

# ITALIAN

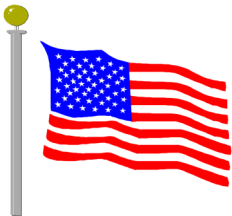
GENEALOGICAL GROUP

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November, 2022

## Remembering Sal Serio (1934-2022)



On a work trip in 2017, I found myself with some free time in New Orleans. Although there are many ways one might enjoy their time in the Big Easy, I had heard about the American Italian Cultural Center & Museum and wanted to pay it a visit. If you're ever in the area, I'd strongly encourage you to do the same; the Museum offers an inspiring collection of displays spotlighting the contributions, hardships, and successes of Americans of Italian descent.

During my last day in town I made plans to visit the American Italian Research Library, under the same auspices but housed within the East Bank Regional Library in Metairie (conveniently on my way to the airport). I was expecting, perhaps, a bookshelf of Italian-themed books, but instead found an astounding collection, taking up a whole floor of the library. I was warmly greeted by its longtime curator and resident expert, Sal Serio.

When I mentioned that I was an IGG Board Member, Sal proudly showed me the shelf housing a semi-complete run of our Newsletter. He immediately asked for my help in securing the issues they were missing, and I was happy to oblige his request. The rich Italian-American history of New Orleans (and beyond) is well preserved within this library's walls: oral histories, photographs, records of societies, and countless other priceless artifacts.

Sal passed away earlier this year, at the age of 87. As his greatest passions were preserving our heritage, and helping others discover their roots,

I thought it was only fitting to remember him on the cover of our Newsletter. And, if your ancestors happened to spend time in New Orleans or nearby, then I do hope you can pay a visit to the Museum and Library, and make use of the rich collections to which he contributed so much.

Cordiali Saluti,  
Michael Cassara, President



Sal Serio and Michael Cassara in 2017

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## Meeting News

The next meeting will take place on Saturday, November 12 at 11:00 (Eastern). The featured speaker will be **Paul Woodbury** who will present “**Genetic Genealogy in Context: Italy**”. This meeting will be in a hybrid format both in person at the Bethpage Library and on Zoom. The meeting will be open to members and non-members. To register, go to the Meetings & Events section of the IGG website.

The following meeting will be on Saturday, December 10 and will feature a special holiday celebration. For further information, go to the Meetings & Events section of the IGG website.



### Our Mission Statement

The Italian Genealogical Group (est. 1993) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to encouraging an interest in genealogy and educating our members and the general public about Italian genealogy, research, and culture. We assist in preserving, indexing and computerizing historical records, making them available to all members of the genealogical community.

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#### *Annual Membership:*

*Individual \$25 per year (online/website access, PDF newsletter)*  
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Newsletter is published 10 times a year.  
Meetings are held the 2nd Saturday of each month,  
September to June at 10:30 AM

## Book Review

Richard Graziano Ed.D.

I am seventy-five years old. I have a doctoral degree and two master's degrees. I've literally read thousands of books in my life. Quite simply, *The Guarded Gate* by **Daniel Okrent** is one of the most important I have ever read. Subtitled, "Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law that Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and Other European Immigrants Out of America," it tells the story of blatant, virulent anti-Semitism and racism directed at southern and eastern Europeans, the eugenics movement that gave a scientific patina to that thinking and how the marriage of the two led to the National Origins Act of 1924, which resulted in the reduction of immigration from Italy through 1965.

Until the 1890s, most immigration to the United States came from northern Europe and the British Isles. While there was certainly backlash against German and Irish immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, those people either spoke English or were of related ethnic backgrounds and, though they surely experienced discrimination, they were never viewed as an existential threat and were eventually accepted into American society. However, the nature of immigration changed when large numbers of Italians, Poles, Slovaks, Greeks, etc. began showing up on American shores. These people were different. They looked different. They dressed differently. They spoke different languages. They worshipped differently. They were poor and uneducated, often illiterate. The upper crust of American society was horrified. They believed that such people would degrade "American blood." These immigrants and their descendants would mean the end of American society as then constituted. They could never become "real" Americans. This new immigration needed to be restricted. An Immigration Restriction League (IRL) was formed in 1896 to achieve that goal.

