ITALIAN GENEALOGICAL GROUP

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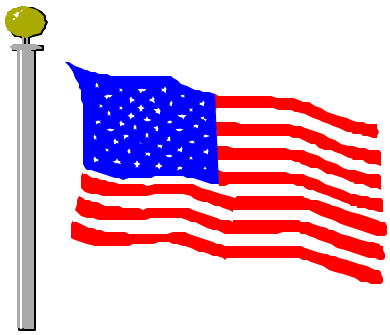
Volume 13, No. 2 **October, 2006**



Presidents' Message

Cari Amici,

New York celebrates Italian Heritage and Cultural during the month of October. Many activities are planned by our fellow organizations. If each one of us takes part in just one activity, think of the wealth of information we can acquire and share. What better time for each one of us to record past events and memories that can become a permanent exhibit in our family history genealogy album. Our first speaker of the season, Dr. Fred Gardaphe inspired us by recording his impressions of the Italian immigrant. Now it is our responsibility to continue the arduous work we started and to involve the youth of our families to carry on the tradition.

Inside this issue:

Researching Italian Records	**Page 3**
Profiles From The Four Corners	**Page 4**
WWI Draft Registration Cards	**Page 6**
Annual Christmas Party	**Page 8**
Columbus Fact vs. Fiction	**Page 9**
The Census Taker	**Page 11**
Computer Corner	**Page 11**

We would also like to encourage you to bring a friend to our October meeting. We want to recruit new members. The more people engaged in search of their ancestors the better it is for all concerned because each individual research helps us all in the long run. Let's do our part to make this a month of remembrance of our ancestors and Italian heritage.

We look forward to hearing about your genealogical experiences.

Sempre Avanti,

Mike Genovese and Marilyn Verna
Co-Presidents

October 2006 Guest Speaker

C'era Una Volta Nell'America: La Protezione di Bambino e la Comunita Italiano-Americano in New York.

Once upon a time in America: The Protection of Children and the Italian-American Community in New York

In your research have you found children who disappear from time to time amidst problems in the family? A very prominent organization, which worked to rescue and help children, still exists today and may have records on the "missing years" of a child's life. We look forward to next month's speaker, Joseph T. Gleason, the Director of Educational, Archival and Administrative Services for the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC). Mr. Gleason a native of New York City, has always been active in education and administration, juvenile supervision and counseling, law enforcement and child protection. The NYSPCC was the first organized child protection agency in the world. Mr. Gleason is an expert on the origins and history of child protection and speaks on various aspects of history and genealogy. Come listen. He may give you some clues, to help your research.

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ITALIAN GENEALOGICAL GROUP

P. O. Box 626
Bethpage, New York 11714-0626

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The Newsletter is published 10 times a year.
Meetings are held the 2nd Saturday of each month, Sept. to June at 10:30 AM

