ITALIAN GENEALOGICAL GROUP

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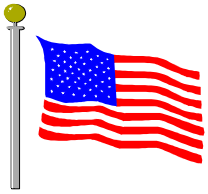
President's Message



"Don't give up though the pace seems slow, you may succeed with another blow,
And many a fellow has turned about, when he might have won had he stuck it out…"
Anonymous. (Now there's a dead end if ever there was one – no one ever to ascertain the author's true identity.) So look over your old collection (something might pop up) and then ask around. If you don't use a computer, find someone who does and arrange to hook up with him or her. Ask different people if they would look over your research and suggest a next step. It is said that we are all "two steps away," in that a person knows a person who knows a person who can help us (of course, the trick is in finding that person). I called the PAO at Annapolis inquiring about a great-grandfather's brother-in-law, and he referred me to the curator of the naval museum, who provided me with a short biography of great-granduncle's time there as a fencing instructor. Ask Google; then explore other search engines as well. Let your imagination lead you to discover how a fact may have been recorded.

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I recently contacted a person on the RAOGK site and he found me two entries in a Denver newspaper which have provided two new leads.

Ask the old and the young: they both have something to contribute. A reference librarian who has been at the library since you were a kid may have a great deal of experience, expertise, and the knowledge to direct you; then ask the new librarian who has grown up on the computer and may know how to more readily find what the veteran has suggested. And speaking of computers, everything is not on the internet yet. More is added every day, so re-research some sites. Knock, and the door may be opened; Ask, and you may receive.

Excelsior,

-Nick Rossi

Computer Corner

More websites from **Anthony DiMarino, Tony Sasso** and **Barbara Florio.**

Anthony Di Marino writes, "I read the front page of the IGG newsletter which mentioned locating famous people in cemeteries. There is a website called <www.findagrave> where there is a vast amount of information on famous and not so famous people. It's a great genealogy site." Anthony also says, "Another local cemetery site is <http://green-wood.com/>, just click on the Greenwood logo at the top left of the page, then click on *Burial Inquiry* at the top middle of page. Then enter your information in the questionnaire."

T*he data banks on Italian emigrants to the United States, Argentina and Brazil*. The site is in Italian, English, Spanish or Portuguese. The US data bank of 200,000 names was created by Ira Glazer of Temple University. The Argentina data bank has over 1 million names of Italians who arrived in Buenos Aries between 1882 and 1920. The Brazil data bank has 27,000 Italian emigrants who arrived in Vitoria between 1858 and 1899. First time visitors should register. It's easy to use. Just put in the surname and arrival date and click *Find*. Go to <http://213.212.128.168/radici/script/radici.dll?start=Visitor&pwd=0&lang=2&res=> The site is busy. Be patient. It works.

Here's a very interesting site for trivia with lots of historical links. Just click on the year you were born and read the news of that year <http://www.infoplease.com/year/1900.html>

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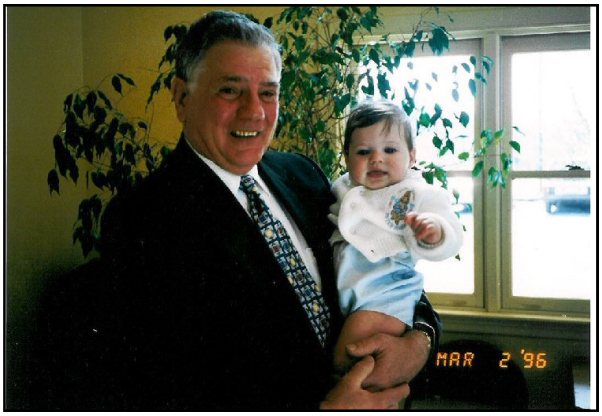
Profiles from the Four Corners

Michael S. Genovese

This month's profile focuses on **John A. Stamato**. John is 81 years young and hails from Crofton, Maryland, and has been a member of IGG since 2005. I interviewed John by way of e-mailing and a telephone conversation. Let John introduce himself.



