



Italians in Public Memory: Pageantry, Power, and Imagining the Italian American

Saverino, Joan. "Italians in Public Memory: Pageantry, Power, and Imagining the Italian American." *The Italian American Review*. 8 (Autumn/Winter 2001): 83-111.

"Two-Ton Tony Likes Berks Spaghetti" headlines a photograph of national boxing champion Tony Galento in a 1939 issue of the Reading Times newspaper. A local girl, holding a banner advertising "Holy Rosary Greater Italian Day" stands beside him, while Galento stuffs a huge forkful of pasta into his mouth.¹ How was it that fifty years after the mass immigration of Italians to the United States, Italians had come to use a constellation of symbols like spaghetti to express a newly developed ethnic identity? During the period between the two World Wars, in the industrial city of Reading, Pennsylvania, Italians appropriated and recontextualized a bricolage of American and Italian folk and popular images and rhetoric in ritual public events of ceremony and celebration. Through the lens of the two most significant celebrations, the Columbus Day and the Italian Day Festivals, we will see how Italians used these displays to create a public ethnic memory, shaping a unique past distinct from the mainstream cultural consensus.² [83]

Public memory is constituted in physical spaces. Italians staged celebrations in public locations historically infused with symbolic meaning for the majority population. By using and sometimes permanently altering spaces (City Park, for instance) that were sacred in a civic sense, Italians reinscribed these material places, creating ethnic sites of memory in their adopted city. Even as Italians developed their own public memory, through the process they also changed the trajectory of the city's memory from one that was primarily Pennsylvania German to a more ethnically diverse landscape. Geographer Allan Pred has written that our sense of present-day place as a "visible scene" does not emerge out of what was once a natural landscape and stop evolving. "Whether place refers to a rural village or a metropolis, an agricultural area or urban-industrial complex or some other observational entity, it always represents a human [84] product. Place, in other words, always involves an appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space."³

The role of performance and public display in the creation of ethnic identity has only recently caught the attention of scholars of immigration and ethnicity.⁴ This paper contributes to that growing body of scholarship. By virtue of the nature of cultural performances as "intensified expressions of high affect and indirect, implicative

reference that stand out from routine communicative passages because of their self-referencing style . . . performances help keep social, psychological, and episodic systems open-ended and transformative in potential."⁵ Sites of memory are created in the popular imagination through the transformative potential of performance and the places associated with their production. The dynamics of cultural change are often most evident through performative display.

Public ritual events such as parades and festivals, meant to celebrate or commemorate and usually open to a general populace, may appear simplistic in their intent. Yet a close analysis of the orchestration of such events reveals how the events themselves and larger societal patterns also help change existing beliefs and social relations. These occasions convey key ideas through symbolic language and imagery. Symbols that carry the most emotional power are those that rely on ambiguity because individuals can ascribe their own meaning to them, while they serve simultaneously to bring people together. Symbols can consolidate alliances even when the participants (both Italians and non-Italians) who rally together have different, even conflicting, values, meanings, and motives for joining together.⁶

Before I begin an analysis of public display, I will turn briefly to an explanation of the local historical and cultural context of Italian immigration. Berks County is regarded as one of the nine counties in the Pennsylvania German heartland. Three features distinguish Italian immigration here from other areas of Italian settlement in Pennsylvania. First, Italians came in smaller numbers compared to other parts of Pennsylvania. Second, Italians entered a region of little ethnic diversity, one dominated by the Pennsylvania Germans. Finally, while the city of Reading was industrializing and factories were sprouting in some of the boroughs as well, the majority of the county remained agricultural.

The city of Reading, fifty-four miles northwest of Philadelphia, was the most Germanic of the large towns in this regional area. Thomas Penn (William Penn's son) and his agents established Reading as the county seat in 1752 because of its central location in the county and its easy accessibility to Philadelphia, both on the Schuylkill River and along a main road to the city.⁷ Reading was a prime location for attracting industries developing as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

By 1890, attracted by the growth of the iron ore industry, the new immigrants, primarily Italians and Poles, noticeably began to alter the Germanic face of Reading and the boroughs surrounding it.⁸ Unlike the Pennsylvania Germans, who had emigrated largely from a single region, the Rhine Palatinate, and who could trace ancestors back to the early eighteenth century,⁹ the Italians, coming from different regions and speaking different dialects, had no uniform, shared past. In effect, they were a people without history, cut off from the lives and histories of villages left behind.¹⁰ Italy was unified in 1861 but remained characterized by regional differences. Immigrants arrived with no real allegiance to an Italian national

identity and none yet to the United States. Although some chain migration and settlement pattern clustering did occur in Reading, it was minimal compared to the colony formations that occurred in larger cities.¹¹ Because of the small numbers of family or fellow villagers who also immigrated, Italians in Reading were forced to expand their social networks to include the mixed regional Composition of the neighborhoods, mutual aid and fraternal societies, and business partnerships.¹²

By the 1920s, the Italian population in the city itself was sizeable with a well-established social and economic infrastructure.¹³ Mutual aid societies and fraternal orders were numerous and popular. A few, such as the lodges of the Sons of Italy, were affiliated with national organizations and wielded considerable influence among Italians. These groups became actively engaged in public display and bolstered their numbers at events by inviting organizational branches from surrounding towns to participate in ceremonies and parades. [86]

The leaders of the fraternal orders were usually members of the Italian middle class or *prominenti*, that is, professionals or small businessmen who had gained respectability in the Italian community. These middle class Italians, usually better educated or more Americanized than the majority of working class Italians, often acted as ethnic brokers between Italians and the dominant society.¹⁴ Those who emerged as leaders in the ethnic community became spokespersons for the rest who had no public voice.

The *prominenti* also sought recognition from the non-Italian middle class elite of Reading, while attempting to retain their influence in the Italian population. In public displays, the goals of the *prominenti* and those of civic officials and other city elite often appeared to be linked together in the concept of Americanization.¹⁵ Nationally, popular sentiment also emphasized that new immigrants should assimilate as quickly as possible into the American mainstream. In Berks County, the social environment had a distinctly Pennsylvania German character. Neither the *prominenti* nor working class Italians, however, equated Americanization with assimilation. From their perspective, maintaining identification with Italian culture and adhering to its values and customs did not in any way conflict with being a good American. These differences in expectations were cultural misunderstandings that sometimes resulted in tension between the *prominenti* and the city leaders, signaling deeper divisions between the Italians and the general populace.