Researching Italian Records For Beginners

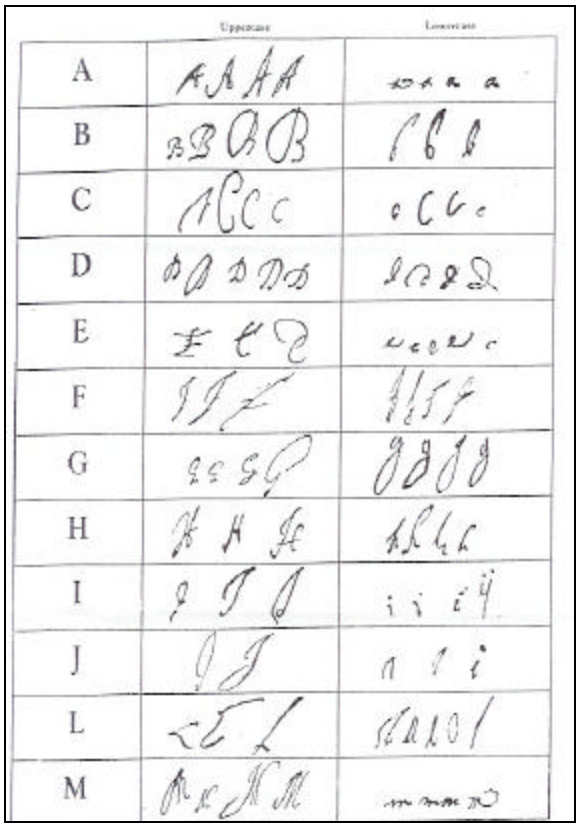
William S. Gimello

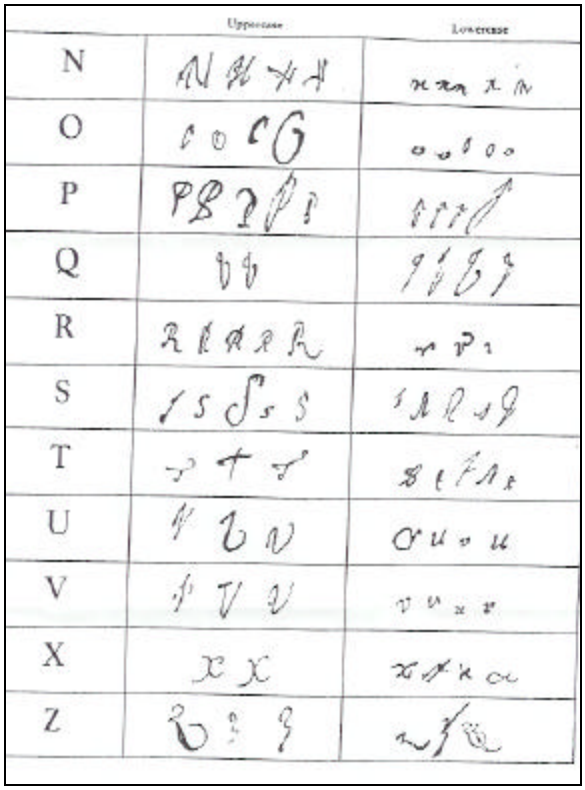
Part I
Identifying Italian Letters

One of the greatest challenges I faced when I began to research my ancestors in Abruzzo and Basilicata was attempting to identify letters and words found in Italian birth, baptism, marriage and death records I reviewed at the Family History Center in Plainview, New York. Some of the documents were over two hundred and fifty years old. Some were faded, while others were very dark, or badly water-stained due to the poor conditions where the documents were stored in Unifficio Anagrafe (General Registry Office) in the municipio (Town Hall) or in the Parrochia (Parish.) This research was done in complete darkness except for a light on old high magnification microfilm machines.

In addition to the poor quality of the microfilm, I have very limited knowledge of the Italian language which hindered my identification of letters and words in the document. Some of the town officials who recorded the information had fairly good handwriting, but most of them blended the letters in the alphabet to the point that the letters were almost impossible to read. When totally halted in my tracks, I turned to another person in the dark room who also was searching Italian records, or I would turn to a volunteer such as Armand Tarantelli for help. Once I identified the first letter, the remaining letters were relatively easy to decipher except when a word ended in an "a" or an "o". I solved this problem by finding the same word in the same document or several other documents. I also had trouble identifying the letters "r", "l" and the capital "I". I eventually was able to recognize all the letters in the Italian alphabet by staying with the problem until it was solved. I remember June DeLalio saying that you can translate any Italian letter or word with great patience and persistence.

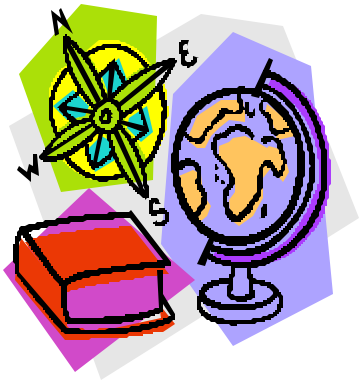
Handwriting Variations of Alphabet Characters as Found in Handwritten Documents from the 1500's to the early 1900's





Profiles from the Four Corners

Michael S. Genovese



Our profile this month focuses on **Louise Camera Pomilla**. Her story provides us with a good example of a personal quest to do justice to her ancestors. It is a story of one person's loving tribute paid to her ancestors. I will let her tell you her story.

