



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

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The *IHS Journal* aims to provide, to those interested in the history of Australian-Italian communities, an outlet for the circulation of news and reports, the exchange of information and the notification of future activities. We invite readers to contribute newsworthy articles and short notes. Guidelines for contributors on application.

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FRONT COVER:

Preparations for the Melbourne Olympic Games held in 1956.

In 1955, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Councillor Frank Selleck, accompanied four visiting Italian fashion models to see the construction progress of the athletes' training-ground. In the background the Olympic swimming pool under construction. On this occasion, he presented the models with a gift and a message for the Lord Mayor of Rome, the city hosting the Olympic Games in 1960.

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ITALIAN SETTLERS IN JACKSON'S BAY SPECIAL SETTLEMENT, NEW ZEALAND 1875-1879 — GOVERNMENT WRONG EXPECTATIONS AND ETHNIC STEREOTYPES

by Adriano Boncompagni

The author has recently completed a PhD on the emigration of people from Tuscany to Australia at the University of Western Australia, Department of Geography. Prior to his settlement in Australia, Boncompagni gained an Arts degree majoring in Historic Geography at the University of Florence.

The aim of this essay is to look into the reasons for the failure of the New Zealand Special Settlement of Jackson's Bay, South Island, established in 1875 and which continued to function until the late 1870s.

Historians Hargreaves and Hearn ascribed the failure mainly to the mixture of nationalities of the settlers — and their incapability to communicate with each other — as 'an obvious breeding ground for discontent',¹ although they acknowledged that the government choice of the geographic area for the settlement was taken without regard to the inhospitable environments and their economic base. Literature available for the period stresses the circumstance of the presence of some Italians in Jackson's Bay as one of the major reasons for the decay of the settlement, although the examination of the Appendices of the Journal of House of Representatives (AJHR from now on) suggests a different interpretation.

In the late 1860s, the gold fields that had attracted many European miners to New Zealand, became less productive.² Together with the wool production industry, gold had been an important source of income for New Zealand. By the 1870s, the gold boom was over, while, at the same time, the rate of growth of the sheep stock was diminishing. Many miners and prospectors had left New Zealand by May 1867, so that the Colony faced economic stagnation. In order to address these circumstances, the new Premier, Sir Julius Vogel, carried out a wide scale programme to provide new ways of expanding the size of the country's economy. His policy resulted in a combination of government and private borrowings to facilitate the expansion of immigration, providing large public infrastructures in transport and converting more land into pastures. A long term development plan of public works and immigration was 'aimed at reviving the flagging economy'.³

With the establishment of the 'Immigration and Public Works Act', Vogel allocated considerable

funds to assist migrants by paying their passage to New Zealand, while selected agents were sent overseas — mainly to Europe — in order to induce prospective workers to migrate. In addition, the Minister financed a study to identify within the country isolated areas suitable to promote as immigrant settlements, and to be known as 'special settlements'. Such settlements were intended to encourage the economic development of areas less profitable because of their geographic position and, at the same time, to maintain control over a significant number of foreign workers. It was an ambitious political plan that, between 1873 and 1879, brought over 100,000 new settlers to New Zealand.⁴

Table 1 — Nationality of Immigrants to New Zealand 1873-1879 (Derived from AJHR, 1880, D3, 'Immigration Returns')

English	51103	50.97%
Irish	24895	24.83%
Scots	16711	16.67%
French	284	0.28%
Germans	3034	3.03%
Danes	1953	1.95%
Swedes	686	0.68%
Norwegians	703	0.70%
Italians	312	0.31%
Others	582	0.58%
Total	100263	100.00%

However, the number of Italian workers who reached New Zealand under this immigration policy was small, according to the 'Immigration Returns' tables published in the Appendices of JHR from 1873 to 1879: they increased from a few dozen in 1874 to 312 in 1878 (see Table 1), while during the same years the total population of New Zealand rose from 344,985 to 458,007.⁵

Geographically, the countries to which the New Zealand Government chose to send agents were those with a surplus of labour during mid-nineteenth century, such as England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Italy. The Italian agent, one John Glynn, an Englishman long resident in Italy,⁶ was established in Leghorn, a port town on the Tuscan coast of Central Italy. His task was to recruit peasant manpower from inland Tuscany to send to the German harbour of Hamburg to be embarked for New Zealand. Hamburg and Bremen were, in fact, the only ports (outside of Great Britain) of direct embarkation for the Colony: the prospective emigrants had to reach Hamburg during the months between May and November, a few days before the usual scheduled departure of the ships. The passage would take from 70 to 100 days.⁷

Contrary to expectations, the job of Mr Glynn was not easy. Just a decade after the unification of Italy, central Italian rural conditions included a widespread sharecropping agrarian system that offered a decent continuity of food supply in the Tuscan region. Consequently, the prospective migrants for New Zealand were those 'excluded' from this Tuscan economic pattern, such as unemployed wage earners and farm hands, as well as the representatives of the newly-born urban proletariat: semi-skilled craftsmen and labourers.⁸

As recorded in the Parliamentary debate:

From Switzerland and Italy many emigrants could be produced, but the people are also poor and not many can raise the heavy coast [sic] of the journey to Hamburg. The Italians are the best railway labourers on the Continent. My Italian agents state that they can supply several hundred navvies.⁹

The reputation of the Italians as good railway labourers has its explanation. Italy had arrived at its political unification in 1860, but the social and economic conditions of the country were still those of a very poor country. Since the 1870s, many thousands of Italian workers had begun to migrate to Northern European countries, where they were employed in urban areas in industrial activities and the construction of the railway system.¹⁰

With regard to the New Zealand settlement of Jackson's Bay on the south western coast of the South Island, the government reports were quite clear:

Some Shetlanders would be suitable immigrants, as there is an abundance of fish on the coast. My attention has also been drawn to the fact that a number of Pomeranians can be obtained, and would be specially suited for such a settlement. No special knowledge is required, but active energetic men.¹¹

As well as being an isolated area, Jackson's Bay was chosen as a 'special settlement' because the gold rushes of the 1860s had brought hundreds of miners to the Haast River region, thereby giving a new importance to the whole area.¹² The intent of such a choice was therefore probably to revitalize the area, which was considered, together with a few others in the South Island as a very secluded one.¹³

The bay has been described as a 'gloomy country, silent, desolate and dreary'.¹⁴ Close to the Alps that run as a backbone all through the South Island, Jackson's Bay had remained wilderness for the whole of the nineteenth century, with a thick subtropical forest that bordered the beaches and formed swamps, in a continental-like climatic environment, characterised by year-round heavy rains.¹⁵ Although the area had seen the presence of a few miners in the previous decades, neither roads nor other infrastructure had been built before the coming of the settlers in the mid-1870s,¹⁶ while the coast had only been sporadically reached by sealers.¹⁷

Few government surveyors had explored the bay, as requested by Vogel.¹⁸ The surveyors thought Jackson's Bay would be suitable for such a special settlement, because of the fertile soil of the area, although probably they minimised the time necessary for the reclamation of the swampy coastal strip. Surveyors and government officers acted like many promoters of immigration to New Zealand had done in the previous decades with prospective migrants from Britain and Continental Europe: they had measured the fertility of the soil in terms of the height and growth of the vegetation.¹⁹ The luxuriance and the size were seen as evidence of the fertility and richness of the land; an assessment that probably was only based on the visual appearance of the vegetation cover. Wrong assessments and expectations that were so common in the first period of European settlement of New Zealand,²⁰ were repeated by Vogel's agents. These mistaken perceptions of the area may be seen as the primary cause of the failure of Jackson's Bay special settlement in the years to come.

The whole area, approximately 30 km long and 5km wide, would have been easily cultivated: ‘What I have seen is sufficient to justify my stating that the bulk of this land will prove very stable for farming’.²¹

Also:

Very excellent land is to be found along the banks of all these rivers. Report speaks of Jackson’s Bay in the best terms as a good fishing-ground. The anchorage[s] in Jackson’s Bay are perfectly safe for shipping.²²

Officially included in Vogel’s special settlement plans in 1871, Jackson’s Bay was divided in lots in the first months of 1875, although it was still to be reclaimed and made arable. The first settlers began to arrive within weeks. The reports of the government agent of Jackson’s Bay are obviously marked by optimism:

I am pleased to report that the majority of the settlers are going into the business of settling with considerable spirit, and I anticipate that by next harvest we shall be able to show good returns.²³

The tasks would have been heavy for the first settlers: deforesting, ploughing, building dwellings, planning a road network and a wharf to load for the markets the future products of the land and logging.

Meantime, the agent Glynn in Leghorn had been able to gather a considerable number of Italian workers as prospective emigrants for New Zealand.²⁴ However, something was already going wrong, since some of them, even before reaching New Zealand, had pleaded with the Italian Consul in Melbourne — where the ship had stopped — to be sent back to Italy. Some Italian workers were disappointed with wage expectations, which, as they discovered on board, were different from those Mr Glynn had promised them.²⁵ The General Agent of Immigration in Europe himself criticised Glynn’s behaviour: ‘... the prospects held out by Mr Glynn were no doubt to a certain extent exaggerated...’.²⁶

Nevertheless, New Zealand immigration officers began to revise their opinion of Italians, no longer believing them to be hard workers but promoters of trouble and disputes:

The Government have [sic] however stopped Italian immigration, finding the great difficulty of obtaining persons of a suitable class ... [some are] unwilling or physically incapable of performing the work required in the colony.²⁷

Notwithstanding this, a group of about a dozen Italian families and single men — approximately forty altogether — reached Jackson’s Bay in mid-1876.²⁸ There were fifteen men, seven women and fifteen children.

Table 2 — Nationality of Settlers in Jackson’s Bay and their composition. (Based on AJHR, 1879, H9A ‘Names of Settlers at Jackson’s Bay’, pp. 73-74)

	Men	%	Women	Children	Total	%
English	28	21.05%	10	19	57	16.72%
Irish	13	9.77%	4	10	27	7.92%
Scots	18	13.53%	9	23	50	14.66%
Germans	35	26.32%	27	61	123	36.07%
Danes	9	6.77%	1	4	14	4.11%
Swedes	5	3.76%		3	8	2.35%
Norwegians	1	0.75%	1	3	5	1.47%
Italians	15	11.28%	7	15	37	10.85%
Canadians	3	2.26%	1	4	8	2.35%
Prussians	1	0.75%			1	0.29%
Victorians (AUS)	4	3.01%	1	4	9	2.64%
New Zealand	1	0.75%	1		2	0.59%
TOTAL	133	100%	62	146	341	100%

The Italians came mainly from Tuscany: there were several couples from the Leghorn area, a number of Florentine peasants and a smaller group of farm hands from the Pistoia Apennines not far from Florence.²⁹ They joined a considerable number of other settlers (around 300) coming from England, Scotland, Germany and Scandinavian countries³⁰ (see also Table 2).

The Italian group kept together and chose a peripheral area of Jackson’s Bay, at the mouth of the Okuru River.³¹ Although disappointed about wages and weather — July is full winter and, in the Westland, rains are incessant — the small Italian community was employed in deforesting and in the construction of a coastal road and the jetty.³²

In 1877 the report to Parliament of the Resident Agent for the Government was still optimistic and reflected the expectations about the future of the settlement:

The Italian settlers are looking forward to be able to grow grapes [sic] and other fruit, as well as being anxious to secure a number of mulberry trees, so as to enable them to engage in sericulture. They appear to be satisfied that several varieties of the grape will thrive here and ripen, and I am sure that all our home fruits will produce abundantly.³³

The reality was slightly different from the report. If we compare the monthly work tables of each settler of Jackson's Bay for the period 1876-1878, we can deduce that the average employment of each adult Italian had never been more than an average six months per year, with low points of two months and high peaks of nine months. This was insufficient to support the large families of the immigrants.³⁴

The earlier wrong assessment of the fertility of the soils came out with the first crops. Despite all the optimistic forecasts, the first potato crop was lost because of the heavy rains.³⁵ Signs of failure of the settlement can also be found in the rare correspondence between some Italian settlers and other Italians who had migrated elsewhere. Pietro Tofanari, a 35 year old Florentine, who wrote:

We live very badly. There is scarcely anything left in the government store. We have had plenty of rain. Dear Ferdinando, the beginning I find very bad in this bushy bushy country.³⁶

Another Italian, Carlo Turchi, 44, who, with his wife and seven children, a few years later settled in New Plymouth wrote: '... we had floods and the water was about three feet deep in our tent.'³⁷

The sworn declarations made by another Italian testifying in front of the Commission, appointed in 1879 to investigate the failure of the settlement, revealed the difficulties which many settlers faced in Jackson's Bay. Aristodemo Franchi, a 40 year-old Tuscan peasant with wife and three children, who later moved to Wellington, declared:

I have been here three years next July. We all came together — Fortunato Lucchesi, Calamai Egisto and myself. We prefer to leave because we do not see any possibility of obtaining a livelihood. The soil we believe to be good, but we do not see that we can cultivate it with profit. I do not consider that any quantity of employment I could get would be sufficient to support myself and my large family.³⁸

The Officer for Immigration in Wellington wrote to the Minister Sir Julius Vogel in 1877:

B ... tells me that he has heard from Leghorn that the workmen in the arsenal are giving two or three hours every Sunday morning to build a vessel which they intend sending to New Zealand to take home any of their countrymen who are destitute'.³⁹

Apart from this statement, which probably was just a rumour, the report reveals the discontent

of the Italians as well as of the whole community of Jackson's Bay. Some thought that one reason for such discontent and, later on, for the failure of the Jackson's Bay special settlement, was the cocktail of too many ethnic groups, often incapable of understanding each other or the government officers.⁴⁰ The ethnic factor might have played its role, although the major components of the settlement were English, Scots, Irish, Germans and Scandinavians. A major reason is related to the irresponsible manner in which the Government went about planning the settlement. Forecasts on the settlement's development were too optimistic and unrealistic. The government officers had put unlimited confidence in the settlers' ability to exploit the soil, without much environmental and climatic awareness, although the annual rainfall for the period 1875-1879 was the highest of the whole nineteenth century.