John Stamato and Grandson Mike

"My father was born in 1889 in Corleto Monforte, the province of Salerno, in the region of Campania and my mother was born in 1906 in Ribera, the province of Agrigento, Sicily. They married in Binghamton, N.Y. in 1924. I was born in 1928 in Johnson City, N.Y. I have a brother Anthony and a sister Teresa. Our family eventually moved to Long Branch, NJ in 1940. In late 1950, I enlisted in the Air Force and served for four years. I finished my tour on June 30, 1954. After the service I applied for employment and accepted a job with the National Security Agency as a Data Systems analyst in 1955. I was single at the time and moved to Laurel, Maryland. After a few months, I began dating Patricia Murphy, who would become my wife. We married in 1961. I finally retired in 1983 and now enjoy our three children and nine grandchildren."

My Genealogical Journey to 1665

In 1996 my wife, Patricia Murphy Stamato and I were visiting my brother Anthony and his wife Gloria, and their nineteen year old daughter, also named Gloria in Long Branch, New Jersey. During lunch, we were discussing family events. My sister-in-law left the table and returned with a diagram of our *Stamato* family tree, which traced the surname and family roots back to about 1890. She told us that they received it a few months earlier at a *"Stamato"* and *"Resciniti"* family reunion in Binghamton, NY. The diagram was a work in progress, but I immediately became interested in pursuing further details about the *Stamato* family ancestry. My niece then showed us e-mails from Mariano Stamato, a possible relative living in Rio de Janiero, Brazil. There were a few *Stamato* names on the diagram of people that lived in Brazil. I quickly decided that I wanted to communicate with Mariano Stamato.

After returning home to Maryland, I went to work to find out more about my family's heritage. I learned that many genealogical records were available at Family History Centers, files. I visited the center many times, and I was able to order microfilmed records from one of our family's town of origin, San Rufo, but there were no microfilmed records available for another family town of origin, Corleto Monforte. I now had to learn enough Italian to translate the data on the microfilmed records.

I also had to find a way to communicate with Mariano Stamato living in Brazil, who spoke Portuguese. We invented the "Stamato Sandwich." I would prepare and write e-mails to Mariano using short sentences in English and then translate it to Portuguese via *Babel Fish* software and sent it as one e-mail to Mariano. It worked well. Mariano and I exchanged e-mails regularly. We still do. In 2001 Mariano invited me to a Stamato Family Reunion in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I attended and had a great time.

Eventually, I also visited Italy four times, in 1997, 2002, 2006 and 2007 to do research. On my last trip to Corleto Monforte in September 2007 I decided to divide my research time into four parts in Salerno Province. Since my entrance and exit would be in the city of Salerno, I would visit the Salerno Provincial Archives on my first and last research days. In between, I would go to the San Rufo Town hall for at least one day. I would spend at least one day in the Corleto Town Hall and four days in the Santa Barbara Church. I contacted

Tom Resciniti, of McMurray, PA to let him know what days I would be in the Roscigno area. Tom has a group of about 20 Rescinitis touring the Roscigno area yearly. I would join them at dinners and for at least one tour. My Aunt Lucia Stamato married Emidio Resciniti in the Santa Barbara Church, Corleto Monforte in 1911.

You should know that I speak broken Italian. I do make myself understood in my research by using the *certificate language* as much as possible. We spoke Italian in our home, but only to my grandmother. All other conversations were in English.

I shall now share some pages of my journal writing with you in order to describe my stay and research in Italy.

A Thursday Morning at the Salerno Archives. I walked about a mile to the Archives and met the keeper of the archives. His name was Carleo. He let me know he was busy and would work me in as he could. I asked for five Stamato family certificates and my father's military papers. It took about 15 minutes. I gave him a quiet tip and let him know that I would return to the archives in about a week. We shook hands and I left. I walked back to the hotel that afternoon. Across the street, I rented a car and was off to Corleto, about an hour and a half drive.

A Friday Morning at the Corleto Town Hall and Santa Barbara Church. I had much success here. I met Roberta Vigorito, who worked with genealogy. On my last visit in 2006, she gave me a desk in the research room and gave me access to all the ledgers up to 1885. She left me alone and went back to work in another area. We were about to go to their research room when a man came out of his office shouting "Privacy Act, Privacy Act". The man explained to Roberta and me that I could not enter the research room. I would have to submit a written request, leave it in the office and pick up the responses in a day or two. I told Roberta I would return the next day with questions. She told me she would talk to the Mayor when he arrived and see what new procedures were in place. I left and went a few hundred yards to the Santa Barbara Church.