At the same time, the eugenics movement was developing in Europe and would soon jump to this side of the Atlantic. "Eugenics" means "good birth." At its start, derived as a perversion of the work of Darwin, eugenics first appeared in England from gentleman "scientist" Francis Galton, who believed that a better society could be created if the best people married and had children with the best people. In one of his books, he stated, "Let us do what we can to encourage the multiplication of the races best suited to invent and conform to a high and generous civilization." Great people were "born, not made," so the only thing that really counted was breeding. Lived experience, privilege, or privation mattered little. Humans, like peas in Gregor Mendel's study or horses that were bred for speed or strength, could be "improved" through selective breeding. It wouldn't be long before a negative corollary was developed. If marrying two "superior" beings resulted in a better stock, wasn't it reasonable to think that the reverse was also true? Thus, negative eugenics was born. The "scientists" who believed in it looked for or made up the evidence to prove it.

This idea soon found acceptance in the United States within leading universities and scientific organizations such as the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory and the American Museum of Natural History. Influenced by upper-level society members who already harbored some unsavory beliefs about the newcomers to society, the theory deemed new immigrants as "inferior." Prescott Hall, a leading IRL member asked, "Shall we permit these inferior races to dilute the thrifty Yankee blood . . . of the earlier immigrants" (p. 56)? Clearly, the expected answer was, "No!" A poem written by Thomas Bailey Aldrich as a protest against America's becoming "a cesspool of Europe" asked,

*Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,  
And through them presses a wild motley throng . . .  
Flying Old World's poverty and scorn . . .  
Accents of menace alien to our air . . .  
O Liberty, white Goddess! Is it well  
To leave the gates unguarded? . . . (p.64).*

Once again, the expected answer was most definitely, "No!" Make no mistake, while Jews were seen as the absolute bottom of the desirability scale, Italians were a major part of the "wild motley throng." Edward A. Ross, a leading sociologist, who taught at both Stanford and the University of Nebraska, stated, "William does

not leave as many children as Tonio because he will not huddle his family into one room, eat macaroni off a bare board, work his wife barefoot in the field, and keep his children weeding onions instead of at school” (p. 92). He also said, “That the Mediterranean people are morally below the races of northern Europe is as certain as any social fact” (p. 188). Getting angry yet? How about these? Secretary of State, Elihu Root compared immigration from southern Europe to “barbarian invasions” (p. 98) while David Star Jordan, President of Stanford University, stated, “There is not one in a thousand from Naples or Sicily that is not a burden on America” (p. 99). A *Washington Post* editorial writer said that Italians “were coming to America to cut throats, throw dynamite, and conduct labor riots and assassinations” (p. 99). In an interview, *Saturday Evening Post* immigration writer, Kenneth Roberts, stated “It is the very slime of Southeastern Europe that is clamoring to get over here, the scum of the world, vermin-ridden and useless” (p. 293). There are many such quotes in this book.

I said this was an important book, and it is for anyone who wants to understand the history of immigration and what led to the discriminatory legislation that barred most Italian entry for forty years. I didn’t say it was an easy read for two reasons. First, the author spends many pages explaining the development of eugenics and the immigration process, and one can get “lost in the weeds.” More importantly, however, I could only read it in short spurts. Every time I read one of these anti-Italian or anti-Semitic quotes that had been uttered quite openly, I became angry and had to close the book. These sentiments were aimed at my grandparents and your grandparents. The qualities of these individuals did not matter; they were lumped together in a bigoted exercise that would impact millions. This is a difficult story that needed to be told, and needs to be read, by us, their descendants.

