

The Italians in America

By Allin Kingsbury

Some of the more seasoned genealogists may scoff at the notion that there were Italians in America during colonial times, but this is a fact. Italy was not a country then and Italians were not a major immigrant group until the 20th century. However, this does not mean that the Italians were not important to the development of America. They did play an important roll in the founding of America and genealogists should be aware that there were Italian families in America back in the 1600s.

The reason that historians give the early Italians in America little attention is that they had no Italian identity. There were no Italian colonies because Italy did not exist as a nation. The city states in Italy were united by a common language, and almost had a common culture because they were dominantly Catholic. The Italian explorers who discovered and surveyed North America worked for non-Italian monarchs. Columbus, an Italian from Genoa, was financed by Ferdinand and Isabella who had unified the provinces of Spain under a single government. Vespucci and Alphonse de Ojida, Italian explorers, discovered Venezuela (Little Venice). Their accounts of the expedition led to the land south of the Caribbean to be named America after Amerigo Vespucci. John Cabot

Today, those with Italian ancestry make up the fifth largest nationality in the United States.

(born as Giovanni Caboto in Venice) discovered Newfoundland and claimed it for his employer, Henry VII, King of England. Another Italian explorer, Verrazzano, was employed by Francis I, King of France. He sailed along the East Coast of the United States from Cape Hatteras to Newfoundland. His description led to more exploration and to the colonization of New Amsterdam as well as colonization by the French in what is now Canada. None of these Italian explorers remained in America as colonists, nor did any of their immediate families.

Italian Immigration to America

The first permanent Italian colonists came with the Jesuits who established missions in New Mexico, Arizona and California from 1687 to 1711. Others, like Henry de Tonti, went with the French into the Great Lakes region and on down the Mississippi. In 1657, a group of Italian Protestants left the Piedmont area in northern Italy, and settled in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam. Eventually they founded New Castle, Delaware. Later, in 1768, about one hundred indentured servants were transported to New Smyrna, Florida, to raise indigo.

All of these early immigrants

were cast into the American melting pot. They lost their Italian language and some of their Italian culture. They became Americans, adopting English and accepting the emerging American culture.

There are no reliable statistics on early Italian immigration. It was not until the early 1800s that census and immigration records indicated the number of Italians coming to America. Between 1829 and 1865, about 17,000 Italians came to America. These include language and music teachers, hairdressers, marble carvers, ships chandlers, and importers of European goods. Many of them were political refugees. Immigration increased after the Civil War. Early immigration had been from Northern Italy. Southern Italy had laws against emigration which were discarded after the unification of Italy starting in 1861.

From 1866 to 1879, Italy accounted for about 70,000 immigrants to the United States. From 1880 to 1914, the number rose to 4 million, and half of those came between 1900 and 1910. Even more Italians left Italy for South American destinations at this time. The largest groups immigrated to Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil. After 1920, the exodus from Italy dropped

significantly, but did not stop. By 1958, Canada was receiving the largest group of Italian emigrants, and the number was greater than the number of immigrants from Great Britain.

Since most Italian immigrants had marketable skills in manufacturing, crafts, music, and art, they were attracted to the cities. Most Italian immigrants settled in cities along the East Coast. Today, those with Italian ancestry make up the fifth largest nationality in the United States.

The History of Italy

As Italy emerged from the Dark Ages, Italy became the center stage of the Renaissance. The port cities such as Genoa became wealthy from the spice trade. The wealthy merchants became patrons of the arts, music, literature, science and architecture. Trade was the driving force for the changes taking place in the culture of the country. Italians were in demand in other nations of Europe as architects, artists, musicians, and skilled craftsman.

Politically, Italy was divided into many city-states. They were often pawns, sought after for power by France, Spain, Portugal Holland and England, as they tried to build empires at the expense of their neighbors. There were frequent boundary changes as rulers went to war and states changed allegiance through mar-

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riage and inheritance of title. The stronger city states often played a role in the history of Europe as alliances shifted the balance of power between Spain, Austria and France who were the dominant powers of the eighteenth century. Napoleon invaded Italy in the late 1700s and divided Italy into five republics with capitals at Milan, Bologna, Naples, Genoa, and Rome with the treaty of Campo in 1797. After 1800, Napoleon crowned himself King over all of Italy. His unification was halted when Napoleon was defeated by the British in 1812. Later, when Victor Emmanuel came to power in the Kingdom of Sardinia, the remaining city states began to join his kingdom, one by one, until there was a unified Italy in 1860. Italy has had some political upheaval since unification, especially when Mussolini came to power and sided with Hitler.

