



*NEWSLETTER*

*of the*

*ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY*

*CO.AS.IT. - VICTORIA*

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1991

VOL 2, NO 4

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## THE ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Mr. Tom Florio, Mildura.

### About the newsletter

The newsletter aims to provide, to those who are interested in the history of the Australian-Italian communities, an outlet for the circulation of news, the exchange of information and the notification of future activities.

We welcome your suggestions for items to include in this newsletter, and invite readers to contribute newsworthy articles and short notes.

The Newsletter will be published four times each year. Subscriptions are available at \$10 per year, (postage included).

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## VICTORIAN HEALTH PROMOTION SPONSORS NEW EXHIBITION PROJECT

The exhibition "The Italians and Jews of Carlton" which will be held at the Museum of Victoria for a year from August, 1992, will be sponsored by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. The Foundation has announced a grant of \$42,000 towards the project.

Established by the State Government with the proceeds of the tax on tobacco, the Foundation promotes good health and disease prevention activities. The Foundation achieves these goals by sponsoring sports, arts and cultural projects which provide good opportunities for the communication of health messages to the Victorian population and which contribute to Australian artistic development by encouraging excellence, broadening community access and supporting Australian initiatives of high quality.

## ITALIAN TRAVEL OF EXHIBITION

As mentioned in the previous edition of our *Newsletter*, the exhibition was on display at the headquarters of the Treviso Provincia from 22 September to 13 October 1991. News of the event which was opened by the first lady of the State of New York, Matilda Cuomo, was extensively covered by the provincial and regional media. Many returned migrants visited the exhibition and it was during a visit to the exhibition by Laura Mecca that a group of

Italian migrants from France expressed the wish to see it travel also to their hometown of Fontanafredda, near Pordenone. Fontanafredda is the birth-place of the grandfather of the Society's Director, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien. When Ilma visited relatives early in November they were "put to work" and most likely the exhibition will be in this part of Italy soon after Christmas!

From Treviso onwards, the travel of the exhibition becomes a "family affair".

Cittadella, hometown of our Chairman Sir James Gobbo, was the next venue (19 October - 7 November). The exhibition was hosted by the Comune which arranged for the display in the prestigious and recently restored Torre di Malta, one of the four towers placed at the cardinal points of the medieval walls of this beautiful Venetian city. Laura Mecca opened the exhibition. Among the guests were many relatives of Sir James who overwhelmed Laura with courtesies!

When in Italy, Laura Mecca visited the premises of the Associazione Bellunesi nel Mondo to offer them the exhibition. The response was so immediate that after two weeks the exhibition left Cittadella for Belluno, (hometown of Laura!), where it opened on November 14 as part of the events for the "Giornata Nazionale delle Migrazioni" (National Day of Migrations) organised by the Catholic Migration Foundation "Migrantes", Rome.

## Cronaca di Treviso

la tribuna 22 settembre 1991

Oggi alle 11 inaugura la mostra fotografica «Italiani d'Australia»

# La first-lady nel passato Matilda Cuomo in Provincia

ERIMONIA d'inaugurazione, stamattina, nel palazzo della Provincia. Sarà la moglie del governatore dello Stato di New York, Matilda Cuomo, a fare da madrina, alla mostra «Italiani d'Australia», di duecento fotografie, gruppette per temi e allate in bacheche in legno raro, raccontano la storia dell'emigrazione di tanti italiani nell'emisfero australe, momenti felici e meno felici, idilli trasportate dall'altra parte del globo, ma anche gruppi di famiglia, arti e mestieri, clamorose scalate al successo, sono effimere nella



## ROME CONFERENCE

The Italian Ministry of Culture hosted a conference on *Sources for the History of Emigration* at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Rome on 28 - 30 October, 1991. Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien was invited to present a paper, and spoke on the collections and activities of the Society. Other Australian participants were Mr Gianfranco Cresciani, who spoke on public and private archives, Professor Roslyn Pesman Cooper, whose paper was on literary sources, and Professor Richard Bosworth who discussed the post-war Italo-Australian press.