The agents had foreseen a development in crop and log production, but, on the other hand, they had never actually investigated the possibility of the building of a wharf in the shallow waters of the bay, which would have harboured ships to carry the products to market. Two schools and a church were built, but no doctor settled permanently in Jackson's Bay, so that the settlement had an extremely high rate of infant mortality.

In addition, in the late 1870s, the strong economic recession pushed the Government to abandon its immigration policy. The New Zealand economy was saturated with debts. Vogel resigned as Premier and consequently there was a deterioration in the management of the special settlements. Meanwhile, the government officers in Jackson's Bay began to look at the Italians in a different way:

These people have evidently been led to expect too much of the good things of this life. They objected to eating salt beef, to getting their feet wet. The few unreasonable ones among the Italians have evidently seen the error of their ways, and I do not anticipate any further trouble with them, but rather look forward to their proving themselves settlers of the proper stamp.⁴¹

Somehow, the Italians in Jackson's Bay became scapegoats for the failure of the government's policy. The Resident Agent in the bay wrote his 1878 annual report to the House of Representatives:

With regard to the Italians, I'm sorry to say my experience with the majority of them has

been anything but satisfactory: the same want of knowledge, the same lack of resource, but possessing far less of the will to work which characterises the others: there is too much of the dolce far niente spirit about them ever to become successful settlers. Their unfitness to act as pioneers of settlement may be ascribed to climatic influences, or to their previous habits of life; at any rate, they have not been a success in this district.⁴²

In a political and social context dominated by a nineteenth-century Victorian attitude, we can easily detect a perception of the 'other', in this case the 'dark' Mediterranean ethnic pattern represented by the Italians, as a threat to the British and Colonial institutions. It is worth mentioning that in those years of economic crisis, the Government issued the 'Chinese Immigrants Act' (1881) which restricted the entry of coloured immigrants to the Colony.⁴³

Jackson's Bay special settlement was doomed. In 1879, Italians, as well as Germans and a considerable number of Scandinavians, left the settlement. The number of settlers dropped from almost 400 in 1878 to 160 in 1881.⁴⁴ Some of the Italians returned to their home country, while most of them settled in Christchurch and Wellington, concentrating on cropping and fishing activities. This occupational trend underlines the unfairness of the judgement of the Government officers about the 'unsuitability' of the Italians for activities such as farming and fishing.

The Government opened an inquiry to investigate the failure of the settlement and to identify the responsibilities. After much investigation, taking the declarations of settlers and special reports, the Commission arrived at a final verdict in which the blame related to the government officers' behaviour is minimised, while major charges are made against single officers of the settlement, such as the manager of the government store.⁴⁵ In addition, the Commission reported that the end of the settlement was also due to unspecified 'enemies [sic] of the settlement who did not desire its success, and who by constant disparagement... have contributed something to its failure'.⁴⁶

Although the Italians constituted about 10 per cent of settlers at Jackson's Bay, they were singled out as the principal authors of the failure, while the officers stressed once again the suitability of a more reliable and strong British ethnic group:

A large number of the Okuru settlers were Italians, and we think their unfitness for the work and the life was to some extent the cause of the abandonment of the place. We do not think that the Italian settlers at Okuru were the class of men best fitted for the work of settlement in such a locality. We believe that British colonialists would have been less easily discouraged, and would have been far more likely to persevere with the undertaking. A careful selection of British and, perhaps, Germans settlers should have been made, and had this been done we think the failure of the scheme would have been far less signal.⁴⁷

In the geographically and historically specific context of Jackson's Bay, the 'others' were the Italians and, once the collapse of the settlement was evident, the attempt was to obliterate their 'trangeness'⁴⁸, as if they were the major cause of the failure, which should be ascribed solely to the government's unrealistic expectations of success of the special settlement.

NOTES

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No. 1

Verzeichniss

der Personen, welche mit dem *Hamburg* Dampf-Schiffe
unter *Deutsches* Flagge. Capitain *Reyer* nach *Neuseeland*
zur Auswanderung durch Unterzeichnete engagirt sind.

11/476

Abgang des Schiffes, d. 12 April 1876

N ^o	Die zu einer Familie gehörenden Personen sind unter einander zu notiren und durch eine Klammer als zusammengehörig zu bezeichnen.		Geschlecht männlich weiblich	Alter	Bisheriger Wohnort.	Im Staate oder in der Provinz.	Bisheriger Stand oder Beruf.	Ziel der Auswanderung, Ort und Land ist anzugeben.	Zahl der Personen	Davon sind		
	Zuname.	Vorname.								Erwachsene und Kinder über 10 Jahre	unter 10 Jahre	unter 1 Jahr
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1	Kentel	Christine	1	39	Christiansburg				1	1		
2	Larsen	Henr. P.	1	29					1	1		
3	Kjeller	Anna	1	22					1	1		
4	Pedersen	Augusta E.	1	17					1	1		
5	Olsson	Hans Peter	1	33					1	1		
6	Lundström	Andreas	1	22					1	1		
7	Krueger	Alfred F.	1	19					1	1		
8	Kroner	Lars Olaus	1	22					1	1		
9	Lundman	Carl N.	1	19					1	1		
10	Andersen	Michael	1	24					1	1		
11	Lundström	Stefan	1	20					1	1		
12		Regerhald	1	44					1	1		

WALHALLA ITALIANS

by Winifred Guatta

Winifred Guatta's great grandparents and grandparents migrated to Victoria from Tirano, Italy and Viano, Switzerland, in the 1880s and settled in Walhalla where they remained until their deaths. Their descendants have maintained a connection to Walhalla. Since her retirement from a career in teaching, Winifred has been researching Italians and their families who have made a significant contribution to the life and fortunes of Walhalla, a town which still captures the imagination of most people who visit it. She has written articles for the Walhalla Chronicle, co-written a history of her last school, Padua College, Mornington, and worked as an editor and writer for Dove Communications, educational publishers.

Winifred's research is continuing and she would be pleased to hear from people who have connections with Walhalla. Please contact her at the Italian Historical Society.

In the year 1900, two terrible accidents claimed the lives of nine Walhalla residents. Both involved the Italian community and both occurred in the area known as Poverty Point. The incidents shocked the residents of this isolated gold mining town in the mountainous region of the La Trobe Valley in Gippsland, Victoria.

Six drowned in the Thomson River

The first accident occurred on Sunday, 27 January between 5 pm and 6 pm at the end of a day's fishing and recreation on the banks of the Thomson River. Four men had taken a punt into the waters: John Ferrari, Peter Novalia, George de Moroni and Joseph Pelusi. They had reached a stretch of deep water about a quarter of a mile below the junction of the Thomson and Aberfeldy Rivers and between three and four miles above the Thomson Bridge. There, they paddled over to the bank and took on board two children, Luisa and Luis Bonazzi. Proceeding downstream for about twenty yards below the spot where Steven Armanasco was fishing, they then turned and rowed upstream for about one hundred yards. In his deposition to the inquiry, Steven Armanasco said he saw small waves caused by the paddling, totally obscuring the sides of the flat-bottomed punt. In a short time the water flowed into the boat, finally unsettled it and, according to another witness, Chas Pelusi, 'it went sheer down'. Those of the party who could swim tried to save themselves and their friends. Peter Novalia, with Luisa Bonazzi, attempted to grasp the upturned boat 'but it glided away from them at every attempt and it is said that through these fruitless efforts and wasted energy that Novalia became powerless to reach the bank'. Charles Pelusi rushed immediately into the river and

reached his brother Joseph 'a second too late'.

The Walhalla Miner and Goldfields Advocate, one of the two newspapers current at the time and popularly known as *The Walhalla Miner*, reported that Pelusi rendered all the assistance in his power to recover the bodies as did Messrs Bruni, Collins, Seear, Edwards, Duffy, Amor and Milner. Constables Graham and Walsh, notified by an onlooker, James Menghini, used drag hooks loaned by Richard Dawson, manager of the Long Tunnel Mine and the Walhalla Fire Brigade but the bodies were not recovered until the following morning in the very spot they went down.

The paper further noted the intense mourning on the part of their fellow Italians, who had arrived from all quarters on hearing the news. Domenic Moratti, renowned for his concern for his countrymen, was deeply distressed. He took it upon himself to arrange the funerals and also assist with the translation of the witnesses' statements at the inquiry.

An inquiry into the fatalities was conducted on Monday afternoon. It was presided by magistrate J.H. Pearson after he and the witnesses had viewed the bodies at Barry's Exchange Hotel where they were taken after the accident. Senior Constable Kissane conducted the inquiry and heard from witnesses Steven Armanasco, Bernard Ferrari, James Menghini, Charles Pelusi, James Bonazzi and Constable Walsh. Mr Pearson found that the six persons met their deaths by drowning in the Thomson River as a result of their boat overturning by accident. Peter Novalia was aged 36, John Ferrari 34, George de Marone 30, Joseph Pelusi 27, Luisa Bonazzi 13 and Luis Bonazzi 11.

The funeral was reported in *The Walhalla Miner*, February 1, 1900:

In the memory of the oldest residents there has never been a funeral in Walhalla of such dimensions as that which took place on Tuesday last, when the victims of the sad drowning fatality at the Thomson were borne to their last resting place. Crowds of ladies lined the tramway opposite the route to be taken by the mournful cortege, and the available space in the street opposite the Exchange Hotel was crowded with people, showing that deep sympathy was felt for the friends and relatives of the deceased.

... The grief of the unfortunate father was boundless. At the graves Mr M.T. Cullinan read the impressive prayers for the dead, with the De Profundis when the bodies had been lowered into their graves. Mr D. Moratti delivered the funeral oration in Italian, which profoundly impressed his countrymen, and the deep feeling created by his words found vent in the case of many, in tears. The public demonstration was not only a tribute to the dead, but an acknowledgment of the popularity of the Italians residing in and around Walhalla, who are amongst the most law-abiding and respected of our citizens. Their peaceable demeanour on all occasions, their anxiety to give assistance when needed for deserving objects, and their evident desire to earn the respect due to strangers in a strange land make the Walhalla Italians respected by all classes in the community.

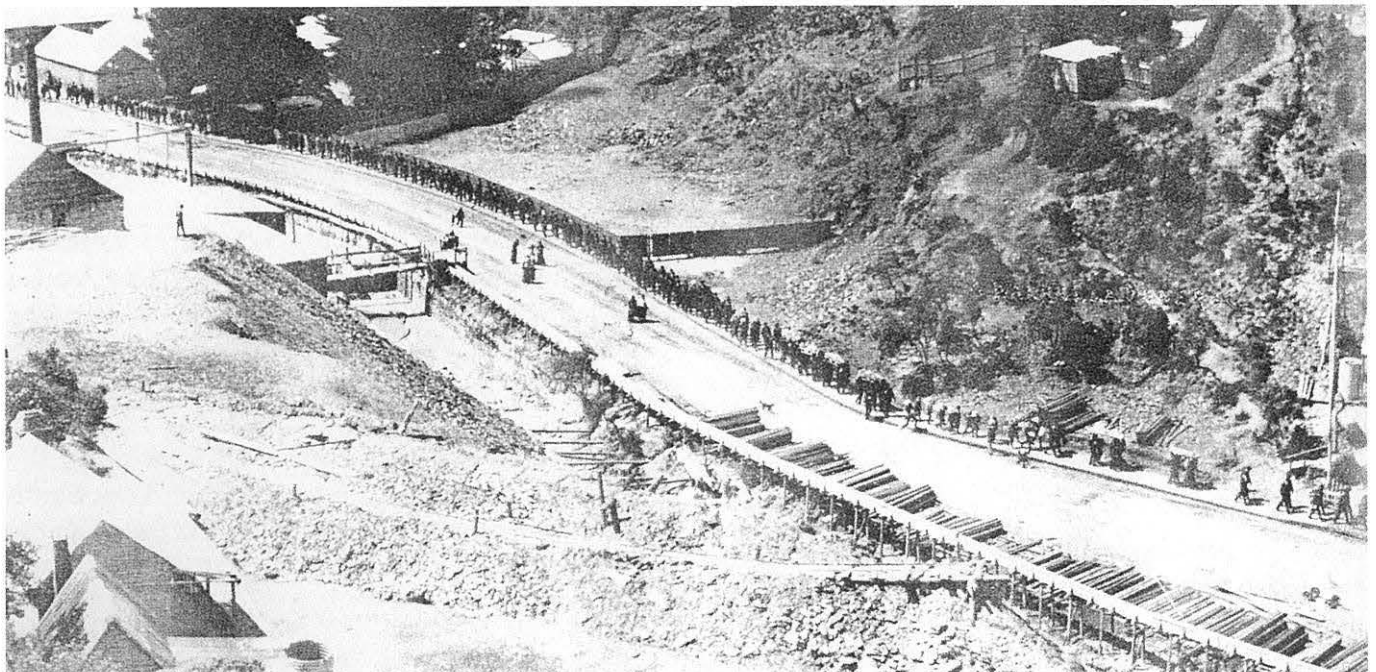
Three killed in a violent storm

The second accident claimed the lives of three members of the Della Torre – De Luis family and severely injured a fourth. Domenico Della Torre, his wife Domenica (Maggie), their two children Mary (aged 7) and Domenico (20 months) lived at Poverty Point about three miles from Walhalla. Maggie's little brother William De Luis (9 years) was staying with them at the time.

At 2.30 am on Saturday, October 27, 1900 a gale roared through the mountains and a tree, thirty feet long and three feet in diameter, broke from the bottom of its trunk and slid with fearful velocity from a height of several hundred feet. It swept everything before it and crashed through the weatherboard cottage where the family members were sleeping, causing the deaths of Maggie, baby Domenico and William.

