



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

July — December 2000

VOLUME 8, No. 2



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

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Volume 8, No. 2

ISSN 1321-3881

The editorial sub-committee for this edition was:
Vince Basile, Doug Campbell, Joan Campbell, Lorenzo Iozzi, Laura Mecca,
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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 are available on application.

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The *Journal* is published twice a year. Subscription is \$25.00 annually (GST incl.) this entitles you to membership of the Italian Historical Society. The Society is part of CO.AS.IT and is governed by the rules and regulations of the of CO.AS.IT.

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FRONT COVER:

Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre, 1952.

It was common for newly arrived immigrants to be offered work as cooks and kitchen-hands. Many chose to remain in this job for a prolonged period. Mario Giagnacovo [first from left, kneeling] worked for 18 months in the kitchens before leaving the Centre. See article on Bonegilla at page 40.

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AUGUSTO LORENZINI: ITALIAN ARTIST DECORATOR IN VICTORIAN SYDNEY

by Megan Martin

Megan Martin is the librarian for the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales and is co-curator of an exhibition about Augusto Lorenzini that will open at Elizabeth Bay House in Sydney in June 2001. This article is an extract from her essay for the exhibition catalogue. The book is due for publication in May 2001. Enquiries can be made to the Museum of Sydney Shop on 02-9251 5988.

On a Saturday morning in March 1995 the deceased estate of a woman named Winn Albury went under the hammer in the rooms of Sydney auctioneers Hamilton & Miller. The auctioneers knew quite a lot about Winn Albury. She was a first-cousin of Henry Lawson, had studied art at East Sydney Technical College, travelled to the United States in the 1920s and had worked as a commercial artist in Sacramento, California, before returning to Sydney in the 1930s.

Mixed-up with Winn's work was a large volume of material by Augusto Lorenzini. Only a few people present at the auction knew anything at all about this man. Two were private collectors. One owned a Lorenzini watercolour and the other owned an oil. Both paintings had been shown at the S.H. Ervin Gallery in late 1993 in an exhibition called *The Italian connection: Italian artists in 19th century Australia*. The catalogue for that show had identified Lorenzini as an artist and creator of mural art decorations active in Sydney from 1884 until 1894.¹

Both collectors bought other Lorenzini items at the Hamilton & Miller auction, among which were ceiling and wall designs for the 1888-9 Centennial Hall of the Sydney Town Hall. A couple of dealers present also recognized Lorenzini's name and bought pieces, including some large painted panels. But much of the material, together with bundles of Winn Albury's commercial work, slipped through this auction unappreciated. Some of it later reappeared at another auction. Over the following twelve months or so the material was further dispersed through salerooms and dealers. Then one particularly important bundle came to light from the damp depths of a locked trunk. This bundle included large sepia photographs of the ballroom of a mansion called *Chatsworth* at Potts Point — long-since demolished. The photographs were taken by leading Sydney

photographer Charles Bayliss and carried an inscription that identified 'A. Lorenzini' as the decorator of the ballroom.

The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales acquired this bundle in mid-1998, set out to acquire other parts of the dispersed Lorenzini archive and began the process of recovering the reputation of Signor Augusto Lorenzini, Italian artist decorator in Victorian Sydney.

Augusto Leopoldo Francesco Lorenzini was born on 3 August 1852 in Rome, son of Giovacchino Lorenzini, engineer, and Santa Tinbastari. At the age of 21 he married 18 year-old Maria Boleta in Rome.² He must have already completed his education and some sort of art training by the time of his marriage but there are few clues to the nature of this training: a loose-leaf treatise on perspective drawing published in Rome in 1861, collections of engravings of Italian landscapes and ruins, profiles of architectural ornaments and engravings of decorative panels in an Italian Renaissance style, all of which perhaps served as text-books and were found among his papers. There are also four torn drawings inscribed 'Tempera by Fratelli Zuccary nel Palazzo de Principe Gaetani at Rome traced by A. Lorenzini in the year 1875'.

Lorenzini spent some time in Paris in the late 1870s before moving to London, where he is listed in the London Post Office Directory for 1880 as a decorative artist and in the 1881 English census as a professor of decorative fine art, living in Newman Street off Oxford Street. He took on some specialist commissions for Thomas Bates & Co, a firm that traded under the sign of 'Housepainters, Decorators, and Paper Hanging Manufacturers' Specialities; Copies of wall decorations of Ancient Pompeii', according to James Ross Anderson, a decorator who worked for the same firm. Bates & Co. was noted for its

success in gaining commissions from England's landed gentry. The firm's senior staff, said Anderson, 'wore frock coats and tall hats' and were treated as 'skilled gentlemen decorators'. Less talented tradesmen referred to them as 'bally silver-tailed painters'. Lorenzini was known among the staff of Bates & Co. as 'Tangerini', almost certainly a reference to red hair.³



Augusto Lorenzini, 1852-1921.

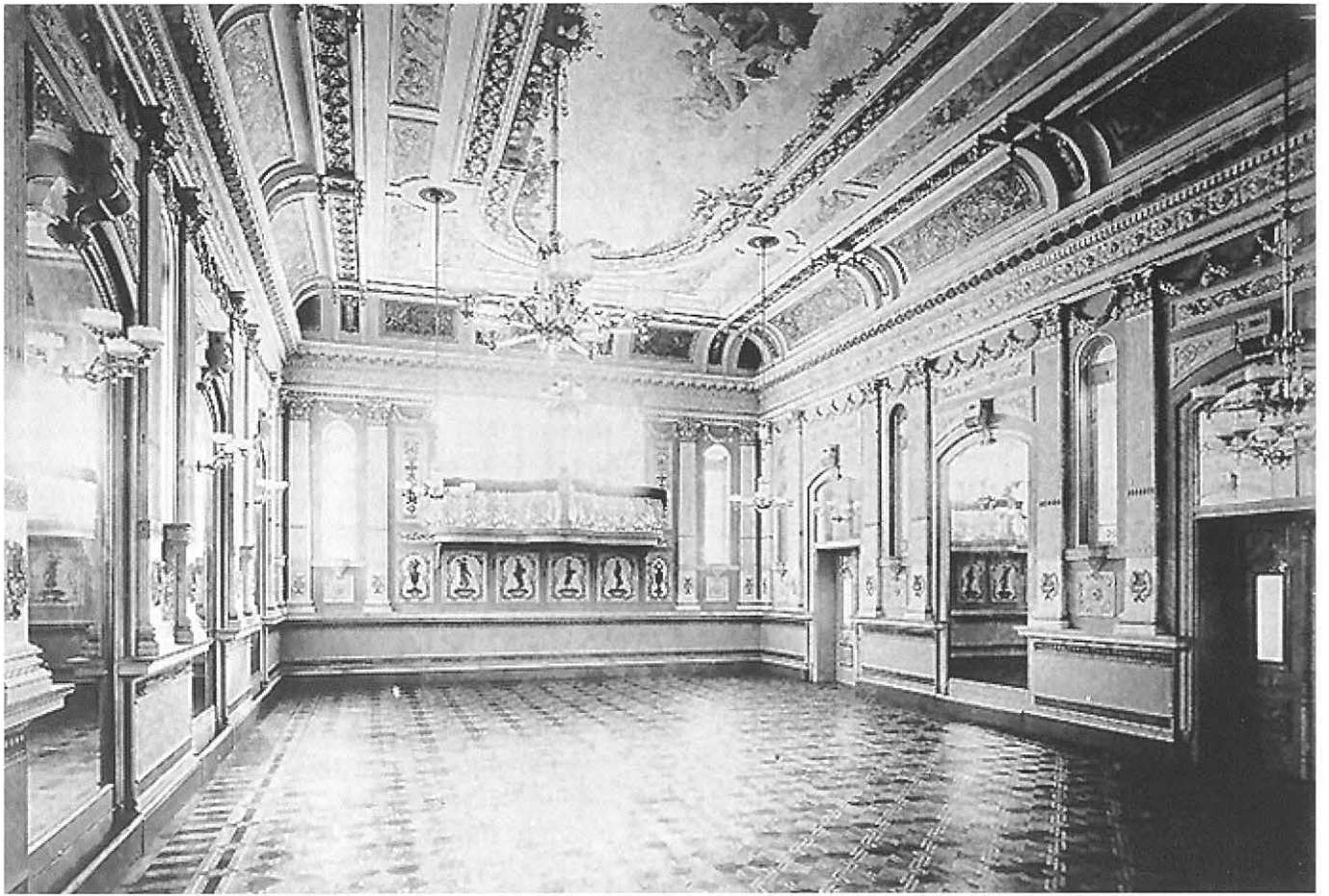
From an album of photographs of exhibitors at the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888. VPRS 840/3. Reproduced with the permission of the Keeper of Public Records.

In 1883 the Lorenzini family left London for Sydney, arriving in September on the *SS Orient*.⁴ They found themselves in a city where a small number

of Italian artists had already made their mark. In 1875 painter Giulio Anivitti and sculptor Achille Simonetti had both been appointed instructors at the Art Training School newly-opened by the New South Wales Academy of Arts. The sculptor Giovanni Fontana made an extended visit to Sydney in 1879 when he exhibited work in the English Court at the Sydney International Exhibition. Another sculptor, Tommaso Sani, had exhibited in the Victorian Court at the Sydney International Exhibition and settled in Sydney in 1882 when Colonial Architect James Barnet engaged him to carve reliefs in the spandrels of the Pitt Street facade of the General Post Office.⁵ Giuseppe Ferrarini, a painter from Parma, had opened a studio in the Garden Palace in 1882.⁶

Lorenzini initially rented premises in Bourke Street, Surry Hills but by June 1884, when he became a member of the Art Society of New South Wales, he had relocated to Tommaso Sani's studio in Phillip Street.⁷ He had a flyer printed announcing his business under the banner: 'Signor Augusto Lorenzini, Italian artist decorator and general contractor, established in Rome, Paris, London and Sydney'. He declared that he had 'many years practical experience in Decorative Works in Italy, France, and England' and was 'now prepared to execute in the best possible manner, at moderate charges, Artistic and Plain Decorations, in all the different styles'. He could be consulted at his Phillip Street Studio 'or by appointment at any address in town or country' — a rather bold promise that was perhaps based on an assumption that country New South Wales was as accessible and wealthy as the English countryside. On receiving architects' plans and specifications, Signor A. Lorenzini would be 'pleased to submit Sketches for Artistic or Plain Decorations'.

Lorenzini was already engaged on a major commission, the decoration of the Potts Point mansion *Chatsworth*. This was the home of Charles James Roberts, publican and politician, and former Mayor of Sydney. In 1884 Roberts engaged the architectural partnership of Martin and Russell to extend the house itself, adding a billiard room and a ballroom. The original house was redecorated to harmonise with the additions. Lorenzini was responsible for the painted decoration of the main entrance hall and the new ballroom. The ballroom was formally opened with a grand ball on 1 September 1884. As the guests began arriving, Lorenzini and the architects presented



Chatsworth Ballroom, Potts Point Sydney. Designed by architects Martin & Russell and built in 1884 with painted ceilings and wall decorations by Augusto Lorenzini. Photographer Charles Bayliss.



Mrs Roberts with a golden key to the room — a small ceremonial moment which seems to confirm Lorenzini's status as a gentleman artist decorator.⁸

Lorenzini's *Chatsworth* success was quickly followed by a commercial commission, the decoration of the newly erected Gunsler's Café in Pitt Street near the General Post Office. Austrian-born John Ferdinand Gunsler was a legendary figure in nineteenth-century colonial catering circles. He had arrived in Melbourne in 1871 and opened the Café Gunsler in Collins Street in 1873. He sold out in 1879 for the huge sum of £26,000 and travelled to Europe and the United States before returning to Australia in 1883.⁹ Gunsler chose Sydney, a city with a poor reputation at that time for the quality of its hotels and restaurants, for his next big venture.¹⁰ His restaurant opened in November 1884 and occupied three floors, providing a gentleman's saloon with a bar and an oyster buffet, a ladies and gentleman's dining room, a ladies salon, a banqueting hall, and five small salons for private dinner parties and after-theatre suppers.

There is no detailed description of Lorenzini's decorations for Gunsler's Café. We have only the *Sydney Morning Herald's* observation that all of the public rooms had been 'decorated in a costly style, the ceilings and wall-panels being figured in oils with flowers, and sometimes classic groups' and the *Sydney Mail's* judgement that the schemes for the painted walls and ceilings throughout the building were 'good examples of chaste and tasteful decoration'. The *Daily Telegraph* was more impressed with the technical details of the fit-out of the kitchen. Even so, there can be no doubt that the press and public interest in this long-overdue 'high-class restaurant' served to further establish Lorenzini's reputation as a talented artist decorator.

In March 1885 Lorenzini exhibited four paintings in the annual exhibition of the Art Society of New South Wales. One of these entries, a portrait of 'Miss M. Lang', was probably of a local subject suggesting that Lorenzini supplemented his income from architectural commissions with smaller private commissions.¹¹ In the event, he was unhappy with the way that his works were hung by the Society and wrote a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* detailing his complaint.¹² Although Lorenzini remained a member of the Society he did not exhibit with it again.

His energies were directed elsewhere. He had a plan to establish an 'Industrial Studio of Art' to provide art training for decorators. His plan was outlined in a four-page prospectus published in February 1886.¹³ He argued that 'one of the principal and most important parts that are absolutely necessary for the development and completion of all Art studies (especially when applied to Industry, which contains the highest and most lucrative branches of Art and difficult work), is the practical instruction or the real execution of work, which only to a very limited extent can be taught in Technical Schools'.

The problem as Lorenzini saw it was that there were only a few experienced decorative painters in the colony. Whereas in Europe pupils could 'easily be taught the practice of their studies' from any one of a number of 'practical professional men', in New South Wales only those who could afford to pay large premiums could enjoy such opportunities. Lorenzini saw his 'Practical Theoric Studio of Arts' both as a means of introducing young artists to industry and as a way of providing patrons with original art work from colonial artists instead of having to purchase European work 'done for exportation'.

Lorenzini placed an advertisement for his Industrial Studio of Arts in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in October 1886, inviting applications for admittance.¹⁴ He later told the Acting President of the Sydney Technical College that within a few days of publication of his prospectus, he had fifteen applicants to join the classes, but had to let the plan lapse because he could not find suitable premises at an affordable rent.¹⁵

Meanwhile he was involved in another commission connected to Charles Roberts, this time the painted decoration of the new Roberts Hotel on the corner of George and Market Streets. The Roberts family had kept a hotel called the Crown and Anchor on this site for more than forty years. The architects of the new five-storey hotel were Messrs Wardell and Vernon and it was presumably they who engaged Lorenzini to work on the wall and ceiling decorations.¹⁶ But it seems likely that Roberts was also involved in the commission, just as it was probably Roberts, as a commissioner for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in London in 1886, who suggested to Lorenzini that he should exhibit two photographs of the *Chatsworth* ballroom in the photography class of the New South Wales Court (stand) at the exhibition.¹⁷



Series of three surviving designs for allegorical figures representing the four seasons. These were cartoons used by Augusto Lorenzini in the decoration of the Chatsworth Ballroom.

In 1888 he prepared a substantial exhibit for the New South Wales Court of the Centennial International Exhibition, which opened in Melbourne in July of that year. Lorenzini's entry included a collection of studies for art decoration, sketches for decorations and specimens of decorations.¹⁸ He may have submitted a scheme for the decoration of the exhibition building itself. It is known that competitive designs were invited for the decoration and a coloured design for a domed neo-classical building survives among Lorenzini's papers. Lorenzini was awarded a First Order of Merit for his 'mural art decorations'. The editor of *The Australasian Builder & Contractor's News* reported that news of the award would be welcomed by Lorenzini's many friends in Sydney.¹⁹

Lorenzini lost no time in having his letterhead reprinted, replacing 'established in Rome, Paris, London and Sydney' with 'First Order of Merit for Art Decorations, Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne'. He used his new stationery

on 14 January 1889 to write to the New South Wales Minister for Education about his plan to establish a 'Practical Theoric Studio of Arts'.²⁰ Lorenzini offered a critique of the existing evening classes in art instruction. These classes were, he said, 'useful as auxiliaries to intending tradesmen such as carpenters, masons, and the like' but were 'totally insufficient' to provide the necessary knowledge for those who wanted to make their future living as art decorators.

Among Lorenzini's papers there are just a few clues as to what he did while he waited for a response from the Minister. There is a design for decoration of the display pipes and case of an organ. It has been identified as the organ installed in a Wesleyan church in Oxley Road Hawthorn in Melbourne.²¹ The foundation stone for this church was laid in July 1888 and the church was completed in September 1889. Lorenzini was probably invited to prepare the design on the strength of his work for the Waverley Wesleyan church but it seems that the commission was never carried out.

There are several designs for painted decoration for the Centennial Hall, or main hall, of the Sydney Town Hall.

Lorenzini took steps to secure his future in another direction at this time, buying 20 acres of orchard land at Castle Hill.²² The Lorenzini had lived in a modest timber cottage in Gipps Street Balmain for four or five years before moving to Waverley sometime in 1888. They probably moved to Castle Hill — Lorenzini always gave the address as Pennant Hills — within a few months of buying the land. A design for painted decoration for St Mary's Catholic Church at Concord which can be dated to early 1890 is stamped 'A. Lorenzini, postal address, Pennant Hills'.

Although Lorenzini had shifted his residence to Castle Hill, he maintained his studio in Phillip Street. Around this time Lorenzini formed a partnership with Giuseppe Anivitti, brother of the painter Giulio Anivitti who had died in Rome in 1881. They listed their partnership in Sands' Sydney Directory under the trade classification of 'Art decorators' and also 'Art galleries' but stayed in business for only two or three years, unable to survive the deepening economic depression of the 1890s. Lorenzini gave up the Phillip Street studio in 1894 and took more modest rooms at the Broadway end of George Street, in premises leased to oil and colour merchant Charles Fraenkel.²³

Fashions and tastes in interior decoration had changed by the time the economy had recovered. Grand houses that had once dazzled visitors with their gilded rooms fell into disrepair, were converted into boarding houses or were demolished. *Chatsworth*, the scene of Lorenzini's early triumph, became the Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School. The girls weren't impressed by the painted finishes. One of them later wrote that *Chatsworth* 'had been very much over-decorated'. She revealed the changing tastes of her generation when she declared her preference for cedar woodwork 'untouched by paint'. For this girl and her friends the 'mythological figures of gods and goddesses upon the painted ceiling' were 'jarring decorations' which 'seemed in danger of coming to earth'.²⁴

Through the 1890s and into the first decade of the twentieth century Lorenzini made his living partly from painting and partly from fruit growing. When he applied for a certificate of naturalization in September 1904 he described himself as an 'art decorator and orchardist'.²⁵

He had a brief moment in the spotlight in June 1908 when the Italian community in Sydney celebrated the Italian Fête of the Statute, or Constitution, with a ball at Paddington Town Hall. Lorenzini was responsible for the artistic decoration of the hall for the occasion. The ball was a splendid success and generated such a feeling of bonhomie that several of those involved in the event, including Lorenzini, decided to hold monthly meetings in the form of a lunch.²⁶

The good times didn't last. Early in 1914 Lorenzini was declared insolvent. He told the Registrar in Bankruptcy that his financial plight was caused by failure of business. Painting work was scarce and he had been unable to conduct a profitable fruit and vegetable growing business because the government had 'washed him out of his land by putting a road in a wrong position'. While the bankruptcy proceedings were taking place Lorenzini and his wife lived in Paddington, with his nephew Giulio Trudeau and Trudeau's wife Ersilia. They had arrived from Italy in 1905.

