# Italian Americans and Their Communities of Cleveland

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# Introduction

The following essays are intended to present to the interested but non-specialized reader some of the significant factors which have contributed to the formation of what is commonly referred to as Italian culture. By choice these are highly selective studies and by necessity they are limited in length. Hence they lack the detailed treatment which would be found in a comprehensive study. Bibliographic references provided will enable the serious reader to undertake further investigation. Taken together these studies will present some important insights into the social and cultural world of the Italians and the translation of that culture into the environment of America.

At the onset I must state my particular historical predispositions as they relate to the study of ethnic groups. The history of a people, like the biography of an individual, is rarely the story of continuous achievement. Except in mythology or hagiography no one is born a hero or a saint, and in the latter case, it is only through superhuman and continuous effort that the state of holiness is achieved, and then for only a few. Collectively the

history of a people and their culture also includes those periodic misjudgments, setbacks and disasters which are part of the total story. No nation is composed totally of saints (although Italians have numerically excelled in this respect). To read much of the contemporary literature on ethnicity one gets the impression of an ethnic group as supermen, or at least a race of geniuses. At best this is shoddy history, a type of production which many writers have managed with little effort and even less reflection. Hopefully such an approach will not be evident in this study.

In dealing with Italian culture and the transplanting of that heritage to the new world, I have attempted to avoid this filiopietistic approach; I have tried to recreate men, women, and situations rather than heroes. Not all or even most Italian-Americans are great scientists, athletes, musicians or artists. Yet some have been in the past and certainly many are today. Not all Americans of Italian descent are intimately connected with "organized crime." But some are, as are members of other ethnic groups, a point usually overlooked by the popular media. Many Italians supported Mussolini during his rise to power, as did many Americans of Italian and non-Italian stock. These are irrefutable facts and as such must be included if the whole story is to be told.

With Italian-American history, as with the history of any other ethnic culture, one must not habitually commit the sin of omission, but should offer instead the virtue of explanation whenever possible. Cultural history can not be written as the steady march of progress and success in Italy as well as in America, resplendent with fantastic heroes and achievements.

This kind of narrative, so common in contemporary ethnic literature, reduces history to mythology. It emphasizes the famous and rejects or submerges the infamous and common. It should, rather, combine the two into an honest and objective account. It is simple to explain the successes of man but much more difficult and more valuable to explain his follies as well.

If we learn anything from the past it should be this: all men and their civilizations often achieve greatness despite their failings and shortcomings. When men begin to overlook their past mistakes and create their own artificial and selective histories, they fool no one, least of all themselves. We can not erase nor escape from the past, however unpleasant, however virtuous it may have been. Each event is part of the historical mosaic entitled "culture." Until all of the pieces are put into place the image remains incomplete. To conclude the metaphor, even the uneven and misshapen stones in the mosaic have a place in the total form and must be included.

The course of human history does at times seem to have the taste of nonsense and chaos about it, of dreams unfulfilled and promises unkept. It is the historian's task to put these seemingly unrelated and disordered events into some order and attach a meaning to them. The following essays should provide some insights into the peoples of Italy and of that culture which was transported and is cherished by millions of Americans today.

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# Part I: Italians--Their Heritage and Contributions

# Chapter 1: The Italian Renaissance and Western Civilization

Italians – Their Heritage and Contributions:
Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Spring*.

Italy became a political reality only during the Risorgimento of the mid-nineteenth century. But the cultural fabric of the Italian nation was being woven in the 14th and 15th centuries during the Renaissance, a period of intense social, political and intellectual development.

During the Renaissance the Italian language was standardized by Dante, whose uniform use of the Tuscan dialect would direct all literary efforts from that point onward. In the various art forms the interest in classical Roman works inspired a love for that civilization and a renewed interest in the people who created it. The Italians of the Quattrocento perceived themselves to be the

inheritors of Latin culture and expressed their pride in art forms modeled on the Italian past.

Although the Italy of the Renaissance was indeed a patchwork of states to outside observers, it was a homogenous country where Roman Law was general and where a wide range of attitudes — religious, economic and social — were shared by other Italians. Dante remarked that "as Italians we share some very simple habits of manners, customs and speech . . ." but still lacked the mortar of a centralized governmental structure. There were acknowledged regional, political and linguistic differences. Again to quote Dante, "We have a single court though it is physically scattered." The Renaissance was to provide the basic foundation for that "single court" which evolved into the nation of Italy.

The political realism of Machiavelli and Guicciardini anticipated the Realpolitik of the 19th century nation states by freeing politics from the confines of morality and internal restraints. It was Machiavelli who called for a united effort among all Italian states to repel the invading French and who underscored the use of native Italian troops rather than foreign mercenaries to fight Italian battles. It was Machiavelli who fanned the embers of Italian nationalism in the sixteenth century but his efforts were never translated into action. His ideas smoldered for 300 years, until they once again blazed in the successful unification efforts of the Risorgimento.

And if the dream of a unified country did not come about in the lifetime of Dante, the Medici or Machiavelli, it did develop from their ideological and cultural direction. In effect Modern

Italy may well look to the Renaissance as a movement which offered those unifying standards which were essential for the development of a nation state.

## The Italian Peninsula in the Fifteenth Century

Much of the vitality of Renaissance life grew out of the physical diversity of the Italian peninsula and its people. Within the 700 miles stretching the length of Italy was found five major city states, at least 25 other cities with populations between 25-50,000, a dozen regions such as Lombardia, the Romagna, Piedmont and Tuscany, and the mountainous spine of the Apennines. The largest cities — Florence, Venice and Milan — had about 100,000 inhabitants each, while other urban centers such as Urbino, Verona, Siena or Bologna numbered between 30-40,000.

Italy is bordered and separated from the rest of Europe by the Alps but was never isolated to the extent that commerce between the north and south was totally extinguished. Trade was always a predominant aspect of Italian civic life, whether in slaves from the Ukraine, wheat from Africa, or spices from the Orient. The Italian cities rapidly became cosmopolitan centers but at differing rates, consequently less homogeneous and more localized in their allegiances. An autonomous, insular political perspective soon formed, creating intense civic pride while rejecting any attempt at peninsular unification. Each city enjoyed its autonomy and looked upon forced consolidation as unrealistic.

The geography of 15th century Italy was one which promoted agriculture along with urban centers populated with merchants, craftsmen, and laborers. Any geographical reference to Italy during the Renaissance would refer to a collection of city states with little or no sense of collective unity whatsoever. Italy was indeed a geographical expression yet to be realized. It was not until the foreign invasions of the 1490's that any sense of national feeling joined the cities, but it was too late to be effective. In 1509 Venice proposed a battle standard proclaiming "Italia . . . Italia! Libertà! Libertà!" but it again was mostly for rhetorical purposes and did not produce the expected result of military cohesion or a sense of national pride.

The tenacious particularism of the Italian cities gave rise to a variety of political solutions to the problem of self-government. In general most communal forms of government were aristocratic, with power controlled by the oligarchic *Popolo Grosso* (literally the "fat people") or by a single family.


RENAISSANCE ITALY: A Patchwork of States

The mercantile communities of Renaissance Italy demanded a stable political regime which would not interfere with business. Indeed commerce and politics were modestly joined early in the history of the communes. The merchant gradually assumed the status of the feudal nobility, although the taint of business took time to wear off.

Another group who were intimately lined up with the ruling factions in the communes were the *literati* or humanists. In the larger city states the *literati*, educated rhetoricians, skilled in the arts or in pursuasive speech and debate, were hired by the governing bodies to write and deliver the speeches, create the political mythologies, praise the city and vilify the opposition in

eloquent Latin prose. The better the humanist performed his job the better his employment potential.

In general major communes and nearly all of the smaller ones were governed by despots or *Signori*, a word which has odious connotations to the modern reader. To the Italian of the 15th century social stability was much more important than individual voting rights. Despite lavish excesses by some despots they usually ruled benevolently and turned their anger against individuals rather than the general population. The Age of the Despots was one which did produce monuments to art, music and literature because of the extensive patronage system encouraged and supported by these singular rulers. Michaelangelo was first appointed to the Medici circle as a young artist, and later was commissioned to do the Sistine Ceiling by an autocrat with unlimited financial resources, Pope Julius II. Petrarch was a frequent guest at these despotic courts, and Leonardo was employed by the Duke of Milan to design costumes for festivals.

Yet the term of rule for the *Signori* was rather precarious because assassination and the more classical approach, tyrannicide, easily attracted desperate men, seeking justification for their action. Milan, Bologna, Florence, Siena, Rome — all experienced somewhat abrupt political changes caused by the untimely demise of their rulers. But the communes survived because in no case was any city ruled totally by only one man. His power was sustained by the aristocratic elements within the city, his position being that figurehead usually controlled by a patriciate of wealth.

Several brief points should be made about Renaissance military policy. In the first place hired mercenary forces, *condottieri*, were used in Italy as long as warfare was inter-communal and on a minor scale. The concept of communal militias was not in vogue because it was not practical. Experience had proven that a more lasting inducement for military forces was financial gain rather than patriotism. Therefore companies of *condottieri* were employed for specific periods by the many city states in Italy.

It should be recalled that Niccolo Machiavelli, better known for his *Il Principe*, was also the author of a work entitled *The Art of War* in which he argued in favor of a communal militia. He actually was briefly in charge of recruiting and training the Florentine militia but his attempt was a failure. It was unsuccessful because the only troops which would volunteer were from the farm areas, the *contado*, and because the Florentine government doubted the political wisdom of arming her own citizens!

Mercenary warfare was wholly effective yet dangerous for all parties involved. Because of their notorious unreliability *condottieri* could not always be depended upon to continue military operations if the payments were late in arriving. *Condottieri* were also known to have turned upon their employers if they were not adequately reimbursed or if they were bribed by the opposing city, which was often the case. War was a career, not a political matter, so prolonged expeditions and engagements were to the financial advantage of these Captains of Fortune. Unrestrained and bloody engagements and no-quarter battles were certainly not in keeping with a mercenary's

responsibility to himself. War was another example of Italian love of spectacle with few lives lost, minimal loss of respect and status for the losing side, and the maximum of pageantry. This was to change dramatically and abruptly when the Italians fought Spanish, French and German invaders at the close of the 15th century.

The *condottieri* captains were an interesting lot and usually were nicknamed by their followers or employers in colorful and descriptive terms. Niccolò Fortebraccio (Strong Arm), Niccolò Piccinino (Little One), or Gattamelata (Honeyed Cat) were a few of the more noteworthy captains of fortune. There were others, perhaps not as interesting for their names but just as effective as commanders, such as Sigismondo Malatesta, Castruccio Castracane, Francesco Sforza, and the Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood.

With the French invasions of Italy in 1494, followed by the repeated assaults by the Spanish, Swiss and Germans, Italy became the battleground of the great powers of Europe. The battles of Fornovo and Marignano concluded a tradition of limited Italian political and military involvement and marked the end of a purely Italian Renaissance.

## Humanism

By and large Renaissance humanism was an elitist movement, presented by highly educated individuals to a select audience of intellectuals.

There were two basic components in the composition of Italian

humanism, each interacting with the other, finally evolving into a varied but positive attitude toward man and his environment. The first factor in humanistic thought was a reverence for and later an obsession with Greco-Roman culture, thereby indicating a clearly defined break with medieval scholasticism. It was in Italy that this classical culture had been established and it was in Italy that the past cultural heritage was to flourish once again. By returning to classical literature and philosophy early writers such as Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch revived the consciousness of the self and the value of the individual. Humanism marks the beginning of the modern state of mind.

The emphasis of life was shifted from the totally spiritual to the secular. Man's personal identification was affirmed; he was no longer to be shaped primarily by his association with the Church or with a race, but by his mere existence. This spiritual reawakening was the other important factor involved in humanism.

Humanism however, was not a monolithic phenomenon, all "humanists" perceiving man as a dignified inheritor of the earth. Indeed, some humanists were rather skeptical of man, such as Pietro Pomponazzi who, while eschewing the virtues of man, denies him an immortal soul and defends predestination. While many humanists were inclined to propose that man was his own ruler, some noteworthy *literati* espoused reliance on astrology.

Much of the confusion surrounding definitions of humanism could be clarified if we try to understand what the Italians understood humanism to mean. The term humanism, as it was understood, was derived from a series of scholarly subjects

known as the *studia humanitatis* in the universities of Italy. It was an educational curriculum consisting of grammar, rhetoric, poetry and ethics gathered from classical texts. In this context humanism was a particular educational discipline, not a philosophical movement. It was a cultural and literary response to scholasticism that contained some philosophical implications.

Many humanists were teachers who later entered the political arena and were influential politicians. Their abilities as orators and rhetoricians were frequently called upon by the governing bodies, thereby combining their academic talents with political necessity. Their "philosophies," if they existed, were primarily civic in temperament; they defended their community with the skills acquired as literary men. They appreciated and restored the classics, wrote some Latin prose, but were more attached to Florence and Urbino than to ancient Rome or Athens.

What importance does humanism play in the history of the Italian Renaissance and western civilization? As a consequence of the "rediscovery" and emphasis on antiquity the humanists salvaged and put to practical use a large corpus of learning which had been neglected during the Middle Ages. This emphasis can be seen in the effect it had on the art and architecture of the period. Humanism also stimulated critical attitudes of unrestricted thought, imaginative questions and answers about man, his nature and destiny.

The world of the humanists also produced a system which emphasized actual experience rather than authority in the making of decisions and the rendering of judgment. Franceso Petrarca, an early humanist, was unafraid to raise his voice in

criticism to the Emperor Charles IV about certain documents of "ancient" origin which Petrarca felt to be forgeries.

Beginning with Petrarch we notice the development of the antiquarian, a man with a sense of the past. His discoveries were based not on reliance on myths for explanations but on an actual experiment search for the causes of events. He realized the concept of change, and that the passage of time often obscured the past. In this sense he initiated a modern sense of historical understanding.

This idea of the passage of time affected two important disciplines other than history, those of art and law. In painting it also had an immense impact, forcing artists to accurately portray their subjects, at least as far as their historical setting permitted. This care and precision now became the essential attitude of the artists and would be reflected in the work of Leonardo and Michaelangelo, who literally recreated the anatomy of their subjects first before they covered their flesh with clothing.

Another result of this critical sense of the past was the discovery that law also had a history and was not a static collection, eternal and immutable.

The Renaissance *literati* made men realize that all things have a history and change over a period of time. If laws have a history and if words may have different connotations during different time periods, then laws should be analyzed and interpreted in their historical context. Law was not permanent but might require alteration or even rejection according to circumstances.

It was a major discovery, one which would ultimately influence French and English systems of law.

In the spectrum of intellectual development in the West a distinctive place is reserved for the humanists of Italy. Many of their ideas were curious and short-lived. Some concepts, such as the dignity of man and the significance of the individual, are part of our own philosophical structure. More than anything else, however, I think that the significance of the humanists rests with their *techniques* in ascertaining the truth about themselves and the world around them.

## The Society of the Court, the Family and the Street

The society of the Italian communes was one of tension and conflict, where the ideals of past laws and customs clashed with the new situations and standards of urban life.

Wealth and social mobility unrestrained by the accident of birth became an early factor in the development of Italian society. However, this fluidity of social status was rapidly solidifying by the mid-15th century into a well-defined hierarchy of wealthy patriciates, middle class merchants, and the poor urban proletariat.

As the Renaissance matured and decayed in the 16th century men rejected the idea of the world as a beautiful court populated by cultivated gentlemen and ladies.

Most men were not courtiers but were engaged in various trades and commerce. They had their own code of ethics, moral

standards and practical advice, above all the dictum “For God . . . and Profit.” The Italian merchant created a revolution in his own manner, transforming a medieval disdain for wealth and religious prohibitions against usury into an acceptance for and appreciation of the value of capital and the culture it could support.

The world of the Italian merchant was a sophisticated terrain of contracts, loans, promissory notes, commercial investments, banks and bankruptcy.

No other class of men had more of an impact on the economic foundations of modern Europe than these early Italian entrepreneurs. For example, through their business transactions and constant search for new markets they achieved commercial ties with the Moslem world as well as the Near and Far East. Italian merchants were in China in the early 14th century and were describing the journey, the people, and the spices in popular trade manuals. They even produced language guides for merchants going to Persia and China in 1303, with helpful phrases used in the merchant trade. While Dante was describing his spiritual journey through hell, purgatory and heaven, other Italian writers of somewhat less literary stature were advising the wanderers of this world of more tangible treasures of the East.

An interesting example of the diversity of the merchandise sought by these men is included in the term “spices”: quicksilver, cotton, asphalt, glue, cinnamon, lead, fennel, wax, opium, pearls, dragon’s blood (a gem), silkworms, eggs and

sugar. The list, found in a 15th century manual, lists over 300 items under this single heading.

## Woman

Vespasiano di Bisticci, a Florentine biographer of the great men of his age, considered women to live under two authorities throughout their lives, God and their husbands. There is little argument to the statement that women in Italy did and still do live in a male-dominated society. It comforts some to cite the life of Vittoria Colonna, poet and friend of Michaelangelo, as a model of courtly learning, or Caterina Sforza, the "Renaissance virago," or the splendid court of Beatrice d'Este. Yet these women were exceptional and would be noteworthy in any age. Suffice it to say that the image of the Renaissance man had his female counterpart but both were part of a minority, an elite society of wealth, power and culture.

We must consider the lives of women during the Renaissance in relation to their family or their husbands. Women did not live individual existences but were seen in either of these two relationships. The mother of Lorenzo de Medici for example, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, is known to us as a daughter in a wealthy family who gave birth to an illustrious son. Lorenzo's wife Clarice Orsini also was recorded for posterity not as an individual woman but as a personality linked with the Medici clan. In Lorenzo's *Ricordi* he made the following notation regarding his new bride: "Today, June 4, 1468 . . . I Lorenzo took for wife Clarice, daughter of the Lord Giacopo . . . or

rather she was given to me."[1] In fact the custom of *Morgengabio* was still in existence during the 16th century when the groom ceremoniously "purchased" his bride from her family with six rings, two on the betrothal, two at the wedding, and two on the day after the wedding.

There were the detractors, those who would relegate woman to an a *priori* inferior status. An inconsistency in humanistic thought is evident, for while some humanists exalted man as a free agent in the universe they predestined women to specific domestic positions. Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), one of the great *literati*, wrote in his treatise *On The Famil*y the following comments:[2]

> The beauties of a woman can be judged not simply in the grace and gentility of her face . . . but even more in the robust form of her figure . . . suited to carrying and producing an abundance of children. Husbands who take counsel with their wives . . . are madmen if they think true prudence or good counsel lies in the female brain.

It was only in Castiglione's *Courtier* that women were given an explicit role outside the circle of family and household. Castiglione's ladies were of the court, cultured, influential and usually aristocratic. These women Castiglione found to be man's mental equal, concluding "As to the mind I say that woman

1. Orville Prescott, *Princes of the Renaissance* (London: 1970). Cecilia Ady, *Milan Under the Sforzas* (London: 1907). E. H. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," in E.F. Jacob, ed., *Italian Renaissance Studies* (London: 1960) pp. 279-311
2. Leon Battista Alberti, *I Libri della Famiglia*, translated by Renee Neu Watkins (Columbia, S.C.: 1969) pp. 210ff.

can understand all the things men can understand, and that the intellect of a woman can penetrate wherever man's can . . ."[3] His book, coupled with the wealth and leisure time at the disposal of some of the ladies, gave the intellectual impetus for a more liberated attitude toward women, at least women of noble birth.

If the average girl living in Italy during the Quattrocento was considered an investment by her family and prospective husband, she became the personification of the family as soon as children were born. It was not uncommon for girls 12-13 years of age to begin their families, while the average age of their husbands was at least 12 years older. For this reason there seems to have been a relative closeness in age between the mother and children. Also, if the husband were a merchant the family could expect long periods of absence, perhaps two years in some cases. Early deaths or political exile also made many Italian mothers the sole authority in the family for long periods of time.

The importance of the mother in the structure of the Italian family can not be overemphasized. Italian wills often included a clause which provided for the wife only if she continued to live with the children and remained a widow.

Regardless of the initial reasons for marriage or the social assumptions which may have been prevalent there was tenderness and love in the marriage bond.

It has generally been assumed that Renaissance families dreaded the birth of daughters because of the dowries and the task of

3. Baldasare Castiglione, *The Courtier*, translated by Friench Simpson (New York: 1959) Book III.

putting surplus females into convents. While it was a typical attitude it was by no means the only nor the prevailing one. There was such a wide range of opinions on the raising and education of daughters in Italy that the only conclusion we can reach is that a definite shift in attitudes in favor of women was evident in Italy during the late 15th century.

Sumptuary laws controlled feminine expression in dress and jewelry. In the *Archivio di Stato* of Florence we find prohibitions against the wearing of golden ornaments above a certain value. In part a law of 1433 reads:[4]

> It is not in accordance with nature for women to be burdened by so many expensive ornaments. Women were created to replenish this free city and to live chastely in matrimony and not to spend gold and silver on clothing and jewelry.

Hard as it is to believe, not all women heeded the good advice of the city fathers. We find one Monna Bice, "daughter of Simone di Giorgio, who was going through this city with 5 rings. Fine: 37 lire, 10 soldi." Monna Agnella was found "wearing a prohibited gown, one part of sky blue cloth, the other part of velvet with sleeves wider than one yard in circumference. Fine: 28 lire."[5]

For the upper-and middle-class woman family life held the possibility of good marriage security with the normal day to

4. Gene Brucker, ed., *The Society of Renaissance Florence* (New York: 1973) p. 181.
5. *Ibid*., p. 188-189.

day cares and anxieties endemic in urban life. The lower-class women were a different matter altogether but we can only ascertain their lifestyles by their transgressions of the social norm.

The daughter of a poor laborer had really three choices in her life although she was usually much freer than her aristocratic sisters in terms of social restraints. Normally she would be married at 13 and become pregnant as often as she could until about the age of 25. It was, of course, much more important to have sons, upon whose shoulders the fortunes of the family rested. Her life expectancy was about 30-35 years.

She could enter the convent as many girls did, often for mere survival rather than out of religious conviction. Some convents were being filled with nuns without vocations and these houses soon acquired unsavory reputations for their laxity. In the 16th century Venetian convents were the scene of dances and festivals for young noblemen. The Inquisition rolls in Florence list a number of nuns whose vows were repeatedly compromised with local youths. These were, of course, exceptions, but it was a means of existence in a quickly accelerating urban society.

For the unmarried girl a third and somewhat more lucrative occupation was always available. Prostitution was more widespread than commonly believed. In Venice there were more than 11,000 prostitutes in a population of some 100,000 souls while Rome's ladies of the night numbered some 7,000 in a city of less than 50,000. In Venice courtesans were not permitted to include Jews or Turks among their clientele and were expected to register with the republic and wear a yellow scarf as a badge.

Florence, as did all of the larger cities, attempted to regulate prostitution by initiating communal brothels in 1415. The women would be supervised and taxed, and the houses would be located "in places where the exercise of such scandalous activity can be concealed . . . for the honor of the city." Women caught soliciting outside of the brothels were fined heavily but were released. Panderers were severely treated when caught, maimed and occasionally executed for their efforts. It was one thing to be a whore, quite another to induce women into the "scandalous activity."[6]

In sum, the woman of the Renaissance emerged into a society with a strong almost obsessive sense of family and made her mark within that social framework. At no other previous period of history were women held in such high esteem, usually as partners with their husbands in the task of raising a family. Unfortunately the powerful social norms narrowly channeled women into only these few occupations. But the woman of wealth and leisure could control the artistic and cultural destinies of others as a patroness of the arts.

6. *Ibid*., p. 188-189.

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"The Spirit of Galileo is still with us, beckoning us to follow, to seek new worlds, to open new doors of the mind and glimpse something of his vision of a universe whose shores we are still trying to chart."
From Colini A. Ronan, Galileo

# Chapter 2: Broadening Man's Horizons

## Italian Born Scientists

During the Middle Ages, under the influence of Arabic achievement in arts and sciences, southern Italy was cultivating a growing interest in scientific inquisitions. At Salerno, even as early as the ninth century, a medical school was founded where the works of Hippocrates and Galen were translated from the Arabic. At the court of Frederick II in Sicily, Italians, Jews and Moslems wrote, read and translated Arabic and Greek scientific treatises into Latin. By the 13th century in the northern regions of Italy, the universities of Bologna and Padua had already developed reputations for academic excellence. As many as 10,000 students a year from all over Europe were attending classes in Italian universities during the 15th century.

It was in this relatively free intellectual climate that many early scientific discoveries were made and theories proposed. Mondino of Luzzi, a professor of medicine at Bologna, was

performing autopsies in 1315 and wrote the Anatomia, the most widely used text book on anatomy. Flavio Gioia perhaps invented but certainly perfected the compass in the 14th century. By 1322 simple spectacles were being produced by the Murano glass works in Venice. It was from Italy that these glasses were imported to the Arabs and the Chinese.[1]

By the beginning of the fifteenth century and the dawning of the world of humanism major scientific breakthroughs were being made in Italy. One reason for this change was the weakening of the dogmatic and authoritative attitudes of the Church, which was itself caught up in the humanistic intellectual tradition. The critical attitude of the humanists toward speculation without experimentation assisted in creating this fertile intellectual environment.

Within this highly charged intellectual atmosphere nothing was beyond investigation and through it came change and progress in scientific truth. Leonardo da Vinci may be cautiously used as an example of this prevailing attitude that all can be achieved once man has put his full reasoning faculties on the problem.

A famous letter written by Leonardo reflects his confidence in the abilities of man. Writing in 1485 to the Duke of Milan, Leonardo requested a commission from the Duke, describing about 36 different services he could perform:[2]

1. Vincent Ilardi, "Eyeglasses and Concave Lenses in Fifteenth-Century Florence and Milan," *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXIX, No. 3 (Autumn, 1976), 341-360.
2. This famous document is from Leonardo's Codex Atlanticus in the Ambrosiana Library in Milan. A Portion of the letter is found in Antonina Vallentin's *Leonardo da Vinci: The Tragic Pursuit of Perfection* (New York: The Viking Press, 1938), pp. 75-85.

> I can invent whatever is needed for offense and for defense, on land and on sea . . .
> I can transport water from one place to another . . .
> I have methods of construction of very light and strong bridges which can be transported with the greatest ease . . .

He goes on to describe armored cars, cannons, small fire arms, and poison gas made from "lime, sulphide of arsenic and verdigris . . ." He got the commission he sought. A cursory examination of Leonardo's *Notebooks* reveals a curiosity and depth which propelled him into scientific regions unimagined by his contemporaries. The following is a list of some of the major scientific discoveries of Leonardo during his sixty-seven years:[3]

3. Pamela Taylor, ed., *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: The New American Library, 1960).

| | |
|---|---|
| As an Inventor: | a lathe |
| | lens grinder |
| | coin stamper |
| | helicopter |
| | flying machine |
| | automatic turnspit |
| | parachute |
| | chain or sprochet drive |
| As an Anatomist: | inclination of the pelvix |
| | rediscovery of the thyroid gland |
| | frontal and maxillary sinuses |
| | suggested the correct order for the circulation of blood |
| | arteriosclerosis – calcification of the veins |
| As a Naturalist: | phyllotoxis or the arrangement of leaves on a stem |
| | measurement of the age of a tree by its concentric circles |
| | suggested the concept of evolution |

Leonardo made further contributions to geology. Why, for example, do we find bones of large fish and oysters and other shells on the tops of high mountains? Leonardo rejected the traditional theory that they were accidental, or the remains of sea life transported there by the Great Flood. He concluded that these marine creatures had always lived there and that the

mountains had originally formed the sea floor, which gradually was raised by river silt and mud.

Leonardo had an insatiable mind, tireless in its attack on the mystery of life. How does a child live in the womb? Why does man grow old and die? Every question demanded an answer through observation certainly but dissection whenever possible. These notations, preserved in the *Codex Atlanticus* in Milan, are masterpieces of detail.

Leonardo da Vinci died in France in 1519, a man to whom nothing was a mystery. As an artist and humanist Leonardo was unsurpassed in a generation of genius, but as a scientist and inventor he transcended his time and as much a part of our own culture as he was of Italian culture in the sixteenth century.

If some of the major scientific discoveries of the 16th and 17th centuries were not made by Italians, and many were, the outstanding scientists of that period studied at the intellectual centers of Italy. The most famous scientist of the 16th century, Nicolous Copernicus, certainly studied at Bologna, Ferrara and Padua. It is impossible to believe that his *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* (1543) and his reaffirmation of the heliocentric theory was not developed under the intellectual influence of the Italian humanists who had earlier turned away from the dictates of ecclesiastical authority.

Indeed, even as Copernicus was composing his treatise the Veronese scientist and physician Girolamo Fracastoro was working on an elaborate study involving a homocentric theory in which the planets rotated on concentric spheres around different

axes. Fracastoro surpassed Copernicus in his attempts to make astronomical observations with the use of a rudimentary telescope, the first mentioned in the history of science. Fracastoro is also important in the history of medicine for his study and nomenclature of syphilis and his description and treatment of the disease in his *De Contagione et Contagionis*, in 1546. He also seemed to have been the first to recognize typhus through a careful recording and case study of the "sweating sickness" as it was known in the 16th century.

In almost every field of science Italians in the 16th and 17th centuries either made significant discoveries or were instrumental in providing the intellectual atmosphere for others to take the lead. In mathematics the first comprehensive printed *Algebra* was made by Luca Pacioli. Nicolo Fontana of Brescia, nicknamed "Tartaglia," first solved cubic equations, translated Euclid and Archimedes and did extensive study on the trajectory of projectiles, anticipating in later works by Galileo and Newton.

Giovanni Battista Benedetti (1530-1590) was interested in the problems involving falling bodies and proposed that all bodies of the same material regardless of size, would fall with the same velocity. Benedetti was incorrect in his belief that the velocities of bodies with the same volume but different material composition would fall in proportion to their weight. He also experimented with projectiles and concluded that natural gravity was not eliminated by the so-called theory of *impetus*.

Galileo Galilei was born to a wealthy family in Pisa in 1564. Originally destined for medicine he became interested in physics, later teaching at Padua from 1592 to 1610. Some of

his early discoveries were made at this time. Sometime between 1592 and 1603 he invented the first instrument for measuring temperature, the thermometer. In 1609 his optic tube enabled him to observe for the first time the lunar terrain as well as Saturn's rings. Through continued refining and experiments he was able to combine concave and convex lenses and created the compound microscope in 1610.

Galileo's observations on the planets and his own curious genius for scientific methodology led him intomdirect confrontation with the Church in 1632. In that year he published his *Dialogue* on the two chief systems of the world, the Ptolemaic and the Copernican, in which a defense of Copernicus was made. Yet the importance of the method used by Galileo was to win him lasting fame. In the *Dialogue* he wrote: "It seems to me that in discussing natural problems we ought not to start from the authority of the texts of the Scriptures but from the experiences of the senses and from necessary demonstrations . . . dalle sensate experienze e dalle dimostrazioni necessarie." This *Dialogue* affirmed a unique view of the universe which was now to be dominated by principles of mathematics coupled with observation rather than the abstract conjectures of Aristotle and Ptolemy, and the authority of Scripture.

Yet during his own lifetime he was humiliated by his peers, denounced by his friends and condemned by his Church. Pope Urban VIII had Galileo perpetually confined to his farm near Florence as a punishment for his stab at authority. Galileo's condemnation was a temporary victory for the Church but its

impact upon the scientific world had far-reaching and longer-lasting consequences.

Despite this setback in the conflict between faith and reason some important scientific and intellectual advancements were made in Italy during the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1657 the *Accademia del Cimento* (The Academy of Experience) was founded in Florence and became the first organized scientific society in the world. While Galileo has been called the "spiritual father" of the Accademia, the Medici Dukes Ferdinand II and Leopold were the ones who actually called this organization to life. Both were extremely interested in the world around them and had the financial resources and influence to pursue their interests. Leopold was especially interested in the poisonous properties of tobacco and the possibilities of artificial incubation. But their interests did not dominate the *Accademia*.

The members of the society were important men of their day such as Borelli (1608-1670) who was recognized throughout Europe for his experiments with air pressure and the entire process of breathing. Within the sheltered confines of the *Accademia* he and others could follow their inclinations and experiment, free from the normal prohibitions of reactionary authority. Francesco Redi (1626-1694), also a member of the *Accademia*, was physician to the Grand Dukes of Tuscany while teaching literature at the University of Florence. His scientific experimentation led to the refutation of spontaneous generation, or the belief that decaying matter caused the creation of insect larva to form. Redi's observations and experiments led to his rejection of this widely held belief on the "natural" formation of

insect larvae; he found that the ova of insects were the maggots on meat.

The *Accademia del Cimento* began to publish the various experiments and research projects undertaken by its members in a book form entitled the *Saggi di Naturale Esperienza Fatte nell'Accademia del Cimento*. In the various issues of this work Galileo's experiments were discussed, pendulum and vacuum studies were related, and several studies on magnetism were presented. This concept of printing the experiments of the members of the *Accademia* had widespread success, so much so that in 1684 the *Saggi* was translated into English, into Latin in 1731 for the scholars of Europe and into French in 1755.

Although the *Accademia* was a short-lived society it nevertheless holds an important place in the history of experimental science. It was the harbinger of the scientific organizations whose members realized the importance of joint efforts, the use of elaborate instruments and the strict reliance on the scientific method. It was begun in a country which presented many features would lead the rest of Europe in its quest for scientific knowledge.

Although most of Italy was under the tight control of the religious authorities in matters broadly relating to dogma, the Italian universities were relatively free from Church control. Just as the *Accademia* was organized to promote experimentation in research, so too the Italian universities premitted a high degree of specialization and were the first universities to offer several "chairs" in the same fields of study. An invitation to Padua, Pisa,

or Bologna was regarded as the highest honor in the scientific world of eighteenth century Europe.

The Enlightenment in western Europe had intellectual and scientific roots in Italy although most would associate the term with France. The Bolognese Luis Galvani (1737-1798) seriously discussed the mysterious force known as electricity, then a popular curiosity on both sides of the Atlantic. He defined positive and negative charges and lent his name to the nomenclature of electrical terms: galvanic, galvanism and galvanometer to name a few. Alessandro Volta from Como was fascinated with the idea of transforming chemical energy into electrical power as well as the storage of this energy. His "Volta Pile," constructed in 1800, was the first battery with terminals of conductors, significantly advancing the study of electricity.

Later in the 19th century several outstanding Italians would successfully carry forth experimentation with electrical forces. Luigi Palmieri for example invented a magnetic electrical apparatus in 1843 to illustrate terrestrial magnetism. From an observation center on Mt. Vesuvious Palmieri devoted himself to various researches on magnetism, later turning his attentions to the creation of instruments which would measure earth tremors and predict the eruption of volcanos.

## Scientific Contributions by Italians in America

The Florentine-born Antonio Meucci devised a prototype of the telephone in 1871 in the United States which he called a "teletrofono." In 1869 and 1871 he took out patents for his

invention and sought financial backing in the United States. He was exceedingly poor at this time and was to become even more disappointed when in 1876 he read that one Alexander Graham Bell had secured a patent for the instrument which he had invented. Subsequently Meucci was taken into the Globe Telephone Company.

Ultimately Bell sued the Globe Company and Meucci sold his patents to Globe; he received a few thousand dollars which was then taken by his creditors.

The story of Antonio Meucci is a highly charged, emotional tale which has been kept current even to this day. In 1971 the Italian government issued a stamp which honored Meucci as the inventor of the telephone while the United States honored Bell with a similar stamp in 1976. Various Italian-American organizations had taken this issue before the Manhattan Federal Court, attempting to stop the issuance of the Bell stamp. They have also charged Bell with fraudulently stealing Meucci's patents. In any event it should be noted that even if Antonio Meucci is not given credit for the invention of the telephone, he will not be left without some honors. In 1881 Meucci received exclusive patents on another of his inventions, the making of postage stamps.

One can not omit from a discussion of 20th century inventors the name of Gugliemo Marconi and his experiments with electrical waves and the transmission of wireless messages. In 1896 he sent the first successful wireless message and in 1901 the first transcontinental communication from the British Isles to

Newfoundland. His discoveries brought the possibility of mass communications that much closer to reality.

Some Italian scientists and inventors came to the United States during the mid-nineteenth century as exiles. One of these inventors was Quirico Filopanti, who arrived in America in 1849. He returned to Italy to fight with Garibaldi in the 1860's. He later sought funds in the United States for experiments in air navigation which brought ridicule from scientists in this country. His proposal for funds was rejected. New York's *Eco d'Italia* voiced its sympathy for Filopanti by printing that "Columbus and Fulton also had to struggle against the prejudices of their century . . ."

The International Centennial Exposition of 1876, held in Philadelphia, drew many Italian intellectuals and scientists to the United States. For the most part they were impressed with the research facilities available and the relatively open intellectual atmosphere. By the turn of the century Italian-born scientists were arriving in this country at an increased rate. In 1903, 817 "professional" including scientists and writers emigrated to this country, 551 of whom were from southern Italy.[4] The immediate linguistic and economic deficiencies encountered were overcome and many contributed to this country's scientific growth. Among them were Giuseppe Bellanca, an aviation pioneer, whose monoplane the *Columbia*, was the first cabin aircraft to cross the Atlantic in 1911. Bellanca also designed the first trans-Pacific monoplane, the *Miss Veedol*.

4. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: 1903).

Italian-born scientists have been best known in the area of physics in recent years, during which the names of Fermi, Rossi and Segre have become prominent leaders in the field of atomic research. Enrico Fermi was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1938 and emigrated to this country in the following year. He was appointed Professor of Physics at Columbia University in 1939 and later, at the University of Chicago, constructed the first atomic pile, leading to a self-sustained nuclear chain reaction. From these experiments would come the first atomic bomb. Later, Fermi would work at harnessing nuclear power for peaceful use until his death in 1954.

Professor Bruno Rossi worked with Fermi on the atomic project but is best known for his work with cosmic radiation. Born in Venice, he taught at Florence, Padua, and Manchester Universities before coming to America in 1939. In America he taught at the University of Chicago, Cornell and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology since 1966. His astrophysical research, carried out by NASA, led to the 1970 Explorer X Project. Rossi's research into cosmic radiation discovered that cosmic rays were able to traverse great thicknesses of matter and that the collisions of such rays with atoms generated secondary particles. In 1971 Professor Rossi was awarded 20 million lire by the Italian Accademia dei Lincei for his contributions to science.

Another prominent Italian physicist who migrated to America is Emilio Segre. Born in Tivoli in 1905, he was a co-discoverer of the element Plutonium, the existence of slow neutrons, and

of anti-protons. His extensive research in nuclear, atomic, and particle physics earned him the Nobel Prize in 1959.

Unlike music and art, the field of science is not always associated in the popular mind with the Italian-born or the Italian-American. Yet consistently biographical compilations such as the *Prominent Scientists of Continental Europe and American Men of Science* devote many pages to the contributions of Italian researchers and leaders in a variety of scientific fields. In 1968, for example, 165 Italian scientists were represented in the *Prominent Scientists of Continental Europe* publication.

And yet it should be remembered that specific contributions to scientific discovery are not the work of any particular ethnic group. Inventions and discoveries rest upon the research and experimentations of many others. Suffice it to remember that Italians have contributed to scientific progress both in Italy and in America.

## Italian Explorers and Travellers

Italians have been at the forefront of many if not most of the important geographical discoveries during the Age of Reconnaissance. From the early Middle Ages Italian prelates and merchants had been deeply involved as nuncios or diplomats for the papacy, city states or commercial agents seeking new lands for trading opportunities. In 1245 Pope Innocent IV sent the sixty-five-year-old monk John of Piano Carpini as an envoy to the Great Khan, Lord of the Mongols. His travels on

horseback covered some 3000 miles concluding when he reached Karakorum in 1247, the first westerner on record to travel to the East, return and relate his experiences.[5] The Polo Brothers, Niccolò and Maffeo, and Niccolò's son Marco traveled extensively in China in 1271. Marco remained in China, traveled to Indonesia, India, and East Africa over a 28-year period, returning to Italy in 1299. His *Travels of Marco Polo* was a popular account of his journeys, evidenced by the fact that we still retain over 120 copies of the original book, an astonishing number for that period, showing that it was widely disseminated in the 13th century.

Carpini and Polo were not the only Italian travelers during this period of relative insularity. Niccolò de Conti, disguised as a Moslem, traveled for 25 years (1416-1441) through Asia. Later with the humanist Poggio Bracciolini he described his travels in the *India Recognita* which ranked with Polo's *Travels* as a widely read treatise. The Venetian Ambrogio Contarini journeyed as an ambassador in Russia and western Asia in the 1470's. In 1475 he met the other Venetian ambassador, Josafat Barbaro in Persia and together attempted to negotiate with the Persians for a continuation of their war against the Turks. This would have relieved Turkish pressure against Venetian trade but the mission was not successful.

The commercial revolution of the 15th century and the need for new trade routes and markets proved to be the major stimuli for the exploration of the world beyond Europe. Many explorers were Italian but were not employed by the various Italian city

5. Christopher Dawson, ed., *Mission to Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

states but by Portugal, Spain, France, and England. The reason for Italian disinterest in exploration was economic and therefore understandable. The large cities had no real need to find new routes to the East for Italian trade was not seriously jeopardized by the Moslem conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Financially the expenses involved were usually prohibitive and few cities could participate in such undertakings. It was in the young but consolidated nation states that such projects could be realized and it was to these countries that Italian navigators flocked.

Finally it was not in the merchant's economic interest to aid in the discovery of improved routes because that would hamper the Italian monopoly on eastern commerce. In this instance any alternate routes would be reckoned only in loss of revenues. For these reasons Italian merchants invested in the secure returns of established commercial ventures rather than speculate on innovative but costly schemes. Money would be expended after a discovery for the spices and tradestuffs available but not for initial exploration. Italian banking houses loaned money for such voyages at exorbitant rates of interest. In 1505, for example, Genoese and Florentine bankers invested 30,000 florins in Portuguese expeditions sailing for spices. The money was returned at the rate of 175% interest!

The saga of Columbus' voyages to the New World is too well known to be repeated here. Suffice it to say that during the course of these journeys, lasting some eight years, he reached the Greater and Lesser Antilles, South America and Central America, and was awarded the title "Admiral of the Ocean Sea." He also received a percentage of the gold and silver found in

these newly discovered lands. The story of how Columbus died in Spain, poor and in chains, is completely inaccurate. Even if he received 2 or 3% of the revenues, as he alleged, he was a wealthy man as the substantial amounts left to his sons indicated.

Columbus did not arrive at his calculations totally by himself. In 1474 he had begun a correspondence with the Florentine Paolo Toscanelli, a doctor of medicine with an interest in geography who encouraged westward travel to the Indies. Toscanelli enthusiastically supported Columbus with his own calculations for a westward journey which did prove to be somewhat inaccurate. Toscanelli reasoned that Asia was such an extensive land mass and projected so far eastward that it would be but a short trip from the Azores to the tip of Asia. This was an oversimplification, to be sure, but it did act as a catalyst for Columbus. In the end the thought of one scholar was interpreted into action by another for the benefit of the whole world.

As to the charges that Columbus was imprisoned, they are true. During an insurrection at Santo Domingo in 1500 the Royal Commissioner felt that the admiral and his sons were guilty of poor administration and brutality. He decided to ship Columbus and his sons back to Spain to answer these charges. During the voyage Columbus was put in irons temporarily and upon arriving in Spain he was exonerated of all charges. He kept the fetters as a gloomy souvenir of his imprisonment. In 1502 he set out again on his fourth voyage with full Spanish backing.

The tragedy of Columbus was not his lack of material wealth nor his humiliating incarceration but the timing of his discoveries. When he died in 1506 his travels and exploits were not highly

regarded and his personal rapport with the Crown was at a low ebb. He died not knowing what he had discovered, believing to the end that a province of China, some islands near Asia, were the lands he had found in the West.

The Admiral of the Ocean Sea was soon followed by other Italians in the employment of foreign powers. Giovanni Caboto from Genoa sailed for Henry VII of England in 1497 and 1498 to North America. With a crew of 18 Bristol mariners and his son Sabastian he touched Cape Breton Island, sighted Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. A second voyage brought him as far as Delaware, and possibly as far south as Cape Hatteras. At that point he disappears from history, another navigator failing to find Asia but discovering North America instead. Sabastian Cabot is usually given credit for advocating the concept of a "Northwest Passage," an all-water northern route to Asia. In 1509 he attempted to discover this route and during his voyage penetrated as far north as Hudson Bay.

The Florentine Amerigo Vespucci was the manager of the Seville branch of the Medici Bank and had helped to finance Columbus' second and third voyages. In 1499 he became involved in the actual exploration of the New World and traveled with the Spaniard Alonzo di Ajeda along the coast of South America for some 2000 miles. In 1501-1502 he was commissioned by the King of Portugal to explore the newly discovered Brazilian territories. He again traveled along the coast of South America to the LaPlata River. It was to Vespucci's credit and fortune that he was the first explorer to realize and advocate that this was indeed a New World, not merely an

extension of Asia as Columbus and others had thought. As a result of his voyages and writings the German cartographer Martin Waldseemuller bestowed the name "America" upon the new continents.[6]

Sidney Alexander has commented that "etymologically, all Americans are Florentine . . ." referring of course to Vespucci's origins. To some degree this is correct if one considers the ethnic backgrounds of many of these early explorers. But not all of them traveled to the New World. Other examples of exploration by Italians proliferate in the annals of early maritime histories. Antonio Pigafetta, a volunteer gentleman from Vicenza, was the official historian on Magellan's circumnavigation in 1522. He was one of the 18 men to survive the journey after Magellan was killed in the Philippines. His *Le Voyage et Navigation faict par les Espaignoly* (1525) ranks with Columbus' Journal as a masterpiece of first-hand narration.