As I arrived at the Church, Father Domenico Rossi was parking his car. When I was here in 2006, I had one hour to research the ledgers because Father Rossi had to leave. I managed to take photographs of about 20 Latin records, called *Status Animarum* or "State of the Souls," which are church census records and birth records dating back to about 1850. When my hour was up, Father Rossi told me that on my next trip, he would give me ledgers dating back to about 1650. I thanked him, gave him a donation for the church, and let him know I would be in contact by mail.

A Friday afternoon with Father Rossi. We went into Father Rossi's office and he made a schedule for me. He showed me 17 ledgers that included ledgers of the parishioners of the closed churches of San Giovanni and San Teodoro. I was scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 AM to 4 PM. I told him I would see him in church on Sunday and left.

The next Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday viewing the ledgers. A young lady unlocked and locked the door each day. I completed all my work by Wednesday. I photographed every Latin record with the surname *Stamato.* In addition, I viewed another *Animarum* that went back to 1769. I made a donation to the church after the completion of my research. I found what I had come for. Luck was with me.

Here is an example of the information that I found on a 1769 *Animarum Record. Please note that I added the "birth" and "my notes" fields to clarify the records for me.*

Age	Birth	Name	My Notes
79	1690	Giovanni Ma. Stamato	head of house
39	1733	Filippo Stamato	son of Giovanni
43	1726	Giuseppe Stamato	son of Giovanni
42	1727	Francesca Lombardo	wife of Giuseppe
11	1758	Gennaro Stamato	son of Giuseppe
9	1760	Camila Stamato	daug. of Giuseppe
6	1763	Rosa	daug. of Giuseppe
2	1767	Antonio	son of Giuseppe

I also found the birth and baptism Latin record for Giovanni Maria Stamato. His birth year matched the data found on the *animarum r*ecord. He was born and baptized on 28 Mar, 1690 in Corleto Fasanella (this was the original name of the

town now called Corleto Monforte). His parents were Antonio Stamato and Camilla Stasella. Antonio's birth year was estimated at 1665. I sent a photographed copy of the birth and marriage records as key data to my friend Raimondo Lentini, a genealogist in Ribera, in Agrigento, Sicily. He transcribed them into a more legible formatted Latin and allowed me to do the translations. It worked for me!

Antonio Stamato and Camilla Stasella are earliest heads of family that I have traced so far, bringing the family tree back to 1665.

(I want to thank John A. Stamato for sharing his family story with us and really appreciate the story of his genealogical journey back in time to claim the Stamato roots as far back as 1665. I also want to thank John for reminding us that the Status Animarum is a source often overlooked.)

You may send articles by mail or electronically in WORD format. Send articles by mail to Michael S. Genovese, IGG Membership Profiles, 50 Daisy Avenue, Floral Park, New York, 11001 or e-mail your story as a Word attachment to: mikegino@aol.com)

Garage Sale News

We are still collecting donations for our Scholarship Garage Sale, which will be held on Saturday, May 1st in Lindenhurst, NY. You may bring your donations to the March or April IGG meeting. We ask that all donations be clean and ready for sale since we don't have facilities for washing. At our April meeting, we will have a small Garage Sale Preview. A few, carefully selected items will be on display if you wish to do some early shopping.

Palm Sunday in Italy

Upcoming Events

Continuing with their efforts to save Our Lady of Loreto Church, **Dr. Marilyn Verna** and **Mario Toglia** will make two Power Point presentations this month. The first presentation will be at the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum on Sunday March 7 at 2:00 PM and the second presentation will be at Christ the King High School on Saturday March 27 at 12:00 Noon. The Garibaldi-Meucci Museum is located at 420 Tompkins Avenue, Staten Island and Christ the King High School is on Metropolitan Avenue, Queens.

The title of the discussion is *Laying Claim to a Monument Dedicated to Italian American History: Our Lady of Loreto Church*.