As we shall see in the example of the dedication of the Columbus Monument celebration, tensions also existed between the *prominenti* and working class Italians. The image of a singular and unified Italian community, displayed during public events, fractures if we look behind the scenes, where a different social reality prevailed. Working class Italians did not always identify with the middle class goals of the *prominenti* and many never attended the elaborate celebrations. Others, while proud that Italians could carry off such pageantry, harbored resentment toward the *prominenti* for their achievements. The Catholic clergy, often

at odds with a large number of Italians, formed a third source of contention. Despite the cacophony of voices representing diverse interests, values, and expectations, usually one group's agenda prevailed. This provided an illusion of unity to the non-Italian majority. With careful analysis of the orchestration of the event, the existing social and political fissures become evident. The Columbus Day celebrations were key events illustrative of how the *prominenti* introduced and promoted the new role of American ethnic. [87]

Columbus Holiday Celebrations

On October 11, 1992, rededication ceremonies of the newly restored statue of Christopher Columbus in City Park in downtown Reading marked the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage. The ceremonies also commemorated the sixty-seventh anniversary of the donation of the statue to the city by the Italians in 1925. Columbus Day and Italians have been synonymous in Reading since 1908 when Italians revived the celebration of their hero's holiday after a fifteen-year hiatus.¹⁶ The celebration of Columbus Day is the most significant illustration of the development and maturation of an Italian American identity in Berks County.

Columbus Day events were unique in that the Italian community itself organized them and thus they provide a window to view the purposeful construction of a public ethnic identity.¹⁷ Since Columbus was an American national symbol, these celebrations had widespread appeal for the entire local population. Nativistic feelings, echoing a prevalent national sentiment, were fervent in Reading during the decades prior to World War II. Columbus Day events provided at least one opportunity a year when Italians could capitalize on positive media coverage.

Americans, who had fully embraced Columbus as a national idol from the time of the Revolutionary War, gave him the status of a mythological hero. After the Civil War, Irish and French Catholics were the first immigrants to promote him as an ethnic hero. Irish Catholics founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882 and the French contemporaneously mounted an appeal to Rome to grant Columbus sainthood.¹⁸ In the late nineteenth century, the popular view held that "material progress" was a positive ideal, and geographical and industrial expansion seemed limitless. Americans further embellished the Columbus image, ascribing all the most admired human virtues to him.¹⁹ With the yearlong commemoration at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Columbus became the symbol of American success. [88]

Since the late nineteenth century, Italian *prominenti* in New York and Philadelphia promoted Columbus as the ideal symbol to represent Italians in the United States. As early as 1882, the Italian American organizations invited to march in the bicentennial of Philadelphia carried a float with a representation of Columbus. The dedication of a statue of Columbus in Central Park, New York, in 1892, with the epigraph, "From the Italians of America," may have most influenced the accep-

tance of the symbolic imagery of Columbus. Following the example of Philadelphia's Italians, floats decorated with Columbus themes were part of the New York festivities and would be a mainstay for future parades held by Italians in towns and cities throughout the United States.²⁰ Thus the groundwork was laid for the reinvention of Columbus as a hero used to promote pan-Italian Americanism and to fight anti-immigrant sentiment.

Invoking the Columbus imagery in the city of Reading linked the Italians to an idealized prestigious past recognized by all Americans. From that first celebration in 1908, the Italian *prominenti* in Reading successfully (re)appropriated Columbus Day as their holiday. They carefully cultivated an air of inclusivity by portraying the celebrations as public events in which all Reading citizens were welcome to participate, even though few, except for invited civic officials and perhaps parade onlookers, ever did.

Two organizations, the Columbo and Spartaco Mutual Benefit Societies, sponsored separate Columbus Day celebrations in 1908. It is unknown whether the two societies attempted to coordinate festivities. In ensuing Columbus Day celebrations, the events, as well as the themes and symbolism employed, mirrored the pomp and circumstance of 1908, with many of the same men taking active roles through the 1930s. When groups could rally around a local or national cause, they often did coordinate efforts. Disagreements sometimes marred the celebrations and probably account for separate parades that were held on many occasions. What seemed like petty arguments often represented power struggles among mutual aid and fraternal societies, some of which were gaining in membership and thus revenue and prestige, while others were declining. For instance, disputes occurred over which society should march at the head of the parade or who should bless the flags at the dedication ceremony of the Columbus monument in 1925.²¹

[89]

In spite of the internal arguments, the Italians managed to construct a distinct ethnic identity, separate from that of mainstream Reading, and linked with other immigrant Italians nationally, while simultaneously endorsing the official message of Americanization. For instance by employing images on parade floats that evoked a sense of an artistically rich classical past (ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy), and a simple and pure folk culture (dressing in peasant costume), presided over by the universal heroic figure of Christopher Columbus, Reading Italians forged the appearance of unity, adopting American values and behaviors, and reflecting national and local ideas about the benefits of assimilation. By engaging in sanctioned American-style public events, the Italians began replacing the prevalent stereotypes of themselves as swarthy, illiterate criminals with images of civilized ethnic Americans, not so different from the Pennsylvania German majority. Over time, this transformation in perception alleviated fears in the majority population about the influx of the Italians. The general populace began thinking of the Italians as an Americanizing community, thus allowing the process of legitimization to begin.

Dedication of the Columbus Monument in 1925

The Italians participated in the 175th Anniversary of the Founding of Reading in 1923.²² Consistent with a national trend for commemorating local history, Reading civic leaders invited Italians, along with other southern (Greeks) and eastern European immigrant groups, to participate in this historic celebration. By incorporating such new Americans into community pageantry, officials promoted a vision of unity. The ethnic groups, on the other hand, viewed these celebrations as opportunities to display their distinctive cultural identities.²³

The *prominenti* were pleased with the Italians' visibility in the 175th Anniversary of the Founding of Reading. Afterward, they continued to hold meetings at the home of Dr. Ferdinand Colletti to determine other ways Italians could "demonstrate their devotion to Reading." In her biography of her husband, Italo DeFrancesco, Ruth B. DeFrancesco remarks, that it was Colletti and DeFrancesco who were "among the small group who were openly proud of their background as Italians in contrast to a large number who were self-conscious in their many limitations in a strange society." It was Colletti, the only Italian physician in Reading during this early period and recognized by the Italians as a leader, who initiated a proposal to erect a monument to Columbus. In 1924, Colletti and DeFrancesco, along with eight other Italian businessmen and professionals, formed the Columbus Monument Committee to place a permanent memorial of Columbus in Penn's Common (City Park). [90]

Internal squabbling as well as fund-raising problems plagued the Monument Committee from the project's inception. Although the precise details of the disagreements are unknown, DeFrancesco alludes to them in the official pamphlet of the statue's dedication.²⁶ They are also mentioned in DeFrancesco's biography: "Certain rivalries existed between organizations, even churches, in the planning committee."²⁷ In spite of these setbacks, the Committee was ultimately successful in its goal.