Another Florentine, Giovanni da Verrazzano, was commissioned by the French to find a northern passage to Asia in 1523. He went as far as South Carolina, turned northward and entered New York harbor. He then rounded Cape Cod, traveled along the northeast coast to Maine and returned home in 1524. His accuracy in surveying and noting the North American coastline was the most important of all the early voyages. His drawings and maps would ultimately give France the basis for her claims in the New World.

6. On early Italian explorers and the Age of Discovery consult B. Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952) and J.H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963).

By the 17th century practically all of the nation states were now supplying the leadership as well as the expertise needed in further settlement and exploration in the New World. The Age of Exploration had given way to an Era of Colonization and Italian leadership was not conspicuous during this phase of settlement. But Italians were present primarily as priests and monks who were a part of every colonization effort.

About 20 Italians arrived at Jamestown in 1622 at the request of the English, who needed their abilities in glassmaking and to teach this art to the other colonists. In the west Father Francesco Kino from Genoa explored extensive tracts of land in Mexico and California, was appointed royal cosmographer in 1683, and in 1698 prepared the first maps of California which established the fact that California was not an island. He also introduced cattle into the southwest as well as grapes and various European grains. This "Padre on Horseback" also established some 20 missions in California before his death in 1711.

Perhaps the most famous of these explorers of Italian origin was Enrico Tonti, who assisted the Frenchman LaSalle in his travels in North America. Tonti was LaSalle's lieutenant and with him built Ft. St. Louis de la Mobile on the Illinois River.[7] During Tonti's numerous expeditions and colonization excursions he journeyed through what is now Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. He was the one man who knew best the unsettled lands of New France, who earned the respect of the Indian tribes in those regions as well as the admiration of his fellow settlers.

7. Barbara Marinacci, *They Came From Italy* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1967), pp. 15-35.

An Italian by birth, he died in 1704 in the New World he had helped to explore and settle. He has been called the "Father of Arkansas" and Tontitown, Arkansas, bears witness to his importance.

After the American War of Independence many Italians of noble birth were intrigued with this new nation and were drawn to America. Several of them were friends of the Founding Fathers or members of the same international organizations as Jefferson and Franklin. Count Francesco dal Verme of Milan arrived here in 1783 and was greeted by George Washington. Traveling as a wealthy and interested vacationer, dal Verme was entertained at Yale University where he received an honorary degree. Later, when Thomas Jefferson visited Lombardy, dal Verme played host to this illustrious American visitor. Another notable of Italian lineage was Count Luigi Castiglione, who was a member of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. He visited all 13 states in 1785-1786 and published a two-volume work on the natural history and plant life of America.

Another Italian traveler during the early 19th century was Giacomo Constantino Beltrami, a six-foot nobleman from Como who arrived in America in 1823, an exile from the Napoleonic wars. Beltrami joined a military expedition to North Dakota but left the party soon after it began. On his own and with the assistance of several Chippewa and Ojibway Indians he stumbled through the wilderness and by chance came upon what he considered to be the source of the Mississippi River at Lake Julia.[8] Upon his return to civilization he published a book on

8. Andrew F. Rolle, *The American Italians* (Belmont, California: The Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 29-35.

the discovery and was actually given credit for it by a United States Geological Survey, in 1855. Today a northern county in Minnesota is named after him, as well as Lake Beltrami in that state.

Italian journalists wrote about the growing American nation for their continental readership during the 19th century, and commented on some interesting features of American life. Some of the reports, articles and fictional accounts were very inaccurate, while others tried to give a realistic portrayal of the land and its people. In 1848 Salvatore Abbate published his report on American life and spent the first chapter of his book dispelling the myths which surrounded this country. He told his readers that not all Americans were rich and patrons of the arts and that indeed some scientific progress was occurring in America. Further, noble birth did not guarantee anyone anything in this new land![9] He cautioned his readers that, despite rumors to the contrary, the American government was NOT paying all travel expenses for Italian immigrants nor providing them with free lands or servants upon their arrival.

Some Italian visitors were outright hostile to America, such as Giovanni Vigna del Ferro, a Bolognese journalist who wrote his *Un Viaggio nel Far West* (A Trip to the American Far West) in 1881. He was offered two free tickets to California and made the worst of this offer by accepting them and writing about his experiences.

An inaccurate journalist at best and certainly not a student of

9. Andrew J. Torrielli, *Italian Opinions on America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 8-9.

American history, del Ferro was disappointed that in the 1880's the Indians encountered no longer attacked the trains nor offered their traditional war whoops. Indeed, during his four year stay in this country he was able to describe the Indians as drunken sots, the buffalo largely killed off and their remains scattered over the prairies, and the food quite unappealing to a foreign visitor. Since western food made him sick he traveled with his own provisions of barreled wines, cans of tuna, mortadella, cheese, sardines and butter.[10] After visiting Salt Lake City, Reno and San Francisco he reported that in the western part of the United States, disease was the usual order of the day and vigilante violence the order of the night. His reports were usually reprinted in Italian-American papers in New York City.

During the Civil War Italy and the Italian journalists who wrote about the conflict were unique in their impartiality toward North and South. During a period when most European countries favored a southern victory most Italians were apathetic toward the outcome. But several Italian travelers did leave their impressions on the subject of slavery. Catholic periodicals especially were anti-slavery and many of the Italian attacks upon the "peculiar institution" were to be found in magazines such as *Civilta Cattolica*. When Harriet Beecher Stowe arrived in London in 1853 this magazine blasted America for permitting slavery to exist, calling it a remnant of pagan antiquity which had no part in the modern world. Ten years later the celebrated Italian scholar Cesare Cantu blamed the United States for not living up to its principles embodied in the Constitution. "The evil in (America) derives from a violation of democracy; from

10. Rolle, *Op. cit*., p. 32.

not having equally distributed power between all, by giving all to a privileged class; a class privileged in politics and personality, who are in competition with their slaves."[11] Only after emancipation could democracy in America and the entire world be assured, he concluded.

After the war Italian travelers to America were consistent in their abhorrence of the treatment of blacks in this country. A professor of geology, Giovanni Capellini, was especially incensed at the inhuman treatment of blacks. He related several incidents in Kentucky and along the Ohio River when whites flung insults at blacks working on another steamboat, while young boys flung stones at the corpse of a black who was floating in the water. All of this after the war, after the emancipation of slavery, in the land of the Declaration of Independence.

Another commentator, Francesco Varvaro, wrote in 1876 that he could not reconcile the doctrines expressed by the American Declaration with the prevailing attitudes toward the former slaves. Although an Italian anti-cleric, Varvaro was disgusted when he witnessed blacks being excluded from Protestant churches. "In a country whose institutions have such an egalitarian base, I admire the Catholics who, slave or free, have always treated the blacks with equality, and have always admitted them to their churches."[12] The actor Ernesto Rossi scorned American democracy after having witnessed two blacks thrown out of a theater while a black Congressman was not admitted to a hotel used by his white colleagues.

11. Cesare Cantu, "L'America nel 1863" quoted in Torrielli, *Op. cit*., pp. 62-63.
12. Torrielli, *Op. cit*., p. 70.

In sum, Italian travelers and journalists found quite a distinction between the principles of American democracy and its actual workings on a day-to-day basis. Although they usually did not get involved with the political squabbles of the post-Civil War period they were very concerned with the ethical and moral questions of slavery and the promise of equality. The views of the Italians in America were the least prejudiced and most believable of any foreign nation of that time and often made Americans ashamed because of their accurate insights.

It may be said with no small amount of pride that the Children of Italy discovered America, gave poetry to the English, cuisine to the French, acting and ballet to the Russians… and music to the world. (Adapted from Luigi Barzini's *The Italians*.)

# Chapter 3: The Mosaic of Italian Culture

Italians have impressively filled Europe and Western Civilization with many of their accomplishments. Italian architects built part of the Kremlin in Moscow and the Winter Palace in Leningrad. They have decorated the Capitol in Washington and designed the dome for that edifice. All over Europe and South America monuments of famous heroes have been produced by Italian artisans.

On a somewhat smaller scale Italy has made her mark. We would have no pistols but for the city of Pistoia, no millinery but for Milan, no blue jeans but for the city of Genoa (Genes) where the blue cotton was first produced. We could not request Neapolitan ice cream, bologna sausage, Parmesan cheese or Venetian blinds. As Luigi Barzini has observed in his book *The Italians*, children of Italy discovered America, gave poetry to the English, cuisine to the French, acting and ballet to the Russians and music to the world.

Yet it is strange that for all of her genius these men never created a great Italy. In fact few of these recognized leaders in world culture exercised any influence at all at home. It seems that with determined regularity those who would lead in cultural pursuits have been systematically neutralized throughout the centuries, in their homeland. Galileo and Veronese were hauled before the Inquisition, Galileo for his "radical" theories, Veronese for his "scandalous" art. Dante, Petrarch, Machiavelli and Mazzini were exiled while Savonarola and Bruno were burned at the stake.

## Art

The creation of art during the period referred to as the Renaissance brought about significant changes in attitudes and approaches to the subject. Between the careers of the two Florentines Giotto (1240-1302) and Michaelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) Italian artists retreated from the unrealistic and symbolic art of the Middle Ages to an art form which described the essence of the real world. We may divide these centuries into three distinct ages, that of Giotto, the generation of Masaccio and Donatello, and the era of Leonardo and Michaelangelo. While the early painters tried to capture reality with varying techniques and styles Leonardo and his followers not only achieved a semblance of perfection but attempted to go beyond nature into the deeper forms of personal reality.

Giotto was perhaps the first Italian to achieve an art form which was less symbolic and more realistic, and to consciously break from Medieval tradition. According to Vasari, "Giotto deserves

to be called the disciple of nature . . . for nature was to him a never failing source of inspiration."[1] Giotto was a revolutionary because most of his techniques rejected the symbolic representation of man and painted the natural reality he perceived.

Giotto provided his frescos with space and fluid movement, although crude in comparison with later artists.

Following Giotto was Masaccio (1401-1428), whose name literally means "sloppy Tom." He was the first artist to use mechanical perspective and assume that human anatomy existed under the clothing of his figures. The idea of perspective, the creation of the illusion of depth on a flat surface, was a style most obsessively mastered by Paolo Uccello. His preoccupation with this technique was so overwhelming that he would refuse to eat or sleep for days, telling his wife repeatedly, "Oh, what a delightful thing is this perspective." The architect Brunelleschi stumbled upon this principle after he had studied the proportions of classical architecture, while the artist Piero della Francesco wrote a manual for artists on the mathematical principles of perspective.

The use of *chiaroscuro* (shading) and of *sfumato* (a smoky haze) were pioneered by Masaccio and Leonardo respectively, permitting the artist to create a mysterious appearance in his art. Another interesting technique, used by the adventurer-artist Benvenuto Cellini, was the "lost wax" technique of bronze casting.

1. Vasari, *Lives of the Artists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946) p. 17.

Luca Signorelli (1441-1523) of Cortona, an artist relatively unknown to most readers, is important in the evolution of Italian painting for his emphasis on the nude which closely approximates the titanic element in Michaelangelo. We know that at least one of his works hung in Lorenzo de Medici's home while the young Michaelangelo was employed there.

The meaning behind the appearance of objects became increasingly elaborate as the Renaissance waned. Indeed, as with the technique of perspective, artists like Botticelli and Raphael became obsessed with the possibilities of symbolic art. Yet no other Italian artist has generated more attention and interest in the idea that art has various levels of meaning than Michaelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). In virtually every sculpture work he created there are hidden meanings, purposely implanted, expressing his personal vision of reality and delivering his philosophical message to those who wish to seek them.

With Michaelangelo's works we begin a new level of artistic genius, of art as an external expression to the world while whispering to the individual the inward struggle of man in subtle but meaningful symbolism.

Italian art in the Renaissance came to represent not merely a chapter in European history but an essential factor in the ideological and cultural formation of modern Europe. The ideas, techniques and inspiration spread throughout Europe and have had far reaching application in art forms today.

## Architecture

The creative talents of Italy can be found in all artistic media but especially in the field of architecture. It is interesting to realize how much of an effect climate and regional differences have had upon the architectural structures of the peninsula. In a relatively mild climate no special structural adaptation was needed.

There is no country in the world where the past serves the present so dutifully as in Italy. Frank Lloyd Wright suggested this relationship between simplicity, tradition and essence in his volume entitled *On Architecture*:[2]

> Of this joy of living there is greater proof in Italy than elsewhere. Buildings, pictures, and sculptures seem to be born, like the flowers by the roadside, to sing themselves into being. Approached in the spirit of their conception they inspire us with the very music of life. No really Italian building seems ill at ease in Italy . . . The secret of this ineffable charm would be sought in vain in the rarefied air of scholasticism or pedantic fine art. It lies close to the earth. Like a handful of the moist, sweet earth itself it is so simple that, to modern minds, trained in intellectual gymnastics, it would seem unrelated to great purpose. It is so close that almost universally it is overlooked by the pedant.

One of the most impressive edifices of the Renaissance was the vaulted dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, executed by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) in Florence. The very idea of a dome or cupola of such height and weight was

2. Frank Lloyd Wright, "On Architecture" quoted in G.E. Kidder Smith, *L'Italia Costrusce* (London: 1955) p. 14.

more than any architect dreamed possible. Even if such a dome could have been constructed it would have been aesthetically burdened by supporting columns and high scaffolds, but Brunelleschi suggested the impossible — no external framework whatsoever!

According to Vasari, Brunelleschi sought to improve the practice of architecture, “and brought it to a perfection,” for the Florentine proposed to build for eternity. Today as in the 15th century the Duomo rises like a benediction over the city on the Arno. It is strong, enduring, the symbolic spirit of Florence. Indeed, Florentines still claim that when they leave the city they are not homesick for the urban community but rather long for their Duomo.

In 1506 Pope Julius II decided to demolish the old Basilica of St. Peter’s and have it rebuilt in a non-traditional style. Donato Bramante (1444-1514) was selected for the task of creating this monument of the Church. Bramante never completed the task because of a lack of funds.

Bramante’s idea for the church was to be innovative. It was not to be oblong, in the traditional sense, but square with chapels symmetrically arranged about a cross-shaped hall. This hall was to be capped by a cupola rising on huge arches. The boldness of this undertaking is inspiring for its ambition but really confirmed the Renaissance ideal that for man nothing is impossible. Thus, majestically rising 452 feet about the Piazza, St. Peter’s Cathedral stands as the architectural achievement of the Renaissance. However, St. Peter’s as we know it today has little in common with the plans of Bramante except for its gigantic

dimensions. It is ironic that Michaelangelo, who had an almost paranoid hostility toward Bramante, was chosen in 1546 to complete the structure.

The construction of St. Peter's was then a cooperative effort, first by Bramante in 1506, later by Sangallo in 1539. Finally Michaelangelo's plan, executed over a twenty-year period, began in 1546. Clearly Michaelangelo wanted to be master of the entire operations and erased all traces of the previous architect's work, to the point of pulling down the work already produced by Sangallo.

Although another architect, Giacomo della Porta, modified Michaelangelo's plans somewhat in 1588 and actually finished the dome, the design was Michaelangelo's. It is the greatest dome and largest cathedral ever built and not only has symbolized religious belief but was also adopted by the men of the Enlightenment and afterwards to crown their secular capitols. As James Ackerman pointed out in his The Architecture of Michaelangelo (1970): "If Michaelangelo had not reluctantly become an architect the domes of St. Paul's and of the Washington Capitol could not have been the same."

It was Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) who relied on the attitudes of the High Renaissance to achieve the mingling of the symbolic and the grand, and pointed to the Baroque. Trained as a sculptor, this Neopolitan towered over all artists of his age, and dominated architecture for the next fifty years.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini was born in Naples in 1598. He was perhaps the only artist of the period to enjoy the gift of longevity

and the fortitude to carry through a project as vast as St. Peter's. A pilgrim coming to Rome in 1600 would have seen little of the grand Basilica, except for the dome. The architecture was disjointed, fragmented. Bernini organized and polished the scraps of uncompleted genius found throughout the city and gave his own audacious grandeur to the scheme.

At the age of 26 he was commissioned by the Barberini Pope Urban VII to build a great canopy over the tomb of St. Peter's, the Baldacchino. To have achieved this feat in bronze (it is nearly 100 feet high) required engineering mastery. To complicate the task he discovered that there was not enough bronze available to complete the work. Urban ordered the roof of the most famous ruin in Rome, the Pantheon, to be stripped of its bronze for the Baldacchino, prompting the quip "What the barbari (barbarians) dared not do was done by the Barberini." But one might quickly add, for the glory of the Church, pagan antiquity must pay.

In 1642 Bernini began plans for the completion of St. Peter's, especially the vast piazza in front of St. Peter's with its encircling colonnade. It was his crowning masterpiece, which gives the observer the impression that he need no longer be burdened by the weight of his problems, but can lose himself within the immensity and ethereal greatness of the Church. In an age of doubt and uncertainty the effect was immediate and profoundly felt by Italian and non-Italian visitors to the holy city. This architectural device was to be emulated throughout Europe for 200 years by secular powers as widely separated as England and Russia.

During the 18th century Italian architects often took their talents to the New World in search of commissions. The Italian traveler and patriot Philip Massei, the intimate friend of Thomas Jefferson, was requested to search out and bring Italian architects and sculptors to America to design a figure of Liberty for the new nation's "Chamber of Representatives." He sent Joseph Franzoni and John Andrew to Jefferson and they combined their talents and planned monuments and sculpted works in Washington. Most important of these early Italian artisans was Antonio Meucci, who planned the dome for the nation's Capitol, basing his construction after St. Peter's in Rome. In 1814 Washington was destroyed by fire and with it the constructions of Franzoni and Meucci. However, other Italians were imported to replace those art objects destroyed by the flames.

Pier Luigi Nervi (1891-) is considered the most important modern Italian architect, working almost completely in reinforced concrete. His works are internationally known and recognized, combining aesthetic value with functionality. It is interesting to observe that Nervi has been awarded most of his commissions not only on the basis of their daring and beauty but because of the relative inexpensiveness of their construction.

## Music

If there is one universal medium which the Italians can take the most pride in, it is their creative artistry in music. Like any art form music transcends national and ethnic distinctions and is enjoyed and appreciated by diverse peoples. Every Italian

region, city and almost every rural village has provided composers artists, craftsmen and performers whose music has flowed through Italy and outward to the world.

Indeed the city of Palermo may have the worst slums in all of Italy, yet it boasts of the third largest opera house in Europe, the Teatro Massimo on the Piazza Verdi.

Sicily has had a rich musical past, reaching back almost 2500 years to the Greek colonization of the island. The great age of music in Sicily comes in the Middle Ages when their poetry was put to song and usually dealt with love, some religious music and, interestingly, one or two protest songs against the Crusades! In the following centuries the composer Alessandro Scarlatti (born in 1660) was born in Palermo and composed over 115 operas. However, his great claim to immortality was his son, Domenico Scarlatti, who became opera composer for the Queen of Poland, musician of the court of Portugal, chair-master of St. Peter's. From 1728 to 1758 he devoted all his attentions and genius to the harpsichord.

In Naples music is synonomous with opera and rightly so. In the 17th century Naples produced in rapid succession composers who monopolized the opera houses of Europe for the remainder of the century. In Naples is the Teatro di San Carol, the oldest opera house in Italy, built in 1737.

The composers of opera in the 18th century were Neapolitan by either birth or training or style. In England Neapolitan opera was represented by Handel and Bonocini, in Germany by Hasse and Jommelli, in Venice by Vivalid and Gasparini. Neapolitan opera

was brought to America by a company of French musicians in 1790, the first Italian opera produced in America being Pergolesi's "La Serva Padrona."

As one moves northward the variety of musical interests increases. Tuscany, the region which contains the cities of Florence, Lucca, Pisa, and Siena, has offered the world some of the greatest composers. Lucca was the home of one of the most prolific of Italian composers, Giacomo Puccini, whose works include *La Bohêeme*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut*, *La Tosca*, and *La Fanciulla del West* (The Girl of the Golden West).

In Florence the earliest opera for which music is preserved, *Euridice*, was presented on October 6, 1600 in the Palazzo Pitti. Under the Medici musicians from all over Europe were brought to the city to perform and compose.

The names of Verdi, Rossini, Donizetti and Stradivarius are internationally recognized for their brilliant contributions to the world of music. Each of these individuals was from the northern provinces of Italy, cities virtually unknown to Americans but each nevertheless possessing a cultural heritage of musical excellence.

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) was born in Bergamo, and is credited with the composition of some 71 operas. Some of his works include *Anna Bolena* (1830) and *Don Pasquale* (1843), reputed to have been written in only eight days. His name now graces the new theater in the city.

The city of Cremona is not famous for her composers although

Monteverdi was born there in 1567. Cremona does have the undisputed reputation of having brought forth the finest stringed instruments in the world. In the city the Amati, Guarneri and Stradivari families lived and created instruments of unsurpassed excellence.

The supreme master of the art of violin-making was Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737), whose craftsmanship became legendary. The sounds from the violins of Cremona radiated throughout the world but it wasn't until 1961 that the city fathers realized that they had no Stradivarius instruments left in the town. A drive was launched to raise money to purchase a violin for 3,000,000 lire or about $50,000. The instrument now rests in a glass case in the Palazzo Communale, facing the city's cathedral.

Milan has been the cultural center of Lombardy for centuries, drawing upon a musical tradition dating back to St. Ambrose in the 4th century. It was in Milan during a religious controversy that the form of antiphonal singing known as the "Ambrosiani" was created. In this musical form the choir is divided into two groups, each responding to a repeated refrain. The Ambrosian chant, with its emphasis on melody and simple language, preceded the Roman Gregorian chant by some 200 years.

The monument which is synonomous with Milan is the Teatro alla Scala which opened on August 3, 1778. From the first it has enjoyed a unique reputation among opera lovers. Unlike the houses of Naples, La Scala has strictly regulated behavior in the theater, forbidding overly enthusiastic applause, signs of disapproval, dogs in the boxes and encores. The conductor Arturo Toscanini, unable to continue his presentation of a

performance because the audience demanded an encore from a tenor, threw his baton at the crowd and walked off the stage. He did not return to La Scala for another three years, and then as artistic director of the opera house.

The music of *Rigoletto*, *Il Travatore*, *La Traviata* and *Aida* are well-known compositions from the pen of Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). Verdi has been characterized as the major musical exponent of patriotism during the 19th century. Although none of his operas specifically refer to the contemporary political situation, the themes of freedom and liberty are the resounding chords in his works.

In 1869 Verdi was commissioned to write an opera for the Khedive of Egypt to celebrate the opening of the new Cairo Opera House and the Suez Canal. With his wife and a friend he composed *Aida* which was performed in Cairo in 1871 amidst a “circus” atmosphere. Six weeks later the opera was again performed in Milan and was very well received. During his lifetime and in the years since his death in 1901, wherever there is an opera house Verdi’s music is performed and enjoyed.

No discussion of Italian musicians can be complete without including Il Maestro, Arturo Toscanini. Toscanini’s name still retains the enduring mark of greatness. Born in Parma in 1867, Toscanini was educated as a cellist and had his first professional experiences in that role.

In 1898 Toscanini was made artistic director of the Teatro alla Scala, the highest honor awarded to an Italian performer. La Scala had been closed for a year prior to his arrival because

of poor management and with Toscanini's guidance it was once again restored. His residence there would be a consistent source of strife and turmoil for the artist.

In March of 1948 Toscanini was visually introduced to the American public on television. He conducted the NBC Symphony until 1954 when network officials decided that he was too old to continue as conductor. In April of that year the 87-year-old conductor gave his last performance at Carnegie Hall. Briefly returning to Italy, the nearly blind Maestro soon returned to America.

The incomparable magic which was worked by Toscanini ended on January 16, 1957, when Il Maestro died at the age of 89. Although his music lives on through numerous recordings (which he personally disliked) nothing can reproduce the vision of Toscanini mounting the podium and transforming an army of mere musicians into an illusion of vibrations and visions. That was his mastery, for which he is lovingly remembered.

## Literature

What follows is a short and briefly annotated sketch of the most noteworthy literary works produced in Italy over the last 700 years. Rather than present lengthy passages from Dante, Leopardi or Pirandello, a listing of their major works is provided. Whenever possible a standard biographical work is also listed.

*THE AGE OF ST. FRANCIS AND DANTE (1226-1340)*

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| St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1126) | *Il Cantico delle Creature* (Canticle of the Sun) — famous collection of poems of Thanksgiving to “brother” sun, “sister” moon, “sister” death. |
| | Biography: Maria Sticco, *The Peace of St. Francis*, 1962. |
| Jacopone da Todi (1236-1306) | *Stabat Mater* and *Laudi* — in contempt of this world; *Lauda della Malattia* for example (In Praise of Disease). |
| Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) | The most widely read and analyzed Italian literary figure. Absolutely essential reading for anyone wishing to understand Italian literature. |
| | *La Vita Nuova* — a book of memories and romantic confessions. |
| | *De Vulgari Eloquentia* — a treatise on the vernacular tongue, establishing Italian on an equal footing with Latin. |
| | *De Monarchia* — treatise in favor of a universal secular monarchy. |
| | *The Divine Comedy* — three books depicting a spiritual journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven; written in the vernacular. |
| | Biography: Michele Barbi, *The Life of Dante*, 1960. |

## *THE AGE OF THE HUMANISTS (1340-1400)*

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|---|---|
| Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) | Thought to be the first great literary figure of the Renaissance, prolific writer and scholar. |
| | *Africa* — epic poem in praise of Scipio Africanus. |
| | *De Viris Illustribus* (On the Lives of Famous Men) — biographical studies of ancient heroes, chiefly Roman. |
| | *Epistolae* (Letters) — interesting letters to Seneca, Quintilian, Vergil, Homer. |
| | Biography: E.H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarca*, 1961. |
| Dino Compagni (1255-1324) | Early historian and sometime poet of Florence. |
| | *Chronicle of the Events of our Time* — impressionistic history of the city of Florence with general references to other Italian cities in the 14th century. |
| | Biography: Ugo Balzani, *Early Chroniclers of Europe: Italy* (London: 1883). |
| Giovanni and Matteo Villani (1276-1348) | *Cronica di Fiorentia* — the most widely read source for the social and political history of Florence in the 14th century. |
| | Biography: Louis Green, *Chronicle Into History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). R. Selfe and P. Wicksteed, eds, *Vilani's Chronicle, Selections*, (London: 1906). |

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|---|---|
| Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) | Poet, scholar, compiler of ribald tales, biographer of Petrarch. |
| | *The Decameron* — Collection of 100 tales told by traveling companions fleeing the Black Death. |
| | *Il Filocolo* — the young romances of Boccaccio described in some detail. |
| | *Vita di Petrarch* — account of the great poet whom Boccaccio met in 1350. |

*THE AGE OF THE RENAISSANCE (1400-1600)*

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| Leonardo Bruni (1374-1444) | Civic humanist, champion of Florentine and Italian liberty. |
| | *In Praise of Florence* — title is self-explanatory; Florence is the "New Rome" on the Arno. |
| | *History of the Florentine People* — early history which searches for human cause and effect in events rather than Providence. |
| | Biography: Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Italian Renaissance,* 1955. |
| Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) | Multi-talented writer and theorist in many aspects of life and culture. |
| | *On the Family* — interesting work which gives insight into the mind and character of 15th century humanists as applied to the family; his attitudes and advice concerning women is most interesting. |
| | *On Architecture* — important work used by architects to set the composition for necessity, convenience and aesthetics. |
| Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) | Perhaps the most popular of the Italian writers of the 16th century. |
| | *Orlando Furioso* — a fantasy epic poem of the Crusades. |
| Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) | "The Prince of the Italian poets" of the Cinquocento. |

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| | *Gerusalemme Liberata* — a tale of the freeing of Jerusalem during the first crusade with many supernatural devices. |
| Lorenzo de Medici (1448-1492) | Virtual ruler of Florence; also the creator of many carnival songs and religious Laudi. |
| | *Canti Carnascialeschi* — songs and poems to be read to the crowds during carnival. |
| | Biography: Cecilia M. Ady, *Lorenzo dei Medici and Renaissance Italy*, 1955. Maurice Rowdon, *Lorenzo the Magnificent*, 1974. |
| Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) | "Old Nick," politician, historian, astute observer of 16th century affairs. |
| | *The Prince* — "handbook" for the new heads of state; "the end justifies the means." |
| | *Discourses* — based on the Roman historian Livy, attempts to draw parallels between the past and present political situations. |
| | *History of Florence and the Affairs of Italy* — a history of despair questioning why Florence had not met expectations. |
| | *Art of War* — treatise in favor of communal militias. |
| | *Mandragola* — a play of sexual seduction through deception. |

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| | Biography: Ralph Roeder, *The Man of the Renaissance*, 1933. |
| Francesco Guicciardini (1482-1540) | Historian, politician, governor of Modena. |
| | *Recollections and Maxims* — anecdotes about his life and experiences. |
| | *History of Italy* — the first really great history of Italy; on a wider European scope than Machiavelli's work. |
| | Biography: Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 1965. |
| Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) | "The Scourge of Princes," notorious scandalmonger, poet and most energetic pornographer of the 16th century. |
| | *The Courtesan* — play mocking Castiglione's *The Courtier*. |
| | *Ipocrita* — the Italian *Tartuffe*. |
| Vittoria Colonna (1472-1547) | Poetess, friend of Michaelangelo, to whom he dedicated many of his poems. |
| | *Rime Varie* — poems on the memory of her husband. |
| | Biography: J.A. Symonds, *Italian Literature*, 2 Vols., Volume 2, 1964. |
| Michaelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) | Painter, sculptor, architect, poet, transitional figure of the Renaissance. |

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| | *Poems/Letters* — his poems number about 300 with numerous letters to friends such as the Medici family, Vittoria Colonna and Giorgio Vasari. |
| | Biography: Creighton Gilbert and Robert Linscott, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michaelangelo*, 1970. |

## *THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES*

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|---|---|
| Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623) | Venetian historian and chronicler of the council of Trent. Very "pro-Venice" and anti-established Church in his works. |
| | *History of the Council of Trent* — a widely read tract critical of the Church's decisions and methods at the council. |
| | *History of Benefices* — traces the corruption which the Church has acquired through its wealth. |
| | Biography: Peter Burke, ed., *Selections from Sarpi*, 1967. |
| Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) | Divided human history into stages which are described according to a formula of growth and decay. |
| | *Scienza Nuova* — introduction of the cyclical interpretation of history, "corsi and ricorsi," flux and reflux, with Providence permitting the individual freedom of choice in decisions. |
| Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794) | Italian lawyer during the Enlightenment. |
| | *On Crime and Punishment* — a persuasive treatise against torture and capital punishment; influenced French philosophesin their attitudes toward punishment. |
| | Biography: Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*. |

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| Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) | Piedmontese nobleman who won recognition as the foremost Italian classical dramatist and herald of the 19th century revival of literary national feeling in Italy. |
| | *Vita di Vittorio Alfieri da Astilife of Alfieri* — his travels and experiences. |
| | *Della Tirannide and Del Principe* — two treatises which examine the cultural achievements under despotism and conclude that literature can have true power only in a free government. |
| | *Filippo* — a play about a Spanish tyrant who was murdered by his own sons. |
| | Biography: *The Life of Alfieri*, translated by Sir Henry McAnally, 1953. |

*THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

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|---|---|
| Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) | One of the three greatest Italian literary figures of the 19th century. Brought the Tuscan dialect into modern literary usage. |
| | *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed) — a modern classic steeped in romanticism and national feelings. |
| | Biography: A. Colquhoun, *Manzoni and his Times*, 1954. |
| Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) | Italy's greatest poet of the 19th century, steeped in profound philosophical insight and unrestrained despair. |
| | *To Italy, The Approach of Death, To Spring* — morbid poems lamenting the emptiness of the world. |
| | Biography: J.H. Whitfield, *Giacomo Leopardi*, 1954. |
| Giovanni Verga (1840-1922) | Sicilian literary exponent of "realism" in literature. Two volumes of his works have been translated by D.H. Lawrence. |
| | *Vita dei Campi* (Life in the Fields) |
| | *Novelle Rusticane* (Rustic Stories) — collection of regional Italian folk tales. |

*THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*

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| Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863-1938) | Flamboyant Byronic figure, Italian air ace during World War I, links the Risorgimento to the Fascist era; "the Duce of Italian literature." |
| | *Novelle della Pescara* — collection of tales about the Abruzzi region. |
| | *Il Piacere* (Pleasure) — his first novel about refined sensuality and degradation. |
| Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) | Sicilian playwright, novelist and short story writer. Nobel Prize winner in 1934. |
| | *Six Characters in Search of an Author* — his most famous play without acts or defined scenes about "unrealized" actors and their search for reality. |
| Alberto Moravia (1907-) | Novelist, essayist and film critic. Perhaps the one living Italian writer with a worldwide reputation. |
| | *The Conformist* — a psychological masterpiece of moral corruption in Fascist Italy. |
| Ignazio Silone (1900-) | Italian ex-communist, anti-fascist writer whose *Bread and Wine* aroused the same passionate interest as Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*. |
| | *Bread and Wine* — story of a communist intellectual in Italy during the war and his experiences while in hiding. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Luigi Barzini (1908-) | Son of a great Milanese journalist, studied at Columbia University and was the celebrated foreign correspondent for Milan's *Corriere della Sera.* He was elected to the Italian Parliament in 1969. |
| | *The Italians* — a full-length portrait of Italy. |
| | *From Caesar to the Mafia* — twenty-one essays on a variety of topics dealing with Italy past and present. |
| Salvatore Quasimodo (1901-1968) | Italian poet awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1959. "A poet desperately yearning for a conversation with mankind." |
| | *The Selected Writings of Salvatore Quasimodo* (London: 1973). |

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# Part II: Italian Immigration and Settlement

# Chapter 4: Italians in America: The Formative Years (1600 - 1880)

“Tutti gli uomini sono per natura egualmente liberi e indipendenti. Quest’eguaglianza e necessaria per costituire un governo libero. Bisogna che ognuno sia uguale all’altro nel diritto naturale.” (All men are by nature equally free and independent. Such equality is necessary in order to create a free government. All men must be equal to each other in

natural law. Philip Mazzei, The Virginia Gazette, 1774. Translated by a friend and neighbor, Thomas Jefferson.)

The Age of Exploration found not a few Italians in the ranks of those who opened up the Americas for habitation and colonization. Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci, Verrazzano, Tonti, Kino all prepared the way for permanent settlement in North America. While their discoveries excited the imagination of other Italians, of other Europeans, it was the English whose well-organized and quickly successful settlements promoted the actual migration of non-English Europeans to America's coastal regions. Some of those early colonists in the 17th and 18th centuries were Italians seeking freedom of religion or political and economic opportunities. Their story is an important one frequently neglected in the narrative of American history during these formative years.

## Early Settlers

To understand Italian colonization efforts during the 16th and 17th centuries it is necessary to realize that many Italians were already dispersed throughout Europe, living in communities in England, Germany, Flanders, France and Spain. Although England was not the only location of early Italian settlers it was perhaps the most important community from which Italian colonists were drawn. A major obstacle in tracing these colonists is that many were Italian born but naturalized in England. The following list, taken from the *Huguenot Society of London*

*Publications* reveals that all of the following "English" persons were naturalized and anglicized Italians:[1]

John Gray
Sir John Portinary
John Gillam
Doctor Sesar, physician
Giles Corner
Gaspyn Sonhall, physician
Peter Foxe

The custom of changing names, either voluntarily or during the naturalization process, is apparently not a recent one.

The nascent English colonies, once having survived their first winters of discontent, now were in need of artisans and craftsmen to create some form of cultural permanence in their communities. As early as 1610 Virginia received several Italian craftsmen at the invitation of the colony. In 1622 Venetian glassmakers, working in England, were brought to Jamestown to teach and to promote their trade. At about the same time Italians were brought as *vignerons* to begin grape cultivation. Obviously the colonies were impressed with these early settlers because they continued to encourage Italian migration. By 1632 a few Italians had settled in Catholic Maryland and soon created a haven for Italian refugees. A declaration of the Lords Proprietaries of Maryland in 1649 encouraged Italians to migrate to the colony and authorized the governor "from time to time to grant lands unto any persons for French, Dutch, or Italian

1. *Huguenot Society of London Publications*, Volume X, Part I cited in Giovanni Schiavo, *Italian-American History*, I (New York: 1947), p. 16.

descent upon the same terms and provisos as those of British or Irish descent."[2]

The first sizable Italian immigration to North America involved certain religious refugees, the Waldensians, who migrated from Holland in 1657. About 167 Waldensians were brought over and settled in New Castle, Delaware, as well as in New Amsterdam. Later in the 17th century other displaced Italian Waldensians were enlisted in a plan to colonize Virginia. Money for their transportation to the colony from their temporary location in Switzerland was furnished by the English government.

A plan to settle the English province of East Florida with Southern Europeans ended in disaster in 1767. The settlement of New Smyrna was set up under feudal conditions for a thousand Italians, Greeks and Minorcans. Unsanitary conditions, harsh overseers and an outbreak of malaria ended in a revolt by the Italians led by one Carlo Forni. He and a group of 30 tried to seize a boat and escape to the Spanish Keys and freedom. They were captured and hanged by the British as pirates. On the Eve of the American Revolution most of the remaining Italians had died of scurvy or malaria, or had escaped to St. Augustine or the Bahamas.

It is ironic that the first Italians to come to the New World stood on the decks of the ships that they captained while later their countrymen would arrive as refugees or indentured servants, huddled together as steerage passengers in the decks below.

2. Quoted from the *Maryland Archives*, Volume I, p. 144 and Volume III, p. 232 and cited by Lawrence Pisani, *The Italian in America* (New York: 1957), pp. 20-21.

From the very beginning, however, Italians participated in the economic and artistic life of this country. Although a comparatively small number of Italians, perhaps 2000, were in America at the time of the Revolution, these transplanted Italians did actively participate in the creation of this new country.

## Philip Mazzei

In the third quarter of the 18th century one man stands out among the dozen or so prominent Italians active in the affairs of North America and the Revolution. He was Philip Mazzei, a Florentine nobleman and medical student who inspired Jefferson and Thomas Paine in their political writings. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to label Mazzei as an "assisting Founding Father" for his impact upon the philosophical principles of this country.

Mazzei came to America in 1773, a cosmopolitan traveler alone in a thoroughly English political climate. He had lived in England for eighteen years and was aware from first-hand experience how careless that government was of its people. American colonies were humbly petitioning for the redress of certain grievances; but Mazzei immediately advocated a complete break with the island which ruled the continent. This idea in particular was later picked up and elaborated upon by another immigrant, Thomas Paine, in his pamphlet *Common Sense*, written in 1776.

In 1773 Mazzei landed with a small party of settlers in Virginia some four miles from Williamsburg and was met by some of the colony's leading citizens, including Washington. Mazzei was

invited to spend a few days at Monticello and Jefferson showed Mazzei a 400-acre tract adjacent to his land which was for sale.

At a most fortunate moment in American history Jefferson and Mazzei became political collaborators and close friends.

Philip Mazzei wished to join in the affairs of this country immediately but Patrick Henry insisted that he could best help the cause with his pen and oratory. As a contributor to the Virginia Gazette, Mazzei used the pen name "Furioso" and had his lines translated by Jefferson (who, incidentally, spoke, read and wrote fluently in Italian). In one issue Mazzei wrote and Jefferson translated the following passage:

> All men are by nature equally free and independent. Such equality is necessary in order to create a free government. All men must be equal to each other in natural law . . .[3]

Although Mazzei never wrote the words "all men are created equal," the exact terminology of Jefferson's Declaration, it is obviously Mazzei who furnished the concept, the philosophy, which the Virginian paraphrased in the Declaration of Independence.

In other ways too, Mazzei was instrumental in the Revolution. His letters to influential friends in France helped develop French assistance to the colonies. He obtained naval support from the

3. Margherita Marchione, *Philip Mazzei: Jefferson's Zealous Whig* (New York: 1975), p. 18.

Netherlands and Spain and funds from European friends. From Paris in 1780 John Adams wrote to Jefferson about Mazzei:

> As far as I have had the opportunity to see and hear he has been useful to us. He kept good company and a good deal of it. He talks a great deal, and is a zealous defender of our affairs. His variety of languages and his knowledge of American affairs give him an advantage which he does not neglect.[4]

Writing to Patrick Henry on June 12, 1783, Adams further commented: "Mr. Mazzei has uniformly discovered in Europe an attachment and zeal for the American Honor and Interest, which would have become any native of our country."[5]

Yet Mazzei was not accepted by all Americans. Benjamin Franklin refused to accept his credentials as a representative from Virginia. He felt that the Congress, not the states, should send agents abroad, and that they should be Americans. Mazzei was understandably indignant but this setback did not weaken his attachment to America although he did feel that he was never quite trusted in the colonies because he was a Catholic and a foreigner.

In 1785 Mazzei left America and returned to Europe, where he was granted Polish citizenship in 1791. For the remaining 25 years of his life he traveled throughout Europe, remaining in correspondence with Jefferson, Madison and the other "Founding Fathers." In 1805 Jefferson requested Mazzei to

4. *Ibid*., p. 22.
5. *Ibid*.

commission the great Italian sculptor Canova to work on the new Capitol in Washington. Instead Mazzei sent two lesser known Italian sculptors to Jefferson and wrote to the Vice President: "I thank you with all my heart . . . that I have the honor and privilege of being placed in a position to do something for my dear adopted fatherland."[6]

When Philip Mazzei died in Pisa in 1816 Jefferson recalled that "his esteem in this country was very general; his early and zealous cooperation in the establishment of our independence having acquired for him here a great degree of favor."[7] During his life he proposed radical solutions to pressing problems and inspired American leaders to decide in favor of revolution and separation. In a self-effacing way he promoted America wherever he went, in his speeches as well as in his four-volume *History of the United States*, written in 1788. Yet Mazzei is little remembered today except by those who choose to investigate beyond the traditional narratives of the American past.

## Italians and the American Revolution

It is difficult to ascertain how many Italians participated in the Revolution; their roles are usually not included in standard histories of the struggle. We do know of a few Italians such as Captains Richard Talliaferro and Ferdinando Finizzi who fought for the Americans. Captain Cosmo Medici ("Madacy" according to the Continental Congress Commission) was court martialed in 1777 but exonerated and later promoted. Colonel Lewis Nicola,

6. Eric Amfitheatrof, *The Children of Columbus* (Boston: 1973), p. 63.
7. Marchione, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

of mixed French and Italian descent, is remembered as the officer who advanced the notion that George Washington ought to be made King. On the rolls of the regiments and naval registries of the thirteen colonies are found scores of purely Italian names.

## Francesco Vigo

The name of Captain Francesco Vigo (1747-1836) has recently been recovered from historical obscurity for his efforts in assisting the Americans' acquisition of the Old Northwest Territory.

As Giovanni Schivio insists, "without Vigo, [General George Rogers] Clark would have remained an obscure frontier raider."[8] It was Vigo who financed several of Clark's expeditions, and influenced the French inhabitants of the region to assist Clark against the British. It was Vigo who personally acted as a spy for Clark on his mission against the British fort at Vincennes.

Francesco Vigo was a very successful Italian fur trader in the Midwest who offered his services and his money and risked his life for General Clark in 1778. The objective was Fort Kaskaskia. Vigo loaned Clark about $1500, influenced others to make loans of $7000, and guaranteed Clark's supplies: "Buy what you want; give orders on me and I will pay for them."[9] The troops were paid, the supplies were purchased and the fort was taken in 1778.

8. Giovanni Schiavo, *Italians in America Before the Civil War* (New York: 1934), p. 180.
9. *Ibid*., p. 182.

In 1779 Vigo was captured by Indians while on a spying mission to the British at Vincennes, the key to the Northwest Territory. Taken to Vincennes, Vigo pursuaded the British commander to free him with the help of the fort's French population who refused to supply the British unless their friend was released. Set free, Vigo made his way to General Clark with information on the fort's supply and the situation of the garrison. Fort Vincennes was taken in 1779.

After the war Vigo suffered severe financial losses. He had personally loaned Clark a total in excess of $9000 but refused to demand repayment. He did receive 400 acres of land worth some $500, the same as any resident of Vincennes who had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States. In 1800 he was made a Colonel in the Indiana state militia. Thirty six years later Vigo, aged 86, died in utter poverty, his total property totaling $77.62, an amount which did not even cover funeral arrangements. He never collected the money owed to him by Congress, although a settlement was made with his heirs in 1876.

It is impossible to estimate the effect which an incident can have upon the outcome of a military campaign. There is no question, however, that Francesco Vigo did play an important role in the opening up of the Northwest Territory for American settlement in that region. Again citing Schivio, it is quite probable that Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan would today form part of Canada instead of the United States if Fort Vincennes had not been taken by General George Rogers Clark. And without Vigo's personal assistance in that mission the fort would not have been taken.

## Italians and the Formations of American Culture

Before the stream of Italian travelers to America had opened into that flood of humanity known as the Great Immigration, Italians were already contributing to American cultural life. As musicians, artists, educators, businessmen and scientists, and as the humble builders in a mass of immigrant labor, they made their mark, however faintly perceived today in general histories of America. Many are known to us by name only, or briefly mentioned in specialized and esoteric studies. Most are referred to not as individuals but as part of the group, i.e., Italian laborers on the streets and subways of New York, on the canals and gravel pits of Pennsylvania, wherever sweat was needed as mortar to hold together the brick and stone used in the building of ever-progressing America.