The Lorenzini returned to the orchard and obscurity. In March 1917 the decorator J. Ross Anderson wrote about Lorenzini in one of a series of articles on 'the old hands' published in a trade journal called *The Australasian decorator and painter*. Anderson commented on the 'marked excellence' of Lorenzini's work and suggested that his skills had been poorly understood and ill-rewarded in New South Wales. He wrote in the past tense, observing that 'Signor Lorenzini was last heard of some years ago in Sydney running a market garden, finding this occupation more lucrative than painting historical pictures and house decorating. So much for high-class decorative work in Australia'.²⁷

Augusto Lorenzini died on 29 July 1921 at his home in Hastings Road, Castle Hill, probably from a heart attack.²⁸ He was found with a red handkerchief in one hand and a law book in the other and at first his wife Maria feared that he had committed suicide under pressure of a lawsuit. There was an inquest into the death, which the *Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers' Advocate* reported under the headline 'Danger of studying law books: a Castle Hill sensation'. But there was no sensation, just sorrow for a 'highly respectable man' who 'had always been on good terms with people'.²⁹

Illustrations kindly supplied by the author.

NOTES

- ¹ *The Italian connection: Italian artists in 19th century Australia*. National Trust of Australia (NSW) S.H. Ervin Gallery Sydney 24 September – 14 November 1993. Exhibition curator Roslyn Maguire
- ² National Archives of Australia naturalization papers for Augusto Lorenzini: A1/15 no. 1904/8160; New South Wales Registrar of births, deaths and marriages, death certificate for Augusto Lorenzini: no.15391 in 1921
- ³ J. Ross Anderson 'The old hands' in *The Australasian decorator and painter* 1 March 1917 pp.144-145
- ⁴ National Archives of Australia naturalization papers for Augusto Lorenzini: A1/15 no. 1904/8160
- ⁵ *The Italian connection: Italian artists in 19th century Australia*. National Trust of Australia (NSW) S.H. Ervin Gallery Sydney 24 September – 14 November 1993. Exhibition curator Roslyn Maguire; *The Italian connection: Italian artists in 19th century Australia. Seminar papers – 9th October 1993*. Roslyn Maguire editor, National Trust of Australia (NSW) S.H. Ervin Gallery Sydney
- ⁶ 'Destruction of the Garden Palace by fire' *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 September, 1882 p.7
- ⁷ Sands' Sydney Directories 1884, 1885; 'Art Society' *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 June 1884 p.3
- ⁸ *ibid* p.259
- ⁹ Entry for John Ferdinand Gunsler in *Australian men of mark* vol. II Sydney Charles Maxwell, 1889 Appendix p.33
- ¹⁰ 'Gunsler's Café, Pitt St.' *Illustrated Sydney News* 23 September 1884 pp.3, 20; 'Gunsler's Café' *Sydney Morning Herald* 13 November 1884 p.6; 'The Gunsler Café' *Daily Telegraph* 13 November 1884 p.5; 'Gunsler's Café' *The Sydney Mail* 6 December 1884 p.1146
- ¹¹ The sixth annual exhibition of the Art Society of New South Wales Catalogue Sydney, John Sands 1885 pp.20-22
- ¹² 'Art Society's exhibition... To the editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald* 30 March 1885 p.5
- ¹³ State Records NSW: Department of Technical Education correspondence files 10/14292.
- ¹⁴ 'Art and industry' *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 October 1886 p.3
- ¹⁵ State Records NSW: Department of Technical Education correspondence files 10/14292
- ¹⁶ 'City improvement – the Crown and Anchor building' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 1888 p.5
- ¹⁷ *New South Wales at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition* 1886 Sydney, Government Printer, 1886 p.45
- ¹⁸ *Centennial International Exhibition Melbourne, 1888: Catalogue of the exhibits in the New South Wales Court* Sydney, Government Printer, 1888 p.54
- ¹⁹ *The Australasian Builder & Contractor's News* 26 January 1889 p.93
- ²⁰ State Records NSW: Department of Technical Education correspondence files 10/14292
- ²¹ Identification made by organ historians Graeme Rushworth and John Maidment
- ²² New South Wales Land Titles Office: Old Systems conveyance book 421 no.809
- ²³ State Records NSW 10/23026 Insolvency file no.9592: Tommaso Sani
- ²⁴ *Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School 1895-1955* Sydney, SCEGGS 1958, pp.131-132
- ²⁵ National Archives of Australia naturalization papers for Augusto Lorenzini: A1/15 no. 1904/8160
- ²⁶ *L'Italo-Australiano*: 'Lo Statuto' 6 Giugno 1908 p.2, 'Il trionfo del Ballo' 13 Giugno 1908 p.2, 'Reunione mensile d'Italiano in Sydney' 20 Giugno 1908 p.2
- ²⁷ J. Ross Anderson *op cit.*
- ²⁸ New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages: death certificate no.15391
- ²⁹ 'Danger of studying law books: a Castle Hill sensation' *The Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers' Advocate* 17 August 1921 p.1

THE ARCHBISHOP'S COMMITTEE FOR ITALIAN RELIEF DURING THE INTERNMENT CRISIS IN VICTORIA: JUNE-DECEMBER 1940

by Cate Elkner

Cate Elkner is a PhD student in the Department of History at the Melbourne University. Her thesis is on the history of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief and the work of its President, Lena Santospirito. She is also the archivist working on the Santospirito manuscript collection held by the Italian Historical Society.

Having lost everything through my husband's detention, I am now dependent upon the sustenance I am receiving. I have no complaints to make except that my husband is being detained on some entirely wrong suspicion, whereas if freed he could earn my living and his own, instead of both of us being a burden to this country...

Had my husband been or inclined to be a Fascist or a communist, I would understand but he was nothing of the sort and should be working for his family and Australia...

Within a few weeks I shall be a mother and you would give me no greater joy than to allow my husband to be back with me and his farming work.¹

Introduction

The origins of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief can be traced to July 1940, shortly after Italy's entry into World War Two on 10 June, which coincided with what *The Argus* described as the 'greatest round-up of aliens in the history of Australia'.² In response to the crisis of internment Archbishop Mannix invited members of Melbourne's Italian community to attend a meeting at St Patrick's Cathedral 'to decide on ways and means of assisting Italian families'.³

The Committee went on to work throughout the war years to raise funds for the material welfare of internees and their families. A total of 170 persons of Italian origin were interned in Victoria.⁴ The effects of Italy's entry into the war were felt throughout the entire Italian community. With their new status as 'enemy aliens', many people were affected by unemployment or loss of business.

In addition to fundraising for needy families, the Archbishop's Committee had another, somewhat covert, aim, which has received relatively little attention:⁵ to work to secure the release of Italian internees in Victoria. The Committee, led by

Italian businessman and community spokesperson Gualtiero Vaccari, co-ordinated a campaign of letter-writing and visits to the authorities, appealing for the release of individual internees and for the cases against them to be reviewed. Representatives of the Church and the Committee visited government and army authorities and held meetings to discuss the situation of internees and their families.

By the end of 1940, at least 61 internees had been released.⁶ The majority of these releases resulted from the Committee's work in co-ordinating the appeals of family members and the Catholic Church, rather than the official mechanisms under the National Security Regulations. This article will give a brief overview of the first six months of the Archbishop's Committee's campaign on behalf of internees, focusing on the case study of internees from Werribee.

Werribee

The first six months of the Archbishop's Committee's work for internees centred on families from the Werribee district. Of the 170 persons of Italian origin interned in Victoria, a disproportionate number (between 60 and 70) were Italian market gardeners from Werribee.

The fears and prejudices which emerged in Australian society as it 'united' in the face of war were running high in Werribee. The majority of Italians in Werribee were market gardeners who had purchased or leased land in the Werribee South Irrigation Area. In many cases, these farms had been taken over from 'soldier settlers', who had bought land from the State Government after World War One. The land failed to yield returns for many of the soldier settlers, who began to sell up in the late 1920s.

Many soldier settlers responded to the arrival of the Italians with resentment, particularly as the Italians' skills in intensive agriculture led to the establishment of successful market gardens in

Werribee South. Racist publications like *Smith's Weekly* inflamed the situation, portraying the growth of the Italian market gardening community as a hostile invasion, and part of a plan to 'crowd out' Australians from agricultural production.⁷



Salvatore Burgio sowing broad bean seeds by hand in his Werribee farm in 1940.

As Australia became involved in World War Two, many returned servicemen in Werribee became involved in local militia activities, forming a Defence Corps to be ready when the war came to Werribee. It was thought that there were several possible targets for 'subversives' in Werribee, such as the RAAF aerodromes at Point Cook and Laverton.⁸ Claims were made in the local press about the threat Italians posed to the community, stressing Werribee's proximity to major defence works and aerodromes. It was argued, for example, that aliens might sabotage the pipelines of MMBW Farm, throwing Melbourne's sewerage system into crisis.⁹

Meanwhile, younger men in the district were signing up for military service. Their send-offs

often provided an arena for public outbursts by returned soldiers and local politicians against the 'dark individuals' in the Werribee community.¹⁰

In this atmosphere of rumour-mongering and preoccupation with domestic security, the local police received numerous 'tip-offs' about the subversive activities of Italian market gardeners. (For example, police were informed that Joe Perillo had 'frequently been seen in the early hours of the morning in the vicinity of the Laverton RAAF aerodrome').¹¹

One resident, writing to his local member in support of his interned Italian neighbours, described the situation:

A good many people here have very little time for Italians and would like to see them all deported; and these people have been ever ready to condemn them and say many things to their detriment.

Rumours have circulated and for which there was not the slightest vestige of foundation have probably reached the ears of the authorities; and this, I think, is the reason why many have been interned.¹²

The members of the Special Branch who came to arrest the Werribee farmers as they worked out in the fields in their gumboots,¹³ were acting on (at that time unverified) information given to the local police as well as dossiers on known members of the Werribee branch of the *Fascio*, prepared by the Commonwealth Investigation Branch (CIB). In the confusion of the arrests, several people were 'swept up' in the operation and interned with no evidence against them.

Several of the Werribee internees were tenants of the Catholic Church, leasing plots of land at Corpus Christi College (now Werribee Park) which was then a seminary for training diocesan priests. An appeal for help was made to the Archbishop from the internment camp through the official visitor, Justice Gavan Duffy.¹⁴ By July 1940, the Church had sent a detailed report to the government on the state of internees' families, prepared by local priests. This report initiated the informal campaign of writing letters, visiting government and army officials, and advocating on behalf of the Italian community. This campaign was to prove much more effective in bringing about the swift release of many internees than the slower-turning wheels of the appeal mechanisms under the National Security Regulations.



Italian tenants of the Catholic Church Mr Puccio, Gaetana and Mrs Burgio are pictured with the priests at the gates of Corpus Christi College at Werribee, c1939.

The strategies

Minutes of a 1941 meeting provide evidence of the aim of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief to secure the release of Italian internees. This aim was to be achieved through liaison between internees' families and the authorities, and by writing 'hundreds of letters'.¹⁵

The Vicar-General from St Patrick's Cathedral, Dr Lyons, Vaccari, and Fr Modotti all made personal visits to influential members of the bureaucracy and the army's Southern Command at Victoria Barracks, in connection with the plight of internees and their families.

The Committee's lobbying efforts focused on Major Roland S. Browne, head of the CIB. Browne was responsible for compiling the intelligence reports which sealed the fates of many internees. At the same time, he was sympathetic to the plight of internees' families. His support was crucial for arranging for the release of an internee through army channels.

Browne was quick to acknowledge that 'some errors had been made at Werribee' and supported the majority of the applications received from

family members. He sent memos to Southern Command recommending the urgent release of many internees, 'in the interests of the state as well as themselves and families'.¹⁶

While the CIB compiled intelligence and made recommendations, the internments themselves were carried out by the army. In several cases, the army interned people who had already been investigated by the CIB prior to June 1940 and had been found to pose no threat to security.

The Committee also organised for letters to be sent to the CIB on behalf of internees. Most of the letters which were written appealing for internees' release conform to a definite pattern. The similarities may reflect the fact that it is evident that many of the letters were written by Vaccari, and signed by the appellant, most often the internee's wife (many of whom knew little English).¹⁷ The letters can be found in the correspondence of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch.¹⁸

The letters often included 'testimonials' as to the internee's good character, from friends, employers and neighbours, presumably designed to demonstrate their status as accepted members of the Australian community.

The letter with which I opened this article typifies the approach taken in the correspondence, which used a common persuasive strategy. First, the letters described the personal hardship experienced by families deprived of the head of the household. Another theme in the letters is the assertion that a mistake had been made, and that the internee had no interest in politics whatsoever. Finally, appeals to the national interest are common. This approach emphasised economic factors, such as the unnecessary financial costs to government of keeping internees in camps, as well as the looming disaster in Werribee if the crops in the market gardens were to fail:

The Archbishop realises that there are difficulties in this matter, but, at the same time, wishes to point out that, apart from the distress of the wives and families of these internees, very serious loss and consequent heavy expense from government sources must result, if something cannot be done to see that the properties and crops in the Werribee district are cared for.¹⁹

Judging from the letters, the Committee believed that in the context of war-time shortages, the

prospect of wasted crops would be as persuasive a factor in obtaining the release of Werribee internees as the fact that many were detained without evidence.²⁰

The Church, through its written reports and visits to the authorities, also tried to cast light on the realities of the political situation in Werribee. In a report 'The History of Italian Activities at Werribee',²¹ the circumstances of the establishment of the Werribee *Fascio* were set out. Despite 'encouragement' from 'fascist notabilities' to join the *Fascio*, which was formed in 1936, the organisation did not prosper. Fascists in Melbourne were peeved that the Italian Returned Soldiers' Association A.N.C.R.I. [*Associazione Nazionale ex-Combattenti e Reduci Italiani*] was much more popular in Werribee.

In mid-1938 the Melbourne fascists decreed that the Branch Secretary of Werribee *Fascio* was also to hold the office of President of A.N.C.R.I. This action led to a boost in membership of the Fascist Party, as many office-bearers in the association wished to maintain their status.



ANZAC Day 1938. Italian immigrants members of the Werribee branch of the Italian Returned Soldiers' Association A.N.C.R.I. laid a wreath at the local War Memorial.

Nevertheless, the Werribee *Fascio* remained, as Major Browne acknowledged, 'to all intents and purposes moribund'.²²

Browne was of the opinion that the majority of Italians in Australia had little interest in politics. Moreover, he recognised that those who were involved with the *Fascio* joined for complex reasons, and that membership could bring a range of social, cultural and economic benefits.

In February 1940, Browne wrote that fascist propaganda was having little effect in Victoria, and that the majority of Italians were:

peasant types who realise that they are better off in Australia than ever before, and who have an appreciation of the freedom accorded to them here and denied to them in their own country.²³

However insulting this stereotype of the ignorant peasant, it worked in favour of the internees' prospects for release, and similar representations of the Italian community were taken up by the Committee and the Church in letters on behalf of internees. Thus, in a memo to the army in connection with an appeal that had been received for the release of two Werribee internees, Browne wrote, 'it has been suggested that the persons concerned were more interested in cauliflowers than politics'.²⁴ Similarly, Fr Modotti, in a 1943 letter to Archbishop Mannix about internees from Northern Queensland, wrote: 'I am sure they are no more interested in politics than the cattle they have on their land'.²⁵

The results

Initially, the official channels for appeal under the National Security Regulations were only open to those internees who were naturalised British subjects. The situation changed in December 1940, when the Regulations were amended, giving Italian subjects the right to have their appeals heard by 'Aliens Tribunals', which sat in 1941.²⁶

Several naturalised internees of Italian origin lodged objections to their internment from July 1940 and were given the opportunity to have their case heard by an Advisory Committee. The first 8 successful appellants were not released until late October 1940.²⁷

In contrast, many 'enemy alien' internees who had not sought naturalisation were released within

MOLLYCODDLING ITALIAN SUSSOS Departmental Muddle At Werribee

A REMARKABLE STORY OF OFFICIAL INEPTITUDE CONCERNING SUSTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITALIANS COMES FROM WERRIBEE. THE DISTRICT HAS A BIG COLONY OF THESE ALIENS, AND FROM ALL ACCOUNTS SOME OF THEM, ESPECIALLY UNNATURALISED FOREIGNERS, LEAD A LIFE OF EASE ON SUSTENANCE, WHILE HARD-UP AUSTRALIANS SUFFER PRIVATIONS.

FEELING IN THE DISTRICT HAS BEEN MOUNTING FOR SOME TIME CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH THE DEFENCE DEPARTMENT, AIDED AND ABETTED BY THE STATE SUSTENANCE BRANCH, HAS MOLLYCODDLED THE FOREIGNERS.

AUSTRALIAN sustenance workers bitterly complain that they are compelled to freeze, while Italians drive up in trucks to the sustenance fuel stack at the Shire Hall and cart off firewood for their compatriots who are on sustenance.

One Italian, who has just been put on sustenance, is reported to have recently paid £10 for the renovation of his motor truck.

It is said that he owns a house and garage, and made good money all summer picking peas and beans on the share system, which is a good cover-up against investigators prying into Italian financial affairs.

Way back in 1938, maximum number of Italians, naturalised and unnaturalised, on sustenance in the Werribee district, was six with 21 dependants, making a total of 27.

In 1939 these figures had jumped to 38 individuals with 83 dependants, totalling 121. Failure of crops on the Dagoes' settlements around Werribee was given as the reason for the increase.

This year, before Mussolini stabbed the Allies in the back, there were only two Werribee Italians with five dependants on sustenance. Italy's entry into the war gave the authorities a chance to demonstrate their muddle-headedness.

Six Italians who were on relief work elsewhere were dismissed, and on returning to Werribee were placed on sustenance, thus making a total of 8 naturalised Italians with three dependants who were working for sustenance.

Worse, however, is the fact that there are five unnaturalised Dagoes with six dependants receiving sustenance for which they do nothing at all. Official explanation for this free gift of board and holiday to enemy aliens is that trouble might arise if they were put to work alongside Australians.

On top of this there are six Italian

wives of internees with seven dependants in the district. They are all certified at the time by the police as being destitute. Now the taxpayer must support them on sustenance rates without any return for the money.

When their men folk were rounded up at the outbreak of the Italian war, the Defence Department pushed the job of looking after them on to the Sustenance Department.

Result of all this mess-up is that there are now 83 aliens on the Government pay roll in the district, and more look like joining it.

Werribee residents are inclined to blame the Shire authorities. Actually nominations for sustenance hand-outs come from the Sustenance Branch or the Defence Department. The Shire Secretary merely transmits their orders. What becomes of sustenance commodities is no concern of his.

Sustenance arrangements for Italians are becoming a grave problem, not only in Werribee, but in other districts where there are large communities of these aliens. The problem will become more tangled as other Italian employers are "put in," and their employees are "put out."