## DONATION BY DR MARIE BENTIVOGLIO BALDESCHI

After the conference Ilma was fortunate to be able to visit Dr Marie Bentivoglio Baldeschi, with whom she has corresponded for some time as part of her research for a biography. Dr. Bentivoglio was the first Australian woman to gain a D.Phil degree (in 1924) and she

worked in the fields of Science, Education and Geography in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Dr Marie Bentivoglio Baldeschi was also involved in many community and professional organisations, and was a member of the executive of the National Council of Women, the University Women Graduates' Association, the New South Wales Geographical Society, the Dante Alighieri Society, among many others.

The Society is very grateful to Dr Bentivoglio Baldeschi for her kind donation of papers and documents which will greatly enhance our collection. The material concerning her career is of special significance. In addition, Dr Bentivoglio Baldeschi made a gift of a number of reference books which will be placed in the Society's library.

## NORTH QUEENSLAND ANNIVERSARY

For those with an interest in North Queensland, an important anniversary has just taken place. December marks the centenary of the arrival in Townsville of the immigrant ship the **Jumna** with 333 Italian men, women and children, mostly from Piedmont and the Veneto. The immigrants were to become the Italian pioneers of the north Queensland sugar industry, settling in Ingham, Ayr, Innisfail, Bundaberg and other northern areas and encouraging the migration of friends and relatives so that the legacy of this group of pioneers is even greater than their numbers would suggest.

## GRANT RECEIVED FROM VICTORIAN MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS

The Victorian Ministry for the Arts awarded the Society a grant of \$1180 under the Museum Grants Program for 1991. The grant is for the purchase of a plan cabinet in which to store our large photographs and panels.

## REGRETS

We regret to inform our readers interested in researching family history in the Sondrio and Swiss-Italian regions that our correspondent Bianca Ferrara is unable to continue her assistance because of bureaucratic difficulties in conducting the research. However, Bianca has reassured us that she will complete the requests so far received from Australia.

(A)

### DR. MARIE BENTIVOGLIO

VERSATILE LECTURER,  
WRITER, TRAVELER,  
TEACHER

Lectures with or without Illustrations

"One of the foremost women intellectually and socially, and is a brilliant lecturer and able writer."—Dr. R. P. COLE, Vice-Principal Teachers College, Sydney, Australia.

"Alert, original mind, a fund of energy and enthusiasm, one of the most fluent and stimulating women speakers in Australia"—Dr. C. ANTONSON, Director Australian Museum, Sydney.

"We consider Dr. Bentivoglio's lecture one of the best of this winter's course."  
—MELVILLE B. GROSVENOR, National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.



### "INTRODUCING AUSTRALIA"

DR. MARIE BENTIVOGLIO is a scholar of distinction who has not lost touch with day to day affairs. She holds degrees from the Universities of Sydney and Oxford. At a recent dinner the chairman announced, "She holds four degrees, but does not look like it." Widely known as a lecturer in Australia, she was invited by the Melbourne University Extension Board to be visiting lecturer; the only woman speaker invited to address the Men's Constitutional Club at Griffith, N. S. W., and on her return visit the large hall was crowded.

Special knowledge of Australian geography in all its aspects due to extensive travel in all states of the Commonwealth—trifle riding on Barrier Reef, skiing on snowy slopes of Mt. Kosciuszko, surfing on golden beaches, and trout fishing in mountain streams, are some of the sports she knows. She has traveled East, West, across the continent by rail and car, four times; and has visited the MacDonnell Ranges in the heart of the continent traveling by car and camel to places of interest there. She has been through all the large forests and over all the large mining areas and been down many of the largest mines; is known in all the capitals; has stayed on sheep stations and has visited all the irrigation schemes and areas on the continent. In fact, Dr. Bentivoglio has been everywhere in Australia and has observed with the eye of the trained researcher.

She has a large collection of beautifully colored slides—many taken from the air, some films—standard size, and one film (about 25 minutes) 16 mm of Australia.

[illegible]



*Dr Soccorso Santoro ashore in Adelaide during his voyage to Melbourne on the "Orama" in 1930.*

**Dott. SOCCORSO GIORGIO SANTORO, M.D., M.CH.O. - 1902-1961**

by Cav. Uff. Dr. Giorgio Romano Santoro, A.M.

My father, Soccorso Santoro was born, the eldest of five children, in Serino near Avellino on the 17th of September 1902. His father was Giovanni Santoro, a local land owner and his mother's maiden name was Giannattasio. She was a primary school teacher who was teaching locally. My father attended local schools and subsequently the Regio Liceo Colletta in Avellino. Later he attended the University of Genoa and lived with his uncle Barone Vladimiro Giannattasio. His family around that time had moved to Solofra and when he went to Genoa his family was under the impression that he was studying law, but he enrolled in medicine. After passing first-year medicine he advised them on his change of course.