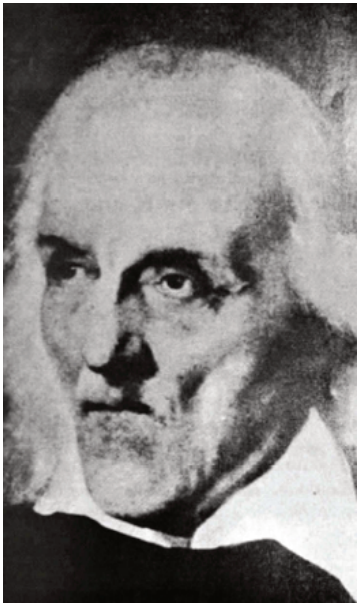
We may pause and mention only a few notables from among the many Italian migrants, to indicate that in almost every endeavor of American life prior to the Civil war Italians played a role. In music for example, Italian opera was first brought to America in 1750 with the *Beggar's Opera*. By 1758 troupes of Italians were touring the colonies giving concerts; John Palma of Philadelphia gave the first concert on record in the colonies in 1757. Giovanni Gualdo, an Italian wine merchant, was a well-known composer and performer in Philadelphia in 1767. Thomas Jefferson recruited the first professional band for the United States Marine Corps from Italy in 1803; fourteen Italians were brought from Catania and launched the distinguished career of the Marine Corps Band. Finally, American opera began to take firm root in 1843 through the efforts of Ferdinardo Palma, an Italian

restaurant owner and lover of opera. From that time onward Italian singers and orchestra performers were brought to America to perform regularly in the opera houses throughout the country, especially in New Orleans, Philadelphia, and New York.[10]

In the field of education Pietro Bachi and Luigi Monti, both Sicilian, taught the first college courses in Italian at Harvard University in 1825. They were also authors of numerous books in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. At Columbia University Lorenzo da Ponte was professor of Italian language and literature from 1842 to 1846 and wrote *A History of the Italian Language and Literature* in New York. He was succeeded by Eleuterio Felice Foresti, a political exile; Foresti also was appointed Professor of Italian at the University of the City of New York in 1842. Italians were also to be found on the faculty of Brown University in the 1850's.

There were many more Italians teaching at the numerous Catholic colleges and seminaries in the United States in the 19th century.

10. Giovanni Schiavo, *Italian-American History*, 2 Volumes (New York: 1947) contains a mine of information relating to the cultural contributions of Italians in America.



Lorenzo da Ponte

The president of Georgetown University in 1812 was the Jesuit Father Giovanni Grassi, under whose guidance that institution was made the first Catholic university in the United States.Father Paresce, a professor of mathematics and physics at Benevento, came to America in 1845 and began the college of the Sacred Heart at Woodstock, Maryland. Another Italian priest, Father Benedict Sestini, came to Woodstock and taught astronomy and mathematics, authoring a “Catalogue of Star Colors” which still is used by astronomers today.

Artists were perhaps the most obvious Italian contributors to the cultural life of 19th century America. Constantino Brumidi, a 72-year-old Roman, was selected to decorate the Nation’s

Capitol in 1859. At $10.00 per day he painted the historical frieze in the rotunda of the Capitol building. He died having completed only about two-thirds of the work; the remaining portion was completed by Filippo Costaggini.[11] Brumidi's gravesite was lost until 1950 when the Congress passed a bill requesting funds to locate it and to erect a marker recognizing the site. Another Italian, General Louis Palma Di Cesnola, was appointed United States Consul to Cyprus and led several important archaeological expeditions. With his accumulated finds he returned to the United States and was appointed Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1878.

## Italians in the Business Community

Although American extrepreneurs of Italian descent do not appear to be prominent during the early 19th century they did have an impact on the commercial life of the country. In the maritime trade Italians were conspicuous in the first half of the century. Some were ship masters like Giovanni Dominis who sailed regularly from Boston to Honolulu and then to the Columbia River for salmon. His voyages initiated the salmon trade between the West Coast and the eastern United States.

Others were shipowners such as Egisto Fabbia and Niccolo Reggio, whose vessels plied the major oceans and seas. Reggio's ships and keen sense of competition eliminated all other ports as competitors for trade with the Near East and made Boston the undisputed world leader in the shipping trade.

11. Barbara Marinacci, *They Came From Italy* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1967), pp. 56-74.

During the first part of the twentieth century, as Italians were no longer first generation immigrants and were able to rise above a subsistence level of life, they were able to involve themselves in America's economic mainstream. The Gold Rush to California attracted hundreds of Italians westward. Though not associated directly with mining, Italians found instant wealth as food suppliers, merchants, and restauranteurs. As one miner remarked, "The miners worked the mines and the Italians then worked the miners." One shopkeeper, Mastro Gagliardo, reportedly did $5000 a day in business in Mariposa, California. In 1851, it was reported in the New York paper *L'Eco d'Italia* that there were over 600 Italians in San Francisco alone.[12] Many went into the fishing industry while others dominated the refuse and garbage collection business.

It was in agriculture that the talents of California's Italian community were most conspicuous, especially in viticulture or wine growing. Andrea Sbarboro and Pietro C. Rossi founded the Italian Swiss Agricultural Colony in 1881. Soon the Italian Swiss Colony was producing wine for all of California and in 1911 won the highest award ever given to an American champagne, the Grand Prix of the Turin International Exposition. Starting with stock worth $135,000 in 1889, Italian Swiss Colony's stock soared to $3,000,000 in 1910.

The financial history of America has been associated with the name of J.P. Morgan. Just as Morgan was the banker for men of wealth, A.P. Giannini was the banker for a generation of

12. Andrew F. Rolle, *The Immigrant Upraised* (The University of Oklahoma Press, 1968) deals extensively with the achievements of the Italian immigrant in the West.

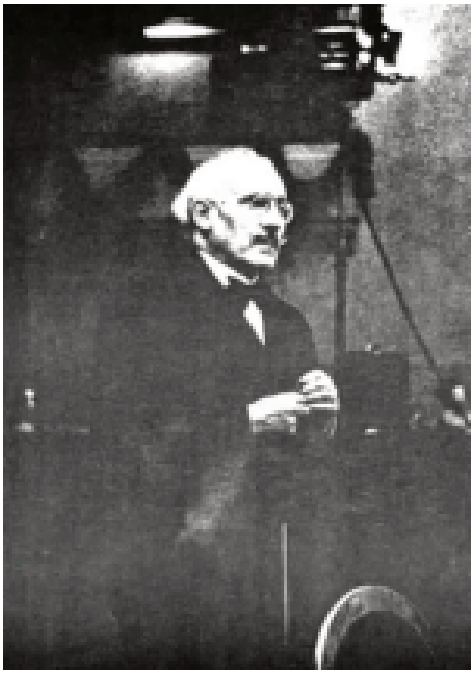
immigrants, fishermen, small ranchers and workmen. While Morgan demanded elaborate security for his investments, Giannini loaned money to laborers "with no better security than the callouses on the borrower's hands."[13]

The Giannini banking empire was born during the disastrous San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Seated behind a plank table supported by two barrels, Giannini loaned out money to distressed victims whom he knew. Soon Italians who had never trusted banks were depositing gold hoarded in stockings, tin boxes, and cloth sacks. From this humble beginning the Bank of Italy was formed and soon became the largest bank in the state in 1918, then in the nation. Under the title Bank of America, Giannini's institution became the largest banking house in the world in 1946.

In the 1920's Bank of Italy's capital helped to rebuild San Francisco and launch the movies of Chaplin and Zanuck. In the 1940's A.P. Giannini personally sold millions of dollars' worth of war bonds and was a personal friend of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. During the 1940's Giannini's personal estate of less than half a million dollars was given as scholarship money for Bank of America employees and to finance medical research. When A.P. Giannini died in 1949, he was remembered as a man who did not merely theorize about goodness but who tried to do good with his talents. His philosophy was simple: a bank should be interested in everything that concerns people. His unusual achievement was based on his special insight and imagination in

13. Marinacci, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 ff.

dealing with people, and has become for all Americans a symbol of success in one of the most respectable of businesses.



Arturo Toscanini

A. P. Giannini

# Chapter 5: The Distant Magnet: Italian Immigration to America (1870 - 1970)

Farewell, land of love, Italy, Sister-land of Paradise; With my own feet I have trodden thee, Have seen with mine own eyes; I remember, thou forgettest me, I remember thee. (Christina Georgina Rossetti, daughter of Italian exile poet Gabriele Rossetti)

## Reasons for Migration

There is a general false impression that Italians came to this country as an immediate and spontaneous result of vague political upheavals in Italy during the latter part of the 19th century. It seems that there were hardly any Italians anywhere before 1870 and after that date 600,000 were miraculously appearing each year at American immigration centers. Indeed, like the Jews, Poles and Irish, Italians were indiscriminately launched from their homeland and most landed in a helter-skelter fashion on America's shores and proceeded to populate American urban ghettos.

The evidence simply does not support these generalizations. In 1850 there were about 5000 identifiable Italian immigrants in the United States. Some had come as political or religious refugees but most were employed in this country as skilled craftsmen or professionals. Many were from northern Italy and immigration averaged less than 300 per year from 1820 to 1850. Before the mass exodus of Italians began in the 1880's, 64,361 Italians had immigrated to America since 1850.[1] They had settled in some twenty states and established colonies. These early settlers acted as one of the most important catalysts for later immigration by their countrymen.

For example, New York's Little Italy, Mulberry Street and Five Points, were already Italian centers during the Civil War. In 1849

1. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, U.S. Bureau of Census, Volume I, 1975, pp. 105-106.

the first Italian language paper, *L'Eco d'Italia* was founded, as were a number of Mutual Aid Societies. Chicago had only 100 Italians in 1860 but over 4000 by 1884. Little Italies were already in existence in Rochester, Philadelphia and New Orleans prior to the war. In the West, San Francisco in 1851 had about 600 Italians; there were over 6000 in the state of California.[2] In 1866 Salt Lake City received a group of 17 Italian families, some of whom were converted to the Mormon faith.

The Italians living in America during the Civil War were active participants in the struggle. During the war an Italian brigade known as the Garibaldi Guard was formed under the command of Colonel L. W. Tinelli. Comprised of Italian American volunteers, it saw action at Harper's Ferry, Bull Run and Gettysburg. Over 200 officers of Italian descent fought in both armies; their names are scattered in the records of the Union and Confederate navies, U.S. government records, and each individual state's accounts. It should be mentioned that President Lincoln offered Giuseppe Garibaldi a commission as Brigadier General during the first year of the conflict. But Garibaldi insisted on two stipulations. The first was that the President immediately announce the abolition of slavery as a war objective and second, that he be made commander of the entire army. Garibaldi did not press his demands because by 1860 he was already deeply involved in the liberation of his own country.

Because of the war there was a labor shortage, so that relatively open immigration was encouraged. Yet from 1860 to 1865 only about 4500 Italians came to the United States. Theirs was a

2. See Andrew F. Rolle's study *The Immigrant Upraised* for his work on Italian migration to the American West.

special labor force, that of the contracted laborer under the direction of a padrone. This system enabled Italians to be assured of passage, a job and an elementary sense of security while in America. The padrone received his “commission” from the American employer, the worker (bracciante) and often the steamship company. He acted as the middleman between labor and management . . . for a slight fee. He usually encouraged the immigrants to learn English and to quickly become a naturalized citizen. Most important, he encouraged them to write back to friends and relatives, to send money, to give tangible evidence of new-found affluence. The padrone system afforded these immigrants security resembling that of the Old World family, especially since many of them came to this country initially without their wives and children.[3]

The conclusion reached is that the first Italian immigration to America, averaging about 1000 persons per year after 1860, provided a solid base for the later waves of immigrants. To these first “trapiantati” or “transplanted ones” the myths and clichés of the New World were real and they transmitted their dreams and illusions by letter and word of mouth. They urged others to come to America, and they sent money. They returned to Italy on visit. Their message of prosperity was carried to eager listeners whose own economic and social conditions, during the late 19th century, were becoming desperate. The dream of a new life, which became a reality to some and a nightmare to others, was first given form during this post-Civil War period.

3. For an interesting discussion of the Padrone system of labor see Luciano Iorizzo, "The Padrone and Immigrant Distribution" in Tomassi and Engel, eds., *The Italian Experience in the United States* (New York, 1970) pp. 42-76.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the young French aristocrat who traveled in early 19th-century America, recorded his impressions in his marvelous *Democracy in America*. In discussing the immigrants who had come from England, France and Spain, he has left us a statement which provides a keen insight into the conditions necessitating Italian immigration. He wrote that “the happy and the powerful do not go into exile . . ,” a passage which accurately reflects the conditions of the Italian traveler in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although politically and socially apathetic, many were eager to leave the country after the unification process had skyrocketed taxes and made the plight of the worker unbearable. The history of mass Italian immigration begins, then, in the poverty and despair of southern Italy, the Mezzogiorno, during the third quarter of the 19th century.

The political reawakening of Italy known as the Risorgimento had little or no effect upon the Italians living in the Mezzogiorno. The newly unified state ignored domestic problems and spent its energy and its meager wealth attempting to build an empire in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Increased taxes went to support these disastrous adventures, and those least able to afford the taxes were forced into financial ruin or flight.

In 1880 about 80% of Italy’s population depended for sustenance on agriculture. Although the rhetoric of the Risorgimento promised internal improvements and land redistribution, most Italians did not profit from the unification process. Indeed the problems of life were solved by doing essentially what one’s ancestors had done. Farming techniques

had not changed since the Roman control of the peninsula; the hoe, the mattock and bare hands were the extent of available farming implements. Booker T. Washington, visiting Italy in 1911, was amazed at the primitive farming practices in use, comparing the tools to the ones black slaves had used in the ante-Bellum South.[4]

Italy's agricultural problems were numerous and complex, to be sure. In the first place, land was concentrated in the hands of a few owners with landless peasants working the soil. One Italian historian, Antonio Genovesi, concluded that during the early 1800's 59 out of 60 families in the south did not even own enough land to be buried in. Many were landless day laborers, or *contadini*, who vied for their daily wages with others of their class.

Secondly, population growth had outstripped the Gross National Product between 1870 and 1900, producing a drastic decline in personal per capita income. By 1900 there were some 100 people per square mile in Italy with the population on the increase. To counterbalance this phenomenon the laborers moved from one section of the country to another in search of minimal employment. In 1900, for example, 1,000,000 laborers left their homes in the south for periods lasting two months to one year to work in other provinces.[5] Some went to South America but the health hazards and oftentimes intolerable working conditions militated against immigration. Thus

4. Booker T. Washington, "Naples and the Land of the Emigrant," *The Outlook*, XCVIII (June, 1911) pp. 295-300.
5. An excellent study of Italian life in the period just prior to the mass immigration from Italy is found in Joseph Lopreato's *Italian Americans* (New York: 1970).

mobility for economic sustenance was already a part of the accepted mentality of the southern Italian laborer at the time of great immigration. It will be shown that this type of semi-transient life is a feature also of Italian-immigrant life in America.

Italy was not a particularly fertile land to work, exhausted after hundreds of years of continued use. Even more important was the competition of the semi-tropic lands of Florida and California, which produced traditionally Italian crops such as citrus fruits and virtually ruined thousands of growers in Sicily and Calabria. Imported wheat from the United States and Russia, combined with high tariffs, spelled economic ruin for the Italian landowner and disaster to millions of contadini.

Even when work was to be found, wages were pitiful. Agricultural workers averaged 16-30 cents a day while seasonal workers were receiving 50 cents per day. Carpenters in Italy were getting 30 cents to $1.40 a day or about $8.40 a week. In America, carpenters could expect about $18.00 for a 50-hour week. One immigrant, Giuseppe Freda, was an intern on Welfare Island in New York City and could not comprehend his first paycheck. “My God . . . this is more than even my professors got in Italy.”[6] Thus another positive inducement was added to the growing list in favor of leaving the old land and living in the new.

Overpopulation, lack of arable land, rising taxes, starvation all combined to produce a hopeless situation for most Italian farm

6. Quoted in Luciano Iorizzo and Salvatore Mondello, *The Italian Americans* (New York: 1970) p. 38.

laborers. The cities were worse, according to Booker T. Washington. He wrote that Negroes in the slums of New Orleans, Philadelphia or New York City were much better off than the "corresponding classes in Naples and other Italian cities."[7] The urban centers did not provide an escape valve. By the turn of the century only immigration and relocation offered any plausible remedy for Italy's millions. The "escape" was not especially difficult at first. Steerage from Naples to New York City was $15.00 in 1880 but nearly doubled to $28.00 by 1900.

Padrones and steamship companies employed agents on the peninsula who were only too eager to recruit immigrants. The Italian government quickly realized the benefits immigration would have in easing the economic and demographic burdens of her people.[8] Especially helpful to the Italian economy was the money sent back to relatives from America, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. Since the average Italian arrived in America with less than $50.00, the drain on the Italian economy was slight.

Thus there were various motives, some negative to be sure, that stimulated Italian immigration to North America in the 1880's. Some historians have labeled this combination of motives "push and pull." In the first category were those conditions in the receiving society which appealed to the immigrant. One of these, often overlooked, was the positive reactions to America from friends and relatives who had already made the journey. In sum,

7. B. T. Washington, *loc. cit.*
8. A good account of the travails of immigrant travels can be found in Ann Novotny's *Strangers at the Door* (New York: 1971) and Terry Coleman's *Going to America* (New York: 1972).

the attractiveness of the new country politically, socially, and most important, economically, replaced the old country's feeble attempt to provide the necessities and later the inspirations of everyday life.

Ellis Island, 1923

Italian Immigrants climbing the iron steps leading to the reception hall, Ellis Island, 1905.


## Patterns of Migration

For whatever motives, over 5 million Italians immigrated to this country during the period 1875-1930. Of these about 80% were from the south of Italy. They were different in culture and outlook from the first Italians who had arrived, and this distinction was to become embedded in the statistical information provided by both the Italian and United States immigration figures. Wherever Italians would travel they would be immediately divided into two groups, designating their region

of birth. It came to pass that those of southern origin were assumed, ipso facto, to be illiterate and semi-barbaric.

For the interested reader the following regional breakdown illustrates the migration patterns of the southern Italian during the years 1861-1961:[9]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Naples area | 1,105,802 | (27.4%) |
| Abruzzi and Molise | 652,972 | (16.2%) |
| Apulia | 300,152 | (7.4%) |
| Basilicata | 232,389 | (5.8%) |
| Calabria | 522,422 | (13.0%) |
| Sicily | 1,205,788 | (29.9%) |
| Sardinia | 14,669 | (.04%) |

From the central and northern regions only 1,024,572 persons emigrated. Before 1860 the northern Italian had dominated the trickle of Italian emigration. But from 1876 to 1900 only some 99,000 were from the north out of a total of some 772,792 persons.

Many Italians had migrated to South America before 1895 and were heavily concentrated in Brazil and Argentina. Italian labor had built the city of Buenos Aires and had laid the country's railroad lines. About half of the immigrants to Argentina from 1857 to 1926 were Italian. More than a third of all the immigrants to Brazil between 1884 and 1941 were Italians – the

9. *Un Secolo di statistiche Italiane: Nord e Sud* (1861-1961) (Roma: 1961) p. 124.

largest immigrant group in that country.[10] Yet only about one-third of all Italian immigrants finally settled in South American countries. What then was the attraction to the North American continent?

Beyond the mythology created by the American and foreign steamship lines, beyond the rhetoric of the padroni and their agents, there was the basic observable reality of economic opportunity and success in America. The money sent back to the villages from strange-sounding American cities like Knobview, Missouri; Canastota, New York; Valdese, North Carolina; and Olneyville, Rhode Island was potent evidence that America offered more than promises.

## Statistical Information on Early Italian Immigrants

What do we know about the early Italian immigrant? By using the statistical data provided by the *Reports of the United States Immigration Commission of 1912*, we can arrive at a composite analysis of the Italian immigrant community for that year.[11] Of the 10,000 Italians questioned out of some 157,134 who immigrated in 1912, at least 50% had been engaged in farming or farm labor in Italy prior to immigrating. Only about 1000 were involved in manufacturing trades. Of the total number of immigrants almost 20,000 were classified as professional or skilled workers, including lawyers, engineers, musicians, physicians, tailors and jewelers. Only about 3000 of the 10,000

10. Robert F. Foerster, *The Italian Immigration in our Time* (Cambridge: 1919) pp. 223-310. See also Robert F. Harney, "Chiaroscuro: Italians in Toronto, 1885-1915" in *Italian Americana*, Volume I, No. 2, 1975.
11. *Reports to the U.S. Immigration Commission*, 1912.

questioned arrived with $50.00 in cash on their persons. In 1900 the per capita amount had been $8.84 per immigrant.

Within five years after their arrival more than one-third would be speaking English and within 9 years about 70% would be fluent in the language. This statistic may seem surprising but it should be remembered that this figure indicates acculturation which would be primarily self-acquired. It was also one of the highest percentages that year when compared to 61% for Hungarians, 52% for Serbians, 63% for Slovenians and 49.5% for Poles living in this country less than 10 years.

Their living conditions were crowded but not excessively so, averaging 5.5 persons per apartment. In Cleveland, Italians had 1.4 persons per sleeping room, which was, incidentally, one of the highest rates in the country. One explanation for the condition may have been that almost 35% of the Italian families interviewed kept boarders, thus reducing the living space of the family. The North Italians especially were well known for this practice, having a 43% incidence of renting their apartments to boarders.

Economically Italians were among the most poorly paid while their women were among the highest paid. In 1912 the average income for a native white American was $14.37 per week, while a Negro earned about $10.66 a week. The North Italian immigrant averaged $11.28 a week; the southern Italian a meager $9.61. Compared with that of other immigrant groups this pay was indeed inadequate. For example, Germans averaged $13.63; Russian Hebrews, $12.71; Norwegians, $15.28; and Irish, $13.01. It can be easily perceived that the Italian was

relatively low on the economic ladder. For this immigrant, the best paying jobs were the most dangerous: copper mining which paid $13.89 to $14.51 a week or work in the steel mills which paid about $13.00 for a 60-hour week. Italian women fared better than their female counterparts in the other ethnic groups. While most women over 18 averaged about $7.00 per week the Italian women engaged in the silk industry were making $9.32 per week, a salary approaching the earnings of the Southern Italian male.

The national average income in the United States in 1912 was $865 per year for whites and $517 for Negroes. Of the sixty-odd ethnic groups considered on the *Immigration Commission's Report* the lowest yearly income was among the Serbians with $462 per year; the Scotch were highest with $1142. Italians were averaging $613 per year, that figure indicating the amount earned by the head of the household. If the wife and children could also work a more secure existence could be expected. Nevertheless a full 75% of all Italian families were making less than $750 yer year in 1912. For the Southern Italian the figure was only $600, one of the clearest indications of the economic plight of the Italian immigrant.

The charge has been made against Italians that they were “birds of passage,” itinerant laborers who came to this country, made their “fortunes” and returned to Palermo and Naples each year to redistribute their wealth among family and friends. Why Italians were singled out is not surprising as the statistics will indicate. In 1912 35% of all wives of Italian immigrants remained in Italy while their husbands emigrated to America to take on jobs.

This factor will help to explain the migratory factor in Italian immigration, especially during the early 20th century. But the 34% figure is small compared to that of the East European and Balkan immigrants whose numbers range from 75% absenteeism for Greek wives to 90% for Bulgarian women. These statistics, when compared with those of the "older" immigrants such as the Germans and Irish, reinforced the impression that Southern and East Europeans were "birds of passage."

Another fact reinforced this impression. The frequency of return to the homeland by the Italian male was another indication of the "shiftless" position of the Southern European immigrant. In 1912 about 168,000 Italian aliens were admitted to the United States while 118,489 returned to Italy. Of those who left about 71,000 had been in this country less than five years. Without doubt this was a very telling indictment against the alien; but it does not reveal the true reasons for this migration nor the frequency of the migration back to America. Obviously, many were returning to be with the families they had been forced to leave behind. Most returned to America after a few months to begin once again the ordeal of loneliness and toil in the American labor market.

A recent study by Francesco Cerase dealing with this continuing phenomenon of return immigration in more recent times suggests that the frequency of returned immigrants was in proportion to their stay in the United States. In other words, the longer an Italian lived in America the more was the likelihood that he would return at least once to the old country. When he

did return he did so for periods of less than a year and returned to the United States. When he traveled to Italy for periods longer than a year he usually had lived in America for 20 years or more and was returning to Italy to retire.[12] In short, the great majority of Italian immigrants came to this country to stay and made one or two return trips back to Italy during their residence here, with almost 40% never returning to their former homeland.

## Occupations of Early Immigrants

When they came to America during the early part of this century, what kinds of work did they do? Basically illiterate and unskilled, many Italians worked as common laborers, railroad employees, canal diggers, or in sewer construction. They harvested crops, then later grew crops in California and mined for copper in Nevada. In New York State every city and village that was touched by the railroad lines had its contingent of Italian day laborers. The old myth, half believed by the immigrant, that the streets of New York City were paved with gold, offered a rude lesson in life's pitfalls. When they got to New York they immediately realized that the streets were *not* paved with gold. Secondly, the streets were not paved at all, and finally, *they* were expected to pave them! In short, any job which could be obtained through the padrone contract system, any daily work, fell upon the shoulders of the immigrant work force.

By 1910 signs of upward mobility among the sons and daughters

12. Francesco Cerase, "Nostalgia or Disenchantment: Considerations on Return Migration," Tomassi and Engel, eds., *The Italian Experience in the United States* (New York, 1970) pp. 23-39.

of the immigrant were becoming increasingly evident. Day labor was no longer their only source of employment; they sought out and found more stable employment as clerks, telephone and telegraph operators and sales personnel. Some Italians in the western states became intimately involved with agriculture, such as Marco Giovanni Fontana, who began the "Del Monte" line of canned foods. As Iorizzo and Mondello concluded in their superb study of Italian Americans: "The Italians had confirmed the fact that geographic and upward job mobility were attainable in one short generation in America."[13] This process was not unnoticed by the masses of Italians still remaining in Italy, about to embark on the great exodus of the twentieth century. The Italian's success was also visible to the Anglo-American population who viewed the process with alarm and later with some of the most vehement campaigns directed against any ethnic community.

It should be mentioned at this point that the work patterns of the Italian male have changed little from one generation to the next. In the 1970 census, which included many third generation Italians, a minimal change is observable in the type of work engaged in by first, second and third generation men. For example, of the first generation males of Italian extraction 3% were engaged in professional endeavors, and only 6% of second generation males were classified as professionals. In 1950, 24% of first generation Italians were craftsmen and 22% of second generation men were still craftsmen. Sixty-six per cent in 1950 earned their living as craftsmen, operatives, service workers or laborers while the percentage of such work for their father's

13. Iorizzo and Mondello, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

generation was only slightly higher at 72%. In 1970, of all Italian-American males of all generations, the figure was still over 56% laborers. Second generation Italian-Americans were doing better than their parents only in the sense that they were doing better economically at essentially the same kind of work.

## Present Italian Immigration to America

Immigration of the “traditional” ethnic groups has continually been perceived as a static phenomenon taking place roughly at the turn of the century and abruptly declining sometime after 1930. This estimation is hardly accurate and a gross oversimplification when applied to ethnic groups in general and Italians in particular. The peak year for Italian immigration was 1907, when 285,731 persons arrived, and was well over 200,000 yearly until 1919 when less than 2000 Italians were admitted. Despite rigid immigration restrictions aimed at curbing southern and eastern immigration, Italians immigrated at a rate of about 5000 per year until 1940.[14]

Since 1946 some 1,365,000 Italians have settled in the Americas, 725,000 in Canada and the United States and 640,000 in Latin America. Approximately 300,000 Italians have settled in the United States since 1946 with an insignificant number of immigrants returning to their homeland. Their numbers have increased the population of this country’s Italian-Americans but to what figure it is impossible to determine. Italian-American newspapers have placed the figure at 21 million, while the

14. Joseph Velikonja, "Italian Immigrants in the U.S. in the Sixties" in Tomassi and Engel, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 23-39.

United States Census in 1970 reported 4,543,935 first and second generation Italians living in this country, or about 2.53% of the population.

The majority of Italian-Americans today live in urban centers, 91.8% to be exact, and tend to remain in the cities while many of the other ethnic groups have moved to the suburban environments. Seventy percent of all Italians live in that vast stretch of America known as Megalopolis, the area north of Boston to south of Norfolk, Virginia. Although some Italians continue to populate smaller ethnic enclaves such as Sunnyside and Tontitown, Arkansas; Rosati, Missouri; and Roseto, Pennsylvania, it is in the largest cities that most Italians have settled and continue to remain. The following chart lists some of the major concentrations of Italians, their numbers, and their percentage of the total population in 1970:[15]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| New York City | 1,531,352 | 10.3% |
| Philadelphia | 248,558 | 5.7% |
| Chicago | 217,788 | 1.0% |
| Boston | 202,987 | 7.8% |
| Pittsburgh | 138,429 | 5.7% |
| Cleveland | 67,721 | 3.8% |
| New Haven, Conn. | 49,172 | 15.8% |
| Waterbury, Conn. | 25,987 | 14.3% |

In 1970 about 22,000 Italians were granted immigrant visas.

15. *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization of Immigrants*, Annual Report, 1970.

During the 10-year period 1964-1973 over 202,000 Italians have been granted visas, of whom 176,000 came from the Palermo and Naples region. It is reported by the Nationalities Services Center that Cleveland accounts for about 5,000 immigrants each year of whom approximately 500 come from Italy. But for all practical purposes the flood of Italian immigration has been channeled to the northeastern seaboard cities.

With Cuyahoga county in general and Cleveland especially losing population, it is to be expected that many Italians also are part of that exodus. Indeed the general shift of Italians in Cleveland can be demonstrated by the population chart of Table G. Internal migration in the 1970's has replaced the immigration of the 1920's and 1930's for the Italians in Cleveland.

# Chapter 6: Anti-Italian Sentiment in America

Nixon: The Italians. We mustn't forget the Italians. Must do something for them. The, Ah, we forget them. They're not, we, Ah, they're not like us. Difference is they smell different, they look different, act different. After all, you can't blame them. Oh no. Can't do that. They've never had the things we've had. Ehrlichman: That's right. Nixon: Of course, the trouble is. . . the trouble is, you can't find one that's honest. (1973, Watergate Tapes)

By 1903 there were about 1,200,000 Italians in the United States, 12% of whom lived in the ghettos of the New York City area. In 1903 another 200,000 Italians had arrived, mostly from the Mezzogiorno, and they were followed by another 193,000 the next year. Nearly 286,000 more flocked to Ellis Island and Castle Gardens in 1907, marking a peak in the influx of Italian

aliens. By 1921, when the first quota act was passed by Congress, the Italians had surpassed the Irish as the second largest foreign-born group in America after the German Americans.

They poured into the ghettos of New York City, the "Little Italy's" of Cleveland, New Orleans, Chicago and San Francisco, and found shelter and companionship in the company of their fellow townsmen, *campanilismo*. But with their growing numbers they generated first an uneasiness, then contempt, finally overt discrimination from Anglo-Americans and other ethnic groups against this new man, the "WOP." Prior to the twentieth century there were indications that the southern European was indeed part of that "wretched refuse" referred to by Emma Lazarus, whose poem *The New Colossus* is inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich expressed his "poetic" concern for this infusion of aliens into the bloodstream of civilized America in his poem, *The Unguarded Gates* (1895):

> Wide open and unguarded stand our gates
> and through them presses a wild motley throng
> Men from the Volga and Tatar Steppes
> Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho
> Malayan, Scythian, Celt and Slav
> Flying the old world's poverty and scorn . . .

Although Italians were not specifically singled out they were considered by many Americans as part of the "motley throng" which passed through America's immigration stalls. John Fiske,

traveling in Italy, printed his observations that "The lowest Irish are far above the level of these creatures (Italians)" while the great Emerson rejoiced that the early immigrants brought "the light complexion, the blue eyes of Europe" rather than "the black eyes, the black drop" of southern Europe. Before a congressional committee investigating Chinese Immigration in 1891 a west coast construction boss commented that "You don't call . . . an Italian a white man . . . an Italian is a Dago."[1]

What prompted this attitude toward Italians as swarthy, lawless, poverty ridden drones upon the American culture and society? What caused the environment in which a poor immigrant becomes a "dago" or "wop" while a wealthy one is immediately associated with the Mafia, and where the stereotyped organ grinder, anarchist, and mafioso become synonomous with the Italian? The answers have their basis in both the fictionalization of the immigrant and in isolated but nevertheless concrete realities associated with the Italian.

Even a cursory examination of anti-Italian sentiment in America will substantiate the charge that they have been and continue to be subjected to some of the most scurrilous campaigns ever directed against any ethnic group. This chapter in the history of the immigrant should be told, if for no other reason than to make people aware that no ethnic group or racial minority has ever been spared from experiencing the trauma of prejudice and intolerance. Italians were lynched in the South as were blacks, in some cases for permitting blacks equal status with whites in their shops. "No Irish Need Apply" signs had their Italian counterpart

1. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Jersey: Atheneum Books, 1963) pp. 63ff.

in the industrial centers of America. "Teutonic" arrogance against the Jew was also directed against the southern Italians in that pseudo-historical, quasi-sociological "classic," *The Passing of the Great Race* by Madison Grant (1916). Prejudice, intolerance, the degradation of others to gratify one's own sense of superiority, are not confined to one group to the exclusion of all others. Many have felt the impulse to create the fantasy of superiority through the downgrading of others. Individually it is occasionally tolerated as a personality quirk. When it becomes a collective and prolonged effort it can lead to genocide.

To overemphasize and to become obsessed with this particularly unpleasant episode in the history of any ethnic group eventually reaches a point of diminishing returns when the question of harmonious inter-ethnic relations is concerned. In every instance one group will continue to be seen as the oppressor even though the particular events involved may have occurred many years before the present confrontation. To pretend that prejudicial activity never occurred creates a myopic illusion, for one who is totally ignorant in this regard is liable to participate in its repetition against another group. To be aware of all aspects of one's cultural heritage is essential. But to crouch behind the prejudices of the past as a shield to justify present social, economic or political militancy invites only criticism. Artificial "justifications" relying on historical precedents rarely explain present realities and only confuse the issues. With this thought in mind we turn briefly to examine some of the underlying causes for a feeling of hostility toward Italian Americans which have their roots in late nineteenth century America.

With their numbers increasing yearly in the eastern cities, the presence of Italians took on a sinister form in the 1880's and 1890's. Pushed together in the squalor of the urban ghettos such as Mulberry Bend in New York, or the North End in Boston or the West Side near Hull House in Chicago, some manifestations of crime were inevitable in tenement environment. Despite newspaper diatribes against Italians, and most especially against southerners, police reports in Boston and New York City indicate that Italians were no more of a criminal element than any other foreign-born group in the city. In Boston the Italians numbered 7% of the population, yet their arrest rate was 6.1% of the total foreign-born. New York City counted Italians as 11.5% of its population in 1903, yet their arrest rate was about 12% of the foreign total. Indeed, as late as 1963 James W. Vander Zander pointed out that the rate of criminal convictions among Italian immigrants was less than that among American-born whites.[2]

Yet statistics do not dispel fears created by personal experience. There is no doubt some truth in the argument then stated that some Italian criminals were deportees from Italy to this country. In any concentration of thousands of people some are bound to turn to violence as a solution to economic problems. In New York City in 1914 there were reported in the papers 60 murders committed by Italians during the first 8 months of the year, including two policemen. Many if not most of the assaults were Italian-upon-Italian. Rarely did the violence spread into the other ethnic neighborhoods or into the Anglo-American sections of

2. James W. Vander Zander, *American Minority Relations*, quoted by Richard Gambino, *Blood of My Blood* (New York: Doubleday, 1974) pp. 253-254.

the city. But the impression had been made and sunk deep into the minds of concerned New Yorkers. Thus the Italian was singled out for particular abuse as a criminal. Just as the Jew was stereotyped as a "shylock" and the Irish as a "drunk" so the Italian was stereotyped as the "genuine Italian bandit, black eyed and swarthy, and wicked . . . with rings in his ears . . ."[3]

It is conceivable that anti-Italian sentiments were first spawned in the violence associated with labor agitation and in the turmoil which swept the country after the Haymarket Riot in 1877. After that incident the immigrant, especially the Italian, was visualized as a lawless, disorderly striker. In 1909, six hundred Italian workers struck at West Point because they were refused entry through the main gates and roads leading to the academy. In 1910 a strike against Chicago's clothing manufacturers found some 10,000 Italians among the 40,000 strikers. In 1912 the great Lawrence textile strike was led by knife-wielding Sicilians. Italians played a key role in the founding of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

Yet they were not always on the side of labor although recent studies by Edwin Fenton and Rudolph Vecoli indicated that Italians participated actively in those unions which had the most bargaining power.[4] They were motivated by simple economic factors rather than conventional appeals to solidarity. Indeed Italians were so active in the Journeyman's Tailor's Union that

3. *The New York Times*, July 9, 1881.
4. Edwin Fenton, *Immigrants and Unions, A Case Study: Italians and American Labor*, 1870-1920. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Harvard University, 1957 and Rudolph J. Vecoli, *Chicago's Italians Prior to World War I: A Study of their Social and Economic Adjustment*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1963.

they aroused the hostility of the Jewish and Bohemians whose leadership they threatened.

In 1907 the Dillingham Commission reported that "strike after strike in Pennsylvania coalfields in the 1870's and 1880's were smashed when employers brought in Slavic, Hungarian and Italian labor." Without a doubt Poles, Blacks and Italians were frequently employed as strikebreakers and in this capacity incurred the wrath of the unemployed workers, frequently Anglo-American and Irish Americans. In 1874 mine owners in the Armstrong Coal Works in Pennsylvania brought in a group of Italian strikebreakers, as was the case more than a decade later in the Pennsylvania strikes of 1887-1888. In 1887 Italians defeated a longshoremen's strike and in 1904 a Chicago meatpackers' strike. An Irish laborer in a textile factory complained about "these dagos who come to this country and takes the vittles right out of our mouths by workin' for nothing and only wants more money to send home to Italy."[5]

One author had gone so far as to state that most Italians were so dependent upon the padrone who furnished the jobs and the transpcrtation that they unwittingly were sent to struck plants! For whatever motives, innocent or otherwise, Italians soon found themselves facing hostility in the labor marketplace, a hostility which would increase yearly as with more immigration, cheaper wages were offered and accepted by these contadini.

But the most lasting and vicious image created in America is the Italian-as-criminal myth which is still part of the American perception of the Italo-American. In 1970 one Hugh Mulligan

5. Eric Amfitheatrof, *The Children of Columbus* (Boston, 1973) p. 174.

was charged with being a key figure in New York's organized crime operations which had attempted to corrupt the city's police force. When he was indicted a spokesman for the Manhattan District Attorney's office was questioned as to how such a figure could have gone unnoticed for so long. The official replied, "We never really heard about him before two years ago. When we went after organized crime we only went after Italians."[6] The U.S. Senate Commission on Organized Crime immediately responded with a disclaimer describing organized crime as having no racial or ethnic exclusiveness. Soon after this revelation, the terms Cosa Nostra and Mafia were dropped in favor of such anemic terms as Organized Crime or the Syndicate.

Closer to home, a November 1976 letter to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* revealed the fear which Clevelanders still seem to live with. The letter questioned the integrity of the presidential candidates who, amidst campaign promises and speeches, hadn't said anything about trying "to rid our country of the dreaded MAFIA." In the January issue of *Cleveland Magazine* the following headline was printed: "Da Besta Things in Life are Righta Here in . . ." The story which followed was on Mayor Perk's defense that "there is no organized crime in Cleveland." The "dreaded Mafia," organized crime, Italians. A neat bundle of phobias and cultural differences which Americans in general have not yet figured out but continue to use indiscriminately.

6. *The New York Times*, July 24, 1974.

## Violence against Italians

The spectre of the Italian criminal has deep roots in American culture. Three major events, receiving national attention, confirmed to many Americans their worst fears and misgivings about the southern immigrant. The first incident was the murder of the Police Chief of New Orleans David C. Hennessy in 1890 as he was about to reveal the names of several *mafiosi* in the city. Fourteen Italians were arrested, nine were tried and six acquitted while a hung jury rendered no decision on the remaining three. All fourteen remained in jail however. Three of them were Italian citizens while eight others were naturalized Americans or in the process of becoming naturalized. One of the fourteen was a teenage boy.

Outraged by the decision and certain of their guilt, a mob of several thousand citizens broke into the jailhouse on March 12, 1891 and shot to death ten of the Italian inmates. While a crowd gathered outside another Italian who had been wounded was dragged outside, hanged, and shot by some twenty vigilantes. Ironically, the man, Polize, was insane and had nothing whatsoever to do with the crime. A grand jury later retroactively justified the murders of the eleven men.

Reaction to the events of March 12th evidenced a decidedly anti-Italian bias. Henry Cabot Lodge wrote that “such acts as the killing of these eleven Italians do not spring from nothing without reason or provocation . . . lawlessness and bloodshed . . . come from the quality of certain classes of immigrants of all races. If we permit the classes which furnish materials for these

societies (the Mafia) to come freely into this country we shall have these outrages to deal with . . ."[7]

Protests against the murders came from the Italian government, and President Harrison denounced the killings. Congress later awarded $25,000 to the families of the three Italian citizens but for the other eight Americans or those in the process of becoming Americans no compensation was given.

The *New York Times* was hardly ambiguous in its position on the matter. The *Times* first condemned the Italian government for the audacity to demand compensation of any kind since it was "well known" that the government had long used America as a dumping ground for her "Italian outlaws." As to the matter of New Orleans the *Times* opened in a similar manner:[8]

These sneaking and cowardly Sicilians, the descendants of bandits and assassins, who have transported to this country the lawless passions, the cutthroat passions and the oathbound societies of their native country, are to us a pest without mitigation. Lynch law was the only recourse open to the people of New Orleans.

In Chicago, where a sizable Sicilian community had been established, the obvious connection between that group and the Mafia was established. "Murder is the foundation stone of the social fabric in Sicily . . . In any community of Sicilian immigrants in America, whenever one man is able to bully

7. Henry Cabot Lodge, "Lynch Law and Unrestricted Immigration" in *The North American Review*, 152 (May, 1891), 602-605.
8. *The New York Times*, March 16-17, 1891.

and levy blackmail on the rest, that man is Capo Mafia . . .”[9] A “mafia conspiracy” had begun in America and the Italian American population was on trial.

The fear created by the thought of an organized conspiracy of Italian Mafiosi gave way to other forms of hysteria and violence. In 1888 the Buffalo Superintendent of Police ordered the arrest of virtually the entire Italian population of that city following the knifing of an Italian by another. Of 325 Italians arrested two were charged with possessing a weapon. Four years earlier in Altoona, Pennsylvania, some 200 Italians had been deported on suspected criminal charges. In Denver, Colorado, an Italian was lynched in 1895 after being acquitted in a murder trial. In 1908 a crazed Italian anarchist shot a German-born Catholic priest during mass in Denver and once again a wave of distrust swept over the Italians, especially those who were involved with “foreign” political philosophies.

The question is rarely asked if there was in fact a basis for this fear of an Italian criminal conspiracy in the United States. Certainly there was an abundance of intra-ethnic feuding which did lead to outbreaks of violence, knifings and murders. And when a community has experienced acts of lawlessness within its own boundaries by a particular group and later learns that other communities have had similar acts, it is natural to connect these nonrelated acts in a “conspiracy.” When an incident takes on national significance, such as that of the New Orleans lynchings, the fear is heightened.

9. Quoted in Luciano Iorizzio and Salvatore Mondello, "The Origins of Italian American Criminality" in *Italian Americana*, I (Spring, 1975) p. 219.

There is also the charge of inter-ethnic feuding between an established group and these who have arrived more recently. Superintendent Hennessey in New Orleans was Irish, as was Captain Kilroy who led the raids against the "dagos" in Buffalo. The following report compiled in 1910 with the assistance of the New York City Police Department, then largely Hibernacized, also points out that Italians were notorious for their criminality. And yet the conclusions reached by this Immigration Report on "Immigration and Crime" were quite interesting. Some conclusions were as follows:[10]

In New York State Italians had the highest percentage of violent personal offenses but in Chicago, Lithuanians and Slavonians had earned that distinction.

Italians ranked first in Abduction and Kidnapping in New York State. In Chicago Greeks took the lead in that crime.

The conclusion which one could reach would be that in New York State, which had a decidedly heavy Italian concentration, major crimes were more often than not committed by Italians. In Chicago, where the influx of east Europeans had dominated the foreign-born population, their representation in criminality was also higher relative to the population. That was not, however, the conclusion reached by the *Immigration Report*.

It concluded that Italians with criminal records were flocking to America. It supported this contention with "popular opinion voiced by the press" and "the great assistance displayed by the

10. Salvatore J. LaGumina, ed., *WOP: A Documentary History of Anti-Italian Discrimination in the United States* (New York: Straight Arrow Books, 1973) pp. 72ff.

New York City police department in tracing Italian criminals in New York." Therefore, Italians were criminal because the police and the press said that they were! If all roads led to Rome, likewise all avenues of criminality led to the Italian and to his criminal conspiracy.

The second incident which re-activated latent anti-Italian hostility took place in 1909 in Palermo, Sicily. Lieutenant Joseph Petrosino, an Italian-American member of the New York City police department, was traveling through Italy in search of information dealing with exconvicts who had migrated to America. He was assassinated in Palermo, the obvious work of the Black Hand. This event convinced the American Press that there was a monolithic conspiracy of crime which spanned the Atlantic and linked Italy with America. The Times reported on March 16, 1909, that Inspector McCafferty of the New York Police Department was expected "to uncover here the beginnings of the plot that had claimed as a victim one of his most valuable men 4000 miles away."

Richard Gambino, an Italian American author of *Blood of My Blood*, has rendered some interesting insights into the murder of Petrosino. His explanation is steeped in the aura of a Sicilian oathbound society, of an honor code which had been violated by the presence of a despised police officer, an insult to all Sicilians. The return of a native-born Italian to investigate other Italians was an affront to their honor. It was not a murder, but rather an execution, a defense of an immoral deed against the "via vecchia" of Sicilian life.

It is an interesting explanation but a poor defense for a murder,

if that was the author's intention. The existence in Sicily of a secret society based on extortion, murder and "religiously" followed ritual in dealing with friends and enemies, family and government, can not be disputed. In Calabria, Naples and western Sicily the work of these "honored societies" has been prosecuted by the early Italian government, the fascist regime and the present government. The criminals have operated under titles such as "giovanotti onorati," "onorata società," and "Ndrangheta" as it was called in Calabria, the "brotherhood." After 1860 most of these larger bands had broken up and operated on a local scale, still maintaining a semblance of authority over the poverty-stricken population. In Naples the Camorra specialized in murder, blackmail, torture and disfigurement of victims. In 1877 the Italian government launched an all-out effort to eliminate these *associazioni* in southern Italy and Sicily. Collectively all of these groups were known in Sicily at least as *Mafie*, hence the wide use of the term *Mafia*.