At the magisterial inquiry, held before Samuel Rothwell J. P. on the site of the accident near the Thomson River on October 27, Domenico Della Torre described how he had woken to the great sound of a falling tree, got up in the dark to check on the children and was struck by the tree as it crashed down the mountain. He was rendered helpless but when he regained consciousness he was able to get to his neighbour, Domenic Moratti for assistance.

Moratti, who lived in an adjoining cottage, said he heard Domenico calling for help. He ran over to the house and although it was dark he could tell



The funeral of the six Italians drowned at Walhalla in January 1900. From Walhalla Heyday by G.F. James and C.G. Lee, Melbourne Graham Publishing, 1975.

that the bedrooms of the house had been totally destroyed. Maggie Della Torre was partly covered by the smashed bedstead. He searched for the children by feeling his way in the dark, the high winds preventing him from keeping a light. The children were both alive when he found them and he managed to carry them to his place but they died shortly after. Maggie had sustained severe injury to her spine and died on Sunday night.

The Walhalla Chronicle, November 2, 1900 in its account of the tragedy reported:

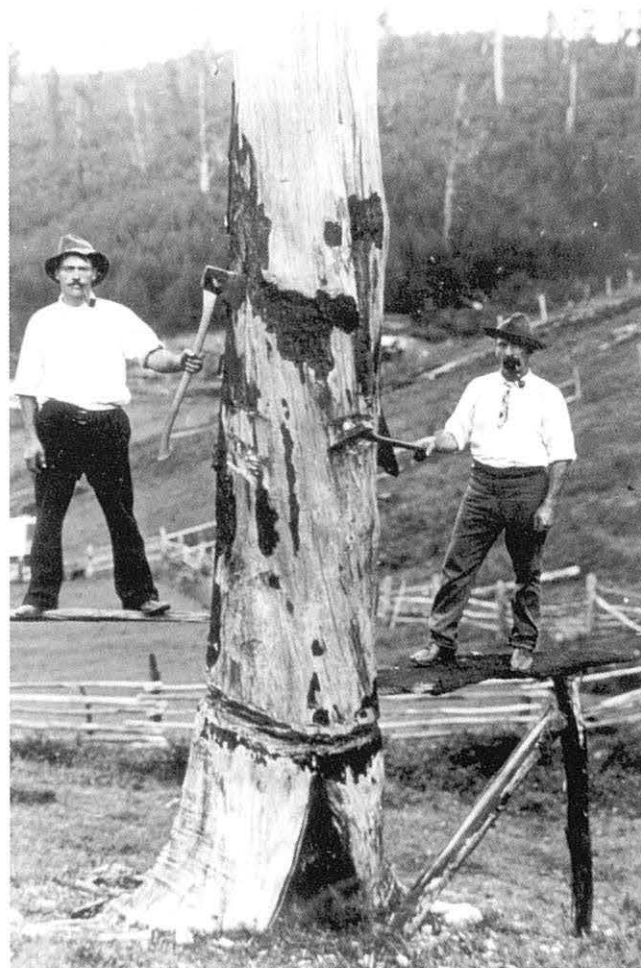
Mr Della Torre was also injured in the back and legs and as he was suffering severely from the shock, it was thought prudent not to inform him of the further loss he had sustained through his wife's death. A little daughter, Mary, aged 7, had a miraculous escape; it is thought she too heard the noise of the falling tree and had left the room, otherwise it was impossible for her to escape serious injury or perhaps death.

... The funeral of the two young victims took place on Sunday afternoon last, the procession being indeed a lengthy one. Mr. Cullinan read the burial service in a very impressive manner. The funeral of Mrs Della Torre took place on Tuesday afternoon last, the Rev. Father Hoyne officiating at the graveside.

Maggie (Domenica Margherita) Della Torre was the daughter of Giovanni and Domenica (nee Omodei) De Luis who, with their other children, Angelina, Giovanni (Jack) and Margherita Domenica (Lena) migrated to Australia from Tirano in the 1880s. They settled in Walhalla where William was born in 1891. Another child, Peter, died as an infant in 1892. Angelina married Giovanni Guatta from Viano and they lived in Walhalla until their deaths in 1940 and 1948. Lena married Bortolo (Bob) Ferrari from Tirano and after the mines in Walhalla closed, moved to Moe where they farmed. They named their house Valtellina. Jack died in Bairnsdale in 1964, aged 89. The parents, Giovanni and Domenica De Luis, both died in 1918.

Poverty Point

Gold was discovered in Walhalla in 1863 and by the 1880s and 1890s the town was at the height of its prosperity. The population reached 4,000 by 1900. Many Italian speaking pioneers, mostly from Valtellina, an alpine region in Lombardy, Italy and from the Poschiavo Valley in



Woodcutters Peter De Bondi [left] and Steve Armanasco clearing land probably at the De Bondi property 5 kilometres north of Walhalla, c1910.

Switzerland, settled in and around Walhalla,¹ some to seek for gold, most to take advantage of the work required in its production. Wood to feed the hungry furnaces, became the second largest industry in Walhalla and the Italians were the main providers of this resource for the mines.

There were miles and miles of tramways around the mountains leading to the mines in and around Walhalla.² These tramways were the means whereby horses pulled the 'trams' loaded with the wood to feed the mine furnaces. The Long Tunnel extended mine had the only two light steam locomotives. Some of the Italians were contracted to supply the mines and they in turn would subcontract the splitters to do the cutting and the carting. Number One South Tram (1885-1910) was owned by the Long Tunnel Mining Company and operated by G. V. Morgan.³

Along this tram, on the banks of the Thomson River about three miles from the town of Walhalla, a community of Italians made their home. This township was known as Poverty



A group of Walhalla Italians making use of the 'tram' along the Long Tunnel Extended Tramway. Included in the photograph are: Tony Guatta, Peter De Bondi, Sam Cabassi, Giovanni Guatta, Mary and Rita Guatta, Mary and Rita Ferrari, Seve Armanasco, Bob Ferrari, Luigi Pianta, Peter Guatta, Tony De Bondi and Dominic Danesi.

Point. In his book *My Walhalla*,⁴ Lou de Prada, whose family lived at Poverty Point, described with warmth and remembered happiness the dwellings and the lifestyle of these pioneers: they built bark houses since bark was easily procurable and very efficient, providing warm in winter and coolness in summer. They built close against the hillsides, digging into the hills for shelter and for level flooring. Each house had a cellar in which milk and cheese were kept fresh in the summer heat. The woodcutters used the remains of anthills as mortar to keep the floor hard and to cement the stones in the fireplaces and chimneys.

Most families were self-sufficient. They grazed some livestock, enabling them to make their own cheese and grew vegetables on higher land, only needing to buy such things as flour, meat, and kerosene at the stores in Walhalla. They were not destitute as the name Poverty Point might suggest, so called because no gold was found there in spite of great effort. After unsuccessful prospecting, the miners left the area which, as far as they were concerned, was aptly named.

Life must have been extremely difficult for the families at Poverty Point. We know that they were living and working in a very isolated area, three miles from school and town. The work was physically demanding and dangerous, often resulting in severe injury as documented in the hospital records and the *Walhalla Chronicle*. Sometimes they had to wait six to nine months

before they were paid their weekly salary of £2.10. The climate was extreme: cold in winter and hot in summer.

When the hills around Walhalla were denuded, the Long Tunnel Mining Company constructed a bridge across the Thomson River providing access to the forests on the Moondara side. On 22 June 1900 the Poverty Point 'Steel' Bridge was opened enabling the tramway to be extended. Fire destroyed the wooden decking of the bridge in 1944 but the steel structure remained. It was redecked in 1976 and stands as a memorial to the wood suppliers and their families, many of whom are sadly now forgotten.⁵

A visit to the area today belies the fact that people once lived there. That they kept livestock and were able to grow vegetables and fruit trees is remarkable given that the terrain is extremely steep. In many ways however the conditions were not dissimilar to those of their place of origin in mountainous parts of Italy and Switzerland.



Examples of settlements in Valtellina and Val Poschiavo

In the town

The Italians of Walhalla have become identified with Poverty Point most likely because of the significant number of families who settled there. The incident of the drowning of the six people etched the site in the memories of those who knew Walhalla. The following examples are evidence of the fact that from the 1870s or before Italians lived in the town itself and in other areas around Walhalla.

Michelangelo Stub Monteagresti, from Livorno, was the manager and shareholder of several gold mines in Walhalla in the 1870s including the *Welcome Golden Dream*, the *Evening Star*, the *Longfellow* and the *Empress* in which Lucio, Pietro and Angelo Monigatti from Brusio also had shares.⁶

Michelangelo's house occupied the fourth block north of the State School. The present school building is on the school's original site. On the opposite side of the road, was the office of The Longfellow Gold Mining Company of which he was manager.⁷

Antonio Simonin was the proprietor of the Alpine Hotel from at least 1882 until 1884 when the licence was transferred to Victor Campagnola.⁸

In 1898, Giovanni Guatta from Viano, obtained a colonial wine licence and he and his wife Angelina (nee De Luis) operated a wine shop opposite the State School until 1913. Pietro and Luigi Pianta from Tirano held the licence from 1893 until 1898, with the exception of the years 1895 and 1896.

Bernardo Plozza and Giacomo Rinaldi also lived in the centre of the town.

And around the town

The rate payers roll of 1908-1909 shows that there were little pockets where Walhalla Italians either lived or farmed together.

The word 'hut' designated on the rates most likely indicates a garden or a farm where the rate payer grazed a cow, grew hay or oats and planted vegetables and fruit trees. One such person was my grandfather, Giovanni Guatta. His hut in this case was a three-room building with a stone fireplace where he would spend his free time to tend his crops. After retirement he would journey up daily, returning home in the evening with a log of wood on his shoulder to keep the fires burning.

The rate books show that there were four Italians living or farming in Britannia Gully. They were John Cabassi, wood cutter from Tovo, Peter De Campo splitter, Giovanni Guatta, contractor from Viano and Giovanni De Luis, charcoal burner from Tirano. Giovanni Guatta was also a wine licensee who paid rates on a shop/dwelling in Main Street. Dominic Danesi, splitter from Livorno and Bortolo Ferrari, miner from Tirano were living in Consuls Gully. John Frantalini, James Franketti and Antonio De Bondi, who all worked as splitters, were listed as rate payers on land along the route of Mitchell's Tram.

John De Prada, Luis Bertozzi, Steven Armanasco, one of the De Bondi, Michael Magatelli, Andrew Ferrari and Joseph Omodei were all splitters who had properties along the South Tram. In addition to working as splitters or contractors, men often followed other pursuits in their quest to make a living. For example, Steve Armanasco had at least one mine along the Britannia Gully. At Ostler's Creek between Walhalla and Toongabbi, Luigi Iseppi from Brusio, Switzerland had two properties with a house and barn on one and a house or land on the other. Also at Ostler's Creek were Lydia Bertino, farmer and Antonio Merlo, contractor from Viano. Dominic Rinaldi, Robert Battista and Benjamin Partoza, all splitters, had huts on land along Number 7 Tram.

Along the Long Tunnel Extended Tramway, the De Bondi family from Tirano had three properties with huts on two of them and a house and garden on the other. The rate payer was Laurence De Bondi. Two other Italians had huts along this tramway: James Plozza from Viano, and Peter De Campo, also a splitter.

In addition to these small communities of Italians, other single entries are noted on the rate payers roll. Antonio Bruni, miner from Centra, Switzerland, owned a house on the Eastern Branch of Stringers Creek. Charles Fermio, miner, occupied a house on the Slaughterhouse Spur. Peter Molinari, miner from Tirano, lived on Tubal Cain Road. Antonio Plozza had a hut at Coronation, an area named after its principle mine.

Two of the tramways were operated by Italians. Both were horse-drawn and owned by the Long Tunnel Gold Mining Company. Borserini's Tramway, operating prior to 1900, was located along the Old Walhalla Road, while



Giovanni and Angelina Guatta's dwelling and wine shop second from left, opposite Walhalla State School.

Campagnola's Tramway operated between 1900 and 1910 and ran from the Maiden Town Ridge to South Eureka Creek.⁹ Gherardo Borserini had migrated from Stazzone, Italy.

In Walhalla at present two people are revealing much on the history of the town and its residents. Greg Hansford at the Walhalla Museum is researching the old chronicles and the *Gippsland Times*. Another Walhalla resident, John Aldersea, is collecting a vast amount of information about people and places. He has scoured the hills, looking for old mines and for signs of former habitations. Because of his work it has been possible to locate my grandfather Giovanni Guatta's patch and the remains of his stone fireplace. We now know where our great-grandparents, the De Luis, and the De Bondi families lived and the location of Steve Armanasco's mines.

Walhalla's Italians Respected

The Walhalla Miner report of the funeral of the six people drowned in the Thomson River paid tribute to the Walhalla Italians referring to '...their peaceable demeanour, their anxiety to give assistance when needed for worthy causes'. *The Walhalla Chronicle* testified to this assessment

on many occasions. Three examples are cited here. On September 15, 1897 the paper reported:

The Italian residents of the district through Mr C Della Torre have handed the secretary of the local hospital a sum of £12.45 subscribed by them in aid of the institution. Mr. Renshaw desires to express his thanks for the same.

In the issue of December 13, 1897, the chronicle advised its readers that the Italian residents were forming a society to provide medical and nursing services for any of their countrymen who might meet with accidents. The initiative was instigated by Mr Rinaldi who received 'good promises of support'. At the second annual banquet of the Italian Medical Aid Society, the chairman Domenic Moratti led a discussion about securing names of those in need. Mr. N. Ferrari sang and the company were also entertained by members of the Choral Society comprising E. Bassarollo, G. del Frate, G. Giudici, G. Armanasco, G. Pelusi, D. Cabassi, D. Della Torre, P. Fopoli and A. Rossi.

The Italian choir came forward to perform for many causes, such as the occasion when they sang with the Mountaineer Band on November 4, 1898 to raise money for the rotunda. The public

showed appreciation by subscribing £9.1.9. The following week, a letter to the newspaper, thanked the band and the choir and it was noted that prior to their performance that day, the members of the choir had the sad duty of farewelling one of their countrymen, Stefano Pefferini who had died of miner's complaint.