On the 22nd November 1926 he graduated from the Faculty of Medicine with a total of 92 marks out of 110. His professor was Commendatore Mattia Moresco. He did his internship at Alessandria, north of Genoa. He became an officer in the Italian army and developed a great national pride which he maintained for his whole life. In later life he stated that he was a true son of Italy and would never relinquish his passport or his citizenship under any circumstances.

In keeping with many students of the time, he was very involved in university politics and his favourite sport was boxing, at which he became proficient.

After his graduation in 1926 he was immediately drafted into the army and he joined the Battaglione All. Uff. Medici e Farmacisti di 2a Compagna and on 27th December, 1926 he was issued with a military rifle YN6681 which was manufactured in 1891. He was issued with a bayonet, a gun belt and two cartridge pouches which were manufactured in 1907. He was also issued with a peaked cap of grey-green cloth, a water bottle, three shirts, three handkerchiefs and three ties.

After his military service, he made a decision to travel around the world and in so doing he took the sensible precaution of registering his Genoa medical degree in London, therefore making it acceptable throughout the English speaking world. He registered in London on 10th June, 1930 and he sailed to Australia on the Orient Line's 'Orama' which left Naples on 29th June,

1930. With him was his colleague Dr. P. Bianchi. He intended to go to America via Australia for a "giretto d'ispezione, di scoperta, di piacere e d'avventura". On the same ship was the young Vittorio Picchi, subsequently of the company 'Mei and Picchi'.

He arrived in Melbourne well equipped with the appropriate medical, surgical and obstetrical instruments. Surprisingly, he also had a set of dental instruments as his basic degree gave him the rights to also practise dentistry, which of course he never did.

When he arrived in Melbourne he initially took up residence at 154 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy and commenced practice at 'Professional Chambers', 110 Collins Street in August, 1930. His practice slowly built up, but not adequately for both practitioners and so eventually Dr. Bianchi went to Innisfail, Queensland and later returned to Italy. Dr. Santoro's decision to remain was based on the fact that he had a weak and painful knee which precluded travel. This knee gave him trouble for nearly 20 years.

On December 24th, 1932 he married Mrs. Vida Ryan, widow of Mr. W.H. Ryan, a Sydney solicitor, at St. Ignatius church, Richmond and they went to Lakes Entrance for a honeymoon. I was born on 3rd May 1935 and the total cost of the confinement was £10.15.6. My sister, Mirella, was born on 5th February, 1942.

His gross income in 1934 was £761 and in 1935 was £791. In 1935 he deducted his car expenses from his gross income and he noted that he had driven 14,400 miles on business and that petrol was 1 shilling and seven pence per gallon (15 cents), this works out at less than 3.5 cents per litre. He also stated in his tax return "I am a general practitioner and my practice consists mainly of Italians. They are scattered in all suburbs of Melbourne and therefore the average monthly mileage is 1200".

In 1935 the British Medical Association had its 103rd Annual General Meeting in Melbourne, the first such meeting in Australia. It was to commemorate Victoria's centenary in the same year. My father, a member of the B.M.A. Victoria Branch attended.

Practice in Collins Street was not easy. Most of

the patients were working-class Italians who would on occasions sit down along the corridor, to the surprise and amusement of the watch-chained specialists dressed in three-piece suits from other rooms in the building. There were frequent complaints, but luckily Saturday morning was the busiest and the specialists were resting! He spent a great deal of time translating for patients. Frequently, if he sent a patient to a surgeon such as Mr. Tom King or Mr. Ted Prendergast, he would attend the specialist with them to translate and arrange the operation.

Dr. Santoro found it difficult to obtain competent nursing staff to assist in the unusual practice, so eventually Vida's sister, Sylvia Clancy, a trained nurse from Sydney was encouraged to assist. She did this on a temporary basis in 1935, however she remained for 26 years until my father's death in 1961. Zia Sylvia did countless extra hours of taking minutes of the Italian Red Cross, Dante Alighieri and other meetings. By 1945 his gross income was 1,966 pounds 17 shillings and threepence.