My full name is Louise Camera Pomilla. I was born in Queens, NY and attended St. Mary Magdalene grammar school and Dominican Commercial High School in Jamaica, NY, graduating from Dominican in 1957. My husband and I married in September 1958. After ten years of going to CW Post and Long Island University, my husband received his BA and MBA. After our three children graduated from college, I decided it was my time to get a degree. I went to Monroe Community College and graduated with honors at age 49. In 1990, I attended NYU in Manhattan for a certificate in Public Relations Management.

We left Hauppauge, LI in 1972 when my husband, joined Xerox Corporation. We still live in the same house in a lovely community, Pittsford, NY, about 20 minutes from downtown Rochester. After Manny retired from Xerox, he became the head starter at *Locust Hill Country Club* and I substitute as a Para-professional at our local high school, where our oldest granddaughter, Alexandra, is a junior. We have three children, Joe, Laura and Andrea, and five grandchildren, Alexandra 16, Cameron 13, Julia 9, Andrew 6 and Ava 6.

I have always been fascinated with my family history. My grandfather, Andrea Camera, was quite interesting. He had three wives and 24 living children. My dad was from the second wife, Luisa Gambardella Camera. Grandpa Andrea Camera, a conductor for an orchestra and band, played for President Teddy Roosevelt, and he and Grandma Luisa are noted in the book, *"Images of Americas Little Italy"*. (Dr. Emelise Aleandri shared this information with me.)

In 1999, I went on a trip to Italy stopping in Amalfi and Ravello. There I found many Cameras and Gambardellas. Both families were born, baptized and lived in Amalfi.

In 2004, my husband and I went to Salerno, Sturno, Frigento and spent three weeks in the town of Amalfi at the La Bussola Hotel (The Compass) Here we were able to acquaint ourselves with Padre Andrea Colavolpe, the pastor of the Cathedral Sant' Andrea. (You can clearly see that the name Andrea/Andrew is very significant in the town of Amalfi). Father Colavolpe, recalling the letters and contributions I had sent through the years gave us permission to review the church records. We spent about 10 days doing this. Father did not speak any English, and my Italian was limited. What really helped in translating records was my high school Latin. I located records back to my great, great, great grandfather, Santolo Camera and his mother, Luisa Camera of Domenico Camera, and great, great grandparents Gambardella.

When I returned home from my trip in 1999, I began to search for where my grandparents were buried. I knew they were in Calvary Cemetery, Queens, NY but I did not have the dates of death.. My cousins, were helpful in recalling the approximate dates of death also provided me two additional photos of my grandparents, and my great grandfather, Nicola Camera. I called Calvary and asked them for the interment list for my relatives. Most of the graves listed six deceased, except for my grandfather Andrea. He is buried with his one year old grandson, James.

In 2000, a second cousin met me at Kennedy Airport and we ventured to Calvary Cemetery to find the graves. There we found that most of our deceased relatives had tombstones, but not grandfather Andre. While continuing my search at the cemetery, I anxiously looked for my grandmother Luisa's grave and, once again, I was saddened and disappointed not to find a headstone. Buried with her are her two infant sons, a female named Annie, (probably my grandfather's daughter from his first wife, Concetta) and his third wife Saveria; who had been his housekeeper after Luisa died at age 32.

Through further research at the New York Public Library, I discovered that many families during the "Great Influenza Epidemic" had to bury their own deceased relatives. I contacted Calvary Cemetery about placing headstones upon their graves. I was told that I would have to pay all the unpaid annual fees, which amounted to a few thousand dollars. After many telephone calls and numerous letters, to both administrations, we agreed to pay $2,200 for perpetual care and purchased headstones for the unmarked graves.

This was a tribute to our ancestors who came to this country to ensure that their children and grandchildren would have the opportunity to experience the great American dream of education, work and a better quality of life.

The above photo is a family gathering of Louise Camera Pomilla at the gravesite at Calvary Cemetery after the dedication.

(We encourage members from the "four corners" of the globe to share your personal genealogical stories, journeys, research sources and findings. Please submit stories to Michael S. Genovese as a WORD attachment and send to mikegino@aol.com)

Adopt-A-Commune

For those of you that may be interested in adopting a commune in Italy, the following link will provide you with details:
http://www.rootsweb.com/~itacamp2/adopt.html

Calvary Cemetery

Joanne Heffernan

You may want to pass this info on in case it's of value to anyone who needs to research at Calvary Cemetery. I was recently on the phone with them and learned that their latest interment list cost is: $55 for the first name and $5 per person after that.