So high is feeling in Werribee at the moment that the local branch of the Returned Soldiers' League has taken the matter up. The annual conference of the league, which has been sitting in Melbourne this week, has been approached and will probably seek the aid of other branches who have Italian communities in their districts, to tackle the Federal Government.

WAR FUND CONCERTS

SUNDAY night concerts at Melbourne Town Hall have been organised by the National Theatre Movement to assist the Australian Comforts and Red Cross Funds. Leading radio entertainers and other popular artists will provide a complete change of programme each week. Admission will be by donation at the doors.

days of their internment. The majority of these were from the Werribee district, and had had representations made on their behalf, organised by the Church and the Archbishop's Committee. Gualtierio Vaccari reported regularly to the Archbishop on the Committee's progress, writing in August 1940 that representations had already been made on behalf of 67 men.²⁸

The first Italian internee to be released in Victoria was Mario Coniglione of Corpus Christi College, released on 13 June 1940. Thirty internees had been released by the end of August 1940. By January 1941, Vaccari was able to report to the Archbishop that the number of Italians interned

in Victoria had been 'just about halved'. He wrote that in around six months, 61 men had been released.²⁹ An astonishing 57 of them were from the Werribee district. In October, Vaccari acknowledged that the Committee's work had focused on Werribee: 'Additional applications have been sent in for certain internees from other districts ... only the fringe of the very large ground has been touched'.³⁰

Such high numbers of releases were not seen again until 1943, when at least 49 internees were freed, and 1944, when 30 more were released. These releases resulted from steps taken by the new Labor Government, which came to power in October 1941. The Aliens Classification and Advisory Committee was established in September 1942 to re-appraise cases of 'precautionary' internment.³¹ The Committee was chaired by Arthur Calwell, whose close relationship with Dr Mannix and the Italian community is well-known. Calwell continued to work closely with the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief throughout the post-war period.

Conclusion

It has become almost a truism in the historical literature that in Victoria, only 'ardent fascists' were interned.³² The experience of the Italian community at Werribee challenges the common conception that Victorian authorities took a more 'enlightened' approach to internment of Italians than their counterparts in other states. The round-up of the market gardeners at Werribee more closely resembles the arrests in states such as Queensland and Western Australia, which saw almost wholesale, 'precautionary' internment of Italian men of military age.

The creation of the Archbishop's Committee to assist the Church in its work for and on behalf of internees demonstrates Archbishop Mannix's commitment to forging a strong relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian community.³³ The Committee's work for and on behalf of the internees was in response to a dearth of government support for families experiencing hardship, as well as widespread ignorance and prejudice against members of the Italian community in Victoria.

The Committee's work over its first six months helped to effect the release of around 61 internees, the majority of them from the Werribee district, and raised funds to support internees and their families.

The campaign on behalf of internees laid the foundations for the Committee's work with post-war migrants, under the presidency of Lena Santospirito, which saw further collaboration between members of the Italian community, the Catholic Church and immigration authorities.

NOTES:

- ¹ Letter from Mrs Giuseppina Agnello to Major Browne, written on behalf of her husband Antonio. NAA, MT 269/8, Item 1046. Agnello was released on 4 October 1940, the day after the CIB forwarded the letter to Southern Command.
- ² *The Argus*, 12 June, 1940, p.2
- ³ Form letter from Vicar-General Dr Lyons, 12 July 1940. Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File: 'Italians to 1940'. The members of the Committee in July 1940 were: Dr Lyons (Vicar-General, St Patrick's Cathedral), Fr Ugo Modotti, Mr G Vaccari, Mr J Santamaria, Mr B A Santamaria, Mr S De Marco, Mr G Briglia, Mr J Fonti, Miss E Nicoletti, Mrs L Santospirito, Mrs J Imbesi, Mrs L Castellano, Mr S Tizio, Mr N Borghesi, Mr Frank Di Mattina, Miss J Virgona, Miss G Tilbury, Miss De Luca, Mr B Canestra, Mr F Basile, Mr D Boffa, Miss Picone and Mrs V Virgona.
- ⁴ 'Commonwealth Statement of Resident Aliens Interned in Australia 31 March 1944', in Noel Lamidey, *Aliens Control in Australia: 1939-1946*, self-published, Sydney, 1974, p.51.
- ⁵ This may well be due to the fact that the Committee's campaign to release internees is not well-documented in the archival records. The government was only advised that a fundraising committee for needy families had been launched (Letter from Vicar-General Lyons to Major Browne, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, 11 July 1940, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File: 'Italians to 1940'.) The Catholic Church did not publicise the work of the Committee until after the armistice with Italy.
- ⁶ The figure is most likely slightly higher than 61. The figures used in this paper have been compiled using the IHS's database of Italian internees and my own research using National Archives of Australia records. This work is ongoing and as yet, the exact numbers have not been established.
- ⁷ *Smith's Weekly* reported that 'land acquisition by aliens of enemy origin' was on the agenda for the Annual Conference of the Victorian Branch of the RSL in 1942, *Smith's Weekly*, 23 July 1942.
- ⁸ Clipping from *Smith's Weekly*, 1941, Italian Historical Society.
- ⁹ Maria Mantello, *Now and Then: the Sicilian farming community at Werribee Park 1929-1949*, Carlton, *Il Globo*, 1986, p.40.
- ¹⁰ *Werribee Shire Banner*, 19 September 1940, p.2.
- ¹¹ Transcript of Giovanni Perillo's hearing on 22 August 1940, NAA, MP 508/1, Item 255/742/403.
- ¹² Letter from Ted Coates to the Hon J A Beasley, for-

warded to Attorney-General W M Hughes on 27 June 1940, National Archives of Australia (NAA), MP 508/1, Item 255/740/327.

¹³ See Sir James Gobbo, 'Italians in Victoria and the Second World War: an address for the Italian Historical Society given at the Italian Institute of Culture, 19 May 1988', and Tape No 142, Mr J Perillo, interviewed by Maria Mantello, 28 May 1981, Italian Historical Society.

¹⁴ Memo to Duffy from Italian Camp Leader, no date, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File: 'Italians to 1940'.

¹⁵ *L'attività del comitato non si è limitata alla raccolta delle contribuzioni, ma si è rivolta in notevole misura alla liberazione del massimo numero possibile d'internati dello Stato del Victoria. Quest'opera ha comportato non pochi viaggi per interrogare la famiglie lontane da Melbourne, visite alle autorità e centinaia di lettere.* [The activities of the Committee were not limited to the collection of donations. Much effort was put into obtaining the release of as many internees as possible. This involved many trips to interview the families living far from Melbourne, several visits to the authorities and the writing of hundreds of letters]. Minutes of Meeting held 8 April 1941. Fr Modotti papers, Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn. File: 'Opera Religiosa'.

¹⁶ NAA, MT 269/8, Item 982.

¹⁷ For example, Vaccari wrote to the Vicar-General that he 'prepared a letter signed by Mrs Perillo' which he delivered, with others, to Major Browne. Letter from Vaccari to Lyons, 19 August 1940, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File: 'Italians to 1940'.

¹⁸ See NAA, MT 269/8 and B741/5.

¹⁹ Letter from Vicar-General Patrick Lyons to Major R S Browne, 11 July 1940, NAA, MP 508/1, Item 255/702/360.

²⁰ The 'national interest' also kept other internees in detention. The General Manager of the State Coal Mine in Wonthaggi wrote to the CIB giving his support to applications made for the release of miners Giovanni Maddalena and Domenico Vescovi. However, Major Browne had been informed that 'a section of the miners employed at Wonthaggi, intimated immediately subsequent to the declaration of war by Italy, that they would not work with Italians'. Browne recommended that the Wonthaggi miners remain interned, due to the need for industrial peace, and therefore coal outputs, to be maintained. NAA, MT 269/8, Item 1112, 22 October 1940.

²¹ Report dated 12 August 1940, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File: 'Italians to 1940'.

²² MT 269/8, Item 1083.

²³ NAA, MT 269/8, Item 430.

²⁴ NAA, MT 269/8, Items 952 & 953.

²⁵ Letter from Fr Ugo Modotti to Archbishop Mannix, 11 September 1943, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File: 'Italians 1942-1943'.

²⁶ Transcripts are available at NAA, in Series MP 529/3.

²⁷ They were Messrs Faranda, Scacciantè, Carli, Boschetti, Perillo, Rigo, Crimi, and Menegazzo. See NAA, MP 508/1.

²⁸ Vaccari to Lyons, 19 August 1940, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File 'Italians to 1940'.

²⁹ Vaccari to Lyons, 6 January 1941, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File 'Italians 1941'.

³⁰ Vaccari to Lyons, 21 October 1940, Archdiocese of Melbourne Archives, File 'Italians to 1940'.

³¹ Noel W Lamidey, *Aliens Control in Australia 1939-1946*, self-published, Sydney, 1974, p.4.

³² For example, Cresciani writes that 'only militants' were interned in Victoria, and attributes the low number of internees in this state to Dr Mannix's support of the Italian community. *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia, 1922-1945*, ANU Press, Canberra, London & Trumbull, 1980, p.173.

³³ The Church was tackling what B A Santamaria coined 'the Italian problem' or the tendency for Italian immigrants to abandon their faith in the host country. See his article, 'The Italian Problem in Australia', in *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol XVI, January 1939, No 1, pp291-305.

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GENOA TO SYDNEY — GUGLIELMO MARCONI AND THE ILLUMINATION OF SYDNEY TOWN HALL IN 1930

by Francesca A. Musicò

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On the 26th March, 1930, in Genoa Harbour from his yacht, *Elettra*, Guglielmo Marconi relayed through beam wireless a switch that turned on the 2800 lights of the Sydney Town Hall. An audience of 3000 people, in total darkness, were awestruck when the Town Hall was illuminated around them. The event was hailed as a technological marvel, even though an impetuous Marconi had relayed the switch several minutes earlier than anticipated.¹ Over 14,000 miles were covered, with the signal being relayed through several stations across the world, from Europe to Dorchester, to Grimsby then to Australia where it was received at Rockbank (Victoria) then from Melbourne to Sydney. Previous to the experiment, the longest distance covered by wireless transmission was 2000 miles over the Atlantic.² The triumph over time seemed to fascinate so many observers. The fact that 14,000 miles were covered in one seventh of a second seemed magical. *The Sydney Mail* reported 'Here was magic! Arabian nights recede into remoteness; their magic was nothing compared to this'.³ Even more miraculous was the fact that only half a kilowatt of power was used for the entire experiment. For many, it seemed that operating radio without wires was surreal and unimaginable.

Four days later on the 29th March, Marconi again made history by transmitting an address from the *Elettra* which was amplified to a large audience in the Sydney Town Hall. In addition, thousands of others were listening to the address at home on their own wireless sets. Marconi's message to Australians celebrated the success of the experiments:

Hello, Australia: Marconi speaking on board the yacht, *Elettra*, at Genoa, Italy. I am delighted to speak to you in your great cities and wide spaces. I am glad that the experiment of switching on the lights of the Town Hall was a success. I hope to meet you all in your wonderful country soon. Meanwhile, I send love from all the world to all your people'.⁴

In addition, Marconi congratulated Australia on its advancements in the history of wireless transmissions. Newspapers, such as *The Sydney Morning Herald*, claimed that Marconi's message was an even greater feat than lighting the Town Hall. This was because the power needed to transmit the message was less than that needed to boil an electric kettle.⁵

The press claimed that Marconi had chosen Australia as the site of his great experiment because of the rapid progress of electro-technical science that occurred in the country.⁶ In essence, Australia was the perfect country for Marconi to use his inventions to their full capacity. After all, Australia was a remote country whose primary need was communication to bridge its inland and overseas isolation.

The lighting of Sydney Town Hall was not Marconi's first encounter with Australia. As early as 1902, the Marconi Company had submitted an unsuccessful wireless proposal to the Australian Government to connect Australia and New Zealand. This was the first of many proposals submitted by the Marconi Company.⁷ The Marconi Company also began the first of its struggles to convince the Australian Government to adopt wireless in various states. Interestingly, in 1912, the English Marconi company sued the Australian Government over their patent rights.⁸ However, it was not until the permanent arrival of Ernest Thomas Fisk in 1911, resident engineer for the English Marconi Company, that Marconi's public relationship with Australia began.⁹ Apart from having the task of selling Marconi's technology to Australia, Fisk was instrumental in arranging the first direct wireless message from England to Australia in 1918. The message was received at Wahroonga on the 22nd September, 1918.¹⁰ This event was given much international acclaim due to the large distance overcome by Marconi's technique. It showed promise that Australia would no longer have to rely solely on underwater cables as a

DAWN OF NEW ELECTRICAL ERA

RADIO WONDER

TRIUMPH OF INVENTIVE GENIUS

SYDNEY EXPERIMENT

POWER WITHOUT USING WIRES

"News" Special

GENOA, Wednesday

THERE was a tense moment in the crowded cabin of yacht *Electra* to-day, when Marchese Marconi pressed a telegraph key, and then awaited a voice from Sydney to announce that the lights had been switched on in Sydney Town Hall.

Mr. Marchese's face was wreathed in smiles when the success of the experiment was announced. He said the experiment was particularly important because it proved the way to the future, when there will be no electric cables, all power and electric power will be transmitted quickly through the air in any direction and wherever desired.

After the light-switching ceremony Marchese Marconi listened to the wireless telegraph experiments between Australia and the British G.P.O.'s station at Rugby, which was audible to everyone on board the *Electra*.

With Marchese Marconi was telephoning to Australia, his wife lay all in her cabin on the *Electra*. If she is better tomorrow the yacht will proceed to Fiumicino and Marchese Marconi will go to Rome to report this apparatus and take part in a long distance talk.

UNIQUE CEREMONY

SCENE AT TOWN HALL

"This ceremony to-night is unique. We have devised it as the first mile tone in a new electrical era," said the chairman of the Electrical and Radio Development Association Exhibition, Mr. P. H. Pettifor in the Town Hall last night.

From his yacht in the Mediterranean, off Genoa, ten thousand miles away, the inventor of wireless telegraphy, Marchese Marconi, performed the ceremony of switching on the 2000 lights in the hall, an epochal event. A further feature was the reception of messages from Marconi.

Last night's proceedings were the result of experiments that have been carried on under the committee of the exhibition by Marconi, and Mr. E. T. Fisk, from the Sydney office of the A.W.A.

At 8 o'clock when the first test scheme of encouraging the electrification of homes was brought into being, a signal was given by the operator in the Town Hall to Marconi.

INVENTIVE GENIUS

The hall was but dimly lighted when Mr. Pettifor requested that operator to indicate to Marconi that all was ready for him to switch the lights on. As if by magic, the request of the operator was acceded to, and the hall was under the spell of the light—an act made possible primarily, said the chairman, by Marconi's own inventive genius.

Many other experiments have been carried out by Marconi and Mr. Fisk. In 1918, Marconi transmitted to Mr. Fisk the first direct wireless message between England and Australia.

Congratulatory messages referring to last night's experiment were received from Mayor Wemp, of Toronto, Canada, the British Electrical Development Association, London, and others.

MARCONI'S MESSAGE

Marconi stated in his own message: "I shall automatically release a train of waves from the Beam wireless station in England, which will be practically instantaneously received at Rockbank, Victoria. The impulse will then be relayed automatically through 500 miles of overhead wire to the Sydney City Hall, where it will cause the power to be switched on by the lights. It is not more than thirty years since I transmitted the first faint wireless signals across the Atlantic Ocean, and to-day we demonstrate that it is possible by wireless to bring powerful currents into operation at the other ends of the earth. I heartily congratulate Australia on the strides made there during recent years in world-wide wireless communication."

OVER 12,000 MILES OF SPACE

Marconi Rings Up By 'Phone

OVER the mountains and hills of the old world, over the ancient cities of the Balkans, through the chilly mists rising from Turkish valleys and the warm air that hangs eternally over the arid plains of Asia Minor and India, there across dark seas and into the sunshine of the Southern Hemisphere the voice of Marconi came yesterday afternoon to 3000 spellbound people at the Radio Exhibition at Sydney Town Hall. The speech was relayed through 2511 throughout the Commonwealth.

GREETINGS FROM GENOA

Mr. Fisk, general manager of Amalgamated Wireless, was speaking with Marconi by telephone for over an hour.



SENATORE MARCONI

and at 4.30 Marconi hung up his receiver, took it off again, and said:

"Hello, Australia! Marconi speaking, aboard the yacht *Electra*, at Genoa, Italy. I am delighted to speak to you in your great cities and wide spaces. I am glad that the experiment of switching on the lights in the Town Hall last Wednesday was a success.

"I hope to meet you all in your wonderful country soon. Meanwhile, I send love from all the world to all your people. Thanks to Australia for affording me this opportunity of speaking to you."

CLEAR RECEPTION

Marconi's voice came over clearly and without interruption. There was an entire absence of static, and the broadcast was as distinct as an ordinary city telephone conversation.

It was early morning at Genoa when Marconi was speaking, and the power he used was less than it takes to boil a pint of shaving water. He had a wave length of 27 metres, and his voice came over 12,000 miles in one-fiftieth of a second.

Mr. Fisk spoke with Marconi nearly every day last week. The wireless wizard has repeatedly congratulated Amalgamated Wireless on its history-making enterprise.

Evening News, 27 March 1930, p.6

The Sunday Times, 30 March 1930, p.2

means of international communication.¹¹ Not only had Marconi linked Australia to the 'mother-country', but also Prime Minister Billy Hughes was able to send Defence Minister, Sir Joseph Cook, a message from the battlefields of Europe. In 1919, Fisk conducted the first public demonstration of music transmitted by radio in Sydney.¹² In 1924 Fisk and Marconi conducted experiments which led to a direct beam service being developed between Australia and Britain. Throughout the 1920s, both Fisk and Marconi collaborated on several wireless experiments from Europe to Australia.¹³ In essence, Fisk was Australia's answer to 'Marconi'.