On January 27, 1925, the Monument Committee signed a contract with Vincenzo Miserendino, a well-known Italian sculptor, from New York. Before the statue was completed, a total of three contracts would be signed because of changes in the original dimensions and costs of the statue. Initially, the bronze statue was to be eight feet tall with a six-foot base of pink granite standing atop a four-foot stone foundation. The total cost was set at \$5,000.

On August 4, 1925, a second contract was signed enlarging the statue's dimensions from fourteen to nineteen feet. The statue itself was to be eight-and-one-half feet high and the pedestal's height grew from six to ten-and-one-half feet. Bronze tablets, depicting episodes of Columbus's landing in America, were to be

added to each side of the pedestal. The Monument Committee agreed to compensate Miserendino an extra \$3,000 within one year of the statue's erection at the site for these alterations to the original design.

On August 17, 1925, yet another contract was signed. It stated that the Committee would pay an additional \$600 for six more inches to the statue's height, which resulted from Miserendino's own error when he made the cast. The phrasing of the contract indicates that Miserendino's successful negotiation for the extra payment caused some bitter feelings. To protect themselves from any further indebtedness, the Committee stipulated in the contract that the \$600 was considered a "voluntary contribution" to the sculptor and that they would not be held "responsible for any other expenses that Mr. Miserendino may have or may incur."²⁸ The total cost of the project had risen to \$8,600.²⁹

[91]

The cost of the statue was an extremely large sum for the time. While working class Italians were proud that a monument in their name would be erected in City Park, a prestigious location, they could not afford to donate much, if any, money to the project. The primary source of funds was pledges solicited from members of the fraternal societies, a majority of whom could only afford to give one dollar and many of those who pledged never paid. The Columbus Committee also orchestrated fund-raisers such as a raffle held during the statue dedication.³⁰ The Committee was unable to raise the last few thousand dollars to pay off the debt. According to the original agreement, the Monument Committee members were held personally liable for the unpaid loan. Within the next few years and the onset of the Depression, several of them went bankrupt and a few simply renege. In 1940, fifteen years after the statue was erected, Cologero Chiarelli, vice-president of the Monument Committee and a successful businessman, paid off the bank note in order to clear his name.

The success of the dedication ceremony on October 12, 1925, overshadowed the issues over the cost of the statue. The statue rallied the emotional, if not the financial, support of the Italian population. Three thousand people, most of them Italians, attended the ceremony. A statement in the *Reading Times* quoted Dr. Ferdinand Colletti:

I wish it clearly understood . . . that the statue presentation of tomorrow is not merely an Italian affair, but one affecting the entire city. In giving Columbus' statue to the city, the Italians not only wish to show their love for Reading, but also to honor a great man who belongs to the American people as a whole . . . Of course the Italians are proud of Columbus . . . but they believe that Columbus, Washington, and Lincoln belong to the entire world, because their deeds benefited all humanity.³¹

[92]

Colletti's words clearly depict how the *prominenti* viewed the intertwining of heritages as a way for Italians to achieve legitimization and enhance their status in the community. By following the prescribed American format for such programs

and by including non-Italians in the schedule of festivities, the Italians reinforced their message that Columbus was a hero for all the city's residents.

The celebration officially began at two o'clock with a parade that wound its way from the Italian neighborhood south of Penn Street to City Park. The parade marshal, Edward Damario, the first Italian police officer in Reading, led the marchers, who consisted of Italian groups as well as other local organizations. All Italians not affiliated with any society were also invited to march in the parade.

Committee members carefully blended Italian and American traditions. At the unveiling ceremony, after featured speeches by public officials, clergymen, teachers, and several official from New York City, Ferdinand Colletti presented the statue to the mayor. Italo DeFrancesco, a prominent member of the Monument Committee, introduced Vincenzo Miserendino and presented an honorary cup to the model who was, ironically, not an Italian but a Pennsylvania German weightlifter.³² Anna Chiarelli, daughter of Cologero, unveiled the statue, draped in Italian and American flags, while the Ringold Band, a local Pennsylvania German group, played "America." The speeches, as well as the accompanying music, were infused with patriotic themes. Festivities continued into the evening with the Ringold Band accompanying the folk dance performance by the Tarantella Dancers from the International Institute of the YWCA.³³

The official pamphlet from the event states that the statue was as a "gift" of the "Italo-Americans" for the "hospitality" shown by the city. In fact, the treatment of Italians up to 1925 had not been particularly welcoming. Although discrimination never escalated to the level of violence that occurred in other places in the United States, anti-immigrant fervor was prevalent in Reading and was keenly felt by the Italians.³⁴ So why did the Italians express a sentiment obviously not supported by the events of the times?

[93]

One explanation lies in the use of the word "gift." Marcel Mauss's classic work demonstrates that gift giving is neither a simple exchange of material objects nor a disinterested action. The act of giving itself increases the value of the object because it initiates a social exchange process, obliging the receiver both to acknowledge the gift and eventually to reciprocate in kind.³⁵ Many scholars, including Marshall Sahlins, Annette Weiner, and Lewis Hyde further define Mauss's early ideas about the role of gifts in the larger cultural economy and in the process of social exchange. If we consider the Columbus monument in the context of a gift, we can see implications for issues of reciprocity, power, and for the (re)negotiation of social relationships. This donation, whose import had such immense symbolic importance for both the American and the immigrant Italian psyches, initiated the potential for a reshuffling of social relationships between the two groups.

Annette Weiner argues that Mauss and others have oversimplified theories of exchange. Weiner suggests that reciprocity does not neutralize power as Mauss

claims, but that “What motivates reciprocity is its reverse—the desire to keep something back from the pressures of give and take. This something is a possession that speaks to and for an individual’s or a group’s social identity and, in so doing, affirms the difference between one person or group and another.” Weiner calls this “the paradox of keeping while giving.”³⁶ Hyde suggests that a gift can be “the actual agent of change, the bearer of new life. In the simplest examples, gifts carry an identity with them, and to accept the gift amounts to incorporating the new identity.”³⁷ Both Weiner and Hyde’s discussion around issues of social identity are significant for understanding the gifting of the Columbus statue. Before elaborating on the above discussion, however, one other point must be made. The social context of the gift of the statue is complicated further by the difference in enculturation between the Italians and the city leaders. The *prominenti*, all recent immigrants, were operating under a southern Italian cultural code which bound families friends, and business associates in complex webs of reciprocal obligation.³⁸ The city fathers would be ignorant of the expectations around gifting (as well as many other issues). We could expect, then, that inter-cultural blunders might easily occur between the two groups. [94]

City Council initially opposed the idea of the statue being placed in City Park near monuments of war heroes.³⁹ Although permission was finally granted, I propose that this was not an instance of cultural disconnect, but the reluctance of the city fathers to allow placement of the statue in the park points to fundamental issues of identity that were at stake for both groups.