With the influx of southern Italians to America, a certain number of petty hoodlums certainly filed in with the mass of immigrants. In the Italian ghettos there were extortionists operating under the collective name of la Mano Nera, the Black Hand. Yet their status was clearly understood by the residents living in the cities as indicated by the words used to describe such individuals: delinquente (criminal), lazzarone (bum), carogna (scoundrel, louse), disgraziato (evil wretch or slob). These were petty criminals and would have been viewed as such in any society. Unfortunately the link was made between these non-aligned groups of petty criminals and the "onorata società" in Italy.

The Sicilian mafia, it was suspected, had been transplanted to America and had taken root. Thus every crime involving Italians was assumed to involve the Mafia. From that to the belief that the Mafia controlled all "organized" crime was but a short step. The Italian had brought the plague of criminality to America and had begun to spread it among the pristine inhabitants of New York, Chicago, Buffalo and Philadelphia. As Police Inspector McCafferty of the New York Police Department stated, the murder of Lieutenant Petrosino had its origins in New York City. The police were quick to respond with mass arrests of Italians. In Hoboken, New Jersey, relations were so tense that when in May of 1909, two police arrived at the scene of an accident involving two Italians, a riot broke out. In December of 1910, fear of the Black Hand led the American Civic League to begin a drive to "free New York City from a large number of Italian criminals and to prevent the immigration of Italian criminals in the future."[11]

In Chicago a group of concerned Italians formed the White Hand Society to combat the notoriety of the Black Hand and to stem the waves of public sentiment against Italians. It was a dismal failure. Instead, a concerted effort was mounting to stop the continued arrival of Italians in general and particularly those "excitable, superstitious and revengeful" Sicilians.

## Sacco and Vanzetti

The following poem was published in Publicmagazine in June

11. Iorizzio and Mondello, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

of 1919. It indicates a third source of anti-Italian sentiment, the image of the Italian as a radical anarchist:[12]

> I mustn't call you "mickey" and you
> musn't call me "WOP" for
> Uncle Sammy says it's wrong and hints we
> ought to stop
> But don't you fret, there's still one name
> that I'm allowed to speak
> So when I disagree with you I'll call you BOLSHEVIK
> It's a scream and it's a shriek, it's a
> rapid fire response to any heresy you squeak

From 1918 onward it seemed that the Italian mafioso would be eclipsed by the figure of the Italian anarchist. This dual image of the Italian as the lawless and radical immigrant was to have its most sordid reflection in the case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the 1920's. It is interesting to note that prior to the murder trial involving these two men there was an increased association of Italians with radical politics. Indeed, one writer for the *Saturday Evening Post* reported that in one month alone in 1920 almost 20% of the Italians who applied for visas to America were turned down because they had served jail sentences, were morally unfit, "or because they were Bolshevik agitators."

In truth the "Red Scare" did have an appreciable number of Italians to point at. In June of 1919 an Italian anarchist, Carlo Valdinoce, blew himself up trying to bomb the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. The lawns of Palmer and of

12. Edmund Cook, "Bol-She-Veek" in *Public*, XXII (June 2, 1919) p. 772.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt were showered with pink leaflets promoting a “class war.” The leaflets were traced to an Italian printer in Brooklyn, one Roberto Elia, and his printer, Andrea Salsedo. On Palmer’s orders, dozens of Italian “anarchists” were rounded up and deported. Salsedo was repeatedly beaten by the FBI, became depressed and finally jumped out of the 14th floor window of the FBI headquarters in New York City.

On December 24, 1919, two payroll guards in South Braintree, Massachusetts, were murdered by five “foreigners” during a robbery attempt. Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested as the murderers. Both were carrying weapons, both were aliens and both were self-proclaimed anarchists. In 1921 they stood trial before Judge Webster Thayer who listened while twenty Italian witnesses swore under oath that Vanzetti was in Plymouth delivering eels to the Italian community on that Christmas Eve. As was their Catholic custom these people had fasted on the day before Christmas and traditionally ate boiled and then marinated eels on Christmas eve. Thus their recollection of Vanzetti’s presence was clear.

Italian witnesses were called and dismissed, humiliated and heckled by the prosecuting attorney, Frederick Katzmann. The defense attorney, Herbert B. Ehrmann, concluded that the trial in Plymouth furnished “an excellent casebook for a study in prejudice.”

Had Vanzetti been delivering turkeys to the Anglo-American community in Plymouth that day there would not have been a conviction on the evidence submitted. Had Vanzetti or Sacco

spoken English better there would likely have been a different outcome.

Indeed their unorthodox political views helped to condemn them. The fact that they were Italians also sealed their fate, or so they believed. "I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical. I have suffered because I was an Italian and indeed I am an Italian."[13] So thought Bartolmeo Vanzetti. As anarchists they were outside the mainstream of American thought. They were tried primarily for their political views and their ethnic associations and secondly for their alleged crime. Despite appeals and stays of execution they were electrocuted on August 23, 1927.

Michael Musmanno, a defense lawyer called upon during the latter stages of the case, confirmed the anti-Italian bias of some of the key figures in the trial. The foreman of the jury, Harry Ripley, constantly referred to Italians as "dagos" while remarking that if "he had the power he would keep them out of the country." Before the trial began he had remarked about the defendants, "Damn them, they ought to hang anyway."[14] Judge Thayer, off the bench, called Sacco and Vanzetti "anarchist bastards" and said he would "get them good and proper."

An Italian fish peddler and shoemaker who were aware of their different political beliefs and their nationality aroused this country's and world opinion. The feeling was that they would never have been convicted if they had not been "pick and

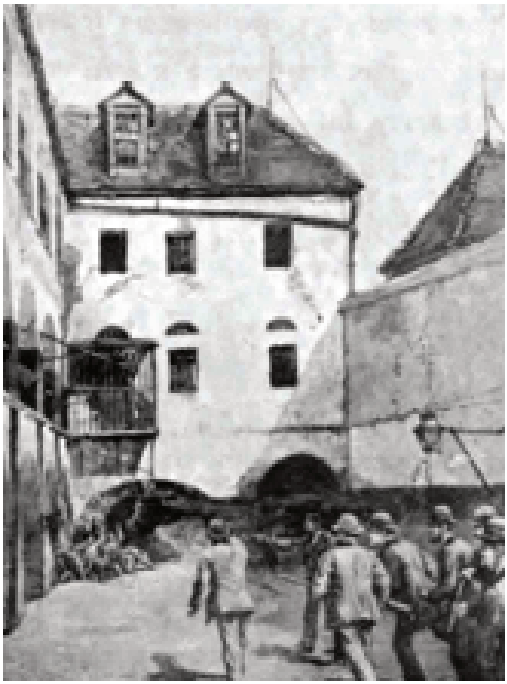
13. LaGumina, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-246.
14. Michael Musmanno, *The Story of the Italians in America* (New York, 1974) pp. 143-146.

shovel" men, part of the powerless mass of American immigrant labor. Ben Shahn's painting, *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, is itself a moving painting recalling the travail of these two men. Edna Saint Vincent Millay based her poem "Wine from these Grapes" on the plight of the executed anarchists, while Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, John Dos Passos, and Felix Frankfurter protested the verdict, but in vain.

Perhaps the most profound appeal was made by Vanzetti during the closing moments of the trial. As Judge Thayer was passing the death sentence on Nicola Sacco, Vanzetti spoke up. The judge continued to prescribe that "the punishment of death by a passage of a current of electricity through your body" should be inflicted. Vanzetti was not permitted to make his statement so he wrote down the following lines about his friend and their fate:[15]


Nicola Sacco (right) Bartolomeo Vanzetti (left)

15. Quoted in Herbert B. Ehrmann, *The Case That Will Not Die* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969) p. 459.



The murder of 11 Italians in New Orleans, March 12, 1891.

But Sacco's name will live in the hearts of the people and in their gratitude when Katzmann's and (your) bones will be dispersed by time, when your name, his name, your laws, institutions and your false gods are but a dim remembrance of a cursed past . . . in which man was wolf to man.

## The Quota System and U.S. Immigration Policy

Crime, anarchy, increasing numbers of southern and eastern Europeans — all this was disconcerting to the American public in the 1920's. In the popular mind this composite of ignorant and illiterate peasants, paupers and criminals, mingled with other assorted "riffraff," caused great concern. Add to this the alleged fecundity of Italian immigrants and a racial problem was brewing. Carl Wittke observed in his *We Who Build America* this fear emanating from supposedly intelligent scholars of population growth, who pointed out:[16]

What disasterous results awaited a country in which 50 Roumanian or Italian peasants would have a perfect army of offsprings in several generations, whereas the stock of 50 Harvard or Yale men would probably be extinct within the same length of time.

Adding to this concern was the perception that the Italians tended to come to America as temporary residents, in droves of males rather than as family units. These "birds of passage" infuriated native Americans. If these Italians were not interested in staying in this country, so ran the argument, they should be kept out permanently.

Thus legislation was adopted to achieve restricted immigration. In 1921 the first Quota Act was established, permitting a total of only 357,803 immigrants from all countries. About 200,000 were allotted to northern and western European countries. Italy was permitted some 42,057 immigrants, a figure which still gave

16. Carl Wittke, *We Who Built America* (New Jersey: 1939) p. 406.

Italy a rather favorable position. But by 1924 certain currents of "racial purity" were much in evidence in America while the concept of the "melting pot" was considered a fallacious and dangerous belief. The immigrant could not and would not assimilate, and continued participation by some countries, notably Italy, would only lead to a case of "alien indigestion." America should immediately be taken off her "diet" of southern and eastern Europeans.

Accordingly, on May 26, 1924, a new Immigration Act was passed which used a 2% quota based on the year 1890 instead of 1910 as the determining factor. The 1910 census reported that 215,537 Italians had entered this country; in 1890 only 52,003 had arrived. Under the 1924 formula 140,999 permits were issued to northern and western European countries and only 20,423 to southern and eastern European nations.[17] Italy was permitted a total of 3,845 immigrants per year! A cursory look at a yearly report from the United States Immigration Office from 1924 onward reveals that this quota was never inforced; there was an average immigration of at least 10,000 Italians per year. Still, Italian immigration was successfully reduced to a figure which would no longer pose a "threat" to the American population and which would maintain "racial purity" within the United States.

This quota act remained basically the same until 1963 when John F. Kennedy urged a new and more positive immigration policy. His ideas were concretely expressed by President Johnson with the passage of a new immigration act on September 30, 1965.

17. Cited by Joseph Lopreato, *Italian Americans* (New York: 1970) pp. 16ff.

It raised the number of immigrants from any single country to 20,000 per year based on technical skills and domestic demand for those skills.

Legal restrictions on Italians opened the way for various forms of overt discrimination. The prevalence of a Darwinian mentality in the United States singled out almost every ethnic and racial group for unfair, capricious scrutiny. For example, an article entitled “Mental Tests for Immigrants” appeared in the *North American Review* in 1922. It ranked 16 ethnic groups according to their relative intelligence and asserting that while the English, Germans, Dutch and Swedes ranked remarkably high in mental ability, Italians and Poles were consistently low in aptitude and intelligence, physically developed but emotionally unstable.[18] Mr. Sweeny, the author of this piece, passionately concluded that “we have no place in this country for the man with the hoe, stained with the earth he digs, and guided by a mind scarcely superior to the ox whose brother he is.”

Madison Grant, scientific dilettante and founder and chairman of the New York Zoological Society, was one of the most strident Anglo-Saxon superracists. His “classic” of genetic scholarship, *The Passing of the Great Race*, revealed his fear of the “Mediterranean Race” whose physical characteristics certainly would mongrelize the American population. “It is race, always race,” he wrote in 1918, “that sets the limit (on stature). The tall Scot and the dwarfed Sardinian owe their respective size not to oatmeal or to olive oil . . . The Mediterranean race is everywhere marked by a relatively short stature . . . and also

18. Arthur Sweeny, "Mental Tests for Immigrants," *North American Review*, 215 (May 1922) 600-612.

by a comparatively light framework and feeble muscular development." The Mediterraneans who were threatening America would soon extinguish the "old stock" Nordics unless the latter reasserted themselves and shut out the undesirables.

Condemnation of Italians for their small stature continued during and after World War I. Kenneth Roberts, famous as a frequent contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post* and his many fictional accounts of colonial America, called southern Europeans a "hybrid race of good for nothing MONGRELS . . ." Italian intelligence was questioned in numerous periodicals. Typical are the comments of Professor Edward A. Ross, who stated that Italians ranked lowest in the ability to speak English, lowest in proportion naturalized after ten years' residence, lowest in proportion of children in school, highest in proportion of children at work. "Steerage passengers from a Naples boat show a distressing frequency of low foreheads, open mouths, weak chins, poor features, small or knobby crania and backless heads!"[19] All this in America less than twenty years before Hitler and his ideology formed the Third Reich.

The president of Stanford University, David Starr Jordan, was reprinted in the *Congressional Record* regarding his opposition to the "Biologically Incapable" southern Italians. In part his statement reads: ". . . There is not one in a thousand from Naples or Sicily that is not a burden on America. Our social perils do not arise from the rapacity of the strong, but from the incapacity of the hereditarily weak." Woodrow Wilson's five-volume *History of the United States* treated Italians in much the same way,

19. E. Ross, *World's Week*, Volume 27, No. 4 (August, 1914) 278-279.

finding them with “neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence . . .” He added that the “Chinese are more to be desired, as workmen, if not as citizens, than most of the coarse crew that comes crowding in every year at the eastern ports.” Wilson did not go as far as another Nativist writer who referred to the “coarse” crews coming from Italy as “steerage slime.”

## The Catholic Church and the Children of Columbus

If Italians were demeaned, insulted and humiliated by the insensitive institutions representing native Americans they still retained a sense of commonality with other ethnic groups by their membership in the Catholic Church. But this bond was a superficial and weak one at best, for soon Protestants and fellow Catholics were critical of the Italian “brand” of Catholicism.

To be sure, Italian Catholicism has been and continues to be a blend of orthodox religious fervor and superstition, with a very close and personal belief in the efficacy of the sacramental church and the veneration of the hierarchy of the saints. One historian of Italian social patterns, Leonard Covello, even concludes that in the Mezzogiorno the Catholic Church did not have a very great influence over the social and moral lives of the people. Despite being nominally Catholic, despite their alliances with particular saints and their enthusiasm for saint’s days, their religion was a mixture of superstition, faith and ritual. Along with the rituals imported from Italy was the inbred distrust of the power of the clergy in particular and of the Papacy in general. Just as the Church had been viewed by Italians as the opponent

of the Risorgimento, the adversary of progress, of the awareness of one's own rights, so this attitude was transmitted to the New World.

In the old world things were different. You gave one of your sons to the church to be made into a priest. This was economically astute, for a son could help the family as a priest. In America every pair of hands meant extra money for the family. In America children best served the family by their roles in a secular society. In Italy religion was often a pragmatic affair where saints were honored to the extent that they seemed to answer the requests of the suppliant. When they did not perform correctly their images would be humiliated, stoned, beaten and generally ignored whenever the desired services were not rendered.

This attitude toward the Church increased as the immigrant confronted a native Catholic hierarchy in America, a church which saw its role as the promoter of the "melting pot" concept of assimilation. As Bishop Dunne stated in 1923, "One thing is certain. The Catholic Church is best qualified to weld into one democratic brotherhood, one great American citizenship, the children of various climes, temperaments and conditions."[20] Very soon this process of forced conformity to a church which was more American and Irish than Catholic would amount to a direct assault upon the values and cultural heritage of the Italian immigrant.

20. Silvano M. Tomasi, "The Ethnic Church and the Integration of Italian Immigrants in the United States" in Tomassi, ed., *The Italian Experience in the United States* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1970) pp. 163-193.

Italians were viewed as “different” Catholics and the Irish-and-German-dominated American clergy was vocal in pointing out this distinction. As late as 1917 the Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Farley, was advised by Reverend B.J. Reilly that:[21]

> The Italians are not a sensitive people like our own. When they are told that they are about the worst Catholics that ever came to this country they don’t resent it or deny it.

There was always the questioning of loyalty to the faith, the imputation of a lack of Catholic respectability. The Italians, it was claimed, were shameless in their poverty. Worse, many were defectors from Catholicism, willing recruits to evangelical Protestantism. But as one writer viewed the situation, it was not a loss to the Church. Writing in the Catholic magazine *America* in 1914, Thomas F. Coakley concludes that:[22]

> It is unfair to count as lost to the Church several millions of immigrants from Southern Europe for the simple reason that they did not belong to the Church in a real sense when they landed on our shores . . . and they do not know what loyalty to the Church means intellectually, financially, or morally.

The Protestant evangelist regarded the conversion of Italians as a possible first step in civilizing them and bridging the cultural gap between the Nordic and the Latin.[23] The immigrant would

21. *Ibid*., p. 167.
22. T. R. Coakley, "Is Peter's Bank Leaking?" *America*, 11, No. 5 (May 16, 1914) 103.
23. For an interesting report of evangelical work among the immigrant

become Americanized and Christianized at the same time and could then look upon the Protestant ethic of social and economic success as a mark of God's favor. Although some Italians did convert, the process was not a successful endeavor by America's Protestant leaders.

For many Italians their first perception of American Catholicism came from a service in the basement of an Irish church. In some cases the Italian members quickly flooded the Irish parishes. At St. Patrick's Old Cathedral on the New York's lower east side, the parish was totally Irish following the civil war. By 1882 the church had to conduct services in the basement in Italian on holidays and special feast days. Within eight years over 5000 children of Italian parents were baptized in that basement. By 1909 over 2500 children in their school were Italian and the Irish began to move out of the parish.

Polite warnings led to open hostilities between these "children of the church." Irish priests spied on Italian clerics, reporting to the Archbishop infractions that were the result of "catering" to the whims of the Italian parishioners. Italian priests explained to the Archbishop their own feelings on attending an Italian church and the impact that a singular ethnic parish would have on the Italian community:[24]

Given an Italian church with services in the Italian language, our people would not be so negligent in the observance of their religious duties. They are for the most part very poor and feel

Italians see Antonio Mangano, *Sons of Italy* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1917).

24. Cited in Tomassi, "The Ethnic Church" p. 180.

ashamed to attend the American church which they can not even understand and which does not appeal to them anyway . . .

By 1925 Italian parishes had begun to develop and achieve autonomous status in various parts of this country. By 1918 the *Catholic Directory* listed the existence of about 580 Italian churches and chapels for an Italian population of about 3 million. Churches became the symbol of many ethnic communities. It was the ethnic parish which held together the basic structure of the old world and introduced the new ways of America.

The men and women who served these Italian parishes would deserve a book of their own. From the scattered work of the early supportive missionaries a growing concern for Italian priests and sisters culminated in the efforts of Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza. In 1887 he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles to operate Italian churches in the United States. Mother Francesca Xavier Cabrini became the first American citizen to be elevated to sainthood, and was one of the first sent by Bishop Scalabrini.

Mother Cabrini arrived in New York City in 1889 with six nuns. She met with Archbishop Corrigan, who suggested that she return to Italy. Persistent in her desire to remain in America, she was permitted to teach Italian children at St. Joachin's Church near Mulberry Street. From this humble beginning she and her order established other orphanages, hospitals and schools in New York and New Orleans. She died in Chicago in 1917 and was canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII as the "Saint of the Immigrants."

In recent years some Italian-Americans have felt discriminated against in regard to their representation within the hierarchy of the American Catholic Church. They cite statistics to justify their contention that the Church has been biased in favor of Irish and Germans prelates to the exclusion of Italo-Americans. For example, as late as 1950 not one bishop of Italian descent was evident out of more than 100 Roman Catholic bishops.

Figures provided by Andrew F. Rolle tend to spotlight this obvious discrepancy. In 1972 some 57% of America's bishops were of Irish extraction while only about 17% of American Catholics were Irish. In 1972 only nine bishops were of Italian descent even though almost 12,000,000 Americans are identified as Italo-Americans. He concludes that while Italian-Americans are advancing in all other fields their ascent within the American Catholic Church has seemingly been blocked.[25]

Monsignor Geno Baroni, head of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, commented on this situation in 1971. He blamed the Church for her over-emphasis on assimilation into the American culture at the expense of the loss of her traditional heritage. "Someday some Italian-American priest is going to write a book about Mother Church, and it's going to make *Portnoy's Complaint* look like nothing."[26] Monsignor Baroni's remarks are indicative of a growing concern among Italian-Americans that only through ethnic diversity can they truly remain good Catholics and fully participate in the functioning of the Church.

25. Andrew Rolle, *The American Italians* (Belmont, California, 1972) pp. 102-107.
26. *Ibid*., pp. 104-105.

I think that the problem of non-representation within the Catholic hierarchy in America may be explained not only by the obvious lack of Italians as bishops, archbishops and cardinals but also by the single most important cause of this numerical deficiency. It lies within the mentality of Italian-Americans in regard to their church. The facts are simple enough to explain while the attitudes which have created present conditions are more complex to decipher.

In the first place some anti-Italian bias within the American Church must certainly not be ruled out; but it should not be given priority in explaining the lack of Italian-American bishops. The cold reality of the situation is that Italo-Americans are not becoming priests. Regardless of the number of Italians who are nominally Catholic, this figure becomes meaningless unless a percentage of that figure has chosen the vocation of the priesthood. But statistics point in another direction. In 1973 there were 58,161 priests in the United States, 12% of whom were Italian. This figure includes all foreign-born priests, so that the number would tend to be inflated. In 1973 there were 34 American archbishops, one of whom was an Italian. There were also 253 bishops, five of whom were of Italian ancestry.

Religious attitudes in the decision-making process among Italian Catholics is also a major factor to be considered. Father Andrew M. Greeley, Director of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, has done extensive research on attitudes among ethnic groups which has revealed some interesting points about Italians nominally involved with the Church. He found that “Italians are the least pious of all Catholic

groups," with only 13% of Italians scoring "high" on piety as compared to 32% of Irish, 31% of German and 30% of Polish Catholics.[27] Greeley also discovered that while 46% of Irish and 50% of German Catholics belong to at least one religious organization, only 22% of the Italians were affiliated with any such organization. Finally on church attendance only 30% of Italian-American Catholics considered church attendance important while 72% of the Irish and 56% of the German Catholics thought that regular attendance was important.

When interest in the process is focused mainly on positions of prestige rather than the day-to-day functioning of the institution, the cry of discrimination has little validity. If Irish and Italians clash over the predominance of one group within the Church's hierarchy, the fact remains that the Irish Catholic has supported his Church on a more continuous basis than his Italian counterpart. Perhaps the future will see a lessening of the traditional Italian philosophy that the church is *cosa femminile*, a woman's thing, and offer more involvement on the part of the entire Italian American community.

Some studies indicate that ethnic participation in the Church's hierarchy among Italians is not as important as it was at one time. It is no longer a burning issue that the parish priest, for example, be Italian. On the Sabbath the majority of Italians now join with Polish, German and Irish Catholics in their suburban parishes. The melting pot concept seems to be working effectively in the churches of America. As Glazer and Moynihan have contended, "The Irish and Italians, who often contended

27. Andrew M. Greeley, *Why Can't They Be Like Us?* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1969) pp. 46ff.

with each other in the city, may work together and with other groups in the Church in the suburbs and their separate ethnic identities are gradually muted in the common identity of American Catholicism."[28]

Although this may be the case, the continued Italian tradition of secularism, and of skepticism about the Church, may still have a strong effect in maintaining vestiges of ethnic identity. Superficially, religious beliefs may not vary between Irish, Polish and Italian Catholics but there still are discernable fundamental disagreements if at least one study is to be considered. In 1965 a national survey indicated that only 37% of the wives from an Irish Catholic background used some form of artificial birth control and thereby flouted the Church's Magisterium on the subject. In contrast 68% of the wives of Italian background used birth control.[29] The conclusion reached by Potvin and others conducting the survey was that there still was a higher degree of independence in the attitude of Italian wives toward one of the Church's most controversial doctrines.

As long as Roman Catholics of Italian extraction continue to pursue religious practices and hold beliefs which are contrary to the basic teachings of the Church, it is to be expected that more intimate representation on the hierarchy in America will not be forthcoming. If today's Italian-Americans do not feel part of the Church, they should not lay the blame on discrimination. The

28. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963) p. 204.
29. Raymond H. Potvin, Charles F. Westhoff, Norman B. Ryder, "Factors affecting Catholic Wives' Conformity to their Church Magisterium's Position on Birth Control," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30 (May, 1968) 263-272.

question may be one of self-imposed exile, a condition which Italian-Americans themselves have helped to create.

## World War II

The period between the world wars witnessed an odd phenomenon relative to Italian Americans and the rise of Fascism in Italy. While the immigrant still bore the brunt of insults and discriminatory policies within the United States, many of their vilifiers applauded the efforts of Mussolini and his Blackshirts against the forces of "bolshevism" in Italy. Indeed, Italo-Americans were afforded the opportunity to rekindle a sense of ethnic pride by supporting Il Duce and his antics during the 30's.

Ironically, those Italian immigrants and exiles who did not favor fascism in Italy were labeled Communists and again subjected to attack from the nativist press. However, America's brief flirtation with Mussolini ended abruptly in the mid-1930's. Italo-Americans faced the dilemma of either continuing to support fascism and risking charges of disloyalty to America, or joining the opposition to fascism and being associated with communism.

At the outset of World War II, Italian-Americans, like Japanese- and German-Americans, were in a precarious position. From the pen of the columnist Westbrook Pegler came invectives against any retention of ethnic identity. With respect to Italian-Americans he was especially vicious, at one point writing that "The Americans of Italian birth or blood have no reason to love Italy," where "extortion and terrorism" was a native peculiarity

. . . as characteristic as garlic." As to the value of Italian-Americans in this country he was again explicit: "As to Italy's contribution to this country I have always been skeptical . . . Italy got rid of alot of excess people and the United States gave the immigrants a chance in life."[30]

At one point he characterized Generoso Pope, the publisher of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* as a "handkerchief immigrant" who had too much influence over Italian-Americans. His papers tended to make Italo-Americans feel "self conscious, to segregate them from other Americans both socially and politically . . ." and created a "national minority with a persecution complex."[31] It should be stated that Pope was originally an outspoken defender of Mussolini at the beginning of his regime but ended his defense of fascism after 1935. During the war he personally sold more than $49,000,000 worth of war bonds and was chairman of the committee for Italian-Americans of New York State. His patriotism was indisputable and he was personally lauded in the Senate for his efforts. This, then, was the "handkerchief immigrant" to whom Mr. Pegler referred.

In reading the remarks of Pegler one can understand and sympathize to a degree with the unspoken fears which may have motivated him to write his invectives. It is quite another matter to read the scurrilous remarks printed in the *Congressional Record* in 1945 by the Honorable Theodore G. Bilbo, U.S. Senator from Mississippi. In a letter to the Senator, Mrs. Josephine Piccolo criticized him for not voting in favor of a bill

30. *New York World Telegram*, June 4, 1940, June 6, 1940.
31. *Ibid*., December 21, 1940.

and actually filibustering against it. She concluded her three-paragraph letter in the following manner: "We want the FEPC and you must help us get it, or you will answer to the millions of Americans who want it." Emphatic perhaps, but certainly within the rights of an American citizen.

The Senator requested that the letter along with his reply to Mrs. Piccolo be printed in the *Congressional Record*. In part his reply reads as follows: "My Dear Dago: (If I am mistaken in this please correct me.)" Toward the end of this letter he advised Mrs. Piccolo to keep her "dirty proboscis out of the other 47 states, especially the dear old State of Mississippi."

When Congressman Vito Marcantonio of New York read the exchange he demanded that Bilbo apologize for his lack of manners, reminding the Senator that three of Mrs. Piccolo's brothers were in the American armed forces and that one had been killed in action. Bilbo took on the Congressman with equal grace and style. He accused Marcantonio of associating with gangsters and of being a communist. The New York Congressman was a "notorious political mongrel" who had the audacity to question the ethics of a U.S. Senator "whose every heartbeat synchronizes with the ideals and principles of the founding fathers."[32]

As a postscript it should be mentioned that although there was some fear that a fifth column of Italian-Americans was forming in this country to support the fascists, no movement appeared. Less than 200 Italian aliens were interred shortly after the outbreak of the war. Whatever sympathies had led to early

32. *Congressional Record*, 79th Congress, 1st Session, p. 7995.

Italian-American support of fascism had withered by 1935. During the war years no Italian engaged in espionage or sabotage. No Italian-American has ever been tried for treason. During World War I about 400,000 Italian-Americans participated in the war and during World War II almost 1,500,000, or about 10% of the armed services, were of Italian extraction.

## Post World War II and Cleveland

In the years since the war the exploits of the Italian-American criminal have been glorified and sold in unforgettable classics such as *The Godfather*, *The Brotherhood*, *The Mafia is Not an Equal Opportunity Employer*, *The Valachi Papers*, *Honor Thy Father* and *The Godmother*. Mafia "witch hunts" in the Senate, led by Kefauver in the 1950's and by Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1966, have enriched the American vocabulary with a series of phrases such as "The Kiss of Death," "Numero Uno," and "Cosa Nostra." The vilification of Italians during the television series "The Untouchables" was so bad that members of an Italian service group began to call it "The Italian Hour," while a sarcastic sophomore at a local university labeled the show "Cops and Wops."

Michael Novak observed in his *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* that a great deal of the bigotry which still exists toward ethnics originates and is perpetuated by that stratum of society known as the "intellectuals." For a number of reasons he sees a chasm of intellect and sensitivity separating the WASP and

the ethnic. He makes an interesting observation on this point midway through his book:[33]

Was Agnew so wrong when he detected "an effete corps of impudent snobs"? Did he anger people by a calumny or by thudding an arrow into the bulls-eye?

This reactionary attitude on the part of some members of the intellectual community has indeed some basis in fact. There is a fear, I think, thinly veiled by a pretended assumption of superiority, of ethnics trying to enter traditionally Anglo-American domain. This mentality of degrading what one fears can be traced back to the racial geneticists such as Grant in the early part of this century.

A concrete example of this kind of arrogance occurred recently at Yale University. Michael Lerner, son of columnist Max Lerner, was a graduate student at Yale during the mayoral elections in New York City involving Mario Proccacino in 1969. He reported a comment made by his professor at Yale regarding Proccacino and Italians. The "scholar" remarked that "If Italians aren't actually an inferior race, they do the best imitation of one I've seen." Everyone at the table laughed, Lerner recalled; but he suggested that the professor could not have said that about blacks if the subject had been H. Rap Brown.[34]

During the waning months of the 1976 presidential campaign a member of the President's Cabinet was forced to resign after it was revealed that he had made an obscene and derogatory

33. Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (New York: The Macmillan Publishing Company, 1973) p. 176.
34. Quoted in Novak, *Ibid*., p. 93.

comment about Black Americans. A month later the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff made a remark about Israel's military burden upon the United States. He was immediately attacked by various Jewish American organizations and was forced by the president to apologize.

In a culture where a racist term for Blacks is occasionally the cause for justifiable homicide, when insinuations about foreign governments bring about immediate apologies, when employer must tread ever so lightly in reference to gender, with an ever-vigilant eye toward quotas when dealing with "official" minorities, the sobriquets "Wop," "Dago," and Mafia are still uttered. As long as the various media treat organized crime as a source of continuous entertainment the terms Mafia and Italian will remain synonymous in the popular mind. As long as Italians are characterized as vicious hoodlums, opera-singing or undershirted buffoons, our culture will continue to alienate a large segment of her most productive citizens.

To be able to laugh at and be amused by our own individual differences and occasional failings lies at the base of our humanity.

To violently oppose the defamation of select groups of "legally sanctioned" ethnic communities while showing benevolent neglect toward scurrilous remarks about others is in itself derogatory and should be condemned. Sadly, this is still the basis of contemporary American culture.

We have become conditioned to laugh at jokes made about ourselves by others. Italian-Americans need to develop another

response. Quiet anger, resentment and retreat into insularity were ineffective in the past and would be worse in the future. As one Italian-American author has suggested, we must update our relations with and responses toward the "outside world." However melodramatic it may sound, the obnoxious image of the Italian as criminal and clown must be confronted and destroyed.

The time has arrived when Italian-Americans should join with other groups and promote a sense of "creative ethnicity." By this I mean that each group uses its ethnicity as a point of departure for growth in human relations rather than as the final proof of worth. Through this process one learns about one's own identity and thereby can also appreciate the cultural complexities of other groups.

With the same sense of ethnic awareness a concerted effort should also be made to denounce in as many legally sanctioned forms as possible those channels of communication which continue to portray the "realities" of American life as white-socked east Europeans, spaghetti-slurping Mediterraneans, dozing "frito banditos," "superfly" blacks, and "hayseed" southerners. When economics are directly involved, cultural bias undergoes immediate changes.

A local example may serve as a case in point. During the urban riots of 1964 it was reported in the Cleveland media that a black activist group, the United Freedom Movement, would picket Murray Hill school the following day. Before pickets actually arrived hundreds of residents from "Little Italy" formed at Mayfield and Murray Hill Roads to prevent any picketing.

Due to police and school board intervention, no United Freedom Movement members actually entered "Little Italy," although some fighting did occur on Euclid Avenue.

That evening the *Cleveland Press* reported in its headlines "Two Negroes Beaten by Crowd in Murray Hill School Fight." The publicity given to "Little Italy" was overwhelmingly unfavorable both in the newspapers and on the local radio stations. Italian-Americans from the Greater Cleveland area justifiably felt maligned, especially by the *Press* and decided to do something about it. They began a massive boycott of the paper with an estimated 20-30,000 Italians cancelling their subscriptions to the paper. After two weeks the *Press* sent a reporter into the neighborhood to smooth ruffled feathers and to spread the word that the paper would take a more objective stand on the entire emotional issue. The boycott was dropped but the impression was made.[35]

35. This incident was reported to me by a friend who has long been an observer of the local Italian scene.

# Part III: The Italian Community of Cleveland

# Chapter 7: The Italians of Cleveland: An Introduction


G. Mileti's Grocery Store on the corner of Mayfield and Murray Hill Roads, circa 1910.

## Sources

Cleveland's Italian community is one of the most colorful and vital of the city's 60 ethnic groups and has been a favorite topic of area writers. Although one of the most recent groups to immigrate to Cleveland, the Italian population has nevertheless been the subject of several studies over the last half century as well as a series of less extensive but equally important articles.

The first analysis of the city's Italian population was undertaken by Charles W. Coulter in 1919 under the auspices of the Cleveland Americanization Committee. Entitled *The Italians of Cleveland*, it was a general survey of the group's early settling patterns, business, civic and religious leaders as well as a description of their social and fraternal organizations. The forty-three page publication gives little detail but does provide the basic framework on which other works have been based. It can be said that even at this early date Coulter's research provided the general Cleveland readership with a very favorable impression of her then increasing Italian population.

Coulter's work seemed to stimulate a few scholarly treatments of particular aspects of Cleveland's Italians which were generally submitted for advanced degrees at local universities. For example, at Western Reserve University there are found several detailed studies dated in the late 1920's such as Ruth Van Vookis' 1929 thesis entitled "A Study of the Italians in the Woodland-East 110th Street District" and William Lewis Bodley's 1938 thesis on "The use of Southern Italian Cultural Material in Group Work Programs," again written at Western Reserve University.

Other specialized studies at the graduate level include Pat J. Columbro's research into the Italians along the Mayfield Road Area in 1948 and Reynold A. Pana's study of the Southern Italian Immigrant, written at John Carroll University in 1966. All of these studies have had a rather limited exposure beyond the immediate university and normally have been accessible only to graduate students.

Two doctoral dissertations have dealt with Cleveland's Italians, one of which has been recently published by Harvard University. Charles Ferroni's 1969 Dissertation at Kent State University deals with "The Italians in Cleveland: A Study in Assimilation." Dr. Ferroni, currently a professor at Ashland College and Vice President of the Italian-American Historical Society, skillfully arranged a number of personal interviews with prominent Cleveland Italians in recreating the cultural, religious and social service center in Cleveland's "Little Italy" section along Mayfield Road.

The other dissertation is Josef Barton's "Immigrants and Social Mobility in an American City" written at the University of Michigan in 1971. This work was published in 1975 by Harvard University Press under the title *Peasants and Strangers*. Basically Barton's research concentrates on the social, economic and education mobility of Cleveland's Italian, Slovak and Rumanian immigrants from 1890 to 1950. More sociological than historical in approach, Dr. Barton finds that the second generation ethnic in Cleveland normally achieved a degree of social mobility equal to that of a native-born American. The 292-page book is complemented by a series of valuable

comparative charts on a variety of educational, economic and social topics.

One other collection important to the study of Italian ethnicity within Cleveland is the "Italian Section" of the *Cleveland Foreign Language Newspaper Digest*, a project of the United States Works Projects Administration in 1939. This collection includes abstracts in translation from Cleveland's two Italian language papers, *L'Araldo* and *La Voce del Popolo Italiano*. Even a cursory reading of this 95-page digest indicates some of the feeling within the Italian community in Cleveland about their settlements, their organizations, their problems and their aspirations. For the non-Italian reader it is an indispensable and highly entertaining source of *Italianità*.

With the renewed attention given to ethnicity in the past decade several ambitious collections have been produced by members of Cleveland's academic community at Cleveland State University and John Carroll University. The first, published in 1972 by the Institute for Urban Studies at Cleveland State University is entitled *A Report on the Location of Ethnic Groups in Greater Cleveland* by Donald Levy. Within Levy's study are found over 30 different ethnic groups with a brief 2-3 page background sketch of each. Of additional importance are a set of maps indicating approximate location of each group in Cuyahoga County as well as census tract information relative to each group.

Following this *Report* were several important studies and collections dealing with ethnicity in Cleveland. The collection *Ethnic Communities of Cleveland: A Reference Work*, edited

by Dr. Michael Pap with a bibliography by Dr. George Prpic provides a useful study on several of the local ethnic groups, including the Italians.

Also in 1974 was published the *Greater Cleveland Nationalities Directory*, a joint effort of the Nationalities Services Center, the Institute for Urban Studies Radio Station WZAK and Sun Newspapers. It is a magnificent and comprehensive guide to over 2000 organizations involved in greater Cleveland's 60 ethnic groups. For the Italians these are listed major churches, social, and cultural, and professional societies as well as the active leaders within each organization. Especially interesting for students of ethnicity is the listing of over 35 Italian fraternal societies and lodges in Greater Cleveland. It is an impressive work which merits the attention of anyone interested in the multifacited world of Cleveland's communities.

Another study of scholarly interest is the monograph coauthored by Dr. Karl Bonutti of Cleveland State University and Dr. George Prpic of John Carroll University dealing with *Selected Ethnic Communities of Cleveland: A Socio-Economic Study (1974)*. Using a series of questionaires and interviews, this work analyzes four contemporary ethnic communities, including St. Rocco's neighborhood along Fulton Road, in terms of numerous aspects of everyday life. Included in this format are age, occupation, ethnic background income, and property ownership, among other items of statistical importance. It is the most detailed analysis of all studies conducted to date on contemporary Italians in Cleveland.

The various studies mentioned, some of which are highly

selective, are usually inaccessible to the general public; and despite the resurgence of ethnicity in Cleveland in the last few years, a definitive study of Cleveland's Italians remains to be written. One reason for this condition lies in approach and methodology. Too many writers have concentrated on the Italian as "hero" and have recited the familiar litany of "important" Italians who made their careers and fortunes in Cleveland. Other authors have become caught up in the ethnic "numbers game" wherein the importance of the group is measured by the number of "influential" members within the economic, cultural or political spectrums. This kind of approach as a primary view of an ethnic group should be avoided at all costs but it will survive because it is the easiest method of historical research.

In the major studies of Cleveland's Italians the question of origins is seldom raised, much less discussed. The rise of the Carabelli or Catalano or Campanella families appears to have occurred through a series of continuous successes. Too often we find the story of an immigrant's rise from laborer to entrepreneur within a decade after arrival, while the typical process of growth and maturation within the city, beset with failure and setback, is hardly mentioned.

Another factor of Italian ethnicity seldom researched is the basic story of the multitude, those thousands who were not particularly successful in economic endeavors, but who did nevertheless labor and survive in a foreign and often hostile environment. Their festivals, their fraternal organizations and their churches are standard topics of research. But what of the individuals? What occupations did they engage in, what kind of social and

economic success did they achieve? How well or how poorly were they received by their adopted city? Finally, what influence did they exercise, and continue to exercise, in Cleveland? These are valid questions which need to be answered before we begin to approach a comprehensive study of the "Italian factor" in Cleveland life. The following essays will at least fill in some of these informational gaps and provide further avenues for research and insight into the Italians of Cleveland.

## Early Settlements

In the City of Cleveland's *Annual Reports* for 1858 there is recorded the marginal note that three Italians were admitted to the city's infirmary during that year. This is an interesting statistic, for the 1860 Federal Census makes no mention of Italians whatsoever in the city of Cleveland, while neighboring Cincinnati recorded some 320 Italians. Presumably these three early Italian immigrants were included in the 662 "Others" listed in the census as being part of the foreign-born population of Cleveland.[1] In 1860 there were 10,437 foreign-born immigrants in the city, mostly of German and Irish descent, who made up almost 45% of Cleveland's population, an extraordinary percentage for that period.

The reality of a growing flood of immigrants to Cleveland did not go unnoticed nor unchallenged by the local media. The Cleveland Leader in November of 1876 editorialized on the expanding foreign migration:[2]

1. City of Cleveland, *City Directory*, 1858.
2. *Cleveland Leader*, November 23, 1876.

> It will be observed that the falling off in the total arrivals for this time is about 25% . . . and it is attributed to the hard times being widely known throughout Europe, both through the letters and reports of the foreigners in this country to their friends and the newspapers and governmental reports. It is, of course, for the interests of the government not to mince their remarks on our difficulties but on the contrary, to exaggerate them as much as possible in order to stop the exodus of their subjects.

There was some cause for alarm, not only because of the swelling population, but about the control of these new immigrants. According to police reports for 1874, some 8563 foreign arrests were made in Cleveland, 1253 of which were designated as having been Irish immigrants. As these foreigners surged through the counting stations at the railroad depots in Cleveland, past the Bureau of Emigrant Police, there was a certain apprehension about these “new people,” especially from southern and eastern Europe. Would they be a burden upon the charitable institutions of the city, a drain on the society of Cleveland, a threat to the peace of the community? Would they accept their new country, learn the language and customs, and fit into this city upon the Cuyahoga?

If these were indeed some of the concerns of Clevelanders, their encounters with and impressions of the Italian immigrant were to be a happy experience. Even though some individuals of Italian descent in Cleveland were involved in crime or were implicated in anti-social behavior, the city’s Italians rarely brought disgrace upon themselves, their city, or their newly adopted country. As a group they had possibly the lowest crime

rate for Italians of any major city in the country. Statistically, Cleveland's Italian population was consistently ranked among the lowest in terms of welfare relief among all groups, native and foreign born. While they gained from their varied experiences and confrontations with America they also shared with their adopted city many of their best and brightest sons and daughters, especially during this formative period.

The 1870 census listed 35 Italians in Cleveland, although this figure could be challenged as a mere estimate. This statement may be made because at least 20 Italian-surnamed individuals could be found in the Cleveland City Directory for the years 1864-65. Included are the names of professional and skilled men such as Joseph Agricola, a carpenter; Nicholas Bruno, a bookkeeper; Joseph Durgetto, a gardener; and the Climo brothers who were laborers. In the 1870 census 29 of the 35 Italians were shown as being engaged in some form of employment such as tradesmen, mining and manufacturing, steelwork and bootmaking. Fifteen of the men were listed as stone masons, probably as part of the group with James Broggini from Lombardy. The Italian immigrant who came to Cleveland during the post-Civil War period usually had a skill or trade to develop in the city. Regardless of their initial work experience the early Italians believed in the work ethic, that honest labor ultimately produced success. Two early Italian experiences in the city can best illustrate this point.


Organ Grinder in front of Guciardo's Saloon, Big Italy, circa 1900.

The Banking House of Vincent Campanella, Little Italy, circa 1910.

Joseph Agricola was listed in the 1864 City Directory as a skilled laborer, a carpenter. Ten years later Agricola had moved

from his original job to that of insurance salesman and by 1880 is recorded as being a solicitor living on Vine Street.[3]

A much more intriguing story is that of Antonio Basso, who first is mentioned as a day laborer in 1874. In 1877 he was arrested by city police for building a fruit stand on the corner of Superior and Public Square. He had purchased a permit to build the stand from the city and was legally pursuing an occupation which the City Council found to be a nuisance. Basso was acquitted by a jury in September of 1877 but was shortly arrested again for the same charge. His stand and produce were destroyed by the police with damages amounting to $1000. The case against him was again dropped in November of 1877.

By 1880 he had opened another fruit stand at 45 Oregon Avenue in Big Italy, a business which he subsequently moved four times until 1900, when he invested in a saloon on St. Clair Avenue which he operated with his son until his death in April of 1907.[4] In a city which initially offered only injustice and hostility he persevered, did not become discouraged, and ultimately triumphed. He died at the age of sixty-seven, a solid citizen of the community.

The pattern followed by Antonio Basso was typical of many Italians in Cleveland. They came to this city, worked as common laborers for a few years, opened up a saloon — then considered more of a social hall than a place to drink — and became

3. *Cleveland Directory*, 1864-1880, Residential and Business Sections.
4. *Annals of Cleveland*, Court Record Series, 1875-1877, Cuyahoga County, Volume X. Also, *City Directory*, 1874-1907.

propertied citizens. They gravitated toward several different types of work, a normal procedure for ethnic groups.