The IRL and its bedfellows acted to limit the immigration of those they had deemed “inferior.” In the 1890s, first attempts to limit European immigration came in the form of a literacy test. Championed by Henry Cabot Lodge, senator from Massachusetts, the literacy test was introduced in consecutive sessions of Congress. The bills were vetoed by Presidents Cleveland, Taft and Wilson (twice) before it passed over Wilson’s veto in 1917. This law was never about literacy, however. Soon after their success in the passage of the literacy requirement, IRL members worried that improved education in places like Italy would prepare immigrants to pass the test and be admitted, so they turned to race as the deciding factor in determining eligibility and urged Congress to take further action to limit immigration. The pseudo-science of eugenics would provide the litmus test. Madison Grant would marry the two into a rationale for exclusion.

Grant was an anthropologist, zoologist and conservationist who was well known to presidents and those in influential positions in society. In his book *The Passing of the Great Race* (published by Charles Scribner’s Sons, which became the go-to publisher for all things eugenic), he categorized people into races. In Europe, he defined these as Nordics from Northern Europe who “dominated the other races, by right” (p. 211), Alpines and Mediterraneans, with the latter being the lowest. “In historian John Higham’s phrase, Grant was ‘the man who put the pieces together,’ The pieces being eugenics and xenophobia; the result was scientific racism as a political creed” (p. 209). His ideas had a direct influence on the passage of the literacy test. He declared, “As soon as the ‘facts’ of ethnic differences were appreciated by lawmakers, a readjustment of law based on racial values was inevitable” (p. 219). His concepts would go on to impact the 1921 and 1924 laws.

According to an IRL document, what was needed was a bill that would “counteract the spread of elementary education in the countries of Europe and western Asia and would cap immigration from every country at a fixed percentage of people from those nations already in the United States” (p. 229). This was the exact formula enacted in the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921. The “emergency” according to Congressman Albert Johnson was that after the Great War, “fleets of ships streaming across the Atlantic with immigrants hanging over their edges and steerage passengers fed from a trough like swine” were soon to overwhelm the country. An editorial in *The New York Times* stated restriction was needed to stem the tide of “swarms of aliens who were bringing diseases of ignorance and Bolshevism along with their loathsome diseases of the flesh” (p. 284). The law which passed in the Senate by a vote of 78-1 (with 17 abstentions) and by acclamation in the House, placed an annual ceiling on immigration and established a quota for each country in Europe set at three percent of the number of people from that nation who were in the United States in the 1910 Census. That would cut immigration from Italy to 42,057, a reduction of eighty-two percent!

The 1921 law was a temporary measure to be replaced by a permanent solution to the immigration “problem.” The Johnson-Reed National Origins Act of 1924 was the remedy. A ceiling of 155,000 was placed on overall immigration. Quotas would remain, but the formula was changed. The quota assigned to a country would be based on just two percent of the number of people from that country who were in the U.S. in the 1890 Census. The choice of that census, as opposed to 1920 or 1910, was purposeful. Since most southern and eastern European immigration did not begin until after 1890, the number upon which quotas would be based was extremely low. The result was that Italian immigration was set at just over four thousand! (Remember, immigrants from Italy during the first decades of the twentieth century averaged over 200,000 per year.) The IRL and other restrictionists lobbied heavily for the bill, which passed overwhelmingly. With slight modifications, this law remained in effect until 1965. Immigration would henceforth be based, not on who people were, but where they came from (p. 278).

The results were catastrophic. Millions who wanted to come were barred. Jews trying to flee the Nazi onslaught were prevented from emigrating and were murdered in the camps. Those wanting to flee political unrest, violence, war or extreme poverty were condemned to endure in place and would often die.

This book is a must-read for all Italian Americans. To understand the America in which my mother, born in 1917, grew up, the book provides context. To understand the discrimination faced by our ancestors who did arrive, it gives us a feel for the attitudes they faced. To “get” the reluctance of children of immigrants who spoke Italian to teach it to their children, the book reveals a rationale for their thinking. While the author makes no mention of the current debate over immigration in this country, there are direct parallels to be realized. The countries of origin of the immigrants have changed, but the rhetoric is eerily similar.

I have written in the newsletter about eugenics and its role in restricting immigration, but I never imagined the depth of distain and prejudice that was openly displayed by its supporters. The language used by those who wanted to keep us out is stark and upsetting. The display of hatred is raw. Thanks to Daniel Okrent, I now understand the bigger picture.

