



Exploring Diversity in Pennsylvania History

Rural Roads, City Streets:
Italians in Pennsylvania

Background Reading

"DOMANI CI ZAPPA": ITALIAN IMMIGRATION AND ETHNICITY IN PENNSYLVANIA

Joan L. Saverino, "'Domani Ci Zappa': Italian Immigration and Ethnicity in Pennsylvania" in *Pennsylvania Folklife*. 45 (Autumn 1995):2-22.

Few Italian immigrants survive the last great wave of immigration to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those who do are now in their eighties and nineties. Their memories provide rich detail about daily life in Italy before emigration, the tribulations of the voyage, and arrival and settlement to a vastly different, not always welcoming land. Their legacy is the foundation upon which is built the ethnic identity of Italian Americans in Pennsylvania today.¹

Folklorists who work with immigrants to the United States study the folklore of the immigrant experience and the folklore of ethnicity. The somewhat antiquated idea of studying an ethnic group as a static entity, is replaced by viewing ethnic identity as individually expressive and innovative, emerging when people engage in social interaction. This folkloristic way of looking at ethnicity is particularly useful in the multicultural landscape of contemporary America. Many Italian Americans are third or fourth generation with a complex combination of heritages through intermarriage of previous generations with other ethnic groups. Even for those with a less diverse cultural background, ethnicity becomes an option that can be chosen to be displayed or not in a given situation depending on the individual's needs or desires. An example of this occurs when an Italian American family regularly rotates American style platter meals consisting of meat, starch, and vegetables and Italian style one-pot pasta dishes with a tomato and meat based sauce.²

Expressions of ethnic identity can be displayed privately in the home with family or peers as described above or in public symbolic representations. When ethnic identity "goes public" it tends to be in the form of events such as festivals, parades, and ceremonies that celebrate or commemorate. These intentionally planned gatherings usually incorporate such expressive forms as music, dance, decorative arts, and cooking.³ Public occasions allow individuals to consolidate as a group, if only for the duration of the event, presenting themselves to each other and presenting key aspects of their culture to the general populace.

Whether it is the private sharing in the home of special regional dishes or such public celebrations as Columbus Day, the Italian American ethnic tradition that has evolved in the last one hundred years grew primarily from southern Italian folklife. From what had been a trickle of skilled northern Italians immigrating to the United States until the 1870s, by the 1880s the overwhelming majority of Italians arriving were from the *Mezzogiorno*, the area south of Rome including Sicily. Furthermore, most were *contadini*, a word variously translated as farmers, farm hands, or peasants. Even an expression used by Italian immigrants to indicate work the next day, “Domani ci zappa (Tomorrow, it’s work”) suggests that these immigrants formerly made a living as farm laborers or lived closely connected to the agricultural cycle. The use of the verb “zappare,” is translated literally “to hoe.”

CONDITIONS IN ITALY

In 1871, nearly 60 percent of the Italian population farmed for a living, attempting to eke out an existence from arid land that often was not their own. Systems of land division, methods of cultivation, and wages varied regionally with the worst situation existing in the South. There, by necessity, most families supplemented their income by working as day laborers (*braccianti*) or emigrated seasonally or permanently.⁴

Migration was a well-known survival strategy used by Italians, especially southerners, during the nineteenth century to cope with poverty, overpopulation, and scarcity of resources. A complex combination of worsening social, political, and economic factors in Italy and in the world at the end of the nineteenth century encouraged Italians to switch from what had been a local and European migration pattern to an International one beginning in the 1870s— first, to South America, then by 1901 to the United States.⁵

Unequivocally, the economic crises of the 1880s and 1890s were major forces in the choice of many Italians to emigrate. The “pull” factors of emigration—the widespread use of the steamship, the stories of returning emigrants, advertising by transatlantic transportation companies in the villages, and the actual economic opportunities offered by the United States— contributed as much to the high rates of emigration as conditions within Italy itself. The specificity of who left, when, and exactly why and where they immigrated depended on many factors, and was regionally and even village specific.⁶ [3]

The typical emigrant was a young, unskilled man from a rural area who intended to earn enough money to return to his home village, purchase land, and comfortably live out his days there. Also, those who emigrated were not usually the poorest of the poor, for they could never manage the fare. Many were seasonal migrants (referred to as “birds of passage”) who returned to Italy several months out of the year. Between 1880 and World War I more than four million people, 80 percent of them southerners, immigrated to the United States. During these peak years of emigration, southern Italian towns became inhabited by old men, women, and

children. In 1921, the United States Congress passed the first quota bill directed against southern and eastern Europeans, restricting immigration from these regions for the first time.⁷

When the immigrants first set foot in the United States, they thought of themselves as natives of the particular town or village from which they hailed, rather than Italians. Italy itself had been united only since 1861, but more importantly, the government was controlled by northerners, with whom the southerners shared few values or beliefs. Long after unification, Italy remained a country characterized by regional differences. With no sense of an Italian national identity and not yet thinking of themselves as Americans, Italian immigrants to Pennsylvania, coming from diverse regions and backgrounds, had no uniform, shared past. In a sense, they were a people without history, cut off from the villages they had left, speaking dialects so different that a Calabrian could not understand a Sicilian, and living in a new place where they often felt out of place, facing an uncertain future.⁸

ITALIAN SETTLEMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania played a key role in the transformation of America from an agricultural to an urban industrial economy in the late nineteenth century. Foreign immigrants followed the same pattern as other Americans, moving to urban areas where most of the new manufacturing jobs existed, so that by 1910, 48 percent of Americans lived in towns and cities. By 1920, almost half of the nation's urban population was comprised of immigrants and their American offspring.⁹

Pennsylvania industrialized rapidly with the heavy industries - coal, iron and steel, railroads, and cement and glass - leading the way. These industries hired huge numbers of the new immigrants, especially Italians and Poles, who fit the criteria of employment: mostly single men, available in large numbers, and eager to accept unskilled low paying jobs wherever they existed. So many Italians headed to Pennsylvania that by 1890 their population was the second highest in the United States, only surpassed by New York state. It would remain so until 1960 when the numbers of Italian immigrants in Pennsylvania dropped to third, behind New York and New Jersey.¹⁰

Although work brought Italians to Pennsylvania, which areas they found most attractive and what jobs they filled are answered by a more complicated set of demographic, economic, and cultural factors, including the aspirations and expectations of the workers themselves. Seventy-one percent of the Italians who immigrated to Pennsylvania moved to the mid-size and smaller industrial towns scattered throughout the state, rather than to the two largest cities, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. This figure may seem surprising since 90 percent of Italians settled in American cities. Most Italians entered the United States through New York and traveled to destinations in Pennsylvania by rail.¹¹ Italians settled in the soft coal fields of southwestern Pennsylvania, in towns with names like Cokeburg, as well as

in the southeastern anthracite towns. They put down roots in Erie, in Allentown, in Scranton, in the mill towns near Pittsburgh, and in other industrial towns throughout the state.

Because of their size and employment needs, the coal and steel industries hired their own recruiters. These labor agents or *padroni* were a significant factor in channeling Italians to these industries. *Padroni* were important and powerful figures especially during the early years of Italian immigration before family networks took over their functions. They secured the most crucial commodity for the immigrants - a job. They sometimes also paid the fare for passage, and located suitable food or housing. Because *padroni* often extracted a fee from wages, it was difficult for the worker to save money.¹²

Padroni were active among construction and railroad workers. In the 1890s, Italians replaced the Irish as the primary railroad gang, laying and maintaining track. Railroad employment was responsible for the largest influx of Italians to Philadelphia. Italians viewed these manual labor positions as temporary until they could find something better. About 300 of the first Italians who came to Reading, Pennsylvania, during the 1890s were railroad and construction workers recruited by *padroni*.¹³ Maria Prioriello Battisti related the stories that her sister, Teresa Granieri, who immigrated to Reading around the turn of the century, told about the living conditions of these groups of single men who were moved by the railroad from place to place to work: "My sister used to say to me, the people, Italian people, Polish people, they work for the railroad, they sleep in a box car in the railroad. With little stove outside, with little pot there, they cook some beans. [Their life] was hard."

Immigrants composed a large percentage of the work force of other smaller industries in Pennsylvania. Italians dominated the road, public works, railroad construction, and certain food processing industries (canning fruits, truck farm vegetables and fish, and migrant fruit and vegetable harvesters).¹⁴ [4]

The situation differed somewhat from city to city, but in general, the *padrone* system, local political bosses, chain migration and kin s pre-migration skills, and personal preferences, influenced where Italians moved and worked. While new immigrants were forced to work in what they considered undesirable paid labor jobs (e.g., on the railroad, in construction, in the iron foundries), most hoped to move to more prestigious occupations in their eyes-artisan (e.g. baker, plasterer, barber, tailor) or merchant businessman as soon as they could.¹⁵

Not all those who became small businessmen or skilled workers had been trained in Italy, and not every Italian immigrant artisan succeeded in practicing his trade in the United States.¹⁶ Even for those who eventually did have their own business, the road to achieving it was long and success depended on the economic climate. Italians sometimes moved to several different locations and hack again in search of work. One immigrant's situation illustrates several of these points.

From the age of eight, Cologero Giarrano, worked in the sulphur mines in his home village of Serradifalco, province of Agrigento, in Sicily. Born in 1876, the eldest son of six children, Cologero's salary supported the family after his father died unexpectedly. Many people from Serradifalco were emigrating to the United States, and Cologero expressed a desire to follow them. His mother set aside money from his paychecks until she had the equivalent of fifty dollars, enough for the ship's fare. When Cologero arrived at Ellis Island, he was approached by a Bethlehem Steel agent who was recruiting men to work in the Dubois plant. Cologero accepted a job cleaning rails, but was unhappy because there were so few Italians there. Seeking more Italians, he was directed to board a train for West Virginia.