Italians participated in the legal processes of the day. From 1879 until 1914 the following men served as jurors at the Walhalla Court, many of them more than once: Giuseppe Antoniolo, Antonio Lanfranchi, Luigi Bruni, Victor Campagnola, Giovanni Guatta, Michael Magatelli and Antonio Merlo.¹⁰

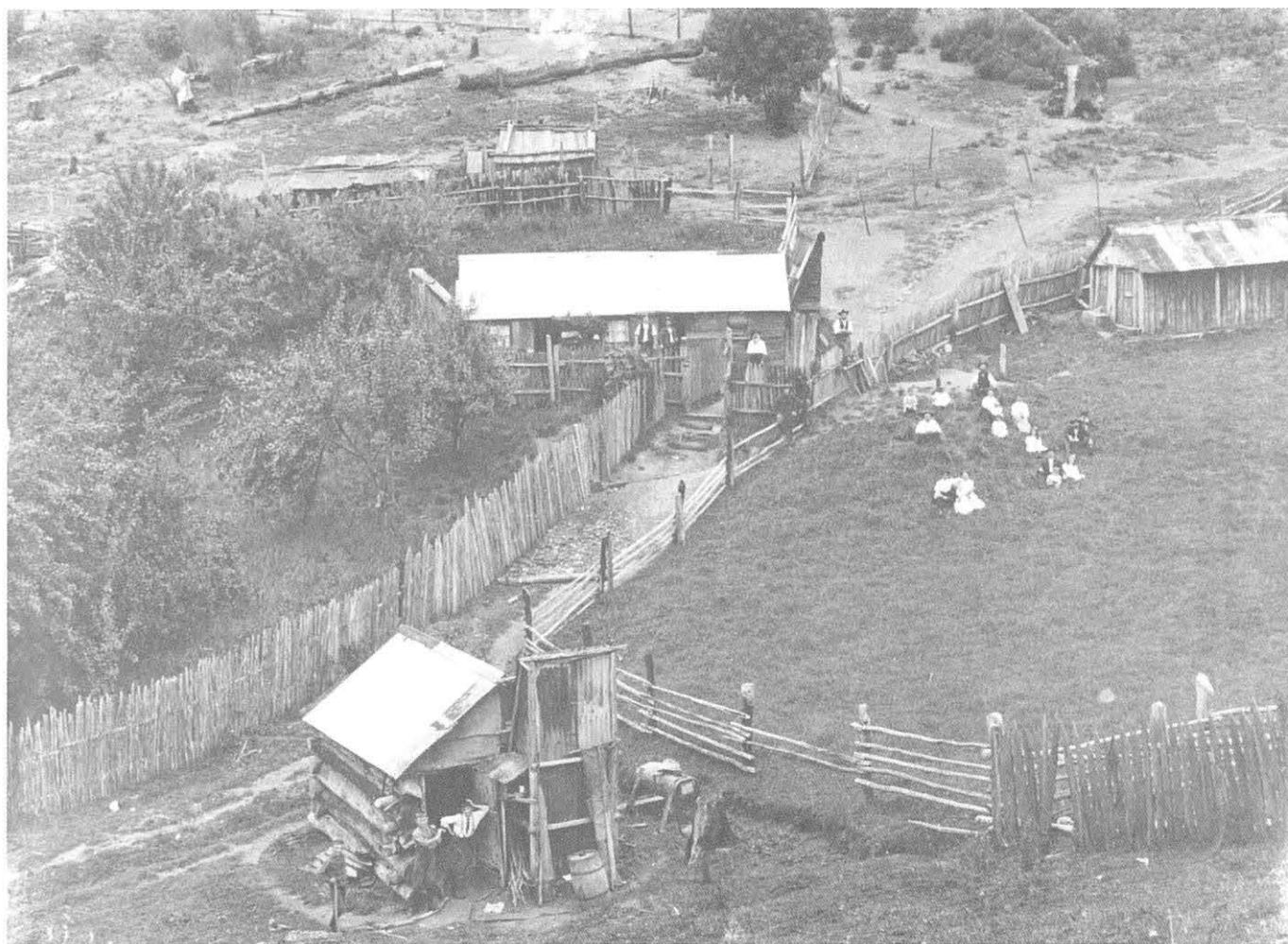
Two unpublished memoirs add another dimension to the high esteem in which Italians were held in Walhalla. Both articles convey the warmth extended towards Italians and an appreciation of their personal and cultural qualities. James Hill, born in Walhalla in 1901 recalled:

Italians were good honest people, they spoke in a very broken English and many funny stories were told about them. ...A relative of mine was walking the children, one in a pram and the other, two or three years old, alongside. Old Mr De Bondi stopped, then, smiling and pointing to one and then the other remarked, 'same farder the two'.¹¹

Isabella Frances Cleugh in her *Childhood Reminiscences of Early Walhalla*, remembered:

Once a fortnight on Saturday afternoons, the Italian woodcutters would come into Walhalla for their fortnightly rations. Some could speak very good English some pigeon, some none. The ones who could not speak English had a spokesman with them. I believe it was very funny in the shops listening to them but good humour prevailed and according to the shopkeepers, they were good payers.

About 4 pm on Saturday afternoons they would track in and, having finished their



The De Bondi family's property on the area known as 'Kelly's' about 5 kilometres north of Walhalla. Members of the De Bondi, Ferrari, Pianta, Cabassi, Guatta and Danesi families in the property of De Bondi.

shopping had a pow-wow with their resident countrymen. They would track back to their huts about 8 pm. After they left the township they'd start singing. Some of them had splendid voices and when singing quartets it was a great treat to listen to them. I was told some of them were clever musicians, both vocalists and instrumentalists. Some people had them set, and their sin, in their eyes, was they always took a supply of wine back with their rations. People forget that wine was their national beverage and never once did I hear of an Italian woodcutter being drunk and incapable.¹²

Naming Walhalla's Italians

One of the initial aims of my research was to locate and record as many Italian names as possible. The significant presence of Italians in Walhalla, while being generally acknowledged in writings by historians has been largely anonymous. In some cases I have found it difficult to track people and match names on one set of records with those on another. For example, Ben De Luis appears only in the baptismal records. Besides the De Luis people already mentioned, I have found a Matthew [Matteo] De Luis listed in naturalisation records and on the electoral rolls. One also needs to be aware of the custom of anglicising, or using another name if the father and son or the mother and daughter had the same name. Sometimes a person was known by his/her second or third name. Antonio Bruni's name, for example, was Giuseppe Antonio Luigi Bruni. Even surnames can be tricky. In Italian records, the De Bondi family were known as D'Abbondi.¹³ Most of Walhalla pioneers had a poor command of English and were not able to correctly spell their names which were entered into official records according to the phonetic interpretation of the person who wrote them down.

Many Italian names appear in Catholic church records. Walhalla's Catholic church, St Patrick's, was part of the parish of Cowwarr and a priest travelled large distances to celebrate mass, baptisms and funerals.

Italians Leave Walhalla

By the time the Long Tunnel Gold Mine closed in 1914, most of the Italians had left Walhalla.¹⁴ They were not alone in leaving. The town began to die as one after another of its enterprises closed down. For years the town waited to be connected by a train line to Moe and the rest of Victoria. Ironically, when the line was completed in 1910, the gold had started to dry up.

However, Walhalla has never entirely died. My grandparents remained in Walhalla and for most of their descendants it is a special place. Over many years, we have seen attempts to recapture something of its heyday and today it is looking as good as it has ever looked in my memory. And what is most pleasing is the emphasis that is being put on bringing to light its history, a history in which the Italians of Walhalla had a significant role.

The Italian Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the loan of photographs by the author for this article.

NOTES

- ¹ Card Indexes to Naturalisation Certificates, VPRS 1190
- ² Terry and Brenda Jenkins, *Firewood Tramways of the Walhalla Mines 1865-1915*, T & B. J Publications, Yarra Junction Victoria. p. 29. The authors walked over 93 kms of firewood tramway cuttings within a seven kilometre radius of Walhalla while researching their book.
- ³ *ibid* p. 43.
- ⁴ Lou De Prada, *My Walhalla*, Morwell 1978
- ⁵ Victorian Government Website, www.heritage.vic.gov.au
- ⁶ *The Walhalla Chronicles* 1872
- ⁷ The Department of Natural Resources and Environment's Survey Maps
- ⁸ VPRS 1500
- ⁹ Terry and Brenda Jenkins, *op.cit.* pp. 94, 99
- ¹⁰ Walhalla County Court Judges and Common Jurors Note Books, VPRS 1501
- ¹¹ James Hill, *My Memoirs of Walhalla as a Child*, unpublished
- ¹² Isabella Frances Cleugh, *Childhood Reminiscences of Early Walhalla*, unpublished c1944, p.24
- ¹³ Kathleen Smyth, *D'Abbondi, A Family History*, unpublished

BAPTISMS RECORDED IN THE BAPTISMAL REGISTER FOR WALHALLA HELD IN THE CATHOLIC PRESBYTERY AT HEYFIELD

Date	Name of infant	Parents	Sponsors
11 October 1891	De Luis, William	John De Luis and Domenica Omodei	Andrew Ferrari and Domenica De Luis
11 October 1891	Plozza, Mary	Bernard Plozza and Katie Ferrari	Bob Ferrari and Mary Bruni
9 May 1897	De Prada, Jack	Jack De Prada and Madeleine Cabassi	John Guatta and Angelina de Luis
12 September 1897	Campagnola, Ernest		
12 September 1897	Gray, Hannah (Annie)		
23 December 1897	De Bondi, Catherine	Lawrence De Bondi and Margarita Monti	Antoni Omodei and Maggie Della Torre. On Catherine's birth certificate the witness was Mrs. De Luis who probably acted as midwife for Katie's birth
5 June 1898	Guatta, John Clement	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	James Pianta and Maggie Della Torre
5 November 1898	Cabassi, William	John Cabassi and Susan Patterson	Dominic Cabassi and Ellen Shallue
12 December 1898	Canali, Anne	Matthew Canali and Mary Tippet	
12 February 1899	Della Torre, Dominic	Dominic Della Torre and Maggie De Luis	
9 April 1899	Guatta, Antonio	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Andrew Ferrari and Madelena De Prada
11 Feb. 1900	Molinari, Margaret Madelina	Peter Molinari and Lucy Senini	
9 September 1900	Serini, John	James Senini and Kate Armanasco	Domenico Della Torre and Maggie Della Torre
9 September 1900	Meneghini, Mary	Bernardo Meneghini and Margaret Bonazzi	Dominic Cabassi and C Bonazzi
4 November 1900	Guatta, Peter	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Andrew Rossi and Rosa Moratti
13 July 1902	Guatta, Dominic	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Domenic Danesi and Lena De Luis
9 April 1903	Molinari, Catherine	Peter Molinari and Lucy Senini	Bortolo Ferrari and Lena De Luis
12 July 1903	Guatta, Mary	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Ben De Luis and Lena Ferrari
12 June 1904	Ferrari, Marie Antoinette	Bortolo Ferrari and Lena De Luis	John De Luis and Angelina Guatta
11 September 1904	Sala, Sarah	Joe Sala and Domenica Bombodari	James Bombodari and Domenica De Luis
2 February 1905	Plozza, Mary Ellen	Antonio Plozza and Amelia Battriotti	Louis Pianta and Ellen Shallue
12 February 1905	Guatta, Benjamin	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Bortolo Ferrari and Lena Ferrari
24 December 1905	Guatta, Natale	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Benjamin De Luis and Mary Merlo
	Magatelli, Sammi	Michael Magatelli and Rosa Moratti	Andrew Rossi and Ellen Shallue
18 March 1906	Patrick		
31 March 1906	Ferrari, Margherita Domenica	Bortolo Ferrari and Lena De Luis	John Guatta and Rosa Magatelli
24 November 1906	Plozza, Arthur Antonio	Antonio Plozza and Ethel Seers	Antonio De Bondi and Frances Kennedy
2 June 1907	Fermio, Edna	Charles Fermio and Mary Briggs	Thomas Walker and Helen Fermio
7 July 1907	Ferrari, Stephen John	Bortolo Ferrari and Lena De Luis	Andrew Ferrari and Mrs. De Prada
6 October 1907	Guatta, Angelina Margherita	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Patrick Ferrari and Rosa Magatelli
4 April 1909	Guatta, Francis	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Luis Pianta and Lena Ferrari
20 December 1909	Bruni, Mary	Antonio Bruni and Catherine Spargo	
17 April 1910	Guatta, Angelina	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Ben De Luis and Maryanne Sparks
1 May 1910	Cabassi, John Ivan	John Cabassi and Susan Patterson	Abel Artgani and Flora Richards
5 June 1910	Ferrari, John	Bortolo Ferrari and Lena De Luis	Andrew Rossi and Rosa Magatelli
14 February 1912	Guatta, Joseph	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	Domenic Danesi and Marie De Bondi
30 January 1916	Guatta, Charles	John Guatta and Angelina De Luis	John Walker and Menna Wurf
July 1925	Merlo, Margaret Ursula	John Peter Merlo and Ursula Doyle	