## Notes About Downloading Records from *Antenati*

Several readers submitted responses about making legible copies from *Antenati*.

From **Joan Lozier**:

The following statement appeared on the *Antenati* site: “It will be possible in the future, to register and access a user area of the Portal where you will be able to download images. The availability of the user area and all instructions for accessing and using it will be indicated on the Portal.”

So, maybe they will fix this problem in the future. When? How easy will it be to use? We’ll see!

From **JoAnne Holmes**:

Regarding the article on downloading records on *Antenati*, there is a blog called *Fortify Your Family Tree* by DiAnn Iamarino that offered another way to download high resolution copies. It was a little slow going and first but now that I’ve tried it a while it goes a lot quicker and is far better than snipping.

Her article is at: <https://family-tree-advice.blogspot.com/2022/01/antenati-tips.html>

Scroll way down to the section that says “This section is all new as of 31 May 2022” for the updated way to download documents.

From **Jim Spero**:

I found a different work around that allows you to download the actual hi-def file from *Antenati* that I’ve been using this successfully for most of the summer.

1. Copy the last 7 characters (not the slash) of the URL for the page to save.
2. In a new window, enter the following web address – <https://iiif-antenati.san.beniculturali.it/iiif/2/XXXXXXX/full/full/0/default.jpg> - and replace the X’s with the 7-character code in step 1. The high-definition image should appear.
3. Right click on the image and click on “Save Image As”

We hope these suggestions are helpful.



## October Speaker: Jane E. Wilcox



The New York State Archives (NYSA) holds the records of the state government. As such, it is an important resource for genealogical research. We were, therefore, fortunate to have Jane E. Wilcox present, “New York State Archives Records” A focus on 19th and 20th Century Immigrants.”

Ms. Wilcox began by introducing us to several immigrants who, we would later learn, could all be found in the records of the State Archive. The Archive has only records of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the New York State government but no local records. Ms. Wilcox urged us to think about how our immigrant ancestors might have interacted with the state government. She focused on six categories of records: census, citizenship, military, institutional, occupational and penal, all today held by the State Archive that was established in 1971.

State record holding began in 1818 with the creation of the State Library. A fire there in 1911, resulted in the loss of the state census records from 1825-1905. Those would have been of great interest to genealogists.

When accessing state records, it is important to know that each set has a title, a range of years and is assigned a series number. The first record set Ms. Wilcox addressed was the state census. As a result of the fire, only the 1915 and 1925 censuses are available. She used an example of the diverse Washington Heights area of Manhattan to demonstrate the information included in the 1925 census.

She then tackled citizenship records. The state has a limited number of naturalization records from 1830-1847 in state courts. The archives also have Alien Depositions citing declarations of intent to become citizens. These have also been digitized and are available on ancestry.com.

Next were institutional records — those of poorhouses and schools for the blind and the deaf. These included examinations of dependents in county and city institutions and censuses of inmates in almshouses and poorhouses. Each of these

provides valuable information for researchers. For the special schools for the blind and deaf, including the Catholic Institute for the Blind in the Bronx, the Archives has correspondence regarding admissions.

Military records include muster roll abstracts for State militia and volunteers in the Civil War and National Guard in the First World War including the Harlem Hell Fighters. The case files of the State Veteran’s Home are held by the Archives.

Employee History Cards of New York State employees (1894-1954) are an example of occupational records held by the Archives. The “Nurse Census” is another such record set. Licenses for midwives and peddlers are also available.

Lastly, records of state prisons such as sentences, admissions, commitments, discharges and record cards as well as clemency applications and pardons were discussed. Records of reformatories including indenture agreements are also held by the Archives. Prison admissions from the 19th and early 20th centuries have been digitized and are on ancestry.

In each of these categories, Ms. Wilcox used specific examples of individual immigrants. Resources were listed in her handout.

Penal records of state prisons and juvenile detention records are subject to a 75-year restriction. Restrictions on other records are available at the Archives finding aids. The URLs for the aids can be found on the handout that accompanied the presentation. While some records are completely restricted, sometimes clues can be found in newspaper items and the proceedings of certain counties.