In Cleveland the Italians were late-comers, so their occupations had to be innovative or they had to evidence extraordinary skill. Thus James Broggini in 1870 and Joseph Carabelli in 1880 specialized in the creation of stone and marble monuments along Euclid and Woodland Avenues. Eugene Grasselli, an innovator in the chemical industry, became internationally known in the 1850's and later the Grasselli Chemical Works merged with DuPont Industries. Many opened grocery stores such as G.V. Vittorio on Woodland Avenue, the brothers Schiappacasse, Casper and Salvador Corso on Broadway, and the Rini brothers, also on Broadway Avenue. Many bought saloons. In 1890, while there were only 864 Italians in the city, twelve owned saloons. By 1919 there were 18 saloons along Mayfield Road alone![5]

The main business effort of these early settlers was concentrated in the produce markets along Broadway and Woodland Avenues. By 1890 there were eight fruit and vegetable sellers in the city, four of whom were Italian including the Catalano brothers. By 1900 thirteen of the 25 produce sellers were Italians, again including the now familiar names of Frank and Michael Catalano and the Rini Brothers (*Cleveland Leader*, November 23, 1876). In 1900 some 26 saloons and restaurants were owned by Italians with names such as Cipra, DiFranco, Schiappacase, Mangino, Trivisonno and Zecarelle. These men and their families were to establish the economic base for a thriving Cleveland Italian community and provide leadership and

5. *City Directory*, 1890-1919.

direction and employment for the thousands who would follow them to Cleveland in the next 25 years.

## The "Chain of Migration"

Why did they come to Cleveland, hundreds of miles from the traditional disembarkation port of New York City? Their motives to migrate to this city were basically the same as those which prompted others to leave Italy. But the single overriding factor, that of local ties, brought many to Cleveland. It has been estimated that three-quarters of all Italians migrating to Cleveland proceeded along a well-traveled course which included specific areas of the city. The single factor which seems so very important in trans-Atlantic migration to Cleveland was that many Italians were from the same village and district, links in a chain of migration stretching from southern Italy and Sicily to Cleveland.

Josef Barton's study of Italian, Slovak and Rumanian immigration to Cleveland indicates that about half of all Italians migrating to this city moved from only 10 villages in southern Italy.[6] The major Italian districts and cities indicated are Patti and Palermo in Sicily, Benevento in the Campania and Campobasso in the Abruzzi. These regions provided about 70% of the Italians coming to Cleveland.

Many of them left their homes as individual travelers or members of a kin group, came down from the mountains and waited to board the trains to Palermo or Sant'Agata. There they

6. Josef Barton, *Peasants and Strangers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) pp. 52ff.

remained, learning a smattering of English, or sought assistance from the St. Raphael Society for the Protection of Sicilian Emigrants. From Palermo they boarded ships filled with Slovenes or Galician Poles who had entered at Trieste. From there they proceeded to the New World and in many cases, to old friends and anxious relatives waiting in Cleveland.

Not all came directly to Cleveland from their village. Vincent Campanella, for example, was born in the Abruzzi in 1870. In 1890 he arrived in America and began work on the Pennsylvania Railroad for a few years. He then dug sewers in Cleveland and did other manual labor until he established enough capital to begin a bank in Little Italy in 1905.[7] Joseph Carabelli labored for ten years in New York City as a marble sculptor before establishing himself in Cleveland in 1880. Eugene Grasselli worked in a chemical company in Philadelphia in 1836, then moved to Cincinnati in 1839 and finally to Cleveland in 1861.

## The Hometown Societies

When the Italian did arrive as part of a "migrant chain" the chances of his remaining in the city were increased. More important, his association with and participation in the several hometown societies formed in Cleveland to assist the immigrant gave the needed stability to the newly arrived migrant. Unlike the east European immigrant who organized national Slovak or Polish Unions, the Italian organizations emphasized the village and the family rather than the nation. These societies buried their dead *paesani*, eared for their widows, sought employment for

7. Charles Coulter, *The Italians in Cleveland* (Cleveland: 1919) p. 17.

their members, and generally provided a refuge against a foreign and sometimes hostile environment.

Ultimately many of these local groups sought affiliation with the national Sons of Italy organization. In 1913 Cleveland had its first chapter, and by 1920 nine lodges were affiliated with the National Sons of Italy. As Charles Feroni pointed out, one of the major attractions of the Sons of Italy was the insurance benefits and mutual aid offered. As much as $400 insurance and funeral expenses were covered by the Sons of Italy, a great inducement for membership.[8] Between the national and local societies about 80% of the Italian males in Cleveland were enrolled during the twenties and thirties.

Some of these early fraternal societies should be mentioned, for they reflect the closely knit society of Italians transplanted to Cleveland. In 1888 Joseph Carabelli, the early Italian leader in Cleveland, founded the Italian Fraternal Society. Originally part of a women's group at Alta House, it gradually developed into the Society. In 1896 the Sicilian Fraternal Society was formed by Gaetano Caito, Cosimo Catalano and others as an organization for small merchants, bankers and lawyers. By 1900 other hometown, fraternal and cultural organizations were forming with such names as Fraterna Sant'Agata, Operaia, La Calabrese, San Nicolo Society, the Sons of Labor, and Cristofore Colombo. In 1909 Silvestro Tamburella formed the Dante Alighieri Cultural Circle in Cleveland. This effort was an early attempt to diffuse the Italian language and culture through

8. Charles Ferroni, *The Italians in Cleveland: A Study in Assimilation*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, Kent State University, 1969, pp. 121ff.

libraries, reading rooms, lectures and similar cultural endeavors. Between 1900 and 1912 there were over 50 societies in Cleveland, three-quarters of every mutual benefit society maintained solely for persons born in a particular region or village.


Matrice Club, 1923.


Plaque on the Sons of Italy Hall, East 73rd and Euclid Avenue.

One of the largest hometown societies in Cleveland was formed in 1937 by Vincent D'Alessandro and others. Since many paesani had immigrated from Ripalimosani in Campobasso it was appropriate that the Ripalimosani Social Union be formed. Known as The Ripa Cluba, it was an extremely popular and positive force in Cleveland's Italian community. One of its major objectives was the integration of the paesani into the mainstream of American life with emphasis on citizenship. Each member was scrutinized to determine his moral and civic character. Concern for the law was essential, and any member convicted of a felony was immediately dropped from the Union. The Ripa Hall, located at 2175 Cornell Avenue, was built by the

membership and is now used as a meeting place and a hall for weddings and other social gatherings.

The impact of these hometown societies upon the Italian immigrant can not be overstated. They provided the social and cultural link with the "old country" and were a strong factor in the acculturation of the *paesani* into the society of twentieth century Cleveland. In 1974 there were still listed some 60 social and fraternal societies in greater Cleveland.[9] They are the connection with the Italian tradition as well as the source of an intense pride in an American culture.

## The Immigrant Bureau in Cleveland

Between 1880 and 1924 some 4,481,416 Italians entered the United States through the traditional ports of immigration at Castle Garden and later at Ellis Island in New York harbor. From there they were packed aboard trains to their final destinations in America. Pinned to their lapels, blouses and shirts were cards announcing their names, destinations and the familiar "W.O.P.", an abbreviation for "Without Papers." It has since taken a more derogatory meaning, but at the turn of the century it indicated only the hurried circumstances of immigrating.

9. *Nationalities Directory of the City of Cleveland* (Cleveland: 1974).


Alta House in the Murray Hill Neighborhood. Built by John D. Rockefeller in 1900 and named in honor of his daughter, Alta Rockefeller.

During these 44 years more than 25,000 Italians entered Cleveland, usually by train. Beginning in 1874 a special Immigration Officer was assigned to the train stations to record those disembarking in the city and to furnish a numerical breakdown regarding their nativity. This information, generally part of the Police Report for the City of Cleveland, was officially filed with the *Annual Reports* of the city.

To deal effectively with the increasing numbers of immigrants the Department of Public Safety established a special Bureau of Immigration in 1913.[10] It was the first attempt by the city to recognize the many problems facing the immigrant. R.E. Cole, the city's immigration officer during this early period, called attention to the haphazard treatment and care of the immigrant.

10. "Report of the Emigrant Police" in the *Annual Report of the City of Cleveland*, 1913.

In his first *Annual Report* he emphasized the need for a more competent system of immigrant aide. "It was found that aside from the work of the Traveler's Aid section at the depots, the arriving immigrants were at the mercy of any who would misuse and misdirect them . . . and such persons were found to be many."[11] Especially ruthless were the cabmen and chauffeurs, who extorted large sums for short distances. In 1913 one group of three Italians was welcomed to the city with a charge of $28.00 for a fare to the Collinwood section!

The Immigration Bureau was established to assist with the many problems confronting the foreign traveler, such as arrival, relocation, settlement, and employment. The operation was systematic and seemingly efficient. The immigrant arrived in usually three types of trains; regular coaches, special "immigrant coaches" which were discontinued and antiquated cars revived for short runs from Buffalo, and "special trains" which had uncertain schedules. Many Italians arrived on these latter coaches because of the economy of the trip. In 1914 over half of the 305 trains carrying foreigners arrived in Cleveland at night and with no set schedule. Members of the Immigrant Bureau were there to meet all trains and upon arrival directed the passengers to large signs posted in the waiting rooms marked WOODLAND or BROADWAY. For those immigrants who were met, care was taken to establish that their "friends" or "relatives" were actually who they said they were. It seems that special care was taken to protect young women traveling alone, for kidnapping at the depots was not uncommon.

11. *Ibid*., p. 1481.

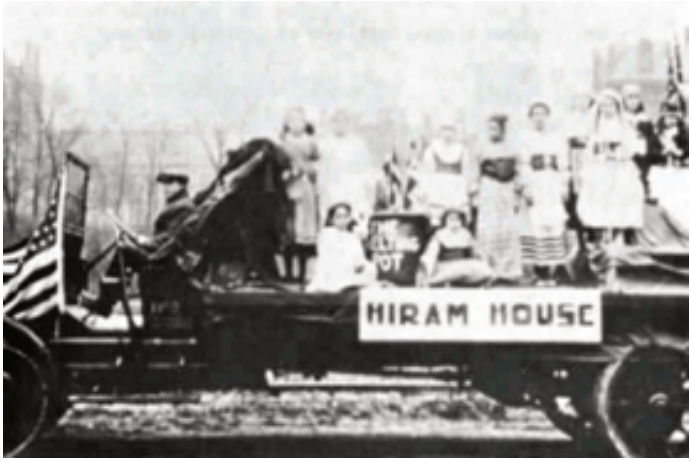
If the immigrant was not met, he or she was tagged with the following card:[12]

> CITY IMMIGRATION OFFICE
>
> This person is going to the address below. Will citizens, conductors and policemen please give any guidance or other help needed? Report any difficulties to R.E. Cole, Immigration Officer, City Hall, Telephone Maine 4600.
>
> Address _____
>
> Remarks _____

To discourage cabmen from overcharging the immigrant a "Cabman's Receipt" was issued. On it was stated the destination and charges before the chauffeur left. Payment was made to the cabman in advance by the immigrant officer, who in turn was paid by the immigrant.

Also distributed before departure from the depot was an "Immigrant's Guide" which assisted in "Clevelandizing" the new arrival. Printed in nine languages it contained concise information on subjects of immediate, practical value such as health care, laws, monetary values, responsibilities and opportunities for American citizenship. In cooperation with the Cleveland Board of Education a list of English language classes and citizenship classes was provided. Between 1913 and 1914, over 10,000 immigrants were enrolled in these classes.

12. *Ibid*., p. 1484.




Two examples of the Americanization process in Cleveland: The "Melting Pot" float (1920) (above) and an English Language class for Italians taught by Mr. Charles Trivison, 1925 (below).

In addition to the “immigrant’s Guide” two other manuals were prepared — a “Citizen’s Manual for Cleveland” and “Everyday English for Every Coming American.” These pamphlets attempted to instruct the foreigner on what procedures to follow in obtaining help from the official city government and how to avoid the pitfalls of trusting their own people, especially in money matters. One incident reported involved an Italian interpreter who was charging $20 to his countrymen for citizenship papers by “manufacturing” witnesses to attest that the immigrant had been in the country for the required time period. The Italian immigrant in question complained to the Immigration Bureau, where the problem was solved.

It was also reported in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in 1900 that it was a common practice in Republican-controlled Cleveland to grant foreigners citizenship for a small fee during the last week or so prior to the elections. As many as 400 aliens were granted citizenship in a single day, it was reported.[13] City councilmen were alleged to carry stacks of blank naturalization affidavits which required only the signature of an immigrant, and the payment of a small charge!

In 1915 there was a decline in immigration to Cleveland which gave the Immigration Bureau the opportunity to deal with the 200,000 resident foreigners, 50,000 of whom were not citizens. John Prucha, then chief of the Bureau, recommended an increased involvement within the ethnic communities,

13. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 23 and November 5, 1900. Also cited by Wellington F. Fordyce, "Nationality Groups in Cleveland Politics," *The Ohio State Archaelogical and Historical Quarterly*, XLVI, 1937, 109-147.

immigrant officers who represented each of the major nationalities, and women to work with immigrant wives. His genuine concern for the foreigners' well being and his favorable impression of these people is recalled in his message to the mayor in 1915:[14]

A large majority of the immigrants are simple people coming from their farming communities in Europe into the very vortex of our modern industrial life in a large city. Their simple life in their native village and their poverty were their protection against fraud and swindle. They bring to the United States their youth, a strong and healthy body and a willingness to work. Their customs may seem strange, their ideal crude, but under the rough surface is a determination to make good. As they enter this new life without knowing the language and the customs, without a knowledge of the law, they are exposed to various forms of graft.

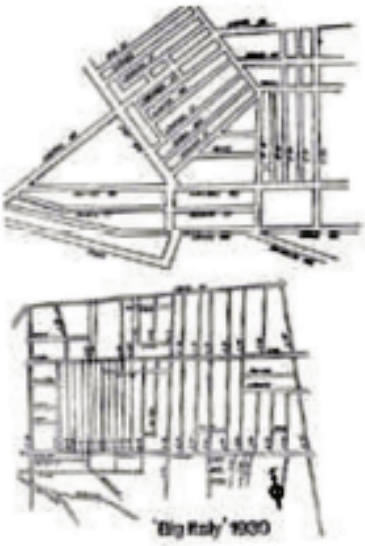
He might have added that the frequent encounters with the law on minor charges such as petty theft, intoxication and disorderly conduct inflated the city's arrest record for the foreign-born and gave the distinct impression of the immigrant as a criminal, at least in terms of total arrests.

## Big Italy and Hiram House

Once the Italian immigrant had arrived in Cleveland two problems were given immediate consideration, where to live and how to earn a living. The concept of the ethnic neighborhood

14. *Annual Report of the City of Cleveland*, Department of Welfare, 1915, p. 1435.

seemed to solve both concerns, for each ethnic settlement in Cleveland provided in varying degrees the security needed for adjustment and survival in the city. The first Italian community was commonly known as Big Italy and was located along Woodland Avenue from Ontario and Orange Avenues to East 40th Street. At the turn of the century this section was populated by about 93% Sicilians and was the center of the city's produce markets.




It was in this locality that Frank Catalano and G.V. Vittorio began their enterprises, Catalano at 839 Woodland and Vittorio at 746 Woodland.

Originally the community was located in the downtown section which was then known as the "Haymarket" section but later moved eastward along Woodland Avenue from East 22nd to East 40th Street. Today Galucci's and Bonafini's Italian importing houses are the solitary remnants of this original Italian settlement. St. Maron's Church at 1245 Carnegie Avenue now serves Cleveland's Lebanese Americans but in 1904 was known as St. Anthony of Padua Church, the first Italian Catholic Church in Cleveland. It was the religious landmark of Cleveland's original Italian settlement.

Of the section known as "Big Italy" little is known except for scattered information surviving from the Hiram House Settlement. Originally this area along Woodland and Orange Avenues had the center of Cleveland's Jewish population. Hiram House, located at 2723 Orange Avenue, was an attempt to assist the immigrant with various social services, language classes, vocational training and recreational activities. In the early 1900's the area surrounding Hiram House was one of moral and social decay. A 1909 Visitor's Report from Hiram House indicated that "saloons are frequent here, some being the lounging places of the lowest type of men and women."[15] Characters such as "Frog Island Kate," "Babe Downs," and "Old Mother Witch" gave the neighborhood an unsavory reputation.

15. Much of the information on the ethnic groups in the Hiram House settlement was obtained from John Grabowski's unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation on the settlement entitled, *Social Settlement in a Neighborhood in Transition: Hiram House*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1896-1926, Department of History, Case Western Reserve University, 1977. Mr. Grabowski graciously permitted me to have access to his dissertation prior to its final form. In addition he has proven to be an invaluable asset in researching this monograph at the Western Reserve Historical Society where he is the Ethnic Archivist.

Aerial photograph of Big Italy with St. Joseph's Church in bottom right.

St. Joseph's Franciscan Church, 1935.

As the Italians began to move into this neighborhood they were exposed to the crime, vice and social disease which was already part of the settlement. There were the "Zookeys," a juvenile gang of Jews and Slovaks led by a black youth whose delinquency was soon overshadowed by Joe Amato and his "Robber Gang." It seems that this brand of ethnic criminality was innocuous by today's standards. They were involved in knife fights, but mostly thrived on invading and disrupting the Hiram House playground, stealing fruit and penny candy, and throwing rocks at the streetcars.

The transitional period between 1908 and 1916 was marked by fierce rivalry between the Jewish immigrants and the Italians in this area. Throughout this period fights between Jews and Italians were frequent at the Hiram House settlement. One report in February of 1915 described a basketball game between a Jewish and an Italian gang:[16]

> The gymnasium was the only department which really drew the Italians. The Jewish boys began to object to so many "WOPS" coming in. For the first time in the history of the gym the Jewish boys found Italians who would not be shrinking and sensitive . . . and who would not be driven out . . .

A fight erupted and concluded with the Italians pulling knives and chasing the rivals out of the gym.

Hiram House was begun by George Bellamy, an ultra-conservative social worker whose social philosophy ran the gamut from philanthropy to racism. Many of his associates reflected his cultural predisposition and were in fact greatly chagrined when the Jewish population began to give way to more recent southern and east European immigration. Miss Mitchell, one of the supervisors at the settlement, commented on this transformation by observing that "In place of the Jews with their splendid morals and intense home life, we have the fiery Italians, and the Slavish and Polish with their duller minds, their drunkeness and immorality."[17] As the Italians kept moving

16. *Neighborhood Visitor's Report*, Hiram House, February, 1915.
17. *Ibid*., 1912.

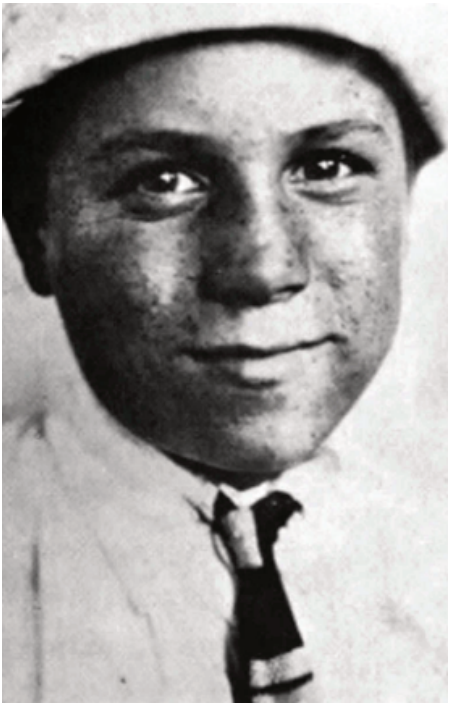
into the settlement region the conflict of cultures would become inevitable.

But the Italians had come to stay in this Woodland Avenue community and were replacing the other ethnic groups. By 1916 a heavy Italian population was concentrated between East 22nd and East 29th Streets. About a third of the 359 Italians listed in the Hiram House records were laborers with another 64 listed as operating retail outlets.[18] Many of these residents were attracted to Hiram House for the varied cultural and vocational experiences offered by the settlement. They felt that if programs dealing with music were started more Italians would become attracted to the settlement, so Dominic Villoni and Frank Russo were permitted to organize two bands which were enthusiastically supported by the neighborhood. Later, operatic selections, especially recordings by Caruso, were purchased for the settlement.

By advertising in *La Voce* the Hiram House settlement brought in Italians for the manual training programs, especially printing. The women were attracted to the sewing and cooking classes and were obviously good at it. A 1911 report stated that the Italian girls were splendid seamstresses — at all ages — and took an obvious pride in their work.

18. Grabowski, *Op. cit.*, pp. 240ff.

Elisie Rapisardo.



Sam Fazio Hiram House Collection, 1922.

If Hiram House marginally accepted the Italian immigrant at first, there was still a basic lack of commitment toward these immigrants. At a time when the settlement was predominantly Italian no full-time staff worker spoke Italian; only six part-time volunteers were proficient in the language. Even after the Jews had left the area and had relocated along East 55th they still dominated the officials at the settlement. Basically Italians participated in a social settlement house which made little attempt to understand or supply their particular needs.

The final chapter of the Italian community along Woodland Avenue really centers around one man who helped breach the chasm between Anglo conservatism and Italian *simpaticatezza*. He was Francesco Gasbarre, himself an Italian-born immigrant, who was known as Frank Casper. His employment at Hiram House in the twenties was marked by a real understanding of and involvement with the Italian community. During his years as a full-time staff member he marched in the Italian festival parades, participated in their hometown meetings, even organized an Italian Mothers Club.

Casper appreciated Italian culture and cultivated its survival at the social settlement. He produced several Italian musicals in English for the general settlement. Whenever Italian opera singers were in Cleveland, Casper made it a point to have them at least visit the settlement. His cultural masterpiece was the annual "Spring Festival," which was begun in 1924.[19] Every ethnic group at the settlement participated, and in 1925, Italian, Russian, Mexican, Slovak and Bulgarian performers contributed to the show.

The same approach was followed with regard to drinking. Red wine was especially popular among the Italian people, most especially at weddings. Prohibition notwithstanding, it was the custom that at festive occasions wine would be served. Nothing of the sort was to occur at Hiram House. Whenever Casper was involved with a wedding reception at the settlement, he overlooked this dictum whenever he could. Abuses of this "illegality" were hardly ever flagrant but made a lasting

19. *Ibid*., pp. 240ff.

impression upon the Italians who saw Casper as a man who understood the difference between wine as a food and alcohol as an escape. Unfortunately prohibition officers did not have the same perspective on life nor understanding of Italian culture.

By the mid-1920's many of the Italian hometown societies moved their meeting places out of Hiram House and into the East 116th Street settlement. This was to be only the beginning of a mass exodus of the inhabitants of Big Italy away from the downtown location and toward the eastern regions. The reason for this change can be explained by the fact that the neighborhood was declining and that there was more space and better housing in the Collinwood, Murray Hill and Kinsman Italian communities.

Work and play in the Hiram House Settlement. TOP: Vincent Ciccarolli pealing potatoes in the Hiram House Kitchen, 1932. BOTTOM: Alex Novalani (holding ball), Richard Wade and Ipiphont LaLaroco playing at the settlement house.

Just as the Jews saw the Italians as a threat to their neighborhood supremacy, so too the Italians felt the influx of blacks into "Big Italy" to be an encroachment. In the decade ending in 1930 the Italian population recorded in the census tracts as living in "Big Italy" fell from 4074 Italian-born in 1920 to 2063 in 1930. More Italians were coming into Cleveland but they no longer lived in the original settlement. By 1940 only about 1300 Italians remained in "Big Italy."[20]

Italians participated in the Hiram House community and continued to inhabit "Big Italy" as long as it was predominantly Italian. They ceased to participate in Hiram House programs when they no longer counted in its leadership. Being a tightly knit group and relatively mobile, the Italians chose to remain aloof from activities which no longer catered to their ethnic traditions. Moreover, as the other Italian communities grew they drew Italian involvement away from the multi-ethnic and multi-racial environment of the Hiram House settlement and into their own communities.

Ironically as the officials of the settlement house began to sense that the Italians were not such a bad lot after all, they tried to keep the Italian interest in their activities alive by opening branches of the Hiram House in the new Italian neighborhoods. In 1924 an attempt to create a branch in the East 116th settlement failed. In 1926 another extension was begun at the Anthony Wayne School at East Boulevard and Woodland Avenues, but by 1929 only 20% of the adult classes were attended by Italians.

20. *U.S. Census, 1940*. Census Tracts I-1 to I-9 (Cleveland's Big Italy).

Too little attention had been paid to these immigrants from the beginning and when the very existence of Hiram House was at stake the leaders sought out the very group they had ignored for involvement in their community activities. This ack of “grass roots” participation and the deterioration of the neighborhood around Hiram House led to its closing in 1941.

Hiram House was a reflection of a temperate and relatively conservative approach toward social organizations. Gambling of any kind was prohibited on the settlement grounds, thereby limiting hometown festivals which included raffles and other games of chance. Italian parades did begin and end at the settlement but any other socializing had to be done elsewhere.


## Little Italy

Another major Italian settlement in Cleveland was "Little Italy" located from East 119th to East 125th Streets on Murray Hill and Mayfield Roads. In 1911 it was estimated that 96% of the population of this neighborhood was Italian-born and another

2% were of Italian parents.[21] Many of these Italians were Neapolitan and were engaged in skilled lacework, the embroidery trades and garment making. The largest district group came from the towns of Ripamolisano, Madrice and San Giovanni in Galdo, which are in the province of Campobasso, in the region known as the Abruzzi.

It was in this neighborhood that the skilled stonemason Joseph Carabelli founded his marble works. He was a unique man in a number of respects. He was northern Italian and a Protestant, which placed him in a distinct class in relation to the “typical” Italian immigrant. He was a native of Porto Ceresio and immigrated to America in 1870 at the age of 20. He spent ten years in New York City as a sculptor and carved the statues for that city’s Federal Building.[22] Settling in Cleveland in 1880 he began the Lakeview Marble Works, became a close friend of John D. Rockefeller, was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives and became a major figure in the affairs of the Italian community of Cleveland.

21. Coulter, *Op. cit*., p. 11. See also Daniel Gallagher, "Different Nationalities in Cleveland" series in the *Cleveland Press*, December, 1927.
22. See the front page article on Carabelli and the Broggini brothers in *La Voce*, April 22, 1911.


The Luna Park Italian Settlement, 1940.

It was also in Little Italy that Vincent Campanella opened his banking business. Born in the Abruzzi, he immigrated in 1890. During his early years in this country he worked in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, in the construction of railroads, dug sewers in Cleveland, and ultimately created a surplus of capital to invest in a bank. His career in banking was very successful but he never changed his general philosophy that life should be accepted as it unfolds, for better or for worse. He is credited with remarking that "America has treated me well . . . she has paid me 10¢ a day . . . and she has paid me $5000 a day."[23] For most other Italians in Cleveland wages usually amounted to $1.00 per day and the people were grateful to receive this wage.

From these two major settlements sprang other colonies which would absorb later Italian immigration to Cleveland. While Murray Hill was developing during the early 1900's two other settlements were forming. On the east side near East 105th, Cedar and Fairhill Roads the third Italian community was established. These settlers were primarily from Campobasso and specifically from the town of Rionero Sannitico. Simultaneous to this settlement a community was forming on the west side in the vicinity of Clark Avenue and Fulton Roads. Many of these immigrants were from Bari, on Italy's southeast coast, and Sicily.[24]

Just prior to World War I a fifth Italian colony, in Collinwood, was formed. In an area bounded by Ivanhoe Road on the west,

23. Coulter, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.
24. For a more extensive analysis of the St. Rocco's Italian community see Karl Bonutti and George Prpic, *Selected Ethnic Communities of Cleveland: A Socio-Economic Study,* 1974, pp. 117 ff.

St. Clair Avenue on the north and the New York Central tracks on the south, Italian families poured into this community. In 1910 Collinwood was formally annexed to the City of Cleveland and brought another Italian settlement within the city limits.

## The Italian Churches in Cleveland: Roman Catholic and Protestant

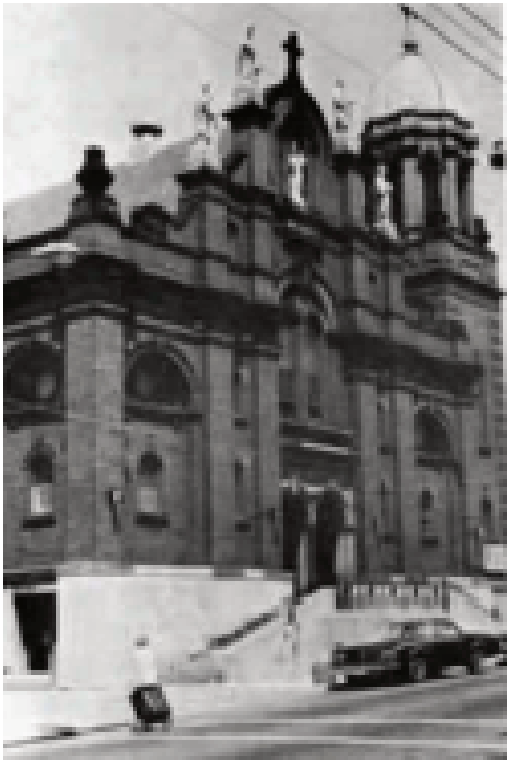
In each of these communities certain landmarks served the community as social, religious and cultural centers. Usually these were the Italian churches which were so important in each area's development. Although in Italy local parishes received small support from the parishioners, in America the ethnic church became the center of the community's life. Even if these religious institutions were not always supported financially by their Italian members their importance can not be overstated.

The original Italian settlement founded St. Anthony of Padua Church in 1887. It was first located in a blacksmith's shop opposite the East 9th Street cemetery. In 1904 it was moved to a new building at 1245 Carnegie. According to one source, during World War I St. Anthony's Parish embraced more than 10,000 people from the Scovill, Central and Woodland districts. However, as the Italians abandoned this locale they also ceased to attend St. Anthony's. In 1938 the church was sold to St. Maron's, and St. Anthony's Parish merged with St. Bridget's on

East 22nd and Scovill.[25] In 1956 this parish was moved to 6750 State Road in Parma.


25. Much of the information on the religious and cultural aspects of Italian ethnicity was furnished by Richard Mileti, a life long student of Italianita in Cleveland.

Two views of St. Anthony of Padua Church, Cleveland's first Italian Church located at east 12th and Carnegie Avenue. The Church is now St. Maron's Church.



Two views of Holy Rosary Church along Mayfield Road in Cleveland's Little Italy.

In the Mayfield Road-Murray Hill district Holy Rosary Parish was founded by the Scalabrini priests in 1892. By 1908 it had reached an enrollment of 940 families. Father Joseph Strumia was the first pastor of the church and was succeeded by Father Givelli in 1894. On January 25, 1905, ground was broken for a new church and in 1908 a new edifice was dedicated at the corner of Mayfield and Coltman Roads. Part of the lands on which the church was built was deeded to the bishop of Cleveland by Joseph Carabelli and his wife for one dollar. There was a one thousand-dollar balance on the property which was

assumed and promptly paid by the diocese. In December of 1973 Holy Rosary had approximately 1000 families, an increase of only 60 families since 1907.

For Holy Rosary Parish the major event in the life of the church and the community is the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption held on August 15th each year. Beginning with a mid-morning mass a procession bearing a statue of Mary, Mother of Christ, is carried out of the church and placed on a carriage. For two hours the Madonna makes its way through the streets proceeded by a band, uniformed Knights of Columbus and school children dressed in their First Communion outfits. In the evening the streets are blocked off and a carnival is held in the business district along Mayfield Road. As many as 40,000 people attend this feast each year, reliving the religious pageantry of the old country with new world *paesani*.

St. Rocco's Parish on Fulton Road developed early in the century and established its own St. Rocco's day celebration in 1915.

In 1922 the church was founded and was guided by Father Sante Gattusso who served this community until his death in 1956. When he arrived at St. Rocco's the collection was bringing into the parish only $10 per week. Within two years he had raised $1400, bought property and built a small church. During the Depression, men from the parish used old railroad ties and trees to heat the school and the church, and discarded bricks taken from demolished buildings were used to build an addition to the school.

In 1950 it was decided that a new church was needed and one of the most unique stories in Cleveland's Italian past began. The men of the parish had been collecting bricks, stones and slabs of marble from construction sites and had stored them on the church grounds until it began to resemble a junkyard. Using ropes and muscle, the men began to build a church, hoisting the stones forty feet above the ground and fitting them into place.


ST. ROCCO'S — 1. North Italian Club; 2. Noicattarese Hall; 3. Home Family Club; 4. Zannoni Grocery Co.; 5. Trentina Club.

During the evening eight men would work and on Saturdays this figure doubled. After two and one-half years of work the

junkyard of materials had been assembled into a beautiful stone church seating 750 members. The church was dedicated on March 16, 1952, by Archbishop Edward F. Hoban. The efforts of these men had saved the parish some $250,000 and had renewed a sense of pride within the entire community.

Today St. Rocco's still retains its large Italian population, many of whom are Italian-born. The 1970 census reported that 597 persons living in the area were born in Italy, about one-third of the entire population of the area. Hometown societies, the Trentina and the Noicattarese along with the North Italian Club still flourish in the area.

St. Rocco's Church on Cleveland's West Side.

Another Italian nationality church, St. Marion, did not survive the post-World War II period. Founded in 1905 in the Blue Rock Springs area by immigrants from Rionero Sannitico, St. Marion became the center of Cleveland's third Italian colony. Although St. Marion remained a small parish the residents of this settlement built the first Italian parochial school in the city. In 1924 the school opened its doors to forty Italian youngsters. Eventually it enrolled some 200 children. By 1936 St. Marion's

Parish accounted for 500 families who had managed to keep the school open during the depression years.

During the post war period the Italian residents' desire for better housing combined with Western Reserve University's expansion programs to accelerate migration to other areas of the city. By 1953 St. Marion's population had dropped to 100 families and the school closed in 1966. In 1968 only 15 Italian families remained in the area. In 1967 when Father Francis Valentini came to St. Marion's he found an empty convent, an empty school and a church with little parochial life remaining. St. Marion's Catholic Church held its final mass in 1975. The structure is now the Second Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Another nationality church is Holy Redeemer, located on Kipling Avenue in the Collinwood district. Founded in 1924 by Father Marin Campagno, it remained a frame structure until 1927.

St. John's Beckwith Church in the Murray Hill Community.

In 1964 a new Holy Redeemer was dedicated. In this Italian settlement some 1400 families are registered in the parish, with over 85% being of Italian extraction. Since many of these members originally came from the Murray Hill section they brought with them many of the traditions of "Little Italy," such as the feast of the Assumption and the ensuing festival.

Although the majority of Cleveland's Italians are Roman Catholic, several Protestant churches have attracted numbers of Italians to their congregations. St. John's Beckwith Church in "Little Italy" was an early example of Protestant missionary

activity in the Italian community. Founded in 1907, St. John's was one of four mission churches established by the Presbyterian Church. It was begun through a grant from the T. Sterling Beckwith Fund and attracted some Italian families living along Mayfield Road.[26]

The first pastor of St. John's was the Reverend Pietro Monnet, who established the church in 1907 at the corner of Murray Hill and Paul Avenues. Joseph Carabelli donated the baptismal font and the Euclid Methodist Church gave the pews. In 1921 St. John's was united with the Euclid Presbyterian Church as part of the Church of the Covenant.

Perhaps the church's most famous pastor was Reverend Gennaro D'Anchise, from Campobasso, who had been the director of the Bureau of Immigrants for the American Waldensian Society. Returning to Italy in 1920 he was "removed" by the fascist government and returned to Cleveland in 1929 when he began his ministry at St. John's. By 1941 his parish membership had a following of some 106 families and in 1948 about 200 families filled the congregation.

The average yearly contribution in 1948 was only $10.50, and this factor had a significant effect upon the demise of the church.

26. For a concise treatment of St. John's Beckwith Church see John Vande Visse, Jr., *The Protestant Church in the Predominantly Catholic Nationality Area*, M.A. Thesis, Department of Sociology, Western Reserve University, 1948.

Christian Congregation Church, Collinwood Neighborhood.

Most of the members lived within one mile of the church but attendance was never more than 40%. Despite D'Anchise's encouragement and efforts to promote Italian culture little effective progress was made. Hampered by the rather hostile attitude of the local Italian Catholic population, the church declined rapidly after 1950. It was finally closed in 1962 and is now occasionally used as a community hall in "Little Italy."

Another Protestant church in Cleveland was St. John's Italian Baptist Church, founded in 1930 on Soika Avenue and East 123rd Street in the Kinsman Italian community. Reverend Vito Cordò, its first pastor, held services in English and Italian, but his efforts proved fruitless. He retired in 1956 and St. John's Baptist continued for two more years before it also was sold to a Black Baptist congregation.

In the original Italian settlement around Hiram House the Josephine Mission of the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church attracted some Italian converts during World War I. Many of these were drawn to the mission because of the classes offered there, especially those in sewing. Another Baptist congregation was founded on East 33rd Street between Woodland and Scovill Avenues in 1909. It also became extinct by 1919 when only 37 parishioners still attended services. In the Collinwood settlement the Church of the Savior was established on Kipling Avenue as an extension of St. John's Beckwith. Begun in 1916 by Reverend Monnet, it was attended by former residents of Little Italy. Like the other Italian Protestant churches they found that they could not compete successfully in a predominantly Roman Catholic area. By 1919 the Church of the Savior counted only 57 members in its congregation.

## Ethnic Mobility among Italians in Cleveland

As Big Italy declined in population in the late thirties other settlements experienced a perceptible increase in population. This would tend to substantiate the belief of some that an ethnic neighborhood is a strong factor in the retention of an ethnic identity. Little Italy, part of census tract R-8, was already evidencing a reduction of Italian population in the decade prior to World War II. In the 1920 census some 3460 Italians were counted, while the 1930 census showed only 1226 Italians. But the areas adjacent to Little Italy rapidly increased in population. The Woodhill-East Boulevard Italian section increased from 653 Italians in 1920 to 1233 in 1930. There was that marked

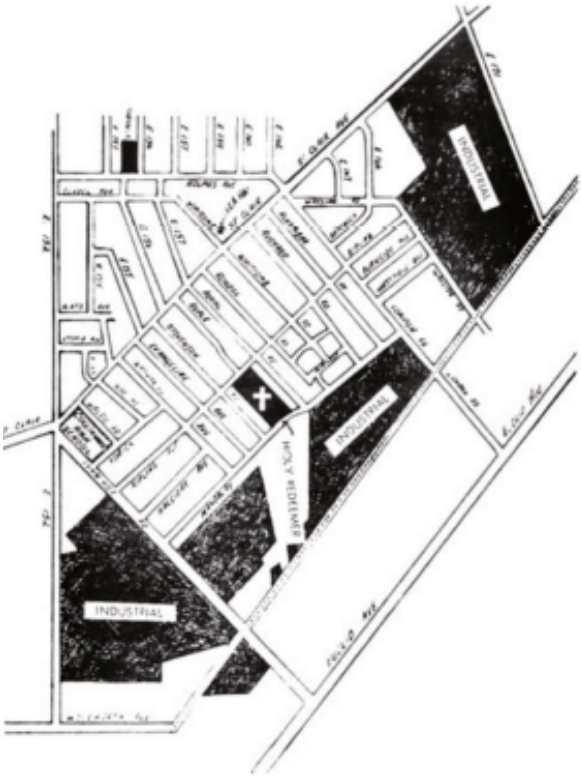
tendency to remain together as a group despite changes in location.

To the south the settlement encompassing Kinsman Road on the north and the Erie railroad on the south witnessed a dramatic increase in Italian settlers. Beginning with a population of 528 Italians in 1920, it climbed dramatically to 2666 by 1930.[27] To the east the Collinwood settlement from East 152nd and St. Clair to East 171st, also became a receptacle for Italians leaving Big Italy. The 1920 census reported only 1269 Italians in the neighborhood, but over 2100 in 1930. In fact, the Collinwood census tract indicated that Italians made up almost 69% of the total population of the area and 78% of all of the foreign-born in the community.

The shift in Italian population was primarily to the eastern regions and not to the west side. The area around St. Rocco's experienced an increase of only 111 Italians in the decade 1920-1930. The census figures show only 759 Italians living in the area in 1930. From West 65th to West 85th, the Mt. Carmel community, an equally low growth rate was recorded. In 1920 only 685 Italians were listed in the census. In 1930 it had increased to only 702. This figure represented only 15% of the total population of that census tract so that this Italian enclave was but a small group within a heterogeneous population mixture.

27. Howard Whipple Green, *Population Characteristics by Census Tracts*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1931. An excellent analysis of the 1930 Federal Census in Cleveland which concentrates on various ethnic groups relative to their economic level and comparative populations throughout the previous census reports.

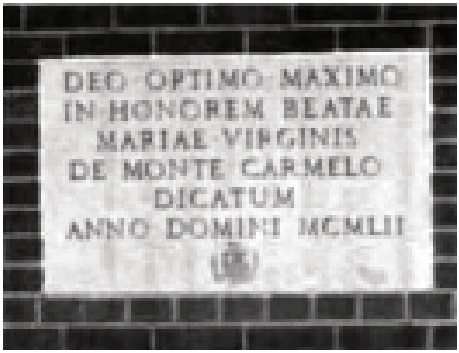
If we go beyond the bare population statistics for 1930 in each of these communities some rather interesting observations can be made about the Italians living in the major settlements in Cleveland. For example, in 1930 the average Clevelander who owned a home had a dwelling which was worth $6971.




COLLINWOOD

In every neighborhood with a sizable Italian population the

average fell into the range $5000-$7500. This is not to imply that every Italian owned a home, but that in general the Italian neighborhoods were at least at the city average in their living accommodations. Indeed in the Collinwood settlement 41% of the population owned their homes while along the Woodland Avenue community another 41% were home owners.




Mosaic and corner stone for Our Lady of Mount Carmel West on Detroit Avenue.

On the west side, St. Rocco's area listed 50% of the population owning dwellings. This would tend to substantiate Josef Barton's study which indicated that only about 14% of the Italians in his survey remained propertyless after twenty years' residence in Cleveland. To the Italian who could afford it and to those many who could not the investment in property was the best method of maintaining a stable environment and was the course most Italians chose.

Yet another statistic probably is more indicative of Italian housing patterns in 1930 — rental property values. In that year the average rental price in the city of Cleveland was $36.25 per month. No Italian settlement reached that figure although the Collinwood and Kinsman settlements were averaging $35 per month. The Murray Hill community had one of the lowest rates in the city with only $28 per month. One can only surmise what these dwellings were like but they did exist amidst middle class residential property.

There has been a recurrent charge made about the mobility of the Italian immigrant, returning home every two or three years to Italy, never really perceiving America as a permanent home. Prior to the 1924 immigration restrictions this may have been the case. After that date, however, the concept of permanence seems to have taken hold. This is indicated in a number of ways. One is by the number of naturalized citizens as well as by those who had made the initial effort to obtain first papers. The following chart illustrates this phenomenon by using the statistics, provided by the 1930 Federal Census, of those applying for citizenship:[28]

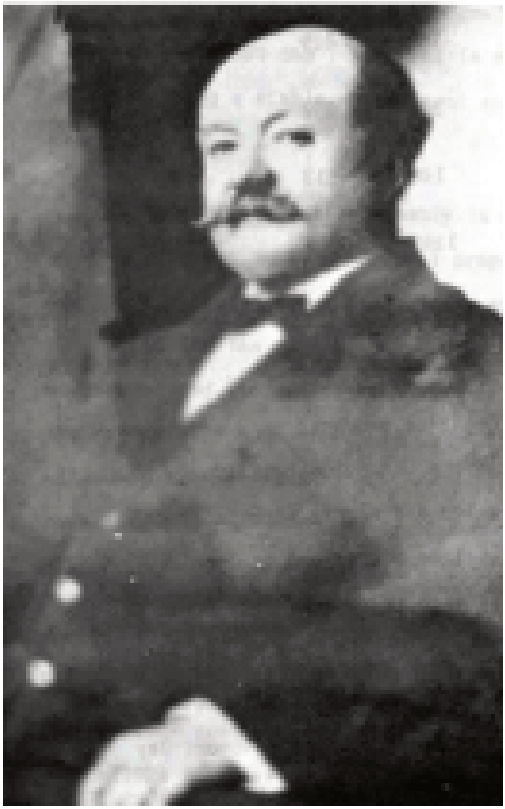
| Area | Total Foreign Born | Total Naturalized | First Papers | Aliens | Number of Foreign-born Italians |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Murray Hill (R-8) | 2380 | 1165 | 169 | 819 | 2227 |
| Collinwood (Q-5) | 2433 | 1158 | 341 | 892 | 2106 |
| St. Rocco's (B-9) | 1431 | 748 | 148 | 513 | 759 |
| Kinsman Rd. (T-5 to T-9) | 12,788 | 7144 | 1392 | 4005 | 2366 |

## Italians in the Professions during the EarlyYears

Cleveland's early Italian communities produced many prominent individuals in a variety of professions. Mention has already been made of Joseph Carabelli whose granite and marble

28. *Ibid*., Table 5.

works attracted others from Italy to settle in Cleveland. A friend of John D. Rockefeller, he influenced that oil magnate to fund Alta House on Mayfield Road for the Italian neighborhood. In 1908 he was elected to the State House of Representatives on a Republican ticket. He was instrumental in having October 12 designated as Columbus Day in Ohio. He died in 1912, the first Italian elected to a major office in the state.



Joseph Carabelli one of the earliest Italians to settle in Cleveland.

Olindo G. Melaragno, Italian American publisher of Cleveland's *La Voce del Popolo d'Italiano*.

Vincenzo Nicola left Monterero Val Cocchiara in Campobasso in 1881 for Ulrichsville, Ohio. His son Benjamin went to Ohio State University, passed his bar examination and in 1904 became the first practicing attorney of Italian extraction in the city of Cleveland. Nicola practiced law in Cleveland until 1964. During his career spanning half a century he was appointed U.S.