Cologero, however, mistakenly took one going east. He asked a passenger where he could find Italians and was told to get off at the next stop, Pittston township. [5] As he walked the road into town from the train, a farmer offered him a job. After working on the farm for several months, he took a job in the coal mines in Pittston because he said that is the work he knew. Cologero was happy to discover that ten other families from Serradifalco had emigrated to Pittston. Along with others, he founded the Serradifalco mutual aid society. Cologero sent money back to his family every month and made three return trips to Italy, on the last of which he met his future wife, Carmella Micciche'. Carmella, accompanied by her father and a brother, arrived in January "on the bitterest winter day" in Pittston in 1908. Carmella and Cologero were married in April of that same year. By the 1920s, Cologero had improved the family situation considerably. He had purchased a house and about three acres in town on which he maintained a farm with animals, a small orchard, and grape arbors. He opened two grocery stores, managed by his wife and seven daughters (the couple also had three sons), while he continued working in the mines. Cologero died in 1963 from black lung he contracted as a miner.¹⁷

Life for immigrants in the small towns and rural areas of Pennsylvania was often significantly different from the "little Italies" in large cities. In the crowded tenements of the cities, Italian communities could exist more insularly, easily self-sufficient with their own family-owned businesses, fraternal organizations, and ethnic parishes, each with its annual religious festival. Many immigrants lived their entire lives in their immediate neighborhoods surrounded by native villagers. They were drawn together through chain migration, a system in which new immigrants depended on previously settled kin and *paesani* (fellow townspeople) to help them find jobs and housing, and to provide an instantaneous social network. Because they were less likely to have contact with the outside world, women seldom learned even rudimentary English because it was unnecessary for day-to-day existence. With few exceptions, Italians who moved to rural areas were not choosing between city life and an agricultural existence, but were moving to what were essentially "company towns," by virtue of the industries that dominated them. Italians in these places lived in the "company houses" alongside other new immigrant groups as well as Italians from other regions who were employed in the same industries. These smaller communities, perhaps consisting of only one or two streets, were scattered

over the landscape in isolated areas distant from larger Italian settlements. Here Italians were even more visibly different, an awareness acutely felt by both the Italians and the dominant American population. Depending on the size and density of the Italian population in non-urban areas, it was difficult to establish fraternal associations or Italian Catholic parishes, organizations to which new immigrants could look for help. Wherever Italians settled, it was the complex interplay of traditional culture and the structural realities of the places themselves that produced distinct immigrant communities in the United States.¹⁸ [6]

ITALIAN IMMIGRATION TO A MID-SIZE INDUSTRIAL TOWN

Maria Prioriello Battisti and Rosa Bolognese DaDamio emigrated from villages in Abruzzi-Molise to Reading, Pennsylvania, within a few years of one another - Maria in 1921 at age twenty-two and Rosa in 1920 at age ten.¹⁹

Rosa's earliest memories in the village of Palmoli are of life without her father, Giuseppe Bolognese. Her family situation was characteristic for the period. Her father had emigrated to join his brothers in Reading, Pennsylvania, as a laborer on the railroad before Rosa was old enough to remember him. "Well. I'll tell you, he left me when I was nine months old and when he came back I was nine years old. When my father came home I didn't want to have anything to do with him. Then I used to say to my mother, 'Why don't we have a father like the rest of the people?' And my mother, God bless her, she used to try to explain to me that my father was in America making money for us. That's why we had more than other people. But I couldn't understand why I didn't have a father."

Giuseppe returned to Italy in 1919 with the intention of staying. Conditions in Italy as well as the fact that his son was almost draft age prompted his decision to bring the family to Reading.

Maria Prioriello left her home town of Boiano near Campobasso, intending merely to visit two older sisters who had settled in Reading much earlier. She never returned to Italy to live, joining the minority of Italian women who emigrated without spouses or parents. Unlike the economic status of the Bolognese family which depended on monetary support sent from the United States, Maria left a solid middle-class background. Maria's father was a well-respected peasant landowner which enabled him to provide education and amenities for his seven children that were unattainable for most southern Italians. Maria traveled with a sister and her brother-in-law by train to Naples, where they boarded a German merchant ship, the Canopik, which landed in the port of Boston. According to Maria, the Canopik was a freighter, not really a passenger ship, a common situation that people were unaware of beforehand.

When Maria Prioriello and the Bolognese family arrived in Reading, the Italian

population was already sizable with a well-established social infrastructure. Reading provides one example of the complex process of Italian American community building.

In the nineteenth century Reading, located fifty-four miles northwest of Philadelphia in Berks County, was the most Germanic of the large towns in the Pennsylvania German heartland. Attracted by the growth of the iron, steel, and railroad industries, new immigrants, primarily Italians and Poles, began to transform this least ethnically diverse city in the region around 1890.²⁰ By the turn of the century, Italians had also settled in the villages of Birdsboro, Robesonia, and Temple to work in the iron foundries. 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.

Between 1900 and 1930 a shift occurred from a pre dominance of heavy to light industry, primarily garment and textile manufacturers. This is the principal reason that fewer Italians immigrated to Reading compared to the rest of the state. Unlike the heavy industries, the garment and textile companies depended more on semi-skilled or workers, and a work force primarily of women who were paid one-half to two-thirds less on a national scale than men. As heavy industry declined in Reading and the county, it became a less attractive place for new immigrants. The foreign-born population in Reading averaged less than 10 percent for any decade. No other city of comparable or larger size in Pennsylvania had such a small percentage of foreign-born in the total population. The census recorded 54 foreign-born Italians in Reading in 1890 and a high of 2,282 in 1930.²¹ [7]

The system of chain migration functioned in Reading as elsewhere in Pennsylvania's growing Italian communities. Information traveled back and forth between Italy and the United States among relatives about places to live and potential employment. Newly arrived immigrant families tended to live near their places of employment and to move together whenever possible.²² Giuseppe Bolognese, Rosa's father, chose Reading as his destination because his brothers Nunzio and Nick were already railroad workers there and could help him secure a job.

Even in towns the size of Reading, the areas where large numbers of Italians lived, such as the neighborhood south of Penn Street near Holy Rosary Church (Third and Franklin Streets), came to be known as "little Italies." In these neighborhoods, the new waves of immigrants supplanted the ethnic groups who had come before them. Even though these ethnic enclaves were not as large or as regionally divided block by block as those in large cities like New York, they did have some of the same characteristics. They were working class and often not singularly Italian, but ethnically mixed. Although a few blocks in Reading became almost entirely Italian, most blocks had a few families of eastern Europeans, Pennsylvania Germans, or Irish. In these neighborhoods the presence of some non Italians helped the Italians to consolidate their ethnic identity even more than if they had lived in exclusively Italian enclaves. In large cities like Philadelphia, so many people came from one region and even one town that each

group comprised its own colony within the larger Italian area of settlement. This clustering within clustering formed natural networks as kin settled near others who spoke their own dialect.²³

AN EARLY IMMIGRANT FAMILY IN READING

In 1903, Italian immigrant Saverio Spadafora lived with his wife, Maria Pullano, and their children in a rented flat in a former mansion located between the Schuylkill River and the Union Canal.²⁴ This area near the river was the first home for many new Italian immigrants to Reading. Available housing often was dilapidated and located in the least desirable neighborhoods.

Originating from Sersale, Calabria, Saverio had been a petty merchant who sold chestnuts and could read and write Italian, but little else is known of his background. He came to Reading about 1895, working first as a laborer, later moving up to foreman. In 1903 he opened the first Italian bakery in the city, operating the business out of another flat he rented in the mansion. Pasquale Spadafora, age four, accompanied his father in a horse and wagon to make bread deliveries. The leftover bread dough was used to make macaroni for the family's meals. According to Pasquale, his father was forced to sell the business because he had extended too much credit.

Saverio, however, seemed determined to pursue a career as a merchant. In that same year, 1912, he purchased a two-story house on the corner of Second and Franklin Streets, in what was still primarily a Pennsylvania German neighborhood. Since he had just lost the bakery, how he was able to finance this purchase is unclear. Saverio moved his family there, and opened a grocery in the front parlor. He kept the grocery for only a short time, however, subsequently renting it to a relative. After these two ill-fated entrepreneurial endeavors, Saverio worked at Reading Steel Casting and then Glen Gery Brickyard until his death in November 1919, at the age of fifty-nine, leaving his wife and eight children.

Although ultimately unsuccessful in escaping the life of a paid laborer, before his death Saverio Spadafora had achieved certain southern Italian social ideals that would have been nearly impossible had he remained in Italy. Whether Saverio's generosity (his son Pasquale said he was "a sucker for a hand-out"), a lack of good business sense, or a combination of factors, contributed to his failure in business is unclear. Nevertheless, he was an independent businessman for a short time and became a [8] property owner of what would have been a middle-class house by Calabrian standards. He was well-known in the Italian community because of his position as a part-time agent (also known as importer or banker) for the White Star Line shipping line.

Saverio achieved a respected social status in the community through his organizational efforts and his reputation for helping others. He was a founding member of at least one mutual aid society, and was also one of a committee of men who pushed for the

establishment of an Italian Catholic parish in Reading.