The role of city parks in nineteenth century social ideology underscores City Park’s symbolic importance for Reading citizens. Historian Mary Ryan notes that by 1870 public places such as city parks were used as a method of ordering (according to gender and class) and sanitizing (prohibiting various forms of indecency) public space. Such spaces with specialized functions allowed a somewhat “controlled and unthreatening environment” of interaction among strangers.⁴⁰ The Italians threatened the hierarchy of this “ordered space” by introducing a permanent “foreign” element (the statue). In a letter to CR. Scholl, the president of the Historical Society of Berks County, DeFrancesco invites him to be a member of the Honorary Columbus Monument Committee. DeFrancesco appears to reassure Scholl concerning fears about the Italians’ intentions. “Our work has no religious or political scope; it is eminently a patriotic movement among the Italian Citizens and is motivated by the highest American ideals.”⁴¹ By placing the Columbus statue in the park, the city’s central green space, the Pennsylvania German identity of the city was at stake. The city’s social identity, already threatened by the sheer physical numbers of immigrants, was symbolically attacked.

In the viewpoint of many in the Italian community, the erection of the statue was truly a cause for celebration. It’s placement in City Park memorialized the Italians for present and future generations in a spot central to the public life of all residents at the time. Furthermore, it played the dual role of confirming the

Italians' ethnic identity while reinforcing the difference between the Italians and the majority population. The symbolic nature of the location of the statue within the park itself also cannot be overlooked. Columbus stands at the hill's crest, overlooking and pointing out over the city below. The statue visually linked together the Italians' and the city's interests. The last line of the epigraph on the base of the nineteen-foot statue reads "by the Italian residents of Reading Pennsylvania, October 12 1925." By choosing a granite statue, a symbol of great physical permanence, the Italians were portraying themselves as a legitimate social group possessing a memorialized past who would be a fixture in the city's future. The Columbus statue, situated amidst other statues of both local and national historical significance, was a bid for official acknowledgement, identifying the Italians as stable and permanent participants in the civic life of the city. The transformation of the City Park site both reflected and constituted the transformation of society itself. [95]

An article appearing in the Reading Times the day after the dedication of the statue, noted that the ceremonies had transformed what had been in past years "merely a holiday" marked by bank and public office closings, to what was now "a day that will be given a full page in the city's history. For Reading [sic] Italo American citizens made it a day of history when they joined together to present to their adopted city a bronze statue of the discoverer of America, Christopher Columbus."⁴² The Italians were successful in projecting a public image of a unified ethnic front. Although Italians staged celebrations for the holiday annually after 1925, the monument dedication was the high point in the history of the Italian community's celebration of Columbus Day. After the erection of the Columbus monument, the parade route always ended at City Park where Italians laid a wreath at the foot of the statue. Probably the most significant change in the Columbus Day celebrations from the late 1920s to 1940, however, was the increasingly adamant expression of *Italianità*, or nationalistic sentiment, that sprang from pride in the new Italy under Mussolini.

Fascism's Role in imagining the Italian American

The climate that existed in the Italian communities in the decades prior to World War II is a key element in the evolution of a unique Italian American identity. [96]
After World War I, Italians in the United States expanded their concept of community and their ethnic identity from a local to a national and even international focus. This reorientation was due to a constellation of successive social, economic, and political factors including post-World War I anti-immigrant sentiment with forced Americanization as its theme, the economic depression, New Deal politics, the Fascist and anti-Fascist struggle, and finally World War II. Italians, feeling isolated and discriminated against in the United States, turned their sights toward their homeland and the new Fascist Italy. Capitalizing on their vulnerability, Mussolini's propaganda campaign promoted the idea that those Italians who emigrated constituted an international colony of united Italians who could all take

pride in and work for a new Italy.⁴³ Philip V. Cannistrano points out that while Italian Fascists sought support among Italian Americans, immigrant fascism played an important role in the development of Italian American communities.⁴⁴ Historian Madeline Goodman's demonstration that ethnic leaders, ethnic institutions, and ideas about ethnic identity were linked and her claim that fascism actually aided in both the construction and reinforcement of ethnic identity follows through locally for Reading.⁴⁵

Italian American organizations used newspapers as well as new and expanding media such as radio, photographs, and film to foster the concept of a local, national, and international Italian ethnic identity. For instance, film was used to promote this idea within the Italian community as well as project a positive image of Italians to the rest of Reading as early as the 1925 dedication of the Columbus monument. The Columbus Monument Committee paid for the production of a sixteen-millimeter film of the parade and monument dedication, which was subsequently shown as a short before the regular features in the local movie theater.⁴⁶

During these years, the maturing second generation was caught between two cultural identities—their Italian ethnicity and their emergent sense of being an American. Whatever their generation, however, Italians could not escape being influenced by the contemporary rhetoric—that of a unified Italian American ethnic pride.⁴⁷ From the 1920s until the United States entered World War II, support for Mussolini swelled among Italian Americans, including those in Berks County. The earliest indication of Fascist sympathies in Reading was a *fascio* organized about 1923 by Oreste Brunicardi, a prominent artist and inventor. In 1925, the *Fasci all 'Eestero* gathered for a conference in Rome. Apparently, delegates from Reading attended because when the North American *fasci* gathered for a group photograph taken on the *piazza del Campidoglio*, an unidentified person held a placard on which is printed "Reading." In 1928, the *Lega Fascista del Nord America* listed another *fascio* in Reading called *Fascio Nello Degli Innocenti*.⁴⁸

With state-supported folk revivals and festivals, Mussolini's intense nationalistic focus romanticized and idealized Italy's folk past. At the same time during the 1920s, for philosophical reasons, the International Institute of the YWCA encouraged folk music and dancing among the immigrants. In parades and commemorations, Italians, seeing no clash between the two, combined symbols of American patriotism with those of Italian nationalism (for example, flags of both nations, Italian folk costumes, costumes of Columbus and native Americans). By the 1930s, speechmakers used phrases like *la Patria lontana* to instill a sense of unity with a national homeland.⁴⁹

Much of the encouragement to develop Italian nationalistic fervor emanated from national fraternal order headquarters and was spread via the Italian American press. Giovanni DiSilvestro, the national leader of the Order of the Sons of Italy, endorsed Mussolini in 1922, and the Order became an unofficial vehicle for trans-

mission of Fascist ideology. In Reading, the Massimo D'Azeglio lodge of the Sons of Italy planned a huge celebration for 1932 in honor of the national Order's plans to unveil a statue of George Washington in Rome. City alderman Anthony Zaffiro, who was the assistant grand venerable of the national Order, assisted in the preparation for the event in Rome.⁵¹