Dear Ancestor

Your tombstone stands among the rest;
Neglected and alone.
The name and date are chiseled out
On polished, marbled stone.
It reaches out to all who care
It is too late to mourn.
You did not know that I exist
You died and I was born.
Yet each of us are cells of you
In flesh, in blood, in bone.
Our blood contracts and beats a pulse
Entirely not our own.
Dear Ancestor, the place you filled
One hundred years ago
Spreads out among the ones you left
Who would have loved you so.
I wonder if you lived and loved,
I wonder if you knew
That someday I would find this spot,
And come to visit you.

Author Unknown

Navigating the WWI Draft Registration Cards

Juliana Smith

My first foray into the field of writing was an article for Ancestry Magazine, which involved research on my granduncle, Edwin Dyer, and his service in WWI. ("Somewhere in France"). It also marked my first research venture into cyberspace.

It was late in 1996 and we had a baby in the house. (We still do, but now that she's ten, she balks at being called "a baby.") By this time my husband had listened to several months worth of lectures from yours truly on how wasteful he was being, spending all this money hooking us up to that Internet thingy. What possible use could it be?

Needless to say, he is still doing the "I told you so" dance over that discussion. As he set me up on the computer and began showing me how to search for things, I was amazed at all the cool things I found within an hour or so. (It may have been longer, because I can also recall that we had an incredibly slow connection and had to constantly re-dial when I lost that connection.)

My, how times have changed! It seems like eons ago that I sat in front of that tiny monitor and began exploring the few resources that were available for military research online. At the time I had no idea that I would be sitting here now with access to images of actual records online. The completion of the World War I Draft Card database at Ancestry.com for Veterans' Day reminded me of those early days, so I spent a little time exploring the database and thought I'd share some tips for using this collection.

What's In It?

First a little background on these records. There were three draft registrations for WWI:

* The first registration. (05 June 1917) was for unenlisted men born between 6 June 1886 and 5 June 1896 and used a card calling for name, age, address, date and place of birth, citizenship status, employer's name and address, dependent information, marital status, race, military service, and physical appearance.

* The second registration (05 June 1918 and a supplemental registration on 24 August 1918) was for unregistered/unenlisted men born 6 June 1896 and 24 August 1897 and used a card calling for name, age, address, date and place of birth, father's birthplace, citizenship status, occupation, employer's name and address, dependent information, name and address of nearest relative, and physical appearance.

* The third registration (12 September 1918) was for all unregistered/unenlisted men born between 11 September 1872 and 12 September 1900 and used a card calling for name, address, age, date of birth, race, citizenship status, occupation, employer's name and address, name and address of nearest relative, and physical appearance.

Overall, these records include males living in the U.S. who were born between 11 September 1872 and 12 September 1900 who were not already enlisted in the military-approximately 24 million men. Citizenship was not a factor in the registration requirements, so you may find recent immigrants in the collection, despite the fact that they hadn't been naturalized.

A couple of important points:

1. Registration did not necessarily mean that your ancestor was called for service.

2. Registration did not include those already in the service. The subject of my first article, Edwin Dyer, enlisted 06 April 1917, before the first registration, so he is not included in this collection.

So who could I look for? I opened up my family database in Family Tree Maker and pulled up the list of all individuals. This list can be sorted by name, birth date or death date, so I clicked on the birth date header and browsed through the list of family members and compiled a list of males who were born between 11 September 1872 and 12 September 1900, and who were still alive at the time of the registrations.

I found several relatives and got previously unknown birth dates for a few of them. In one case, I was able to narrow down a marriage date for a man who was unmarried in the 1910 census and married in 1920. He is listed as single when he registered 31 May 1917, so he was married between that date and the date of the 1920 census -- 01 January 1920.

I Can't Find Him!

As with any record group, there may be spelling or transcription problems that could hinder your search. If you're unable to locate an ancestor through "creative searching," the images are also browse able, and although it may seem to be a daunting task at first, there are a few tips that can shorten your search.