After Saverio's death, his wife, who had never worked outside the home, depended on the older children to support the family. Rosina, the eldest daughter, was married and lived in a house directly behind the family home, affording mother and daughter daily interaction. All the children except the youngest left school before graduating from high school to begin working. Daughter Maria worked at A. B. Kirschbaum Company, a garment factory near their home. Son Pasquale quit school at age fourteen to begin working at the Berkshire Knitting Mills at a "school kid" job, pushing stockings through a ring and turning them right side out.

THE PRIVATE CIRCLE OF FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, AND WORK

The Spadafora family typified certain aspects of early Italian settlement and family life in Pennsylvania. Immigrants mitigated adverse factors to adjustment (such as language barriers, illiteracy, unfamiliarity with American customs, and discrimination) by forming internal support networks among kin and neighbors. Family and ethnic ties were connected to the workplace, since new arrivals often secured their first jobs through these internal networks.²⁵ Furthermore, earlier arrivals, such as Saverio Spadafora, could rise in social status in their own communities because they already knew the ropes and thus could provide assistance to immigrants who arrived later. In the first decades of Italian settlement, the growing ethnic community supported an expanding infrastructure of merchants like Spadafora's bakery; other small business men, like barbers, tailors, grocers, tried to engage a clientele beyond the Italian community.

Italians reduced overhead by using one property for business and residence. This Pattern enabled the father to be at home, helping to supervise children if necessary. Sometimes the husband held a job away from home while the wife ran a grocery in the house; thus, she could generate a small income year round, even while tending children. Families adopted this strategy out of necessity, because full-time work for men was often sporadic. Running a grocery, while popular, was not especially lucrative, and many were in business only a few years.²⁶

When working as paid laborers, Italian men, as the newest ethnic group, were the least favored and were often hired for the dirtiest and lowest paid jobs. Delvisio Franchi said that even as late as the 1930s most of the Italian workers at Birdsboro Steel were employed as chippers: "Nobody did that kind of work because chipping was a dirty job, and it killed them. They got dust in their lungs and they got silicosis. But they only put the Italians there."

Italian men also worked in the garment factories and hosiery mills. These jobs required semi-skilled and skilled laborers. The knitting positions at the Berkshire Knitting Mills in Reading were the most desirable because they paid the highest wages, but few Italians were ever moved into those or supervisory positions. Italians knew it was an unspoken

rule that those jobs were reserved for the Germans and the Pennsylvania Germans. Joe Corea did become the head dyer at “the Berkie,” but Maria Prioriello Battisti’s brother-in-law. Joe Lombardo, never rose from his position as a boarder. Nevertheless, he was considered one of the lucky ones because work there was steady and he was not laid off during the Depression.²⁷

The factories in Reading varied in terms of which departments had Italian workers and whether they could move into the few supervisory positions that existed. Charles Carabello commented: “Every department had a supervisor and most of the supervisors—well now, in the pants factory [Penn Pants Factory], supervisors were always Italian. They were smart in doing that. In the hat factory [Alexander Hat Factory], they were not. The hat factory was more [a] Germanic organization. And the hatters themselves were Italians, the ones who worked the hats from the ground up. There [9] were many Italians. But upstairs...where the women put the hats together, they were not...Italian, they were, Polish, German—Pennsylvania Dutch as we call them.”

Before workers were unionized, if they were laid off, they had no recourse but to find work wherever they could at whatever rate of pay was offered them. Joe DelCollo described his father’s experience in Reading around 1910 or 1911: “My Dad was out of work, the Oley Street Mill closed up...And he was just walking around looking for a job and there was a guy having a building [built]...and he said, ‘Hey John.’—they used to call Italians all John ‘Do you want to work?’ He said sure. He worked all day. At the end of the day he said, you come to my store and I’ll pay you...and my Pop went upstairs to get paid. And he kept him waiting around, waiting around, and waiting around, ‘till finally at the end, he says, ‘Hey John, how ‘bout a nice hat?’ My Pop said, ‘I don’t need a hat, I need money for the kids.’ He didn’t get a nickel, he got a hat for his wages.”

To increase their chances of survival, members of the immigrant generation relied on one another for assistance and lived in neighborhoods with other Italians, near kin whenever possible. They depended on help, based on the southern Italian ideal of social reciprocity, from an informal network of people to secure jobs, find housing, and provide emotional sustenance. Most important in this network were the nuclear family and members of the extended family. Familial interdependence was regarded as the key for economic survival by the immigrant generation.

Next in importance in the support network were *paesani* and neighbors. People I interviewed emphasized a way of life that centered around families and neighbors who helped each other. Joe DelCollo said: “We had family life and we had friendly life-neighbors.” Rosa Bolognesc DaDamio put it this way: “There was a lot of love in the family in those days. A lot of love.”

WOMEN’S AND CHILDREN’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAMILY ECONOMY

Many Italian women in Pennsylvania, both before marriage and for part of their

lives afterward, worked out of necessity in some capacity other than homemaking. According to Maria Prioriello Battisti, born in Italy in 1899, the *ideal* life for an Italian woman was that the wife should remain at home as a full-time homemaker. Short of this possibility, the next preference was to have a business in one's home, so that the wife could help out if needed, but would primarily care for the house and children. With men's employment often sporadic or seasonal, women and even children's contributions to the family economy were required.²⁸

Maria herself did not realize the Italian ideal. After emigrating to Reading in 1921, she supported herself and sent money to her family in Italy whose economic situation had deteriorated, by working at different garment factories and hosiery mills. After her marriage and the birth of her children, she worked intermittently and whenever work was available.

Maria Maccione Carabello, another immigrant to Reading, is a good example of how women often combined ways to generate income and extend the family budget. Charles Carabello described his mother's life: "In the early days, my mother was a very busy woman. It [was] the only way they could make expenses meet and whenever a relative came to America from Italy, they would house him for maybe a dollar a month. We had a home which would house maybe one, two, three, four, maybe four or five people. And my mother would not only feed them but wash their clothing and everything else. My mother, she worked...So I'm not very much in accord with the idea that mothers [are] out working and the children are not raised right and that's why they have become impossible I don't agree. My mother worked all day...she was only at home at night. Left in the morning early sometime before we even got up. My father, of course he did work in the home because he was a barber hut nevertheless we got out and went out to do our own things such as carrying newspapers for the *Reading Eagle*, going to the market [to] carry baskets and all that...My mother worked in many factories, she worked in the old Penn Pants factory which I mentioned before is the (R.N. Palmer) candy company in West Reading. I remember going with my little wagon during the First World War picking up bundles of soldiers' pants to bring home for her [to] sew. She would do sewing on certain parts of it. The next day I would take them back and then pick up a new bundle so she could do them at home. Goodness knows what she got a day, if she made a dollar a day. I'd be surprised...I can't describe everything that she did but goodness knows, she worked and she worked very hard."²⁹ On her way home after work, Maria often stopped at Teresa and Sam (Salvatore) Granieri's grocery store on Penn Street. Teresa gave her any blemished unsalable fruit for her family's table. [10]

Italian women's contributions to the family economy have been underestimated because they have been difficult to assess in monetary terms. Even when women engaged in paid labor, the work was often part-time, seasonal, short-term, paid by the piece, or subject to lay-offs during slow periods. Work performed in the home, especially maintaining a household, but also keeping boarders or assisting with a family business, often has been discounted because it was not wage labor. Increasingly, however, scholars

have demonstrated that women's and even children's work was instrumental not only in keeping a family housed and clothed, but also in improving its economic status.³⁰

Three factors contributed to determine where Italian women worked: available work, level of skill, and cultural preferences. The concentration of garment factories in Reading that required semi-skilled laborers and skilled "hand sewers" provided ready employment for Italian women. Since most Italian women had learned hand sewing and needlework as young girls, they already possessed the skills that clothing manufacturers sought.

Certain kinds of jobs or workplaces were considered indecent for Italian women. Adalgisa (Naldi) Pichini Franchi, a second generation Italian American from Reading, said that her immigrant mother would not allow her to work at the local "5 and 10" because "it wasn't the right kind of place, nice girls didn't work there," whereas working at a factory was permissible. This criterion of selectivity for the appropriateness of work for women suggests a transmission of Old World values concerning the protection of women's honor. Protecting unmarried daughters was difficult in an unsupervised atmosphere like a retail shop, where the potential for meeting strangers was greater. The factory milieu with its regimented workday, the likelihood of gender segregation of employees, and the probability that Italian friends worked there as well, calmed parents' fears.

Children, including girls, were seen as potential contributors to the family income and often quit school early to begin working. In 1924, Rosa Bolognese DaDamio went to work at Luden's Candy Factory at age fourteen until her marriage in 1927. As late as the 1940s, the pattern had not changed significantly for girls, although they more frequently graduated from high school and often kept at least some of their earnings. While they were still attending school, children usually took on part-time jobs. Since boys were permitted more freedom than girls at a younger age, they could find ways to make money earlier by delivering newspapers or transporting groceries for people from the farmers' markets in toy wagons. Generally, Italian children were expected to turn over wages to parents. Charles Carabello's first job was during the mid-1920s at the Penn Pants Factory: "Well, my first job was a pants factory where they made nothing but pants practically for the American soldier...And I worked on the second floor there, pressing certain bits of trousers, I was fourteen but I lied. I told them I was sixteen and I know they didn't believe me, but I got twenty-five cents an hour, twelve dollars a week. That was big money for my family...Whenever we got our salary we took the whole darn thing home, period. And if we needed anything we got it but we never spent a cent of our salary."