BURIALS IN THE RECORDS OF THE WALHALLA CEMETERY, 1877-1970

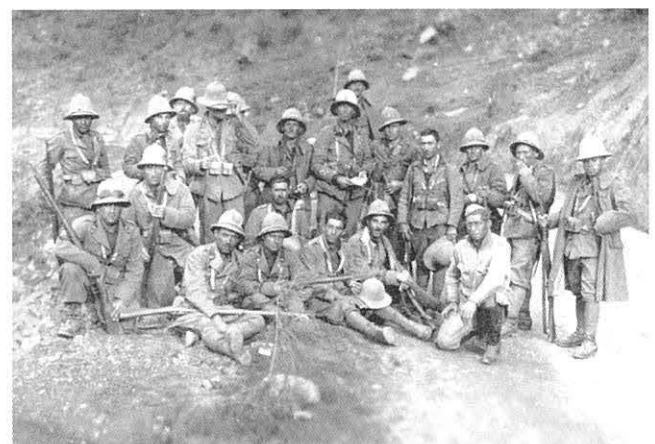
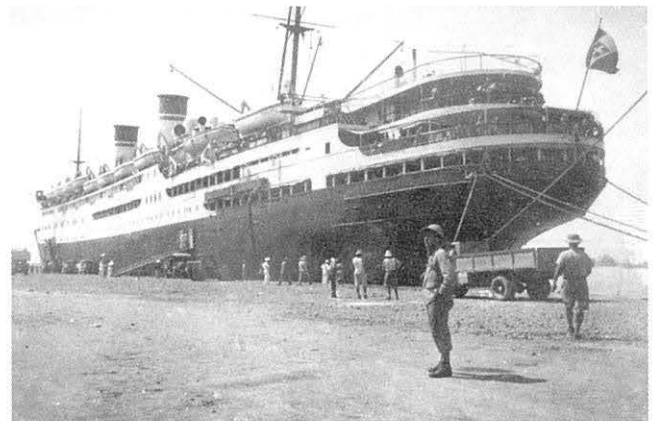
Name	Date of burial	Age
Monigatti, Lucio	1877	
Pianta, Peter	1883	
Ballserino, Stephen	1885-10-13	
Campagnola, ?	1888-05-28	2 months
Fermio, Basil	1888-06-18	4 months
Saligari, Antonio	1890-09-11	
Fermio, ?	1891-02-06	still born
Magatelli, Michael	1891-07-09	
Senini, (daughter of Giuseppe)	1892-11-01	
Della Torre, Peter	1894-07-05	infant
Pefferino, Bernardo	1898-10-07	
Tozni, Giovanni	1898-12-22	
Bonazzi, Luis	1900-02-01	12 years
Bonazzi, Luisa	1900-02-01	13 years
De Maroni, George	1900-02-01	30 years
Ferrari, John	1900-02-01	34 years
Novalia, Peter	1900-02-01	36 years
Pelusi, Joseph	1900-01-30	27 years
Della Torre, Dominic	1900-10-28	20 months
De Luis, William	1900-10-28	9 years
Della Torre, Margaret	1900-10-30	23 years
Fermio, ?	1902-12-16	still born
Fermio, Mrs.	1902-12-18	
Campagnola, Victor	1903-0-07	
Campagnola, Adelina	1904-07-19	infant
Bruni, Luigi	1905-01-08	
Bruni, Charles	1905-01-29	
Plozza (daughter of Antonio)	1905-02-20	
Guatta, Begniamino	1905-09-11	10 months
Guatta, Natale	1906-03-12	3 months
De Campo, ?	1909-11-20	
Guatta, Angelina	1910	infant
Guatta, Giuseppe	1912-10-25	3 months
Guatta, Angelina Margherhita	1913-06-25	6
Rinaldi, Giacomo	1917-10-14	
De Luis, Domenica	1918-05-12	72
De Luis, Giovanni	1918-05-29	75
Zampatti, Victor	1936-03-07	
Guatta, Giovanni	1940-04-06	71
Guatta, Angelina	1948-07-15	75
De Prada, Madeleine	1949-04-25	
Guatta, Dominic	1970-06-24	68

NEW MATERIAL

An important collection of over 90 original photographs on the life experiences of Francesco Aloe as soldier in Abyssinia, POW in Britain and migrant in Australia was donated to the Italian Historical Society by his daughter Phil Magris. Francesco was born in Sambiasse, Calabria, in 1914. As a young man of 21, he was conscripted into Italy's Abyssinian war. Upon his return to Italy in 1937, Francesco married Rosina Bonacci, a young woman from Decollatura, a town near Sambiasse.

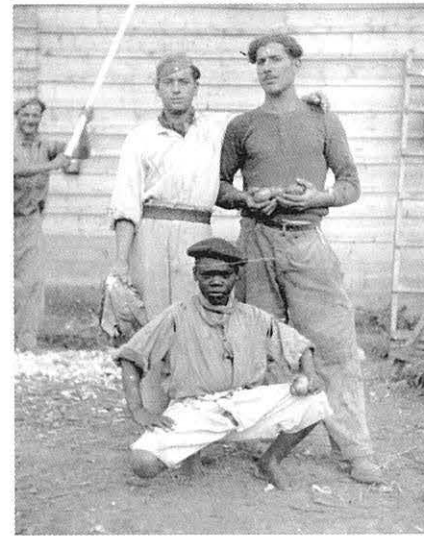


At the outbreak of the Second World War, Francesco was called up again and sent to Libya where he was taken prisoner by British soldiers. After spending two long and painful years in a POW camp in the Middle East, he was transported in 1942 to a camp in England from which he was then sent out to work on a farm. He was repatriated to Italy in 1946.





MATRICOLA
137-779. SOLDA
ALOE FRANCES
CHIEF POW
CENTRE
MIDDLE-
EAST



PRISONER OF WAR. POST.
PRIGIONIERE DI GUERRA. N° 15602.
SOLDATO
ALOE FRANCESCO 39: PRISONER.
OF WAR. CAMPO. GRAN. BRETAGNA
SALUTI E BACI TUO SPOSO FRANCESCO
ALLA. SIGNORA.
ALOE BONACCI. ROSINA.
DECOLLATURA. CERRISI.
PROV. CATANZARO
ITALIA

In the after-war years, work was very scarce in Italy, particularly in the south. For thousands of Italians emigration was the only opportunity for a better future. Australia was for Francesco the preferred destination supported by the fact that his uncle Michele Sesto sponsored him out. He arrived in Melbourne in 1949 and his wife Rosina and their three children – Grace, Domenico and Philomena – followed in 1953.

Within a few years from his arrival, Francesco also sponsored the emigration of his five brothers. Early in 1960s he joined the Victorian Railways where he worked until retirement in 1999. The photographs beautifully illustrate his experience as a soldier in Abyssinia and many salient moments in his life as a migrant in Australia

Thank you to Phil Magris for entrusting us with the history of her family.



THE PINZONE BUSINESSES IN STAWELL AND ARARAT

by Joe Pinzone

Joe is the son of Vince and Josie Pinzone. In this article he honours the memory of his father and tells the story of the contribution of the Pinzone brothers to the development of Ararat.

Vincenzo (known as Vince) Pinzone was the son of Giuseppe and Giuseppa nee Gemmola. He was born in Lingua, Salina, on the Aeolian Islands, north-east of Sicily. He sailed to Australia from Naples on 28 June 1913, aged 14, on the Orient steam ship *Ophir*. Soon after his arrival in Melbourne, he worked in his uncle Charlie Gemmola's fruit shop in Ballarat. A few years later, with the experience he gained, he went into business with his cousin Charlie Strangio in a small fruit shop in Main Street, Stawell, at the foot of the Grampians.



Vince Pinzone soon after his arrival in Australia in 1913.



The Wimmera Café in Stawell soon after its opening.

In 1917, he was called up as a reservist to serve in the Italian Army during the First World War. He was attached to the Australian Army and sailed to Europe aboard an Australian troop ship. On arrival in Southampton, England, he fell ill with the Spanish flu which was raging at the time and was transferred to a hospital tent where several of his companions perished. After he recovered, he was sent to the Italian Army to serve on the border with Austria, taking supplies to the front. For his war service he received a certificate of thanks and appreciation from the Italian Government.

Vince returned to Stawell in 1919 to continue to run the fruit shop business in partnership with Charlie Strangio. In 1924 they built nearby the exclusive Wimmera Café in which they served meals and sold fruit and vegetables wholesale and retail. The café soon became well known, as it boasted the most modern soda fountains imported from the United States. It became the social meeting place for the people of Stawell and the district, most of them graziers and farmers of anglo-celtic origin. During the famous annual Stawell Gift foot running carnival, the café did a roaring trade, sometimes remaining open until 4.00 am.

Many of Vince's and Charlie's relations worked in the café, including Vince's brother Gaetano, known as Tom, his sisters Celie, Sera and Nancy,



The sumptuous wedding of Josephine Taranto to Vince Pinzone in Sydney in 1928 demonstrated the wealth of the community from the Aeolian Islands in Australia at the time.

his other brother Joe and his cousin Jack Costa, who was only sixteen when he arrived in Stawell in 1925. Jack drove the horse and dray for deliveries as far as Halls Gap in the Grampians and picked up goods for the café at the Stawell railway station. Soon after his arrival, Jack became popular in town for saving a small girl from drowning in a dam used by the gold miners.

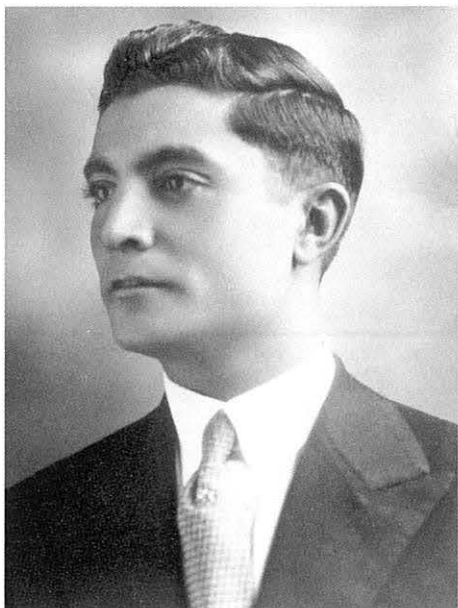
On 7 June 1928 Vince married Josephine (Josie) Taranto at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. Josie was born in Korumburra, Victoria, on 1 June 1907 to parents also from the Aeolian Islands, like Vince. Soon after Josie's birth they moved and settled in Erina via Gosford, New South Wales, where they had an orchard and grew vegetables. After a brief honeymoon in the Blue Mountains, Vince and Josie made their home in Skene Street, Stawell. Their first child, a girl, died of meningitis in infancy. Two boys followed, Joe born in 1930 and Bob in 1932. From 1935 to 1946 four more sons were born.

Vince was a keen football follower. His love for

Australian rules started, as the story goes, when he ran a stall at the Stawell Football Club home games at Central Park. He was donating oranges to the Stawell players for refreshment at three-quarter time. His allegiance to his home team continued for many years, even after he moved to Ararat years later.

In 1933 due to ill-health Vince, sold his share in the Wimmera Café to his partner Charlie Strangio. On the advice of his doctor he took a long holiday and sailed to Italy with his wife Josie and sons Joe and Bob to visit Vince's parents. The family returned to Australia in 1934 and in 1935 Vince bought the Plaza Café at the west-end of Barkly Street in Ararat. The shop also carried a small stock of fruit and vegetables.

During the Second World War the business went through lean years because of rationing of goods. However, the fruit and vegetables side and the milk bar trade kept the business afloat. There was enough petrol for the shop's Fargo truck to travel to Ballarat's wholesale markets for provisions once a week.



The Pinzone brothers. From top: Joe Pinzone b. 1897, Vince Pinzone b. 1899, Tom Pinzone b. 1908.

When Vince started the Plaza Café in Ararat, his brothers Joe and Tom were already running the Bon Ton Café at the east-end of Barkly Street. The BonTon was later renamed Town Hall Café and the Plaza became Pinzone Bros. Café. Both cafés sold wholesale and retail fruit and vegetables, confectionery, served morning teas and supper, and had soda fountains. The Plaza Café sold Swallows ice-cream and the Town Hall sold Peter's ice-cream, although in the early days Joe made his own ice-cream with a machine in the basement of the Bon Ton Café. In 1933 Joe returned to Lingua to marry Maria Acunto from the neighbouring town of Santamarina. Upon their return to Australia they took up residence behind their café in Ararat and they had five children.

In 1939 Vince and his brother Tom bought from their brother-in-law Joe Natoli, another combined fruit shop and milk bar in Ararat's Barkly Street, where Robert Bates' Majors Mensland shop is now located. Tom ran this shop with the help of two employees Les Kelly and Pat Farish. Tom's friend Val Canty also helped out on a Sunday.

During the Second World War there was a large camp of American soldiers in Ballarat and many of them came to Ararat on leave. They were very good customers for Tom. They were very fond of milkshakes and were responsible for introducing the first thick shakes in town as they would ask for a large amount of ice-cream to be added to their shakes. Some of these soldiers were Italian-American and often mistook Pat Farish's mother, who did the cleaning for the shop, for Tom's mother. They would beg her to cook a plate of spaghetti, but at that time not many Australian women knew how to cook spaghetti!

Between 1939 and 1946 there were three Pinzone shops in Barkly Street, Ararat, commonly known as the 'Pinzone's Top Shop' run by Vince, the 'Pinzone's Middle Shop' run by Tom and the 'Pinzone's Bottom Shop' run by Joe. The middle shop was sold in 1946 to the Pinzones' cousin Vince Gemmola and his son Vince Jnr, whilst the bottom shop was sold in 1964 by Joe's widow, Maria. This left only one Pinzone shop in Ararat, which continued to operate under the brothers Vince and Tom, who were both excellent salesmen. Like the Wimmera Café in Stawell, Pinzone Bros. milk bar became a meeting place for the locals to socialize. It was particularly popular with young single people and courting couples after the pictures and dances on a Saturday night and after church on Sunday morning.

The shop underwent many renovations and expansions during its years of operation to cater for changing conditions. A tobacconist shop was annexed to the business and groceries were added to the choice of goods for sale. It had expanded into a very large mixed business, trading seven days a week. It was the forerunner to today's modern supermarket. Vince Pinzone built, perhaps, the first cool room in Ararat, with the help of carpenter Peter Jensen. It was constructed of timber and insulation and driven by a condenser in the basement.

Although it was rough by today's standards, it worked very well and was a great boon for storing fruit and vegetables and other perishables. A fruit ripening room, mainly for ripening bananas was also constructed in the basement.