In March 1934, a commemoration of the Birthday of Fascism was held in New York, promoted by the Fascist paper, *Grido della Stirpe*. The *fascio* from Reading sent a telegram signed by Oreste Brunicardi greeting "in a Fascist fashion' the consular authorities and the old leaders, especially Thaon di Revel," the former leader of the Fascist League of North America. It concluded: "We swear loyalty to *Il Duce*."⁵²

In the 1930s, the local council of the lodges of the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America formed a group called the *Amici dell'Italia* (Friends of Italy). Propaganda from the Fascist government, supported by Italian American organizations, helped build mass enthusiasm for Mussolini's occupation of Ethiopia. In 1935, *Amici* held a meeting to gather support for Mussolini's Ethiopian campaign and to begin an assistance drive for the Italian Red Cross. Representatives of the Central Committee of *Amici dell'Italia* in Philadelphia came to Reading to speak. A Reading resident and former soldier in the Italian army offered his insurance policy from the Italian government on the spot to signify his loyalty to Italy. Raising money for the Italian Red Cross was a popular cause in Reading, as it was elsewhere in the United States during the Ethiopian War. Women donated their gold jewelry and people bought stamps printed with a picture of Mussolini and bearing the inscription, "November 18, 1935, Friends of Italy."⁵³

Italian Day Celebrations

The "Italian Days" festivals that emerged in the mid-1930s also grew out of this fervent *Italianità*. While Italians successfully merged the themes *Italianità* and American patriotism in the Columbus celebrations, they cleverly exploited certain pan-Italian American stereotypical symbols for specific money making endeavors in the "Italian Day" festivals.

The idea for an Italian Day celebration began on August 18, 1935, when the seven lodges of the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America held an Italian-American Day festival and picnic at Socialist Park in nearby Sinking Spring. The lodges invited all the other Italian associations in Reading and its environs as well as the public to participate.⁵⁴

By 1938 "Italian-American Day" was an annual event planned by the Order of Italian Sons and Daughters. Although still referred to as a picnic in one newspaper article, in reality it had grown into a large fund raising endeavor for the Order's coffers. That year the event, publicized as a program for people of all ages, was

held on July 31 and drew about four thousand people to Carsonia Park, a popular local amusement park. A free concert, featuring the newly reorganized Reading Royal Italian Band was announced widely.⁵⁵ [99]

In 1938, Father Leonard Miconi assumed the pastorship of Holy Rosary Church, the Italian national parish in downtown Reading. Upon his arrival, Miconi immediately set his sights on constructing a new church and recognized the potential of the festival format to raise revenue for a building fund. He convinced (some said coerced) the Italian American organizations to allow Holy Rosary to take over the sponsorship of the event renaming it "Greater Italian Day" in 1939. Representatives from twenty-six local Italian organizations and two assistant pastors from the parish expanded the event that year to cover an entire week-end in August making it the largest Italian festival ever held in Reading.

The events began at Holy Rosary Church on Franklin Street in the heart of the largest Italian neighborhood in the city. On Saturday evening the Royal Italian Band, featuring a soloist from Philadelphia, performed two concerts in front of the church. On Sunday morning the band led a religious procession celebrating the Feast of San Rocco from Holy Rosary to the small chapel at Schuylkill Avenue and Green Street, where priests celebrated a mass. By orchestrating the merging of the sacred with what had formerly been a secular celebration, Miconi successfully redirected the Italians to the parish as the center of their community.

The festival continued at the Reading Fairground with afternoon and evening entertainment programs, including Joseph Campo's song and comedy routine from Philadelphia. The Italian General Consul and an Italian American judge from Philadelphia were invited to address the crowd. Although the celebration was intended "to unite all the Italian families of the community and suburbs," the general public was invited to attend.⁵⁶ Emidio Cianci, the general chairman, stated:

The purpose of Greater Italian Day is not to promote an exaggerated nationalistic spirit, nor to divide the Italian people from their fellow Americans. Indeed a hearty invitation was extended to all nationalities to participate in the celebration . . . The supreme desire of the Italian people of Reading is to erect a new church worthy of their glorious history and tradition. Greater Italian Day will prove ideal and serve to realize this aspiration if it enkindles a wider enthusiasm and forges a stronger bond of unity in the Italian community. It will be difficult, if not impossible to build a new Italian church, unless each Italian displays a personal interest, and strangles in his heart all ill feeling and bitterness toward his fellow Italians.⁵⁷ [100]

This combination of a disclaimer and a call to Italians to unify indicates a heightened sensitivity on the part of ethnic leaders in appearing overly pro-Fascist in public. Recent investigations into Fascist activities in the United States by anti-Fascists, newspapers, and Congress had caused concern that Fascist propaganda was creating divided loyalties among Italian Americans.⁵⁸ Cianci wanted to urge

the diverse Italian populace to unite for the Holy Rosary building campaign (a far from unanimous goal), while he simultaneously averted any public apprehension that might arise from a call to unify. In contrast to Cianci's statement, and appearing on the opposite page of the pamphlet, was a note of welcome to the Italian General Consul written by Giuseppe Battisti, a local Italian American leader. It is worth noting that these remarks appeared only in Italian (thus obviously meant for a specified readership), but Cianci's appeared in both languages. Battisti began by hailing the *Patria lontana* (far-off Fatherland) and greeting the Consul as:

the representative of the supreme Mussolini who has given Italy new life, new enthusiasm, new valour, new strength and who will carry her to the highest destiny. . .Your presence in the Patriotic Colony is symbol of the spiritual ties that unite the emigrant Italians to great and strong Italy. To you...the most cordial greeting from all the Italians of Reading and the assurance of their everlasting gratitude and faith.⁵⁹

While Cianci's statement shows that Italians were well aware of the need to preserve an American patriotic image, Battisti's warm greeting to the Consul illustrates [101] the overwhelming popularity Mussolini still enjoyed among Italians in Berks County, sentiments consistent with national feeling. Although some Italians had grown concerned by the negative reports of recent Italian expatriates arriving in the United States, most continued to express loyalty to both their adopted country and their ancestral homeland until the United States itself declared war in December 1941.

In 1940 Greater Italian Day underwent another change. Although community leaders who organized the event in 1939 still participated in the planning, Holy Rosary sponsored it alone, not jointly with the Italian societies. By 1941 only the clergy formed the planning committee. With what many described as an abrasive personal style and bullish tactics, Father Miconi had usurped the yearly event from the fraternal organizations for his own fund-raising aspirations and in the process he had alienated many parishioners.