LEISURE TIME AND FAMILY LIFE

The limited leisure time that existed for working-class Italians also centered around family and to some extent neighbors and *paesani*. Weekday evenings after work included dinner shared as a family together and perhaps a visit with extended family or a few minutes sitting on the front porch or stoop and talking with neighbors. Men

might walk to their nearby social club to socialize with male friends who congregated there to play cards or *bocce*. In the summer, families often sat in the backyard and worked in the garden.

Although some women cooked in a traditional Italian style on a daily basis, others, especially second generation women, incorporated "American" dishes. In Reading, a predominantly Pennsylvania German region, these were often what Italians call "Dutch" recipes that they learned from neighbors. For instance, Joe Borelli's family was the only Italian family in Hamburg, a farming community. He remembers that his immigrant mother, Angelina, wanted to fit in with Pennsylvania German neighbors. Joe recalled: "She went next door to the neighbor's and said, look, I got to learn, [11] what is this sauerkraut, what is this? And then the lady next door made it, showed her everything. My God, we had sauerkraut and pork and I didn't like it.'

Sunday was the only full day of leisure. Many Italian families attended church together in the morning, returning home for the Sunday meal. It was a symbolic ritual, more important than church attendance, that idealized the centrality, unity, and authority of the family through the act of sharing the Italian foods prepared.³¹ Women usually spent the entire morning on Sundays preparing food, serving dinner about noon. Even women who Americanized their cooking during the week reserved Sundays (and holidays) for Italian fare. Pasta with some kind of tomato and meat sauce was a central dish. For most Italians, Sundays were limited to extended family gatherings and visits with *compari* (godparents). *Compari* were treated like kin and visited each other regularly.

Men spent more time away from their homes than women. They visited with friends at the Italian clubs, after work on weekdays and on Sunday afternoons. Many Italian men kept social memberships at several clubs, while they may have paid beneficial dues to only one. Local shops were also places for men to gather.

Men and women's social spheres tended to be separate. In their spare time, Italian women stayed close to home, supervising children and visiting family and Italian neighbors. Charles Carabello said of his mother: "She lived in her own little sector of people. She had three or four women friends, they sat together every day practically. Talked...Then they went home."

Conversation centered around people's personal lives, news from Italy, and political and social events. Umberto (Bert) Tucci described the news that traveled back and forth from Italian hometowns to Reading: "Another thing that was the center of the social activity was...there was a great deal of communication by letter from here to Italy. And when somebody received a letter, it was just like a newspaper. Everybody wanted to know what was going on over there and this and that. The unfortunate thing that I never liked was, of course, even the gossip got into those letters."

The relationship between husbands and wives tended to be a formal respectful one.

They showed little affection in public or even within the privacy of the home. Charles Carabello remembers his parents did most of their talking after the children were in bed. "I would hear them, maybe for an hour when they would go to bed probably and talk and talk and talk."

COURTING, MARRIAGE, AND GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Especially in the first few decades after immigration, as girls reached their teenage years, parents continued to supervise them closely. They were usually allowed to walk downtown together as a group. Some immigrant parents were more lenient as they became more Americanized themselves. Even so, the changes in behavior worried immigrant parents, who still tried to exert control.

The second generation sometimes felt inner conflict between their private familial identity of being "Italian" and the public identity cultivated within their peer group of being "American." Some parents, aware of the difficulties of their children, attempted to help them with the identity issue, but mixed messages from other family members and the outside world contributed to the problem.

Marriage customs changed from the immigrant generation to the first of the second generation to reach marriageable age. Even though the majority of the latter married other Italians, they chose their own spouses, circumventing any attempts by elders to arrange a marriage. The immigrants, many of whom had been unhappy with their own arranged marriages, relinquished control of this aspect of their children's lives.

Courting, however, was still supervised until the couple married. If couples went out, they were accompanied by a chaperon, often an older brother of the girl. By the 1940s, inter-ethnic marriages were occurring with increasing frequency, a potential source of family conflict. Most immigrants, realizing their children lived in a different world from their own past, eventually accepted this change and the new spouse after a period of adjustment.

The second generation, having grown up in America, had no context for understanding the Italian customs of watchful surveillance to ensure chastity in women and the sexual taboos imposed by their parents. Speaking to an unmarried woman was a transgression unthinkable in Italy, a situation that would have compromised the girl's honor and brought shame to the family. Immigrant parents were distressed by the mores in American culture that they little understood, and saw them as a constant threat to the preservation of a daughter's honor. The second generation were increasingly influenced by peer group associations and popular culture rather than by the social ideals of the family. This caused misunderstandings and sometimes conflict between the generations.³²

For the most part, however, especially for the oldest members of the second generation, family wishes took priority. Charles Carabello, who was a teenager in the 1920s, commented: "We never conflicted with our parents. In other words, we were obedient, and we felt that the knew what they were doing and that we owed them the respect."

After marriage, obligations to family continued. Parents often expected all the children and their families to gather at the parents' home every Sunday, where the mother prepared an Italian meal for everyone. If both sides of the family were Italian, juggling visits without offending anyone was a challenge.

THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE

When immigrants arrived in Pennsylvania they spoke distinctive regional dialects.³³ Those who had attended school in Italy also knew standard Italian. These immigrants, speaking different dialects, were thrust together at the same time that they entered an English speaking culture. Some significant features of language changed nationally among Italian immigrants, in part because newer forms were used by the Italian American press. Regional dialects retained many archaic forms because they were not exposed to the modernizing influences of standard Italian, and words and accents from one dialect were incorporated into another. Also, English words were adopted and Italianized. A few familiar examples: business became *bisinisse*, a job became *jobba*, and pound became *pondo*. Semantic changes also occurred for words that were phonetically similar in the two languages. For instance, *fattoria*, meaning "farm" in Italian, now means "factory" in Italian American. Italian Americans used *baccausa*, probably adopted and changed from the English word "backhouse," to indicate the outhouse. Some merging of dialects also occurred as a result of interaction among immigrants who spoke different dialects.³⁴ For instance, Maria Prioriello Battisti's youngest daughter, Roma, became friendly with the Sicilian family who lived across the street in Reading. Roma soon spoke a combination of the Molisan dialect spoken at her home and the Sicilian dialect she learned from the neighbors. [12]

Immigrants struggled to learn English. Some people took formal English classes offered by various organizations; others learned on their own through trial and error. Men often spoke English better because they interacted more in the public realm with non-Italians. Some learned or even taught themselves to read and write in English. Charles Carabello said, "My mother never learned to speak any English, more than thirty or forty English words. My father had to because he was a barber." In certain parts of Pennsylvania, immigrants also were exposed to the Pennsylvania German dialect. Joe Borelli recalled that his father, Carlo Borelli, a shoemaker in Hamburg, even learned some Pennsylvania German in order to converse with his rural customers. Many Italians did not become more fluent in English because they were ashamed of their inability to speak correctly.

Children learned to speak or at least to understand the dialect because it was spoken in the home. Older children generally spoke the dialect more fluently than younger ones and frequently did not speak any English until they went to school. If parents learned

more English, both languages might be used in the home. When standard Italian was taught in a parish school, it was not the language spoken at home. The dialect used as conversational speech usually ended when the immigrants died or learned English.

THE YEARLY CALENDAR: RITUAL AND FESTIVE LIFE

In southern Italy, activities centered around the seasonal agricultural cycle and the religious calendar. Immigrants continued in the United States certain seasonal activities and celebrations that had been part of their lives in their home regions. Without the context of their home villages, however, traditions lost their original meaning. As immigrants adjusted to American society they continued certain customs, sometimes instilled them with new meaning, dropped some observances, and adopted some from American culture such as Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July.

In so doing, the immigrant generation adopted those American and local practices that made sense in their own worldview. One Berks County resident indicated that her mother believed in “powwowing,” a Pennsylvania German magico-religious practice of curing,³⁵ similar to Italian folk beliefs about good, evil, and disease. When no Italian practitioner was available, an American “powwow doctor” could perform the same functions.

Immigrants continued activities that had been integral to their lives in Italy—gardening and winemaking. Converting backyards and unused public land into garden space was a common strategy for economic survival. In Temple and Birdsboro, families generally had bigger yards than in downtown Reading, with space to raise animals as well as vegetables for food. Similar to Italian Americans in other rural settings in Pennsylvania, Connie Napoletano Brancadoro said that Italians in Birdsboro raised their own pigs, butchering them in autumn. They made sausage and hung it on wooden poles to dry.

The emphasis placed on gardening went beyond economics, however, underscoring both the value Italians placed on having fresh cooking ingredients on hand and the pride they took in producing them themselves. Also, the transformation of gardening space into the familiar grids and terraces used in Italy gave the immigrants a feeling of security and connectedness with remembered cultural landscapes.³⁶

Most Italians converted their entire backyards into garden space except for a central path. If they had access to unused land, they took advantage of that too. Sometimes they built elaborate sheds, like those still commonly seen in Italy, in which they might store work clothes and gardening implements. Italians commonly grew standard vegetables and herbs in the southern Italian diet such as tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, beans, varieties of lettuce, swiss chard, endive, parsley, basil, chamomile, and rosemary. If space existed, they might plant one or more fruit trees. Grape arbors were ubiquitous in Italian yards. The grape harvest was not large enough for the annual production of

a family's wine; instead, these small arbors served as nostalgic transformations of space, reminders of the Italian landscape.