The Archives, located in Albany in the Cultural Education Center, is open Monday to Friday. Reservations are highly recommended. Anyone with a New York zip code can gain free access to the digitized records on ancestry.com.

For additional information, consult Ms. Wilcox’s soon to be published book from the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, *New York State Archives — A Guide for Family Historians, Biographers, and Historical Research*.

A lively question and answer period followed. Ms. Wilcox’s presentation and informative handout are available in the Meeting Archive in the Members Area of the IGG website.

## Culture Column November: Tributes and Giving Thanks

Marilyn A. Verna Ed.D.

In our previous November newsletters, I highlighted the special holy days of All Souls Day and All Saints Day. Traditions for those days are held throughout the religious communities. In bakeries, you usually see the bones of the dead cookies, "*l'ossi dei morti*". In Italy, at midnight the residents parade through the cemeteries with lit candles while reciting prayers. Some people will leave a window open with a glass of water so the souls can enter. Disappearing water will be a sign that they visited.

Although the holiday of Thanksgiving is not a traditional festive day in Italy, some restaurants and families have adopted this day of thanks. Finding a turkey can be time consuming. It is not normally available in the local markets. *Buon Rigiamento!*

This issue ends our year of celebration words. Below is a word search with some of our holiday words. Do you remember their definitions? Enjoy the activity!

### Word List:

Agnello	Maschera
Arance	Onomastico
Chiesa	Parmureli
Cuore	Regali
Falegname	Scopa
Gelato	Statua
Locanda	Zucca
Noce	Angeli
Panettone	Chiavi
Raccolto	Cortei
Sangue	Estate
Spiaggia	Fiori
Tombola	Labefana
Amore	Neve
Caminetto	Pane
Cioccolati	Presepio
Dolci	Ringraziamento
Ferragusto	Sfilata
Giocatoli	Tacchino



### Do You Shop at Amazon?

If so, you can support the IGG by placing your order through AmazonSmile. Visit:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/11-3302825>

A portion of all order proceeds will benefit the IGG.

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*“verba volant, scripta manent”*

## We Get Letters

From Christine Tralongo

I was interested to read Richard Graziano's article "A Notice to Aliens" in the September IGG Newsletter. My paternal grandparents emigrated to New York City from Sicily. My grandfather, Giovanni Tralongo, came just before World War I, and my grandmother, Maria Teresa Todaro and their two children, delayed by the war, arrived in late 1919. My grandfather naturalized in 1930. (That would later enable me to obtain dual Italian citizenship since my father Frank [Francesco] was their first child born in America in 1920 while his father was still an Italian citizen.) We have also learned from previous articles in the newsletter that, because his naturalization took place after the enactment of the Cable Act in 1922, my grandmother did not derive citizenship from him and would have been required to naturalize on her own. (See Dr. Graziano's article, "To Derive or Not to Derive," in the September 2021 IGG Newsletter.)

But she never did. That meant that she had to register under the Alien Registration Act. While doing my research, I was able to obtain her Alien Registration Card. That's when I discovered that, not only was she not a U.S. citizen, but she was also illiterate and wasn't even able to sign her name. Certainly, I was affronted by the idea of a middle-aged Italian housewife being treated as the "enemy," even though she had never done anything to deserve that designation. However, I was even more sad to see the evidence of her illiteracy. I guess that speaks to the position of women in the poor rural Sicily of her era. And I doubt she would have had much time to learn to read or write when she came here given that she had four babies in the first five years after being reunited with her husband, plus the two children she already had. I'm sure she had her hands full since she no longer would have had the support of an extended family in the little town of Ficcarazzi outside of Palermo where Tralongo and Todaro are still common *cognome* to this day. I wish I could have known her. Sadly, I never met her or my grandfather as both died before I was born.