Marconi's Sydney Town Hall experiment was organised for the opening of The Electrical and

Radio Exhibition held at the Town Hall. The experiment complemented the Exhibition as it essentially was an exposé of modernity showcasing the most technologically advanced electrical appliances. The exhibition was to demonstrate 'the wonderful scientific developments in the application of electricity',¹⁴ not only to industry, but also to household technology. The exhibition began in 1922 and each year more and more technological treats were on display. Now, modernity had infiltrated into the homes and lives of everyone. It seemed that modernity was now a way of life. The humble toaster, cooker, vacuum cleaner and electric kettle were compulsory items for the 'modern' person. The exhibition was also to prove 'an interesting study by housewives' as there was on display the latest advancements

in domestic equipment of 150 items. Newspapers reported with excitement the new conveniences, including a bathroom tap which could instantly dispense hot water or the house that could be run without the need for matches – electricity was to be the servant of the new ‘modern’.¹⁵

Several of the press optimistically saw the experiment as one in a continuing age of technical marvels. The chairman of the Electrical and Radio Exhibition, Mr. P.H. Pettyfer, spoke of the experiment as the first milestone in the ‘new electrical era’.¹⁶ *The Queenslander* echoed that more ‘wonderful things’ were yet to come in the forthcoming decades.¹⁷ *The Daily Pictorial* reported from London that it would be possible in the future, to start and stop trains, trams and factories using wireless.¹⁸ Fisk startled reporters by stating that in the future it would be possible to run ships and aeroplanes by electric motors without the need for fuel.¹⁹ Even the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. J.H. Scullin celebrating the experiment, echoed this:

Senatore Marconi’s feat in turning on the lights at the Sydney Town Hall should bring home picturesquely to every one the marvels of modern wireless, of which Senatore Marconi himself is one of the great pioneers’.²⁰

Fisk, in a message to Marconi, acknowledged that the experiment had brought Australia ‘prominently’ before the eyes of the world.²¹ In Fisk’s eyes, the experiment made outsiders view Australia as ‘thoroughly up-to-date’ and ‘possessing initiative’.²² *The Daily Guardian* referred to the event as the biggest individual event in Australian wireless history.²³ The paper went on to say that the event ‘advertised’ Australia in 14,000 different newspapers around the world.²⁴ Newspaper headlines referred to Marconi’s experiment as the ‘World Watches Marconi’ and, therefore, the world watched Australia.²⁵

The news of the experiment was widely reported in the international press. *The Times of London* reported as early as the 24th March, Marconi’s intention to light Sydney Town Hall.²⁶ The High Commissioner for Australia reported to the British press that Marconi had successfully illuminated the Town Hall in the presence of over three thousand people.²⁷ In addition to this, *The Times* continued to keep its readers updated on Marconi’s further advances. After communicating with wireless phone to Australia, Marconi further carried out similar tests with Cape Town, South

Africa.²⁸ *The New York Times* also recorded Marconi’s achievement in Sydney.²⁹ A large article titled ‘Radio Lights Lamps 11,000 Miles Away’ maintained that this was ‘a notable event in the history of wireless communication’.³⁰ The *Elettra* had been besieged by Italian journalists. When the experiment was successfully conducted, the news was amplified via loud speakers throughout Italy.³¹ The Italian press on board the *Elettra* sent a beam message to Australia congratulating the country on its recent success. Even Mussolini showed interest and organised to inspect Marconi’s equipment on the *Elettra*.

Even though most of the press referred to the magnificence of the experiment, some were rather nervous about the potential of such powerful technology placed in the wrong hands. The press seemed to be very conscious of the dangerous effects of wireless in war. Wireless had been successfully used by the navy as well as other ocean vessels. *The Queenslander’s* editorial addressed the issue ‘A battleship even now can be directed by wireless. Imagine some combatant destroying cities with the touch of a button thousands of miles away. The death ray beloved of imaginative novelists has come’.³² Another editorial said that such technologies could lead to ‘wholesale destruction’ at the touch of a button.³³ *The Italo-Australian* was concerned by the realistic possibility of aggressors releasing buttons of electric waves and annihilating entire armies.³⁴

Unlike much of the mainstream press, the wireless and radio fraternity did not view the experiment as a technological marvel. The London based *Wireless World and Radio Review* wrote of the experiment with technical disdain. In essence, they claimed that Marconi had misled the public. The technical journal argued that there was no connection between Marconi’s experiment and transmitting power without wires.³⁵ The fact that an electric switch was activated on the arrival of Marconi’s wireless message bore no relation to transmitting power without wires. The review chastised the press for referring to the experiment as a demonstration of the transmission of power, when in reality it was a normal wireless signal. According to the *Review*, the press was responsible for blowing this simple wireless signal out of proportion ‘there was no novelty in the method of performing this operation, and certainly no invention connected with it, yet it was an interesting enough demonstration in its ways had it been left at that’.³⁶ In conclusion, the *Review* did note that

The SYDNEY MAIL

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 1930.



Marconi and his Wife on the Elettra

Marchese Marconi last week switched on from his yacht Elettra, then lying off Genoa, 2800 lights in the Sydney Town Hall by pressing a key which set in motion the ether signals that were transmitted by beam wireless to Australia. It was regarded as one of the most interesting experiments of the times in wireless transmission, and was a complete success. The photograph shows Marconi on the deck of the yacht with his wife, who was on the vessel when the signal was sent through.

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VOL. IX.—No. 15. Anno IX.

SYDNEY: SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 1930.

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Another Triumph for Marconi

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holders of all skiing societies enjoy special rates as well as permission to carry their skis on the plane.

Berlin-Naples Express—Beginning from January 1, 1930, a rapid passenger train, consisting of first

the experiment did have one positive — it pointed the way to a future where electricity could be transmitted ‘directly through the air in any direction and quantity desired’.³⁷

Throughout the newspaper reports, there were undertones of the commonality of such technological marvels. Several papers insinuated that they were living in an ‘age of marvels’ one which brought the advent of the car, aviation and other scientific discoveries. The people of this ‘age of marvels’ were so accustomed to new discoveries that they were no longer novelties. The *Italo-Australian* remarked that it was ‘truly difficult to stir us with the remarkable’.³⁸ Yet, for some reason Marconi’s experiment was extraordinary and it did ‘stir’ the public.

Throughout the media reports, Marconi was hailed as a hero. According to the editor of the *Daily Pictorial*, the world as a whole was indebted to the genius of Marconi.³⁹ Sydney’s Italian community viewed the event somewhat differently. Firstly, they marvelled at the genius of Marconi which is suggested by an editorial by Franco Battistessa in the Sydney Italian-language newspaper, the *Italo-Australian*.⁴⁰ Secondly, the Italian community saw the event as a symbol of the Italian contribution to Australia, as well as Italians and Australians being able to work together harmoniously.⁴¹ In the 1930s, there was a plethora of anti-Italian feeling in Australia, particularly in Northern Queensland. Just a month prior to the event, the murder of Italian Domenico Belle at Newtown Station, Sydney, was alleged to have been the workings of the Italian ‘Black Hand’ or the *Camorra*. The ‘Black Hand’ was again alleged responsible for the spate of murders by Italians throughout

Northern Queensland in the 1930s. The press were particularly racist in their coverage of the ‘Black Hand’ murders, insinuating the evil of the Italian influence in Australia. Also, the Depression aggravated prevailing racial tensions. For the Italian community, Marconi represented a ‘positive’ image of Italians. The fact that it was an Italian who brought world-wide attention to Sydney gave the Italian community legitimacy. The Italian community was particularly touched when the probability of Benito Mussolini speaking to Australians from the *Elettra* became a real possibility. The *Italo-Australian*, a pro-Fascist paper, reported that wireless provided the avenue for a better understanding between the races, as Mussolini was a man whose ‘motives and aims’ were more ‘completely misunderstood than those of any other statesman in the world’.⁴²

The Italian community’s efforts to commemorate the event testifies to the view that the experiments were landmarks in Italo-Australian history. Even as late as 1963, the Sydney Italian language newspaper, *La Fiamma*, was still featuring commemorative articles on the lighting of the Town Hall.⁴³ When Marconi died in 1937, a commemorative mass in St Mary’s Cathedral was held by Sydney’s Italian community.⁴⁴ In Bossley Park, south-west of Sydney, an Italian club founded in 1958 was named ‘Club Marconi’. This Club is located in a concentrated area of Italian residency and is the largest Italian Club in NSW, having over 32,000 members. Again, in 1974, members of Sydney’s Italian community formed a Marconi Memorial Fund for the provision of a sculpture to honour the centenary of Marconi’s birth. The sculpture was executed by Michael Kitching in the grounds of the Sydney Town Hall

and was unveiled in 1976 by Marconi's daughter, Princess Elettra.⁴⁵

Marconi's link with Australia still continues today. Marconi's daughter, Princess Elettra Marconi Giovanelli, frequently travels to Australia to make official visits to Club Marconi and to unveil new monuments to her father.⁴⁶ Club Marconi have even called their restaurant the 'Elettra Room'. Sydney Town Hall also has a room named the 'Marconi Room'. Although he never visited Australia, the existence of our very radio system is the greatest testimony to the genius of Marconi.

All images are reproduced courtesy of the State Library of NSW.

NOTES

¹ 'Marconi was too Impetuous', *The Daily Guardian*, 27 March 1930, p. 11.

² 'Marconi's Talk With Sydney', *The Age (Melbourne)*, 26 March 1930, p. 11.

³ 'When Marconi Switched on the Lights', *The Sydney Mail*, 2 April 1930, p. 20.

⁴ '3000 Heard Marconi at Town Hall', *Sunday Guardian*, 30 March 1930, p. 6; 'Greetings From Genoa', *The Sunday Times*, 30 March 1930, p. 2.

⁵ 'Marconi's Message', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1930, p. 15.

⁶ 'Radio Wonder of 1930', *Daily Pictorial*, 25 March 1930, p.7.

⁷ For more information on early wireless history see: Philip Geeves, 'Marconi and Australia', *AWA Technical Review*, Vol.15, No.4, December 1974, p. 132.

J.B.Potter, 'The Development and Future of Wireless', *Quaderni dell'Istituto Italiano di Cultura*, (5), 1975, pp. 161-178, E.Bonollo, 'Guglielmo Marconi — Centenary of an Engineer 1874-1974', *Ibid*.

⁸ 'Sir Ernest Thomas Fisk', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, pp. 508-509.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 508.

¹⁰ *First Direct Wireless Messages From England to Australia*, AWA, Sydney, 1935, 5. A 1935 memorial to the event is located between Cleveland and Stuart Streets, Wahroonga. It features a statue of Mercury, the messenger of the gods with various other symbols of communication. See B.Henderson (ed.), *Monuments and Memorials*, The Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1988, p. 89.

¹¹ 'Sir Ernest Thomas Fisk', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, op.cit., p. 509.

¹² See Frances Pollon (ed.), *The Best of Geeves — Nostalgic Cameos from Australia's Past* by Philip Geeves, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1984, pp. 37,45.

¹³ See Philip Geeves, 'Australia's Radio Pioneers 1-4', *Electronics Australia*, May, June, July, August 1974.

¹⁴ 'Modern Triumph — Girdling the Earth', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 March 1930, p. 9.

¹⁵ 'When Marconi Switched on the Lights', *The Sydney Mail*, 2 April 1930, p. 20.

¹⁶ 'Dawn of New Electrical Era', *Evening News*, 27 March, 1930, p. 6.

¹⁷ 'Wireless Marvels', *The Queenslander*, 3 April 1930, p. 3.

¹⁸ 'Radio Wonder of 1930', *Daily Pictorial*, 25 March 1930, p.7.

¹⁹ 'A Forecast', *The Sydney Mail*, 2 April 1930, p. 25.

²⁰ 'Wireless Marvel — Marconi's Achievement — Space Conquered', *The Brisbane Courier*, 27 March 1930, p. 13.

²¹ 'Congratulations for Mr.Fisk', *Daily Pictorial*, 28 March 1930, p. 8.

²² 'Wireless — Successful Experiment', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 March 1930, p. 8.

²³ 'Marconi was too Impetuous', *The Daily Guardian*, 27 March 1930, p. 11.

²⁴ 'Marconi was too Impetuous', *The Daily Guardian*, 27 March 1930, p. 11.

²⁵ 'World Watches Marconi', *The New York Times*, 26 March 1930, p. 10.

²⁶ 'Marconi's Experiments', *The Times (London)*, 24 March 1930, p. 13.

²⁷ 'Senator Marconi's Talk to Sydney', *The Times (London)*, 31 March 1930, p. 13.

²⁸ 'Marchese Marconi's Experiments', *The Times (London)*, 15 April 1930, p. 15.

²⁹ 'Marconi Tests New Radio', *The New York Times*, 22 March 1930, p. 24.

³⁰ 'Radio Lights Lamps 11,000 Miles Away', *The New York Times*, 27 March 1930, 29. See also: 'Keeping Time With the Air Waves', *The New York Times*, 28 March 1930, p. 24.

³¹ 'Marvels of Radio', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 March 1930, p. 11.

³² 'Wireless Marvels', *The Queenslander*, 3 April 1930, p. 3.

³³ 'An Age of Miracles', *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 March 1930, p. 14.

³⁴ 'Another Triumph for Marconi', *Italo-Australian*, 12 April 1930, p. 1.

³⁵ *The Wireless World and Radio Review*, Vol. XXVI, No.14, 2 April 1930, p. 349.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

³⁸ 'Another Triumph for Marconi', *Italo-Australian*, 12 April 1930, p. 1.

³⁹ 'Great Radio Test', *Daily Pictorial*, 25 March 1930, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Franco Battistesssa, 'Eviva Marconi!', *Italo-Australian*, 29 March 1930, p. 4.

⁴¹ 'Another Triumph for Marconi', *Italo-Australian*, 12 April 1930, p. 1; See also Pino Bosi, *Blood, Sweat and Guts*, Kurunda, Sydney c1971.

⁴² *Ibid*. See also 'Marconi Ha Parlato e Mussolini Parlerà Con Sydney', *Italo-Australian*, 5 April 1930, p. 3.

⁴³ This article was written by a former scientist on the *Elettra*, Adelmo Landini, 'Non dimenticherà mai quel giorno', *La Fiamma*, 10 December 1963, p. 18.

⁴⁴ 'Solenne Messa Requiem in Memoria di Marconi', *Il Giornale Italiano*, 25 August 1937, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Sydney City Council, Sydney Open Museum History Survey, 1994, p. 125.

⁴⁶ *40th Anniversary of Club Marconi 1994-1998*, Club Marconi, Bossley Park, 1998, pp. 33-34.

FROM MOLINARA TO ADELAIDE: THE SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA OF A SMALL SOUTHERN ITALIAN COMMUNITY

by Danielle Carr

Danielle Carr completed an Honours degree in Italian in 1999 at Flinders University, Adelaide. This paper contains the results of some of the research that she carried out for her Honours thesis both in the Adelaide community and in Molinara. Her supervisor was Associate Professor Desmond O'Connor.

Molinara is a small Italian town situated approximately thirty kilometres north-east of Benevento in Campania, and around ninety kilometres north-east of Naples. In 1911 the town's population was 3,369 but, due to migration, today the number has been reduced to approximately 1,980. Until the early 1960s very few of the inhabitants lived outside the walls of the medieval fortified town. Inside the walls sewerage was rudimentary, many houses still had no electricity, and the only water available was from the public fountains. Bartering, rather than cash, was still the preferred method of exchange, and Molinara's economy was solely rural. Cereals and olive oil were the main products of the town and its outlying lands, which was also the local centre for grinding wheat into flour. Farming was not easy, as there was very little machinery, and until the 1950s most families used donkeys for transport and bullocks for ploughing the fields.

On 21 August 1962 Molinara was at the epicentre of an earthquake which fortunately caused few deaths, but much destruction. The earthquake all but destroyed the medieval section of the town, and many of the houses outside the walls were also damaged. Subsidies from the Italian government, along with contributions from the Molinarese community in Adelaide, helped to rebuild the town, which now exists almost entirely outside the walls of the medieval section. Today in the old walled part only a few houses, a church and the town's sole pizzeria have been restored, the rest still lies in ruins. The earthquake also marked the beginning of diversification of the town's economy: industrial and commercial enterprises have since sprung up and now exist alongside the traditional agricultural activities.

The early 1950s saw many Italians from Southern Italy migrate to Australia, and Molinara was no exception. The average income of a southern

Italian was less than half that of Italians in the North, well over 50 percent of the labour force was in agriculture, a quarter of the population was illiterate, and the number of unemployed ranged from between 33 and 50 percent in the rural areas.¹ It is therefore little wonder that many southern Italians wished to leave their village in search of a better life. The exodus from Italy occurred mainly from these rural areas in the poor, agriculturally-based southern regions. The loss of inhabitants from the region of Campania was substantial, such that by 1981 there were almost 78,000 *campani*² living permanently outside of Italy.³

Between the years 1945 and 1982 approximately 300 *molinaresi* (fifteen percent of the population) migrated to Australia, nearly all of whom settled in Adelaide. Of these, just 38 later returned permanently to Italy.⁴ The peak decade of Molinarese migration to South Australia was 1955 to 1964, with the highest number, 92 migrants, settling in Adelaide in the two years 1959 and 1960 as part of a strong migration chain. The reasons for this group migration include not only the drive for economic betterment but also a natural calamity, the earthquake in Molinara in 1962. Ironically, the injection of Italian government funds in the reconstruction period helped improve living conditions and created new employment prospects for those who stayed behind.

Today very few South Australian *molinaresi* live outside of the Adelaide metropolitan area. All initially chose Adelaide because they had friends and relatives who were already there, who were willing to sponsor them, and who reported that work was plentiful and wages were high. Once the newcomers arrived, they decided to stay because they found people from their own region who could help them through the traumatic first months. Some *molinaresi* had initially wanted to



Panoramic view of Molinara as rebuilt after the earthquake of 1962.

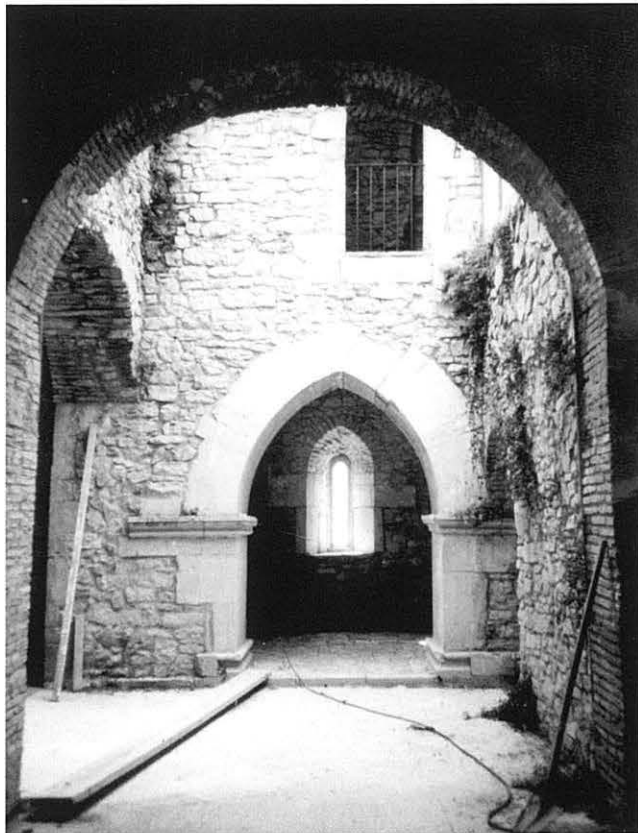
emigrate to the United States, Canada or Argentina, but had found that it was much easier to obtain permission to come to Australia.⁵ All were totally convinced that Australia offered far more opportunities for them than did Molinara. The *molinaresi* are known for having *braccia lunghe e lingua corta* (long arms and a short tongue), i.e., they have the reputation of being people of action rather than words, and as such are people who have worked hard to create comfortable lives for themselves in their new country. The small proportion of *molinaresi* who returned to Italy underscores the successful integration of the Molinarese community into South Australian society and the close bond (linguistic, social, familial, religious, cultural) that the members of the community have established with each other in Adelaide.

