief Dinan has sent circulars throughout the State and Mexico giving a description of Tonini and asking for his arrest. His wife is said to be living at the villa near San Anselmo. It is said that both the villa and residence on Pacific Heights are in Mrs. Tonini's name.

A large crowd of the smaller creditors of Banker M. G. Tonini met last night at 628 Montgomery street to consider ways and means of getting a portion of their money back. More than fifty of them have turned their cases over to John N. Ross, attorney for the National Law and Collection Agency. At last night's session it was decided to call a general meeting of the creditors about September 11, or whenever a receiver for the estate has been named under the law.

Attorney Ross stated last night that Tonini owns two pieces of property valued at about \$14,000. He had overdrawn his account on the Bank of California a few days before the crash came, and the very day he disappeared he turned over the deed of the property to the bank officials to cover a mortgage of \$2000.

It is the intention of the creditors to force the bank to give up the deeds and in that way to allow the creditors to come in for at least a share of their investments. Tonini also owns a beautiful country home near San Anselmo, but it is understood that it is in his wife's name and therefore cannot be touched. The total amount of Tonini's shortage will probably reach \$60,000.

TONINI IS STILL AT LARGE.—George Colman, saloon-keeper, Montgomery avenue and Montgomery street, obtained a warrant from Police Judge Mogan yesterday for the arrest of M. G. Tonini on a charge of felony embezzlement. Colman alleges that Tonini embezzled \$250 of his money. Tonini conducted a private bank on Montgomery avenue and disappeared about two months ago, taking with him the money of his depositors, about \$60,000. A warrant for his arrest was issued at the time, but the police have been unable to obtain any clew to his whereabouts.

BANK AGENT TONINI ARRESTED IN SAN ANSELMO

Left Here Ten Months Ago
Under Charges of Em-
bezzling \$60,000.

M. G. Tonini, a prominent Italian steamship and banking agent, was arrested yesterday at his home in San Anselmo by Deputy Sheriff Treanor on a charge of embezzlement of funds aggregating \$60,000, sworn to ten months ago. He was brought to San Francisco by Sheriff W. P. Taylor of Marin county and locked up in the O'Farrell-street station.

Tonini disappeared several months ago. Many Italians, who claimed that they had given him their money for safe keeping, entered complaints against him and secured a warrant for his arrest, charging him with embezzlement. The warrant was burned in the fire, and Tonini evidently thought that the danger of arrest was removed. He returned to his home in San Anselmo and lived in concealment with his family until the neighbors became suspicious.

Tonini, when asked to make a statement for publication, refused to discuss the case.

He nervously expressed regret for allowing the officer to arrest him. "You have done it. You arrested me without a warrant. You got me all right," emphatically remarked Tonini to Sheriff Taylor. Taylor stated that he made the arrest on the advice of District Attorney T. P. Boyd of Marin county, who told him that on a felony charge it was legal to apprehend the prisoner without the customary papers for a period of three years after the crime is alleged to have been committed.

Judge Spinetti, a local attorney, representing a number of Italians who claimed they were victimized by Tonini, is said to have procured the original warrant for the accused. A reward of \$1,000 was offered for the fugitive's apprehension.

SAN FRANCISCO BROKER ARRESTED FOR FRAUD

Italian Nabbed in San Anselmo on
Charge of Misconduct Prior
to the Fire.

SAN FRANCISCO, June 26.—M. G. Tonini, a former resident of San Francisco's Italian quarter, was arrested today in San Anselmo, Cal., by Sheriff Taylor, of Marin county, brought back to this city and lodged in the city prison to await investigation of a charge preferred against him prior to the San Francisco fire. The destruction of the police records has made it difficult to ascertain the exact circumstances surrounding Tonini's case, but officers who were in pursuit of the prisoner prior to the fire state that he is wanted on a charge of embezzlement, approximating \$64,000.

The police say Tonini conducted a sort of broker's establishment extensively patronized by Italians, and that he paid a rate of interest slightly higher than was allowed by the banks.

WILL BE APPEALED

Taylor. Immediately after his arrest Tonini was taken to San Francisco.

Tonini was found hiding in a closet of his house at the base of Bald Hill.

Mrs. Tonini recognized the sheriff and refused him admittance. She admitted that her husband was in the house, but declared that she would not give him up unless a warrant was shown. As the charge in this case is a felony, Taylor forced his way past the woman and found Tonini crouching in a closet. He submitted quietly to arrest and was taken on the next train to San Francisco.

BOND NOT FILED.

Back

Tonini Caught At San Anselmo

M. G. Tonini was arrested at his home at San Anselmo on Tuesday by Sheriff Taylor and Deputy Sheriff William Treanor. The arrested man was a prominent broker in San Francisco about a year ago and did a large business in the Italian colony. He got into financial difficulties and disappeared. Afterwards warrants were sworn out for embezzlement and a reward was offered for his capture. It was supposed that he had left the country until a few days ago when it was rumored that he was being sheltered by his wife and daughters at their San Anselmo home. The rumor caused an investigation with the result that he was captured in the house by two officers. The arrested man enjoyed a wide popularity and a high standing in business circles and his troubles were a surprise to every one. He was a man of good habits and his difficulty is said to be due to a number of unfortunate business ventures and investments.

TONINI REFUSES TO DISCUSS CASE

**Destruction of City Records Induced
Him to Return to His
Home.**

M. G. Tonini, the Italian banker and steamship ticket broker who was arrested in Marin county on a charge of embezzling \$64,000 from Italian clients, was a private banker. His place was located at 4 Montgomery avenue.

A warrant was issued for his arrest several months before the fire but Tonini disappeared. Nothing was seen of him for months. Then the records of the Police Department were burned in the fire and the warrant for Tonini's arrest destroyed. It was probably this fact that encouraged Tonini to return to his home in San Anselmo, where Sheriff W. P. Taylor arrested him yesterday afternoon.

Taylor was advised by District Attorney T. P. Boyd of Marin county that it would not be necessary for him to have a warrant; so he entered Tonini's house, where the fugitive was living with his wife and three daughters. Before he found his room several papers were taken out of a bureau drawer by Tonini's daughter and effectually concealed.

At the police station in the Lowell High School Tonini would not talk. He refused to say where he had been since last September. His name was entered on the detinue book and he was locked up in the O'Farrell-street Station. A reward of \$1000 had been offered for Tonini's arrest.

[Back](#)

Tonini In Legal Coils Entrapped by Sheriff

About a year ago M. G. Tonini was a well known broker in San Francisco, doing a large business in the Italian colony. He apparently became the victim of chance or misfortune, and not being able to respond to many financial claims, suddenly made his visit to some place unknown. Complaints for embezzlement were made, and likewise a reward for his capture. It was presumed that he had left until the rumor prevailed that he was at San Anselmo well concealed from observation by his wife and daughters. Sheriff Taylor took measures accordingly and by exercising not a little of the ingenuity for which he is deservedly noted, soon discovered his hiding place, much to the bewilderment of his wife and daughter, who thought they had deftly hidden him beyond all scrutiny.

The arrested man was exceedingly popular and stood high in business circles and his financial troubles caused a general surprise.

His habits were good and his sudden adverse turn in business is said to be due to unfortunate financial adventures and investments.

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