Women might work in the backyard garden, but mainly took responsibility for processing and canning fruits and vegetables once they were harvested. Besides canning, Italian women also preserved vegetables, such as tomatoes and hot peppers, by drying and stored others in vinegar or salt brine in crocks. Joe Iezzi, whose artisan family emigrated to Reading from San Valentino near Chieti in the Abruzzi, remembered that his mother, Elizabeth, put eggplant, celery, and fennel in the same crock with tomatoes and peppers. Growing food that could be preserved to last through the [13] winter was the highest priority. Listing what his father, Giovanni, grew in the garden, Charles Carabello brought this point home: Once in a while, just for kicks, he might grow a watermelon or two, but mostly stuff he could use for canning to make his spaghetti sauce."

Although chores were usually divided according to gender, with men tending the Garden and women primarily responsible for food preservation, husbands and wives cooperated too and, when circumstances demanded, women did the bulk of the work. Also, cooking was not solely a women's province; some men cooked for their families.

Immigrants found solace and revived memories in the acts of planting, growing, smelling, and eating familiar foods. In the summer of 1991, one second generation Italian in Reading proudly showed me his Italian parsley. He emphasized that this was the same parsley that his father had brought from Italy in 1918, because his father and now he had saved the seeds from the plants every year since then. For him, that parsley triggered memories of his father and his father's homeland.

Of all the plants that Italians grew in the United States, two perhaps became the most symbolic of Italy for them— figs and grapes. Grapes were made into wine, a staple in southern Italy where the water supply was often unsafe to drink. Even children were given diluted wine to drink. Rosa Bolognese DaDamio recalled: "My mother used to sell most of [the wine]. But we had wine at the table at every meal. Now for us, my Mom used to make [what] she called *l'aquad'* [dialect]. It was watered down. But we drank since we were three, four years old, we drank wine. She gave us water too. But she didn't want to give us the strong wine because it was too strong for us and she used to give us this watered-down wine. They believed that wine would make you strong so she wanted to make us strong [laughs]."

The symbolic nature of wine for Italians is illustrated in proverbs such as "Un giorno senza vino e come un giorno senza sole," and "Acqua fa male, il vino fa canta [sic]."³⁷ Bert Tucci told a story illustrating how Italians revered wine as the very essence of life: "My Dad always told me the story of when I was born... 'When you were born.' he says, 'I put my finger in a glass of wine and I [gave] it to you, and that was the first piece of nourishment that you ever had.' I'll never forget that."

For winemaking itself, Berks County Italians purchased boxes of grapes that were brought in from Philadelphia. Each box cost about twenty-five cents and many Italians bought two or three hundred boxes. Giovanni Carabello, like others, purchased a combination of white, blue, and red grapes. Charles Carabello recalled his father's winemaking: "I can still remember the early days of his wine making. He had built a vat in his basement and we would put hip-hoots on and go and crush the grapes with our feet...All of us, my father and the boys [would] go and smash, smash, smash! And then he'd have a little...open outlet and the juice would come out, you see, and he would put it in barrels and most [of it] came out fine. Once in a while it soured. [He] had his own barrels. You could smell that all over South Second Street and South Third Street. You could tell who was making wine as you went down those neighborhoods and boy, it smelled like a bar room."

Joe Iezzi recalled that especially during the lean years of the Depression, his father, [14] Achille, made dandelion, elderberry, and strawberry wine because these grew wild and therefore were free for the picking. Later, wine presses became the common apparatus used for processing grapes.

Many Italians planted fig trees if they had room. No matter in what climate they settled, immigrants attempted to grow figs, pampering and covering them each fall so that they would survive harsh winters. Charles Carabello related this anecdote which evokes the almost mythical essence of figs for Italian Americans: "Mr. Penta, [his sons] tell me he had a fig tree back [of] his house and he eventually [built] a hothouse around it. And goodness knows how long it lasted. Just getting back a little...bit of old Italy, you know."

Festival times in Italy were events in the liturgical calendar (saints' feast days, Christmas, and Easter) or rites of passage marked by the Catholic sacraments (birth, coming of age, marriage, and death) that centered around the family. In Pennsylvania, these events continued to be important, but with distinct changes. They were still primarily family affairs, but the relative wealth of the immigrants compared to what their economic status had been in Italy allowed them to celebrate much more elaborately, sometimes emulating styles customary to the landowning class in Italy for whom they had worked.³⁸

Music, dance, storytelling, drama, and games were integral to Italian social life and provided the immigrant generation with a vital link to their past. With few exceptions, these play and performance genres, so dependent on the regional context from which they emanated, often did not survive intact past the first generation. Sometimes a particular regional form was adopted. For instance, the tunes that were popular Neapolitan songs of the early twentieth century became generalized as Italian music and became part of a pan-Italian identity in the United States. More complicated changes also occurred as when old forms were given new uses and meanings; or sometimes elements from different cultures were combined.³⁹

For instance, almost every village in Italy had a predominantly brass or woodwind band that paraded in religious festivals and traveled to other towns to play. Italian immigrants organized town bands in Pennsylvania that played in parades, *feste*, funerals, and other occasions. During the World War II era, many of the ethnic town bands disappeared. Six Italian bands still perform (out of 35 that once existed) in Beaver and Lawrence Counties of Western Pennsylvania. They might incorporate instruments that were never part of bands in Italy and play a repertoire that includes music widely divergent from the traditional ancestral marches and folk tunes.⁴⁰

Many Italians played musical instruments, so neighbors and friends also often formed small string hands. Families regularly hired these informally organized groups for a small fee to play at social events, especially baptisms, weddings, and serenades for a fiancée. Some serenading still occurs in South Philadelphia. Events marking one's passage through the life cycle (baptisms, First Holy Communion, weddings, or funerals) were both religious and secular celebrations. These rituals changed from their Italian origins to their Italian American counterparts over the span of half a century. For instance, weddings in Italy were celebrated with family, with the most important component a dowry large enough to ensure that daughters would find a suitable spouse. In the United States, the emphasis shifted from a proper dowry to staging a large impressive wedding. Families spent large sums of money on celebrations, especially weddings and funerals, which became occasions for competitive display. The more impressive the celebration staged, the higher the admiration bestowed on the family by the rest of the community. If the celebration was not up to the accepted standard, criticism could be directed at the family for their social and moral error and gossiped about for years to come.⁴¹

In all areas of life, both private and public, from the everyday to the ritual and festive, to the organizational networks they formed or joined, the immigrants confronted choices in how they would live in their newly adopted country. Although the immigrants intended to maintain the cultural and social ideals of the Old World, and they drew upon these ideals to provide answers in new situations, in practice they could not always follow them.⁴² The dilemma for immigrants was finding a comfortable zone of adjustment in their new life in the United States. They faced choosing among new cultural values and the Italian values they did not wish to lose.

Emigration started a process of social and cultural change that began with the immigrant generation and resulted in a uniquely Italian American one. Thus, although Italian values continued to be important, new economic opportunities in the United States contributed to creating uniquely Italian American families and communities.⁴³ The immigrants changed their ways of doing things in the private arenas of life—belief systems, family and social interaction, ways of celebrating, use of space, cuisine—in the course of adjusting to the challenges of the American

[15]

world and workplace they had entered. Change was neither steady nor predictable, and families varied in the ways they responded to American society. Individual choice also played a role in how people changed, but options were constrained by factors of gender, class, and age. The immigrants could conveniently resort to the social behavior and ideals of the world they left when it suited their needs, or they could merely say they were doing so while actually doing something else. At other times, they could invoke American cultural values or combine them with Italian ones to reimagine a way of life that better suited their new environment. The immigrants themselves may not have been in great conflict over these choices because they were adults constructing a new world as they went along. Their children, however, sometimes had a more difficult time adjusting. They often felt caught between the good Italians their parents wanted them to be and the Americans they wanted to become.

ITALIAN NETWORKS AND THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

Ethnic communities never fit the romantic portrayals of the “little Italies,” often written about so sentimentally. Immigrants could not have produced carbon copies of their previous lives even if they had wanted to. The migratory process was extremely disruptive to people’s lives. New settlement patterns and economic roles in America did not allow the formation of a mirror image of household arrangements and social structures as they had existed in Italy. All immigrants changed when they came to the United States, reconstructing their identity based on the new circumstances and people they encountered. Social networks were constantly shifting over time as people moved to another location, joined different social organizations, aged, and shifted alliances. The organizational aspects of community—ethnic businesses, social organizations, and churches—also shifted. Businesses closed and new ones opened; social and fraternal organizations were formed and reformed. The internal reorganization of institutions and communities was primarily in response to the rapid changes in the American economy that redistributed occupational opportunities and job availability.⁴⁴

Individuals I interviewed described “community” based on their own social network of those with whom they regularly interacted, usually people of their own social class. “Community” was tied in a material sense to the spaces occupied by homes, workplaces, organizations, churches, and the businesses where Italians met people, socialized—in sum, where they lived their lives. When people talked about their past, memories were associated with specific places. When thought of in this way, the concept of community becomes a dynamic ongoing construction formed by the activities that bound people together and grounded in the spaces in which these activities were conducted.⁴⁵

ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS

By the turn of the century, the expanding Italian populations had developed new Economic, social, and religious requirements. Since the institutions of the dominant society did not always fit the immigrants’ needs, nor were they always welcoming,

Italians formed their own. The mutual aid societies were established by Italians to help one another; others, like small businesses, not only served Italians but reached out to a wider clientele.

The social and economic sub-culture was not an impermeable one in which Italians only interacted with Italians. In fact, some Italians purposely nurtured ties with non-Italians. Those who came from the middle class in Italy, or who were better educated or more Americanized than the majority of working-class Italians, often acted as middlemen or “ethnic brokers” between Italians and the dominant society.⁴⁶ Those who emerged as leaders in the ethnic community became spokespersons for the rest who had no public voice.