Commissioner in 1930 and a judge of the Common Pleas Court in 1948. He also served on the Board of Directors of Alta House as well as the Urban League.

By 1919 at least 12 Italians were listed as attorneys in the city, most of whom advertised in the weekly *La Voce* under the heading "Avocati." Among these were Joseph Nuccio, who would later become assistant city prosecutor. B.A. Bvonpane, an articulate spokesman for the Italian community, was also among this group, along with Louis Perry, D.J. Lombardo, Michael Picciano and Louis Lanza.

Another lawyer of prominence was Alexander De Maioribus, who was to become the first Italian-American to be elected to Cleveland's City Council in 1927. A member of the Republican party, he served in Council from Ward 19 until 1947 and was president of that body for eight years, from 1936 to 1944.

During this formative period a number of distinguished Italian-American physicians and dentists were found in the city. Dr. G.A. Barricelli of Murray Hill was a specialist in pulmonary and cardiac work and was an occasional lecturer at Western Reserve University. He was also an outspoken supporter of the Italian-Americans in Cleveland and was a frequent contributor to the editorial pages of *La Voce* as well as the English-speaking dailies. His wife, Dr. Orfea Barricelli, also held a position in the literature and language departments at Western Reserve and was a president of *Il Cenacolo*, the Italian Cultural Organization.

It has been observed that the Italian professional men in Cleveland lived by the needs of the peasants. Indeed a good case

could be made for this assertion, for during these developing years those Italian-American doctors, dentists, lawyers and businessmen who had their offices in the several Italian settlements catered to the wants and needs of their own people. For the Italian doctor or lawyer, his ability to communicate in the language of his constituents was a most important attribute. It was certainly a good business practice.

The banking establishments along Woodland, the Gugliotta Brothers, Nicola and Salvatore, and Vincent Campanella in Little Italy, did business with usually an Italian-based clientele. Joseph Russo and Son's Ohio Macaroni Company was begun in 1910, while Albert Pucciani's Roma Cigar Company began three years later. G.V. Vittorio's store on Woodland Avenue specialized in olive oil, anchovies and other Mediterranean specialties hardly noticed and certainly unappreciated by native Clevelanders. But for the community in which he did business his was a mecca for these delicacies, a culinary bridge between Italy and Cleveland.

Early in this century Italians were involved in various aspects of the food industry. We can only speculate why this particular occupation has attracted so many Italians and probably never arrive at a conclusive answer. Perhaps the best explanation would be summed up by the idea of "possibilities." The potential in the restaurant business was, at that time at any rate, limitless, and so the possibility became the attraction, the magnet which pulled an immigrant such as Guiseppe Z. Botta toward success. He arrived in Cleveland in 1902, worked as a waiter for seven years and by 1909 opened a restaurant of his own. He would

then employ others from Sicily, perhaps some of his paesani from Sant'Agata, to work for him. With them and others he later organized the Sant'Agata Workers Society in 1915.

By 1920 it was reported that four of Cleveland's finest restaurants were owned by Italians, a phenomenal accomplishment by any standards. One of them, the New Roma on Prospect Avenue, was said to be the largest in Ohio. Italian chefs managed the culinary duties at the Hotels Statler, Cleveland, Hollenden and at the Shaker Heights Club. It was estimated that during the 1920's seventy percent of the cooks in Cleveland's restaurants were of Italian descent.[29]

In 1910 Samuel P. Orth wrote a three-volume *History of Cleveland* which was more of a biographical survey of this city's illustrious citizens than anything else.[30] In the second volume of this work are listed some 400 Clevelanders, six of whom were Italian. Joseph Carabelli is listed as are the Caito Brothers, who were fruit merchants along Broadway. Two priests are noted, the Reverend Humbert Rocchi of St. Anthony of Padua Church and the Reverend Guiseppe Militello, pastor of Holy Rosary Parish. Benjamin Nicola, the attorney, and Nicola Cerri, the Italian consul to Cleveland are also briefly mentioned.

29. Coulter, *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
30. Samuel P. Orth, *A History of Cleveland*, 3 Volumes. (Cleveland: Clarke Publishing Company, 1910).


Lake View Monumental Works, begun by Joseph Carabelli in 1880 on Euclid Avenue across from Lake View Cemetary.

The most impressive treatment afforded an Italian is given to Eugene Grasselli, whose name is linked to the chemical industry, to John Carroll University, to the Cleveland Public Library, to the Cleveland Museum of Art, to duPont Chemicals. Ironically Grasselli was born in Strasburg in 1810, the son of Jean Angelo Grasselli, a chemist. Thus it is obvious that Eugene Grasselli was not a first generation Italian but did have an Italian background.

Eugene Grasselli emigrated first to Philadelphia in 1836, then to Cincinnati in 1839, where he established a small chemical plant. In 1861 he arrived in Cleveland and soon organized the Grasselli Chemical Company. His plant was located on East 26th near Broadway and Independence Roads and initially manufactured sulfuric acids used in the refining of oil. By 1885 Grasselli Chemicals Incorporated had a net worth of $600,000 with plants in seven states and Canada.

Eugene Grasselli died on January 10, 1882, and his son Caesar

continued the company's operations. On the eve of World War I the Grasselli chemical works were worth some 20 million dollars and became involved in the manufacturing of explosives. Caesar's son Thomas consolidated the company with duPont Chemicals in 1926 and was made a vice-president of that concern. In 1936 Grasselli Chemicals was incorporated as a department of duPont thus ending a century of leadership in the chemical manufacturing field.[31]

Today the name Grasselli is associated with John Carroll University, for the Grasselli Tower and the Grasselli Library on the campus. A plaque at the Cleveland Public Library indicates that Eugene Grasselli was a trustee of this nationally known institution. The Grasselli's were also benefactors of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

For each illustrious success story such as Carabelli, Grasselli or Nicola, thousands of other Italians managed only to survive in the city. Indeed, a cursory examination of Cleveland's *City Directory* from 1910 to 1920 will indicate the persistence of obscurity for most Italians entering the city. They began and ended their work careers in Cleveland as common laborers, a condition which was partially caused by their general lack of education, as well as by the undertones of discrimination in hiring. There was also the positive attitude toward manual labor which was important to many of the immigrants from the rural southern Italian towns. It was an honorable way to make a living so many continued in this occupational strata.

31. William Ganson Rose, *Cleveland: The Making of a City* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1950) pp. 338ff; 471-472.

A few examples will illustrate this point. Michael Valentino and Angelo DiRienzo began working in Cleveland in 1908 as common laborers. Eleven years later DiRienzo is still listed as a laborer, Valentino having dropped out of the listing in the City Directory. Others such as Pietro Cannavini started out as laborers but soon discovered that Cleveland was not what they had expected and left the city. Cannavini probably was among the "birds of passage," those immigrants who periodically returned home to Naples, Palermo, or some village in southern Italy for a more secure existence. Statistics are inconclusive on this matter, but a rough check on entries and those remaining by the next Federal Census indicates an average loss of about 39% of the Italians yearly. This percentage is generally substantiated by national figures which show that in some years Italians leaving the United States almost equaled those immigrating to America. Between 1908 and 1916, 1,499,907 Italians entered the United States while 1,215,998 returned to Italy.[32] After the 1924 Immigration Quotas were set, the number of Italians leaving was substantially decreased.

Upward mobility on a small scale is evident among the Italians in this city and the story can be told again and again of the laborer who persevered and was rewarded by an improved occupational status, however marginal it may seem to us. Pietro Trivisono, living at 168 Carabelli Avenue was listed as a laborer in 1904 and remained as such until 1916 when he had assumed the occupation of a general contractor. Antonio Caputo began as a laborer in Big Italy in 1908 but in 1920 we find him listed as

32. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*. Volume I, 105-106; see also Carl Wittke, *We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1939) p. 437.

a baker and living in Murray Hill. In 1925 he was living in the Collinwood settlement, still as a baker.

Barton's study indicates that among Cleveland's Italians there was a good deal of occupational mobility. Generally speaking, of those Italians who were studied, only 25% of the second generation Italians remained in the same occupation as their fathers. The sons of Italians who had been laborers and peasants in Italy generally ended up slightly better than their fathers. Of the 250 families studied only 14% were propertyless after living in the city for 20 years. They were more likely to invest in a house and a lot than in other material comforts and thus rapidly became part of a growing and stable middle class population within the city.

This sense of permanence can also be indicated in several ways other than property ownership. In 1902 there were over 300 registered Italian voters just from the Murray Hill section of the city. In 1909 *La Voce de Popolo Italiano* was urging its readers to register as citizens and to vote for certain Republican candidates. Other issues of *La Voce* provided typical questions and answers in English and Italian relating to governmental operations in the United States. These were the types of questions which could be expected on their examinations for citizenship.

*La Voce* also published a "Commercial Guide" to assist the Italian reader in spending his wages. The Cleveland business community bombarded the paper with advertisements by Italian and non-Italian concerns. Burrows, Cleveland Trust, The May Company advertised along with Carabelli and Russo. A bakery

from Pittsburgh and a "Grosseria Italiana" from Columbus, Ohio also ran ads to attract Italian consumers.[33] The May Company and Cleveland Trust set up "Italian Departments" in their stores to accommodate the Italian-American shopper. The Italians were here to stay and their business was eagerly sought after.

## Poor Relief and Crime

Another indicator of a group's stability and general desire to contribute to their immediate surroundings is their reliance upon public institutions to care for normal familial responsibilities. It is obvious that for every individual group there may be a period of adjustment, of acculturation, during which public assistance is necessary. Add the impediment of learning a foreign language and the cultural differences, and it would seem logical that the foreign-born would depend on public help to a relatively large extent.

In addition the complexity of a foreign legal system where almost one hundred actions were determined to be illegal, numerous confrontations with the law would be expected. It is true that during the first quarter of this century the foreign-born did participate to a larger extent than the native-born Clevelander in relying on public welfare. But the Italian immigrant evidenced one of the lowest rates of involvement with public assistance and a reasonably low rate of arrest and detention in the city.

Using official departmental reports on Poor Relief in the city

33. *La Voce*, October 9, 1909 and April 24, 1915.

from 1874 to 1930 there is a definite indication that Italians did not request public aid to any great extent during this period. In 1910, for example, 2544 families received public welfare from the city, of which 1799 were foreign born. Italian relief constituted only .09% of the foreign born and only .06% of the total on relief. This figure representing 159 Italians was the highest rate of public welfare experienced by the Italian community until the Depression years. (See Table E in Appendix: Native and Foreign Born Clevelanders Receiving Public Assistance.)

In most cases an individual remains an obscure part of an ethnic group until he or she comes in conflict with the legal structure of a community. However distasteful or unfortunate these stereotypes may be, it is apparent that such adverse publicity has affected the image of certain ethnic groups. The stigma of criminality has been attached to the Italians even though there is empirical evidence which points to the contrary.

The Cleveland Police Department issued an *Arrest Report* each year indicating the total number of arrests, total foreigners arrested, with a breakdown by Nativity. Table F indicates a composite of Italians arrested in Cleveland until 1902 when the Nativity charts were no longer published. The arrest rate for Italians was relatively low when compared to the total arrested, although it was high considering the Italian population prior to 1910. Italians averaged about 4% of the foreigners arrested.

It should be kept in mind that arrests do not necessarily imply convictions and that the total arrest figures reflect all types of crimes, misdemeanors as well as felonies. Serious crimes

usually involved incarceration and this figure may be used as an indicator of serious crimes charged against Italians. The following chart indicates Italians in the city's House of Correction (based on available information):[34]

| Year | Total in House of Correction | Foreigners | Italians | % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1910 | 2252 | 730 | 39 | .02% |
| 1911 | 2433 | 906 | 70 | .03% |
| 1912 | 2372 | 841 | 94 | .04% |
| 1913 | 3591 | 1222 | 97 | .03% |
| 1915 | 4735 | 1659 | 93 | .02% |
| 1922 | 1400 | 610 | 96 | .068% |
| 1928 | 9836 | 2532 | 124 | .0126% |

This does not imply that Italian crime was negligible nor that it was non-existent, but it does imply that such crime did not reach epidemic levels as some would believe. Yet to read official statements on criminality in Cleveland one would get an entirely different impression.

A Report issued by the Cleveland Association for Criminal Justice stated that from October to December, 1922, 96 Italians were arrested for felonies out of a total of 923 whites, 610 foreign born, 477 "colored," and 104 Austrians. During the year 1927 Sabastian C. was convicted of rape and murder. Sam B.

34. *Annual Reports of the Department of Police*, City of Cleveland, 1915-1928.

was found insane after convictions for three murders and Ross M. and his non-Italian gang of “boy burglars” were convicted in the same year. The 1928 Report foretold that “Cleveland is today fertile territory for ‘organized crime’ of all kinds.” Crime was indeed on the rise in the city and the statistics tell the story. It was in the foreign and “colored” elements within the city that the real source of criminality was to be found.

The Italian community was quick to report and denounce rather than defend the criminal element within its midst. An early issue of *La Voce* warned the readers of a counterfeiter working within community as well as reported the murder of an Italian by another in East Cleveland. Almost every issue reported an assault, a robbery or manslaughter within the Italian sector, of Italians harassing other Italians. The April 24, 1915, edition of *La Voce* reported the murder of “Big Dominic” M. on Orange Avenue by two other Italians while another Italian was assaulted on Race Avenue.

These were isolated examples of crime within an ethnic community. No settlement was free of it. As the Italian-born element grew in the city and as the foreign born population reached over 230,000 in 1930, inter-ethnic strife was expected. Yet within the Italian neighborhoods one institution, the family, provided the bulwark against an epidemic of anti-social behavior.

Miss Florence Graham, the assistant principal of the Murray Hill school from 1908-1928 and principal there from 1937-1957, provided an “outsider’s” account of the Italian community during the 1920’s. While in the home parents were the only

authority, the school became the real as well as the legal extension of the family. In the Italian tradition the school teachers were looked upon for leadership and were treated with respect. “I think that was why they accepted us so well. When the teacher said something was so . . . the Italian said, ‘that’s right and don’t question it.'” This deep respect for authority, the subverting of the individual’s “rights” for basic unity and order, is a main current in the history of the Italian people whether in Italy or in America.

Miss Graham also commented on the stability of the Italian home:[35]

> During the first period when I was in Little Italy (1908-1928) the parents were in the laboring class. They worked like clockwork. The fathers came home at a certain time and the mothers were there preparing the meal. One knew where the mother was. That’s why they had such wonderful families . . . because they were sure of their homes.

This sense of stability and security was carried out of the home and into the streets by the children. Boys were home by 7:00 p.m. Girls were closely watched. Delinquency was practically nonexistent during this time. In 1928 at the Cleveland Boys Farm only three Italian-born youths were admitted while only 18 second-generation Italian youths were incarcerated. This was in a city which had reached nearly 900,000 people with almost 23,000 Italian-born within the population.

35. Much of the material on the Murray Hill School is taken from Dr. Charles Feroni's personal interviews in the neighborhood and are found in his dissertation *The Italians in Cleveland*, pages 209 and following.

In conclusion, the formative period of Cleveland's Italian settlement witnessed an increase in population, a relatively low crime rate, an almost negligible dependence on public assistance and a propensity to purchase real property within the city. Commercially, culturally and socially the Italians were accepted and encouraged by their Cleveland neighbors to continue their efforts to contribute to the city's growth and development. Prohibition and the rise of fascism proved to be discordant factors in this otherwise harmonious relationship and altered some of that encouragement to outward signs of concern and even hostility.

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# Chapter 8: The Italians in Cleveland: Prohibition to World War II

Four notable Cleveland Italians, from left to right, Capt. Emilio Ardito, Count Cesare Gradenigo, Dr. Gigi Maino, and Dr. Cosimo Menzalora of the Dante Alighieri Society, April 8, 1935.

> "Italians did join together because of discrimination during Prohibition and the depression. They supported me because they felt they had no representation. I fought against the search of homes and the destruction of property . . . against the discrimination of the quota system."
>
> *(Alexander DeMaioribus, Cleveland Councilman, 1927-1947, Ward 19)*

The years following the first World War were marked by heated exchanges between the Italian community and the various news media over such issues as Prohibition, crime and the rise of fascism in Europe. These confrontations would produce a reaction in the Italian press which resulted in an affirmation of Italian culture while questioning the intent of the Cleveland press, and an almost unwavering support of Mussolini's regime until the mid-thirties.

## The Issues of Prohibition and Crime

Crimes, especially those related to the making, selling and consumption of alcohol, began the ferment. Murray Hill was "known" for its involvement with "bootleg" liquor even though those who transported the illegal booze were relatively minor figures who profited little for their efforts. In general Italians, like most ethnic groups, were opposed to Prohibition and were vocal in their sentiments. The consumption of wine was a natural part of a meal, an essential component of life. To deprive a man

of his vino would be like prohibiting the Englishman his tea or the American his coffee. It was barbaric but it was the law.

Arrests for liquor violations were frequent during the twenties and made up the crime which would inflate Cleveland's arrest totals by about 30% each year. Italian involvement in the liquor trade was common. *The Plain Dealer* routinely published the names of those arrested for violations while *La Voce* detailed those crimes involving Italians. In February of 1920 *La Voce* reported that an Italian from Murray Hill was arrested on Euclid Avenue for requesting a drink with "kick," while the same issue ran an editorial against Prohibition, calling it a "theft of people's liberty."[1]

In another editorial *La Voce* commented on the local press coverage of criminal arrest reporting, complaining that the identification by ethnic group was not necessary. Although it was a fairly common practice in official and non-official reports to designate the nativity of the criminal, *La Voce* strenuously challenged the propriety of such coverage:[2]

> Our dissension is in the misuse of the word "Italian." Why is it necessary to always bring this to the fore when an unfortunate of this race is caught in the coils of his own act and brought to the bar? Then why the discrimination? If a Pole commits a murder do our fatuous press brazen forth the culprit's nationality?
>
> Why can't we say John Ferraro, or John Smith, or Ivan Ivanovich did this thing and he alone should suffer.

1. *La Voce del Popolo Italiano*, February 7, 1920.
2. *Ibid*., June 25, 1921.

*La Voce's* plea went unheeded because it seemed to be the very intent of the press to saddle the various immigrant groups with the bulk of the crimes committed in the city.

For example, the Cleveland Association for Criminal Justice, a group of concerned professionals, felt that law enforcement in the city needed to pursue a more aggressive program. In each of its quarterly *Bulletins*, the association issued a crime statistics table for the city, as well as detailed the exploits of selected criminals, negligent judges and unethical lawyers.

Though not necessarily an anti-Italian group, the association did underscore the relative criminality associated with the foreign born of the city.

During the last three months of 1922 it reported that 923 whites

had been arrested for felonies, 477 "colored," and 610 foreign born of whom 96 were Italian. That same issue also featured the careers of three notorious Italians, guilty of various murders, rapes and assorted felonious escapades.[3] The following year's *Bulletin* described Calmer S. as "another ignorant foreigner" arrested for liquor violation. A later *Bulletin* would devote its entire coverage to the exploits of a "second generation Italian" criminal.

The myth of the immigrant criminal, exploited by various national and local media, was attacked not only by the ethnic communities themselves but received substantial attention from foreign observers as well. One distinguished reporter, Sir A. Maurice Low, began a series of articles for the *London Morning Post* on "America the Lawless." During the latter part of 1927 his reports concluded that the idea of the "immigrant as a criminal" was nothing more than fabrication.[4] He specifically dealt with several major cities in America, Cleveland being one of those selected. While the crime rate was high his findings concluded that it was the native born American who was the overall culprit perpetrating the most serious crimes in the country as a whole. Unfortunately his conclusions had little impact in Cleveland.

By the end of the twenties a short lived but highly influential publication appeared in Cleveland which further promoted the cause of Italian culture while condemning Prohibition and

3. Cleveland Association for Criminal Justice, *4th Quarterly Bulletin*, 1922. See also Bulletin No. 38, 1934.
4. *The London Morning Post*, November 17, 1927, "The Myth of the Foreign Criminal" and November 19, 1927, "Figures Absolve the Immigrant."

insults against Italians. It was called *The Latin World* and began publication in 1929 for "Americans of Latin extraction." Although Italian-oriented material predominated, articles in French and by non-Italian authors were usually found within its pages. It was an impressive cultural magazine edited by Alfred Deflorentis and included among its Honorary Membership City Manager William R. Hopkins, Benjamin Nicola, Stefano Ardito, Frank Celebrezze and Antonio Milano.[5]

*The Latin World* soon became a publication of cultural significance and intense involvement in the political and social activities of Cleveland. When the Met arrived in 1929 *The Latin World* ran articles on the Italian performers. The functions of the Italian Woman's Club of 1929 were noted, as was the case when J.G. Lombardo was created Chevalier of the Crown of Italy in June of the same year.

During the short-lived career of *The Latin World* almost every issue contained advertisements for grapes for winemaking, even though Prohibition was still a very real part of American society. A limited amount of winemaking was permitted only for home consumption but it is questionable whether this kind of advertising appealed to the home winemaker. The Volstead Act of 1919 prevented the manufacture of any beverage in excess of one-half of one percent of alcohol. Whatever could legally be produced would be little more than grape juice.

*The Latin World* opposed Prohibition as a "Bugaboo of Truth and Normality," and attorney Blase A. Buonpane editorialized on this topic. According to Buonpane there were too many

5. *The Latin World*, various issues, 1929-1930.

abuses being committed against Italians in the name of Prohibition. He condemned the self-appointed purists and questioned the integrity of the prohibitionists: "What human feelings are crushed at the sight of an orderly group of convivial persons who are taking drinks at their party?" He concluded that imbibing in a social drink or two was normal and that absolute temperance was a cultural aberration.[6]

Opposition to Prohibition took more tangible form in the disregard for the law and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The local police responded to such liquor violations in a variety of actions, from overlooking minor infractions to all-out warfare against notorious offenders. In Murray Hill during the late 1920's the safety forces formed roadblocks at all the entrances to the neighborhood, searching cars and persons for liquor without warrants. Protests to the mayor, the chief of police and the papers had no effect. This neighborhood had "earned" the reputation of being a major source for "bootleg" liquor and drastic measures had to be assumed to curb this threat. It was but one step to stigmatizing the entire community for the activities of some within its boundaries.

The Italian press was aware of the criminal element within the settlements and was quick to reveal those persons responsible for crimes against society. Yet the paper also warned its readership and the English-speaking community that any links between isolated instances of crime and any "organized mobs" were nonsense:[7]

6. *Ibid*., September, 1930.
7. *La Voce*, July 10, 1920.

> Recently the city has been more or less startled by a series of crimes correctly or not attributed to "a mythical organization" labeled the "Black Hand." We say mythical because it is such . . . We are for law and order. But in extenuation of our neighbors . . . and law abiding citizens who must bear the stigma of the acts above noted . . . we can not help but sound a note of satisfaction in our positive knowledge that extermination from its own festering hands is foreshadowed for those who are the outragers of the decent and law abiding.

*The Latin World* published an editorial in September of 1929 in Italian which questioned the conviction of Angelo Amato, accused in the Sly-Fanner murders. It was a reasonably thought-out piece which concluded that, despite Amato's conviction, he was being sentenced on the testimony of another "paranoid" murderer. "Italian justice, pure and blameless in its knowledge of this situation, will get to the bottom of this case."

Crime was indeed on the upsurge in Cleveland during Prohibition and some Italians were among those arrested. Yet the arrests did not reach epidemic proportions. In 1928 the following figures were reported by the Cleveland House of Corrections:[8]

**Total Prisoners in House of Correction – 1928**

8. Annual Report of the City of Cleveland, *Report of the House of Corrections*, 1928.

| | |
|---|---|
| Americans, 7304 | Hungarians, 169 |
| Austrians, 433 | Russians, 124 |
| Irish, 430 | Italians, 124 |
| Poles, 268 | Germans, 122 |

Male juvenile offenders of Italian descent numbered 18 of the 154 boys incarcerated. Two years earlier 181 females of Italian extraction had been placed in the House of Correction for varying offenses, an astounding figure when one considers the relatively strong family ties associated with the Italian woman. Yet these were second and third generation juveniles; it is evident that a by-product of acculturation was the erosion of parental authority and the likelihood of a higher incidence of delinquency.

By the 1930's a full-blown epidemic of "Italian racketeers" was being reported by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. In an exclusive story in the Sunday Magazine section Frank Merrick, the city's former Director of Public Safety, offered his observations in an article entitled "Giving the Low Down on Cleveland's Racketeers." In this review of the city's criminal element it was the Italians who were singled out for blame.

Complete with mug shots and drawings Merrick singled out Dominic Benigno as the mastermind behind Cleveland's crime problem. Although he had never participated in a crime, "from his mob sprang almost every known gangster existing in Cleveland today."[9] Along with Benigno in his "organization" of

9. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 27, 1933, p. 3.

murder, theft and extortion were Frank Motto and Sam Purpera, a sixteen-year-old accomplice. To round out this mob, Mrs. Emma Colovito was included. These persons were indeed part of a criminal element, but to cite them as the only source for Cleveland's criminality was inaccurate. To include only Italians as forming this city's racketeers was to utter an absurdity that needs no further comment.

## Italians and the Depression

The Depression was brutally experienced and painfully remembered by the Italian people in Cleveland, for many of the men had been employed as laborers, not as white collar professionals. A man was considered fortunate who worked two weeks a month for the WPA, earning about $79. In Little Italy the effects of the Depression could be felt as late as 1936 when Father Charles McBride became assistant at Holy Rosary. He recalled how young boys were forced to steal coal from the railroad cars to heat their family's houses.

In 1936 almost 1000 families out of 1472 were on relief in the Holy Rosary Parish. It was here that many parishioners received assistance in the form of flour and potatoes. Alta House also distributed rice, barley, milk and potatoes once a week for the needy.

So intense was the feeling against the Murray Hill Italians that the Mayfield Merchant's Association invited a *Cleveland News* reporter to visit the area and write about his first-hand experiences for his Cleveland readers. In July of 1935 Jack

Kennon of the News began to walk among the people of Little Italy, listening to their problems and observing their life style. His conclusion was that the only title which Murray Hill did merit was Little Italy and nothing else.

He reported on the street society during the Depression, of older men sitting on the steps of the neighborhood shops discussing politics, their jobs or lack of jobs; women and children streaming to and from Holy Rosary to pray. He saw no crime, no delinquency, no street brawling. He did discover gambling when "a dozen youths were shooting craps" under a dim street light on Murray Hill Road. "And that law violation was the only one I saw during my entire tour of the district . . ."[10] It was a compact and relatively isolated area, poor during a period of extensive poverty, but surrounded by the values of family and friends.

Poverty was an integral part of Italian-American life during the Depression and was evident even in the Collinwood settlement during the thirties. In 1934 sixty percent of the family heads in the area were born in Italy, some 850 persons in all. Into Collinwood had poured the new immigrants and those others who relocated from the Murray Hill and Kinsman settlements. Collinwood had been perhaps the most affluent Italian settlement in the city prior to the Depression.

During the thirties shortages of all types were evident in the Collinwood community. Housing was especially acute, with 97% of the people renting for under $30 per month. Other figures also illustrate the extent of shortages in this predominantly Italian area. Only 30% of the 1597 families

10. *The Cleveland News*, July 3, 1935.

owned a simple radio in 1934, while only 7% had telephone service. Only 2% had a mechanical refrigerator, while in Bratenahl, about three miles away, 53% of the families had this appliance. About one-third of the families had an automobile, the lowest figure in the 12 census tracts comprising the entire Collinwood district.[11]

## Fascism and the Italian American Community

The impact of fascism on Cleveland's Italians is better understood if viewed with the Depression as a background. Italians had immigrated to this country by the millions and many thousands were part of the city's population during the thirties. They had little voice in a city where their numbers should have given them some political importance. Authority was in the hands of non-*paesani* while very few Italians controlled their own financial destiny. Their continued immigration was controlled by law and their private lives were dominated by a Prohibitionist mentality. They were associated with a mounting criminal element and had lost much of their economic gains over the past 25 years.

This lack of power was the main reason why Alexander DeMaioribus chose to run for Cleveland's City Council from Ward 19 in 1927. For the next 20 years (1927-1947) he won re-election, serving as president for eight years. In an interview he commented on the situation confronting the Italian community in Cleveland during the thirties which led to his election:[12]

11. Howard Whipple Green, "A Sheet A Week," May 6, 1937.
12. Interview with Alexander de Maioribus, Italian American political leader, March 20, 1968, conducted by Charles Ferroni.

> Yes, Italians did join together because of discrimination during Prohibition and the Depression. They supported me because they felt they had no representation. I fought against the search of homes and the destruction of property. During the Depression I fought against the discrimination of the quota system used to employ people. Little Italy was way behind. I pushed to get more employed.

The Italians rallied around DeMaioribus, a Republican, even though the Democrats were strongest among the ethnic groups. He was a man who restored pride to the people and for this reason rather than political ideology he was returned again and again to Cleveland's City Council.

This same kind of identification with authority and the rekindling of pride was the major reason for Italian-Americans to give evidence to what appeared to be a pro-fascist sentiment during the 1930's. The new respect Italy had achieved within the world community during the twenties and thirties acted as an antidote for the humiliation and discrimination felt during the Depression. The image of Italy, of Mussolini's "New Roman Empire," found eager adherents in the city as well as from various non-Italian news media.[13]

In the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* a rather parochial attitude toward Italy had always prevailed. Events in Italy did not concern the *Plain Dealer* although crime in Cleveland committed by Italians usually received good coverage. Italy was generally ignored

13. For an interesting analysis of America's brief "flirtation" with fascism see John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

until suddenly on October 27, 1922, the Italian Cabinet resigned . . . inspiring the *PD* to deliver a 13-line article! On the 28th another story described the *fascisti* and their leader:[14]

Benito Mussolini is a young man in his 40's whose career has been distinguished by his virile and forceful traits of character . . . His magnetism and eloquence . . . He was wounded upwards of a hundred times and bears the scars of battle.

Actually the *PD* had no understanding whatsoever of the man or the political conditions which shaped him. *The Plain Dealer* endorsed Mussolini yet questioned his policies of violence, dictatorship and his uncompromising attitudes on Yugoslavia. The paper endorsed a personality and an ideology which seemed to provide a solution to the problem of Bolshevism in Italy. The fact remains that less than a marginal amount of investigation was done on the situation before the apparent successes of fascism were applauded by the *Plain Dealer.* The major thrust was that for the moment communism was destroyed in Italy and that a new era of dignity and peace was returning to the country.

Cleveland's Italians reacted to Mussolini with very positive sentiments of patriotism. *La Voce del Popolo Italiano* was the largest Italian language paper in Ohio and its editor, O.G. Melaragno, was wooed by the new fascist regime. Mussolini personally requested King Victor Emmanuel to confer upon this Cleveland journalist the title of Chevalier of the Crown. For the most part *La Voce* during the thirties would carry articles favorable to the fascist government.

14. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 28, 1922. See also *PD*, October 31, 1922.

In the archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society are found microfilmed issues of *La Voce* from 1907 to October 7, 1922. The paper reappears in 1936 as a firm supporter of the fascist government, but even in the early years these attitudes were present. For example, the turmoil within post-war Italy was described in detail for the Cleveland community as a "madness which has infected the classes of Italy . . . It is the spread of communist fallacies . . . it is destructive, revolutionary." *La Voce's* readers were urged to write and cable friends and relatives in Italy to make any sacrifices necessary "to save their country from red revolution."[15]

Cleveland Fascisti marching on the west side, May, 1927.

Describing the fall of the Italian government, *La Voce* suggested

15. *La Voce*, September 11 and 18, 1920.

that "King Victor and his advisors may decide to call an untried man to the premiership." The same article revealed that the fascist movement in Italy had been transformed into a political party and that Italy had finally "found herself." The connection between the chaotic situation and the fascist solution "waiting in the wings" was obvious.

The rise of fascism and the establishment of a "Young Italy" was closely reported in the Italian Press. In Cleveland the Italians experienced a resurgence of ethnic maturity, a feeling that despite the recurrence of anti-Italian discrimination in the city they could justifiably feel proud of recent developments in their homeland.

This elation in Italian achievements, however suspect it may seem in retrospect, was encouraged by the presence of Captain Count Caesar Pierre Albert Buzzi Gradenigo, and Dr. Romeo Montecchi, the two Italian consuls for the city of Cleveland. Count Gradenigo served as consul from 1930-1936 and Dr. Montecchi from 1936-1941. Their interaction with Cleveland's Italians stimulated and directed the emerging ethnic consciousness for over a decade.

Accepting his new post in 1930, Gradenigo reminded Cleveland's Italians not to forget their mother country:[16]

> You must be loyal to the United States, the land of your adoption, but do not forget the culture and history of Italy. Italy now has a stable government that is aiming at world peace. By helping to bind the United

16. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 5, 1930.

> States and Italy more closely together than they are already you can serve both countries at the same time.

In November of each year Gradenigo met with the Italian Veterans' Association at the Hotel Statler to celebrate King Victor Emmanuel's birthday, the March on Rome, and Armistice Day. Cries of "Viva l'America! Viva Benito Mussolini!" opened the 1934 celebration.[17] The Count reminded his audience that these annual celebrations were "decidedly not fascist propaganda but an expression of sentiment by Italian Americans toward the land of their ancestry." This particular celebration was also attended by several non-Italians such as Judge John P. Dempsey, who remarked that "Mussolini will be recorded in history as one of the greatest political geniuses of all times." Praise from Harold Burton of the American Legion on Italy's war record and her contributions toward world peace were also sounded. These would be remembered as the golden years of Italian ethnic pride in Cleveland.

As with most ethnic groups, pride and self-awareness soon gave way to demands and a more aggressive position began to be adopted by the leaders and self-appointed spokesmen of the Italian community. As the membership of the Sons of Italy reached 9000 this organization demanded that the Cleveland Public Schools adopt the teaching of the Italian language in the curriculum. The Sons of Italy made it known that they would support only those board members who were favorable to this

17. *Ibid*., November 5, 1934.

addition. The schools ultimately decided to add this language course to their curriculum in 1934.

In 1935 the Italian ambassador to the United States, Augusto Rosso, came to Cleveland to help dedicate a temple for the Sons of Italy. It was to be the first time an Italian ambassador had visited the city and it was expected to be a major event in the community. Cleveland, the Italian community was told, was seen by Mussolini not as an isolated midwest city somewhere between New York and Chicago, but as an important link in the chain of Italian communities throughout the country. The fascist government was aware of Cleveland's initiatives and encouraged these activities by such prestigious visits. The temple of the Sons of Italy was to include a restaurant, classrooms, offices, a lounge and a 1200-seat auditorium. The *Cleveland News* believed that this structure was a significant milestone in Cleveland's cultural history, while the *Plain Dealer* called the Temple one of the most ambitious undertakings of Italians anywhere in the United States.[18]

Rosso's two day visit in June of 1935 was perhaps the most significant pro-Italian event in the history of the city during the thirties. His speeches were tangible evidence that Italians had no longer to fear the stigma of being part of the nondescript "huddled masses" of immigrants but that their native land was one of proud achievement. Italy was now a strong country, orderly, confident. She was "loved by many, feared by some . . . but respected by all." And Rosso reminded his audience that this prestige was primarily the work of Mussolini.

18. *Ibid*., May 19, 1935, and the *Cleveland News*, May 30, 1935.

Although Ambassador Rosso spoke of Italy he did not forget to address the situation of Italian-Americans. Of his audiences he requested that they *not* forget the language and culture of Italy while becoming acculturated Americans. Basically an Italian-American had a dual responsibility, to his adopted country but more so to his native land. Transported Italians should be ready to sacrifice, as others had done, to keep Italy strong and "respected by all."

The city's Italians had the opportunity to show their solidarity with Mussolini's Italy in October of 1935 with the invasion of Ethiopia by Italian troops. Italian Clevelanders responded with the ardor and enthusiasm of patriots. One enthusiastic writer described the events by saying that "the love of country was alive and vibrating . . . all worked actively, all felt morally mobilized, all felt the obligation to support a work most holy and most patriotic."[19]

19. Enzo Cotruvo, *De Vittorio Veneto A Addis Abeba* (Cleveland: The Tower Press, 1937) pp. 130-131 quoted by Ferroni. Mr. Cotruvo was the Editor of *La Voce*.

Columbus Day Parade in Cleveland's Murray Hill Section, October, 1938.

By September of 1936 Cleveland's Italian organizations had donated $12,404.21 to the Italian Red Cross. Some 1000 Cleveland Italians also donated their gold wedding rings to Italy for "this holy and patriotic cause," and received steel bands from Mussolini to wear as symbols of their faith in Italy. The new consul, Dr. Romeo Montecchi, made the presentations.[20]

To assume that Cleveland's Italians were not impressed with the exploits of the fascist government is to grossly underestimate their enthusiasm. In 1937 over 4000 Italians gathered in Murray Hill to celebrate the first anniversary of the "Italian Empire." Montecchi said that the rebirth of the Italian nation under Mussolini was "a true harbinger of the restoration of the old Roman Empire and the acquisition of Ethiopia was a proper

20. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 25, 1936.

step in that direction."[21] Unfortunately few outside this circle of enthusiasts felt the same and one could almost sense that the peak of pro-Italian sentiment in Cleveland had been reached. The invasion of Ethiopia marks a turning point in the history of Italian ethnicity in Cleveland.

While Italy's official representatives were proclaiming a new Roman Empire, Italian-Americans were expressing their sentiments on the subject of their Italian heritage. In the pages of *La Voce* and the local press letters were received denouncing the Cleveland papers for rejecting Mussolini and his regime. The president of the Italian War Veterans attacked the *Plain Dealer* for its "anti-Italian" editorial policy:[22]

> Your newspaper has followed an editorial policy which had been openly hostile and abusive towards the existing government of Italy. It is un-American to enter into discussion concerning the good or the bad features of a foreign country's policy. A nation expressing a habitual hatred or fondness for another is a slave to its animosity or its affection. We hope you will not indulge further in efforts to arouse racial passions and hatreds.

The editor of the *Cleveland News* printed the following letter from Raoul Spoleti-Bonanno in June of 1937 concerning recent anti-Italian editorials:[23]

21. *Ibid*., May 10, 1937.
22. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 18, 1937.
23. *The Cleveland News*, June 2, 1937.

> Are we to understand that a good American is one who condemns everything not reflecting American political, economic, moral, and philosophical points of view? As an Italian I can not berate fascism for having developed a national consciousness . . .

There were others who saw in this renewed ethnic identification an opportunity to creatively develop Italian culture within the main current of American culture. One individual who supported this kind of positive ethnicity was Stefano Emilio Ardito, the vice-consul in Cleveland under Count Gradenigo. His letters to *La Voce* appealed to American youth to learn about Italy aside from the immediate political embroilments. "Do not forget your native tongue, study it wholeheartedly. You should be proud of Italy, knowing she has contributed so greatly to art, literature, and science."[24]

Other like attorney J. Melaragno were cautious amidst this resurgence of Italian pride. He emphasized *America*, not Italy, in his responses to the local media. He spoke of Americanization, of being well-informed about the laws of this country. "Italians who form a part of an American cosmopolitan group seek to earn the privilege of being citizens."[25] His was the voice of moderation and reason but was not in tune with the moment and was drowned by the exuberance of victory.

Riding on the crest of world wide recognition, some Italians in the city took advantage of the situation and became ultrasensitive to anything which appeared to conflict with their

24. *La Voce*, May 21, 1937.
25. *Ibid*., July 14, 1937.

own inflated conception of Italianness. There were minor rumblings in the late thirties which were exaggerated beyond proportion in the Italian press. For example, there was an attempt to change the name of Murray Hill to Marconi Avenue. In December of 1937 letters to *La Voce* indicated that Italian pride *depended* on this name change. As it happened, many home owners and merchants on Murray Hill in fact did not want the name changed. But their "anti-Italian" attitude was "observed," and their "stinginess" offended the entire Italian community in the city![26]

There were those who were almost paranoid when it came to "Italian Pride." J.V. Rapone, a pro-fascist observer and frequent contributor to *La Voce*, was violently opposed to any disrespect, any challenging of Italian foreign exploits. Such anti-Italian sentiment was "propaganda" which came from "organizers and representatives of labor classes who believe that fascism has acquired a harmful control over labor."[27] Indeed, any statement which was critical of the Italian government brought letters and rebuttals from Italian patriots in the city. Few voices were raised supporting American citizenship, the study of English, of the improvement of the quality of life of Cleveland's Italians.

It was a short-lived flirtation, almost totally based on emotionality, which luckily did not result in a lasting marriage. By 1939 the enthusiasm had worn thin. To be sure, most of the profascist sentiment was more than rhetoric but less than actual commitment to fascist ideology. As long as Italy did not collide with American interests, as long as Mussolini's empire regulated

26. See also the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1938.
27. *La Voce*, April 2, 1937.

railroad schedules, drained marshes, built bridges, bestowed awards on local Italo-Americans, and generally kept order in the country, the exuberance was a positive and unifying force in the Italian community. When the fascist government declared war on France and England on June 10, 1940, the momentum of Italian-American exhilaration halted abruptly. When the appearance of confrontation seemed inevitable, the overwhelming majority of Italian-Americans had no misconceptions as to their loyalty. On June 13, 1940, Raymond Boccia, Grand Venerable of the Sons of Italy, expressed the collective sentiments of his organization in a letter to the *Cleveland Press*:[28]

> The members of the Sons of Italy in America are stunned by Italy's declaration of war and are extremely sorry that Italy has felt constrained to enter the European holocaust. We have been praying for peace and hoping that this hour might never come to pass and that some solution could be found whereby this act of Italy might have been averted. But now that such a thing has happened we as Americans stand ready shoulder to shoulder with other Americans, in assuming the responsibilities of upholding and safeguarding our form of government. Our motto has been and will be "America first and above all." We hope that the present European conflict will come to an immediate end so that America can help rebuild once again this disrupted world.

## Italian American Loyalty and World War II

In the months that followed Cleveland's Italians were stumbling

28. *The Cleveland Press*, June 13, 1940.

over each other to prove they were loyal Americans. The editor of *L'Araldo* wrote, "There seems to be a stampede on by various Italian organizations to declare themselves, in no uncertain terms, that they are contrary to dealings going on in Italy and reaffirming their allegiance to the United States."[29] International events were also affecting the Italian consul, who was noticeably absent from various ethnic ceremonies. Following the outbreak of the Greek-Italian war in October 1940, Montecchi was available only to a few close friends. In March 1941, the Italian Veterans' Association dedicated their new hall without him and he made no appearance in September when the Italian Gardens were dedicated in Cleveland's Rockefeller Park. In presenting the gardens to the city, Alexander De Maioribus, the prominent Italian-American politician, said that one is not an American "by virtue of any blood strain or any heritage except the heritage of freedom. We Americans are brothers in a common political faith whose fundamental concept is that all government is justified only as conserving the rights and dignities of the individual." De Maioribus asked for an embargo on hate. It did not matter whether one's neighbor was Italian, German, French or English:[30]

> He is an American and the presumption is that he is just as good an American as the Cabots and the Lodges whose forebears came over on the Mayflower.

The dedication ceremonies closed with Cleveland's Italians singing "God Bless America."

29. *L'Araldo*, Cleveland, July 5, 1940.
30. *The Cleveland Press*, September 15, 1941.

Six days before Pearl Harbor, Cleveland's Sons of Italy announced that they would invest $101,900 in defense bonds as a first step toward full support of President Roosevelt's defense program.[31] Then when Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, Cleveland's Italians were "struck at the heart."

Ethnicity underwent a transformation as the Italian community redirected its energy toward the war effort. When the public schools dropped the Italian language, the Sons of Italy did not complain. Lodges that had been named after Italian royalty were renamed Abraham Lincoln, Betsy Ross, etc. Membership declined. The junior lodges were closed and in 1945 the temple that Ambassador Rosso had dedicated was for sale. Most embarrassing was the thorough examination by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Although no links to the fascist government were uncovered, one officer of the Sons of Italy admitted hiding a bust of Mussolini for fear that government agents would misunderstand. Even more annoying were the many questions of local newspapermen. Still, the order was not completely immobilized, when rumors about the treatment of Japanese-Americans spread fear in the Italian community. Cleveland's Sons of Italy sent a special delegation to meet with President Roosevelt who promised that "the Italian people would not be touched."

Cleveland's Italians supported the American war effort with enthusiasm. They led the city in scrap drives and bond drives. By 1942 they sent 2500 of their sons to the United States' armed forces. One of these, Pfc. Frank Petrarca, was the first Ohioan

31. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 1, 1941.

awarded the Medal of Honor. Many of Cleveland's Italians had relatives fighting on both sides. Lieutenant Victor Cereno, a bombardier on a Flying Fortress, wrote to his parents:[32]

> Recently, I flew over the beautiful hometown of Dr. Romano on a bombing mission. I was sorry to see a nice town like that be bombed but there was nothing I could do about it. I performed my duty as any American would do, dropped my bombs and with an aching heart observed the terrific blasting . . .

World War II was a watershed for Cleveland's Italians. They emerged from the war with a clear understanding of their place within the framework of American pluralism. Having passed through a painful experience with chauvinistic ethnicity during the fascist heyday, they came to the realization of creative ethnicity. Cleveland's Italians discovered in creative ethnicity that one could live not only as a rooted person but also beyond one's roots. They began to identify themselves as Americans of Italian descent and recognized their history as the story of their roots, planted by their heroes, the immigrants.

Cleveland's Italians had inherited a bi-cultural way of life that offered them a choice and there was much to choose from as the post war years brought many changes to the Italian community. Much of the impetus for change after 1945 came from the returning veterans. Having been exposed to experiences outside the community, they sought advanced educational opportunities, more space, a higher income and contact with non-Italians. What followed has been an increase in intermarriage, and a movement

32. *Ibid*., March 2, 1942.

to the suburbs for better housing and educational facilities. Still, the "increases in education and income, geographic dispersion and intergroup contacts have not lessened ethnic awareness . . ." The sources of ethnic vitality, including the nationality church and the social organizations, continue to reinforce ethnicity. But ultimately it is *l'ordine della famiglia* that provides the basis for ethnic identification. Within the family the values and traditions continue to imbue the individual with a respect and dignity that keeps him from becoming an empty, sterile, plastic person.