In the late 1950s seven of the Pinzone family members were in partnership in Pinzone Bros: Tom and his wife Connie (nee Natoli) from Sydney and Vince and his sons Joe, Bob, Vince jnr. and Eric. Vince's wife, Josie, had to cater for two shifts of hungry men at mealtime, and often a large extended family of relations. She also provided the staff of the shop with morning and afternoon tea. The aroma of her cooking would waffle into the shop from the kitchen and send

both the customers and the staff mad with hunger. Tom's wife Connie who had a wonderful outgoing personality was quite popular with the customers. Music was her special gift. She was a talented piano player and had a good singing voice. She used to entertain visitors, family and staff in the lounge of the shop's living quarters.

Over the years many Ararat people worked in the shop. Many started their working lives there after school, before going on to make their mark in life. One was John James, the Carlton Football Club Brownlow Medallist, who delivered orders on the shop bike. Some employees gave good service for a number of years. The most notable was Mrs. May Clark, nee McKenzie, who worked at the shop from the age of 14, and became regarded as a member of the family. She worked at the shop for twenty years until she married and then returned some years later for another three years.

Tom and Connie left the partnership when they moved to Sydney with their family in 1964. Vince Pinzone, the founder of Pinzone Bros, died while on holiday in Italy in 1972. The business was carried on by his sons Joe, Bob and Vince jnr. for the next few years, who sold it in 1978.

Pinzone Bros. closed down on 12 July 1998 to make room for a modern redevelopment.



The family of Joe Pinzone in their fruit shop in Barkly Street, Ararat, c.1955.

PAOLO DATTARI, ARCHITECT — A BUILDING

by Ruth Dwyer

In East Melbourne in the 1880s, at the present 33 Grey Street, on the south-west corner of Simpson Street, stood a small building overlooking the Collingwood Drill Ground, now known as Darling Square. An extension to this building was to be erected to the design of the Italian born architect, Paolo Dattari¹. Dattari, born c1850 in

alterations to the property, Louis Jean Suhard, was at this time a confectioner. He had previously been a licensed victualler in Melbourne, but became insolvent in 1862.

Louis Suhard passed away in 1891 aged 58. He was not the owner of the dwelling³. His widow,



No. 33 Grey Street, East Melbourne, showing the six-roomed two-storey extension designed by Paolo Dattari.

Leghorn near Florence, the son of Luigi Dattari, gentleman, and Enrichetta, formerly Maneschit, was one of a number of Italians drawn to the colony of Victoria in the late 1870s. At this time, 1884, Dattari was employed as a draftsman in the engineering section of the Victorian Railways.

The application to build, dated December 2 1884² and naming Paolo Daturri (sic) as the architect, was for a two-storey extension to the dwelling at 33 Grey Street. This involved the demolition of the wooden section of the existing building. Christopher Fry of Coppin Street, Richmond, was named as the builder. The applicant for

Georgiana, died in the August of 1892, leaving her affairs in the hands of her administrator. Her elder son, Louis Henri Lambert Suhard, jeweller of Adelaide, assented to matters being handled by a daughter, Emilie Georgiana Cox. It was revealed that the dwelling with the two-storey extension, completed, was in the ownership of the deceased, Georgiana Suhard. Her husband, Louis Suhard, had taken advantage of the Married Women's Property Act as did many men of business in the late nineteenth century. The probate papers of September 1892 gave the valuation for the eight-roomed brick property, of which six were to Dattari's design, as one thousand, three

hundred pounds⁴. The property had a frontage of thirty-two feet to Grey Street, and, bordering Simpson Street, was seventy-two feet deep. The dwelling still stands today. It shows Dattari's influence in the external Italianate appearance.

Meredith Gould, in the assessment of buildings within the City of Melbourne for the Conservation Study of 1983 gives a citation as follows: *...The two-storey section is classical in style with restrained cornice string courses and segmental pedimented window surrounds...*

The property was listed for auction on 7 November 1998 — *Rarely offered for sale... gracious light filled rooms of warmth and character...a cedar staircase...*⁵. The exterior is of rendered brick, with double-hung sash windows, at present with shutters to those on the ground floor, and decorative ironwork to the upper. Internally the two-storey section contains little of the original. Walls have been replastered, the decorative cornices, ceiling roses and light fittings are no longer there. Nor are there Victorian fireplaces and mantelpieces, architraves or the high skirting boards. The polished cedar staircase, rather narrow, is all that remains.

This is the only building designed by Paolo Dattari located in Melbourne records up to the present time.

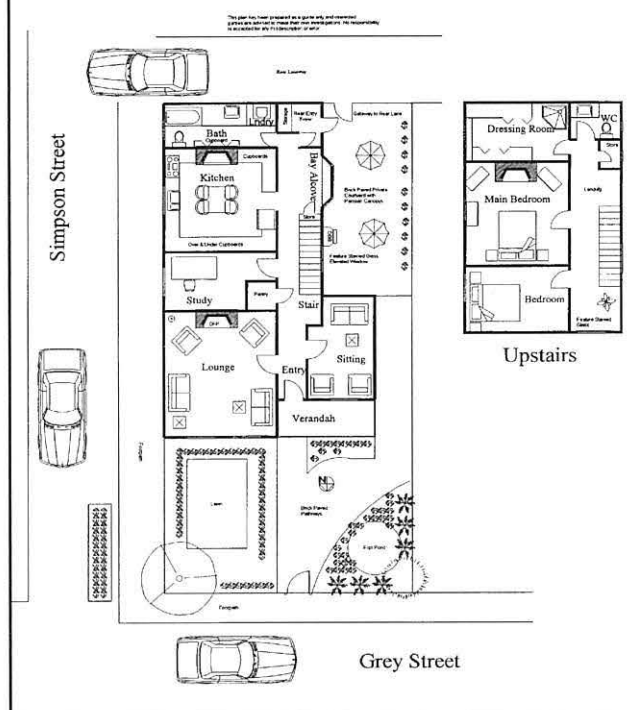
Author's acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to Steve Earl, First National Real Estate, 133 Queens Parade, Clifton Hill for permitting the use of the photograph and floor plan of No.33 Grey Street, East Melbourne.

NOTES

- ¹ For Dattari see Ruth Dwyer, *To Honour a Noted Botanist*, Italian Historical Society Journal, July - December 1996, Volume 4, No.2., reprinted from *The Victorian Naturalist*, Volume 113(4) August 1996. See also Ruth Dwyer, *Paolo Dattari, Jewellery and the Italian Court at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-1881*, Italian Historical Society Journal, July - December 1997, Volume 5, No.2.
- ² PROV VPRS 9462/P3 Unit 4 Reg. No.1226, Melbourne City Council, Index of Architects named in Notices of Intention to Build.
- ³ PROV VPRS 28/P2 Unit 319 46/636 Louis Jean Suhard.
- ⁴ PROV VPRS 28/P2 Unit 346 50/21 Georgiana Suhard.
- ⁵ *The Age* 31 October 1998 p.G17.

33 Grey Street, East Melbourne Corner of Simpson Street Overlooking Darling Square



Floor Plan showing the two storey extension of No. 33 Grey Street, East Melbourne, 1998.

Paolo Dattari was a talented gentleman of many parts. He was born in Leghorn, near Florence, c1850 and was the son of Luigi and Enrichetta Dattari. He emigrated from London to Australia in 1877 as an unassisted passenger aboard the Somersetshire. In 1881 he married in Melbourne Margaret Victoria Yeomans, born in London. In June 1880 Dattari was elected to The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and 1881 he designed a handsome and costly gold and silver presentation casket for Captain Standish, Chief Commissioner of Police in Victoria. The Italian Consul and Commissioner General for Italy, C.A. de Goyzueta, appointed Dattari as one of the Italian jurors at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-1881, together with Carlo Catani, Ettore Checchi and Pietro Baracchi.

THE SCENT OF OUR ISLAND

It all began in 1949. Seven men and four women in the prime of their lives sailed from Genoa to Australia on board the ship *Ugolino Vivaldi* on 28 July 1949. They were a group of friends, all from Capoliveri, one of the main towns on the Island of Elba situated in the Ligurian Sea, opposite Tuscany. Their hearts were full of sorrow for leaving behind the loved ones, knowing that it would take many years before they could be reunited. In their suitcases, some tied up with a string, they packed their best clothes and filled them with the hope of a better life and work opportunity in Australia. Their names were: Gennai Gualberto, Corrado De Angelis, Baldo Sardi, Franco Sardi, Giuseppe Muti, Giovanni Conci, Pietro De Stefani, Giuseppina Muti, Libera Conci, Leonia Conci and Liana Muti Conci.

Many other people from the same town had migrated to Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of them spent long years of hard work cutting sugar cane in North Queensland. In the letters they sent home, which were read out to everybody in the town, most of them would speak well of Australia. So, after the Second World War, it was natural for many others to follow in the footsteps of their *paesani*, many of them sponsored out by relatives.



Cane cutters from Isola d'Elba in north Queensland in 1930s.

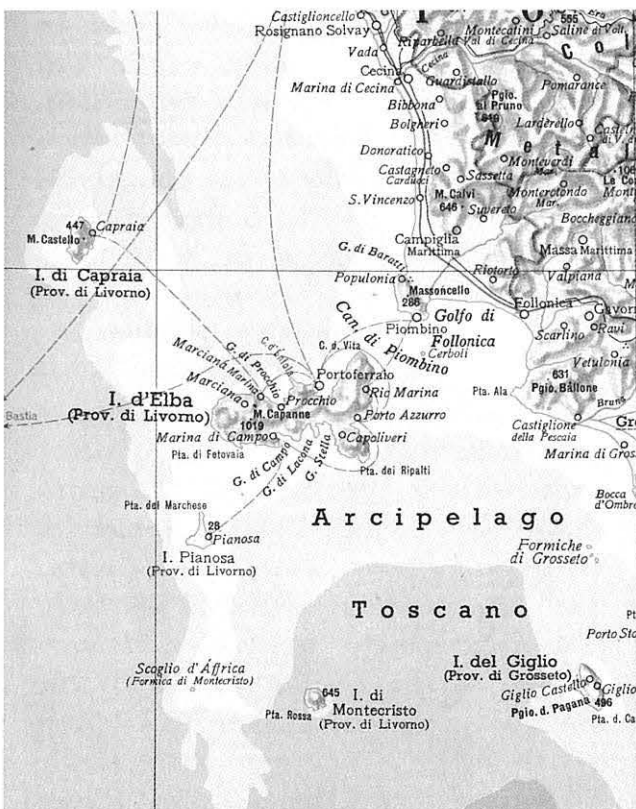
The anguish of leaving their hometown became stronger for these young people on approaching the waters in the proximity of their island, after a day at sea. They decided to say goodbye again to their loved ones in a true 'navigator's way': by sending a message in a bottle, consigned with a prayer to the waves of the deep blue sea they knew so well. The message read:

On board, 29 July 1949

Dear Everybody,

First of all let us hope that good fate will be on our side for this brief message to reach you. You will be comforted to know that we are all well. At this very moment, 10.30am of the 29th, we are navigating next to the Island of Capraia and we can smell the scent of our dear island. We always think of you. Goodbye, we hug you all with lots of love.

La Capraia is an island near Elba. The message was signed by all and placed in an envelope with this address: *Please deliver to the people of Capoliveri who remember us.* On the back of the envelope they wrote: *From a group of emigrants to Australia who left Genoa on 28.7.49 on board the U. Vivaldi.* The bottle with the message was thrown overboard and followed by eyes filled with tears.



A map of the Tuscan Archipelago with the Island of Capraia north-west of the Island of Elba.

After a few months the bottle was caught in the nets of a fisherman from the Island of Elba. The entire population of Capoliveri, who fondly remembered them, read the message. The letter was finally given to Silvana Giusti, the sweet-heart of one of the signatories, Gualberto Gennai. It was an event remembered by many on the island for a long time.

Silvana and Gualberto married a few years later and settled in Melbourne. The message was forgotten until recently when it was found together with other family papers by Gualberto and Silvana during a recent visit back to Capoliveri. It is now in Melbourne where it has brought together some of the original members of the group who now call Australia home.



Three members of the original group of young immigrants from Isola d'Elba reunited in Melbourne in 1999. From left: Gualberto Gennai, Corrado De Angelis and Baldo Sardi.

Bordo 29.4.49
Carissimi tutti
Speriamo anzi tutto che il vostro
sia stato favorevole a noi nel
poter giungere queste brevi righe
che vi serviamo di conforto
poiché possiamo assicurarvi che
stiamo tutti bene. In questo
momento e precisamente all
ore 10.30 del 29.4
di fianco alle Copie
quindi sentiamo via
della nostra casa, io
sono sempre e ci
con tutto il vostro
Affettuosi
Corrado



The message written on board the ship Ugolino Vivaldi in 1949.

BENVENUTO ROSSI: MASTER OF ROSES

by Laurie Burchell

This is an edited version of the article 'Coburg: Rose Capital of Victoria' published in Search: Journal of the Coburg Historical Society, No. 57, June 1999. We wish to thank the author for his permission to reproduce it.

Benvenuto Vincenzo Natale Rossi was born on Christmas Eve, 1860 at Casale Monferrato, near Asti in Piedmont, northern Italy. His father was a surgeon and fought with Garibaldi in the *Risorgimento* for the unification of Italy. He was shot dead in action in the late 1860s. Young Rossi was apprenticed to a printing firm in Turin and became a skilled lithographer. In 1884 he was commissioned to illustrate 3000 copies of the Koran in Egypt, a job which took three years to complete. In 1887 he sailed from Port Said on a ship bound for Australia and possibly America. It was his intention to migrate to United States. However he stopped in Melbourne where, at the Italian Club, he met a friend who convinced him to stay awhile and secured him a position as lithographer with Troedel & Cooper, a printing firm involved in the publication of material for the Great Centennial Exhibition of 1888. His great knowledge of lithography landed him with a lucrative job and so he never reached the United States. He settled down in Melbourne and after marrying a young lady of English parentage in 1892, moved from Fitzroy to Coburg.