The social and economic map of the Italian “communities” changed in response to the local, regional, and national context during the first fifty years of Italian settlement. The changes were not always smooth, since change often involved a redistribution of power, which induced tension and conflict.

The Catholic Church was the most powerful and crucial institution with which the immigrant came into contact in terms of their everyday lives. Most Italian immigrants were Roman Catholic, but American Church officials criticized their demonstrative religiosity as virtual paganism. Their spirituality was a belief system fusing official doctrine with other supernatural beliefs and magical ritual. The magical beliefs, behaviors, and sacred objects used by Italians provided a method for negotiating life crises. Folk religion explained and gave meaning to an unpredictable world. Their devotion was firmly rooted in their villages and region of origin, in the saints and holy places connected to these sites.⁴⁷

Although Italian Protestant congregations existed in both Italy and the United States, Protestant missionary work was relatively unsuccessful in converting large numbers of Italians. Their relationship to folk religion and their distrust of the institutional church explains why more Italians were not attracted to Protestantism.⁴⁸

When the eastern and southern European Catholic immigrants arrived in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, they encountered an intolerant Irish Catholic hierarchy that did not understand them or their needs. The Church instituted nationality parishes, hoping to avert a resurgence of anti-Catholic sentiment in the United States, and as a gesture of accommodation to the new immigrants, who neither felt comfortable with the rigid authoritarianism of Irish Catholicism nor welcome in parishes where English speakers predominated.⁴⁹ St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, in South Philadelphia, was the first Italian national parish in the United States, established in 1853 by Bishop John Neumann.⁵⁰ [16]

In general, Italians were suspicious of the institutional Church, as they were of all institutions. Although some better-educated Italians were anti-clerical on political grounds, most were so from experience. In Italy, the Church allied itself with the landed aristocracy and remained unresponsive to the plight of the peasants. Many

peasants, particularly the men, did not attend church regularly, although everyone attended baptisms, weddings, funerals, and the village saints' festivals. Italians thought of themselves as Catholics; at the same time, they did not view regular church attendance as a requirement for being a good and faithful person.⁵¹

The immigrants' experience in the United States did not change their attitudes. Underlying the dissatisfaction with particular priests in America was anger with an American Church insensitive to their culture and religious worldview. In spite of their resentment toward the American clergy, most Italians did not abandon the Catholic Church entirely, because their religious beliefs were integral to their family-centered lives.⁵²

The immigrants continued their devotion to the same saints in the United States by recreating the religious *feste* of their villages. The Irish found the demonstrative public behavior exhibited during the religious *feste*, the biggest celebration of the year for the immigrants, particularly problematic. The American Church decided to tolerate *feste* if they succeeded in drawing the Italians into church and if they could be controlled by bringing them under the jurisdiction of the clergy.⁵³ Often a tug-of-war ensued between the lay committees who organized the *feste* and the Catholic clergy who wanted ultimate control. In Italian parishes throughout the United States, including Pennsylvania, the annual *festa* became the galvanizing force that drew people and linked them emotionally with their parish even when they were at odds with the clergy. A traditional *festa* tradition was more likely to be transferred from Italy if large numbers of people from the same village emigrated to the same town in Pennsylvania. For instance, the small town of Roseto, in Northampton County, was founded by villagers from Roseto Valfortore, in Apulia. They still celebrate the *Festa del Carmine*, in honor of their patron saint in Italy, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, although older residents complain that the celebration is not the communal one it once was.⁵⁴ [17]

The immigrants also maintained personal devotions to their favorite saints to whom specific kinds of veneration were promised for favors granted in times of crises. Immigrants created iconographic displays or "home altars" consisting of an arrangement of the Holy Family with other saints who were thought to be in consanguineous (blood) relationship with the Holy Family or with one another, thus personalizing the supernatural figures. Although less commonly found today, these sacred spaces in the home as well as the display of religious pictures on interior walls were popular forms of lay devotion. They are private attestations to the power of familial relationship, the central importance of the mother, and ultimately the centrality of the family to Italian life.⁵⁵

Magic, witchcraft, fortunetelling, and divining were other common features of Italian folk belief. A belief in the *malocchio* or (evil eye) was the most prevalent. The evil eye cast a magical spell inflicting physical or other kinds of harm on a victim through the power of envy and could be given willingly or unwittingly.

Vulnerable stages in life, such as pregnancy, infancy, childhood, and death, made people particularly susceptible to the evil eye. One could be exposed to the evil eye at any time without knowing it, so people take steps to protect themselves from it by repeating certain phrases, using certain signs, and both displaying in their homes and wearing protective naturalistic amulets, one of the best known being a beast's horns.⁵⁶

In any Italian community, somebody knew the "oil and water" test to determine if the evil eye had been given, and knew the charms and prayers to remove it. Charles Carabello remembered that neighbors came to his mother, Maria, who also practiced midwifery, to remove the *malocchio*: "I remember we all wore them [horns] as kids. That was supposed to keep the evil from you. The ones they wore were made of coral or gold." Many second and third generation Italians I interviewed claimed they did not believe in the evil eye, but said it also did not hurt to take precautions.

One could easily make generalities about southern Italian folk beliefs, but social and economic factors influenced how much importance individuals ascribed to magico-religious beliefs. People who had more formal schooling, and therefore had been influenced by a scientific perspective, were less likely to hold such beliefs.

From the 1920s on, the Church's efforts to Americanize Italian Catholics began to have some effect, especially with the second generation. By the 1940s, external factors worked in the Church's favor; the second generation's search for an American identity coincided with the cohesive effects of World War II in creating a real sense of being an American. The result was a feeling among Italians that they had more commonalities than differences with other American Catholics.⁵⁷ Even so, national estimates found that, after fifty years of missionary work by both Catholics and Protestants, the majority of Italian immigrants were only nominally tied to the Catholic Church or had no church with which they were affiliated.⁵⁸

While the churches tried to mold the Italians, secular institutions also took a keen interest in the immigrants' welfare. Beginning around the turn of the twentieth century, and rising to a crescendo in the post-World War I period, private and public agencies proliferated to aid and Americanize new immigrants. Some of these groups, especially patriotic societies like the Daughters of the American Revolution, operated out of fear of the immigrants, establishing agendas of forced assimilation. Other groups, like the International Institute, a branch organization of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), adopted a gentler program of acculturation based on tolerance.⁵⁹ Before World War I, Americanization had focused primarily on indoctrinating immigrants to become law-abiding citizens. After the War, the by-word for Americanization was "loyalty," which was really a demand for cultural conformity. This extended to every detail of life, including promoting certain vegetables as "American" and labeling others "foreign"! Immigrants, including the Italians, resented the organized efforts at Americanization and their responses

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ranged from indifference to hostility.⁶⁰

In general, Italians avoided programs that promised handouts. They were unfamiliar with and distrustful of institutionalized help since it had been uncommon in Italy. The immediate family, relatives, and the mutual aid societies were expected to help the needy.⁶¹

Similar to the pattern of Italian communities in other sections of the country, mutual aid and fraternal societies were the first and most well-organized Italian institutions in Pennsylvania. Mutual aid societies, founded on the concept of communal assistance, were of paramount importance in ethnic communities during an era when neither unions nor employers offered any safety net of benefits. Small monthly dues paid by members insured that societies could make modest payments to families if a spouse became ill, was injured, or died (life insurance policies were usually under \$1,000).⁶² Perhaps even more important than providing economic assistance, the societies helped new immigrants adjust to America and also served as centers of social life. Founders of these societies often included *prominenti*, middle class merchants, artisans, or professionals. Serving as an officer in a society became a way to achieve or heighten status in the Italian community.⁶³

Societies were often short-lived because of an inadequate number of members and poor management of funds.⁶⁴ In order to achieve more stability, small local mutual aid societies often merged with the larger and expanding national fraternal orders. In Reading, for example, the once independent San Donato Society di Auletta joined the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America, becoming a lodge of the national association.

As local and national fraternal organizations tried to build membership, destructive competition among leaders was not uncommon. Strife within the leadership ranks of the Order Sons of Italy in Pennsylvania resulted in a break by some members to found the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America (ISDA) in Pittsburgh in 1930. This fraternal association quickly gained popularity, expanding its membership to eastern Pennsylvania. By 1934 Reading had eleven ISDA lodges, including several women's lodges.⁶⁵

The social and civic functions of the mutual aid and fraternal societies, such as participation in parades and American holiday commemorations, became the most enduring aspects of these organizations. Furthermore, the societies were instrumental in developing a sense of national pride in Italy, something the immigrants had never felt in their homeland. After World War I and Mussolini's subsequent rise to power, Italian national pride rose to new heights. Fund raising events to send money to support the Red Cross or victims of earthquakes in Italy were common. While mutual aid and fraternal organizations helped define a separate ethnic consciousness, an Italian American identity, they simultaneously facilitated Americanization by sponsoring such activities as citizenship classes.

Since Italians were often not welcome as members in social organizations of the majority population, their own ethnic organizations filled the gap. From the earliest years, the clubs sponsored at least one annual event for families. The local lodge meetings and the annual conventions of the national fraternal orders became social events in themselves. Most of all, the local club was a central meeting place for men. In the sanctioned atmosphere of the club, men drank together and played card games such as *briscola* or *tresette* or other Italian games like *bocce* and *morra*. Many of the fraternal societies also sponsored sports teams and this aspect of the clubs was a key to drawing in the second generation as members.