Finding Your Italian Roots

Most Italian families came to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These later immigrants have been here for only a few generations. These families often have home sources that identify their immigrant ancestors and in many cases, there are home sources or living family members that know where these ancestors came from in Italy. Families who came before the Civil War will be much more difficult to link to a place in Italy. Sources that are helpful in identifying the birthplace in Italy of an ancestor include the U.S. census, naturalization records, passenger arrival lists, immigration records, and draft records. If there is a compiled family history, it should have the birthplace. Other sources of help are Italian-American organizations and societies. Some of them are compiling databases of Italian families that came to the United States including their place of origin.

Research in Italy

Once the birth place of an immigrant ancestor is known, research can begin using Italian records. It is possible that a compiled family history exists for an immigrant ancestor, but it is unlikely. Italian records that are most used for research to trace ancestry are the following:

Church records or *Registri Parrocchiali* were kept by the Catholic Church beginning in 1563 when the Council of Trent required priests to keep records of baptisms (*atti di battesimo*), marriages (*atti di matrimonio*), and burials (*atti di sepoltura*). Most church records also include confirmations and first communions, and sometimes church census records. Some parishes have records which date back to the 1300s. Most records are written in Latin. The church records may be the only source available. The parish records are almost always found at the local parish, but duplicate copies of the records after 1900 are at the diocesan archives.

Census records or *Censimenti* are a disappointment when compared to the U.S. Census. The Italian census began in 1871, with another census each decade. The censuses for 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 vary from region to region, and usually name the head of household, occupation, and the number of individuals in the household. The census records from 1911 and later list names, ages, occupations, birthplaces and relationships to the head of household for each resident. These later census records are usually found in the register office or *anagrafe* of the commune. Availability of the records varies from commune to commune.

Early Civil Registration Records or *Stato Civile* were kept from 1804 to 1866. We can thank Napoleon for these records. When he annexed large portions of Italy beginning in 1804, he began the prac-

tice of keeping civil records. These early civil records include birth, marriage and death records for the years of 1804-1815. They are found in the Italian state archive designated to keep records for the area. When Napoleon lost power in 1815, most areas of Italy stopped keeping civil registers. Parish priests in some areas in Italy continued the practice of civil registration. The early civil records vary from town to town. Where they can be found, they are a valuable source of information.

Modern Civil Registration or *Stato Civile* began in 1966 for most of Italy and continues to the present day. They include birth (*atto di nascita*), marriage (*atto di matrimonio*) and death (*atto di morto*) records. They are found at the local registrar's office (*Anagrafe*) in the town where the individual resided. Records less than seventy-five years old are not available to the public.

Certificate of Family Status or Genealogy or *Certificato dello Stato di Famiglia* is a record unique to Italy. The certificate has information about an entire family and usually contains the name, relationship, and date and place of birth for each family member, often including family members who moved away or died. A few towns began keeping this record in 1869, but it wasn't in widespread use until 1911. The certificates are kept by local Registry Office or *Ufficio Anagrafe*. (See genealogy.about.com.)

Military and Conscription Records or *Ufficio Matricola e Centro Documentale* were kept for all males from 1869 to the present day. All male Italian citizens are required to register at the age of eighteen. These records typically include name, birth date, address at time of registration, parents, next of kin, and physical description of the registrant, and an explanation of their military status (whether they ever served, deserted, or were exempted). The records from 1870-1920 can be obtained at the State Archives. Later records are in the custody of the local Military District or *Distretto Militare*. (See genealogy.about.com.)

