

Caraceni Part I: Domenico Caraceni Bespoke Tailor Rome

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In the world of bespoke custom tailoring, there are few families who have acquired status similar to the Caraceni families. The mere mention of the name Caraceni usually elicits tailors from across the world to express some form of delight or admiration.

Despite this, many do not know that there were a number of different Caraceni tailors present in Europe. Today, we hope to shed a little light on the history of this marvelous bespoke tailoring family that created garments for style icons such as Douglas Fairbanks, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Yves Saint Laurent, Gianni Agnelli, Tyrone Power, Humphrey Bogart... the list goes on. In the first of several parts, we want to focus on Tommaso and Domenico Caraceni.

History Of The Caraceni Family

The Caraceni family, as we know it today, has its origins in Ortona a Mare (Chieti), in the area of Abruzzi, which lies east of Rome.



Domenico Caraceni And Douglas Fairbanks

Tommaso Caraceni

Tommaso Caraceni was born in Ortona a Mare, and maintained a tailor shop in this little town up until the beginning of the 20th century. Together with his wife, he had

13 children, most of whom worked in the shop as well. Among them were Domenico Caraceni and his brother, Augusto, who were taught the craft of tailoring by their father Tommaso. In time, the talent of the sons would eclipse their father and would eventually carry the name of Caraceni around the world.

Initially, the oldest son, Domenico, set the foundation for the Caraceni's success in Rome during the 1920's. Later, his brothers Augusto and Galliano would continue in his footsteps.

Domenico Caraceni (*May 30, 1880 †August 28, 1940)

Domenico Caraceni was born in Ortina a Mare, the son of Tommaso. As such, he worked and learned in his father's tailor shop and even as a kid he was interested in other tailor's work. Whenever he saw a differently made garment, he would tear it apart and re-sew it in order to learn the secrets of each piece.

Dissecting Henry Poole Suits

The anglophile composer and teacher at the English Court, Francesco Paolo Tosti, commissioned his suits at Henry Poole of Savile Row, just like King Edward VII. Just like Edward, Tosti was a dandy, and was always in need of new suits. As a native of Ortona, he sent his older suits to his brothers and relatives in his hometown. The lucky men who obtained these Poole suits had these garments altered in Caraceni's tailor shop. Domenico would dissect them entirely and learn the secrets of the English bespoke tailors that were then considered to be the among the best in the world.



Tyrone Power in Caraceni Morning Coat

Learning And Patents

Using his newfound knowledge, Domenico combined the best of the English tailoring school with the Abruzzo tailoring techniques and took away some of the stiffness of English garments. Domenico wanted to create elegant suits that looked crisp, but were at the same time as light as a handkerchief.

Ironically, even though Domenico's style was a combination of many tailoring schools, he was convinced that he had invented a new style. He wrote the book, *Orientamenti nuovi nella tecnica e nell'arte del sarto* (*New Tendencies in the Technique and Art of Tailoring*), in 1933, and subsequently patented his technique under the number 28642.

Ever since the emergence of Domenico's new style, the Abruzzo tailoring school became more distinct in the sense that it was bolder and a little more exaggerated than the Neapolitan tailoring school.

Domenico Caraceni in Rome



Caraceni Suit Agnelli

1936

By the time Domenico was 15 years old, he made his first suit from scratch – he cut and sewed everything on his own – for the local doctor in his hometown. Soon after, he had successfully completed this task he moved to Rome, like so many of his peers from the Abruzzo region who hoped to earn more money in the big city. In the capital, he worked for Ottolenghi's on Via Frattina, one of the leading bespoke tailoring establishments at the time. Within a few years, he was promoted from an assistant position to the chief cutter.

Subsequently, he moved on to become a partner in the tailor shop, *Sartoria Comandona*, at Corso Umberto. Just a few months before Italy entered WWI in 1915, Domenico opened the first Caraceni branch outside of Ortona – in Rome in 1913. However, the timing was unfortunate, and he was soon drafted and had to give up the business. During the war, he was injured and became blind, but a rather risky surgery enabled him to see again. Restored to his lifelong trade, he continued in the tailoring business.



Josephine

Baker in Top Hat & Caraceni Tailcoat

Domenico Caraceni Rome – Milan – Paris –
Naples

In 1926, he opened a Caraceni tailor shop at Via Boncompagni 21 in Rome. This branch would be followed by stores in Naples, Paris and Milan, as he developed a reputation for fine bespoke tailored garments throughout Europe. He reached out to his brothers Augusto and Galliano for the expansion. During the peak of his career in the 1930's, he dressed many important figures, apparently including King George V and Edward VIII, who would later become the Duke of Windsor.

Domenico Caraceni died on August 28, 1940. After the war, the business was continued by Galliano Caraceni and by his sons Tommy & Giulio Caraceni.

Gianni Campagna & Domenico Caraceni



Domenico Caraceni – Gianni

Agnelli 1938

On a final note, the brand name, Domenico Caraceni, is no longer connected with the family in the present day. It was bought in 1998 by the tailor and businessman, Gianni Campagna, who was an apprentice at Sartoria Domenico Caraceni at one point in time. Today, Sartoria Caraceni offers mostly ready-to-wear garments instead of bespoke suits, and they have even expanded to products such as perfume.

Next time, we will profile [A. Caraceni](#) and [Galliano Caraceni](#), as well as Mario Caraceni, [Tommy & Giulio](#), [Ferdinando and Nicoletta Caraceni](#).