Tony Lauriano will be presenting his *Writing the Family Story* lectures at the Nanuet High Scholl Adult Program and the New City Library.

The Nanuet lectures will be held on March 8, 15, 16, and 22, starting at 7:00 PM and will include all four lectures of his series. The New City lecture will be held on March 23, also starting at 7:00 PM and will cover Beginning lecture # 1 only.

On Saturday March 13, at our regular IGG meeting, our speaker will be Debra Braverman.

Do you need 1890 census information. We know that most of the 1890 Census is not available. What do you do? Come to the Italian Genealogy Group on March 13, 2010 at the Bethpage Library and hear our speaker Debra Braverman explain what you can use in place of this document.

On Saturday, April 24th, at 2:00 PM (**Note the Time**) at the **Westchester Chapter,** Toni McKeen will present the program *Acquiring Italian Records*. Ms. McKeen will discuss the Italian system of record keeping including what the various documents can look like, the information they may contain, and four of the ways to obtain them. The Westchester Italian Cultural Center, is located in Tuckahoe, NY. For directions go to: http://www.wiccny.org/contact-us#directions

The program is free but you must register. (914) 771-8700 or programs@wiccny.org

February Meeting: Putting Flesh on the Bones of Your Ancestors

Toni McKeen says "You have gathered the data. Now learn how to make the information come alive. Learn how to assemble a book about your relatives." Using an **Outline** and a Power Point presentation, Toni was able to take us through the steps to develop a book about our ancestors.

Toni McKeen

Toni's theory is to **Keep in Mind** that the book does not have to be perfect. It's not going to be published. It's not a contest . The book can be as long as you want. Toni's motto is, " KISS - Keep It Simple and Short." Most of all, she says to get personal. "Write yourself into the book and keep each topic no longer than one page." She makes it look easy.

Toni started her lecture by breaking the book down to a **List of Topics**: Birth and Early Childhood, Young Adult, Marriage, Honeymoon, Military Career, New Parents, Personality, Work and Death

For each book, she made a decorated **Cover**, which included a photo of the family member. She recommends a separate book for each family member. The **Dedication** of the book should include your memories of the subject of the book. The book can be dedicated to your children or grandchildren, your spouse or to the people who helped you. The **Introduction** explains the reasons for the book and should tell how you were inspired by the subject. Be sure to include the date and your signature.

The **Body** of the book should include documents, photos, and a story.

Documents (Census Forms, Passenger Lists) should be highlighted to make them easy to read. In some cases, Toni had to retype the information in text boxes displayed below the document. Again she emphasizes "…keep the information on one page." Scan **Photos** of the people, houses, churches, schools, work places, towns, headstones, etc., and add text boxes. Always indicate the names of the people, the locations and dates. Take any **Story** about the subject that you heard over your lifetime and add them to the book. Use any scraps of information.

Geography: Google the maps, go to the Comune web sites and indicate on the maps the locations you are referring to. Cut and paste the information on to your pages.

Include some of the events of the **History** of the period. The sources are Google, old newspapers, history web sites, almanacs, popular songs, famous people, etc. Toni made artistic tabulation **Charts** indicating ancestors, descendents, siblings, children and residences. Remember keep the story to one person.

Include general and local **Maps**, and indicate specific locations on the maps. Highlight the major events that occurred in this person's life in chronological order on a **Timeline**.

An **Epilogue** should tell about why you wrote this book, how you felt writing this book and what you learned. Describe the process, including your trips to gather the information. Round out the subject's personality and interview other family members.

While writing, fill in the blanks; "I believe," "maybe," "common for the time," "my best research indicates," "family story is." Interview others. Again put yourself into the book.

In **Finishing** the book, select an antique lettering font and size, and be consistent with it through the book. For appearance sake, pick special paper with a border and save the pages in archival covers that can be inserted into a loose leaf book. Add a cover with a photo.

At the end of the presentation the audience showed lots of interest, and Toni answered many questions. A few people said that they plan on writing their own book.

2010 Census

Be Cautious About Giving Info to Census Workers

Susan Johnson

With the US Census process beginning, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) advises people to be cooperative, but cautious, so as not to become a victim of fraud or identity theft. The first phase of the 2010 US. Census is under way as workers have begun verifying the addresses of households across the country. Eventually, more than 140,000 US Census workers will count every person in the United States and will gather information about every person living at each address including name, age, gender, race, and other relevant data.