Dr. Santoro was President of the Dante Alighieri from 1931 to 1959 when he resigned due to ill health. At that stage he was made an honorary President of the Society. He was then presented with the gold medal 'Societa' Dante

Alighieri". During the war years most of the Dante library and some other items were safely stored under the family house in Molesworth Street, Kew and were retrieved at the end of hostilities. From 1933 to 1940 he was a delegate of the "Croce Rossa Italiana" - the Italian Red Cross. He was responsible for the collection of donations on behalf of the Italian Red Cross and he arranged this with vigour and, in fact, on at least one occasion he arranged for the distribution of a small newspaper which encouraged donations. After the war, he was again named as delegate for the Italian Red Cross. From 1931 to 1940 he was the representative of the "Touring Club Italiano" in Melbourne. He was the President of the Cavour Club on different occasions, including 1934. This was the year that we waited in vain for the arrival of Signor Guglielmo Marconi in Victoria.

He was the official doctor of the Italian Consulate General in Melbourne and also the doctor for the Italian shipping lines. On a lighter vein he wrote a comedy "Alla Corte di Addis Abeba" around the life of Haile Selassie. This play was produced at the Cavour Club on 15th March, 1936 in aid of the Italian Red Cross. The cast consisted of S. De Marco, P. Menara, B. Canestra, F. Adorna, F. Conti, Z. and D. De Marco, P. Magi and Dr. Santoro. The play was

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DELEGAZIONE



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VOL. V

MELBOURNE: MERCOLEDÌ 19 AGOSTO, 1936-XIV.

No. 24.

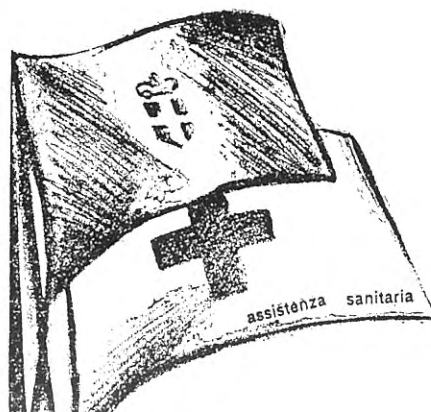
## Per la Patria: Sempre ed Ovunque

*L'Appello del  
Dott. S. Santoro  
agli Italiani  
del Vittoria*

Connazionali del Vittoria!

Tre anni or sono voi rispondeste all'appello che io vi lanciai a favor della Croce Rossa Italiana, come solamente i figli d'Italia sanno rispondere in tali occasioni, ed una somma non indifferente fu raccolta.

Oggi, mentre il nostro paese sta aumentando ancora di più la sua potenza nel mondo e sta dando prove luminose del valore dei suoi figli, in tutti i campi, io mi rivolgo anco-



### IL PLAUSO DEL REGIO CONSOLE

Signor Dottore,  
Il risultato della campagna pro Croce Rossa Italiana da Lei organizzata e condotta fa onore a Lei e a tutti coloro che La coadiuvarono in questa nobile iniziativa.

Voglia partecipare anche ai membri del Comitato e a tutti coloro che si sono incaricati delle raccolte l'espressione del mio plauso e del mio compiacimento.

Con distinta considerazione.  
IL REGIO CONSOLE.  
(E. Anzilotti.)

Dott. S. Santoro,  
Delegato della C.R.I.  
110 Collins Street,  
Melbourne.



*A scene from "Alla Corte di Addis Abbeba", written by Dr S. G. Santoro.*

well accepted and the costumes took many months to prepare. I recollect it even involved the family dog, a female cocker spaniel named Lora. He also wrote another play, a two act comedy "L'incoronazione di Cornelia".

He was the President of the Association of Italian Reserve Officers in Australia. He did not relinquish his military commission. He was active and there were meetings at the Latin and Italian Society Restaurants. Frequent heated debates occurred with university Italian teacher, a professed and uncompromising socialist, the Bolognese Prof. Omero Schiassi.

When war was declared he was interned in a camp at Tatura in Victoria and was there for approximately six weeks. My mother was an Australian citizen and it was due to her efforts that he was interned for such a short time. Other Italians were interned for the duration of the war. He was released on condition that he reported to the Kew Police Station three times a week and did not travel more than 25 miles from Kew. He was warned that he would not be allowed to buy a house on Port Phillip Bay as there was a possibility that he would signal to

enemy shipping! His shotgun which was used for quail and rabbit shooting was confiscated and eventually returned after the war.