Books on Italian Genealogy

Italian genealogy is rapidly growing in popularity. Some recent books on the subject include:

- Italian Genealogical Records: How to Use Italian Civil, Ecclesiastical & Other Records in Family History Research (Italian Edition) (Hardcover) by Trafford R Cole
- Genealogists Guide to Discovering Your Italian Ancestors: How to Find and Record Your Unique Heritage (Paperback) by Lynn Nelson
- Finding Italian Roots: The Complete Guide to Americans (Paperback) by John Philip Colletta
- La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience (Paperback) by Jerre Mangione
- Our Italian Surnames (Hardcover) by Joseph G. Fucilla

Internet Sites

There are many genealogy sites available for help with Italian genealogy research.

www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=8317&cj=1&_xid=000000000&o_lid=000000000 Ancestry.com - Italian Naming Customs – an article by John Philip Colletta

www.angelfire.com/ok3/pearlsofwisdom/ Italian Genealogy Online

- Italian Ancestry Genealogical Research Site

www.capital.net/~dehill/ItalStud.htm Italian Studies Resource Guide

www.caropepe.com/italy/ Joe's Italian Genealogy Page

<http://ciliaacorte.com/> Genealogy information on Maltese and Italian genealogy

www.cimorelli.com/pie/ PIE - Pursuing Our Italian Names Together In E-mail

www.cyndislist.com/italy.htm Cyndi's List - Italy a list of Italian genealogy sources on the Internet

Italian Genealogy

www.daddezio.com/ The Italian Heritage and Genealogy Home Page - D'Addezio.com: Tools to research your Italian ancestry, surname queries, coat of arms, ship arrivals

www.genealogica.it/ Genealogia Caffè - club for Italian genealogists

www.genealogy.about.com/od/italy/Italian_Genealogy_Family_History.htm Tracing Your Family Tree in Italy

www.genealogyjoe.com/ Joe's Links to Italy

<http://gens.labo.net/en/cognomi/> Surnames in Italy / L'Italia dei cognomi - enter a surname and view a distribution map of that surname in Italy

www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/1709/index.html Lou ALFANO's GeoCities Web Site

www.google.com/Top/Regional/Europe/Italy/Society_and_Culture/Genealogy/ Resource for Italian genealogical research

www.initaly.com/gene/ Radici - The Italian Genealogy Webclub

www.italiamerica.org/ ITALIAMERICA - Italian Cultural Organization to Honor Italian Emigrants

www.italianancestry.com/ ItalianAncestry.com - links for Italian genealogical research

<http://italianfamilytree.com/> Italian Genealogy Research

<http://italiangenealogy.tardio.com/> The Italian Genealogy Home Page

www.italylink.com/genealogy.html Italian Genealogy - an Italian genealogy portal

www.italywgw.org/ Italy GenWeb

www.italyworldclub.com/genealogy/ Genealogy research in Southern Italy - information to get you started in your Italian genealogy

research, plus special Italian genealogy topics

www.kindredtrails.com/italy.html Italian Genealogy and Family History Resources

<http://library.thinkquest.org/20619/Italian.html> Immigration: The Italians

www.regalis.com/reg/genres.htm Italian Genealogical Research - Regalis - Introduction to Italian genealogy

www.regalis.com/res.htm Research Conditions in Italy

www.theitalianproject.com/ Italian Project: to promote, support, and spread Italian language, culture, tradition, genealogy, and lifestyle

How to do Italian Research

www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/rg/frameset_rg.asp?Dest=G1&Aid=&Gid=&Lid=&Sid=&Did=&JurisI=&Event=&Year=&Gloss=&Sub=&Tab=&Entry=&Guide=Italy.ASP FamilySearch Research Guidance - Research Outline - Italy

www.genealogy.com/00000375.html Genealogy.com - Italian Genealogy How-To Guide

www.anzwers.org/free/italiangen/free_genealogy_research.html How to Do Your Own Italian Genealogy Research

www.anzwers.org/free/italiangen/ Learn how to do your own Italian genealogy research, Italian genealogy links, surname boards and more