The big question is - how do you tell the difference between a US Census worker and a con artist? BBB offers the following advice:

If a US Census worker knocks on your door, he or she will have a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag, and a confidentiality notice. Ask to see identification and badge before answering questions. However, you should never invite anyone you don't know into your home.

Census workers are currently only knocking on doors to verify address information.

Do not give your Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone, even if they claim they need it for the US Census.

Remember, no matter what they ask, you really only need to tell them how many people live at your address.

While the Census Bureau might ask for basic financial information, such as a salary range, **you don't have to answer anything at all about your financial situation.**

The Census Bureau will not ask for Social Security, bank account, or credit card numbers, nor will employees solicit donations. Any one asking for that information is NOT with the Census Bureau.

And remember, the census bureau has decided not to work with Acorn on gathering this information. No Acorn worker should approach you saying he/she is with the Census Bureau.

Eventually, Census workers may contact you by telephone, mail, or in person at home. However, the Census Bureau will not contact you by Email, so be on the lookout for Email scams impersonating the Census.

Never click on a link or open any attachments in an Email that are supposedly from the US Census Bureau.

Please share this info with family and friends.

WWI Draft Board Location

Kathleen Scarlett O'Hara

I've found the italiangen.org website to be INCREDIBLY helpful to my genealogical research over the past few years. I wanted to thank you, and to share with you something that I hope will be a resource for other researchers. In searching for my great-grandfather's WWI Draft Registration Card, I used the information from your archived newsletter article "WWI Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918" to map the locations so I could best approximate which one my great-grandfather would have registered with. The map is a public Google map, and I thought that you might be interested in seeing it. I think it could be useful to others researching Brooklyn ancestors, if you'd like to link to it on your site. It's available on Google maps at: http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117813914027713096212.00047c4ddfe6b3aa755b7&z=12

Thank you so much for your website!

Photos of Inwood Families

Millicent Vollono is a librarian at the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Library working on a book on the Five Towns for Arcadia Press. If any of IGG members have photographs of family in Inwood, parades (San Cono or others), etc. I would love to hear from them as soon as possible. Many thanks.

(Phone: 516-223-0838, e-mail: mvollono@hwpl.org)

A Tourist Journey
Sicily's Semitic Side

When Barbara Aiello made her first visit to her parents' home regions of southern Italy, she was amazed to discover that her Sicilian relatives customarily avoided eating dairy and meat together, and discarded any eggs with a hint of blood. "Things I considered family tradition or superstition were actually Jewish traditions," she said. "

But in an overwhelmingly Catholic region where Jewish families had undergone forced conversions during inquisitions, Jewish practices had become assimilated into Italian habit.

"I have a priest and two nuns in my own Marrano family," said Aiello, a Reform rabbi, using the term for Jews of the Sephardic diaspora, many of whom fled the Iberian inquisitions and settled amid the lemon groves and arid Mediterranean cliffs of Sicily.

That decades ago visit sparked Aiello's fascination with Southern Italian Jewish ancestry. In turn, her research spawned a career built around introducing the Italian-Jewish diaspora to its heritage. Aiello is Italy's first Reform and first female rabbi; she leads a congregation in the Calabria region that is a headquarters for non-Orthodox Southern Italian Jews, and conducts frequent tours of the region for foreign visitors.

Aiello is a frequent collaborator with Amalfi Life, a Brooklyn-based tour company that specializes in Southern Italy and Italian Jewish culture. Amalfi Life's popular Jewish heritage tours combine typically Italian pleasures - stunning landscapes, historic towns and mouthwatering food - with the research and insights of Aiello and other scholars who have begun uncovering the deep Jewish roots in this most Catholic country.

For Jewish visitors, there is much to discover. Of the 26 million Italian- Americans living in the U.S., she notes, about 80 percent trace their ancestry to these two regions. Many of these vowel laden folk either have Jewish ancestry or are married to Jews. Rabbi Aiello notes that new scholarship puts the pre-Inquisition presence in Southern Italy at 50 percent of the population or more. "So the chances are greater than not that an Italian-American will have Jewish roots," she noted. "You always hear about Italians and Jews being a popular combination, but the demographics really bear that out."