The fraternal societies reached their height of membership and power during the 1930s and 1940s, in part because the sources of income were expanded far beyond membership dues. They added social activities such as dinner dances, incorporated bars and dance bands, and offered social memberships to anyone who paid the nominal fee. The concept of the women's auxiliary came into its own in the national fraternal orders. Although women's auxiliaries had existed in the mutual aid societies, they had never before occupied such a visible and active role.

In addition to the fraternal organizations and social clubs, by the mid-1920s, Italians formed political clubs. Rather than entirely a local initiative, these associations were part of the political parties efforts to organize Italians nationwide.⁶⁶ Local political candidates and officeholders had long recognized the potential of the Italian vote and had courted it by speaking at and attending Italian functions whenever expedient for them.

THE DECADES BETWEEN THE WARS AND WORLD WAR II

[19]

The social climate in the Italian communities in the decades prior to World War II was a key element in the emergence and development of an Italian American ethnic identity. 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 factors including post-World War I anti-immigrant sentiment with forced Americanization as its theme, the economic depression, involvement in labor organization, New Deal politics, the conflict between Fascist and anti-Fascist factions, and finally World War II. Italians, feeling isolated and discriminated against in the United States, turned their sights outward to their Italian homeland and the new Fascist Italy. Mussolini's propaganda campaign capitalized on this vulnerability, promoting the idea of an international colony of united Italians who could all take pride in and work for a new Italy. From 1922 to 1945, social and political conditions in the United States did not allow Italian Americans to ignore the issue of their Italian origins.⁶⁷ Italian American organizations used news papers as well as new and expanding media such as radio, photographs, and film to sell the concept of a local, national, and international Italian ethnic identity.

During these years, the maturing second generation who had grown up in the United States, were 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 ethnic pride.⁶⁸

From the 1920s, until the United States entered World War II, Mussolini was a popular figure among Italians in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States. Italians throughout the United States believed Mussolini was transforming Italy into a great nation. Fascism painted a picture of a vital, strong Italian “nation,” not the factionalized Italy the immigrants had left behind. Mussolini’s March on Rome in 1922 was convenient timing, allowing Fascism to latch onto the surge in nationalistic sentiment that Italian Americans felt during World War I. For Italian Americans, who often felt discriminated against and displaced in the United States, embracing this imagined Italian homeland was appealing.⁶⁹

Whether individuals truly adopted the Fascist ideology or merely sympathized with its goals, Fascist propaganda became the instrument that united the Italian diaspora in spirit and at times in action with the Italian homeland. Fascism brought Italian Americans together under a banner of pan-Italian ethnic unity. If Italian Americans were vocal in their support for Mussolini, they were only in step with American public and United States’ governmental sentiments.⁷⁰

Before the Axis attack on France in June 1940, many Italian Americans were unequivocal in their support for Mussolini. From that point on, culminating with the U. S. declaration of war in December 1941, Italian Americans, spearheaded by their ethnic leaders and the press, rejected Mussolini and declared loyalty to the United States and democracy.⁷¹ Italians never wavered in uniting with other Americans in the war effort. Perhaps because of their virtual immediate rejection of Mussolini at the crucial moment, suspicion of Italian Americans was not widespread and instead Americans expressed sympathy for the plight of the Italian people during the war.⁷²

The first years of Italian settlement in Pennsylvania were formative ones. Initially, it was a time when the immigrants arrived unsure of their place in American society, slowly putting down roots as individuals, families, and *paesani*. They created larger social and economic net works, started businesses, formed local organizations, engaged in civic activities, and reached out to the larger society, hesitantly at first but with more assurance as they developed a sense of their place in American society.

The large numbers of Italians in the United States, the development of national Italian organizational networks, and the use of mass media helped to transform their self-identity as immigrants from individual *paesani* to a national one as American ethnics, as Italian Americans. In fact, from the first days of immigration, leaders in Italian American communities fostered the development of an ethnic identity distinct from the mainstream American cultural consensus. One way to do this

was to stage public events incorporating symbolic imagery around which the diverse Italian population could identify and rally together as a unified group. Columbus, accepted as a hero by Americans since the late eighteenth century, is probably the best example of an image that was seized on by Italian immigrants and soon became adopted as a pan-Italian American ethnic symbol. Such symbols were spread through efforts of the ethnic press and national Italian American organizations like the Sons of Italy in an effort to counteract the negative stereotypes of Italians so prevalent during the immigration period. In the late nineteenth century, Italian leaders in New York and Philadelphia began promoting Columbus as the perfect symbol to represent Italians in the United States. As early as 1882, Italian American organizations invited to march in the parade to celebrate William Penn's arrival in Philadelphia carried a float with a representation of Columbus.⁷³ Columbus Day Parades soon became public rituals (meaning that they were repeated year after year) for Italian Americans in communities across the United States. Only a few decades after Italians settled here, certain images such as Columbus had become pan-Italian American symbols both used by Italians to express their ethnic identity and accepted by the majority population as what constituted being Italian American. [20]

THE POST WAR ERA TO THE PRESENT

After the war, the beginnings of a sealing down of heavy industry, the trend of an exodus from city and town to suburb, the desire of adult second generation children to blend with mainstream America, and the aging of the immigrant generation, contributed to a general decline of old ethnic neighborhoods. These factors did not signal an end to ethnic identity. As the second generation aged they often became nostalgic for the sense of belonging — however stifling it felt when they were young — that they once had in Italian family systems and close-knit neighborhoods. In part in an effort to recreate what they had lost, they became interested in their own ethnic heritage. They were also buoyed by their third generation children who embraced the label of Italian American, never having felt the need to rebel against it.

As a result of renewed interest in ethnic identity, old fraternal societies sometimes gain a second life or new organizations with names like "Italian Heritage Association" are formed. Ethnic festivals, reunions, and revivals of public events long abandoned become occasions to celebrate heritage and to share and display publicly expressions of ethnicity. In Reading, present and former residents of North Eighth Street hold an annual "North Eighth Street Gang" reunion picnic. Sometimes old celebrations are rejuvenated by incorporating newer immigrant groups into the events (and sometimes give occasion for public competition and even conflict among the groups). In Conshohocken, just west of Philadelphia, the *fiesta* of Saints Cosmas and Damian still attracts the large crowds of previous decades. Since the mid-1980s, Haitians who have a particular devotion to the two saints, have become integral to the event. Although the Italians and Haitians

do not intermingle, no resentment is apparent and parishioners wholeheartedly acknowledge the Haitians' devotion.⁷⁴ [21]

Italians continued to settle in the United States after World War I although few in number when compared with the figures in the early part of the century. Nonetheless, these immigrants contributed to keeping old Italian neighborhoods like South Philadelphia infused with new blood and alive with language and artistic traditions that perhaps would have been forgotten.

The metamorphosis from immigrant to ethnic American was a long process. The peak of white ethnic pride in the 1960s and 1970s had a history behind it. The public and private 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.

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ENDNOTES

All interview quotations or specific information about individuals in Reading, Pennsylvania, included in this article are taken from oral interviews conducted by Joan Saverino as project director of the Italian American Ethnohistory Project (1990-1993), funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs and the Historical and Museums Commission of Pennsylvania. The tape-recorded interviews and other primary research material front this project are housed in the library at the Historical Society of Berks County in Reading. For direct quotations the following transcription conventions are used: three consecutive periods indicate a deletion, an italicized word indicates emphasis by speaker, and brackets indicate word(s) inserted by author.

For a comprehensive bibliography on Italian American folklore in Pennsylvania and in the United States, see Luisa Del Giudice, ed *Studies in Italian American Folklore* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1993). A highly readable source on Italian American folklore and folklife in the United States that includes examples from Pennsylvania, is Frances M. Malpezzi and William M. Clements, *Italian-American Folklore* (Little Rock, AR: August House Publishers, 1992). Below is a list of suggested sources for readers interested in learning more about the Italian experience in Pennsylvania. Carla Bianco, *The Two Rosetos* (Bloomington:

Indiana University Press, 1974); John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own; Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1 960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Caroline Golab, *Immigrant Destinations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977); Richard Juliani, *The Social Organization of Immigration* (New York:Arno Press, 1980); Elizabeth Mathias, "The Game as Creator of the Group in an Italian-American Community," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 23:4(1 974):22- 30; -, "The Italian-American Funeral: Persistence Through Change," *Western Folklore* 33:1(1974):35.50; Dorothy Noyes, "From the *Paese* to the *Patria*: An Italian American Pilgrimage to Rome in 1929," in *Studies in Italian American Folklore*, ed. Luisa Del Giudice (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1993), 127-152; —, *Uses of Tradition; Arts of Italian Americans in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial and Philadelphia Folklore Project, 1989); Emma S. Rocco, "A History of Italian-American Bands in Western Pennsylvania," *Journal of Band Research* 26:1(1990):59-81; Joan Saverino, "The Italians of Reading: Forging an Identity in the 1920s," *Historical Review of Berks County* 56(Fall 1991):172-197; Janet Theophano, "I Gave Him a Cake': An Interpretation of Two Italian-American Weddings," in *Creative Ethnicity; Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life*, ed. Stepheti Stern and John Allan Cicala (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1991), 44-54; "Mildred Urick, "The San Rocco Festival at Aliquippa, Pennsylvania: A Transplanted Tradition," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 19:1(1969): 14- 22; Clement Valletta, "Italian Immigrant Life in Northampton County, Pennsylvania, 1890-1915," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 15: 1(1965);39-48; *A Study of Americanization in Carneta; Italian-American identity through Three Generations* (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Richard A. Varbero, "Philadelphia's South Italians in the 1920's," in *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower Class Life, 1790-1940*, ed. Allen F. Davis and Mark It. Flaller. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 255-275.