Language

The Italian language is a challenge if you do not speak it. The following sites will help you to get by as a genealogist:

www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/rg/frameset_rg.asp?Dest=G1&Aid=&Gid=&Lid=&Sid=&Did=&JurisI=&Event=&Year=&Gloss=&Sub=&Tab=&Entry=&Guide=WLIItalia.ASP Italian Genealogical Word List

www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/rg/frameset_rg.asp?Dest=G1&Aid=&Gid=&Lid=&Sid=&Did=&JurisI=&Event=&Year=&Gloss=&Sub=&Tab=&Entry=&Guide=LGIItalia.ASP Italian Letter Writing Guide

www.freedict.com/ondict/ita.html Online English to Italian to English Dictionary

Libraries Archives and Museums

The following are Web sites of repositories with significant Italian collections:

www.provinz.bz.it/denkmalpflege/1303/it/default.htm Archivio della Provincia di Bol-

zano (South Tyrol Archive)

www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/nuovosito/ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (The State Archive of Florence)

www.archivi.beniculturali.it/ ARCHIVI - portale ufficiale dell'Amministrazione Archivistica Italiana (National archives system of Italy)

www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/ The European Library - A portal for books, magazines, journals,- both digital and non-digital from the 45 national libraries of Europe.

www.archiviodiari.it/ Fondazione Archivio Diaristico Nazionale ~ Pieve Santo Stefano (Italian national diary archives)

www.italianamericanmuseum.org/ Italian American Museum ~ New York City, New York

www.libdex.com/country/italy/ LibDex - The Library Index - Italy: a worldwide directory of links to library homepages and web-based OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogs)

www.beniculturali.it/ Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali / Ministry for the Cultural Assets and Activities

<http://eticodns12.eticodns12.com/~admin45/> Museo dell'Emigrante della Repubblica di San Marino ~ San Marino

www.provinz.bz.it/denkmalpflege/1303/index_d.asp Südtiroler Landesarchiv / South Tyrol Archive, now part of Italy.

www.vatican.va/library_archives/index.htm Vatican Library/Secret Archives

Mailing lists

Mailing lists are helpful in getting answers to questions and finding new resources as they become available. The following are a few of the many Italian mailing lists used for family history research:

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/gen_mail_country-ita.html List of Italy Mailing Lists

http://lists.rootsweb.ancestry.com/index/intl/ITA/?cj=1&o_xid=0001029688&o_lid=0001029688 RootsWeb: Genealogy Mailing Lists: Italy

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/AeolianGenealogy Aeolian Genealogy Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ANGLO-ITALIAN ANGLO-ITALIAN Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ARIA-L ARIA Mailing List for Australians and

New Zealanders who are researching their Italian Heritage

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/AUT-TYROL AUT-TYROL Mailing List - A trilingual English-German-Italian mailing list for anyone with a genealogical, cultural or historical interest in Tyrol (including South-Tyrol now part of Italy).

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/BarItaly BarItaly Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/Basilicata Basilicata Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/CALITRI CALITRI Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/CEFALU CEFALU Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/CHE-TICINO CHE-TICINO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/COMUNES_OF_ITALY COMUNES_OF_ITALY Mailing List for those who are interested in Italian genealogy, culture and all things Italian.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/GEN-ITALIAN GEN-ITALIAN Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ICC il-circolo-calabrese Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-ABRUZZO ITA-ABRUZZO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-ALFEDENA ITA-ALFEDENA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-BASILICATA ITA-BASILICATA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CALABRIA ITA-CALABRIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CALABRIA-SIMBARIO ITA-CALABRIA-SIMBARIO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CAMPANIA-AVELLINO ITA-CAMPANIA-AVELLINO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CAMPANIA-BENEVENTO ITA-CAMPANIA-BENEVENTO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CAMPANIA-CASERTA ITA-CAMPANIA-CASERTA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CAMPANIA ITA-CAMPANIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CAMPANIA-NAPOLI ITA-CAMPANIA-NAPOLI Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CAMPANIA-SALERNO ITA-CAMPANIA-SALERNO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CATANZARO ITA-CATANZARO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-CUGGIONO ITA-CUGGIONO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-EMILIA-ROMAGNA ITA-EMILIA-ROMAGNA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-FRIULI-VENEZIA-GIULIA ITA-FRIULI-VENEZIA-GIULIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-FROSINONE ITA-

FROSINONE Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-LAZIO ITA-LAZIO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITALIADOPTION ITALI-ADOPTION Mailing List - For individuals who were born in Italy and adopted by families in the United States or Canada