Amongst the first three *molinaresi* to land in South Australia was Antonio Girolamo, who arrived in Adelaide on 11 October 1927.⁶ Girolamo was born in 1890 and as a young man had spent eight years in the U.S.A. He returned to Molinara just prior to the outbreak of World War 1, because

he did not want to fight for the United States. He was conscripted into the Italian army, and during the course of the war was captured and became a prisoner of war in Germany. His return to Molinara at the end of the war was short-lived, as he quickly began looking for alternative lands in which he could make his fortune. His refusal to fight for the US army meant that he was not allowed to return to America, and Argentina (which was a popular destination for *molinaresi* at the time) did not appeal to him due to the poverty, dirtiness and the hard times reported by early Molinarese migrants. A friend of his from the nearby town of San Giorgio La Molara told him of his friend, Giuseppe Catalano (from Ceppaloni in the Benevento province), who had already migrated to Australia and was residing in Broken Hill. Girolamo contacted Catalano, and asked him to arrange an *atto di chiamata* (sponsorship). After several months Girolamo was given permission to emigrate to Australia. He left Molinara in August 1927, leaving behind two young daughters and his pregnant wife. Three months after his arrival in Adelaide, his wife gave birth to their third daughter.



The medieval town of Molinara today. The earthquake of 1962 all but destroyed the medieval town, and it has been left virtually untouched since.



The Church of Santa Maria dei Greci. The earthquake caused considerable damage to the church, and it is one of the few buildings in the medieval town currently in the process of being restored.

In 1939, after being separated from his family for twelve years, Antonio Girolamo had saved enough money to bring them out to Australia. In Italy his wife sold all of their possessions and made preparations for the long journey but the Second World War broke out just eight days before the planned departure of Girolamo's wife and three daughters, and they were unable to leave. Six more years passed, during which time Girolamo had no news of his family in Italy, nor they of him. At the end of the war a letter from Girolamo arrived in Molinara, via the Italian Red Cross. In it he once again asked his family to join him in the country where he had by now been living for eighteen years. His daughters, however, had grown up, and they were reluctant to leave Molinara. The eldest was married and both the younger two were engaged. Their mother wrote and explained this to their father, who thought that it was important for at least the youngest daughter to come. Once again, Girolamo's wife started preparing for the voyage to Australia, which she finally made in November 1948, with her eldest daughter's husband, who had decided to migrate along with the mother and the younger sister. They arrived in Adelaide in February 1949 and were joined by the eldest daughter the following August. The youngest daughter, Maria, who had married her fiancé Giuseppe in 1948, left Molinara with her husband in October 1949. They arrived in Adelaide in time to spend Christmas with the family. Maria was pregnant. As the couple alighted in Adelaide from the train that they had caught in Melbourne, Antonio Girolamo started to cry. It was the very first time that he had seen his youngest daughter. She was now 22 years old. Giuseppe, the youngest daughter's husband, says that he later asked Antonio Girolamo what had prompted his tears at the train station. Girolamo replied: *'Mi chiedeva se fosse la figlia o la moglie'* 'I kept wondering whether this was my daughter or my wife'). Just as he had left his wife pregnant with Maria in 1927, so Maria arrived pregnant with his grandson in Adelaide in 1949.

The migration story of Antonio Girolamo, who arrived at the head of a migration chain, is a vivid reminder of the hardships that Italian migrants endured before World War 2 and in the early post-war period. The Molinarese migrant group is particularly interesting because it is a case of large-scale migration from one small village

and, at the point of arrival, of a settlement pattern of limited geographical confines (the north-eastern suburbs of Adelaide). The difficulties of settlement were typical of those experienced by many other Italian migrants to Australia in the 1950s and 60s: the encounter with a monocultural society, the language barrier, the unfamiliar cityscape and landscape, the problem of finding suitable employment, the lack of organised leisure-time activities and subsequently, as the children were born and grew up, the struggle to transmit to the second generation the language, culture and beliefs of the parents. Like the *agnonesi*⁷ of William A. Douglass's study, the *molinaresi* in Adelaide share with the *molinaresi* in Molinara 'a common thread that runs through the lives of people residing in ... different parts of the world ... whose orientation and behaviour are in at least some respects conditioned by a continued loyalty to birthplace'.⁸

While the visible links with the town of Molinara remain strong through family ties and return visits, the links with contemporary Italy are arguably more tenuous. A pointer to this is the extent to which the *molinaresi* in South Australia use Italian-language media. Interestingly, the local Italian radio station is popular (because it focuses on the Australian-Italian community, its activities, local sport, and Italian music and songs of yesteryear), but Italian television from RAI-TV is less so, presumably because it reports mainly on Italian politics and current affairs in Italy, which are of little interest to the average Italian-Australian.

The *molinaresi* of Adelaide are a close-knit community: they mainly frequent local relatives and *paesani* and the all-important Molinara Sports and Social Club, established in 1971. The attractive club was originally designed to be a focal point for the first generation and their children, but it now has an uncertain future because it is all but ignored by the second and third generation who are fully integrated into South Australia's broad and diverse society. The economic betterment experienced by the first generation migrants has brought with it the feeling of being 'between two worlds': life in modern-day Australia where the sense of loyalty to Molinara is defended and needed, and nostalgia for the earlier life in the Molinara of their roots, a youthful experience that today, with the passing of time, grows increasingly distant. Just as the Adelaide *molinaresi* had left Italy behind, now Italy has left



Group gathering of the Chiuchiolo, Sebastiano, Gentilcore and Monaco families at Lillian Street, Findon. The Monacos returned to Molinara permanently in 1989.



Post-christening party attended by the Gentilcore, Caruso and Boffa families.



Soon after migrating to Adelaide, Rocco and Rosa Longo celebrated their wedding with other Molinarese paesani.



Luigi Chiuchiolo (dec.) in Melbourne, January 1956 after disembarking from the Neptune.

them behind. One migrant interviewed succinctly summed up the anguish stemming from his bond with Molinara: *Soffrivo e soffro ancora che sono nato là ma resto qua* ('I suffered then and I still suffer now because I was born there but I remain here').

Apart from family and relatives, today amongst Adelaide's Italians the most enduring and visible connection with Molinara is the devotion to, and celebration of, the town's patron San Rocco, a bridging emblem of identity and the annual reminder of the presence and continuation of age-old traditions and rituals. Established in Adelaide in 1957, the *fešta* has been transposed from the traditional liturgical date of 16 August to the second Sunday in January, in mid-summer, so as to encourage maximum participation of devotees, who today number more than two thousand.⁹

How long will the 'Adelaide Molinara' survive? Like Italian communities everywhere, the *molinaresi* in Adelaide are concerned about the maintenance in their families of their language, culture and traditions. As the age of the community increases, so too does the distance between the elderly *molinaresi*, enthusiastic supporters of the club and of the *fešta*, and the second and third generation descendants, for whom the migratory journey from Molinara has become the legendary tale of parents and grandparents.

Photographs supplied by the author.

NOTES

- ¹ M. Clark. *Modern Italy 1871-1982*, New York, Longman Group Limited, 1984, p. 357.
- ² People from the Italian region of Campania.
- ³ G. Montroni, *Popolazione e insediamenti in Campania (1861-1981)*. In *Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi. La Campania*. Eds. P. Macry and P. Villani, Milan, Einaudi, 1990, p. 250.
- ⁴ M. Cirocco. 'Il fenomeno migratorio ed i cambiamenti della struttura socio-economica in un paese del meridione d'Italia. Molinara, dal 1891 ad oggi'. (The migration phenomenon and changes to the socio-economic structure of a southern Italian town. Molinara, from 1891 to the present day) University essay, s.a., s.l., supplied by author.
- ⁵ There is a large Molinarese community in Argentina, and smaller ones in the United States, Canada and Venezuela, but most of these migrants left Italy before World War 2.
- ⁶ Of the other two, Rocco Luigi Cirocco arrived six weeks earlier, on 27 August 1927, on the 'Città di Genova' and Michele Gentilcore arrived with Antonio Girolamo on the *Palermo* on 11 October.
- ⁷ People from the town of Agnola.
- ⁸ W.A. Douglass, *Emigration in a South Italian Town. An Anthropological History*, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1984, p. 1.
- ⁹ Antonio Paganoni and Desmond O'Connor, *Se la processione va bene ... Religiosità popolare italiana nel Sud Australia*, Rome, Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1999, p. 140.



Molinara today.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PICTURE FRAME MAKING IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AUSTRALIA: LAWRENCE CETTA AND THE QUICK PROFIT

by Elizabeth Cant

Elizabeth Cant is a former surgeon. In 1999 her M.A Thesis on the history of picture framing in nineteenth century Australia was accepted by Flinders University, Adelaide. This article was published in The World of Antiques & Art, December 1999-June 2000. It is reproduced with the kind permission of the author.

Like silversmiths, professional picture frame makers supplied what was, in 1830s Australia, a luxury item. They required a combination of a sufficient population of professional artists — and, in the second half of the nineteenth century, photographers — with the building of permanent homes and increasing wealth to provide a market for their product. Such conditions began to occur in Sydney and Hobart Town by the mid 1830s, in Launceston by the early 1840s and in Adelaide and Port Phillip by the late 1840s.

Lawrence Cetta, the first Italian emigrant professional picture frame maker, had arrived in Sydney at least by the end of 1842. He alone of the picture frame makers, British and European, realised a potential market for his product existed in the other Australian colonies. He established his factory and clientele in Sydney and then proceeded to make contacts further afield. A decade later he left Australia.

Cetta was born in 1803 near Como, Italy, into a family of picture frame and looking glass makers. As was the tradition of this artisan class, he emigrated to England and thence to Australia. Arriving in Sydney, he is recorded as entering into a partnership with another frame maker, T. E. Hughes, by January 1843.¹ This partnership lasted until April 1845; after this he worked alone.²

He married Jane Ellis in 1846 and lived at 57 George Street from 1845/46 to 1850/51. His business prospered to the point that two brothers, Julian and Peter arrived from London to provide assistance on 11 August 1846 and in October 1850 respectively. They also must have lived at 57 George Street as Julian is recorded as living there from 1851. Both maintained the Sydney business whilst Lawrence and Jane spent the first half of 1851 travelling to London and Europe. This high degree of activity suggests that Cetta may also have made picture frame mouldings for the local trade.

Whilst in Sydney, Lawrence Cetta ran a thriving inter-colonial export business³ which began in November 1844 with a shipment of one case labelled *Cetta* to Port Phillip and continued with shipments in January and February of the following year, each of a single case labelled *Cetta & Hughes*. Thereafter all shipments were in the name of *Cetta* only. There were sixty-four shipments over the next eight years, each consisting of an average of fifteen cases of mainly looking glasses, the last being in November, 1852.⁴ The destinations varied but were mainly to Port Phillip (forty-five), Launceston (nine), where there was apparently little competition for looking glasses from the local picture frame maker William Wilson who had arrived in 1842; Adelaide (eight), where the first professional frame maker David Culley only arrived late in 1849; and Geelong (four). There was one shipment to Port Fairy and also a single shipment to Hobart in 1845 where the local frame maker Robin Vaughan Hood, firmly established there since 1833, would have provided vigorous resistance to Cetta's intrusion. The artist Joseph Fowles, in his *Sydney in 1848*, was prompted to write:

Opposite the Royal Hotel is Mr. Cetta's Picture Frame and Looking Glass Manufactory from whence all the neighbouring colonies are almost exclusively supplied: the Carving and Gilding executed at this establishment is of the highest order and merits the extensive patronage it receives.⁵

Cetta applied for naturalisation and this was granted on 31 December, 1852. In February he, his wife and a Miss Cetta sailed for Le Havre from Sydney via Melbourne and there is no further record of him.

This departure was surprisingly abrupt, considering his recent naturalisation, although his initial aim on emigrating had always been to make a profit and return to live in style in Italy. His eventual

departure was certainly related to the unexpected discovery of gold in the colony of Victoria in 1851. He was, no doubt, aware that the increasing wealth of that colony would attract a large number of picture frame and looking glass makers and



fig. 1a: Framemaker – Cetta & Hughes.



fig. 1b: Frame label of frame in figure 1a.

cause the subsequent demise of his inter-colonial export business — an event that did not occur until 1855.⁶

A more likely explanation for his abrupt departure concerned the fashionability of his wares. At home in Sydney he faced increased competition from two new arrivals, Edwin Baldwin and another Italian, John Bernasconi, who had established their businesses by the early 1850s.⁷

The picture frames common in Sydney from the 1830s to the early 1860s were three variants of the *ogee* (S-shaped) profile, the basic shape being a broad *ogee* rising to the top edge and leading to a back *scotia* (half circle concave). These variants were consecutive in time with only short periods of overlap and showed increasingly rich ornamentation.

Examples of Cetta's picture frames are extant. An empty frame dating from the Cetta & Hughes George St. period (October 1843 to April 1845) (fig. 1) and three frames surrounding portraits of the Sinclair family by the artist Joseph Backler, all with Cetta labels and dated 1846 (fig. 2) are identical and represent the first *ogee* variant. They are straight-sided frames with large corner cartouches flanked by flower and leaf tendrils. A feature of all the frames is the wide (two centimetres) sight edge moulding. The basic frame is unadorned unlike similar frames from the same period made in Launceston and Hobart, which showed the application of net, the nineteenth century substitute for the crosshatching of gesso in the eighteenth century. This particular variant was also popular in the English provinces (fig. 3) and copied a Rococo variant of the picture frames associated with the Bourbon Restoration in France (1815-1850).⁸

No example of Cetta's looking glasses appear to be available but one suspects that they, like his picture frames, were competent but already being superseded by new ornament. These new, more advanced decorations became available with the new arrivals and must have been evident by the end of 1852. Both Baldwin and Bernasconi went to gain prizes for their portrait frames when they were exhibited at the Australian Museum in Sydney in 1854 prior to the Paris International Exhibition in 1855⁹ (fig. 4, 5).

Lawrence Cetta's stay in Australia was shortened by the unexpected discovery of gold in Victoria. The real reason for his abrupt departure will never be known but a significant factor would

have been the advent of new decorations which eclipsed his own product. The naturalisation must have been undertaken in case he should ever decide to return to Australia.

NOTES

- ¹ Neville, R., 'Joseph Backler: Potrait painter to the not very rich or famous', *The Australian Antique Collector*, vol 46, June-Dec, 1983, pp 53; *Barbazon's New General Town Directory*, Sydney 1843.
- ² Low's *City of Sydney Directory* 1847. Cetta & Hughes King St. West, Sydney 1843; Cetta & Hughes 397 George St., Sydney October 1843-1845; Cetta 397 Goerge St. from April 1845.
- ³ *Sydney Morning Herald* Shipping News September 1842-February 1953.
- ⁴ Cant, E., *The Deportment of Paintings: the history of nineteenth century Australian picture frames*. M. A. Thesis, The Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1998, Appendix 10, pp 314.
- ⁵ Fowles, J., *Sydney in 1848*, reprinted 1973 Ure Smith and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Sydney, pp 57.
- ⁶ Melbourne picture frame makers: 1851 Charles Huxtable & Co.; 1852 Huxtable & Co; 1853 Huxtable & Co., 1854 John Campi; 1855 Braché & Boldner, Henry Byrne, John Maclachan, Richard Foster Norton, John Campi.
- ⁷ R. Maguire, 'The Fine Art of Framing', *Australian Antique Collector*, vol.31, Jan-June 1986, pp46-47; K. Fahy & A. Simpson, *Australian Furniture; pictorial history and dictionary 1788-1938*, Sydney 1998, pp.21, 26.
- ⁸ Mitchell, P., Roberts, L. A. *History of European Picture Frames*, P. Mitchell Ltd. In assoc.with Merrell Holbertson Publishers, London, 1996, pp 49 fig. 34(e).
- ⁹ Fahy, K., Simpson, G., Simpson, A., *Nineteenth century Australian Furniture*, David Ell Press, Sydney, 1985.

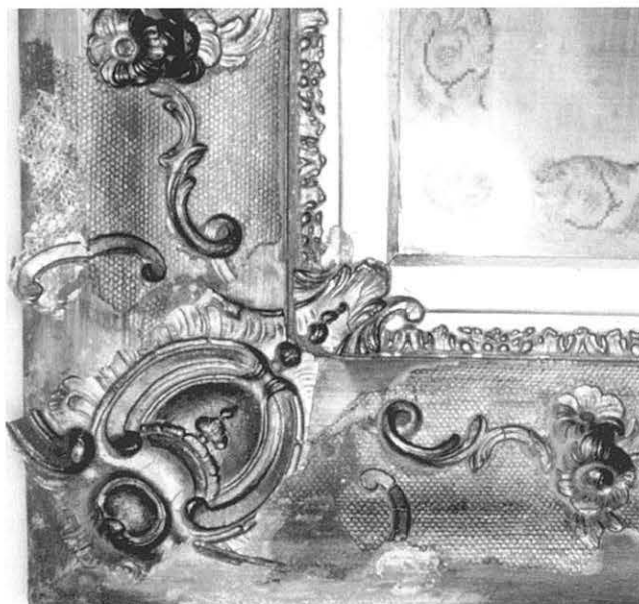


fig. 3: Framemaker – Unknown.



fig. 2: Framemaker – Lawrence Cetta.



fig. 4: Framemaker – Edwin Baldwin.

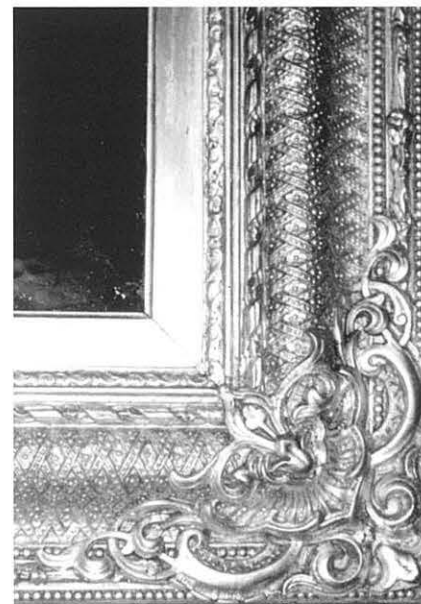


fig. 5: Framemaker – John Bernasconi.

FAMILY HISTORY

New Italian Family History Group in Sydney

We are pleased to announce the formation of the 'Italian Family History Group' for descendants of Italian immigrants who settled in New South Wales. This group will operate as a subcommittee of the Italian Heritage Committee of Co.As.It. Sydney. Co.As.It. is the official Italian welfare agency for New South Wales. The group was formed earlier this year and intends to have its inaugural public meeting in February of this year. The group meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6.00 p.m. at Casa d'Italia, 67 Norton Street, Leichhardt. Everybody is welcome!

The group has already initiated various projects. The compilation of an index of Italian names from Sydney shipping lists starting from 1856 is already underway. The group also received a generous donation from the *Associazione Isole Eolie* (Aeolian Islands Association) to acquire the microfilms of all the civil and church records of the Aeolian Islands. These records were microfilmed by the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints (Mormons). It is hoped that microfilms of birth, death and marriage records of other Italian regions can be added to the collection in the future.

Volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks, including research and transcribing of records, are welcomed.

For further information please write to:
Italian Family History Group
Casa d'Italia, 67 Norton Street
Leichhardt, 2040.

Or contact:

Dominic Arrivolo (02) 9789 1787
Margaret De Manincor (02) 9631 0658
Francesca Musicò (02) 9606 5440

A website for descendants of emigrants from the Veneto, Trentino and Friuli Regions

At last a visually attractive, useful and intelligent website! www.cuoretriveneto.it has been written for all those who have an interest in or a connection with the regions of Veneto, Trentino and Friuli. It offers information on the history of the main towns such as Venice, Verona, Padova, Treviso, Vicenza, Belluno, Rovigo, Trento, Trieste, Udine,

Gorizia and Pordenone, as well as recipes of traditional cuisine, cultural events, tourist itineraries, news, and, most importantly, a 'FIND YOUR ROOTS' section aimed at bringing together the descendants of emigrant families whose members are scattered all over the world, from Brazil to Australia, from the United States to Russia. The service is free and worth a try. A perfect site for school projects!