It is likely that national and international political events (Italy invaded France in June 1940) also contributed to the change in the 1940 festival. The emphasis on the event as a church-sponsored one rather than a secular expression of *Italianità* could be read as a creative diversionary tactic in inter-ethnic relations. At this point, Italians were careful to separate ethnic identity from Fascism. In 1941, when the United States was at war, this trend continued with the festival renamed "Holy Rosary Day" under the pretext that it promoted parish unity. A history of Holy Rosary stated: "The purpose of the celebration was to strengthen the bonds of unity among the parishioners, to interest our youth in the parish movement and to draw more enthusiastic cooperation for the Church campaign."⁶⁰

Fund raising was the primary goal from the inception of the Italian Day celebra-

tions in 1935. For the first few years, however, the flavor was more local, using talent from the community. Beginning in 1938, the planning committee incorporated and combined pan-Italian American symbols of spaghetti and national celebrities in an American-style carnivalesque atmosphere to attract large crowds to the fairground, thus enhancing fund-raising potential. In 1938, Tony Galento, the heavyweight prizefighter from New Jersey, refereed an amateur boxing match. For the 1939 event, the *Reading Times* identified the women's committee as serving "real Italian spaghetti dinners" with Tony Galento photographed eating one.⁶¹ [102]

In 1941, Joe DiMaggio of the New York Yankees was the star attraction and was quoted as saying: "I'm very glad to be in Reading and it was nice to get a good Italian meal here." Besides being a moneymaker, by 1940, with the tumultuous political scene, food became a benign, non-controversial way of expressing Italian American identity. For Italians food sharing represents the ultimate expression of generosity and hospitality. The increased emphasis on food at the event could be interpreted as a symbolic gesture to the larger population for improved inter-ethnic understanding.

The orchestration of the Italian Day events and the changes that transpired must be viewed in light of the repositioning of groups and their influence in the Italian community during these years. The rapid rise in membership and influence of fraternal organizations like the Order Italian Sons and Daughters represents a change in the interests of Americanizing immigrants and second-generation children. In addition, the transformation from mutual aid societies based on the membership of *paesani*, to pan-Italian American organizations can be explained, at least partially, by the unifying appeal of Italian nationalism that increasingly drew Italian Americans under one umbrella during the 1920s and 1930s.

From the Tarantella to Two-Ton Tony

The transition from peasant folk dancing the tarantella as Italians had done in public performances and on parade floats during the 1920s to Tony Galento eating spaghetti as ubiquitous symbols of Italian ethnicity visually represent the movement from an immigrant identity to a pan-Italian American one.

Italians recontextualized traditions to fit their new social situation and in the process invented an Italian American identity which in theory fit neatly in the city father's plans for a model city—a city where, in theory, all lived in peaceful co-existence. The reality of the situation, however, was still that Italians were often victims of discrimination and they remained separate from the majority population. World War I brought a sense of identification with Italy as a nation, but with the restriction in the new immigration laws of 1924 Italians could not travel back and forth to Italy as easily. They faced the reality that their future would be in America, and in response imagined a uniquely Italian American identity with the appearance of a "community" of Italians adopting "American" values. [103]

The 1920s and 1930s were a time of maturation for the Italians of Reading and Berks County. By latching onto the Fascist symbols of unity and strength, bolstered by the rapidly expanding national Italian American organizations, Italians gained confidence in their public image as ethnic Americans. The invasion of France by Italy in June 1940 and the subsequent declaration of war by the United States in December 1941 could have instigated a crisis in national loyalties among Italian Americans. Following the lead of national Italian American leaders, Italians in Berks County quickly renounced Mussolini and declared faithfulness to American democratic principles, softening their rhetoric of *Italianità*. Although we may chart such a gross chronology, the movement from an immigrant to an ethnic identity was neither linear nor smooth.

During the period between the two World Wars, specifically through events of public display, Italians developed a public ethnic memory transforming the social landscape. The public expression of a unified ethnic identity through performance was a key factor for Italians in the metamorphosis from immigrant to ethnic American. The peak of white ethnic pride that occurred in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s had a history behind it. The expressions of Italian ethnicity as they exist today, began with the immigrants' roots in Italy and the communities they created after their arrival in the United States.

Acknowledgments

If this manuscript is at all an accurate portrayal of the Italian American community that existed, it is because of the people who so generously allowed me to interview them. I wish to thank Bob St. George for reading earlier versions of this essay and Philip Cannistraro for reading an earlier version of the section on Fascism. I also thank Leonard Primiano for his comments and suggestions.

Notes

[104]

Versions of this article were presented at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies Faculty Forum, March 1999; at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., November 1993; at the American Italian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., November 1992; and in the author's doctoral dissertation, "Private Lives, Public Identities: The Italians of Reading and Berks County, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940." University of Pennsylvania, 1996.

1. "Two Ton Tony Likes Berks Spaghetti," Reading Times, August 14, 1939.
2. David Kertzer defines ritual as "action wrapped in a web of symbolism. Standardized, repetitive action lacking such symbolization is an example of habit or custom and not ritual . . . Through ritual, beliefs about the universe come to be acquired, reinforced, and eventually changed." David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 9.
3. Allan R. Pred, "Space as Historically Contingent Process," in *Place, Practice, and Situation: Social and Spatial Transformation in Southern Sweden, 1750-1850*

(Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1986), 6, quoted in Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 9.

4. John Bodnar discusses the construction of ethnic memory through commemorative events in Chapter 3, "The Construction of Ethnic Memory," in *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). For performative studies of specific ethnic groups see April R. Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1994) and Hadey Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

5. St. George, *Conversing by Signs*, 7.

6. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power*, 69. Kertzer discusses the ambiguity of symbols at length in Chapter 4, "The Virtues of Ambiguity," 57-76. Adrienne L. Kaeppler discusses the festival as a multifaceted communicative event specifically within the context of ethnic identity in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967), 162-170.

7. James T. Lemon. *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 133. [105]

8. Birdsboro, Robeson, and Temple attracted immigrants because of the iron foundries located there.

9. Raymond L. Ford, Jr., "Germans and Other Foreign Stock: Their Part in the Evolution of Reading, Pennsylvania" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1963), 1-5.

10. Eric Wolf in the preface to *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), x, uses the phrase "the people without history" in reference to the common people—peasants, laborers, immigrants, minorities—who were "as much agents in the historical process as they were its victims and silent witnesses." It is used here in a different sense, to indicate Italians who were cutoff from their historical past through the process of emigration.

11. The largest concentration of regional identities were from towns in the Abruzzi, the town of Santo Stefano di Camastra on the north coast of Sicily, and from the town and province of Ascoli Piceno, in the Marches.

12. For references on the scholarly debate concerning the changes in the family system from Italy to the immigrant communities in the United States as well as how Sicilian immigrants in New York City expanded their network of support, see Donna Gabaccia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 100-116.