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITALIANS-NY ITALIANS-NY Mailing List - For anyone with a genealogical interest in Italian immigrants to New York.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITALIAN-SURNAMES ITALIAN-SURNAMES Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-LIGURIA ITA-LIGURIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-LOMBARDIA ITA-LOMBARDIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-LUCCA ITA-LUCCA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITALY-ARBERESH ITALY-ARBERESH Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/italy-gene italy-gene Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITALY ITALY Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ItalyNW ItalyNW Mailing List for family history research in northern Italy.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-MARCHE ITA-MARCHE Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-MENFI ITA-MENFI Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-MOLISE ITA-MOLISE Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-PIEDMONT ITA-PIEDMONT Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-PUGLIA ITA-PUGLIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-SARDEGNA ITA-SARDEGNA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-SICILY-BARCELLONA-MESSINA ITA-SICILY-BARCELLONA-MESSINA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-SICILY-GEN ITA-SICILY-GEN Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-SICILY ITA-SICILY Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-SICILY-SERRADIFALCO ITA-SICILY-SERRADIFALCO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-SICILY-TERRASINI ITA-SICILY-TERRASINI Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-TOSCANA ITA-TOSCANA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-TRENTINO-ALTO-ADIGE ITA-TRENTINO-ALTO-ADIGE Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-TURIN-SALASSA ITA-TURIN-SALASSA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-UMBRIA ITA-UMBRIA Mailing List

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-VALLE-AOSTA> ITA-VALLE-AOSTA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/ITA-VENETO ITA-VENETO Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/PIE PIE Mailing List for Italian genealogical research.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/SARDINIA SARDINIA Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/Terminimerese Terminimerese Mailing List

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jfuller/VALLEDOLMO VALLE-DOLMO Mailing List

www.angelfire.com/ok3/pearlsofwisdom/boards.html Genealogy Surname Boards at Italian Genealogy Online

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/italynw/ItalyNW> eGroup for northwestern Italy

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TriggianoBaritaly/> TRIGGIANO-Baritaly – for the town of Triggiano in the province of Bari, Italy.

Maps

You will need a detailed map to find the towns, villages, cemeteries, churches and other places that need to be located for family history. Following are a few sources for Italian maps:

www.initaly.com/gene/rad-map.htm Folding Maps for sale showing the administrative boundaries of small towns in the province.

www.initaly.com/info/maps.htm In Italy Online - Bazaar - Maps of Italy for sale

www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/rg/frameset_rg.asp?Dest=G1&Aid=&Gid=&Lid=&Sid=&Did=&JurisI=&Event=&Year=&Gloss=&Sub=&Tab=&Entry=&Guide=MItaly.ASP Map of Italy

<http://map.lib.umn.edu/bessie/usa/italian.html> Map of the United States: Italian Ancestry from the University of Minnesota.

www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/italy.html The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection - Italy Maps from the University of Texas at Austin.

<http://gens.labo.net/en/cognomi/> Surnames in Italy / L'Italia dei cognomi By entering a surname and view a distribution map of that particular surname in Italy.

Societies, Clubs and Associations

There are many genealogical organizations that have collected genealogical data that will be of help in Italian research. Some of the organizations that specialize in Italian research are:

www.aiha-albany.org/ American Italian Heritage Association. Albany, New York

www.anglo-italianfhs.org.uk/ Anglo-Italian Family History Society

<http://bawnyigs.s5.com/> Buffalo & Western New York Italian Genealogy Society

www.circolocalabrese.org/ Il Circolo Calabrese devoted to the

study and preservation of the language, history, culture and genealogy of the Calabria region of Italy

www.geocities.com/circolomazzei/index.html Il Circolo Filippo Mazzei - The Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area Italian Genealogical Society

www.iagi.info/ Istituto Araldico Genealogico Italiano

www.italiangen.org/ The Italian Genealogical Group

www.italianheritage.org/ Italian Heritage Society of Indiana

www.italianhistorical.org/ Italian Historical Society of America, Brooklyn, New York

www.italianroots.org/ Italian Genealogical Society of America - Peabody, Massachusetts

www.main.org/pip10/ Italian Genealogy - POINTers In Person Chapter 10 – Austin, Texas

www.niaf.org/ The National Italian American Foundation - to preserve and protect Italian American heritage and culture

www.osia.org/ One Stop Italian American: The Order Sons of Italy in America

www.point-pointers.net/ POINT -- Pursuing Our Italian Names Together – network of Italian family historians