1. Roger D. Abrahams, "Folklore," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, 1980 ed.; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Studying Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 39,43; Shalom Staub, *Yemenis in New York City; The Folklore of Ethnicity*(Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989), 31-33, 41-42; Judith Goode, Janet Theophano, and Karen Curtis, "A Framework for the Analysis of Continuity and Change in Shared Sociocultural Rules for Food Use: The Italian-American Pattern," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States*, ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 74-75.

3. Abrahams, 377-378.

4. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871-1982* (London: Longman, 1984), 12.

5. *Ibid.*, 1-2; Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 371.

6. Clark, 32-33; Donna R. Gahaecia, *Militants and Migrants; Rural Sicilians Become American Workers* (New Brunswick: NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 20-25.

7. t-Iumbert S. Nelli, "Italians," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. 1980 ed.; Nelli, *From Immigrants to Ethnics; The Italian*

Americans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 19, 33, 42-43; Clark, 166; Glenn C. Altschuler, *Ethnicity, Race, and Class in American Social Thought 1865-1919* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 70.

8. Clark, 1-2; Eric R. 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 cut off from their historical past through the process of emigration.

9. *ibid.*, 41; See Table 1, Luciano J. Iorizzo and Salvatore Mondello, *The Italian-Americans* (NY: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971).

10. Golab, 34; Nelli, "Italians".

11. Golab, 3-5.

12. Golab, 35, 58-59; Joseph Lopreato, *Italian Americans* (NY: Random House, 1970), 93-95; Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants*, 114-15.

13. Richard Juliani, "The Origin and Development of the Italian Community in Philadelphia," in *The Ethnic Experience in Philadelphia*, ed. John E. Bodnar (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1973), 244; Golab, 60; Raymond L. Ford, "Germans and Other Foreign Stock: Their Part in the Evolution of Reading, Pennsylvania," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1963), 145.

14. Golab, 40-41, 59-61.

15. Donna R. Gabaccia, *From Scilly to Elizabeth, Street; Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 62.

16. *Ibid.*, 64.

17. Mary Giarrano Mistretta, personal communication, 27-28 June, 1995.

18. Bodnar, *Lives of Their Own*, 6, 114.

19. Since Mussolini's era, the region was divided into two separate states, Abruzzi and Molise. Juliani, *Social Organization*, 178.

20. James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country; A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 133; Ford, 130.

21. Ford, 129-130, 172-174, 201; U.S. Census, Population Statistics. 1930.

22. John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted; A History of immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 57, 68.

23. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community; Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 59.

24. According to Pasquale Spadafora, the mansion, built by a retired engineer named Smith, was turned into rental Oats for Italian immigrants when Smith became disenchanted after the Pennsylvania railroad built a track between the mansion and the river. An Edwin S. Smith, listed as an engineer in the city directory of 1885, is probably the engineer who built the mansion.

25. Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 178.79.

26. Gabaccia, *Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, 93-94, discusses the sporadic nature of specific jobs. [22]

27. My discussion of Italian men's work is based on qualitative research (primarily personal interviews) and some secondary source material. Quantitative research still needs to be conducted to determine exact work patterns and percentages in specific industries.

28. My assessment of the work patterns of Italian women in Reading, like that for men, gathered from qualitative research; detailed quantitative study is called for.

29. See Yans-McLaughlin, 173-74, 205, and Gabaccia, *Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, 80-81, for discussion of the commonality of taking in boarders and frequency of kin as boarders.

It should be noted, too, that Charles Carabello also remembered that his mother often stopped at Theresa and Sam Salvatore Granieri's grocery store on Penn Street on her way home from work. Teresa gave her blemished fruit which could not be sold for her family's table.

30. Yans-McLaughlin, 164-67; Gabaccia, *Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, 91-95.

31. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 173.

32. Gabaccia, *Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, 102.

33. The issue of whether regional dialects are true languages is controversial. Regarding Sicilian, for instance, Olga M. Ragus, chair of the Italian department at Columbia University said, "Sicilian can be considered a language in that it has a distinct structure and a written literature, which goes back to the 13th century and continues to be produced. On the other hand, it can be considered a dialect together with the many other varieties of spoken Italian in existence." Marvin Howe, "Poets' Group Preserves Link To Sicily," *New York Times*, 30 Nov 1984, sec. B, p. 2(F). Anna Laura Lepschy and Giulio Lepschy, *The Italian Language Today* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1977) is a good resource in English for an historical overview of the language, the present linguistic situation, and a discussion of the dialects.

34. Bianche, 70-74; Malpezzi and Clements, 45.

35. Don Yoder, "Folk Medicine," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 202-203.

36. The Italian emphasis on fresh ingredients and organization of garden space is noted in Richard Raspa, "Exotic Foods Among Italian-Americans in Mormon Utah," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States*, Ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 189, and in Philip F. Notarianni, "Places of Origin: Calabresi in Carbon County, Utah," in *Old Ties, New Attachments: Italian-American Folklife in the West*, ed. David A. Taylor and John Alexander Williams (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992), 71-74. Raspa also discusses the transformation of the landscape by Italians in rural Utah into familiar peasant farmsteads in "The Italian Community of Helper, Utah: Its Historic and Folkloric Past and Present," in *The Family and Community Life of Italian Americans: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Italian American Historical Association* held in Chicago, Illinois, October 24 and 25, 1980, ed Richard

- N. Juliani (Staten Island, NY: American Italian Historical Association, 1983), 23-34.
37. Malpezzi and Clements, 235. Translation of proverbs: A day without wine is like a day without the sun; water makes one ill, wine makes one sing. For the Italian, the correct grammar should read "Acqua fa male, il vino fa cantare."
- 38 Mathias, "Funeral," 35, makes this point about Italian funerals in South Philadelphia.
39. Malpezzi and Clements, 218; Abrahams, 374.
40. Rocco, 59, 65, 81.
41. Mathias, "Funeral," 40, makes this point about Italian funerals in South Philadelphia, but from my research in Berks County I have found that it also applied to other significant celebrations, especially weddings.
42. Gabaccia, *Sicily To Elizabeth Street*, 10, 51-52.
43. Ibid., 100. I have drawn on Gabaccia's interpretation of Sicilian family and community life which disagrees with some authors who argue that while socially immigrants became Americans, culturally they remained the Italians they had been before emigration.
44. Micaela di Leonardo, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience: Kinship, Class, and Gender Among California Italian-Americans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 134-35.
45. My interpretation here is informed by Henry Glassie's discussion of community in *Passing The Time in Ballymenone: Culture and hlistory of an Ulster Community* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 11-34.
46. di Leonardo, 156.
47. Bianco, 84-90; Introduction in Orsi, *Madonna*; 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(1991):216; Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants: Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church," *Journal of Social History* 2(1969):228; Vecoli, "Cult and Occult in Italian-American Culture: The Persistence of a Religious Heritage." In *Immigrants and Religion in Urban America*, ed. Randall M. Miller and Thomas D. Marzik (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977); reprint St. Paul: Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, 25-30, (page references are to reprint edition).
48. Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants," 267-68.
49. James S. Olson, *Catholic Immigrants in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987), 102.
50. Juliani, *Social Organization*, 91.
51. Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants," 229, 235-36; Orsi, *Madonna*, xvi-xvii.
52. Orsi, *Madonna*, 220.
53. Ibid., 55.
54. Bianco, 120; Angie Silvestro, personal communication.
55. Joseph Sciorra, "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian-Americans," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, vol. III*, Cd. Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Ilerman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 185-198.
56. Bianco, 84, 94-95; Phyllis Williams, *South Italian Folkways in Europe and America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1938), 142-43. The word for evil eye varies according to the regional dialect.

57. Orsi, "Center Out There," 218.
58. Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants," 268.
59. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925. 2nd ed.* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 212-13, 235-37.
60. John F. McClymer, "Gender and the 'American Way of Life': Women in the Americanization Movement," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10 (Spring, 1991):3-7, 11-12.
61. StYans-McLaughlin, 133-36.
62. John Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: Their Historical Development, Character and Significance," in *Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the United States: Essays and Inventories*, ed. Susan H. Shreve and Rudolph J. Vecoli (St. Paul: Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, 1981), 7.
63. Bodnar "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations," 7 and Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 124-25 discusses the role of the prominent/in the societies.
64. Humbert S. Nelli, *Italians in Chicago, 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 173.
65. Bodnar, *Transplanted*, 125; "The Birth of the Order," *Order Italian Sons & Daughters of America*, 1964.
66. For more information, see Philip Cannistraro, "Generoso Pope and the Rise of Italian-American Politics, 1925-1936," in *Italian-Americans: New Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, ed. Lydio F. Iomasi (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1985), 264-88.
67. Philip Cannistraro, "Fascism and Italian Americans," in *Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity: Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Casa Italiana*, Columbia University, May 21-23, 1976, ed. Silvano M. Tomasi (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 52.
68. Orsi, "Center Out There," 218.
69. The concept that nations are "constructed" and "imaginary" rather than natural outgrowths of historical processes has been discussed by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).
70. Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. and introduction by Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 167-68.
71. Italian American reaction once the United States declared war, see John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 349-50; Cannistraro in Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities*, xxxvi.
72. Diggins, 351.
73. John Noble Wilford, *The Mysterious History of Columbus: An Exploration of the Man, the Myth, the Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 247-265; Claudia L. Bushman, *America Discovers Columbus: How an Italian Explorer Became an American Hero* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 22, 81; David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*:

The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 22-23.

74. Noyes, *Uses of Tradition*, 56-57.