But since most Italian- and Jewish-Americans do not speak Italian and most Italians do not speak English, the language barrier has posed a significant obstacle for travelers seeking their roots. This is where an organized tour comes in handy. For clients of Amalfi Life tours, Rabbi Aiello can even trace the roots of Jewish surnames, uncovering fascinating tidbits of history in the process.

For instance, Aiutomicristo -- literally, "Help me, Christ" -- is a common Italian-Jewish surname borne by conversos, or Jews forced to convert to Catholicism. That seems contrary to logic, but it makes perfect sense: conversos sought the most Christian name possible, aggressively asserting their religious bona fides in order to save their proverbial skin.

Today's postwar Jewish population in southern Italy is small and somewhat scattered; Rabbi Aiello notes that Jews are not organized into a cohesive community in the American sense. Earlier this decade, Rabbi Aiello said, she inaugurated the first new synagogue in Calabria in 500 years, Ner Tamid del Sud, with a membership that stretches from Naples to Sicily. She also directs its affiliate organization, the Italian Jewish Cultural Center of Calabria, which helps Italian Jews to trace their roots. As the first non-Orthodox and female rabbi in this religiously doctrinaire country, "there isn't a rabbi in Italy that will work with me," she declared.

But she has had great success in assembling local Italian Jews for holiday events, including her annual Passover seder.

. In Palermo, as many as 30 locals have attended the seders alongside touring guests from the U.S. and abroad. A Sicilian tradition, carried on by· Rabbi Aiello and Amalfi Life travelers, is a seder held on the fifth night of Passover. "Historically, the Christians organized it to protect Jews who were under scrutiny during the Inquisition," explained the rabbi. "It was held to confound the Inquisitors," who would have been alert for seder activity on the first or second nights.

Amalfi Life's upcoming Jewish heritage tour begins in Sicily, moves on to Calabria – the "toe" of Italy's boot- and finishes in Rome, for a total of eight nights and:2000 years of history, according to Amalfi Life Director Laurie Howell. Leading the

tour will be Rabbi Aiello in Sicily and Calabria and Laura Supino, a Roman-Jewish scholar, in Rome. Food on the trip is not kosher, but kosher-style as the region allows: vegetarian pastas, kosher fish and the like.

The adventure begins in Ortigia, an island area of the city of Siracusa in Sicily with a historic Jewish quarter. "Sicily was a part of Greater Greece in the time of Pythagorus," observed Rabbi Aiello. "There's tremendous cultural heritage, archaeology. When you couple that with' the Jewish heritage, it comes as a surprise to many people." A Catholic church in Palermo's Jewish quarter is typical of this semi-hidden past: its former incarnations, as a synagogue and then a mosque are evident in the Semitic inscriptions still visible on its walls .

In Siracusa, a highlight is the oldest extant mikveh in Western Europe; it was built around the sixth century and in use for 1,000 years until Jews were expelled from the city in the 1500s. "It was underground, hidden, and now the Jewish community has purchased it," said Rabbi Aiello, adding that the mikveh has been restored and is open for public touring.

Taormina, where the rabbi's mother's family is from, is one of Sicily's premier resort towns. In Catania, Amalfi Life travelers tour the city with a local guide who represents the local Jewish community.

Once on the mainland, Rabbi Aiello leads visitors to Reggio di Calabria and Bova Marina, where local archaeologists explain the importance of a fourth-century synagogue site and an Archaeological Museum contains artifacts from ancient Hebrew settlers. History is balanced with a two-night retreat and a Shabbat service in the rural village of Serrastretta, where Rabbi Aiello lives and works.

Other highlights include a visit to one of Italy's largest World War II concentration camps, located in the Calabrian countryside. Unlike its northern counterparts, this was not a camp for extermination, but for labor: about 4,000 Jews from across Southeastern Europe were interred to work, in modest structures that now house a museum.