My father was the only one of the six siblings to marry a non-Italian, pretty radical in East Harlem, the area where he grew up. My mother was French-Canadian and came to New York City during World War II, lured by the attraction of good-paying factory

jobs. She became one of the millions of female workers, a "Rosie the Riveter" contributing to the War effort. It was at work that she met my father who wasn't in the military due to health issues, including having been in a TB sanatorium as a boy. While my mother was far from illiterate (she went to nursing school in Montreal after graduating from high school and was bilingual), she didn't apply for citizenship until the early 1960s. Fortunately, there was no war going on (pre-Vietnam) so alien registration was a thing of the past. Even more fortunately for me, mom was still a Canadian citizen when I was born. So, I got to do research for dual citizenship a second time. As a result, today I'm proud to have dual citizenship from both Italy and Canada and happily celebrate my combined Italian and French-Canadian heritage — a true American story! It's interesting to note how much war and the laws related to Italian immigrants that were passed in the United States played significant roles in the lives of both my grandparents and parents.

### From the Editor

When I responded to the above letter from Christine Tralongo, I thanked her and explained that it is often a challenge to find enough material to fill the eleven pages of text that goes into each month's newsletter. I encouraged her to submit other articles about her research and any interesting finds she came across or to reflect on something she reads in the newsletter. I offered to provide any editing assistance she needed to do so.

She wrote back to thank me for offering to publish additional articles and stated, "It wouldn't have occurred to me to write something for the newsletter if I hadn't read the article about the alien registration process which sparked my memory of my grandmother's alien registration card and how I discovered from it that she was both required to register and that she was illiterate."

That made me wonder whether there were other IGG members who read the newsletter who also might not have thought to write and submit an article. If that's you, please consider, sending one in. Many of us discover stories in our research that would be of interest to our readers. If so, please send your submission to [newsletter@italiangen.org](mailto:newsletter@italiangen.org).



# How to Apply for the Annual IGG Scholarship

Kelly Barbano-Bodami

We are excited to announce the 2022-2023 Italian Genealogical Group (IGG) scholarship. Since 1993, the IGG has awarded graduating high school seniors over \$58,000 in scholarships.

You may be wondering — how does someone apply for the Italian Genealogical Group Scholarship?

The eligibility criteria are simple:

- Be a current, graduating high school senior in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Have at least one grandparent of Italian descent.
- Be recommended by a current member of the Italian Genealogical Group.

While further instructions will be available on our website ([www.italianguen.org/scholarships/](http://www.italianguen.org/scholarships/)) beginning in November, each applicant will need to submit an essay, a family tree, and research documentation.

The essay should contain the story of your family that you discovered while researching. It should detail their lives in Italy, immigration to the United States or elsewhere, and their experiences once settled in their new home. Beyond the what and when, you should also detail what you learned about your family's experiences that were important, interesting, surprising, or even inspiring.

The Family Tree should be completed on the pedigree chart provided on the scholarship information page. It is important to complete the pedigree chart with as many generations as necessary to identify your Italian born ancestor, and preferably their parents as well. All women should be listed only with their maiden names. Biographic details on each ancestor such as date and place of birth, marriage, and death should be filled in.

The key component to a successful application is through research. Documents must be included to support the information given in the family tree and the essay. Whenever possible, the expectation is to use primary source documents, such as birth, marriage, and death records; immigration records, such as ship manifests and naturalization records; military records, such as draft registration and

enlistment records; and census records. (This is not an exhaustive list of acceptable sources but are suggestions.) When possible, we do expect you to find the Italian records for your Italian-born ancestors.

Some resources for research:

- Databases on the Italian Genealogical Group website: [www.italianguen.org/databases/](http://www.italianguen.org/databases/)
- <https://www.ancestry.com>
- <https://www.familysearch.org>

Hint: to find the records for specific towns and cities in Italy, use the catalog on Family Search to search for records available for that town. Many Italian records are not indexed to search via a database search and must be researched manually.

- Antenati - The Italian Ancestors Portal  
[www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it/](http://www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it/)

Hint: As on Family Search, you will be more successful on Antenati if you search by the town name to pull up the available records than if you search by your ancestor's name.