He was allowed to continue the practice of medicine at 110 Collins Street. However, he was advised that while he was seeing a patient, no more than two other patients could be in the waiting room. For this reason Sister Clancy had to advise any other Italians to "go for a walk around the block". This was to stop any conspiracies or planning occurring. He was also advised that tennis could not be played at the family home if it involved other Italians as this, of course, could be the beginning of yet another conspiracy. On at least two occasions the house was searched by the Australian authorities, but they did not find the complete Dante Library hidden under the house.

This was an era of great respect for the family doctor who was the confidant of many families with their problems. The migrants had to turn to someone who could understand them and their family ties. When their children mixed with local children, then the family strictness and unity tended to break down and the older members



*At a Dante Alighieri Society meeting, in the front row are Shirley McLean, Dr Santoro, Cav and Mrs Boffa, Vittorio Picchi and others.*

were unable to deal with modern problems. My father gave generously of his time to assist and on occasions had to break the news of elopement and death to the rest of the family.

Many children refused to speak in Italian and were desperate to be considered Australians. This rejection of the older migrants became very upsetting especially as the young had to be relied upon as interpreters.

My father was welcomed into many families especially as he had high ideals of patriotism and language and morality. He never spoke to his children in English, he did not use bad language and he was considered by all to be a cultured gentleman. Many a time he took me to houses around Carlton where the Italian families were roasting coffee or making spaghetti, ravioli, salamis or prosciutto. All work would cease and the whole family would become involved in prolonged quiet conversation with my father regarding some family difficulties. It was unusual for him to complete a home call in under one hour.

When my sister was only one year old, my father moved mother, sister Mirella and myself up to Charlton in central Victoria for 12 months because of the fear of enemy bombing. We stayed with the Paino family and my father frequently drove up at weekends in his Ford V8, when he had enough petrol ration coupons.

I especially remember once when he arrived with a bootful of ripe tomatoes from the garden in Kew.

The family then obtained a property in the Dandenongs at Sassafra, within the 25-mile limit, but not in his name as enemy aliens were not allowed to own property and we moved there for six months. Things got better on the war front and we came back to Kew, where by that time my father had successfully started numerous grape vines in the back garden. We soon started sending food parcels to his family in Italy.

After the war, in 1948, my father made his first trip back to Italy. The plane trip from Melbourne to Rome took approximately 90 hours.

He had been given the honorary position of Outpatient Surgeon at St. Vincent's Hospital in Mr. K. Hadley's clinic, a position he proudly held for twenty years, every Monday afternoon and Thursday morning. In those days many reputable doctors gave part of their week in an honorary capacity to treat the public.

In 1953 St. Vincent's Hospital had a building programme and my father gave his time to mobilising many of the Italian Clubs and individuals to give donations. On 29th May, 1953 and on 5th June, 1952 he arranged dances for the Italian Community at Brenan

Hall St. Vincent's Hospital. I still have the original lists of donors - well-known names throughout the community.

Our social life evolved around numerous Italian families and we frequently saw the families of Ballini, Poli, Tibaldi, Mei and Picchi, Cardosi, Borghese, Vigano', Negri, Vaccari, Sperani, Adami, Valmorbida, Gobbo, Boffa, Pagliaro, Gallichio, Arcaro, Cavedon, Borsari, Nibbi, Zarro, Father Ugo Modotti and Father Nazario and all the Italian Consuls. On Thursday nights, Messrs. Dimattina, Demarco and Conti would come home and play cards with my father.

How fondly do I recollect the annual Italian picnic days, going around the oval from car to car, tasting veal at one and melanzane at the next and a nip of home-made wine at another. The camaraderie and the concept of "one big family" is not understood if one has not been part of it.

Ingegnere Luigi Benini of Meldrum Street, Kew had a Bell and Howell black and white projector and he used to hire 16mm films over the weekend and on Saturday nights we would all go over to Benini's and watch films where all the baddies went to jail and all the goodies lived happily ever after!