The records are set up by, state, city or county, by draft board and then somewhat alphabetically. (For the most part the records I viewed were alphabetical, but there were a few inconsistencies and where writing is hard to read, you may find some misplaced.) The National Archives and the Family History Library have microfilm maps of draft board boundaries for selected cities. (A list of these cities is included in Eileen Polakoff's September/October 2002 Ancestry Magazine article on these records.)

You may also find lists online. I found a list with the addresses of draft boards for New York City online through the Italian Genealogy Group's website (http://www.italiangen.org/art9.stm). It was reprinted online from the organization's October 1997 newsletters. Try an online search for "[city or county] draft boards" or check with local societies in the area to see if they have a map or address listing available. Then plot the draft board locations around your ancestor's home and see if you can't find them by browsing the nearest ones. As today's "Clipping of the Day" indicates, some men may have had to leave work to register and you may also want to check the draft boards in the vicinity of their place of business.

Another short-cut that could help you save time, would be to check the 1920 census for a male neighbor who would have been eligible for the draft and who may have been living in the same place at the time of registration. A good candidate might be a male still living at home with parents who own their home, as opposed to young male who may have married and moved from home between the registration and the time of the census, or renters who may have moved around more frequently. Since roughly a quarter of the population is included in this database, you have a good chance of finding a neighbor who registered at the same local draft board as your ancestor and you may locate him by browsing that board.

Use caution when including a birth date. Although the dates matched up well for the family members I found, when I was playing around with the database, I noted quite a few individuals listed with birth dates that seemed to be wrong, extending well before and after the 1872 and 1900 inclusion dates. For example, Lue Elmer Payne of Warren County, Illinois lists his age in September 1918 as 43, but gives his birth date as 15 November 1866. Either the date is wrong or this patriotic 51 year old man tried to slip by hoping that the draft board volunteer wouldn't do the math.

Conversely, Roy Bland of Stoddard County, Missouri lists his age as 18, but his date of birth as 28 August 1910. In the 1920 census, we find him enumerated with his family with his age listed as 19, making it more likely that his age was correct and that the numbers were transposed in the birth date. (It probably would have been a little tougher for an eight year old to slip by the draft board than a 51 year old man trying to pass for 43.)

With this in mind though, and knowing that patriotism was rampant throughout the country during this period, it could be well worth it to extend your parameters and search for individuals a bit on either side of the 1872-1900 limits. These records are full of information on the men included and are worth searching for all of your direct ancestors who might be included, as well as all siblings, collateral relatives and associates.

I'll leave you with one last example of what I found in the database. The card for Pietro Vitti, an alien, lists his place of birth as Settefrati, Caserta, Italy. Where it asks "Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support?" He specifies, "wife & 3 children and one third support of mother and father." We also know from the card that he resided lived on Richmond Hill Road in New Canaan, Ct. and was born May 12, 1887. Used in conjunction with other records, these cards can really open some doors in your research. Have fun!

Ancestry.com subscribers can now search the WWI Draft Registration database.

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ITALIAN GENEALOGICAL GROUP

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Time: Saturday, December 9, 2006 - 12:30 PM

Place: Filomena's Restaurant
1034 Hempstead Turnpike
Franklin Square, New York
516-437-4919

Price: $25 Per Person

MENU

Salad
Penne Ala Vodka or Rigatoni Di Pomodoro

Entrees – Select One

Chicken Francese
Chicken Parmigiana
Eggplant Parmigiana
Filet of Sole

Sheet Cake
Coffee, Tea or Espresso
Soda Regular or Diet

Make Checks Payable to "Italian Genealogical Group"

Mail to: Mrs. Barbara Florio
259 North Beech Street
North Massapequa, New York 11758
516-798-1023

Directions: Woodridge Savings Bank Parking Lot
North Side of Hempstead Turnpike,
2 blocks West of New Hyde Park Road

Columbus : Fact vs. Fiction

Tony Sasso

This article is a very brief version of a recent study that was prepared by the Order of The Sons of Italy in America, Commission for Social Justice, 219 E Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002. The study represents a more balanced look at Columbus's life. The entire study is available on line at www.osia.org.

What Columbus Accomplished

HISTORICAL:

Columbus proved that it was possible to safely cross the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus founded the first permanent European settlement in the Western Hemisphere, Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic).

Columbus was the first to open relations between Europe and the Western Hemisphere. His voyages mark the beginning of more than 500 years of cultural, economic and political relations between Europe and the Americas.