13. In 1920, the U.S. Census recorded 1810 Italians in the city (1.7 percent of the population). In 1930, there were 2282 Italians comprising 2.1 percent of the population. U.S. Census 1860-1970.

14. See Micaela di Leonardo, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience: Kinship, Class, and Gender Among California Italian-Americans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

1984), 156, for comment on role of ethnic brokers. Until 1900, working class jobs available to Italians were primarily in the railroad yards, construction, and iron foundries, which required unskilled or semi-skilled labor. From 1900-1930, the economic situation shifted from one of heavy to light industry, primarily textiles and garment manufacturers. These industries depended on semi-skilled and skilled workers and employed both sexes. By the 1920s, the Italian middle class consisted of one physician, clergy, and entrepreneurs engaged in artisan trades (baker, barber, tailor) or merchant/businessmen (construction and building trades or wholesale/retail businesses). Information on work patterns is based on qualitative research (primarily personal interviews) and some secondary source material. Quantitative research still needs to be conducted. [106]

15. John Higham defines the 100 percent Americanism campaign that took hold in the United States after World War I. Its aim was to stamp out any foreign influence in the United States and its tactics favored coercing immigrants to become citizens, to adopt the English language, to adhere without question to American institutions, and to abandon the customs, beliefs, and any loyalties to their homeland. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. 2nd edition (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 247.

16. Columbus Day celebrations had not occurred in Reading since 1893, *Reading Times*, October 13, 1908, 1. No description of the 1893 events could be found in the local newspapers of that year.

17. Italians participated in other commemorative city-wide events orchestrated by the city fathers such as the 175 Anniversary of the Founding of Reading held in 1923.

18. John Noble Wilford, *The Mysterious History of Columbus: An Exploration of the Man, the Myth, the Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 254-55.

19 Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 7. See "Roots of Antimodernism" for a fuller discussion of nineteenth century American capitalist ideology, Chapter 1.

20. Carol Bradley, "Towards a Celebration, The Columbus Monument in New York" in Paola A Sensi-Isolani and Anthony Julian Tamburri, ed., *Italian Americans Celebrate Life: The Arts and Popular Culture* (Staten Island: American Italian Historical Association, 1990), 93.

21. The squabbling was mentioned by people I interviewed who attributed the squabbling among Italians to "jealousy" and "suspiciousness"(Joe Borelli, personal communication, August 13, 1992; Maria Battisti, personal communication, October 1, 1992; Charles Carabello, personal communication, July 10, 1992). Ruth B. DeFrancesco mentions the rivalry in conjunction with the plans to erect the Columbus monument in 1925 in the biography of her husband, Italo DeFrancesco, *Journey to Another Hilltop: The Life of Dr. De* (Kutztown, PA: Kutztown Publishing, 1969), 63.

22. Although some Italians must have witnessed the Sesqui-Centennial Anniversary of Reading in 1898, which spanned an entire week in June, the first record of Italian participation in a city-wide occasion was the 175th Anniversary of the [107]

Founding of Reading. Several Polish societies marched in at least one of the parades during the Sesqui-Centennial in 1898. *Official Program Reading Sesqui Centennial Jubilee Week*. We can assume that Italian mutual aid societies would have marched in the Sesqui-Centennial except that none were yet organized. The first to apply for a charter was Spartaco on May 20, 1899. Mary Ryan notes that anyone could apply for a permit to march in parades in nineteenth-century America. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 31 . The official name of the 1923 event was the 175th Anniversary of the Founding of Reading, Pennsylvania. For brevity, it will be referred to as the 175th Anniversary celebration.

23. Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 21-23, addresses the participation of ethnic groups in public pageantry and how they often used the opportunity to express their own identities and traditions. For more about the 175 Anniversary, see Chapter 5, 252-297, of the author's dissertation.

24. DeFrancesco, *Journey to Another Hilltop*, 63.

25. *Ibid*, 62.

26. In commemoration of the 500 anniversary of Columbus's landing, Italian American leaders organized the Columbus '92 Commission to plan events. One of the endeavors was to clean and refurbish the Columbus monument. A proposal was made to move the statue from its original location to the grounds of the Reading Museum, located in the Wyomissing neighborhood. Ultimately, the statue remained in City Park, but the disagreements within the group indicated that many of the earlier intra-ethnic tensions persisted.

27. DeFrancesco, *Journey to Another Hilltop*, 63.

28. Contract dated 17 August 1925 in file folder, "Unveiling and Dedication of the Columbus Monument," Historical Society of Berks County Library, Reading, PA.

29. The men who signed the original contract on January 27, 1925, were only six: Ferdinando Colletti, M. G. Albert, Louis Vladi, Antonio DiStasio, Cologero Chiarelli, Giovanni Viglione. In August 1925 an additional contract was signed enlarging the dimensions of the statue. Three additional men signed this contract: Livio Sonsini, Michael D'Agostino, Cologero Camilleri (See copies of legal contracts in file folder, [108] "Unveiling and Dedication of Columbus Monument," Historical Society of Berks County Library). The ten men who were listed as officers of the Columbus Monument Committee in the official pamphlet, *Unveiling and Dedication of the Columbus Monument*, 39, were Dr. F. Colletti, president; C. Chiarelli, vice-president; G Penta, vice-president; L. Sonsini, vice-president; L. Viadi, vice-president; M. G. Alberti, treasurer; V. Ciofalo, corresponding secretary; G. Zaffiro, financial secretary; C. Gison, recording secretary; Italo L. DeFrancesco, manager. Forty Seven other men are listed as members of the Monument Committee (see the official pamphlet, p. 38). Only the men who had signed the contract with the sculptor, however, were legally responsible for the debt. The cost of the statue was incorrectly given as \$10,000 in the article by the author, "The Italians of Reading: Forging an Identity in the 1920s," 193.

30. Ann Chiarelli Winters, interview by author, April 23, 1991, Tape 31.tra, 36, Historical Society of Berks County Library.

31. *Reading Times*, October 12, 1925, 1.