Applications are due May 1, 2023. If any prospective applicant has any questions, the scholarship committee can be reached at [scholarships@italianguen.org](mailto:scholarships@italianguen.org). We urge all eligible candidates to apply. *Buona fortuna!*

**Editor's Note:** Is there a topic or question you would like our How-To Columnists, Kelly Bodami and Alec Ferretti, to address in the future? If so, please send it to [newsletter@italianguen.org](mailto:newsletter@italianguen.org).

## Idiomatic Saying

From Ruth Lapioli Merriman

Have you ever given anyone four? Four what, you may ask. In Italy, if you give someone 'four,' you are giving them a piece of your mind. Here's an example:

*Scrivero a Roberto e gliene diro quattro!*

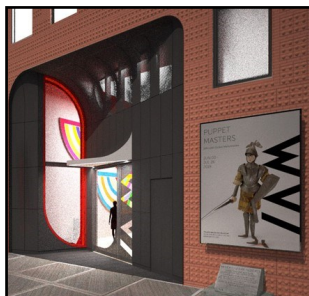
(I'll write to Robert and give him a piece of my mind!)

Source:  
POINTERS, (Summer, 2004). Vol. 18 (2). Issue 66. p. 13.

# A Walking Tour Through Little Italy

Richard Graziano

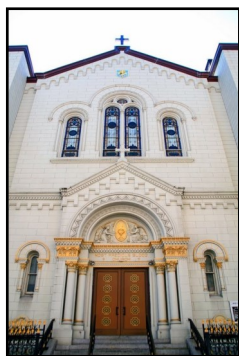
As we anticipate the opening of the Italian American Museum in New York City's Little Italy, probably in Spring 2023, the museum is getting a head start by offering walking tours of the neighborhood. In September, I was fortunate enough to be included in a test run of the tour, which was led by Marie Palladino, the Director of Education. Dr. Joseph Scelsa, the Museum Founder and Director, and Janine Coyne, the Curator, also joined the tour. The walk covered about ten blocks and lasted about an hour and a half. It began, in front of the museum at 151 Mulberry Street with a general discussion of the neighborhood and some specifics about the Banco Stabile that once occupied the site.



Italian American Museum  
Tour starting point

Almost immediately, I learned some new things about Little Italy. For example, the streets of the neighborhood were home to Italians of different regions of Italy. Mulberry Street was where many from the Naples area settled while on Elizabeth Street, you found mostly Sicilians, and Baxter Street was the home of many from Bari. I also learned that the Stabile Bank, like other banks in the area that served the Italian immigrant population, was a multi-purpose institution. It not only provided banking services but also sold steamship tickets, arranged wire transfers of money to those in Italy, offered translation assistance and a variety of other services.

The tour then proceeded to the Most Precious Blood Church. As in other places where large numbers of Italians settled, the immigrants sought out a place to worship. At the beginning, the only option was Old St. Patrick's Church where Italians were relegated to services held in the church basement. As the community grew and prospered, Italians accumulated funds to construct their own church. Most Precious Blood was the result. While the church was not open, the guide explained that inside one would find statues



that represented the patron saints of the various towns and provinces of Italy that were important to parishioners.

Another stop on the tour was Umberto's Clam House, the site of the mob execution of Joey Gallo, which was a good place to discuss the one-time presence of the Black Hand and the Mafia which preyed upon the residents of the community. That led to a discussion of Giuseppe Petrosino, the first Italian American to be earn the rank of lieutenant in the New York City Police Department. He organized a special squad to arrest mob members. On a trip to Sicily to find evidence, he was assassinated. A park in the neighborhood, another stop on the tour, is dedicated to him.

On the side of Di Palo's Italian provision store is a plaque commemorating the World War II service of veterans from the neighborhood. This was also a place for a discussion of discriminatory U.S. government practices, such as the internment of Italian immigrants and the requirement to register as "enemy aliens" during the war.

The tour provided an excellent overview of the Little Italy neighborhood and a good feel for the experiences of those who lived there. The museum plans to offer weekly Saturday tours starting in October. Tours for school and other groups will also be available. Contact the museum for further information.