Family History Enquiries

The Italian Historical Society has received an unprecedented number of enquiries from family history researchers. In many cases we have been able to match people researching the same ancestor(s), in others we provided information on archival and records-keeping systems in Italy. To all we stress the difficulty in accessing the Italian records and obtaining copies or a reply at all!

The Society will continue to provide the best possible service to family history researchers. The publication in the IHS Journal of enquiries received has in the past produced unexpected favourable results and assistance for the researchers from other people undertaking similar investigation for their own family tree.

The following are summaries of the most interesting enquiries received in the last six months:

Pietro Cusini [Casini]/Maria Sala

This is a good example of how family names were often voluntarily or involuntarily modified to accommodate the correct Italian phonetic pronunciation. Casini is a common name in many regions of Italy, especially in Lombardy. Pietro and his wife Maria settled in Bendigo in 1870s/1880s. Their house was taken over by the Bendigo School of Mines. Kevin Larson (03) 9773 1081 is researching the family records in Italy.

Lazarus Canepa

Mr Doug Canepa, who is the first of Lazarus' descendants to emigrate to Australia from the Isle of Man in 1965, is eager to find out as much as possible about his great-great-grandfather's family in Italy. Lazarus left Italy in late 1840s, possibly from Genoa, to settle on the Isle of Man where in 1850 he married a Manx girl. He was soon after commissioned by J.G. Cumming, Principal of King William College, Castletown, to make casts of a number of Celtic crosses. In a follow-up article by a Dr. Vigfussen of Oxford, England, entitled 'The Manx Runic Inscriptions'

the author states that an inscription on a broken cast read 'L. Canepa 12 May 1853. Viva l'Italia e la libertà. Morte ai tiranni della patria' (Long live Italy and freedom. Death to the tyrants of [my] homeland).

Dates and places of birth are vital information for family history research. Without this information Mr Canepa's chances of finding any documents in Italy are quite remote. In most cases, birth, death and marriage certificates pre-unification of the country [c1870] can only be found in the Parish(es) where the person was born, married and died. Civil records were introduced after 1870, however many Comune (Municipal Offices) began the registration of births, deaths and marriages much earlier and the records are today available. Mr Canepa needs to access Lazarus' records on the Isle of Man where the person lived. Lazarus' marriage, death and naturalisation certificates or will should include the date and place of his birth. The patriotic inscription on the broken cast of a Celtic cross is reliable proof that Lazarus Canepa left Italy in opposition to the Austrian Empire which occupied northern Italy from 1818 to 1870. Many young men were persecuted by the Austrians for their political beliefs and participation in pro-freedom revolutionary associations and secret movements, such as the Carboneria and Giovane Italia. After the first attempt to free Italy failed in the war of 1848-1849 a number of young men fled the country. They sought refuge in the United Kingdom where they found shelter and support for their struggle for freedom and unification of their homeland. Some of them settled there permanently and some migrated to Australia with their British wives when gold was discovered in Victoria in 1851.

Domenico Moratti

The article on the Italian pioneers in Walhalla by Winifred Guatta (*IHS Journal*, Vol. 8. No.1) prompted Alan Poletti from New Zealand to seek the help of Ms Guatta in explaining the connection of Walhalla's Domenico Moratti with another member of the family by the same name. Poletti writes that during a recent trip to Italy, while he was tracking down information on Domenico Moratti (b. 3/1/1850), he found at the *Casa Comunale* (Council's Offices) in Villa di Tirano, Valtellina, a *Stato di Famiglia* of an uncle of 'his' Domenico by the same name. *Stato di Famiglia* is a document which lists births, deaths and marriages

of a nuclear family, starting from the head of the family down to each child. When a child marries, a new *Stato di Famiglia* is generated and an entry on the original document of the father refers you to the registry page number of the new document. The Domenico in this document was born in March 31, 1835 and his last place of residence was given as Australia. Could he be the one at Walhalla? Uncle Domenico was the son of Domenico Moratti and Agostina Moratti (her maiden name), born in Musciano, in the *Comune* of Villa di Tirano in 1835. He married Agostina Del Dosso Vanari and the children born were Maria Domenica, Domenico Moratti and Rosa Moratti. With the help of Ms Guatta, Poletti was able to establish the connection between the Moratti members. The lack of any vital records concerning their story in Australia may be due to the fact that Moratti father and son probably returned to Italy early in 1900.

Poletti's comment that 'when it came to names, the Morattis showed little imagination' is an understatement! Traditionally the first son was named after his paternal grandfather. The second name was often that of the maternal grandfather. This tradition is less common in Italy today. Poletti gives us another important information on the existence and availability of civil records pre-1870s in the Casa Comunale (Municipal Offices) of Villa di Tirano. The Society will write to the Council for information as to the type of records held in their archives and will report the outcome of our enquiry in the next issue of the IHS Journal.

A personal note: When I was expecting a child in Italy in the 1960s, my family wanted me and my husband to follow the tradition in the naming of the child. This was not an easy decision and we were hoping with all our heart that it was going to be a girl and not a boy. The reason being that the name of my father was JULIUS and that of my father-in-law CAESAR! Thank goodness Lucrezia was born and the names of both her paternal and maternal great-grandmothers, Simona and Elisabetta, became her second and third names! Laura Mecca

Carlo Foppoli, Dr.

Mr Bruno Ciapponi Landi, Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Tirano, Valtellina, is interested in receiving information on Carlo Foppoli, a medical doctor born in 1821 in Ponte in Valtellina, Sondrio. According to the information

held by the Museum, Dr Foppoli is recorded as a distinguished and accomplished person, whose political involvement in his region's affairs saw him elected to the Parliament of Italy in 1888. However, from 1855 to 1866 Dr Foppoli spent a period in the United States (California), in Australia (Victoria) and in New Zealand (Greymouth). He left Italy for political reasons against the occupying Austrians. In San Francisco, where he settled during his American stint, it is recorded that he was nominated the official doctor of the Italian and French communities. After a brief visit home in 1860, he left again and this time for Victoria, Australia where his presence is recorded in 1861. This was going to be the place where he stayed for the shortest period as in c1862 he left for New Zealand where it is claimed he became the director of the hospital of Greymouth (Hokitika) on the West Coast of the South Island. Foppoli returned to Italy in 1866 where he continued his political involvement in the unification of Italy. In 1888 he was elected to the Parliament of unified Italy. He died in his birth town in 1910. The obituaries in the local papers of the period are full of praise for his achievements and contribution to the community of Valtellina. However, no mention is made of his medical career, a profession which he most likely ceased to practice upon his return to Italy.

Ooops!! Sometime history is best left alone! The Italian Historical Society was able to find out that during his short stay in Australia, Dr Foppoli practiced in Epsom, Victoria, where he was charged with the manslaughter of a fellow countryman. The Daylesford Express and Hepburn Advertiser, October 4, 1862 reported:

It will be remembered that a short time since an Italian named Angelo Tomasi died at Epsom (according to the verdict of the Coroner's Jury) from an overdose of narcotic medicine prescribed by an Italian practitioner, named Foppoli, and who at present stands charged under the coroner's warrant with the manslaughter of the deceased. The remains of the deceased had been exhumed by an order, and Dr Cheyne had attempted to make an examination of the stomach of the deceased. Decomposition, however, prevented his arriving at anything on which to express an opinion.

Could it be that Dr Foppoli was not exactly the man that his fellow countrymen took him to be?

Joseph Martini

Joseph Martini married Mary Bartlett (Barclay/Barkley/Bartley) in Geelong, Victoria, c1851. Their children were:

- Henry Patrick Martini, b. 1852 Geelong, married Rose Walker.
- John Dominic Martini, b. 1854 Geelong, married first Mary Johnson (1882) and then Katherine Scott Nixon (1887).
- Catherine Martini, b.1856 Geelong.
- Joseph Martini, b.1858 Geelong.
- Jane Martini, b. & d. 1860 Geelong.
- Francis Martini, b. c1860 Geelong.
- Thomas Francis Martini, b. c1861 Geelong, married Ada Theresa Bristow (Brutonon).
- Henry Patrick Martini, b. c1863 Geelong, married Susan Ellen Seabrook.
- Mary Ann Martini, b. 1867.
- Ellen Martini, b.1870 Geelong, married David Duncan.
- Augustus Martini, b.1871 Geelong, married Mary Ann Berryman.
- Patrick Martini, b. & d. 1875 Geelong.

The descendants of Joseph Martini cannot locate any records to confirm his Italian origins.

Martini is also a common name in France. The Society located a Francesco Martini, son of Antonio, in the Italian Diplomatic Archives Collection. He is listed in 1868 as a landowner residing in Launceston (Tasmania) in a document of 'Italian residents under the jurisdiction of the Italian Consulate General in Melbourne'. There could well be a connection with Joseph Martini given that he named two of his sons Francis.

Carlo Saverio Scopi (Scopia/Scopie)

His descendants believe that Carlo Saverio was born in Venice in 1831. He arrived in Victoria in May 1855 on board the ship *Sea King* from London. He married Margaret Taylor in Ballarat in 1855 and naturalised in February 4, 1876, settling in Ballarat where he worked as a draper. His father was a sea captain in the Austrian navy. Elsa McMaster (03 9822 2874) is unsure whether or not her ancestor was from the city of Venice or the region of Veneto.

Carlo Saverio probably met his future wife in England and migrated to Australia where they married upon their arrival in 1855. As a sea captain he would have had the chance to visit England

frequently. He could have also 'jumped ship' in England and fled to Australia with his sweetheart. The Veneto region was under Austrian domination from 1818 to c1870. He has an unusual name and a consultation of the Italian telephone directory proved negative for the province of Venice. However, there is a Scopi listed in Trieste, which is a city north-east of Venice on the shores of the Adriatic sea. It was quite common for early Italian immigrants to indicate as their place of birth the nearest most important city. The Society will write to Mr. Scopi in Trieste on behalf of the researcher.

Note: If our readers wish to access the Italian telephone directory via Internet, we have found the best Italian research site to be www.virgilio.it. To access the directory click on the telephone icon.

Peter Pasetti

Peter (Pietro) Pasetti was born in Villa di Tirano, Valtellina, in c1864. He arrived at Atherton Tableland, North Queensland, in 1885. He returned home to marry Anna Morelli and in 1888 they came back and settled permanently near Tolga in north Queensland. A daughter, Ernesta, was born at Mareeba in 1907 and a son, Dino, was born at Atherton in 1911. His granddaughter Mrs. M. Tait (1 Beech Street, Innisfail Qld. 4860) is researching the family history and is keen to hear from anyone who may have come across her ancestors' names in the Italian or Australian records.

Giovanni Battista Guascone

Born in Genoa in 1832, Guascone arrived in Australia in 1857 and settled at Shepherds Flat, Victoria. He married Mary Harrison nee Reilly at Daylesford, Victoria on February 6, 1869. His ancestors believe he was initially a miner and later became a farmer. They had three sons: Ermenegildo, Louis and Andrew. Giovanni died November 26, 1900 and Mary died February 29, 1912. They are both buried in the Franklinton cemetery (Victoria), but do not have headstones. Mary was previously married and had six children to that marriage. Ermenegildo and Andrew never married. Ermenegildo worked as a farm labourer near Dubbo, New South Wales, and fought in the First World War in France. He went by the name of John Guascone. He died July 26, 1949 and is buried in Dubbo. Andrew was a farmer and took over his father's farm. He died January 3, 1946 and is buried in his father's grave. Louis married and fathered nine children.

His employment included labourer, fence building and working in a sawmill. He lived near Echuca, Victoria where he died November 6, 1944. Philippe Guascone (5 Igera Place, Ngurnawal, ACT, 2913) is trying to find the name of the ship on which his great-grandfather travelled and to obtain a birth certificate from Italy.

Angelo Cassanelli/Casinelli

This is another early immigrant from Genoa who arrived in Victoria in 1857. He married Caroline Lavezzola in Daylesford, where her family operated a flourmill. It is believed the Lavezzola family supplied the flour to the Lucini Macaroni factory in the nearby gold mining town of Hepburn Springs, where Angelo and Caroline lived. They had two children. Angelo died in a mining accident at a young age. Soon after his death, his wife and a child were also deceased. His surviving son, Joseph, grew up in an orphanage. Mary Anne Waters, 220 Barkers Rd., Castlemaine 3450 is researching the family history and is keen to hear from anyone who comes across her ancestors names.

Angelo is recorded as 'Casinelli' by the Italian Consul Giuseppe Biagi in 1866 in a list of contributors of funds in aid to the wounded soldiers in the war for Italy's independence, published in the IHS Journal, January – June 1996, Vol.4. No.1. Angelo arrived in Victoria the same year (1857) as Giovanni Battista Guascone. Did they know each other and did they travel on the same ship? Most likely they sailed from Genoa to Liverpool, from where they boarded an English ship to Australia. The descendants should contact each other and share information and compare records. The Society will write to Municipal Offices in Genoa for their birth certificates.

Joseph (Giuseppe) Garonne/Garone

The descendant, Rosemary Williams (RMB 6598, Eldorado, Vic. 3578), always believed her ancestor to be of French origins and only recently discovered that he was an Italian! Joseph Garone arrived in the colony of Victoria with his father Stefano and mother Lucia nee Scalia in c1848, from Intra near Novara (Piedmont). They all went back after a few years. However, Joseph returned to the colony to settle permanently in 1859. He married a Yorkshire woman and died in 1919 in Inglewood, Victoria.

The name Garone could well be of French origins. After all Napoleon Bonaparte reigned in northern Italy from 1798 to 1818. It is quite possible that

he left behind some soldiers! Intra is also the town of origin of the Lucini family (Macaroni factory at Hepburn Springs). Only a very few pioneers came from this area. Most likely they knew each other.

We were here too!

Many people believe that the presence of Italians in Australia is a phenomenon mainly of the post-war period. While it is a fact that the majority of Italians settled in this country between 1950 and 1970, it is also a fact that the Italian presence in this part of the world goes back a long way. Most history books on Australia's Italians claim that there were two Italian convicts in the First Fleet, Costantini and Tuzo. This claim was based more on the presence of Italian-sounding names on the list of convicts transported to Australia, rather than on archival records.

We have recently received a telephone enquiry from descendants of Joseph [Giuseppe] Tuzo — often spelled Tuso or Tuza — interested in tracing the family history in Italy of their 'convict' ancestor. The story of Tuzo's early beginnings in Australia was handed down to the family by word of mouth. He is believed to have been born in Genoa and was only fourteen years old when in 1784 the ship on which he worked as a ship-boy was confiscated by the British navy, possibly while berthed at the docklands in London. While attempting to procure some money to pay for his return to Genoa, Tuzo was arrested and charged with robbery. He was imprisoned for three years in a hulk on the Thames river near Stepney, to be later sent as a convict to the colony of New South Wales on board the *Scarborough* in the First Fleet. In 1802 Tuzo was one of the nine convicts whom the great navigator Matthew Flinders was forced to take aboard the *Investigator* during his circumnavigation and mapping of Australia in 1802-1803. The convicts, all of whom it is believed had experience with navigation, were replacing eight officers and men drowned off the southern coast of Australia. Upon their return to Port Jackson, the convicts were to be freed, subject to a favourable report from Flinders. In 1804, 1807 and again in 1808, Joseph Tuzo placed notices in the *Sydney Gazette* stating his intention to leave the colony. This was a procedure required by law. However, he must have changed his mind about leaving the colony and settled in Sydney. He first married Sarah Wards. It is not clear if Tuzo divorced Sarah before setting up house with Rebecca Gaulsby, who had arrived in

the colony in 1811 as a 'free servant'. Two daughters were born, Priscilla in 1815 and Joanna in 1818. Tuzo joined the police force in c1813. A few years later he was a trader and property owner and became a wealthy businessman. He died in Sydney in October 1925. The death notice in the *Sydney Gazette*, October 6, 1925 read: 'Mr Giuseppe Tuzo, a resident of this town since its foundation, died last Tuesday'.

Other enquiries

Family history enquiries were also received for the following immigrants. For further details please contact the Italian Historical Society:

- Armanasco Pietro
- Arnoldi Antonio
- Bensi Maria
- Caligaris Maria
- Ferrara Baldassere
- Fodera Benedetta
- Forno Domenico
- Gaspari Pietro
- Giacomelli Augusto
- Longo Lorenzo
- Midolo Joseph
- Pollio Liberato
- Rizzi Andrea
- Rizzo Giovanni
- Scibillia Michele
- Tibaldi Alessandro Enrico
- Vignaglio Maurizio

NEWS

A celebration at Government House

The Italian Historical Society recently celebrated its 20th anniversary and to mark this special event, Sir James Gobbo, Governor of Victoria, and Lady Gobbo hosted a reception for the Society at Government House on December 19, 2000.



The function was attended by over 170 guests, including officials from leading public institutions such as the State Library of Victoria, Museum Victoria and the University of Melbourne with whom the Society has pioneered important cultural agreements. Also present were the many donors of historical items to the IHS collection, as well as patrons, supporters and members of other non-English speaking communities.



The contribution of Sir James Gobbo to the establishment of the Society and its successful achievements has been of the utmost importance. From its humble beginnings in 1980, the Society is today the most important repository in Australia of photographs, records and archival material on the history of migration, settlement and contribution of Italians in Australia.

We are grateful to Sir James and Lady Gobbo for making it possible to celebrate the founding of the Society in such a marvellous way.

Agreement with the State Library of Victoria

The reception at Government House was preceded by the signing of an important collaborative agreement between the Library Board of Victoria and Co.As.It Italian Historical Society. The document was signed by the State Librarian Mrs Fran Awcock and by Justice Bernard Bongiorno, President of CO.AS.IT in the presence of officials of both organisations.



The State Library of Victoria and the Italian Historical Society had entered into an informal arrangement in 1983 whereby the Library agreed to act as a custodian for the material collected by the Society. This agreement will provide a formalised structure and officially endorsed relationship between the Society and the Library Board for the cataloguing, conservation, access and management of the Society's collection. The Society will soon commence to lodge in the archives of the State Library many original manuscripts and documents, followed by the photographic collection.



Primelife supports the Italian Historical Society

The Society is pleased to announce the generous commitment made by Primelife Corporation Limited to be a major sponsor of the Society for a period of three years.

Primelife is the pre-eminent organisation in Australia's retirement and aged care industry, providing a complete range of lifestyle products and services to people over 55 years of age.

The funding will go towards the conservation of the IHS collection with particular emphasis on cataloguing and copying of rare historical photographs. The cost of maintaining an important collection such as that of the Italian Historical Society requires substantial funds usually beyond the means of a small society such as ours. It is therefore with great appreciation that we acknowledge the assistance given by Primelife to support the work of the Society. Without sponsors such as Primelife the task of preserving our history would not be possible.



Mr Ted Sent, Managing Director and CEO of Primelife Corporation, presents the sponsorship to the President of CO.AS.IT, Justice Bernard Bongiorno. Also featured are Mrs Grace Sent (right) and Laura Mecca, Manager of the Italian Historical Society.