In 1956 the 'Squadra Olimpica Italiana' arrived in Melbourne for the 16th Olympic Games and he was nominated as their official doctor. On 7th December, 1956 the Dante held a meeting on the cruiser 'Raimondo Montecuccoli' which was here in port. About 50 people attended and toured around the ship. This was not the February 1938 controversial arrival of the 'Montecuccoli' in Melbourne. On 10th December, 1956 a ball was held at the Royal Ballroom (at the Exhibition Buildings) by the Dante Alighieri Society for the Italian Olympic team. Frank Selleck (later Sir Frank), the Lord Mayor attended.



*Dr. Santoro, family and friends relax after tennis at home in Kew.*

On the 2nd March, 1956 Dr. Santoro presented the Lending Branch of the Melbourne Public Library 200 books by Italian authors. These books were presented on behalf of the Melbourne Branch of the Dante and they were presented to Dr. C. Irving Benson (Later Sir), Chairman of the Public Library Trustees. This, of course, demonstrated the increasing importance of the Italian language in this city.

My father was particularly proud of the Dante and as it was the peak Italian Cultural organisation, he always watched and jealously guarded protocol of seating at official functions and felt he should be placed above the geographical and sporting clubs. The Dante was a great link with the Italian and the Australian Community and was treated on the same basis as the 'Alliance Francaise' and attracted many of the cultural and educated luminaries of Australian Society. This communication was of enormous value to the Italian Community.

1960 was a great year for my father as the Italian language was accepted as a tertiary language at the University of Melbourne and my father also received his honour as Cavaliere Ufficiale from the Italian Government. In commemoration of my father's work with Italian Culture the Dante Alighieri Society still donates an annual 'Dr. Santoro' prize to the best student in first year at Melbourne University. Mr. Tom Hazell, the current president of the Dante, very kindly asks me to present it. The Dante records show a motion on the books in 1935 to strive for the acceptance of the teaching of the Italian language at the Melbourne University. It had taken 25 years. The Dante had a cocktail party on Saturday, 20th June, 1959 at Union House, Melbourne University 'to celebrate the establishment of the teaching of Italian at the University of Melbourne'. The Italian Ambassador, Dr. Eugenio Prato, attended and the guests were welcomed by the honorary President, Dr. Santoro, who was presented with a gold medal for his 29 years service as President. He was succeeded by Professor Sydney Rubbo.

In November, 1958, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Councillor F. W. Thomas received from Dr. Santoro a bust of Dante Alighieri which was placed in the Treasury Gardens. The marble bust rested on a pedestal of granite from De Marco Brothers.

He suffered a heart attack in 1956 at the age of 54, one night when he was dining out with Professor Rubbo. After some weeks in the Mercy Hospital he improved and returned to medical practice. Whilst in hospital, Professor

Chisholm called to see my father and on behalf of the Dante my father presented him with a camera in recognition of the work he had done and the great assistance he had given to the Italian community, in particular in furthering the recognition of the Italian language at the University of Melbourne. In October, 1959 he transferred his medical practice to Coates Building, 20 Collins Street, a new building. He was very proud of his ultra modern rooms and his 'Clinica Medica Italiana'.



*Dr. Santoro and son George who also became a medical practitioner.*

In April, 1961 he left for a trip to Italy and in Genova he had another heart attack and was admitted to hospital, the same hospital where he had studied in his medical course and on 10th July he died. He was buried at Solofra Cemetery, near Serino, his birthplace. He had flown across the world to die, back in his beloved Italy.

In the months prior to his death, he had contacted many of the 1926 university of Genoa Medical School Graduates and was well on the way to arranging a 35-year reunion. He was very interested to renew his acquaintance with his colleagues and hear their stories of medical practice throughout Italy's turbulent years; it was not to be.

## MEMORIES MAKE HISTORY

### How Research Has Been Conducted For An Exhibition

by Fiona McFarlane

*[Fiona spent three weeks at the Society as part of her final placement for her Diploma of Museum Studies. We congratulate Fiona for the excellent results she has achieved in her diploma and thank her for her very valuable contribution to the project.]*

I feel most privileged to have assisted three organisations whose partnership in mounting an exhibition is historic for Australian museum practice.

The Museum of Victoria, the Italian Historical Society and The Jewish Museum of Australia are collaborating to bring together their expertise, collections and resources that will form an exhibition (opening at the Museum of Victoria in August 1992) which examines the history of ethnic immigration to Carlton. Particular focus will be given to the two communities which made the most notable demographic impact in the area from the 1860's to the 1960's - the Jews and Italians.