54 Loch Street, Rossi's first house in Coburg.

Benvenuto had the hobby of growing carnations. One day he met William Buzaglo [Buzaglio] on the tram, on his way to work. Both were amateur gardeners, thus Ben wore a carnation in his

buttonhole and William a rose; naturally they fell into conversation. William soon convinced his newfound friend that growing roses was far more interesting than growing carnations. He gave Ben a couple of plants to get him started. Ben must have embraced rose growing as an alternative occupation to lithography. After a few years he gave up his job with Troedel & Cooper in favour of full-time gardening. There was not enough land around his house in Loch Street, Coburg, so in 1899 he bought four and a half acres in Harding Street, near Nicholson Street, where he built a new house set well back from the street and established a plant nursery in front.

The National Rose Society of Victoria was formed in 1899 and for many years was the only rose society in Australia. Naturally both Buzaglo and Rossi became members. The Society held its inaugural show in Autumn 1900 and from 1901 both an Autumn and a Spring show. Rossi was an early exhibitor but it was not until 1903 that he won any prize. In April 1906 he won the Society's championship gold medal when he finally mastered the art of protecting a bloom. At that show he virtually swept the board taking four first prizes and one second in the six categories available to growers. In spring of the same year he won first prizes in five of the seven sections. This became the pattern for the next five years. Five times he gained the coveted championship gold medal. From 1905 the Society conducted a competition for the best bloom at its monthly meetings. This proved to be a successful means of promoting attendances, with nearly a hundred entries on some occasions. For both the 1905-6 and 1909-10 seasons Rossi was the outright winner. When the Coburg Council conducted rose shows in 1907 and 1909 the first prizes went to him.

For a number of years Rossi continued to grow carnations but by 1907 he stated in his catalogue:

Owing to the success of my rose plants achieved with the public, I have decided to relinquish growing carnations so as to be able to give all my time to the 'Queen of All Flowers'.

The front page of the same catalogue read:

The Nursery and Rose Gardens are open for Inspection Every Day except Sunday. Visitors welcome, purchasers or not.

My Rosaries are well worth a visit. All the best varieties can be seen blooming at any time, more especially from the middle of April onward.

Persons acquainted with the large number of varieties can thus see for themselves what is most suitable, and make their selection. The Nursery is easily reached. Take the Brunswick tram in Elizabeth Street up to the terminus (cost 2d), then take the horse tram (cost 1d), and ask the conductor to let you down at Harding's Road. A few minutes walk will bring you to my gate.

Rossi was not the only one in Coburg to excel at rose growing. His friend Fred Buzaglo enjoyed similar successes in the Amateur Class during the same years. When the National Rose Society of Victoria introduced a prize for the best kept state school rose garden, Coburg won in 1909 and tied for first place with Surrey Hills the following year. Truly Rossi and others, but chiefly Rossi, had made Coburg the Rose Capital of Victoria.



Benvenuto Rossi, c.1926.

Rossi was not entirely happy with the location of his nursery. For would-be visitors and purchasers it was a slow tram ride north of Moreland Road

and a long walk down Harding Street. Moreover most of his customers would have lived in the eastern or southern suburbs. With the surge in house construction from 1908 Benvenuto seized the opportunity in 1912 to subdivide his land into eighteen allotments, creating an extension of Gladstone Street as far as Harding Street. The subdivision was quite successful: the 1912-13 council's rate book showed only four unsold allotments. One of these, lot 18, facing Harding Street, was much larger in order to accommodate his existing house. This was rented out and finally sold in 1917. Rossi had paid £302.10s for the land in November 1898 and although it is not known the total he received from the sale of all the allotments, he was able to buy six acres in Ford Street, Ivanhoe for a new rosary and build a much finer house.

From this nursery he produced some of the finest plants and blooms in Australia. Up to the time of his retirement in 1926, he had won 120 championships 150 gold and silver medals and two thousand first prizes. In 1930 Benvenuto published *Modern Roses in Australia* which sold all over the world.

Benvenuto Vincenzo Rossi died aged 92 on 25 May 1963 and rests in the Fawkner Cemetery.

SOURCES

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- Coburg Rate Records 1891-1918.
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- *Ivanhoe News*, 5 June 1953.
- Lodged Plan No. 5774.
- W.A. Lugton, 'A History of the National Rose Society of Victoria' in *Victorian Rose News*, p. 31, March 1967.
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- Sands & McDougall Directories 1892-1913.
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FAMILY HISTORY

We wish to thank Mr. Rod Skilbeck, team leader of Genealogical Services, State Trustees, for his permission to publish the following material. A similar article also appeared in the Journal of the Genealogical Society of Victoria Ancestor, Vol. 25, No.1, March 2000.

Your school photo could solve a mystery!

Peripheral evidence like pictures and personal effects can often provide very useful hints in researching the family of a deceased person. In the case of Dionisio Dorbolo one photograph could actually solve a \$250,000 mystery.

Dionisio Dorbolo is the last member of his family. His father, mother and only sister all died on the family farm north of Melbourne. The proceeds from the sale of his farm amounts to approximately \$250,000 — and the whole share would go to Dionisio or his children (if Dionisio has died).

Dionisio (Nisio or 'Nisha' as he was known as a teenager) was born in Italy in 1922 and arrived in Sydney in 1926 with his mother Gisella and sister Velma to join their father Luigi who had arrived a few months earlier. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Dionisio and his family were living on a farm at Humevale, near Whittlesea. By the end of the war Dionisio had vanished and remains a mystery figure to this day.

Following an article on this case in Melbourne's Herald-Sun last June, the State Trustees received over a dozen calls from people who knew the Dorbolo family. Several recalled school days with Dionisio at Glen Vale School (number 7270 near Whittlesea). State Trustees also received a call from persons whose father had died recently and had told them his real name was similar to Dorbolo. Other details about this man's past seem to tie-in with Dionisio Dorbolo. The main thing which intrigued the State Trustees is that all records of Dionisio end after July 1945, no records for this 'other man' exist prior to March 1948.

Is this 'other man' actually Dionisio Dorbolo, heir to \$250,000?

State Trustees has been given several photos of the 'other man' from the late 1940s and early 1950s. What they desperately need now is a photo of Dionisio Dorbolo prior to 1945 — so they can gauge whether or not they are one and the same person.

The only people in the family photos found on the Dorbolo family farm have been identified as Dionisio's young uncle Gino Bianchini and other female relatives. State Trustees is hoping that old school photos from Glen Vale School may include 'Nisha' and thus help solve the mystery.

State Trustees is currently extending its searches to Tumbarumba, New South Wales, where the Dorbolo's family lived from 1926 to 1939. If you can provide photos from Glen Vale School or know anyone who may have school photos from the Whittlesea area from the late 1930s, please contact Rod Skilbeck on (03) 9667 6779, email rs@statetrustees.com.au or write to GPO Box 2462V, Melbourne, Vic. 3001.

Missing Millions on-line

State Trustees has posted its updated unclaimed deceased estates and missing beneficiaries lists on the internet at www.statetrustees.com.au

Some 338 unclaimed deceased estates valued at over \$500 are currently being researched. There are also several hundred other estates currently under administration. The combined value of these estates is over \$27 million, with more than \$13 million listed as 'unclaimed'. Unclaimed estates are those classified by State Trustees as being very difficult to resolve. There may be difficulty in locating all or some next of kin, despite several years of extensive research.

The list of missing beneficiaries comprises 121 names, some of which are of Italian origin. These are people we are actually trying to locate and present money to! Collectively, they stand to inherit \$1.8 million.

Although a significant number of estates has been resolved over the past couple of years, information is still needed to resolve a large number of difficult cases. State Trustees welcomes any input from the public in helping solve these cases. Sometimes the smallest clue about a person may unlock information about the family and lead to their resolution.

Those who believe they are eligible to make a claim must be able to prove they are related to the deceased. Relatives may include spouses and spouses' children, parents, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, grandparents, uncles, aunts, first cousins once removed and great uncles and aunts.

The Italian Historical Society has accessed the web site of the State Trustees. The following names of unclaimed deceased estates and missing beneficiaries extracted from the list, appear to be of Italian origin:

Names of the deceased:

Depierro, Giacomo (\$22,846.90)
Foldi, Frank (\$88,064.90)
Fracas, Umberto (\$8,053.06)
Ghisalberti, Armando (\$2,307.00)
Pascarelli, George (\$100,397.17)
Rivano, Silvano (\$121,141.39)
Urbano, Francesco (\$7,745.12)
Varela, Anthony (\$24,297.12)

Beneficiaries sought:

Depierro, Annunzio (\$6,000.00)
Dorbolo, Dionisio (\$250,000.00)
Penno, Lola Joyce (\$3,500.00)
Scione, Giuseppina (\$7,500.00)

If you would like a copy of the lists or think you may be an heir, or know someone who may be an heir, please contact: Adelaide Tapper, Genealogical Services, State Trustees, GPO 2462V, Melbourne, Vic. 3001. Tel (03) 9667 6444, or 1300 138 672. Email: info@statetrustees.com.au

Genealogy and Heraldry

This is a wonderful opportunity for the serious family history researcher to travel to Western Australia. The 9th Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry *Let the Records Speak* will be presented in Perth, Western Australia, from 27th September-1st October 2000. For further enquiries write to Keynote Conferences, PO Box 1126, Leederville, WA 6901, Website: http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/~wages/Perth_Congress_2000, Email: keynote@ca.com.au

The 4th Victorian State Conference *From Goldrush to Federation, 1860-1901* will be hosted by the Wodonga Family History Society, on Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th April, 2001 at the Scots School, Perry Street, Albury. For further details write to the Wodonga Family History Society, PO Box 289, Wodonga, Vic. 3689. Email: nokey@albury.net.au

Researching family history in Italian church archives

As mentioned in previous editions of the *IHS Journal*, the compulsory record-keeping of marriages and baptisms by parish priests was

sanctioned in 1563 by the Concilium of Trentum, whilst the recording of deaths was introduced much later, in 1614. However, in many parishes the systematic keeping of these records was implemented years later. In some others these records were kept even before the Concilium. Only an enquiry to the Archdiocese of the province of interest can reveal the exact dates of birth, death and marriage record-keeping. Until circa 1850 most records are entered in Latin.

The aim of the *Libri dei Battesimi*, or Books of Baptisms was to record the bond between the godfather/godmother and the infant which constitutes one of the impediments in a catholic marriage.

The *Libri dei Morti*, or Books of the Dead, were compiled to demonstrate the status of widowhood of those who remarried. In the early records the gender of the deceased is often unclear and women are always recorded in connection to being the daughter/wife/sister of a man. The name of a deceased child is recorded only when he/she is a few years old. For those who died under 1 year of age, there is almost never a name, but only the annotation 'son of... (figlio di...)'.

Marriage records list the name of the bride and the groom, the name of their fathers, often their address before marriage, the name of the witnesses, information relating to any marriage impediment and the date of reading of the bans of marriage.

Early parish records are very valuable not only to family historians, but also to determine the population's growth and mobility in an era when population census was unknown.

AN OLYMPIC EVENT

Melbourne, 1956. The Italian community was abuzz with joy. Every opportunity was seized to visit the Olympic Village at Heidelberg to see and be seen and photographed with athletes from the Italian team. Many Italians volunteered their time to assist the organizers of the games with interpreting jobs or to accompany the athletes. Nino Borsari, the King of Carlton and himself a gold medallist at the Los Angeles Olympics of 1932, held dinners and parties in honour of Italian athletes and officials.



Nino Borsari with two members of the Italian Olympic team in Melbourne, 1956. In the background Borsari Emporium in Carlton.

The 1950s were the years of mass migration of Italians to Australia. The Olympics represented a rare opportunity for many newly arrived migrants to see Italian athletes compete. Sacrifices were made to buy tickets for events in which the Italians excelled, such as boxing and cycling, sports extremely popular in Italy at that time.

Gualberto Gennai arrived in Melbourne in 1949. In 1956 he was working in a restaurant as a waiter. He bought tickets for some cycling competitions, hoping with all his heart that the Italians would win. When the Road Time Trial was held on December 7, 1956 hundreds of Italian fans packed both sides of the road to cheer on their hero. They were screaming *Baldini! Baldini!* Ercole Baldini won the Olympic Gold Medal. 1956 was known as 'Baldini's Year' — that year

he won the 4000m pursuit at the World Championships, broke the World Records for the one hour time trial and, of course, won the gold medal. He was one of the world's greatest cyclists. His victory in Melbourne was even more special, in that he overcame a protest by the second and third placegetters (France and Britain respectively), who claimed that Baldini was protected from the heat and glare of the sun during the final stages of the race thanks to the film van that was driving along side him.

During the ceremony to confer the gold medal to Baldini, something went terribly wrong: no Italian anthem was played over the public address system. In the awaiting silence that followed, a voice from the crowd began singing the *Inno di Mameli*. It was Gualberto Gennai who sang proudly from the heart for his fellow Italian champion. Soon all the other Italian fans in the crowd broke into an emotional chorus. Baldini also joined in with a voice broken with emotion. It was a magic moment.

Unfortunately on that occasion Gualberto did not have the opportunity to meet Baldini personally. However, in February 1997 after 41 years, the organizers of the Sydney 2000 Olympics remembered that unusual event and brought Baldini and Gennai together in Sydney. The meeting was very cordial: the two men shook hands and embraced each other and sang the Italian anthem together.



Gualberto Gennai and Ercole Baldini sing the Italian anthem at their reunion in Sydney in 1997.

For Baldini, Gualberto's singing was one of the most special moments in his cycling career, which made his victory at the Melbourne Olympics even more memorable.

Baldini will be at the Sydney 2000 games as the manager of the Italian cycling team.