The recorded history of the Western Hemisphere begins with Columbus. There was no written history about these vast continents before his arrival in 1492.

NAVIGATIONAL:

Columbus was the first European to realize the full importance of the Atlantic wind pattern called the prevailing Westerlies, which blew steadily west to east. This convinced him it was possible to sail west with the Trade Winds to the New World and return to Europe with the Westerlies.

During his four transatlantic voyages, Columbus chartered the route for what today are the islands of Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, the Lesser Antilles and the coasts of Panama, Honduras and Venezuela.

Columbus' trans-Atlantic route lay the foundation for future navigation in the region. His maps were used by Amerigo Vespucci (after whom the American continent takes its name), whose maps were used by later explorers of South America.

The route across the Atlantic Ocean that Columbus charted in the 15th century is still used by sailors today.

Columbus introduced the principle of compass variation (the variation at any point on the Earth's surface between the direction to magnetic and geographic north) and observed the rotation of the Pole star.

Why We Should Celebrate Columbus Day

Columbus Day recognizes the achievements of a great Renaissance explorer who founded the first permanent European settlement in the New World. The arrival of Columbus in 1492 marks the beginning of recorded history in America and opened relations between the Americas and the rest of the world.

Columbus Day celebrates the beginning of cultural exchange between America and Europe. After Columbus, millions of European immigrants brought their art, music, science, medicine, philosophy and religious principles to America. These contributions have helped shape the United States and include Greek democracy, Roman law, Judeo-Christian ethics and the belief that all men are created equal.

Columbus Day is one of America's oldest holidays. The tradition of observing Columbus Day dates back to the 18th century in this country. It was first celebrated on October 12, 1792, when the New York Society of Tammany honored Columbus on the 300th anniversary of his first voyage.

Columbus Day is a patriotic holiday. In fact, the Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 in honor of the 400th anniversary of his first voyage. That year, President Benjamin Harrison declared Columbus Day a legal holiday.

The United States has long admired Columbus. America has more monuments to Columbus than any nation in the world, according to the

Christopher Columbus Encyclopedia. These include a Columbus statue in Providence, R.I., cast by Frederic Auguste Bertholdi, who created the Statue of Liberty, and one in New York City, created by one of the six Piccirilli brothers who carved the Lincoln Memorial.

The United States has a significant collection of Columbus memorabilia, including his desk, papers, and the cross he used to claim the New World for Spain. These are in the Columbus Chapel in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania.

In 1905, Colorado became the first state to declare Columbus Day a holiday. In 1971, Columbus Day became a federal holiday in all 50 states after Congress passed a law declaring the second Monday in October Columbus Day.

Columbus Day also commemorates the arrival on these shores of more than 5 million Italians beginning 1880. Today, the children and grandchildren of these early Italian Americans constitute the nations fifth largest ethnic group, according to the US Census Bureau.

Christopher Columbus: Biography

1451 Christopher Columbus (Cristoforo Colombo) is born in Genoa to Domenico Colombo and his wife, Susanna Fontanarossa. They were weavers who lived above their small shop. At that time, Genoa was a naval power and independent republic that rivaled Venice and traded with the Orient. In 1453, two years after Columbus' birth, Constantinople fell to the Moslems, cutting off Europe's eastward trade routes to the Orient and making the finding of a westward route imperative.

1465 Columbus takes his first sea voyage at age 14. Later he studies navigation in Greece and mapmaking in Portugal, where he lives for nine years in a colony of Genoese businessmen and shippers. He also travels to Africa, Ireland, England and Iceland.

1479 Columbus marries Felipa Perestrello y Moniz (1479), has a son, Diego, and is widowed (1480). [Later, he has another son, Fernando, with Beatriz Enriquez de Harana, whom he never marries.]

1483 Columbus presents his plan to reach the Orient by sailing west across the Atlantic to the kings of Portugal, England, France and Spain. Only Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella accept his offer, but it takes Columbus six years (1486-1492) to convince them to underwrite his explorations.

1492 On August 3, Columbus sails from Palos, Spain. On October 12 at two o'clock in the morning, land is sighted. It was an island which he names San Salvador (Holy Savior). Deeply religious, Columbus believes one of his missions is to bring Christianity to the New World.