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilpip1gs/index.htm Pursuing our Italian Names Together In Person-Chicago

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~itappnc/index.htm POINTers In Person: Italian & Chicago resources

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~njpoint/ Pointers in Person: Italian genealogical group - Totowa, New Jersey

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nypip25/ Pointers in Person: Italian genealogical group - Rochester, New York

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nywnycp/ Pointers in Person: Italian genealogical group - Western New York, Buffalo

www.spess.it/ Pesaro: Societa' pesarese di studi storici - promoting the historical research and study of Pesaro and its region

www.lucchitoscani.org/ Associazione Lucchesi Nel Mondo - Tuscany Club of Washington, DC.

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~santoippolito/> Santo Ippolito Genealogical Society - American immigrants from the town of Santo Ippolito, Cosenza, Calabria, Italy.

Good Luck with your Italian research.

Signs of the Times

Continued from last month

For genealogists, there is a lot of good news. Volunteers are indexing records in record numbers. New records are being made available to the public. Volunteers for FamilySearch.org completed their two-hundred-fifty-millionth record in March of this year, about three years after they began indexing in January of 2006. Many other projects using volunteers are underway and will add to the immense amount to data available to genealogists on the Internet. Genealogical organizations are working together as partners to make new data available. We are benefit from these projects with the spirit of cooperation as a foundation.

Illegitimacy in Germany

By Lesly Klippel

Mein mann ist ganz Deutsch. Sein grosseltern war in Deutschland geboren. My husband is entirely German. His grandparents were born in Germany. He was an officer and an aviator in the U.S. Army for twenty years and in 1964, he was transferred to Mannheim, Germany. We packed up six children and two Barbie dolls and headed for Europe. My mother soon joined us, so with her help at home, I was able to spend time tracking down my husband's ancestors. I spent many enjoyable days in the village churches, copying names from the actual parish registers, a pleasure you are rarely able to have today since most churches will only let certain researchers handle the books.

I learned a little German in the class the Army provided, such as "Wo ist de toilette?" und "Wie viel costet?" Then we learned that the Klippels had come from Nieder Weisel, a Lutheran village about an hour and a half north of Mannheim. I quickly made the acquaintance of the parish minister and his wife, who at that time, lived in the house next to the church. Today, the minister lives in a rented house, works in a bank in Frankfurt, and takes care of two other parish churches. How times have changed!

Since that learning experience over forty years ago, I have spent many, many hours pouring over the microfilms of the parish registers of the villages where Ken's ancestors lived, including the microfilms of the Nieder Weisel parish and civil registers. It is fun to look at the images of the books that I handled so long ago.

Learning about German Society

With lots of help from the minister and his gracious wife, I gradually learned to read and translate the parish records. One thing I quickly noticed was that in almost every marriage record, either the father of the groom or the father of the bride was deceased. I also noticed that the illegitimacy of infants (unehrllich) was noted in the christening records, including the name of the father of the infant, but that very often, the parents later married. I also noticed that one of the sons generally followed the same occupation as his father, while the other sons followed other occupations. Johannes Klippel arrived in Nieder Weisel about 1720 as a journeyman shoemaker and a Catholic. He was accepted in that Lutheran village, married a local girl and became a master shoemaker. He was always listed as a Catholic in the Lutheran registers of the town. His son, Conrad Klippel became the next village shoemaker and his son, Johann Jacob Klippel, after him. They were all master shoemakers with apprentices.

Dr. Roger Minert

Fast forward to 2008 when I learned that Dr. Roger Minert, Professor at BYU, would be a lecturer at the National Genealogical Society Conference in Kansas City in May. He was to lecture about German society, including marriage customs and village status or class. What I learned in his lectures explained what I had noticed in my years of researching in the German parish registers.

It all started with the Guilds. Each craft had a Guild which dictated how many workers of that particular craft a village could support. Depending on the population, a village could have one or

two shoemakers, a certain number of coopers, masons, carpenters and so on. If a man tried to set up shop against the Guild's dictates, he would be boycotted.