NEWS

Local History Grant

The Italian Historical Society (IHS) was successful in obtaining a \$9,000 grant under the Local History Grants Program (LHGP). The aim of this Program is to encourage and foster projects which preserve, record and share the local and community history of Victoria. The grants were announced and awarded by Mr Steve Bracks, Premier of Victoria, at a function at the Eureka Stockade Centre in Ballarat on January 6, 2000. The Society was represented by Laura Mecca and Lorenzo Iozzi.

The Society's application focused on the need to catalogue and preserve the Candela Collection, which comprises manuscript letters, diaries, journals, photographs, music sheets and scores and objects, spanning the period 1880 to 1980. Cataloguing, interpretation, translation and preservation are essential processes before this collection is lodged into mainstream repositories, such as the State Library of Victoria and Museum Victoria, with whom IHS has ongoing cultural agreements.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and the Community Support Fund in making this project possible.



Mr Steve Bracks, Premier of Victoria and Ross Gibbs, Director Public Record Office Victoria, congratulate Laura Mecca on the award of the Local History Grant.

Students from Australia and overseas

A number of tertiary students utilised the Society's collection for their research.

After touring Australia for a few weeks with her cousin Franziska, Mara Di Rocco 'settled down' and became 'one of us' by spending four months

at the Society researching her thesis on the Italian migrant community in Australia. Her research explored changes and development in the migrants' way of life in the new country, religion and cultural maintenance, integration, ethnicity and the Australian born generation. Mara is undertaking a degree in International and Diplomatic Sciences at the University of Trieste, Gorizia Campus. While at the Society, Mara took advantage of today's technology to facilitate her work. She scanned into her lap top hundreds of pages of history books and documents from the Society's collection for reference and further consultation upon her return to Italy. Mara is hoping to pursue a career working for the United Nations or the European Common Market. We wish her all the best for a brilliant future.



Mara Di Rocco with cousin Franziska during her research work at the Italian Historical Society.

Rosalinda Di Virgilio from the University of Pescara 'G. D'Annunzio' found abundant material for her research on Italian dialects in the oral history collection of the Society. Gwendolyn Stansbury from the University of Armidale, New South Wales, undertook research in Italian Food in Australia. Valerie Wee made good use of our extensive collection of photographs, for her topic on the Italian street musicians active in Melbourne during the early 1900s, while Enza Mennarello and Cristina Potz from RMIT Department of Languages drew on the Society's library for information for their essay on the historical and socio-cultural and socio-economical factors shaping the Italian Migration in Australia.

Santospirito Collection

In March of this year, work commenced on a collaborative project between the Italian Historical Society and the University of Melbourne. The Australian Research Council (ARC) is funding a three-year project on the

Santospirito Collection, which was donated to the Society some years ago.

Cate Elkner has been awarded a scholarship to write a PhD thesis on the life and work of Mrs Lena Santospirito. As well as historical research, the project also involves the archival arrangement and description of Mrs Santospirito's papers, and the creation of a definitive guide to the collection. An electronic finding aid will enhance future researchers' access to these records. Associate Professor Alan Mayne of the Department of History, is co-supervising this project with Laura Mecca, manager of the Society, and Michael Piggot, University Archivist. Prior to commencing work on the Santospirito Collection, Cate worked as an archivist at the Public Record Office of Victoria. In 1997 she completed an Honours thesis in Australian History.

So far, Cate's research has taken her to the National Archives of Australia, the Jesuit Archives in Hawthorn and the Archdiocese of Melbourne's Archives. Mrs Santospirito's son, Tony, has been volunteering his time since the beginning of last year in translating, describing and indexing the records. CO.AS.IT staff have also been enlisted to help with processing the database.

Launch of a book on the diaspora of the emigrants from Venezia Giulia and Dalmazia.

CO.AS.IT's premises were selected by the Associazione Giuliani nel Mondo (Association of migrants from Venezia Giulia) based in Trieste, as the preferred location for the launch of an important Italian book, edited by the well-known Australian historian Gianfranco Cresciani.

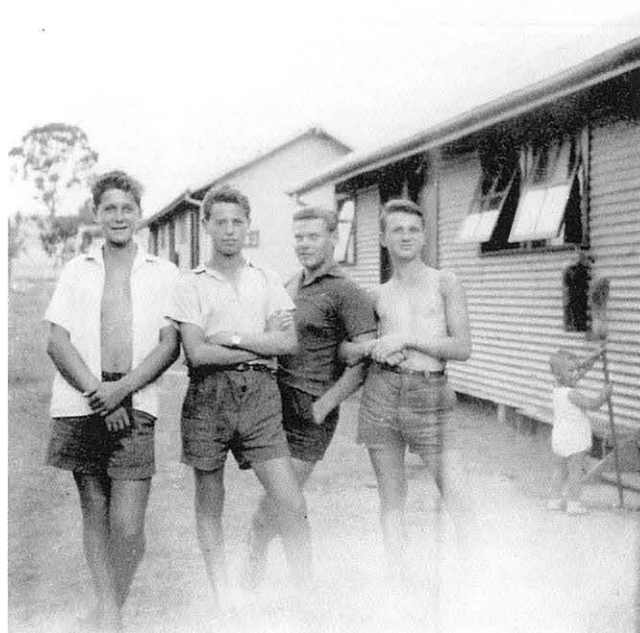
Giuliano Dalmati in Australia: Contributi e testimonianze per una storia includes personal and moving accounts on the painful and unjust experience of thousands of Italian displaced people forced to abandon their homeland in the areas ceded by Italy to former Yugoslavia after the Second World War. This emigration did not result from economic need, but from political and historical events which brought upon Italy changes to its north-east borders. The book also includes an important research essay on the emigration to Australia by people from Trieste by Adriana Nelli who is undertaking a PhD on this topic at the Victoria University of Technology.

A large number of Italian immigrants from Venezia Giulia were invited to the presentation which was officiated by the president of the Association, Dr. Dario Rinaldi, in the presence of the Italian Consul General for Victoria and Tasmania, Dr. Gianni Bardini.

The Italian Historical Society paid homage to the Giuliano Dalmati emigrants by setting up a display of photographs and documents on their history and migration to Australia. This was made possible by the generous donation to the Society of a significant collection of photographs of exceptional quality by Mr Pino Bartolome', himself an immigrant from Fiume.



The Italian Consul General, Dr. Gianni Bardini, addresses the guests at the presentation of the book on the Giuliano Dalmati in Australia.



A group of displaced Italian young men at Rushworth Migrant Centre in 1952. From left: Edo Mansutti, Rino Zavattiero, Edoardo Vorano, Sergio Csar and baby Paolo Mansutti.

A stone upon a stone

by Raelene Marshall

On May 4 this year the Federal Minister for the Arts, the Honourable Peter McGauran announced round thirteen of the Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts – Visions of Australia Cultural Touring Development Grants Program. One of only five grants awarded to Victoria is towards developing a touring exhibition A Stone upon a Stone based on the migrant histories of the multicultural craft of dry stone walling in the making of the Australian landscape.

This exhibition will be particularly important to the descendants of Swiss and Italian pioneers. Not only will it provide an opportunity to profile the fine craftsmanship skills they brought to this country but it will also tell that tenacious and worthwhile story to a wide Victorian and New South Wales audience. With that story in mind the curator of the exhibition Raelene Marshall is now seeking any information, artefacts, visual images and family anecdotes or mythology that may assist her in this venture.

Dry stone walling in Australia emerged in the mid 1800s in areas where a proliferation of stone in the geological landscape necessitated a clearing of the land. Although built as the most economic form of fencing, specific historical associations can also be made to particular landowners since the style of wall also often reflects the status of its builder. Constructed by both Anglo Celtic and European migrants the walls are historically and culturally significant standing as testimony to a time when artisan skills portrayed the patterns of our early settlement. Albeit agrarian and connected with grazing as the chief rural industry, their aesthetic qualities and strong sculptural forms create visual definitions and picturesque qualities that allude to romantic traces of ruins in the landscape.

Through a series of visual and narrative storytelling, and interactive experiences, the exhibition will tell the “dry stone story” which will be conceptually based around the multicultural craft of dry stone walling in the making of the Australian landscape. This unique and universally recognised craft emerged here in the mid 1800s in areas where a proliferation of stone in the geological landscape necessitated a clearing of the land. In the making of their walls how did the migrant wallers adapt

their traditional skills to suit an Australian topography and influence our material and non-material culture, and what is the relevance and importance of the walls in today’s contemporary society?

The craft of dry stone walling, which means building in stone without mortar or cement must be very old. How old we do not know. Dry stone walls, dry stone dykes! How does the ordinary reader, the man in the street, the holiday-maker the countryman regard these objects which we meet everywhere in the west and north west of these islands? Does he or she look upon them with any sort of interest or do they merge into the landscape as part of the infinite variety of hills, rivers, lakes, fields, woods and farms? Yet here we have a native art, unsurpassed elsewhere. In other lands of the Eastern Hemisphere there are, of course, such walls many thousands of miles of them, but rarely are they up to the standard that the British stone wallers can show. It is an art that has persisted through the centuries and that now - even in this age of steel - more than holds its own.

Rainsford-Hannay F. 1957. Dry Stone Walling Faber and Faber Limited London

Most importantly the purpose of this exhibition is to provide opportunities for a significant number of people to acknowledge a hitherto little known part of Australia’s immigrant story that will capture the mood and character of “dry stone walling” as a dominant human contribution to the Australian landscape. Should you be able to assist in any way please contact Raelene directly on (03) 9337 1713. Mobile 0418 52 3900 or raelene@net2000.com.au



PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

This list outlines the books received by the Society by gift or purchase. These books may not necessarily be recent releases. The recommended retail price is indicated where available.

Pukunja.

By Vilma Watkins, self published, 1999. Available from: Parker Pattinson Publishing, Suite 2, 211 Forest Rd., Hurstville NSW 2220 at \$30.00.

This is a well written and captivating biography of an Italian woman who joined her husband in North Queensland in 1930. It is the story of fifty extraordinary years in the life of Carolena on a tobacco plantation at a small place called Pukunja, including a period of internment of her husband Roberto during the Second World War.

History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences.

By William Bramwell Withers. Facsimile edition, 1999. Published by and available from Ballarat Heritage Services, PO Box 2209, Ballarat Mail Centre 3354 at \$59.95.

This publication reproduces Withers' original history of Ballarat first published in 1870, as well as a number of reminiscences originally published in serial form during 1895 and 1896.

History of Ballarat is an exciting account of Ballarat from its glorious golden era until 1870. It was written within the memory of gold-rush pioneers and early colonists. It includes viewpoints, personal reminiscences and documents.

Some Ballarat Reminiscences, written by Withers 25 years later, resulted from further research undertaken by the author, who was one of the first to record local history in the colonies. The book is well presented and is a valuable source of information for students, scholars and family history researchers.

St Alipius: The Early History of Ballarat's First Church.

By Dorothy Wickham, self published, 1997.

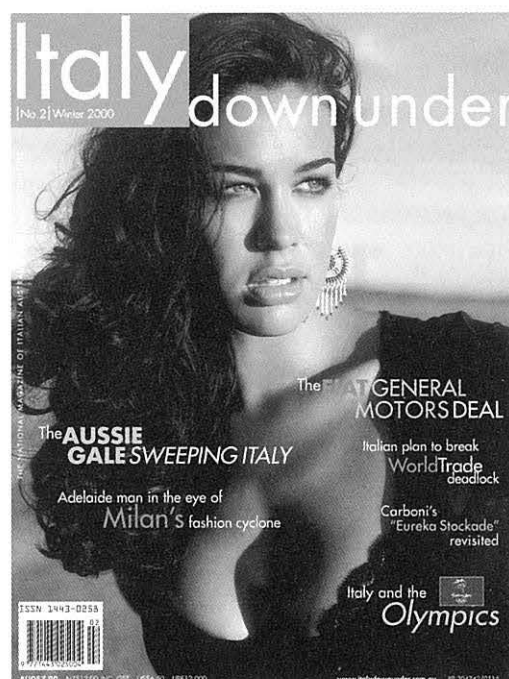
St Alipius was the first Roman Catholic church to be erected in Ballarat. The transition from a flimsy tent near Brown Hill where the first Mass was celebrated in 1851 to a beautiful stalwart stone building completed in 1874, reflects the general sociological changes taking place at that time within the community of Ballarat. The church was designed by prominent Ballarat architect, Henry Caselli. Raffaello Carboni,

famous for his written account on the Eureka Stockade events, was a parishioner of St Alipius. Available from Ballarat Heritage Services, PO Box 2209, Ballarat Mail Centre, 3354.

Eureka Reminiscences, edited by Ballarat Heritage Services, 1998; ***Deaths at Eureka***, by Dorothy Wickham, 1996; facsimile edition (1999) of ***Story of the Eureka Stockade*** by John Lynch, originally published in 1895; ***Outbreak at Ballarat: The Eureka Story from the pages of Mount Alexander Mail***, 8 December 1854.

This collection of booklets share the common theme of the Eureka Stockade rebellion in Ballarat, 1854. They provide an accurate insight into the causes of the uprising and its consequences on the early inhabitants of Ballarat. Available from Ballarat Heritage Services, PO Box 2209, Ballarat Mail Centre, 3354.

Italy Down Under is an exciting and beautifully composed and illustrated new quarterly Australian magazine. It includes a good selection of articles by reputable journalists and writers on Italian Australian affairs, culture and history. It is a publication that appeals to all those who acknowledge an Italian background or are interested in the affairs and culture of Italy and of Australia's Italians. Highly recommended. Yearly subscription (four issues) \$33 inclusive of GST and postage. Available in most newsagencies Australia wide at \$7.90. Published by Medialink Communications Pty. Ltd., 478 William Street, West Melbourne, 3003. Telephone 03 93281433, Fax. 03 93281385.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**ARTS
VICTORIA**



The Italian Historical Society — CO.AS.IT gratefully acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and the Community Support Fund in making the cataloguing and preservation of the Candela Collection possible.



Annual tree planting day (arbour day) at Viggiano, Basilicata, 1915. This photograph was taken by Vincenzo Candela, five years before his emigration to Australia.