1502 Columbus takes his last voyage across the ocean. He crossed the Atlantic four times in 10 years: 1492, 1493, 1498 and 1502.

On his first voyage he lands on Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which he calls "Hispaniola," where he founds the first permanent European settlement in the Western Hemisphere. On his third voyage, his political enemies bring him back to Spain in chains, but the Queen absolves him of any blame. On his fourth voyage, he was shipwrecked for nearly a year on what is today Jamaica.

1506 Columbus dies in Valladolid, Spain, on May 20 at age 54. He insists on being buried with the chains he wore when he was brought back to Spain, following his third voyage. No one is sure where he is buried. Some scholars believe his remains are in the Lighthouse of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic while others believe they are in Spain in the Cathedral of Seville.

The Census Taker

Author Unknown

It was the first day of census, and all through the land The pollster was ready...a black book in hand He mounted his horse for a long dusty ride His book and some quills were tucked by his side

A long winding ride down a road barely there toward the smell of fresh bread wafting, up through the air. The woman was tired, with lines on her face and wisps of brown hair she tucked back into place.

She gave him some water...as they sat at the table she answered his questions...the best she was able. He asked of her children...Yes, she had quite a few. The oldest was twenty, the youngest not two

She held up a toddler with cheeks round and red. His sister, she whispered, was napping in bed. He noted each person who lived there with pride and she felt the faint stirrings of the wee one inside.

He noted the sex, the color, the age. The marks from the quill soon filled up the page. At the number of children, she nodded her head, and saw her lips quiver for the three that were dead.

The places of birth she "never forgot." Was it Kansas? or Utah? or Oregon...or not? They came from Scotland, of that she was clear, but she wasn't quite sure just how long they'd been here

They spoke of employment, of schooling and such. They could read some and write some... though really not much. When the questions were answered, his job there was done, so he mounted his horse and he rode toward the sun.

We can almost imagine his voice loud and clear, "May God bless you all for another ten years." Now picture a time warp...it's now you and me, as we search for the people on our family tree.

We squint at the census and scroll down so slow, as we search for that entry from long, long ago. Could they only imagine on that long ago day that the entries they made would affect us this way.

If they knew, would they wonder at the yearning we feel and the searching that makes them so increasingly real? We can hear if we listen the words they impart through their blood in our veins and their voice in our heart.

Computer Corner

Surname Searches

Below is a link to search surnames in Campania http://campania.indettaglio.it/eng/motori/cognomi/motore_cognomi_out.html

This one is the same for Basilicata http://basilicata.indettaglio.it/eng/motori/cognomi/motore_cognomi.html

The Italian Padrone System

A report from the June 1, 1882 *New York Times* describes the arrival at Castle Gardens of about 170 Italian workers on the SS Desirade from Marseilles. Two padroni, Pietro and Carlo Baccari Palladino, had paid for the workers' tickets and required them to sign contracts, in which they agreed to pay twenty cents a day for three years. After their arrival, the men were dissatisfied and complained to the Superintendent at Castle Garden.

They were informed that the contracts they had signed in Italy were illegal. They were free to seek employment and keep all of their wages.

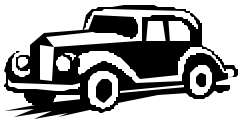
Future Meeting Dates for the Italian Genealogical Group

October 14, and November 11, 2006

All meetings start at 10:30 AM
No December regular meeting, Christmas Party December 9th.

Directions to the Bethpage Library, 50 Powell Ave, Bethpage, NY:

By Train: The Bethpage Library may be reached by taking the Long Island Railroad to the Bethpage Station. You can then walk east one block to Broadway, turn left, go (north) 3 blocks on Broadway; then (at the second traffic light) turn right on Powell Avenue; the Library is about 500 ft on your right.



By Car: Use the Southern State Parkway or the Long Island Expressway. If using the Southern State Parkway take exit 28A and go north on the Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway (Route 135). If using the Long Island Expressway take Exit 44S and go south on the Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway (Route 135). Exit Route 135 at the Powell Avenue Exit. Proceed in a westerly direction towards the village, about 3 blocks. There is ample parking across the street from the Library. Our meeting will be in the downstairs meeting room.