## Governor Hochul Announces Grant

At a breakfast meeting with several dozen Italian American civic leaders, New York Governor, Kathy Hochul, announced a grant to help with the completion of the Italian American Museum in New York City. Her statement to the *New York Post* was,

"Whether in government, business, or in the arts, Italian Americans have been integral in building and strengthening New York State. I'm proud to honor the legacy and heritage of New York's Italian-American community by announcing \$1 million in state funding to help complete construction of the Italian American Museum in Little Italy."

### Source:

Campanile, C. (March 16, 2022). Hochul delivers \$1M for new Little Italy Museum after snub for Chinatown. *New York Post*. Available at: <https://nypost.com/2022/03/16/hochul-delivers-1m-for-new-little-italy-museum-after-grant-snub/>

## Italian American Museums

In New York City, we await the possible Spring 2023 opening of the newly constructed and expanded Italian American Museum located on Mulberry Street in the heart of Little Italy. We were curious about the existence of Italian American museums in other cities in the United States.

A Google search for “Italian American Museum” revealed the following:

- The Italian American Museum of Los Angeles;
- American Italian Heritage Association and Museum, Albany, New York;
- Museo Italo Americano, San Francisco;
- The Italian American Museum of Cleveland;
- The Robert A. Faccina Italian American Museum of Washington, D.C.;
- The American Italian Cultural Center, New Orleans;
- Casa Italiana, Chicago.

If you live in one of these cities and make a visit to the local Italian American museum, please write and tell us about their facilities and offerings at [newsletter@italiangen.org](mailto:newsletter@italiangen.org). If you live in another city that has an Italian American museum that we left off this list, let us know about that too.

### Item of Interest

From Anthony Di Marino

#### What’s in a name?

Several times in this newsletter we’ve read about Italian naming patterns. The first boy is named after the father’s father, the first girl after the father’s mother, etc. But did you ever wonder about the meanings of those names?

This website does just that. You put in a given name and it provides its meaning, origin and pronunciation.

Try it at: <https://www.meaningofthename.com>

Find us on 

## RootsTech 2023

From Gayle Adams

The 2023 annual three-day family history conference will take place from March 2-4, 2023. This year’s event will be both in-person in Salt Lake City and in a virtual format. As in the last two years, virtual participation will be free. Attendance at the in-person event will cost \$98 for an all-inclusive pass for the entire conference.

Over two hundred exhibitors will be presenting their products in the Expo Hall. You will be able to learn about innovations in the industry and to try out new offerings.

As in the past, there will be a variety of classes and sessions on every conceivable aspect of genealogy. Ten to fifteen classes will be live-streamed each day while other pre-recorded sessions will be available as well. There will also be a roster of keynote speakers from a variety of backgrounds. Since RootsTech is all about bringing people, stories, memories, technology, innovation, communities and, ultimately, families together, the theme of this year’s conference will be “uniting”.

Registration is now open. So, mark your calendars, and visit [rootstech.org](http://rootstech.org) for registration and other information.

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### Quote of the Month

Reflecting on the passing of her mother, **Maria Bodkin** provides us with yet another reason to pursue our family histories.

“One often hears about closure. Perhaps the term is overused. But I felt that there was something I could do to bring her closer to me, even in death and that was to find out about her and my own Italian heritage.”

#### Source:

Bodkin, M. (Autumn, 2001). Recovering my past. POINTers. Vol. 15. (3). p. 3.





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

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## **Future Meeting Dates for the Italian Genealogical Group**

December 10, 2022, January 14 and February 11, 2023

The Library opens at 9:00 AM. **The meeting starts at 11:00 AM.**

### **Directions to the Bethpage Library, 47 Powell Ave, Bethpage, NY**

**By Train:** Take the Long Island Railroad to the Bethpage Station. Walk east one block to Broadway, turn left, go (north) three blocks on Broadway. At the second traffic light, turn right on to Powell Avenue, The Library is about 500 ft ahead, on your right.

**By Car:** Via Southern State Parkway. Take exit 28A and go north on the Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway (Route 135). Via 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 three blocks.

There is ample parking across the street from the Library. The meeting is in the auditorium.