

Navigating the Italian State Archives & The Portale Antenati

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Overview of Italian history and Civil Records

- Italy did not exist until the 1860s
- Prior to that, the Italian peninsula was comprised of a myriad of city-states and small kingdoms
- Southern Italy was known as *The Kingdom of Naples and Sicily*, and was governed usually by either the French or the Spanish up through the 19th century
- In 1799, Napoleon captured Naples, and proclaimed the kingdom for France
- Napoleon was instrumental for instituting a number of reforms in Italy and all across Europe, including starting the process of Civil Registration
- Civil Registration Begins in 1806-09 for the Italian mainland
- Civil Registration Begins in 1820 for Sicily
- Northern Italy ceases civil registration after Napoleon is exiled in 1815 and leaves record-keeping to the churches
- Resumes around 1871, after unification
- The *Kingdom of the Two Sicilies* maintains its registration through the present day
- Two copies of all civil records were to be maintained
- One copy stayed in the comune
- One copy went to the provincial government
- (Usually) records from before 1865 went to the State Archives
- (Usually) records from after 1866 went to the Local Courts
- 19th century Italian clerks were not always very good at following procedures
- The LDS Church has filmed records from some of the State Archives, some of the Courthouses, and some of the Town Halls
- Each records custodian has different copyright restrictions
- Many records are on FamilySearch
- Some images must be viewed in a family history center and some need an LDS login
- Other images are free to the public to view
- Some images were mistakenly made available to the general public and were later restricted
- The Italian State Archives signed a new agreement with the LDS Church to digitize their civil registration images held in all ~100 archives
- These primarily consist of records from the period 1809-1865

- Images are being loaded onto FamilySearch and the website of the Italian State Archives (the Portal)
- Some images that are restricted on FamilySearch can be viewed from home on the Portal
- The Portal is why we are here today!

Getting to Images on the Portal

- “Regions & Sources OR “Il territorio e le fonti”
- Click region, and then province
- “Browse”
- Choose town
- Choose event type
- Choose year
- These images are often scanned microfilm reels
- Navigating from image to image is done in the same way one would do so on FamilySearch
- Sometimes FamilySearch works faster than the portal
- Sometimes the portal works faster than FamilySearch
- Sometimes agreements necessitate the use of one platform or the other
- Sometimes the images are available in both places

If Images aren't on the Portal

- Towns **MAY** respond to email requests
- Use FamilySearch letter-writing templates
- Request only one or two documents at a time
- Try to provide as much information as possible
- Include photo Identification
- Let them know you're an American
- They often will waive fees for international applicants
- Responses may vary
- Sign up for a PEC: a certified Email address
- State Archives **WILL** respond to emails. They are obliged by law
- Use address provided on the portal
- Make sure the archive has the document in question

Closing Thoughts

- Patience is key
- Answers may take months
- Records will go online
- The Portal won't always be down for maintenance
- Indexing projects will continue
- Italy's Government won't collapse in the immediate future
- You will find them one day