Obtaining an Occupation

So what was a young man to do? Actually, his future was set by his father over a stein of beer at the local inn. As the fathers discussed their children, they made arrangements about apprenticeships and marriages. For instance, the shoemaker with more than one son would agree with the cooper who had only daughters that one of his sons would apprentice with the cooper, learn the trade, marry one of the cooper's daughters, and take over the shop when the cooper died. Those last few words are significant. The young man could not become one of the village coopers until his cooper "master" died or became incapacitated and could no longer work. Also, Lutheran law dictated that a man must be able to support a family before he married. The "young" man might be forty years old by the time his future father-in-law finally gave up his work to his apprentice. Meanwhile, young Johann knows he will eventually marry Anna Maria, the cooper's daughter. He sees her every day at the cooper's home and shop, and so, of course, he gets to know her. Very often, children are the result. These babes are welcomed into the mother's home with care and affection, christened within a week of birth and registered in the church books. By the time Johann and Anna Maria are finally able to marry, there may be one or two additional children. Wentzel Klippel and Anna Elisabetha Wilhelm had three children by the time they were finally able to marry in 1831.

Status of Illegitimate Children

Once the parents legitimized their relationship, the practice was to take the marriage record to the local court and have the children legitimized. The record from the court would be duly noted by date and number in the margin of the church book next to the christening record of the child or children. Starting in the 19th Century, the minister himself could legitimize any illegitimate children when he married their parents. It was important to legitimize the children since illegitimacy prevented a person from joining a guild, from inheriting property or from marrying the child of a guild member.

I noticed that very often, at least in Nieder Weisel, the first illegitimate child of a couple died as an infant and I asked Dr. Minert if that fact was significant. He assured me that infant mortality was always high and that all illegitimate children were welcomed and cared for as well as circumstances allowed.

I also noted that an illegitimate girl whose mother did not marry the father, often grew up to have an illegitimate child herself. It is interesting that the illegitimacy of the mother was noted in the christening record of her illegitimate child. Since there were military barracks about a mile away from Nieder Weisel, there were quite a few illegitimate children whose fathers were listed as soldiers. These soldiers rarely married the girls.

Statistics of Illegitimacy

About fifteen percent of Lutheran and about twenty percent

of Catholic babies were born out of wedlock. With both Lutherans and Catholics, the majority of parents of illegitimate children married. If there were two or more children, they almost always married. The percentage of illegitimacy in cities was higher. In the middle 1800s, fully half of the babies born in Vienna were illegitimate.

Village Status or "Stand"

A person's standing in the village was very important, so important that the printed parish registers have a column entitled "Stand." I once asked a German friend what that column meant and all she could answer was "their Stand." Written in the column was generally the person's occupation. Dr. Minert's lectures clarified the connection between "Stand" and occupation. There was a hierarchy dictated by custom and a person's place in that hierarchy was determined by his occupation. I say "his" occupation, because each woman took her status from her husband. The Stand determined which pew the family occupied in the church and the family's position in the holiday processions as well as the selection of spouses for the children. You could NOT marry up or down the social register. You could NOT walk in front of someone of a higher status in the processions into the church on holidays. You could NOT sit in someone else's pew. There were actually legal court cases where a man sued another man for walking in front of

him in the procession when his Stand dictated otherwise.

Village Processions

On church holidays, the entire village would walk in a procession through the village streets to the church. The order was dictated by the Stand: Priest first, then any landed gentry, next came property owners with more than three acres, then property owners of less than three acres, next came the craftsmen such as shoemakers, coopers, masons, tailors and so forth, then day laborers who worked wherever they could find work, generally in the fields, and finally the lowest class of people such as grave diggers, executioners and prostitutes.

Societal Expectations

Every young person was expected to marry and have a family. Divorce was practically unheard of, although desertions did occur. The societal order was maintained by marriage customs, the "Stand" and the Guilds. Regulation provided security. Obedience to the customs assured societal acceptance. Everyone knew their place and what was expected of them. It was, in general, a very orderly society that produced diligent, hard-working ancestors for my husband. We are grateful for that heritage. Have fun finding yours among the wonderfully complete and accurate German records.