# Chapter 9: Italian Families, Festivals and Foods

"Chi lascia la via vecchia per la nuova, sa quel che perde e non sa quel che trova. . . Whoever forsakes the old way for the new knows what he is losing but not what he will find."

Of all the fascinating phenomena associated with ethnicity none has had a more profound effect on the shaping of Italian-Americans than the family. Without exception writers from Barzini and Puzo to Cambino and Greeley have been enchanted by the domestic lives of Italo-Americans. To understand the Italian one must understand the family. It is as simple as that.

From the various accounts of the domestic relationships of the Italo-American certain basic characteristics have emerged concerning the family. But before investigating these

characteristics a word of caution should be inserted. Much of the writing on the Italian American family has been sprinkled with nostalgic distortions which may give incorrect impressions about ALL Italian families. What each narrative often deals with is a particular family situation, and the impulse to generalize about Italians has become irresistible. This is not the case and should be kept in mind.

Perhaps most importantly these domestic histories usually relate to first-generation families who would naturally maintain much of the cultural tradition of Italy. What will be described in the following pages would be associated with such first-generation families who would perhaps have much in common with families living in Italy. It would not necessarily apply to second-generation Italians and conceivably would have little relation to third-generation children.

Hence to speak of Italo-American families we must properly speak in traditional terms with usual reference to first-and perhaps second-generation Italians. Beyond that stage some of the traditional emphasis has disappeared through the acculturative and assimilative processes. And with it has come the weakening of the basic unit of Italian ethnicity.

For the purpose of comparison we should examine the family structure as it exists in Italy, especially in the southern regions. For centuries the first source of power in that country was the family unit. Indeed it has been proposed that Italy should be described as nothing more than a mosaic of millions of families. In order to survive and improve themselves during periods of invasion and occupation by Austrians, Spanish, Arabs, French,

Normans, and Germans, the Italians relied solely on their *famiglia*. One of the reasons why the governmental structure in Italy has always been unstable at best is due to the belief that all external political institutions, foreign or Italian, are a threat to the family order and must thereby be rendered useless through systematic anarchy!!! Governments topple, invaders come and go, but the family remains.

And what is the composition of this family, this historical bulwark which has to be maintained at all costs? In the first place it was and still is patriarchal in form but in no way an absolute monarchy ruled by the father. Usually all unmarried children reside in the home and the major life decisions are made for the betterment of the family unit, not of the individual.

In the Italian setting the family is stationary with a strong sense of group stability. Everyone who is able works for the family. In fact, along these traditional lines, the unmarried sons usually give their paychecks to their mother who in turn gives them an allowance. In many instances this practice is still carried on in American-Italian families.

One of the myths surrounding the Italian family is the dominance of the husband as absolute ruler of the home. Of course the father does have a high status, but the wife is the center of the family and usually has the last unspoken word. As the saying indicates, “In Italy the men run the country. . . but women run the men.” One should not be deceived by outward appearances which often have little to do with the actual workings of things.

To estimate the importance of women in Italian society one need only listen to the music or visit the churches to perceive their influence. In what other country are hundreds of songs dedicated to “mamma”? Where else do burly workers cry out to their mamma when they are in pain or are experiencing some difficulty?

In the religious sphere La Madonna has as many churches dedicated to her as to her Son. National Shrines to Mary such as Madonne di Pompei, di Loreto, del Rosario, del Carmine, del divino Amore proliferate throughout the country. During each month at least one day is devoted to Mary, and she is given May entirely as her special month. In Italy children are taught that Jesus was Jewish but they somehow reach the conclusion themselves that Mary was Italian!

Several general statements can be advanced as to the internal workings and external interactions of the Italian family unit. In the first place the family is usually bilaterally extended; bilaterally meaning that descent is reckoned through both mother and father; extended refering to the potential for developing of strong ties outside the nuclear family. Thus one “typical” family would consist of father, mother, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and up to third cousins on both sides.

Supplementing this circle of family was the institution of Comparaggio, the systematized selection of those outsiders who were admitted to the family circles. These intimates were literally “godparents” but not in the religious sense of “standing up” for a child at baptism. Compari (male) and Commare

(female) were highly respected close friends of one's own age and considered part of the family. Older Compari would be called zio (uncle) or zia (aunt), or padrino, even though they would not be blood related.

One's "godfather" or compare was given the same respect as one's parents, consulted on important matters, and his advice heeded. Yet the relationship was not to be as deep as to one's own brother or parent. In any clash of interest blood ties always took precedence. This was part of l'ordine della famiglia, the unwritten but all-demanding set of rules governing the family.

The social value of compariggio was considerable. It assured the family's welfare in an unsure environment. It also maintained the old and destitute within one's family without the assistance of outside agencies. This is why Italian-Americans have rarely turned to the government for assistance but always to the family.

Jacob Riis, writing at the turn of the centry, noted that immigrant pauperism was highest among the Irish, then native Americans, Germans, etc. Italians made up less than 2% of those requiring assistance. In Cleveland for forty years (1874-1914) Italians were consistantly among the groups requiring the least amount of poor relief. Is there any wonder why Italian-Americans today, although labeled "racist" and "reactionary" view public welfare systems as shameful and distasteful?


Banquet in honor of Settimo Mileti given by fellow citizens from the town of Alcara Li Fusi, Cleveland, Ohio September 23, 1939.

The most destitute condition within the Italian society was to be without a family, to be a scommunicato. This status was reserved for those who had violated l'ordine della famiglia either by trechery or scandal. In Sicily to be scommunicato was to be un saccu vacante, an empty sack, a nobody mixed with nothing. Expulsion from the family had borrowed a religious term and given it a secular application.

If being within a family held so much meaning and required so much loyalty, outsiders (stranieri) were literally aliens to be exploited and ignored. The isolation of the south required only one allegiance. All others — church, state, political parties, employers, etc. — demanded and received little recognition.

Because of its insularity the traditional Italian family provided the necessities of life or at least a comfortable survival.

Economically all worked for the common good, the fathers and sons in the fields, the mothers and daughters in the home. Education was provided by the parents, the children being trained in their expected adult roles by the parents.

Throughout the centuries of political instability in Italy the family provided the legal basis for the society. Disputes were settled within the family by family members. Warnings to wayward children were never given or taken lightly. Inter-family problems were dealt with by the elders, always mindful of the protection and honor of their family. Those disputes which were not able to be peacefully settled exploded into feuds or vendette which took on the form of local wars.

Perhaps of all the important roles assumed by the Italian family that of socialization was most important. The family maintained the role of psychologist, psychiatrist, marriage counsellor and matchmaker. Why look elsewhere for friends when one had an inexaustible supply of relatives?

Although it was traditionally the family that chose one's mate, the decision was given the appearance of developing naturally. This was done by strict supervision of young ladies so that well in advance of any formal overtures of marriage a family knew whether or not the merging of the two individuals, not to mention the two families, would be advantageous. Then, and only then, were matters permitted to proceed "naturally" and betrothal accepted. While the parents reminded their children that "matrimoni e vescovati dal cielo son destinati" (marriages and bishoprics are predestined in heaven), it was understood that

the initial choice of the partner was carefully managed by the family.

What has been described was an intricate and oftentimes demanding domestic system which grew and maintained itself out of necessity in the Italian peninsula. However, as this kind of organization was uprooted and transplanted to the urban setting of North America, a different pattern emerged. The myriad demands of the acculturating society attacked the very roots of the extended family, creating a cultural shock few immigrant groups have experienced.

Friction between the first and second generation Italian family in America was soon created. The intimate relationship of the extended family was broken in the Italian ghetto. The primary status of the father was undermined by both the children who could speak English and his wife who oftentimes worked outside of the home and earned more than her husband through skilled millenery work.

One of the most serious gaps between first-and second-generation Italians was the relationship between the children and parents. In the first place marriage partners were now selected from the available prospects, hopefully from the same region in Italy but certainly not compari. Although they would still be Italian the marriage partner would not necessarily reflect the values of the traditional Italian home. Indeed, the marriage of two second-generation Italians often resulted in rejection of the *via vecchia* and affirming the new ways of America at the expense of the extended family concept.


"Come to the Public Schools" 1912 Americanization Poster.

As the second-generation children attended the public schools and developed a widened interaction with American culture they had to exist in two worlds. They loved their families but were expected to retain beliefs and practices no longer applicable to their urban environment. They were to go out into the world but not become part of it. The culture that the first-generation immigrants held out to their children was inappropriate for adaptation in the New World.

Indeed, the children often became the teachers of the adults,

a reversal of roles which was viewed as humiliating by the parents. A poster published by the Cleveland Board of Education and the Cleveland Americanization Committee in 1912 shows a child explaining the A B C's to his parents. The youngster was to lead his babushkaed mother and moustached father into the schools to learn English and the American way. What impact this must have had upon the Italian family can only be assessed in terms of enrollment in the schools and for the Italian males at least such enrollment was very low.

No better example of the anguish of the acculturation process can be offered than the effect of the public school upon the family as the sole source of authority. If nothing else, school introduced a rival to parental rule. Swiftly the teacher and the school's codes competed with the authority of the parent and encouraged the child to reject his ethnicity while striving to achieve only middle class American values. The concept of the Melting Pot was dispensed through the classroom.

From the blond-haired, blue-eyed models of the class texts children soon came to believe that their parents were inferior to Dick and Jane's parents because they did not resemble the models put forth by the books. Much of the educational process was false, having nothing whatsoever to do with the experience of the child. To be different was to appear wrong, and a major cultural adjustment was demanded.

This cultural schizophrenia was to be the legacy of the second-generation Italian American. At home the child spoke and acted as an Italian. Outside he was to be someone else. Ultimately the world of the immigrant would be rejected almost totally by these

Children of Columbus with a specific rejection of the extended family concept.

As some of the first-generation Italian children came to denounce much of what was the traditional Italian lifestyle in their quest for identity within the American culture, the ultimate barrier between the generations, that of marriage selection, was erected. A study conducted in 1935 in New York City indicated that between Italo-Americans under 35, i.e. those children of the immigrants, and those over 35, a deep rift had developed. On the question of arranged marriages 99% of those under 35 disapproved. Those under 35 also minimized the importance of large families, the supreme role of the father and the domestic role of the mother. The second-generation Italian family in America was thus characterized by deep intergenerational conflict which would lead to the rejection of the traditional domestic structure.

The second-generation family or those groups either born in America of Italian-born parents or who had themselves been brought here at an early age, would aprticipate in a further disintegration of familiar values. From the few studies available it can be asserted that second-generation Italo-Americans could be characterized by the general weakening of their Italian ethnic ties as they attempted to accelerate the process of assimilation. This family type moves from the ethnic neighborhood into more “respectable” locations. The use of Italian in the home is rejected. Names are Americanized in some instances and Italian cuisine is retained only for holidays or special occasions. Usually this segment of the second-generation Italian have

successfully adapted to American society and are basically estranged from the *via vecchia*.

The third-generation Italian American family has received scant attention even from official sources such as the Federal Census Bureau, which does not record third-or fourth-generation ethnic groups. Among this section, to which many Italo-Americans now belong, most of the traditional values have been lost. The third-generation male is most likely to have crossed ethnic lines in the choice of his spouse. The third-generation Italo-American female in turn is married to a man who does not see himself as the sole authority of the family. Marital roles are occasionally interchangeable, both mother and father taking responsibility for cooking, cleaning and child rearing.

Values seem to have also changed in the third-generation Italian American family. The family is not child-centered and decidedly oriented towards education. The family will normally be small, with only a very few reminders of traditional domestic life remaining and those usually reserved for special occasions. Any reminders of ethnicity usually must be brought into the home, for they do not naturally exist in many families.

And yet a curious phenomen has been taking place among third- and fourth-generation Italian-Americans. It is in this very group, secure in their place in society as individuals who have "arrived," that a reawakening of ethnicity is becoming evident. This symbolic return to their Italian heritage is manifested in their interest in Italian foods, cuisine, travel to Italy, and similiar experiences. A few are ardent advocates of Italian organizations

or the reading of Italian-American magazines such as Identity or Italian American.

Their attachment to the via vecchia may be indicated by their return to some of the external rituals associated with the extended family. A 1967 study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center revealed that of all the major ethnic groups Italians still had the highest percentage of those who were maintaining physical contact with their parents. For example: 40% of those polled live in the same neighborhood with their parents; 33% live in the same neighborhood with their children; while 24% live in the same neighborhoods with their in-laws. Seventy-nine percent of Italians saw their parents weekly and visited their children, and 61% saw their children at least once a week. These figures would indicate that in recent years there has been a return to some of the traditional family values, at least as they pertain to physical closeness between children and parents.

A recent poll (April, 1977) conducted by *Identity* magazine attempted to determine the *Italianita* of its subscribers. It was assumed that the vast majority of these readers would be Italo-American, and the initial returns indicated that the median age was 45 years old with an average income of $24,000.

Of interest were those statistics relating to the family; 81% of those polled were married or widowed, 85% spoke Italian and “ate Italian” at home at least three and a half times per week.

The negative impact of the Americanization process has been significant when applied to the Italian-American family. The

classic example of this adverse influence is the case of Roseto, Pennsylvania, a town of 1,600 people, 95% of whom are Italian-Americans. During the 1960's researchers from the University of Oklahoma arrived to determine why there were so few heart attacks among these people despite the fact that they ate a rich, spicy, high-cholesterol diet. No one under 47 years of age had had a heart attack and the average Rosetan ate more and lived 10 to 20 years longer than the average American. Was it in the water, the air, the wine, or was it psychological?

Ten years later, the miracle of Roseto was over. In 1972, the heart attack rate of the town rose to three times the national average. The reason. . . the rapid rate of "Americanization." And according to the head of the University of Texas medical research team who have been investigating Roseto since 1961, the cause is definite: "In Roseto family and community support is disappearing. Most of the men who have had heart attacks here were living under stress and really had nowhere to turn to relieve that pressure. These people have given up something to get something and it's killing them."

Perhaps this reawakening of Italian ethnicity is only a curiosity, especially as it involves the traditional family structure. It certainly is not in tune with today's liberating lifestyles and could be considered "square" by many standards. But when the values and traditions of kinship relating to the extended family are juxtaposed to the current state of marriage in America and the status of the American family, the ordine della familia may prove to be more enticing and rewarding than first imagined.

## Italian Foods

Within the Italian family food is much more than just the habit of filling one's stomach. It has taken on the appearance of a ritual of the highest order. In fact the sharing of a meal oftentimes has become a symbolic communion, permitting one to pass from the status of a straniero to an acquaintance by the mere taking of wine or coffee together.

Each meal has its own significance. The noon meal or collazione was usually eaten together by all family members when the group worked near the home. In America this feast came into conflict with the American school system. It was unthinkable for Giovanni or Maria to eat lunch anywhere except with the family. But the schools offered subsidized "balanced meals" in school and through this incentive exacted one more tribute to the acculturative process.

I can remember that as late as 1974 one of the major "problems" at Collinwood High School was the keeping of our students in school during lunch. In this Italian community lunch was eaten at home; this custom was interpreted by the administration and faculty as just another attempt to "escape" their authority. It created a cultural gap which to this day has not been bridged at the school.

Pranzo, or dinner, also was eaten together with the family. Occasionally godparents and honored friends were invited. Unlike their American peers, Italian children rarely ate at their friends' homes because that would infringe upon the family unit. The traditional family meal was to play a significant part

in maintaining ties with the old world. The breaking of this tradition would assist in the acculturation process and weakening of the family structure.

And what of the meals themselves? In the first place, since the majority of Italians immigrating to America were from the South of Italy, the cuisine of their regions naturally predominated at the Italo-American table. The major differences between northern and southern Italians is their staple eating habits. In the northern regions polenta or cornmeal and risotto (rice dishes) are the foundation of the meal. In the south an infinite variety of pasta are the basic foods. Indeed northern Italians are often labeled *polentani*, "polenta eaters" by the southerners while some of the sobriquets offered by the northerners about the southern Italian are unprintable.

Pasta has become increasingly the basic dish familiar to all of Italy, from the Piedmont to Sicily, Tuscany to the Abruzzi. It is mostly a myth that Marco Polo first introduced spaghetti from the Orient in 1292. There is abundant evidence that pasta was being eaten in Italy during Etruscan times. Sicilians were devouring strands of dough at the time of the Arab invasions, about 800 A.D., while ravioli and fettuccini were known during the early middle ages.

That noted Italophile Thomas Jefferson imported the first pasta-making machine to his beloved Monticello in the 1780's. His spaghetti was approvingly eaten by family and friends alike, although an early American recipe (1792) called for boiling the pasta in water for 3 hours then for another ten minutes in a broth, then mixing it with bread in a soup tureen!!!

Italians are emotional when it comes to their foods, especially pasta, each region, commune and city declaring its variety to be the best. The writer Giuseppe Marotta has delivered an extremely theatrical but typically Italian comment on this subject. Writing of the Neopolitans' love for pasta he remarked: "He who enters paradise through a door is not a Neopolitan. WE make our entrance into that heavenly abode by delicately parting a curtain of spaghetti."

Each of the regions of Italy has produced its own specialities. That which we normally refer to as "Italian" cooking is really only the cuisine of the southern regions for the most part. From Lombardy rice dishes such as Risotto mixed with saffron are common. Indeed rice is mixed with almost any conceivable food such as Omlette di Riso, Riso al Salto (rice fried in butter) rich with mushrooms, even pumpkin and rice.

In the Veneto maize was first introduced in the early 16th century and the first polenta was created. Polenta is eaten with a variety of meats, game and fish dishes and is common to Verona, Padua, and Venice. Along with polenta, Baccala, or sun-dried salt cod, is a favorite of the Veneto as it is among Italian-Americans.

Southern Italian cuisine has had the most impact upon the American palate. Pizza from the Naples area needs no introduction to the Americans who consume 1.75 billion pizzas annually. The kind of pasta common to Americans is "pasta al dente," "to the tooth." This variety is slightly resistant to the bite, in other words, not overcooked. Sicily offers the sweet desserts such as cannoli, those crisp shells of pastry stuffed with ricotta

cheese or cream. Gelato or ice cream also originated in Sicily, the invention of Procopio Catelli who introduced this treat to Parisian society in 1630.

Italy has shared other foods with America besides pasta and pizza. Such vegetables as broccoli, fennel, zucchini, and artichokes and herbs like rosemary and oregano were introduced from the Italian tavola to the American table. Lasagna, manicotti, chicken cacciatore, antipasto and minestrone are common dishes on American tables and in American restaurants. And I haven't even mentioned the cheeses from Parmesan to Fontinella, Bel Paese and ricotta to mozzarella. And lest we forget, the hero, torpedo, submarine and grinder are only variations of the Italian-American sandwich.

Some Italian foods are not common to Americans but do have interesting names. A few of the more exotic ones are:

Saltimbocca (Leap in the mouth) delicately fried veal Stracciatella (Little Rag Soup) dumpling soup Ossobuco (Hollow Bones of Liguria) braised veal shin Calzoni (The Trouser Leg) folded-over pizza Aragosta fra diavolo (The devil's lobster) lobster Mozzarella in carrozza (cheese in a carriage) Cappelletti di Romagna (Little hats of cheese) Orecchiette al Pomidoro (Little ears of cheese).

Nick Gravino, baker's assistant at Presti's Bakery in Murray Hill, offers a few selections from the variety of baked goods available at the bakery.


Corbo's Dolceria on the corner of Mayfield and Murray Hill Roads.

Like most ethnic groups Italians have special foods for the various religious holidays during the year. Christmas is traditionally the holiday of a variety of sweets such as the Panettone or Christmas cake sold at most import stores in the Cleveland area. It is made of flour, raisins, rum and a variety of other ingredients. It is said to have been originated in Milano by a baker named Toni, hence the name Toni's bread, "Pane Toni."

Easter (La Pasqua) is a day of centuries-old tradition and culinary ecstasy. Perhaps the most common foods associated with La Pasqua are Abbacchio or spring lamb, and porchetto, or roast pig. A typical Easter meal would consist of an antipasto, abbacchio, ravioli and for dessert a torte or the traditional Pastiera di Grano, or Easter Wheat pie. In some parts of Italy blessed palms are inserted into the filling of cheese, candied cherries, eggs and grain before it is baked.

In the same breath with foods we must also mention wines for both are synonymous with life. "Un giorno senzo vino e come un giorno senza sole. . ." ("a day without wine is like a day without the sun") is an authentic Italian expression which has been modified by American advertising to refer to orange juice. But the thrust of the expression remains the same. Wine is a necessity at the tavola of the Italian family, a natural food rather than a primary source of inebriation.

There was no age restriction placed upon drinking wine, much to the chagrin of the American teachers, social workers, and those other "officials" who visited the immigrants and witnessed the

regular drinking of small amounts of wine by children. Usually the wine had been diluted with water for the young; but they were nonetheless becoming acquainted with the taste of the drink.

It is with this experience with wine that Italo-Americans have traditionally been raised, in an environment which considers wine as a natural food to be enjoyed, not to be feared or locked in a liquor chest. I have never personally known an Italian who was an alcoholic, although I assume there probably are some. I would be surprised if there would be many. For Italians, the mystique surrounding alcohol has been removed through the natural teachings and habits of the family.

Added to this was the continued association of food along with wine and soon a good habit had been formed. Today Italian-Americans raised in the traditional family naturally connect eating and drinking. While Americans usually drink martinis without food for the primary inebriating effect, Italians drink chianti as a tangy potion pleasing to the palate and stimulating to the gastric juices.

Some of the world's finest wines are produced in California by Italian-American families rivaling the chateau vintages of Bordeaux and Burguandy. An estimated 43% of America's wines are produced by about 60 Italo-American families, with Ernest and Julio Gallo accounting for 34% of the nation's wine sales. The Sabastiani winery sold over 1,250,000 cases of wine in 1976 through 250 distributors across the country. Along with the Italian Swiss Colony, the other major Italian producers in

California are the Martinis, the Foppianos, and the Pedroncellis from Tuscany, Genoa and Lombardy respectively.

Italian wines are as diversified as the regions of Italy. Some of the more popular Italian wines gracing the world's tables are Lambrusco, the red wine originating in the Romagna. Chianti, another red wine, comes from Tuscany and is the universally accepted drink with pasta. The wines of Verona, Valpolicella and Bardolino are among the most popular and most expensive of the imported Italian wines. Asti Spumante, the sparkling wine of Piedmont, has been widely known as "Italian Champagne" in this country although it costs about half the price of French champagne.

Amaretto and Galliano have gained a wide acceptance by Americans as versatile after-dinner liquors. Amaretto dates from the early 16th century. It was concocted by a love-struck widow for a painter, Bernadino Liuni, out of apricot pits, alcohol and almonds. Galliano, the golden sweet liqueur of the south, is a popular after-dinner drink in American homes and supper clubs.

Family, foods and wines come naturally together with a great deal of gusto during feasts. Processions, festivals, children dressed in white, bands, and endless tables of food mark these special days dedicated to the various regional saints of Italy. In New York City the tenement-lined streets of little Italy along Mulberry Street erupt into a 10-day, 9-night fair honoring San Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples. Beginning on September 19, this feast attracts thousands of tourists from all over New York to partake of the carnival atmosphere.In Cleveland, August 15 marks the Feast of the Assumption and the Murray Hill

Community announces the beginning of a weekend festival. After High Mass at Holy Rosary Church, a procession of the Virgin is begun with Her statue carried through the streets while money is pinned onto the statue by thousands of persons in the crowds. The procession is climaxed by a blast of fireworks, after which the marchers eat a traditional meal of cavatelli with sauce prepared by the parish women.

Mrs. Sara Morello selling nuts for the feast days in Murray Hill, August, 1930.

The Feast usually begins on August 12 and concludes on the 15th, although some changes have been made in recent years to have the festivities fall on a weekend. The entire operation takes the efforts of about 300 persons who run the amusement rides and games of skill and cook the pizza and cavatelli. John Peca, who operates a sign shop at Mayfield and Murray Hill

Roads, has been the program chairman for the last twenty years. Although other festivals are held in other Italian communities across the country, Mr. Peca explained that the Feast of the Assumption is unique to Cleveland's Little Italy because it was special to the people from Campobasso province, the region from which many of the early immigrants to Murray Hill came. Of what significance is the Feast to the Italian-American community of Cleveland's Little Italy? Financially, it has made important contributions to the operation of the church and school. According to Fr. Valentini, Pastor of Holy Rosary, it may someday help finance a senior citizens home in the neighborhood and hopefully draw back many of the younger families into the neighborhood.

But the other important aspect of the Feast is its ability to elicit an ethnic response from the Cleveland community. As John Peca observes, "Each year the festival becomes bigger and better. But most important it gives us all a sense of pride and accomplishment." It is on this feeling of togetherness that the real traditions of Italian ethnicity is based.

Beginning of the Procession for the Feast of the Assumption at Holy Rosary Church, August, 1941.

Offerings to the Virgin Mary, Feast of the Assumption, August, 1935, Holy Rosary Church.

Alack the heavy day, That I have worn so many winters out And know not now what name to call myself! — Shakespeare, *Richard II*

# Chapter 10: Italian Ethnicity in Cleveland: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

## From Traditional Neighborhoods to the Suburbs

In recent years there have been written several accounts relating to the decline of ethnicity in Cleveland. We have been reminded of the deterioration of the traditional nationality neighborhoods, of the rapidly decreasing population of these areas, and the general lack of interest in their rejuvenation.[1] It has become axiomatic that the reduction of a particular nationality population within the city is to be equated with the general demise of ethnicity. By using this criterion we should assume that ethnicity is a dying phenomenon, retreating before the forces of assimilation, depopulation and apathy.

1. See the *Plain Dealer* Magazine account for August 1, 1976 on Murray Hill by Joe Crea. A more positive assessment of "the Hill" is offered by Kenneth F. Seminator's "Memoirs of Murray Hill" in the *Cleveland Magazine*, August, 1976, pp. 48-54.

And, in fact Cleveland's ethnic communities are slowly losing their population. In particular the Italian element in the city has undergone a reduction in the decade since the 1960 census. In that year there were nearly 20,000 first-and second-generation Italians living in the city. This figure was reduced to 17,693 in the 1970 census. A conservative projection would be that by the 1980 census less than 14,000 Italian-born Clevelanders will remain within the city's boundaries.

What is more noticeable is the shift in the Italian population away from the traditional neighborhoods and into the suburban communities. Indeed, each of the five major Italian settlements in Cleveland proper has suffered significant losses in population in the last two census reports. Table G in the Appendix indicates this comparative loss which may be summarized here:

| | Little Italy | Collinwood | Mt. Carmel (East) | St. Rocco's |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1960 | 1965 | 2371 | 2164 | 804 |
| 1970 | 975 | 1271 | 247 | 597 |

Although these figures indicate a substantial population reduction in the Italian-born population they do not totally reveal the situation. A more recent indicator of population, the 1976 election returns by ward, illustrate even further reductions in Italian population within the city. For example, Ward 19, Little Italy, had less than 500 Italian-surnamed individuals registered to vote.[2] In the Collinwood area less than 1200 were listed while in St. Rocco's area some 450 Italian-surnamed voters were

2. *Register of Electors*, 1976, Cleveland, Ohio. I would like to express my

registered. Since the voting age has been reduced to 18 it would be expected that a much larger figure would be found. But that was not the case. Another indicator of the decreasing population among the young in Murray Hill was that one of the proposals of the Cleveland Public Schools Desegregation Plan was to close Murray Hill School because of the decline of enrollment in that traditionally Italian school.

Italians are no longer immigrating to Cleveland to the same extent which they have done in the past. Although the number of Italian immigrants to the United States has averaged about 20,000 per year since 1970, they have not migrated to Cleveland in proportion to their immigration. One statistic which illustrates this point is the numbers of Italians naturalized in Cleveland since 1970. These figures are presented below:[3]

| | |
|---|---|
| 1970: 49 | 1973: 152 |
| 1971: 59 | 1974: 129 |
| 1972: 176 | 1975: 70 |

The declining trend will continue not necessarily because of apathy but because fewer Italians are entering the city. The once strongly attracting effect of a growing Italian-American community in Cleveland is no longer present. Recent Italian immigrants are remaining along the northeastern coastal cities while east Europeans, especially Yugoslavians, have

appreciation to Mr. William Kubes, Deputy Director of the Board of Elections, for his assistance in this aspect of my research.

3. *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Services*, 1970-1975.

increasingly found Cleveland a hospitable community and thus have increased their migration to the city.

The Italian population of the city is undisputably declining but this does not necessarily indicate a weakening of Italian ethnicity. Using the concept of "ethnic corridors" we can explain that the Italian population of Cleveland is being dispersed into the suburban areas even to the extent of once again creating Italian spheres of influence. According to the 1972 *Levy Report*, Italians in the community of Seven Hills represented one of the three major ethnic groups in that city.[4] In Lyndhurst 27% of the foreign-born population are of Italian extraction, while Italians make up over 10% of the foreign born in the city of Euclid.


Gust Gallucci Co., Food Importers, One of the earliest grocery stores in Cleveland, located at 505 Woodland Avenue.

4. Donald Levy, *A Report on the Location of Ethnic Groups in Greater Cleveland* (Cleveland: Cleveland State University, Institute of Urban Studies, 1972) p. 23. The 1970 Census reported 964 Italians living in Seven Hills.


Catalano's Stop-N-Shop at 5880 Mayfield Road in Cleveland.

Alesci's Imported Foods at 4333 Mayfield Road.


Mayfield Importing Company in Cleveland's Little Italy.

These ethnic corridors for the Italian community may be said to include various avenues of inter-city migration. In the eastern suburbs they would include Euclid, Lyndhurst, South Euclid, Cleveland Heights, Garfield Heights and Mayfield Heights. On the west side Parma has perhaps the largest Italian concentration with over 2200 Italians. Seven Hills also includes nearly one thousand Italians within its boundaries. According to the 1970 census these growing Cleveland suburbs had the following Italian population:[5]

5. *Population According to Census Tracts*, Cleveland, 1970.

| | Total Population | Italian Population |
|---|---|---|
| Euclid | 71,552 | 2503 |
| Parma | 100,211 | 2380 |
| Cleveland Heights | 60,756 | 1757 |
| Garfield Heights | 43,800 | 2060 |
| South Euclid | 29,611 | 2871 |
| Lyndhurst | 19,749 | 1856 |

Within the city of Cleveland those Italians who have remained have reformed some communities but without the full complement of ethnic flavor normally associated with such a neighborhood. This regrouping has been primarily occurring on the south and west sides where the population has increased. For example, along Puritas and Bellaire Avenues contained in Census Tracts 1242, 1245 and 1246, nearly 800 Italians were listed during the last census. They live in an area which also includes Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Germans. On the near west side along Detroit Avenue from West 45th to West Boulevard about 700 Italians have formed a colony. Yet these are only pockets of Italian-American settlers and do not necessarily reveal an ethnic community. In the last analysis then, ethnicity does not mean merely population but also must include a sense of association, a feeling of *Italianità*.

The question which legitimately can be raised is, has the declining ethnic population in the traditionally Italian neighborhoods minimized the influence or involvement of Italian-Americans in those neighborhoods? Also, does this

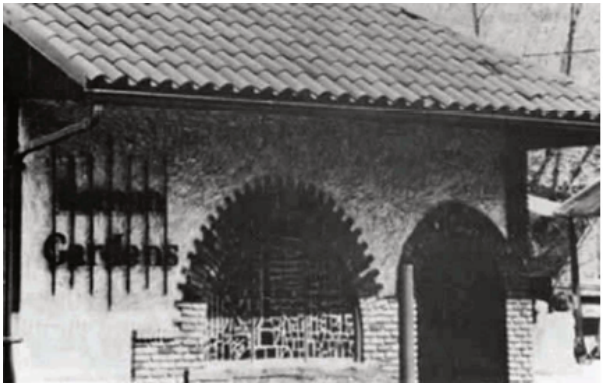
decline in numbers also diminish the impact of the Italians upon the city itself? To a degree there must be some correlation between influence, involvement, and population, but not necessarily to the extent one would expect.

With regard to the old neighborhoods they still act as a magnet to draw their suburban children back to their streets and shops every weekend. As one former resident put it, “People who live on the ‘Hill’ love it, but you don’t have to live here to know that feeling.” It seems that actual habitation in an area is not necessary to experience a sense of cultural identity.

The attractions of *Italianità* are as varied as the individual Italo-Americans who return to the neighborhoods, each seeking his or her own level of identification and participation. In Murray Hill the Mayfield Importing Company is as crowded as any specialty shop on any given Saturday. For those who can more easily identify their “Italianness” with food their search ends among the savory prosciutto and mortadellas of Mayfield Importing and with the crusty breads of Presti’s or Corbo’s bakeries. In the evening the major Italian restaurants on the Hill, such as the Roman Gardens, Mamma Santa’s, the Golden Bowl, Guairino’s and Theresa’s, cater to Italian and non-Italian diners.

In downtown Cleveland Gallucci’s and Bonafini Imports still attract hundreds of shoppers daily while Zannoni’s on West 35th and Clark Avenue fulfill the needs of the west-side Italians. Orlando Baking Company supplies hundreds of Cleveland businesses daily with its many varieties of baked goods. Still located along Woodland Avenue near East Boulevard, it has been a Cleveland enterprise since the turn of the century.


Zannoni's Import Store located at 3502 Clark Avenue in the St. Rocco neighborhood.



The Roman Gardens, one of Cleveland's finest Italian restaurants.

But ethnicity isn't only based on food or on mere numbers of people. It is a commitment coupled with an intangible feeling

of identity. It is the extended sense of attachment to a special group with whom you can identify and are accepted. It is, in essence, an extension of one's being beyond being an American to another dimension of existence.

This "extension of the self" can be seen in the numerous ethnic societies within the Italian community. Italians have always evidenced a decentralized organizational format, and for this reason appear to be fragmented and disunified. There are only a few national Italian organizations in the city, specifically the Sons of Italy and the Italian Sons and Daughters of America. Instead one can still find an assortment of local hometown societies, ward clubs and cultural organizations within the city. A sample listing of those presently in existence illustrates their regional diversity:

Noicattarese Club
Italian Cultural Gardens Association
North Italian Club
Baranello Woman's Auxiliary
Calabrese Club
Imerese Lodge
Ripalimosani Men's Union
Italian Workers Society
The Trentina Club
St. Anthony's Club

Columbus Day, October, 1955 in Downtown Cleveland.

A complete listing can be found in the 1974 Nationalities Directory. Like the family these organizations were founded and continue to function for the benefit of their local membership. Decentralization has proven to be a strength for these organizations rather than a weakness, for they have brought together people from the same region and town, people who have many common experiences to share.

An estimate of the functioning Italian clubs and lodges in the city is about 50.[6] They include cultural, professional, service, social and fraternal groups. With the Slovaks, Poles, Slovenians and Czechs, the Italians have the largest number of organizations within the city of Cleveland. This kind of activity illustrates a more positive aspect of ethnic awareness, beyond mere association to active participation.

6. Data taken from the *Greater Cleveland Nationalities Directory*, 1974, pp. 87-92.

## Italians in Cleveland Politics

Besides Italian-oriented societies and activities, in what other areas is there evidence that Italians are an influential group in the city? Politics have usually been the stepping stone for ethnic groups to move up the social and economic ladder, and Italo-Americans are no exception. In Cleveland only a handful of Italians, however, have ever been elected to an office, while many have received appointed positions.

Anthony J. Celebrezze

Beginning with the election of Alexander De Maioribus to City

Council in 1928 from the predominantly Italian 19th Ward, Murray Hill has always returned an Italian councilman. In 1947 George Costello took over the seat held by De Maioribus and was followed by Paul J. De Grandis, Jr. in 1957. Michael Fatica succeeded De Grandis in 1961 and was later replaced by Anthony Garofoli. Currently Basil Russo represents the voters of the 19th Ward.[7]

Other Italian councilmen elected in Cleveland over the years include Alfred Grisanti from Ward 31 in 1943 and Ernest C.T. Santora from Ward 21 in 1957. In 1972 with the election of Mayor Perk, four Italian Americans were listed in the City Council: Joseph A. Lombardo from Ward 2, Michael Climaco from Ward 5, Basil Russo, Ward 19 and Ben Zaccaro, Ward 26. Currently three Italian Americans serve on the council.[8]

The most successful Italian-American politician in Cleveland was Anthony J. Celebrezze. Born in Anzi, Italy, on September 4, 1910, he was brought to this country at the age of two. Educated in the Cleveland Public Schools and at John Carroll University, he received his law degree in 1936. His political career began in 1950 when he won election to the Ohio Senate. As a member of several important committees he was twice voted as one of the state's top senators.

His work in the Senate attracted the attention of Cleveland's voters. In 1953 Celebrezze ran for mayor of the City of Cleveland and was elected. He brought into his administration eleven Italian-Americans to serve in various administrative

7. *The City Record of the City of Cleveland*, 1928-1977.
8. *Ibid*., Wednesday, February 2, 1977.

capacities. Joseph Ventura was appointed as secretary to the Mayor. Louis Corsi and Salvatore A. Precario were appointed as assistant directors in the Civil Branch, while Charles W. Lazzaro headed the Criminal Branch. The Director of Public Properties was John J. Lucuocco.

Mayor Celebrezze served four terms as mayor and during the fifth elected term was appointed by President Kennedy to be Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in July of 1962. He served in that capacity until 1965 when he was appointed Judge of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. On July 20, 1973, by an act of the United States Congress, the new federal building in Cleveland was named the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building in honor of the former mayor of Cleveland and prominent Italian-American.

The name Celebrezze was not new to Cleveland politics. In 1937 Governor Martin L. Davey appointed Frank D. Celebrezze, brother of Anthony Celebrezze, to the municipal bench in Cleveland. He was the first Italian-American judge so appointed and, as it turns out, not without the assistance of Alexander de Maioribus. According to one source de Maioribus, a Republican, spoke with the Governor on Celebrezze's behalf, showing the need for an Italian judge in Cleveland. The influence was there and the Republican councilman succeeded in getting a Democrat appointed.

Other Italians have been appointed to administrative positions by various mayors. During the terms of Mayor Locher (1962-1968) one Italian-American, Vincent De Melto, was appointed Director of Public Utilities. Under Mayor Stokes, S.R.

Calandra and J.P. Mancino were assistant directors of the Civil Branch of the city, while B.J. Zaccaro and T.J. Italiano were directors in the Criminal Branch.

It is interesting to note that during the first year in office Mayor Stokes had drawn up a xerox listing of appointees entitled *Personnel of Ethnic Backgrounds in Responsible Positions in the Administration of Mayor Carl B. Stokes*. Eighteen ethnic groups were listed as having members in the Stokes' administration. Twelve Italian-Americans were listed as being top administrators. In fairness it should be stated that most of these men were under civil service appointment and held their positions by the grace of law rather than by political patronage.

Two notable Italian-Americans in the administration of Mayor Perk are Law Director Vincent Campanella and J.A. Zingale as Acting Director of the Department of Public Properties. Several commissioners include S.T. Sturniolo in Architecture, Acting Commissioner of Streets J. La Riccia, and L. Civittolo in the Department of Finance. Additional Italians are included on the Community Relations Board, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Board of Building Standards.

## Italianità in Cleveland's Colleges, Universities and Schools

In the field of education Italian-Americans are found on the faculties of every local public and private university and college as well as in the public school system. Traditionally Italians did not place a great deal of emphasis on formal education.

To earn a living as soon as possible was the major concern of most Italian-American families and educational priorities were placed accordingly. Even as late as the 1970 census only 7% of Italian-Americans over 25 years of age were college graduates, a figure well below other ethnic groups. But since the post-war period some inroads have been made in the emphasis placed upon formal education and this is reflected by the numbers of Italo-Americans currently holding faculty status in the various educational sectors.

At Cleveland State University about 15 faculty members are of Italian descent dispersed throughout the sciences and humanities. Case Western Reserve University, with a much larger faculty, has less than 20 Italians, while John Carroll University lists about 13 as being full-time members of the teaching staff.

The Cleveland Public Schools have some Italian-Americans who serve as supervisors in the various disciplines. In 1976 eight individuals were listed as holding either supervisory or assistant supervisory positions.[9] Within the schools themselves about 15 individuals of Italian descent are principals or assistant principals in the system of some 180 schools. Italian-American teachers are to be found in the schools, some of whom head large departments. The names Iammarino, Caliguire, Mileti, Conti, DiScipio, Contini, Russo, Rosi and DeMarco identify just a few of the many educators within the public schools who have provided Cleveland students with models of achievement.

What is currently offered in the way of Italian-oriented

9. *Directory*, Cleveland City School District, 1975-76.

curriculum in Cleveland's institutions of higher education? At most colleges introductory and intermediate Italian language classes are presently offered. Italian literature is not offered at any institution in Cleveland although theoretically Italian writers are included in survey courses in Comparative Literature. Interestingly enough, Kent State University lists 14 courses in Latin Literature, three in related Greek courses and nothing in Italian literature. John Carroll offers almost 25 courses in the Classics but only four courses in modern Italian. It should be mentioned that one of the proposals made by the Cleveland Public Schools desegregation plan was to fund a Foreign Language and Cultural Center at Cleveland State University. Russian, Chinese, Czech, Hebrew, Latin and Italian were among those tentative courses which would be available but only the Russian and Chinese programs were given first priority.

At the college level there are several institutions which have offered general courses in ethnic studies. At least one university, John Carroll, presented a course specifically in Italian-American history. At the high school level, especially in the parochial schools, separate courses in ethnicity have been developed and are presently being taught. In the public schools at least two schools offer ethnic studies, while units on immigration and general ethnicity have been incorporated into the traditional American Studies curriculum.

During the 1974-75 school year the Cleveland Public Schools, in cooperation with Cleveland State University, did sponsor the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program which developed and implemented multi-ethnic curriculum materials. Although not

designed to concentrate on any single group but rather to incorporate many of the sixty ethnic peoples within its curriculum, some materials specifically focused on the Italian American experience in Cleveland. One filmstrip, "Ethnic Neighborhoods in Transition," traces the origins, growth and development of the Italian, Jewish, Black, Ukrainian and Hungarian communities in the city. Another media presentation, "What is an Ethnic Group?" uses several Italian area landmarks in the city to describe the meaning of ethnicity.[10]

## The Italian-American Media in Cleveland

Unlike several other major groups in Cleveland such as the Polish, Hungarian, Slovenian, Czech, German and Romanian, the Italian community does not have a locally published newspaper. At one time Cleveland had two papers for the Italian communities, *La Voce* and *L'Araldo*, and the *Italian Pictoral News* and *The Latin World*. *La Voce*, founded in 1904 by Olindo and Fernando Melaragno, ceased publication in 1944. *L'Araldo* came into existence in 1938 and, under the leadership of Louis De Paolo, continued until 1959.

The most enduring Italian-American publication in America, *Il Progresso Italio-Americano*, is published in New York City and is sent to Cleveland daily. *Il Progresso* along with imported Italian language magazines and newspapers such as *Oggi* and *Milan's Corriere della Sèra* can be purchased at Schroder's Book Store on Public Square. Two new magazines, *The Italian*

10. *The Cleveland Ethnic Heritage Program*. Filmstrips and bound materials are available through the Department of Social Studies, Cleveland Public Schools, Room 400, 1380 East Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44114.

*American* and *Identity*, are also sold in local newsstands and bookstores.

L'ARALDO THE HERALD

ANTHONY CELEBREZZE, IL FUTURO FIORELLO LA GUARDIA DI CLEVELAND

By the courtesy of Alphonso D'Emilia, former editor of *L'Araldo*.

At the beginning of 1977 Cleveland had approximately 12 hours of Italian language broadcasting on five different radio stations. The sudden announcement in February of 1977 that station WXEN, the all-nationalities station, was changing its entire format, reduced all ethnic broadcasting substantially and the Italian air time dramatically. For the Italian-American community programming was reduced to only six hours weekly

and then usually on “non prime time” during the weekends. Familiar commentators and broadcasters such as Louis De Paolo, Joe Giuliano, Carl Finocchi, Vincent Cardarelli and Emanuel Diligente had brought local and international news in Italian to thousands of avid listeners. Usually recruiting their own advertisers and working on marginal salaries, they provided a sorely needed service to the Cleveland community. Sadly, it seems that these efforts and community-oriented broadcasting are gradually coming to an end.

The person seriously interested in individual study of Italian language and culture will find that Cleveland area libraries offer some outstanding collections of Italica. The Cleveland Public Library has over 9500 volumes in Italian, ranging from the classics to serious historical works and specialized biographical studies. Also of interest are some collections of Italian genealogical materials which could be valuable in the tracing of one’s Italian ancestry. Frieberger Library of Case Western Reserve University also has a number of works in Italian and English on the culture of Italy. Of particular value is the periodical section, which has nearly every major scholarly Italian journal currently available.

John Carroll University has a unique collection of some 2000 literary works in Italian, concentrated primarily on the literature of the country. They are part of the bequest of *Il Cenacolo Italiano*, the Italian cultural society in Cleveland. Each year monies are made available by the Society to the Grasselli Library at John Carroll to purchase additional works. It is a

praiseworthy effort which has significantly contributed to the promotion of Italian culture in Cleveland.

## Il Cenacolo

*Il Cenacolo* dates to the late 1920's when the idea of an Italian Cultural Club in Cleveland was conceived. Originally known as "Il Circolo" (The Circle) it was founded in 1928 by the Italian Consul Antonio Logolusi, Professor Joseph L. Bogerhoff, Dr. Nicola Cerri, Judge B.D. Nicola and others of Italian and non-Italian extraction. Inspired by and patterned after *La Maison Francaise*, the organization aimed at keeping alive the Italian language and culture in this city. Its first president and perhaps most influential single force was Professor Borgerhoff.