In Rome, tourists spend two days with Supino visiting the Great Synagogue, the Museo Ebraico and the former ghetto. An excursion out of town winds down the trip in Appia Pignatelli, with a private visit to the Hebrew Catacombs, and finally the first-century ruins of the synagogue at Ostia Antica, a prominent archeological site.

"We are the true people of the book, always learning," observed Rabbi Aiello. "And this is the Italy that nobody knows."

You can reach Amalfi Life at www.amalfilife.com or by calling Laurie Howell at (347) 240-1244.

IGG to Award $1000 Scholarship

Open to High School Seniors of Italian Descent

Requirements for consideration of your application: You must be studying Italian in school. If your school does not offer Italian, you must attach a letter on school letterhead from a guidance counselor or administrator stating that fact.

You must submit an original, grammatically correct, typed (double-spaced, 12 font) essay of 500 (minimum) to 750 (maximum) words showing evidence of Italian family history research. With your essay, you must submit a family tree of four generations (including yourself) displaying your Italian ancestry.

Your application must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation on school letterhead from your Italian teacher (or, if Italian is not offered, your principal or counselor) attesting to your character and scholarship.

Completed applications, essays, and family trees must be mailed to :

IGG Scholarship Committee
11 Quincy Place
West Islip, NY 11795

Applications must be received by Friday, April 30, 2010.

Application is available at our website, www.italiangen.org. Hit the SCHOLARSHIP button. If you do not have internet access, contact Angela LaGiglia (631-587-5377) to request an application by mail. The Scholarship Committee will review all applications and select the final winner by June 1, 2010. Winner's name and school will be announced at our website. Winner's essay will be published in our newsletter.

Farewell To Italy

Michael Pantaello

Setting out for the US of America:
Naples, November 11,1922

An excerpt of 'Biographical Dairy" The last immigrant of the Quota, 25 November, 1922. Translated by Marie Pantaello

On November 13, 1922, while passing through the Straits of Gibraltar *(Stritto di Gibilterra),* it occurred to me that it was my 28th birthday. I have never forgotten it -- what a wonderful event! We had a good voyage until we met with the Gulf Stream. Here a raging storm sprang up; for more than 24 hours, we remained under covers. The noise of the crashing ocean waves gave the impression that the ship was about to go to pieces. Our arrival was the 25th of November, and since it was Thanksgiving Day *(la Festa del Ringraziemento),* we had to remain on board until the next day. The weather was severe, cold, with a cutting wind. To go on deck, I had to wrap myself in a blanket in order to see the famous elevated train (the "L") that passed not too far from the landing place. We could distinguish the people who were responding to our greeting -- handkerchiefs waving from both sides.

Waiting for disembarkation was long; twenty-four hours seemed like an eternity. On the faces you could read impatience and nervousness. I was too, but I had to remain calm; but I had a premonition: my conscience was rebelling -- but I said to myself: "I have nothing to worry about; all that remains is the will to face the situation with sincerity and courage."

The time to go ashore arrived and began at 9:00 a.m. In orderly lines, the ferry boat was ready to take us to Ellis Island *(Isla della Lacrime* -- Island of Tears) with a well organized system, *alla Americana.* Without confusion, we disembarked and were conducted into a huge hall for our medical examination; then into another hall for customs to search and release our luggage. My brother-in-law, Nino Pisani, and I were standing near one another. There was a bit of confusion and disorder due to a mountain of boxes and luggage. After finding ours and having them inspected, the only thing that remained was to be transported on the ferry boat and landing in this great metropolis of New York:

For Nino, it was easy, and he made his way toward the exit… not I, because I had to find the case with the lottery tickets. I told Nino to go ahead and to wait for me outside and not to leave until I had finished. After finding the case, I approached the inspector to tell him I had a case for inspection. He asked what did it contain as he lifted it and found it so heavy.

"They are tickets for the Italian National Lottery to benefit" the children of the soldiers who died in the war."

The case was opened and upon seeing the mass of tickets that looked like money, he was astounded -- 100 *mila!* The agent was Italian and he spoke in our language. He was surprised at how I could have taken on such an enterprise. Then I opened up my briefcase to show him all the documents received from Rome from the VIPs involved in this charitable benefit, but he was not convinced.