Spider Webs:

Tennessee Blog, Immigration Explorer, Irish Immigration Records, Wyoming Newspaper Project, Seeking Michigan, All Things Irish

Tennessee Blog

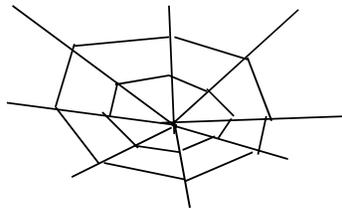
A new blog has been created and is focused to Tennessee history and genealogy. The URL for the blog is: <http://tnblog.arleneeakle.com>

Immigration Explorer

The New York Times has a new interactive map that shows where various ethnic groups settled. It uses data from the U.S. Census and other population data. The user can select an ethnic group and the areas settled by that group are shown on the map. Go to: www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/03/10/us/20090310-immigration-explorer.html?hp

Irish Immigration Records

Ancestry.ca has added records from the book, "Irish Immigration to New England, Through the Port of Saint John, New Brunswick 1841-1849" by Daniel F. Johnson. There are about 7000 individuals listed in the book. Many of them entered the United States, but a many of the immigrants were sick and destitute and were housed in a quarantine station and hospital in Saint John. A large group of these indi-



viduals remained in New Brunswick. Ancestry.ca is a subscription Web site with URL: www.ancestry.ca.

Wyoming Newspaper Project

The Wyoming Newspaper project is a work in progress to publish old Wyoming newspapers which contain a wealth of Wyoming history. The goal of the project is to make 900,000 pages of Wyoming newspapers available on the Internet at no cost. About one-half of the newspapers are available and the remaining newspapers are being processed. The newspaper collection dates from 1849 to 1922. They can be searched for a word or phrase or they can be browsed.

The project is funded by the State of Wyoming with money from the Library services Technology Act which was passed by

the federal government. To visit the site, go to: www.wyonepapers.org

Seeking Michigan

The Library of Michigan and the Archives of Michigan have created a Web site which has a growing collection of historical information. The collection includes vital records, maps, films, images, and oral histories. The first major project of the site was to digitize about one million death records dating from 1897 through 1920. These records are searchable by name, death date, death location, and age. The site also has 100,000 pages of Civil War records, about 10,000 photographs, architecture, Michigan sheet music, and family history. To visit the site, go to: www.seekingmichigan.org

All Things Irish

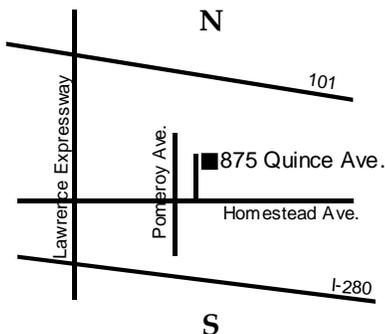
There are 36.5 million Irish in the United States, more than eight times the population of Ireland. *All Things Irish* is aimed at this group of displaced Irish in the United States. Amid the humor, news, tourist information and other items, the Web site has some genealogy information. The site is found at: www.irishcentral.com



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SV-CGG meets monthly, except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints building, 875 Quince Avenue, Santa Clara, CA. We offer classes and sponsor guest speakers at meetings to help family historians with computer technology and research techniques. Membership dues are US\$15 per year (US\$20 for Canada and US\$25 for other international). Members are offered classes at meetings, mentor help, *Silicon Valley PastFinder* (a monthly newsletter published each month there is a meeting).

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- The following can be ordered from www.FamilySearch.org or at 1-800-537 5950:
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 - Personal Ancestral File 4.04 US\$6
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 - Personal Ancestral File 4.04.18 and 5.2.18, PAF Companion (evaluation) or PAF User's Guide (English, Spanish, French, German, or Portuguese) downloaded at: www.FamilySearch.org free

- The following can be ordered from www.svcomputergenealogy.org or the group address (see above):
- Newsletter back issues if available, per issue US\$1 (order by mail or purchase at meetings)
 - Videos of classes; syllabus copies See Web site for titles, prices
 - Family History Documentation Guidelines* Available at meetings and on Web site
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Articles contributed by readers are welcome. Articles may be submitted as a text file on PC-compatible disk, CD-ROM, or as an e-mail attachment. The editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit articles. Articles are not returned.

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- Reunion for the Mac
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General Classes

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- Getting Started with Genealogy

For more details or changes, go to: www.svcomputergenealogy.org