In 1932, at the suggestion of Count Buzzi Gradenigo, "Il Circolo" was rebaptized with the present name of *Il Cenacolo Italiano* and began to attract new members such as Dr. William M. Milliken, former president of the Cleveland Museum of Art and Dr. Orfea Barricelli of Western Reserve University. *Il Cenacolo* is another name for Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, but in this case simply means an intimate group of friends who are interested in the arts in general and in Italian culture in particular. It is a spiritual link between Italy and the United States.

In addition to the collection of books at the Grasselli Library and an annual scholarship for the study of Italian, *Il Cenacolo* offers a number of lectures during the academic year. Usually meetings are held in members' homes and, except in rare instances, all

proceedings and lectures are given in Italian. During the program year of 1976-77, *Il Cenacolo* numbered about 50 members with honorary memberships received by Mario Anziano, Italian Consul to Cleveland, and Maestro Lorin Maazel, conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra.

## The Future of Italian Ethnicity in Cleveland

What is the future of the Italian-American community in Cleveland? Will the traditional neighborhoods remain until the next century or will they succumb to the fate of many of urban America's communities? Will the various fraternal, social and cultural organizations continue to flourish or will they dwindle in size and disappear? Indeed, will we be able to intelligently speak of an "Italian-American Identity" in the twenty-first century, or any other form of ethnicity for that matter?

An interesting answer to this question was supplied by Glazer and Moynihan in their book *Beyond the Melting Pot*. Although written in 1963, their analysis of today's trends in ethnicity may have some bearing on tomorrow's realities:[11]

Religion and race seem to define the major groups into which American society is evolving. . . as the specifically national aspects of ethnicity decline. . . the next stage of the evolution of the immigrant groups will involve a Catholic group in which the distinctions between Irish, Italian, Polish and German Catholics are steadily reduced by intermarriage. . . (Thus) religion and race define the next stage in the evolution of the American peoples.

11. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: M.T.T. Press, 1963) pp. 313-314.

Will we in Cleveland in fact merge into a consciousness dictated solely by race and religion rather than by national identities?

Father Ferdinand Tamburri, pastor of Holy Rosary Church and George Johnson, a mail carrier for six years in Cleveland's Murray Hill neighborhood, 1961.

As long as the search for individual awareness continues, and until we have become so transparent culturally as to accept a composite definition of ourselves, we will have little to fear. However, unless perpetuation of ethnic awareness is sanctioned and legitimized by more than token acknowledgements from local, state and most especially federal agencies, the diversity of

our peoples will indeed merge “beyond the melting pot” into an amorphous entity devoid of cultural vitality. Ethnicity will then become only a pursuit for antiquarians and have no adaptibility beyond the confines of the library and the university.

But this does not seem to be the case in Cleveland. We can still enjoy fine Italian cuisine in Murray Hill, attend an all-Italian concert at the Art Museum, listen to an Italian radio program, borrow a book in Italian while still living in Euclid, Parma or Cleveland Heights. The opportunities for those who seek their cultural roots are there if the time is taken to look.

For the Italian-American, with such a rich heritage in this country and in this city, the necessity for re-evaluation of his or her past becomes more than a request. There is the compelling urge for each to contribute his or her individual texture to the pattern of a unique cultural experience to that still unfinished mosaic which is American society. As long as the Italians of Cleveland continue to ask questions and seek answers about their past as well as the promises of the future, both as individuals and as a group, ethnicity will remain a viable force within this community.


Bonaffini's Importing located in the original Italian business district in downtown Cleveland.


Miceli's Dairy and Cheese Company, 2721 East 90th Street.


The Orlando Baking Company at 11129 Woodland Avenue in the Mt. Carmel East neighborhood.

Perhaps the Italians in Cleveland are no longer centrally located and perhaps the old neighborhoods are in decline. But the concept of *Italianità* still exists and will continue to nourish those who but take the time to partake of the bountiful cultural heritage which it offers. Ethnicity has indeed become and will remain a movable feast within the Italian-American communities of greater Cleveland.

# Appendix I: Preparing an Italian American Genealogy

There is perhaps no activity which can more vividly reawaken one's sense of history and ethnic awareness than the compiling of a family history. For Anglo-Americans this can be a relatively simple process, for thousands of volumes have already been published specifically dealing with English, Scotch, Welsh and Irish genealogy and are relatively accessible in any large public library. The Cleveland Public Library, for example, has over 150 separate works dealing only with British ancestry, not including various periodicals such as the *Parish Register Society* and the *Publications of the Northamtonshire Record Society.*

Parish records in England, Ireland and Scotland have been well kept and many are available at the Western Reserve Historical Society and the Public Library. In this country each state Historical Society has compiled documents and other primary sources dealing with early settlers in their state. In sum, the original interest in family history has rested primarily with this

Anglo-American community. Consequently the materials currently available reflect this group's pedigree.

Americans of Continental descent have had little printed material from which to work in their attempts to trace family histories. To further complicate matters one must also contend with language barriers and the almost continuous shifting of boundaries over the last 200 years. Thus, depending on when and where a relative was born, his "official" language may have been Austrian while his vernacular speech would have been Slovenian, Croatian or Italian.

The Anglo-American can, with relative ease, trace his or her ancestry to a neatly kept collection of parish records in County Cork or Yorkshire. The uninitiated Italian-American would quickly realize that attempts to go beyond a paternal grandparent would end in frustration and failure. The problem is knowing how and where to look. Some of these questions will hopefully be answered in this essay.

This essay was prepared to assist those of Italian extraction in ascertaining their own individual family histories. It will require work, but the rewards of knowing more about your particular history should more than compensate for the efforts.

(1). The task of tracing a family history falls into two distinct categories. The first task lies in tracing the history of one's family in America and the second should deal with following those pertinent individuals back to Italy as far as possible. The first task should be approached in the following manner. Contact all relatives who can give any recollections about origins such

as who was the first from your family to come to America. When did they arrive, and where? What section and town did they come from in Italy? These are really the most important steps in recreating a family portrait, because they will determine the framework for the genealogy. This step is essential, because these living relatives can later clarify initial problems encountered in subsequent research.

(2). For the city of Cleveland you can trace your recent ancestors within the last 100 years or so by consulting the city Directory, available from the early 1800's to the present. The Directory can be used at the Western Reserve Historical Society or the Cleveland Public Library. They are arranged alphabetically and will include the name, address and occupation of the individual you are seeking. By using these on a yearly basis you can determine changes in occupations, ethnic mobility from one neighborhood to another, even changes in spelling of names. For example, Francesco de Nicola may appear for six consecutive years at a particular address and suddenly appear as Francis or Frank Nicols at the same address. Obviously there was a name change in the Americanization process but the original name is most important for tracing previous ancestry.

(3). Also at the local level, one should consult church records which will indicate additional information about the individual's background such as date and place of birth, marriages, baptisms, etc. Usually family members are allowed such access with permission from the parish and/or the diocese. The address of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese will be found in the last page of this essay.

If a non-Catholic member is involved, local civil information can be obtained by checking with the County Courthouse for such materials. Some helpful guides have been prepared by the government on finding especially difficult civil materials. At a nominal fee of 35¢ each, one may order guides entitled "Where to Write for Birth and Death Certificates" and "Where to Write for Marriage Records" from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402.

(4). Since we are dealing with Italian aliens of the first generation who may or may not have become citizens, one should also contact the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization for official documentation which would determine general and occasionally specific information on a recently arrived immigrant.

Prior to 1906 information required for an immigrant in the process of naturalization was very sketchy. Most Italians immigrated to America about this time, so specific information would be marginal. These materials on naturalization would be kept in the local courthouse where the individual applied. If immigration occurred after 1906 copies of the naturalization papers would be housed locally as well as at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

I was reminded by the Bureau of Immigration that anyone wishing this kind of information must apply for it through the local Immigration and Naturalization office. In Cleveland this bureau is located in the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building.

(5). It is also possible by writing or visiting the National

Archives in Washington, D.C. to obtain a photocopy of a Federal Census record which would also indicate pertinent information about the individual in question. This listing required more sophisticated questions at the turn of the century when Italian immigration was greatest. Thus, the interested party could trace back his or her grandparent by using the Federal Census lists if aware of that person's city of habitation during a particular census period. Microfilmed copies of the Ohio Federal Census from 1820 to 1880 are currently available at the Western Reserve Historical Society. After 1900 the information must be obtained directly from the National Archives.

To do this contact the National Archives in Washington and determine which of its 11 branches is nearest to you. Write to that branch and give them the state, county and census year. They will give you the number of the microfilm roll containing the census information about your ancestor. Ask the Cleveland Public Library to borrow that film for you and you can get an accurate accounting of a particular ancestor's past.

(6). It is also possible in some cases to use the Federal Archives to determine the actual vessel which was used to transport one's relatives by utilizing Ship's Passenger Lists. These microfilmed collections would contain the name of the vessel, the ship's master, and most important, the names of all passengers, port of embarcation, age, sex and port of immigration. For the majority of Italians this port would be Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore or New Orleans. There is a special form for obtaining this information, Form GSA-7111, the official request for

passenger lists. This must be done through the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Once you have traced your roots back to your relatives who first immigrated to America, the trail doesn't have to end there. You can indeed trace them back to the country, region and town from which they came.

An excellent place to begin is the massive library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) in Salt Lake City, Utah. It holds information on people of every race, creed and nationality, from some forty countries. The library contains more than a billion names and genealogical data from 1538 to 1885. It maintains a staff of 75 around the world who are constantly microfilming records in national and local archives, museums, cemeteries, churches, etc. The six storehouses for this unique collection of microfilm are chiseled into a mountain in the Rockies.

Most of the information in the main library is available from any of the 216 local branches of the Mormon Church in the United States. None of the libraries accept requests by mail to trace ancestry but you can do it yourself on the premises free of charge. The address of the local branch is also located on the last page of this essay.

Thus, by using relatives, local records and Federal repositories the serious researcher should be able to trace the history of his or her own ancestry in this country. Who was the first Italian in your family to settle in America, where and when did he settle and from what area of Italy did he originate? Equipped with the

answers to these questions, one is ready for the second major undertaking, that of tracing back one's genealogy to the region, town or *frazioni* (village) from which they originated.

This aspect for the Italian-American researcher is especially difficult because rarely have there been any guides to follow in this pursuit. One work in English by Joseph G. Fucilla, entitled *Our Italian Surnames* deals only with the origins of names rather than actually tracing back the individual family histories. Dante at least had Virgil and Beatrice to guide him through the uncertainties of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. The Italian-American researcher could encounter formidable problems and without a working set of guidelines could lose his way in a labyrinth of manmade obstacles.

Although each individual's efforts will vary, certain standards can be set down establishing rules and procedures. If the exact area or town in Italy is known there should be fewer problems. In this case two sources are indispensable for research. First, the Civil Communal Archives of each town should contain all legal documents such as birth certificates, marriage licenses and death notices. These records were standardized in Italy in 1869, but in the south of Italy Civil Registration began in 1820.

Birth registers were required by law to show the exact time and place of nativity, sex, name of the child, surname, occupation, residence and occasionally the age of the father and maiden name of the mother. In some instances the names of the paternal grandparents are also indicated. Thus by writing or visiting the town where your ancestor originated you should be able to acquire knowledge of several generations.

The address of each communal archive may be acquired by writing to the Institute Italiane di Cultura, 686 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10021. Another source is the two-volume work *The World of Learning, 1976-1977 Italy* in Volume I lists about 150 civic libraries and repositories in Italy by city with the addresses. Noel C. Stevenson's *Search and Research* (1959) also lists various European libraries and archives of benefit to the genealogist.

The Cleveland Public Library has several works in Italian on Italian genealogy, but they deal usually with Italian nobility and heraldry and usually would be of little value unless one's ancestors were titled nobility in Italy. Works of special note are the *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani*, a scholarly dictionary of national biography which began in 1960. Another monumental compilation is Vittorio Spreti's *Enciclopedia Storica Nobiliare Italiana* (6 Volumes, 1928-1932) which is helpful in identifying some Italian families.

By using the municipal archives one should be able to trace one's ancestry back to the early 19th century. If, however, this information is *not* available because of lost or damaged records another source is available. This is the *Parish Archives* which date back to an Edict of the Council of Trent in 1563, authorizing each parish to maintain a complete listing of its parishioners. The *Parish Archives* are usually in Latin and cover even the most remote villages in the district. An application to the diocesan chancery is usually required before the local parish records are permitted to be used. Microfilming and/or xeroxing of pertinent information will not usually be available, so a letter with the

needed information may be the contents of a reply from an Italian parish request. Names and addresses of pertinent ecclesiastical authorities in Italy may be obtained from the Institute Italiano di Cultura in New York or from the local diocesan office in Cleveland.

Also included in some parochial registers will be a *Status Animarum*, literally the "state of souls," which will list the particulars of a household. Included would be the names, ages, residence, birth dates, occupations and occasionally remarks about the spiritual status of the family. In some regions the *Status Animarum* was well kept and updated every two or three years while other areas were not as scrupulous in their clerical preciseness.

An interesting problem could arise when researching your Italian ancestry. In some cases there may be many persons in one town or village with the same surname as yours. One genealogist discovered that in a north Italian village of about 1400 people, 850 had the same last name. In a town in Sicily of some 6000, 80% of the population could be divided into 7 surnamed groups. It is for this reason that the Parish Records and the *Status Animarum* will be of significant value in ascertaining one's particular ancestry.

In addition to the Communal and Parochial archives one may also consult the *Archivio di Stato* or state archives, which exist currently in about 72 cities, each the chief city in a particular province. There are also state archives in the larger urban centers such as Rome, Naples, Palermo, Venice, Turin, Milan, Genoa,

Florence, and Bologna. Addresses of these state archives are available from the Instituto Italiano di Cultura.

Within the archives *notorial registers* or minute books can be located which will contain information of a legal nature, usually marriage contracts, sales of property, etc. In addition military conscription registers known as *Leva*, covering a whole military district, may be consulted for persons born in the last 100 years. The *Leva* will reveal the exact birthplace of an individual as well as other pertinent information.

For the Italian-American of Sicilian ancestry who wishes to trace back his or her cultural roots there is an American-based travel organization which specializes in tours to Sicily for just that purpose. Perillo Tours in New York has plans to institute a speciality package which will specialize in genealogical searches in Sicily. The address of the Perillo Agency can be obtained from any travel service in Cleveland.

The following addresses will facilitate the interested researcher in obtaining preliminary information on an Italian-American family history:

The National Archives
8th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20408

The Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

———
25000 Westwood Avenue Westlake, Ohio 44145

Instituto Italiano di Cultura
686 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10021

The Italian Consulate: Cleveland
Consul Mario Anziano
Hilton Office Tower
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

The Italian Embassy
1601 Fuller Street
Washington, D.C. 20009

The Western Reserve Historical Society
10825 East Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

The Cleveland and Catholic Diocese
1027 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
Phone: 216 696-6525

The Federal Archives and Records Center – Chicago
7358 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, Illinois 60629

Some Italian names and addresses for continental genealogy:

Vital Statistics (Italy):

Instituto Centrale di Statistica
Via Cesare Balbo
16 Rome

Wills and some legal documents:

Archivio Notarile
Ispettatore Generale
Via Flaminia 160

Rome Italian National Archives:

Archivio Centrale della Stato
Corse Rinnascimento
40 Rome

# Appendix II: Resource Materials for Secondary School Teachers Teaching the Italian-American Experience

## Books for Teachers

Amfitheatrof, Eric. *The Children of Columbus: An Informal History of the Italians in the New World*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973.

Barzini, Luigi. *The Italians*. New York: Antheneum Publishers, 1964.

_____. *From Caesar to the Mafia*. Bantam Books, 1971.

Banks, James A., ed. *Teaching Ethnic Studies: Concepts and Strategies*, 1973.

Cordasco, Francesco and Eugene Buccioni. *The Italians: Social Backgrounds of an American Group*, 1974.

Cordasco, Francesco and Salvatore LaGumina. *Italians in the United States: A Bibliography of Reports, Texts, Critical Studies and Related Materials*, 1972.

Covello, Leonard. *The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child*, 1967.

D'Angelo, Pascal. *Sons of Italy*, 1975.

DeConde, Alexander. *Half Bitter, Half Sweet*, 1971.

Donato, Pietro Di. *Christ in Concrete*, 1975.

Ets, Marie Hall. *Rosa, the Life of an Italian Immigrant*, 1970.

Fenton, Edwin. *Immigrants and Unions, A Case Study: Italians and American Labor, 1870-1920*, 1975.

Fucilla, Joseph. *The Teaching of Italian in the United States*, 1967.

Foerster, Robert Franz. *The Italian Emigration of Our Times*, 1927.

Fermi, Laura. *Atoms in the Family — My Life with Enrico Fermi*, 1954.

Fermi, Laura. *Illustrious Immigrants, the Intellectual Migration from Europe, 1930-1941*, 1968.

Garlick, Richard C., Jr. et al. *Italy and the Italians in Washington's Time*, 1933.

Garlick, Richard. *Philip Mazzei, Friend of Jefferson*, 1933.

Gallo, Patrick. *Ethnic Alienation: The Italian Americans*, 1974.

Gambino, Richard. *Blood of My Blood*, 1974.

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. *Beyond the Melting Pot*, 1963.

Greeley, Andrew M. *Why Can't They Be Like Us?* 1969.

Iorizzo, Luciano and Salvatore Mondello. *The Italian American*, 1971.

Kennedy, John F. *A Nation of Immigrants*, 1960.

La Gumina, Salvadore J. *Vito Marcantonio, the People's Politician*, 1969.

La Gumina, Salvatore, ed. *WOP! A Documentary History of Anti-Italian Discrimination in the United States*, 1973.

Levy, Mark R. and Michael S. Kramer. *The Ethnic Factor*, 1972.

Logatto, A.F. *The Italians in America: A Chronology and Fact Book*, 1972.

Marinacci, Barbara. *They Came From Italy*, 1967.

Mangione, Jerre. *America is Also Italian*, 1969.

Marchione, Margherita. *Philip Mazzei*, 1976.

Musmanno, Michael. *The Story of the Italians in America*, 1965.

Nelli, Humbert S. *The Italians in Chicago, 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility*, 1970.

Odencrantz, Louise C. *Italian Women in Industry*, 1919 (Reprint, 1975).

Parenti, Michael John. *Ethnic and Political Attitudes: A Depth Study of Italian Americans*, 1962.

Panunzio, Constantine M. *The Soul of an Immigrant*, 1928 (Reprint, 1975).

Pisani, Lawrence Frank. *The Italian in America*, 1957.

Puzo, Mario. *The Godfather*, 1969.

Puzo, Mario. *The Fortunate Pilgrim.*

Rolle, Andrew. *The Immigrant Upraised*, 1968.

Rolle, Andrew. *The American Italians: Their History and Culture*, 1972.

Rose, Philip M. *The Italians in America*, 1922.

Rose, Peter I. *They and We: Racial and Ethnic Relations in the United States*, 1964.

Sartorio, Enrico C. *Social and Religious Life of Italians in America*, 1970.

Scarpaci, Jean A., ed. *The Interaction of Italians and Jews in America*, 1974.

Schiavo, Giovanni E. *Four Centuries of Italian American History*, 1952.

Schiavo, Giovanni. *Italian American History*, 2 volumes, 1947 and 1949.

Schiavo, Giovanni. *The Italians in America Before the Civil War*, 1934.

Tomasi, Silvano M. and Madeline Engels, ed. *The Italian Experience In America*, 1970.

Ulm, Richard Otis. *The Italo-American Student in the American Public Schools*, 1958.

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*Italian American*, State University College at Buffalo, 1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14222.

*The Italian Historical Society of America*, 111 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201.

*Identity Magazine*, P.O. Box 305, Dover, New Jersey 07801.

*I-AM, The National Magazine for Italian Americans*, P.O. Box 6350, Marion, Ohio 43302.

## Research Organiztions

Center for Immigration Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455. Dr. Rudolph J. Vecoli, Director.

Center for Migration Studies, 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island, New York 10304. Sylvan M. Tomasi, C.S. Director.

Programma Di Lingua E Cultura Italiana Per La Communita Di New Jersey, Del Nord, Italian Catholic Center, 78 Market Street, Patterson, New Jersey 17505.

National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, 4408 8th Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20071. Monsignor Geno Baroni, Director.

Roots of America: A Multi-Ethnic Curriculum Resource Guide for 7th, 8th and 9th Grade Social Studies Teachers. National Education Association Publication, 1975. Section on the Italian American Experience, pp. 107-123 contains brief topical introduction to Immigration, The Italian American Community, Discrimination, Contributions and Achievements and Resource Guide.

This was the project developed by the New Jersey Educational Association and the National Educational Association Ethnic Heritage Program. Copies may be obtained by writing The New Jersey Educational Association, Instruction Division, Trenton, New Jersey 08608.

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American Institute of Italian Studies, Eight East Sixty-Ninth Street, New York, New York 10021.

# Table A

## Italian Immigration to the United States, 1820-1975

| Year | Number of Immigrants |
|---|---|
| 1820 | 30 |
| 1821 | 63 |
| 1822 | 35 |
| 1823 | 33 |
| 1824 | 45 |
| 1825 | 75 |
| 1826 | 57 |
| 1827 | 35 |
| 1828 | 34 |
| 1829 | 23 |
| 1830 | 9 |
| 1831 | 28 |
| 1832 | 3 |
| 1833 | 169 |
| 1834 | 105 |
| 1835 | 60 |
| 1836 | 115 |
| 1837 | 36 |
| 1838 | 86 |
| 1839 | 84 |
| 1840 | 37 |
| 1841 | 179 |
| 1842 | 100 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1843 | 117 |
| 1844 | 141 |
| 1845 | 137 |
| 1846 | 151 |
| 1847 | 164 |
| 1848 | 241 |
| 1849 | 209 |
| 1850 | 431 |
| 1851 | 447 |
| 1852 | 351 |
| 1853 | 555 |
| 1854 | 1,263 |
| 1855 | 1,052 |
| 1856 | 1,365 |
| 1857 | 1,007 |
| 1858 | 1,240 |
| 1859 | 932 |
| 1860 | 1,019 |
| 1861 | 811 |
| 1862 | 566 |
| 1863 | 547 |
| 1864 | 600 |
| 1865 | 942 |
| 1866 | 1,382 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1867 | 1,624 |
| 1868 | 891 |
| 1869 | 1,489 |
| 1870 | 2,891 |
| 1871 | 2,816 |
| 1872 | 4,190 |
| 1873 | 8,757 |
| 1874 | 7,666 |
| 1875 | 3,631 |
| 1876 | 3,015 |
| 1877 | 3,195 |
| 1878 | 4,344 |
| 1879 | 5,791 |
| 1880 | 12,354 |
| 1881 | 15,401 |
| 1882 | 32,159 |
| 1883 | 31,792 |
| 1884 | 16,510 |
| 1885 | 13,642 |
| 1886 | 21,315 |
| 1887 | 47,622 |
| 1888 | 51,558 |
| 1889 | 25,307 |
| 1890 | 52,003 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1891 | 76,005 |
| 1892 | 61,631 |
| 1893 | 72,145 |
| 1894 | 42,977 |
| 1895 | 35,427 |
| 1896 | 68,060 |
| 1897 | 59,431 |
| 1898 | 58,613 |
| 1899 | 77,419 |
| 1900 | 100,135 |
| 1901 | 135,996 |
| 1902 | 178,375 |
| 1903 | 230,622 |
| 1904 | 193,296 |
| 1905 | 221,479 |
| 1906 | 273,120 |
| 1907 | 285,731 |
| 1908 | 128,503 |
| 1909 | 183,218 |
| 1910 | 215,537 |
| 1911 | 182,882 |
| 1912 | 157,134 |
| 1913 | 265,542 |
| 1914 | 283,738 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1915 | 49,688 |
| 1916 | 33,665 |
| 1917 | 34,596 |
| 1918 | 5,250 |
| 1919 | 1,884 |
| 1920 | 95,145 |
| 1921 | 222,260 |
| 1922 | 40,319 |
| 1923 | 46,674 |
| 1924 | 56,246 |
| 1925 | 6,203 |
| 1926 | 8,253 |
| 1927 | 17,297 |
| 1928 | 17,728 |
| 1929 | 18,008 |
| 1930 | 22,327 |
| 1931 | 13,399 |
| 1932 | 6,662 |
| 1933 | 3,477 |
| 1934 | 4,374 |
| 1935 | 6,566 |
| 1936 | 6,774 |
| 1937 | 7,192 |
| 1938 | 7,712 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1939 | 6,570 |
| 1940 | 5,302 |
| 1941 | 450 |
| 1942 | 103 |
| 1943 | 49 |
| 1944 | 120 |
| 1945 | 213 |
| 1946 | 2,636 |
| 1947 | 13,866 |
| 1948 | 16,075 |
| 1949 | 11,695 |
| 1950 | 12,454 |
| 1951 | 8,958 |
| 1952 | 11,342 |
| 1953 | 8,432 |
| 1954 | 13,145 |
| 1955 | 30,272 |
| 1956 | 40,430 |
| 1957 | 19,624 |
| 1958 | 23,115 |
| 1959 | 16,804 |
| 1960 | 13,369 |
| 1961 | 18,956 |
| 1962 | 20,119 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1963 | 16,175 |
| 1964 | 12,769 |
| 1965 | 10,874 |
| 1966 | 26,447 |
| 1967 | 28,487 |
| 1968 | 25,882 |
| 1969 | 27,003 |
| 1970 | 27,369 |
| 1971 | 22,137 |
| 1972 | 21,427 |
| 1973 | 22,151 |
| 1974 | 15,884 |
| 1975 | 11,522 (To June, 1975) |

Sources:

*Annual Reports of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 1970-1975.

*Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Volume I, pp. 105-106, 1975.

# Table B

## Italian Immigration to Cleveland

| Year | Population of Cleveland | Immigrants Arrived | Total Italian Immigrants | Approximated Italian Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1856 | 47,000 | | | 20 |
| 1860 | 43,417 | | | 30 |
| 1870 | 92,829 | | | 35 |
| 1874 | | 1,880 | 87 | 80 |
| 1875 | | 1,323 | 12 | 87 |
| 1876 | | 844 | 15 | 95 |
| 1877 | | 739 | 23 | |
| 1878 | | 638 | 10 | |
| 1879 | | 1,010 | 7 | |
| 1880 | 158,207 | 3,469 | 52 | 110 |
| 1881 | 167,413 | 8,846 | 23 | 123 |
| 1882 | 185,851 | 9,272 | 60 | 173 |
| 1883 | 194,684 | 4,555 | 16 | 179 |
| 1884 | 200,426 | 5,227 | 42 | 211 |
| 1885 | 205,446 | 2,726 | 30 | 231 |
| 1886 | 214,013 | 2,321 | 130 | 351 |
| 1887 | 223,000[1] | 5,337 | 71 | 412 |
| 1888 | 230,000[2] | 5,061 | 191 | 593 |
| 1889 | 250,000 | 4,730 | 194 | 707 |
| 1890 | 261,353 | 5,639 | 103 | 864 |
| 1891 | | 5,985 | 125 | 975 |
| 1892 | | 3,111 | 83 | 1,044 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1893 | 310,000[3] | 3,326 | 121 | 1,151 |
| 1894 | 325,000[4] | 790 | 54 | 1,191 |
| 1895 | 330,279[5] | 2,104 | 146 | 1,323 |
| 1896 | | 3,152 | 286 | 1,595 |
| 1897 | | 1,642 | 226 | 1,807 |
| 1898 | 355,292 | 2,526 | 301 | 2,094 |
| 1899 | 380,000[6] | 3,900 | 555 | 2,635 |
| 1900 | 381,768 | 4,590 | 439 | 3,065 |
| 1901 | | 6,388 | 981 | 3,359 |
| 1902 | | 10,752 | 1,219 | 3,591 |
| 1903 | | 13,651 | 1,932 | 5,136 |
| 1904 | | 7,086 | 1,464 | 5,913 |
| 1905 | | 14,138 | 1,918 | 7,144 |
| 1906 | | 16,275 | 2,836 | 9,293 |
| 1907 | | 17,066 | 1,963 | 10,659 |
| 1910 | 560,663 | | | 10,836 |

Source: *The Annual Report of the Departments of Government of the City of Cleveland*, 1856-1910.

Another work by David E. Green entitled *The Invasion of Cleveland by the Europeans* (Cleveland: Mission Study

1. Estimated Census conducted by the Cleveland Police Department.
2. Estimated Census conducted by the Cleveland Police Department.
3. Estimated Census conducted by the Cleveland Police Department.
4. Estimated Census conducted by the Cleveland Police Department.
5. Estimated Census conducted by the Cleveland Police Department.
6. Estimated Census conducted by the Cleveland Police Department.

Committee, 1906) included a rather inaccurate analysis of immigrant flow to the city with statistics compiled from the same Police Census statistics. In regard to the number of Italian immigrants to Cleveland each year, Green provided the following statistics:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1871: 351 Italians | 1876: no figure |
| 1872: 325 Italians | 1877: 99 Italians |
| 1873: 358 Italians | 1878: 130 Italians |
| 1874: 282 Italians | 1879: 167 Italians |
| 1875: 192 Italians | 1880: 411 Italians |

We know, for example, that according to the Federal Census of 1880 there were only 110 Italians in Cleveland. If Green's figures are accurate then the yearly exodus of Italians from the city must have been phenomenal!

# Table C

## Federal Population Figures on Cleveland With Special Emphasis on the Italian Population, 1900-1970

| Year | Cleveland Population | Foreign Born Population | Italian Born Population[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1900 | 381,768 | 163,570 | 3,065 |
| 1910 | 560,663 | 223,908 | 10,836 |
| 1920 | 762,026 | 310,241 | 18,730 |
| 1930 | 900,529 | 230,946 | 23,524 |
| 1940 | 878,336 | 179,784 | 20,961 |
| 1950 | 914,808 | 183,667 | 20,166 |
| 1960 | 876,050 | 175,134 | 19,317 |
| 1970 | 750,903 | 164,523 | 17,693 |

1. The terminology used to indicate foreign population is often misleading. In the early census of this century it was usually "foreign born" which was used to refer to the city's foreign population. However, during the last census the terms "foreign stock," "foreign born," and "mixed or foreign parentage" are used thereby confusing the issue. Basically an Italian is so considered if he is foreign born or if his parents were foreign

Source: United States Department of Commerce, *Bureau of the Census*, 1900-1970.

born. Therefore, a third generation Italian-American would not be considered as an Italian in this census.

# Table D

## Distribution of Italian-Born Immigrants in Ohio By Decade, 1850-1970

| | |
|---|---|
| 1850 | 174 |
| 1860 | 407 |
| 1870 | 564 |
| 1880 | 1,064 |
| 1890 | 2,857 |
| 1900 | 11,321 |
| 1910 | 41,620 |
| 1920 | 60,658 |
| 1930 | 71,496 |
| 1940 | 65,453 |
| 1950 | 56,593 |
| 1960 | 50,338 |
| 1970 | 36,164 |

## Major Ohio Cities with Significant Italian Foreign Stock, 1970

| | |
|---|---|
| Cleveland | 17,693 |
| Cincinnati | 3,806 |
| Columbus | 6,018 |
| Dayton | 890 |
| Akron | 6,369 |
| Youngstown | 8,472 |
| Canton | 3,567 |
| Parma | 3,712 |
| Toledo | 2,280 |

Source: Characteristics of the Population, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Bureau of the Census*, Ohio, 1970, Volume 2, Table 141.

# Table E

## Native Born and Italian Born Clevelanders Receiving Public Assistance, 1874-1913

| Year | Total on Outdoor Relief[1] | Foreigners on Outdoor Relief | Italians on Outdoor Relief |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1874 | 618 | 451 | 3 |
| 1877 | 2,386 | 1,945 | 0 |
| 1878 | 1,568 | 1,201 | 0 |
| 1879 | 1,550 | 1,179 | 0 |
| 1880 | 1,156 | 984 | 0 |
| 1881 | 1,013 | 773 | 0 |
| 1882 | 985 | 776 | 0 |
| 1883 | 1,393 | 1,108 | 0 |
| 1884 | 1,920 | 1,652 | 3 |
| 1885 | 2,218 | 1,946 | 3 |
| 1886 | 1,686 | 1,419 | 8 |
| 1887 | 1,765 | 1,221 | 13 |
| 1888 | 1,701 | 1,365 | 15 |
| 1889 | 1,543 | 1,215 | 20 |
| 1890 | 1,552 | 1,238 | 18 |
| 1891 | 1,843 | 1,109 | 26 |
| 1892 | 2,074 | 1,603 | 24 |
| 1893 | 4,628 | 3,499 | 45 |
| 1894 | 6,011 | 4,623 | 82 |
| 1895 | 3,582 | 2,670 | 44 |
| 1896 | 2,250 | 1,708 | 28 |
| 1897 | 2,552 | 1,905 | 42 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1898 | 2,147 | 1,569 | 30 |
| 1899 | 2,708 | 1,988 | 57 |
| 1900 | 2,527 | 1,850 | 61 |
| 1901 | 2,297 | 1,603 | 49 |
| 1902 | 2,175 | 1,477 | 55 |
| 1903 | 2,308 | 1,574 | 57 |
| 1904 | 2,603 | 1,790 | 68 |
| 1905 | 2,191 | 1,490 | 59 |
| 1906 | 1,946 | 1,347 | 70 |
| 1907 | 2,134 | 1,435 | 83 |
| 1908 | | | 197 |
| 1909 | 3,426 | 2,482 | 197 |
| 1910 | 2,544 | 1,799 | 159 |
| 1911 | 7,765 | 2,139 | 127 |
| 1912 | 1,816 | | |
| 1913 | 1,393 | 1,121 | 72 |
| 1914 | 2,223 | 1,872 | 139 |

Source: *The Annual Report of the Departments of Government of the City of Cleveland: Department of the Infirmary*.

1. Outdoor relief was public assistance to the needy either on a temporary or sustained basis. It included the following items which were distributed through the city's Department of the Infirmary: coal, meat, shoes, soap, tea, coffee, corn meal, railroad passes, flour, sugar, potatoes, rice, beans, peas, barley and burial expenses.

# Table F

## Italian Arrests in Cleveland, 1870-1902

| Year | Total Arrests | Total Foreigners Arrested | Total Italians Arrested |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1870 | 4,004 | 2,554 | 2 |
| 1874 | 9,571 | 8,563 | 32 |
| 1875 | 8,823 | 4,685 | 18 |
| 1876 | 8,407 | 1,046 | 19 |
| 1877 | 7,845 | 3,892 | 24 |
| 1878 | 7,151 | 3,281 | 22 |
| 1879 | 6,539 | 3,042 | 12 |
| 1880 | 7,432 | 3,469 | 27 |
| 1881 | 7,465 | 3,628 | 29 |
| 1882 | 6,741 | 3,377 | 14 |
| 1883 | 7,254 | 3,577 | 36 |
| 1884 | 7,271 | 3,540 | 42 |
| 1885 | 6,882 | 3,409 | 29 |
| 1886 | 6,732 | 3,409 | 24 |
| 1887 | 8,588 | 4,083 | 27 |
| 1888 | 8,731 | 4,026 | 38 |
| 1889 | 10,377 | 4,644 | 34 |
| 1890 | 9,616 | 4,199 | 55 |
| 1891 | 11,133 | 4,967 | 66 |
| 1892 | 10,717 | 4,941 | 81 |
| 1893 | 9,368 | 4,227 | 56 |
| 1894 | 9,751 | 4,016 | 85 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1895 | 11,006 | 4,449 | 80 |
| 1896 | 13,491 | 5,302 | 107 |
| 1897 | 14,481 | 5,601 | 121 |
| 1898 | 14,452 | 5,571 | 193 |
| 1899 | 15,674 | 5,679 | 176 |
| 1900 | 19,923 | 7,227 | 205 |
| 1901 | 19,219 | 7,385 | 237 |
| 1902 | 18,236 | 7,350 | 261 |

Source: *The Annual Report of the Departments of Government of the City of Cleveland*, 1870-1902.

Beginning in 1870 and ending in 1902 the Police Department of the City of Cleveland annually published its detailed accounting of the year's criminal activity within the city. For the 32 years studied the police department listed individual crimes and the number of occurrences of each. It then also listed by nativity the number of individuals from the major 15 ethnic groups within the city arrested and charged with a crime.[1]

1. Crimes in the reports were never specified for individual groups, but in 1910, for example, there were 7185 arrests with the following crimes comprising more than half of the charges:

| | |
|---|---|
| intoxication | 1,089 |
| assault and battery | 1,361 |
| petty larceny | 711 |
| vagrancy | 258 |
| gambling | 206 |
| violating the automobile law | 190 |

Numerically the Italians during this period were not a major criminal threat to the peace and security of the city. Indeed, their crime statistics were usually less than 5% of the foreign population. If the above "official" figures of the police department are relatively accurate there was a great deal of "ethnic" criminality in Cleveland, but the groups which contributed most to this situation were not the Italians, during this period at any rate.

The statistical information stops at 1902, for in that year the police department no longer supplied the same kind of numerical breakdown as it had, and only designated "white" and "colored" criminal figures.

# Table G

## Population Change in Italian-Born Residents by Census Tract, 1910-1970

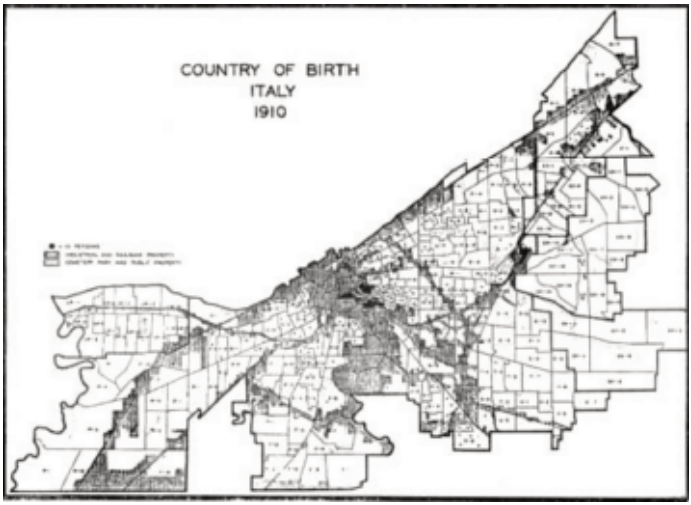
| Year | Big Italy | Little Italy | Collinwood | Mount Carmel (East) Blue Rock Springs | St. Rocco's | Kinsman Road Woodland Hills |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1910 | 4,429 | 3,090 | 61 | 765 | 173 | 52 |
| 1920 | 4,297 | 3,460 | 1,269 | 1,664 | 499 | 581 |
| 1930 | 2,065 | 2,227 | 2,106 | 2,042 | 759 | 2,836 |
| 1940 | 1,304 | 1,612 | 1,800 | 1,628 | 655 | 2,926 |
| 1950 | 505 | 1,017 | 1,238 | 1,266 | 869 | 2,248 |
| 1960 | 180 | 1,965 | 2,371 | 2,164 | 804 | 3,262 |
| 1970 | [1] | 975 | 1,271 | 247 | 597 | 1,602 |

1. Census figures determine this area to be without a significant foreign born population.

Sources:

*Census Tracts: Cleveland, Ohio*, 1950-1970.

Howard Whipple Green, “A Sheet-a-Week,” December 16, 1943.

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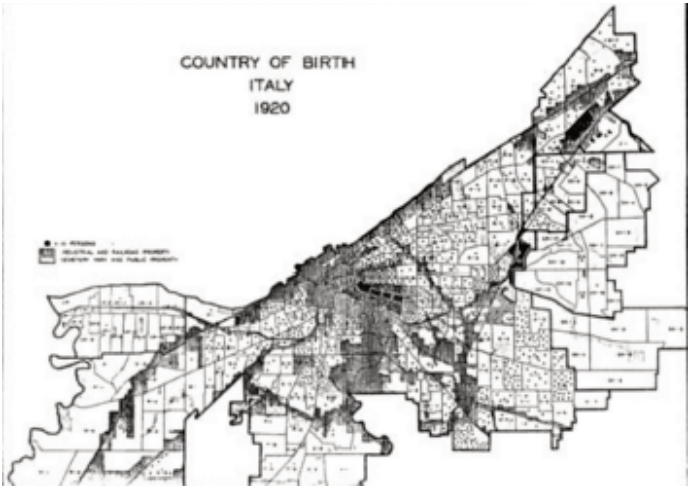


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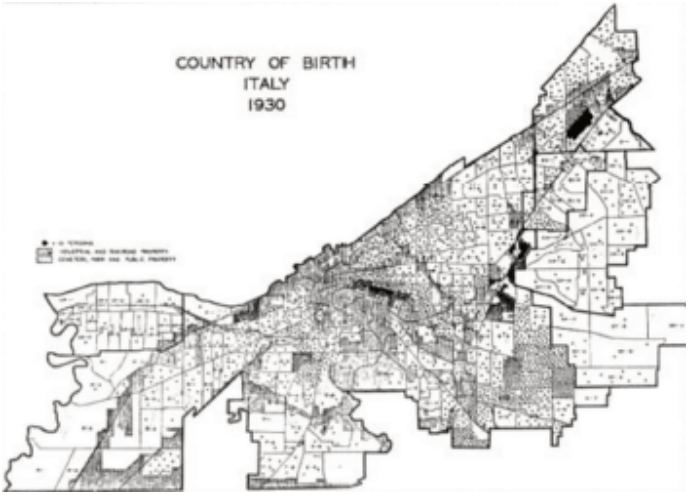


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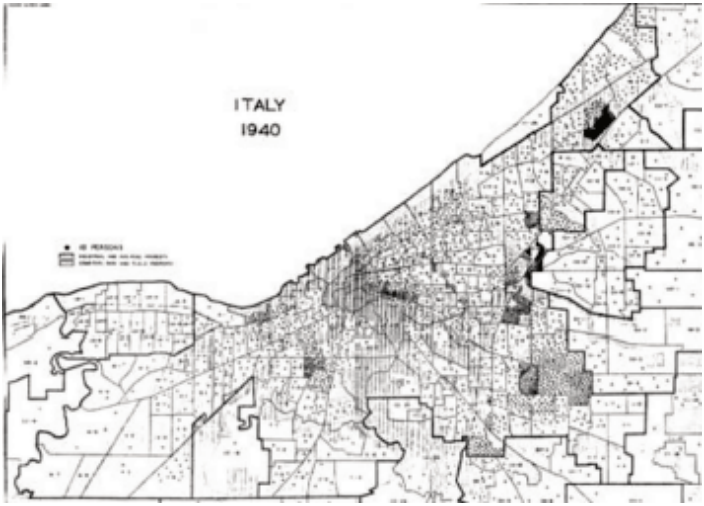


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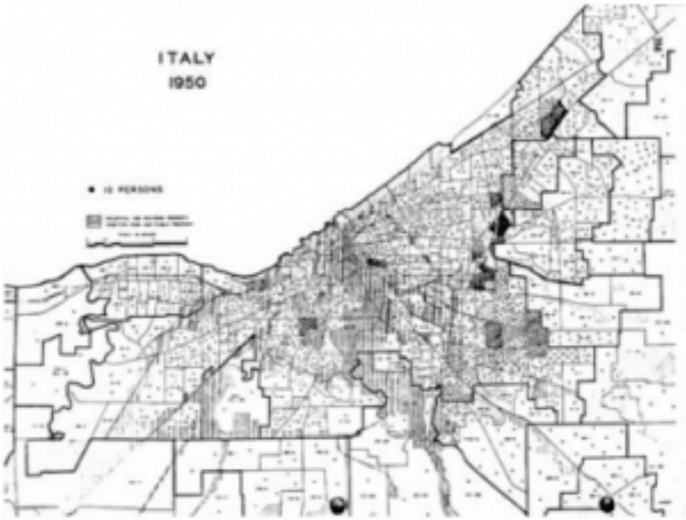


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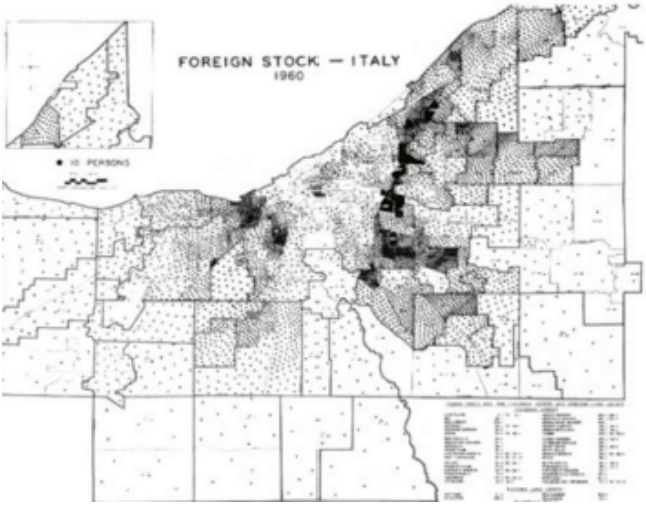


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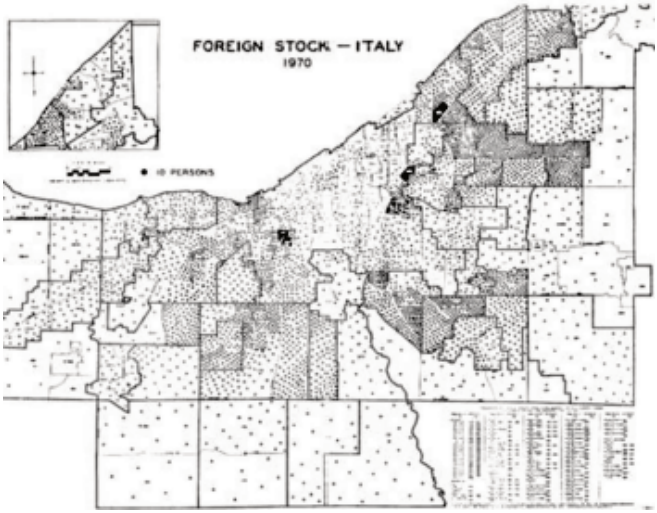


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