Sponsorship from Fondazione Cassamarca

On the occasion of the visit in August 2000 of the President of Fondazione Cassamarca, Dr. Dino De Poli, the Society submitted to Cassamarca a sponsorship and collaboration proposal. The terms of the proposal were the deposit over a period of three years in a migration research centre in the Veneto region nominated by Cassamarca, copies of two thousands photographs illustrating the migration and settlement process and the contribution to Australia of immigrants from the

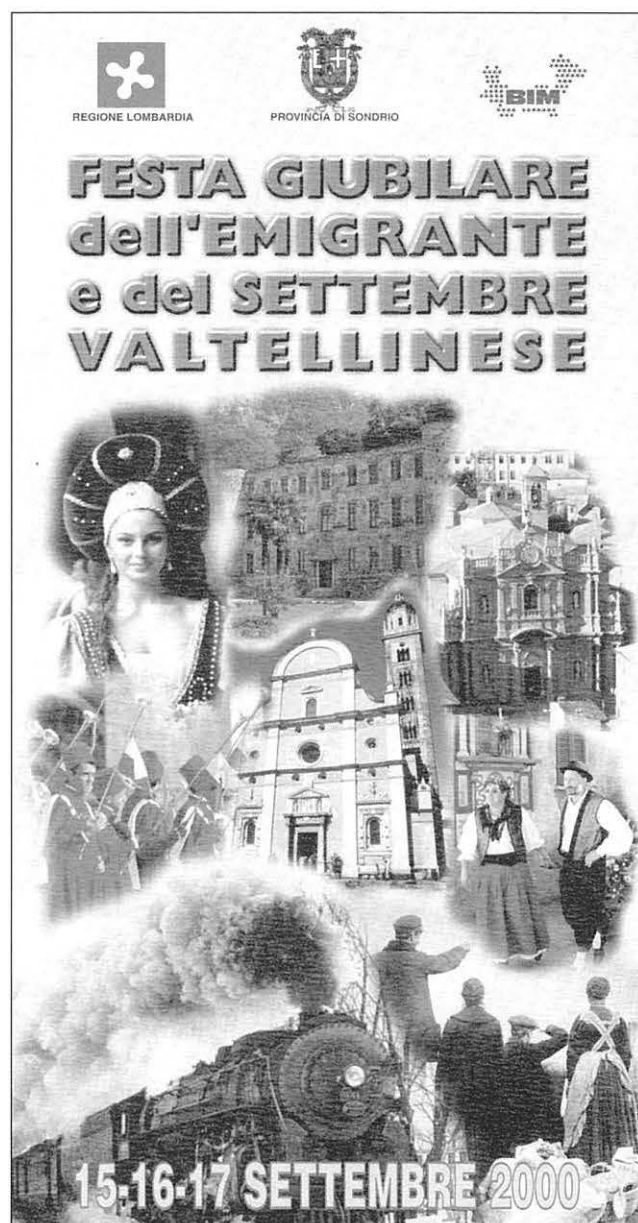
Veneto region. These images are from the collection of the Italian Historical Society.

As a result of this agreement, Fondazione Cassamarca has become the Society's major Italian-based sponsor. We thank Cassamarca and particularly Dr. Dino De Poli for their generosity and support for the work of the Society.

Valtellina and Valchiavenna remember their migrants

More than 1,000 migrants and their descendants from many countries around the world gathered in their towns of origin in Valtellina and Valchiavenna, northern Lombardy, in September to take part in the celebrations of the Jubilee Migrant Festival.

Reunions, folklore parades and dances, photographic exhibitions, religious ceremonies, official dinners



and round table discussions were some of the many events which took place from 15 to 17 September, in the towns of Sondrio, Chiavenna, Morbegno and Tirano. A wreath was also laid at the Monument to the Migrant unveiled in Tirano some years ago.

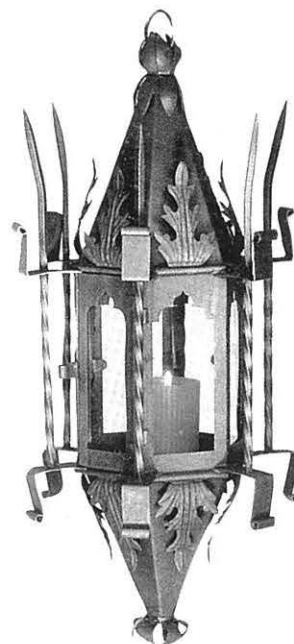
Authorities and representatives from the Government of Sondrio Province, the Universities of Milan, Pavia and Macerata Tirano Ethnographic Museum and other officials discussed major research projects undertaken by academics on the emigration of people from Valtellina. Mr Ciapponi Landi, director of Tirano Ethnographic Museum, honoured the memory of University of Melbourne lecturer and historian Jackie Templeton who died in April 2000. In late 1980s Jackie had undertaken a remarkable study of the emigration and settlement in Australia of people from the Valtellina region through emigrant letters. During her several visits to the Valtellina region she formed a strong relationship with the Tirano Ethnographic Museum who supported her project and with whom she collaborated in creating a centre for the documentation of emigration.

A votive lamp dedicated to all the migrants who left the region was blessed during the Holy Mass celebrated in the Basilica of Madonna di Tirano. A register of names of past emigrants from the region was also established. The registration of names is subject to a small donation. The lamp and the register will be lodged in a chapel in the

cemetery of Tirano built by a returned migrant, Pietro Strambini.

For information on how to register the name of your ancestor(s) in the Register of emigrants from Valtellina and Valchiavenna contact:

CENTRO PROVINCIALE DI
DOCUMENTAZIONE DELL'EMIGRAZIONE
Piazza Basilica, 30
23030 Madonna di Tirano – Italy
Fax. 001139 0342 701181.
E-mail museo.tirano@provincia.so.it



The votive lamp dedicated to migrants from the regions of Valtellina and Valchiavenna (Sondrio).

Lunedì 18 settembre 2000

Valtellina

TIRANO / Commosso «arrivederci» ai tanti emigranti tornati nella loro terra per la Festa Giubilare. Chiusura con spettacolo folk e consegna di targhe ricordo

Ovunque vadano serbano la Valtellina nel cuore

di Marco Quaroni

TIRANO — Un gran finale per la Festa Giubilare dell'Emigrante. Ieri pomeriggio Tirano ha dato l'ultimo, caldo e forte abbraccio a quelle persone che, in epoca ormai lontana, dovettero abbandonare la Valtellina per andare a cercare fortuna in paesi lontani. L'appuntamento nel centro aduano è stato l'ultimo atto di una Festa promossa da Comuni, Provincia ed enti locali, che negli ultimi giorni aveva portato gli emigranti valtellinesi giunti da ogni angolo del mondo (in particolare da Svizzera e Australia) in giro per tutta la Valtellina e la Valchiavenna. La giornata è cominciata il mattino presto con la partenza degli emigranti da Morbegno per Tirano dove, nella Basilica di Madonna alle 10, il gruppo ha potuto assistere alla messa giubilare celebrata dal vescovo Alessandro Maggolini. «Sono felice di poter salutare e dare il benvenuto -



FROM THE STEPS OF BONEGILLA

A travelling exhibition by the Albury Regional Museum presented at the Immigration Museum, Melbourne.

by Maria Tence

Maria is the Manager of the Schiavello Access Gallery, Coordinator and Community Liaison Officer of the Immigration Museum. Her interest in and knowledge of the history of Bonegilla Migration Reception Centre was the impetus for the Museum to stage this exhibition and explore this aspect of our history further. Maria has had a long connection with the Italian Historical Society.

The Exhibition

From the Steps of Bonegilla explores the impact of the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre on the community of Albury/Wodonga — where it was located — and on the lives of migrants who passed through its gates. In the exhibition some

former Bonegilla resident, staff and officials have been profiled in an attempt to show how the Centre managed the lives, events and episodes of those connected with it. The history of Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre represents a vital chapter in the history of immigration in Australia over the past 50 years where different national communities were forming the basis of a rich and complex culturally diverse society long before Australia was introduced to the concept of 'multiculturalism'. The exhibition is presented with the addition of a Melbourne component developed by the Immigration Museum.

Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre

In 1947, Bonegilla, the place of a former military camp of the Second World War located on the shores of Lake Hume, received the first group of Displaced Persons. Bonegilla was to become Australia's first, largest and longest serving migrant reception centre. This initial intake inaugurated Australia's largest ever government



Migrant children outside Bonegilla huts, 1949. Courtesy Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

sponsored and supervised immigration program. It also heralded the longest sustained period of officially sanctioned migration.

The program resulted from a perceived need in the post-war years to increase Australia's population by recruiting European immigrants. In 1947, the population of Australia was 7,666,358, of which only 9.7% were overseas born. The Labour Government of Prime Minister Ben Chifley moved to implement a radical and massive immigration program. The existing Immigration Restriction Act favoured predominantly Anglo-Celtic immigrants but this did not produce the desired result either in volume or the labour market skills required. Hence the policy shift towards including European-born migrants in the program.

Arthur Calwell, Australia's first Minister for Immigration, saw that an immediate solution to the problem lay in negotiating with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) for an allocation of Displaced Persons from refugee camps in central Europe. Although Calwell anticipated that this category of immigrants would assimilate well into Australian society, he had to convince other members of Parliament and the Australian people at large that the only viable immigration program lay in the recruitment of non-British people.

Various safeguards were to be built into the program. Some of the crucial ones were:

- Australian officials would select only Displaced Persons who could easily be integrated.
- The IRO, at their expense, would provide transport as shipping was in short supply.
- Displaced Persons would be contracted for two years to the Government and would be placed in unskilled occupations and other occupations that could not be filled by Australians.
- Calwell promised the unions there would be no threat to jobs or standards of pay with the intake of large numbers of immigrants and that these immigrants would be the first to be withdrawn if industrial disputes arose.

When the first batch of Displaced Persons arrived on the *General Heinzelman* in Perth, they were transferred to the *HMS Kanimbla* for transhipment to Melbourne, and from there to immediate dispatch from the port to Bonegilla. After arrival at the Migrant Reception Centre, they were to be 'processed' and assigned to employment wherever there was a manpower shortage.

Bonegilla was located about 16km from Wodonga, nearly 400km from Melbourne and 3km away from Bandiana Army Camp, an operating military training installation. During its period of operation from 1947 to 1971 when it closed, Bonegilla 'processed' and housed over 320,000 mainly non-British immigrants. Of these, approximately 42,000 Italian immigrants were housed under the Assisted Migration Agreement which the Australian Government stipulated with the Italian Government in 1951.

The camp consisted of a mix of timber cottages and corrugated iron Nissan huts. Government officials initially thought it would house 1,500 immigrants at a time, but during the mass-immigration period between 1947 and 1957, up to 7,000 people were sometimes housed. At its peak capacity, army tents were also erected and it was reported that those who had been assigned to the outskirts of the camp would need to walk nearly 4km to get to the camp centre, where administration, eating and laundry blocks were located.



Capuchin Father Filippo Magni with an Italian immigrant, Mr. Pomponio, on the steps of the hut which housed the Catholic Chapel at Bonegilla in c1952. Mr. Pomponio served Mass during his stay at the Centre.



Migrants collect their baggage on arrival at Bonegilla in 1961. Courtesy Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs..

The Department of Immigration thought the average stay for newly arrived immigrants would be approximately 6 weeks, which was considered an acceptable period of time in which to 'Australianise' immigrants to a basic level. However it was proved to be economic conditions that dictated the actual length of stay which varied from days to several months.

Upon arrival at Melbourne's docks, immigrants were allocated to different hostels, with those allocated to Bonegilla given a yellow lapel button. The new arrivals were quickly shunted onto trains waiting on the piers, for a further eight-hour journey, stopping at Benalla or Seymour, where they were given light refreshments, usually tea and sandwiches. This 'welcome ceremony' was later conducted by community groups such as the Good Neighbour Councils, the Country Women's Association and the YCWA.

In the early period, immigrants were taken to Albury, then bussed to Bonegilla, but later they

were taken directly to Bonegilla which had a railway siding. They arrived at all hours and were promptly medically examined. Those thought to be suffering illness, such as TB or war wounds, were separated for further tests. New arrivals were issued with a consignment of provisions — blankets, sheets, pillowcases, pillow, towels, cups and saucers, a soup bowl, dinner plate and a bread plate, along with other utensils. Because immigrants were allocated camp maintenance duties they were also issued with basins, brushes, brooms, buckets, shovels and rakes. If any items were lost or damaged, they were replaced by deducting the value of the item from their weekly allowance. Because of this, the souveniring of objects was rare. The weekly allowance was 1 Pound, from which board and maintenance were automatically deducted, leaving about 5 Shillings — enough for a packet of cigarettes and stamps and perhaps a bus fare to Albury/Wodonga.

Nationalities were separated and housed in designated blocks. Men were separated from

women. Initially families were divided — boys from age 16 went with fathers. Children over the age of 16 were regarded as adults who could be employed separately and often families were separated with members being assigned to various States and locations to fulfil their 2 year contract obligations. Employment officers interviewed migrants to assess their working potential — they were usually placed in unskilled employment, as farm hands or labourers building Australia's infrastructure or in manufacturing industries. If they had good language skills, they were often employed at the centre as interpreters or aides in the medical centre, the school, canteens, or employment office. Adults were expected to attend English lessons but it was not compulsory. A school was not operational until 1952 and until that time, children's education was seen as inadequate, especially by the Eastern European refugees, of whom many were well educated.

People were allowed to leave Bonegilla voluntarily, and did not have to wait to be placed in a job by employment officers. Those who were officially placed in work could return to Bonegilla if they became unemployed or if their contracts were terminated; however, voluntary leavers could not return and could not ask to be re-accommodated in any hostel.

It is important to note that the different experiences and memories of Bonegilla were based on an individual's own experiences, age and expectations. In the main, these experiences can be categorised into three main groups.

The First Intake – Displaced Persons

These were stateless people having had their homelands redrawn to form part of Communist Europe, such as East Germany, Poland, Hungary and the Baltic States, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, the Ukraine and the former Yugoslavia. These groups included the displaced Giuliano-Dalmati Italians.

Most of these people were relieved to leave the refugee camps of Europe where many had been living for up to four years. A high number of them were well educated and expected that they would be placed in similar professions, and that their professional experience and qualifications would count in Australia. When they discovered that they were to fill unskilled positions, many were frustrated that their skills were not being put to use in this young country, despite the obvious

needs. Of this group those who possessed linguistic skills were often given administrative positions where they acted as translators and teacher aides.

After the availability of Displaced Persons was exhausted, the Australian Government looked to other European countries in order to sustain the flow of non-British migrants and introduced the national assisted migration program to fulfil the growing demand for labour in Australia.

The Second Intake — Northern Europeans

Although not in great numbers, some northern Europeans, mainly from Norway and Sweden, but mostly from the Netherlands, did venture to Australia under the national assisted migration program. These immigrants fitted into the first priority of selected groups. They were professionals and para-professionals of whom a great number were disillusioned after having left large cities and towns, only to find themselves in a primitive camp environment in an isolated setting. There are high numbers of return migration from this category.

The Third Intake — Southern Europeans

In the 1940s Australian context, Italians and Greeks were perceived to be culturally and physically different. This group of immigrants who came largely from rural areas chose to emigrate for a better future. Even though they travelled under an Assisted Passage Agreement stipulated by the Australian Government with their respective countries, they were required to pay some money towards their passage costs. The contribution changed over the years and at one stage reached approximately 90 Pounds, which was nine times as much as the British assisted migrants paid. Not only financial but also an identifiable level of racial discrimination awaited many of these European post-war migrants.

The preference was for single men, but married men were also chosen. Mostly they left their families behind, thinking they would work their two years and return home much wealthier. Many had borrowed money to pay their fares. They came expecting to be placed in jobs immediately, but unfortunately this was often not the case. Some already had relatives and friends in cities who could accommodate them, assist them in finding employment and provide the much needed community net-work support for them to resettle and begin their new lives. Others however, were not so fortunate and found the sense of

relative physical and social isolation a barrier to be overcome. This feeling of 'abandonment' led to much discontent, and the splitting of families for different work locations caused hardship.

The 1952 Riot

At this time Australia was experiencing an economic recession. Factories declined to take on workers and the need for unskilled workers decreased. Italians and Greeks found themselves the least favoured group because they were largely classified unskilled; often available employment went to immigrants from central and northern Europeans. This tense situation together with the fact that many had incurred debts to pay for their fares and had families to feed, combined with the anxiety of an uncertain future, isolation and basic conditions of camp life, resulted in a high level of discontent.

In July 1952, an argument about unsatisfactory food broke out in one of the canteens. Shortly after, one hut was burned down and others were set alight, including the Church. Police were sent from Albury and armoured trucks from Bandiana Camp. After some discussions, the administration agreed to attempt to clear as many Italians as possible as a few more thousand were expected to arrive and inevitably this would have led to even more problems.

The 1961 Riot

A similar situation occurred in 1961 when Australia was experiencing rolling strikes by unions across the country and major industries and manufacturers laid off workers.

This time it was Italians and Germans who rioted but the authorities were prepared. The rioters and trouble-makers were quickly identified and incarcerated. It is interesting to note that the solicitor who successfully acted on behalf of the Italian rioters was Frank Galbally, the author of the Fraser Government's 'Galbally Report' which led to official and bipartisan acceptance of multicultural policies. The solicitor acting for the Germans was Clyde Holding, later to become a Minister in the Whitlam Labor Government. Jim Cairns, also later to become a Minister in the Whitlam Labor Government, set bail for the group.

Resident Register

Although it is recorded that over 320,000 persons passed through Bonegilla between 1947 and

1971, a Register of Bonegilla residents does not appear to exist. Lists of daily intakes were made based on ship and arrival dates, but much of this information is missing. The National Australian Archives hold the files on Bonegilla. If residents were hospitalised or needed medical treatment, files may exist. If residents were under suspicion, especially if viewed as agitators or communists, ASIO files exist. The involvement of Italian immigrants in the lead up to the Riots of 1952 is well documented in government records.

Nostalgia and Myths

Within any community, especially one that has been artificially created there are diverse perspectives. Over time these have created various myths about Bonegilla:

- **A place of no hope**

A number of people who went through Bonegilla in fact saw it as an adventure and an economic holiday. However, many Displaced Persons who spent more than the anticipated time there, considered it as a place of no hope, because unlike other voluntary assisted immigrants who could return to their homeland, they could not return to their native country.

What was hopeless about Bonegilla was that it was the epitome of bureaucracy. It was managed to standards of army regulation. Initially the staff was not sensitive to the various experiences, anxieties and expectations of the residents and were unable to cope with their psychological and emotional needs.

- **Promiscuity, abuse and illegitimate births**

Although this is difficult to document, examination of released medical reports and files reveals the official report of some incidents but the information is incomplete. Anecdotal evidence suggests that despite segregation of the sexes and the strong presence of camp officials acting as moral police, there was strong social interaction not only amongst camp residents but amongst staff as well.

- **Contagious illnesses**

In 1949, twelve children died from TB which they had contracted prior to arrival, and which developed in the early phase of resettlement. Criticism that the huts were too cold was well founded. At one stage there was a coal strike and the camp had to cut back on fuel for heaters. There was also an influenza epidemic in the camp.