"Anyway," he said, "I'll do the best I can to convince my superiors that this has been a mistake and to take the case in good faith and rid you of this predicament, which is not so easy. *La Via Crucis* (the way of the cross) began from one office to another--verification of all the documents and letters of recommendation to persons known in New York. Since they were written in Italian and someone had to translate them into English, it created a big job. Thus, many hours passed. In one of these offices, there was an inspector who spoke to me in Italian:

"Is it possible that in Italy they do not know that the Lottery in America is forbidden?" He continued: "Ignorance of the law is no excuse."

I kept quiet. I did not want to risk answering. Leaving the office, I was hungry and thirsty and I was a bit dizzy. Evening was upon us. I sat patiently in a hall, awaiting the verdict. The offices were starting to close and I was the only immigrant who was awaiting liberty. After this long wait, the agent arrived with a happy smile, and said,

"You have been fortunate. This is the receipt for the case, which remains here; for the moment you are free. I will accompany you to the ferry boat and we will do the crossing together."

I put my feet on *terrafirma* of this great metropolis of New York with a big sigh. The agent

told me that an inquiry would be made through the Italian Consulate with the Embassy in Washington, D.C. and at their request you will be called to find out the results of these inquiries. I thanked the Agent, who shook my hand and wished me good luck.

It was already night; my brother-in-law had been waiting and had been worried, but being together took care of everything. There are always means of transportation in New York. A limousine -- a large automobile for passengers -- was waiting to be filled and with the two of us, it became filled. It took off to the various destinations of the passengers. We drove for hours around the great city. The last stop was at 1318 - 64th Street, Brooklyn, New York, residence of the brothers Antonio and Luigi Sofo, who could not understand what caused our delay. We were very tired. I asked the driver the cost of the trip. To make us understand, knowing that we were new immigrants, he opened his two hands, then one and three fingers -- the fare was $18.00 each! I said to Nino,

"This one thinks we are stupid; stay and watch the luggage!" I hurried into the house of our friends and without taking time, I said, "Who speaks English?"

"What has happened?" asked Don Peppino Yetto, the brother-in-law of Luigi Sofo, and a security agent. He quickly came down with me, tried to take care of the matter but could not. He got into his auto and five minutes later, arrived with a policeman. After the policeman found out the exorbitant amount for the fare, he berated the driver a bit, then said to us:

"Give him three dollars each and not a cent more." The driver protested and left, cursing. It had been a good lesson for the driver and for us -- beginning of an event, to be aware of crooks.

Our friends laughed shamelessly at our unfortunate incident. A nice warm supper was ready, but we were tired and preferred to go to bed. But they insisted. It was after midnight, so we quickly devoured a few mouthfuls, and some good wine and we went to sleep. The bed had been made ready and soon we were sound asleep.

The Names of the Dead

Avella, Italy

Eleanor M. Imperato

Dusty registers with a whiff of mold
Sit abandoned on sturdy metal shelves.
In disarray they stand, they lean, they crowd
In tall precarious piles: buried secrets
Discolored by the touch of time.

Sifting the pages for ancestors long
Forgotten, my eyes scan unfamiliar
Scripts, round flourishes, a river of words
That flows densely on the page. I become
Witness as scenes unfold under my gaze.

The clerk dips pen to ink, grates the black nib
Into the rough texture of his paper.
He writes the names of the dead, of newborns
Of burials, of matrimonial vows.
I see generations come to life.

Two shy young peasants on their wedding day
Murmur their names, ages, parentage and
Parish, shuffle their feet as the word "fee"
Hangs in the air. The pen scribbles "fee waived
Because they're poor." The bride casts down her eyes.

The tradesman comes, cradling his newborn
Relatives, friends crowd around him, smiling
As he bestows upon his son grandfather's name.
Ancestors' names recur throughout the years
Until wars, famines decimate the line.

Uncles, brothers, cousins, teary-eyed with
Handkerchiefs in hand, declare their loss:
Name, age, spouse, parentage and parish
In voices as strong and clear as they can muster
The names of the dead, and they are all dead

Future Meeting Dates for the Italian Genealogical Group

March 13, and April 10, and May 8, 2010

All meetings start at 10:30 AM

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.