I first became aware of the project six months ago. At the time I was surprised that Carlton ever had a Jewish population, indeed, one so significant that the suburb was known in the

1930's as "Little Jerusalem". Naively I had always believed Carlton to be "Little Italy". Apart from my knowledge that Italians and working-class Australians were in Carlton I had never really questioned who might have lived or worked in the streets such as Lygon, Rathdowne, and Drummond.

Yet, in my time assisting the museums I have discovered that since the 1840's Carlton has been home to Irish, Chinese, Lebanese, Indians, Greeks, Jews and Italians. That is just to name a few! Just take time to examine the faces and names inked on the back of pre 1950 class photographs from the schools such as Lee St. State and Princes Hill that will be exhibited. These illustrate a fascinating and colourful multicultural past.

My five-week involvement with the project began at the formative stages of the exhibition.



*Christmas 1959 at St. George's Kindergarten with Ann Campbell as the Virgin Mary*

I have catalogued information and objects collected over the past year by the Italian Historical Society and The Jewish Museum. I have also had the special privilege of interviewing Italians, Jews and Lebanese who have historic ties with Carlton. Some of these people have lent or donated their photographs for reproduction, and diaries, memoirs and personal objects for research and display.

The last object I brought back from an interview was a pair of socks that had been kept as mementos by the Jewish family who ran the Ideal Knitting Mills where the socks were manufactured. In the 1930's this mill stood in Lygon Street where the Road Traffic Authority is today.

I now have a clearer understanding of the events, issues, organisations and personalities of these communities and their profound impact on Carlton. The Jewish and Italian cultures are no doubt different. Yet strangers in a new land



Caterina Sinisgalli with friends Caterina Russo, Rosina Tursi, Raffaella Torzillo and daughter Maria in front of her house at 22 Dorrit Street, Carlton in 1940.

## Lygon Street Traders

invite you to inspect & patronise their  
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The Lygon Street Traders was published in the early 1950s by The Carlton Traders' Promotion Committee of which Prospero Papaleo was the Treasurer.

share remarkably similar experiences. I have found it most interesting in my readings and at interviews with members of the two cultures that experiences most profound for the newly arrived are often the same. Some arrived here on the same ship. Many would have passed each other in the street or at the Exhibition Gardens. The first day at school and finding first employment are subjects most often referred to in the memoirs I have read. Sadness at leaving the homeland, excitement about the prospects and possibilities of a new country, trepidation and fear of the unknown are emotions that were shared by both communities. These will be sensed in this exhibition.

It has been a thrill meeting the personalities behind the photographs and memoirs I have studied. Hearing them share intimate details of their past, their perceptions, observations and philosophies has been a special experience. For the first time in my life I met someone who could describe from first hand experience the terror of Nazi brutality. This was the reason for Rabbi Rudski's emigration here. I have met Joe Lo Schiavo who kindly brought his family photographs to the Eolian Hall in Lygon Street - a building which was originally central to Jewish cultural life as the Kadimah and which became the Eolian Islands community club in the late

1960's. Joe arrived here in 1930 from Stromboli, an island so small and hilly that no soccer ground could be built. Luigi Di Santo has spoken of how he had the idea to import espresso machines to Melbourne. He brought out Melbourne's first Cimbali machine in 1953. Today his importing business still operates from its same address in Amess Street, Carlton. It began as a rented front room of an Italian family home. Gina Triaca has given information about how she taught English to newly arrived women at St. George's Hall. John Gangitano painted vivid pictures of how Lygon Street looked in the 1950's and recalled his experiences as a Real Estate agent here.

Needless to say, assisting with this exhibition has been for me a most fulfilling and enjoyable experience. I have absorbed new information and met wonderful people. I have also begun to look at Carlton through new eyes and, as a fourth generation Scot, am now keen to pursue more information about my own ancestors' experiences of immigration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the three Curators responsible for this exhibition. Dr. Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien at the Italian Historical Society, Dr. Helen Light at the Jewish Museum of Australia and Miss Anna Malgorzewicz at the Museum of Victoria have all been so welcoming and supportive. I have learnt and been inspired by them all and wish them great success with this fascinating and worthwhile exhibition.



*Maria Rebellato with great-grandson Eros Anceschi in the Carlton Gardens in 1956 c.*



*St. George's First Communion. Carlton, 1936.*