32. Jesse Mercer Gehman, a resident of New York City, was chosen by the sculptor to model for the statue because of his physique and because he was a former resident of Reading. *Unveiling and Dedication of the Columbus Monument*, 22.
33. *Reading Times*, October 13, 1925, 1.
34. Oral interview accounts ranged from prejudicial comments made to Italians to social intimidation to systematic discriminatory practices in the workplace and housing. For instance, at the Berkshire Knitting Mills few Italians were promoted to supervisory positions. Collaborators told me they knew these jobs were reserved for the Germans and the Pennsylvania Germans. See Joan Lynn Savereno, *Private Lives, Public Identities: The Italians of Reading and Berks County, Pennsylvania, 1890- 1940* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 80-81. Ruth B. DeFrancesco notes, "As laborers they were almost uniformly discriminated against, and the condescending attitude and sneering manner of more established groups had its subduing effect. *Journey to Another Hilltop*, 62.
35. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Norton, 1967), 10-12, 63, 71. Also see Virginia R. Dominguez, "The Marketing of Heritage," *American Ethnologist* 13(1986), 553. She draws on the classical analysis of gift giving by anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Marshall Sahlins.
36. Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-while Giving* (Austin: University of Texas, 1992), 43, quoted in Amy Shuman, "Food Gifts: Ritual Exchange and the Production of Excess Meaning," *Journal of American Folklore*, 113 (Fall 2000), 505. [109]
37. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. (New York: Vintage, 1979), 45.
38. Jane and Peter Schneider, *Cultural and Political Economy in Western Sicily*, (Academic, 1976), 86-87, 101.
39. City Council approved the statue in May 1925. In compliance with state law, permission to erect a public monument was also obtained from the Pennsylvania State Art Commission. See Savereno, 1996, 274.
40. Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public. Between Banners and Ballots* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 62, 78.
41. Italo L. DeFrancesco to CR. Scholl, 15 September 1925, Historical Society of Berks County Library, Reading, PA.
42. *Reading Times*, October 13, 1925, 1.
43. Philip Cannistraro, "Fascism and Italian Americans," in Silvano M. Tomasi, ed., *Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity: Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Casa Italiana, Columbia University, May 21-13, 1976* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 52.
44. Philip Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism 1921-1929* (New York: Bordighera, 1999), 6.
45. Madeline Jane Goodman, "The Evolution of Ethnicity: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in the Italian-American Community, 1914-1945." Ph.D. dissertation, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1993.
46. Ann Chiarelli Winters, interview by author, April 23, 1991, Tape 31 .tra, 35, Historical Society of Berks County Library. Historian Warren Susman says that

the more sophisticated uses of photographs, radio, and film during the 1930s created a "special community of all Americans (possibly an international one)." Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (Pantheon, 1973), 160. I suggest that ethnic communities were using these same resources to create a sense of ethnic identity in the United States as well.

47. Robert Orsi, "The Center Out There, In Here, and Everywhere Else: The Nature of Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Saint Jude, 1929-1965," *Journal of Social History*, 25 (1 991), 218.

48. The organization of the *fascio* in Reading by Brunicardi is noted in *Il Carroccio*, March 1923 . The information on the conference in Rome with the accompanying photograph appeared in *Il Carroccio*, vol. X, November 1925. The listing of the "Fascio Nello Degli Innocenti" appeared in *Lega Fascista del Nord America*, 13. I am grateful to Philip V. Cannistraro for providing me with the above information. [110]

49. Battisti scrapbook 2, 47, Historical Society of Berks County Library.

50 Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*. ed., introduction by Philip V. Cannistraro. (Center for Migration Studies, 1977). 92-93.

51. *Reading Times*, October 13, 1931, 17. In the 1933 newspaper coverage of Columbus Day, no mention was made of the event planned to take place in Rome. Apparently, the event never actually occurred, according to Madeline Goodman. Personal communication, February 1993.

52. The Italian translation of the telegram sent from Reading appears in Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities*, 176-77. The original newspaper article about the Fascist party noting Brunicardi as the sender is from *Il Grido della Stirpe*, March 31 , 1934 (incorrectly footnoted in Salvemini as May 31, 1934).

53. Information on the formation of the local "Amici dell' Italia" was from an unidentified newspaper clipping in file folder, "Battisti scrapbook 2", 47, Historical Society of Berks County Library. Although undated, from the text it appears that the meeting was held sometime after Italy's invasion of Ethiopia on October 3, 1935. John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 304, mentions the Friends of Italy Committee as one organization that staged the letter-writing campaign to United States congressmen to protest Roosevelt's revision of the Neutrality Act regarding Italy and the Ethiopian War. The build-up of enthusiasm for Mussolini's take-over of Ethiopia on October 3, 1935 is described by Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities*, 201 -2. The Italian phrase is translated as "in order to give approval to their fraternal committee who come to swell the ranks and to expand the movement." Filippo Cipri Romano is described as "a Fascist of the old guard" by Gaetano Saivemini (109). The Fascist stamps were probably printed locally, perhaps in Philadelphia; for information on the stamps, see Maria Battisti, interview by author, 2 November 1990, Tape7.tra, 17-18, Historical Society of Berks County Library. For a picture of the stamp, see file folder "Battisti scrapbook 2," 47.

54. Battisti scrapbook 2, 47, Historical Society of Berks County Library. Socialist Park was the name of a public park reflecting the socialist leanings in the area. [111]

William C. Pratt ("The Reading Socialist Experience: A Study of Working Class Politics." Ph. D. dissertation, Emory University, 1969) found that the movement was the strongest among the Pennsylvania Germans. While some success was attained among the Polish and Italians, generally they were anti-Socialist, 32-33.

55. Martorana scrapbook, 38-39, 41, Historical Society of Berks County Library.

56. The Italian General Consul was Ludovico Censi, and the judge from Philadelphia was Adrian Bonnelly. Battisti Scrapbook 2, 84, 86-87, 90-91, Historical Society of Berks County Library. See pamphlet, *Greater Italian Day of the Holy Rosary Church*, in file folder, "Holy Rosary," Historical Society of Berks County Library for entertainment schedule.

57. *Greater Italian Day of the Holy Rosary Church* (pamphlet), in "Holy Rosary" file folder, Historical Society of Berks County Library.

58. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 343-44.

59. The original Italian text is, "In Voi, essa vede il Rappresentate del Sommo DUCE; che ha dato all'Italia Nuova Vita, Nuovo Entusiasmo, Nuovo Valore, Nuova Forza e che la porterà ai più alti destini. . La Vostra presenza in questa Patriottica Colonia è simbolo del legame spirituale che unisce gli italiani emigrati alla Grande e Forte Italia. A Voi, . il saluto più cordiale di tutti gli Italiani di Reading, e l'assicurazione della loro imperitura Riconoscenza e Fede." The above is only a portion of the original statement. *Greater Italian Day of the Holy Rosary Church* (pamphlet), in "Holy Rosary" file folder, Historical Society of Berks County Library.

60. *The Most Notable Facts Events Activities of Holy Rosary Church 1904-1944*. Historical Society of Berks County Library.

61. *Reading Times*, August 14, 1939, in Battisti scrapbook 2, 103, Historical Society of Berks County Library. See *Reading Times*, August 14, 1939, for details on Tony Galento's arrival. Vincent Cianciosi remembers that the idea to bring in name celebrities such as Joe DiMaggio and several boxers, Primo Camera, Tony Galento, Jack Dempsey, was to attract large crowds.