- Food

Everyone complained about the food. Displaced Persons were more appreciative of the transitory circumstances in which they found themselves and did not officially complain about catering. However, voluntary immigrants from all nationalities openly criticised the quality of food and cuisine provided. This situation eventually changed when the camp administration employed immigrants as cooks.

- Nostalgia

The experience at Bonegilla has been embedded in the memories of many who stayed there. Some saw it as a transition camp and have not

thought much about it, whereas others have romanticised its significance as having a lasting impact on their lives in Australia.

Despite the memories that Bonegilla evokes, it is remembered by all as the first point of contact with Australia and Australians. Bonegilla has now been forged into the annals of contemporary Australian history. It is seen either as a place of no hope where the expectations and aspirations of thousands disintegrated into the isolated and typically bare Australian landscape that enveloped the camp, or as a celebrated symbol of modern Australia — as good a place as any to start a second life in a 'young', yet to be developed country.



Mealtime in one of Bonegilla's dining rooms, 1955. Courtesy Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

The exhibition *From the Steps of Bonegilla* will be on display at the Immigration Museum, Old Customs House, 400 Flinders Street, Melbourne until 25 February 2001.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Public activities

The Society was invited to address members of Coburg Historical Society at their monthly meeting on July 19, 2000. Laura Mecca, representing the Society, spoke about the history and the contribution of Italian immigrants to Australia from the gold rush period of the 1850s to the present day. She illustrated her talk with a series of slides of historical photographs from the IHS collection. The presentation was well received and was featured in the local papers.

A Forum for the Future

The Yarra–Melbourne Regional Library Community Advisory Committee which was established last year to report on conservation issues regarding historical collections held its first forum on September 3, 2000 at Carringbush Library in Richmond. The importance of the forum is reflected in the apt title, *Preserving the Past for the Future: Community History, Collections and Collecting*. The aim of the forum was to

- explore what resources are needed for local history and local studies
- what is currently available
- how local libraries fit in
- what gaps can be identified at state, regional and local levels.

Twenty speakers from a broad spectrum of the history sector in Victoria participated in the forum including representatives from Local History Societies, State Agencies [Public Record Office, State Library of Victoria and Museum Victoria], Councils [City of Yarra and City of Melbourne], Specific Collections [Italian Historical Society and Makor Jewish Community Library and Yarra–Melbourne Regional Libraries].

The Italian Historical Society was represented by the curator Lorenzo Iozzi whose paper concentrated on the problems associated with the establishment and conservation of a specialized collection such as that of the IHS. The curator's paper stressed that the Society was formed with three outcomes in mind, They were to:

- [1] Integrate the Italian experience with mainstream culture
- [2] Ensure that this history would be preserved for future generations
- [3] Increase access to this history

The strategy adopted was to ensure these outcomes revolved around the idea of collaboration with major institutions, given that the Society has formed partnership agreements with State Library of Victoria, University of Melbourne and Museum Victoria. These arrangements are regarded as a model for other migrant collections.

The forum was highly successful and showed what could be achieved by bringing together representatives of the many organizations with a common mission. Another meeting to consider issues arising from the forum is planned for this year.

A report on the forum with a summary of the various papers can be obtained from the IHS or the Yarra–Melbourne Regional Library Community Advisory Committee.

Visitors from Italy

Fondazione Cassamarca

The President of the Fondazione Cassamarca, Dr Dino De Poli, showed great interest in the collection and conservation work of the Society during his visit in early August 2000. The Foundation, with head-quarters in Treviso (Veneto) was established by the bank Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana. In the past few years the Cassamarca Foundation has generously sponsored several lectureships in South American and Australian universities where the Italian language and culture is taught. In Australia alone, the Cassamarca is financing eleven lectureships for an amount close to \$3 million over a period of three years.



Dr. Dino De Poli (far right) during his visit to the Italian Historical Society.

Host to exchange students

Twenty Italian exchange students of the Istituto Tecnico 'Citta' del Tricolore' from the town of Rivalta, Reggio Emilia, who came to Melbourne as guests of Pembroke Secondary College, visited the Society at the end of August 2000. The theme of study for these exchange students was the emigration of people from their region to Australia. They were given the opportunity to view rare original documents and photographs held in the collection of the Society.



St. George's Student Reunion

The 49th reunion of former pupils of St. George's School was held at the premises of the Society. More than 80 former pupils attended this yearly event, some with their partners. The display of photographic material set up by the Society on the story of Italian immigrants in Carlton, attracted much attention and generated many reminiscences of school and community events. The group's coordinator is looking for ideas and support on how to best celebrate in 2001 the 50th reunion. For further information contact Ray Silvio on (03) 9460 6607.



Former pupils of St. George's School at their 49th reunion.

Sound and Voices from Australia

The Italian Historical Society Oral History Collection was utilised in a novel and interesting way to convey the migrant experience by Stefano Zorzanello, a composer and musician from Bologna, Italy. Stefano accessed our collection to extract passages from the taped interviews for an electronic music composition which was performed by Stefano and his band 'Mistress' in a church in Bologna for the Year 2000 celebrations. Bologna was selected as the cultural city of Italy for that year. Stefano also utilised a photograph from the Society's collection for the production of advertising material for this event. A CD-Rom of the music composition will also be produced and made available to the Society.

VOCI ITALIA-AUSTRALIA

storie di corrispondenza magnetica
un'opera multicode di **Stefano Zorzanello**

Mistress (different)
Stefano Zorzanello sax soprano
Daniela Cattivelli sax contralto
Paolo Angeli chitarra elettrica
Giorgio Casadei chitarra elettrica
Elena Giardini violoncello
Marianna Finarelli violoncello
Tiziano Popoli tastiere, campionatore
Nicola Zecca drum pad, campionatore

Domenica 10 dicembre 2000 h.21.00
Aula Absidale di S.Lucia, via de' Chiari 23, Bologna
Ingresso £10.000 (€ 5,16) Info tel. 051.352330

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Organizzazione Massimo Simonini Ufficio Stampa Silvia Fanti
Con la partecipazione del
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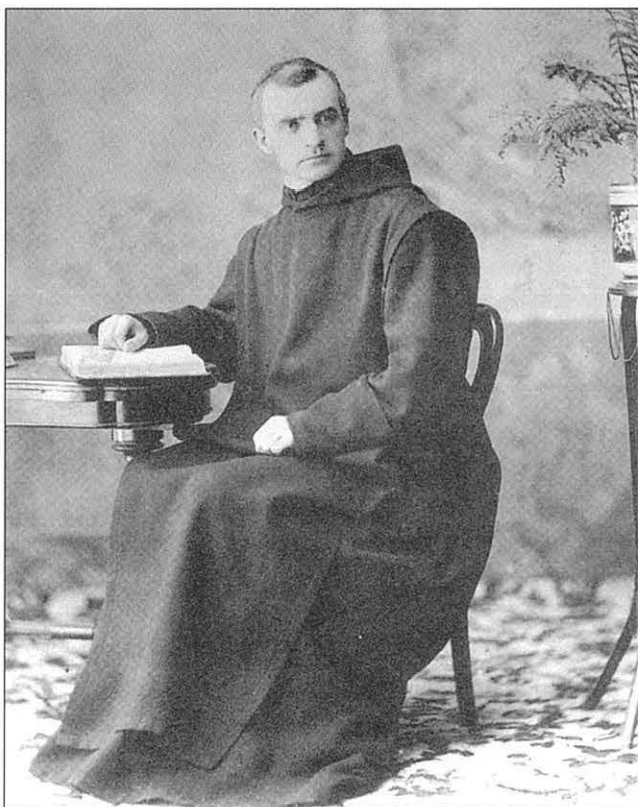
PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

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. These books can be viewed at the Italian Historical Society, 1st floor, 189 Faraday Street, Carlton between 10am and 4pm Tuesday to Thursday.

History of New Zealand and its inhabitants: first English translation 2000 — first published 1896.

Dom Felice Vaggioli, translated by John Crockett, University of Otago Press, Dunedin 2000.

John Crockett faithfully translates Dom Felice Vaggioli's details of the life and customs of the Maori people. Vaggioli was one of the first Benedictine priests to be sent to New Zealand in 1879 and is highly sympathetic to the Maoris and highly critical of British colonialisation.



Vaggioli as a young monk, photographed by Clarke Bros., Auckland, c.1880.

Joseph Bosisto.

Alfred Stirling, The Hawthorn Press. Melbourne, 1970.

An interesting account on the life and times of Joseph Bosisto, the creator of Bosisto's Eucalyptus oil.

Women of Australia: their lives and times: a photographic gallery.

Helen Duffy and Ingrid Ohlsson, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 1999.

A beautifully illustrated history of the lives and times of women in Australia since settlement. A number of photographs from the Italian Historical Society collection are included in this publication.

Angels and arrogant gods: migration officers and migrants reminisce 1945-85.

Harry Martin, AGPS, Canberra, 1989.

Recollections of the experiences of a number of Australian Migration Officers assigned to overseas postings during the post-war years to process applications for emigration to Australia. To provide counterpoint, migrants present their side of the story, recording the circumstances in their home countries which motivated them to leave.

Citizenship in Australia: guide to Commonwealth government records.

David Dutton, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 1999.

This guide introduces readers to Commonwealth government records on citizenship held by the National Archives of Australia and provides valuable advice to the researcher interested in this topic. The guide covers important themes related to citizenship in Australia, including British and Australian nationality and citizenship categories, naturalisation, the treatment of aliens, assimilation, racial limitations on citizenship, the civic status of women, and civic rights and duties generally.

A history of the army camp and migrant camp at Greta New South Wales : 1939-1960.

Christopher Keating, AGPS, Canberra, 1997.

An informative account on how Greta Camp served as an army camp for the recruits of the Australian Military Forces, as a camp of Italian POWs and as reception centre for thousands of post-war immigrants.

Not a dutiful daughter: the personal story of a migrant academic.

Thelma Hunter, Ginninderra Press, Charnwood ACT, 1999.

The autobiography of Thelma Hunter, born into an Italian family in Glasgow Scotland, a subsequent migrant to Australia and a scholar.

Going to St Joe's: a Marist school in East Brunswick and North Fitzroy 1930-1999.

Val Noone, Spectrum, Richmond, 1999.

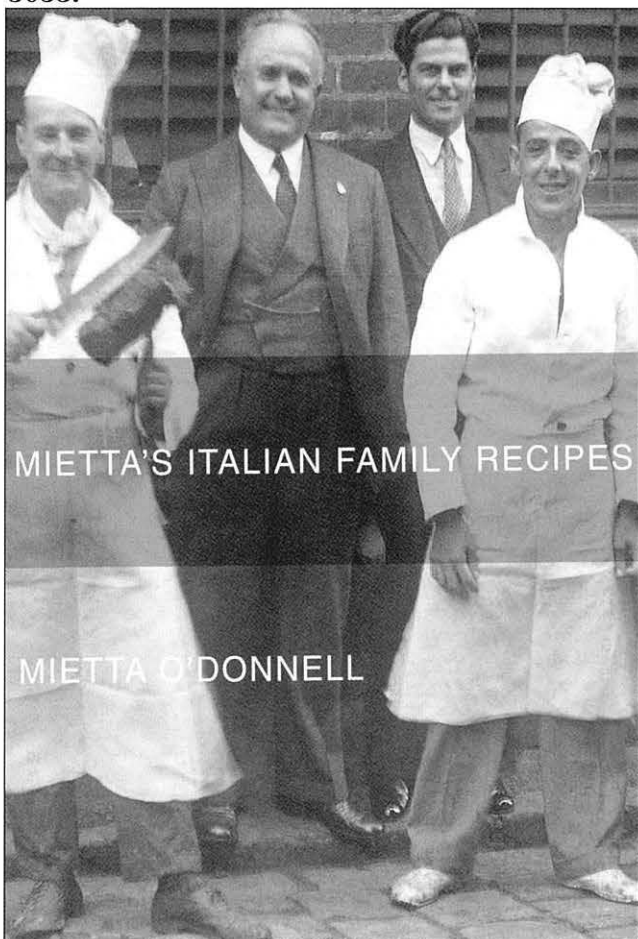
The history of St. Joe's Catholic College from 1930 to 1999. Chronicles the arrival of the first Italian migrant children at the school.

Mietta's Italian family recipes.

Mietta O'Donnell, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2000.

A cook book with a difference. Mietta O'Donnell weaves together Italian recipes and family stories, bringing to life the culture of generations of Italian restaurant families who changed the way Australians think about food. The families whose history is featured are the Viganò, Panelli, Molina, Massoni, Codognotto, Virgona and Gobbo. With assistance from chef and former restaurateur Silvana Palmira, Mietta presents over 185 recipes, covering antipasto, soups, risotto, pasta, fish, meat, pizza and desserts.

This publication retails at \$42.95 but is available from the Italian Historical Society (IHS) at a special offer price of \$35 inc. GST (postage not included). To order, please send cheque to IHS, 189 Faraday Street, Carlton 3053.



Voices from in between: migrants in North East Victoria.

Edited by Geoff Baker, Wangaratta Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta, 2000.

A collection of poems employing the words of over eighty people who were interviewed for the *Living in Harmony — Out Migrants' Stories*, a Wangaratta Oral History Project. Orders taken on 03 57210200 or the Immigration Museum Bookstore, circa \$24.

Struggletown: public and private life in Richmond 1900-1965.

Janet McCalman, Hyland House P/L, South Melbourne, 1988.

A revised edition of the 1984 book dealing with the local history of Richmond, one of the most interesting and colourful suburb of Melbourne, blending oral reminiscences, politics and social history from a working class point of view. The contribution of the son of an Italian immigrant, Gus Coloretti, to the Richmond Council in the 1950s makes interesting reading.

In search of the Italian Australian into the new millennium: Italian Australian Institute, (Melbourne, 2000).

Edited by Piero Genovesi and Walter Musolino, Gro-Set Pty. Ltd. Thornbury, 2000.

Proceedings of the conference of the same name held in May 2000 at Park-Hyatt Hotel, East Melbourne. This collection of specialized papers provide an insight into the history and contribution of Italians to Australia and the challenges that lay ahead for future generations. Available at the Italian Historical Society, 189 Faraday Street, Carlton 2053, at \$44, plus postage.

Books from Italy

Da paese a paese: Riposto nell'emigrazione: percorsi, figure, immagini.

Alberto Micalizzi, Editrice Il quadrifoglio, Livorno, 1999.

A pictorial history of migration from Riposto, Sicily.

Storia di Valtellina e Valchiavenna: una introduzione.

Dario Benetti and Massimo Guidetti, Cooperativa editoriale quaderni valtellinesi, Milano, 1990.

An interesting account of the history of the regions of Valtellina and Valchiavenna, from pre-history to the modern days. The period from the Vienna Congress (1815) to the the end of the First World

War is of particular interest to the many descendants of immigrants from Valtellina for shedding some light on the reasons behind their ancestor's migration to Australia and the United States. It is unfortunate that this book is not published also in English.

Arriva la madre, i figli partono: l'emigrazione in Australia di 20,000 triestini.

Associazione culturale "Enrico Berlinguer", Trieste, 1999.

Chronicles the reasons why approximately 20,000 people from Trieste migrated to Australia between 1952-1961.

Two languages two lands: l'opera letteraria di Joseph Tusiani.

Edited by Cosma Siani, Quaderni del Sud, San Marco in Lamis, Puglia, 2000.

Conference proceedings of a conference held in San Marco in Lamis in May 15, 1999. The papers deal with the legacy of Joseph Tusiani to literature in America.

L'emigrazione poschiavina in Australia negli anni 1850-1860 attraverso le cronache de Il Grigione Italiano.

Jacqueline Templeton, Gritli Olgiati, Bruno Ciapponi Landi, Museo Etnografico Tiranese, Tirano, Lombardia, 2000.

Migration from Poschiavo to Australia between 1850 and 1860 through the articles published in the local newspaper *The Grigione Italiano*.

Un'infanzia nel '45 nel Veneto della guerra civile.

Ulderico Bernardi, Marsilio, Venice, 1999.

Autobiography of Ulderico Bernardi's childhood growing up amongst the after effects of the Second World War in the Veneto region.

Periodicals in Italian

Bollettino giuliano.

Edited by E. Canevari and R. Varagnolo, Associazione Giuliani Sydney.

An account of social activities and events organised by associations of Giuliani in Australia.

Four issues annually.

Altreitalie: n° 19 (gennaio-dicembre 1999)

Edited by Marcello Pacini, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino.

International Journal of studies on the people of Italian origin in the world. Some multilingual

texts. Topics covered in this edition are: Italians in the world and globalisation; Hollywood Italians; From the Appenines to the bush: temporary migrants from Tuscany and the Western Australia's italophobia 1921-1939; Italian transoceanic migration in the 1800s and 1900s; Tuscan migration to Western Australia; e-mail addresses of Italian organisations in the world. Two editions annually (usually).

Frontiere: Anno I, n° 1, (giugno 2000).

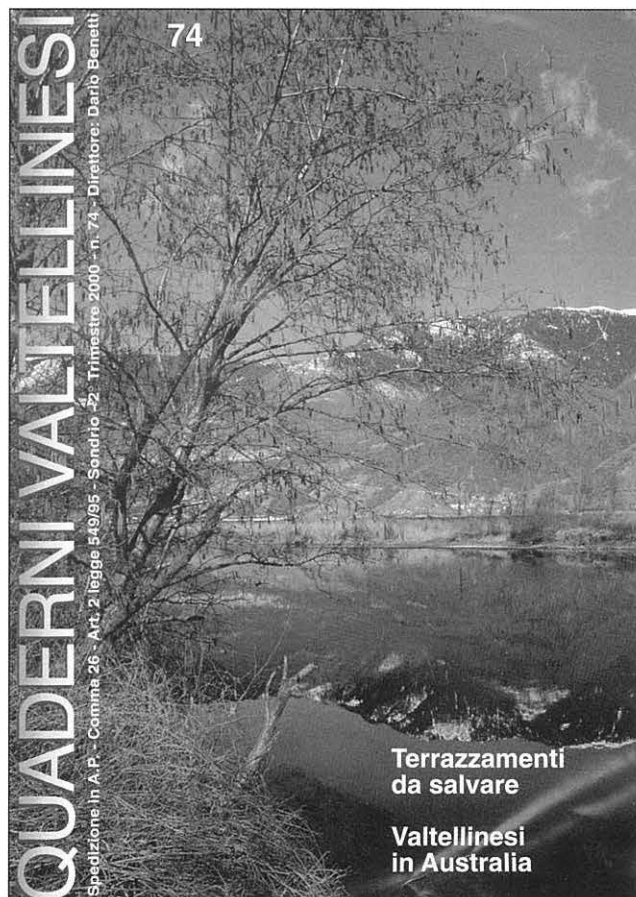
Centro di documentazione sulla storia e la letteratura dell'emigrazione della Capitanata, Comune di San Marco in Lamis, 2000.

Bi-annual publication dealing with migration from Capitanata, San Marco in Lamis, Puglia region.

Quaderni valtelinesi.

Edited by Dario Benetti, Cooperativa Editoriale Quaderni Valtelinesi s.r.l., Sondrio, Italy.

An informative publication dealing with the anthropology, history and contemporary environmental issues in Valtellina and surrounding areas. Three editions annually.





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